





Of Ghosts and Speculation

The C H I P S T O N E Foundation
Milwaukee

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This book was published by the CHIPSTONE Foundation as a component of an archive Of Ghosts and Speculation: An Archive and a Mine, which was built to accompany a face jug in the permanent collection (Ascensions# 2006.6). It was built to serve as an analog archive and reference, and to seed the continued investigation and collection of material relevant to scholarship concerning the origin and identity of the African American face jugs and the people who made them. This book is the first of an open edition.

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Art and Ritual in 19th-Century South Carolina

Claudia Mooney, 2012

The Chipstone Foundation

I. Slave-made artifacts are exceptionally rare. Face jugs, face cups, and face pitchers were first made in Edgefield, South Carolina, around 1860. They are among the most important and mysterious surviving examples of slave-made artifacts. With bulging kaolin (white clay) eyes and bared teeth, these expressive faces seem shocking to us today. But what did they mean in their own time, why and for whom were they made, and how were they used?

There is little known written documentation about face jugs, which continued to be made by African Americans until around 1880, so researchers have had to turn to other forms of evidence. Archaeologists have discovered that some of the early face jugs were produced in small in-ground or "groundhog" kilns, located away from the main production kilns used by local potteries. This fact, along with the relatively small number of the vessels (compared to the staggeringly large number of plain utilitarian jugs and bottles from the Edgefield area), suggests that they were special objects made for use within the African American community.

That the earliest face jugs were made at all is surprising. Slaves had no legal or civil rights, nor were they allowed to freely express themselves. Despite these restrictions, African Americans found creative ways to sustain their customs and beliefs. One strategy was to fashion objects, songs, and stories with double meanings. According to former slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass, hidden messages were written into the lyrics of spirituals. The African American folk tales centering on Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox discretely forecast the downfall of white masters in the guise of seemingly innocent children's stories. Face vessels also may have functioned as cleverly coded objects.

II. In the eyes of many white southerners of this era, face jugs fulfilled deeply rooted visual stereotypes about African Americans. An example of this is An Aesthetic Darkey, a stereoscopic image South Carolina photographer J. A. Palmer made in 1882. The title alone reveals its racist intentions. The picture portrays a young boy sitting at a table with a variety of props, including an early Edgefield face jug. Palmer's composition is based on W. H. Beard's satirical engraving of the

earlier that year when Wilde was on his North American tour. Titled *The Aesthetic Monkey*, the Beard engraving depicts Wilde as a flamboyantly dressed monkey, surrounded by symbols of the feminized Aesthetic style. The Darwinian inference is that Wilde, who did not hide his homosexuality, was not a fully evolved human being. Palmer's photograph is even more blunt with its dehumanizing accusation, which compares the boy to a monkey and a face jug.

However, the jugs themselves were not intended to be racist representations. Instead, their story is much more fascinating and complex, marking the transatlantic migration of people, beliefs, and craft practices.

III. One of the most important historical references on face jugs came from a South Carolina pottery owner named Colonel Thomas Davies. His Palmetto Fire Brick Works in nearby Bath was in operation between 1862 and 1865. It was one of many production potteries that took advantage of the region's rich clay deposits to make bricks, jugs, jars, and other functional wares. Slave labor was a crucial part of the potteries in the Edgefield area. Over fifty slaves worked at the Palmetto Fire Brick Works doing everything from preparing the clay and stoking the kiln to turning and firing the pots. Three decades after the pottery closed, ceramic scholar Edward Atlee Barber interviewed Davies, who initially described the face jugs as "weird-looking water jugs." This statement serves as a clue to the dual identities of these pots. Most of the Edgefield face jugs were far too small to have held enough water to quench the thirst of a field worker laboring in the hot sun. Moreover, Davies's pottery and the other local kilns mass-produced inexpensive utilitarian water jugs that held a half-gallon or more. Instead, Davies may have been told that these were water jugs to divert his attention from their real purpose.

The pottery owner then commented that these pots were "in the form of a grotesque human face—evidently intended to portray African features." Barber, who owned several early southern face jugs, also noted that the design "reveals a trace of aboriginal art as formerly practiced by the ancestors of the makers in the Dark Continent." This leads to the question: How did slaves in South Carolina, many of whom were third-, fourth-, or fifth-generation Americans, learn about an African artistic tradition? One intriguing occurrence possibly links these charismatic vessels back to Africa.

IV. In 1858 a ship filled with captured Africans landed illegally on the Georgia coast. The *Wanderer* was a luxury yacht that was secretly retrofitted as a slave ship. It docked at Jekyll Island with 407 slaves, most of whom were from various Kongo societies. Over 100 of these slaves were sent inland to the Edgefield region, and some were put to work in the potteries. A growing number of researchers believe that the arrival of the *Wanderer* slaves gave rise to the southern face jug tradition.

This astonishing Africa-Edgefield connection encourages an interpretation of the face jugs as being more than whimsical pots and more than racist imagery. Instead, could they have functioned covertly as ritualistic vessels? Within the various Kongo cultures, powerful diviners and shamans called nganga used spirit containers called nkisi to channel their distinctive powers. Nkisi were made from all sorts of materials, from a cloth bag or ceramic pot to a wooden human or animal figure with a hollow belly. The diviner placed magical materials—kaolin clay, human hair, herbs, insects, and other objects owned by an individual—inside the nkisi to initiate contact with the spirit world and either heal or harm through a ritual known today as a “conjure.”

Were the Edgefield face jugs in fact conjure jugs? In the most oppressive environment, African ritualistic beliefs still were kept alive or reshaped by slave communities. Firsthand narratives published in the early twentieth century specifically detail the many ritualistic practices of South Carolina’s slaves, who often carried bags filled with magical materials to protect themselves against conjures. These African-based beliefs were not seen as antithetical to the slaves’ simultaneous practice of Christianity. Rather, they were perceived as additional forms of spiritual practice that met needs and accomplished goals that the Christian faith did not directly address. For example, one could pray to get healthy, but it was believed that African magic would protect you from disease or injury. Similarly, a targeted conjure could harm or even kill a foe.

Several features on the Edgefield face jugs strongly suggest a link to Kongo ritual. The white eyes and teeth were made from locally harvested fine kaolin clay, a material long considered magical in West Africa. Kaolin was traditionally placed inside of and rubbed onto nkisi containers in order to activate it and open up contact with the spirit world. Also, the sharpened teeth found on some of the face vessels mirror not only Kongo and other African sculpture but also a real-life custom practiced by some of the members of the Wanderer community.

One key historical figure from the Wanderer was a man named Tahro, who was renamed “Romeo” upon arrival. Later described in a 1927 newspaper article as a “king,” Romeo was more likely a Kongo village leader and, therefore, had elevated status within the community. Romeo worked alongside other Wanderer slaves at Palmetto Fire Brick Works. While there is no evidence he was an nganga, Romeo nevertheless would have understood the concept of nkisi, and he may have played a role in the rise of face jugs in Edgefield. He also built an African-style hut with a thatched roof covered with a diamond-patterned mesh, a shape associated with good fortune. While this tiny building, no more than 6 x 12 feet, may have served as Romeo’s home, it also bears some resemblance to Kongo funerary buildings, including having two pedestals outside the front door, which would have customarily held offerings for the deceased.

V. A recent discovery further suggests that face jugs were used for conjuring or some other ritual practice. On the back of this face jug, below the handle, two words were etched into the surface while the clay was still wet. The first word on the jug clearly says "Squir," which alludes to the documented use of the first name Esquire or Squire in South Carolina around this time. The second word appears to read "Pofu." In addition to being a Kongo village, pofu or m-pofu translates as "blind" or "blindness," which could explain the blackened pupils and thick glaze completely covering the eyes—characteristics not commonly seen on face vessels with white kaolin features. Could the vacant stare symbolize blindness and the fearful expression connote a conjure or spell on someone named Squire? Early twentieth-century interviews with former slaves, including those in the Edgefield region, reveal a great fear of being afflicted with a conjure. Also, African Americans sometimes threatened to put harmful conjures on slave owners and other oppressive individuals.

While the ritualistic use of face jugs in early Edgefield cannot yet be proven there is much evidence to propose that they were more than just racialized pots. With the future discovery of more face vessels, new documentation, and archaeological remains, we undoubtedly will be able to add more to the story in the years to come. The survival of African ritualistic traditions in the South and the creation of these face jugs just after the arrival of the Wanderer slaves in Edgefield strongly suggest the need to consider a Kongo connection. So too does the "Squir Pofu" jug. Debate will continue about the extent and nature of this African connection, but there is no doubt about the aesthetic power and interpretive potency of these amazing jugs. We continue to gaze at them while they continue to gaze at us and ,in the process, more of their meanings are likely to be revealed.

Of Ghosts and Speculation

Brian Gillis, 2012

Archives are mines. They are built of records selected for preservation on the grounds of their enduring cultural, historical, or practical value. So much of what we know about who we are comes from access to archives. They allow us to speculate about ancient people and our own historicity. They provide us the invaluable opportunity to survey and catalog things already in existence in order to create new thought. Through these archives we see the way people consider their world, the things in it, the afterlife, how they organize socially, or grieve, or celebrate, bear children, worship or eat and sleep. Archives are a necessary part of the society we live in; they are at once a mirror, raw material and a time machine.

Though we cannot say for certain who made the original face jugs, or why they were made in the first place, we can say conclusively that they were made by specific people from a specific time and place, out of specific materials, and that they are in and of themselves archives. While serving as artifacts from a lost time, face jugs are not only a symbol or witness, but also real, concrete evidence of people and a moment in time that has enduring cultural and historical value.

As we probe these forms further and try to make clear a definitive identity, how speculative our connections truly are is all the more apparent. And in doing so, the fact that these forms have no objective origin or identity, as of yet, brings the fact that there IS an origin and identity that much more to the fore. This is perhaps what makes these objects the most enigmatic and valuable. This is perhaps their greatest socio-cultural value; not that they are a link to African divination, ceremony or daily life, but that they COULD be. What are they? Where are they from?

Despite all of our research and analysis, we are still uncertain of the true origin and identity of these face jugs. This in and of itself is what makes these forms all the more relevant, because this sense of wonder and intrigue about these mysterious forms is perhaps one of the most human responses we have toward other humans, our world and ourselves. As organisms who truly can know only our own real origin and identity, we are commonly so intrigued at these things in others. Perhaps this is the case because seeing these things in others helps us to understand who we are, have been or could be.

Of Ghosts and Speculation uses the occasion of the first major exhibition of African American Face

Jugs as a point of departure to celebrate and monumentalize these extremely rare, enigmatic, culturally significant forms while confirming the value of history as a necessary part of society. This project, a public archive that is meant to exist as a conceptual hybridization of a time capsule, seed bank and black box flight recorder, is in place as somewhat of a foil, tribute and living annotation to the face jug. It was designed to elicit reverence for these face jugs by engaging a community to value its own origin and identity through a greater intimacy with the scholarship surrounding these objects, an awareness of the value of history as both definite and speculative and the opportunity to permanently archive a first person account of one's own origin and identity, the very thing we have no conclusive answer for in the case of these face jugs.

Of Ghosts and Speculation is composed of two main parts - a high tech, catastrophe resistant, mobile archive and a recording center housed in the museum called the *Object Mine*. This recording center was built for the collection of images and first person accounts of identity and origin as linked to personal objects from the public. The archive was built to preserve an exhaustive amount of information known about the face jug while seeding and archiving future inquiry about origin and identity both through the use of the *Object Mine* and the investigation of new scholarship. The 3-dimensionally scanned form used for the image of this archival container was of the only face jug currently in the Chipstone collection (Ascension#2006.6, Miles Mill Face Jug, Edgefield, SC 1862-70 [5.875"x5.75"x5.125"]). The container was printed in nylon and nickel plated so as to be light, corrosive resistant, chemically neutral and air tight. It uses digital storage media and an analog paper and rag book to archive all of the known scholarship surrounding face jugs. It contains a significant amount of empty space for the addition of new scholarship, and will hopefully exist for posterity as both an archive and a mine as it was produced to accompany this specific face jug in whichever collection it resides.

At the conclusion of the exhibition for which this piece was built, *Face Jugs: Art and Ritual in 19th-Century South Carolina*, the information collected both by the *Object Mine* and any new academic scholarship will be permanently stored in the archive. This will, in essence, propose the symbiotic value of objects as such that inform and define who we are and the world we live in, the very things we simply cannot know conclusively about the face jug and the people from whose world they originate. In many ways, the identity of this archive is only complete when it is used as a perpetual reference and receptacle to better understand face jugs while acting as a place to archive first-hand accounts of how one's origin and identity is, was and can be linked to objects.

Research Notes

Kelly Whitford, 2012

I joined this project as a "Research Assistant," a common title in academia. My task was to locate all existing scholarly books, articles, catalogues, papers, and essays that contain even the briefest mention of nineteenth-century face jugs. I hold a Master's degree in art history and have worked in multiple university research centers. In these academic and professional contexts I have developed a thorough research process of identifying a topic, locating relevant sources and theoretical frameworks, and crafting an argument.

Though this project put to use some of my research skills locating scholarly sources about face jugs, this process did not include what could be, arguably, the most important aspect of traditional academic research—articulating a thesis-driven argument. While the desired result of much of my previous work has been an essay, conference paper, or master's thesis, this project aimed to produce only an exhaustive bibliography. In performing this job it became unnecessary to try to absorb the information from the sources that I located. Instead of reading for content I became a type of scanner picking out specific words that might suggest a discussion of face jugs. I examined exhibition catalogs, historical accounts of nineteenth-century South Carolina, archaeological reports, histories of American ceramics and folk arts, and formal analyses in art historical journals for keywords like "face jugs," "monkey jugs," "grotesque jugs," and "Edgefield district."

The limited and directed scope of this project resulted in a process unlike any I had ever completed. My training requires that after an initial examination of art historical sources considering a given topic, I necessarily have to expand that search to fields such as history, archaeology, sociology, and linguistics in an attempt to identify an appropriate methodological approach or locate contextual information to support my argument. Thesis-driven research can literally be never-ending. The information in each new book or article can always lead to a new author, a new argument, or an entirely new field for examination. For example, an historical account of nineteenth-century Edgefield district in South Carolina could lead to an article on face jugs discussing possible uses for these vessels, which subsequently might lead a researcher to theories of folklore anthropological studies of West African rituals and religious beliefs, or an archaeological report of a dig. On the other hand, the same initial investigation of the Edgefield district and face jugs might lead a scholar to consider the field of nineteenth-century ceramics, to ask what forms were contemporaneously being produced in other locations like Europe, Asia or other regions in America. New information can always lead to further avenues of inquiry.

My search for existing materials containing any mention of nineteenth-century face jugs was never in danger of following this type of endless question-driven research. Eventually, after my initial search for material, I occasionally found a new article or chapter, but it became more and more likely that the bibliographies of these new sources contained items that I had already located and examined. Instead of directing me further a field, these materials began to point back to one another, citing each other, and revealing a closed loop instead of an unending spiral.

The finite aspect of my contribution to this project makes it unique. Typically a deadline or the necessity to move on to a new project requires me to prematurely terminate a potentially unceasing network of questions and research. All of my previous work has acknowledged this, either in discursive footnotes briefly summarizing other lines of inquiry or in concluding remarks that outline further directions for the project. With this project I know I am done. As of this date I have found all of those sources mentioning nineteenth-century face jugs that I could. Of course, there is always room for human error and neglect and I take responsibility for any omissions and acknowledge that some probably exist, but even with this disclaimer I can consider my work here complete. Of course I leave behind a potential new project for someone at a future date to prove me wrong by correcting my errors and satisfying my omissions, or to add any new scholarship that, as of now, has yet to be written.

Though my role in this project has been a somewhat mechanical one, which has capitalized upon some of my skills as a researcher and scanner but not as a thinker or scholar, this exercise has prompted me to examine my own work. A commonality that has emerged between my traditional methods and the process I developed for this project is the centrality of the object. Each line of questioning or effort to compile a bibliography begins with a topic that defines the scope of research and the parameters of an initial search. In the field of art history this reflection highlights for me the necessity of object-driven research and the dangers of beginning with information and theories from various disciplines and attempting to fit objects to them. In other words, without a fixed starting point (the object), one risks falling uncontrollably down the research spiral instead of methodically tracing its circuitous route. For me, this project has re-established the most rewarding aspect of research: following questions and inconsistencies to see where they can lead.

RESEARCH



Peter Lenzo

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African-American Contributions to American Folk Art

"I wonder where is all my relations/Friendship to all--and every nation," reads a verse on a jar from 1857. The slave who expressed this concern about the separation of his and other families is Edgerfield S.C.'s most famous potter, Dave. Unlike most slaves, whose work is unknown, he is recognized as a highly skilled potter because he signed many of the large storage jars and jugs that he made. Since only one document has been discovered that includes first-hand information about this talented potter, the most training is his ware. Dave was part of the African-American labor force that was largely responsible for the early expansion of alkaline-glazed stoneware production in the Edgerfield District of South Carolina.

Think of Edgerfield's alkaline-glazed stoneware pottery tradition as a multicultural dialogue in clay. Derived from a European ceramics heritage, with a glaze formula borrowed from China, a labor force consisting of both Anglo-American potters and African-American slaves, and with unique designs and forms that experts say have their roots in Africa, the Edgerfield stoneware tradition personifies the blending of diverse cultures.

RESEARCH

Steve Ferrell





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large, bulbous jars. Contemporary folk potters marvel at the strength and dexterity required to produce such large-capacity vessels. He either turned the jars on the wheel in two or three sections, which he then joined together, or Used a technique of adding clay to the rim, thereby gradually building up the walls of the vessel.

In 1840, Dave began to sign his work. Many of the large storage jars that he turned from 1840 until just before the Civil War bear a factory mark, date of manufacture and signature incised into the moist clay at the upper shoulder. Some vessels also feature a poem of rhymed couplets. These verses may have been a form of passive protest, since it was illegal to teach slaves to read and write in antebellum Edgefield. Dave included information about his slave status on a few of his pots. A verse on a jar dated July 31, 1840, reads, "Dave belongs to Mr. Miles/wher(e) the oven bakes and the pot biles [boils]."

The earliest known vessel inscribed with a verse that may be attributed to Dave is a large, bulbous, wide-mouthed storage jar dated July 12, 1834, and signed, "put every bit all between/surely this jar will hold 14." Some of the verses on Dave's pots reveal his religious philosophy. For example, "I made this Jar all of cross/I you dont repent, you will be lost," and "I saw a leppard & a lion's face,/than I felt the need ofgrace." Three verses refer directly to a concern for material gain--"Gave me silver or either gold;/though they are dangerous; to our soul." "I made this jar for cash; Though its called mere trash," and "This noble jar will hold 20/ill it with silver then you'll have plenty."

Unique stoneware forms have been attributed to African-American slave and freed black potters. In addition to large utilitarian jars, Edge field slave potters produced unusual sculpted vessels that consisted of a wheel-thrown base onto which facial features were modelled in



applied clay. Jugs, pitchers, lidded jars, cups and water carriers appear with this type of treatment. In the early 1900s, ceramic historian Edwin Atlee Barber interviewed Thomas J. Davies, co-owner of a Civil War-era Edgetfield District stoneware factory at Bath, S.C. In the interview Davies remarked that the slaves who worked in the pottery were allowed time on their own, which they spent: "in making homely designs in coarse pottery. Among these were some weirdlooking water jugs, roughly modeled in the form of a grotesque human face, evidently intended' to portray the African features." This admittedly biased account of African-American pottery production in Edgetfield clearly identifies slaves as the makers of sculpted face vessels.

Although the intent of these vessels is unclear, their technical complexity and consistent style indicate that they were not whimsical or frivolous, and that the face-vessel form was developed over a period of several years.

Some scholars have compared the Edgetfield face vessels to African wood carvings made by the Kongo people of Central Africa. They point to stylistic similarities in the mixedmedia

RESEARCH

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approach achieved in pottery and wood through the use of kaolin inserts for eyes and teeth. Also, since the majority of South Carolina's slaves were imported from lands controlled by the Kongo or closely related peoples, there was a cultural precedent for the use of these techniques.

New evidence has recently been uncovered that links the Edgefield face vessels with the Kongo people. In 1908 anthropologist Charles Montgomery wrote an article about a group of slaves who came to America in 1858 on the slave ship "Wanderer." The "Wanderer" was anchored at Jekyll Island, Ga., and the slaves were carried up the Savannah River by steamboat. These mostly Kikongo-speaking people were then sold, many of them to Edgefield planters. The newly arrived slaves reintroduced African customs, healing methods and agricultural practices to their fellow slaves in Georgia and South Carolina. Lucinda Thurmond, a former servant of the Seigler family, recalls four of the men pictured in Montgomery's article. Romeo, the oldest of those interviewed, had built an African-style house constructed of rush that Mrs. Thurmond remembers playing in as a child. A business ledger from the Palmetto Fire Brick Works, where many of the Edgefield face vessels were made, shows a slave named Romeo among the list of workmen at the factory. If this is the Romeo who arrived on the "Wanderer" in 1858, the document provides the first direct evidence of a connection between the African Kongo people and the production of Edgefield face vessels.

The "monkey jug," a type of water carrier produced in Edgefield, also appears to have been African-inspired. These vessels are ovoid in form with an over-arching stirrup handle and one

or two tubular spouts attached at an angle. Monkey jugs were produced in unglazed earthenware in Africa and the West Indies and in alkaline-glazed stoneware in the Edgefield District. Folklorist John Viach has speculated that, since the monkey jug was known in the Caribbean, it may have been a remembered African form. The term "monkey" refers to the function of the vessels carrying drinking water into the field.

Just as today's plastic containers are invaluable to us, pottery was in growing demand in the 19th century. However, new materials such as tin and glass replaced stoneware at the end of the century, and the last pottery in South Carolina ceased operation around 1940.

Since then, South Carolina's Edgefield pottery has been largely ignored because of its rural tradition. Today, however, it is recognized as a unique and valuable expression of traditional ceramic art.

Edgefield face vessels are an extraordinary example of the multicultural exchanges that occurred among early stoneware potters in South Carolina. Potters of Scottish descent taught African-American slave potters in Edgefield how to produce European-style stoneware with an Oriental alkaline glaze. The African Americans, rather than passively accepting the

Steve Ferrell





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skills and techniques of their masters, contributed new forms and decorative styles, thereby creating a truly indigenous American folk art form.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Romeo, on the right, is thought to be the link between African Kongo people and Edgefield face vessels.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Three African-American slave potters, two of them turners, are mentioned in this Edgefield Advertiser notice of the sale of the pottersville factory.

PHOTO (COLOR): "Lm Aug 30 1857 Dave." This stoneware storage jug was produced by Dave at Lewis Miles' pottery.

PHOTO (COLOR): "Oct. 26 - 1853," reads the script on this alkaline-glazed stoneware jug, produced by Dave at Lewis Miles' pottery.

PHOTO (COLOR): Slave potters at the Thomas J. Davies Pottery in Edgefield produced this stoneware face pitcher circa 1862.

PHOTO (COLOR): A face cup found on a waster pile at the Thomas J. Davies Pottery. Davies considered such vessels, by slaves, "homely designs in coarse pottery."

PHOTO (COLOR): A storage jar, produced by Dave at Lewis Miles' pottery, is 19" tall, with a maximum circumference of 56 1/2".

By Cinda Baldwin

Cinda Baldwin was a research curator for the exhibit "Crossroads of Clay: The Southern Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware Tradition" at the McKissick Museum in Columbia, S.c. She is currently working on a book on South Carolina stoneware, to be published in 1991.

UNTITLED.

"Crossroads of Clay: The Southern Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware Tradition" exhibits more than 77 examples of decorative work and demonstrates how African, Asian and European pottery-making traditions came together to create a singular American art form. A re-creation of a potter's shop and visual displays show how the pottery was produced in factories, then marketed and sold throughout the South. The exhibit is on display at McKissick Museum, Columbia, S.C., through September 9, when it will begin a national tour. Follow our Calendar section in upcoming issues for more details.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Alkaline-glazed monkey jug-an African-American art form.





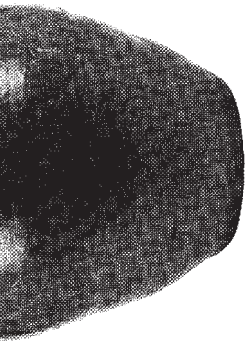
GREAT & NOBLE JAR

Traditional Stoneware of South Carolina

CINDA K. BALDWIN

McKissick Museum The University of South Carolina
The University of Georgia Press Athens & London







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CHAPTER THREE

The African-American Presence in the Edgefield District Stoneware Tradition

In 1962 Ivor Noel Hume described a type of unglazed, low-fired plain earthenware that he had found at Williamsburg and that had been found by archaeologists at several early colonial sites on the southern Atlantic coast. He called the pottery Colono-Indian ware because it was similar to both prehistoric and historic (nineteenth-century) Indian ware in Virginia. Although Noel Hume thought that the ware had been made by Indians, he surmised that it must have been used by African-American slaves, since glazed ware would have been available to all but the poorest colonists.¹

Bartholus later settled in South Carolina.² Ferguson argues that since the makers and users of the ware must be determined on a site by site basis, the suffix "Indian" should be dropped.³ Some of this "Colono-ware," then, was apparently made and used on eighteenth-century plantations by African-Americans (see Figure 3-1).

These conclusions may be particularly significant in light of the role that African-Americans played in development of the stoneware tradition in South Carolina. African-American slaves were involved in stoneware production in South Carolina throughout the nineteenth century. Slaves

More recent research by anthropologist Leland Ferguson suggests that this ware is more closely associated with non-Indians than with Indians, and that it was produced and used by African-Americans. Ferguson points out that African people had a long tradition of manufacturing low-fired coiled and hand-modeled earthenware, and that the forms and techniques of manufacture of Colono-Indian ware are similar to those found in Africa. He adds that, although there is no direct historical reference to pottery production by African-Americans in South Carolina before the Revolution, there is evidence of pottery activity in a slave context from the Lesser Antilles, including Barbados, and the islands of Antigua and Nevis. African-Americanist scholars have noted that many of the early planters from

in the Edgefield District of South Carolina produced distinctive pottery forms that have been traced to Africa and the West Indies.

The presence of African-American slaves in the Edgefield District stoneware factories was perhaps the single most important influence on stoneware production in the area. Edgefield slaves who adopted the European-derived ceramics technology and materials made unique contributions to the alkaline-glazed stoneware tradition in the South. Distinctive styles of pottery, characterized by divergent vessel forms, unusual decorative techniques, and in one rare instance, highly individualistic and personalized maker's marks, were produced by slaves and freed blacks in Edgefield.

Slaves constituted a significant portion of the





5-1 Colono-ware bowl fragment from the Spaders Landing site (538BK 600), Berkeley County, S. C. Photographed by Carolina Archaeological Services, Inc. Photograph by Emily Short. Courtesy of Leland Ferguson.



labor force in nineteenth-century Edgefield industry. From 1800 to 1820 the number of slaves in Edgefield increased four times while the white population decreased. This fluctuation of the white and slave populations signaled the emergence of an increasingly wealthy white planter class. Edgefield's wealth came from agriculture, and slaves were employed mainly as plantation laborers. During the same period the local pottery industry, which employed a significant amount of slave labor, was established to satisfy the needs of

ized in the production of these large-capacity jars. The potter typically applied two horizontal lug handles to jars of up to fifteen gallons, and four evenly spaced lug handles to twenty- to forty-gallon jars. When full, the jars were extremely heavy and were probably placed in a smokehouse, shed, or pantry, thereby providing easy access for periodic retrieval of the foods stored within.

Another common stoneware form, the syrup jug, with two opposing loop handles, was designed to hold cane syrup, the principal sweetener

plantations for food storage and preservation.

The Plantation Food System

A variety of vessel types and sizes was produced for the tasks of food storage, preservation, and serving on the plantation. Twenty-, thirty-, and even forty-gallon storage jars were produced in Edgefield, sizes that were rare in other areas of the South. These large-capacity storage jars were designed to meet the requirements of the plantation food system. Rendered lard and salted meat were packed into the stoneware jars during the slaughtering season and stored for use throughout the year. Some Edgefield slave turners special-

on nineteenth-century southern farms and plantations.⁴ Syrup continued to be important in rural areas of the lower South well into the twentieth century. Anne Bell, a former slave of Fairfield County plantation owner John Glazier Rubb, provided a detailed description of the plantation larder in her account of the arrival of Union troops on the plantation. "Before they went they took everything. They took de meat and 'visions out de smoker-house and de 'lasses, sugar, flour, and meal out de house. Killed de pigs and cows, burnt de ginhouse and cotton, and took off de live stock, geese, chickens and turkeys."⁵

The plantation food system prompted a sense of community. This attitude is reflected in the recollections of a former slave from Berry Cochrain's





plantation. "Master put out a side w' meat and a barrel o' meal, and all ub us would go and git our rations for de week. Eve'body, fiod er garden patch an' plenty greens and taters and all dat kinder thing."⁶ According to Edgelfield historian Vernon Burton: "Allotments of food were made on an individual basis; each slave laborer generally received three pounds of bacon or pork and a peck of meal for the week."⁷ The amount of food that each slave received appears to have varied according to the size of the plantation, the amount of concern felt by the master or overseer for the welfare of the slaves, the location of the plantation, the size of the slave family, the presence of children, the ability of slaves to produce food themselves, the time available to procure wild foods, and the amount of food slaves could barter, purchase, or steal. Sometimes the rations were issued to a cook who prepared meals for the slaves at a central kitchen. However, Casper Rumpke, a former slave from Edgelfield, recalled that adult slaves were responsible "for their own cooking."⁸ Adults' eating routines often differed from those of children. Francis Pickens enforced an elaborate diet routine and instructed his overseers "that no child shall want food for a moment. See that the woman who cooks for them does jus-

ty caught rabbits in wooden boxes, called "rabbit guns."⁹ Slaves sometimes raided the smokehouse, "stealing" chicken, pork, and potatoes. This widespread use of small mammals and wild birds at interior slave sites suggests more active hunting at interior sites than was required in coastal settings.¹⁰

Archaeologists have been able to clearly illustrate that the core slave diet of corn, pork, and beef was supplemented by other foods. Slave populations on plantations of various sizes throughout the sea islands of Georgia, Florida, and North and South Carolina, as well as in other environmental zones, exploited many environmental niches with a variety of technological methods. Archaeological analysis of animal bones recovered from tenant/sharecropper houses occupied after 1860 on the Millwood Plantation (located in Abbeville County, South Carolina, and Elbert County, Georgia) revealed both wild and domestic species. Hogs outnumbered cattle in the collection, with domestic animals comprising 45 percent of the individuals identified. Wild resources consisted primarily of opossum, rabbit, squirrel, and fish.¹¹

Most coastal rice and cotton plantations operated on the task system, rather than the gang



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live to all.⁷⁹ Slave men and women maintained year-round gardens. Matilda Brooks, a former slave of Governor Francis Pickens, recalled a diet consisting "largely of potatoes, corn bread, syrup, greens, peas, and occasionally ham, lard, and other meats or poultry. Their chief beverage was coffee made from parched corn."⁸⁰

Hunting and fishing provided additional variety and nutrition to the slave diet. A former slave of Judge Andrew Pickens Butler recalled that "we used to hunt possums, rabbits, squirrels, wild turkeys, doves, and partridges, and set traps for partridges and set box gins for rabbits."⁸¹ Another former slave, Peggy Grigsby, stated that "the wren folks hunted much; doves, partridges, wild turkeys, deer, squirrels, and rabbits. Sometimes

of the major cash crops grown there; upcountry plantation overseers typically relied on the gang system. Under the gang system a team of slaves worked together for a specified period of time, usually from dawn to dusk. Under the task system slaves were assigned a specific task or individual plots of land to tend. When this task was completed to the satisfaction of the overseer, the slave was finished for the day. Tasks were divided into heavy, moderate, and light categories, and slaves were classified according to the amount of tasks they performed. Presumably, under the task system slaves might finish work by midday, with time left to devote to gardening, stock-raising, fishing, hunting, or other activities. Even under



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the task system, however, the workday could be fifteen to sixteen hours long during the peak harvest season. Under the *gang* system the overseer usually set aside some free time for the slaves.

Each slave cabin in Edgelyield had a garden patch, and residents of cabins were allowed time off from plantation chores in order to tend gardens. A former slave of James Henry Hammond recalled that "we always had a half holiday on Saturday."¹⁴

During working hours slaves were employed in a variety of agricultural, domestic, and industrial enterprises. Although the majority of slaves were field hands, some slaves were trained in a wide range of skilled occupations.

Edgelyield Slave Pottery

Pottery manufacture was one of a number of skilled trades practiced by slaves in South Carolina. Historian Carl Bridenbaugh noted that "in the Carolinas the overwhelming majority of artisans were Negro slaves."¹⁵ Slave occupations included carpentry, blacksmithing and other ironwork, milling, tanning, weaving, cloth making, and sewing. As in Africa, craftsmen were held in great respect in preindustrial America because of

however, were not named in court records pertaining to the stoneware factories. Women and children would have performed more menial tasks, while men were trained in all aspects of the pottery craft and, most important, in the role of turner. The slave turner was a skilled artisan and therefore was highly valued by the slaveholder. A few Edgelyield slave turners were afforded special privileges because of their favored status.

The 1850 census provides information regarding the ownership of slaves by Edgelyield stone-ware manufacturers. Edgelyield stoneware factory owner Lewis Miles owned fourteen slaves that year. Another stoneware maker, B. F. Landon, owned six male and two female slaves in 1850. Collin Rhodes's slaveholdings in 1850 included thirty-five blocks and mulattoes raising in age from forty-six years to three months, the largest number of any Edgelyield stoneware factory owner.

Slaves were often mentioned in court records and newspaper advertisements involving the Edgelyield stoneware factories. Seven slaves—Daniel, Sam, Gusear, 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 wagoner.¹⁶



the expense of importing goods from Europe.

Southern society was patriarchal. Planters referred to slave holders as "head men," and the "driver" or leader, was considered the "most important negro on the plantation."¹⁶ This male authority system provided for the sharing of influence between the slave head man or leader and the white master. Likewise, pottery manufacture was a male-dominated activity in nineteenth-century Edgefield. "Turner" was the most commonly listed occupation for slaves who labored in the Edgefield pottery factories, although slaves were undoubtedly involved in every aspect of stoneware production, from digging, hauling, and preparing the clay to turning and firing the ware and wagoning it to market. Slave families,

Abram may have also worked at the John Landrum pottery. A bill of sale for a "negro boy, Abram," from Samuel Landrum to John Landrum was recorded in Edgefield on 5 December 1795.¹⁸ In an 1840 advertisement announcing the sale of his land and stoneware manufactory, John Presley listed "three or four Negroes" along with livestock and other equipment associated with the factory. "Three Negro men, two of whom are Turners," were mentioned in an 1840 sale of the Pottersville Manufactory, and an 1845 listing of the Pottersville property included "four Negroes, viz three Turners and one Wagner." An 1847 executor's sale of the John Landrum estate offered "18 likely Negroes," one of them "an excellent Slave, Wurn Turner."¹⁹





THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESENCE

In an 1852 deed Thomas Chandler had the following property placed in a trust for his wife, Margaret Chandler, and their children: "four negro slaves of names & ages as follows: Simon about fifty years old, Easter about forty six years old, John about eighteen years old, and Ned about eighteen years old, and three waggons now in my possession, one of which is a four horse road waggon and the other two are two horse waggons, and eight mules and one mare, all of which are now in my possession."²⁰ Although white journeyman potters are known to have worked at the stoneware factories operated by Chandler, this document suggests that Chandler also relied upon slaves as laborers in his pottery. John, one of the slaves named in the 1852 deed, may have later turned alkaline-glazed stoneware at the John M. Wilson pottery in Guadalupe County, Texas.²¹

Thomas Davies and Anson Pecker employed over fifty slaves in their Palmetto Fire Brick Works during 1862 and 1865. Some of these laborers were hired as part of a team, while others were employed as individuals. Their salaries ranged from five to one hundred dollars per month.²² The operation, later known as the Bath Fire Brick Works, was established as a fire-

evidence of the presence of slave women in the Edgefield pottery shops. The case involved the death of a female slave, Ann, who was a laborer in the Benjamin Franklin Landrum factory. Landrum testified that he had whipped Ann and lied her up when she refused to do the work assigned to her. Then, according to the report, he had "left the de[ce]ase[d] and two other negroes at his shop at [the] stoneware factory to go to breakfast." Landrum claimed that when he returned about forty-five minutes later one of the slaves he had left at the shop told him that Ann had hung herself and that she was dead. Then, he said, he "went into the shop and found the negroes loos[ing] the rope from around her neck." From the position that he claimed to have found her in, he surmised that Ann had wrapped the end of the rope around her neck twice and squatted or leaned upon it to choke herself to death. He added that he had tied her up because she had "threatened to runaway [and] was of turbulent disposition." John L. Atkinson testified that Landrum came to him and his son William and told them "that his negro woman Ann had hung herself."²³ They inspected the body (which had been laid out in the kitchen) for marks and bruises, and Landrum took them "to the shop where it



brick factory, but by 1867 alkaline-glazed stoneware jars, jugs, milk pans, and chamber pots were being produced there.

Slave Women in the Edgefield Stoneware Factories

Farms with at least twenty slaves (plantations) were the home of 60.5 percent of Edgefield slaves in 1850 and 64.2 percent in 1860. About one-third of the slave population was made up of children too young to work. Men and women generally worked at different tasks, but both were expected to perform hard physical labor.

An 1848 coroner's inquisition provides direct

was said she hung herself and shewed witness where de[rease]d had thrown herself down in the furnace and had loosed a brick and where she had hung herself."²³ They then helped Landrum bury the body because the coroner had gone to Columbia. Two other men, John Whillock and John Creen, provided supporting testimony in the case, testifying as to the bad disposition of the deceased slave.²⁴ The testimony presented in connection with the death of B. F. Landrum's slave, Ana, establishes that slave women were employed as laborers in the Edgefield stoneware factories.

The documentary evidence suggests that although female slaves as well as males were employed as laborers in the Edgefield stoneware factories, the involvement of women in pottery



production was typically limited to more menial tasks. The status of slave men and women varied according to the amount of skill and training their occupation required. Turners were usually afforded greater status and recognition than other laborers in the Edgesfield stoneware factories.

Dave

Edgesfield's most famous slave potter was a man called Dave. An 1863 *Edgesfield Advertiser* editorial promoting the beneficial properties of buttermilk is the only known direct documentary reference to this remarkable potter. The article consists of a dialogue between an elderly black man named Dave and the editor of the newspaper. The editor refers to Dave as "Dave Pottery" but suggests that many readers will remember him as "the grandiloquent old darkey once connected with a paper known as the *Edgesfield Hive*."²⁵ This information is particularly significant since stoneware manufacturer Abner Landrum was editor and publisher of the *Hive* newspaper before moving to Columbia in 1854. Dave was literate, and since it became illegal to teach slaves to read and write in South Carolina

in 1857, some scholars have suggested that Dave may have acquired his skills as a turner while assisting Landrum on the newspaper. A Dave jar dated 18 April 1850 bears the verse "hive is eighteen; hundred + fifty nine / unto you all I fill [heel] in, cline[87]." Perhaps a reference to himself as "hive," or to the newspaper, this verse may be further evidence of Dave's early association with Abner Landrum.

The most important evidence of Dave's extraordinary abilities is his ware. Dave was a prolific potter. Many of the storage jars and jugs that he produced survive in public and private collections. Approximately twenty of these vessels are inscribed with original poetry, and at least fifty additional Dave vessels have been identified by a signature, maker's mark, date, or other inscription. (A list of the verses inscribed on ware produced by Dave is presented in Appendix 3.) The storage jars turned by Dave are bulbous in form as is most antebellum Edgesfield ware. Unlike other ware produced in the area during the period, Dave's jars are widest at the top. They are wide-mouthed forms with thick, rolled rims and high, broad shoulders. Contemporary potter's who have examined Dave's thick-walled, large-capacity storage jars are amazed at the

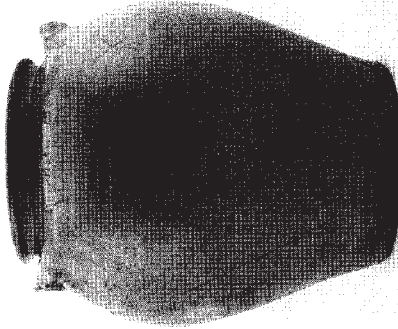




3.9 Alkali-glazed stoneware storage jar, 3840, Dave (slave poet), Lewis Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, S.C. H 15 3/8", C 4 3/8", Incised script: 21st July 1810 (front, upper shoulder between handles); Dave belongs to Mr. Miles / when the oven bakes & the pot boils (opposite). Collection of the Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.



3.5. Alkaline-glazed stoneware storage jar, 1840. Dave (slave potter), Lewis Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, S.C. H 14 1/2", C 40 1/2". Incised script: 27th June 1840 / Mr. L. Miles Dave (front, upper shoulder between handles); Give me silver or either gold; / though they are dangerous; to our soul (opposite). Collection of Dr. and Mrs. George V. Rosenberg



great strength and skill that was required to produce vessels of such size. This technical skill, coupled with the unique poetic compositions that he inscribed on many pieces of his ware, have distinguished Dave as the most outstanding African-American potter of his time.

In the third decade of the nineteenth century Dave began to inscribe the storage jars that he turned with maker's marks, dates of manufacture, signatures, and poems. By 1840 he was turning ware at the Lewis Miles stoneware factory. A storage jar dated 31 July 1840 reads "Dave belongs to Mr. Miles / whur[e] the oven backs & the pot biles" (Figure 3-2). Another jar, made the same

year, is signed "Mr. L. Miles Dave" (Figure 3-3). Dave inscribed the maker's mark "Lm" in script, the initials of stoneware factory owner Lewis Miles, on most of his signed and dated ware (see Figure 3-4). A pair of forty-gallon storage jars dated 15 May 1859 and signed by Dave and another slave named Boddler are the largest and most spectacular slave-made vessels known. (see Figure 3-5). The incised verse "Made at Stoney Bluff / for Making lord Emuff" appearing on one of these jars, refers to Lewis Miles's Stony Bluff plantation. These marks and the correlation of dates that appear on Dave's pots indicate that Miles acquired Dave after Abner Landrum

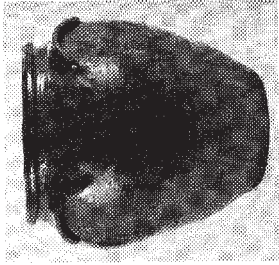




3-4. Detail of maker's mark. Incised script: Lam Aug 16 1857 / Dave. Alkaline-glazed stoneware storage jar, 1857, Dave (slave potter), Lewis Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, S.C. The factory mark "Lam" identifies the Lewis Miles Factory as the place of manufacture and the date "Aug 16 1857" indicates when the vessel was made. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Larry B. Carlson.

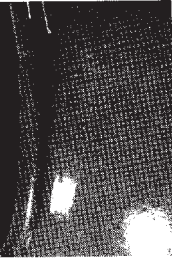
moved to Columbia. Dave undoubtedly acquired his skill as a turner through an apprenticeship at the Doctersville and/or John Landrum potteries.

Dave applied other marks to his ware. For example, some signed Dave vessels bear circular impressions, punctates, slash marks, and/or



3-5. Alkaline-glazed stoneware jar, 1859a, Dave and Baddler (slave potters), Lewis Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, S.C. H.953/6, C.81-87. Incised script: Lam May 15, 1859 / Dave & Baddler (front, upper shoulder between handles); Great & Noble jar / hold sleep, goat and bear (opposite); Collection of the Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.

horses/horn-shaped marks, either grouped together in a pattern or with one type of mark applied in a series (see Figure 5-6). Some scholars have suggested that these are a system of capacity markings used by illiterate slaves on Edgelfield-area plantations. Although in some instances this interpretation appears to be correct, no systematic application of the marks is apparent on some of the ware. The marks then may have served other functions as well—for example, as maker's marks to identify the work of a particular potter or of the pottery factory where the ware was produced. Whatever their significance, it is clear that in Edgelfield these marks were typically used by slave potters and are most often associated with the Lewis Miles factory.



5-6 Detail of incised marks, alkaline-glazed stoneware storage jar, ca. 1850, attributed to Lewis Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgelfield District, S.C. Collection of the Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.





Alkaline-glazed stoneware jar, 1850, Dave and Baddler, Lewis Miles Factory, Horse Creek Valley, Edgefield District, S.C. H 9.5 3/4", C 8 1/4", incised script: "Lin May 15, 1850 / Dave & / Baddler" (front, upper shoulder between handles) and "Great and Noble jar, / hold sheep, goat and bear." (opposite). Collection of the Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.

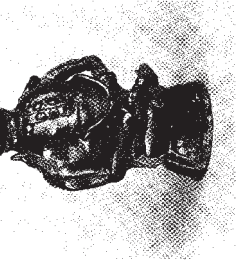




Alkaline-glazed stoneware face vessels, ca. 1860-80, attributed to African-American potters, Edgefield District, S.C. *Left:* H 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ ", C 5 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". *Center:* H 9", C 22". *Right:* H 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", C 12 $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Collection of Tony and Marie Shank.



Alkaline-glazed stoneware figural bottle, ca. 1860-70,



attributed to African-American potter Jim Lee,
Roundtree and Bodie Pottery, Kirksey's Crossroads,
Edgefield District, S.C. H 13 1/4", C 16 1/2". Collection of
the Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.





Edgefield Sculpted Vessels

In addition to utilitarian stoneware, Edgefield slave potters produced a distinct style of ceramic sculpture. Known variously as "grotesques," "voodoo jugs," or "monkey jugs," they consisted of a wheel-thrown vessel, usually of ovoid form, onto which facial features were applied in molded clay. Jugs, pitchers, lidded jars, cups, and water carriers were produced with this type of treatment.

Thomas Davies, owner of a pottery established in Edgefield District at Bath (located between present-day Aiken, South Carolina, and Augusta, Georgia) in 1802, remarked in an interview with ceramics historian Edwin Albee Barber that the slaves were allowed time on their own, which they spent "in making homely designs in coarse pottery. Among these were some weird-looking water jugs, roughly modeled in the front in the form of a grotesque human face evidently intended to portray the African features."³⁷ Barber also noted that the slaves inserted white porcelain clay for eyes and teeth, a technique that he deemed "ingenious" and reminiscent of "aboriginal art as formerly practiced by the ancestors of



37 Portrait of Colonel Thomas Davies. Courtesy of the Blue Ridge Institute, Ferrum College, Ferrum, Va., with thanks to Roddy Moore.

the makers in the Dark Continent.²⁷ A small stoneware face cup found on a waster pile at the site of the Davies pottery confirms this account (Figure 5.8).²⁸

Two similarly sculpted vessels in the collection of the Charleston Museum are attributed to Miles Mill (see Figure 5.9). However, no archaeological evidence has been found to indicate that face vessels were produced at the Miles Mill site. Even if this attribution is correct, it seems unlikely that the form was first developed at Miles Mill because the historical record indicates that the first pottery located at the site dates to about 1867. Since the Davies and Miles Mill potteries were in operation during roughly the same period, slaves may have been exchanged between the two operations, either through sale or hiring

out.²⁹ The commonality of forms could then be explained as an outcome of shared skills and borrowing of techniques of manufacture. Another face vessel has been discovered that is signed in incised script "Joe Kirksey" (Figure 5.10). This piece has a flattened face, unglazed kaolin eyes and teeth, a strap handle attached horizontally across the top, and a rear pouring spout. The style and features of the "Kirksey" and Miles Mill vessels may indicate that they are later versions.

Davies indicated that face vessels appeared on the scene rather suddenly in 1862. However, the simplification of the design and elaborate techniques required to produce the ware indicate that this vessel type was developed over a period of several years. Stoneware clay and porcelain have





well; white matte finished eyes and teeth, shiny green or brown vessel body; and eye rims and lips of either a buff or reddish brown color that were left unglazed."³⁰ To Vlach, this evolution in form demonstrates that finer vessels were produced by African-American slaves in the Edgefield area well before 1862.

Several possibilities have been proposed regarding the inspiration for the Edgefield face vessels. African-American scholars have compared the stoneware vessels to African wood carvings made by the Kongo people from the coastal areas of central Africa. They point to the fact that most of South Carolina's slave population was imported from lands controlled by the Kongo and closely related peoples.³¹ Both the Bakongo wood

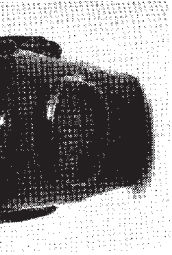


5-8. Alkali-glazed stoneware face cup with applied clay features, ca. 1862. Thomas Davies Pottery, Bath, Edgefield District, S.C. H 5 3/8", C 14 3/8". Collection of the Augusta-Richmond County Museum, Augusta, Ga.

different shrinkage rates, so if the kaolin insert is not bulky enough, it will shrink up and fall out of its socket when fired. Since the slave porters were working with highly unpredictable ground-hog kilns, a period of trial and error would have



been required to calculate the right combination of duration and position for firing. Finally, some scholars have pointed to an evolution of form as indicative of various stages through which the face vessel was developed. Scholar Robert Faris Thompson has identified certain features or groups of features with a particular "master" potter. For example, he credits one subtype, in which the potter incised the lipolin teeth with slanted rather than vertical strokes, to the "Master of the Diagonal Teeth." Folklorist John Michael Vlach maintains that these variations in style and technique suggest an evolution of form that may have taken twenty-five years to complete. According to Vlach, "the most refined of those pots feature a three-color format with variations in texture as

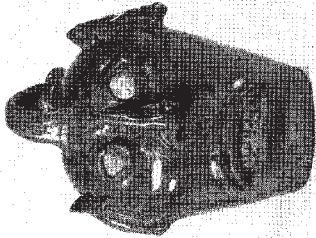


3-9 Alkaline-glazed stoneware face jug with applied clay features, ca. 1880, attributed to clares at Miles Mill Pottery, Alken County, S.C. H 6", C. 15 1/2". Collection of the Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.



ground." Similarly carved walking sticks with lizards and snakes were noted at Brownville, west of Savannah. At Frogtown and Carrytown wood carvers produced full-length human figures and busts mounted on blocks of wood. Clay sculptures produced on Wilmington Island during the same period may have represented an extension of the woodcarving tradition: "The African men used to all the time make little clay images. Sometimes they like men and sometimes they like animals. Once they made a big one. They put a spear in his hand and walk around him and say he was the chief."¹⁰ Thus the production of ceramic figurines in Edgerfield by African-American slaves may have represented a transference of African woodcarving techniques.

The decoration of pottery with faces was common in Great Britain from the Roman era onward, and this treatment was also used throughout the United States. The English Toby jug, first made in Staffordshire in the late eighteenth century and later imitated by American potters, may have also indirectly influenced the Edgerfield face vessels. Thompson noted the presence of "Tobylizing" images in Kongo art beginning in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹¹ Tobys were ex-



5.10 All-oxide-glazed stoneware face jug with applied clay features, ca. 1860-80, Edgerfield District, S.C., H 9", C 10 3/4". Incised script: Joe Kirksey. Collection of the University of South Carolina, Columbia, S.C.

carvers and the Edgelfield potters employed a mixed-media approach in the depiction of facial features. Thompson and Vlach interpret this stylistic parallel as an African survival.

There was a strong woodcarving tradition among former slaves living in coastal Georgia in the 1940s. WPA researchers, remarking on the work of a wood carver called "Stick Duddy" in the settlement of Yamacraw near the Savannah River, asserted that the chief characteristic of his carves (carved with snakes and crocodiles) was "the boldness with which the carved figures, dark-stained and highly polished, stand out against their unfinished natural wood back-

were used among the Kongo as models for stone funerary sculpture and grave ornaments. Kongo potters soon developed their own versions of the Toby, sculpted from terra-cotta clay. The Toby, then, may have represented memories of Africa for slaves in the New World.

John Vlach suggests that potters from Bennington, Vermont, brought to the Edgefield District in 1858 to establish a porcelain factory at Kaolin (present-day Badin, South Carolina), may have introduced the Toby form to the area. Tobys were stock items in New England, and Vlach points out that the spouts on two Edgefield pitchers resemble the profile of the Toby's emblematic tricorn hat.³⁹

The Kaolin factory, later known as the South-



ern Porcelain Manufacturing Company, was located near Davies's pottery in present-day Bath, South Carolina. Anson Peeler, a carpenter and skilled mechanic who had previously been involved in the design and construction of the United States Pottery in Lexington, Vermont, had been brought to South Carolina by William H. Farrar to oversee the construction of the Kaolin porcelain factory. In 1862 Peeler persuaded Davies to establish a firebrick factory on the South Carolina Railroad line at Bath. Davies supplied slaves and capital for the operation, and Peeler was made manager. During the Civil War Davies's Palmetto Fire Brick Works was converted into a stoneware factory for the production of jars, pitchers, and cups to supply Confederate hospitals. Meanwhile, the production of fine china ware was discontinued at the Kaolin factory. In 1865 the factory, under new ownership and renamed the Southern Porcelain Manufacturing Company, was producing porcelain telegraph insulators for the Confederate government and earthenware water pipes for the regional market. The Southern Porcelain Manufacturing Company was destroyed by fire in 1865 or 1864, and the Davies pottery was closed in 1865. Davies later became manager of a kaolin mine where some of his former slaves were probably

Island, Georgia, aboard the ship *Wanderer*. Some were then taken by steamboat up the John's River in Florida and sold, and others were disposed of on the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina. About 170 of the Africans were carried up the Savannah River by steamboat to a landing on the Carolina side of the river, about two miles south of Augusta, Georgia. They were then taken to the Edgefield plantation of a relative of the principal owner of the *Wanderer* where they were sold, mainly to planters in the area.²⁶ In the early 1900s a few of these native Africans were still living within a few miles of the point where they had debarked from the steamboat. Some of their Carolina-born friends and relatives still recall the presence of these individuals in the community. Floyd White of St. Simons Island, Georgia, described Tom Floyd, one of the slaves who had arrived on the *Wanderer*, in the following passage.

He wuz shawt an tick set. I think he was Ibo. He used to whomp an hollah. He say dey do dia way in Africa. He wuz doctuh too an he could out yuh wid a kulle an cop [cut or bleed] yuh. I wish he wuz yuh right now tuh cop me. I sho needs it an it make yuh feel his bestuh. I heah him talk, plenty bout Africa but I caahn mezbuh so much uh it coz uh wuz young boy den. He say he lib in a hut on a rihbah an dey eat cocconut an bread wuz grow on a tree. Dey plant yam dey sechen yeam uh



employed as kuelin miners. The skilled turners, many of whom had been brought to Beth from the Edgefield vicinity, probably bared on with local Edgefield-area stoneware factory owners after the close of the Palmetto Fire Brick Works.²⁵

Newly arrived Kongo slaves may have inspired the Edgefield potters to attempt the difficult Toby-style sculptures. Although a federal law prohibiting the slave trade went into effect in the United States in 1808, shipments of slaves were often illegally smuggled into friendly ports in the South. In 1858 one of the last slave cargoes brought to this country landed on the coast of Georgia. This group of Africans, primarily Kikongo-speaking people, was brought to Jekyll

dey dohn hadiduh wuk it. Dey hab pesum an banana. He call it by nuuhlooh name but I canbin meembuh it. I seen plenty ab African people an dey all say dey plant dah crop an dey dohn hadiduh wuk it. I hesh let uh em tell how dey get ohuh yuh. Dey trap em on a boat wud a red flag.²⁷

Slaves from the *Wanderer*, therefore, reintroduced African customs, healing methods, and agricultural practices to their fellow slaves in the Georgia sea islands. Some of these newly arrived Africans apparently retained their African beliefs. For example, anthropologist Charles Montgomerie offered the following description of Uster Williams, a former slave living in the Richmond County Home near Augusta, who had been a pas-



seizer on the *Wanderer*: "His present condition is peculiarly sad. Almost blind, and with little mind left, thinking he has had a 'spell' put on him by 'witchcraft,' he seems to think that someone is going to kill him; yet he retains his memory of African words and customs in a remarkable degree. He says he came from near the 'Bezy' river in Africa."⁴⁶

Lucinda Thurmond, a former servant on the Seiger plantation in Edgefield, remembered four of the African men pictured in Montgomery's 1908 article on the *Wanderer*: "Uncle Ward (Cincinnati), or Ward Lee), Uncle Tucker (Pucka Greata, or Tucker Henderson), Uncle Romeo (Tahro, or Romeo), and Uncle Uster (Mabiala, or Uster Williams)," Tahro, or Romeo, the oldest of those interviewed by Montgomery, built an African-style straw house that Mrs. Thurmond remembered playing in as a child. Mrs. Thurmond recalled that Tucker once scared her by waving a red pocket hanky and saying: "I liked to had ya, I liked to had ya." When asked why she was afraid, she replied that "they said, that's the way they brought 'em over here from Africa."⁴⁷ These memories of Africa evidently made a lasting impression upon African-Americans living in the



June, July, and August. In the third entry, dated 1 November, R. O. Starke hired out Dennis, Jim, Rob, Silas, Romeo, and Ike during September and October for \$.60. Although it is unclear what sort of tasks Romeo performed at the factory, his presence there may be the first evidence of direct Kongó influence on the production of face vessels in the Edgefield District.

Other sculpted forms were produced by freed blacks during the postbellum era. A figural bottle in the Charleston Museum is attributed to a black potter named Jim Lee who worked at the Roundtree-Bodie factory at Kirksey's Crossroads in Edgefield District (Figure 3.11). Although the Charleston Museum records indicate that the bottle was made before 1860, the Bodie pottery does not appear in the Edgefield industrial census records until 1870. W. D. Roundtree was listed in the 1860 census of industry as the owner of the stoneware pottery later operated by Bodie. According to local historian Margaret Watson, the site was first established as a stoneware factory in 1840 by a man named Turner. W. D. Roundtree acquired the pottery shortly before the Civil War and later sold it to J. H. Burnett. Burnett sold the property to Bodie around 1870, and Bodie report-

Edgefield area. The retention of African magical-religious practices by the slaves from the *Wanderer* may be particularly significant since the African Tobys were infused with magical power.⁴⁶

A slave named Romco, possibly the Romco brought to the Edgefield area on the *Wanderer*, appears in a business ledger kept by Thomas J. Davies as a workman at the Palmetto Fire Brick Works.⁴⁷ Romco appears in three separate entries. In the first, dated 28 May 1865, he is listed as part of a work gang hired out from slaveholder R. O. Statke during the month of May for \$60. The gang consists of Romco and four other slaves—Jim, Dennis, Bob Selby, and Ike. On 15 September of the same year slaveholder W. P. Statke hired out another gang—Romco, Dennis, Ike, Jim, and Bob—to the factory for \$362.50 during

1884.⁴⁸ This account suggests two possibilities. Jim Lee either made the bottle at the Roundtree pottery in about 1860, or he turned the piece at the pottery under Bodie's ownership sometime after 1870.

The Jim Lee bottle is different in design and technique from the Davies and Miles Mill face vessels. This unusual form was reportedly made in the likeness of a local preacher, the Reverend Pickett. The sculptural detailing of the body and costume is reminiscent of the Tobys, and the iron-slip markings, applied to features such as hair, buttons, epaulets, bow tie, collar, and sleeves, is similar to that found on fragments of a ceramic figure recovered from the site of the Phoenix Factory. The Phoenix Factory figure,

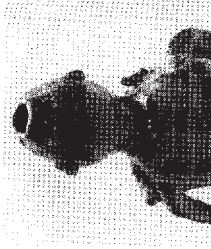
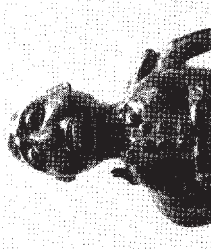


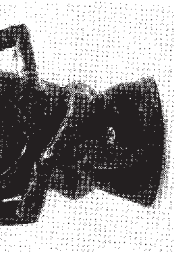


thought to have been a depiction of an Indian chief, bears a gray-green alkaline glaze similar in color and texture to the glaze formulas developed by Thomas Chandler. This is not surprising since Chandler was one of the principal potters at the Phoenix Factory. Facial features were applied in kaolin and iron slip to both the Phoenix Factory figure and the figural bottle attributed to Jim Lee. Lee also used an unusual decorative technique typically associated with Catawba Valley, North Carolina, folk pottery—that of placing pieces of broken glass on the rim. (In this case,

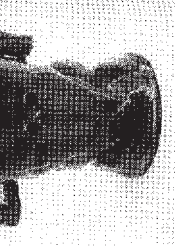
on the shoulders of the figure). The glass fragments liquefied when fired, creating a pattern of thick, contrasting drips along the length of the bottle (figure 3.12). Since this technique was not commonly used in Edgefield, the piece may be indicative of the interaction between potters in the Kirksey's Crossroads-area of Edgefield and the Catawba Valley of North Carolina.

Edgefield potters continued to produce face vessels well into the twentieth century. For example, a crudely designed face jug in a private collection is inscribed "E. G. / Aiken /





3-11. Alkaline-glazed stoneware figural bottle, ca. 1860-70, attributed to African-American potter Jim Lee, Roundtree and Bodie Pottery, Kirksey's Crossroads, Edgefield District, S.C. H. 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ " C. 16 $\frac{3}{4}$ "



3-12. Reverse view of Figure 3-11. The vertical drips along the length of the bottle were achieved by placing pieces of glass on the rim before firing. Collection of the Charleston Museum, Charleston, S.C.



S.C. / 6-24-17" (Figure 3-13). American folk art collector Herbert Hemphill reported that an African-American living near Mobile was making stoneware sculpture similar to that made by African-American slaves in Edgefield as late as the decade preceding World War II. John Vluch has suggested a continuation of the aesthetic force of the Edgefield face vessels in the contemporary clay sculptures of James ("Son Ford") Thomas of Leland, Mississippi.⁴³

Southern Anglo-American folk potters may have borrowed the earlier African-American face vessel design and technology. For example, until his death in 1967 folk potter Cheever Meaders of Whit County, Georgia, produced alkaline-glozed stoneware jugs with sculpted facial features and fragments of earthenware dishes inserted for teeth. His son, Lamar Meaders, produces similar face vessels today, as does folk potter Burlon Craig in the Catawba Valley of North Carolina (see Figure 3-14).⁴⁴ John Burrison identified "at least seven white pottery families" that have made face vessels in Georgia.⁴⁵ Members of one of these families, the Browns, reportedly introduced the face vessel to North Carolina when they established a shop at Arden in 1923.





5-15 Alkaline-glazed stoneware face jug with applied clay features, 1917, Aiken County, S.C., H. 8", C. 20 5/8".
Inlaid script: E G / Aiken / S.C. / 6-24-17. Courtesy of Roddy and Sally Moore.

Sculptor, potter, and historian, Michael Hall has proposed an alternative explanation for the appearance of face vessels in America. Hall rejects the presumption that face vessels represent a black folk art form. He contends instead that "face vessels originated in a white world and are linked to the American temperance movement."⁴⁶ Through specific examples from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and North Carolina he links their production to the growth and spread of temperance throughout the United States. Although Hall overdoes his thesis that the temperance movement is the key to face vessels, he ranges wide in his evidence, demonstrating the appearance of American face vessels long before the South Carolina versions. Thus, it remains unclear whether Anglo potters borrowed the face vessel





the Caribbean, it may have been a remembered African form. In support of this theory, he points out that Bakongo potters made earthenware vessels called *m'anga* that resemble water coolers made throughout the West Indies. John Burri-son has suggested that pots with air-rup handles and everted spouts were alien to British folk pottery and mairians that water carriers of this type were unknown in England until about 1900. Georgeanna Greer points out that this form appears in Europe much earlier and that it may be Iberian in origin. Greer adds that the "moonkey" form was called a harvest jug in some parts of the United States and was produced by Anglo potters as well as African-Americans.⁵⁶



5-14. Alkaline-glazed stoneware face jug, 1979, Lanier Meaders, Cleveland, Ga. H. 9^{1/2}". C 22 1/2". Incised script. Lanier Meaders (at base). Collection of McKisick Museum, The University of South Carolina, Columbia.

design and technology from African-Americans. Another type of vessel found in Edgefield that may have been African-inspired is a water car-



rier known as the "monkey jug." This vessel,

made in unglazed earthenware in Africa and the West Indies and in alkali-glazed stoneware in Edgefield, was ovoid in form with an overarching stirrup handle and a tubular spout attached at an angle (see Figure 5-15). The use of the term "monkey" in connection with these jugs is reportedly a reference to their function, and significance rather than to their resemblance to the head of a monkey. Barber noted that porous vessels made for holding water and cooling it by evaporation were called by that name. The use of the term "monkey" to mean a strong thirst dates to as early as the late eighteenth century and is still used by blacks in South Carolina.⁷ John Vorch speculates that since the monkey jug was known in



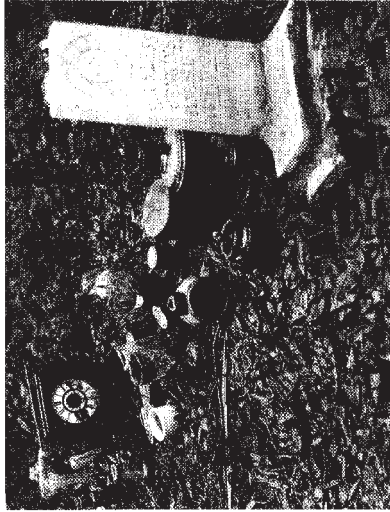
5-15 Alkali-glazed stoneware "monkey" jug with applied clay features, ca. 1864, attributed to the Thomas Davies Pottery, Bath, Edgefield District, S.C., 118 $\frac{1}{2}$ " C x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Collection of the Augusta-Richmond County Museum, Augusta, Ga.





THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN PRESENCE

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Robert Farris Thompson has proposed another possible African derivation of the term: "monkey" — the Kikongo word for "devil," *mibugi*. Thompson maintains that the Edgefield face vessels, some of them fashioned in the monkey form, may have been derived from a Kongo ceremony in which the chief drank palm wine from a skull-cup (and later from a 'Lobby) to symbolize his power over life and death. Presumably, the Edgefield face vessels, called Afro-Carolinian face vessels by Thompson, were modeled after the African 'Lobys and therefore were also imbued with mystical powers.¹⁰

Thompson also noted that American ceramic historian C. Malcolm Watkiss had informed him "of a notice of Afro-Carolinian vessels having been found in Afro-Carolinian burial grounds," and that a collection of face vessels in the possession of William Raiford Ewe, a descendant of Thomas Davies, had holes "very carefully chipped out of the bottom, as if to break the objects without spoiling them, to prepare them as items of broken crockery, which traditionally covered the graves of Carolinians of African descent" (see Figure 3, 16).¹⁰

In his *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, New-

RESEARCH



bell Niles Puckett observed that African-Americans in Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina placed broken objects on the graves of friends and relatives in order to appease the spirit of the deceased. He wrote that "in South Carolina, bleached sea shells, broken crockery and glassware, broken pitchers, soup-dishes, lamp chimneys, turkeys, coffee-cups, syrup jugs, all sorts of ornamental vases, cigar boxes, gun locks, tomato cans, trawls, flower pots, bits of stucco, plaster images, pieces of carved stone-work from one of the public buildings during the war, glass lamps and tumblers in great number, and forty other kitchen articles are used."⁵⁵ WPA fieldworkers in the Georgia sea islands also reported on this custom. In Sandfly, a community located about nine miles southeast of Savannah, workers observed "the practice of placing broken bits of pottery and possessions last used by the dead person on the grave for the purpose of supplying the needs of the spirit." An informant in Brownville, west of Savannah, explained that the things a person used last were placed on the grave "to satisfy the spirit and keep it from following you back to the house," and in Harris Neck, south of Savannah: "You put dishes and bottles and all the pretty pieces what they like on the grave.



This analysis of stoneware vessels produced in Edgefield by African-American potters reveals a process identified by anthropologists as "syncretism," whereby elements of two diverse cultures that are most similar are interwoven, creating a new entity or cultural hybrid. In this instance, African concepts of form and decoration combined with Western ceramic technology and materials (that is, stoneware and porcelain clay). Hybrid artifacts that may be viewed as reflective of the African-American response to a hostile and alien environment. Nineteenth-century Edgefield stoneware vessels are often labeled grotesque jugs, but for their black makers and the African-Americans who used them they may have served as ritualistic objects. Although such interpretations have been criticized as speculative and poorly documented, as John Vlach pointed out in his study of African-American art and craft, "if we fail to understand that there is a black history behind black artifacts, we risk missing the essence of Afro-American creativity."⁵⁶

Studies of other early nineteenth-century industries in the South suggest that skilled slave potters may have achieved greater autonomy as a result of their increased value to the slave owner.⁵⁷

You always break these things before you put 'em down. You break [them] so that the chain will be broke. You see, the one person is dead and if you don't break the things, then the others in the family will die, too."⁷⁴ Since similar burial customs have been practiced in West Africa for hundreds of years, the appearance of the tradition in the United States is generally viewed by African-Americanist scholars as an African cultural survival. Melville J. Herskovits wrote that "whatever else has been lost of aboriginal custom, the attitudes towards the dead as manifested in meticulous rituals cast in the mold of West African patterns, have survived."⁷⁵ African-American graves in South Carolina were still being covered with bits of broken crockery, lamps, and toys as late as 1914 and still are today in the sea islands.⁷⁶

Skilled slaves were afforded greater freedom of movement among plantations and were allowed free time to cultivate a garden or to earn capital for their personal use. Associations between Edgelyield stoneware factories were strengthened and maintained through the practice of hiring out or selling slaves, and the exchange of slaves between potteries formed a larger, interconnected community of slave potters.

African-Americans continued their involvement in Edgelyield stoneware production during the second half of the nineteenth century, and at least one freed black, John Chandler, appears to have been among a group of migrant potters who carried the alkaline-glazed stoneware tradition from Edgelyield to Texas.

Freed blacks worked at the Stigler, B. F. Lan-



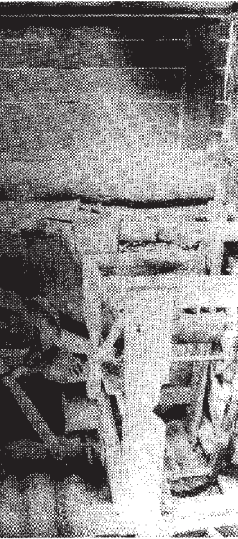


drum, Bodie, and Miles Mill potteries. Most likely, some of these men were former slaves who had been trained in stoneware manufacture during the antebellum period. Two black turners, David Druise and Mark Jones, appear in the 1870 Edgelfield County census living near stoneware manufacturer John Miles, Thomas Brewster, and Mark Jones; also worked at the Seigler pottery. Some black potters may have taken the surnames of their former masters. For example, Scott and Moss Miles reportedly worked at the B.F. Landrum pottery, and Edgelfield turners Philip and Oliver Miles were living in Shaw's Creek in 1870. A black man named Josh Miles appears in the 1850 Aitken County industrial census as the owner

of a "Judge Factory" located on Shaw's Creek and employing six male and female laborers. His was probably a family owned and operated pottery run by members of the Miles family. It is the only documented black-owned stoneware factory in the Edgelfield area.

Black potters were also active in the Jugtown area of South Carolina. In her book *The Carolina Mountaintops*, published in 1915, Margaret Morley wrote about an African-American potter named Rich Williams who was operating a shop located in the Tyger River area near Gowensville, South Carolina (in present-day Greenville County) (see Figure 5.17). Williams produced "jugs, wide-mouthed butter crocks, and pitchers" with a glaze





3-17 African-American potter Rich Williams at the wheel. Photograph by Margaret W. Motley, courtesy of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.





5-18 Alkaline-glazed stoneware vessels by Rich Williams. Photograph by Margaret W. Morley, courtesy of the North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, N.C.

made from ash and clay (see Figure 5-18). Morley potter in late nineteenth-century Edgefield-area described Williams's kiln as "a long, low vault of census records."

bricks and clay, with a fire hole at one end and an opening at the other.⁵⁵ This kiln type was used by alkaline-glazed stoneware potters throughout the South.⁵⁶ Although no positive connection has been found between Rich Williams and Edgefield African-American potters, at least one other black man with the surname Williams appeared as a

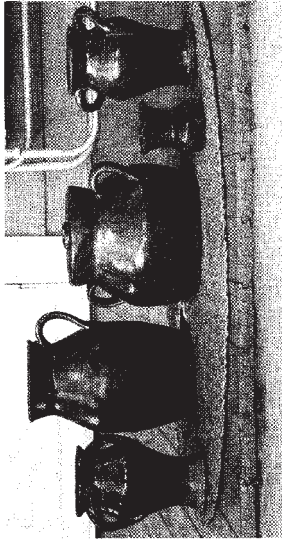
Clearly, African-Americans made lasting contributions to the southern stoneware tradition. Surviving ware produced in the Edgefield District and throughout the South attest to the skill, creativity, and individuality of African-American potters.





