

2009

## Clay Connections: A Thousand-Mile Journey from South Carolina to Texas

Jill Beute Koverman

*University of South Carolina - Columbia*, [koverman@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:koverman@mailbox.sc.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/mks\\_staffpub](https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/mks_staffpub)



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

---

### Publication Info

Published in *American Material Culture and the Texas Experience: The David B. Warren Symposium*, ed. Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2009, pages 118-145.

<http://www.mfah.org/>

© 2009 by Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

This Book Chapter is brought to you by the McKissick Museum at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu).



**Clay Connections:  
A Thousand-Mile Journey from South Carolina to Texas**

Jill Beute Koverman

One can visit Edgefield, South Carolina, and stand at the courthouse on the corner of Buncombe and Main streets and imagine what it would have been like to have been there in the early nineteenth century (fig. 1). From the intersection of these two streets, you would have seen a town bustling with political, civic, and commercial activity including the operation of several potteries, as recalled by editor Arthur Simkins in this newspaper article of May 11, 1859: “A clever writer in the South Carolinian discourses of old Pottersville and Dr. Landrum in pleasant terms. . . . Do we not still mind how the boys and girls used to think it a fine Saturday frolic to walk to old Pottersville and survey its manufacturing peculiaristics? To watch old DAVE as the clay assumed beneath his magic touch the desired shape of jug, jar, or crock, or pitcher as the case might be?”<sup>1</sup>

Almost one hundred fifty years later, a lively discourse continues about Dave, Dr. Landrum, and the others involved in the manufacture of stoneware in and around Edgefield. The tradition that emerged from Pottersville, a small hamlet a mile north of Edgefield proper, is not just one of local, entrepreneurial success but rather encompasses American scientific discovery and ingenuity, skilled craftsmanship, personal endurance, and westward expansion into Texas.

*Detail, fig. 3*

Fig. 1. View of Edgefield Courthouse Square, 1998.



Hundreds of decorated and undecorated utilitarian pots made by potters from Edgefield have survived into the twenty-first century because of their usefulness, durability, or beauty (fig. 2). Through close examination of extant vessels, one can gather information about the origins and makers of the pots, how they were used, and how they survived. History emerges when we use pottery as a magnifying glass to bring the written documents such as census records, account books, and advertisements into clearer focus. The potters from Edgefield, South Carolina, are the focus of this paper—who they were, who they worked with, what they produced, why they moved, and how “manifest destiny” brought a particular tradition one thousand miles from Edgefield, all the way to Texas. The storage jugs and jars, pitchers, and churns with a distinctive lime or ash glaze were the basis for successful pottery factories from Edgefield to Seguin, Texas, as the potters met the demands of the cotton- and plantation-based agricultural economy.

The town of Edgefield is located twenty-five miles east of the Savannah River, which forms the boundary between South Carolina and Georgia. Geologically, the surrounding area is endowed with rich mineral deposits. It is situated along the Fall Line, which extends westward all the way into Mississippi.<sup>2</sup> The residual clay found above the Fall Line is primarily feldspathic, ranging in color from deep iron red to gray. Kaolin, the main sedimentary clay, is almost pure white. Formed by decomposing feldspar and granite, it is found below the Fall Line. The region is heavily wooded with both hard- and softwoods and intersected by streams and small rivers. These raw materials are all necessary for the manufacture of stoneware pottery and are the main reasons the potteries were established in this area and were successful.

Pottersville, also known as Landrumsville, was situated one mile northeast of the Edgefield courthouse as one travels out Buncombe Street. The small community had many prosperous businesses, including a pottery, a blacksmithing shop, a newspaper, a tannery, and a hotel.<sup>3</sup> Pottersville was part of the larger community made up of Edgefield and the District of the same name. This area became the “Crossroads of Clay,” a term coined by folklorist and historian John Michael Vlach to describe the confluence of cultural traditions from Europe, Africa, and Asia in the creation of a unique type of pottery.<sup>4</sup>

The potters from this area came primarily from two cultural groups: artisans of European descent who had migrated from Pennsylvania and Virginia, and those of African descent who came over on the slave ships or were later born into slavery. The Landrums, with their origins in Scotland, migrated down the Great Wagon Road, bringing with them their simple pitchers, and sturdy, bulbous pottery jugs and jars. Samuel Landrum and his family lived in North Carolina and then settled in Edgefield around 1773. There he and his wife raised five sons and a daughter. Three of the sons, John, Abner, and Amos, were joined by their sister Martha’s sons, Harvey and Reuben Drake, in the creation of a stoneware dynasty. This endeavor was built upon family connections similar to those found among European potters everywhere. By 1850, the industry reached its zenith in terms of number of factories, production, and financial value through the use of slave labor. The number of factories declined in the 1870s before pottery production all but ended in Edgefield at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Fig. 2. Collin Rhodes Factory. *Pie Pan*. c. 1850.  
Alkaline-glazed stoneware with kaolin slip,  
2 1/2 x 9 1/4 in. (6.4 x 24.8 cm). McKissick  
Museum, University of South Carolina.



