A Search for Carolina Creamware at Cain Hoy

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CHAIRMAN’S NOTE

This PastWatch issue has started 1993 off to a great start! The current archaeological research being conducted and illustrated in the adjacent articles is testimony to your valuable support. Please join us on the bus tour to Santa Elena!

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A SEARCH FOR CAROLINA CREAMWARE AT CAIN HOY
By Stanley South

For the past twenty-five years archaeologists in South Carolina have been finding creamware sherd s that are a darker shade of yellow than the usual Staffordshire creamware fragments found on British colonial sites. This darker creamware was made either by a potter named John Bartlam or his foreman, William Ellis. Though origination of this pottery has not been determined, our research has revealed locations that include a manufactory at Cain Hoy, on the banks of the Wando River, between 1765 and 1770, or by Bartlam at Charleston in 1770, or by Bartlam at Camden, between 1774 to 1781. Historic documents also revealed that William Ellis went to Salem, North Carolina and taught their potter, Rudolph Christ, how to make the mould-made Staffordshire type creamware and stoneware. Since we did not know which of these pottery sites was responsible for the darker sherd s we were finding, we called them “Carolina creamware”.

Some fragments of John Bartlam’s pottery were found by George Terry in Cain Hoy in the 1970s, and these have long been of interest to me and to Bradford L. Rauschenberg, Director of Research at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) at Old Salem, North Carolina. Brad recently published a documentary account of the activities of John Bartlam and his foreman, Ellis, in The Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Volume 17, No. 2.

In the spring of 1992, a joint proposal of SCIAA, the Diachronic Research Foundation, and MESDA, for survey and planning to look for America’s first creamware factory, was funded by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History. Through the cooperation of Bill Johnston of Waterfront Properties, Inc., Carl Steen and Kathryn Joseph, and a number of volunteers, spent the month of March carrying out a sampling survey and a number of Bartlam’s biscuit fired pottery fragments were found. These included the “Carolina creamware”, tortoise shell glazed ware, green glazed ware with a barleycorn pattern, dot diaper and basket moulded ware, caulifower, melon, and pineapple moulded fragments. A report on this project is currently being prepared by Rauschenberg, South, and Steen.

In October, I returned to Cain Hoy, through the cooperation of the private lot owners, Les Dyches and Larry Ammann, to conduct additional investigations until mid-December. Assisting me with this project were Jim Legg, Ashley Chapman, Barbara Hiott, Dennis Graham, and from SCIAA Tommy Charles and Joe Beatty. This project was funded through MESDA by private donors, through the cooperation of SCIAA, which resulted in many more fragments of Bartlam’s broken pottery being recovered. We found that he was making a wide variety of wares, including the earliest known production anywhere of what was called “blue and white” and “china” at the (Continued on Page 6)
One of the finest accomplishments, I believe, of 1992, was the fundraising progress made by SCIAA's Archaeological Research Trust, led by Board Member Dr. Albert Goodyear. ART has raised $29,693.00 for our Endowment this first year. Additionally some $40,000 in projects, largely by Board Member Mark Newell, were close under the aegis of ART.

I appreciate this generosity in these difficult financial times in which we all find ourselves. Thank you, Al, and all the Board, and especially all of you who gave so generously towards this vision of private support. A granite plaque is being created to commemorate this profound generosity.

Another great accomplishment of last year was the November 8, 1992 barbecue arranged by Al, funded by the South Carolina Underwater Archaeological Research Council (SCUARC), Board Chairman Roland Young, and hosted by Sue and Phil Neeley at their lodge on the South Edisto River. The best BBQ in the US was most graciously prepared by longtime supporters Dianne and Sammy Lee which fed approximately 55 of the ART Faithful.

1992 also saw our orderly expansion of the Board to a full complement of eight members. Joining us in 1992, for two year terms, were Mr. Shipp Harris, an attorney in Columbia and Mr. Antony Harper, a businessman in Greenville. Both Shipp and Tony have been associated with SCIAA for a long time, Shipp through the SC Underwater Archaeological Research Council (SCUARC), and Tony, who helped write our first Act in 1963, and has long been interested in archaeology. Welcome Aboard!

I would like to invite you to join fellow Art supporters on a chartered bus trip to Parris Island to visit the famous site of Santa Elena. Don’t miss it!

Lastly, let me encourage you to again contribute to the SCIAA ART Endowment in 1993. The Board in its March meeting voted to make our first awards this coming fall from the ART endowment. These first awards will no doubt be modest, but we are keeping the faith, and your earnings with be seen to nurture discovery and revelations of our South Carolina Archaeology.

Until the Bus Trip,