FORMS AND FUNCTIONS

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6.35 Clayton Ing Factory ware: flower vases, pitcher, and stew pot. Collection of Mrs. Jones ("Pete"), Clayton.

Horticultural Implements

Sculpted Vessels

By the turn of the century stoneware potters throughout the South were facing competition

from Edgelfield-area stoneware factories. These vessels

from increasingly available and cheaper mass-produced glass and metal containers. Most potters converted to the production of garden and tourist ware in order to survive.

Many potters produced gardenware such as flowerpots, vases, and urns along with their regular line of stoneware. Flowerpots were unglazed, as were the large urns or planters used in the yard and in the cemetery. Urns, planters, and vases were often further embellished with decorative handles, fluted rims, and tooled rings (see Figure 6.53).

South Carolina potters also produced vessels used in animal husbandry. The chicken waterer or poultry fountain appears in alkaline-glazed stoneware in the Edgefield District as well as in the upcountry region of the state.

like two main forms—the figural vessel and the face vessel. Figural vessels are statuettes consisting of a vessel base onto which a complete figure has been modeled in applied clay. Details such as facial features are typically rendered in dark iron-bearing slip or white kaolin slip. The face vessel also involves modeling features in clay onto a thrown base, but instead of a complete figure, the potter created a head with well-defined facial features. Mid-nineteenth-century South Carolina face vessels may be distinguished from later versions by the type of material used for the eyes and teeth. Early Edgefield potters inserted pure kaolin into the hollow openings of the eyes and mouth. The round eyeballs occasionally bear a single puncture mark where they were pierced with a sharp tool. Details of the teeth vary widely,

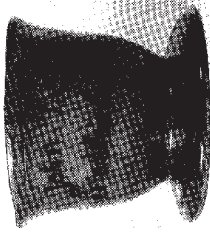


with some potters simply smoothing the kaolin into the mouth and others meticulously incising one or two rows of vertical lines onto the clay divided by a single horizontal line across the length of the mouth. Another Edgefield potter applied a row of diagonal lines for the teeth. Although some twentieth-century potters have produced face vessels with eyes fashioned from kaolin, the teeth typically consist of broken fragments of earthenware. The jagged "teeth" are inserted into the mouth individually. The possible origins and significance of these unusual vessels have already been discussed in Chapter 5. Twentieth-century South Carolina potters who produced face vessels include the Brown family of Bethune and John B. Smith in the Jugtown area.

Mortuary Objects

Pottery grave markers, made to be placed on a grave as a marker or planter, are found from southwestern Pennsylvania to Texas. Few South Carolina examples have survived, but these vessels were probably fairly commonly produced in the late nineteenth century.

A vessel signed in iron-slip script "John Trapp / Edgefield District / SC / January 15, 1846" may



6.54. Alkaline-glazed stoneware cemetery urn, 1846, Trapp-Chandler Factory, Kirksey's Crossroads, Edgefield District, S.C. H 6'10", C 4 1/2", Iron-slip script. John Trapp / Edgefield District / SC / January 15, 1846. Collection of Tony and Marie Shank.

a tall fluted urn with a pedestal-type base and flared rim (Figure 6.56). This was one of the most sophisticated pieces, having been turned in two pieces. Two other pots were baluster-shaped,

be a rare example of an archaic form South Carolina cemetery urn or planter (Figure 6.74). This unusual pot, attributed to the Trepp-Chandler Factory at Kirksey's Crossroads, has a smooth olive brown alkaline glaze, a tooled rim, and a wide, footed base.

In a 1967 *Ceramics Monthly* article Boynie Lee and Don Lewis wrote about their discovery of over thirty large cemetery urns and a grave marker in a local cemetery.¹² The vessels illustrated in the article were unglazed but were decorated with fluted rims, incised markings, and tooled rings. They exhibited a wide range of forms. One of the most recent examples was

and a third was short and squat with a high, wide shoulder and an everted rim. The simplest pot in form and decoration was a wide-mouthed flowerpot with three sets of wavy combed bands.

The makers of these vessels were not identified, but Lee and Lewis observed that the ware represented the skills of at least a half-dozen different potters. The grave ornaments have long since disappeared, but the cemetery where they were found, Mt. Lebanon Church in Greenville County, is located in the heart of Jugtown. Several potters, most notably the Hansons, Atkinsons, and Tappes, operated shops in the Mt. Lebanon community. Thomas Gentry Bab, stepson of





THE
POTTERY AND PORCELAIN
OF
THE UNITED STATES

AN HISTORICAL REVIEW OF AMERICAN CERAMIC ART FROM
THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE PRESENT DAY

TO WHICH IS APPENDED A CHAPTER ON
THE POTTERY OF MEXICO

BY

EDWIN ATLEE BARBER, A.M., Ph.D.

Director of the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, Philadelphia

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

WITH 335 ILLUSTRATIONS

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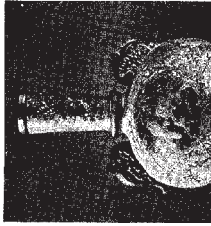
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"Lady, by yonder blessèd moon I swear,
That tips with silver all these fruit tree tops."

The opposite side is no less artistic. On a branch in the central panel is a peacock with flowing train, in raised gold, while beneath are the lines from Hamlet :

"And now reigns here
A very, very — peacock."

Mr. Lycett's artistic career in America may be said to represent the history of china painting in the United States, since he is the only ceramic artist who has been continuously identified with the development and expansion of the art from the beginning of the Civil War to the present time, covering



a period of four decades. His work has been so vastly more important than all the work in this field before him, that it is not improper to speak of him as the father of china painting in America.



238.—GREENPOINT FAIENCE VASE. RELIEF GOLD DESIGNS ON MAROON GROUND. DECORATED BY EDWARD LYCETT. PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM COLLECTION.

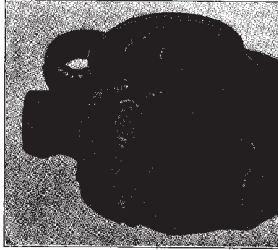
BATH, S. C.

Before the great influx of business came to the little pottery which was operated by Colonel Thomas J. Davies, at Bath, S. C., about the commencement of the Civil War



(see page 248), the negro workmen had considerable spare time on their hands, which they were accustomed to employ in making homely designs in coarse pottery. Among these were some weird-looking water jugs, roughly modelled on the front in the form of a grotesque human face,—evidently intended to portray the African features.

These were generally known as "monkey jugs," not on account of their resemblance to the head of an ape, but because the porous vessels which were made for holding water and cooling it by evaporation were called by that name. Colonel Davies informed me a few years ago that





239.—"MONKEY JUG," MADE BY NEGRO
SLAVES, AT BATH, S. C., 1862.

numbers of these were made during the year 1862. These curious objects, which I have seen in several collections, labelled "Native Pottery made in Africa," possess considerable interest as representing an art of the Southern negroes, uninfluenced by civilization, and we can readily believe that the modelling reveals a trace of aboriginal art as formerly practised by the ancestors of the makers in the Dark Continent. By the ingenious insertion of a different clay, more porous and whiter than the body of the jug, the





ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL FACTS. 467

eyeballs and teeth attain a hideous prominence. A purplish glaze was roughly flown over the surface, presenting the appearance of a composition of sand and ashes, as described to me by Colonel Davies himself. Taking it all in all, the history of the little pottery at Bath possesses greater interest, and is more closely interwoven with the history of the Southern Confederacy, than any other industrial enterprise of the time.

HOCKESSIN, DEL.

Abner Marshall built a small pottery at Hockessin, Del., in 1860, for utilizing the fine china clays which abounded in that vicinity. We have seen an ornate Rockingham candlestick, with relief decorations, which was made at this establishment. The manufacture, however, only continued for about three years.

When the Phoenix Pottery, at Phoenixville, Pa., was leased to Messrs. W. A. H. Schreiber and J. F. Betz, in 1872, the manufacture of parian was commenced there. Lithophanes, or transparencies for windows and lamp shades, at that time much in vogue, were produced to some extent. Among the subjects selected for this style of intaglio modelling on thin, flat porcelain surfaces, were the Crucifixion, the Madonna, Faust and Marguerite, Penn's Treaty with the Indians, Christ and the Adulteress, the Descent from the Cross, Portrait of a Lady, Romeo and Juliet, Storm at Sea, Forest Scene, Fireside Scene,





African American Visual Arts

From Slavery to the Present

CELESTE-MARIE BERNIER

The University of North Carolina Press
Chapel Hill





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'THE SLAVE WHO PAINTS'

resist racist censoring of their works has resulted in slippery art objects which may include no overt 'ethnic expression' but which have helped to lay the foundations for an African American visual arts tradition.

Dave the Potter and Afro-Carolinian Face Vessels

'Dave belongs to Mr. Miles/ wher the oven bakes & the pot biles'

African American slave potters improvised out of necessity by creating artworks out of otherwise utilitarian objects. Early artisans were forced to work with the materials provided by white masters and create objects in compliance with their demands. Their success in carving out a space for their own artistic agency in spite of these difficulties establishes connections between art, political protest and an oppositional aesthetics which continue on into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The most famous potter of the nineteenth century is a slave known only to the official records as 'Dave'. The fact that we are not even sure of his last name, although recent scholarship suggests it may have been 'Drake', resonates with ambiguities surrounding the birthdates and biographies of many black artists. Similarly, perhaps the most original surviving artefacts in this period are the Afro-Carolinian face vessels. While we have no idea concerning the identity of these slave creators, enigmas remain surrounding their origin, imagery and purpose. These incomplete records highlight the difficulties in researching early African

American artisans and leave us wondering how many more are simply lost to history.

Dave the Potter (c. 1780–1863)

'I made this jar for cash/ Though its called lucre trash' (22 August 1875) (in De Groft, 1998: 251). Dave the Potter's legacy consists of over one hundred 'great and noble' jars fired to store food in southern plantations (Ibid.: 250). These large works can be identified via their decorative rims, incised and arched handles and rich brown and grey glazes of glossy textures. However, the poetic couplets etched on to the glazed surfaces of these pots are far more astonishing than their epic size. As Aaron De Groft argues, these 'usable' artefacts became 'vehicles of covert, yet overt, protest in that Dave not only signed and dated his creations but also incised verses into his pieces' (Ibid.: 249). Dave's opening couplet reveals that he created these works out of economic necessity – 'I made this jar for cash' – at the same time, however, that his hatred of 'lucre trash' registered his rejection of his status as a slave





available for purchase. Dave's inclusion of poetry on objects destined for use by enslaved labourers challenged their status as domestic artefacts. In his gifted hands, they became works of art and touchstones of protest. These works testify to Dave's 'attempt to communicate', given that he was 'creating an audience and teaching slaves to read' in fearless opposition to South Carolina laws banning slave literacy (*ibid.*: 255). As Cox argues, 'Dave's use of the poetic form' created a 'legitimate cultural space from which to articulate and inscribe a valid and practicable sense of self' (Cox, 2006: 8).

Dave's highly visible poetic lines which he commonly situated near the rim of his jars mitigated against dehumanising drudgery to argue for the right of the black slave to an artistic identity. His pioneering practice transformed his status from dutiful slave potter to radical poet and loose cannon capable of advocating resistance under the master's gaze. These pots which were made to store food would have been used by slave labourers far beyond the eyes of white masters. In this context, a seemingly innocuous utilitarian and domestic object became a statement not only of artistic independence, given that Dave claimed ownership by signing these works, but also of radical protest. Dave's success in spreading literacy and incendiary politics in the heart of the slaveholding south during a period of black subjugation mirrors the works of slave quilters who developed coded patterns by which to assist slave runaways

in their escape north. In an era of slavery and black cultural annihilation, early African American artists improvised with existing materials to argue for the right to create art out of everyday artefacts. Their technique of indirect artistic expression should signal caution to audiences otherwise tempted to see only abstractly patterned quilts or glazed earthenware with no awareness of their hidden dimensions.

Dave's engraving of poetic text on jars 'appears to be unique in the history of pottery' (De Groft, 1998: 249). His couplets address common themes in African American visual arts including labour, history, slavery, identity, nationalism and religion. John Burrison's argument that most of Dave's couplets 'relate directly to the pots themselves' as they become 'integrated with their medium' overlooks how even his most descriptive couplets revel in his agency as an artist (Burrison, 1983: 339). These couplets not only offer advice concerning the use of his pots but also celebrate their 'greatness' and size — 'Great and Noble jar/ Hold sheep, goat, or bear' (13 May 1859) (in Patton, 1998: 64) and 'A very large jar which has four handles/ pack it full of fresh meats — then light candles'





(1858. *Ibid.*: 65). One of Dave's earliest inscriptions – 'Dave belongs to Mr. Miles/ wher the oven bakes & the pot biles [sic]' (31 July 1840) (in De Groft, 1998: 250) – is open to multiple readings. On the surface, these phrases communicate factual statements reflecting Dave's status as a slave and the purpose of his jar to assist in domestic chores. However, as a poet, he operated by understatement by leaving his declaration ... 'Dave belongs to Mr. Miles' – unexplained on the grounds that his enslaved audience would have identified with his plight. His use of rhyming in 'Miles' and 'biles' questions the slave-owner's authority by associating him with the domestic chores undertaken by slaves on the plantation. Furthermore, the phonetic spelling of 'wher' and 'biles' highlights his use of an African American spoken vernacular to demonstrate the richness of a distinct oral tradition. Ultimately, Dave experimented with literary language on his pots to resist his chattel status.

While it is likely that Dave's intended audience was enslaved men and women, this may not be the whole story. Among his couplets are many which offer warnings including: 'If you don't listen at the bible, you will be lost' (25 March 1859. *Ibid.*: 256); and 'I made this Jar all of cross/ If you don't repent, you will be lost' (3 May 1862. *Ibid.*: 256). These lines are most likely to have been directed towards his black viewers to raise their religious awareness. However, as De Groft argues these

couplets no doubt refer to 'Christ's crucifixion and death for the sins of man' (Ibid.: 256). Could they, therefore, also have been intended as a warning to slaveholders? By associating the suffering of slaves with the crucifixion of Christ on the 'cross', might Dave have been taunting his white audiences with their sins? He may have been unafraid of whites seeing his poetry – particularly given their highly visible placement at the top of these jars – as he asked them to 'repent'. 'I made this Jar all of cross' not only highlights his artistic agency but the connotations of 'cross' align African Americans with Christian martyrdom. Dave's poetic couplets rely on irony and satire to generate thematic ambiguity. As Thompson sees it, parallels exist between Dave's poetry and early developments in black music. He argues that Dave placed 'the same rhyme' on 'more than one vessel', not only to betray his 'wit' but also to 'recall the sparing style of the three-line blues' (Thompson, 1983: 35). Dave's repetition with variation as well as his use of off-rhyme in 'cross' and 'lost' introduce jarring effects which complicate attempts to interpret his works. Moreover, he was not afraid to discuss American politics: 'The fourth of July is surely come/ to blow the fife and beat





the drum' (4 July 1859) (in De Groft, 1998: 251). The irony of Fourth of July celebrations of white freedom would not have been lost on Dave or his captive audience.

The impact of Dave's work arises in the jarring juxtaposition of poetic text with domestic artefact. His understated textual fragments contrast with his epic-sized jars to underscore the invisible and elided aspects of black narratives and histories. Viewers can immediately take in the enormity of his earthenware but they have to peer closer to unearth his buried text. Dave performed as an African American griot or storyteller whose work can be understood alongside later pictorial narratives by Harriet Powers, narrative series by Jacob Lawrence, photographic fragments by Betye Saar and photomontage projections by Romare Bearden. Samella Lewis claims that Dave's works got to the 'heart of community life' by representing 'images common to African American lives' (Lewis, 2003: 4). His inclusion of poetry 'hidden in plain view' educated his black audiences that it was possible to survive and resist cultural annihilation (Tobin and Dobard, 2000). Ultimately, Dave's ongoing sense of isolation which he admitted in couplets such as "I wonder where is all my relation/ friendship to all – and every nation" (16 August 1857) captures the struggles facing early black artists in their fight for an artistic identity and an audience for their works (in De Groft, 1998: 259).

Afro-Carolinian Face Vessels

'Grotesque'. 'Voodoo'. 'Monkey'. These words have been in popular use to describe the small jugs of between 4 to 9 inches' produced in a twenty year period between 1860 and 1880 and recently unearthed in South Carolina (Patton, 1998: 65). Thompson redesignated these artefacts 'Afro-Carolinian face vessels' because he was unhappy with their problematic associations (Thompson, 1983: 34). He describes these objects as 'stoneware vessels shaped in the form of a tormented human face' (Ibid.: 33). The majority of these works were produced during the American Civil War when a slaveholder ordered his 'Afro-American potters to fashion earthen jars, pitchers, cups, and saucers' (Ibid.: 34). By 1863, however, the 'slaves suddenly were fashioning on their own initiative small vessels with human faces on them' (Ibid.: 34). Thompson argues that these works were inspired by the eighteenth-century tradition of the English toby jug, representing a 'short, corpulent, grinning man', and Congo-Angola traditions of 'multiple media in figural sculpture' in their 'similar mixing of the white medium of kaolin





with darker glazed pottery' (Ibid.: 38, 39). These patterns of aesthetic influence transcend national borders to suggest the importance of Africa and Europe for African American artists throughout the period.

One particular Afro-Carolinian face vessel dared at c.1860 contrasts the green-grey glaze of an unknown visage with startlingly white protruding eyes and teeth. Thompson argues that the 'eyes project intention' while the teeth demonstrate 'bestial ferocity' (Ibid.: 33). The diminutive size and asymmetry of the face provided by one eye raised above another and the lack of alignment in the ears compound the viewer's sense of anguish and contortion. The ambiguity of the facial features insinuate parallels with African masks used in ceremonial and religious rituals. Masks remain a fundamental feature of twentieth and twenty-first century African American sculpture, painting, mixed-media assemblage and installation art. They carry symbolic and spiritual significance to suggest origins in Africa, rituals of religious worship, performance and disguise. Their popularity may emanate from the power of the mask to ascribe private interiority to African American subjects by concealing their emotions. As Burrison argues, these 'face vessels may have been powerful artistic statements of the frustration and resentment of a people in bondage, masks seldom revealed more directly to the white masters' (Burrison, 1983: 345).

These slave artists successfully subverted the use value of their works at the same time as they refused to provide a clear-cut symbolism or accessible visual language. They replaced the 'pitchers' and 'jars' of the white master's decree with diminutive objects which refused to 'tell' their aesthetic origins, symbolism and intended function. These works show how objects commissioned by whites could assume a life beyond their patron's imagining. In contrast to Dave's large earthenware jugs, the diminutive size and small openings of these artefacts suggest they may have been created to fulfil other functions – possibly ceremonial, ritualistic or even ornamental. Perhaps they started life as white commissioned artefacts but evolved to circulate within the black community. Vlach claims that these 'miniature vessels' which were 'sculpted as human heads' had a 'symbolic, rather than utilitarian, purpose because of the care taken in modelling the very small bodies' (Vlach, 1991: 34). Thompson's assessment that they were perhaps 'containers of magical substances' suggests parallels with African art which jars with their intended use by whites (Thompson, 1983: 41).

The most interesting feature of these objects is their highly figurative





depictions of human faces. On these grounds, Thompson celebrates their 'imaginative transformation of gross ceramic structure into human expression' (Ibid.: 33). He claims that they were most likely bought by whites who interpreted them as 'amusing craft curiosities, a kind of visual minstrelsy' (Ibid.: 39). Burrison's argument that the 'olive-glazed figure' of one slave potter may have presented a 'satiric likeness' of an 'Anglo-American' man of the period opens up another possibility for readings of these mysterious face vessels (Burrison, 1983: 345). Is it possible that interpretations of these works as visual tales of slave anguish are not the whole story? Thompson is right to argue that slaves 'made these vessels for themselves and their people for traditional reasons of their own', given that '[u]nder the noses of their masters they succeeded in carving out a world of aesthetic autonomy' (Ibid.: 39). On the same principle that Dave inscribed text on to works used by slaves to protest against racial oppression beyond the white gaze, can it be argued that these works are as likely to be caricatures of white physiognomies, as perceived by African American slaves? As such, they could be the first of their kind. The exaggerated and contorted features as well as the frowning expression of the extant Afro-Carolinian face vessel (c.1860) suggest that this work is as likely to reflect the satirical likeness of a white master as it is to depict the sorrow of an enslaved African. For the slave potter there was more to be gained by caricaturing whites rather than

blacks. By stereotyping white facial features so that slave owners would not recognise themselves, black artists may have found a way to obtain agency and defeat white racist illusions of superiority. Given that they challenged white tendencies to objectify black physicality and reduce African Americans to no more than their chattel status, the power of these images may arise in their ability to convey both realities at the same time. In the same way that Thompson argues it is 'dangerous to assume monofunctionality', perhaps these works carry multiple interpretations (Thompson, 1983: 42).

As Cox writes, the existence of Afro-Carolinian face vessels demonstrates that the "folk" productions of slaves contained a subtext of resistance whilst simultaneously allowing concealment of this resistance because of the colonisers' innocuous understandings of the slaves' conduct' (Cox: 2006: 4). The discovery of Afro-Carolinian face vessels in the 'areas of the Underground Railroad' and at slave burial sites undoubtedly establishes a close relationship between early African American utilitarian objects and a visual poetics of resistance (Ibid.).





Even a brief examination of enslaved African potters and their aesthetic practices shows that critics must read against the grain to gain further insights into the otherwise elided complexities of African American art produced during the early period.

James P. Ball (1825-1904)

'[F]ugitives are men of daring fortitude'

'The Virginians rushed in crowds to his room; all classes, white and black, bond and free sought to have their lineaments, stamped, by the artist [James P. Ball] who painted with the Sun's rays' (anon. 1855 in Willis, 1993: 250). Various working in different parts of the United States and Liberia, West Africa, James P. Ball, Jules Lion and Augustus Washington were African American pioneers in the history of daguerreotyping. As the most daguerreotyped African American of the nineteenth century, the fugitive slave-turned-orator, Frederick Douglass, was enraptured by the opportunities for racial equality presented by this invention which would make it possible for '[m]en of all conditions' to 'see themselves as others see them' (in Blassingame, vol. 3 1985: 454). Douglass welcomed daguerreotypes for their ability to fight against the 'disappearance' of African Americans from the 'canvas of art' only to reappear 'in the background corner as a clownish, grotesque object setting off the glory

of his master' (Locke, 1936: 9). Ball, Washington, Lyon and others extended the usual repertoire of African American daguerreotypists which consisted of rich and even criminal whites, lynching victims and fugitive slaves to include portraits of African American politicians, lawyers, business men, soldiers, masons, writers, philanthropists, activists and prosperous families. Early images by Ball and Washington, in particular, commemorate the births, deaths and marriages of everyday African Americans. They proved Douglass right by presenting '[m]en of all conditions', and especially black men, with an opportunity to record their personal lives, as long, of course, as they could afford it.

Daguerreotypes by Ball and others established an alternative iconography by which African Americans could be represented as subjects and not objects of white consumption. At the same time, the proliferation of daguerreotypes and later photographs showing members of an emerging black professional class resisted their status as scientific specimens, political touchstones and cultural stereotypes. Their artistic compositions, experimentations with light and use of theatrical properties illuminated their subjects and paved the way for later developments





AMERICAN FOLK SCULPTURE

by

Robert Bishop

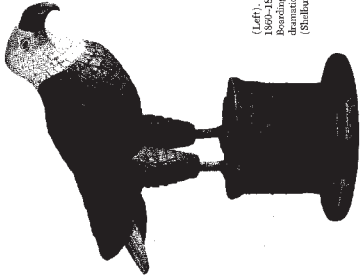
Museum Editor, Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum





NEW YORK
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(Left). Eagle on lat. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1860-1870. Wood, H. 24". The Veterans' Boarding House in Pittsburgh sported this dramatic carving inscribed "Eagle House U.S." (Shelburne Museum, Inc.)

Color plate, page 1: Leopard, Maine, Early twentieth century. Tree trunk and limbs, L. 77". This figure was made by a lumberman, who used it as an outside decoration at a lumber camp. (Private collection)

Color plate, page 2: Detail of tavern sign, Guilford, New York. C. 1827. Wood, painted. W. 46". This splendid angel Gabriel, one of the masterpieces of American folk sculpture, was used under the portico of the Angel Tavern at Guilford. The tavern was built by Captain Elihu Murray for his son, Dauphin. See page 392 for an illustration of the complete sculpture. (Mrs. Jacob M. Kaplan; photograph courtesy Gerald Kornblau Gallery)

Color plate, page 3: Dove, Kansas. Late nineteenth century. Wood. L. 24½". Some of the original paint remains on this carving, which once served as a ridgepole decoration on a granary. (Private collection; photograph courtesy Ralph M. Meyer)

Color plate, page 8: Detail of the Warts Towers. Simon Rodia (1879-1985). Watts, California. Begun in 1921; completed in 1954. Steel rods, nails, and mortar decorated with broken bottles, dishes, tiles, and seashells. Height of tallest tower is approximately 150 feet. This incredible structure was built without a pre-drawn design and includes towers, arches, lognains, pavilions, and labyrinthis. (Photograph courtesy James Eakle)

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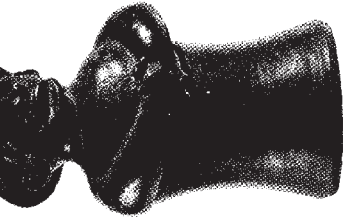
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410 (left). Head, East Sparta, Ohio, c. 1910. Sewer tiles, H. 8 1/2". This whistly is a powerful and original piece of sculpture. (Mr. and Mrs. Michael D. Hall)





411 (above). Jug, Pennsylvania, c. 1870. Pottery. H. 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". This jug represents a black soldier of the Civil War. (Gary C. Cole; photograph courtesy George E. Schoellkopf Gallery)

412 (left). Preacher man. Anonymous black artist. Georgia, c. 1860. Pottery, painted and glazed. H. 16 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". (Lesh and John Gordon)

413 (opposite). Gritsque jug, 1850–1900. Pottery. H. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". Few pieces of pottery are comparable to this folk art masterpiece, which is believed to have been made at Zanesville, Ohio. (George O. Bird)









Footnote Jill Coverton, *Molding Love*, Southern Clay Services, 802-993-0103; African Art Supply, Colorado, South Carolina, 2020.

Renée Brown is currently cited in *residence* of the 91st Blue Boy Foundation for the

Carl Block, Peter Jenzo and David Bratley are three ceramicists tied together by more than their love of clay. Although these three artists work in different parts of the southern United States, one thread that connects them is they all make face jugs.

These jugs with applied facial features began appearing in the southern United States in the early 1800s. Ceramicist Virginia Scobell notes that face jugs were thought to have begun in Bluffton County, South Carolina, by African-American slaves working as potters on the plantations, creating face jugs after making functional pottery. Some historians think there may have been a spiritual connection to the jug for these potters, although there is little documentation concerning the practices and innovations of these early makers.

THE HUMAN HEAD Texas potter Carl Block believes the jug form lends itself to becoming a human head, saying that the sculpting and decorating facial features helps him to "tear up" the surface by playing with patterns. Block likes many aspects of traditional folk pottery including the human touch he can find in the underpinnings of the work. Many southern American face jugs, he notes, were wood-fired with earth-toned or ash glazes. This he attributes to the folk pottery tradition where children and grandchildren were born and raised in the pottery business. Local manufacturing handed down methods were used, consistently in the making of face jugs. Only a few could work within tradition and skill, save artists integrity; the rest were going through the motions, industrially created pots that do not speak. The asymmetry and brightly coloured glazes on his pieces are "...the spirit of the piece. It's what the piece requires to become. It's the original face." He strives to let the pots make themselves and tries not to involve himself too much in ornate designs. "I have





Facing Tradition

Renée Brown traces the inspirations of three contemporary ceramists to historic American face jugs.

always wozled in a Zen state; reemerging thrilled but not in charge. Awake but not awake. I call it plugging in."

Black creates images of faces he sees in his mind, which are often inspired by people he encounters, assimilating the diverse information around him and transferring it to the pot, giving it a life of its own. Black also creates the likeness of the individual who inspires the faces he sees in his mind. "I don't think of my sculpted faces as necessarily the image of a face. I'm sculpting the inside—the major part. That's why my pieces are usually neither man nor woman."

SELF-PORTRAITS "Sculpting the inside" is also the theme of Peter Luzzo's work. His pieces are self-portraits exploring his continuing struggle with the effect of epileptic seizures on his life. He identifies strongly with the mystic aspect of both face jugs and zany jugs. Memory jugs are traditionally made by placing broken objects into the clay, creating a collage of experienced items and forming a nostalgic mood of things lost that have been found again. Luzzo, brought this northern tradition with him when he came to South Carolina in 1992. "For the memory jugs I like the fact that all of the different items bring their own physical memories with them into the piece," said Luzzo. "I mean it's been places, touched things, been touched by people."

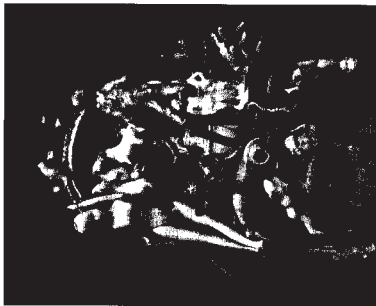
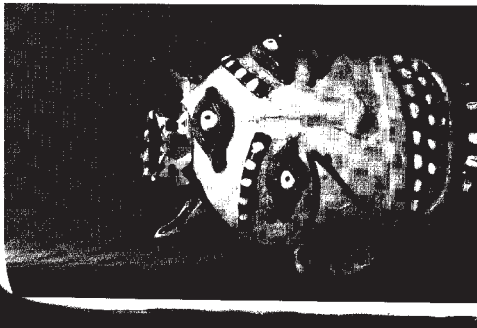
For Luzzo, the tradition of face jug making holds somewhat of a special different. "I love the fact that it comes from an unreflexible, spiritual origin," he says. The slaves who began the tradition and designed the originals, came up with the technology of the kaolin eyes and teeth using the most primitive conditions. In fact, they had no instruction or training other than their own instinct or inherent skills they carried with them from their homeland.

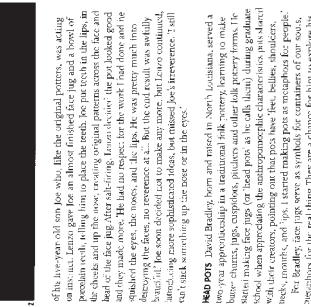
Luzzo's first encounter with face jugs was that "they were not very attractive, not very well executed, kinda sloppy craftsmanship. However, the naive and uncalculated honesty in craft emerged through the hand-





- 1 David Bradley - Headrest, 2002 - 111cm
 - 2 Gill Black - Face Jug - 1990cm - 23.5cm
 - 3 Peter Lewis - Face A.G. - 1990cm - 23.5cm
- porcelain, 100% cotton, wire, slips, 5, 12, 26
and found objects, 11-18cm

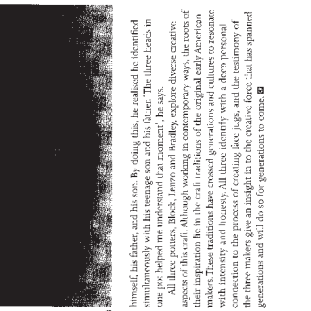




of his five-year-old son Joe who, like the original potters, was acting on his own. Lenzo gave Joe an almost finished face jug and a bowl of porcelain teeth, telling him to place the teeth, face, put teeth in the lips, in the cheeks and up the nose, re-creating original patterns across the face and head of the face jug. After salt-firing, Lenzo decided the pot looked good and they made more. He had no respect for the work I had done and he squished the eyes, the noses, and the lips. He was pretty much into destroying the faces, no reverence at all. But the end result was awfully beautiful. Joe soon decided not to make any more, but Lenzo continued, introducing more sophisticated ideas, but missed Joe's reverence. I still can't stick scratching up the nose or in the eyes.

HEAD POTS David Bradley, born and raised in North Louisiana, served a two-year apprenticeship in a traditional folk pottery learning to make butter churns, jugs, crockpots, platters and other folk pottery forms. He started making face jugs (or 'head pots' as he calls them) during graduate school when appreciating the anthropomorphic characteristics, just shared with their creators, pointing out that pots have feet, bellies, shoulders, necks, mouths, and lips. I started making pots as metaphors for people.

For Bradley, face jugs serve as symbols for containers of our souls, neighbors for the real thing. They are a chance for him to explore his identity, and the form is a means to express the ideas inside it. Sometimes he uses away parts on the back showing the thoughts and memories that have influenced his character. Once he made a pot with three faces:



himself, his father, and his son. By doing this, he realized he identified simultaneously with his teenage son and his father. The three heads in one pot helped me understand that moment', he says.

All three potters, Block, Lenzo and Bradley, explore diverse creative aspects of this craft. Although working in contemporary ways, the roots of their inspiration lie in the craft traditions of the original early American makers. These traditions have crossed generations and cultures to resonate with integrity and honesty. All three identify with a deep personal connection to the process of creating face jugs, and the testimony of the three makers give an insight to the creative force that has spanned generations and will do so for generations to come. **Q**



Carolina Folk

The Cradle of a Southern Tradition





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Carolina Folk





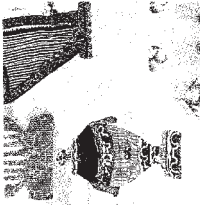
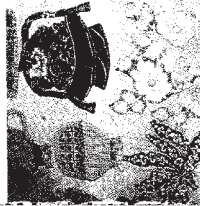
Face Jugs (Cat. #1, #2, #4-7) | Edgelyield, South Carolina | The Moses Collection





Carolina Folk

The Cradle of a
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23 August to 6 October, 1985

(Gower)

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Charleston, South Carolina
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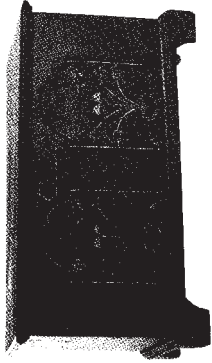


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Kingsville, North Carolina
Collection of William W. Ivey





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John A. Burrison

Carolina Clay

THE RISE OF A REGIONAL POTTERY TRADITION

In 1767-68, an Englishman named Thomas Griffiths undertook a perilous journey across the Atlantic to Charleston, then into the South Carolina up-country to Ayres on the mountains of North Carolina (near present-day Franklin), braving wilderness robbers and potentially hostile Cherokees. His objective: a rumored pit of kaolin, a pure white clay used in the manufacture of porcelain. Griffiths was acting as agent for none other than Josiah Wedgwood.

"father" of Staffordshire's pottery industry, and his job was to bring out a quantity of this precious "Cherokee earth" by packhorse and wagon and ship it back to England. The mission

inland population were concentrated, was established. Beginning with German-trained Gottfried Amsler in 1756, a succession of master potters and their apprentices carried on, for a century and a half, an earthenware tradition rooted in central Europe. A variety of useful wares were made from the coarse-grained earthenware clay, thrown on the potter's wheel, and then glazed with lead (either clear or tinted brown or green). Special display pieces, such as plates and sugar jars, were decorated by trailing slips (liquid clays) of different colors in often elaborate floral designs over the red or yellow base clay. Molded items, such as stove

ware, stoneware at that time was becoming the dominant type of traditional pottery throughout the country. In the North and upper South it was glazed with salt, a technique originating in fifteenth century Germany and spreading to England in the late seventeenth century. Common salt was thrown into the bin at the height of firing. The resulting sodium vapor fused with molten alumina and silica from the clay of the pots to form a transparent coating of glass with an orange-skin texture. Frequently, this salt-glazed stoneware was decorated with cobalt oxide which fired to a deep blue, contrasting with the typically light gray or

was successful (at a cost of over \$600 for five looms), but there is no record of how the clay was used. Wedgwood had reason to be secretive, however, for he learned that a "potwork" in Charleston had earlier received some of the same clay, and that a cask of it had been secured by an English china maker in 1760.²

High-quality clays were thus known in the Carolinas by the middle of the eighteenth century. Such knowledge would soon attract potters seeking to locate near their most important raw material.

While a few individual potters are known to have worked in eighteenth-century Charleston,³ the first real center to maintain a continuous tradition was the Moravian communities of Beulahara and Salem in what is now Forsyth County, North Carolina. Here, the Southeastern pattern of locating potteries in the Piedmont Plateau, where both good clays and the

titles and bottles in the shapes of various animals, were also produced.⁴ That pottery was in great demand for food storage and processing in the Carolina back-country, is recorded in the Moravian Church diaries, such as this entry of May 21, 1770: "There was an unusual course of visitors, some coming 60 or 80 miles to buy milk crocks and pans in our pottery. They bought the entire store, not one piece was left; many could get only half they wanted, and others who came too late, were promised more next week."⁵

While of great historic and artistic interest, the Moravian earthenware tradition did not remain a major force in the region, and was to be overshadowed by the emergence of stoneware in the early nineteenth century.

Composed of a purer, higher-firing clay than the less durable and potentially hazardous lead-glazed earthen-

ware, salt-glazed stoneware was also made sporadically in the Deep South, but it seldom was cobalt-decorated. It often had, instead, an irregular coloration and texture resulting from the brick-drippings, melted fly-ash or heavy salt deposits, and fluctuating firing atmosphere associated with the rectangular wood-burning kilns endemic to the region.

The earliest and largest center of salt-glazed stoneware production in the Deep South was the Seagrave area at the juncture of Randolph, Moore, and Charburn counties in North Carolina. Potters of largely British background, such as the Cra-veins and Coles (whose work in the South can be traced for nine generations), were established there by the late eighteenth century, having migrated from the Middle Atlantic states and Virginia.⁶ They appear to have begun with the manufacture of earthenware, but by the 1820s, stone-





Carolina Clay

own discoveries, is made much stronger, better, and cheaper than any European or American ware of the same kind."⁴ The sophistication of Landrum's ceramic knowledge is suggested by the names he gave to three of his sons: Wedgwood, Pallissy, and Manises. How Abner and his brothers, John and Amos, became involved in pottery making is not known, but the previous generation of Landrums was associated with the Craven family back in North Carolina.⁵

In 1827, Abner sold his interest in the Potteryville manufactory, later moving to the state's capital, Columbia, where he established another pottery. The family continued to exert influence over the Edgefield District's stoneware tradition through the familiar southern pattern of intermarriage.⁶ Amos Landrum's son-in-law, Collin Rhodes, became a major figure in the tradition, and Rev. John Landrum's son-in-law, Lewis Miles, carried on the Baptist preacher's opera-

makers of these striking anthropomorphic jugs, cups, and jars, which have inset kaolin eyes and teeth, have not been identified, and we can only speculate about their intent.¹⁰ Infrared studies exist, however, about a slave potter named Dave, one of the most intriguing personalities in southern ceramics history. Born about 1780, he became the property of Abner Landrum, in whose shop he may have first worked. Taught to read and write, Dave was made the typesetter for Landrum's newspaper, the *Flite*. When Abner left for Columbia in 1831, his nephew-in-law Lewis Miles acquired Dave and put him to work at his pottery. Dave was considered enough of later researchers in date and sign much of his work. The dates range from 1834 to 1863. The earliest pieces are signed only with his master's name or initials, but the later ones have his own name added. Some also include the stamped letter "L" or a horseshoe (apparently a slave-potter identification mark) and

Stoney Bluff. For making hard enamel." (*Illustration 2*) Obviously proud of his literacy, Dave verbally decorated some of his work with poetry of his own composition, incised in script in the damp clay. A couplet on a jar dated 1840 refers to his slave status: "Dave belongs to Mr. Miles / where



the alternative Edgelfield system for indicating capacity, which was a series of punctated dots or scratched lines representing the number of gallons a piece held.

Dave specialized in ash-glazed food storage jars. Some of them, undoubtedly for plantation use, are among the most monumental examples of American folk pottery. The largest known, twins owned by the Charleston Museum, are both dated May 13, 1859 (when the potter was in his late seventies); each stands about 29 inches tall and can hold over 40 gallons. Both are signed "Dave & Baskler," the latter name perhaps that of a slave assistant who cranked the wheel while Dave added clay coils to build the upper wall. In addition to their size, these four-handled jars are remarkable for their inscriptions: "Great & noble Jar / hold Sheep goat or bear" and "Made at

tion, or set up his own, nearby, on his plantation, Stony Bluff, later known as Miles Mill. Both men relied heavily on slave labor to manufacture their stoneware. In fact, South Carolina had more Afro-Americans involved in the craft than any other state. Not all were "turners" or potters proper. Some would have been responsible for the less skilled chores of digging and preparing clay, mixing glaze, chopping wood for fuel, loading, stoking, and unloading the kilns, and packing wagons. There is even the likelihood that slave women served as decorators at the Rhoades shop and Phoenix Factory, which Rhoades partly owned.

A number of vessels with grotesque faces of applied clay are attributed to black Edgelfield District potters, including those who worked at the Thomas Davis pottery at Bath during the 1860s. Unfortunately, the

Illustration 2. Storage Jar, Dave (Cat. 66)
Edgelfield, South Carolina
The Charleston Museum





Pottery, Poetry and Politics

*Surrounding the Enslaved
African-American Potter, Dave*



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Pottery, Poetry and Politics Surrounding
the Enslaved African-American Potter, Dave

Symposium
MCKESSICK MUSEUM
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
APRIL 25, 1998

cover photo:

Storage Jar, 1858
Dave, Lewis Miles Factory
Edgefield District, South Carolina

Inscribed with the verse:

*"The sun moon and stars
in the west are plenty of bears"*

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and commenting on his age. These references also help situate Dave in the local pottery history, for Landrum was one of the founders of an important pottery tradition in the old Edgefield District of west-central South Carolina.

By 1817, according to a map by Thomas Anderson, Abner had established a pottery shop just north of the town of Edgefield, in the village of Landrumsville (later renamed Potteryville), while his brother, Rev. John Landrum, was operating a shop south of Edgefield on Horse Creek. Dave apparently learned the potter's craft in one of these two shops. His signed wares were made later at the plantation pottery of Lewis Miles (who had successively married daughters of both Abner and John Landrum) in what is now Aiken County. On a pot dated 1840, Dave referred in rhyme to his status: "Dave belongs to Mr. Miles, Where the oven bakes and the pot boils."

The Landrums may have been the first to produce stoneware with feldspathic glazes containing lime and woodash that were probably inspired by published descriptions of similar Chinese glazes. This alkaline-glazed stoneware was recognized locally as special; in an 1819 issue of South Carolina's *Camden Gazette*, a merchant advertised "370 pieces of the Edgefield-made stoneware. . . . The first of the kind (and superior in quality to any) ever offered here for sale," while architect Robert Mills, in his *1826 Statistics of South Carolina*, described Potteryville as "supported by the manufacture of stoneware carried on by this gentleman [Abner Landrum]; and which, by his own discoveries, is made much stronger, better, and cheaper than any European or American ware of the same kind." Dave was trained in this regional tradition of alkaline-glazed stoneware, which was carried by migrating Edgefield potters as far west as Texas.

Driven by an entrepreneurial spirit atypical of later southern folk potters who farmed and potred on a seasonal basis, Edgefield shops began to decorate their wares in about 1840 to be more competitive. A large water cooler made at Phoenix Factory depicts toasting servants in two colors of slip or liquid clay, possibly commemorating a wedding.

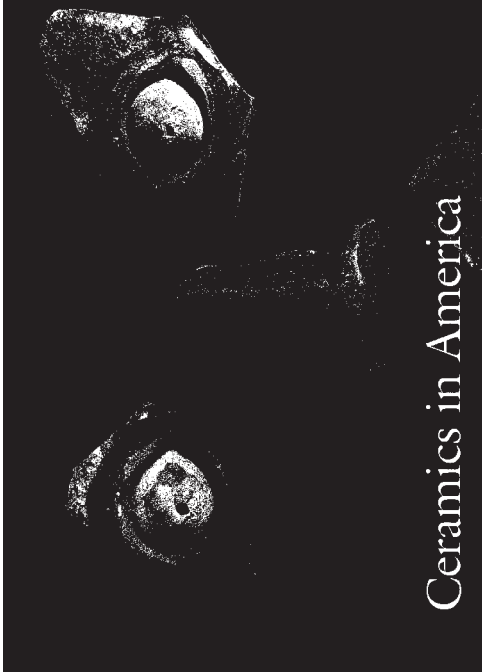
Edgefield was the only American pottery center to make extensive use of slave labor, including the skilled work of turning or throwing on the potter's wheel. However, just a few of the slaves recorded as turners in documents are actually named. The case of Thomas Davies' Palmetto Firebrick Works at Barb, South Carolina is typi-

cal. Col. Davies reported to ceramics historian Edwin AtLee Barber that in 1862, his slaves began to make jugs "modeled in . . . the form of a grotesque human face evidently intended to portray the African features." He praised as "ingenious" their technique of inserting white porcelain clay, or kaolin, for the eyes and teeth, but didn't record the makers' names or what motivated this sculptural creativity.

So far as we know, Dave did not make such face vessels. His choice of decoration was unique in Edgefield District and the South as a regular practice: incising poetry into the damp clay in flowing script. The verse on a 30-gallon food-storage jar dated July 4, 1859 reads, "The fourth of July is surely come, To blow the life and beat the drum." Like other Dave poems, this one is subject to multiple interpretations. Does it patriotically commemorate the national holiday? Or was it an ironic comment on Dave's having to work on the holiday? As a slave, how might he have viewed Independence Day? Slave drumming was banned in South Carolina's 1740 Slave Act as a possible incitement to rebellion; could Dave's reference to drums have a hidden subversive meaning?

A larger question is whether Dave arrived at this verbal approach to decoration on his own or was participating in some group-shared tradition of pot-poetry. The two such traditions linguistically or geographically closest to Dave lay in England and Pennsylvania. Short poetic inscriptions began to appear on English pottery in the seventeenth century; the rhyme on a tin-glazed dish, dated 1600 and made for some well-to-do Londoner, reads, "The rose is red, the leaves are green; God save Elizabeth our Queen." A tradition of inscribed harvest jugs flourished in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century north Devon; a 1764 example by Joseph Hollanore reads: "Now I am come for to supply the harvest men when they are dry. When they do labor hard and sweat, Good liquor is better far than meat. I by my master here am sent, To make you merry is my intent." Puzzle jugs were made all over England. The accompanying rhymes challenged the uninitiated to drink without spilling the ale or cider through





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edited by Robert Hunter





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IN AMERICA
2006

Edited by Robert Hunter

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Color Illustrations: Face (left), fragments, Miles Hill, Edgeland, South Carolina, ca. 1867-1873. (Private collection; photo, Gavin Ashworth.)

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Figure 37 *Batijo*, Felix Perez workshop, Caernes, Spain, mid-nineteenth century. Lead-glazed earthenware, 11.4" (Auksoy, collection). Made as a tourist souvenir, the monkey-jug form of this vessel is elaborated with vertical loop handles, button finials, and a sgraffito bird and foliage with copper-green highlighting.



in the plane of the handle or on opposite sides of it. This form, also traceable to ancient Greece, is concentrated in Africa and Mediterranean Europe (figs. 36, 37); in Spain, where it is known as a *batijo*, it is virtually a national emblem, with three museums devoted to its seemingly infinite variety in shape, glaze, and ornamentation.⁴⁶ In America, imports from Europe may have inspired Northern monkey jugs; in the South, where the form was

made by slave potters, a West African source is probable.⁴⁶

Craft into Art: Making Faces on Jugs

Working in such a malleable medium, day in and day out, it is not surprising that potters the world over have seen their clay as a kind of mirror and accepted its challenge to model a human likeness on a pot, pushing utilitarian craft into plastic art. His anthropomorphizing impulse is stronger in some clay-working societies than in others: in England, for example, it surfaced several times, first with Romano-British burial urns, then with medieval "face-on-front jugs," and finally with the "Loby jugs" of late-eighteenth-century Staffordshire, which initiated an industrial tradition of slip-cast character mugs continuing to this day.⁴⁷ Evidently, however, England was not the source of America's face-jug traditions.

In reviewing what is known of those traditions, three points should be made by way of introduction. First, although many humanoid vessels made in the United States are indeed jugs, some are pitchers, cups, jars, or bottles. Second, not all depict just faces or heads; some are full figures. Third, Native Americans of the South made "people pots," during the Mississippian

110 JOHN A. BURRISON

*
"Loby Jugs"
Mississippi
Bottle





era (A.D. 800–1500), too early to have influenced the Southern face jugs discussed here.⁴⁷

As with other adaptations of the jug form in the United States, face vessels—as both a historical and a living tradition—have been concentrated in the South. However, the oldest known Euro-American examples are from the early-nineteenth-century Philadelphia workshop of Henry Remmey Jr. (fig. 48), whose great-grandfather, stoneware potter John Remmey, had immigrated to Manhattan from the Rhineland in the 1730s. John would have been familiar with the graybeard jugs still being made in Germany, and if he made them in New York and passed the concept to his descendants, then Henry's face vessels are Americanizations of the German tradition.⁴⁸

A substantial group of early Southern face vessels was made between 1863 and 1865 by enslaved African-American potters at Colouel Thomas Davis's Palmetto Fire Brick Works at Beuth, in the old Edgefield District of west-central South Carolina.⁴⁹ Distinguished by bulging eyes and bared teeth of kaolin insert into the stoneware clay body, the iron-based mineral that darkened the alkaline glaze on some, along with the wax resist used to keep the glaze off the white eyes and teeth to maximize contrast, leave

Figure 38 Two-face monkey-earm jug attributed to Henry Remmey Jr. or his son Richard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1817. Sub-joined stoneware. H. 17". (Ex-collection of Tully and Marie Shank, photo, Tully Shank.) Highlighted with cobalt blue, this stoned jug might represent an Americanization of the German graybeard tradition.



Two-face monkey-earm jug
 attributed to Henry Remmey Jr. or his
 son Richard, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania,
 1817. Sub-joined stoneware. H. 17".
 (Ex-collection of Tully and Marie Shank,
 photo, Tully Shank.) Highlighted with
 cobalt blue, this stoned jug might represent
 an Americanization of the German gray-
 beard tradition.



111 FLUID VESSEL: JOURNEY OF THE PUG

Scott
2 FIVE
COLUMBIA
PICTURES
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little doubt that they were meant to represent their makers' race (figs. 39, 4c). Potter ceramics historian Edwin Alder Harber, after corresponding with Davies, was the first to discuss them in print: "These curious objects . . . possess considerable interest as representing an art of the Southern negroes. . . . The modeling reveals a trace of aboriginal art as formerly prac-

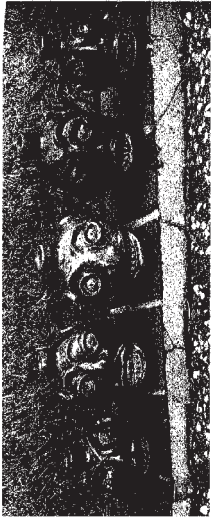


Figure 39 Face jugs, attributed to slave potters at Thomas Davis's Plantation Fire Brick Works, Beth, South Carolina, early 1800s. Alkalinic-glazed stoneware, with inset handle eyes and teeth. (Fits collection of Tracy and Marie Scauki.)



Figure 40 "An Aesthetic Darky," from a series of stereoscopic cards by photographer J. A. Palmer of Aiken.

Smith Carolina, 1882. (Courtesy, J. Garrison Stradling.) This earliest known published image of an American face pig, or a monkey face and probably was made by a local (Edgewood District) African American potter.



112 JOHN A. BURRISON

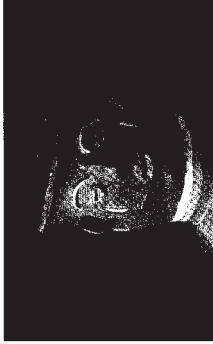


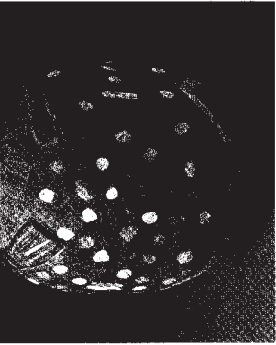


ticed by their ancestors in the Dark Continent?⁴¹ Barber says nothing, how ever, of the makers' motivations. Sixty years later, Yale University art historian Robert Farris Thompson advanced Barber's suggestion of African origins, arguing that later white face-jug makers such as Cheever Meaders appropriated the "Afro-Carolinian" tradition.⁴²

Germany and Africa, then, are two possible sources for American face jugs, with a third possibility that they arose independent of any Old World influence. Can we come any closer to resolving this historical dilemma? Anthropomorphic clay vessels were indeed made in West Africa (the chief source area of the Atlantic slave trade), perhaps early enough for the idea to be brought by slaves. The Yungur of Nigeria, for example, made portrait pots called *wazo* to honor ancestral spirits at shrines,⁴³ and the Mambila of Cameroon made similar figurative vessels (fig. 41). The angry expressions of some Afro-Carolinian face vessels, which could be interpreted as a nonver-

Figure 41. Figurative jar, Mambila culture, Cameroon, twentieth century. Earthenware with polychrome decoration. 11, 30". (Photo, courtesy Douglas Dawson.)





113 FLUID VESSEL: JOURNEY OF THE JUG

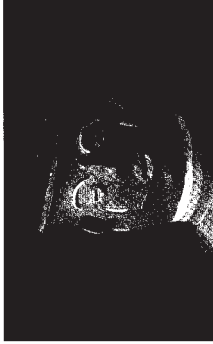


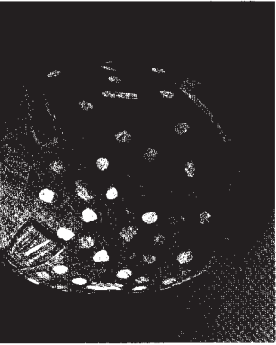


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Figure 41. Figurative jar, Mambila culture, Cameroon, twentieth century. Earthenware with polychrome decoration. 11, 36". (Photo, courtesy Douglas Dawson.)






113 FLUID VESSEL: JOURNEY OF THE JUG





Figure 42 Monkey-form face (pige, Pige-
Told) District, South Carolina, ca. 1860.
Aché, José, stoneware, H. 17.5, Mark:
stamped "CHANDLER / MAKER." (Private
collection; photo, McSpeth Museum,
University of South Carolina.) The happy
countenance on this jug contrasts with the
angry ones of a decade later by same pot-
ters in the same area.





bad protest against enslavement, and a few mutinizing hints that these vessels may have been used in magical religious or mortuary practices, at least suggest that they had a meaning distinct from face jugs by white potters. This raises the question whether white potters in the South made face vessels as early as the slave-made ones.

In 1995 a piece in a private collection surfaced that addresses this question (fig. 42). An alkaline-glazed, happy-faced jug with the monkey horn, it is stamped "CHANDLER / MAKER," the mark of Thomas Chandler, a white potter who worked in Edgefield District from 1838 to 1852.³⁴ Made about 1850, it precedes the slave-made face vessels from the Davises workshop by over a decade. Before moving to South Carolina, Virginia-born Chandler may have worked as a potter in New York State; it is remotely





Figure 43 Face jugs and wheel thrown "wig wand," Lanier Meaders, White County, Georgia, 1963-1974. Albainite-glazed stoneware. H. (left to right) 9 1/2", 8 1/2", 9"



Figure 44 Examples of wooden face jugs, Lanier Meaders, White County, Georgia, 1963-1974. Albainite-glazed stoneware. H. (left to right) 9 1/2", 8 1/2", 9"

possible that in his Northern sojourn he met and learned of face vessels from one of the Remneys.¹⁵ Did Chandler then introduce the concept to Edgefield slave potters, or were they working in a separate, perhaps African-based, tradition? We now know that the face jugs of Cheever and Lanier Meaders were part of a continuous Anglo-Southern tradition, but whether ultimately inspired by slave-made examples, as Thompson suggests, might never be learned (fig. 43).



Figure 44 Examples of wooden face jugs, Lanier Meaders, White County, Georgia, 1963-1974. Albainite-glazed stoneware. H. (left to right) 9 1/2", 8 1/2", 9"



The Jug Today

Jugs are still indispensable for keeping liquids, from bleach to milk and larger volumes of wine. Now, though, they rarely are made of clay; glass and plastic containers are less expensive to produce, and the latter has the further advantage of being less breakable (fig. 44). In recent years, a few whiskey companies have used mold-made clay jugs to reinforce the old-fashioned image of their product, and school-trained studio potters may occasionally throw a jug to demonstrate that they are not embarrassed to make a useful form despite the current trend of pottery as Art.³⁶

In the 1980s and 1990s it seemed as though every potter in the South, folk and otherwise, was trying his or her hand at face jugs, which had become something of a regional art icon (for which Lamer, Meaders deserves





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Archaeological Survey of Alkaline-Glazed Pottery Kiln Sites in Old Edgefield District, South Carolina



1954 MAR 10

Submitted to

South Carolina Department of Archives and History

Prepared by

McKissick Museum

**South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA**





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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF ALKALINE-GLAZED POTTERY KILN SITES IN
OLD EDGEFIELD DISTRICT, SOUTH CAROLINA

George J. Castille, Principal Archaeological Investigator
Cinda K. Baldwin, Principal Historical Investigator
Carl R. Steen, Archaeological Assistant

Steve Smith, contributor
Stanley South, contributor

Submitted to

THE SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY

Prepared by

MCKISSICK MUSEUM
THE SOUTH CAROLINA INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

August 1988





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Some factory owners shipped orders of their ware by rail to merchants as far away as Charleston. In 1833 the South Carolina Railroad from Charleston to Hamburg (present North Augusta) was built, and by 1834 it was in full operation. Mathis and Rhodes took advantage of the railroad for the transport of their Phoenix Factory ware throughout the state, advertising that orders could be delivered to a merchant's door any distance under one hundred and fifty miles. Charleston merchants could, "have their ware delivered at the depot, in Aiken, at 12 1/2 cents per gallon." Occasionally, the merchant had his name and address written in clay slip or incised onto the jugs or storage jars that he bought at one of the Edgefield factories. This served as a promotion or advertisement for the merchant when he resold the ware to his customers.

Several factors account for the unique nature of the Edgefield factories. Most of the factory owners appear to have been well educated and most were involved in other business enterprises in addition to stoneware manufacture. These men described themselves as stoneware manufacturers in census records, and appear to have taken a more entrepreneurial approach to stoneware production than most southern stoneware factory owners. This attitude may explain the unusual production techniques used in Edgefield, and the sometimes elaborate marketing strategies such as the advertisement and transport of ware by rail.

African-American slaves played an important role in the development of the Edgefield stoneware tradition. Slaves accounted for a significant portion of the labor force in the Edgefield stoneware factories and were often named in Edgefield court proceedings and newspaper advertisements involving transfers of ownership of the factories. For example, Daniel, Sam, George and Abram were named in an 1830 agreement between Harvey and Reuben Drake as part of the Pottersville stoneware factory property. Three slaves - Abram, Old Harry and Young Harry - were listed in an 1839 indenture in which John Hughes signed over his interest in the Pottersville factory to Collin Rhodes, and "four negroes viz Harry, Abram and Daniel (Turner) and old Tom (waggoner)," were listed as part of the "Pottersville Manufacturing concern" in an 1843 mortgage between John Nance and Jasper Gibbs (SCMR K:417-418; ECC 1840-1869, CCC:72-73).

Although the most frequently named occupation for slave potters was turner, slaves undoubtedly participated in all aspects of stoneware production. An 1847 executor's sale of the John Landrum estate included, "an excellent Stone Ware Turner" (E.A. 22 February 1847:3). This advertisement may have referred to Dave, a slave potter who is well known for the large storage jars that he turned at Lewis Miles' stoneware factory. Much of Dave's





work may be identified by the maker's marks that he applied to the ware he produced. Dave signed some of his ware, "Lm," at the upper shoulder, indicating the factory owner, Lewis Miles. Other vessels are marked "Im," with a date and Dave's signature. Dave often further individualized the vessels with poems that he incised onto the upper body between the opposing lug handles. For example, a Dave jar dated July 31, 1840 reads, "Dave belongs to Mr. Miles/ wher[e] the oven bakes and the pot biles," and another verse, "Made at Stoney Bluff/ for making lard enough," identifies Lewis Miles' Stoney Bluff plantation and provides information about the use patterns or function of many of the jars. Pork constituted an important part of the southerner's diet and lard rendered from the slaughtered animals was used in cooking and food preservation. Salted meat was packed into the large storage jars with fat or lard rendered from the hogs.

The jars that Dave turned are testimony to the skill and craftsmanship exhibited by slave potters in Edgerfield and are important cultural documents. Dave's ability to combine the skills of an accomplished potter, formal education and personal inspiration earned him a special status in the community. Mrs. Irene Gingrey, great granddaughter of John Landrum, recalls that one of the Black men who worked for her family was allowed to use his own "trademark" on the pottery that he made (Irene Gingrey, personal communication, July 24, 1987). Could this man have been Dave? If so, the reputation of this highly skilled slave potter has survived for a hundred and fifty years.

Many of the storage jars produced at Lewis Miles' factory were marked with a series of slashes and dots applied at the upper

shoulder. Some of these appear to be a system of capacity markings and may have been employed by potters for illiterate slaves who worked in the plantation kitchens. Prior to the Civil War, it had been forbidden to teach slaves to read. Among free Blacks the literacy rate was higher, especially among skilled free Blacks. The disparity in the literacy between Blacks and whites was carried over into the decades following the Civil War. Only 4.4% of Afro-American heads of households were listed as literate in the 1870 census, as opposed to 84.1% literacy among white households heads (Burton 1985:212, 245-47). Other marks used on Edgefield wares include circular punctates and single letters or symbols usually stamped or incised near the base of the vessel. These may have identified the maker or factory where the ware was produced. These distinctive makers' marks, applied to ware produced at the Edgefield pottery factories, may aid investigators in identification of wares produced at a specific factory site.

The storage jars turned by Dave and other slave potters were used primarily on the large plantations in operation in the area during the period. Twenty, thirty and even forty gallon storage jars were produced in Edgefield. Stoneware jars of this size





were rare in other areas of the South. In most potteries outside Edgefield large sizes of up to ten gallons were sometimes produced, although a capacity of from two to five gallons was most common. North Carolina potters Daniel Seagle and John Craven are the only known southern folk potters outside Edgefield who produced large capacity storage jars holding fifteen gallons or more (Zug 1976:295-296). These jars were produced only in those areas where large scale agricultural production, such as that supported through the plantation system, was prevalent.

A distinct Afro-American pottery form was produced by slaves in at least one Edgefield stoneware factory. Monkey jugs, grotesques, or face vessels have been attributed to Black slave potters who worked at Thomas Davies' factory near Bath, South Carolina. Bath is located between Aiken, South Carolina and Augusta, Georgia near the old South Carolina Railroad line. In 1862 Anson Peeler, a carpenter from Bennington, Vermont, who had come to South Carolina as a builder for the Southern Porcelain Manufacturing Company, convinced Davies, a cotton planter, to finance a firebrick factory to be managed by Peeler. Firebrick for iron furnaces and powder mills, and crucibles and tiles for gas works were produced at the Bath fire brick factory. During the Civil War the factory supplied demands for jars, pitchers, cups and saucers for Confederate hospitals. It was during this period that slaves working in the factory made the unusual face vessels in their free time (Barber 1902:248-251).

The Edgefield face vessel consisted of a wheel thrown base, usually ovoid in form, onto which facial features of molded clay were applied. The potter often added pieces of kaolin clay for

eyes and teeth. The term "monkey" originally referred to a type of vessel that was first produced in the West Indies. These earthenware jugs, with a loop handle attached vertically along the body and an opposing pouring spout, were used by Black laborers to carry water into the fields (Vlach 1978). Although some of the face vessels made in Bath are of the monkey form, the term "monkey jug" is now synonymous with face jugs of any form. The intent of the vessels is unclear but scholars of African-American folk art have suggested that they are African cultural survivals (Vlach 1978; Thompson and Cornet 1981).

Decline of the Edgefield Alkaline Glaze Tradition

Between 1850 and 1860 several of the most active Edgefield stoneware factories were closed. Thomas Chandler, one of the area's most prolific potters, moved to North Carolina where he died in 1854. Collin Rhodes sold his property on Shaw's Creek in 1851 and moved to Louisiana. The scale of stoneware production gradually declined in the following decades. As glass and metal containers became widely available in the area, the local market





AFRO-AMERICAN ART AND CRAFT
JUDITH WRAGG CHASE



VAN NOSTRAND REINHOLD COMPANY
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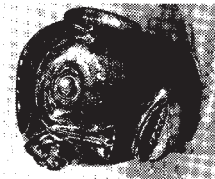
For Rachel and Theo.

This very prohibition, however, gave rise to the one original American musical instrument, the banjo. Its ancestor was the "chordophone," a stringed instrument that is common throughout Africa. It evolved from a simple hunting bow, the single string being tapped by the arrow. Basically, the African instrument consists of strings that cross a drumlike resonator, like the American banjo. Adoption of it by the slaves gave them the percussion they lacked without drums. Together with hand-clapping and the rattling of "the bones" (which were literally dried animal bones), the banjo supplied the Negro with the beat for his songs and dances.

Slave-made tools or utensils are related to Africa in various small ways—the use of an adze rather than a knife for whittling or carving, the shape of a rice scoop, or perhaps the method of making a piece of pottery—and African ingenuity in utilizing natural materials at hand was applied by the slave on the American plantations. A fishnet was given a slide made of marrow bone or cow's horn. A chair seat was woven of twisted corn shucks; a tree branch ingeniously adapted into a rake or pitchfork. Such rakes were made from hickory saplings that had three or more branches to form the prongs. After the prongs were spread apart, they were held in place by a piece of wood with holes through which the prongs extended. The rake was then hung from a rather-wild weight on the end so that it would dry with a straight handle.

Sometimes a familiar African form was transferred to another material, as in the case of a slave-made piece of pottery that resembles a carved wooden cup and was found in Bath, South Carolina. Or, again, a slave-made pipe was decorated with the same basketweave found on African pieces of wood or metal. This is in itself an Africanism. We have already seen that transference of patterns from one material to another was common in Africa.

Many iron tools and utensils have survived. Pottery is more rare, although Georgia and South Carolina both have excellent clay for that craft. Fine imported china and pottery were more common for use at the master's table, while metal or wooden vessels were used in kitchen and slave quarters. There



Ellis Job, called a money pot by Negroes, was made in 1817 by a Negro slave. It was brown with a beautiful high glaze. Its simple face has obvious African characteristics—the bold, stylized design, the use of a form in nature. (Courtesy, the Negro Museum, New York, N.Y.)



is evidence, however, that some plantations did use local clay to make their own urns and Negro slaves were employed in professional pottery kilns such as the one at Bath, South Carolina.

The pieces of clay-ware that have come to light thus far sometimes follow European traditions, one, in particular, is very like the English "Toby jug." But some do show African influence. By far the most interesting of these are the water jugs called "monkey pots" by the Negroes and "grotesque jugs" or "woodoo pots" by many museums, though it is very doubtful if these jugs were ever used in cult ceremonies. The name "woodoo" was applied somewhat indiscriminately by white people to anything that looked "heathenish" to them. On the other hand, the term "monkey pot" has an authentic origin. Mrs. Alice Davis, Negro artist on the faculty of Paine College, Augusta, Georgia, has explained this. According to her, the name was not a derogatory or descriptive one, as some have thought. It derived from the old-time expression, "I see a monkey," which was exclaimed by field hands when dizzied by the heat. The pots were used to prevent the "monkey" by bringing water to thirsty slaves working in the fields. There are definite resemblances between some of these jugs and African effigy pots.



It is interesting that the monkey pot above is very like the one made by a high woodoo cop in America when were the Gories, though in Africa this was women's work. Therefore a man would be likely to use designs like this to avoid the possibility of being accused of having a knowledge of patterns from one material to another is common in Africa. (Courtesy, University Museum)





IBC Ware.

ANY information of the whereabouts of one PFARL, who passed a spurious \$20 Bill on me for good money, on the night of the 19th February last, will be thankfully received. Said Pearl purports to be a trader on Jugs, Jars, &c., and had with him two indifferant Waggons, and loads of these articles—the teams driven by two lads. He said he got his wares from the Factories in Edgefield District, S. C., and was in the Summer near Kirkseys & Rords, Edgefield. He is about middle age, dark skin, heavy beard, round shouldered and very profane. He is guilty of other crimes in Georgia, for which he should be brought to justice. Editors would serve the public by inserting the above a few times.

DAVID COOPER
Raytown, Taliaferro Co. Ga. Oct 11, 1849.
Oct 17 21 29

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Early Decorated Stoneware of the Edgefield District South Carolina

An exhibition sponsored by the Inver Museum Exchange Program and the Greenville County Art Association, with the assistance of the South Carolina Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C.

Organized by the Greenville County Museum of Art
Greenville, South Carolina 29650







In 1974 the Greenville County Museum of Art needed the Gibbes Art Gallery, Charleston and the Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia to form the Inter-Museum Exchange Program. With the assistance of grants from the South Carolina Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C., the Program was designed to maximize the quality of exhibitions at each institution, to increase use of limited financial resources and to establish a basis for scholarly research and participation in areas of broad interest to South Carolinians.

Each year directors and curators, from the institutions previously mentioned, meet to discuss plans and present proposals for future exhibitions as well as to report on their progress with current projects. In making financial decisions the directors and curators seek to develop a diversified program and range of subjects. Exhibitions already executed were Edward Gay, March 1975; Harvey Hartman's, September, 1975; Expressions of Nature in Art, December 1975. A return visit is planned for 1977.

In April 1975 the Greenville County Museum of Art proposed an exhibition of early to mid-nineteenth century ceramic ware from the Edgefield District of South Carolina. The proposal was stimulated by independent study and research of Stephen T. Ferrill, pottery instructor, Museum School of Art, in Greenville, and the idea was enthusiastically received and supported by Inter-Museum Exchange Program representatives.

While there appears to be a broad and general interest in early stoneware produced in and around Edgefield, South Carolina, recorded history is meager and a complete record does not exist. In this regard it is appropriate that the Greenville County Museum of Art's emphasis upon North American art and crafts focus on the development of this information.

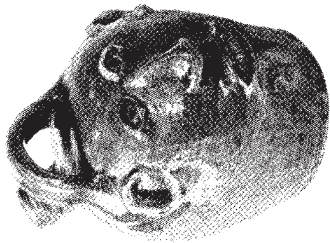
It is especially significant that the Museum has been able to draw upon the avocational research of an avid collector of Edgefield pottery. Stephen T. Ferrill's studies of Edgefield ceramics span over a decade and his findings have eagerly been adopted by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the Museum of Early Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Charleston Museum, Charleston; South Carolina Museum of Georgia Folk Culture, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia; as well as many private collectors. His efforts to date have been largely self-supported and assisted by his father, Ray T.M. Ferrill.

Through the publication of this and subsequent monographs and catalogues it is the intent of the Inter-Museum Exchange Program to promote a better understanding of the arts and crafts and to provide South Carolinians with valuable resource materials to underwrite that understanding and appreciation.

Jack A. Morris, Jr.
Executive Director
Greenville County Museum of Art

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Lewis J. Miles and "Dave"

In a totally different vein from the decorated wares of Chandler and Rhoads was a crude ware — yet possessing great homely quality — produced on Lewis Hill's "Shoney Bluff" plantation. The ware was impressive not only for its size, but for the remarkable vessels indeed in it, as by a state named

strange jar in the Charleston, S. C., Museum collection.

"Dave" belongs to Mr. Miles, who ate the oven-baked and the pot-baked. (No. 3) Considering the verse inscribed by Dave it appears that he was at once toward "good" he indicated the purpose of the vessels, such as on another some jar at Charleston. Great and noble jar, holds goat, sheep, or beer.

Or another in a private collection: "Good for fard or fardling lins" meat. But we were when "ger saw" the folded sheet. There may also have been religious overtones, as expressed in this verse: "This jar is made a lot cross; if you can't report you will be 'bet'." (no. 4.)

There is a tradition that Dave lost his legs while lying drunk on a railroad track. As the story goes, he depended on a slave without a "ris to" kick the wheel for him as he turned pottery. This colorful story contradicted by a newspaper-edition in 1855 advocating buttermilk as a healthful drink. The newspaper editor called him "Dave Pottery" and states that Dave was once committed with the *Edgewood* Hye. Dave was owned by Almer Landrum and must have been created by accident during a working days with the Hye.

The editor recounts this dialogue between himself and Dave: "Observing an intelligent blackie at the shop, we addressed him in one of his own set speeches. 'Ah, Uncle Dave, how does your rumposity seem to sagwaller?' 'Fingrate, young master, from top to toe, I just had a rump; amongst bowful of dis oleebones and bicyclogic, buttermilk."

1863 was supposedly the year Dave died at age 83. We can see why he recited: "young master" to the editor. If he

Other Makers

Col. Thomas Davis established a pottery and brick manufactory near War, S. C. in the lower part of the Decade in 1862; to meet the needs of the Confederacy. Unlike the others, his product slave labor for the production of the basically utilitarian ware. Here also, we see the modeled clay face vessels produced by the Afro-American slaves. One such example is a cup (no. 27) to and on the "washer" pile at the pottery site. Note the eye (ornaments) and tooth formed out of clay in clay. The Davis establishment was recaptured in 1865 by Sherman's troops.