In December 1812, Abner Landrum was granted a loan of \$2,000 from the General Legislation of South Carolina to establish a “Quensware or Porcelain” manufactory in Edgefield.<sup>5</sup> Not much is known about this endeavor as there are no extant marked examples of queensware or porcelain wares made at Pottersville. However, by 1817, Abner and his relatives were producing stoneware jugs, jars, pitchers and churns of good quality and selling them to the people of South Carolina. These wares were a low-cost and more durable alternative to soft, lead-glazed earthenware and salt-glazed stoneware. By the end of the eighteenth century, lead was known to be toxic when ingested. Additionally, both lead and salt were expensive to purchase as they were not readily available. It was also less expensive than importing wares from the port of Charleston or from northern cities such as Philadelphia or New York. The wealthy residents of Edgefield did own fine porcelains from China, along with feather-edged queensware and fancifully decorated mocha-wares imported from England. The pottery factories responded to the demand from small and large households, farms, and plantations with pieces that did not need special care and that were durable for everyday use. Hundreds of thousands of stoneware vessels were produced in Edgefield during the nineteenth century.

Scientifically minded and educated as a physician, Abner Landrum has been credited with the development of the alkaline-glaze between 1810 and 1817. Prior to its use in Edgefield, this glaze was not found outside of the Orient—China, Japan, and Korea. It is thought that he was the one who developed the glaze based upon his education and access to Jean-Baptiste Du Halde’s *The General History of China*, in which the papers of Pierre d’Entrecolles, including letters regarding the manufacture of china, appeared.<sup>6</sup> The glaze, now called alkaline because of its chemical properties, is composed of lime or wood ash or both, then mixed with local clay and water. It can be fired to a temperature exceeding 2,250 degrees Fahrenheit, the result being a durable, nontoxic surface for stoneware that is inexpensive to create. The coloration of the glaze depends upon the clay and the type of ash or lime, as well as the atmosphere of the kiln.

The Landrum family had at least two potteries operating in the 1810s and 1820s and owned a thousand acres of land in the Edgefield District on Shaw’s Creek and another thousand acres on Horse Creek as early as 1808. Two of the brothers were involved in each land transaction. Abner is closely associated with Pottersville—called Landrumsville in 1817 by surveyor Thomas Anderson and then published in Robert Mill’s *Atlas of South Carolina* (fig. 3) in 1825. Reverend John

Fig. 3. Thomas Anderson. Map, Edgefield District, South Carolina, from Mill’s *Atlas of South Carolina*. 1825.



Landrum was identified as the owner of the pottery located south of the Edgefield Courthouse on Horse Creek. Aside from operating the pottery, John was also a circuit-riding preacher. From what is known, Amos worked with his brothers and nephew Harvey in the potteries and had numerous other landholdings.<sup>7</sup>

The early examples of stoneware made at Pottersville and Reverend John Landrum’s pottery are generally ovoid in shape, with strap and lug handles, and a light colored glaze. The clay used during this period had a high content of kaolin with little iron. Many of these early jugs and jars were stamped with a single letter near the base—“P,” “A,” and “S” were found on the shards illustrated in fig. 4. It is likely that the letters were maker’s marks based on the initial of the potter. None was signed with a name, and only a few were dated. The vessels were often small in size, no more than five gallons in capacity.



Fig. 4. Rev. John Landrum Pottery. Various shards. c. 1820. Alkaline-glazed stoneware. McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina.

Potteries were labor-intensive enterprises. Many hands were needed to dig, haul, refine, and prepare the clay for turning. The skilled workers would turn, glaze, and decorate the vessels before they were fired. Others, less skilled, chopped and hauled wood and loaded and unloaded the kiln. Many would be involved in stoking the kiln fires for two to three days. The wagoners loaded the wagon and hauled the wares to market. Hired white and enslaved black men, along with a few women, worked in the potteries. The potteries often operated year-round, and the work was hard. The days started early, with only Sundays off to rest and to attend religious services.

James Prothro, Cyrus Cogburn, Abraham Massey, Matthew Duncan, James Kirbee, and the Leopards were potters who learned how to make the alkaline-glaze in the 1810s and 1820s. All were associated with the Landrums and lived in Edgefield for a short period of time before leaving to seek their own fortunes in the “Indian nations” of the West. They all continued to produce stoneware of similar forms using the inexpensive glaze and carried the alkaline-glazed stoneware tradition to Texas.

After the War of 1812, many young families from South Carolina went westward looking for better opportunities as the young nation expanded its borders and the Indians were pushed further westward. Of these settlers, many were the sons of planters and yeoman farmers who yearned for their own land and money; others were lawyers and merchants; there were also carpenters, mechanics, and craftsmen who produced utilitarian goods such as cabinets, wagons, iron goods, and pottery. Some historians have estimated that between 1820 and 1850, more than half of the South Carolinians and about 25 percent of Georgians migrated to the Old Southwest, that is, to Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas.<sup>8</sup>

Land speculation was one of the main reasons many moved west. On April 9, 1830, South Carolina College President Thomas Cooper wrote to Dr. Cohen of Baltimore, “I begin to think the land speculation in Texas is not worth much. Do you hear any thing of the title, which my correspondent is not much pleased with. I fancy by hook or by crook Texas will belong to the United States.”<sup>9</sup> His words were prophetic, as many South Carolinians, including Edgefield natives William Barret Travis and James Butler Bonham, fought and died at the Alamo in 1836.<sup>10</sup> More still would fight in the Mexican War in 1846; Edgefield fulfilled her quota of soldiers at the initial summons.<sup>11</sup>

