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Cover photograph –Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) at Owl’s Hole Pit Cave courtesy of Elyse Vogeli

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AN INVESTIGATION INTO POTTERY SHERDS COLLECTED ON ANDROS, BAHAMAS

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ABSTRACT

Since 1989, approximately 2500 pottery sherds have been haphazardly collected from along a short interval of the shoreline at Blanket Sound (just south of Stafford Creek), Andros Island, Bahamas. From the same site, several additional artifacts have been recovered, including: pipe stems and bowls, a small medicine bottle, small porcelain doll fragments, marbles, and buttons. Applied surface decorations on the pottery in the collection encompass: spongeware, hand painted ware, transferware, and flowing blue. Additional sherd types include: yellow ware, stoneware, unglazed earthenware and both molded and undecorated whiteware. Research and analysis indicates that identifiable maker marks and patterns of the sherds originated in Stoke-on-Trent, England, from the late 18th through the early 20th centuries. Many of the styles and types of pottery suggest a high likelihood that they were intended as export wares. Collection continues at the site and more sherds may provide definitive answers to unanswered questions; such as the intended destination and route of transport, as well as the reason the artifacts are located at such a specific site. The collection currently resides at the University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne, Indiana; but it may find a permanent repository at The Pompey Museum, Nassau, Bahamas.

INTRODUCTION

An investigation has been made into the significance of pottery sherds found on Andros, Bahamas. (Wischmeyer & Wiedman, 2005) The purpose of this paper, however, is to discover the origins of the pottery and to determine the dates of

production, as well as specific patterns and how the sherds came to be on Andros. The previous investigation dealt with questions such as: "why is the pottery on Andros?" and "how did it get there?" but based conclusions primarily on oral history and extrapolation. This research is concerned with the questions: "where did the pottery originate;" "when did it get to Andros," and "what types, specifically, are found on Andros?" The site is located at North Blanket Sound, Andros, Bahamas. The collection has been built up over the course of approximately 15 years and has primarily been collected by members of the Wiedman family, students from the University of Saint Francis, and interns from Forfar Field Station. Others have also collected from the site, and attempts are being made to unify collections for the sake of research.

"Since 1989, several artifacts have been discovered eroding from the banks of a small (<100 meters) beachface (sic) along the coast of Andros Island in a cove leeward of Calabash Cay near the communities of South Blanket Sound (population 120) and Big Pond Settlement (population 40)." (Lahrman, 2002) For a while, it was believed that the site would yield no more artifacts; "Further collecting seems unlikely to add specimens as the site was literally buried under several feet of sediment during the tropical storm *Hurricane Michelle* in October of 2001." (Lahrman, 2002) In actuality, pottery collection from the site saw an increased rate of collection due to the sand movement. The pottery had simply been pushed a little further down the beach. Sherd collection has slowed to an average rate of 5 sherds per collecting day, with some days yielding as many as 10 sherds. The sediment which moved during *Michelle* has begun to shift again, unearthing

ing more sherds and shifting the collecting site to a slightly different section of the beach.

DISCUSSION

To date, all pottery collected at the site appears to be from various potteries located at Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England. Stoke started as a small community of farmer-potters in the town of Burslem, but as the pottery market expanded, Stoke grew to encompass the towns of Tunstall, Cobridge, Hanley, Shelton, Stoke, Fenton, and Langton. Together these towns formed the city of Stoke-on-Trent, which came to be known informally as “the potteries.” (City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2002) “The pottery manufacturers around the Stoke-on-Trent area of Staffordshire had a ready supply of both the labour (sic) and materials needed to begin producing the blue-and-white earthenware that was to become so popular.” (Neale, 2005) Stoke had a virtual monopoly on transfer-printed wares for many years. (City of Stoke-on-Trent, 2002) However, the market shifted in the early 1800’s: “North America became the principal destination for any export from Britain. Pottery sent to America formed about 40 per cent of the exports from Staffordshire potteries between 1812 and the onset of the American Civil War in 1860, after which America’s trade with the rest of the world suffered owing to major financial instability.” (Neale, 2005) This would explain why pottery in the collection represents the years from 1790-1914, although the earliest dates are approximate.