Records indicate there were many other stoneware makers in the Edgefield District. We are no doubt overlooking some of importance. Many early makers moved on to the West and we have no record or example of their wares. Some other names deserve more research: F. W. Spence, S. C. Huxley, John Prossler, John H. Giles, Ezra Brooks, Andrew Davlin and John Seigler. Later points, Jesse P. Block and W. F. Hahn carried on the Edgefield tradition in forms and glazes, though without decoration.

Dave's ego is correct. He produced most of his extremely large storage jars at over 70 years of age and was actively producing until his death. Crucial in this exhibition, (no. 1) is the set "Dave and Baddler." Baddler obviously was rancher, slays who a fox in the cell throwing of such a large vessel.

The storage jars manufactured by Dave at the kilns pottery are no doubt some of the largest hand thrown production stoneware pieces made anywhere in the U.S. in that period. Some reached over 30 gallons in volume.

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Edited by
William Ferris

Afro-American Folk Art and Crafts

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~~SECRET~~

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The Face Vessel Controversy

For collectors of American ceramics and students of Afro-American culture, vessels with applied, stylized faces, referred to in the literature as "grotesque," "voodoo," and "monkey" jugs, best represent the Black contribution to American folk pottery. Indeed, a surprising number have turned up in collections as far-ranging as California and New England. As a form of American folk art they unquestionably deserve the attention they have received, and more; but by no means are the issues surrounding their origins as clear-cut as Robert Farris Thompson has suggested in his pioneering exploratory essay.¹⁶ Since Professor Thompson has made certain statements which frankly cry out for reconsideration, perhaps I can muddy the water in closer approximation to the state of current knowledge about these remarkable objects.

His hypothesis is that the "Afro-Carolinian face vessels," as he calls them, are an Afro-American development of sculpture from the Congo-Angola area, "compromised" by the Anglo-Southern wheel-turned, ash-glazed, jug-form tradition imposed on slave potters. He further suggests that white potters such as Cheever Meaders, who also made face vessels, necessarily imitated and misinterpreted Afro-American originals.

Most of the face vessels labeled as Black products were undoubtedly made in Edgefield District, particularly at the shop operating at Miles Mill into the 1890s, and at Thomas Jones Davies' Palmetto Firebrick Works (ca. 1862-65) at nearby Bath in Aiken County. Thompson cites, though not uncritically, the story that by 1863 "slaves suddenly were fashioning on their own initiative small vessels with human faces on them and bringing these works to the Davies pottery to be fired."¹⁷ The pieces I have seen, however, are all compe-

tently wheel-turned, and anyone who has attempted to master the skill of throwing symmetrical hollow-ware knows the considerable training and practice required. A slave not actually working in a pottery shop would not have had access either to a potter's wheel or the necessary training, so it seems unlikely that novices were somehow fashioning face vessels and bringing them to a kiln. More likely, the examples were made by the trained slave potters (or apprentices) working in the Davies plant and elsewhere in Edgefield District. Thompson distinguishes, through stylistic details, the work of at least three anonymous individuals; despite their seemingly prolific output (which may be somewhat misleading since the novel face vessels were more carefully preserved by their owners and thus survived), it is probable that there were not many more than these three responsible for the known Afro-Carolinian face vessels.

Assuming, of course, that this ware was in fact made by Blacks; the documentation seems to be limited to interviews conducted by the Charleston Museum in this century, and my own research has taught me to accept oral history data only with caution. I am not seriously questioning this documentation; however, I intend to establish that there was a fairly early tradition of Anglo-American stylized face vessels, and it does not seem impossible that white potters operating





in Edgefield District could have been responsible for some of the pieces attributed to Blacks. Thompson's argument that these are distinctly Afro-American--indeed, African--in their artistic conception is not entirely convincing to me, in light of similar pieces known to have been made independently by white Georgia and North Carolina potters. It seems to me that either there were parallel traditions of stylized face vessels for both white and Black potters in the South, possibly of different inspirations, or, more likely, that both streams participated in the same basic tradition, a situation not unlike that argued by George Pullen Jackson for the spiritual.¹⁸

It is not difficult to establish that stylized face vessels are not only not restricted to Black potters, but were made outside the South. The distribution of their manufacture ranges from New England through Pennsylvania into the Midwest and Deep South, at least as far west as Ohio and Mississippi. Early nineteenth century dated examples made by white Yankee potters include those of E. G. Crafts of Whately, Massachusetts (1833),¹⁹ Henry Remney of Philadelphia (1836),²⁰ and what may be the earliest dated example, by an anonymous Montgomery County, Pennsylvania potter (1805).²¹ (Most of the Afro-Carolinian pieces, by contrast, were probably made in the 1860s.) The latter two are a light gray salt-glazed stoneware with brushed cobalt-blue decoration, and all three are pitchers rather than narrow-necked jugs, alluding them more closely with the English Toby jugs which some researchers believe may have inspired our American face vessels.²²

The production of face vessels by white potters in South Carolina

has not yet been documented,²⁵ but I have amassed some information on the subject for Georgia (whose stoneware tradition was largely derived from the Carolinas), where at least seven white pottery families have made them.

Alkaline-glazed face jugs are still being produced by Georgia's last practicing folk potter, Lanier Meaders of White County, who learned the tradition from his father, the late Cheever Meaders.²⁴ Lanier, like his father, dislikes making these "nigger heads" (the local term, in reference to their dark color and exaggerated features), which he sells now in large quantities to tourists and craft shops, because of the time and concentration involved in applying the faces. It is said that face jugs were introduced into White County around 1910 by Will Hewell, who worked for Cheever's uncle, Daddy Bill Dorsey.²⁵ Hewell came from Gillsville, another pottery center twenty miles to the southeast in Hall County. Both the Howells and the Fergusons of Gillsville made face jugs, and these two associated families, in turn, had migrated from the Statham area twenty-five miles below Gillsville in what was then part of Jackson County but is now Barrow County, where they had made pottery since the mid-nineteenth century (although it is not known if they made face jugs that early). Finally, Charles Ferguson, the first of that family to make pottery in Jackson County, came to Georgia in 1826 after working in Abner Landrum's pottery shop.²⁶ This at least suggests the possibility of an indirect lineage through five generations from





a hypothetical early Edgefield District face vessel tradition (white or Black) to the current output of Lanier Meaders.

Other white Georgia pottery families which have made face jugs for at least two generations include the Gordys, much of whose pottery tradition descends from the Bishops of west-central Georgia's Jugtown (on the Ipson/Pike County line), the Browns, also of Jugtown and later Atlanta and North Carolina (where members of the family are still making face jugs), who have been involved in Southern pottery-making for seven generations, and the Averetts of eastern Crawford County near Macon.²⁷

To the knowledge of those surviving members of all these families with whom I've spoken, there was never any contact with, or indeed knowledge of, Black potters (other than the aforementioned late-comer, Bob Cantrell of White County). Thus, recent imitation of the Afro-Carolinian face vessels is pretty well ruled out, yet one should not dismiss the possibility that several of these families, which left South Carolina for Georgia in the 1820s, brought with them and developed an early, and again hypothetical (the Afro-Carolinian pieces were almost certainly made after this migration), Edgefield District tradition of face vessels.

There is no strong tradition of similarly stylized face vessels in England which can be pointed to as the obvious precursor of this American phenomenon. One can, however, trace a sequence of anthropomorphic pottery vessels stretching nearly two millennia in Britain which at least may suggest a continuation of thought to the New World: a Carian vessel, the most striking English parallel to our American

face vessels are the burial urns made by Roman potters in Britain during the first and second centuries A.D.²⁸ The faces on these globular jars are stylized and often comical (seemingly incongruous with their funerary function), the features formed by hills and strips of clay applied to the wall, just as with the American face vessels (fig. 1).

2. During the Middle Ages, jugs and pitchers with face marks or stylized human figures were produced rather consistently, such as the face-on-front jugs of Surrey and Nottingham.²⁹ It is possible that this tradition was carried into the Renaissance and beyond by country potters, providing a partial inspiration for the Toby and Anglo-American face vessels, although evidence is lacking.

3. Bellarmines, also called de Alvas, bartrams, and greybeards and originating in the sixteenth-century Rhineland, are bulbous, salt-glazed stoneware jugs displaying a small bearded face impressed into the neck and shoulder (fig. 2). Once thought to be a caricature of Cardinal Roberto Bellarmine, hated opponent of the Reformation in the Low Countries, this association is now believed apocryphal, in that one "bellarmine" is dated 1550, when the Italian Jesuit was only eight years old. Another tradition connects the face with the despised Duke of Alva. The earliest Rhinish face masks, molded on honey pots and ewers dating to the second century A.D., may represent a satyr or the devil; but on the earliest bellarmines, as such (1550-1625), the faces are benign, becoming stylized and grotesque only in the mid to late seventeenth century.³⁰ While often imported





to Britain, they were first made there by John Dwight of Fulham in the 1670s. One notable aspect of the bellarmines is their use as "witch bottles" in England, as described by Williamsburg archaeologist Ivor NoCl Hume:

From lime to lime bellarmines have been found buried beneath hearths or in the beds of streams with their contents still intact. . . . When opened the bottles pour forth an assemblage of iron nails, fingernail parings, human hair, and a cloth heart pierced by brass pins. . . . Such discoveries are known as witch bottles and were used both as a protection against witchcraft and as a method of bewitching others. . . . It may, perhaps, be significant that all the known bellarmine witch bottles belong to the second half of the seventeenth century when the bottles' masks bore their most menacing expressions.³¹

Judith Wragg Chase, curator of Charleston's Old Slave Mart Museum, has dismissed the possibility that the term "voodoo pot," as applied to the Afro-Carolinian face vessels, is anything more than an outsiders' coinage (equivalent to the term "hex sign" applied to Pennsylvania German painted bard decorations; in fact, the term "voodoo" is not used by Blacks of the Southeast, although "hoodoo" is).³² Perhaps, however, those pieces that are impractically small for water or spirits should be re-evaluated as possible adaptations of the Afro-American magical charm known as "mojo," "hand," or "trick."³³ In light of the suggestive use of bellarmines. A careful history of the use of the term "voodoo pot" might be a step in the right direction.

4. The Toby jug, in its usual form of a full-figured, seated man holding a pint-pot and wearing a removable tricorne hat, was conceived by Ralph Wood, Sr., of Burslem, Staffordshire, shortly after

the publication of Francis Fawkes' 1761 popular song "The Brown Jug," commemorating the thirsty Toby Fillpot (fig. 3). These naturalistically-colored mugs were widely imitated in England and America, sometimes representing only Toby's head rather than his whole body, and are still being made.³⁴

If we can see any English roots or inspiration for the American face vessels, the Toby Jug, popular during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, would be the most likely choice. Yet, as Thompson has pointed out, there is a considerable conceptual distance between the naturalistic Tobys and most of the American (including Afro-Carolinian) face vessels, which depict only a head, and that stylized or distorted.

The other logical direction of influence on the South Carolina examples, West Africa, has already been tentatively explored by Thompson and Chase. Thompson could find no similar pottery tradition in slave-supplying Africa, so concluded that the Afro-Carolinian face vessels represent a shift in media from wood to clay, attempting to demonstrate affinities with African sculpture. What he considers to be the most African features of the South Carolina pieces--the white eyes and teeth contrasting against the dark face--could indeed





be an echo of African mixed-media sculpture, with white used symbolically to represent "coolness" and mediation between this and the spirit world; but, more simply, it could be a function of the medium in which the nineteenth-century Southern stoneware potters worked: olive green or brown alkaline glazes (the darkness of which is partly attributable to impurities in the clay body) combined with locally available kaolin, undoubtedly the same kaolin used by Edgefield District's white potters for slip decoration.

Ms. Chase did find clay effigy pots bearing some resemblance to the Southern face vessels, but was forced to admit that they were from an area of Africa outside the slavery range,³⁵ finally subscribing also to the shift-in-media notion:

In America men were the potters, though in Africa this was women's work. Therefore a man would be likely to use designs he was accustomed to making in wood. Such transference of patterns from one material to another is common in Africa.³⁶

It is possible, I suppose, that stylized African representations of the human face in wood could have been carried over to pottery among second- or third-generation Afro-Americans; but her delineation of the transposed "obvious African characteristics—the bold, stylized design and the exaggerated features," is not specific (i.e., obviously African) enough; one can similarly describe the medieval English face-on-front jugs.

Based on admittedly limited comparative data, then, it appears that neither England nor Africa is directly responsible for the American face vessels. Again, as with the spiritual, one can point to Old World analogues, but the phenomenon, as fully developed, is a uniquely American and biracial folk expression. The general tra-

dition may have developed as a folk-pottery reinterpretation of the English Toby jug, perhaps further influenced in the South by stylistic tendencies in Afro-American woodcarving or by a more general racial approach to artistic representation of the human face.

The foregoing has assumed diffusion as the explanation for the face vessel's distribution. There is, however, the alternative possibility that individual potters invented face vessels independent of an inherited tradition. A creative sense of humor or the absurd, combined with the urge to relieve the monotonous routine of throwing similar pieces of unadorned ware all day long, could have inspired potters to spontaneously apply a stylized face to a vessel; there is something Jungian about the notion. (Perhaps appropriately, collectors have sometimes referred to face vessels as potters' "whimsies" or "end of the day" pieces.) The universality of anthropomorphic vessels among pottery-producing cultures throughout the world seems to reinforce this polygenetic explanation of face-vessel origins, yet, where white Georgia potters are known to have made face jugs, a chain of transmission can be established for at least two generations, indicating that when these potters chose to make something out of the ordinary, alternatives were nevertheless selected from available traditional models. To suggest a common origin for all American face





vessels, however, seems both simplistic and highly unlikely at this stage of research.

For the folklorist, origins are only one consideration in the investigation of a tradition. In an over-zealous quest for origins, perhaps never resolvable, one can miss the point of the tradition. Whatever their origins, what were the meanings of face vessels to the makers and owners? Perhaps in respect to function we can see more racially divergent approaches.

For the white potters who have made them, they were originally a comic relief from the humdrum, with perhaps overtones of satire, personal or racial. The intent of these novelties was discussed by potter Louis Brown, whose father, Davis, and grandfather, James, made them in the Atlanta area as well as later in North Carolina:

For years and years, grandpa made them and daddy made them. They're just more or less an ornamental jug . . . The public takes it as a joke. I've seen people get mad. One would accuse the other that he looks like that. But I guess that's what sells them. . . . It's a good seller but really no practical use. . . . The potter would go over there during his odd time and start making a face jug and maybe even . . . make it to look like somebody or maybe make one and give to somebody [i.e., a presentation piece]. They might go out here to a bootlegger somewhere and fill it full and give it to somebody. And then, too, lots of places they would like to attract attention and draw crowds and so they [merchants] would order a bunch of them to be made 'cause everybody'd stop in front of a place to look at them.³⁷

Lanier Meaders has a similar explanation of the face jugs' function:

They're nothing except to make somebody mad with. . . . Tell a fella it had his picture, you'd have to fight him, after he's seen it. They're about the ugliest thing a person could make. 38

Lanier also theorizes, in his half-joking way, that they may have been used as a kind of boogeyman to frighten children into behaving. He has seldom intentionally made a face jug in someone's likeness, although he will jokingly point out a coincidental resemblance to a customer. For him, they have become a highly saleable item to most non-local customers, in that they embody the quaintness and primitiveness expected in folk pottery. Several young people in the Mossy Creek community, however, have also bought them, and display them--complete with wigs, eyeglasses, or hats--as comic conversation pieces in their homes. Lanier has filled orders for hundreds of these pieces, and has been told that someday they will wind up in museums; so that for him their purpose has shifted from an occasional in-group joke toward a more commercial orientation. This shift began when his father's pottery was publicized and opened up to an outside market during the 1950s. As Lanier has been made artistically self-





conscious, his face jugs have become increasingly sophisticated in their modeling, and what began in 1967 (when Lanier took over his father's shop) as simple jug forms with the most basic features crudely applied, has evolved into carefully sculpted heads complete with sunken cheeks, incised eyelashes, chins, necks, occasional innovative touches such as incised scars and pierced earlobes, and even deviations from the standard jug form: devil's head jack-o-lanterns, double-handled two-faced jugs, and wig stands.³⁹ Face jugs for Lanier Meaders have thus become an artistic challenge.

As for the face vessels attributed to slaves, unlike Mississippi skull sculptor James Thomas, who creates similar, although evidently unrelated, pieces, the Afro-Carolinian potters are long dead, so that we can do little more than speculate about intent. Some of the larger examples were designed as water jugs for field hands; hence they were called "monkey" (thirst) jugs.⁴⁰ Perhaps some of the smaller pieces were used for hoodoo or conjure, or made to be placed on graves as part of the Afro-American tradition of grave "decoration."⁴¹ One atypical full-figured example attributed to Black potter Jim Lee is said to be a satirical likeness of a Greenwood County preacher.⁴² Certain Afro-Carolinian face vessels with menacingly bared teeth conceivably manifest undercurrents of protest, as exhibited in other select forms of Black American folklore (e.g., the "Old Marster and John" tales). Thus, for some slave potters, face vessels may have been powerful artistic statements of the frustration and resentment of a people in bondage, masks seldom revealed more directly to the white masters. But, until further historical data is uncovered and careful stylistic analysis of all American face vessels is undertaken, we cannot be certain that these pieces were even made by Black potters.

1. A suggestive beginning is Charles M. Hudson, ed., Red, White, and Black: Symposium on Indians in the Old South (Athens: University of Georgia Press for the Southern Anthropological Society, Proceedings No. 5, 1971). In Southern foodways, for example, Indians contributed maize (including lye hominy), beans, squash, sweet potatoes, and pokeweed; Europeans brought honey bees (which are not native to North America), peach and apple trees, and "Irish" potatoes (which they had originally borrowed from South America!), not to mention more obvious contributions; while, most revealing, foods were imported from Africa which became staples of the Southern diet: the peanut ("goober," from the Angolese nguba), okra and the soup-stew based on that vegetable, gumbo (from the Bantu gombo), the yam (from the Fulani yamli, "lu eat"), the watermelon, black-eyed peas and other crops, and possibly even the tradition of deep-fat frying. However, a classic illustration of misinformed defense of African origins of Black American folklore is Thomas W. Talley's Negro Folk Rhymes (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1968, reprint of 1922 edition), in which two songs are mistaken for "Guinea or Ebo rhymes" because of their nonsense refrains: "Frog in a Mill,"





AMERICAN STONEWARES,

The Art And Craft Of Utilitarian Potters

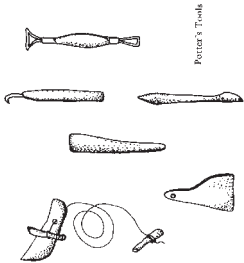
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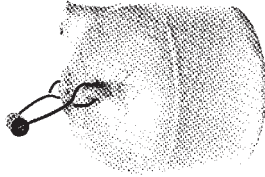
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A one-half-gallon jug made in two pieces in a jigger mold. It has a bail handle and is covered with a thick, white British form of glaze inside and out. The bottom bears the raised mark: "MANUFACTURED BY F. B. WEEKS, AKRON, O. STYLE XXX / pat. pending."
Akron, Ohio, c. 1890



FANCY JUG FORMS AND BOTTLES

A large number of fancy or unusual forms were made modifying the original jug form. A good many of these were really whimsys. Small and miniature jug forms were almost always in demand as gifts or containers for small amounts, even samples, of various products. Some miniature

ceramic strap or metal bail handle across the top. During the late nineteenth century in the industrialized potteries of Ohio, this form was often highly decorated and inscribed. The main body of these particular Ohio fancy jugs was frequently formed in jigger molds.

Grotesque and puzzle jugs were made as special pieces. Early anthropomorphic grotesque jugs may have been made as

ugs may be too small to contain anything. Many are the usual sample size of two-ounce capacity. Most of the other fancy forms vary from half pint to half gallon in capacity. They are mainly rather ornately turned modifications of ordinary jug forms.

One of the most common modifications of the ovoid jug form to produce a rather fancy effect is the flattening of two sides to make the jug resemble the glass flask form. These "fancy" stoneware flasks were very often also inscribed and decorated. A handle may or may not be present. Stoneware flasks are uncommon after the mid-nineteenth century.

The field or harvest jug is made with two openings on the shoulder area. One is in the form of an added spout from which to drink, the other, either central in position or opposite the drinking spout, is a ringed mouth opening through which to fill the jug. These jugs are usually handled with a

wichcraft pieces, but later examples were (and still are) manufactured as a sort of curiosity or souvenir piece popular for tourist sale. Most grotesque jugs made in America have facial characteristics representing a male Negro. Eyeballs and teeth may be a white clay. Teeth were also represented by broken bits of white ironstone china. They were produced mainly in the deep southern states and in Ohio.

Puzzle jugs, like mugs of the same type, are so constructed that inner secret tubes or openings make them dribble or spill when used in an ordinary fashion. They are highly variable in form.

Batter jugs are almost more pitcher than jug forms, since they have an added spout and a large mouth opening. At times they were fitted with overhead bail handles and lids of metal. Occasionally an additional cupped, lug type handle was applied near





Eloquent Vessels/Poetics of Power

The Heroic Stoneware of "Dave the Potter"

Aaron De Croft

ONE OF THE most remarkable figures in the history of southern ceramics—and certainly the most accomplished, well-known African American potter in the antebellum South—was a slave known only as Dave. He lived and worked nearly his entire life in the Edgetfield district of west-central South Carolina. He was an integral part of the unique, distinguished, nineteenth-century Edgetfield stoneware tradition that was characterized by the use of alkaline glazes, unusual decoration, distinctive forms, and African American slave labor for the manu-

protest in that Dave not only signed and dated his creations but also incised verses into his pieces before firing. The literature concerning Dave is not wide ranging, and this idea of protest has never been investigated. However, such an examination reveals that Dave's work does not fit neatly within the regional pottery tradition, nor does it fit exactly into the broader tradition of pottery and stoneware as once believed. It appears to be unique in the history of pottery. That uniqueness stems from the artist, his life, and his use of his craft and writing as a form of self-expressive pro-

test, especially at a time when all forms of general self-expression by slaves and free African Americans were condemned.

Most of the available historical information on Edgefield-district potters deals with the white potters and factory owners, although several slave potters are known to have worked there prior to the Civil War. These slaves turned wares in factories belonging to their owners and provided an inexpensive, and no doubt highly skilled, source of labor. The lack of written records leaves more speculation than fact about the lives of these slave potters. Dave is no exception; however, glimpses of the man and his art tell an unfinished story of one who used his craft as a means of personal and political expression.

The early history of Dave's life focuses on the ceramic activity of the village of Landrumville (later Pottersville), South Carolina, which is located a mile and a half northeast of the Edgefield courthouse and was founded by Samuel Landrum. Landrum was a Scotsman who migrated to the Edgefield district in 1773 by way of Virginia and North Carolina. His background is unknown. Three of his sons became involved in the manu-

facture of pottery. Beyond a regional interest, however, Dave also occupies a major place in the larger southern history of ceramics.¹

This essay focuses on the work of "Dave the Potter," examining some of the specific pottery he produced within the context of his social status not only as a potter but also as a slave. His wares go beyond mere pottery. They became a usable medium and vehicles of covert, yet overt,

Aaron De Groot is a Ph.D. candidate in the art history department at Florida State University.

¹John Michael Welch, *The Afro-American Tradition in the Domestic Arts* (Columbia: Greenwood Museum Art, 1978), pp. 76-77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000.

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ufacture of stoneware. One, Abner, was a physician by training but also a scientific farmer, newspaper publisher, and pottery entrepreneur. He was said to have established the first shop in the community in 1810. Abner's wide-ranging knowledge of ceramics is revealed in the names he gave his sons: Wedgwood, Palfrey, and Manises—some of the greatest names associated with the field.²

An 1826 account by Robert Mills praises Abner Landrum as "ingenious and scientific" and describes his operation as one that supported the entire village. Mills also noted the quality of the stoneware, claiming, "The manufacture of stoneware, carried on by this gentleman, and which by his own discovery is made much stronger, better, and cheaper than any European or American ware of the same kind. . . . Its usefulness can hardly be estimated." These are not idle compliments but noteworthy praise from the preeminent architect and designer of such important structures as the Washington Monument. This optimism, however, was supplanted when the Petersburg factory passed out of Landrum's hands in 1827; ownership changed several times over the next sixteen years. Seven different companies ran the pottery works until it was sold for the last time in 1843.³

The Landrum family was, nonetheless, responsible for Dave's presence in Edgefield. It is be-

lieved he published *The Columbia Hive*. He also served as state printer and operated another pottery and brickworks until his death in 1859. Dave had remained in Edgefield, where he was known variously as "Dave of the Hive," "Dave Pottery," and "Dave the Potter." He was mentioned once in print—in a small 1863 article touting the beneficial effects of buttermilk.⁴

Following Landrum's departure from Edgefield, Dave passed to various Landrum family owners and finally to Abner's son-in-law, Lewis Miles, either as dowry or by sale. Miles, who was listed in the 1850 census as "potter and planter, 4000 acres," named his home "Stoney Bluff." It was located roughly fifteen miles south of Edgefield, just inside the present Aiken County line. A post office was established there and was called "Miles Mill."⁵

Dave flourished as a potter under Miles, more than one hundred pots attributed to Dave are documented in various collections. Most date from July 1834 through January 1864. There are probably many more pots made by Dave, as some pieces signed "L.M.," for Lewis Miles, are thought to have come from the hand of this slave.⁶ In terms of productivity, it is interesting to note that a successful potter might churn out hundreds of pots over a lifetime. Dave produced pots for Miles for thirty years, yet only about one hundred sur-

ieved Dave was born in 1780 to one of eight slaves brought from North Carolina by Samuel Landrum. He spent his young adult years in the service of Abner Landrum, from whom he probably learned the potter's craft. During this time, Dave worked on another of Abner's diverse interests, his two newspapers: *The South Carolina Republican* and later *The Edgefield Hive*. Unlike most slaves, Dave was taught to read and write by Landrum, perhaps as an example of Landrum's "scientific" attitude. Dave was subsequently put to work as a typesetter at the newspapers until they were disbanded in 1831. Landrum held Unionist views that were not welcome in the Edgefield district during that time, so he moved to the more tolerant climate of the state capital, Columbia.

¹ Vlach, *Afro-American Traditions*, pp. 76-77; Burritson, "Afro-American Folk Pottery," p. 176; Burritson, "Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware," p. 987; Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, pp. 67-70; Baldwin, "Edgefield Face Vessels," pp. 16-20; Kernan, "Object at Hand," pp. 30-32.

² Vlach, *Afro-American Traditions*, pp. 76-77; Burritson, "Afro-American Folk Pottery," p. 176; Burritson, "Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware," p. 987; Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, pp. 67-70; Baldwin, "Edgefield Face Vessels," pp. 16-20; Kernan, "Object at Hand," pp. 30-32.

ived their utilitarian function and the ravages of time. These inscribed and dated pots have a wide range of production dates. There are five from January, July, and August of 1840; three from August 1857 (made over eight days); one in January, one in March, three in April (made over six days), and one in November of 1858; and one in March, two in April, three in May (made over ten days with two on the same day), and one in July 1859.

³ New research for an exhibition organized by the University of South Carolina indicates that Dave may have been born as late as 1800. This new research also attempts to identify Dave in a concrete way through various property records and financial and legal documents. The catalogue for the exhibition, however, is currently in production, and public copies are as yet unavailable. Jill Bate Koverman, ed., *I made this jar . . . The Life and Work of the Enslaved Afro-American Potter, "Dave"* (Columbia, McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, forthcoming 1998). See also Zita Ingalls, "A Slave, a Potter: Preserving the Legacy of David Drake," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 31, 1998, pp. B8-B9, for an introduction to the exhibition and catalogue. ⁴ Buttermilk, "Edgefield [S.C.] Advertiser, April 1, 1859," p. 2.

⁵ Vlach, *Afro-American Traditions*, pp. 76-77; Burritson, "Afro-American Folk Pottery," p. 176; Burritson, "Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware," p. 987; Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, pp. 67-70; Baldwin, "Edgefield Face Vessels," pp. 16-20; Kernan, "Object at Hand," pp. 30-32.

⁶ Burritson, "Afro-American Folk Pottery," p. 176.





ter. Without that background, Dave, too, may have expressed his creative forres through applied decorations like those of the face jugs. Instead, he chose elegant script, grammatically correct prose, and poetics of power while, as historian John Burrison states, he followed an oral aesthetic that characterizes much of the African American tradition. Burrison makes this point in an attempt to individualize Dave's pottery. I later use this assumption, however, to argue that these pots are a form of covert, yet overt, protest.⁹

Dave's pots consist mostly of very large, open-mouthed storage jars, usually about two feet high, with slab handles around the rim. The largest piece firmly attributed to him through the inscription is a colossal pot that stands twenty-five inches high and carries the name of its maker and that of another slave, Baddler. According to Vlach, this jar, which may hold more than forty gallons, "is the largest piece of stoneware known in the South." The pot appears to be a collaborative effort and was probably made in sections; Dave threw the clay while Baddler turned the wheel or worked the treadle. By the time Dave was finishing the upper part of the pot, he would not have been able to kick the treadle of the wheel due to the size and weight of the object. According to Vlach, "This piece should be re-

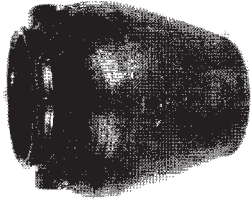


Fig. 2. "Dave the Potter," storage jar, dated August 24, 1857. Alkaline-glazed stoneware. Ft. 10". Max. circum. 34". Inscribed on shoulder near rim: "A pretty little girl on the verge / voiced [in] it moumains how they

garded as something of a ceramic monument; contemporary folk potters using the same technology are awestruck by Dave's ability.¹¹⁰

Undeniably, large scale is one characteristic of Dave's work. In addition, the shape of Dave's wares varies depending on their specific functions, though in general his pots tend to be extremely wide at the shoulders while the bases, which average about twelve inches in diameter, conform to the norm produced by almost all Edgelfield potters. Some of his pieces are nearly as wide as they are tall, measuring up to eighty inches in circumference. Historians agree that the profiles of Dave's pots are unusual. They are quite wide and flair boldly to the shoulder, near the top of the vessel. Above the shoulder, the walls break sharply inward to the mouth. Although these "broad-shouldered" pots are similar to traditional Edgelfield vessels, their size, shape, and scale mark them clearly as products of Dave's hand. Local white potters made large, bulbous storage jars, but most were more curva-

¹¹⁰Barrittson, "Afro-American Folk Pottery," p. 182.

¹¹¹Vlach, *Afro-American Tradition*, p. 79.

states, "This jar is to Mr. Segler [Seigler] who keeps the bar in Orangeburg / For Mr. Edwards a gentle man who formerly kept Mr. Thos Bacon's horses" (April 21, 1858). Dave must have known the value of his work, seeing that it was worthy as a gift. Knowing the inherent mental and physical conditions of slavery, it is touching yet curious that a sentiment such as the following could be evoked: "When Noble Dr. Landrum is dead / May Guardian Angels visit his bed" (April 14, 1859). Dave's first master, Abner Landrum, died in 1859.

While witty and delightful, as Vlach claims, the pots and inscriptions show that Dave was expressing himself as a craftsman. In his own way, he followed fellow Edgelfield potters—who ornamented their work with applied faces or designs in glazes—in an effort to make a statement about himself as a craftsman. Beyond the clay, the form of Dave's self-expression and, subsequently, his literacy comes from his early training as a typeset-





Pottery, Poetry and Politics

*Surrounding the Enslaved
African-American Potter, Dave*



McKissick Museum Symposium
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Pottery, Poetry and Politics Surrounding
the Enslaved African-American Potter, Dave

Symposium

MCKINSICK MUSEUM

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

APRIL 25, 1998

cover photo:

Storage Jar, 1858

Dave, Lewis Miles Factory
Edgerfield District, South Carolina

Inscribed with the verse:
*"The sun moon and stars
in the nests are plenty of bears"*

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Poetry, Pottery or Protest: The Work of the Slave, "Dave the Potter."

Aaron De Groff
Florida State University

One of the most remarkable figures in the history of Southern ceramics, and certainly the most accomplished, well-known Afro-American potter in the antebellum South was a slave known only as Dave. He lived and worked nearly his entire life in the Edgefield District of west-central South Carolina. He was an integral part of the unique, distinguished nineteenth century Edgefield stoneware tradition which was characterized by the use of alkaline glazes, unusual decoration, distinctive forms and an extensive use of Afro-American slave labor for the manufacture of pottery. Beyond a regional interest, however, Dave also occupies a major place in the larger Southern history of ceramics. His work in Edgefield, however, goes beyond merely the opportunity to manufacture a product because of the fortuity of good clay deposits and the advent of new, innovative glaze. It raises questions about the use of slave labor beyond what most people more commonly associate as the slaves' primary task in field work, into the economic realm of manufacturing products such as pottery, textiles, ironwork, furniture or, for that matter, gold mining which was done by slaves in other parts of South Carolina and other southern states. Dave's pots also raise questions of slaves reading, writing and literacy.

This paper focuses on the work of "Dave the Potter" and examines some of the specific pottery he produced within the context of his social status not only as a potter, but also as a slave. The wares he produced go beyond mere pottery. They became a usable medium and vehicle of covert, yet overt protest in that Dave not only signed and dated his creations but also incised verses into his pieces before firing. The literature concerning Dave is not wide ranging and this idea of protest has never been examined. Yet such an examination reveals that Dave's work does not fit neatly within the regional pottery tradition, nor does it fit exactly into the broader tradition of poetry

and stoneware as once believed. It appears to be very unique in the history of pottery and that uniqueness stems from the artist, his life and his use of his craft and his writing as a form of self-expression, especially at a time when all forms of even general self-expression from slaves and free Afro-Americans was condemned.¹

Dave flourished as a potter under his second owner, Lewis Miles and over 100 pots attributed to him are documented in various collections. Most date from July, 1834, through January, 1864. There are probably many more pots made by Dave as some pieces signed "LM" for Lewis Miles are thought to come from the hand of this slave.² In terms of productivity it is interesting to note that a successful potter in a business such as that of Lewis Miles would churn out hundreds of pots over a lifetime. Dave produced pots for Miles for 30 years, yet only approximately those 100 survived their utilitarian function, and the ravages of time. These remaining inscribed and dated pots have a wide range of production dates and by examining the proximity of some of those dates one may understand the rate of creation. There are five pots that date to January, July and August of 1840; three in August of 1857 (over 8 days); one in January, one in March, three in April (over 6 days) and one in November of 1858; and one in March, two in April; three in May (over 10 days with 2 on the same day) and one in July of 1859. It is conceivable that Dave made thousands of pots over those 30 years by throwing just a few per week.

He is not known to have made the face vessels or "Monkey" jugs attributed to other Afro-American potters of the region. Instead, he specialized in large storage jars with horizontal slab handles—the basic form of jug made by most of the local white potters. These pieces were intended for large-scale plantation food preservation and are among the largest examples of folk pottery in America with some able to hold up to forty gallons or more. In addition to the skill needed to throw and handle pottery of such incredible size, Dave's pots are even more unique. Besides his signature, over one-fourth of his known works contain handwritten, incised verse. Sometimes whimsical and other times cryptic, the poetic couplets and inscriptions are very individual.³





Early American Folk Pottery





Harold F. Guillard

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Note: Renderings denoted by asterisk were selected by Bernard Leach, Shoji Hamada and Soetsu Yanagi from the Index of American Design in 1952 for a slide show to illustrate fine examples of American folk pottery.





Peter Lenzo



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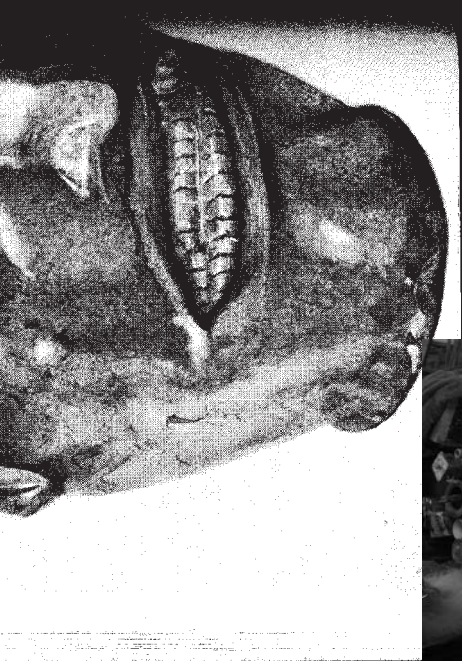
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Peter Lenzo







Peter Lenzo













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Brother's Keeper: Some Research on American Face Vessels and Some Conjecture on the Cultural Witness of Folk Potters in the New World

Inquiring into the social and utilitarian nature of folk-made objects, folklorists and other social scientists are currently offering explanations and interpretations of folk art that radically differ from those generally offered by collectors. Michael Hall's appreciation of folk art has its sociological as well as its aesthetic concern. His speculations on American face vessels were first presented in the Cranbrook Academy of Art "Faculty Lecture Series" in 1982. Since that presentation, Hall has continued his research on figural pottery and has expanded the face vessel text he first read at Cranbrook. The 1986 paper printed here is

* * *

At one time or another, almost everyone encounters something in life that brings them up short, something peculiar and enigmatic enough to trigger the response we call wonder. Such was my response when I first confronted an American face jug. The sculptor, the potter, the historian and the collector in me were all transfixed by the odd little object which leered out from its plexiglass display case in a museum. That was in the summer of 1966. Since then, I have handled and documented almost two hundred face jugs and my fascination with them has only grown.

The jug I first saw was a small piece, some five inches in height, made from a rather coarse stoneware coated with a semi-transparent green-brown alkaline glaze. The face on the jug was crudely formed from small bits of clay applied to its surface. These modifications only minimally transformed the profile of the basic wheel-thrown vessel to which they had been added. The dramatic and distinguishing features of the piece were its bulging whitish eyes and its gaping mouth filled with white teeth. The museum label indicated that the work was of unknown authorship, but was believed to have been made in the area of Edgefield, South Carolina by Negro slaves sometime around 1850 (see fig. 53).



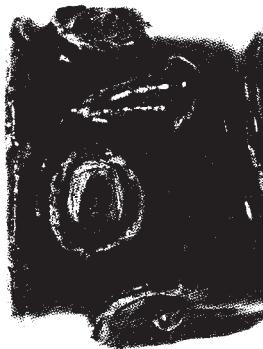




Figure 53. Anonymous, *Face Cap*, ca. 1860
Stoneware clay with kaolin details, alkaline glaze, 4".
Edgefield, South Carolina.
Private collection.





The presumption that face vessels are black folk art can be traced to a single historic account. This base might well be questioned and reconsidered today. No known document on black history mentions face vessels or alludes to any black custom that would certify such objects as survivals of an Afro-Atlantic slave culture in North America. My contention is that face vessels originated in a white world and are linked to the American temperance movement. I will demonstrate that their production correlates with the growth and spread of temperance throughout the eastern United States from the early nineteenth century into the first decade of the twentieth. To be understood as temperance signs, face vessels must be studied in what George Kubler calls a "history of things," a line of inquiry "intended to reunite ideas and objects under the rubric of visual forms."¹

This text will address the way in which popular prejudice on one hand, and academic myopia on the other, have frustrated the proper placement of face vessels in a history of things. Reassessed, these objects force us to examine our understanding of folk art and to recognize that, within an idiom presumed to be "primitive," even simple artifacts reflect a condition in which "every trait of a thing is both a cluster of subordinate traits as well as a subordinate part of another cluster."² Face vessels testify to the coherence of folk culture. They confirm the belief that ordinary citizens (tradesmen and artisans) exert suasion in the American political process. And, finally, they attest to the fact that complex symbolic meanings can be communicated in a visual language shared as a sign system by individuals enmeshed in a cultural matrix. To launch a reexamination of face pottery, we retrace a history. The

village of Edgefield is in the southeastern corner of South Carolina, near the more easily located town of Bath. The district around Edgefield was a pottery producing center in the early nineteenth century. The first potters in the area probably emigrated from England. Tradition maintains that the first pottery near Edgefield was founded in 1796. Foremost among the early potters were Thomas Chandler and Collin Rhodes. These men produced solid functional ware and, from time to time, turned out large, slip-embroidered jars which have considerable quality as works of decorative art.³ Edgefield ware, however, would probably have remained something of a footnote in ceramic history had it not been for a reference to Edgefield face vessels published in an early volume on American ceramics written by Edwin Atlee Barber.

Born in 1851, Barber was trained in his youth as an archeologist. Sometime after 1885, he began studying American ceramics and in 1893 published what is probably the earliest important survey of American pottery and porcelain.⁴ In a later revised and enlarged version of his book, Barber made the first known mention of American face vessels. His comments are almost universally cited when face vessels are discussed. To my knowledge,





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however, his complete statement has never been reproduced. Because I believe it to be critical to the discussion I am initiating, I would like to quote it in its entirety:

Before the great influx of business came to the little pottery which was operated by Colonel Thomas J. Davies, at Bath, S. C., about the commencement of the Civil War, the negro workmen had considerable spare time on their hands, which they were accustomed to employ in making homely designs in coarse pottery. Among these were some weird-looking water jugs, roughly modeled on the front in the form of a grotesque human face,—evidently intended to portray the African features. These were generally known as "monkey jugs," not on account of their resemblance to the head of an ape, but because the porous vessels which were made for holding water and cooling it by evaporation were called by that name. Colonel Davies informed me a few years ago that numbers of these were made during the year 1862. These curious objects, which I have seen in several collections, labeled "Native Pottery Made in Africa," possess considerable interest as representing an art of the Southern negroes, uninfluenced by civilization, and we can readily believe that the modeling reveals a trace of aboriginal art as formerly practiced by the ancestors of the makers in the Dark Continent. By the ingenious insertion of a different clay, more porous and whiter than the body of the jug, the eyeballs and teeth attain a hideous prominence. A purplish glaze was roughly flown over the surface, presenting the appearance of a composition of sand and ashes, as described to me by Colonel Davies himself.⁵

Later authors writing on American pottery, notably John Spargo and William Ketchum, Jr., cited Barber as the source for their discussions of face pottery.⁶ Through its persistent reinforcement in print, Barber's impressionistic notation transformed into a complete cosmology of history and interpretation. Americana enthusiasts came to regard most face vessels as black folk art. Scholars came to view Edgefield as the epicenter of a pottery production

that would anchor Afro-Atlantic cultural studies. A close look at Barber's statement, however, raises some questions.

In the first place, it is important to examine the source of his information. Colonel Davies was an educated and successful Carolina cotton planter before the war.⁷ He was involved with numerous business ventures and his pot shop was certainly among the least important. Barber knew, in fact, that the pottery developed as an offshoot of a Davies firebrick manufacturing business. The brickworks and the pottery were run by Anson Peeler, a carpenter; Davies, it seems, simply supplied the capital and the slaves to make the enterprise go.⁸ The pottery closed in 1865 and Barber did not begin his study until 1885. Thus, Davies, as an informant looking back into the past, could only provide Barber with general recollections. Nothing he shared could be considered hard information.

Secondly, Barber's account is shaded with inflections and suppositions that have had rather broad and unfortunate consequences for face vessel study. His reference to Negro workmen with "considerable spare time on their hands" sowed the seeds for later presumptions that face jugs were "end of





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the day pieces"—botched or damaged vessels which potters brought to life at quitting time.⁹ Alluding to the jugs as "homely," "weird-looking" and "grotesque," Barber set a tone which would cause collectors (and to some extent scholars) to perceive face vessels as ugly, alien and bizarre—aberrations that certainly could have no place in mainstream American culture.

Surmising that the faces on the jugs "evidently intended to portray the African features," Barber's attempt to interpret the iconography of face vessels was biased by his preconceptions. Very little in the exaggerated features we see in Edgefield face pots can be characterized as portraying African features.¹⁰ His contention that the vessels were "uninfluenced by civilization" betrays his apprehension of them as barbaric. His assertion that the eyes and teeth attained a "hideous prominence" seems indicative that his was a highly condescending (if not racist) perception of the pottery objects he was describing—a perception that would incline later authors to refer to face vessels as ugly jugs, grotesques, voodoo jugs, and effigy pots.¹¹

Barber alone, however, did not establish face jugs as black folk art. With the fine arts as a reference, Americana collectors in the thirties and forties came to view folk art with an aesthetic influenced by the enthusiasm for tribal and primitive arts engendered by Picasso and other pioneer modernists. The modernist myth of primitivism reinforced Barber's conclusions on face pottery. It begat a specious assumption which reduces to a simplistic syllogism:

- A. Face jugs look exotic and evince something votive in their appearance.

- B. African tribal arts look exotic and are generally votive in nature.
- C. Therefore, face jugs are survivals of African art brought to America by slaves.

Barber's vague and largely unsupported craft history inadvertently colluded with modern art history to popularize face vessels as black folk art and relegated them to the role of simple curious regional, ethnic artifacts.

It was not until the 1960s that Edgefield face jugs were finally reexamined. Given the emerging awareness of black identity, folklorists and social historians resited the ground at Edgefield looking for their own evidence to support Barber's original assertion that face jugs represented a survival of African culture in the new world. This time, however, the arguments focused on more sophisticated data than that which Barber gathered. New research utilized stylistic comparisons between Edgefield vessels and specific forms of African art. One author, comparing an Edgefield jug to a Kongo charm figure, observed that the details of the carving reveal "an extraordinary affinity with the Afro-Carolinian vessel style. The eyes with pupils pin-pointed with embedded glass correspond to the whitened teeth and the high-bridged





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nose."¹² Another cited specific African pottery traditions in his comparison. He noted that "the Lwena, who live to the south of the Kongo, and the Mbuundu make spherical water jugs with human heads fashioned on their tops."¹³

Much new cross-cultural speculation focused on the white kaolin features typically incorporated in Edgefield face pots. It was argued that the decorative and symbolic use of white chalk and shells in African sculpture constituted a distinct tradition which slave potters would have inherited and that this tradition was reasserted by Afro-Americans inserting white kaolin eyes and teeth into figural vessels made of brown stoneware. "The face jugs with bulging white eyes and the small wooden [African] statues with eyes made from white shells are end points of a stylistic continuum stretching the breadth of the ocean."¹⁴

At least half-a-dozen distinctive "hands" are recognizable in the Edgefield works that have been found. Dr. Franklin Fenenga, an authority on southern pottery, and Dr. Robert Farris Thompson, Professor of Afro-American Art History at Yale, worked together briefly on this problem. They attributed various pieces to authors they identified with such names as "the Master of the Diagonal Teeth," "the Master of the Transverse Handle," etc. Fenenga and Thompson confirmed that at least a dozen Edgefield jugs were discovered in the cabins of southern blacks.¹⁵ As for their purpose, one informant told Dr. Fenenga that face vessels were used by black parents to intimidate misbehaving children—that they were a type of "bogey-man" image used in the discipline of children.¹⁶

Despite all of the information I have just related, the discussion of face vessels still seems more informed by folklore and political bias than by reliable sociology and art history. No one examining the artifacts and data available at Edgefield has been able to reliably account for the significance and the

signification of the vessels within the community where they were made and used. The acceptance of Barber's history and its fortification with new broad theories on the slave transmission of African culture to North America overlooks one major fact. Edgefield face jugs form but one small part of a much larger corpus of face vessels traceable to virtually every major pottery manufacturing area of the eastern United States.

Simply looking at work from Pennsylvania, Ohio and North Carolina, we see that the black production of face vessels at Edgefield was bracketed chronologically and geographically by a white production of strikingly related works. Reason dictates that all these works must be considered together if the inquiry into face jugs is to reveal the richness of an artistic tradition and its importance in a history of things.

One group of face pots produced in Pennsylvania reliably predates its South Carolina counterpart by fifty years. A face pitcher from this group,





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illustrated in Warren Cox's book *Pottery and Porcelain*, is of primary interest and importance. The visage on this piece is brutish and dour. From its heavy brow to its jutting goatee, it is decorated with blue cobalt designs. Under its handle, the piece is inscribed "Whitpain Township, Montgomery County, 1805, Henry Dull."¹⁷ The inscription suggests that the author (or the recipient) of the pitcher was of English ancestry, but the style of this pitcher is derived from a broad Euro-American pottery tradition. Potters of mixed European backgrounds worked in eastern Pennsylvania and readily combined forms and decorative motifs from English and Rhenish traditions. Thus, the Henry Dull pitcher may be viewed as an amalgamated folk expression, deriving its form and style from European cultural sources. Its meaning, however, can be shown to derive from something wholly American.

At least four other large double-faced harvest jugs have been located which strongly resemble the Henry Dull pitcher (see fig. 54). Found near Philadelphia, they all exhibit the same sharp noses, protruding goatees and, like the Dull piece, are all salt-fired and embellished with incised and slip-painted sideburns and eyebrows. As harvest jugs, however, they also have paired spouts which form horns on their tops. Another related pitcher, from the Smithsonian Collection, has been attributed to the Remmey family, and if properly attributed, would have been made in Baltimore or Philadelphia sometime between 1810 and 1835. This pitcher, the Henry Dull piece, and the Pennsylvania harvest jugs form a body of work from which we can assert that face vessels of Euro-American origin developed in North America long before they were made by blacks in Edgefield.

In the Midwest, there exists yet another production of face pottery which

can be studied—this time in Ohio. The vessels here are large, imaginative, and boldly figured. The pieces characteristically possess grimacing mouths, bulging eyes and conspicuous “coleslaw” hair, beards, and sideburns. They were produced in many of the major shops in the northeastern and south central counties of the state. The makers of these pots are known to have all been white. Many of them were employed at the Stein Pottery near Lancaster, Ohio.¹⁸ Signed examples exist and attributions of unsigned pieces can be constructed from the stylistic characteristics of the jugs themselves. The high period of Ohio face jug production was between 1870 and 1890.

Shifting our inquiry again, we inspect the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century face vessels produced by white potters in North Carolina and northern Georgia. Here, members of the Brown family, the Gordy family, the Dorsey family, and others all made face jugs.¹⁹ These works are plentiful compared to examples from Philadelphia or Edgefield. Perhaps as many as one fifth of the face jugs currently housed in public and private collections were fashioned by various members of the Brown family. Brown face jugs are highly stylized and are particularly distinguished by their fierce open





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mouths filled with white tile chip teeth. Their other prominent features include pointy ears, moustaches, and goatees.

The simplest way to account for such a broad-based manufacture of face vessels is to cite the universal disposition of potters to transform functional ware into figurative images. Given the whole of ceramic history, face vessels form a category of objects which can be found across time and in almost all cultures. In some ways, the idiom constitutes a natural potter's expression. The inherent plasticity of wet clay makes any freshly formed pot receptive to a pinch here and the addition of a coil there which can transform it into a figurative image. A potter who can weld lugs and spouts on jars and churns all day long can just as easily add a nose and ears to the same form and dramatically figurate his work. Formed in this manner, face vessels are suspended somewhere between the abstraction of pottery and the explicit descriptiveness of sculpture. A universal face vessel morphology is revealed if examples from all over the world are examined.

Yet I have difficulty accepting the suggestion that the various face vessel productions in the United States were all of independent origin. It would seem absurd to contend that same "Henry Dull" invented the face jug as a personal encounter with his craft, and that the Edgefield masters fifty years later and the Ohio masters and the Brown family later yet all did the same. I can accept the independent invention of face vessels in different cultures, but my instincts and my researches compel me to seek some tie—some common thread linking all American face vessels to an American history of things. Some groundswell of social pressure set American potters to their production of face jugs in the opening decade of the nineteenth century. This pressure

remained a viable impulse in their trade for the next one hundred years. To discover this impulse, we turn to a consideration of potters and their craft.

Origins for potters are always in clay. The contemporary potter Henry Varnum Poor framed a vision of a potter's spiritual bond to his clay in the opening chapter of his book, *A Book of Pottery*. For his clarity and his poetry, I quote him:

As rock broke up into sand, and sand disintegrated into clay or dirt, or mud, the live surface of the globe came into being. How organic life began no one knows, but it sprang most directly from mud, and is most dependent on mud for its continued existence. The miracle of life and growth involves air, water, and earth, all activated by heat, and of these the tangible element of earth is most closely bound up with the life of man.

From the beginning man knew that he came from earth and returned to earth. . . .

And mud has preserved the most perfect records of life that existed before man. The delicate tracery of leaves, of ferns, of fragile forms long vanished are preserved in shale as vividly as are the specimens that lie pressed between the blotters of a botanist's book. Of all inorganic substances, clay most approaches the organic; it seems almost to contain in itself the breath of life. And it is the host that holds loam, the soluble salts, and all the other elements that support vegetation.²⁰





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Poor's eloquent prose ties his personal artistic identity to that of generations of potters who had read or heard Genesis 2:7; "And the lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Ample proof of the continuity of the impact of scripture on potters in the Western tradition can be found in the inscriptions scratched into or trailed on the surfaces of historic pieces of pottery. An early English plate carries the inscription, "Earth I am, it is most true/ Distain me not, for so are you."²¹ A Pennsylvania pottery inscription in German from 1800 translates as, "This dish is of earth and clay/ And men are also thereof."²²

The words clay, dust and earth are frequently used interchangeably in the Bible and this fact combined with the frequent biblical metaphor which describes man as a "vessel" seems to have endowed Euro-American potters with a peculiar and somewhat paradoxical sense of their place in the world. Their craft touched both the mundane and the sublime. Asserting themselves artistically, they symbolically emulated the divine act of creation—but in their repetitious production of simple vessels, they performed a prosaic, tiring, and repetitious chore.²³

The most powerful biblical reference outside of Genesis which might bear on the thinking of early American potters would be the parable of the potter found in the eighteenth chapter of the Book of Jeremiah:

The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter, so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, O house

of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.²⁴

Folk potters shared an important "social contract" with their community. When they embellished or decorated their work, they did so with incised or painted marks and depictions which were conventional and which were fully recognizable and legible within their society. Much that was common in their culture was inherited; much that they did was dictated by tradition. Their communities were stabilized by certain norms including adherence to many social and intellectual strictures derived from Christian belief. Most potters, like most Americans, were influenced by Christian moral teachings. Western belief would answer the biblical Cain in the affirmative when he cried out, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Secular thought would follow this model and shape the moral, social and political values in the society around folk potters in America. Turning jars, jugs and churns for the preparation and storage of his community's foodstuffs, the folk potter, in a very real way,





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was his brother's keeper. An American-made flowerpot dating from about 1822 bears an incised inscription which corroborates this contention.

Is this a Christian world?
Are we a human race?
And can man from his brother's soul
God's impress dare efface?²⁹

Folk potters accepted the Christian abjuration of vanity and arrogance. As tradesmen, they knew their place. They shied away from artistic pretensions that would challenge or usurp divine prerogatives and yet they seem to have been fully aware of the unique Promethean essence of their art. By tradition, their impulse to transform pottery into some figural form of sculpture was inhibited by two factors. As practical men, they made their living producing standardized ware—not time-consuming “one of a kind” objects. As Christians, they refrained from engaging in a creative enterprise which might be construed to parody or insult God's original forming of man from the clay of a riverbank.

Some force in the nineteenth century did, however, compel potters to ply their hands at sculptural figuration. When they did, the figures they formed were most surprising. We find them to be strangely caricatured, frozen, and slightly bizarre. Their pointed ears, jutting goatees and grimacing mouths impart a demonic aspect to their visages. The persistence of this demonic visage establishes a motif in an art we have not yet explained. A search for an explanation compels us to take a closer look at the prototypical Pennsylvania

face jugs related to the one marked "Henry Dull."

In a European iconographic mainstream, the imagery in these jugs is very familiar. We recognize their fill and pour spouts as horns. The goatees, heavy sideburns and eyebrows signal the hitsute personage of the devil. Finally, the applied heavy brow ridges distort the diabolical face, transforming it into the specter of the fiend who apes both God and man. Henry Dull's devil jug carries centuries of accumulated visual history in its image. Why, though, should it appear in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania in 1805? And to what purpose? Why would the potters around Henry Dull suddenly begin producing ceramic representations of fallen gods and fallen men? More curious yet, why would potters in the South and the Midwest continue to create demon faces on their wares for the next hundred years?

Social history provides our answer. Potter "Dull," in his time, felt the first stirrings of the groundswell that was to become the temperance movement. As the century unfolded, secular habits and social conscience began to clash and potters, as tradesmen, found their craft conscripted into the service of social reformers crusading against the evils of drink. The "Dull" face pots became signs. Their makers turned their hands to the production of visual





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object lessons—didactic propaganda for the movement. By applying horns, exaggerated facial features and a goatee to an ordinary harvest jug, potter "Dull" fashioned an image of a lustful, evil spirit—an image understood by his community as the symbol of spiritual and physical perversity. Soddren man, for temperance advocates, was fallen man. Fallen man, in turn, was one with the fallen archangel, Lucifer.

Alcohol was, of course, popularly consumed in America from the time of the first settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts. The colonials were, nonetheless, fundamentally quick to rebuke excess. For them, "all such indiscretions signified an abuse of nature's wholesome gifts, and were, therefore, violations of the Divine Will in regard to man's use of natural blessings."²⁶ By 1789, this attitude had accelerated and what would have to be designated as the first temperance society in America was formed in Connecticut. This body was "a voluntary association of forty prominent citizens, who pledged themselves to carry on their respective business interests without the use of distilled spirits, and to serve their workmen only mild beverages such as beer and cider."²⁷ By the time potter "Dull" and his contemporaries began making devil jugs, demon rum was under fire.

The interesting convergence of forces which would link Satan and the Gentle Creature (as spirits were often called) into an archetypal pottery image is documented in the literature of the temperance movement. By 1830, the learned Dr. Thomas Sewall of Washington, D. C. had published his findings on the conditions which befell drunkards:

Dyspepsia, jaundice, emaciation, compulsion, dropsy, ulcers, rheumatism, gout, tremors, palpitation, hysteria, epilepsy, palsy, lethargy, apoplexy, melancholy, madness, delirium,

tremens, and premature old age, compose but a small part of the catalogue of diseases produced by ardent spirit.²⁸

Sewall's admonitions conjure up myriad images of the very grotesque distortions of the human form which had always informed the images of art depicting the horrors of the infernal realms. Sewall and potter "Dull" had come together to set the stage for the emergence of a pottery expression that would preach an American temperance sermon.

An early nineteenth-century preserve jar from New York confirms the fact that potters readily incorporated pro-temperance sentiments in their work. The jar is decorated with an incised and glaze painted figure lifting a flask to his lips. On its opposite side, it bears the inscription: "There is a man in our land./ Upon his feet he cannot stand./ The reason why you all know./ He drinks too much afore he'll go."²⁹

The first half of the nineteenth century saw churches and reformers join together in a giant crusade against alcohol which was not concluded until the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment almost one hundred years





later. The fever pitch of the early phase of the movement generated huge camp meetings and pledge signings throughout the Northeast. This fever spread and refocused itself several times in various other regions of the country during the 1900s. The social awareness kindled by the cause of temperance and later fueled by the mid-century antislavery issue committed Americans to the expectation that everyone was in one way or another *rightly* his brother's keeper. Folk potters set their craft in the service of the expanded social concerns of their world. To support my assertion that face vessels in America were predominantly linked to the cause of temperance, I would need to correlate the several major productions of such vessels with the growth and spread of temperance. Specifically, I would need to trace a parallel development of face jugs and of temperance activity throughout the pottery-producing regions of the United States. This can be done. The organized temperance movement began in Connecticut and spread principally into New England and Pennsylvania in the early 1800s. It is here that we find the first face pots. And as has been demonstrated, it is in the Philadelphia area that we find the earliest formulation of the Satan face jug that would become the paradigmatic form of the idiom.

In the 1830s, temperance gained strength in the South, especially in Virginia and the Carolinas. By mid-century, South Carolinians were hotly debating the issue. In an 1852 Edgefield town council election, a "no license" group won a majority of seats. This victory "attests to the influence of the

Sons [of Temperance] in that community, numbering about 50."³⁰ We also note that "Grand Worthy Patriarch A. M. Kennedy, in 1852, at the State Convention of the South Carolina Sons of Temperance, urged state-wide prohibition. . . ." ³¹ South Carolina Governor William Henry Gist (1858–60) was an ardent advocate of restrictions on liquors and his sentiments clearly reflected those of the citizens of the town of Due West, South Carolina which, in 1854, passed a local prohibition law making the sale and consumption of alcohol illegal.³² Due West is barely forty-five miles from Edgefield. Churches in South Carolina also became actively involved—particularly in rural areas. In Edgefield itself Rev. John Landrum, a Baptist minister who also owned one of the area potteries, expelled his own brother from the church in 1839 for drunkenness.³³

The face pots Barber described from the Davies pottery in the 1860s were produced in the midst of this ferment. On close inspection, they exhibit most of the typical demonic features (sharp noses, pointed ears, heavy brows and goatees) which could be said to have derived from the established lexicon of pottery temperance signs established in Pennsylvania (see fig. 55). It may well be that, ironically, face vessels came into southern black life not as African retentions but as temperance admonitions from whites who had very practical reasons for turning blacks away from the consumption of spirits.





For Rachel and Thom.



Figure 55. Anonymous, *Face Jug*, ca. 1860.
Stoneware clay with kaolin details, alkaline glaze, 9".
Edgefield, South Carolina.
Private collection.





"Intemperance among his slaves cost the owner money in terms of sickness, time lost, and physical deterioration. One South Carolinian cited a figure for his state which estimated the depreciation and damage to slaves caused by intemperance at 20% per year."³⁴

Temperance next caught fire in Ohio. Face jugs followed its path. Many of those settling the Western Reserve migrated from New England. They brought with them a temperance fever instilled by the early movement in the East. Resettled and prosperous in Ohio, they needed only a spark to reignite the temperance flame that had flickered out during the Civil War. The spark was struck by Dr. Dioclesian Lewis. A temperance lecture he delivered in Hillsboro, Ohio in the winter of 1873 set off a blaze which became known as the "Women's Crusade."³⁵

Women all over the country were restive because male leaders had not successfully controlled the evil. "The ladies were primed and ready to shoot. Dr. Lewis pulled the trigger."³⁶ Hundreds of Ohio women inspired by Dr. Lewis's message began to crusade and close saloons throughout the state. Lewis himself reported that "in the first two months of the crusade seven-teen thousand drinking places were abandoned in Ohio alone."³⁷ The crusade was particularly effective in small and medium-size towns. From Akron to Springfield, the crusaders closed bars and distilleries.

It is precisely along this line and to the East that we find the great Ohio face jugs. Pottery production in Ohio in the last quarter of the nineteenth century ran from Akron in the North to Portsmouth and Cincinnati in the South. Stoneware devils, satyrs and even a Bacchus can all be traced to the hands of potters working in this area.³⁸ With the Ohio story, coincident occurrences in Pennsylvania and South Carolina begin to align themselves in patterns. Where temperance crusaded on American clay soil—face jugs joined the file.

To corroborate my contention that face vessels are temperance signs, I have the testimony of an informant with a most interesting account. In 1982, I taped an interview with Aileen Smith, a black domestic living in Detroit, Michigan. In the interview, Mrs. Smith recounts her upbringing in Montgomery, Alabama and describes three face vessels which she remembers in her childhood home. Mrs. Smith recalls that the jugs belonged to her great-grandfather and that he frequently admonished the small children in the house to leave the vessels alone. Smith contends that her great-grandfather referred to the vessels as “jimmie jugs.” She has no recollection of having ever heard the term “monkey jug” or “ugly jug.” They were “jimmie jugs” to her because, as she says, “that is what the old people called them.”³⁹

The term “jimmie jug” at first seems confusing. Is it an appropriation of a maker’s or owner’s name? Could it be a confusion of Jim Crow? Might





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it be a creolized African term? In the end, these speculations prove unfruitful. Tracing American slang, we find "jimmies" as a term denoting "delirium tremens."⁴⁰ As a colloquialism, "the jimmies" derives from "the jim jars"—a popular euphemism for the D.T.'s which appears in American literature as far back as 1852.⁴¹ Mrs. Smith's statement establishes that face vessels, even in black American society, were signs of the spirit of temperance—signs completely consistent in form and meaning with a paradigm recognized throughout nineteenth-century America.

By 1860, the satanic model for the face vessel began to change. A religious motif began to secularize and become more domestic. The bulging eyes and grimacing mouths found on middle period face pots do not link to a purely satanic iconography. Instead, they illustrate the secular variant of the devil as a drunkard in the throes of the jim-jars—the sodden mortal who was the pathetic reality of a fictional demon. The *Edgefield Advertiser* in 1859 published the following description of a sufferer with delirium tremens:

There he lies upon his bed of straw; with parched lips, bloated countenance, and blood-shot eyes, the very personification of ruin. Tossing upon his hard and comfortless couch, panting for breath, and calling for help, but all in vain. Death marks him for his victim, and now, if for a while he is relieved from frightful ghosts and demons which hitherto haunted his disordered imagination. . . .⁴²

Perhaps the potters of Edgefield fashioning the face jugs Barber described as having eyeballs and teeth of a hideous prominence were simply giving visual form to the accepted period stereotype of the debaucher led astray

by drink. Recognized as regional stylistic interpretations of a broad tradition parodistically depicting the fiend in the drunkard, Barber's "weird-looking water jugs" finally find a place in a legitimate context of meaning. They become part of the ancestor tree of the "jimmie jugs" Aileen Smith knew as a child.

Having established face vessels as temperance folk art, new issues must be dealt with. First an explanation must be found for the persistent reference to these vessels as grotesques, monkey jugs and the like. Second, there is a need to investigate and explain some of the seemingly eccentric iconographic motifs which distinguish a few of the most interesting and unique works in the face jug corpus. Finally, the links should be forged that would connect face vessels to other known forms of American temperance pottery such as the snake pots from Ohio and Illinois.

Barber actually never referred to face vessels as "grotesque jugs." Rather, he described them as having "the form of a grotesque human face." His language exhibits a dash of high Victorian affectation but he appropriately uses the word *grotesque* as referring to things characterized by fanciful or





fantastic representations of human and animal forms—things that appear as bizarre hybrid composites using distortion or exaggeration of the natural or the expected to the point of comic absurdity or ludicrous caricature. As temperance signs, face jugs are thus properly and intentionally grotesque. Once the term “grotesque jug” entered the popular lexicon, however, it gained a pejorative aspect. Collectors have refused to see face vessels as hybrid composites intentionally distorted to achieve high comic absurdity and ugliness. Face pots become absurd only when they slip into their paradoxical social role as critics/comics. In this role, they function in a temperance drama much as Shakespeare’s fools functioned in his plays.

The antic intent of some face jugs is confirmed by a detail on one particularly outstanding Ohio piece. This large jug is constructed from two rather average sized clay globes joined together, one on top of the other. The smaller top globe is skillfully modeled into a reptilian human face. The chin of the figure sports a small goatee. Under the protruding goatee, a small hole has been drilled which penetrates into the interior of the vessel. This particular jug, when raised to the lips, would not pour cleanly out of its top spout. Instead, its contents would dribble out of the hidden hole and down the vest of the unwitting victim foolish enough to be tricked into partaking of its intoxicating contents. This prank is part of the long American tradition of prac-

tical joking. It suggests more, though. The embarrassed drinker is made a fool. He is soiled and embarrassed and his knee-slapping companions have precipitated his symbolic fall. All of this was presided over silently by the sardonic face atop the jug which viewed the ludicrous goings-on as a piece of absurd theater.

Barber did cite "monkey jugs" in his discussion of South Carolina face vessels. He notes the term as applied to them was a name for porous pots that kept water cool by evaporation. Contemporary researchers have sought to confirm a place for Barber's face decorated monkey jugs in black history. They have found that non-figured vessels called *monkeys* are "known to have been made by slave potters from Barbados in the nineteenth century."⁴³ They also point out that a variety of such monkeys from the West Indies are related in form to certain pottery water coolers made in the Congo *and* to one of the basic vessel shapes on which South Carolina black potters modeled faces.

Investigating further, John Vlach found that "some Blacks in South Carolina still use the word monkey to mean a strong thirst caused by physical exertion."⁴⁴ Thompson suggests that there may well be various Kongolisms concealed in this single word and states that "*mbugi*, Ki-Kongo for 'devil,' is surely one origin for 'monkey,' in the sense of evil spirit . . ."⁴⁵ From these and related inquiries, Afro-Americanists have interpreted the monkey jug from nineteenth-century South Carolina as expressing black slaves'





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memories of their Caribbean/African roots. Interestingly, the same information can be reinterpreted to root the same jug in American temperance. If the word *monkey* in black society alludes to both ceramic forms *and* to thirst and evil then “monkey jug” might be a colloquial name for a temperance jug.

A look at a European history reveals still more on “monkeys.” In Antwerp during the 1560s, Pieter Bruegel painted a slightly melancholy picture of two monkeys in a tower window. In Bruegel’s time, monkeys were a symbol “commonly used to represent man’s bondage to his bestial side.”⁴⁶ Bruegel and his contemporaries intuited what Charles Darwin would scientifically assert three hundred years later, namely, that monkeys are tied to man and somehow at the low end of a chain. Throughout nineteenth-century America and into the twentieth, monkeys have been associated with the brutish and the ludicrous. The monkey was duly appropriated as a temperance sign—for the debasements induced by alcoholic spirits were seen to make a monkey of a man. Thus, as a term which may well have synthesized Afro/Caribbean and European connotations, “monkey jug” becomes a fitting designation for the “jimmie jug”; the pottery reminder that “He who stepped over the shadowy line of moderation, was an outcast from the community.”⁴⁷

The term “effigy jug” comes into the literature on face pottery somewhat late. The word *effigy* denotes a likeness, visually “a crude representation of a person who is hated or held in contempt.”⁴⁸ This word provides an insight into the not-so-veiled racial prejudice that informs the imagery in certain late face vessels—a prejudice that also seems to have conditioned collector perceptions of face vessels from Barber’s time to the present.

To ground a discussion of face vessels as effigies, I must establish a historic context that goes back to the age of discovery. The early navigators and ex-

plorers followed maps which beckoned them westward with painted images of Christ or the Virgin Mary worked into their western borders.⁴⁹ This had a great deal to do with the mental and spiritual geography of the medieval world. Up until Columbus's time, Europeans were in general agreement that the biblical Garden of Eden lay somewhere to the east. However, because its precise location had never been ascertained, Eden became oddly transposed into a vision that entreated explorers to seek its whereabouts in the West. The regaining of Paradise and Christ's promise of redemption merged in this dream.

Such speculations coincided with the discovery and popularization of the magnetic compass. Once it was known that a suspended lodestone would orientate itself north and south, the world had a base for standardizing the attitudes of its maps. North and "up" became one and the same and south and "down" likewise became synonymous. Two quite different maps began to superimpose themselves in the minds of Europeans. The theological map





of Christian thought placed God, goodness and enlightenment up toward heaven; and Satan, evil and depravity down toward hell. The geographic charts used by the navigators placed Europe up at the top of the map and put Africa and South America down toward the bottom of the map. In one of the most troublesome coincidences in history, the skin colors of the peoples of the then-known world distributed themselves in a tonal gradation that ran from light in the North to dark in the South. Ironically, this pattern precisely fit the up/down and the good/bad models imprinted on Christian consciousness. Refining these maps, Columbus and those who followed him did much that would place the dark serpent of racial prejudice into the shining paradise they sought in the West.

Dark-skinned savages discovered in southern and tropic climates were abhorrent to the early Spanish and Italian explorers, both for their nakedness and for their presumed barbarism. Rumors that they practiced cannibalism particularly shocked and repelled explorers. The journals of the early navigators are full of lurid descriptions of alleged savage cannibal rites.⁵⁰ A century later, sailing from their northern island fortress, the English had even less experience with dark peoples than had the Spanish and the Italians. Dark people were Moors and Ethiopians to the English of Shakespeare's world.

The bard himself, time and again, polarizes things in black and white. His Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus* is portrayed as a "walking, plotting, fornicating symbol of evil."⁵¹ Like most of his countrymen, Shakespeare perpetuated early stereotypes of peoples from southern climes as devilish, evil, bestial and remarkably potent sexually. The colonists debarking with

ings the Elizabethan dispositions on the subject of race and color which would significantly shape their attitudes toward the Indians and blacks with whom they would share their new world. In the wave of settlement that followed exploration, the colonists, potters among them, arrived in North America. In the nineteenth century, expansion settled potters throughout the eastern United States. They built shops wherever good clay deposits could be found and where riverways or railroads provided access to markets. They adapted their work to the peculiar conditions of the various locales where they set up their wheels and kilns. They probably did not speculate much about the transgenerational transmission of images and prejudices but their hands were conduits for both.