These men and their families traveled along the many wagon roads. One of the main ones that led from Edgefield and Hamburg into Georgia followed a route similar to present-day Interstate 20. The road, which also followed the Fall Line and its related natural resources of good clay and abundant water supply, traversed Georgia through the capitol of Milledgeville, and then crossed Creek Indian Territory into Montgomery, Alabama. Cogburn and Massey left before 1820, as they were in Washington County, Georgia, at the time of the census. James Kirbee left Edgefield between 1825 and 1830 and moved across the Savannah River to Elbert County Georgia by 1830. The Leopards were in Fayette County, Georgia, in the 1830s, and in Randolph, Alabama, in the 1840s. By the 1850s, all of these men were living in Texas and engaged in pottery manufacture.

A few of the enslaved African Americans working in the potteries between 1810 and 1830 are known. According to Cinda Baldwin, “Seven slaves—Daniel, Sam, George, Abram, Old Harry, Young Harry and Old Tom—were named in records pertaining to the Pottersville factory. Daniel was listed as a turner, and Old Tom as a wagoner.”<sup>12</sup> Little is known of these men except for information listed in legal documents and advertisements. Another enslaved African American who worked in the potteries at this time was a young man named Dave. In 1817, at age seventeen, he was used as collateral by Abner Landrum, Amos Landrum,

and Harvey Drake in a mortgage agreement with their neighbor Eldrid Simkins. During his lifetime, Dave was owned by several men, all related, and worked at each of their potteries. It is likely that he encountered or worked with Cogburn, Massey, Prothro, Duncan, Kirbee, and the Leopards. He turned thousands of jars, many of which he signed with his name, “Dave,” and an occasional date. On at least thirty occasions, he inscribed poetry on the sides of the pots. His actions provide us with the best documentation of any single potter’s work in Edgefield during the period of 1834 to 1864. Dave, who took the last name Drake after Emancipation, was one of more than fifty enslaved men and women who worked in the Edgefield potteries.

A small number of pieces attributed to Dave were produced as early as the 1820s. These include a jug bearing the date 1821 (fig. 5). The attribution to Dave is based on the similarities between this jug and several others dated from the 1830s, where the handwriting is clearly that of the potter (fig. 6 and 7). The glaze coloration, height, and circumference are almost identical in all three instances. These potteries were factories with the goal of producing wares of consistent size, form,



Fig. 5. Attributed to David Drake, Pottersville or Rev. John Landrum Pottery. Jug. 1821. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 14 ¼ x 12 in. (36.2 x 30.5 cm). Collection of Phil and Debbie Wingard.

Fig. 6. Attributed to David Drake, Pottersville or John Landrum Pottery. Jug. August 25, 1836. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 14 ¾ x 11 ¾ in. (37.5 x 29.8 cm). Collection of Charles Comolli.



and look, but the pots were made by hand, which yielded certain individual idiosyncrasies. During this time, Dave worked at Pottersville for Dr. Abner Landrum, Amos Landrum, and Harvey Drake. Some scholars believed that Dave also worked for Abner at his newspaper, the *Edgefield Hive*, and that may be where he learned to read and write. Abner sold the Pottersville factory to Harvey and Reuben Drake in 1828. Dave was then later owned by Harvey Drake and worked as a turner for Harvey and Reuben Drake until Harvey died in December of 1832. The following year, Reuben Drake and his business partner Jasper Gibbs purchased Dave for \$400.<sup>13</sup> Dave continued to work at Pottersville, which was then owned by Drake and Collin Rhodes, Amos Landrum’s son-in-law. While the name of the pottery and the roster of owners changed between 1834 and 1840, Dave continued to produce stoneware.<sup>14</sup> By the age of thirty-four, he was a very skilled potter and

Fig. 7. David Drake, Pottersville. Jug. October 17, 1836. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 14 x 11 ½ in. (35.6 x 29.2 cm). Private collection.



began to write poetry on the side of the large jars. “Put every bit all between / surely this jar with hold 14” appears on a large fourteen-gallon vessel, along with the date July 12, 1834.

It was not unusual during the antebellum period for free African Americans to work as craftsmen along with those enslaved in the potteries. In Alexandria, Virginia, another African-American potter named David Jarbour was able to purchase his freedom from Zenas Kinsey in 1820. In 1830, he was creating utilitarian salt-glazed stoneware for Hugh Smith. Jarbour also fashioned large pieces of more than twenty inches in height (fig. 8). Unlike Dave, this potter signed his initial and last name and dated his work on the bottom of the piece.<sup>15</sup>

In March of 1836, Dave incised the poem “Horses, mules and hogs / all our cows is in the bogs / there they shall ever stay / til the buzzards take them away,” on the side of an eight-gallon jar, one of the hundreds of vessels he turned that month (fig. 9). This jar eventually made its way to Elberton, Georgia, where it was used

Fig. 8. David Jarbour. Jar. 1830. Salt-glazed stoneware, 27 ¾ x 14 ½ in. (70.5 x 36.8 cm). Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.