It is difficult to say whether the pottery in the collection was destined for America, or whether it was intended for somewhere else; possibly even the British Colonies in the Bahamas and surrounding area. The reason that this is difficult to determine is that most pottery specifically produced for the export market was only marked with an export mark, instead of the maker’s full name and mark. This has been attributed to Americans’ disinclination to purchase imported items. (Neale, 2005) One such mark may be present in the collection; a sherd has been collected that is clearly the bottom of a vessel that is simply

marked with the letter “Y.”(Figure 1) This mark may or may not be an export mark, but no context for it has been found in maker mark references. Another of the more obvious characteristics of export ware is that the Americans preferred a darker blue decoration than their English counterparts. Flow Blue also was immensely popular in the Americas, but not as sought after in England. The English thought the Flow Blue wares were of lesser quality. Wares that were not popular in England and outdated items were often exported to America. Colored transferware, for instance, is more commonly found in America, as it never caught on in England. (Neale, 2005)



Figure 1. Possible Export Mark.

While sherds in the collection do exhibit some of the qualities of export ware, namely: colored transferware, darker blue transferware, and Flow Blue characteristics, several maker marks have also been recovered, with the company’s full insignia. The majority of these marks even state “England” on them, and that seems to contradict the so-called American sentiment about English-made wares. Furthermore, light blue patterns have also been recovered, along with several styles that did see great popularity in England. Americans supposedly had a great liking for multi-colored “romantic” patterns. (Neale, 2005) No such sherds have been recovered from the site at this point. This may suggest that the pottery car-

go was intended for British colonies, perhaps even in the Bahamas.

One of the maker marks discovered at the site was produced by J & G Meakin (LTD.) (Figure 2). The mark included in the collection dates from 1890 or after. (Godden, 1964) James and George Meakin operated their potteries in Hanley, Staffordshire from 1851 onward; they primarily produced earthenware and ironstone. (Godden, 1964) In 1887, J & G Meakin was considered to be the most prosperous pottery in Stoke. (Bills, thepotteries.com) One of the primary goals of J & G Meakin was to produce wares to be exported, particularly to America and the British Colonies, and the factory was very successful in that market. (Bunt, 1956) No Meakin pottery patterns have been identified thus far to accompany the Meakin mark.



Figure 2. J & G Meakin Maker Mark.

A mark has been found at the site which corresponds with the marks used by the W.H. Grindley potters (Figure 3), who operated from Tunstall, Staffordshire. (Godden, 1964) The mark was used from 1914-1925. (Cushion, 1995) Relatively little is known about the wares produced by the Grindley potters at this time, and no specific patterns have been recognized. This maker mark represents the latest confirmable date of production found at the site.

Two Johnson Bros. LTD. marks have been found at the site (Figures 4 & 5), representing examples of the marks used in 1883-1913. (Godden, 1964) Johnson Bros. produced earthenware and

ironstone at factories in Hanley and Tunstall, Staffordshire. (Godden, 1964) The Johnson Brothers (Frederick, Alfred, Robert, and Henry) were related to the Meakin family; of J & G Meakin notoriety. (thepotteries.org, 2005) Although they started their business producing “white granite” wares, they soon progressed to under-glaze printed ware. Their products were very popular in the American market, due to durability and cheapness. (thepotteries.com, 2005) No patterns have been attributed to Johnson Bros., so far, but a thick rim attached to one maker mark, that is, undecorated whiteware, might provide a hint that these sherds represent the earlier dates of production.

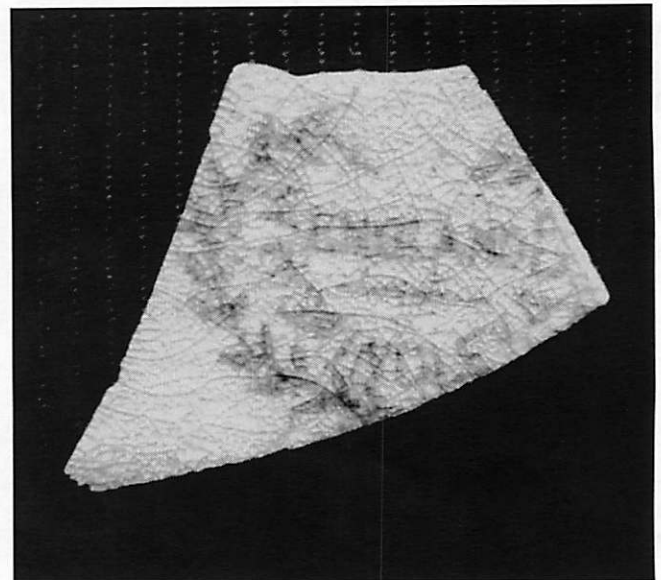


Figure 3. W.H. Grindley Maker Mark.