If the real subject of temperance figural pottery was fallen man, and if potters truly had inherited the dual European map of up/down, light/dark, good/evil, then at some point one among them would logically create a jug that would depict fallen man in the form of a black devil. This evocation would evolve from the cultural assumptions which prescribed the belief





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system a potter lived within and the meanings associated with the words he spoke. Somewhere, some potter had to explicitly depict blacks, the fallen scorched ones, on his temperance pots as the incarnation of Satan.

One did, and his name is known for he signed one of his jugs "John Dollings." Dollings potted at the Stein Pottery in the White Valley area of Ohio around 1880.⁵² His hand is unmistakable. The seven face vessels known to have been produced by him all display the same technical and sculptural authority. They are also all degraded by the same mawkish interpretation of their black subject. Dollings lived in a time when expunging devils was not accomplished gently. In the South, men still felt the sting of their defeat in a war over who was whose keeper. In the North, men still had very little experience living with Shakespeare's Aaron. In the midst of the events that swept Dollings and his contemporaries toward the twentieth century, it is doubtful that anyone noticed that the virtue of temperance and the vice of racism had been married in one bizarre set of ceramic artifacts from Ohio.

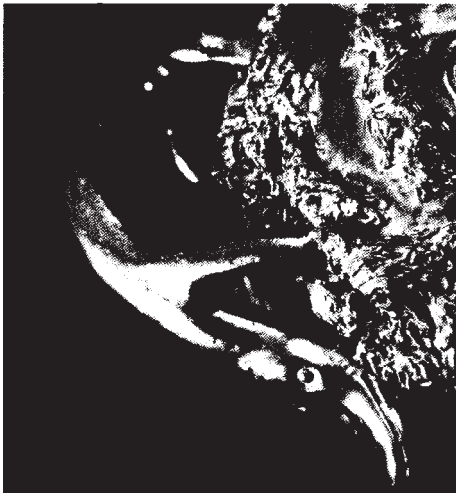
Despite their lack of artistic merit, the Dollings jugs are true effigies. Ohio townsmen understood these vessels as depicting an amalgamation of two evils many of them feared and held in contempt—alcohol and blacks. In the next century, numerous collectors, perceiving face jugs as Negro portraits, would consider all face pots similarly as effigies. Their prejudicial misconceptions would be only slightly more subtle and veiled than those of John Dollings.

As the temperance movement spread west and south throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, its icons predictably changed. In a broadening stylistic evolution the form of the face vessel was dramatically altered by potters swept into late temperance activity in Ohio, Illinois, Georgia and Alabama. In the North, the bridging piece in this history is an Ohio jug which is distinguished by a transverse stirrup handle that has been modeled

into the form of what appears to be an alligator (see fig. 56). As recently as ten years ago, this jug would have been attributed to the hand of a black southern potter. Its coleslaw hair would have been read as an allusion to the woolly texture of Negro hair. The alligator image would have cinched the attribution, given the many references to alligators that can be found in black folklore. Even the fact that the piece was discovered in Ohio would not have deterred this attribution. Its presence there would have been explained away by the presumption that it came north with runaway slaves on the underground railroad.³⁵

Today this jug would be attributed quite differently. It is obviously late, white and northern. The clay body from which it is made is typical of those used in potteries along the Ohio river in the 1870s. Ignoring its figurative details, we see that the jug itself was fashioned with a technical finesse singular to Ohio. Simple inspection confirms that this pot never wandered very far from its place of origin.





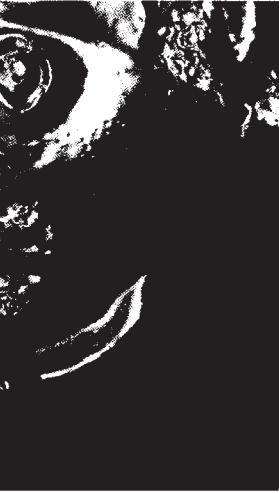


Figure 56. Anonymous, *Face Jug with Crocodile* (Detail), ca. 1875
White stoneware clay with iron glaze, 9".
Central Ohio.
Private collection.





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What then distinguishes this sturdy piece of crockery enough to warrant all this attention? Much! The hirsute personage peering out from its surface rings a familiar bell. It is the "Henry Dull" Satan. Lucifer had moved west with the rest of the sinners. But what about the alligator? Something new rather than something transplanted complicates the iconography in this jug and begs explanation. A perusal of lore on alligators yields little but it does cross-reference to crocodiles. These reptiles, in turn, cross-reference to scripture. The crocodile in Ezekiel is the caiman—the dragon of the Nile.⁵⁴

The crocodile also appears in Revelations as a dragon from the great river Euphrates. From its mouth, unclean spirits spew forth. In Revelations, these spirits are described as being like frogs "out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet."⁵⁵ As the most malevolent in a host of fiends, the crocodile complements the devil face on this jug. The reptile is incorporated as a metaphor for the treachery of false prophets. Fused on the jug as a handle, the crocodile signals a shift in the temperance pottery sign system we are tracing. A narrative element begins to inform an idiom that in its classic early phase was essentially iconic. Fallen man is no longer a frozen specter coaxed to the surface of a freshly formed clay vessel. Instead, he becomes a much-reduced presence caught up in a larger graphic vision.

Other Ohio jugs, contemporaneous with this piece, are even more narrative. In these works, face imagery gives way to fully sculptured tableaux which entwine around vessels. In one, a hapless drunkard is caught up in the jaws of a giant crocodile which arches up over the top of the pot to form a handle and then turns down and around its spout. A menagerie of clay demons witnesses all of this from below. This host includes a serpent,

a scorpion and a turtle. Assembled on this jug is a quartet of creatures from the dark realms ordained to rend, sting and torment the inebriant flung into their midst.

Certainly a deep cultural memory fed the imagination of the artist who shaped this jug. A durable oral and visual culture, sustained in a history of things, outcrops in the images formed here. After 1870, potters in the North became storytellers as well as sign-makers. It would be tempting to suggest that the single faces on early temperance pots were eclipsed by more complex narrative figurations as Americans themselves began to feel personally overw/whelmed by the problems and promises of the urban industrial new world they were creating. Psychosocial speculations such as this could be expanded but would carry us too quickly into contemporary concerns and thus should probably be put aside as we turn to examine the late face pots of the South.

Though much has been written on Georgia folk pottery, little comment has been focused on the region's face jugs as a distinct expression within





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the overall genre. Perhaps this is because it is presumed that these jugs were simply late imitations of Edgefield originals. Certainly the recent self-conscious revival of face-jug making in Georgia has tended to muddy the waters around the authentic folk pieces. Whatever the reason, this oversight should be addressed. Temperance innares were formed in Georgia clay well into the twentieth century and they deserve their own place in a history.

Actually, the fact that face jugs were made late in Georgia should not surprise us at all. Many writers have alluded to a certain cultural conservatism that has seemingly kept the South out of step with its time. "As an index of this regional time-lag, the height of folk pottery production in Georgia occurred during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whereas in New York State, for example, folk pottery activity reached its zenith in the 1820s and was on the decline by the 1840s."⁵⁶ The relatively late emergence of the temperance movement in the deep South, however, contributed to the delayed evolution of face vessels in Georgia and in its neighboring states. Though temperance crested late here, when it did, it broke with a vengeance.

In 1907, Georgia became the first southern state to adopt statewide prohibition.⁵⁷ The process that brought this about had taken decades. As Due West, South Carolina had voted itself dry in 1854, so too did many other towns throughout the South between 1840 and 1900. With the passage of each new local prohibition, temperance gained strength. The battle that would be won with the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1920 was fought town to town and county by county in Georgia, Alabama and the Carolinas. Georgia, however, led the charge and "within nine months of Georgia's ac-

tion [prohibition], four more states had done likewise."⁵⁸

Georgia potters responded by reasserting the face vessel. In general, it can be said that Georgia face jugs are diverse and individualized in appearance. They are usually made from the typical coarse stoneware clay found in the region. Though they do not exhibit the technical finesse evident in Pennsylvania and Ohio ware, they do have unique stylistic and iconographic characteristics.

Stylistically, the face jugs produced during the high period of deep South temperance push the limits of sculptural figuration afforded by the vessel form. Throughout the piedmont plateau and west into Alabama, potters transformed jugs into full figures. These works sport heads, torsos, arms, hands and even suggestions of dress apparel. Preeminent among the southern figural vessels is a piece referred to as the *Gospel Singer*.⁵⁹ Allegedly from eastern Alabama, this piece reflects stylistic characteristics specific to jugs known to have been made in the Georgia piedmont.

The *Gospel Singer* is an outstanding piece of figural pottery and it typifies the highest ambitions of late Georgia and Alabama face-vessel makers. The





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small spout: at the top of this jug flares out to become a broad-brimmed hat. The figure's face is minimally detailed but wondrously expressive. The main body of the pot is transformed into a torso by the addition of two coils of clay which simulate the lapels of a coat and by two additional coils which curve down from the shoulders of the pot and terminate in a pair of clasped hands.

The maker of the *Gospel Singer* may also have fashioned other less developed but still fascinating figural pieces discovered in Georgia.⁶⁰ In concert, these works attest to the development of one artist's expression from its genesis in a common tradition to its culmination in a highly personalized gesture which exploits the sculptural potential of the potter's language. As completely as Ohio potters became narrators, potters from Georgia, Alabama and North Carolina became sculptors.

They also brought a certain sense of humor and whimsy to a traditionally sober idiom. The rakish, laughing devils made by Georgia's E. J. Brown exemplify the metamorphosis of late southern face pot demons into imps. Brown made his genial ten-gallon polychromed monsters in the nineteen-twenties and thirties and placed them along the roadside near his North Carolina pottery to attract tourists (see fig. 57). Three or four survive—the rest fell victim to shotgun blasts leveled at them by “good old boys” joyriding in their cars up and down mountain roads.⁶¹

No one in the Brown family today recalls the jugs as anything other than roadside attractions. “Henry Dull’s” sinister Pennsylvania fiend obviously changed greatly to end up as the horned jester placed outside the Brown shop. As temperance advocates in the early twentieth century were about to grasp their long-sought dream, their pottery sign, it seems, had become forgetful and even playful. By 1920, prohibitionists nationwide had saved

all their brothers with a constitutional amendment.⁶² As prohibition became law, face vessels would become history. As whimsies, they would persist in the folk pottery idiom but they would no longer signal a message that an American community could decode.

Despite a hundred-year history of manufacture, almost no face vessels have been found signed or otherwise documented. It is almost unthinkable that so many artifacts could have remained so largely undifferentiated one from another. Somewhere in all of this production, some great master must have taken the common themes from the visual tradition around him and aspired to convert them into something so original and uncommon that it would identify itself in art history. Such was the vision of Wallace Kirkpatrick—an Illinois temperance potter without peer. His amazing sculptured snake jugs brilliantly end-game the history of American temperance ceramics.

Born in Ohio in 1828, Wallace was part of a pottery-making family which migrated west from Pennsylvania. The events of his life placed him in Ohio





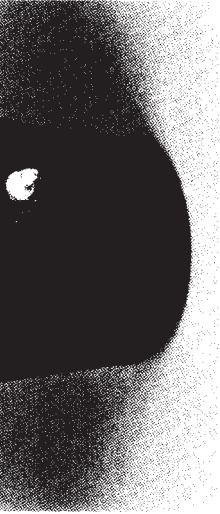


Figure 57. E. J. Brown, *Devil Jug*, ca. 1920
Stoneware with painted features, 21 1/2".
North Carolina.
Private collection.



at precisely the right time to have absorbed all the temperance impulses which fed the narrative movement described earlier. In 1857, he joined his brother in a pottery at Mound City, Illinois. Two years later, the brothers built another pottery in the town of Anna, Illinois, the site where Wallace would create his masterworks.⁶³

As a member of the United Friends of Temperance, he took the cause to his clay and fashioned perhaps a dozen epic temperance jugs between 1865 and 1880. Among these, we find a piece he entitled *The Drunkard's Doom*. The jug is so encrusted with figures and reptiles that the underlying vessel form itself is almost obscured. Central in the piece is a figure whose buttocks and legs protrude from one side and whose head emerges from the other (see fig. 58). Around the buttocks, Kirkpatrick inscribed "Nice Young Man Going In." Bursting out, the nice young man is engulfed by a host of serpents and by the epitaph, "The Drunkard's Doom."

Elsewhere on this vessel, three drunken revelers sprawl across railcar coach seats while snakes and lizards look on. Opposite this scene, a pair of dung beetles are busy pushing a large ball of waste back and forth between themselves. Nearby, frogs and locusts perch to survey the scene. Atop the piece, a coiled serpent as a stopper seals the mouth of the jug.

Kirkpatrick's art was a fully synthetic expression, both sophisticated and provincial, traditional and modern. A closer look at *The Drunkard's Doom* reveals that its handle is hollow. In a gesture of uproarious abandon, Kirkpatrick took his complex sculptured editorial and reasserted its grassroots in a poetry tradition.⁶⁴ Upended, the jug pours its contents out of the mouth of the frog squatting on its handle. Yet, Kirkpatrick signed or otherwise identified most of his work. The "self-expression" in this pottery suggests that its maker was temperamentally more a twentieth-century artist than a nineteenth-century folk craftsman.



Temperance face vessels disappeared from the American scene by 1930.

A few self-conscious contemporary potters have attempted to revive the idiom producing commissioned works imitating the "look" of early face vessels. The face jug as a functioning sign in a history of things, however, is not theirs to revive. It belongs instead to a past time. An educated count would set the number of known pre-1920 temperance face vessels somewhere between three and four hundred. I would assume that a hundred or more await discovery in attics and basements where they have been stored for years.

The creators of our face vessels passed into history leaving only a few cryptic inscriptions that do little to explain their work. By refusing to decode this work for us in a manner appropriate to our habit of literacy, they left their art vulnerable to misunderstanding. They did, though, leave the vessels they made. In a medieval rather than a modern way, folk potters bequeathed their pots as witness to their existence but not to their ego. The temperance







Figure 58. Wallace Kirkpatrick, *The Drunkard's Doom*,
ca. 1870-75
Stoneware clay, salt fired with incised, applied and
cobalt blue decoration, 9 1/2".
Anna, Illinois.
Private collection.



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experience of American potters was collective. It gathered and carried forth in time that which seemed central and useful to folk communities. Conversely, it also shed that which would not allow potters to remain continuous in their world. The history of things of which American face vessels are a part is not easily broken down for convenient filling in Dewey's system of classification. Yet, meaning resides in the corpus of face jugs we inherit. The phenomenon is an entity. Our aesthetic inspection of this entity extends our perceptions of the art in folk art.

The folk potter, in some manner, knew all of this. Hunkered over his turning wheel, he was centered in his universe. Whenever he set up another shop, he recreated himself, and his hands again transmitted cultural memory, social value and personal creativity to the pliable clay which turned between them. The silence of the fragile baked images he fashioned inspires a peculiar wonder for us today. The pieces are suspended forever between the centrifugal and centripetal forces which shaped them. Turned inward, they store the perishable history of a people. Turned outward, they stare enigmatically into an indifferent present time as ceramic curiosities. As folk art they are both objects and signs—objects which can now be appreciated as signs of the temperance fire that once burned fiercely in the kilns and imaginations of American potters; a fire that flickered out in a new age which dismissed both potters and their face pots from service as their brother's keepers.

Notes

1. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 9.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
3. Stephen Terrell and T. M. Terrell, *Early Decorated Stoneware of the Edgefield District, South*

Carrizosa (Greenville, South Carolina: Greenville County Museum of Art, 1976), n.p.

4. Edwin Adee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelains of the United States: An Historical Review of American Ceramic Art from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893).
5. Edwin Adee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelains of the United States: An Historical Review of American Ceramic Art from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, third ed., rev. and enl. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), pp. 465-66.
6. John Spargo, *Early American Pottery and Obsian* (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1926), pp. 547-48; and William C. Ketchum, Jr., *The Pottery and Porcelain Collector's Handbook* (New York: Funk & Wagnall's, 1971), p. 71.
7. Nancy C. Mims, personal communication, December 1986. Ms. Mims directs the Visitor Center in Edgefield, South Carolina and is knowledgeable on the subject of Edgefield history. Her family has long ties to the temperance movement in South Carolina.
8. Edwin Adee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, pp. 248-49.
9. Harold T. Gulland, *Early American Salt Pottery* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1971), p. 133.



10. Personal field work. I have handled over twenty-five Edgefield face vessels. (Observation does not bear out Barber's statement that the modelling on these vessels was "intended to portray the African features.")
11. Michael Kan, "American Folk Sculpture: Some Considerations of Its Ethnic Heritage," in Herbert W. Hemphill, Jr., ed., *Folk Sculpture U.S.A.* (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1976), p. 56. William C. Ketchum, Jr., *Pottery Handbook*, p. 71.
12. Michael Kan, "American Folk Sculpture," p. 58.
13. Robert Farris Thompson and Joseph Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun: Kongo Art in Two Worlds* (Washington, D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 1981), p. 159.
14. John Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978), p. 86.
15. Robert Farris Thompson, personal communication, November 1986. In January 1969, Dr. Thompson visited the Edgefield area to gather information on Afro-American face vessels. He met a Mrs. Eve who had in her possession a number of face jugs. Her son, William Raiford Eve, had collected the jugs between 1939 and 1940. Mrs. Eve informed Dr. Thompson that her son had found all of the pieces in black homes in the countryside around Edgefield.
16. Franklin Fenenga, personal communication, June 1976. I visited Dr. Fenenga in his California home to discuss his field work on face pottery. In the conversation on his findings, the information related here was revealed. Dr. Fenenga also shared his collection of face pottery with me, recounting as much specific information as he could on each piece that he offered for my inspection.
17. Warren E. Cox, *The Book of Pottery and Porcelain*, vol. 11 (New York: Crown Publishers, 1944), p. 986.
18. David Good, personal communication, December 1982. Mr. Good is a knowledgeable collector of Ohio pottery. His personal field work has uncovered a great deal of useful information on Ohio face vessels. He has established that members of the Stein family as well as E. Hall and John Dollings all worked in the Stein pottery on Kent Run in the Zanesville area of Ohio in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

19. John A. Burrison, *Brothers in Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1983).
20. Henry Varnum Poor, *A Book of Pottery: From Mud into Immortality* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958), pp. 17-18.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
22. Edwin Atlee Barber, *Tulip Ware of the Pennsylvania-German Potters*, reprint of 1928 ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1970), p. 208.
23. *The Holy Bible* (King James Version), "The Acts" 9:15. In this chapter of Acts, God admonishes Ananias to go and seek out the blind Saul of Tarsus and to lead him into Christian fellowship:
... Go thy way; for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the children of Israel.
24. *The Holy Bible* (King James Version), "Jeremiah" 18:1-6.
25. Edwin Barber, *Tulip Ware*, p. 216.
26. John Allen Krout, *The Origins of Prohibition*, reprint of 1925 ed. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), p. 1.



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27. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
29. Georgeanna H. Greer, *American Stonewares: The Art and Craft of Utilitarian Pottery* (Exton, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1981), p. 255.
30. Douglas Wiley Carlson, "Temperance Reform in the Cotton Kingdom," unpublished thesis (Urbana-Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1982), p. 250.
31. David Duncan Wallace, *South Carolina: A Short History, 1520-1948* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1948), p. 86.
32. Benjamin Ryan, *The Tillman Movement in South Carolina*, n.p.
33. Ferrell & Ferrell, *Edgefield District*, n.p.
34. Douglas Carlson, *Temperance*, p. 65.
35. Herbert Ashbury, *The Great Illusion: An Informal History of Prohibition* (Garden City, N.Y.: The Country Life Press, 1950), pp. 68-87.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
38. David Good, personal communication, December 1982.
39. Aileen Smith, personal communication, April 1982. Mrs. Smith was born Aileen Taylor in Greenville, Alabama in 1929. The face vessels in her childhood home belonged to her grandfather, Caesar McPherson. Caesar had been born a slave and brought the jugs with him into Alabama sometime after the Civil War. Mrs. Smith is not certain of the events of his early life but she indicates that he came to Greenville from somewhere to "the east" (Georgia? South Carolina?) Her testimony establishes that Caesar repeatedly asked the children in the house not to touch the face vessels saying, "Those are my jugs." It is not certain whether he was claiming ownership or authorship of them. That he called them "jimmie jugs" is, however, clear in Mrs. Smith's recollection.
40. Eric Partridge, *A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 8th ed. (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1984), p. 620.

41. Stewart Berg Flexner, *I Hear America Talking* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1976), p. 128.
42. Douglas Carlson, *Temperance*, p. 122.
43. John Michael Vlach, *Afro-American Tradition*, p. 87.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
45. Robert Farris Thompson and Joseph Cornet, *The Four Moments of the Sun*, p. 163.
46. Timothy Fouts and the Editors of Time-Life Books, *The World of Bruegel, c. 1525-1569* (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968), p. 69.
47. John Krout, *Prohibition*, p. 27.
48. *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958), p. 462.
49. Ronald Sanders, *Lost Tribes and Promised Lands: The Origins of American Racism* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), p. 10.



50. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
52. Robert Doty, *American Folk Art in Ohio Collections* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1976), n.p. The signed example cited is in the collection of the Ohio Historical Society. The jug is marked in glaze on its bottom with the maker's name and the note "White Valley." Interestingly, the Ohio Historical Society refers to the piece as an effigy jug.
53. Regina A. Perry, *Spirits or Satire: African-American Face Vessels of the 19th Century* (Charleston, S.C.: Carolina Art Association, 1985), n.p.
54. *The Holy Bible* (King James Version), "Ezekiel" 29: 3-5. In this chapter, Ezekiel was sent to prophesy against Pharaoh in the name of the Lord. His message rages:
- 3 . . . Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.
- 4 But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.
- 5 And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, . . .
55. *The Holy Bible* (King James Version), "Revelation" 16: 13.
56. John Burrison, *Brothers*, p. 56.
57. John Samuel Ezell, *The South Since 1865* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1963), p. 399.
58. *Ibid.*
59. Illustrated and discussed in John Michael Vlach, *Afro-American Tradition*, pp. 92-93.
60. Personal field work, north Georgia, August 1981.
61. J. Roderick Moore, personal communications 1975-85. Professor Moore directs the Blue Ridge Institute at Ferrum College in Virginia. He is a well-known authority on southern folk art and has a special interest in face vessels. He has interviewed various members of

the Brown family over the years and obtained the story of E. J.'s devil jugs during his extended field research.

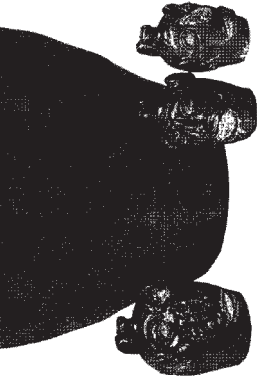
62. John Krout, *Prohibition*, foreword.
63. Ellen Paul Denker, "Kirkpatrick Jug Acquired by Folk Art Center in Williamsburg," *Ohio Antique Review*, vol. 4 (March 1978), pp. 9-10. For more information on Wallace Kirkpatrick's background and his temperance activities in Anna see: Ellen Paul Denker, *Forever Getting Up Something New: The Kirkpatricks' Pottery at Anna, Illinois, 1859-1894* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1978).
64. Personal observation. I have had access to *The Drunkard's Doom* for many years and have been able to study it completely. The "puzzle jug" detail of this vessel is engineered in a most sophisticated way. An internal "re-routing" of the jug contents causes liquid to pass through the container's handle rather than through its spout when it is upended.



**INSTRUCTIONAL
RESOURCES**

**SELECTED
AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTISTS:
1859 TO 1945**





George Jor, 1958. *Daves* (1959). *10/27*, *Mads* at *Lewis Miles Potter* es. *Edgelle* d. *Scrub Cap* na. *Alcristia-plizad* *scrowere*, 28½ inches x 18½ inches
Rene Jorg c. 1950s. *Alfso Jor* in *Thuris Denis Poterles*, *Edgelle*, *Scrub Cap* na. *Alcristia-plizad* *scrowere*, (from left to right) 7½ inches x 7¼ inches
 5½ inches x 2½ inches, 6½ inches x 5½ inches.



SELECTED AFRICAN-AMERICAN ARTISTS: 1859 TO 1945

BY BAY HALLOWELL

This Instructional Resource (IR) examines the diverse works of African-American artists spanning a period from the Civil War to the Civil Rights era. The IR focuses on cultural and art historical information and offers brief suggestions for studio activities. Teachers can adapt the material for many grade levels and may wish to use student writing or studio projects to assess learning.

Enslaved African-American potters in South Carolina were skillful artisans who found ways of expressing their Christian and African beliefs in their pottery. Henry Ossawa Tanner, son of a minister and a former slave, attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and became a successful academic painter who chose to live in Paris because of racial prejudice in the United States. Marie Hensley, a domestic servant in North Carolina, created a quilt for herself that contains extraordinary complex patterns, rhythms, and symbols reminiscent of West African textile traditions and spiritual beliefs. Beauford Delaney's portrait of the noted writer James Baldwin as a young man expresses his feelings of deep kinship with Baldwin as well as his awareness of current trends in modern art (Hallowell, 2000).

Dave (1800?-1870?)
Made at Lewis Miles Potteries, Edgefield, South Carolina
Alkaline-glazed stoneware
26½" x 15½"

Face Jugs, c. 1860s
Attributed to Thomas Davies Potteries, Edgefield,
South Carolina
Alkaline-glazed stoneware
(from left to right) 7½" x 7¾", 5¾" x 3¾", 6¾" x 5½"

Looking Questions

- How were these pots made?
- How big do you think they are?
- Find a date and the name "Dave," written in script on the biggest one. What could you put in the large jar?
- How do you think it was originally used?
- What kinds of expressions do you see on the face jugs?
- How do you think the face jugs might have been used?

Enslaved African-American potters created these pots around the time of the Civil War in the Edgefield District of South Carolina, a place famous for its pottery throughout the 1800s. The pots feature alkaline glazes, made with sand and ash, that were used primarily in China before being rediscovered in Edgefield. A remarkable African-American potter named Dave, who was a slave working in the Edgefield District, created the large storage jar by taking two bowls formed on a wheel and placing one upside down on top of the other. The brownish glaze was poured on. On one side of the jar Dave wrote "I'm May 3rd 1859" and his name. "I,m" are the initials of Dave's fourth owner, Lewis Miles. On the other side of the jar is a verse by Dave referring to a New Testament story (Acts 10:10): "Good for Jard or holding fresh meat" and "Blest we were when /eter saw the folded sheet." Dave found hope for the equality for all people in this biblical passage. He is one of the few African-American artisans from the antebellum period (before the Civil War) who can be identified by name. His well-crafted vessels are notable for the witty poetry he wrote on them and for their impressive size, with some large enough to hold more than 20 gallons. A master potter and a poet, known for his command of the English language, Dave expressed himself with intelligence



The NEW ENCYCLOPEDIA of SOUTHERN CULTURE





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GLENN HINSON & WILLIAM FERRIS

Volume Editors

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U.S. South, ed. Helen Regis (2005); Harry Oster, *Louisiana Folklore Miscellany* (May 1958); Art Rosenbaum and Mango Newmark Rosenbaum, *Shout Because You're Free: The African American Ring Shout Tradition in Coastal Georgia* (1998); Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and the Foundations of Black America* (1987).

Face Jugs

One of the most intriguing products of southern folk potters, past and present, is the face jug. Where did the idea of modeling a human face on a jug (and other vessel types) come from, and what were the meanings of early examples? Emerging knowledge suggests that the answers are far from simple.

A substantial number of face vessels were made in 1865–65 by enslaved African American potters at Thomas Davies's Palmetto Fire Brick Works in South Carolina's Edgefield District. They are distinguished by bared teeth and bulging eyes of white clay, set into the wheel-thrown stoneware to contrast with an often-dark alkaline glaze,

are not the earliest such pieces. Fragments of a vessel with a European-looking face were excavated from the site of Phoenix Factory, a short-lived Edgefield operation of the early 1840s. A white potter who worked there, Thomas Chandler, then ran his own shop in the district where a jug stamped "CHANDLER / MAKER" was made no later than 1850; its happy face contrasts with the angry-looking ones by slaves. Before coming to South Carolina, Chandler worked in New York State, and in his northern sojourn he may have met potters of the Remmey family, who created the earliest dated Euro-American face vessels (1830s) as an extension of the German *Bartmannskrug* tradition (a jug with a bearded face molded on the neck). However speculative, this connection to Germany via the mid-Atlantic is not far-fetched; another potter, German-born Charles Decker, worked at the Remmey Pottery in Philadelphia before establishing Tennessee's Keystone Pottery in 1871, where he and his son William made Remmey-style

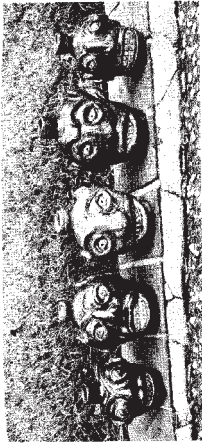
Ceramics historian Edwin Atlee Barber speculated in 1909 that their inspiration came from the "Dark Continent," and portrait pots were indeed made in Africa, perhaps early enough to have influenced the African American potters. Barber, who corresponded with Davies, says that the slaves made face jugs on their own time but offers no motive; it is known, though, that Nigeria's Yungur people made figural vessels to contain ancestral spirits at shrines. Africa, then, is one possible source of the southern face-jug tradition.

However, the slave-made examples

face jugs. Chandler's example raises the question of influence between him and the slave potters—or were they working in separate traditions with different meanings?

Another possible influence is England, where Toby jugs have been made since the 1760s. Depicting the figure of a jolly drinker with tricorne hat, these molded character mugs differ in spirit from the South's face jugs. Perhaps southern potters drew on all three sources—Africa, Germany, and England. Conversely, it may be that none was an influence and the tradition arose





The latter decades of the 20th century witnessed an explosion of public interest in face jugs — an explosion largely driven by collectors and the folk-art market. Scores of southern potters now make their own versions of jugs that feature a scalped face. Few of these potters are carrying on a tradition handed down in their families; most make these pots to meet market demand. In so doing, however, they often draw inspiration from older jugs, like those in this grouping of face jugs made by enslaved African American potters at the Palmetto Fire Brick Works in Bath, S.C., in the early 1860s. (Photograph by John Burriano)

from an anthropomorphizing impulse universal in clay-working societies.

The current popularity of face jugs as an icon of southern folk art is due largely to Lanier Meaders of Mossy Creek, Ga. (1917–98). His father, Cheever, made a small number of them, but they became the cornerstone of Lanier's career, bringing him national publicity in the 1960s. Cheever had learned of face jugs from William

jugs at Arden, N.C., like those by their family back in Atlanta. All this indicates diffusion of a 19th-century Anglo-southern tradition of face jugs.

For 19th-century African American potters, face vessels may have been made to place on graves or as a non-verbal protest against enslavement. For white potters of the early 1900s, they were occasional whimsies expressing a masculine "aesthetic of the ugly," later

Hewell of Gillsville; Hewell, in turn, acquired the idea from his Ferguson in-laws, who made the earliest known north Georgia examples. In 1921 Casey Meaders, Cheever's brother, brought the face-jug tradition to North Carolina's Carawba Valley, where Harvey Reinhardt made them in the 1930s. Reinhardt's work influenced that area's famed folk potter Burlon Craig (who also visited Lanier Meaders in the late 1970s). Beginning in 1925, brothers Davis and Javan Brown made face

to become tourist novelties and, now, a good source of income in the folk-art collectors' market.

JOHN A. BURRISON
Georgia State University

Robert Hunter, ed., *Ceramics in America* (2006); Jill Beute Koverman, ed., *Making Faces: Southern Face Vessels from 1840 to 1990* (2001).

Fiddle Contests

These days, most active American fiddlers attend several fiddle contests every





Crossroads of Clay

The Southern Alkaline - Glazed Stoneware Tradition

Edited by Catherine Wilson Home

McKissick Museum
The University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina





Crossroads of Clay

for
George D. Terry
who began the quest
for the Crossroads of Clay

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preservation and storage. The introduction of stoneware to the United States in the late eighteenth century provided an effective alternative.

Salt-glazed stoneware was produced in many of the New England and Middle Atlantic states as well as North Carolina and Virginia. Salt-glazed stoneware required a heavier, denser clay and used salt in the kiln at the point of oxidation to vitrify (*fuse*) the glaze to the clay body. But salt was a very important item for preserving foods in the days before refrigeration. In some areas of the country, particularly the southern Piedmont, salt glazing was not practical because salt was too expensive and hard to obtain.

John Michael Vlach discusses in his essay how the southern potters sought an alternative to the salt glaze. These potters were predominantly of English or Scotch-Irish descent and drew on familiar British models for pottery forms and the style of the potter's treadle wheel and downdraft kiln. But the glaze they perfected in the Edgefield District was unlike any used in Europe or America. The only place in the world where this type of lime or ash glaze was used previous to its introduction in the southern Piedmont was the Orient. Even though we will probably never know for certain how the formula for this glaze reached the southern Piedmont, John Vlach explains how scholars have been able to substantiate this mysterious link between these two cultures. Chinese ceramic technology recorded and published in eighteenth century newspapers and books surfaced in Piedmont potters' preparation and development of alkaline glazes.

Perhaps the most startling international influence on the southern alkaline-glazed stoneware tradition came from Africa. African people from Central Africa were enslaved in the southern United States as the major source of labor. These people produced a distinctive subgroup of face vessels with applied clay features which help define their significant contribution to alkaline-glazed stoneware in South Carolina.

Alkaline-glazed stoneware pitcher, Thomas Chandler, attr. to the Trapp-Chandler Factory, Edgefield District, South Carolina, ca. 1845.
(47)





Cinda Baldwin's essay begins with an interpretation of vessel form and function and the composition of the alkaline glaze. She then explores the development of the tradition in South Carolina during the early nineteenth century. She relates how early potters may have planted the seeds of pottery production which were then nourished by the rise of pottery dynasties such as the Landrum family. By examining the roles which kinship, commerce and decoration played in the tradition's development, she relates historical facts to show that the Edgefield District of South Carolina was unique. The pottery produced in factory-like environments where there were owners/investors, with a division of labor that extended through master turners and decorators to clay diggers and wagoners; the ware was transported across the region and state by millroad and sold through newspaper advertisements. Scores of pottery factories opened or changed hands between 1810 and 1850; by 1840 the tradition had reached a zenith with the opening of the Phoenix Factory where for the first time pottery was decorated on a wide-scale basis. Equally significant was the impact which African-Americans had on the tradition because of their involvement in every aspect of pottery production.



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"... All of Cross"—African Potters, Marks, and Meanings in the Folk Pottery of the Edgefield District, South Carolina

ABSTRACT

African Americans were integral to the stoneware-manufacturing district that developed around Edgefield, South Carolina. Enslaved African Americans worked as potters at several of the Edgefield shops, and the most renowned potter of the district was an enslaved African American named Dave, who incorporated poetic verse onto some of the pottery he made, as well as other marks including an X and slashes. A cross mark was also associated with two of the potters in the district where Dave had once worked: the Rev. John Landrum Pottery, and the subsequent operation of this pottery by Rev. Landrum's son, Benjamin Franklin Landrum. The cross-in-circle mark, known as the Landrum cross, resembles the African Baulego cosmogram *diabougou*. The Landrum cross, as well as Dave's use of the X and slashes, may be representations of African symbols brought to the New World and found archaeologically in other settings and contexts. This paper looks at the African American presence in Edgefield, Landrum crosses, and Dave's use of the cross mark, to examine the meaning of these marks and their potential expression of African American identity.

Introduction

mark known as a Landrum cross were used on

historian Aaron De Groff noted that this particular verse "refers to the dominant Christian theme of Christ's crucifixion and death for the sins of man and the edict to repent and live one's life man after the model set forth by Christ or 'be lost'" (De Groff 1998:55). Edgefield District historian Orville Burton (1985:152) expressed some ambiguity in his interpretation of the meaning of this verse, which he described as reflecting Dave's "feelings about slavery, religion, or both." Anthropologist Grey Gundaker argued that the verse incorporated a broader meaning of the word "cross" than strictly its Christian identity, and suggested this "couplet refers to the Black Atlantic crossmark as well as the Christian cross" (Gundaker 1998:97).

If Dave's written words can elicit multiple and different interpretations of their meaning, it should not be surprising that the other pottery marks made by Dave and his fellow African American potters in the Edgefield District also possess debated identities and interpretations. In addition to verse, Dave's work is frequently marked by other characteristics and signs: the initials LM for his owner Lewis Miles, the signature of his name "Dave," production dates, paired slash marks, circle punctuations, a U-shaped symbol, deep fingerprints at the bases of handles, and inscribed Xs. X marks used a cross-in-circle

"I made this Jar all of cross. If you don't repent, you will be lost" is one of 27 known verses inscribed on stoneware of the Edgefield District, South Carolina, by the potter Dave, also known as Dave Drake, Dave of the Five, and Dave Pottery (Todd 2008). An enslaved African American, Dave's pottery and poetry have been analyzed by historians, anthropologists, folklorists, and collectors for the meanings of his words and the window they offer to our understanding of African American life in the Old South. "I made this Jar ..." was chosen for the title of the first publication on the life and work of Dave the potter, as an expression of Dave's accomplishment and possession of the pottery he produced (Koeverman 1998b). In a published symposium that followed the printing of *I made this jar* ...

the ceramics made at the Rev. John Landrum and Benjamin Franklin Landrum potteries, and the Landrum cross resembles an African symbol known as the Bakongo cosmogram, or *alongo-dza Kongo*, an African ideological motif expressing the relationship between the present and the afterlife (Thompson 1983; Fennell 2007:51). Similar marks have been recorded on Southern African American colonowares (Ferguson 1993:113), and X and cross marks have been found archaeologically in a number of African American contexts. Both the X and cross-in-circle marks have European as well as African connotations. The recognition of these symbols on Edgefield stoneware expands their vocabulary and provides further insight into the meaning of these marks and African American identity in

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Steve Ferrell



particularly pieces produced by the potter Dave, were identified by the inscribed cursive initials "LM." Unique among the marks found on Edgefield stonewares and attributed as maker's marks is a cross decoration referred to as the "Landrum cross" (Holcombe and Holcombe 1989:19). Found on pottery from the Rev. John and B. F. Landrum factories, this paper argues that the makers of these marks identify were the African American potters who produced these wares, rather than the Landrums.

African Americans to the Edgefield District

African Americans played a key role in the Edgefield District stoneware industry. Enslaved African Americans were prominent at most of the stoneware factories, and their work as stoneware potters is documented by census directories and advertisements. According to the 1850 census, stoneware-factory owner Lewis Miles held 14 African American slaves, B. F. Landrum 12, and Collin Rhodes 35—the largest number of any of the factory owners at that time. An 1840 advertisement for the sale of the Pottersville factory listed "[f]luree Negro men, two of whom are Turners," while an 1843 listing of the same property identified "four Negroes, viz three Turners and one Wagoner" (Holcombe and Holcombe 1989:22; Baldwin 1993:74). While

(1993:71–90), and others have looked at the African influence and expression in Edgefield stoneware. Thompson, Vlach, and Baldwin recognize African stylistic elements and cultural traditions in the production of face jugs—anthropomorphic jugs produced on an occasional basis at several of the Edgefield factories. Thomas Davis, the owner of an Edgefield pottery, reported to ceramic historian Edwin Altce Barber that the enslaved African Americans at his pottery were provided time to make pottery of their own, and that they produced "some weird-looking ware" that they produced "some weird-looking ware" jugs, roughly modeled in front in the form of a grotesque human face evidently intended to portray the African features" (Barber 1976:60; Baldwin 1993:79). White kaolin is used to form the eyes of these face vessels; Thompson (1969:138–139) notes that white cowrie shells, white strips of tin, white pieces of mirror fragments, or glass backed with white were used to represent eyes in West African wood sculpture. While Edgefield face vessels resemble African woodcarvings in some respects, they are also evocative of English "Toby" vessels. Toby jugs, however, were also found in Africa, where they were favored by the Kongo royalty, and Vlach notes that the Kongo learned to produce their own versions of Toby jugs out of terra cotta. Kongo people were a major part of the South Carolina slave population, comprising 70% of a

African Americans worked in all aspects of the factories' operations—from excavating clay and preparing it for turning, to hauling finished ware to market—folklorist Cinda Baldwin suggests that many African Americans were employed in the important role of "turning" pottery. She writes that "[t]he presence of African American slaves in the Edgefield District stoneware factories was perhaps the single most important influence on stoneware production in the area" (Baldwin 1993:71). The Holcombes, collectors and researchers of Edgefield stoneware, observe that "[t]he District's ceramic entrepreneurs never would have been able to manufacture such large quantities of Edgefield wares without the slave participation" (Holcombe and Holcombe 1989:22). Perhaps the best measure of the African presence in Edgefield is the fact that Edgefield's most renowned and most accomplished potter, Dave, was an enslaved African American.

Robert Farris Thompson (1969:130-143), John Vlach (1978:76-95, 1990:17-39), Cinda Baldwin

enslaved Africans shipped to Charleston in the period from 1735 to 1740 (Vlach 1990:34). The "face vessels" produced in Edgefield thus appear to Vlach to have developed from the African adoption of a Toby-style jug.

Another Edgefield form with African and Caribbean antecedents is the "monkey" jug. An ovoid jug with an upraised stirrup handle and an angled spout, these vessels are similar to unglazed earthenware vessels found in Africa and the West Indies as water carriers and coolers. Several origins are suggested for the naming of this vessel type as a monkey jug including the use of the term "monkey" in the late 18th century to indicate a strong drink, use still applied by African Americans in South Carolina (Baldwin 1993:86). The appellation could also derive from the West Indian name for these vessels, *m'wagni*, or from a Kikongo word for a type of clay vessel used to smoke maize leaves, referred to as a *musokoki* (Vlach 1990:3 Baldwin 1993:86). This form is uncommon in the

Steve Ferrell



Record: 1**Title:** The object at hand.**Authors:** Kernan, Michael**Source:** Smithsonian; Nov93, Vol. 24 Issue 8, p30, 2p, 1 Color Photograph**Document Type:** Article**Subject Terms:** *POTTERY -- History**Geographic Terms:** UNITED STATES**Abstract:** Looks at 19th-century pottery face jugs thought to be the work of slaves in Edgefield, South Carolina. Ceramic historian Stephen Ferrell; McKissick Museum and Edgefield County Museum; Identification of the work of 40 slave craftsmen; Evidence that links Edgefield with Kikongo-speaking people from central Africa; Why pottery was created by men, not women, in Edgefield; The pots' white kaolin inserts; Questions about the pots.**Full Text Word Count:** 1353**ISSN:** 00377333**Accession Number:** 9311107559**Database:** Academic Search Premier**THE OBJECT AT HAND**

A striking range of skills is shown in the 19th-century pottery made by slave artisans in South Carolina

The faces on these jugs are ferocious. They express shouts of rage. The eyes are frontally sited but are set wide to achieve a forbidding stare. With their huge bared white teeth and bulging white eyeballs, their silent mocking howl of protest, they should have given nightmares to any slave owner with his wits about him.

The fierce expression is no accident. The jugs were almost certainly made by slaves in Edgefield, South Carolina.

Looking over the samples at the National Museum of American History, one is struck by the potters' range of skills. A few faces seem to be wonderfully mocking caricatures, perhaps picking up the salient features of some hated master. Here and there, you find a nose that appears to be a definite portrait nose.

Some are as graceful as a Brancusi bust with its lovely arched eyebrows. And some are crudely misshapen, as if done by a child. Some, as ceramic historian Stephen Ferrell puts it, "are just one step up from pinch-pots." You can see the finger marks where the eyeholes were punched in.

Ferrell is a master potter who lives in Edgefield. He has a major collection of these jugs and has been studying them for 25 years. Many more are displayed at the McKissick Museum in Columbia, South Carolina, and of course at the Edgefield County Museum in western South Carolina, as well as at several private museums and homes.



As early as 1815 there were 22 ceramic factories around Edgerfield, and today archaeologists are swarming over the area searching for the vital fragments-a peculiar jug handle, an oddly designed lip-that are the signatures of various African-American potters. So far, the work of some 40 slave craftsmen has been identified, and investigators have predicted that eventually the work of more than 150 African-American potters will be distinguishable.

It seems most likely that the pots are the product of slave artisans, though at one time or another ceramic historians likened these face pots to pots of ancient Egypt, Greece, Mexico, even Korea. It is natural, after all, for a potter making a round head-size jug to think of giving it eyes, ears and a nose.

Recent evidence clearly links Edgerfield with a specific group of Kikongo-speaking people from central Africa, brought here in 1858 on the slave ship Wanderer, one of the last such cargoes. These kidnap victims were landed at Jekyll Island, Georgia, and brought by steamboat up the Savannah River. Many were then sold to Edgerfield planters. Among them was a slave named Romeo, a name which later turns up on pottery factory rosters.

A slaveholder, one Abner Landrum, opened the first Edgerfield district pottery between 1810 and 1820, and, as a contemporary wrote, "The village is altogether supported by the manufacture of stoneware, carried on by this gentleman." Landrum products, it was claimed, were "much stronger, better and cheaper than any European or American ware of the same kind."

Landrum passed ownership to relatives, and other entrepreneurs moved in, seeing a good thing in the local, clayrich soil. Soon Edgerfield and Aiken counties were dotted with factories turning out high-fire stoneware pots to store everything from salted meat to lard, and for carrying water. Using wood ash, sand and cinders, the Edgerfield potters-there may have been as many as 140 in the

period from the 1820s until the 1860s-developed the trademark alkaline glaze, ranging in color from tan to olive to deep dark brown, a glaze then unknown in Europe.

Slave artisans were sought after from the earliest days by the Edgetfield district potteries. Slave-sale notices show that a skilled turner, or operator of the kick-turned potting wheel, brought big money on the slave market.

In Africa, the production of utilitarian pottery was mostly women's work. Pots were built by piling up layers of clay coils. But around Edgetfield it became men's work, in part because Edgetfield pots were thrown on a heavy foot-operated wheel. This meant that great hunks of clay often had to be kneaded to remove air bubbles and then manhandled onto the wheel. The pots were not earthenware, baked in an open fire, but much harder clay vitrified at 2,200 degrees F in the controlled firestorm of a kiln.

Probably the most famous slave potter was the man now known variously as Dave, Dave Pottery and Dave of the Hive, whom Landrum taught to read and write. For a time Dave worked as a typesetter on Landrum's local newspaper, *The Hive*, but in 1831 he was sold or given to another pottery maker, Lewis Miles. From November 1834 through March 1863, when presumably the remarkable Dave died at age 83, he steadily turned out pots.

Big pots. Forty-gallon pots two feet high. Pots a child could hide in. Superb high-shouldered storage



pots so massive they had to be made in sections, with a helper on the wheel. And on his creations there are 50 we know of-Dave inscribed his name, the date, sometimes the name of his collaborator, a person called Baddler, and occasionally, most famously, verses that offer tantalizing hints about his own personality:

"Dave belongs to Mr. Miles / Where the oven bakes and the pot biles" . . . "Great and Noble jar/hold Sheep, Goat and Bear" . . . "This noble jar will hold 20/ fill it with silver then you will have plenty" . . . "I saw a leopard & a lion's face/ then I felt the need of grace."

The scrawled handwriting, literally a message from the past, makes these pots more moving than a pot has any right to be. Today some of Dave's pots sell for upwards of \$25,000.

But as far as anyone knows, Dave made no face jugs. Scholars have traced some face jug craftsmen: one named Jim Lee, and the anonymous Master of the Davies Pottery, Master of the Extended Eyebrows and Master of the Diagonal Teeth, a potter who indicated teeth simply with diagonal strokes in a grinning mouth of white.

Most potters used native Carolina kaolin-the fine white clay that gives porcelain its sleek vitrine strength-to make eyeballs and teeth for the faces. This alone indicates technical sophistication, for kaolin shrinks in firing at a different rate than other clay and would fall out unless subtly wedged in place. There is no precedent in European pottery for these white kaolin inserts, but West African potters and woodcarvers have for centuries inserted cowrie shells as well as mirrors and bits of brass into their figurines.

What were the face jugs used for? Apparently many of them did duty as water jugs for field hands.

They were called monkey jugs," after an old slang expression for thirst. The Oxford English Dictionary connects "monkey" with water jugs as early as 1634. "To suck the monkey" is an old phrase meaning to drink straight from the bottle.

There is a puzzle here. Often the face jugs came in miniature, only four or five inches tall, some as small as a baseball. Were they toys? Or end-of-the-day whimsies thrown on the wheel by accomplished apprentices? In any case, miniature pots were brought along by slaves escaping on the Underground Railroad during the Civil War, ending up as far away as Tennessee and Ohio, Pennsylvania and upstate New York.

Some experts suggest that these miniatures were charms, like hex dolls, containing magic potions, made to bring down "bad mojo" (misfortune) on the head of the person they mocked. They have even been called voodoo pots. Whether this is so or not, some seem sinister indeed.

The power and energy that all but glow from these small heads cannot be taken lightly. Charms they may not have been; charming they are not. Instead, the Edgefield face jugs glare at us from their shelf, daring us to remember the bitter times from which they grew. Michael Kerman

PHOTO: Miniature face jugs from NMAH collection typify the stoneware of the Edgefield potters; largest is six inches high. Were they toys-or something more sinister?





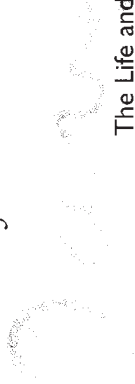
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I made this jar ♦♦♦

The Life and Works
of the Enslaved
African-American
Potter, Dave



*I made this jar...**



The Life and Works
of the Enslaved
African-American
Potter, Dave

EDITED BY JILL BEUTE KOVERMAN

McKissick Museum
University of South Carolina



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covers: Five works by Dave the potter, Sonage jar, 1840. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. James K. Smith; pitcher, 1830,
 and two storage jars, 1857. Collection of McKissick Museum; (top ca. 1857-59, Collection of Larry and Joan Carlson.
 Photograph by Gordon Brown and Jill Beate Kowrman.

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Fig. 1. Two Vessels (left), (right), glazed, southern, ca. 1800-1850. Attributed to work of American potters of Edgefield District, South Carolina. Collection of McKrackin Museum, University of South Carolina, Carlisle, South Carolina.

Fig. 2. Two Vessels (left), (right), glazed, southern, ca. 1800-1850. Attributed to work of African American potters of Edgefield District, South Carolina. Collection of McKrackin Museum, University of South Carolina, Carlisle, South Carolina.



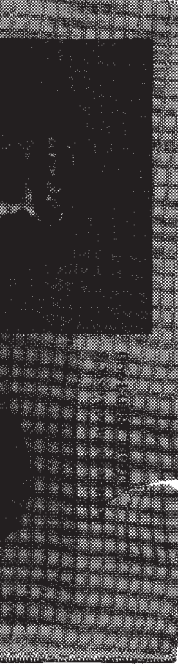
Steve Ferrell



Making

Faces





Steve Ferrell



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Making

Making faces :Southern face vessels
from 1840-1990.

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COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29208-0301

Faces

Southern Face Vessels
from 1840-1990

Mckissick Museum
College of Liberal Arts
University of South Carolina
2001

Steve Ferrell



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Making Faces:
Southern Face Vessels from 1840 - 1990*

Jill Beule Koverman, Curator

McKissick Museum

Columbia, South Carolina

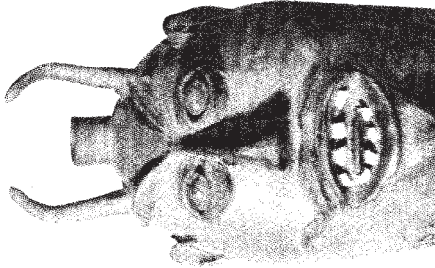
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Marcbant Jug
Glazed stoneware
Javan Brown, Brown Pottery
Ardur, North Carolina, circa 1950
Ht. 20.5" W: 9.5"
Collection of Iris Elizabeth Harmin



Predecessor Jug

Alkaline glazed stoneware with glass runs

Billy Ray Hussey

Robbins, North Carolina, 1990

H: 8.7" W: 8.5"

Collection of McKissick Museum

University of South Carolina





THE MANY FACES OF TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN POTTERY

When a potter in the South decides to make a jug or a jar in a human form or decorate it with a face, they are a part of a tradition shared by potters around the world. For centuries anthropomorphic vessels have been made. Historically, the majority of these were made for funerary or ritualistic purposes such as the Egyptian Canopic jars, Narayit figurat vessels, and the German Bellemeine jugs. Others, such as Moche (Peru) and Mangbetu (Zaire) portrait vessels, were associated with the nobility and ruling classes. English Toby jugs were made as caricatures of the fictional town drunk, Toby Philpott.

In the United States, the tradition of making jugs or pitchers adorned with faces began

potters of these unusual forms been as prolific as in the southern United States.

Since the 1870s, Southern potters have produced thousands of "face jugs" of all sizes, shapes, and designs. These vessels, along with the alkaline-glaze that frequently covers their surface, originated in Edgefield, South Carolina. However, the purpose of these earliest pieces, aside from holding liquids, is still a mystery.

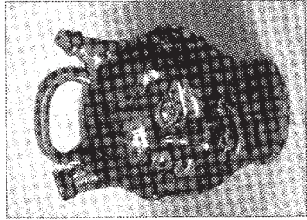
Edgefield, South Carolina: Birthplace of the Southern Face Vessel

In the nineteenth century a new center of ceramic production developed in Edgefield, a western region of South Carolina. Stoneware,

around 1810 in the North with potters whose goods were competing with those wares from England and the Continent. The Romneys of New York and Philadelphia made a small number of pitchers and jugs with applied faces for a short period of time. After the Civil War, face vessels were being made in the South and the Midwest. However, nowhere else in the world have the

covered with an alkaline glaze and made by potters of both European and African origins was produced as a local alternative to the salt-glazed utilitarian wares made elsewhere. It was to this site, with its combination of new and old technologies, Old and New World sensibilities, that the Southern face vessel owes its origin.





Face Vessel

Alkaline-glazed stoneware

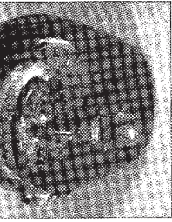
Thomas Chandler

Pigeonfield, South Carolina, 1840-1852

H: 11" W: 8.5" Stamped: CHANDLER MAKER

Collection of James B. Turner





Face Jug
Alkaline glazed stoneware
J. H. Stone
Buncombe County, North Carolina, circa 1870
H: 3" W: 7.5"
Collection of Dianne F. Garnett



Thomas Chandler, perhaps the best known of the many Edgefield potters, made "harvest" or "rورانkey" jugs that had sculpted features. An unusual surviving example, stamped "Chandler Maker", has carefully applied eyes and sophisticated African features, which hints that this was not the first time Chandler produced such a vessel. This theory is substantiated by a shard of a Romanesque nose collected from the Phoenix Factory site by potter Stephen Ferrell. Its rarity indicates that it was either a personal possession or made as a presentation piece. The form is similar to that used by the Rennneys of New York and Philadelphia who made a small number of pitchers and jugs with applied faces between 1838 and 1858. John Westley, another potter from the Philadelphia area, also made face vessels. Like Chandler and Rennney, he also chose to apply faces to the "harvest" vessel form. According to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Westley's vessels date to the 1870s. Similarly, James H. Stone of Buncombe County, North Carolina,

to western North Carolina.

The majority of face vessels made in Edgefield, however, were utilitarian bottles that could hold whiskey, syrups, or water while others were cups for drinking. One particularly large vessel that might have been used as an umbrella stand, is attributed to David Drake (Dave the Potter) who worked at the Lewis Miles Factory between 1857 and 1859. This tall vessel is similar to other signed pieces by this renowned African-American artisan.

During the Civil War, more than fifteen slaves were employed at Colonel Thomas Davies's Palmetto Fire Brick Works. The account books record the production of bricks and stoneware, but do not go into great detail. In 1892, ceramic historian Edwin Alex Barber of Philadelphia wrote that the slaves at Davies's factory made face vessels, or grotesque jugs as he called them. At least one of these men, Romco, was a recent arrival to South Carolina

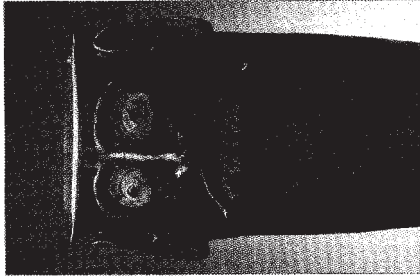
made a harvest type lace vessel around 1880. It is of note that Stone's father worked with Thomas Chandler in Edgefield before moving

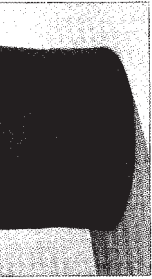
having been brought over on the slave ship, *The Wanderer*, in 1858 and sold in 1859. These men from Africa may have created lace jugs as



a means of expressing their heritage. It is not known, however, if these early forms have direct links to religious or ritual beliefs. The vessels attributed to Davics's factory are often much smaller than the face vessels produced by Thomas Chandler and employ different stylistic traits such as rolled kaolin eyes and diagonally incised teeth.

Jim Lee, another African-American potter, produced a figural bottle between 1860 and 1870 while working for the Roundtree-Bodie Pottery at Kirksey's Crossroads. This figure was in the likeness of Reverend Pickett, an Edgefield citizen. Face jugs were also produced at the Miles Mill pottery after the Civil War.

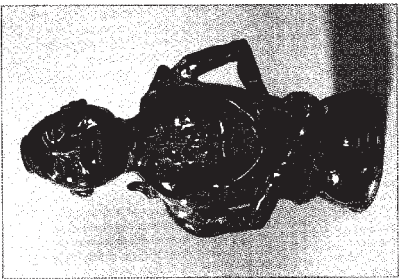
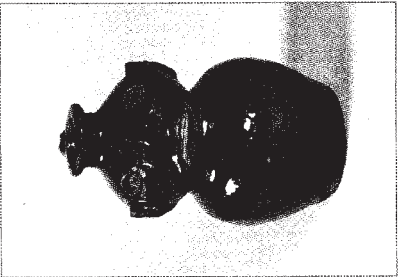




Face Jar

Alkaline glazed stoneware and unglazed porcelain
Miles Mill Pottery
Edgessfield District, South Carolina, ca. 1870
H: 28" W: 14.5"
High Museum of Art, Atlanta - Georgia; Purchased with
funds from the Decorative Arts Endowment
1997.190





Figural Vessel

Alkaline-glazed stoneware with iron slip decorations and glass runs at shoulders
Attributed to **Jim Lee**, Roundtree & Boodle Pottery
Kirksey's Crossroads, Edgefield District,
South Carolina, 1890-1870
H: 12" W: 7"
Collection of The Charleston Museum

Figural Vessel

Alkaline-glazed stoneware
Attributed to **Miles Mill**
Fedgehelt, South Carolina, 1860-1880
H: 5" W: 3.5"
Collection of Pria Elizabeth Harmon



Face vase

Multi colors; glazed earthenware

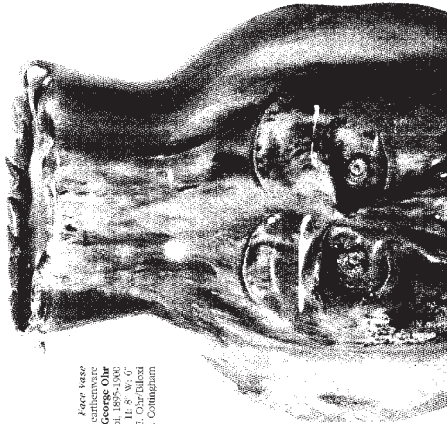
George Ohr

Biloxi, Mississippi, 1895-1900

H: 8" W: 6"

Scrapped on base: G. O. Ohr/Biloxi

Collection of Don E. and Norma B. Coltingham





WHAT'S IN A NAME?

American interest in the "exotic," non-Western, arts of Africa and Asia increased dramatically after the Civil War. Commander Matthew Perry's arrival in Japan, the re-opening of trade with China, and the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 all greatly influenced Americans' popular taste. The fine and decorative arts produced in America and Europe between 1870 and 1940 also reflect the influences of the Aesthetic Movement.

The first published image of a southern face vessel is a stereoscopic card entitled "An Aesthetic Darkey," made by J.A. Palmer of Alken, South Carolina. Most likely issued after Oscar Wilde stopped in Augusta, Georgia, on July 6, 1882, as part of his American lecture tour. The view is of a young Negro boy sitting next to a face jug with a sunflower, a calla lily and a horseshoe placed on an open book. Not only does this image connect face vessels with African





Stereoscopic Card:
"An Aesthetic Turkey"

J. A. Palmer

Aixora, South Carolina, 1882

Collection of Pia Elizabeth Humon





"The Aesthetic Monkey"
Engraved from a painting
by **W. H. Beard**
Harper's Weekly,
January 28, 1882

Americans; but it also illustrates the impact of the Aesthetic Movement on popular American culture. The image could be viewed as a parody of Wilde, taken from a reproduction of W. H. Beard's *"The Aesthetic Monkey"*, that ran in *Harper's Weekly*; but it is also grounded in the racist outlook of the period.

Of "Monkey jugs" and "Voodoo jars"

what was most authentically "American" in an increasingly international world. Ceramic historian Edwin Allee Barber began surveying all of America's potteries, including those in the South. Barber documented the face vessels produced earlier at Thomas Davics's pottery in the Old Edgefield District of South Carolina in his comprehensive book, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States: A Historical Review of American Ceramic Art from the Earliest Times to the Present*. This growing interest in American vernacular culture encouraged the collecting of local arts. Dr. Teague of Aiken, South Carolina, donated two ceramic pieces to the Charleston (South Carolina) Museum in January 1902. He identified them as "monkey" jugs and indicated that "Negro potters at Miles Mill" made them in Aiken County, circa 1880.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the romanticized image of the South was reinforced by several national movements that included the revival of traditional handicrafts, the growing popularity of

In the 1880s and 1890s, scholarly investigation into American decorative arts grew. This was part of a large national interest in identifying

regional authors, and a search for what was "authentic" or primitive. In his 1926 book *Early American Pottery and China*, John Spargo



extolled the "grotesque fancy" and mystery surrounding what he called "monkey jugs." Other authors perpetuated the thinking that all "crudely fashioned" face vessels from the South were made by African Americans for rituals or other magical purposes. John Ransby, in his 1939 book *American Jesters and Pottery*, illustrated two anthropomorphic vessels made at nineteenth century Georgia and Florida potteries as "Woodoo Jugs" without any substantial information about the potteries or the potters.

A new wave of academic interest in "folk"

culture began in the 1960s. This research was based on hard facts, fieldwork and oral histories. By 1969, Dr. Robert Harris Thompson at Yale University was exploring the origins of slave-made jugs from the Edgefield District. By renaming them "Afro-Carolinian Face Vessels," and turning the terminology away from "grotesque," he placed these vessels into the larger context of the African Diaspora. Scholars, including Dr. John Michael Vlach, continued this line of reasoning in exhibitions and publications throughout the following decades, and focused on the influence of the English Toby jug in Africa and America.



Grotesque Jug and Face Cup

Alkaline-glazed stoneware
Attributed to enslaved African-
American potters,
Thomas Davies Pottery
Edgefield District, South Carolina,



circa 1862

H: 5.5" W: 4" H: 6" W: 4"

Collection of Mecklissick Museum,
University of South Carolina
Gift of Mr. & Mrs. James P. Barrow



Comments on African American Contributions to American Material Life

Theodore C. Landsmark

WHEN I APPROACHED WINTERTHUR in the early 1990s about my interest in African American decorative arts, I was enthusiastically welcomed into the Winter Institute (an intensive three-week study of American decorative arts) in part because little research had been conducted in this area. My 1996 annotated bibliography of materials on the subject was among the first in the field, significantly supple-

Movement, which led to the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. An African American whose father was a Methodist and a Latin scholar and whose mother was a teacher, Porter studied painting, drawing, and art history at Howard University. After graduating in 1927, he began teaching at Howard while taking summer art courses at Columbia University and the Art Students' League

menting bibliographies prepared by George Washington University professor John Michael Vlach and Sally Gant of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.¹ We are on the cusp of theoretical and methodological breakthroughs in assessing how ethnic groups created our distinctly syncretic American culture, and emerging discussions on African contributions to the American aesthetic are a fundamental part of this change in material culture analysis.

Early Research into African American Artisanship

The first thorough research work linking African American craftsmanship, aesthetics, and folk art was James Porter's *Modern Negro Art* (1943). Porter was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in the same year that W. E. B. Du Bois founded the Niagara

in New York. In 1929 he won the Harmon Foundation's Portrait Painting Prize at its "Annual Exhibition of Work by Negro Artists."² By 1936 his works had been exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Detroit Institute of Art, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, and the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston.

During this early period of professional growth as an artist, Porter undertook "a systematic study of the history of art in an effort to see more clearly the role that people of African ancestry played in American art and in the art of other countries, such as Cuba and Brazil." An Institute of International Education scholarship, which he received in 1935, allowed him to study abroad at the Institute d'Art et Archéologie at the Sorbonne in Paris.³ This research broadened his art historical perspective as he completed his master of arts degree at New York University in

Theodore C. Landismark is president of the Boston Architectural Center.

Theodore C. Landismark, "African American Material Culture Bibliography," Winterthur Library, Winterthur, Del.

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¹ David C. Driskell, "Introduction," in James Porter, *Modern Negro Art* (1943; Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1994), p. xxiv.

² Driskell, "Introduction," p. xxv.



1937. His thesis research evolved into *Modern Negro Art*.

Apart from the historical writings of Howard University's art history department head professor James V. Herring and professor Alain Locke, little had been written specifically on early forms of African American art and crafts prior to the second quarter of the twentieth century. Porter worked with Alfred Barr, Jr., of the Museum of Modern Art; art historian Walter Pach; Robert Goldwater of the Art Institute, New York University; Holger Cahill of the Works Progress Administration; and researchers at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Frick Art Reference Library, and the Karamu House in Cleveland to expand the limited earlier research on African American art to include its early craft origins. Assisted by his wife, Dorothy, who was a bibliographer and supervisor of the Negro Collection at Howard University, Porter examined extensive original sources on slavery and free black craftsmen, and in his introduction to Porter's *Modern Negro Art*, Fisk University art historian David C. Driskell stated that "some of the finest examples of workmanship in the plantation homes of the South such as furniture, cabinets, cooking utensils, tableware, and wrought iron implements were the products of slaves." Driskell went on to note that Porter's research "further revealed that this superbly endowed

in upper New York, North Carolina, and South Carolina; and ironworkers in Virginia, Charleston, and New Orleans. In line with contemporary thinking about the contributions of ethnic vernacular craft traditions to the language of American art and culture, Porter concluded that "the Negro artist in America emerged from a background of folk art, and his formal speech was grounded in the industrial idiom of the New World. The Negro's survival in this sphere has been difficult, but historical evidence shows that his crafts productions must have been considerable, and so suggests a future complete review based on a searching investigation into the whole body of American folk art. In this way the Negro's contributions to American handicrafts can be brought into better focus."⁵

The only scholarly publication prior to 1970 to specifically focus on describing and analyzing African American folk arts and crafts was Miriam B. Wilson's *Slave Days: A Condensed History of Slavecraft*, published in 1948. Wilson was a self-trained historian, former government researcher, and business entrepreneur who had founded the Old Slave Mart Museum in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1937. For the half century prior to publication of *Slave Days*, African American crafts had been addressed only peripherally, within broader studies of African American labor practices or Af-

ment of artistic skill among slaves knew no gender barrier, as women, like men, supplied many necessary craft items for southern homes while performing the usual duties of domestic servant and caretaker of the children of slaveowners.¹⁴

Driskell pointed out that Porter also determined that "a number of craft items were made in a tradition that connected them iconographically to the art of West Africa, the region from which most African American slaves had come."¹⁵ Referencing mid nineteenth-century grotesque face jugs, quilts and textiles, walking sticks, and architectural ornamentation and slave housing forms, Porter (and later Driskell, in *Two Centuries of Black American Art* [1976]) argued that many African American forms had their origins in West African craft and aesthetic traditions. These African American art historians referenced North Carolina cabinetmaker Thomas Day, the anonymous slave artisans who crafted face jugs and walking sticks, portrait painters such as Joshua Johnston and Neptune Thurston; slave builders

frican American art history and folk art.

A call for interpretations of the uses and aesthetics of vernacular folk art and crafts as historical artifacts that can elaborate on written narratives of culture was set forth in the post-War II period by historian Carl Bridenbaugh in *The Colonial Craftsmen* (1959). Based upon his study of colonial newspaper advertisements, diaries, and similar documents, Bridenbaugh concluded that rural eighteenth-century craftsmen were primarily ambitious entrepreneurs and independent, self-sufficient, and respected community members without regard to their social diversity and differing ideologies. Bridenbaugh recognized the contributions to the southern

¹⁴ Driskell, "Introduction," p. xxv. Porter later focused his research on sub-Saharan traditions of craft aesthetics and practices in the Americas. Referring to African American slave-made effigy face jugs of South Carolina, he noted "unmistakable signs of African recollection in particular of surface design" (James A. Porter, "One Hundred and Fifty Years of Afro-American Art," in *The Negro in American Art* [Los Angeles: UCLA Art Galleries, 1960], pp. 5–18, 18). See also David C. Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), pp. 11–38.

¹⁵ Driskell, "Introduction," p. xxvi.



was illegal to teach slaves to read and write, and simple marking systems comprising slash marks, crosses, and/or dots were applied by slave workers to the shoulders of their wares to indicate vessel capacities.²⁹

It is clear that Dave was an extraordinary potter, producing "ceramic monuments" —namely, small storage stonewares larger than any others then being made in Edgefield.³⁰ More than one hundred of his pieces have been documented. After Landrum left the area, Dave passed to Landrum's son-in-law, Lewis Miles; there the potter's literacy and artistry enabled him to transcend accepted practices by inscribing the sides of the vessels he produced. With the assistance of another slave potter, Baddler, he added short, rhymed couplets along with the date and his signature. These inscribed works are apparently unique in nineteenth-century crafts and carry messages ranging from simple dates and production locations, such as "Made at Stoney Bluff/for Making Jard Enuff" (May 15, 1859) to more complex expressions of his personal sentiments on particular days, such as "I made this jar for cash / Though its called lucre trash" (August 22, 1857). Other Edgefield-area artisans were producing works with applied swags, faces, and other designs on their surfaces, and some were producing distinctive face vessels or "Monkey" jugs, but Dave

number of his inscriptions express liberating Christian spiritual and religious values. The poems were articulated only five hundred miles from and concurrent with Thomas Day's ownership of slave craftsmen. Dave was making a poignant statement against the slave system that he outlined by publishing creative works within a society that generally sought to suppress slaves' individuality and cultural self-expression.

These papers raise the question of whether and how individual black slave and free artisans were able to express their creativity through their works within antebellum southern society. The simple fact is that they did, and they supported themselves and their families by doing so. All were talented craftsmen respected for their skills in a marketplace conditioned to discriminate between free and slave workers on the basis of their race. Caste distinctions among African Americans based upon complexion and degrees of racial mixing further exacerbated the suppression of opportunities for black workers seeking to achieve economic self-sufficiency within or apart from slavery. Artisans were a privileged class whose members could achieve freedom or a degree of autonomy based upon their skills.

Yet as Prown argues, it is not clear that this creative autonomy was derived directly from craft traditions, from iconographic or stylistic references

alone published his poems in *glazed stoneware*. De Croft makes the case that Dave's poetry is not only a powerful expression of his ironic self-recognition as a talented and literate slave in a society debating the morality of slavery but also a protest against his situation. The storage vessels would have been commonly seen by other slaves who could neither read nor write but who would have understood the iconographic message of freedom conveyed through inscribed texts written by a slave hand. Dave expressed both authority and implicit authority in making and placing in circulation his often ironic poems ("Give me silver or either gold/ though they are dangerous, to our soul!" [June 27, 1840]). His artistic expression would have been interpreted as an endorsement of literacy and freedom for African Americans during the years just before the war, and a

to or traditions grounded within specifically African origins. Unlike concurrent ethnic survivals in the craft practices of New York Dutch, Pennsylvania German, Boston English, Minnesota Norwegian, or Rio Grande Spanish cultures, the argument that these artisans expressed distinctly African-originated traditions remains to be proven in these fields. Unlike vernacular forms, such as basketry, where Rosegarten has made a convincing case that low country baskets bear distinctly West African characteristics, or quilting, where Maule Wahlman and Eli Leon have presented similarly convincing evidence, or personal shrines, where Robert Farris Thompson shows connections between Yoruba practices and American vodun, the evidence supporting direct transmissions of African practices into the Americas within these commercially dependent forms remains to be proven. The works discussed in these papers are creative, artistically worthy, and distinctive, but their characteristic "Africanness" as commercially viable products remains a matter of conjecture until additional research demonstrates more direct references and connections.

²² Canda K. Baldwin, "The Scene at the Crossroads: The Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware Tradition of South Carolina," in Catherine Wilson Horne, ed., *Glazes of Clay: The Southern Alkaline-Glazed Stoneware Tradition* (Columbia: McRae-Speck Museum, University of South Carolina, 1999), p. 71.