for keeping dry-goods such as flour until 1997. The jar with the poem is very similar in form and size to another four-handled jar that was slip decorated and inscribed “Hiram Gibbs / Union / S. Cr. / Presented 1836.” Most likely, this Hiram Gibbs was seven years of age in 1836, the same young man who would be living with Martin Canfield’s family in Bienville Parish, Louisiana, in 1850.<sup>16</sup>

The next ten years were marked by continual change at Pottersville. Nathaniel Ramey became a business partner with Reuben Drake and Collin Rhodes in January 1836; in September of the same year, Drake sold his share of the business to Robert Mathis and the business was renamed Ramey Rhodes and Company. A year later, Reuben Drake and his family left Edgefield and moved to Bienville Parish, Louisiana along with forty other Edgefield families. This may have been a response to the opening of lands in the West effected by the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the Trail of Tears, as well as a reaction to the economic depression caused by the Panic of 1837, when many banks closed their doors. In 1838, only

Fig. 9. David Drake, Pottersville, Drake & Gibbs. Storage Jar. March 29, 1836. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 19 ¼ x 18 in. (48.9 x 45.7 cm). Incised "Horses, mules and hogs/all our cows is in the bogs/ here they shall ever stay/till the buzzards take them away" and on the reverse "29th March 1836." Collection of Bert and Jane Hunecke.



two years after his purchase, Robert Mathis sold his share of the business to Dr. Jasper Gibbs, creating Rhodes Ramey and Gibbs. Ramey and Company, a partnership between Nathaniel Ramey, Jasper Gibbs, and John Hughes, was formed in January 1939. During the same period, Collin Rhodes was the overseer for Ramey and Hughes Pottersville Merchants, which was selling hundreds of gallons of stone-ware, "flour pots," and brick. The same year, Dr. Jasper Gibbs married Laura Jane Drake, daughter of the late Harvey Drake and Reuben's niece, in Edgefield on May 7, and in October he sold his interest in the factory. Business partners change again, and by 1840, Jasper and his brother James W. Gibbs are the owners of the factory. In 1842, J. Gibbs and Company was divided into six shares and owned by John Hughes, James W. Gibbs, Jasper Gibbs, Sandford Gibbs, John D. Nance, and an unknown party. While the ownership changed frequently, the factory continued to produce pottery in good quantities, due to the work of enslaved African American potters like Abram, Dave, Daniel, Harry, and old Harry. Five years later in 1847, Jasper Gibbs and his young family moved to Bienville Parish. By 1850, Frances W. Pickens was the owner of the factory, having purchased it sometime between 1842 and 1850.<sup>17</sup>

Jefferson S. Nash, related to the owners of Pottersville through marriage, made his way to Texas with stops in Georgia and Louisiana. He operated a pottery for a short time in Marion, Texas, where wares bearing his stamp, "J. S. Nash," and having the characteristics of Edgefield pottery, were produced. Two pieces of stamped pottery survive today. One, a jug with a double ringed neck and strap handles, ovoid-shaped body, and light-colored alkaline-glaze (fig. 10). It bears a striking resemblance to a double-ringed-neck jug with strap handles, decorated with kaolin slip, made in 1850 at the Collin Rhodes factory in Edgefield (fig. 11). The dimensions of the Rhodes jug are quite similar, at 17 ½ inches tall with a circumference of 39 inches. These works were produced at factories where consistency of form and size was desired. The variation in size could be attributed to difference in shrinkage rates between the clay bodies. The second Nash piece, a large jar in the Bayou Bend Collection, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, has an iron-slip swag decoration and four applied slab handles (fig. 12). It echoes the decorative style used at the Phoenix Factory and the Rhodes Factory. This type of decoration was not common among pottery produced in Georgia, Alabama, or Texas.



Fig. 10. Jefferson S. Nash. Jug. c. 1850. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 16 ½ x 12 in. (41.9 x 30.5 cm). Stamped "J. S. NASH". Private collection.



Fig. 11. Collin Rhodes Factory. "Scott & Ewart" Jug. c. 1850. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 17 ½ x 12 ½ in. (44.5 x 31.7 cm). McKisick Collection, University of South Carolina.

Nash was born in Georgia around 1802. He was not named in the 1820 census for either Georgia or South Carolina, not unusual for a young man of eighteen. Jefferson Nash does appear in the 1830 census for Monroe County, Georgia, and then in Henry County, Georgia, in 1840. His wife, Elizabeth Gibbs Nash, sister of James and Jasper Gibbs, inherited 480 acres in Texas upon her brother James's death in 1849. Jefferson Nash was the executor for Gibbs estate. By 1850, he, his wife, and six children were listed in a census for Cass County, Texas. Elizabeth's sister Mary Gibbs moved to Texas with them. It is interesting to note that Nash is listed as a farmer in both the 1850 census (Cass County) and the 1860 census (Marion County). A "J. A. Watts" and another young man are listed as turners within the Nash household during the 1850 census. It is probable Nash was the owner of a pottery business as well as the first iron foundry in Texas that and his eldest son, William D., established in 1847.<sup>19</sup> Cooper Nash, possibly Jefferson's brother, was living in Rusk County, Texas, in 1850; this is the county where the Leopards and Cogburns were living and working as potters.