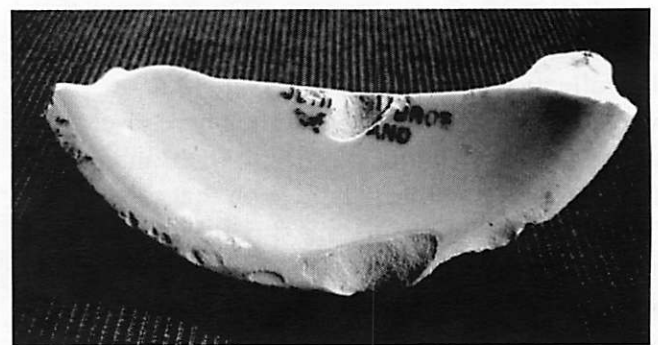


Figure 4. Johnson Bros. Maker Mark.

The transferware found most often at the site has recently been identified as the red “Seville” pattern produced by John Maddock, a potter

operating out of Burslem, Staffordshire. (Replacements, Ltd.) Fortunately, a maker mark (Figure 6), on a separate sherd, was also recovered from the site. The Rd. No. incorporated on the sherd is from the year 1895, and the mark is consistent with the identification used from 1880-1896. The pottery of Maddock & Sons produced wares for American export market, primarily from 1855 onward. (thepotteries.org)



Figure 5. Johnson Bros. Maker Mark.



Figure 6. John Maddock Maker Mark.

Some difficulties have been encountered when identifying certain maker marks, seeing as several marks in the collection integrate the Royal Arms (Figure 7). Originally, potters had to obtain a Royal Warrant to use the Royal Arms in their mark, however, in the late 19th century; many marks included the Arms without a Royal Warrant. (thepotteries.org) The companies which used the Royal Arms were located in England and abroad, which makes specific identification complicated. It is supposed that makers incorporated the Royal Arms to allocate a sense of value to their wares. The text surrounding the shield in the Royal Arms is the motto of the Order of the Garter: "Shame to him who evil thinks." (thepotteries.org) Below the shield is the motto of the Sovereign: "God and My Right." (thepotteries.org) Due to the popularity of this mark, it is easy to misidentify from one maker to another. One such error may have occurred in the previously published paper by Wischmeyer (2003); in figure 1 of her paper, she included a picture of a partial maker mark recovered from the site alongside a completed image of the Alfred Meakin Royal Arms mark. (Wischmeyer & Wiedman, 2003) There is no substantial evidence that this mark was produced by Alfred Meakin, as it does not include any information other than the Royal Arms and "Royal Ironstone." Royal Ironstone was a name commonly employed for whiteware and "White Granite" wares. Based on ink color, size, and additional information included on the sherd, Royal Arms marks in the collection have been attributed to Johnson Bros. and J & G Meakin.

About 1/3 of the collection is comprised of spongeware and stamped sponged wares. The spongeware found is diverse in both pattern and color. The most common designs from the site are: crude flowers, leaves, sunbursts, swirls, stars within circles, border sponging, and geometric patterns. On some sherds, up to 5 colors were employed. Most of the spongeware sherds in the collection are: red, light green, dark green, light blue, dark blue, brown, or purple in color, although some variations occur. It was hoped that an encyclopedic guide to identifying various spongeware colors and patterns; thus far, no such

guide has been found. At best, partial lists for specific potters have been found. A probable reason for this is that spongeware was seldom marked. Spongeware was sold, for the most part, at the lower end of the market, and it was fairly cheaply made. Judging by colors and glaze used, most of the collection of spongeware is characteristic of the years 1790-1850, although it is difficult to tell without a guide.



Figure 7. Maker Mark with Royal Arms.

Transfer-printed earthenware does not comprise a large part of the collection, however, transfer printed wares are, in many cases, easier to identify. Printing, or transfer-printing, on pottery was a complex process. After the print was designed, it was engraved on a copper plate. An impression was then made on the pottery by stamping it with the copper plate. Following the application of the copper impression, the pottery could be decorated. (Hayden, 1909) "Transfer-printed pottery was originally produced to satisfy the desire of the emerging middle classes to possess items of beauty for everyday use, as they were unable to afford imported porcelain from China." (Neale, 2005) The first and most common color to be used on transfer-printed ware was blue. New colors such as green, brown, and red were introduced around 1830. (Neale, 2005) Motifs before about 1815 are predominantly Chinese-

inspired, and between about 1815 and 1830 landscapes and historical scenes were popular. Romantic views predominate after ca. 1830. (FLMNH) Only a small percentage of the collection is made up of non-blue-and-white transferware. The types collected range from single color designs to complex and multi-colored. As is usual with ceramics, most patterns are floral and/or geometric in nature. The collection of transferware appears to be from the 1820's - 1890's. A few of the sherds seem to be early attempts at the transfer process, while others seem to represent a more recent era.