²³ Vlach, *Afro-American Traditions*, pp. 79–77.



ness, and information from historical archaeologists, religious historians, economists, cultural anthropologists, artists and art historians, sociologists, and other documentarians.

Increasingly, interpreters have focused on the symbolic meanings hidden in inscriptions (epigraphically) or in symbols (semiotically) that orient utilitarian objects, on how similar objects were used within West African tribal cultures, and on what these objects represented within the spiritual and religious lives of these socially and economically oppressed American slaves and freed blacks. The structural, analytical tools of anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss are being supplemented or superseded by Clifford Geertz's "thick" hermeneutics and the post-structural analyses of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, who have argued that how a viewer today interprets an object or collection of objects made in the past is as important as the meaning intended to be imparted to that object by its maker. What is likely needed is an open dialogue among educators, curators, collectors, and cultural theorists to discuss how makers' interpretations of their objects' iconography in original contexts can be addressed by modern experiences of those objects in museum or private collection settings. More complex interpretations of the meanings and uses of objects are replacing

research has stressed that efforts to declare hegemony over specific cultural symbols and iconography have increasingly shaped our cultural memory, particularly through material culture collections in museums and at historical sites.

Tracing specific decorative and design motifs and patterns of use from southern black vernacular culture to their origins in Africa has sharply challenged decorative arts analysis. Early twentieth-century collectors and antiquarians undertook their research with the methodological benefit of a century of closer proximity to the makers of many of the primarily formal objects studied and with literary and written documents available to trace provenances. Within the expanding context of international and evolving material culture studies, late twentieth-century scholars involved in the analysis of vernacular objects and their uses are tracing design origins and reorientations using more comprehensive methodological approaches.

What speculations and conclusions may be drawn from published studies today, and how may collectors link such studies with published commentaries of the past? Scholars and collectors now concur that coiled Carolina baskets reflect West African basketmaking techniques. There is agreement that the simple pottery known as co-bonware may have been used for healing pur-

the interpretive authority once thought to be the exclusive right of traditionally trained ethnographers and related scholars.

Scholars and collectors now understand better how personal objects and their decorative embellishments can be perceived as social texts within nonliterary and economically oppressed African cultures. Works such as Philip D. Morgan's *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (1998) document how in the early decades of the eighteenth century concentrations of young male slaves from the West Indies, Biafra, Angola, and Senegambia frightened low country planters, who required their vast numbers and rice growing skills, and how they were able to preserve material and aesthetic elements of their tribal cultures. The identification with and transformation of African cultural values has continued into the twentieth century with Joseph Tilden Rhea's *Race Pride and the American Identity* (1998), which explores how ethnic group efforts to clarify racial identification have transformed the American cultural landscape since the Civil Rights movement. Such

poses—that is, as vessels for mixing herbs used in West African-derived medicinal practices—as well as for food preparation. Face jugs made primarily by blacks in the mid nineteenth century but apparently rarely made by black artisans over the past one hundred years may have had alcohol temperance or healing uses as well as more utilitarian functions, serving as water vessels for field workers. Similarly, iron pots were used for heating and possibly for currency storage as well as for food preparation.

Vlach and others argue that shotgun houses and the bare landscaping around them are derived from Caribbean and West African housing compound models. Carved walking sticks were commonly employed as status symbols in West African culture and continue to hold magical, protective powers in urban southern communities such as New Orleans. Stricks with hands grasping balls may be derived from royal Benin symbols connoting the fragility of holding and exercising power. Highly decorated pottery mummy jars on burial grounds appear to be derived from West African burial practices, and whites may have





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AUTHOR: Mary Leather

TITLE: **Face Jugs**

SOURCE: Pottery Making Illustrated 8 no5 27-30 S/O 2005

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ASSIGNMENT

No one knows for sure the exact origination or purpose of **face jugs**, but we do know they first appeared in the slave communities of the Carolinas in the early 1800s. Enslaved African Americans were the brick-makers and potters on the plantations, and in their spare time, they created these grotesque pieces. The folklore surrounding **face jugs** adds to their appeal. Some say that the slaves made **jugs** to be placed on graves and that they had to be ugly enough to frighten the devil. Others say that the slaves believed that if these **jugs** broke during the year after death it meant that the soul of the deceased was wrestling with the devil. During prohibition, there were potters who placed scary **faces** on storage **jugs** to frighten the children of Appalachia from the **jugs** of moonshine.

Traditionally wheel thrown out or dark clay with bits of broken china or white rock used as eyes and teeth, and usually with a pulled handle or two, **face jugs** can be both humorous and grotesque. Also known as ugly **jugs**, devil **jugs** and voodoo pots, they continue to be a popular folk-art tradition, and sideline of many potters of the Southeastern U.S.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- * Students learn to construct handbuilt **face jugs** using basic soft-slab ceramic construction techniques with simple sculpted features.
- * The lesson will provide creative expression, an appreciation of the human **face** as an art form and the opportunity to express emotions through art.
- * The lesson will impart an understanding and appreciation of traditional pottery in a historical/cultural context.

PROCEDURE

Step 1. Remove the label from a plastic bottle and cut above the curved portion at the bottom. Any size straight-sided plastic bottle will work. Two-liter pop bottles make wonderful **jugs**, but their size can be an issue with regards to a tight clay budget. Time, storage and space in the kiln for a large class also can be issues. If so, use smaller water bottles such as the one-liter bottle shown in the example. Invert and insert the curved bottom portion

inside the plastic bottle to stabilize the cut edge.

Step 2. Roll out a 1/4 to 3/8-inch thick slab using a rolling pin and guides on canvas or a slab roller. Provide templates to use to cut the slab into a rectangle shape long enough to encircle the bottle. Be sure to allow for trimming and overlap. The width of the rectangle is at least equal to the height of the shoulder of the bottle. Use graduated pastry/cookie cutters for cutting the shoulder portion of the jug. The diameter of the shoulder piece needs to be large enough to meet the outside measurement of the finished cylinder. The hole is cut based on the largest feature on the neck of the bottle. Reserve some slabs of clay to make the bottom and the neck of the jug.

Step 3. Miter the seam for the cylinder by holding the knife at a constant angle, while trimming the short sides of the rectangle. The profile of the clay slab should be a parallelogram.

Step 4. Apply a thin coat of cooking spray or vegetable oil to the bottle, then wrap with the slab and check the fit. Make any slight adjustments by trimming or gently stretching. Brush the seam with a damp toothbrush and join. The toothbrush gently scores the area and creates a small amount of slip all in one slip.

Step 5. Brush the top of the cylinder and the outside edge of the shoulder piece and join the edges together. Gently pattle the seams. The back of a wooden spoon is an inexpensive source of curved wooden paddles.

Step 6. After the jug has stiffened so that it can hold its own shape, slide the plastic bottle out. Place the jug gently on the slab reserved for the bottom and trace a line around the edge of the bottle form. Remove and brush the line and the bottom of the jug with a wet toothbrush. Replace the bottle form on the slab with a gentle wiggle and carefully cut off the excess clay from the bottom slab. Next, run a finger around the seam. It is important that this seam is well sealed since it is done only from one side.

Step 7. Placement of the eyes, mouth and nose is determined, and the eye and the mouth areas are given a good whack/indentation with fingers or the heel of the hand. The more character the better. Allow the pieces to stiffen before adding the neck and facial features.

Step 8. Brush the top with a damp toothbrush. Add a coil or slab (or combination of both) to finish the neck or rim.

Step 9. The nose is easily formed from a coil with small balls added to form nostrils. Open the nostrils with a tool and add character through modeling.



Step 10. Form an eye from white clay, and poke a hole into it to insert a smaller dark ball of clay.

Step 11. Attach the eye to the socket. Insert a small hole in the center to seat the iris and form the pupil.

Step 12. Apply a coil with narrow ends for the lower lid, then one for the upper eye lid. Other features such as eyebrows, ears, moustache, tongue, beard and horns (but not lips) are added as desired with clay or slip.

Step 13. Roll out a coil for the gums and poke small holes in it. Insert teardrop-shaped white clay teeth into the holes.

Step 14. Slightly squeeze the gums around the teeth. Flatten and cut the ends of the teeth to the desired length, and trim the gums. Attach the gums and teeth inside the open mouth, then add the lower and upper lips.

Step 15. Once the **face** is complete, attach a handle. The handles can be pulled or coil built and made more flexible by running damp fingers lengthwise along the surface. Lightly cover the completed jug to allow the moisture to even out and dry slowly. If there is any contamination of dark clay on white or white on dark, scrape it off once the pieces are dry.

Step 16. Bisque fire then glaze. If no glaze is applied, **jugs** can be fired to maturity in one firing. The decision to decorate with slip or glaze is strictly one of aesthetics, budget and time. Depending on the clay body selected, the **face jugs** are also quite effective without glaze.

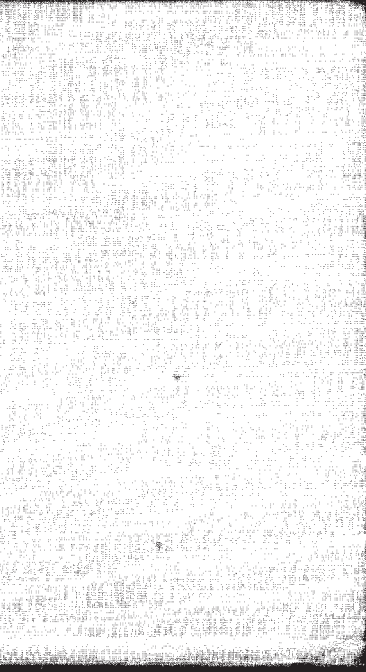
ADDED MATERIAL

Mary Leather has over 20 years experience as a potter and instructor. See materials list available on our website at www.pottery-making.org.

Burlon Craig (1914-2002), considered one of America's great folk potters, kept the **face** jug tradition alive in North Carolina during the 20th century. This jug was thrown from two types of clay in 1963. Photo courtesy of the Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC.



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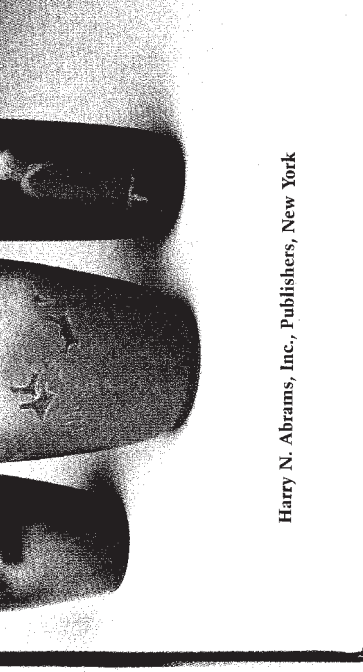
by Elaine Levin

THE HISTORY OF 1607 to the present

AMERICAN CERAMICS

from pipkins and bean pots to contemporary forms





Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York



To Bill
for his love, confidence, and persistence
and
In memory of Becky Levin and Hope Silver

page 1. WILLIAM GRANT. BEAVER TILE. Astor Place subway
stations, New York City, c. 1904. Earthenware

The beaver is a heraldic emblem of the Astor family of New York City; hence its choice in the tiles at the subway station named after the Astors. The city's first subway opened in 1904, its stations decorated with custom designed tile produced by William Grueby and Rockwood.

page 2-3. ROCKWOOD PHOTO. FIVE VASES. Earthenware. (left to right): *Leaf vase*, 1901. Height 8 1/2", diameter 3-2". *Ceasar vase*, 1901. Height 10 3/8", diameter 5 1/2". *Korin vase*, 1902. Height 7 1/2", diameter 4". *Italian vase*, 1898. Height 7 1/2", diameter 8". *Maiden*, 1898 (decoration). *Vase with gnomes*, 1887. Height 7 1/2", diameter 7 1/2". *Private collection*

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executed. Sprightly birds balanced on a tree stump or flowered branch, floral flourishes and deer amid meadows and pine trees distinguish this period. From its earliest years, the Norton Pottery responded to changes in styles; in the mid-nineteenth century the popularity of Rockingham ware and parian statuettes joined stoneware production.

STONEWARE IN THE SOUTH

The Moravians in North Carolina and in particular Rudolf Christ, who had shown his responsiveness to new ideas in the past, also expanded production to include stoneware. Christ perfected the technique about 1795 and added press-molded animal-shaped bottles to his ware. These were decorative as well as practical and were in-

U. A. BROUGHTON, BLOOMER CURRY

SQUIRREL BOTTLE AND MOLD

Late 18th century Moravian earthenware, brown glaze, height 7 1/2". Courtesy, Old Salem Reconstruction, Winston-Salem, N.C.

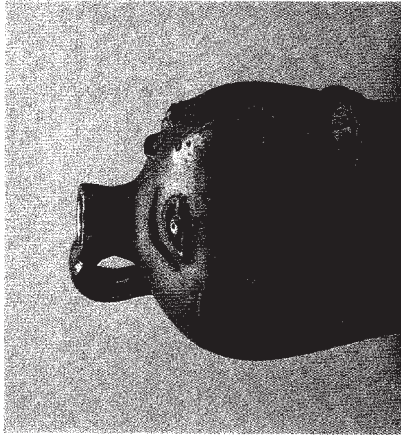




spired by similar objects made at the Staffordshire potteries in England, and imported to America in large quantities.

Also developing in the South—or where they seemed to derive the most impact—were ceramic face vessels. Familiar to many cultures, and generally less sophisticated than most ceramic sculpture, the face vessel consisted of a jug whose body was carved or sculpted into a face. Their origin in Britain dates from the Roman period, the second and third centuries A.D. By the eighteenth century, the face vessel in England had become a comical figure—the Toby jug. Face vessels have taken many forms, with the earliest examples from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania in 1805.¹⁴ And while they have been found in almost every pottery area in America, the most distinctive pieces from this period were made by the black slave potters of the Edgelfield district in South Carolina. Although the origin of







18. FACE JUC
c. 1850-1920. Red earthenware
with brown metallic glaze, por-
celain teeth. Height 10", base
diameter 8". www.colgate.com



these vessels has not been definitively researched, they suggest comparison with those of Ghana and show a stylistic similarity to Bamongo wood sculpture.¹⁵ Bizarre carved faces on figures were venerated by African households and regarded as powerful objects. In the Edgefield district, faces appeared on earthenware and stoneware on a wide variety of forms—jugs, cups, and bottles—using kaolin (a white clay later used in making porcelain) for eyes and teeth. Arched eyebrows, bulging eyes, long noses, and flaring nostrils give the faces their characteristic grotesque, hypnotic stare.

But face vessels were not the only Afro-American contribution during this period. Over half the labor force in the Edgefield district plus a majority of the artisans were slaves trained by whites. Between 1810 and 1830, Abner Landrum established the first pottery in the area. One of his slaves, known as Dave the Potter, was taught to read and set type for Landrum's newspaper as well as to make pottery. Dave combined these skills to produce a personal, expressive body of ware: revealing a sense of humor. Rhymed couplets inscribed on his large, open-mouthed stoneware jars advised, "This noble jar will hold twenty [lemons]/ fill it with silver then you will have plenty."¹⁷ Another comments, "A pretty girl on a virgin/ how they burge."¹⁸ His exceptional storage jars required as much as forty pounds of clay, were thrown wide at the shoulders, and fired with slab handles.

The old Edgefield district was also an early center for producing alkaline-glazed stoneware. Historically of ancient origin—first attributed to the Han Dynasty in China [207 B.C. -A.D. 220]—the basic glaze is a combination of wood ash, clay, and sand and was used in Edgefield by the early nineteenth century, spreading from there to other areas of the South and West. Strucks and rivulets are characteristic features of this glaze, probably the result of imperfect grinding

in old stone mills.¹⁷ While some potters used a rib or a comb to draw bands of lines through the glaze, the majority of alkaline-glazed stoneware allowed the beauty of the variegated surface to be the main decoration.

By mid-century, most of the techniques and styles associated with American folk pottery had taken hold. To a large extent stoneware had replaced the crude earthenware characteristic of the eighteenth century. Indeed, the most elaborately decorative stoneware was produced in the 1850s, just prior to the Civil War. When that conflict ended, industrial competition, which had gradually been developing, accelerated. In areas where small pottery workshops, in order to survive, had to substantially increase their output, procedures that could speed production but undercut craftsmanship gradually became the rule. Stencil patterns, a decorative technique requiring a minimum of skill, replaced brush decoration and slip-trailed designs. Then, too, in the postwar period, tin-canned fruits and vegetables and glass canning jars entered the market, offering quality and efficiency beyond the capacity of stoneware jugs and crocks. Hand-thrown, hand-decorated ware that retained a sense of the potter's presence was declining. The evolution from handcrafted to factory-made ware was a response to growing industrialization in America, and charted the future of ceramic production.



The Traditional Potters of Seagrove, North Carolina

And Surrounding Areas from the 1800s to the Present

The Antiques & Collectibles Press™



The Traditional Potters of Seagrove, North Carolina

And Surrounding Areas
from the 1800s to the Present

by Robert C. Lock
with Yvonne Hancock Teague, Archie Teague,
& Kit Vanderwal

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Face Jugs—The Gargoyles of Pottery

It is believed that among the first face jugs made in America were those made in Edgefield, South Carolina, by slaves as a carryover from traditional rituals in Africa. One story suggests that face jugs were headstomies. They have also been called voodoo jugs and monkey jugs, among other things. This very distinctive type of pottery is one of the most popular collectibles today.

According to tradition, some of the earliest pieces were done as jokes, either to amuse the potter's own children, or to poke fun at a rival by mocking his features in a kind of caricature-in-clay. One of the most common folk notions is that they were originally intended for the storage of liquor or some other harmful liquid—the idea being that the jugs' leering, toothy, jack-o-lantern faces would frighten small children

"Everybody seems to react to them one way or the other... you can't remain indifferent to them. Some people regard them as something to fear, they think it represents something terrible. Face jugs were sometimes done as a joke. It's the dark side of everybody. It's there in every one of us. We do not see what we're looking at most of the time. We only think we see it. Dorothy Auman referred to her uncle as the man who taught her to see.

To see the shapes and subtle curves and contours and to actually see what she was doing. These that I make have evolved and they will continue to evolve. Each time I make thirty jugs they evolve. It's just a normal development. I hope I don't cross over the line, if there is one, between folk art and sculpture. I don't even look at it. I do it by feel. It's all by touch. I don't look at them. They evolve. I do both ears at the same time. That way I can feel them. You can't stand it

away from their contents. Somehow, that explanation seems a bit lame — whenever kids go into a pottery shop, the first thing they head for is the face jug display.

Until they became popular with tourists and collectors, however, the face jug genre was never terribly popular with area craftsmen, because making them took a lot of extra work. Dorothy Annun was the first of the Seagrave area potters to make face jugs in commercial quantities. Over time, almost all of the potters have made a face jug or two at some point. Old potters say that there have always been a few made for entertainment or to poke fun at a neighbor.

emotionally. You're totally exhausted when you're making face jugs. Sixteen is my limit, what I can keep up with at the same time. I have sixteen people with sixteen different personalities that I'm making. I'm thinking about expressions, not about clay bonding."

—Avebe Touque

As with every other style of Seagrave pottery, the older specimens of face jugs are more valuable, and much more scarce, than the ones made today. But contemporary potters are turning out some exotic and highly imaginative variations on the basic theme, so the age of a face jug is not the only factor influencing its value.



Katharine M. McClinton

THE COMPLETE BOOK

OF

American Country
Antiques



COWARD - McCANN, Inc.
NEW YORK



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AMERICAN COUNTRY ANTIQUES

W. F. James made clay pipes which were given away with bags of Moonshine Tobacco in 1910. These were marked "Moonshine" and decorated with a crescent moon.

The old Indian and Mound Builders pipes are available in shops today. They may also be seen in such museums as the Museum of Natural History, in New York City, and the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C. The New-York Historical Society owns a collection of English, Dutch, and American pipes from diggings in and around New York City, as well as some Presidential pipe bowls. In the 1890's Barney Spring made a set of Presidential pipe bowls for the Smithsonian Institution from the molds and dies he had used years before. They may be seen there today.

Although pipes may still be found in old diggings, the time spent is seldom rewarding. The old pipes, although all

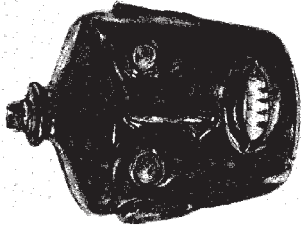
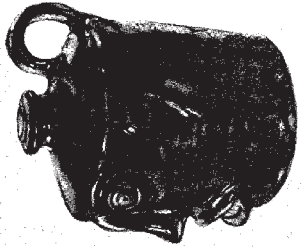
handmade, were always cheap, so that they were not valued by their owners. They were made of cheap clays—redware, brownware, yellowware, and stoneware—and their stems were of willow or other reeds. The molds were of wood, lead, or tin. Fine clays for pipe making are found in the Mississippi Valley and in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Virginia, and South Carolina, and in these areas clay pipes were made until the end of the nineteenth century. When clay tobacco pipes were no longer in demand, the companies began making toy pipes for blowing soap bubbles instead. The clay soap bubble pipes have now been replaced by metal pipes, so that even the old bubble pipe is a collector's item today.

Monkey or Slave Jugs: The monkey jug or slave jug is another product of the country potter. In nearly all countries and times, potters have made these jugs, expressing their jests





Grotesque slave jug, Connecticut, nineteenth century. INDEX OF AMERICAN DESIGN.



Grotesque jug, New York, about 1850. INDEX OF AMERICAN DESIGN.



AMERICAN COUNTRY ANTIQUES

and jibes in grotesque pottery caricatures. Many such jugs were made in Germany, and in England nineteenth-century Staffordshire jugs bore whimsical figures of national heroes, such as Wellington and Nelson. In America the earliest grotesque jugs were made by the Mound Builders of the Middle West. Grotesque jugs were also made by American Indians, but those that particularly interest the collector of country antiques were made at the small nineteenth-century American potteries or by country amateurs, such as slaves. These grotesque monkey or slave jugs were made of ordinary clays, such as redware, stoneware, and brownware, both glazed and unglazed, the glaze ranging from olive brown to dark brown or black. They were made to hold liquor, ale, or cider, usually in the form of a cider jug with a handle, a small short neck and a cork stopper.

The jugs showed a crude profile with a large nose. Huge

protruding ears sprang from the sides of the jug, and the large round eyes and open mouth with teeth that were sometimes movable suggest a voodoo figure. In fact, the jugs are often called voodoo jugs.

Grotesque jugs were made in various country potteries throughout the United States from New England—Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut—south to Virginia and west to Ohio. Some were made by Negroes on plantations after the Civil War, but others are known to have been produced in well-known potteries. The jugs were sometimes marked with incised names, but there is no information concerning the identity of the person whose name was scratched on the jug. Was he the potter or the person represented in the caricature? No one knows. Most of the jugs date from the middle of the nineteenth century. There are not many available, but there



AMERICAN COUNTRY ANTIQUES

are also few collectors; however, grotesque jugs undeniably make interesting conversation pieces for open country shelves.

Grease Lamps: Another product of the country potter was the grease, or slut, lamp. These were similar to the open-saucer iron and tin lamps and related to the Betty lamp. In fact, some Betty lamps were made of pottery. Grease lamps had an open reservoir on a standard set in a saucer base. The lamp had one or two handles and a beak or spout for a wick rest. Opossum or coon fat often provided the fuel. Grease lamps were made of redware and stoneware. The redware was usually given a dark-brown glaze, but some lamps had a mottled pattern, and those made in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, had a combination of brown, black, and cream or a green slip on a yellow-brown ground. No two grease lamps were alike, but they followed old types made from about 1770 to 1870. Grease lamps ranged in height from three to seven

inches and had a stocky shape, with a heavy standard rising from a saucer and bulging into an oval receptacle for grease, which may resemble a teapot. Sometimes the standard was fluted, as in the lamps made in Pennsylvania, and sometimes the grease receptacle was pinched at the top. Some lamps were unusually tall, and others were as short as a chamber candlestick; still others were enlarged saucers without a standard. A unique grease saucer lamp, made by David Spinner of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, between 1800 and 1811, was heart-shaped. Another rare type is a saucer lamp with three spouts. But the rarest grease lamp of all is the small pottery Betty lamp. Grease lamps were made in Pennsylvania; in Morgantown, West Virginia; by the Moravians in Salem, North Carolina; in Tennessee; and in Ohio. More have been found in



Black Art, Folk Art, and Social Control

Eugene W. McCarthy

AESTHETIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES in the history of black American art have often been difficult to disentangle. For one thing, such confusion is encountered in all art of course, but it has been a particular burden for black Americans. Art, represents and sometimes even reinforces society; the ability to create and appreciate art has been regarded as a main sensibility and evident social status and privilege. A people had to be victorious, or with a degraded form of it, reputedly, else themselves lacking in the qualities that signify human excellence and social recognition. They are said to be "un-authorized" persons, unable to participate in refined society. Definitions of art are therefore

and art," said James Weldon Johnson, "has ever been looked on by the world as distinctly inferior." Yet to gain a measure of acceptance from the white art world art, white or black, black fine artists have often been forced to conform to artistic traditions and norms that denied their unique culture, heritage and the reality of their American experience.

This was not true for all black artists, however. From the earliest years of their American captivity, blacks had practiced aspects of the traditional arts of Africa. Although the so-called did not use any term to define artists, definitions and so were not assigned; yet, the name is, they did provide their makers and communities a sense of the social totality, a ritual to help accept and honor culture.

comes into ineluctable social patterns, and imposes support for human value in the face of a black system bent on denying it. Long before black Americans learned European folk arts and were taught to be ashamed of their folk jobs, they were denied slaves and babies to take their natural state. Almost devoid of tradition and history, the practice of which would contribute to the present as a vibrant force in black American society.

Despite the significance of folk art in black American culture, virtually no general studies of the history of American art take seriously black American contributions. In the rare instances when they are mentioned, it is usually only the works that have met the aesthetic standards of academic taste and "high culture."¹ The few published exhibitions and books that have focused entirely on the work of black American artists have also generally adopted a high-cultural bias.² A no-

¹ For a useful, although not exhaustive, survey of African Negro art, see, for example, New York: National Black Exhibition, ed., *Art in the Black Community* (New York: National Black Exhibition, 1969).

² An important exception to the general exhibitionist approach is the exhibition *Modern Art in the Black Community*, ed. by the National Black Exhibition, 1969. This exhibition, held at the National Black Exhibition, 1969, was the first to present a comprehensive survey of black art in the United States.

highly political. They are major technological contributions to the struggle for human and social recognition is sought. A people are ill-served to let others control the definition by which their art is judged and evaluated.

The variety of black cultural art demonstrates the social consciousness of such a people, and the first elements of black experience in American art to support a social system provided in the ideal of the humanity of black people, which is generally reserved to white folk. Blacks could make art at all, by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, and the beginning of the twentieth century. The black artist had mastered the white Europeanized aesthetic tradition to argue that blacks had proved their equality and should be allowed the benefits of American democracy. No "people that has ever possessed great literature

has ever possessed great literature. No people that has ever possessed great literature

has ever possessed great literature. No people that has ever possessed great literature

has ever possessed great literature. No people that has ever possessed great literature



paradoxically based in a deeply communal culture, while springing from the hands of a relatively few, physically isolated individuals," says Livingston. "The style I am characterizing has to do not with crafts or traditional utilitarian artisanship, but with full-fledged, gratuitous art objects, paintings and drawings and sculptures." Nevertheless, she continues later:

The traditions in American black art stemming from various crafts . . . clearly provide paradigms for the much more independent and improvisatory twentieth century art that is presented in this exhibition. In linking these two phenomena, certain insistently repetitive themes recur. For instance it is useful to note that the ubiquitous snake or lizard begins to appear on canvas at an early time and continues to reappear in contemporary folk art; a certain kind of facial expression, one with menacing or at least prominent teeth and concave or inset eyes, . . . seems derived from the face-jug tradition; many early quilt patterns suggest the coloristic and compositional approaches which would appear in twentieth century black folk painting. But it is not the continuities as much as the many examples of novelty and individualism which we find in the work of these twenty artists, which become so assertive as we study the work.¹⁷

At the heart of these definitional statements, as Livingston suggests, there lies a paradox, but it is one more profound than she intimates. Black American folk art is defined here as both communal and individual. It is said to encompass com-

collective sensibility that is identifiable and profound.

In defining the art in "Black Folk Art in America," there is an attempt to assert a communal tradition as well as the idea of strikingly individual artistic expression. The result is a confusion of contexts, with the organizers of the exhibition claiming that the works presented fully respond both to the long history and tradition of black folk art and to overpowering and unprecedented individual artistic visions. It is said in the catalogue that these black artists "are members of the last two generations of a vivid tradition that reaches back virtually to the first era of slavery in the United States" and later that the output of the artists represents "bodies of work whose range of style and subject and technique approaches that of some of the great modernist outputs. They are not bodies of work made in the spirit of generationally inherited artisanship . . . ; they are artistic oeuvres."¹⁸ Although the catalogue includes an article written by art historian Regenia Perry that outlines some of the early manifestations of the black American folk tradition and asserts that "it is against this illustrious background that the works in the present exhibition . . . should be viewed," it also admits that "this exhibition is without precedent."¹⁹

Because of these contradictions, the definition of black folk art presented in the exhibition

continuity and novelty. To a point, such paradoxes are appropriate and central to the nature of folk art, an art in which individual expression exists within, and is enabled by, communal forms and traditions. It is an art in which the tension between personal freedom and social restraints often gives meaning and power to artistic expression. But this tension and paradox can exist only as long as the communal and traditional domains exert a significant influence on the artist. Once individualism and novelty overshadow tradition, as Livingston suggests they may in this exhibition, the art is no longer significantly folk. That is the problem here. Is this black art folk or not?

The primary cultural root of black American folk art is, of course, African. Although this heritage remains an unaltered presence in very few black American visual arts, it is the basis of the context in which black American folk art occurs. Created within this traditional setting and made largely according to the ideas and standards of the group, black folk art responds significantly to a

catalogue finally becomes so unwieldy that it is useless even to those who propose it. "In analyzing the way in which these folk artists are 'major,'" says Livingston, "we cannot always use the same criteria we apply in judging 'high art.' For the very premises of the endeavor are different." Yet, she contradicts herself almost immediately: "'Folk art,' . . . in its broadest definition, is not strictly synonymous with the phenomenon we are dealing with on the present occasion. . . . It is not an occurrence which truly finds parallel in other so-called 'folk art' events." After arguing that the art she presents is both a fundamental part of the black folk tradition and comparable to that of the great modernists, Livingston announces that it is neither folk nor fine. The best she can suggest is a description that explains nothing beyond what the exhibition title already conveys: "Two factors inherent in this project separate it from any familiarly examined category," says Livingston directly after admitting that the works in the exhibition are not folk art. "First, all the artists shown here are black Ameri-

⁴ Livingston, "What It Is," pp. 18, 18; Regenau, A. Perry, "Black American Folk Art: Origins and Early Manifestations," in Livingston and Beardsley, *Black Folk Art*, pp. 37, 43.

⁵ Livingston, "What It Is," pp. 11, 17-18.





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edited by Robert Hunter



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*Two Blermans; Excavation fragments,
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Mark M. Newell
with Peter Lenzo

Making Faccs:
Archaeological
Evidence of
African-American
Face Jug
Production

▼ T H E F I R S T archaeological evidence of nineteenth-century face jug production within South Carolina's Edgefield District has been announced by the Georgia Archaeological Institute (fig. 1). The production site, located on one of the Miles family potteries near Turelea, sheds light not only on the manufacturing process but also on the origin of some of the vessels in major collections. Study of the recovered fragments proved invaluable, enabling exploration of the technology of face jug production by re-creating several facsimile vessels. This should provide a basis for understanding similar jugs and make it easier to attribute them to specific makers or places.

Origins of Southern Face Vessels

The origin of face vessels made by Southern slaves has been the subject of great debate in recent years.¹ Antirepomorphic representations have appeared on clay pots in virtually all cultures since people first began molding clay. Some researchers claim, perhaps ethnocentrically, that slave-made face jugs got their start with the help of the English Toby jug.² The Toby, an eighteenth-century figural vessel most commonly made as a pitcher or decorative piece (fig. 2), was introduced through trade into Africa where it reportedly

was adopted and adapted by African artisans. Even a cursory study of African art and religious beliefs, however, would not support such a speculation. Although in 1868 Edgerfield saw an influx of slaves from the Congo, the distinct form of the Toby jug, with its traditional incrown hair and enfolded arms, has never been found among the African clay forms of this region. One vessel in the collection of the Charleston Museum, attributed to black potter Jan Lee from Kirkcsey, South Carolina, is reminiscent of the form—a figural bottle in the shape of a man—but bears no direct morphological connection.¹

Early American ceramic historian Edwin Atlee Barber interviewed plantation and pottery owner Colored Davies from Bethl, South Carolina. In commenting about the face vessels made circa 1862 by African slave potters, Davies suggested that the slaves had made them "for their own purposes."² Even at that early date the strange objects aroused curiosity. Interest in their origin and function has intensified over the years, particularly since the only known vessels had been in private and museum collections (figs. 3-5).



Figure 2 Toby jug, Saffordshire, England, ca. 1784. Peabody: H. 10". (Chippstone Foundation; photo, Gary Ashworth.)





Figure 3 Face jug, Edgerfield, South Carolina, ca. 1860-1870. Alkaline-glassed stoneware. H. 4 1/2". (Courtesy, Arthur Goddberg photo, Gavin Ashworth.)

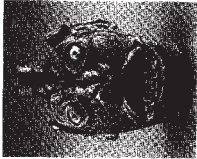


Figure 4 Face jug, Edgerfield, South Carolina, ca. 1860-1870. Alkaline-glassed stoneware. H. 6 1/2". (Courtesy, James W. Abowick; photo, Gavin Ashworth.)



Some of the face jugs, which functioned as water vessels, were of "monkey" jugs—after *monkywet*, a Southern term for the dehydration of summer lettuce.⁵ The functionality of these jugs does not explain the starting eyes and gaping mouths, however, nor does it address why the early forms were too small to have any obvious purpose.

Colonel Davies hinted at the connection between the jugs and the ritual art of . . . the Dark Continent;⁶ a point further developed by temporary folklorist John Vlach.⁶ Vlach has suggested a direct connection between the face vessels and the *nkisis* figures of central and western Congo now Zaire.⁷

The African *nkisis* (plural for *nkisi*), also called power figures associated with fetishism and ritual magic. Traditionally wooden figures with wide, bright eyes and gaping mouths, they are made up of various components designated for the practice of magic. The *nkisi nkisis* figure, for example, is a ritual figurine carved from a light, expressive

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wood (*Canarium schweinfurthii*) believed for this purpose to be suitable (fig. 6). By itself the *nkisi* does not represent a spiritual personality but a container for one, and it is up to one member of each village

Figure 6 Nkisi figure, Zaïre, Africa, ca. 1900. *Canarium schweinfurthii*, Pl. 1839. (Courtesy, Georgia Archaeological Institute; photo, Karen Ashworth.)



Figure 6
Canarium
schweinfurthii
Pl. 1839



nganyga n'koné, to make sure that the capture of the appropriate spirit is accomplished. Taking on the role as expert in such rituals, the *nganyga n'koné* conceals a mixture of minerals, herbs, and other substances inside the *mási*, usually within its protruding belly cavity. The aromatic blend lures curious spirits, or spiritual powers, who are entrapped when the cavity is sealed.⁴ Spirits are also attracted by the bright whites of *mási* eyes, which are either painted with white kaolin clay or inset with glass (fig. 7). The early *mási* were made exclusively of kaolin clay, which was

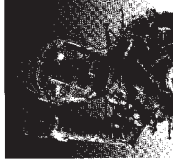


Figure 7. Detail of the *mási* figure illustration: in fig. 6.

regarded as a sacred substance.⁵ As with other parallels, the functional features of the *mási* closely match those of the slave-made face jug, an analogy strengthened by evidence that variations of these rituals are still in existence in America.¹⁰

It is well accepted that slaves in America practiced their religious beliefs in secrecy. In the tradition of their ancestors, some African Americans, especially in rural areas such as modern-day Edgefield County, still main-

Fig. 7
Detail of the mási figure illustration: in fig. 6

tain a vigorous belief in "root magic," a fact confirmed by various informants, from local ministers to descendants of slave families.⁴⁴

History of Face Jug Production

The distinctive African-made, green-glazed jug with red clay body and kaolin inserts is thought to date from after 1838, although there is evidence that white potters made face-decorated harvest vessels even earlier. Virginia-born potter Thomas Chamblor, for example, made at least one harvest jug at his Shaw Creek site sometime between 1840 and 1857.⁴⁵

The earliest Edgefield face jugs generally have been attributed to potters working in the upper Horse Creek Valley watershed. The Miles Mill pottery is known to have been located in this area, although the actual location of the site discussed in this paper was not known at the time of these attributions. Various extant examples exhibit rich green or brown glazes, high-ridged noses, and eyes and mouths set within separately applied eyelids and lips. The clay bodies fire to a purplish red color, and the eyes and teeth are made of white kaolin clay. These early vessels exhibit two types of teeth construction: sharp and angular, and flat, square teeth etched into a single piece of kaolin.



1
 1 SPANNERS/MARKER'S MARKS
 1 FINGER PRINTS
 1 4 MARKS/RESISTS
 1 HANDLE
 1 NECK

* 1000 A.D.
 * 1000 B.C.
 * 1000 A.D.
 * 1000 B.C.
 * 1000 A.D.
 * 1000 B.C.
 * 1000 A.D.
 * 1000 B.C.
 * 1000 A.D.
 * 1000 B.C.

The tradition of white Southern potters copying the African-style face jug appears to have begun with South Carolina potter Mark Bayham,¹³ A recently discovered circa 1900 face jug bearing his stamp ("MARK") was reported in the 2003 issue of *Ceramics in America*.¹⁴ The Bayham vessel appears to have been directly modeled on the slave-made versions: the ears and nose are applied, as are the lips and eyelids, and the eyes and teeth are attached directly onto the vessel's unglazed body. The teeth, which are especially reminiscent of the African-style vessels, and the eyes were left unglazed, implying use of a wax resist (see figs. 31, 32), and an attempt to mimic the African practice. Bayham did not, however, make separate kaolin inserts for each. Like other white potters who followed him, he probably did not consider the detail and extra work necessary, unaware of their possible religious significance.

Discovery of Early Jug Production

Despite the far-ranging interest in these early face jug forms, no archaeological evidence of their manufacture has ever been recorded.¹⁵ An ongoing reassessment by the Georgia Archaeological Institute (GAI) of the Joseph G. Bayham site (38ED221) at Eureka found conclusive proof of early face jug production.¹⁶ During the first few days, GAI encountered evidence that occupation of the Bayham site dated to the 1870s.¹⁷ Furthermore, beneath the Bayham context an earlier pottery was discovered, which had produced wares entirely different from the Bayham wares in body clay, glaze, and style—including a neck style that was known from an existing face jug. Face jug fragments were first encountered in a test pit selectively located away from the main Bayham context on a wooded slope near a small drain. It was in fact isolated from all other pottery production areas. A two-meter-by-five-meter excavation subsequently revealed a shallow deposit of face

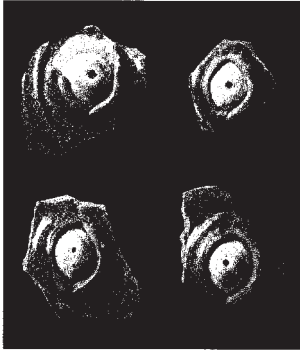
jug fragments, bowl fragments, kiln furniture, and kiln debris. Careful testing of the surrounding area indicates that this one spot might have been selected solely for the production of face jugs.

In all, more than two thousand large fragments and small sherds were recovered from the area at depths ranging from 1.18 to 3.93 inches and representing at least seven face jug (figs. 8-13). The fragments' neck styles, in combination with the Miles Mill face jugs housed in collections, allow us to develop a tentative chronology for their manufacture. The earliest appear to be those with double-collared necks, a style found on the Horse levels of the Summerville site, a mile from the Baynham site on Horse Creek. It is believed that this dates to the earliest Lewis Miles occupation of the site, from the 1850s to circa 1867. Stratigraphic evidence enables us to date with some confidence the flared-neck style (see fig. 10) to about 1867-1872, the John L. Miles occupation of both the Baynham and Summerville sites. This same neck type appears on a Davies pottery vessel dated to circa 1862.¹⁸ The similarity of neck styles is attributed to the movement of the upper Horse Creek slave potters from one local pottery to another. The tubular Bodle-style neck appears to be the last of its kind and is documented on Baynham-made dispensary jugs of the early 1880s.¹⁹

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Figure 8. Face bag fragments, Miles Mill, Lenoir, North Carolina, ca. 1865-1872. All face-glazed stoneware.



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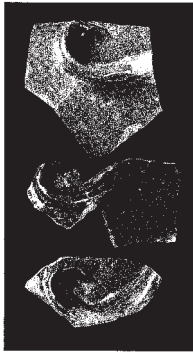


Figure 9 Face jug fragments, Miles Mill, Edgefield, South Carolina, ca. 1865-1872. Alkaline-glazed stoneware.



Figure 10 Face jug neck fragments, Miles Mill, Edgefield, South Carolina, ca. 1867-1872. Alkaline-glazed stoneware.



Figure 11 Face jug fragments, Miles Mill, Edgefield, South Carolina, ca. 1867-1872. Alkaline-glazed stoneware.



Figure 12 Top rim handle fragment, Miles Mill, Edgefield, South Carolina, ca. 1867-1872. Alkaline-glazed stoneware.

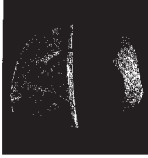
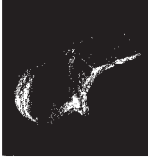
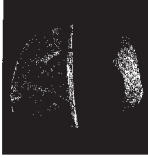
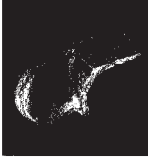


Figure 13 Face jug base fragments, Miles Mill, Edgefield, South Carolina, ca. 1875. Alkaline-glazed stoneware.



Experimental Production of a Face Jug

Following initial development of the construction sequence and the techniques based on analysis of the recovered sherds it was decided that an experimental reconstruction project might shed further light on the process (fig. 14).²⁰ Peter Lenzo, a potter in Columbia, South Carolina, was enlisted to reproduce the GAI finds. Lenzo, who maintains a studio on Rosewood Avenue, has gained national recognition for his explorative work and interpretation of the American face jug tradition.

The initial task was to select a local clay for the trial pieces, and Bethune clay from a mine east of Columbia was chosen. The clay was used for the last vessels produced by an early-twentieth-century pottery once owned by

Figure 14. Artist's reconstruction based on the fragments recovered from the John L. Miles site. (Drawing, Christine MacLagan.) The best guess for the shape of the face jug came from an intact storage jug found at the Miles site.

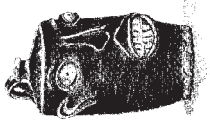


Figure 3: In this sequence of photographs, Peter Lenz forms the jug on the wheel. First the clay is centered and opened, then a cylinder is raised and the glazing of the body is done. After the body contours are defined, the shoulder and neck are closed to create the jug. The final finishing of the neck and lip begins at this stage.

Thomas Daugherty, a former partner of Horace Baynham at the Edgenfield District pottery at the head of School House Creek.¹⁴ Lenz used a mixture of Bethune clay and Otis Norris's clay, which Otis digs from around McBee, South Carolina, near the Lynchess River. Bethune clay fires to a red color and has a more aggressive tooth (a coarser, stronger body) than Edgenfield's Horse Creek clays, but it was deemed acceptable for the project since the latter was unavailable. Lenz also experimented with a variety of iron-bearing glaze formulas with the hope of reproducing the rich green glaze the original potters applied over the dark red and purplish fired clay body.

After careful study of the sherds, vessel production began with the throwing of a jug on the wheel (fig. 45). In the absence of a readily





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identifiable antique prototype, an intact jug recovered from the site that had similar handle and neck characteristics as the face jug sherds was used as a model. The distinctive broad flat lip at the opening of the face jug is unique in the Edgefield tradition and specific to the John L. Miller pottery (fig. 16). After removing the thrown jug from the wheel (fig. 17), a handle was pulled and attached in the manner suggested by the recovered artifacts (figs. 18, 19).

While the jug was still in a wet, plastic state, work began on the various facial components, beginning with the nose. While there is no direct evidence of sequence, starting with the nose helped set up the proportions and balance of the final face. Created from a cone-shaped section of clay, the nose was attached to the vessel's center and subsequently modeled (fig. 20). It is not known whether these attachments were scored and moistened with water or slip, in keeping with modern hand-building techniques. None of the recovered fragments bears any evidence of scoring. It is clear that considerable force was used to ensure the reliability of the attachment (see fig. 30).

Figure 16 Peter Lenzao finishes the neck and lip of the jug.





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Figure 18 The thrown pig body is cut from the wheel head with a wire tool.



Figure 19 A typical method of forming handles is known as "pulling," whereby the clay is drawn out in successive pulls until the right thickness is achieved. The pulled strip is then cut to size.

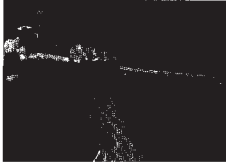
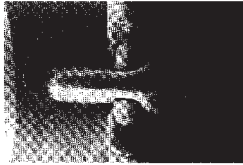


Figure 20 The ear handle is attached first to the shoulder and then to the body.



placed in the nose, which is attached to a wedge-shaped coil and subsequently modified by hand.



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Figure 27 After the nose is formed, two balls of the kaolin that will become the eyes are pressed into position.



The flat, oval eyes—the vessel's focal point—were achieved by rolling and pressing small balls of kaolin-based white clay in the palm of the hand. Probably mixed with a binding and fluxing agent, each eye was attached to the jug without any application of slip between it and the vessel's surface (fig. 27). Small strips of clay rolled on a flat surface into a coil measuring .12





Figure 21 Coils of clay are placed near the top and bottom of the kaolin balls to create the eye sockets. This step is one of the most critical because the shrinkage rate of the two clay bodies differs.



inches in diameter formed the eyelids. Sections of the coil were placed over the eye's top (fig. 22) and bottom edges and then carefully smoothed.

As with the eyes, the teeth were created from a ball of kaolin-based clay that was rolled and flattened into an oval plate and pressed onto the surface of the jug above the vessel base (fig. 23). Since the kaolin clay has a much higher shrinkage rate during firing than the body clay, potters had to use enough overlapping clay for the eyelids and lips to ensure that neither the eyes nor the teeth fell out. Many of the recovered fragments and related





Figure 23. A mud pad of Kaolin is prepared and pressed onto the body of the dog. Coils of clay are then placed and modeled to create the lips.



Figure 24. Clay coils are positioned to form the eyebrows, which are modeled with the help of a stick tool.



Figure 25 An original eye fragment is computed as Lettaz's prototype.



antique face jugs indicate that the kaolin eyes slumped in the firing and moved unerringly within their sockets. None of the recovered fragments, however, exhibited loose teeth.

Adding a somewhat quizzical expression to the face, coils of clay were used to fashion eyebrows—modeled with a wooden tool (fig. 24)—and ears (fig. 20).

Figure 20 Clay coils are placed for the ears, which are modeled by hand.



Figure 27 A sharpened stick is used to create the iris. Most of the punctures observed on the fragments were deep and tubular.





Once the facial features had been attached and modeled, attention was turned to the details. To simulate the iris (fig. 27), a sharp stick was used to create a small, triangular hole in each eye. In most of the recovered eyes, the hole was a deep tubular piercing, probably made with an instrument of uniform width. An object that had a worked edge, possibly a wooden rib, scored the clay to make straight, square teeth but only after two coils of clay had formed the lips (fig. 28).

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Figure 25. The teeth are sectioned with a scribe. Close examination of the fragments reveals that these marks were made after the lips had been applied.



Figure 28. As clay normally shrinks on re-



to prevent sludging during drying and firing, the sulfided prototype face ring appears larger than the inert storage ring recovered from the site.

Figure 10 One of the demonstration jumps was cut in half to show the interior depressions resulting from the pressure applied when attaching the various facial scanners. These depressions are an exact match for many of the original sludges.



Figure 1. Melted wax is brushed over the kaolin mouth and eyes. The artist, which prevents the glass from sticking to the kaolin, will burn off during firing.

leaving the applied areas white and shiny again. Some type of beeswax is thought to have been used by the Jasperfield potters.



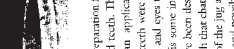


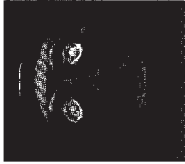
Figure 24 The liquid glaze—a mixture of commercially prepared fine clay, hard-wood ash seasoned from fireplaces and woodstoves, and ground feldspar—is poured into the interior of the jug and allowed to drain. The exterior of the jug is then dipped in the glaze and allowed to air dry. Note how the wax over the eyes and mouth repels the glaze. Many original shards and vessels exhibit danger marks on the base of the jug (see fig. 30). The absence of glaze on the pot's bottom helps keep them from sticking to the tin during firing.

After the vessel was thoroughly air-dried (fig. 29), preparation for glazing began with the application of wax to the eyes and teeth. This resinous technique—the Edgefield potters probably used an application of beeswax—was employed to ensure that the eyes and teeth were left unglazed (fig. 31), and also might have allowed the teeth and eyes to move slightly. The intention, however, is unknown. There is some indication from Edgefield County sources that the effect may have been desirable; that is, the “best” face jugs had eyes that rolled and teeth that chattered.

The final step before firing was coating the interior of the jug and the exterior in a glaze mixture of a clay slip, wood ash, and possibly sum-



Figure 33 Face jugs, Peter Leves, Cahm-bia, South Carolina, 2006. Alkaline glazed stoneware. H. 9 1/2". At left is the glazed but unfired face jug. At right is a previously fired example of a jug, shown to illustrate the alkaline glaze color.



After the experimental phase of the project had been completed, two antique examples of the face jugs discussed herein came to light. The first was illustrated in the arts section of the *New York Times* during "Antique Week," January 2006 (fig. 34). The jug's overall shape and facial features corresponded very closely with the experimental reconstruction, with the exception of its height. The antique example suggested that some of the face jugs were slightly squarer. A subsequent example confirmed this shape as being more typical of the production on the site (fig. 35).

Figure 34 Face jug, Miles Mill, Edgefield, South Carolina, ca. 1800-1875. Alkaline glazed stoneware. Courtesy, Chadler Benzer.) Note that the lips and teeth have spilled away on this example at their points of attachment.





Figure 39 Four figs, Miles Hill, Edgemoor, South Carolina, ca. 1807-1821. Alkali-line-glassed ionosphere. IT, 5%. (Diagrams collected from photos, Gavin Ashworth.)



Undoubtedly, more face jug examples residing in antique collections can now be firmly attributed to the Miles Mill production site. A full report on the face jug find is due to be published by GAI late in 2006.

1. See John A. Bourgeois, *Fluid Treads: Journey of the Jug*, pp. 99–221 of this volume.
2. Cindy K. Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jars: Traditional Vessels of South Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 81.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 83–84, 92, 344, 345.
4. Edwin Allée Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States: An Historical Survey of American Ceramic Art from the Earliest Linear to the Present Day* (New York: C. P. Putnam, 1929), p. 466.
5. John Michael Vach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), pp. 86–92.
6. Barber, *Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*.
7. Vach, *Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*; Mark M. Newell, "Echoes of Africa, GAI Research Manuscript 443/0966, which covers 1996 iconographic research in Zaire.
8. Roxana Farris Thompson, "The Grand Detroit 'X' Motif," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of the Arts* 66, no. 4 (1998): 267–222.
9. Debra Secord, Zaire, personal communication, 1996.
10. Personal communication with an African-American minister in Edgettsville, who wishes to remain anonymous.
11. A highly sensitive topic among rural blacks, root magic is a continuing research interest of the Georgia Archaeological Institute. Much of the sensitivity and secrecy are connected directly with the power attributed to the grave sites of important blacks of the past one hundred and fifty years.
12. Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jars*, pp. 47, 84–4.
13. Nancy Reynolds, *Revolution: A History of a South Carolinian Family* (Augusta, Ga.: Harnburg Press, 1999).
14. Mark M. Newell, "Making The 'MARK' in *Ceramics in America*, edited by Robert Hunter (Haines: NLI: University Press of New England for the Chipstone Foundation, 2003), pp. 273–75.
15. Stephen Ferrell, an avocational Edgettsville potter-blanner, found two face-vested fragments in the 1960s while raking through a vesper pile at Susanbrook, one of the Lewis Mills sites.
16. George F. Carrille, Cindy K. Baldwin, and Carl Steen, *Archaeological Survey of Middlebrook Pottery Kiln Site in Old Edgettsville District, South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.): M.L.A. 1997.

Miner, 1988). Researchers on this site in the 1980s published findings to the effect that Bayham had not been a part of the Edgfield slaveware tradition but that his pottery operation represented a cultural incursion from Ohio in 1803. GMI's preliminary survey of the site in 1996 also determined that the two sites extended over a far greater area than the earlier archaeologists had supposed—1.2 miles in length as opposed to the 348 feet originally reported. The GMI's reassessments discovered that the boundaries of the site, which previously had been described as encompassed within a few hundred feet, in fact extend beyond a 1.5-by-5-mile strip.

17. Mark M. Newell, "A Spectacular Find at the Joseph Gregory Rydabaan Pottery Site," in *Ceramics in America*, edited by Robert Turner (Tennessee, N.H.: University Press of New England for the Chipewick Foundation, 2006), pp. 229-31.

18. *Molding Lines: Southern Pine Plant 167-190*, ed. Cal. (Columbia, S.C.): McSkisick Auctions, 2001b, p. 17.

19. Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, p. 131. By 1870 the J. P. Riddle pottery was in operation at Kirby's Crossroads in the Edgfield District.

20. A grant from the Chipewick Foundation funded the cost of materials and documents.

21. Baldwin, *Great and Noble Jar*, p. 141.



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Atlantic Africa and the
African Diaspora



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Akinwumi Ogundiran and Toyin Falola

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to inform us of the specific impacts of Atlantic slavery on the communities who experienced wholesale raiding and destruction in the hands of individual vagabonds as well as state-sponsored banditry. To this end, Alioune Diéne, Ndéye Sokhna Guèye, and Aribidesi Usman apply archaeological data to demonstrate the debilitating impacts of slavery in the Senegambian valley and north-central Yorubaland. Both chapters provide us with some of the turbulent historical backgrounds in Africa from which the African Diaspora emerged. Citing Walter Rodney (1966, 1970, 1981), Diéne and Guèye argue that the Atlantic slave trade and direct European intervention transformed the character of the class system, social hierarchy, and state structure in the Senegambia region, paving the way for the warrior class to dominate the region's political institutions from the sixteenth century onward. As the European factors intensified their demands on the warrior-political agents for human cargo, insecurity of lives and property became a daily concern, and autocracy and exploitation by the warrior-rulers increased. Diéne and Guèye's chapter is also a longitudinal study of how the Atlantic slave trade was an expansion of the trans-Saharan slave trade in some areas and a new experience in other parts of the Senegambian region. The ecological and settlement pattern approaches adopted in the essay demonstrate how the landscape was utilized for defensive purposes against the slave trade—motivated wars of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries and how different ecological zones were deployed in the face of the uncertainties of drought and famine to pursue flexible economic strategies, such as fishing, farming, and pastoralism.

By the early nineteenth century, the effects of the slave trade—warfare,

displacement, and famine—had left the people of Senegambia so mobile that they were unable to exercise elaborate acquisition and creativity in material culture as their ancestors had done. In fact, the region experienced poverty, technological decline, and minimalism in ceramic decorations. Most of the pots belonging to this period were poorly fired and bore very simple decorations, if any. Déme and Guéye conclude that the Senegambian societies were impoverished by the Atlantic slave trade, rendered perpetually immobile by war and slave raiding, and straining under the loss and weakening of the institutions that had held the societies together. The impoverishment of the material record and the scanty ceramic decoration grammar in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Senegambia could provide insights into how we can interpret similar occurrences in the Americas.

Since pottery is the most prevalent class of artifacts in the archaeological contexts of the African Diaspora, it has become the most important locus for understanding food customs and African ethnic identity in the Americas (see Weik and also Hauser, this volume). The potteries identified with African manufacture and sites in the Americas, from the Carolinas to the Caribbean and Brazil, such as colonoware and yabbas, share many characteristics. Above all, they are low-fired earthenware, undecorated and of little variability in form (Hauser and Armstrong 1999, 69). These potteries are a subject of



intense disputations among archaeologists (e.g., Ferguson 1992). Hill (1987) has argued that these earthenware could not have been inspired by African ceramic traditions because pots are always highly decorated in western Africa. Kelly (2004, 224), on the other hand, has speculated that because more than 90 percent of archaeologically recovered ceramics from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries at Savi (Bight of Benin) "exhibit little or no decoration," the makers of the colonoware might have originated from Savi. Both Hill's and Kelly's arguments are problematic because they are based on the assumption that the surface patterns, manufacturing techniques, and formal properties of ceramics are idiosyncratic cultural practices that must be replicated at all times and in all situations. This assumption overlooks the instrumental purposes that objects and styles often serve in daily lives, especially in the context of weak institutions.

We would argue that the grammar of ceramic decoration is not always a reflection of idiosyncratic cultural practices; rather, ceramic production, including the level of complexity of surface decoration patterns, often reflects the political economy, institutional variability, and sociopolitical relations of a community or polity at any given time. The predominantly low-fired plain ceramics across the western African region during the turbulent nineteenth century indicate that the production of certain items such as pottery became attuned to utilitarian purposes rather than social significance due to the weakening of institutions that mediated social relationships. Likewise, coming from traditions where ceramic decoration patterns were a means by which

group identities and aesthetic values were linked to class, status, group identity, honor, and therefore a complex repertoire of meanings, enslaved peoples found themselves in the historical conditions of slavery where such identities and meanings were no longer in existence or were weakened and less relevant. The result is that the grammar of ceramic decoration or ceramic complex from a cultural zone in Atlantic Africa often became fragmented in the Americas. It is not surprising, therefore, that Americanist archaeologists have been at a loss to match the repertoire of decorations and forms of pottery in the New World African sites with those from pre-Atlantic and even Atlantic Africa. The foregoing challenges us to consider ceramic decorations, like ethnic identities, as historically conditioned, not necessarily derived from ingrained extrasonatic cognitive qualities. Such qualities would be perpetuated and replicated in material forms only when the social relations and cultural systems that could support them existed.

Political Formation and Transformation

The impact of Atlantic trade on sociopolitical formation and devolution in western Africa has been a subject of intense debate in the historiography. At the core of this debate is the degree to which the Atlantic slave trade affected



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18 Henry Gudgeal

Walking-stick, c.1863.

The rendering of two

viewpoints for the human

figure and animals in a single

composition is typical of native

folk-art-style.

Pottery

The best-known pottery of the antebellum period is the alkaline-glazed (wood ash- or lime-based) stoneware, found only in certain regions of the United States: the western Carolinas, Georgia, upper Florida, Alabama, eastern Texas and to a lesser extent in Arkansas and Mississippi. Edgefield District in western South Carolina has the earliest dated wares, c. 1815, and the most prolific production site in the region. Production continued until 1880, peaking between 1830 and 1860.

African-American slaves, who outnumbered whites four to one, mostly worked in pottery mills or shops owned and operated by white pioneer potters, who were well-to-do farmers or planters. Notable were the Reverend John Landrum, his brother Abner Landrum, founder of Pottersville Stoneware Manufactory, and John's son-in-law, Lewis J. Miles of Miles Mill Factory (c. 1850–79). Miles Mill was the leading manufacturer of alkaline-glazed earthenware in the nineteenth century. Typical vessels would not be marked, but would be slip-decorated in a light grey-green or yellow-green (earlier), or later, in a darker olive-green and brown colour. The green-brown glazes were typical of the Miles Factory. Some slaves were skilled potters called 'turners', who specialized in certain forms, such as storage jars.

One slave, known simply as Dave (c. 1780–1863), 'threw pots' for 29

years. So far, over 50 of his pots have been discovered. Large storage jars, used for storage of salted meat and rendered lard, were his most distinctive forms. His signature was a jar with a wide mouth and thick rolled rims, often 24 inches (60 cm) tall. There are approximately twenty enormous 25-gallon (95-litre) jars signed by Dave still in existence bearing a completion date, and a rhymed couplet incised between the crescent-shaped lug handles on the high broad shoulders. One of his largest (40-gallon/151-litre), a storage jar (19), has the following inscription: *Great and Noble jar! Hold sheep, goat, or bear and on the opposite side: Lm [initials of Lewis Miles] May 13, 1839/Dave & Baddler*. Baddler was another black 'turner' at Miles Mill.

How Dave became literate is conjectural, but he may have developed his poetic skills while assisting (as a typesetter?) Abner Landrum, who owned a local newspaper, *Edgefield Hive*, until 1831. On 12 July 1834, by which time he was an apprentice and slave of John Landrum, Dave completed his earliest known couplet jar. By 1840 Dave was a slave of Lewis J. Miles. One vessel documents the new ownership: *Dave belongs to Mr Miles/waher[e] the oven bakes & the pot bakes, and is dated on the other side: 3, July 1840.*

64. CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION



Some couplets record how meats were preserved: *A very large jar which has four handles/pack it full of fresh meats—then light candles* (1858). Others express sentiments about slavery (1857), pride (1857), and spiritual redemption (1862). The last signed pot with an incised couplet is dated May 31 1862. Dave's genius is evident in his ability to assert his identity within the anonymity of slavery by composing witty verse, signing his name and the date of the finished work, and alluding to his physical strength by the distinctively large jars. Dave's pots are cultural and personal commemoratives as well as works of art.

Unique in glazed stoneware are face vessels attributed to slave potters also living in Edgefield District. They made what is considered one of the more inventive stoneware forms in the South. Dating between 1860 and 1880, and ranging in height from 4 to 9 inches (to 23 cm), these 'grotesque jars', and 'voodoo jugs', as they were popularly called, were renamed in 1969 'Afro-Georgian' and 'Afro-Carolinian' by art historian Robert Farris Thompson to denote both the artisan's African heritage and the area of manufacture. We do not know what the slaves called them. Many were discovered in the vicinity of Colonel Thomas Davies's Palmetto Firebrick Works in Bath, South Carolina.

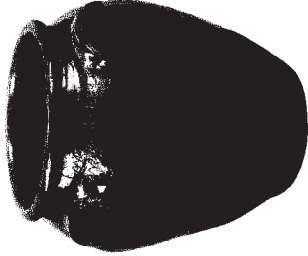
Davies, who opened his factory in 1862 and closed it three years later, informed ceramic historian Edwin A. Barber in 1893 that his slaves were allowed time on their own to make face vessels in 1862: "They were accustomed to employ in making homely designs in coarse pottery. Among these were some weird-looking water jugs, roughly modelled in the front in the form of a grotesque human face evidently

intended to portray the African features.²² Barber, in turn, considered the facial forms similar to African art.

19 Dave the Potter

'Great and Noble jar',

13 May, 1859.

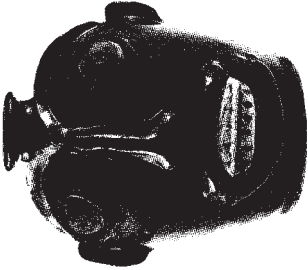


Edgefield face vessels display a human face on one side of the body, sculpted in relief. As shown in one Afro-Carolinian face vessel (20), the contrast of the white porcelain bulbous eyes and teeth next to the clay lips and the brown glaze of the body create a visually dramatic and animated image. The use of two different clays, the open-mouth expression, and the white eyes contrasting against the darker coloured form appear similar to Kongo 'power' statuary, according to African scholars. The knowledge that Kongo slaves worked at the Davies Factory makes the hypothesis that the style and technique is African-derived more plausible. Making human-face earthenwares is considered to be an African translation of the British Toby, which could have been imported into North America. Alternatively, as has been recently documented, it could have been a continuance of pottery forms seen in northern Kongo region, where, by the early nineteenth century, the people had transformed the Toby into a more African form and magi-cal object.

The meaning and function of these vessels is conjectural. Some were kept in families for generations; others were found in the vicinity of the Underground Railroad. This, and the care with which they were modelled and fired, and their small size (suggesting that they were not utilitarian objects) hint at some special, possibly spiritual, significance. Some of these pots have holes. Pottery damaged in this way has been found on burial grounds in South Carolina and Georgia. One writer in Columbia, South Carolina, observed in 1881:

When a negro dies, some article or utensil, or more than one, is thrown upon his grave; moreover it is broken. Nearly every grave has a most curious collec-

20 Anonymous
African-Caribbean face vessel,
c. 1860.



66 CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION



tion of broken crockery. On the large graves are laid broken pitchers, sirup [*sic*] jugs, plaster images. Chief of all these, however, are large water pitchers; very few graves lack them. What the significance of so many cracked pitchers and jugs may be I do not know. Surely the negro of Columbia does not regard this particular form of earthenware with special admiration or affection.³

Another writer observed the same practice in 1891 in the same place, and noted that graves were decorated with a variety of objects, including fragments of crockery, and cited an engraving depicting the grave of a Kongo chief 'that would do very well for the picture of one in the Pottery Field, Columbia, South Carolina'.⁴ On the grave all articles were cracked or perforated with holes. As mortuary items, face vessels may have been protective spiritual devices and prestige objects reflecting African spiritual concepts and practices.

Afro-Carolinian and Afro-Georgian face vessels mark the confluence of cultures in North America. They display an amalgamation of African pottery technique: two clays with different firing temperatures; and of European pottery forms and technique: using the potter's wheel (not traditionally used in West and Central Africa); and a late eighteenth-century form of face vessel: the British Toby. Furthermore, the vessels suggest the continuity of African beliefs.

Quilts

Female slaves continued to dominate textile production in the antebellum period, and after the Civil War women quilters dominated folk art genres. Numerous surviving quilts from the antebellum period are

attributed to slaves. On plantations, slave women made quilts on their own or under the supervision of the slave-mistress. I earning from family members or the slave-mistress, black women excelled in making pieced, commonly called patchwork, appliqué, and embroidered quilts and coverlets. Upon seeing their work it is easy to understand how they earned incomes to purchase their freedom. One fine example of dexterity, and a masterpiece of design, using a pattern called 'Touching Stars', is a silk quilt (21) made by two slaves, Aunt Ellen and Aunt Margaret, who belonged to the Marmaduke Beckwith family at the Knob plantation in Kentucky.

Quilting bees or quilting parties were very much a part of plantation society in the nineteenth century. They were elaborate affairs, either sponsored by the slave-master or arranged impromptu by the slaves. Quilting parties provided opportunities for socialization and reinforced slave community ties, thereby making them significant social events that contradict the common belief that slave life disrupted African-American cultural traditions. During the antebellum period quilts were hung outdoors as signs: those with the colour black in them indicated a place of refuge (a safe house) on the path of the Underground Railroad. 'Jacob's Ladder' and 'North Star' patterns were



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Regenia A. Perry
Guest Curator

Professor of African and African-American
Art History

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia

Gibbes Art Gallery

October 1 - November 6, 1985

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During the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, Georgia and the Carolinas produced a tradition of pottery-making which is unique in the history of American ceramics. Slaves who were employed in plantation potteries fashioned a variety of small vessels in their spare time, for private use, which characteristically depict the features of a human face. This category of vessels is known by a number of terms including "plantation pottery," "voodoo pots," "grotesque jugs," "slave jugs", and "monkey jugs." However, the most sophisticated and appropriate nomenclature, "Afro-Georgian and Afro-Carolinian face vessels", was coined by Professor Robert F. Thompson of Yale University.¹ This term refers to the racial origin and geographic location of the makers, and to the fact that all of the examples are containers. These stoneware vessels were fashioned of local clay and glazed in a variety of colors ranging from pale lime green to dark olive green and warm iron yellow and tan to dark brown, gray and black. The facial features of these vessels are frequently tormented; however, some examples are static, others smile, and a few are suggestive of voices raised in song. The eyes and teeth of the vessels were sometimes fashioned of kaolin (white clay) which remains white after firing and provides a striking contrast in color against the darker backgrounds.

African-American face vessels did not develop in cultural isolation, but were a segment of a distinct tradition of Southern folk pottery developed in the Edgefield district of South Carolina. While pottery in other sections of the East coast was either salt-glazed or slip-covered stoneware, South Carolina produced a tradition of alkaline-glazed stoneware. This type of glaze was produced from mixing sand and wood ashes which were ground together to produce an even glaze. The glazes represented a wide range of colors determined by the iron content of the local clays and the temperatures at which they were fired.

Most Edgefield pottery was produced for utilitarian purposes, and generally for kitchen and smokehouse use. However, the most distinct feature of Edgefield district stoneware was its slip (liquified clay) decoration of which Edgefield potters employed two types: iron-bearing slip and kaolin slip. Sometimes the two types were used in combination with the iron-bearing slip producing browns, olive greens, and iron reds, and the kaolin slips producing white and cream shades.

The distinct tradition of alkaline-glazed stoneware appears to have originated in the Edgefield district of South Carolina which today includes Edgefield, Greenwood and parts of Aiken Counties. By

the early 1830s this region had become a major center for the production of alkaline-glazed pottery and remained so until the Civil War. Most of the Edgefield factories were small, located on plantations, and worked primarily by slaves. Potters working in Edgefield moved to other parts of the south before the Civil War, and disseminated the tradition of alkaline-glazed stoneware to North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas.²

The reason for the predominance of African-American potters working in South Carolina was due to the fact that their labor could be obtained very inexpensively. By 1840 the use of African-American slave labor was almost universal. Several of the most outstanding potteries in this district were established by Abner Landrum near Edgefield in 1796; a pottery at Louis Milles' Mill near Alken, which was active from ca. 1837-1894; and Phoenix Factory established by Collin Rhodes and Robert W. Mathis in 1840. A continuous tradition of pottery-making existed in South Carolina during most of the nineteenth century.

While the names of a number of Anglo-American potters working in South Carolina during the nineteenth century are known, fewer names of the numerous African-American potters of the same period have been preserved. Although no names have been assigned specifically to the slave makers of face vessels, at least three

²Thompson, Robert F. "African Influence on the Art of the United States," Armstead L. Robinson et al., eds., *Black Studies in the University*. New York: Bantam Books, 1969.

³Myers, Lynn Robertson, and Terry, George D. *Southern Make. The Southern Folk Heritage*. Exhibition Catalogue. Columbia: McKissick Museums, Univer-





figure 1

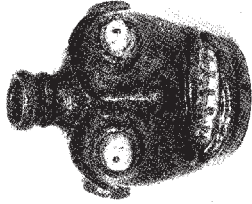


figure 2

African-American potters have been documented in archives at the Charleston Museum.³

The most interesting of these documented African-American potters was a man called "Dave," who worked at Miles' Mill Pottery, was apparently literate, and is said to have died in 1863 at the age of eighty-three or eighty-five. Most of Dave's vessels are large, simple in form, and still remain in South Carolina collections. They are best known for their inscriptions of rhymed couplets, although some examples are only signed and dated. It is believed that Dave was taught to read and write by his master Amos Landrum. A large glazed crock in the collection of the Charleston Museum establishes the potter's wit, slave status, and sense of humor:

*Dave belongs to Mr. Miles
where the oven bakes and the pot boils*

A large olive-gray storage jar by Dave, also in the Charleston Museum collection bears the date May 13, 1859 and the following inscription:

*Dave & Baddier/great & noble jar
hold goat, sheep or bear*

An identical vessel in the same collection also has an 1859 date, but a different couplet about the making of the jar at Stony Bluff "for making [not legible] enuff." Documentation concerning

now missing pots by Dave indicates that he often repeated the verse about the "great and noble jar," and that the partially illegible inscription might have read originally as:

Made at Stoney Bluff for making (lard) enuff

May 13, 1859

Other known couplets by Dave include the following:

Pretty little girl on a verge

volcanic mountain, how they burge

1857

This noble jar will hold 20 (gallons)

fill it with silver then you will have plenty

1858

Good for lard and holding fresh meat

blest we were when Peter saw the folded sheet

1859

This jar is made all of cross

if you don't repent you will be lost

1862

In a similar tradition to the stanza-shifting compositions of African-American spiritual singers in South Carolina during the nineteenth century, Dave chose to place similar rhymes on more than



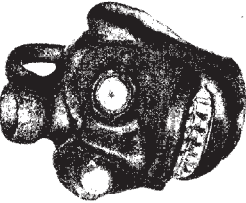


figure 3

one pot. Dave was an African-American potter who was engaged in a productive career for at least nineteen years, and was active until shortly before his death.

In an interview conducted on the site of Seigler's Pottery near Eureka, South Carolina on October 4, 1930,² an elderly African-American man, Carey Dickson, recalled his acquaintance with Dave:

Of course I knew Dave. I know all about him. He used to belong to old man Drake and it was at that time that he had his leg cut off ... They say he got drunk and layed on the railroad track. Later Dave went to Miles' Mill. After Dave was crippled he had Henry Simkins, who was crippled in the arms, to drive the wheel for him.