*Fig. 12. Jefferson S. Nash Pottery. Storage Jar. c. 1850. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 19 1/2 in. x 12 3/4 in. (49.5 x 32.4 cm). The Bayou Bend Collection, museum purchase with funds provided by the Ima Hogg Ceramic Circle, B.82.2.*

The Kirbees are another pottery family with ties to both South Carolina and Texas. James Kirbee, listed in the 1830 census for Elbert County, Georgia, was living Montgomery, Texas, by 1840. His son Lewis married Frances King in Elbert, Georgia, in 1836. Five years later in 1841, Lewis Kirbee and Lewis Miles witnessed a document for Amos and John Landrum, which indicates there was a continuous relationship between the Kirbees in Georgia and Texas with South Carolina. Lewis Miles was John Landrum's son-in-law and lived nearby, where he operated a pottery and mill. It is unknown whether Kirbee was a business associate of or related to Lewis Miles and John Landrum, or if he learned the pottery trade from the Landrums before moving to Texas, where he operated his own stoneware manufacture. If so, Lewis Kirbee worked with Dave, who in 1840 wrote the rhyme "Dave belongs to Mr. Miles, where the oven bakes and the pots bile."<sup>20</sup>

The rest of the Kirbee family eventually moved into Montgomery, Texas, and operated a pottery from 1850 into the 1860s. Kirbee's kiln, according to the late Texas ceramics scholar Georgeanna Greer, was one of the largest "ground-hog," or dug-out, kilns in the South. Archaeological fragments found at Kirbee's kiln site bear the alkaline-glaze developed in Edgefield. The forms of the vessels are also similar to those produced in Edgefield during the early nineteenth century. Several shards found at the Kirbee site are stamped with an "O."<sup>21</sup> Many Pottersville pieces are similarly marked with letter stamps, among them "A" and "P"; the maker's marks of an "x" were also found on ware made at Reverend John Landrum's pottery (see fig. 4).

According to Greer's analysis of the census records and the list of those operating potters in Texas during the 1850s, the Kirbee Pottery was not as productive as the Cogburn or Prothro factories, as the Kirbee Pottery's output did not exceed a value of \$500 in annual product. Prothro Pottery in Chalk Hill, Texas, produced 10,000 gallons of stoneware annually at a value of \$2,500. T. I. Cogburn's pottery in Sand Hill, Rusk County, Texas, also produced ten thousand gallons of stoneware, valued at \$2,500.<sup>22</sup>

In comparison, Lewis Miles Factory employed seven men and two women and produced forty thousand gallons of stoneware, valued at \$4,000 in 1850. Thomas Chandler employed eleven men and women and his output was valued at \$2,500.<sup>23</sup> Collin Rhodes employed three men and three women and the stoneware was valued at \$2,000. The difference in value could be attributed to the close proximity of the potteries and increased competition in Edgefield, whereas in Texas there was a good bit of distance between the potteries. In 1860, Lewis Miles Pottery, with Dave as the master potter, produced fifty thousand gallons of ware annually and was valued at \$5,000, an increase of \$1,000 in value over a ten-year period.

Advertisements promoted the quality of the works along with the standard sizes available for sale. Thomas Chandler was working with Collin Rhodes and Robert Mathis at the Phoenix Factory site in the 1840s. They were advertising their decorated wares as being of “warrantable” quality. Many of the vessels were inscribed “Warranted” or with the stamp of the factory, “Phoenix Factory / SC.” Years later, Thomas Chandler parted company with Collin Rhodes and established his own factory, marking his vessels, “Chandler Maker” and advertised as such (fig. 13). Thomas Chandler and Dave were the two potters in Edgefield known to make vessels larger than twenty gallons. The very large jars began to appear in the 1840s, shortly after Thomas Chandler moved into the area. Chandler produced unusually tall water coolers, including one with a slave wedding scene on the side, and another with a fine celadon glaze and kaolin slip decoration. By 1843, Dave was turning very tall vessels over twenty inches in height (fig. 14).

Pottery was also produced and marketed for merchants in Columbia, Hamburg, and Lexington, South Carolina. Many of these merchant jugs were decorated with kaolin slip, a method quite different from the inscriptions on works from Lewis Miles Pottery. Several of the extant pieces also bear the mark of the Collin Rhodes factory, “C. Rhodes Maker.”

**Stone Ware!**

**T**HE Subscriber believing that a good article of this useful and necessary Ware is much needed, has come to the conclusion to make and keep on hand a splendid article, which he will not only recommend, but will warrant to be good.

He, therefore, most respectfully solicits the patronage of those who deal in and use this kind of Ware, knowing that they will be satisfied with his Ware and prices.

All orders directed to me at Kirksey's X Roads, Edgefield District, S. C., will meet with prompt attention.

My Jugs are marked “Chandler Maker,— Warranted.”

T. M. CHANDLER.

May 15,                      6m                      17

Fig. 13. Advertisement for Thomas Chandler's business, *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 15, 1850. South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina.



Fig. 14. David Drake, Lewis Miles Factory. *Storage Jar*. May 16, 1843. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 27 x 22 1/2 in. (68.6 x 57.2 cm). Private collection.