Blue transferware poses one of the greatest problems in the research for this project, for two reasons. The first and most important reason is that blue and white transferware was one of the most popular kinds of table service. Thus, there are many designs and makers. Similarly, makers often borrowed, stole, and bought designs from one another. The second reason is that the site has yet to yield a piece of blue and white transferware that is attached to a maker mark, distinct enough to search for, or large enough that it can easily be compared other reference vessels. The most promising pieces in the collection so far include: two pieces depicting windmills on the interior and exterior, a piece with intricate, embossed flowers, two pieces depicting a garden and trees, and a collection of oriental motif sherds. One pattern that has been identified is the Asiatic Pheasants print. The blue Asiatic Pheasants print was second only to the "Blue Willow" print in popularity. The Asiatic Pheasant print was usually printed in a paler blue and reached peak production in the second half of the 19th century. (Coysh & Henrywood, 1989)

Multiple sherds of Flow Blue pottery have been recovered from the site, although they are relatively scarce in the collection. The term Flow Blue applies to the process in which blue printed ink is permitted to mix with the glaze, creating a blurry effect. (Coysh & Henrywood, 1989) This blurring is produced by introducing chemicals such as lime or ammonium chloride into the oven. (Coysh & Henrywood, 1989) Flown Blue, Flow Blue, and Flowing Blue are all equally acceptable names for this type of pottery. (Ray, 1974) There

are only a few varieties of flow blue pottery in the collection. Flow Blue was never as popular as blue and white transferware. This might explain the relative scarcity of Flow Blue sherds.

Before the year 1756, all earthenware was decorated by hand painting. (Hayden, 1909) The hand-painted pottery sherds in the collection are almost all floral, with a good portion incorporating annular bands. The pieces are almost exclusively interior hand-painted which was the style common in the middle of the 19th century. Hand-painted wares make up around one fifth of the collection of sherds. There is not much information on hand-painted pottery due to its diversity and the lack of maker marks.

The collection only includes a small number of stoneware sherds. The stoneware sherds that have been collected are very hard to identify, as they have neither maker marks nor distinctive patterns. One piece in particular has been difficult, although it has been identified as being salt glazed. Salt glaze is usually found on vitrified (or shiny and nonporous) stoneware. (Laing, 2003) "When the kiln is at its hottest, salt is thrown in over the fire. The result is a very hard, mottled glaze, usually brown or grey." (Laing, 2003) Other pieces of stoneware in the collection include unidentifiable mottled and painted sherds. One piece that shows promise for positive age identification appears to be a sherd from a jug and is marked simply "C3." (Figure 8) It has been suggested that "C3" may be a capacitance mark; a type often found on German stoneware of the 19th century. (Wiard, 2007) A dark brown stoneware sherd has also been added to the collection recently. The sherd's unusual color might be simpler to age and identify.

Similar in appearance to stoneware is yellow ware. Yellow ware is a type of refined earthenware that was produced between 1840 and the 20th century. A transparent lead glaze gives this earthenware its yellow appearance. (FLMNH) Sherds of yellow ware in the collection are all molded in various decorative designs. Yellow ware, being rather thick earthenware for earthenware, was often used for chamber pots and other utilitarian purposes. (FLMNH)

One early type of decorated earthenware that is represented in the collection is shell-edged pearl ware. Shell-edge is described as one of the longest-lived, and most successful, English ceramic styles ever produced. This type of ceramic owed its success to the cheap price. Shell-edged was one of the least expensive ceramics with color decoration, and it was exported in tremendous quantities between 1780 and 1860. Blue and green were the most common colors of shell edge, although brown, purple, red and black were also produced. Shell edged wares were said to be used in nearly every home in America during the Federal period. (Hunter & Miller, 1994) All shell-edged sherds in the collection are decorated in blue. Closely related to shell edged pottery is embossed-edge earthenware. Several varieties of embossed motif have been collected on Andros. Embossed edges were mainly produced on pearlwares in the 1830's. (Hunter & Miller, 1994).



Figure 8. "C3" Capacitance Mark

Other pieces in the collection include five pieces of porcelain, two doll legs, a doll's arm, a

marble, several buttons and several hundred sherds of undecorated whiteware, creamware, and pearlware. These pieces are not valuable to current research, as it is unlikely they would shed any light on the dates of the collection, the makers represented, or any other worthwhile information.

CONCLUSIONS

Several conclusions can be drawn at this point in time. All identified pottery sherds collected on Andros, at the site, originally came from Stoke-on-Trent in England, with most styles and decorations representing the years from 1790 to 1914. Further investigation will hopefully yield more data regarding the destination of the pottery and other artifacts, as well as more definitive dates for the sherds that were produced earlier in the years represented.

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