Carey Dickson also recalled that the Seigler Pottery produced pitchers, jars, jugs, bricks, and pipes, and that the last firing was done in the 1890s. The Dickson interview makes no mention of Baddler whose name appears in a partnership suggestion with Dave's, it is highly unlikely that an Anglo-American potter would have taken second billing to a slave; hence one assumes that Baddler was also an African-American who assisted.

Recent research has uncovered a contemporary account of Dave published in an editorial in the *Edgefield Hive* in 1863 in which Dave allegedly advocated buttermilk as a healthful drink.³ The newspaper editor of the colorful story called him "Dave Potter" and implied that Dave was once connected with the *Edgefield Hive*. At this time, Dave was owned by Abner Landrum, who apparently taught him to read and write, and the editor recounted this dialogue between himself and Dave.



figure 4

Observing an intelligent twinkle in his eye, we accousted him in one of his own set speeches: 'Well, uncle Dave, how does your corporosity seem to sagittiate?' 'First rate, young master, from top to toe; I just had myself a magnanimous bowl-ful of dat delicious old beverage, buttermilk.'

If 1863 was the year Dave died at age eighty-three, he produced most of his large storage jars at over seventy years of age. The storage jars manufactured by Dave at the Miles' Mill Pottery were used for storing lard, salt meat, beans, flour, cornmeal, and for preserving pickles. They were some of the largest hand-thrown stoneware pieces made in the United States during this period, of which some had a capacity of over thirty gallons. The Dave jars are simple, capacious stoneware vessels with eyebrow-like handles fashioned by hand. The couplets, names, and dates were inscribed directly into the wet clay by Dave (or someone under his direction) and became a permanent part of the vessel when fired.

A second African-American potter from South Carolina was Jack Thurman, who died in 1908 at age eighty-four. Information concerning Thurman was provided by a contemporary Anglo-American potter, George Flesher, during an interview conducted in 1930 by a Charleston Museum archivist.⁶ George Flesher worked at Miles' Mill Pottery during the last years of its operation, and provided firsthand

⁶Ibid.

⁶Ferrell, Stephen T., and Ferrell, T.M. *Early Decorated Stoneware of the Edgefield District South Carolina*. Exhibition Catalogue. Greenville: Greenville County Museum of Art, 1976, p. 13.

⁶Archives at the Charleston Museum.



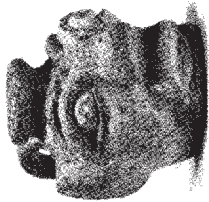


figure 5



figure 6

information concerning pottery wares and the men who produced them. Flesher recalled the dignity of Jack Thurman, his impressive physique, his gift as a raconteur, and attributed two vessels in the Charleston Museum collection to Thurman's hand. During the same interview, Flesher recalled that Thurman not only worked at Miles' Mill, but also at one of the two Landrum potteries in the Aiken area. This exchange of African-American labor almost certainly provides a clue to the unity among the Aiken County styles. The Thurman attributions in the Charleston Museum are simply-shaped, sand and pine ash-glazed stoneware vessels in the manner of the Dave Jars, but lack the dates and rhymed couplets.

Jim Lee was another African-American potter who worked at the pottery of Roundtree and Bodie in what is presently Greenwood County, South Carolina. Only one of Jim Lee's works has been documented. It is a representation of a seated male rather than a jug or vessel (fig. 7). The figure is in the collection of the Charleston Museum and obviously represents an Anglo-American male with long hooked nose and pear-shaped head. The small figure wears a jacket which is turned back to expose the fancy buttons on his shirt, and the hair, mustache, and jacket facing are glazed black. The facing of the man's jacket is turned up at the right shoulder suggesting a dishevelled appearance. The overall impression is that of a vain, self-centered, and not overwhelmingly intelligent plantation preacher. This figure is reputedly a satirical likeness of a Reverend Pickett, and was made by Jim Lee sometime before 1860. In all probability this representation of the preacher is more genetic than satirical. Admittedly, the preacher's pear-shaped head, exaggerated

features, and idiotic expression seem caricature-like in spirit). The man's implied vanity despite his unkempt appearance and low mentality was keenly observed by the slave ceramicist. However, it is significant to note that even in an informal work of this type (in which the slave maker obviously did not hold the preacher in very high regard) the African-American potter did not create a grimacing monstrosity as Anglo-American craftsmen did so frequently in their treatment of African-American subjects. While the Jim Lee preacher is mildly amusing, it also reveals a certain degree of sympathy toward the subject on the part of its unusually perceptive maker. It is hoped that additional works by Jim Lee will be discovered. If Baddier of "Dave and Baddier" fame were, indeed, African-American, the names of only four African-American potters can be documented.

One of the earliest formal recognitions of slave face vessels was noted in Edwin Barber's *Pottery and Porcelain of the U.S. of 1902*⁷ in which he described the works as "crude and primitive," but was compelled to admire their strength of design. Shortly before World War II, William Ratford Eve of Augusta, Georgia assembled a collection of related cups and jugs which he had secured during several field trips to African-American settlements between Aiken and Langley, South Carolina. The Eve Collection, in addition to museum holdings and other private collections which have been attributed to the Aiken, South Carolina vicinity, form the basis for the suggestion of a regional tradition. These vessels are containers with human features applied by hand, glazed with sand and pine ash,

⁷Barber, Edwin A. *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*. New York: C. B. Putnam's, Socy, 1902, p. 166.



feature ball-like eyes of clay or porcelain placed in sockets and sometimes moveable, kaolin or broken porcelain teeth, and prominent noses with flaring nostrils and slightly hooked profiles.

A number of these vessels has been attributed to the pottery of Colonel Thomas Jones Davies (1830-1902) at Bath, South Carolina near the western portion of Aiken County. Existing documentation attests to the fact that most of the potters at Bath were African-American. In 1863, due to increasing wartime demand, Davies' potters fashioned stoneware jars, pitchers, plates, cups, and saucers using the simple kickwheel which has a treadle and crank. Edwin Barber noted that the body of this pottery was composed of three quarters to five sixths kaolin and alluvial earth from the Savannah River located six miles from Bath. This composition created a hard body on which a mixture of sand and pine ashes was used to obtain a glaze which partially vitrified with the body of the vessel.

Legend exists that by 1863 slaves were suddenly fashioning their own small face vessels and bringing them to be fired at Davies' Pottery. By the end of the Confederacy all operations were suspended and the pottery never re-opened. One source states that General Sherman's army set fire to the enterprise in 1865. Another local tradition states that the vessels were created during a two-year period, from 1863-65, and then disappeared.

It is not possible to accept the two-year production period for face vessels, as art forms do not generally emerge without historical basis, in isolation, and then disappear entirely. It is important to note that kaolin deposits have been known to exist in the Augusta and Aiken areas since the beginning of the nineteenth century. When the first African-American craftsmen took this substance and fashioned eyes and teeth which were set into the body of their sculptures to be fired, they created an artistic concept for which no precedent has been found. On the basis of stylistic analysis of the body of Georgian and South Carolina face vessels made by anonymous African-American slave artisans, it has been possible to detect at least three different hands—"The Master of the Davies Pottery," "The Master of the Diagonal Teeth," and "The Master of the Louis Miles' Pottery."

Archives at the Charleston Museum support the theory that all of the face vessels made at Miles' Mill Pottery were the products of African-Americans. A small group of vessels from this pottery comprise the finest examples known which may be attributed to a single hand. Three examples are in the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History; two are in the Charleston Museum; and one is in the Gordon Collection in New York City. The first ex-

ample in the Smithsonian Institution (fig. 2), is glazed olive-gray except for the kaolin eyes and teeth. The wide mouth is placed near the bottom of the chinless vessel, and the convex lips protrude from the body's surface. The prominent nose projects and has pinched nostrils and a bridge which extends to meet the central section of the prominently arched eyebrows and diminutive ears. The large, widely-spaced eyes with pierced pupils were fashioned of kaolin and set within the deeply rounded sockets from which they glow intensely. The clenched teeth of the open mouth were also fashioned of kaolin, with the lower row decidedly larger than the upper. The mouth is placed close to the base of the vessel which appears to terminate below the lower teeth without a chin or neck. The spout of the vessel is decorated with a circular ridged band and at the back



figure 7

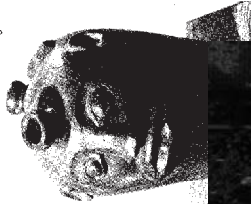


figure 8



Truh Rockefeller
Collection



a small, curved handle rises from the top of the spout and curves down to the widest portion of the vessel. The enormous white kaolin eyes, wide, open mouth with clenched kaolin teeth, and the dramatic protrusion of the eyebrows create an incredible sense of ferocity in this vessel which is only four inches high.

A second vessel (*fig. 3*), in the Smithsonian Institution is obviously by the same potter, glazed olive-gray, and is slightly smaller than the previous example. A similar wide, open mouth is depicted with the lips being more evenly fashioned and the body tapering to suggest a neck. The prominent nose is placed high above the mouth and connects with the sharply-ridged eyebrows which is one of the earmarks of this master's style. The high curves of the eyebrows eliminate a forehead as in the previous example, and a wide-lipped spout (minus the circular band) rises directly above and in front of a short, curved handle. In contrast to the diminutive ears of the previous example, the present vessel has prominent elongated ears with the suggestion of lobes which repeat the curves evidenced in the eyebrows and handle. The kaolin teeth in the second example are more evenly fashioned, again with larger lower teeth, and are set at angles rather than in a clenched position. The eyes in both examples are equally intense, and appear to stare at the observer and glow with an inner life.

Another vessel by the same hand, glazed dark brown, in the Gordon Collection (*fig. 4*), is almost identical to the previous example except it does not employ kaolin for the eyes and teeth. The most unusual example in the entire category of African-American face vessels, (*fig. 5*), is a miniature version in the Charleston Museum. It is fashioned entirely of white kaolin and is only 1 1/4 inches high. It is the smallest known example, the only vessel of its type made entirely of kaolin, and was fashioned completely by hand. This tiny work shares many stylistic similarities with the previously discussed examples by an unnamed potter at Miles' Mill whom this writer would like to designate as the "Master of the Extended Eyebrows." His body of work comprises the most distinguished examples which have been located.

Additional vessels were fashioned by less-talented men than the "Master of the Extended Eyebrows," and many are equally as interesting. The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center in Williamsburg, Virginia owns several face vessels of African-American origin which are believed to have been produced in the vicinity of Aiken, South Carolina, and are dated between 1850-1875.

One example (*fig. 6*), is of stoneware glazed dark brown and is 7 1/4 inches high. The basic shape of the jug was retained, and the

facial features are concentrated on the upper region of the vessel. Striations suggesting hair and a beard were drawn in the moist clay and are unusual features of the piece. The entire lower portion of the vessel was conceived as a beard above which were applied a wide mouth with slightly-parted thin lips and a long, curved nose. The tiny eyes were modeled individually of the same clay as the body and set in, sockets close to the bridge of the nose. A single, slightly curved line above each eye suggest brows. Small, curved ears appear on either side of the broad face and the typical curved handle extends from the back of the spout. The corncob "stopper" is not original to the piece, and its placement has given rise to the theory that such vessels were used as liquor jugs. Perhaps the most striking difference between the present example and the work of the "Master of the Extended Eyebrows" is that the expression of the

figure 9

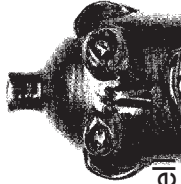
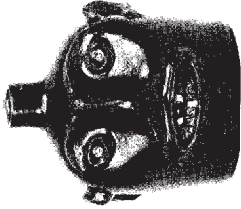


figure 10



Steve Ferrell



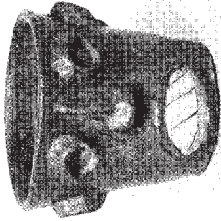


figure 11

Williamsburg vessel is benign in comparison. While the other examples were conceived as totally expressive faces, the Williamsburg piece is basically a jug to which small facial features have been applied. It is obviously the work of a far less-talented potter than the "Master of the Extended Eyebrows" who strove to create an effigy in the local tradition. The concentration of the features near the upper portion of the jug and the small, beady eyes placed close to the nose create an uneven and somewhat ill-proportioned appearance. The absence of kaolin contrasts and exposed teeth is also strongly felt in this vessel. Although the hair and beard striations are interesting and unusual, they do not compensate for the small, uneven features placed near the top of the vessel.

A second vessel in the Williamsburg Collection (fig. 7), is 9½ inches high and fashioned of red clay with a dark brown glaze. As in the previous example, the features are concentrated near the top of the jug, but are more prominent. The vessel is chinless and has large, protruding, closed lips placed directly below a broad nose which flares at the end. The eyes were fashioned from the same clay as the body, have pierced pupils, and were placed in sockets. Curved indentations above the eyes suggest brows, and tiny ears are placed near the top of the vessel. Two spouts project at angles from the front and rear of the piece whose loop handle has been broken. While the present example is considerably more arresting than its companion in the same collection, the concentration of features near the top of the jugs suggest stylistic unity. The facial features of the present example are very prominent. The broad nose and pouting lips give the work a certain character and the carefully

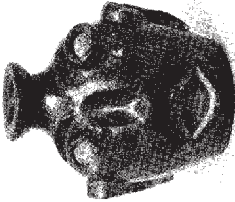


figure 12

modeled eyes, albeit of the same material, display a certain intensity which is one of the main characteristics of this category of pottery.

A South Carolina-made vessel in a New York collection (*fig. 8*), presents still another concept of a face vessel design in which the basic shape is a sculptured face, rather than a jug to which facial features have been applied. The piece tapers at the top and bottom to create an oval form. A slight protrusion near the bottom of the piece suggests a chin above a wide, open mouth with clenched kaolin teeth. A long hooked nose dominates the center of the face between two large blank eyes which were fashioned of kaolin. A few curved striations above the eyes suggest brows and large curved ears project from the sides of the vessel. A reverse relationship of the handle and spout is noted as the handle extends from the rear to the forehead, and the spout projects at an angle from the rear. The contrast of white kaolin and olive-gray stoneware, as well as the ferocious expression of this vessel, are both admirable qualities. More significantly, the anonymous potter who created this work conceived of the design as a sculptured head rather than a vessel embellished with human facial features.

Broken bits of porcelain, in lieu of kaolin, were employed by some African-American potters for textural contrasts. An Anglo-American potter, Cheever Meaders, who worked in the northeast corner of Georgia at Cleveland until his death in 1967, made ash-glazed stoneware with eyes and teeth of broken pieces of glazed earthenware embedded in the body of the stoneware. Meaders was apparently imitating the forms and kaolin contrasts of African-

African face vessels; however, all of his examples suffer by comparison with the slave-made vessels appear to pulsate with

Steve Ferrer



Jefferson (*fig. 9*). While the slave-made vessels appear to pulsate with

an inner life, those made by Meaders and other Anglo-American imitators are very caricature-like and superficial in spirit.

An African-American face vessel in the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History (fig. 10), is of dark brown glazed stoneware and employs bits of broken porcelain for contrast. The vessel retains its basic squat shape, and depicts an open mouth in which small uneven porcelain fragments have been set to suggest teeth. The nose is narrow and pinched with nostrils suggested by two diagonal indentations, and the eyes and eyebrows project from concave indentations on either side of the broad face and small projecting ears. A simple, short, rimless spout projects from the top and rear of the work. A small chip of white porcelain is placed in the center of each eye, forming the pupil and complementing the same material used in the teeth below. The vessels which employ porcelain fragments rather than kaolin features are not as impressive, and somehow lack the unity of the inset kaolin examples.

A vessel in the collection of the Charleston Museum (cover illustration), is glazed dark brown, has prominent features, and eyes and teeth of kaolin. The eyes with their dotted pupils are large, widely-spaced, and move freely within their sockets. When the vessel is shaken the movable eyes produce a rattling sound which is complemented by the bared, clenched teeth, implying a growl.

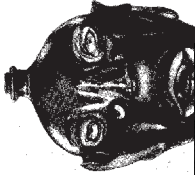
The John Gordon Collection, which comprises the largest single grouping of African-American face vessels, includes a number of unique examples.

An olive-gray glazed piece in the form of a drinking mug (fig. 11), provides an introduction to the group. The hollow cup-shaped object has a wide rim which tapers towards the bottom, and a curved handle placed parallel to the facial features. The features were fashioned of the same material as the body of the cup and depict circular eyes, prominently projecting nose and ears, and an open mouth with teeth indicated by diagonal striations within the mouth. This is the only example known to the writer which is obviously a drinking vessel. Teacups and mugs were produced in large quantities in plantation potteries, and the designer of this example elected to make his own unusual vessel by adding human features to a basic cup shape.

Another unusual example, which was formerly in the Gordon Collection and now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, is a glazed black vessel in the form of a small pitcher with a pouring spout at the top. The large eyes and teeth were fashioned of kaolin. The broad nose, ears, and eyebrows project prominently, and a small curved handle is at the back of the piece. The large kaolin eyes of

the small, hollow vessel gaze intently, and the white kaolin against the charcoal black body provides a striking contrast. The rim of this vessel has been carefully shaped and terminates in a V-shaped point for pouring liquids. The scale of this vessel suggests the function of a cream pitcher, an article which would hardly have been present on a slave dining table. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that the basic form might have been intended originally for Anglo-American use, but discarded as an inferior "second" and adopted by the slave potter who fashioned his own private face vessel in the local tradition. This was a potter of considerably greater talents than the "Master of the Drinking Mug," and the kaolin contrasts and ferocious gaze of the piece are in the same spirit as the "Master of the Extended Eyebrows" from Miles' Mill

figure 13



Steve Ferrell



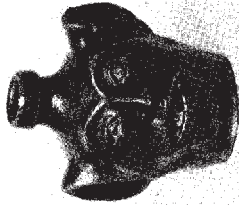


figure 14

Pottery whose works he might have known.

A small beaker or vase form in the Gordon Collection is unique for several reasons. The dark brown glazed vessel may be one of the few in existence which is suggestive of singing (*fig. 12*). The vase has a wide spout which tapers toward the top of the eyebrows. The large eyes are placed close to the top of the vessel, and a prominent nose and ears project boldly from the face. The wide toothless mouth is open and slightly tilted on one corner, possibly representing a slave singer. In contrast to the almost bestial ferocity of other works in this category, this vessel imparts a mood of gaiety in one of the few forms of relaxation plantation owners did not deny slaves. This example does not employ kaolin contrasts and has no handle. However, the expressive qualities inherent in the prominent features create an almost lifelike pulsating rhythm. At least one other singing face vessel was in a private collection in New York City during the 1930s when it was documented and rendered (*fig. 13*). The present location of this vessel is unknown.

In a similar spirit as the singing face vessels is another unusual piece in the Gordon Collection. The body of the vessel is basically oval or egg-shaped, with the broader portion forming the top. A short spout projects from the rear of the piece which has no handle. The ears and facial features are less prominent than in the previous example, and fragments of clay appear on the forehead, cheeks, and chin. The open mouth represents a laughing figure in contrast to the singers in the two previous examples. The rotund face of this jolly figure is totally expressive of its mood. While the previous examples sing happily, this vessel roars with laughter. The eyes reflect a

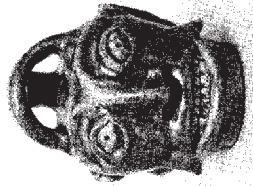


figure 15

similar gay spirit, and the square bits of clay placed intermittently on the face serve to accentuate further the jovial mood of the vessel. This laughing face vessel is believed to be the only one of its kind in existence.

Other unusual vessels in the Gordon Collection include one with satanic features (*fig. 14*), one with a prominent Foo mustache (*fig. 15*), and one with a serpent entwined around the body of the vessel. The appearance of a serpent in combination with a face vessel gives additional credence to the suspected link between spirits and serpents in West African religion and mythology, and the functions of slave-made face vessels.

The presence of face vessels fashioned by African-American potters in Georgia and the Carolinas during the nineteenth century is, indeed, a unique phenomenon in American art. However, they should be considered within the realm of minor arts in the ceramics category rather than works of sculpture, *per se*. Since these objects are representative of many sizes, shapes and colors, the nomenclature "Afro-Georgian and Afro-Carolinian face vessels" coined by Thompson is considerably more appropriate and dignified than "monkey jugs," "slave pots," "voodoo pots," etc. The recent terminology refers both to the makers and the purpose or capacity of the vessels.

A great deal of speculation has been advanced concerning the function of these slave-made vessels which are usually not signed or dated. Exceptions may be noted in certain examples made by Anglo-American potters at Brown's Pottery in Arden, North Carolina, works by Cheever Meaders, and one example in the present exhibition signed "Joe Banford" (*fig. 16*).

The most outstanding examples of African-American face

vessels were produced prior to the Civil War, and there is no documentation contemporary with their production to establish the purposes for which these vessels were intended. Unfortunately, during the extensive Georgia Writer's Project of the 1930s, which documented a number of African survivals in Georgia, no interviews were conducted with elderly African-Americans on the subject of face vessels. Although it is well-documented that the majority of these vessels were made by slaves in Georgia and South Carolina, they have been located as far north as upstate New York and as far west as Tennessee and Ohio. Generally speaking, they were found in the vicinity of the underground railroads. This fact indicates that these vessels were important enough to runaway slaves to be included among their prized possessions, and might have been regarded as good luck pieces.

A considerable number of African-American face vessels became the property of Anglo-American collectors early on, who regarded these vessels as slave curiosities and humorous examples of "primitive" art produced by a crude people who were incapable of understanding fine art. However, these uninformed and uninspired collectors did not realize that they possessed designs which are unprecedented on American soil. The simplest theory is that these unusual vessels were fashioned by slaves in their spare time as a hobby or avocation, and generally had no utilitarian function. They could have been used as playthings for children, as in the case of Kachina dolls of the Hopi Indians, or simply displayed as decorative objects in slave cabins. The physiognomy of the pieces is not consistent enough to betray racial identity. Some pieces appear to depict African features while others may be caricatures of the slaves' oppressors.

A strong case for the theory that African-American face vessels were more than mere curiosities is that they were taken by runaway slaves heading north and west via underground railroad routes. It seems unlikely that an escaping slave, embarking on such a perilous journey as leaving his master's plantation without permission, would carry along a bulky ceramic knick-knack of no value. Considering the traditional African belief in spirits and souls, it seems highly possible that some of these vessels represented spirits of gods or ancestors and were regarded as charms or good luck pieces by their slave owners. In the examples with the large inset kaolin eyes, the potters might have been recalling African prototypes and the old "eye is the window of the soul" adage. A point of comparison might also be made between African-American face vessels and the *ikenga* figures of the Igbo tribe of southeastern Nigeria. Each *ikenga* is a unique, individually commissioned per-

sonal shrine carved for personal ownership of an outstanding male. #kengas are the embodiment of the soul of their owners and considered talismen or good luck pieces. It is entirely possible that African-American face vessels were commissioned and owned by individual slaves and served as their only tangible connection with the spirit world. Since many of these vessels are comical in expression and were amusing to slave masters, they provided an outlet through which slave potters could experiment freely without arousing suspicion among their masters. This is not to suggest that all African-American face vessels were spiritual in nature as some appear to be entirely light-hearted.

Some scholars feel that African-American face vessels were used as whiskey decanters. Others agree with this writer that these



figure 16

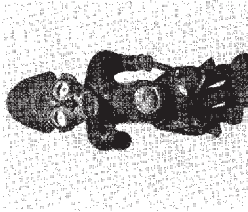


figure 17

vessels were made in imitation of spirits to which a kinship with African art and religion may be traced. Since the sizes and shapes of these vessels are so varied, and some of the finest examples are only four inches high, the notion of their use as containers seems unlikely. However, a link between African-American face vessels and religious spirits is not as easy to dismiss when one considers the number of African traditions which survived in Georgia and South Carolina for many years after slaves were brought to this region. Since these diminutive vessels were produced in fairly large quantities, their overt use in religious ceremonies would have aroused great suspicion among slave owners.

No art forms have been located in Western art which are related specifically to nineteenth-century African-American face vessels. Some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century examples of German Bellarmine jugs have faces framed by rectangles. However, those faces were cast in a mold and then applied to the vessels, while the African-American-made examples have facial features modeled by hand. Although several Bellarmine jugs were excavated on the Bull Plantation near Sheldon, South Carolina, in all probability these jugs were never seen by slave potters.

In a search for additional European prototypes for African-American face vessels the English Toby jug comes to mind almost immediately. Toby jugs are basically hollow chinless figures on low seats and depict short grinning men wearing deeply-pocketed coats, wide cuffs, and tricorne hats. Their description recalls the satirized preacher figure by the slave Jim Lee. However, Jim Lee probably never saw an English Toby jug. Finally, the German and English examples are smoothly finished and represent naturalistic features, in direct contrast to the rugged character of the finest slave-made face vessels.

One must then consider African pottery as a possible source of inspiration for slave-made face vessels. The use of kaolin insets to form eyes and teeth in the body of the pottery seems peculiarly African-American as there are no examples of kaolin insets in African pottery. However, their appearance in "Afro-Georgian and Afro-Carolinian face vessels" strongly recalls the African use of white cowrie shells, glittering pieces of mirror, glass, and tin strips to represent eyes against darker wood material. The use of mixed media in African figural sculpture is one of the salient characteristics of this category of art. Since it is not possible to document any similar instances of dark against light in nineteenth-century European pottery, it can be assumed that the Georgia-South Carolina tradition of white kaolin used in combination with darker

glazed pottery is decidedly African.

Similarities between certain figural sculptures of the Kongo tribe in Zaire and African-American face vessels appear too close to be coincidental. A point of comparison may be made between a nineteenth-century Kongo *Man on Horse*, now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and one of the face vessels from Miles' Mill Pottery (figs. 17 and 2). The Kongo artist carved out the sockets of the enormous eyes and embedded glass insets. There is an open mouth with bared teeth, raised eyebrows, and eyes which project a similar intensity as in the South Carolina example. Although one vessel is of wood and the other of clay, pottery decorated with facial features is known in West Africa. However, the

figure 18

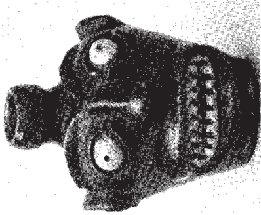


figure 20

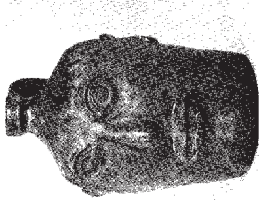




figure 19

African examples are unglazed and have no kaolin insets. The combination of white kaolin clay, which remains white when fired, and darker glazed bodies appears to be an African-American innovation.

It is entirely possible that the "Master of the Miles' Mill Pottery" was born in Africa or knew someone who was familiar with that tradition of figural sculpture. Documentation attests to the fact that some 22,000 slaves from the Congo-Angola sector were brought to South Carolina during the eighteenth century. In fact, the largest mass of African slaves in South Carolina during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were of Congo-Angolan origin. In the absence of actual documentation to support a definite stylistic link between Kongo figural sculpture, certain examples of African pottery, and African-American face vessels, the most logical conclusions are:

- 1) The potter or potters who modeled the superb vessels at Miles' Mill Pottery, and the school from the Aiken County vicinity, were almost certainly recalling African prototypes when they explored the possibilities of local kaolin insets to develop their big-eyed, clefted teeth style.

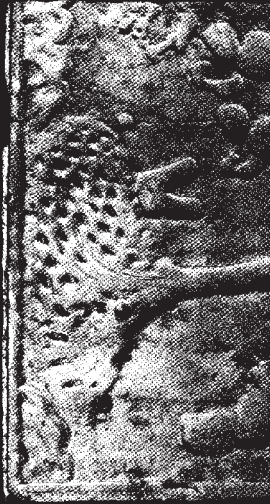
- 2) The largest body of African-American face vessels does not employ kaolin contrasts, and was apparently a native style influenced by Aiken County examples.

- 3) The tremendous variety of sizes and forms of African-American face vessels does not allow a single purpose or utilitarian function. They are indigenous expressions of the creative talents of an oppressed, yet artistic people.

The gallery of faces depicted in African-American face vessels runs the gamut from extreme ferocity (*fig. 15*), anger, and unhap-

piness (fig. 16) to benign gazes (figs. 19 and 20), singing (figs. 12 and 13), and unabashed laughter. In addition, face vessels might have served a psychological function of emotional release of suppressed slave aggressions toward their oppressors. If this hypothesis is correct, it seems especially ironic that many of these vessels were owned formerly by the very persons whom they ridiculed. A number of early Anglo-American collectors of slave-made face vessels displayed these objects in the "big house" where they were regarded as crude, but extremely humorous. If the various facial expressions depicted on slave face vessels were, indeed, a tangible outlet for the release of the slaves' covert feelings toward their masters — then the African-American *captives*, and not the Anglo-American *captors*, actually enjoyed the last laugh.

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THE SOUTHERN FOLK HERITAGE

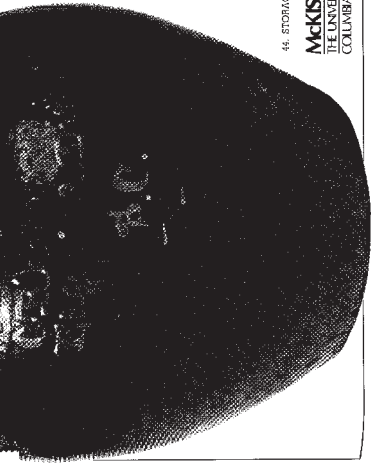
Volume 5 • Summer of 2008

SOUTHERN MAKE

THE SOUTHERN
FOLK HERITAGE

August 23-September 30, 1981





44. STORAGE JAR, c. 1850

McKISSICK MUSEUMS
THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29208

SOUTHERN MAKE

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THE SOUTHERN FOLK HERITAGE

George D. Terry
Lynn Robertson Myers

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POTTERY

Rhodes and Robert W. Mathis. The factory employed some of the most skilled potters ever to work in the area, including Thomas Gáandler and Arco Landrum. The pottery produced at Phoenix Factory was decorated with both iron and kaolin slips. An indication of how elaborately a piece of pottery might be decorated at this factory is seen in the cooler stamped "Phoenix Factory/Ed. S. C." (Item #52). The cooler, which weighs sixty-five pounds, features both iron and kaolin slips and a motif of two blacks (probably slaves), dressed in house servants' clothes, roasting one another with wine glasses. Beneath the two figures is a hog drinking from a cooler which looks similar to the piece it decorates. This piece represents one of the truly magnificent examples of decorated alkaline-glazed stoneware produced in the South.

In addition to the Phoenix Factory, there were a number of important factories in the Edgefield District. Collin Rhodes, who was one of the founders of the Phoenix Factory, produced pottery on his plantation with some unparalleled examples of decoration. One of Rhodes' innovations in decorating his pieces was to include on his pottery, in kaolin slip, the name of the merchant the piece was produced for, along with

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In areas of the South outside Edgefield, most of the alkaline-glazed stoneware produced was left undecorated. When Southern potters did decorate their wares, it was usually limited to incised lines, incrusts, or occasionally an inscription. The majority of stoneware produced in the region, however, was undecorated. The beauty of most pieces of Southern stoneware lies not with any decorative scheme, but with its simplicity of shape and functionality such as the bowl, made in Crawford County, Georgia, in the late Nineteenth Century (Item #38). The ring jug made in the same county about the same time (Item #41) is another example of the beauty of simplistic shapes of folk pottery. According to tradition, ring jugs were used as a sort of cooler, which could be carried over the shoulder while traveling on horseback.

Notable exceptions to the lack of decoration of stoneware, however, were the face jugs produced by a number of potters throughout the region. In Georgia, for instance, noted stoneware authority John Burrison has concluded that at least seven families produced these folk art whimsies. The earliest area in which these face vessels are known to have been manufactured was in Edgefield District, South Carolina. While some

some additional floral decorations. On occasion Rhodes would proudly include his name as the maker in each slip or produce an elaborate motif featuring flowers or even a lady in a hooded skirt (Item #52).

As potters working in Edgelyield moved to other parts of the region, the clear-line-glazed stoneware tradition spread throughout the South during the Nineteenth Century. The Long family, for example, migrated from Edgelyield to Middle Georgia in the first decade of the Nineteenth Century. Other potters, such as members of the Durcan and Cogburn families, moved south from Edgelyield before the Civil War. As a result, by 1852, clear-line-glazed stoneware was being widely produced throughout Georgia, northern Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas. Recent research by such authorities on Southern stoneware as Charles Zug, Georgeanna H. Greer and Stephen Ferrell also suggest that at about the same time other potters, initially associated with the Edgelyield factories, moved northward into North Carolina. Edward Stone, for example, worked early in his career at the pottery owned by Thomas Chandler at Kirksey's Crossroads in Edgelyield. By 1844, however, Stone moved to Buncombe County, North Carolina.

scholars have argued that these vessels had their origin in Africa, others have suggested they can be traced to the Toby jugs produced in England. Whatever their origin, these vessels reached their peak of production in the South in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. Although many of these pieces were manufactured as novelties, others were made to be utilized. The jug made by a member of the Fewell family of Cillsville, Georgia (Item #49) with its second opening, for example, was definitely intended to be used.

In addition to the alkaline-glazed stoneware, the Southern folk pottery tradition includes the use of a variety of other types of clays and glazes in different parts of the region. Lead-glazed earthenware, for example, was the most common type of pottery made in the North Carolina Piedmont in the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century. Although most of this pottery was undecorated, that which was produced by the Moravian potters reached a high level of embellishment. This emphasis on decoration manifested itself in a variety of colored slips usually in a geometric or floral design. These Geiman folk artists also produced press-molded ware such as the squirrel bottle (Item #29) which was made with a plaster mold.

POTTERY

13

By the middle of the Nineteenth Century, stoneware became the predominant type of pottery produced in North Carolina. But unlike some areas of the region, potters in that state did not rely exclusively upon an alkaline-glaze in their work. North Carolina potters also utilized much of their stoneware. Soft glazes, unlike alkaline glazes, is not a solution in which the pottery is dipped before firing. Instead, salt-glazing is accom-

plished by inserting salt into openings in the kiln at the height of firing. The sodium from the vaporized salt, combined with molten alumina and silica from the clay body, produces an orange-peel textured surface of glazes on the vessel's surface. The colors of the pottery glazes in this fashion vary according to the content of the clay and the condition of the kiln at the

—CONTINUED NEXT PAGE





49. FACE YUG. c. 1900

POTTERY

14

time of firing. The most common colors produced by salt-glazing are gray, cream, brown and rust.

Like the craftsmen working with alkaline glazes, those salt-glazing their stoneware rarely decorated their wares. As already pointed out, a favorite decorative device for those who did was the use of incised lines and figures. Perhaps the most skilled person to utilize this technique was an unknown potter who produced salt-glazed wares in Randolph County, North Carolina, during the third quarter of the Nineteenth Century. This potter decorated his work with a large variety of geometric shapes, birds, flowers, fish and trees (item #45).

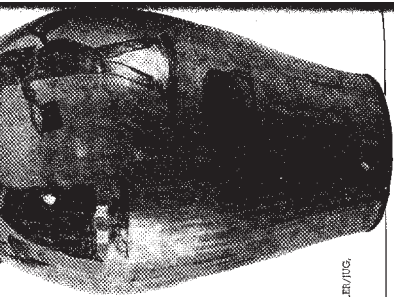
A final type pottery produced in the South is the lead-glazed stoneware and earthenware made in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia during the Nineteenth Century. The distinctive lectures of these wares were the elaborate decorative motifs and the mottled glazes placed on many of the works. These mottled glazes were effected by coating greenware, earthenware pottery in a biscuit state, with a white slip. Once dried, green and brown glaze configurations made from copper oxide and manganese would be added by brushing, sponging or dripping. The last step was often

Bel, in 1837 in Strasburg, Virginia. For the next forty-five years, Bell produced both utilitarian and decorative pieces of pottery. (Items #31 and #53).

When considering the lectures of Southern folk pottery which distinguish it from that produced in other regions of the country, one would have to conclude pieces in the South were produced more for utilitarian purposes and less for decoration. More importantly, however, the vast majority of the pottery manufactured in the region was alkaline-glazed stoneware—*a glaze used exclusively in the South.*



the addition of a clear lead glaze. This final step was necessary to seal the vessels, making them waterproof and at the same time enriching the underlying colored glazes. Perhaps the most notable potter working in the Shenandoah Valley was Solomon Bell, Bell, whose father was one of the first potters to settle in the area, began making pottery with his older brother, Samuel,



52. STONWARE COOLER/JUG,
c. 1840

**BLACK STUDIES
IN THE UNIVERSITY**

A SYMPOSIUM

edited by

ARMSTEAD L. ROBINSON

CRAIG C. FOSTER

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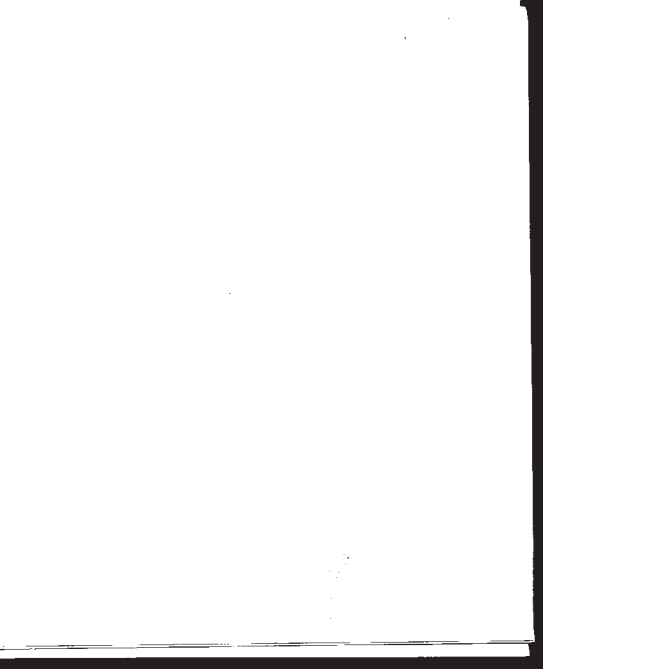
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For Theo and Rachel

AFRICAN INFLUENCE ON THE ART OF THE UNITED STATES

Robert Farris Thompson

African-influenced art in the United States attests the cultural vitality of the Afro-American. Recent research has discovered a wealth of continuities in the Deep South, from wood sculpture and basketry to ceramic sculptured forms in which Western types become the basis for patterns of iconic intensity possibly derived from the Congo-Angola section of Africa. The assumption has been that slavery in the United States destroyed the creative memories of newly arrived Africans, so that today no African influence can be

discerned in this country, apart from fragments in the verbal arts, music, and the dance. The more extreme view holds that no form of African influence whatsoever remains. The literature on African-influenced art in the United States is consequently sparse (few are likely to study a field believed not to exist) and is embedded in larger controversy about the relative strength of African-influenced custom in this country.

James A. Porter (1943: 13-28) described the contribution of African slave artisans to American folk art. Later, he rethought their achievement in terms of sub-Saharan retentions. Porter detected, without going into detail, "unmistakable signs of African recollection in peculiarities of surface design" characterizing effigy vessels made in stoneware by men of African descent in South Carolina

NOTE: This lecture at the symposium was illustrated by about 125 lantern slides, a thirty-minute film on the use of sculpture in dance context in West African art, and demonstrations of praise drumming. It has not proved practical to reproduce any of these illustrations here, and I have revised my lecture accordingly. The reader who is interested will find the entire thesis intact in a forthcoming volume entitled *African and Afro-American Art: The Transatlantic Tradition*, to be published by New York Graphic.

of more intimate expressions. Present to this day are African-influenced verbal arts (Aunt Nancy tales), healing (conjuring), cuisine (hog maws and collard greens), singing (field hollers and work songs), and dance forms in considerable quantity. And present, too, are parallel visual continuities: amazing stoneware vessels shaped in the form of anguished human faces made by Afro-Americans in South Carolina in the last century, multiple wood carving modes in tidewater Georgia, basketry modes of astonishing purity near Charleston, the deliberate decoration of graves in the African manner with surface deposits of broken earthenware and possessions in many parts of the Deep South, and isolated instances of Afro-American wood carving in Livingston County, Missouri, and Onondaga County, New York. If these visual traditions are less blatant than the programs of costuming, sculpture, and the dance with which Afro-Cubans used to bring their street fiestas to proper aesthetic pitch,

they are no less valid for this difference. By the hand of individual Afro-American masters were fashioned works of art whose blending of remembered ancestral and encountered alien modes may now be estimated and explored.

Livingston County, Missouri

A striking example of what may be designated Afro-Missourian art is a walking stick carved by the Afro-American blacksmith, Henry Gudgell, in Livingston County some fifty miles northeast of Kansas City.

Henry Gudgell was born a slave in 1826 in Kentucky. Census records of 1880 at the Missouri State Historical Society at Columbia indicate that the father of Gudgell was born in Tennessee and his mother in Kentucky. His father was an Anglo-American and his mother a slave. The mother trekked on foot with her child, it is said, from Kentucky to Missouri with some of the slaves of what was to become the Spence Gudgell farm when the Anglo-American Gudgells came to the area at some point before 27 December 1867, when the name of Spence Gudgell appears for the first time in the records of the Livingston County Recorder's Office. Thus Henry Gudgell and his mother were from Kentucky, a state which in 1793 had absorbed large numbers of slaves from coastal America (Jordan, 1969: 320).

33: 145). Thus for the last twenty-five years of his life the craftsman was a landholder. He died in 1895 and is buried in the Utica, Missouri, cemetery.

In a sense, Afro-Missourian sculpture at Livingston County died with him. Afro-American canes have been recently found in this portion of Missouri—three attributed to the twentieth-century craftsman George Ballinger of Carlo, Missouri, have motifs vaguely reminiscent of West Africa—but none show the strength or the authority of the master. More research needs to be done on the origins of the style of Henry Gudgell, so that the links between the coastal work of Afro-Georgian sculptors, whose canes, embellished with reptile and human figures, are similar to the Missouri work, and the inland carver may be determined and analyzed together with elements of Western influence, the canon of proportion characterizing the human figure on the side of the cane, his dress, and the shape and conception of the veined leaf.

South Carolina

This state preserves a tradition of ash-glazed stoneware vessels shaped in the form of a tormented human face. These works are attributed to Afro-American craftsmen. A single example introduces the field, where formal quality is largely determined by the degree of imaginative transformation of gross ceramic structure into human expression.

The object at hand is glazed olive-grey. The eyes and bared teeth are rendered in another medium—kaolin (porcelain clay)—so that the image presents a startling contrast in color and texture. The vessel is small, about four inches high. The structural elements are quickly told: the spout is set centrally at the top and is grooved twice; a short oval section handle rises out of the bottom of the spout, at the back of the object, and curves down to end at the widest portion of the vessel.

The eyes project intensely. They are fashioned separately, as balls of kaolin, then set in rounded sockets, surrounded by oval rims overlaid with glaze, then fired together with the vessel. Their stare is striking because they have been placed slightly to each side of the face and have not been frontally sited. The eyebrows form high

curves. The inner point of each eyebrow joins the line of the nose. The nose itself is narrow and has pinched nostrils. The nose is set high above the mouth. The open mouth reveals the clenched kaolin teeth. Lower teeth are larger than upper, suggesting bestial ferocity. Part of the upper lip seems taut and part of the upper lip seems relaxed. There is no chin, and the head seems cut off at the neck. The sculpture is a marvel of coherent expression: protrusion by protrusion, white against olive, smoothness against grain.

There are two further known examples by the same hand, one in the Smithsonian Institution, the other in the John Gordon Collection in New York City. These show virtually identical concentration of power within diminutive mass and shaping of the human face as a terrible force, like a skull partially revealed. The artist has taken spectacular advantage of the fact that kaolin remains white when it burns.

Shortly before the Second World War, William Raiford Eye of

Augusta, Georgia, put together a collection of related jugs and cups, the fruit of several field trips to the Afro-American settlements between Aiken and Langley, South Carolina. On the basis of this collection and other pieces, such as the example I have described, which have been independently attributed to what is now Aiken County in South Carolina, it is possible to suggest a regional tradition based on the use of mixed sand and pine ash glaze, most frequently olive green or brown, ball-like eyes rendered in kaolin, with or without dotted pupil, and sometimes movable within their sockets; bared teeth in kaolin, occasionally indicated with diagonal strokes; and long noses with flaring nostrils, drooping at the tip, and slightly hooked in profile.

These vessels have been attributed in local traditions to the pottery of the plantation of Colonel Thomas Jones Davies (1830-1902) at Bath, in the western portion of the county of Aiken. Colonel Davies founded the Palmetto Firebrick Works in 1862 during the Civil War. On a field trip in January 1969 the writer found the ledger of Colonel Davies, kept by a surviving daughter of a second marriage, at Augusta, Georgia, and the first entry appears to be February 22, 1862.

The important fact is that the men who made the pottery at Bath

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were mostly Afro-American. It is documented that in 1863 a mounting wartime demand for crockery caused Davies to direct his Afro-American potters to fashion earthen jars, pitchers, cups, and saucers, using the simple kickwheel, which has a treadle with a crank. When the historian of American ceramics, Barber, viewed their work about forty years later he found the vessels "crude and of primitive shape" (in reaction to non-Western notions of approximate, as opposed to absolute, measurement?) but he did admire their strength. Barber, furthermore, found that the body of the pottery was composed of three-fourths to five-sixths of kaolin and alluvial earth from the Savannah River, which is six miles distant from Bath. This composition created a hard body which partially vitrified with a mixture of sand and pine ashes to obtain an excellent glaze.

The story goes that by 1863 the slaves suddenly were fashioning on their own initiative small vessels with human faces on them and bringing these works to the Davies pottery to be fired. All operations

were suspended by the end of the Confederacy and the pottery never reopened. One source maintains that the men of the army of General Tecumseh Sherman set fire to the enterprise in 1865. In effect, we are told by local tradition that the slaves dreamed up these striking sculptures within two years, then disappeared.

To accept this uncritically is impossible. Important artistic events do not emerge without historical basis. Kaolin deposits had been known to exist in the hills between Augusta and Aiken since at least the beginning of the nineteenth century, and when the Afro-American craftsmen took this substance and fashioned with it eyes and teeth and set them into the firebrick-like body of their sculptures to be fired they had, as far as can be determined, created an artistic concept for which there is no precedent in the history of Western ceramics. The importance of their contribution forces a rethinking of the history of United States pottery.

The argument for the use of Afro-American artisans in South Carolina was originally scarcity of labor. The entire province in 1731 had only one potter (Stavisky, 1948-9: 317). As potteries opened in South Carolina during the next hundred and fifty years, the use of Afro-American labor had become common. In 1796 a certain Mr. Landrum established a pottery industry near Edgefield, some fifteen

miles north of what is now Aiken County, itself carved out of a larger geographic entity about 1872. There was also an active and important pottery at Lewis Miles Mill, between Trenton and Vaulse, near Aiken, from about 1837 to 1894 (Webb, 1968: personal communications). Thus there was continuous pottery-making industry in the kaolin-rich Aiken area during most of the last century.

The most important fact remains that many of the potters of the region were of African descent. It must be made clear that at least three different hands can be detected in the corpus of face vessels attributed to Afro-Americans—"The Master of the Davies Pottery," "The Master of the Diagonal Teeth," "The Master of the Louis Miles Pottery"—and that a number of Afro-American potters, who gained recognition for their work and whose names are known, may soon be linked to these modes.

The most interesting of the documented Afro-American potters

was a man known only as "Dave." He worked at the Miles Mill pottery and is said to have died about 1860 at the estimated age of eighty-three. Four extant works are attributed to Dave. Three are in the Charleston Museum, one in the South Caroliniana Library at Columbia. Dave is noted for having his work inscribed with rhymed couplets. One such inscription, on a glazed crock (Charleston Museum 29.255.1), establishes a cryptic sense of humour and the slave status of the maker:

Dave belongs to Mr. Miles

Where the oven bakes and the pot biles

Also inscribed is the date: July 31, 1840. On an impressive olive-glazed salt meat or lard jar which he made and which is now at Charleston we find the date May 13, 1859, and the inscription, "Dave & Baddler/ Great and Noble Jar/ Hold Sheep, Goat, or Bear." An identical vessel, also at the Charleston Museum, has the same date but a different couplet about the making of the object at Stoney Bluff, "for making [illegible] enuff." Archival material at the South Caroliniana Library indicates that, on a now missing jar, Dave repeats the verse about the "great and noble jar," and another document of a vanished pot seems to shed light on the effaced

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Charleston inscription: "Made at Stoney Bluff/ For Making [Lard] Enuff." Like the stanza-shifting Afro-American singers of the nineteenth-century South Carolinian spiritual, who sang stanzas of one song in another (Davis, 1914: 250), Dave chose for reasons of his own to place the same rhyme on more than one vessel. The short rhymed statements attest his wit and recall the sparing style of the three-line blues. Here is an Afro-American potter who distinguished himself during a career of more than nineteen years and who was active until very shortly before his death.

A second Afro-Carolinian ceramist was Jack Thurman, who also belonged to Louis Miles. Thurman allegedly died about 1908 at the age of eighty-four. A certain George Flesher, who worked at the Miles Mill pottery during the last years of its operation and who consequently was in a position to provide firsthand information about the wares of the pottery and the men who made them, recalled for a Charleston Museum archivist in the summer of 1930 the dignity of Jack Thurman, his impressive physique, and his gift as a

raconteur. Flesher attributed two vessels in the Charleston Museum (29.271.21; 29.255.3) to the hand of Thurman. Most interesting is the recollection that Thurman not only worked at Miles Mill but also at one of the two Landrum potteries in the Aiken area, suggesting a measure of exchange in Afro-American labor and furnishing a clue to the unity of the Aiken County style range.

A third Carolina potter of African descent was a slave named Jim Lee. Lee worked at the pottery of Roundtree and Bodie, near Ninety-Six, in what is now Greenwood County (Charleston Museum *Bulletin*, October-November 1920: 52). One of his works, in the Charleston Museum, is known: a remarkable olive-glazed figure of an Anglo-American with pear-shaped head. The figure wears a jacket with front facing turned back to reveal the elegant buttons of his shirt. The hair, moustache, and jacket-facing of the figure are charcoal black. The back facing of the figure's garment is turned up at the right shoulder, giving a mildly dishevelled appearance. It is said that the image was a satiric likeness (but the writer thinks that the features seem generic) of a certain Reverend Pickett. The version fits the fact of the anomalous flapping up of part of the garment of the subject. It is said that Jim Lee made this sculpture "before 1860."

Thus four nineteenth-century Afro-Carolinian potters are known, assuming that "Baddler" was also of African descent, for it does not seem likely that an Anglo-American potter would have taken second billing to a slave.

The face vessels made at the Miles Mill pottery were Afro-American works, as attested by Charleston Museum documentation (6448; 18029). The finest of these holdings is a superbly glazed brown face vessel with elegant features and a haunting luminosity. Another is contrastingly crude and is dated to 1880, some fourteen years before the closing of the Louis Miles pottery.

The diffusion of the genre through Anglo-Saxon mimesis and Afro-American migration assured a certain continuity. The Smithsonian Institution has an interesting work by the Anglo-American potter Cheaver Meaders, who worked in the northeast corner of the state of Georgia, at Cleveland, until his death in 1967 at the age of

eighty. Meaders made dark brown ash-glazed stoneware face jugs, among other ceramic types (Watkins, 1969: personal communication). He made eyes and teeth by inserting broken pieces of yellow glazed earthenware into the body of the stoneware, in evident imitation of the kaolin of the South Carolinian mode. He substituted the sharper glitter of fragmented crockery (Smithsonian 65. 192). He seems to mistake the artistic distortions of Afro-Carolinian for license, in the manner of rock-and-roll mistranslations of the blues. Finally, Herbert Hemphill, of the Museum of American Folk Arts, reports that an Afro-American living near Mobile was making stoneware sculpture in the Afro-Carolinian manner as late as the decade preceding World War II.

Thus the traditional account of a sudden burst of Afro-American creativity at the Davies Plantation is subsumed under a larger and more important history of individual Afro-American achievement. The broader reality of the Aiken County ceramic history also reveals the inadequacy of traditional forms of nomenclature applied to these face vessels. They are often called "monkey jugs," after an old designation for water cooler (Stow, 1932). Afro-Carolinians used to refer to the heat of the day in phrases like "monkey almost got me today," and Albert E. Sanders, curator of natural sciences at the Charleston Museum, recalls having heard similar expressions during

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his childhood at Columbia, South Carolina, used in the sense of heat prostration. But we have seen that the most visually intense of the face vessels are not more than four inches high and would not have been practical as containers of water for thirsty field hands. At some point, the writer suspects, a term for larger utilitarian stoneware water jugs was loosely applied to all face vessels and the imprecise designation acquired an inertia of its own.

An improper title can contribute to a lack of critical thought about artistic form. Afro-Carolinian face vessels are called "water jugs," "grotesque jugs," "slave jugs," "plantation jugs," and even, in one isolated instance, "voodoo pots." None of these terms suggest artistic viability. In addition, while many vessels are true jugs, many face cups and face jars are not, hence as a general designation the notion of the jug is not applicable. It might be useful to jettison, once and for all, all forms of past terminology and introduce the fresh term, Afro-Carolinian face vessels, first of all to honor the African descent of the makers, secondly to single out the province

where the finest works were made, thirdly to allude to the inventive fusion of physiognomy and ceramic structure which characterizes the genre, and fourthly to suggest the extension of the tradition across a universe of ceramic forms, of which the jug is but one type.

However we title them, these sculptures are still considered craft curiosities, not works of art. The indifferent quality of many examples, many of these made by Anglo-American imitators, seem to have colored the impression of an entire field. One authority on "material culture," struck by the use of Western glaze and what he thinks is an obvious citation of the Toby Jug tradition of England, has written off altogether the possibility of African influence at the same time that he consigns the works to the nether regions of folk art limbo. But one does not judge Memling on the basis of Flemish daubers. The finest of the Afro-Carolinian ceramics are complex solutions of problems of form, quality, and meaning, and when the culture of the men who made them is remembered, it becomes dangerous to ignore the possibility of African cultural impulses reinstated in these works.

The main problem of analysis is the separation of the Western from the African elements. First of all, the Afro-American potters

were working within a Western technical tradition of ash-glazed stoneware, which was common in Anglo-American potteries from the Carolinas to Florida. Stoneware vitrifies at the temperature of about 2200° to 2300° fahrenheit, and the ash glaze is a high-temperature glaze especially suited to the medium. The glaze, C. Malcolm Watkins (personal communication) has kindly informed the writer, is not colored when it is applied nor does it achieve its usual olive-green color by itself. Under normal firing conditions it combines chemically with the clay to produce the characteristic olive color. This color is recurrent on utilitarian stoneware from any number of potteries in the South. The same clay and the same glaze, with only slightly changed degrees of firing conditions, may produce a brown or some other color. It is therefore impossible to base an attribution upon color alone, nor can one impute intention to shifts in chromatic effect. A brown pot and a green pot, Watkins explains,

both of the same clay and glaze and made by the same potter, could come out of the same kiln in the same firing. Hard-to-control wood-fired kilns prevailed in the South in the nineteenth century, and a change in the wind or the weather could literally create a variety of colors.

Secondly, the basic pottery shapes and the use of the wheel as means of production were imposed upon the Afro-American potters and show no sign of African influence; hand-modeling and the molding of hemispherical bowls upon upturned pot-bottoms are techniques employed along the Guinea Coast (Drost, 1967: 256). The dominant Western influences are therefore the use of the glaze, the wheel, and the basic structure, the jug, jar, or cup, all with oval-section handle.

The notion of embellishing such vessels with a human face might have come from Europe, but African precedents, especially at the mouth of the Congo can also be cited. Some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century German Bellarmine jugs have a rectangle framing a face, shaped in a mold and applied to the vessel. But the Afro-Carolinian faces are hand modeled, especially the eyes and teeth, and the concept of the face as an isolated framed unit of decoration is foreign to the Carolinian spontaneous humanizing of the entire frontal mass of the vessel. We may therefore safely ignore a Bellar-

mine excavated on the Bull Plantation near Sheldon as having nothing in common with the indigenous aesthetic. Bellarmine probably did not, after all, occur in sight of the slave potters.

Much more serious as a possible source is the English Toby Jug, essentially a hollow china figure seated on a low seat. The first examples are attributed to Ralph Wood (1716-72) of Burslem. The Toby Jug traditionally represents a short, corpulent, grinning man who wears a deep-pocketed coat with large buttons and wide cuffs, as well as a tricorn hat (Hansen, ed. 1968: 64). The description recalls somewhat the "satirized minister" by Jim Lee and suggests that a modicum of English influence may have guided the hand of this particular potter. But Lee was outside the circle of Aiken County potters. Even closer, at first sight, to the Aiken County face vessels was a variant on the Toby mode, a face occupying the entire front of a jug. Pottery was one of the free-thinking areas of late

eighteenth-century English art and there were many interesting face pitchers made at this time (McNab, 1969: personal communication). However, the face jugs and face pitchers of the English have a characteristic buttery sheen and naturalistic detail, which are alien to the iconic intensity of the best of the Afro-Carolinian.

We must remember that there are at least three men working in the Aiken County tradition and that each man doubtless resolves the conflict between the wheel-turned technique which he was given and his own plastic sources of inspiration in different ways. Jim Lee, working north of the county, seems to have moved in a direction perceptively closer to Western propriety, but it is difficult to say, so paltry is relevant information about him. But the Aiken County masters created a face from which the eyes protrude and the teeth flash in a manner light years removed from the courtly Toby Jug.

The white clay eyes and teeth, set against the glaze, make the finest Afro-Carolinian face vessels appear to roar where works three times their size merely whisper. There is nothing in Europe remotely like them, for the use of kaolin inserts into the body of the pottery seems peculiar to the Afro-Carolinian and his imitators. One may object: but are there glazed kaolin eyes and teeth in African pottery? The answer is no, but this is not the point. The point is that kaolin has been used here in a manner which strongly recalls the

insertion of white cowrie shells, white glittering pieces of mirror, or white strips of tin, or glass backed with white, to represent the eyes against the darker medium of wood in a wide variety of West African societies. The use of multiple media in figural sculpture—brass on wood, mirror insets in the eyes, cowrie shell insets to denote the eyes and mouth, buttons to denote the eyes, application of brass studs or iron nails to denote the pupil of the eye, the use of beads to mark the eyes within a face carved of wood; the recital of usages is potentially endless—is one of the important traits of West African sculpture as a cultural entity. Until evidence of similar mixing of the white medium of kaolin with darker glazed pottery can be proved in pre-Civil War pottery from Europe, it is surely more logical to suggest the influence of this basic West African tendency. The glaze and the gross shape of the Afro-Carolinian vessels have distracted the lay observer from the expressionist nuances of their modeling. The modeling of the faces finds much in common with Bakongo figural

sculpture in wood.

Compare, as illustrations, examples of a variety of wood figures from this area of West Africa. The same pinpoint pupils within white eyes (white behind glass in lieu of kaolin), the same long hooked nose, the same siting of the nose at a point relatively high above the lips, the same open mouth with bared teeth, and the same widening of the mouth so that it extends across the width of the jaw, are highly suggestive similarities. It would be unwise in the absence of data about the ancestors of the Afro-Carolinian potters to press this comparison too far, but it is certainly true that no Western jar or pitcher known to the writer shows such striking kinship.

South Carolina is a state where artistic transmission from tropical Africa has been firmly established. The woven baskets and trays fashioned by Afro-Carolinian women between Mt. Pleasant and Sullivan's Island, across the harbor from Charleston, and elsewhere in the state, are made with the coiling technique of West Africa and the method of decoration, albeit achieved with available American materials—viz. marsh grass for the body of the basket, palmetto leaves for the binding, and the long-leaved pine for a decorative band of brown—seems decidedly African (Sturtevant; 1959; Chase, n.d.: 2) Some of these baskets have been convincingly related to virtually identical

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Senegambian wares by Judith Wragg Chase in an exhibit mounted at Charleston and visually cited by the Afro-American installation of the Hall of Africa exhibition, which opened in June 1968, at the American Museum of Natural History. It is strange that no one has criticized the cultural legitimacy of the "Gullah baskets" on account of the use of the needles of the American long-leaved pine as an element of decoration, while the use of glaze and the wheel seems to suffice to discredit any possibility of African influence upon South Carolinian stoneware.

The stylistic closeness of the Afro-Carolinian baskets to Senegambia makes sense in the light of slaving history, for the third largest quantity of Africans brought to South Carolina during the period 1752-1808 (12,441 out of a total of 65,466 African slaves) were from "Gambia to Sierra Leone" (Donnan, 1935: Vol. IV, pp. 278ff). The overwhelming incursion was Congo-Angolan, however, for when the figures from these two adjacent areas of Africa are

added together, it is clear that the sum—22,409—is almost double the Senegambian.

The fact that men and women of African descent in tidewater South Carolina are called Gullahs, and this word is supposed to derive from Angola, and the fact that the most convincing of the Africanisms detected in Gullah dialect by Lorenzo Dow Turner (1949) are, in the opinion of the writer, those of Congo and Angolan origin, make one rethink the notion that Anglo-Saxon America was normally correlated with an incursion of Ashanti slaves and hence Ashanti survivals.

Comparison of the Afro-Carolinian ceramic with the hushed, dignified heads of rulers in the funerary terracotta tradition of the Akan is more in the nature of a confrontation, for the harsh tenor of the American genre is far removed from the composure which the Akan noble heads evince. On the other hand, the moment the vessels are compared to the open-mouthed, bared-teeth, glassy-eyed figures of the Bakongo visual tradition, correspondences leap to life before the eyes of the observer. It is worth noting, in addition, that not only does the Ki-Kongo word for smoking pipe survive in South Carolina (Turner: 199) but Judith Wragg Chase has documented a clay smoking pipe with raised design that was found under a slave

cabin in South Carolina bearing comparison with the clay smoking pipes of the Congo-Angolan region and their apparent descendants among the Congo-Angola miners of the Minas Gerais province in eighteenth-century Brazil.

The writer suggests that a connection between Congo-Angola arts and South Carolina pottery made by Afro-Americans is a distinct possibility and would seem likely in view of the particular slaving history of the area. This correspondence, if proved, would make definite the links between the Bakongo and Aiken County pottery. Indeed, because there are complex compromises made with Western technique, the phenomenon is more dynamic, historically, and consequently more interesting as a subject for study than a mechanical carry-over.

Finally, what is the meaning of the stylized anguish which contorts the face of the vessels, and for whom were the vessels

made? Taking the last question first, the writer would guess that the Anglo-Americans who bought face vessels considered them amusing craft curiosities, a kind of visual minstrelsy, and even today the writer has heard an Anglo-American Georgian describe these works as "their idea of art." A patronizing patronage does not make much sense as a sustaining force for the autonomous wit and invention and care which went into the making of the finest of these vessels. Their excellence goes against the grain of what we know about the low productivity of slaves in the ante-bellum South. Bondage, Eugene Genovese (1965: 43) tells us, forced the Afro-American to give his labor grudgingly and badly. The low productivity resulted from inadequate care, training, and incentives. One can hardly suggest that the artistic excellence of the Aiken County artisanate was the testament of a rare circle of contented slaves. In the presence of the ferocity and energy expressed by the best of these Afro-Carolinian vessels, one senses a shift in attitude, a craft based on the self-generated incentive of a vital culture, standing apart from the nature of most pre-Civil War Southern Afro-American industry. The distinction, the writer would guess, stems from the fact that the Afro-American craftsmen made these vessels for themselves and their people for traditional reasons of their own. Under the noses of their masters they

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succeeded in carving out a world of aesthetic autonomy.

C. Malcolm Watkins has informed the writer of a notice of Afro-Carolinian vessels having been found in Afro-Carolinian burial grounds, and the William Raiford Eve Collection includes pieces in which holes have been very carefully chipped out of the bottom, as if to break the objects without spoiling them, to prepare them as items of broken crockery, which traditionally covered the graves of Carolinians of African descent (Davis: 248). It is worth mentioning that broken household objects are placed on top of the tombs of the dead among the Bwende (Manker, 1932), who are part of the Kongo cluster of peoples from whom so many Afro-Carolinians seem to derive.

In a mortuary context these striking vessels may have served as protective devices and simultaneously as elements of prestige, excellent works by Afro-Americans for Afro-Americans, imperishable forces which make their manifold aggression very plain. They may

have also been used as containers of magical substances, although there is no evidence to this effect, and such a practice would have been conspicuous and would have attracted unfavorable attention. Yet one sees precisely what one is prepared to see, and in their ignorance of the vitality of African and African-influenced religions (cf. Jordan: 20ff) the Anglo-Saxons were certainly capable of having missed an entire dimension of New World creativity. The smug assignment of the works to Anglo-American folk art in later years compounded the possibility of ignorance.

Possibly Afro-Carolinian potters also created these vessels as a deliberate gallery of tormented faces in order to vent response to a slave environment. If we have learned anything about the nature of the traditional arts of Africa in recent years, it is that it is dangerous to assume monofunctionality for works of art and, indeed, these vessels, as in African instances, may have served a variety of functions, separately or concurrently. The artists of imperial Benin worked images of long-nosed Portuguese soldiers into the coiffure of an ivory representation of their ruler as a suggestion of the power of their state to incorporate the power of the foreigner. So the potters of South Carolina may have alluded to their oppressor the better to absorb his power.

The pottery burlesque attributed to Jim Lee has more in common with Anglo-American potters' jests than with the parallel sculpture of social allusion in the African vein where sculptors shape noses with deliberate crookedness to poke fun at the pompous, the foreign, or the corrupt, or, at a different analytic level, massively exaggerate the eyes of an image to suggest the moral wrath of the ancestors in contexts of tribal jurisprudence.

Afro-Carolinian face vessels, at their best, represent a related deliberate shaping of generalized principles of visual disorder; they are not portraits of named buffoons. To this extent they seem palpably influenced by African notions of generic mimesis.

The possibility that these images were stylized assertions of Afro-American resistance in the face of the exploitative aggression of the Anglo-Saxon is suggested by the combination of sharp teeth, bulging eyes, and contorted lips. The suggestion dovetails with a document-

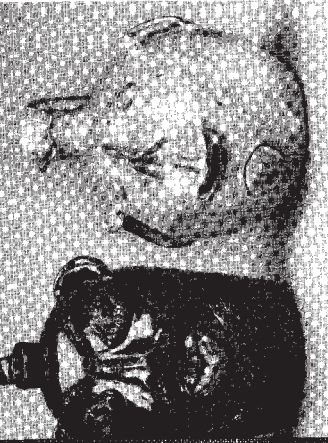
ed instance of assertive satire in choreography, recounted by a South Carolina "strut gal" (accomplished dancer) who received special privileges at Beaufort in the 1840s because of her talent:

Us slaves watched the white folks' parties where the guests danced a minuet and then paraded in a grand march. Then we'd do it too, but we used to mock 'em, every step. Sometimes the white folks noticed it but they seemed to like it. I guess they thought we couldn't dance any better [Stearns and Stearns, 1968: 22].

Afro-Carolinian potters could equally assume that their deliberate distortions, for whatever multiple purposes, would be misapprehended as lack of skill and therefore would be considered harmless and amusing. Is it possible that the small Afro-Carolinian vessels were provocative devices, trapping the visually sensitive into a consideration of aggression in the Western world, the monkey on the back of the Afro-American and the conscience of a nation? Could this distillation of visual anguish have been simultaneously antidotal, on the theory that the best way to defeat an antagonistic force is to absorb its power? It is to be hoped that future research may bring to light evidence which will enable us to test such hypotheses.

Be Jugs, Chickens and Other Whimseys

ernacular Southern Folk Pottery



by
Roy Thompson

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Face Jugs, Chickens and Other Whimseys
Vernacular Southern Folk Pottery

by
Roy Thompson

In her introduction to the exhibition catalogue of *Vernacular Pottery of North Carolina* from the collection of Leonidas Betts at North Carolina State University, Charlotte Brown describes the

difference between vernacular pottery and reproduction, studio, and Arts & Crafts pottery:

Vernacular pottery is produced under exacting circumstances and according to traditional designs, methods and ways of working and thinking. The skill of these potters has been nationally recognized because their work and the work of their ancestors has manifested vitality, variety and the ability to learn and absorb from new influences. These are characteristics of a living art — not simply a way of making pottery for everyday use.¹

The South has a long and rich history of pottery making, producing wares which are unique and unlike the pottery typically produced in the North. The vessels, glazes, and even the terminology are different, as the following couplet suggests:

They don't throw, they turn,
They don't fire, they burn.

Most collectors outside the South have had little, if any, exposure to Southern folk pottery. The traditional way of producing these wares is carried out today by a small group of vernacular potters scattered throughout the South, most of whom are direct descendants of 19th-century Southern potters.

Little has changed with the methods utilized today by these

vernacular potters. Concessions to 20th-century technology are very few within this select group. The treadle wheels, used to turn their wares, often were originally built by an ancestor. They dig their own clay, mix their own glazes and burn their ground hog kilns with wood — about a cord per ten-hour burn, to temperatures in excess of 2,200 degrees Fahrenheit. Potter Jerry Brown of Hamilton, Alabama, has burned his kiln to 3,000 degrees, causing the brick roof of the kiln to partially collapse.

Undoubtedly, the most unique aspect of Southern folk pottery is the use of rich alkaline glazes. Salt has been the predominant glaze utilized on American stoneware, except in the South, where alkaline



These broken pots on Charles Lisk's log shed are sober reminders of the perils associated with wood-burning ground hog kilns. The vernacular potters do not bisque fire their greenware before the wood burn. Any moisture in the pots, the result of rain or humidity, brings disaster.

glazes are green or brown and lustrous in appearance. The glaze, when melted in the kiln, often forms thick, rich veins or "runs" down the walls of the jugs.

A typical batch of alkaline glaze would be produced by combining three gallons of wood ash and one gallon of slip and mixing it with water until it is the consistency of buttermilk. The glaze must be constantly stirred to prevent the glass from settling to the bottom.³



Charles Lisk of Vale, North Carolina, is shown with a large, four-colored swirled bust, still warm from the kiln. The Catawba Valley was once the home to 130 potters, Charles Lisk and Burlon Craig are all that remain.

Some potters, following the tradition which began in the Catawba Valley of North Carolina, will occasionally lay shards of broken glass on various parts of a pot before it is burned in the kiln. The melted glass produces a rich, opalescent "glass run" over the alkaline glaze. This overglaze may have originally been intended to help strengthen the necks, spouts and handles of stoneware jugs and pots.

An unusual effect indigenous to Catawba Valley pieces is the occasional presence of fluorescent blue or

rutile in areas of the alkaline glaze. This attractive quirk is thought to be the result of the presence of titanium dioxide in the locally dug clay.

An interesting and beautiful stoneware variation found in Southern folk pottery is swirlware or striped ware. This is a variant of agateware as occasionally found in 18th-century Staffordshire pieces, becoming popular with North Carolina potters beginning around 1930.

Swirlware takes three to four times longer to turn than ordinary ware, due to the difficult process of keeping separate the various layers of colored clay while turning the object. Overworking the piece is disastrous, as the various clays will begin to mix, producing a cloudy and unattractive result. The effect, when masterfully done — as in the work of Burlon Craig or Charles Lisk — is astonishing and striking. Swirlware is not alkaline glazed. Instead, a potter uses a clear glaze composed of feldspar, clay, flint and water.

The most recognizable form of Southern folk pottery, because of its popularity with collectors, is the face jug. It is a common assumption, but an incorrect one, that face jugs or other face vessels originated in the South. They did not.

Some of the oldest known examples were made by an anonymous potter from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

nia (circa 1833), and by Henry Remmey of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (circa 1838). The *Index of American Design* depicts a most impressive face jug made in Connecticut in the early 1800's.³

Face jugs and other face vessels are turned and shaped by all the vernacular potters in a seemingly infinite variety of styles, and they elicit as many different responses to them. You can read comments ranging from "nothing excites a contemporary collector of ceramics more...⁴ to, in the words of perhaps the greatest living vernacular potter, Lanier Meaders, "they have no earthly value at all."⁵

These pieces cannot be passively viewed. Quite simply,



These three face jugs illustrate the variety of styles among potters. From left to right, they are by John Brock of Virginia, Jerry Brown of Alabama and Vernon Owens of North Carolina. Vernon's is a rare face pitcher with stopper, which he admitted he had completely forgotten having made. The piece is signed and dated 1977.



THE
FOUR
MOMENTS
OF THE
SUN





**Longo
Art in
Two Worlds**

Robert Farris Thompson and
Joseph Cornet

International Gallery
Art
Washington



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The following abbreviations are used in the photo captions to indicate the locations of the objects illustrated:

Göteborg Museum = Virografiska Museet, Göteborg, Sweden

IMNZ = Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre, Kinshasa, Zaïre

Rietberg Museum = Museum Rietberg,

Zürich, Switzerland

Tervuren Museum = Musée Royal de

Tervuren, Tervuren, Belgium

All the basic research for the execution of the catalogue map was prepared by J. Cornet and members of the staff of the Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre. Exhibition catalogue map by Peter J. Balch and John D. Garst, Jr. of the National Geographic Society.