Fig. 15. David Drake, Lewis Miles Factory. *Syrup Jug*. January 29, 1840. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 17 1/4 x 14 in. (43.8 x 36.6 cm). Incised “Ladys & gentlemens Shoes: /sell all you can: & nothing you'll loose!” and on the reverse, “January 29th 1840 L Miles Dave.” Collection of Dr. and Mrs. John E. Hoar.

The 1840s two-handled jug with the lines “Ladies and Gentlemens Shoes / Sell all you can and nothing you’ll loose” (fig. 15) turned by Dave is also very similar in form and size to the J. S. Nash jug (see fig. 10) and the Scot & Ewart jug made at the Collin Rhodes factory in 1850 (see fig. 11).

Pottery was distributed by wagon and railway after 1833 and until the late part of the nineteenth century. Potters advertised that goods could be delivered to the depot in Charleston. About twenty years later, a railroad line was located near Lewis Miles Pottery. The pottery produced by Dave at the Lewis Miles factory was primarily fashioned out of the iron-rich clay, which if under fired would have the appearance of earthenware as seen in the porous surface of a large jar created August 24, 1857 (fig. 16). Similarly, the glaze found on many pieces made in 1857 was a very iron-rich alkaline-glaze, which fired to a shiny, almost iridescent brown. If fired at too high a temperature, the glaze would turn almost black, as seen in a jug incised “Panzerbider Grocers” (fig. 17). This jug fired to a different appearance than a jar that was also made for this grocer, now in the collection of the Charleston



*Fig. 16. David Drake, Lewis Miles Factory. Storage Jar. August 24, 1857. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 19 x 17 ¼ in. (48.3 x 43.8 cm). Incised “A pretty little girl on a verge / volca[n]ic mountains how they burge / Dave” and on the reverse, “Lm Aug 24 1857 Dave.” McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina.*

Museum. The Panziebieter Grocery was at the corner of King and Columbus streets in Charleston, near the present-day headquarters for the *Charleston Post and Courier* newspaper and two blocks north of the railroad depot, now the Charleston Visitor Center and across the street from the Charleston Museum. A pitcher was excavated from a privy off of Judith Street, a block from the railroad depot in Charleston. It is among the very few pieces of Edgefield pottery among archaeological fragments found in the city.

When the Charleston Museum began collecting and documenting Edgefield pottery in the 1919, numerous examples were obtained from people who lived along the South Carolina railroad lines. The museum collected two of the largest hand-made pieces of stoneware produced in the United States during the nineteenth century. Dave and Baddler (most likely another slave) made these mammoth vessels while working at Lewis Miles factory on May 13, 1859, a mere three days after Arthur Simkins’s newspaper musings about Dr. Landrum, Dave, and Pottersville. The museum acquired the first jar in February. It bears the following verse:



*Fig. 17. David Drake, Lewis Miles Factory. Syrup or Whiskey Jug. c. 1858. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 14 ¾ x 11 ½ in. (45 x 29.2 cm). Incised “Panzebider / Groceries / King and Columbus Streets / Charleston / S.C.”* Collection of Larry and Joan Carlson.

“Made at Stoney Bluff— / for making [lard] enuff.” The second jar they acquired a month later from another source which bears the verse, “Great & noble jar / hold sheep goat and bear” (fig. 18).<sup>24</sup> These forty-gallon vessels were made in three and four sections. The first section was thrown on the wheel, the second and third sections were possibly coiled on—or turned on the wheel to the appropriate diameter—and then added to the body of the pot until the desired height and capacity were reached. Before firing, the pots would have weighed between two hundred and two hundred forty pounds. The glaze was poured over and down the sides of the pot, which can be seen in the drips. Areas of blue puddling appear along the handles and can be explained by the natural occurrence of rutile, or titanium dioxide, making its way through the glaze or by the deliberate placing of blue glass on the handles to strengthen the attachment as well as for decorative effect. The latter was a technique employed at the potteries operating in the Catawba Valley of North Carolina.

Dave continued to work up through the Civil War, writing poems with biblical references such as “I saw a leopard & a lions face / then I felt the need of grace” written twice; first on November 3, 1858 and then again on August 7, 1860 (fig. 19).



Fig. 18. Dave and Baddler, Lewis Miles Factory. Food Storage Jar. May 13, 1859. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 25 3/4 x 26 in. (65.4 x 66 cm). Incised “Lm/May 13 1859/Dave & Baddler” and on the reverse, “Great and Noble jar,/hold sheep, goat and bear”. Collection of the Charleston Museum, South Carolina.



Fig. 19. David Drake, Lewis Miles Factory. Food Storage Jar. August 7, 1860. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 16 3/4 x 17 1/4 in. (42.5 x 43.8 cm). Incised “Aug 7 1860 Dave” and on the reverse, “I saw a leopard & a lions face /then I felt the need of grace.”



Fig. 20. David Drake, Lewis Miles Pottery. Storage Jar. March 31, 1864. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 15 x 12 3/4 in. (38.1 x 32.4 cm). Incised “Lm March 31, 1864 Dave.” Collection of Lou Edens.