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Cover, detail of terra-cotta grave marker,
Institut des Musées Nationaux du Zaïre,
Kiruhosa (cat. no. 41).



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of elaboration in the addition of stars and values and references to saints and deities, so certain messianic leaders have rendered transparent cosmograms in ritual, spatial landscapes while at the same time hearing distant foreign voices. One fascinating illustration is at Kinanga near Kinshasa in Bas-Zaïre, Wyatt MacGaffey photographed in 1960 a mystic roundabout or "traffic circle" (fig. 122). It was designed, and built by a religious leader, Mayeko Charles, who is shown in the illustration standing to the left of his creation.⁶⁵ Taking care to structure the interior of this circle so that it divided into the primordial four segments, Mayeko placed in its very center an impressive pulpit from which Mincé biffy was asked to preach. In the foreground is visible one of four triangles, rendered in concrete at each cardinal point, with the apex pointing in the appropriate direction. These neatly rendered triangles clearly function, in a sense, like the circumferencing stars about the *wéve* of André Pierre. They reinforce the strength and significance of the central statement: meditation and contact with God's word.



Fig. 122. Afro-Carolinian mask-pitcher, unglazed, about 1860-1870. 19th's memorial; Herpin Collection, NYC. Photo: John Barnes et al.

South Carolina during the first half of the nineteenth century (fig. 123).⁶⁶ He made a powerful mask-pitcher, now in the Herbert Herpin collection of American folk art. The face-pitcher is painted black (to indicate an Afro-American spirit's) and not glazed. This object manifests a knowledge of the Toby tradition: the spot recreates the outline of Toby's tricorn hat (fig. 69), and these curving lines are more or less repeated by the eyebrows and the outline of the strongly arched eyes. The latter bulge with a glare reminiscent of persons possessed by spirits in certain traditional religions of West and Central Africa.

Stylistically, the shaping of the eyes, the mouth, and other facial details, relates to a small group of face-vessels of great artistic merit first attributed to Afro-American slave artisans by Thomas Dawley, owner of a pottery at Bath, in the Edgefield District of South Carolina. He dated their work to around 1862 and told a historian of American pottery that his slaves made these mask-jugs "roughly modeled in the front in the form of a . . . human

In sum, a visionary person in modern Kongo has built a sacred site, a memory trace of ancient symbolic shape which simultaneously factors allusions to Christianity and the modern world. The attack of concrete, enamel paint, automobiles, and traffic thus culturally are parried by a richer, deeper consciousness, lending to this space the force of the ancestors and the geometry of God.

The Toby Connection/Kongo and New World Black Jug Music



From cosmographic renderings of spirit, we return to sculptural expressions of such forces.

For example, the English Toby Jug provided a striking skull-surrogate for the public drinking of royal palm wine in an intentionally intimidating form. The vessel itself was shaped like a human head or figure, and the glimmering creamware recalled the color of human bones. Enriched with important indigenous interpretations, the form quickly spread, as both an object of prestige and a source of formal influence, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As early as the first half of the nineteenth century, Tobyizing images began to emerge in Kongo art, especially in Idyuvombe. In short, the Toby form made a strong impression.

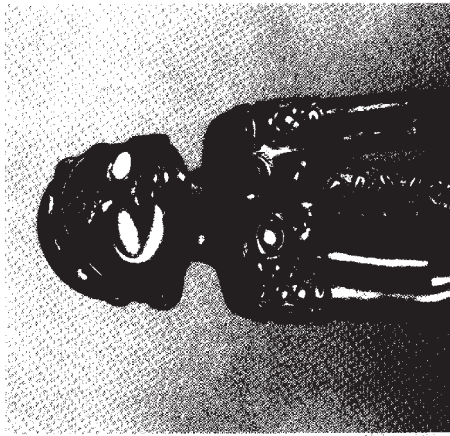
It made a similar impression upon a black artist of the Edgetfield District potteries in

face evidently intended to portray the African features.⁴⁶ In spite of his condescending attitude Davies was forced to admit that one stylistic element associated with this body of work was most "ingenious": the shaping of the eyes and mouths of these mask-jugs with kaolin inserts. This multimedia approach was unprecedented in the pottery of England, Germany, or anywhere else in the world. But it was highly analogous to the ancient practice of inserting porcelain fragments within the eye sockets of carved wooden human figures in northern Kongo, particularly among the Bembe and Kuniy clans.

The spectral, bone-white gaze of the Kuniy wooden image of an *ngoma*-drummer (fig. 124) is close to the level of inactivity and spiritual suggestiveness engendered when insects

of kaolin (the material from which porcelain made) were embedded in the eye sockets of Afro-Carolinian face-vessels and face cups of the Ledgerfield District (figs. 125 and 126). Moreover, Bakongo and their neighbors have from time immemorial considered earthen (especially when white, the color of the dead, or red, the color of transition) as one with the spirit of the dead. Earthen provided preservative substances to be inserted into a charm in order to activate the object by giving it human soul. It is the same logic which led an Afro-Missourian charm-maker to insert a piece of tin foil into a charm in order to ensure within the flesh, a certain spirit.⁶⁵ And that was not at all unlike enhancing the gaze of a mask-peg by inserting into the body of the form specially prepared balls of kaolin to mark the eyes, and an ovoid mass of the same substance to mark the teeth within lips strongly rendered in relief.

The rise of these unique objects apparently resulted from a complicated blending of Kongo-Angola ideas about inserting kaolin into charms (or actual porcelain, as in the



eyes of Kongo, Bembe, and Kuviri sculptural English and Anglo-American ideas about dating vessels as masks or heads ("whimsies") and local Anglo-American ideas about glazing, firing, and other Western technical matters. In all this, the Toby operated as a reinforcing element: the idea of such face-vessels may well have been known among Bakongo arriving as captives in the early years of the nineteenth century, men and women who had seen such vessels on royal tombs in Kongo.

But English and American "whimsies" fed just one line of logical formal influence on these face-vessels. Bakongo and cultures to the south have fully developed figured pottery traditions of their own. These involve the making of small water jugs embellished with



Fig. 124. Kongo figurine representing drummer, eyes marked with inserts of porcelain. B. de Gramme Collection.



Fig. 125. Afro-Carolinian face-cup, c. 1862. Observed near Haiti, S.C., in 1908. Private collection.

human visages. The Lwena, who live to the south of Kongo, and the Mbunda make spherical water jugs with human heads fashioned on their tops (fig. 127). Lunda and Tchokwe in northeastern Angola make similar water jugs, with conical spoons, stirrup handles, and small decorative human heads arising from the tops (fig. 128). The size and shape of the Lunda/Chokwe water-pot recall wares made

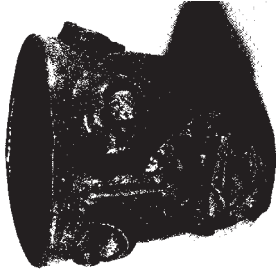


Fig. 126. Afro-Carolinian face-jug, c. 1862; inserts of kaolin mark the eyes. Private collection.

to the wares just examined from Kongo and Angola.

Roger Abraham informs us that the black potters of Nevis, an island in the West Indies, are quite conservative, and we can believe this because the Nevis version of the mortar/jug, or water pot (fig. 130), is very close to related Kongo and Angola modes (figs. 127-129). South Carolina may have received cer-

tubular spoons, was introduced from Africa. He added that "they were made by a number of potters in the South, black and white, but they are rare in the North. They are unknown in Britain and I have so far failed to find them in Germany, the two most logical sources of our American pottery traditions."¹⁵ But Kongo and Angola provide precedents galore.

However the precise nature of the blend of

in northern Kongo, as documented by Janet MacGaffey (fig. 129).³⁰ The latter series displays, again, a stirrup handle and caented spout.

So it is surely more than coincidental that, in the West Indies, where numerous Kongo and Angolan slaves were present, a similar indigenously Afro-Caribbean ceramic form has emerged: the monkey.³¹ Monkey jugs are defined by their spherical forms, caented spouts, and stirrup handles. They are made, or sold, to this day, by blacks in Jamaica, and on the islands of Nevis, Barbados, and Antigua. The possibility that the monkey jug emerged on an especially Kongo-influenced island, and then diffused in trade to other islands, ought to be entertained as an alternative hypothesis. In every case there is strong resemblance

Kongo, English, and Anglo-American elements turns out to be defined, the most astounding invention—the rendering of eyes and mouths with kaolin insertions—remains this style unique in the history of world pottery. We have already spoken to the obvious parallel—the inscription of kaolin in Kongo charms and kaolin-derived porcelain fragments in the eyes of key forms of northern Kongo charm-sculpture.

But there is even a recognizable matrix of similar artistic procedures in black South Carolina itself. There, the oldest burials of the Edgefield area reveal mounds lined with shells, stones, and pieces of quartz, artfully selected for their shining whiteness. Moreover, a kind of *nan-akia* was found in

one version of this form in any one of several ways: in trade from Barbados; from Kongo directly, in the memories of incoming slaves who had practiced pottery-making there; through a combination of these means, or via other strands of influence, yet to be identified.

In any event, it is significant that one of the prominent mask-jug types, found in the area of the Edgefield District where black potters worked, was fashioned out of the basic monkey-jug type—caented spouts, stirrup handle, and all. John Brinsson, an authority on southern American folk pottery, was apparently the first scholar to point out the possibility that the monkey, as a basic form, with stirrup handle across the top and one or two caated



Fig. 121. Lwisa water jug (*mubondo*), collected 1950. Museum für Völkerkunde, Berlin.

the area, "abandoned in an Edgefield area cemetery." It is a South Carolina brownware jar covered with plaster, colored red. Fimbriae, a chicken bowl—and prominent among them are white porcelain things: a miniature spoon, plate, and figurine (fig. 131). This amazing object, now in the possession of the Pottersville Museum, near Edgefield, in South Carolina, has been roughly dated by Ralph McClelland of the museum staff to the 1870s, on the basis of the form and style of the brownware jar.⁷³ The latter relates to wares from the workshop of W. F. Holm, in Edgefield District, dating from that period. In any event,

Fig. 128. Lunda water vessel, by Cuthbomba of Maricopa, Angles, c. 1966.

the insertion of kaolin-derived and other white objects into the sides of this nineteenth-century jar from the Edgefield District shows that the tradition of embedding kaolin or porcelain fragments on pottery forms, the main invention of the Afro-Carolinian artisans of the area in the mid-nineteenth century, was still alive, albeit transmuted, in the 1870s. It leads to the white-made "devil jugs" of northern Georgia in this century.

Shows a photograph of the object-embossed jar, and told that it was found "thrown away

Fig. 129. Kongo water vessel (emerged) by Muvungwa Tharase, 1966s. MacCaffrey collection.

in a cemetery," a Kongo man remarked: "It is a new *ni-kondi* form. The things inserted are signs *ibafimbi*. The people were trying to communicate to their ancestors in Africa, through these objects. They told them about the changes that were going on around them, and asked the dead to protect them from declination by this new environment."⁷⁴

But even if these culturally changed and geographically concentrated pieces of evidence did not exist, there would still be the fact of continuity of intimidation by facial impact,

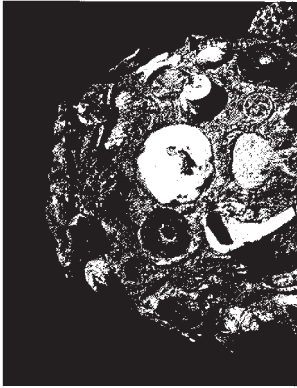


Fig. 130. *Arxos member*, 1946, West Indies.
MacGuffey collection.

by rendering a skull-surrogate in pottery form. From Kongo chiefs instilling moral terror through drinking out of skulls and Troys (as skull-surrogates), to Afro-American parents placing a small monkey *bee-visage* in their cabins to frighten their children into proper behavior, provides a form-function fusion that makes discussion about cultural communities possible.¹² It also provides a missing link, between the skull-containers of old Kongo and the numerous clay skulls fashioned by Son Thomas, a black folk artist of Leland, Mississippi, an example of whose work, dating from the fall of 1972, is illustrated as fig. 132. Note the resilient multimodular approach



Fig. 131. *Uyo*ware jar covered with plaster and embedded in pebbles, 18th-19th, Edjoifical area, within Calabina Petheronite Museum, Edjoifical, S.C.



Fig. 012. Staff, by Sam Thomas of Lehard, Misare.



here, with corn kernels inserted to mark the teeth; whereas in the older Edgfield and related traditions, porcelain fragments or lac-
lin paste was used.

From an early age Son Thomas felt an urgent need to make such skulls, and his effort immediately brought down upon his head the censure of an elder, who told the young sculptor he wanted no such object in his house, for fear of "spooks." It was an outwardly amusing comment, conceding the speaker's inner belief in the power of such objects.

Son Thomas, in discussing how he makes his clay skulls—"you first shape it up like a



Fig. 133. Stone figure, person smoking miniature pipes from pottery or catfish-pipe (marokoll), Tervuren Museum.

regular man's head. Then you cut it down to a skeleton head because you couldn't make a skeleton head straight out without cutting it down."¹⁰ —speaks with the voice of his artistic ancestors. His works recall the fact that, in Kongo, conceivably is distinctly correlated with negation and with death;¹¹ that the Kongo-rised Kuisa reliquary figures sometimes comprise a mouthless visage with conceivably; and that there are numerous mask styles in the Boma area characterized by a "cutting down," of facial convexity, with simultaneous decoration of the resulting concavities with white clay, showing the color of death and the other world. In sum, the "Joby connector" bridges a history of artistic gestures made in allusion to the power of the dead, from the skull-vestals of Kongo to Son Thomas' skull-sculptures of the Mississippi Delta.

There are further qualities linking Kongo and American popular ceramic traditions. The very term "monkey," meaning burlesquely "evil spirit" ("monkey on my back") and "water jug," has puzzled scholars. There may well be various Kongoisms connoted in this single



WHISTLER & HIS JUG BAND

Fig. 134. First U.S. jug band to record, 1924; drawn by R. Crumb for Yamao Records, New York City.

word, hence the apparent confusion. I thus might, Ki-Kongo for "devil," is surely one origin for "monkey," in the sense of evil spirit, reinforced by the English word "hooey," the same double tracing that gave us *boogie*: "devil music," as the blues used to be called in black America. As for the pottery usage, there is a round, vaguely juglike calabash or clay pipe bowl that Bakongo use for smoking manioc leaves (fig. 133). In Ki-Kongo, this object is called *monkoki*.⁷⁶ Surely one of the origins for the Afro-American word "monkey," in the sense of round pottery form.

Kongo-related American pottery forms include a musical dimension. In Kongo a stand-ard term for water jug, *mwanga*, also refers to the use of the same ceramic object as a one-note bass voice in a traditional ensemble.

Mwanga, literally means "bass voice" in a choir of singers.⁷⁸ This fact immediately sheds light on the use of the black jug bands of the South in the United States, where the jug, in early jazz instrumentation, plays the role of bass (fig. 134).⁷⁹ In Afro-Cuban culture, too, musicians still fill a water jug to their lips (fig. 135) and play the ceramic form as a bass voice instrument.⁸⁰ Some are hokeyed (one note played per instrument), like Kongo *biwadi* (fig. 136). This practice also recalls the lifting of

similar ceramic (or calabash) forms to the lips of Bakongo, either as a smoking instrument or as a musical instrument. Afro-Cubans call their bass-jug instruments *bwangos*, clearly derived from the Ki-Kongo term for the same instrument.⁸¹ In the rise of the Kongo-

influenced jug music of the Western Hemisphere there was undoubtedly an enormous amount of reinforcement from culturally similar subsaharan traditions of ceramic or calabash-containing instrumentation.⁸² Thus Robert Palmer, in his 1983 study, *Deep Blues*, notes that "one fascinating group of [Central African] instruments . . . singing gourds, can be played as horns, with the lips vibrating. . . . The Lubas of Zaire lip their singing gourds as if they were playing trumpets, and the instruments contribute propulsive bass parts to ensemble music. The playing technique and the instrument's musical function, were preserved by the jug blowers in black American tag bands" (fig. 137).⁸³

Finally, just as Western falsetto and glass-

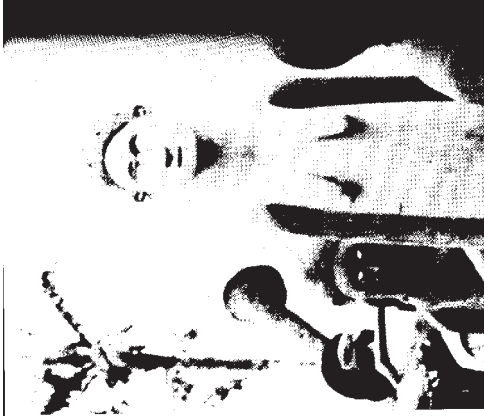




Fig. 13. Cuban *bouzouki* bouzouki player. Photo: Earl Leaf, 1978.

wire core) with *maboukalo* and *maringa* on many Kongo graves as the one-note hocketing style of the bass jug tradition in the United States coexists with a black usage of modern glassware instrumentation.

The distinguished Mississippi folklorist, William Ferris, has filmed Louis Doton, a black instrumentalist, playing a coco bottle in a "whooping" (bottle-yodel) style that imminently recalls the yodelling music and hocketing technique of ex-gym groups in Zaire and Congo-Brazzaville. As Doton, who lives in

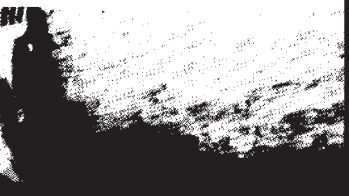


Fig. 14. Companion of *bibidi* players, Congo-Brazzaville, 1966. Photo: Charles Duvelle (see fig. 37).



CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS

Fig. 137. Jug Band, Ripley, Tennessee, 1938-1939, drawn by R. Crumb for Yanco Records, New York City.



Lorman, Mississippi, explains his style: "we call that *zoking the bottle*. See, you have to fill that Coke bottle a little over half full of water. You can blow and whoop in it then. If you don't have the water in it, it takes up too much air, and you can't do no whoopin'." 55 From playing the water-pipe in Kongo to playing a Coke bottle "a little over half full with water" marks a lasting and consistent logic of performance. In the process, another classical Kongo tradition resumes its place in North America behind an outwardly Western class of object. Finally, it is just possible that the late nineteenth-century Southern white tradition of the grave pit (fig. 139)⁵⁶ rests on unsuspected sources, *mbumba*, and other

black pottery marker traditions, the influence of which was reestablished through simple stonebought pots (fig. 138) as visual *caiques* or "loom-translations" of *mbumba* (fig. 140) in black cemeteries of the old Deep South. But this is a problem which must be deferred to a further publication.

Kongo Gestures of the Black Atlantic World



The important kinds of gestures symbolized by Kongo funerary art have lived beyond the



• No. 82 **Figurated Trumpet (nsibak)**
"Mother" of the Group (fig. 37)

Height: 128 cm. (50 3/8 in.)

Private Collection

Called "Self-Respect" (*nsima mbungu*), this figure is attributed to the Master of the Bembé Trumpets. Perhaps late nineteenth century or early twentieth century. Made of wood, with porcelain-inlaid eyes. R.F.T.



century or early twentieth century. Made of wood, with porcelain inlay missing from eyes. R.F.T.



from northern Kongo. Probably nineteenth century. R.F.T.



• No. 85 **Scepter-Finial of a Woman** (fig. 144)

Height: 11 cm. 4 1/2 in.)

Duravelle Collection, Brussels

This scepter finial of a woman communicating respect (kacelling) and denial (head averted) probably dates from the nineteenth century. It is made of ivory, and was collected by Edward Duravelle from the Chief of the Bawoyo in what is now Zaïre. It is said that



• No. 83 **Figurated Trumpet (nsibak)**
"Daughter" of the Group (fig. 37)

Height: 115 cm. 44 1/2 in.)



• No. 87 **Image of a Most Important Woman with Her Child** (fig. 141)

Height: 27 cm. 10 5/8 in.)

Collection Count Baudouin de Gramme, Brussels

Attributed to a master sculptor of the Yombe-Sundi area, this figure is made of wood, with a metal strip at the base. Nineteenth century? R.F.T.

Called "Tranquil Self-Respect" (*temba nsoni*), this figure is attributed to the Master of the Bombe Trumpets. Perhaps late nineteenth century or early twentieth century. Made of wood, with porcelain inlaid eyes.

- No. 84 Figurated Trumpet (nsiba); "Son" of the Group (fig. 37)

Height: 86 cm. (33 7/8 in.)

Private Collection

Called "Giver of Self-Respect" (*temba nsoni*), this figure is attributed to the Master of the Bombe Trumpets. Perhaps late nineteenth

the fusion of these two coded attitudes, one negative, one positive, on a royal scepter, suggests the following: be warned: the attention of the king favors those who know how to make authority feel, not only their graces, but also their respect. R.F.T.



- No. 86 Kucelling Figure Playing an Ngoma Drum (fig. 124)

Height: 18 cm. (7 1/8 in.)

Collection Count Baudouin de Gramme,

Brussels

This figure, made of wood, with porcelain-inset eyes and ornamental studs of brass, is

- No. 88 Afro-Carolinian Face Cup (fig. 126)

Height: 10.2 cm. (4 in.)

Anonymous Collection

Attributed to the Master of the Diagonally

Indicated Teeth, this cup is stoneware, with
mah glaze and kaolin-insect eyes and teeth;
c. 1862. It was found in an Afro-American
cabin, c. 1950, near the site of the old Davies
Pottery, in western South Carolina, where
many such vessels were made by black pot-
ters. R.F.L.



• No. 89 Afro-Carolinian Face Vessel
(fig. 125)

Height: 12.7 cm. (5 in.)

© 1975 by the
American Museum of Natural History

Attributed to a master potter of the Bath, South Carolina, area, this cup is stoneware, with ash glaze and kaolin-insert eyes and teeth; c. 1862. It was found in an Afro-American cabin, c. 1940, near the site of the old Davies Pottery, in western South Carolina, where many such vessels were made by black potters, *et. al.*

Philadelphia Museum of Art

BULLETIN

**A Selection of Works by
African American Artists in the
Philadelphia Museum of Art**

Glenn C. Tomlinson

Rolando Corpus

Departmental Assistant, Twentieth-Century Art

Winter 1995, Volume 90, Numbers 3 82-83

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Cover: Detail of *Man T*, 1969, by **Barkley Hendricks**
(p. 21)

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These jugs, c. 1860s.
Albino-glazed stoneware,
height 7 1/2" (19 cm), left,
8 1/4" (19.3 cm) high,
Gift of Edward Sowell
Jones, 1994-5/6, 77

ATTRIBUTED TO THOMAS DAVIES POTTERIES

Very little is known about face jugs besides the physical evidence indicating that they were produced in great numbers in Georgia and South Carolina between 1850 and 1880. Probably invented by African American slaves in this region, the jugs drew abundantly on African traditions. The use of light-colored insets to represent eyes, for example, was not practiced in Europe but was familiar for centuries among African woodcarvers and potters, who inserted cowrie shells and pieces of brass mirrors to represent eyes. The expressiveness of the face jugs also reveals direct stylistic similarities with sculptures made by the Bakongo peoples of Zaire. Documents indicate that twenty-two thousand people from this region were brought to Georgia and South Carolina in 1838.³

Using local materials, the face-jug potters developed a rich variety of colors and styles. Their alkaline glazes, made from wood ash, lime, and sand or chalk, were unlike the clay slip and salt glazes of other American and European ceramics and became the trademark for African American potters in the South. Although the potters themselves have remained anonymous for the most part, variations in their work reveal individual styles.

At least forty distinct styles have been catalogued, and it is estimated that there are more than one hundred yet to be identified. Scholars identify the unknown artisans by referring to specific characteristics of their work, such as Master of the Extended Eyebrow or Master of the Diagonal Teeth.⁴

Based on stylistic evidence, it is believed that the Museum's jugs may have been fashioned at the Thomas Davies Potteries in South Carolina in the early 1860s. Col. Thomas Davies was a white slave-holder who had converted his Palmetto Firebrick Works into a ceramics factory in 1863 to produce cups, jars, and pitchers for Confederate hospitals.⁵ The factory was one of the more than one hundred pottery factories active in that region. Reports claim that the factory was burned down three years later in 1865 by General Sherman's troops.⁶

Face jugs, also known as "monkey jugs," were probably used to hold water. The term "monkey jug," however, may have been a reference to the old slang expression "to suck the monkey," which meant to drink straight from the bottle. Smaller face jugs, some no more than 1 1/4 inches high, may have had a more personal or ritual function. Many face jugs have been found along routes of the

Underground Railroad, from Tennessee to Pennsylvania and upstate New York. To many African Americans escaping slavery, these face jugs may have been important enough to be included among their most valued possessions.⁵ RC.

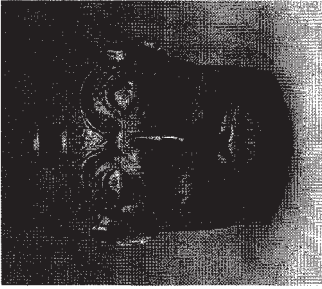
1. John Michael Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Cleveland, 1976), pp. 41–45.

2. See Michael Kernan, "'The Object at Hand,'" *The Southwestern*, vol. 34, no. 8 (November 1992), pp. 32, 32.

3. Vlach 1978, p. 54.

4. Stephen T. Ferrell and T. M. Ferrell, *Early Decorated Stoneware of the Edgefield District, South Carolina* (Greenville, S.C., 1976), p. 28.

5. Regenia A. Perry, *Servants of Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Art* (New York, 1970), p. 111.






Crossroads of Clay

Edited by Catherine Wilson Horne

McKissick Museum
The University of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina



Crossroads of Clay

for
George D. Terry
who began the quest
for the Crossroads of Clay

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John Michael Vlach

The Scene at the Crossroads: The Alkaline-Glazed
Stoneware Tradition of South Carolina

Cinda K. Baldwin

Out of Edgefield: The Migration of Alkaline-Glazed
Stoneware Potters in the Lower South

Georgianna H. Greer

Catalog of Objects

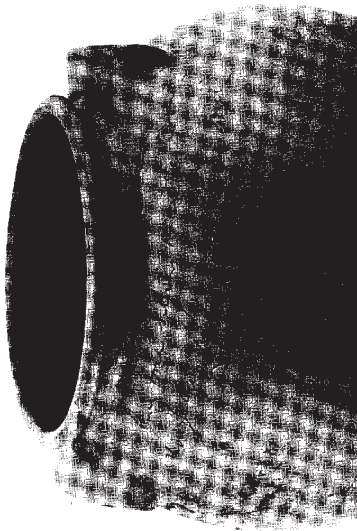
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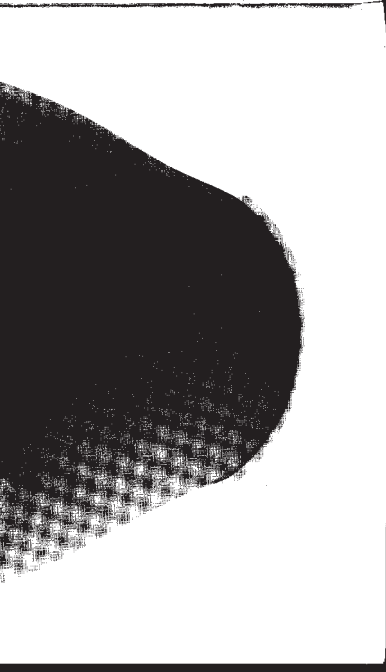
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International Encounters at the Crossroads of Clay

European, Asian and African Influences on Edgefield Pottery

by John Michael Viach

In 1791 when George Washington passed through the old Edgefield District on his famous tour of the South he characterized the place as "a pine barren of the worst sort, being hilly as well as poor."¹ Today's traveler following nearly the same route along what is now Interstate 20 is sure to find a similar landscape of scraggly trees, sandy hills and patches of red clay. To the uninformed eye, Edgefield is merely a stretch of ground to pass hurriedly over with no remarkable features to hold one's attention. Robert Mills declared as much in 1826 in his *Statistics of South Carolina* when he wrote "There is nothing that distinguishes the settlement of Edgefield from that of other districts in the upper and middle country."² But Mills was certainly in error in making such a sweeping generalization. There is much about Edgefield that is interesting. Indeed, Mills himself observed that there was a village just north of the district court house where superior

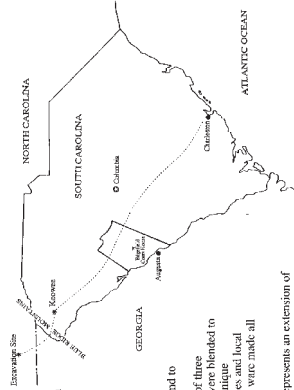
left: Alkaline-glazed stoneware storage jar, Dove, Lewis Mills Pottery, Edgefield District, South Carolina, 1840. (34)

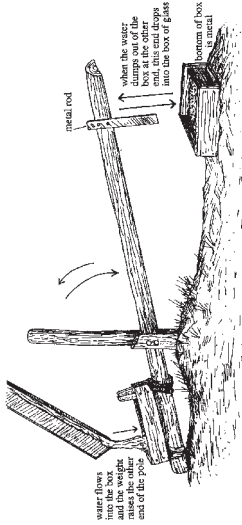
Map of South Carolina showing the route taken by Thomas Griffiths while in search of Cherokee clay.

stoneware pottery was produced, "stronger, better, and cheaper than any European or American ware of the same kind."¹³ He should have realized that Edgefield was unique in comparison with the rest of the Carolina backcountry. Now with the comfort of hindsight we can piece together the story of Edgefield pottery and formulate a narrative as intriguing, and perhaps as unlikely, as any in the annals of world ceramics.

It turns out that the Carolina hinterland to the northeast of Augusta, Georgia was a *crossroads of clay* where the influences of three continents—Europe, Asia and Africa—were blended to create a distinct pottery tradition. This unique combination of diverse Old World legacies and local initiatives subsequently affected ceramic ware made all across the lower South.

In general Edgefield ceramic ware represents an extension of an English tradition to the New World. The backcountry was settled mainly by English-speaking colonists coming in from the coast





Craig of Lincoln County, North Carolina today uses a water-powered trip hammer to prepare his glaze materials, a machine almost identical to one described in a passage from *du Halde's A General History of China* which was printed in the *South Carolina Gazette*. Devices of this sort were once quite common at North Carolina potteries throughout the Catawba Valley.⁴⁶

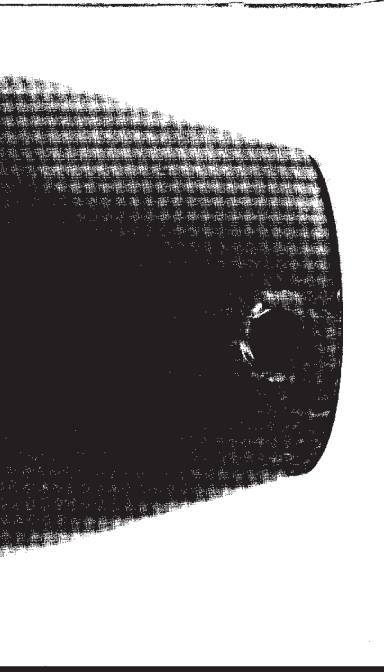
Butler Craig's Glass Pounder.

The institution of slavery was to a great extent responsible for the rapid expansion of the Edgefield pottery industry. While slaves were present in the Edgefield District as early as 1736, it was in the years between 1800 and 1820 that they came to constitute half of the district's population. During this period their numbers increased from slightly more than 5,000 to approximately 12,250.⁴⁷ It was during this same

period that the local pottery industry was started, apparently to satisfy the extensive food storage and preparation needs of the region's new plantations. Consider the testimony of an ex-slave from Edgefield regarding the diet provided on her plantation, Matilda Brooks, interviewed in the 1930s, recalled potatoes, cornbread, syrup and greens, supplemented with some meat. Coffee made from parched corn was her chief beverage.⁴⁸ Other South Carolina ex-slaves reported that they were given hominy, mush, milk, honey and molasses; Zack Herken put the weekly molasses ration at one-half gallon per person.⁴⁹ William Gilmore Simms, a planter in nearby Barnwell District, recorded the churning of butter by his slaves in his daybook while his good friend James Henry Hammond of Edgefield specified in his manual on the care of slaves that each worker should receive three pounds of pickled pork per week.⁵⁰ Viewed from a ceramic perspective, this diet required jugs for the syrup and milk, bowls for the mush and greens, churns for the butter and large crocks for preserving and storing the meat. Considered further in the light of the fact that forty-five percent of Edgefield's slaves were held in groups of thirty or more, planters would have required extra sets of ceramic ware made expressly for their slaves. They could not have fed such large groups with only the vessels used in big house kitchens. Hammond, if he followed his own recommendations, would have needed storage capacity for about 1,320 pounds of pork or approximately forty eight-gallon crocks.⁵¹ He would also have required a large number of smaller containers in order to divide the portions among his work force which, at its largest, included almost 300 slaves.

Not only did slavery create a need for ceramic ware but it also is why certain Edgefield pots bear African features. In addition to the utilitarian pots discussed above, a number of vessels have been found in the area which have faces sculpted on them that





resemble African carvings. The pots with this type of decorative treatment include jugs, pitchers, lidded jars, cups and water carriers, but they are generally so small that they seem not to have served a practical purpose. Indeed one of these jugs is less than an inch and a half tall. Lacking any testimony regarding their function, we are left to hypothesize aesthetic or ritual uses.⁵² We can be certain that these vessels were important, for they were crafted carefully and followed a consistent style. Consequently, they were not frivolous or whimsical items. They are sculptures willfully created to convey a message, one known at least among a community of slave artisans and probably by the surrounding slave community; a meaning now faded from memory.

While there is a long tradition for making vessels scripted into human form in England, we can credit with confidence Edgefield's face vessels to slave potters. Thomas Davies who ran a pottery at Bath, reported that his slaves had made such pots, which interviewed by ceramic historian Edwin Alice Barber. As Barber summarized Davies' remarks, the slaves were allowed some time on their own which they spent "in making homely designs in coarse pottery. Among these were some weird-looking water jugs, roughly modeled in the form of a grotesque human face evidently intended to portray the African features."⁵³ The most distinctive feature of these jugs was that the eyes and teeth were made from unglazed kaolin and stood out boldly from the dark green color of the glazed vessels. The combination of two clays in one pot Barber saw as "ingenious."⁵⁴ Indeed it was a unique occurrence in world ceramic history, not being successfully achieved again until recent times under carefully controlled laboratory conditions. That Davies' memory of his slaves' private activities was correct was later confirmed by the discovery of a small stoneware cup with its eyes and teeth fashioned out of white kaolin in the waste pile at the site of his pottery in Bath, South Carolina.⁵⁴

Works of such complexity do not arise simply because slaves are granted free time without required tasks. The difficulty of firing two different clay bodies simultaneously in one vessel indicates that there must have been a period of experimentation. Because porcelain and stoneware clays have different shrinkage rates, a porcelain eye inserted into a stoneware vessel, if not bulky enough, could fall

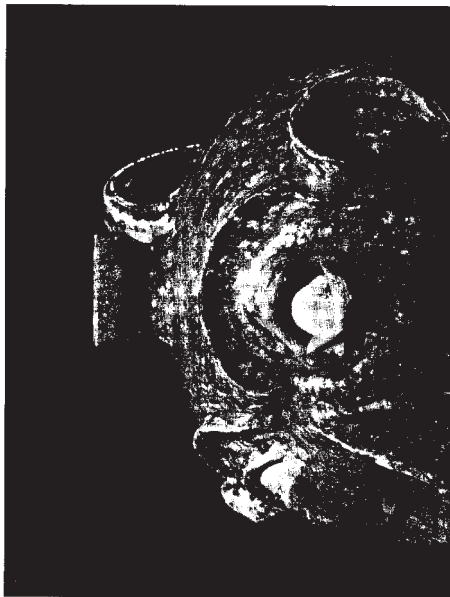
out during the firing process. In fact, there are some surviving vessels in which eyes are missing or are loose in their sockets. Several trial runs must have been made in order to determine how to bond the two materials together. Also, determining how to fire these vessels must have required a period of testing since there is a limited temperature range which will allow these two different clays to vitrify (generally between 1250° and 1390° Celcius). Slave potters working with highly unpredictable groundhog kilns had to be mindful of how long they fired their jugs and where in the kiln they placed them since some spots were hotter than others. Calculating the right combination of duration and position also required a trial and error period. Finally the vessel forms themselves, being so carefully shaped, suggest that these ceramic sculptures evolved over a period of years. Wheel-thrown hollow ware fashioned with such precision simply could not have been made without specific training and years of practice, particularly when the potter was working in such small dimensions.⁵⁵ It thus can be safely asserted that face vessels were made before Davies opened his shop in 1862.

When considered collectively, the face vessels of Edgefield suggest an evolution of form that may have taken twenty-five years to complete. Variations in the pots suggest that the highest level of complexity was attained at Bath between 1862 and 1865. The most refined of those pots feature a three color format with variations in texture—white matte finished eyes and teeth, shiny green or brown vessel body and eye rims and lips of either a buff or reddish brown color that were left unglazed. Vessels attributed to other sites have only the contrast between the porcelain and the glaze. In some jugs where porcelain was inserted, the contrast was lost because the whole pot was covered with a dark glaze. There were still other face vessels in which

left: Alkaline-glazed stoneware water cooler with celadon-like glaze, Thomas Chandler, Thomas Chandler Factory, Edgefield District, South Carolina, ca. 1850; (30)

next page left: Alkaline-glazed stoneware face jug, attr. to African-Americans, at Thomas J. Davies Pottery, Edgefield District, South Carolina, ca. 1862; (39). Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (gift of Edward Russell Jones).

next page right: Alkaline-glazed stoneware face jug, attr. to African-Americans, at Thomas J. Davies Pottery, Edgefield District, South Carolina, ca. 1862; (40). Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art (gift by Frank Samuel).













only stoneware clay was used. In those instances the gaze of the pottery face was muted, although in some cases attempts were made to give color to the eyes with the application of a white clay slip. The plausible sequence of face vessel development would appear to begin with pots sculpted into heads using only one clay body. Next, decoration was attempted by adding color to the surface followed by attempts to insert white clay. These vessels at first were glazed over completely; later, care was taken to remove the glaze from the eyes and mouth. This could have been done by wiping off those areas or by applying a resist material such as wax before dunking the vessel in the glaze vat. While only hypothetical, this suggested order is consistent with the stylistic features of the pots and with what is known of the working methods required by the extant ceramic technology and media.

Edgefield's face vessels, often called "monkey jugs," "voodoo pots," or "ugly jugs," were actually complex artifacts that were not confined to just one site. Two jugs in the collection of The Charleston Museum are attributed to Miles Mill where Lewis Miles, son-in-law of Abner Landrum, owned a 4,000-acre plantation named "Stoney Bluff." Miles is known to have employed at least three of his slaves as potters. Collin Rhodes used seven slaves in his ceramic factory and Thomas Chandler owned four.⁵⁶ Notices of sales in the *Edgefield Advertiser* regularly listed slaves with pottery making skills—two turners were included along with the equipment at the sale of the Pottersville Manufactory in 1840; three turners were mentioned in an 1843 announcement, and in 1847 an "excellent Stone Ware Turner" was singled out for special attention in John Landrum's auction of "18 Likely Negroes."⁵⁷ A full census of slave potters has yet to be completed but it would not be out of line to suggest that between 1810 and 1865 there may have been fifty slaves capable of turning ceramic forms. It is to this group of artisans that we must look in order to discover the makers of face vessels.

There was at Edgefield a black pottery community made up not only of potters but of other slaves who worked at the various shops mixing clay, stacking and unloading kilns, chopping fire wood for fuel and driving wagons.⁵⁸ Lewis Miles, for example, owned forty slaves, many of whom must have

left: Alkaline-glazed stoneware face jug, attr. to African-Americans at a factory at Kruksey's Crossroads, Edgefield District, South Carolina, ca. 1840-80, (58) Courtesy of the High Museum of Art (purchased with funds from the Decorative Arts Endowment).

Alkaline-glazed stoneware face jug made from one clay body. Collection of John Gordon.

performed such tasks. Because of their collective efficiency as producers of stoneware, the slaves at the potteries were highly esteemed. To judge from the dollar values that Collin Rhodes assigned to his female slaves, they may even have been employed as pottery decorators.⁵⁹ Dave, who made pots for Lewis Miles, certainly was respected for two reasons: he made vessels larger than any one in the district (his largest has an estimated capacity of more than forty gallons) and he was literate, inscribing rhymed couplets on his pots. His literacy grew out of his initial employment as a typesetter for Landrum's *Hive* and made him a person to watch since after 1837 teaching slaves to read and write was illegal.⁶⁰ There was probably a measure of protest in Dave's verses since their very existence mocked the effectiveness of the white man's law. Giving other slaves working with him (as well as those at work in kitchens and field quarters throughout the district) a modest example of resistance, Dave's efforts showed how skill with pottery could provide a degree of personal autonomy. This is important because a firm sense of personal power is the basis for a distinct aesthetic sensibility. In the case of a community of slave artisans, their aesthetic could be expected to evoke memories of Africa.

This was, in fact, Barber's opinion when he first saw Edgefield face vessels. He wrote of them that their sculptural technique revealed "a trace of aboriginal art as formerly practiced by the ancestors of the makers in the Dark Continent [Africa]."⁶¹

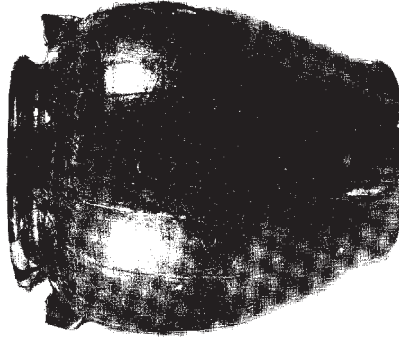


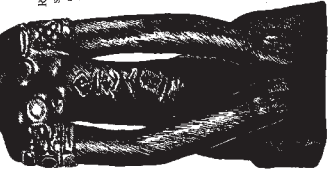


Crossroads of Clay

Alkaline-glazed stoneware storage jar; Dove, Lewis Miles Pottery, Edgefield District, South Carolina, 1857. (56)

Kongo statue with inserted porcelain eyes.



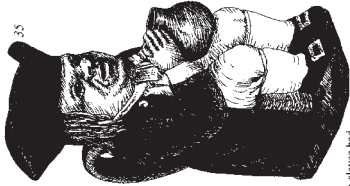


Robert Farris Thompson has since pointed out that African and African-American sculpture share a mixed-media approach to design and finish. He notes that eyes especially are highlighted by the insertion of beads, stones, shells or bits of metal. The insertion of white porcelain into a darker stoneware vessel, he takes to be a Carolinian instance of this sculptural mode.⁵² Moreover, he identifies a specific African source for the practice in wooden figures with inserted porcelain eyes made by the Kongo people from the coastal areas of Central Africa, a territory encompassing parts of the modern countries of Gabon, Zaire and Angola.⁵³

To connect Edgefield specifically to the Kongo people out of all of the African groups that were enslaved is appropriate for several reasons. First, South Carolina's slave population generally was formed by captives from Central Africa. Peter Wood has noted that, in the period from 1735 to 1740, seventy percent of all slaves imported into Charleston are listed as from Angola, the shipping designation for slaves from Kongo territory.⁵⁴ Second, a broad census of the entire four centuries of the Atlantic slave trade by Philip D. Curtin indicates that during the first half of the nineteenth century, sixty-nine percent of all slave cargoes came from lands controlled by the Kongo or closely related peoples.⁵⁵ Finally, in 1858 one of the last groups of slaves brought into the United States from Africa consisted primarily of Kikongo-speaking people. The ship *Wanderer* debarked 170 Africans on Jekyll Island, Georgia who were then carried up the Savannah River by steamboat and sold mainly into Edgefield County.⁵⁶ If there

was any memory of Africa in Edgefield during the period when slaves were making pottery, it then was most likely a memory of the Kongo homeland. While there is no written record to document this connection, the formal similarities between Edgefield face vessels and Central African sculptures is persuasive evidence.

As an alternative to the possibilities of African influence on Edgefield ceramic sculptures, the English Toby jug has been suggested as a potential model.⁶⁷ These comical mugs and pitchers were caricatures of the ever thirsty Sir Toby Filpott. First made in 1761 in Staffordshire, they also were imitated by American potters. When potters from Bennington, Vermont were brought to the Edgefield District in 1858 to establish the Southern Porcelain Manufacturing Company, in what is today Aiken County, they might have carried the Toby jug idea with them since Tobys were stock items in New England.⁶⁸ Indeed, two Edgefield pitchers strongly recall Sir Toby, their spouts resembling the profile of his emblematic tricorn hat. However, these vessels could also represent a recollection of Africa rather than an evocation of English satire. Tobys were exported to Africa soon after they first were invented and were particularly esteemed by Kongo royalty. They were used among the Kongo as models for stone funerary sculpture as well as for ornaments on grave sites. And more intriguingly, Kongo potters also learned to make their own versions of Tobys out of terra-cotta clay.⁶⁹ Thus, if Edgefield's slave potters were shown Bennington Tobys, they might have been reminded of Tobys with a different ancestry. And given the fact that Kongo slaves had recently arrived in the district, it is possible that their fresh recollections of African customs might have inspired the Carolina-born slaves to attempt such sculptures. Slaves in South Carolina were already putting fancy glass and porcelain items on graves; they might have been encouraged to add an African-inspired effigy vessel.⁷⁰ Full-fledged African systems of thought were present in the district which would have supported such behavior. In 1835



English Toby jug.

Alkaline-glazed stoneware monkey jug. Collection of Augustus Richmond County Museum.



Hammond reported that some of his slaves had tunneled into his wine cellar believing they would avoid capture because Urama, one of his Negro women, had cast a protective spell that "screened" them from detection.⁷¹

There is one other vessel form from Edgewater which has African antecedents, a water carrier known as a "monkey." This vessel is oval in form with an over-arching stirrup handle and at least one tubular spout attached at an angle. Found widely throughout the West Indies, where they are made as unglazed earthenware vessels, those known from Edgewater were made of glazed stoneware and decorated with faces (although it seems likely that undecorated versions were made as well).⁷² Water carriers of this type were unknown in England until about 1900 while they were particularly common to Africa and, by virtue of migration from that continent, to the Caribbean.⁷³ Consequently, one must look to the West Indies, if not to Africa, for their source. Thompson connects the term "monkey" to the Kongo word for water jug *mwanga*, arguing that the word shifts slightly in the mouths of English speakers. He also sees another possible source in the term *munukoki*, which is Kikongo for a type of clay vessel used to smoke manioc leaves.⁷⁴ While made by Anglo-American potters in other southern states, the monkey vessel has never been common-place.⁷⁵ Perhaps its exotic origins and association with African-American field hands has something to do with its scarcity.

The apparent African influence on Edgewater pottery was restricted

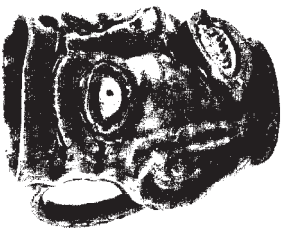
Crossroads of Clay



*Kongo Toby figure.
Arabian-glazed stoneware toby
pitcher. Collection of John
Gardner.*

generally to the African-American community. In that community it seems that distinctive face vessels were fashioned which were analogous to but distinct from ceramic sculpture of Anglo-American origin. The monkey form also seems to have been confined mainly to black use. Any expression of African influence was private, kept relatively hidden and still remains difficult to interpret with certainty. While African-American potters were quite evident, their most intriguing pots were generally concealed from public view.

Surprisingly, even astonishingly, George Washington's "pine barren of the worst sort" has proved to be complex beyond any scholar's dream. The local clays move out to England while English potters move in. British traditions take root but are modified by grafting oriental techniques onto an English stem. Finally, when large numbers of slaves are trained to make pots, they use their circumstances to create a subculture of their own, one which appears to reconnect itself to African customs. The crossroads metaphor invoked in this essay's title is particularly well-suited to Edgefield for the image is one of pathways leading both in and out. Three international traditions entered the Carolina backcountry by various routes; a unique mode of pottery was developed and then carried out to the rest of the lower South.



JOHN MICHAEL VLACH

The Afro-American Tradition in Deco

Published by The Cleveland Museum of Art

orative Arts

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5. Pottery

Blacks have been involved in all major craft activities in the United States from the colonial period on up to present times. This is not surprising when we understand that black people constituted half, if not more, of the labor force for many southern states. A British traveler in 1759 remarked: "The number of Negroes in the southern colonies is upon the whole nearly equal if not superior, to that of the white men."¹ In Louisa County in central Virginia, the number of Blacks was just slightly above the white population in 1790, but by 1880 their margin of dominance increased to more than 4,000.² The daily chores which were essential to the maintenance of life in rural eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America included many tasks other than field labor. There were houses and barns to build, tools to make and repair, grain to mill and store, cloth to weave and tailor. Although most Blacks toiled their lives away under the sharp eye of the field foreman, some had to be placed in the workshop, forge, mill, and loom house. None of the historians of slavery ever fails to note the involvement of Blacks in skilled trades.³ Carl Bridenbaugh notes that "in the Carolinas the overwhelming majority of artisans were Negro slaves."⁴ Circumstances such as these gave rise to a black American tradition in pottery, a tradition most often practiced in this country by Whites.

teenth century, was at that time the only Black among 215 known potters in the state.⁵ Other Blacks working in the ceramic craft in Alabama and Mississippi were, like Caulrell, trained by Whites and relatively rare. Only in Texas was this general trend reversed, when around 1900 a white man hired an ex-slave to teach his son to be a potter.⁶

The rift between a possible memory of an African aesthetic and the demands of the American experience could only be closed when black craftsmen worked in groups, a situation that is encountered in western Texas but is most prevalent in the Edgefield District of west-central South Carolina. This latter area was a primary center throughout the nineteenth century for the production of alkaline-glazed stoneware,⁷ much of which was made by black labor. Lewis Miles of Edgefield, for example, owned forty slaves, many of whom were employed in his pottery works.⁸ The Afro-American tradition in ceramics thus began in South Carolina, and it is here that we can expect to find a distinct black achievement.

Edgefield District Utilitarian Ware

The first pottery in the Edgefield District (see map, Figure 28), a former militia area comprising what today are Edgefield and Aiken counties,

That Blacks did not dominate American ceramics is understandable, given the distinctly European technology and materials involved: treadle-operated wheels, wood stoked kilns, decorative slips and glazes. Even if an African slave had known something of his own pottery traditions of hand-built, open-fired earthenware, he still would have been inadequately prepared to "burn and burn" stoneware jugs and crocks. Furthermore, pottery as practiced throughout Africa is mainly a woman's craft.⁵ Black men who became potters may thus have had to break sharply away from their past as they entered into their new trade.

The meager reports of black potters, when assembled, reveal a pattern of general isolation. Most were single individuals who had been brought up in shops belonging to white pottery-making families. Such was the case of Peter Oliver, who was trained in 1788 in North Carolina to make pottery like his owner, Br. Christ, § Bob Cartrell of Cleveland, Georgia, who worked in the shop of William Dorsey late in the nine-

was established somewhere between 1810 and 1820 by Amner Landrum at a site just outside of Edgefield, named, appropriately enough, Pottersville.⁶ A contemporary account from 1826 by Robert Mills praises Landrum as "ingenious and scientific," and describes his operation: "The village is altogether supported by the manufacture of stoneware, carried on by this gentleman; and which, by his own discovery is made much stronger, better, and cheaper than any European or American ware of the same kind. This manufacture of stoneware may be increased to almost any extent; in case of war, &c., his usefulness can hardly be estimated."⁷ The vigorous tone used here is rich with optimism, but in 1827 the Pottersville manufactory passed out of Landrum's control and for the next sixteen years continuously changed owners. Seven different families ran the pottery works until 1843 when it was sold. Other potteries sprang up in the same general period: Miles Mill opened around 1834; Collin Rhodes and Robert W. Mathis founded

FIGURE 28. Important pottery sites in South Carolina. Edgelfield and Aiken Counties are roughly equal to what was known as the Edgelfield District in the 19th century.

the Phoenix Factory in 1840; Thomas Chandler, a former potter at the Phoenix Factory, started his own business at Kirskey's Crossroads in 1850.¹⁸ Stoneware did, as Mills had suggested, become a major product for the Edgelfield area. Landrum started it all and had a major influence on subsequent developments. His brother Amos worked with Collin Rhodes; Lewis Miles, owner of the Miles Mill, was Landrum's son-in-law; and Landrum's slave Dave was to become the most accomplished Afro-American potter of the period.

Among Landrum's diverse interests was the publication of a newspaper, *The South Carolina Republican* (later called *The Hive*). Dave was taught to read and write by Landrum, perhaps as an example of his "scientific" attitude. Dave apparently was a fine student, for he was put to work on the newspaper. He filled the post of typesetter for the *Hive* until 1831 when the paper was disbanded and moved to Columbia, South Carolina's capital.¹⁹ Dave was then given over to Lewis Miles to work as a potter. He has been variously remembered as "Dave Potter," "Dave Pottery," and "Dave of the Hive," the latter

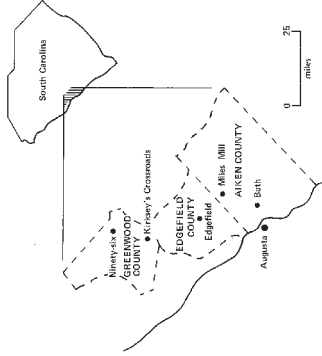
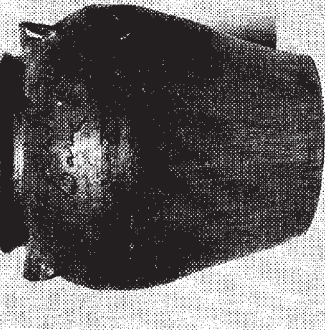


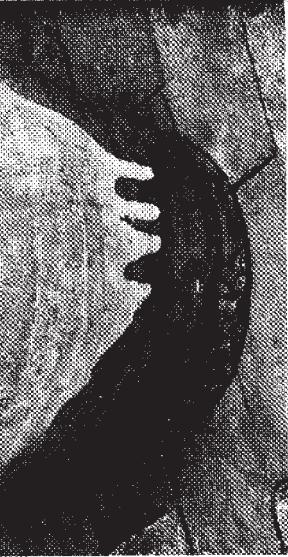
FIGURE 29. *For Stonewares, see above. Inset: 1. In Aug 24, 1857 (Days, On opposite side). Pottery little ear on the rim; 2. On the opposite side. Dave the Potter. American South Carolina Miles Mill, 1780-1863. University Museum, University of South Carolina, Columbia.*

alluding to his newspaper apprenticeship. His verbal training was useful to him in his pottery career, for he often inscribed his works with rhymed couplets. These poetic pots are among the outstanding achievements of Afro-American folk craft (68-71; Figure 29).

Dave's work is a delight to the ceramic historian, for not only did he sign his name with a distinctive script, but he also recorded the name or initials of his owner, Lewis Miles, the date of manufacture, and occasionally the name of the customer. A stoneware jug splashed with white glaze, slip (68) bears a typical inscription: "Lm, Oct 26 - 1853/Dave." This is minimal information, but it is enough. Dave's career in pottery was quite long, and consequently he must have made hundreds of clay objects. Almost fifty have been discovered so far (more are sure to turn up). Roughly one fourth of Dave's known repertoire carries a verbal message, a sign of his education and verbal skills. His themes tend to describe the function of his large jars, but he could also venture into the realm of the metaphorical; one jug bears only one word, "Pounder-







68 Jag, Dave the Potter

ostic."¹⁵ Although most of his rhymes were artistic compositions, the couplet, "Made at Stoney Bluff/ For making lard snuff," occurs on two pots.¹⁶ Other verses which mention a storage function include: "Great & noble-jar/hold Sheep goat or bear" [69, detail]; "A very large jar which has four handles/ pack it full of fresh meat then light candles";¹⁷ "Put every bit between/ Surely this jar will hold fourteen [gallons],¹⁸ and "Good for lard or holding/ fresh meat/ Bless we were when/ Peter saw the folded/ sheet" [70] (this last rhyme is an oblique reference to an edit allowing early Christians to eat pork). Dave's verbal skills were also directed toward monetary matters: "This noble jar will hold 20 [gallons]/ fill it with silver then you will have plenty";¹⁹ females: "a pretty little girl on the verge/ volcanic mountain how they barge"; (Figure 29); patriotism: "The Fourth of July is surely come/ to sound the fife and beat the drum";²⁰ and even his own enslavement: "Dave belongs to Mr. Miles/ where the oven bakes & the pot boils" [7], detail. A particularly poignant verse, "this jar is made all of cross/ if you don't repent you will be lost,"²¹ may reflect Dave's combined feelings about slavery and religion. Though these verses are somewhat reminiscent of blues poetry, what can clearly be defined as the blues was still half a century away at the time of Dave's career. It is best to consider these verses as Dave's individual achievement. They are special flourishes of decoration, per-



69. *Jar*, Dave, the Potter; detail of inscription (above). See Co. on Plate VI, following page 108.



sonal marks of the maker. They reflect Dave's history as typesetter turned potter, a blend of occupational lore that, in Edgefield, was Dave's alone.

Dave's work consists mostly of very large open-mouth storage jars, usually about two feet high, with slab handles around the rim. His largest piece stands twenty-nine inches high and is inscribed with his name and that of another slave, Baddler (Figure 30). This jar, which may hold more than forty gallons, is the largest piece of stoneware known in the South (69). Made in sections, it was probably thrown by Dave while Baddler turned the wheel. Certainly, by the time Dave pulled the topmost coils of the vessel's walls he would not have been able to kick the treadle. This piece should be regarded as something of a ceramic monument; contemporary folk potters using the same technology are awestruck by Dave's ability.²²

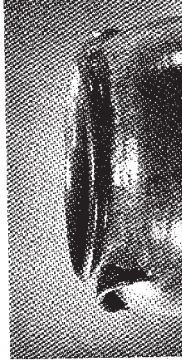
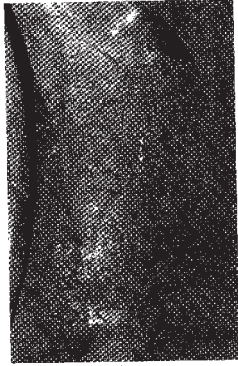
Another characteristic of Dave's work is the scale of his pieces; his pots tend to be very wide at the shoulder. Their bases conform to the usual dimensions (around twelve inches), but the walls



FIGURE 10. DETAIL OF DAVE'S POTTERY (for 69).

flair boldly to the shoulder, near the top of the vessel. Above the shoulder of the jar, the walls break sharply inward to the mouth, leaving a distinct ridge. Although these broad-shouldered pots are very much like other Edgefield wares—and all Edgefield potters made large storage crocks—the width of Dave's work is an important difference. Collin Rhodes, for example, made bulbous storage jars, but the walls of his vessels are more curvaceous, with the widest portion coming at the middle of the vessel rather than the top.²³ These are subtle differences, but they are enough to identify the hand of the maker. Thomas Chandler, like Dave, placed four slab handles around the rim of his pots. Bulbous storage jars such as Chandler's are a genre of British folk pottery.

Dave's works are largely renderings of an Anglo-American form. It may be possible to think of Dave's pieces as modifications of the American norm, in the same manner that Afro-American quilts are renderings of Euro-American designs, but it is more appropriate to view his pottery as a heroic accomplishment. He threw larger and heavier ware than anyone else, sometimes requiring a mound of clay weighing more than forty pounds. Great strength and skill were required to turn such pots. He knew it and his own knew it. Perhaps in this way he sought to throw off the shackles of bondage and gain a measure of respect. He was eighty-three years old when he died; it is evident that a powerful



spirit had moved him through all those years.

Dave was, of course, not the only slave potter working in the Edgely area. We have already mentioned Baedler. Another slave named Jack Thurman was remembered by a white potter, George Fleisher, who had also worked at the Miles Mill in its last days.²⁴ He recalled that Thurman had been a strong and dignified man. Fleisher died in 1908 at the age of eighty-four and hence would have worked with Dave for at least twenty years. Other Blacks owned by Miles can be named: from the Rev. John Landrum estate, in 1847, Miles acquired a slave named Phil for \$785 and a boy named Frank for \$687—prices that may be considered an index of the skills. Others remain to be named, but it is clear from the impressive work of Dave that there existed ample motive in Edgely to train slaves to make stoneware. If they did not actually throw pots, they certainly stoked kiln fires

70 *for Dave the Potter.*

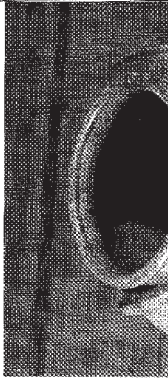
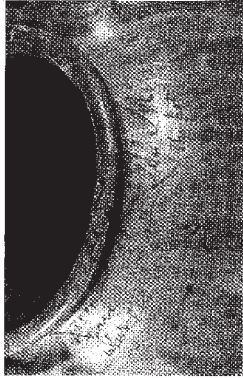


shaded greenware, wedged clay, mixed glazes, and loaded wagons. Without their efforts Edgefield wares would not have become so well established.

That black labor was part of the commercial pottery industry in Edgefield has been clearly documented. A transaction in 1835 between Amos Landrum and the Gibbs and Drake pottery mentions a slave named Buster who is described as a turner.²⁶ A group of seven slaves—including Abram, Old Harry, and Young Harry—worked at the Phoenix Factory for Colin Rhodes.²⁷ Chandler's will, dated February 10, 1852, lists with the property of his pottery works four slaves: Simon, Easter, John, and Ned.²⁸ In 1862 a pottery was established at Bath, twenty-five miles south of Edgefield, by Colonel Thomas J. Davies, who hired one Anson Peeler from Bennington, Vermont (a noted pottery center), to direct the work of his slaves.²⁹ The four production works of Miles, Rhodes, Chandler, and Davies in a way constitute a larger community of artisans, since slaves were often exchanged for short periods between potteries.³⁰

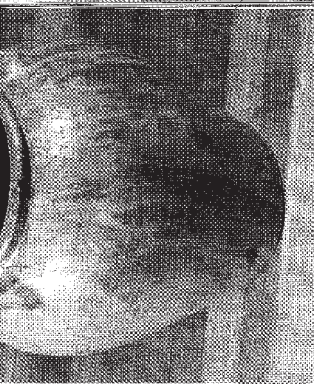
Edgefield Face Vessels

The circumstances in the Edgefield District that favored the production of utilitarian pottery by Blacks also fostered artistic attitudes that were to lead to the creation of ceramic sculpture. A number of vessels with sculptured faces were made at several of the Edgefield potteries. In the



literature of folk art these vessels are variously called "protesque jugs," "voodoo pots," and "monkey jugs." Rural Georgians today call them simply "ugly jugs."

There has been some speculation that this genre of artistic expression had its origins in South Carolina, but such views are without historical validity. Face vessels were made in every pottery region of the United States. Some of the oldest known examples are by an anonymous potter from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania (1865),²³ by E. G. Crafts of Whitley, Massachusetts (1833),²⁴ and by Henry Remmey of Philadelphia (1838).²⁵ Even in Edgelyield there is evidence of ceramic sculpture before 1840 (fragments of a portrait bust—not a vessel)—have been recovered from the site of the Rhodes pottery; this piece, which may have depicted an Indian chief, stood perhaps sixteen inches



²³ *Ibid.*, Dave the Potter: detail of inscription (above).

high).³² Of course, the decoration of pottery with faces had been established much earlier in Europe.³³ Since English antecessors are most pertinent to southern ceramic forms, it is important to note that British face vessels date from the period of Roman domination. This mode of decoration, which became part of the British tradition of folk pottery around AD 200, merges again in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By the eighteenth century the face vessel form had matured into the comical Toby jug.³⁴ The face jugs made in Edgefield around 1850 are thus preceded by an extensive tradition in European pottery. Moreover, the making of pots with faces was so widespread by the late nineteenth century that it would be a mistake to consider all late nineteenth- and twentieth-century face vessels as necessarily tied to Edgefield tradition—obviously, other pertinent sources of inspiration were also available. Although Edgefield face vessels are neither the oldest nor the most influential expression of this type of ceramic sculpture in the United States, they are, nevertheless, stylistically distinct. Because of this, and because they were made by black potters, we may view them as an important achievement in Afro-American decorative art.

Some have questioned whether or not Blacks ever made face vessels at all. We have already seen that they were deeply involved in the making of utilitarian ware.³⁵ In this perception we can add the comment of Thomas Davies, owner of the pottery at Bath, who informed ceramic his-

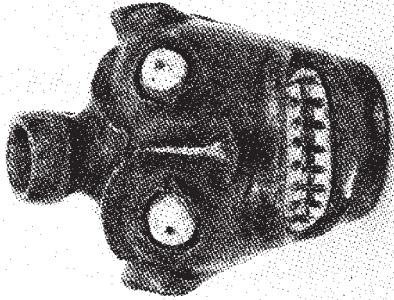


Figure 33. Face Vessel, Stoneware, kaolin, ca. 1860. H. 4 inches. South Carolina, Bath, Thomas Davies Pottery. Atlanta-Radisonoff County Museum, Augusta, Georgia.



torian Edwin Barber that his slaves made face vessels in 1862: "... they were accustomed to employ in making homely designs in coarse pottery. Among these were some weird-looking water jugs, roughly modeled in the front in the form of a grotesque human face evidently intended to portray the African features."²⁶ The was at a time when Davies' Palmetto Firebrick works was converted into a manufactory for jars, pitchers, and cups to supply Confederate hospitals, and when slaves apparently had some lime to themselves. The "weird-looking water jugs" are small stoneware vessels (about four inches tall), glazed in colors ranging from black to dark-olive, with white porcelain clay inserts for eyes and teeth (72). Barber considered the last feature to be "ingenious," and he said the sculptural technique "reveals a trace of ancestral art as formerly practiced by the ancestors of the makers in the Dark Continent."²⁶ All this verbal testimony about Blacks making sculptural vessels with two kinds of clay was substantiated when a small cup with kaolin eye

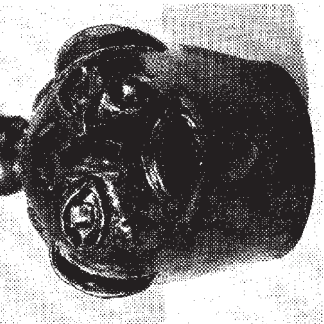
and health was discovered in the waster dump at the site of the now defunct Davies pottery.³⁷ Thus, we can be certain that Blacks made a specific type of ceramic sculpture in the 1860's; the archaeological remnant confirms the written history.

This type of pot was not confined solely to the Bath pottery. Two similar pieces in the Charleston Museum are attributed to Miles MBE (6448 and 18028). The resemblance in the works of the two potteries may be due to an exchange of slaves. A design developed at one site could have been easily carried ten miles up the road to one of the other pottery works. It might even be suggested that the black style of shaping a face was practiced at all the potteries of the Edgefield District, for the basic ingredients—stoneware clay and kaolin—were readily available throughout the area.

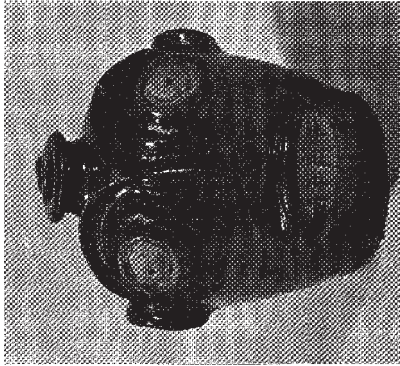
There are some minor but nevertheless considerable variations in Edgefield face vessels. To begin with, faces were applied to a number of pot forms: jugs, cups (Figure 31), jars (Figure 22), pitchers (73), and bottles (74). Although differences in form and size arise according to the



Figure 32. Face Vessel, Stoneware, kaolin, ca. 1860. H. 8 1/2 inches. South Carolina, Edgefield District, Augusta Richmond County Museum, Augusta, Georgia. Another face vessel 75, very similar in style of modeling and pattern of glaze application, may have been made by the same potter.



function of the object, faces are generally standardized, having curving eyebrows, bulging white eyeballs, long noses with flaring nostrils, and open mouths with white teeth. However, a feature or a group of features could be manipulated in ways that would best suit a single potter. Eyebrows, for example, might be made with sharp ridges and joined at the bridge of the nose, or be rounded and separated, or even omitted altogether. Eyes and teeth were either covered with glaze or left unglazed. In the latter case the potter painted wax (or some other type of resin) on the eyes and teeth and often on the eye rims and lips before dipping the jug into the glaze. Glaze would not adhere to those portions and wax would burn off by the time the kiln reached its 2300° firing temperature. The results were often dramatic, yielding a shiny face with a stark white stare and a grinning mouth [75]. One sub style of the genre has teeth incised with slanted rather than vertical strokes [76]. Thompson credits works with this feature to the "Master of the Diagonal Teeth."⁷⁵ Other "masters" might be recognized for their distinctive ears (one potter characteristically marked the center of the ear with a small lump of clay);⁷⁶ or the rendering of chins with dimples or beards.⁷⁷ The shape of a face varies with the shape of vessel that supports it: jugs with rounded shoulders tend to have eyes and ears situated high on the vessel, while straight sided pots tend to have faces with a frontal gaze. Some faces are stylized and others are more naturalistic. Because of the remarkable similarity in some groups of faces



75 Face Vessel, Saudi, Cretaceous
See Color Plates VII, following page 136.

76 Face Cup, South Carolina.



jects, it is evident that they were done by the same hand and may even have been included in the same kiln firing. The variety of formal possibilities, on the other hand, suggests that there were many different hands at work. Through experimentation, it seems, a potter would eventually satisfy himself with a particular arrangement of features.

The many variations and sub-types of the Edgefield face vessel did not all happen at once. The vessels themselves are very well-made examples of wheel-thrown hollow-ware. The makers of these pieces were competent in the intricate techniques of centering, opening, turning, trimming, and trimming pottery. Because the knowledge required to make pottery on a wheel is only learned through a period of apprenticeship—time of trial and error—we cannot simply accept the opening of the Davics pottery in 1862 as the starting point for the advanced production of face vessels. The skill required and the variety attained bespeak an older history. Thompson's

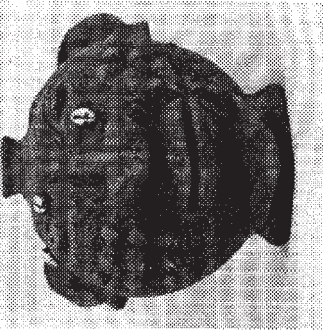
suggestion of late eighteenth-century origins is inaccessible, since there were no potteries in the region at the time. It is more likely that the tradition began after 1820, when the first pottery was introduced. After this time, Blacks would have been fully trained in pottery and, having a good understanding of the complexities of glaze formulas, clay composition, and kiln behavior, could have begun to experiment with face vessels. A basic problem in the Edgefield format is encountered with the nature of the materials; stone-ware clay and porcelain clay have different shrinkage rates. If an insert of kaolin is not bulky enough, it will shrink up and fall out of its socket. Perhaps by the 1830's this problem was understood and a solution discovered. Certainly, it is in that period that Edgefield pottery began to flourish and many more Blacks would have been brought into the trade. Twenty-five years seems enough lead time to account for the excellence of the vessels made at Bath in the 1860's.

Antecedents: African and Caribbean

Having established that some of the face vessels of South Carolina are Afro-American, a further issue to pursue is the relationship of these ceramics to pottery to African forms. The effigy pots of the Manabutu of eastern Zaire have been offered for comparison,⁴⁰ but it is highly unlikely that people from so far into the interior of Africa were ever pulled into the network of the Atlantic slave

ing eyes and clenched teeth found in Edgefield face vessels, sought a comparison with soapstone carvings from Sierra Leone.⁴¹ While these features are indeed shared, Kan overlooks these critical facts: that peoples from the windward coast of Africa are the least numerous of all participants in the slave trade, and, more importantly, that the carvers of the soapstone figures are an extinct people, who preceded the current inhabitants of the land by several centuries. On the other hand, Thompson's attempts to link Afro-Carolinian face vessels to the Zaire-Angola region are more in line with what is known about the ethnic origins of South Carolina's slaves. Placing an Edgefield jug next to a Bakongo statue (78), he notes: "The same pinpoint pupils within white eyes, the same long hooked nose, the same siting of the nose at a point relatively high above the lips, the same open mouth with bared teeth, the same widening of the mouth so that it extends across the width of the jaw. . . ."⁴²

Most of the Edgefield works are iconic in nature, with simple, bold faces. These compare well with Bakongo sculptures, which also employ the force of direct symbolism. The flash of white eyes and

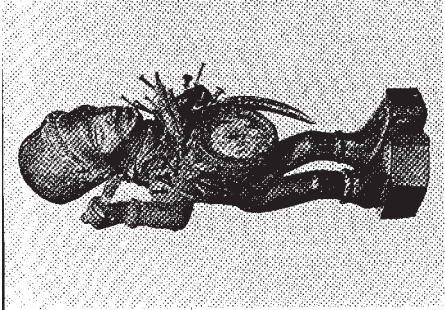


trade. A more appropriate comparison can be made with a recently discovered ceramic face vessel, linked to Ghana [77]. A similarity of facial features is immediately apparent, although this pot bears some distinctive ethnic marks (behold scars and fan-shaped beard) which may indicate either Akan or Ewe origins. There are also some cowrie shells stuck onto the outside of the pot with wax. In size, this vessel compares well with other jar sub-types of the Edgfield genre. The knobbed lid may be seen as the formal antecedent for the flared central spout encountered on most jug forms and thus may indicate a deeper level of Africanity in seemingly Euro-American ceramic forms. However, caution must be exercised, since it has not yet been determined how long vessels such as this one may have existed in Ghana. Pots decorated with faces in the manner and style of this piece may not have been known by the ancestors of South Carolina slaves.