The last dated verse, “I - made this Jar all of cross / If you don’t repent, you will be lost” was written on May 3, 1862. The jars became smaller as the years progressed, indicating Dave’s advancing years as well as the changing needs of the local population as the plantation system was abolished.

Pots made by Dave with dates after 1864 have not surfaced, but they may be out there. The latest known dated jar, bearing the inscription, “Lm March 31 1864 / Dave” originally held food in a kitchen house (fig. 20). During the pot’s long life, it journeyed to the middle part of the state, passed through three or four generations, was relegated to the back yard and painted institutional green, then saved by a family member who removed the paint and then used it as a stand for umbrellas and tennis rackets. The pot had traveled more than one hundred miles to the coast of South Carolina and narrowly escaped destruction when the front door of the owner’s house was blown in as the eye of Hurricane Hugo passed over Mt. Pleasant and Charleston on September 21, 1989.

### African-American Potters after the Civil War

The occurrence of former slaves working as potters after the Civil War was not isolated to South Carolina. These men often took the same surname as their former owners who operated the potteries: Cribbs, Presley, Williams, and Rushton in Alabama, Chandler, Cogburn, Frazier, and Wilson in Texas; Drake and Miles in South Carolina.<sup>25</sup>

The story of the Wilson Pottery is similar to that of the Lewis Miles Pottery, where enslaved potters who were working for Lewis Miles in Edgefield and those working for John Wilson in Texas continued the pottery business several years after the Civil War.<sup>26</sup> The Wilsons were producing pots that reflect the change in the economy away from the plantation system and the need for enormous vessels. The pots are not huge in capacity—the largest being five gallons, which was typical of the late nineteenth century. The vessels became more cylindrical in form with straight walls and small handles (fig. 21). This change occurred as a means to fit more pots in the kiln during firing. The stamping of the vessels with the maker/pottery name became more consistent, as did stamping the ware with a numeric capacity. The major difference between the Wilson Pottery and the Edgefield potteries was the glaze. The Wilsons used the salt glaze when they fired.

In Edgefield, after the Civil War ended, many of the former slaves continued to work at the Lewis Miles Pottery at Miles Mill. Lewis Miles died in 1869, and his son John continued the business for at least another decade. Josh Miles, who was a black man, operated a pottery not far from Miles Mill with the assistance of six male and female laborers. One of those men was “Uncle” Jack Thurman, the mulatto son of Lewis Miles. The manner in which the handles were attached on a stoneware jar attributed to Jack Thurman shows similarities to the vessels made at the Wilson pottery (fig. 22). This could be attributed to changes in style and the idiosyncrasies of the individual potter. As the capacity of the jars decreased, so did the size of the handles. It is interesting to compare the output and value of the three potteries operating in the Shaw’s Creek area of Aiken County. John Miles, Ben Landrum, and Josh Miles were listed in the Industrial Census of 1879–80 for their stoneware factories. Josh Miles’ factory employed the fewest number of people (six) and paid the lowest wages (\$100 average yearly wages for a skilled worker) yet the output was valued the highest among the three, at \$6,000.

The ceramic tradition in Edgefield dwindled at the end of the nineteenth century and died out by 1920; it endured in other areas of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Texas because the potters adapted their goods and glazes to meet changing demands.



*Fig. 21. H. Wilson & Co. Storage Jar. c. 1869–84. Salt-glazed stoneware, 14 x 9 in. diameter. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Bayou Bend Collection.*



*Fig. 22. Attributed to Jack Thurman, Miles Mill. Storage Jar. c. 1890. Alkaline-glazed stoneware, 16 ¼ x 13 in. (41.3 x 33 cm). Collection of the Charleston Museum.*

## Today

Many men and women have collected, researched, and written about Edgefield pottery and how its influence spread across the South. The history of pottery made in Edgefield has been researched by many people over the past one hundred years, beginning with Edwin Atlee Barber of Philadelphia in 1896. Texan Georgeanna Greer, who was a physician by career, was also an avid collector, researcher, and author of American pottery. She contributed to the study of Southern traditional pottery, beginning in Texas and moving east as she researched the men who established the potteries, many who lived in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Greer influenced many other ceramic scholars, including Joey Brackner, who wrote his master's thesis on the Wilson Potteries of Texas while a student at the University of Texas. Brackner has become the authority on the traditional pottery of Alabama. His recent publication, [Alabama Folk Pottery](#), covers two hundred years of pottery production in that state to the present day. Several of the early potters in Alabama came from the Edgefield area by way of Georgia and produced alkaline-glazed stoneware; a few traveled westward to Texas.

Greer influenced the study of Edgefield pottery when her collection was surveyed by Cinda Baldwin of McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina. Her research on the alkaline-glazed stoneware was published in the exhibition catalogue, *Crossroads of Clay*. Baldwin's own research emerged from [Crossroads of Clay](#) into the excellent publication, [Great and Noble Jar: Traditional Stoneware of South Carolina](#), the first comprehensive history of stoneware production in the state and how the tradition moved westward and survived. It encompasses archaeological research, folklore, and a material culture approach to the topic. This work provided the framework for my research on David Drake, and it continues to educate and inspire.

Dr. John A. Burrison, professor of English and Folklore at Georgia State University, also discourses over the connections between Edgefield and the early stoneware potters of Georgia. He delves into the history of Cyrus Cogburn and Abraham Massey as they worked in Georgia and their activities with the Landrum families. His book [Brothers in Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery](#) defines the traditional familial relationship found among southern potters, a tradition that persists today and that mirrors that of English and European potters. Burrison has also collected Southern traditional pottery for nearly forty years, of which a large portion is on display at the Atlanta History Center and at the Museum of North Georgia Folk Pottery.

[Turners and Burners](#), by Dr. Charles Zug, professor of folklore at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, provides the history of North Carolina's rich ceramic traditions, including that of alkaline-glazed stoneware and the areas of the state where that type of glaze was predominately used.

The scope of work about Southern traditional pottery has grown exponentially since the 1960s. The discourse about Southern pottery and potters continues as contemporary potters explore the old forms and traditions and as collectors, archaeologists, genealogists, folklorists, historians, anthropologists, and art historians find and research the families and "new" old pots. Of course, museums continue to play an important role as they collect and exhibit American ceramics and demonstrate how these vessels are much more than functional or beautiful, but have a complex and compelling story that is told from the viewpoint of material culture.

## Notes

- 1 *Edgefield Advertiser*, May 11, 1859, vol. 24, no. 18.
- 2 John Winberry, "The Cultural Hearth of the Southern Pottery Tradition: The Historical Geographic Framework" in *Crossroads of Clay: The Southern Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware Tradition*, ed. Catherine Wilson Horne (Columbia, S.C.: McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, 1990), 7–8.
- 3 Robert Mills, *Statistics of South Carolina* (Charleston: Haurbut and Lloyd, 1826), 523–524. Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 34.
- 4 Catherine Wilson Horne, *Crossroads of Clay: The Southern Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware Tradition* (Columbia, S.C.: McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, 1990), x.
- 5 Report of the Committee on the Governors message, No. 1, upon the petition of Abner Landrum, December 14, 1812, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
- 6 Cinda Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar: Traditional Stoneware of South Carolina*, (Columbia, S.C.: McKissick Museum; Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 17–19.
- 7 Land purchases made by John and Amos Landrum on Horse Creek, John and Abner Landrum on Horse Creek, November 11, 1808. On-line search, South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Amos and Harvey purchased land at Stephen's Creek in 1825.

- 8 Bradley Skelcher, "Review of James David Miller, *South by Southwest: Planter Emigration and Identity in the Slave South*," *H-South, H-Net Reviews*, August 2004. <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=323821094926599>.
- 9 Correspondence, Thomas Cooper to Dr. Cohen, April 9, 1830. Copy from original in Geology Department files, McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C. At the time, Cooper was President of the South Carolina College, a position he held from 1821 to 1833. He was a noted scientist as well as a friend of President Thomas Jefferson's and was influential in the realm of South Carolina politics.
- 10 Handbook of Texas Online, Texas State Historical Association, "Bonham, James Butler," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/> (accessed May 5, 2007).
- 11 Burton, *In My Father's House*, 95–98.
- 12 Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, 74.
- 13 Jill Beute Koverman, *I Made This Jar...: The Life and Works of the Enslaved African-American Potter, Dave* (Columbia, S.C.: McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, 1998), 23. See also Edgefield County Probate Records, Estate of Harvey Drake, box 9, package 304, microfilm reel #ED8, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
- 14 Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, 36–39.
- 15 "To Witness the Past: African American Archaeology in Alexandria" online exhibit, <http://oha.alexandriava.gov/archaeology/ar-exhibits-witness-3.html> (accessed May 16, 2007).
- 16 1850 Federal Census, Bienville Parish, Louisiana, 561 or 261.
- 17 Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, 194. see also account book/ledger, "Ramey and Hughes Merchants, Pottersville, South Carolina," South Carolina Historical Society.
- 18 Michael K. Brown, *The Wilson Potters: An African-American Enterprise in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts Houston, 2002). This reference indicates that Nash was the executor of Jasper Gibbs estate, but most likely it was the estate of James William Gibbs (brother to Jasper). Nash was married to James's sister Elizabeth, who was the recipient of 480 acres of land in Cass County, Texas. In 1850, Dr. Jasper Gibbs lived in Bienville Parish with his wife, Laura Jane (Drake) and their three children. (1850 Census, Cass County, Texas; 1850 Federal Census, Bienville Parish County, Louisiana). Gibbs would later move to Mexia, Texas, after his wife Laura died, and he subsequently remarried.
- 19 *Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Nash's Iron Foundry," <http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/NN/dkn1.html> (accessed February 1, 2007).
- 20 Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, 65; James M. Malone, Georgeanna H. Greer, and Helen Simons, *Kirbee Kiln: A Mid Nineteenth Century Texas Stoneware Pottery* (Austin: Office of the State Archaeologist, Texas Historical Commission, 1979), 52.
- 21 Malone, Greer, and Simons, [Kirbee Kiln](#), 3–11.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 46.
- 23 1850 Federal Industrial/Manufacturing Census, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.
- 24 Koverman, *I Made This Jar...*, 19.
- 25 Brackner, Joey, *Alabama Folk Pottery* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), 11.
- 26 Brown, *The Wilson Potters*, 15–19.
- 27 Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, 89–90.