Other possible correlations can be made on the basis of form rather than medium, but this strategy is very tricky and prone to error. Michael Kwan, for example, on the basis of the bulg-

tooth against a shiny dark surface shared by Bakongo figures and Afro-American ceramic sculptures has been explained away by the availability of the necessary media in both areas of origin.⁴³ But considerations of environment should not cause us to overlook the similarity of presentation, no matter how accidental, it might be. The fact that the sacred white chalk of Zaïre, *mpemba*, is not attainable in Edgemoor does not mean that white kaolin cannot be used in its place. The face jugs with bulging white eyes⁴⁴ and the small wooden statues with eyes made from white shells are end points of a stylistic continuum stretching the breadth of the ocean.

The stylistic similarities that link Bakongo wood sculpture to Afro-American clay sculpture are reaffirmed by the presence of Kikongo words in the creole English spoken by nineteenth-century Blacks.⁴⁵ One of the last slave cargoes brought into the United States was landed from the *Wanderer* in 1858 on Jekyll Island, Georgia. Most of that group were Kikongo-speaking, and they ended up near Edgemoor.⁴⁶ They were to be the last direct contribution of African heritage to the area, and their presence most likely provided a stimulus for sustained appreciation of face vessels by local Blacks. Even as late as 1940, face jugs were still kept in black households in Aiken County where they were regarded as objects of power and wonder.



Further evidence for African connections for Afro-Carolinian face vessels involves the nomenclature for these pots. Barber noted that face jugs were "generally known as 'monkey jugs' not on account of their resemblance to the head of an ape but because porous vessels which were made for holding water and cooling it by evaporation were called by that name."¹⁶ In fact, the use of the word "monkey" in connection with water jugs appears in the Oxford English Dictionary as early as 1834. Even older is the 1788 phrase, "to suck the monkey," a slang expression used to describe someone who drinks directly from the bottle and therefore drinks too much. Some Blacks in South Carolina still use the word "monkey" to mean a strong thirst caused by physical exertion.¹⁷ The antiquity of the term and the continued stability of its usage among American Blacks implies a long and intricate



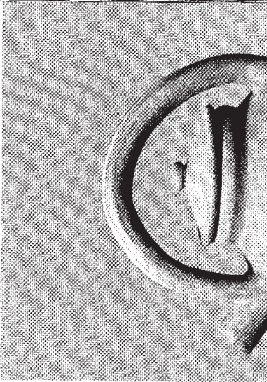
association of Afro-Americans with the pot form called a monkey.

Earthenware vessels called monkeys are known to have been made by slave potters from Barbados in the nineteenth century. F. Bayley, writing in the 1820's, noted that among the items for sale at the Bridgetown market were "gurglets for holding water."⁴⁸ A later traveler gives more detail:

... although the ware is sold at a small price it is highly valued, and no Barbadian home, from the Governor's residence down to the poorest hut, is considered furnished without its assortment of "gurglets" and "monkeys" as they are called. . . . The vase shaped vessels with narrow mouths and without handles are "gurglets," those in shape much like a teacup and generally larger than the former are "monkeys."⁴⁹

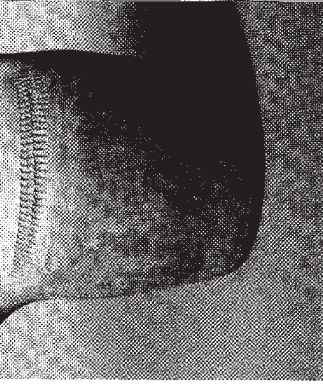
We can be fairly sure then that monkey jugs were known among Blacks in both the West Indies and the American South during the nineteenth century and possibly in the late eighteenth century as well. It is significant for our understanding of Afro-American pottery that South Carolina's first settlers came from Barbados and continued to maintain extensive economic ties with the Caribbean for many years.⁵⁰

Another significant tie to Caribbean ceramics has recently been discovered in New England.⁵¹ Earthenware jars formerly used as containers for tamarind, an African caltogen grown in the



West Indies, have been excavated from three sites known to have been inhabited by Blacks in the early 1800's. These tumazed jars, although wheel-thrown, are, because of their form and function, outside the traditions of Euro-American pottery forms. Since pottery wheels were not used in Africa, these pit-fired pots could only have come from the Caribbean.

The origins of the Edgefield monkey jug tradition, in like manner, are to be found outside of South Carolina. While the Funk and Wagnalls dictionary intriguingly describes a monkey jug as "sometimes fashioned in imitation of a grotesque human head with moveable eyes and feet," the common monkey jar of the West Indies is a plain and humble object. Those still made today generally resemble a large tea pot with a stubby spout, arching handle, and a lid-dec mouth.⁸⁰ They have, at the most, only a few bands of markings as decoration and, although a fine pot may be burnished, most are left with a rough finish. In fact, they serve their water-cooling function best if the surface is left coarse and porous.



What relationship does the large unglazed earthenware vessel capable of holding five quarts have to the small glazed stoneware pots of Edgefield that can barely hold a pint? There are, in spite of their differences, a number of key similarities in form and possibly function. While most of the known Afro-Carolinian vessels are jug forms with spouts centered at the top and oval-section handles at the back, some were made with stirrup handles and had curved spouts, usually set at the rear [81]. This later form is essentially the same as a contemporary West Indian monkey jar except for the lidless mouth. Even though the usual Edgefield face vessel is not more than four or five inches tall, this particular variant is considerably larger and holds as much as a quart. Such vessels, then, are small monkey's made with stoneware and decorated with faces.

It is important to note that in the West Indies a miniature monkey jug, three or four inches high, is made as a child's toy.⁸² This tiny jug form may have been the model from which Edgefield potters worked; like the Barbadians, South Carolina Blacks also may have intended their miniature monkey jugs for children. One report about the function of face vessels seems to confirm this speculation: it is told that a small face jug was used by black parents as a kind of bogey-man figure to scare their young children into behaving themselves.⁸³

The Edgefield vessels are so laborately decorated and sculptured that we tend to overlook the important cultural traditions their forms reveal.

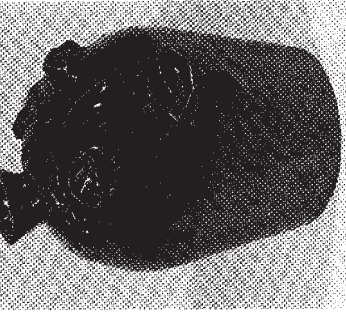


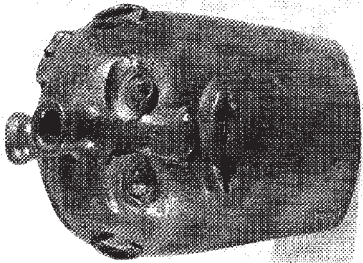
81. Face Vessel, South Carolina.

82. Face Jug, attributed to Lewis Miles Pottery.

One of the oldest forms of ceramic ware known to Blacks was evidently a rough earthenware water cooler. Such vessels may have been carried into the fields to slake the thirst of the men and women who cultivated the cotton, tobacco, and rice. When Blacks made pottery they apparently used this familiar form as a model for a water jug while they learned the more conventional stoneware forms. Sculpted monkey jugs may have been the first form of Edgelfield face vessel. Some of the surviving examples of this type are made with only one clay body '82, '83) and hence may precede the discovery of kaolin inserts ('84, '85). While face vessels similar to those made by Blacks are widely known, the mode of decoration that developed in Edgelfield was essentially an independent ceramic invention based on a deep cultural preference for bold, iconic presentation. The combination of two different clay bodies was until then unknown anywhere in the world.

That the monkey jug form was also known in the Caribbean may indicate a remembered Afri-

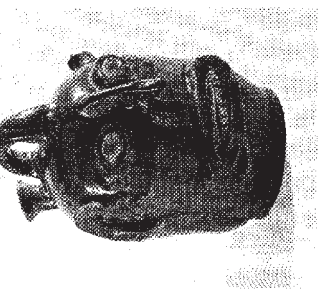
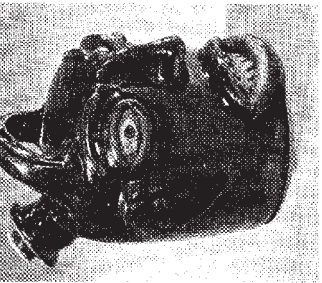




Left: 83. Face Vessel, South Carolina (?)

Left below: 84. Face Vessel, South Carolina

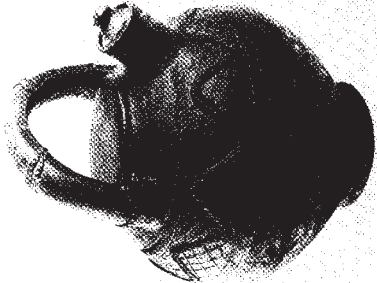
Below: 85. Face Vessel, South Carolina



86 *Kongo Storage-Horned Water Potter*,
Mayvungwa Tsimbe.

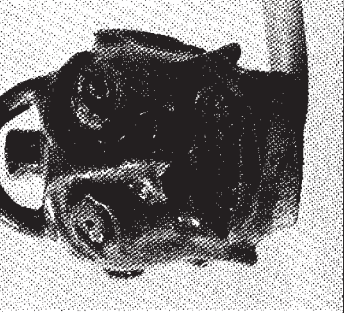
can pottery form. Bakongo potters made earthenware vessels called *m'wanga* (85) that closely resemble the water coolers known throughout the West Indies. These bulbous jars with everted spouts and stirrup handles may be the prototype for the earthenware coolers known in Edgefield.⁵¹ Slaves with Bakongo backgrounds may have expressed in the Afro-Carolinian vessels their memories of African sculpture and pottery. Incidentally, it is important to note that where *m'wanga* are made, men share with women the role of potter.⁵²

We come, in the end, to see the Edgefield face vessel as a complex amalgam—a more-or-less direct retention of basic African decorative preferences and pottery traditions, plus indigenous influences from Afro-American ceramic forms and newly learned Euro-American pottery forms and techniques. Previous analyses of Afro-American ceramics have focused closely on the sculptural elements of face vessels. By looking at these works as pots as well as sculpture, we gain further insight into the matter of cultural survival, for we are made aware of levels of memory. In some instances we see a memory of decoration and in others a recollection of format. Both occasionally were combined (87) to create an example of Afro-American craftsmanship that is doubtless representative of an African heritage not just a potter's whynany.



Figural Vessels

Another form of ceramic sculpture by Blacks in the vicinity of Edgefield was the figured bottle [88]. One piece is attributed to the slave potter Jim Lico, who worked at the Roundtree and Boeie pottery in Ninety-Six, South Carolina. Made perhaps shortly before 1860, it has been called the "preacher barbaque"; it is possible that it was made to satirize Lee's owner, Baptist preacher Jesse Pitts Boeize. The figure depicts a pompous man seated in a casual, legs-crossed position. Despite his splendid attire, consisting of a frock coat with epaulettes, piping, and large buttons, a bow tie, and a vest, his appearance is rather unkempt and shabby. The coat seems ill-fitting; the right shoulder of the garment is pushed up. Even though the figure is posed casually in a moment of leisure—right hand of



Foxfire 8

edited by
ELIOT WIGGINTON
and **MARGIE BENNETT**
with an introduction by
Eliot Wigginton



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Garden City, New York
1984

This book is dedicated to the Aunt Aries, the Terry and Mack Dickersons, the Rufus Morgans, the Etta and Charlie Ross Hartleys, the Kenny Runions, the Margaret and Richard Nortons, the Leonard Webbs, and the Pearl and Oscar Martins of the mountains. They and scores of others like them have contributed unselfishly and joyously to the contents of this series of books; now that they are gone, the value of the contributions they made becomes daily more evident. Through these books, thanks to the energy they gave, they live on as touchstones for all of us.

Eliot Wigginton, who started the Foxfire project with his ninth- and tenth-grade students in Rabun County, Georgia, in 1966, still teaches English there today at the new consolidated Rabun County High School. Students in Wig's English classes, as a part of their language arts curriculum, continue to produce *Foxfire* magazine and the Foxfire book series. Royalties from the sale of the books are directed back into the educational program to pay salaries and expenses involved in offering at the high school some sixteen additional experiential community-based classes ranging from television and record production to photography, folklore, and environmental studies.

Margie Bennett has worked as Eliot Wigginton's associate at the high school for the last ten years. As a member of Foxfire's board of directors, she, with her students, is directly responsible for a substantial portion of the contents of this book. She and Wig and the rest of the Foxfire staff strive daily not only to do whatever they can to help make the Rabun County High School one of the best public high schools in Georgia, but also to join forces nationally with a growing number of advocates who believe that America's public

school system can be a powerfully positive and affirmative force in the lives of our nation's youth.

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indicates, they may have served a more serious magico-religious purpose associated with death and burial. Vessels with grotesque or stylized faces are attributed to South Carolina slave potters, and one scholar believes the tradition to have grown out of West African funerary sculpture, perhaps reinforced by the English Toby jug.

Some of the folk potter's equipment is exclusive to the region, as well. Most important here is the rectangular kiln, very different from the round northern kilns and possibly derived, via colonial Virginia, from Germany, France, or England, where similar kilns are known. When these kilns were enveloped in earth to improve insulation and inhibit expansion, they were known as "groundhog" kilns; unenclosed ones were more often called "tunnel" or "hog-back" kilns. Another piece of equipment that seems to be unique to this part of the country is the ball-opener lever attached to the rear crib wall of the potter's wheel and used to gauge a uniform bottom for larger wares.

A final regional characteristic is the very endurance of the tradition. A handful of old-fashioned potters still operate in the Deep South, whereas their counterparts in the industrialized, change-oriented North became extinct many years ago. These southern folk

pottery maintain an essentially nineteenth-century approach to pottery making, and in so doing provide a window into the past. Still, they have not been entirely uninfluenced by technological advancements around them. Trained in a core tradition that included mule-drawn wooden clay mills, foot-powered treadle wheels, alkaline glazes ground by hand in a stone mill, the wood-burning rectangular kiln, and a repertoire of functional wares related to food and drink, each has made certain concessions which allow him or her to function more efficiently in the absence of younger helpers.

Of the folk potters presented here, North Carolina's Burlon Craig is perhaps the most traditional, in that he has departed least from that core of old-fashioned traits. Even he, however, has mechanized his clay mill, added commercial chemicals to his glazes, and increased the proportion of decorative wares geared to customers from outside the community. Lanier and Edwin Meaders could be viewed as slightly less traditional, as they have adopted electric-powered (although homemade) metal clay mixers, retired the stone glaze mill by using preprocessed ingredients (while still producing alkaline glazes which, in basic composition, are the same as the hand-ground ones), and, like Burlon, have come to emphasize more ornamental wares (Lanier's face jugs, Edwin's roosters) to meet outside demand. Then there is Alabama's Norman Smith, the last to work in a log

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The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies

ANNALS OF

TURNERS & BURNERS

THE FOLK POTTERS OF NORTH CAROLINA

BY CHARLES G. ZUG III

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smaller spout, why, you drink out of that. You can set that out and the evaporation keeps it cool."⁴⁶

Thus it appears that this form originated in either the Mediterranean region or Africa and may have been introduced into American ceramics by Afro-Americans, who used it in the fields. It is quite rare in North Carolina, though Clyde Rutherford Coyne asserts that her father, James D. Rutherford, produced many such monkey jugs at his shop near Candler, Buncombe County, during the early twentieth century.⁴⁷ And the Hiltons appear to have made alkaline-glazed monkey jugs as part of their "Catawba Indian Pottery" line (fig. 13-4). But as the three pieces illustrated here are all glazed and variously decorated, it would appear that these forms were made as whitneys rather than utilitarian production items.

The second type of monkey jug is found only in the Catawba Valley; it is much smaller and consists of two separate chambers with individual spouts (fig. 12-28; another example is shown in fig. 11-12). Elsewhere double containers called "gemels" or "gemel bottles" were "used for storing oil and vinegar or two kinds of wine." One Connecticut example from around 1800 is formed by attaching two small bottles together, while another from Pennsylvania is in the shape of a sweet potato.⁴⁸ While these two are similar in principle, they are markedly different in form from monkey jugs in the Catawba Valley, where the potter skillfully turns one chamber right on top of the other. As Burl Craig explains: "You turn the top first. Just turn you a cylinder, you know, with no bottom. Close it up a little—you leave your lip up there like you're going to make a jug. And set it off. Then you turn your bottom; close it up like you're going to make a, them closed up jugs like I make. And then you set that [top cylinder] back on it, get it in the center on top of this bottom; jug. Then you finish the top." All of this can be done very quickly, though Burl warns that "you got to leave the bottom; a little bit thicker than the top so it'll stand, hold the weight."⁴⁹

Thus it appears that this double-chambered monkey jug was a unique regional creation. And it is a rather late one, as the oldest surviving examples date from the 1920s or 1930s, a time when the folk potter was rapidly expanding his repertory in order to attract new customers. But readily allows that "they were tourist things—they didn't have no practical use. Just a novelty. They always said, one was to put your whiskey in, one to keep your chaser in. . . . Fact is, I've never seen one with liquor and chaser in it."⁶⁰

FACE VESSELS

Nothing excites a contemporary collector of ceramics more than a face vessel—or "face jug," "ugly jug," or "woodoo jug," as they are variously called. Scarcity alone cannot explain this interest. While the older ones (those made before World War II) are not common, they are no less plentiful than many other forms, like the ring jug or monkey jug. Rather it is the

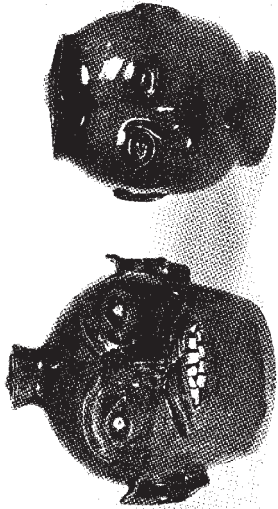
public imagination, the ability to envision, perhaps, voodoo rites or burial ceremonies behind these humanoid creations, that seems to spur such enthusiasm for them. Appropriately, the prime beneficiaries of this ardor have been Burl Craig and Lanier Meaders of Georgia, the two most active folk potters remaining in the South. Between them, they have produced thousands of face vessels over the last decade, many of which have been transported north and sold at substantial markups as "old" pottery.

At the same time, scholars have been debating the problem of origins, with some, notably John Vlach, emphasizing the African contribution to the tradition. Drawing particular attention to face vessels made by blacks in the Edgefield District of South Carolina during the second half of the nineteenth century, Vlach posits "a complex amalgam—a more-or-less direct retention of basic African decorative preferences and pottery traditions plus indirect influences from Afro-American ceramic forms and newly learned Euro-American pottery forms and techniques."⁵¹ Clearly there is a need to recognize African contributions to American material culture—the previously discussed monkey jug is a likely possibility. But the Africanist position as presented by Vlach and others too often lacks full evidence, disregards other possible sources for the face vessel, and uses doubtful formal and stylistic analogies to prove intercultural relationships.

A more comprehensive approach has been developed by John Burrison, who explores the potential European and white-American contributions as well, and who offers a balanced, if less specific, conclusion. "Based on admittedly limited comparative data, then, it appears that neither England nor Africa is directly responsible for the American face vessels. Again, as with the spiritual [song], one can point to Old World analogues, but the phenomenon, as fully developed, is a uniquely American and biracial folk

Ultimately the controversy over origins has little bearing on the situation in North Carolina. Here there is presently no evidence that black potters turned face vessels, or, in fact, that anyone made them before the twentieth century. The largest number appears to have come from the Catawba Valley, where Aubrey Hilton and Harvey Reinhardt produced them during the 1920s and 1930s (fig. 12-29). Despite the almost infinite range of possibilities in sculpting a face, most potters tended to repeat the same form and features. Harvey's face jugs, for example, are immediately recognizable for their pointy ears, prominent moustaches, and long, narrow, toothy grins (see also figs. 3-14, 9-4). True to the general southern tradition, Harvey turned an ordinary jug and then applied a popeyed, somewhat grotesque visage to the exterior.

Aubrey Hilton's face pitcher is another matter. It has a conspicuous foot, shows much less work on facial features, sports a small chin or goatee, and is trimmed in cobalt around the eyes and rim. During the 1920s, he was increasingly turning to art pottery, in many respects his work seems closer



to an English Toby jug (to an English potter the term "jug" means pitcher).

Specifically Auliy appears to have been imitating a Zachary Taylor "bough and Ready" Toby pitcher, as made in the mid-nineteenth century at Christoforo vessels. Jug, ca. 1935, Harvey

pher Webber Fenton's well-known pottery at Bennington, Vermont.⁵³ Where the prototype was molded and covered with a brownish, mottled Rockingham glaze, Aubry's is hand-turned and finished with the local alkaline glaze. But the prominent rim, rather benign features, flattened ears, jutting jaw, and coat collar base on the original are all reflected in the North Carolina copy.

Almost certainly, Aubry obtained his model—whether a photograph or an actual 'toby' pitcher—from Mrs. M. G. Canfield, a pottery collector from Woodstock, Vermont, who had visited and assisted him.⁵⁴ Perhaps it was this curious hybrid form—a ceramic blend from England, Vermont, and North Carolina—that led archeologist Stanley South to identify a similar Hilton face pitcher as a nineteenth-century "alkaline glazed 'voodoo head' jug . . . thought to be a South Carolina piece."⁵⁵

Altogether relatively few face vessels were produced in the Catawba Valley. Other than Reinhardt and Hilton, journeyman Will Bass is said to have turned some, and Duff Craig adds that "after I got to where I could turn a

Reinhardt, Henry, Lincoln County,
H 8". Collection of James and Irene

Gales, Pitcher: ca. 1920, Ernest
Auburn Hilton, Catawba County,
H 6 1/2", C 18 1/8", Cobalt trim on rim
and eyes. Collection of the Mint Museum,
Charlotte, N.C.

Figure 12.31

Unglazed stoneware devil jug, ca. 1930, Juan Brown, Arden, Buncombe County. H 20", C 19 1/4". Signed in script: "JRAHAM'S FURNITURE / AND / HARDWARE STORE / BAKERSVILLE, NC." Collector of Doug and Jane Penland.

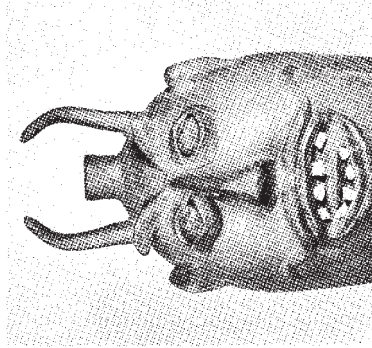




Figure 12-32
 Several generations of face jugs
 fresh from Burlon Craig's kiln, 1978.
 The "tears" are produced by poking
 the eye sockets with a white har-
 ning clay.



and apply at least thirteen pieces of clay to create the typical face: ears (2), eyebrows (2), eyes (6), nose (1), lips (2). Optional features such as a moustaiche (2), tongue (1), beard (1), or horns (2) raise the total to nineteen (plus one more for the wart on the nose of Javan Brown's devil jug). Finally he must insert the teeth, which are jagged pieces of commercial whitewares in the illustrations above (older vessels from other areas employed whiteluring clays or fragments of rock). Burl Craig readily allows that he has no love for this lengthy decorating process; he much prefers turning the jug itself. But he also knows that he must answer to current tastes, and he recognizes the modern efficiency of a face vessel. It takes up no more room in the kiln than a plain jug but commands a far higher price. As Burl admits, making face vessels "is getting old, but what I like is the money I get out of it."⁶⁰

In the past, however, there was very little money in the face jug. "There wasn't no sale for it, that was the trouble. There wasn't no sale. You maybe take a face jug and let it set around a long time before somebody come around and wanted to buy it. What everybody was trying to do then is to get a buck as quick as they could. . . . They made something they was sure they

could sell right off.¹⁰¹ The extra flourishes described above more than double the time needed to finish the pot, but they add nothing to its ultimate function of storing vinegar, molasses, or some "medicinal" beverage. And few people were willing to pay more than the standard rate of ten cents per gallon just to have ears, eyes, and teeth on their water jug.

This same rational, down-to-earth attitude applies to all of the forms grouped under Horticultural Wares and Whimsies, and it was certainly shared by the potters themselves, who frequently voiced their disdain for all toys, miniatures, and other such frivolities. Burd Craig reinforces this nonsensical attitude with the following anecdote about the day the journeyman potter Will Bass quit working for the Reinhardts. "When they made the flowerpots, they had a comb. And they wanted him to put a comb design, jiggle it up and down on the rim of the flowerpot. . . . It wasn't very hard—he could do it all right. But old man Will said it took up extra time, and it wasn't worth a damn, and he wasn't going to do it. And he didn't! He *quit!*"¹⁰²



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Mind in Matter:
An Introduction to Material Culture,
Theory, and Method
Jules David Prown, 1982

Mind in Matter

An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method

Jules David Proum

ALTHOUGH ART MUSEUMS, historical societies, museums of history and technology, historic houses, open-air museums, and museums of ethnography, science, and even natural history, have long collected, studied, and exhibited the material of what has come to be called *material culture*, no comprehensive academic philosophy or discipline for the investigation of material culture has as yet been developed. Recently, however, there has been increased scholarly interest in the subject, as witnessed by the establishment of this periodical, *Winterthur Portfolio*, devoted specifically to material culture; graduate programs in material culture at University of Delaware, University of Notre Dame, and Boston University; and an experimental Center for American Art and

What is Material Culture?

Material culture is the study through artifacts of the beliefs—values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions—of a particular community or society at a given time. The term *material culture* is also frequently used to refer to artifacts themselves, to the body of material available for such study. I shall restrict the term to mean the study and refer to the evidence simply as *material or artifacts*.

Material culture is singular as a mode of cultural investigation in its use of objects as primary data, but in its scholarly purposes it can be considered a branch of cultural history or cultural anthropology. It is a means rather than an end, a discipline rather than a field. In this, material culture differs

Material Culture at Yale University, and a substantial amount of innovative scholarship, especially in such emerging academic areas as folk life and cultural geography (a selective material culture bibliography is appended below). These developments and activities have been spontaneous and largely uncoordinated responses to a perceived scholarly need and opportunity. This essay attempts to define material culture and considers the nature of the discipline. It makes no claim to be either the first or the last word on material culture, but it does seek to illuminate the subject and to provide a basis for further discussion. It also proposes a particular methodology based on the proposition that artifacts are primary data for the study of material culture, and, therefore, they can be used actively as evidence rather than passively as illustrations.¹

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¹ There are material culture studies that do not require object analysis, in part because they address questions posed by the very existence of artifacts that lead directly to the consideration of external evidence. This is particularly true of soci-

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from art history, for example, which is both a discipline (a mode of investigation) in its study of history through art and a field (a subject of investigation) in its study of the history of art itself.

Material culture is comparable to art history as a discipline in its study of culture through artifacts. As such, it provides a scholarly approach to artifacts that can be utilized by investigators in a variety of fields. But the material of material culture is too diverse to constitute a single field. In practice it consists of subfields investigated by specialists—cultural geographers or historians of art, architecture, decorative arts, science, and technology.

Material culture as a study is based upon the obvious fact that the existence of a man-made object is concrete evidence of the presence of a human intelligence operating at the time of fabrication. The underlying premise is that objects made or modified by man reflect, consciously or uncon-

scious, media that deal with artifacts abstractly, often methodically, to address issues of class, economics, or levels of technology; availability of materials; means of distribution, and so on.

sciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and by extension the beliefs of the larger society to which they belonged. The term *material culture* thus refers quite directly and efficiently, if not elegantly, both to the subject matter of the study, *material*, and to its purpose, the understanding of *culture*.

Despite its concision and aptness, the term *material culture* seems unsatisfactory, indeed, self-contradictory. *Material* is a word we associate with base and pragmatic things; *culture* is a word we associate with lofty, intellectual, abstract things. Our unease with this apparent disjunction is not superficial; it derives from a fundamental human perception of the universe as divided between earth and sky. That empirically observed opposition of lower and higher provides a powerful and pervasive metaphor for the distinctions we make between such elemental polarities as material and spiritual, concrete and abstract, finite and infinite, real and ideal. In its theological formulation this metaphor invariably locates heaven upward, above the earth, accessible not to the body but only to the mind or spirit (with mortification of the flesh [material] one way to achieve spiritual ends), and places hell in the bowels of the earth, down deep in the midst of matter. Material things are heir to all sorts of ills—they break, get dirty, smell, wear out; abstract ideas remain pristine, free from such worldly debilities.

scious ordering makes us uncomfortable with the terminological coupling of base *material* and lofty *culture*. Nevertheless, the term *material culture*, if not ideal, has the advantage of being concise, accurate, and in general use.

Material

The word *material* in material culture refers to a broad, but not unrestricted, range of objects. It embraces the class of objects known as artifacts—objects made by man or modified by man. It excludes natural objects. Thus, the study of material culture might include a hammer, a plow, a microscope, a house, a paunch, a city. It would exclude trees, rocks, fossils, skeletons. Two general observations should be made here. First, natural objects are occasionally encountered in a pattern that indicates human activity—a stone wall or a row of trees in an otherwise random forest, a concentration of chicken bones in a pit or a pile of oyster shells, topiary or a clipped poolside, a latwood body or a prepared meal. In the broadest sense these natural materials are artifacts—objects modified by man—and are of cultural interest. Second, works of art constitute a large and special category within artifacts because their inevitable aesthetic and occasional ethical or spiritual (sacred) dimensions make them direct and often overt or intentional expressions of cultural belief. The self-consciously expressive character of this material, however,

The Western conception of history is that it has been characterized by man's increasing understanding and mastery of the physical environment, by the progressive triumph of mind over matter. The evidence of human history seems to confirm our sense that abstract, intellectual, spiritual elements are superior to material and physical things. This has led inevitably to a hierarchical ordering that informs our apprehension and judgment of human activities and experiences.² This uncon-

² For example, poetry, because more abstract, is considered higher than prose, music, in the scale of scholarship of low to high. In the world of scholarship, the more abstract subjects, mathematics, philosophy, literature—are more highly regarded than concrete and practical subjects such as engineering. Such ordering takes place even within the material realm of artifacts where all things are not equal. Higher value has been attached to works of art than to utilitarian craft objects since the Renaissance when a distinction was made between the *liberal* arts which require intellectual skills, and the *mechanical* arts which require physical labor and mechanical ingenuity. Even in a specific art such as painting, there has long been an ordering of genres, ranging from history painting, which springs from the painter's imagination, at the top of the scale, to still-life painting, the reproduction of worldly objects, at the bottom. In architecture, the mental activity of design has been considered an appropriate

ways artifacts that express culture unconsciously are more useful as objective cultural indexes.³ For the moment, however, let it simply be borne in mind that all tangible works of art are part of material culture, but not all the material of material culture is art.

The range of objects that fall within the compass of material culture is so broad as to make some system of classification desirable. Sorting by physical materials does not work because of the multiplicity of substances used, even at times in a single artifact. The same is true of methods of fabrication. The most promising mode of classification is by function. The following list is arranged in a sequence of categories that progresses from the more decorative (or aesthetic) to the more utilitarian.

—————

³ Pursuit for gentility (for example, Thomas Jefferson), while the actual physical labor of building has been carried out by laborers of the lower classes. In sculpture in the nineteenth century, the realization of the form inscribed in the marble was the work of the artist; hacking out repetitions was the work of stonecutters.

⁴ See the sections on velocity below.

1. Art (paintings, drawings, prints, sculpture, photography)
2. Diversions (books, toys, games, meals, theatrical performances)
3. Adornment (jewelry, clothing, hairstyles, cosmetics, tattooing, other alterations of the body)
4. Modifications of the landscape (architecture, town planning, agriculture, mining)
5. Applied arts (furniture, furnishings, receptacles)
6. Devices (machines, vehicles, scientific instruments, musical instruments, implements)

These categories are broad; they undoubtedly require modification and refining; the list is intended simply to define the terrain and suggest the outlines of a system. Many objects straddle categories, but taxonomic shortcomings do not cause analytical problems. Classification for purposes of manageability and discussion does not affect the actual process of material culture analysis described below which applies to all artifacts. Although the range of categories suggests the potential applicability of a variety of specialized techniques and methodologies, no systematic attempt is made in this general essay to correlate categories of objects with particular analytical methods or with the production of particular kinds of cultural *idéa*. However, further consideration is given to these categories;

value is quite persistent. More transient or variable are those values that have been attached by the people who originally made or used the object, by us today, or by people at any intervening moment. A value that accrues from utility will inhere as long as an object continues to be useful and can return when an obsolete object again becomes useful (wood stoves in an oil shortage). In addition to material and utilitarian values, certain objects have aesthetic value (art), some possess spiritual value (icons, cult objects), and some express attitudes toward other human beings (a fortress, a love seat) or toward the world (using materials in their natural condition as opposed to reshaping them).

Obviously then, objects do embody and reflect cultural beliefs. But, although such embodiments of value differ in form from verbal and behavioral modes of cultural expression, they do not necessarily differ in character or content. In the following regards, however, objects do constitute distinctive cultural expressions.

Surviving/ Historical Events

Objects created in the past are the only historical occurrences that continue to exist in the present. They provide an opportunity by which "we encounter the past at first hand; we have direct sensory experience of surviving historical events."⁴ Artifacts may not be important historical events, but they are, to the extent that they can be ex-

gories in the final section.

Why Material Culture?

Why should one bother to investigate material objects in the quest for culture, for a society's systems of belief? Surely people in all societies express and have expressed their beliefs more explicitly and openly in their words and deeds than in the things they have made. Are there aspects of mind to be discovered in objects that differ from, complement, supplement, or contradict what can be learned from more traditional literary and behavioral sources?

Inherent and Attached Value

The most obvious cultural belief associated with material objects has to do with value. There are different kinds of value. One, intrinsic in the fabric of an object itself, is established by the rarity of the materials used. Such value will inhere in the object for as long as the material continues to be valuable. With gold or silver or precious stones, this kind of

rienced and interpreted as evidence, significant.

Mass Representative

Henry Glavin has observed that only a small percentage of the world's population is and has been literate, and that the people who write literature or keep diaries are atypical. Objects are used by a much broader cross section of the population and are therefore potentially a more wide-ranging, more representative source of information than words.³ They offer the possibility of a way to understand the mind of the great majority of nonliterate people, past and present, who remain otherwise inaccessible except through impersonal records and the distorting view of a contemporary

³ Jules David Brown, "Style as Evidence," *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1980): 208. Peter Gay has observed that "the most undramatic work of art presents precisely the same causal puzzles as the creation of the text, like the invention of a new word or the invention of a new style." *The Great Invention: On Creativity, Chance, and the Mind* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 31.

⁴ Henry Glavin, "Meaningful Things and Appropriate Myths: The Artifact's Place in American Studies," in *Perspectives: An Annual of American Cultural Studies*, ed. Jack Salzman, vol. 3 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), pp. 29-30.

literary elite. This promise perhaps explains why many of the leading early proponents, indeed pioneers, of material culture have come from the field of folklore and folk life and have studied vernacular objects. Such study has required a considerable amount of scholarly innovation. Vernacular objects pose interpretive difficulties because our scholarly traditions and experience, especially in regard to art, architecture, and the decorative arts, have focused on high style objects.

The theoretical, demarcative advantage of artifacts in general, and vernacular material in particular, is partially offset by the skewed nature of what in fact survives from an earlier culture. A primary factor in this is the destructive, or the preservative, effect of particular environments on particular materials. Materials from the deeper recesses of time are often buried, and recovered archaeologically. Of the material heritage of such cultures, glass and ceramics survive in relatively good condition, metal in poor to fair condition, wood in the form of voids (postholes), and clothing not at all (except for metallic threads, buttons, and an odd clasp or hook).

Inherent and attached value, discussed above, is another major element in what survives. A significant aspect of this is taste, or, more specifically, changes in taste over the years. A "degree-of-sophistication" scale, ranging from rude vernacular

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is essential for cultural understanding, are consequently not perceivable in what a society expresses. They can, however, be detected in the way in which a society expresses itself, in the configuration or form of things, in *style*.¹⁴ Stylistic evidence can be found in all modes of cultural expression, whether verbal, behavioral, or material. But a society puts a considerable amount of cultural spin on what it consciously says and does. Cultural expression is less self-conscious, and therefore potentially more truthful, in what a society produces, especially such mundane, utilitarian objects as domestic buildings, furniture, or pots.

Cultural Perspective

Perhaps the most difficult problem to recognize and surmount in cultural studies is that of cultural stance or cultural perspective. The evidence we study is the product of a particular cultural environment. We, the interpreters, are products of a different cultural environment. We are pervaded by the beliefs of our own social groups—nation, locality, class, religion, politics, occupation, gender, age, race, ethnicity—beliefs in the form of assumptions that we make unconsciously. These are biases that we take for granted; we accept them as mindlessly as we accept the tug of gravity. Is it possible to step outside of one's own cultural givens and interpret evidence objectively in terms of the beliefs of the individuals and the societies that produced

at one end to high style at the other, counts into play. The calibrations on this scale have obvious implications of social class. High style objects, sometimes of precious materials and fabricated with technical skill that elicits admiration, tend to be preserved; modest objects, which for economic reasons sometimes have much less invested in them in terms of the quality of the material or the craftsmanship, simply may not last as long or, if they do, tend eventually to be discarded as junk. Objects with ironic or associational value are preserved, but when they lose that association (religious paintings in a secular society, photographs of unknown success), they become disposable.

Even allowing for the distortions of survival, it remains true that objects can make accessible aspects, especially nonline aspects, of a culture that are not always present or detectable in other modes of cultural expression.

Veracity

Certain fundamental beliefs in any society are so generally accepted that they never need to be articulated (see *Cultural Perspective* below). These basic cultural assumptions, the detection of which

in the materials of the society.⁴ The evidence? If not, if we are irreflexibly biased by our own unconscious beliefs, if we are hopelessly culture bound, then the entire enterprise of cultural interpretation should be avoided since our interpretations will inevitably be distorted. It is possible to argue, as Arnold Hauser does in response to the contention of Karl Marx that we see all things from the perspective of our social interest and our view is therefore inevitably distorted, that once we become aware of the problem we can struggle against subjectivity, against individual and class interests, and can move toward greater objectivity.⁵ Awareness of the problem of one's own cultural bias is a large step in the direction of neutralizing the problem, but material culture offers a scholarly approach that is more specific and trustworthy than simple awareness. The study of systems of belief through an analysis of artifacts offers opportunities to circumvent the investigator's own cultural per-

⁴ For an extended discussion of this issue, see Brown, "Style as Evidence," esp. pp. 197-200.

⁵ Arnold Hauser, "Sociology of Art," in *Marxism and Art: Writings in American Anthropology*, ed. Reed Lang and Forrest Williams (New York: Dover McKay Co., 1978), p. 279.

spective. By undertaking cultural interpretation through artifacts, we can engage the other culture in the first instance not with our minds, the seat of our cultural biases, but with our senses. "This affective mode of apprehension through the senses that allows us to put ourselves, figuratively speaking, inside the skins of individuals who committed, made, used, or enjoyed these objects, to see with their eyes and touch with their hands, to identify with them empathetically, is clearly a different way of engaging the past than abstractly through the written word. Instead of our minds making intellectual contact with minds of the past, our senses make affective contact with senses of the past."⁷⁶

The methodology of material culture, with its affective approach that aspires to the objectivity of scientific method, affords a procedure for overcoming the distortions of our particular cultural stance, and, of almost equal importance, it makes visible the otherwise invisible, unconscious biases of our own cultural perspective. Awareness of what one normally takes for granted occurs only in the forced confrontation with another norm. For example, we become particularly aware of gravity as gravity when it is not there, as in our observation of astronauts working in a spacecraft. When we identify with another culture through the affective, sensory apprehension of its artifacts, we have an opportunity to accept the other culture as the norm

values as well as historical facts. But it would be a delusion to assume we acquire complete access to the belief systems of a culture through its material survival. Cultural expression is not limited to things. But the techniques of material culture should be part of the tool kit of the well-equipped cultural scholar. The obverse of this disclaimer is the argument advanced here: although the study of artifacts is only one route to the understanding of culture, it is a special, important, and qualitatively different route. An investigation that ignores material culture will be impoverished.

Theoretical Background

Culture and Society

The definition given at the beginning stated that the study of material culture can be considered a methodological branch of cultural history or cultural anthropology. Material culture is the object-based aspect of the study of culture. As with cultural history and cultural anthropology, the study of material culture touches on the allied concerns of social history and social anthropology. A society, a group of interdependent persons forming a single community, has a culture; a set of beliefs, Social history and social anthropology study the relationships between individuals or groups of individuals in a society, especially the patterns and details of

and become aware of the differentness, the special qualities, of our own culture. The culture being studied provides a platform, a new cultural stance, for a perspective on our culture. This can be of interest for its own sake, but specifically and practically in terms of the study of material culture, increasing awareness of the biases of one's own cultural perspective helps achieve objectivity in subsequent investigations.

The fact is that cultural perspective is only a problem or liability to the extent that one is unaware or unable to adjust for it. Indeed, it is our quarry, the cultural patterns of belief, of mind, that we seek.

Final Note

A disclaimer should be entered regarding the completeness of what can be learned from material culture. In certain instances—prehistoric or preliterate societies, for example—artifacts constitute the only surviving evidence, so there is little choice but to use them as best one can to determine cultural

the daily existence of large subgroups as defined by class, race, religion, place of residence, wealth, and so forth. Cultural history and cultural anthropology study the peculiar achievements, especially intellectual, that characterize a society, such as art, science, technology, religion. Obviously there are significant areas of overlap. Society and culture are inextricably intertwined, and their study cannot and should not be isolated except for analytical purposes.

Cultural history and cultural anthropology, with their sister subjects of social history and social anthropology, thus constitute a field-of-interest umbrella that arches over the study of material culture.⁹ The theoretical underpinnings of the study will be noted in the sections that follow but are not explored extensively in view of their complexity and the introductory nature of this essay.

⁹ The location of material culture within the broader confines of cultural and social history and anthropology does not, however, preclude the utilization in the study of material culture of investigative techniques normally associated with other fields and disciplines. These techniques will be discussed later.

⁸ Brown, "Style as Evidence," p. 208.

Structuralism and Semiotics

The fundamental purpose of the study of material culture is the quest for cultural belief systems, the patterns of belief of a particular group of people in a certain time and place. The methodology is to some extent *strukturalist* in its premise that the configurations or properties of an artifact correspond to patterns in the mind of the individual producer or producers and of the society of which he or they were a part.

Modern linguistic theory has made us aware of the significance of language as the manifestation of man's capacity, indeed compulsion, to impose structure on the world and his experience of it. Man's structuring apparent in language, is the only reality he knows. His reality is relative, endlessly changing, true only for the moment, it is the empirical shadow of a hypothetical underlying permanent universe, a world of ideas, a unified field. The reality man experiences is created by man, and language, the naming of that reality, is a manifestation and measure of the current structure of reality in any given place and time. It is therefore significant cultural evidence as the reflection of man's mental structuring. But language is not solely human. Animals communicate by arrangements of sounds and, in the case of dolphins, for example, may have languages. Perhaps more special to man than language is the capacity to make implements and, more special yet, objects for aesthetic gratification.

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jecting others. This is why an object or an entire category of objects falls in and out of fashion. The object stays relatively the same, but people change and cultural values change. From the time it is created, an artifact can arouse different patterns of response according to the belief systems of the perceivers' cultural matrices. The sequence of synchronic patterns that could be triggered by an artifact resembles the sequence of frames in a motion picture; in theory, if we could retrieve all the patterns, we would have a film of history. In practice, only a few patterns are accessible, primarily those of the original fabricator and the modern perceiver. Artifacts, then, can yield evidence of the patterns of mind of the society that fabricated them, of our society as we interpret our responses (and nonresponses), and of any other society intervening in time or removed in space for which there are recorded responses.

Determinism

The fundamental attitude underlying the study of material culture is, as with most contemporary scholarship, a pervasive *determinism*. This statement may seem to belabor the obvious, but a strict determinism not only underlies the other theoretical aspects of the study of material culture but also dictates the methodological procedures outlined below whereby, through a variety of techniques, an object is unpacked. The basic premise is that

every effect observable in or induced by the object has a cause. Therefore, the way to understand the cause (some aspect of culture) is the careful and imaginative study of the effect (the object). In theory, if we could perceive all of the effects we could understand all of the causes; an entire cultural universe is in the object waiting to be discovered. The theoretical approach here is modified, however; by the conviction that in practice omnipresence leading to omniscience is not a real possibility. External information—that is, evidence drawn from outside of the object, including information regarding the maker's purpose or intent—plays an essential role in the process. Such an approach is inclusive, not exclusive.

Although the fundamental concern of material culture is with the artifact as the embodiment of mental structures, or patterns of belief, it is also of interest that the fabrication of the object is a manifestation of behavior, of human act. As noted above in the discussion of culture and society, belief and behavior are inextricably intertwined. The material culturalist is, therefore, necessarily interested in the motive forces that condition behavior,

There is a language of form as there is a language of words; a naming through making as there is a naming through saying. That man expresses his human need to structure his world through forms as well as through language is a basic premise of the structuralist approach to material culture.¹⁰

The methodology of material culture is also concerned with semantics in its conviction that artifacts transmit signals which elucidate mental patterns or structures. Complementing the structuralist premise and semiotic promise of the interpretation of artifacts is the knowledge that artifacts serve as cultural releasers. Perceivers in other societies who have a different mix of cultural values, some in concert and some at variance with those of the producing society, respond positively to certain artifacts or aspects of artifacts while ne-

¹⁰ A measure of the potency of the language of form is the role that nature—and man's experience of the physical world—plays in language. This is obviously true with poetic imagery and metaphor, where concretions vivify abstractions, and in the imagery of vernacular expressions which articulate and expose fundamental human perceptions of the residues of existence.

specifically the making, the distribution, and the use of artifacts. There is an underlying assumption that every living being acts so as to gratify his own self-interest as he determines that interest to be at any given moment. This is an inevitable by-product of the fundamental concern with cause and effect. Thus such issues as the availability of materials, the demands of patronage, channels of distribution, promotion, available technology, and means of exchange, which require the investigation of external evidence, are pertinent.

Methodology

How does one extract information about culture, about mind, from mute objects? We have been taught to retrieve information in abstract form, words and numbers, but most of us are functionally illiterate when it comes to interpreting information encoded in objects. Several academic disciplines, notably art history and archaeology, routinely work with artifacts as evidence and over the years have built up a considerable amount of theoretical and methodological expertise. Work done in these fields is often directed inward, toward the accumulation and explication of information required by the discipline itself. In the history of art this takes the form of resolving questions of stylistic and iconographic influence, of dating and authorship,

descriptive techniques of art history and archaeology, and in this there is more overlap with the natural than with the social sciences. The initial descriptive steps in the approach to objects resemble fieldwork in a science such as geology, and description can also involve the use of scientific equipment.

The method of object analysis proposed below progresses through three stages. To keep the distorting biases of the investigator's cultural perspective in check, these stages must be undertaken in sequence and kept as discrete as possible. The analysis proceeds from *description*, recording the internal evidence of the object itself; to *detection*, interpreting the interaction between the object and the perceiver; to *speculation*, framing hypotheses and questions which lead out from the object to external evidence for testing and resolution.¹¹

Description

Description is restricted to what can be observed in the object itself, that is, to internal evidence. In practice, it is desirable to begin with the largest, most comprehensive observations and progress systematically to more particular details. The terminology should be as accurate as possible; technical terms are fine as long as they can be understood. The analyst must, however, continually guard against the intrusion of either subjective assumptions or conclusions derived from other experi-

of quality and authenticity. In archaeology it is the basic task of assembling, sorting, dating, and analyzing the assembled data. But art history and archaeology also have fundamental concerns with the cultures that produced the objects, and the methodologies of these two fields, to the extent that they provide means for the interpretation of culture, are essential to material culture. At present they are the two disciplines most directly relevant to the actual work of investigating material culture. But, as they are usually defined, they are not adequate to the total task. The exploration of posterns of belief and behavior, in an intellectual borderland where the interests of humanities and social sciences merge, requires an openness to other methodologies, including those of cultural and social history, cultural and social anthropology, psychohistory, sociology, cultural geography, folklore and folk life, and linguistics. But the approach to material culture set forth below dictates that these broader concerns and methodologies *not* be brought into play until the evidence of the artifact itself has been plumbed as objectively as possible. Therefore the first steps are most closely related to the basic

ence. This is a synchronic exercise; the physical object is read at a particular moment in time. The object is almost certainly not identical to what it was when it was fabricated; time, weather, usage will all have taken their toll. At this stage no consideration is given to condition or to other diachronic technological, iconographic, or stylistic influences.

Substantial analysis. Description begins with substantial analysis, an account of the physical dimensions, material, and articulation of the object. To determine physical dimensions, the object is mea-

¹¹ The issue of sequence undoubtedly needs further study. I am aware that the insistence upon strict adherence to a particular series of steps seems rigid and arbitrary, an unalloyed fettering of the investigator. Yet, I have come to appreciate the virtues of sequence empirically on the basis of considerable classroom experience with artifact analysis. It is only with both the object and the investigator in mind that the object can be brought to the more complex, and satisfying the final interpretation. Obviously, the procedure is time-consuming, and there is a natural impatience to move along. My experience has been, however, that this should be retained until the analysis is exhaustive and the obvious next question requires advancing to the next step.

sure. The object is measured in its own terms, and the greater the care taken with each analytical step before proceeding, the more penetrating, complex, and satisfying the final interpretation. Obviously, the procedure is time-consuming, and there is a natural impatience to move along. My experience has been, however, that this should be retained until the analysis is exhaustive and the obvious next question requires advancing to the next step.

sured and perhaps weighed. The degree of precision depends on the interests of the investigator. If he will be considering a series of objects, a certain amount of precision is desirable, given the possible subsequent significance of and need for quantification. However, it is not desirable to carry decimals to the point of losing an immediate sense of dimension in a welter of numbers; real significance may lie in general measure, as with Glasick's discovery of the modal importance of spans and cubits in the vernacular architecture of Virginia.¹⁴ Next comes a description of the materials—what they are, how extensively they are used, and the pattern of their distribution throughout the object. Finally, the ways in which the materials are put together in the fabrication of the object, the articulation, should be noted. For example, with fabrics one would look at the weave; with metals, the welding, soldering, riveting; with wood, the dovetails, dowels, miter joints, mortise-and-tenon joints, glue.

Substantial analysis is a descriptive physical inventory of the object. It is achieved with the assistance of whatever technical apparatus is appropriate and available. Simple tape measures and scales, ultraviolet lamps and infrared photographs, or complex electron microscopes and X-ray defraction machines are all basically enhancement of one's ability to perceive and take the measure of the physical properties and dimensions of the object.¹⁵

Content. The next step in description is analysis

rative designs or motifs, inscriptions, coats of arms, or diagrams, engraved or embossed on metal, carved or painted on wood or stone, woven in textiles, molded or etched in glass.

Formal analysis. Finally, and very important, is analysis of the object's form or configuration, its visual character. It is useful to begin by describing the two-dimensional organization—lines and areas—either on the surface of a flat object, or in elevations or sections through a solid object.¹⁶ Next comes the three-dimensional organization of forms in space, whether actual in a three-dimensional object or represented in a pictorial object. Subsequently, other formal elements such as color, light, and texture should be analyzed with, as in the case of the initial description of materials, an account of their nature, extent, and pattern of distribution (rhythm) in each case. Determination of the degree of detail must be left to the discretion of the investigator; too much can be almost as bad as too little, the forest can be lost for the trees.

Deduction

The second stage of analysis moves from the object itself to the relationship between the object and the perceiver. It involves the empathetic linking of the material (actual) or represented world of the object with the perceiver's world of existence and experience. To put it another way, the analyst contemplates what it would be like to use or interact with

of content. The investigator is concerned simply with subject matter. This is usually a factor only with works of art or other decorated objects. The procedure is iconography in its simplest sense, a reading of overt representations. In the case of a painting, this may simply be what is represented, as if the work were a window on the world (or on some kind of world). Content may include deco-

the object, or, in the case of a representational object, to be transported empathetically into the depicted world. If conditions permit, he handles, lifts, uses, walks through, or experiments physically with the object. The paramount criterion for deductions drawn from this interaction is that they must meet the test of reasonableness and common sense; that is, most people, on the basis of their knowledge of the physical world and the evidence of their own life experience, should find the deductions to be unstrained interpretations of the evidence elicited by the description. If these deductions are not readily acceptable as reasonable, they must be considered hypothetical and deferred to the next stage.

Although the analyst in the deductive stage moves away from a concern solely with the internal evidence of the object and injects himself into the investigation, the process remains synchronic. Just as the object is only what it is at the moment of

¹¹ The procedures of formal analysis summarized briefly here will be familiar to any art historian. They are not, however, arcane, and investigators need not be specially trained. Formal analysis is a matter of articulating and recording what one sees, preferably in a systematic sequence as suggested here.

¹¹ Henry Glavin, *John Howard in Middle Pysquis: A Structural Analysis of Historic Artifacts* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973).

¹² The procedures outlined here for collecting internal evidence have other significant applications. Physical analysis, including the use of scientific apparatus, can provide crucial information in regard to authenticity. The use of scientific methods, such as radiocarbon dating, can be exceedingly useful in determining authenticity. These applications of the methodology can take place at any time, but it is preferable for the issue of authenticity to be resolved before the analysis proceeds beyond description. If a material culture investigator is to arrive at cultural conclusions on the basis of material evidence, the specimen being studied must be an authentic product of the culture in question. The investigator must recognize the limits of the objects. If the objects are the products of the culture, a fair may be a useful artifact in relation to the culture that produced the fake, but it is deceptive in relation to the faked culture.

investigation, and as such may be more or less different than what it was when it was made, so too the analyst is what he is at the moment of investigation. Ten years hence he might respond differently to the object because of different interests and a different mix of life experiences near the surface of conscious awareness. The particular encounter between an object with its history and an individual with his history shapes the deductions. Neither is what they were nor what they may become. Yet the event does not occur within a vacuum. The object is at least in some ways what it was or bears some recognizable relationship to what it was; the same, although less germane, is true of the investigator. The object may not testify with complete accuracy about its culture, but it can divulge something. It is the analyst's task to find out what it can tell and, perhaps, deduce what it can no longer tell.

Sensory engagement. The first step in deduction is sensory experience of the object. If possible, one touches it to feel its texture and lifts it to know its heft. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to the physical adjustments a user would have to make to its size, weight, configuration, and texture. The experience of architecture or a townscape would involve sensory perceptions while moving through it. If the object is not accessible, then these things must be done imaginatively and empathetically. In the case of a picture, the en-

one's external knowledge to see if it can be deduced from the object itself and, if it cannot, to set that knowledge aside until the next stage.

In the case of a pictorial object, there are a number of questions that may be addressed to and answered by the object itself, especially if it is representational. What is the time of day? What is the season of the year? What is the effect on what is depicted of natural forces such as heat and cold or the pull of gravity? In the relation between the depicted world and our world, where are we positioned, what might we be doing, and what role, if any, might we play? How would we enter pictorial space? What transpired prior to the depicted moment? What may happen next?

Emotional response. Finally, there is the matter of the viewer's emotional response to the object. Reactions vary in kind, intensity, and specificity, but it is not uncommon to discover that what one considered a subjective response is in fact widely shared. A particular object may trigger joy, fright, awe, perturbation, revulsion, indifference, curiosity, or other responses that can be quite subtly distinguished. These subjective reactions, difficult but by no means impossible to articulate, tend to be significant to the extent that they are generally shared. They point the way to specific insights when the analyst identifies the elements noted in the descriptive stage that have precipitated them.

I have stressed the importance of attempting them.

gagement is necessarily empathetic; the analyst projects himself into the represented world (or, in Alois Riegl's sense, considers that the pictorial space continues into the viewer's world of existence) and records what he would see, hear, smell, taste, and feel.¹⁴

Intellectual engagement. The second step is intellectual apprehension of the object. With a tool or implement this is a consideration of what it does and how it does it, and in such cases may need to precede or accompany the sensory engagement. The degree of understanding at this stage (prior to the admission of external evidence) depends on the complexity of the object and the analyst's prior knowledge and experience. It is unnecessary to ignore what one knows and feign innocence for the appearance of objectivity, but it is desirable to test

to maintain rigorous discreteness and sequence in the stages of object analysis. In fact, this is difficult if not impossible to achieve. Deductions almost invariably creep into the initial description. These slips, usually unnoticed by the investigator, are undesirable since they undercut objectivity. But in practice, while striving to achieve objectivity and to maintain the scientific method as an ideal, the investigator should not be so rigorous and doctrinaire in the application of methodological rigor as to inhibit the process. Vigilance, not martial law, is the appropriate attitude. Often an individual's subjective assumptions are not recognized as such until considerably later. In fact, it is instructive in regard to understanding one's own cultural biases, one's own cultural perspective, to mark those assumptions that remain undetected the longest in the descriptive stage. These are often the most deeply rooted cultural assumptions.

Speculation

Having progressed from the object itself in description to the interaction between object and perceiver in deduction, the analysis now moves com-

¹⁴ See Sheldon Nodden, "Structural Analysis in Art and Architecture," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, Vol. 37, No. 10, October, 1951, pp. 56-61; and also, in the same issue, the article set forth tentatively as the basis for contemporary structural analysis in the early art historical work of the German school of *Strukturgeschichte*, especially as initiated by Riegl and developed by Guido von Knaack, Wilhelm, and the anthropologist structuralist of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

pletely to the mind of the perceiver, to *speculation*. There are few rules or prescriptions at this stage. What is desired is as much creative imagining as possible, the free association of ideas and perceptions tempered only, and then not too quickly, by the analyst's common sense and judgment as to what is even vaguely plausible.

Theoria and hypotheses. The first step in speculation is to review the information developed in the descriptive and deductive stages and to formulate hypotheses. This is the time of summing up what has been learned from the internal evidence of the object itself, turning those data over in one's mind, developing theories that might explain the various effects observed and felt. Speculation takes place in the mind of the investigator, and his cultural stance now becomes a major factor. However, since the objective and deductive evidence is already in hand, this cultural bias has little distorting effect. Indeed, it is an asset rather than a liability; it fuels the creative work that now must take place. Because of cultural perspective, it is impossible to respond to and interpret the object in exactly the same way as did the fabricating society, or any other society that may have been exposed to and reacted to the object during its history and perignations. Where there is a common response, it provides an affective insight into the cultural values of another society. Where there is divergence, the distinctive cultural perspective of our society can illuminate unseen

inary analysis—description, deduction, speculation—is complete and the investigation has moved to external evidence. There should be continual shunting back and forth between the outside evidence and the artifact as research suggests to the investigator the need for more descriptive information or indicates other hypotheses that need to be tested affectively.

Investigation of External Evidence

Allied Disciplines

Pursuing a program of research in material culture based on questions and hypotheses arising from artifact analysis involves the techniques and approaches of any of a dozen or more subjects or disciplines divided between the humanities and the social sciences.¹⁶ The following can or do utilize artifacts evidentially: archaeology, cultural geography, folklore and folk life, history of art, social and cultural anthropology, and social and cultural history. Several others that do not to any substantial degree are linguistics, psychohistory, and psychology. Since the study of material culture as a distinct discipline (rather than as a part of art history or archaeology) is relatively recent and the theoretical substructure is still being formulated, the list of allied disciplines is probably not complete.

The different relationships the allied disciplines

and even unconscious aspects of the other culture. There was gravity before Newton; there was economic determinism before Marx; there was sex before Freud. We are free to use the insights afforded by our cultural and historical perspective, as long as we do not make the mistake of assigning intentionality or even awareness to the fabricating culture. Our cultural distance from the culture of the object precludes affective experience of those beliefs that are at variance with our own belief systems, but the process now begun can lead to the recovery of some of those beliefs. That is a goal of the exercise.

Programs of research. The second step in the speculative stage is developing a program for validation, that is, a plan for scholarly investigation of questions posed by the material evidence. This shifts the inquiry from analysis of internal evidence to the search for and investigation of external evidence. Now the methodologies and techniques of various disciplines can be brought into play according to the nature of the questions raised and the skills and inclinations of the scholar.

The object is not abandoned after the prelim-

bear to material culture need clarification. In regard to the three disciplines that do not use objects, the relationship is one-sided; material culture does not contribute significantly to, but profits from, techniques and insights of linguistics, psychohistory, and psychology.¹⁷ Conversely, one subject area that does use artifacts, folklore and folk life, profits from, but does not make a readily definable or distinctive methodological contribution to, material culture. Folklore and folk life seems out of place on the list since it refers to a broad area of investigation; as a field rather than a discipline, it is the

¹⁷ There is some question in academic circles whether social and cultural history belong to the human or to the social sciences. This perhaps suggests the seeming usefulness of a distinction between the study of human beliefs, values, and history on the one hand and the study of human behavior on the other, and the need for a new term to encompass those disciplines that study the interaction of human belief and behavior, whether historical or contemporary.

It is inasmuch as the essential purpose of material culture is to help us understand the past that we are interested in it, as yet the methodologies of this equally new (and more controversial) approach are as rudimentary as those of material culture.

opposite of material culture which is a discipline and not a field. In addition to utilizing most of the other disciplinary approaches listed here, studies in folklore and folk life have made especially effective use of material evidence, inasmuch as material culture is particularly useful for any investigation of nonliterate or quasilliterate societies or segments of societies.

The relationship of material culture to other disciplines that use artifacts is one of common or parallel interests rather than interdependence. As noted above, social and cultural history, social and cultural anthropology, and, it might be added, sociology can view material culture as simply a methodological subbranch to be utilized when appropriate.

Cultural geography has an especially close connection with material culture. The explanation may be that, since cultural geography deals directly with the shaping influence of man's mind on his physical environment, it is essentially material culture writ large. As with material culture, its primary evidence exists in the form of both artifacts and pictorial representations. Cultural geography may be defined as an important branch of material culture (as with art, all cultural geography is material culture, but not all material culture is cultural geography); in time the two subjects may turn out to be aspects of a single discipline. For the moment the study of each is in its infancy and their precise

a student in my material culture seminar, Rachel Feldberg, investigated one mid-eighteenth-century Connecticut desk-and-bookcase. She began by noting the number of apertures, then she considered how the openings might have been used by the original owner and hypothesized that they were for sorting and storing papers. Given the desk-and-bookcase's functional associations with reading and writing, its division into upper case and lower case (as in typefaces), and the possible use of the lower section as a press (as in "lined press"), her thoughts turned to printing. She speculated that if envisioned in a horizontal plane, this particular desk-and-bookcase had the same number of openings as did a printer's tray. This suggested alphabetization, with the usual conflation of certain letters (p/q, v/w/z), and the use of the apertures for systematic filing. A quantitative survey of similar desk-and-bookcases would help to confirm or negate her hypothesis.¹⁰ The development of computer technology makes possible a range and variety of quantitative research previously unmanageable.

Syllabic analysis. The other two aspects of the descriptive stage, stylistic analysis and iconography, also lend themselves to broader diachronic and geographic consideration. The search for stylistic influences or sources is a basic art historical procedure. Within the broader framework of material culture, tracing syllabic influence has considerable potential. For example, New England in the six-

relationship remains to be determined.

Art History and Archaeology

I turn now to the two areas of scholarship that have had the longest working experience with material culture—art history and archaeology. The initial step in the analytical process, the physical description of objects (including the use of technical apparatus), is common to both these fields. Moreover the most obvious methodological steps away from the internal evidence and into external evidence also spring from, although they are not limited to, these fields.

Quantitative analysis. Quantitative analysis, more common to archaeology than to art history, is most frequently the extension of descriptive physical analysis to other objects in order to determine the distribution, in time and in space, of certain forms, materials, or modes of construction. Quantitative study can also use the original object and others like it for considering abstract questions, such as the relationship of objects to patrons or users vis-à-vis class, religion, politics, age, wealth, sex, place of residence, profession, and so on. For example,

the beginning of European settlement in the seventeenth century, gravestones appeared in the coastal towns; subsequently their use spread up the river valleys and across the countryside. Since gravestones are often inscribed with considerable data regarding the deceased, a corpus of subject information can be assembled about age, sex, religion, profession, and residence. Gravestones also have a formal design component. Analysis of the evolution and spread of gravestone styles in New England, previously a stylistic tabula rasa, might lead to a significant study of the dispersion of style, of how formal information is disseminated in a

¹⁰ This example is simplified for illustrative purposes and should not be interpreted as relative either for population or quantification studies of the type being discussed. In fact, the variables would deal with a much larger number of variables, as indeed would Feiblein's study of date-and-book-cases if actually undertaken. Also, her investigation into external evidence led to various other issues not apparent here such as the use of letters of credit in the eighteenth century which might be filed in the bookcase; the velocity of correspondence of a New England businessman; both and safekeeping; and the issue of recording gentlemen's and commerce.

given culture.¹⁹ Like radioactive isotopes injected into the bloodstream of a cancer patient, the gravestones would make visible the culture and its pattern of diffusion.

Iconology. Iconography is also a basic art historical procedure for the investigation of art influencing art. There is a gain in research potential when iconography moves to iconology and studies are made of the intellectual matrix—the web of myth, religion, historical circumstance—that spawned the legends and imbue the iconographic elements with their intellectual and symbolic power. The study of iconology leads ineluctably to the study of semantics; all objects, not only works of art with highly developed narrative, image, iconographic, and symbolic content, are the transmitters of signs and signals, whether consciously or subconsciously sent or received. And the interpretation of cultural signals transmitted by artifacts is what material culture is all about.

Another student in my seminar, Kimberly Rosenschach, investigated an eighteenth-century Connecticut tall clock. Traditional research into external evidence, which is part of any investigation into material culture, led to estate inventories in an attempt to determine the normal placement of such clocks and to prove patterns of distribution by economic status. Similarly, clock-makers' account books were consulted for information about shop locations. But such activities need moreulative store-

Wisnerthor Porifolio

house, the store was not a celestial watcher but an iron Caliban that needed itself to be watched. How does one explore the mental landscapes? Sermons, to validate or deny such speculations? Sermons, private diaries, poetry, and fiction are among the sources for the investigator: weaking not only facts but also the hints or suggestions of belief. Even if such hypotheses or speculations remain unproved, they are not necessarily invalid.

Observations on the Categories of Artifacts

Although all man-made things are, in theory, useful evidence of cultural mind, in practice different categories of material yield different kinds of information in response to different investigative techniques. Some categories are responsive to familiar scholarly methodologies; some seem obdurate and mute. This final section reviews the categories of the material of material culture and considers their evidential promise.

Art

The fine arts in general have two advantages, as material for the study of material culture. One, already discussed, is the applicability of the experience and methodologies of an existing discipline, the history of art. The other is that objects of art possess considerable underlying theoretical, com-

practices, but the concept and the language of object analysis framed qualitatively different questions and hypotheses. The tall clock stands slim and erect, slightly larger than human scale. It has human characteristics, and yet it is both less and more than human. It has a face behind which a surrogate brain ticks relentlessly. It is not capable of independent life, yet once wound its mechanism ticks on and its hands move without rest. The human occupants of a house are mortal while the clock loses span of time to use or waste while the clock measures its irremovable passage. Could the clock have played a metaphorical role as the unblinking toiler of time who watches the inhabitants of the house, the agent of some extrahuman, divine power? A student in another course, Joel Phazer, analyzed a Victorian coal-fired parlor stove, a very different object. A useful black imp who ate coal voraciously and had to be emptied (its fecal ashes a material by-product in contrast to the abstract output of the clock), who would inflict a nasty burn on the unwary and could, if unintended, destroy the

¹⁹ See James Dwyer, *In Small Things Forgiveness: The Archaeology of Early American Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977), pp. 64-90.

plexity (as opposed to technical or mechanical complexity), embodying by definition aesthetic and even ethical decision making.²⁰ On the other hand, as noted in the discussion of veracity, the self-consciousness of artistic expression makes art less neutral as cultural evidence than are mundane artifacts. Moreover, there is a special problem connected with the consideration of works of art as cultural evidence, what might be called the aesthetic dilemma.

Hausser has argued that there is no relationship between an object's aesthetic value and its cultural significance. Each is judged by different criteria, and each set of standards is perfectly valid as long as the two are not confused. It is self-deluding to consider an object aesthetically better because it has cultural potency, or to elevate an object as a cultural document because it accords with our sense of aesthetic quality. The aesthetic dilemma arises when

²⁰ "The more complex an object is, the more decisions its design required, the more a particular object was likely to be discovered by accident," writes the author in "Study of the Aesthetic," in *Handbook of American Problems*, ed. Richard Dawson (Hortchommg).

an analytical approach breaks down the complexity of a work of art into simple categories and in so doing destroys the aesthetic experience irretrievably.¹¹ The question is whether the analytical procedures of material culture wreak this kind of aesthetic damage.

The initial steps of the methodology proposed here are completely descriptive and do not compromise the aesthetic response. Close examination of the object accords with accepted procedures for aesthetic evaluation. And the second stage of deductive and interpretative analysis involves objective procedures that only enhance and magnify familiarity, understanding, and aesthetic appreciation. Danger lies in the third stage—speculation. The aesthetic dilemma does not in fact arise from analysis; it arises from speculation. The aesthetic experience of a work of art (or music or literature) can be affected, even permanently altered, by external associations—a distasteful experience at the time of perception, the intrusion of a parody, an unsolicited, ungenial interpretation. Speculation, especially by an "expert," can color, perhaps permanently, the perception of others. Regardless of the validity of the interpretation, the state of mind of the listener or reader is altered, innocence is lost, what has been said cannot be unsaid, the aesthetic experience is irredeemably changed.

Students of material culture who have applied the analytical techniques, including speculation,

accoutrements of theatrical performance, that did not fit into the other obvious categories. These objects share the quality of giving pleasure, or entertainment to the mind and body, and the category has an affinity with, although separate from, art. This is a category in the process of definition and further discussion of it must be deferred.

Adornment

Adornment, especially clothing, has, like the applied arts, the advantage of touching on a wide range of quotidian functions and of embodying a relatively uncomplicated partnership of function and style that permits the isolation and study of style. The potency of this material as cultural evidence can be tested by the simple act of criticizing someone's clothes; the reaction is much more intense than that aroused by comparable criticism of a house, a car, or a television set. Criticism of clothing is taken more personally, suggesting a high correlation between clothing and personal identity and values. Although personal adornment promises to be a particularly rich vein for material culture studies, to date little significant work has been done with it.

Modifications of the Landscape

The most essential quality of an object for the study of material culture, after survival, is authenticity. The optimum object is the gravestone because it

have in fact found their aesthetic pleasure in the object enhanced, not compromised. But aesthetic damage is done not to the interpreter, for whom the speculations are arrived at freely, but to his audience. This, however, is one of the pitfalls in the play of ideas, especially in the area of aesthetic criticism. Speculation is essential to a democracy of ideas, and the danger of restricting ideas or associations is much more serious than the occasional aesthetic damage caused by their expression. Inactive critical interpretation may change an object irrevocably, but our ideas and our perceptions are continually being altered by new ideas and perceptions. That is life. The "aesthetic dilemma" turns out on close inspection to be less a real problem and more in the order of normal intellectual growing pains.

Diversions

In attempting to classify artifacts, I initially established a miscellaneous category for things, such as books, toys and games, prepared meals, and the

is geographically rooted and attended by a great deal of primary data; we are quite secure in attaching it to a particular cultural complex. There has been little or no faking of gravestones and only a limited amount of rearing or relocating. Although an individual gravestone can be considered as sculpture, gravestones and graveyards (or cemeteries) fundamentally belong to a broader category, modifications of the natural landscape. Architecture, town planning, and indeed all aspects of the human-shaped landscape (cultural geography) share with gravestones the same quality of rootedness that ties artifacts to a particular fabricating culture. Although lacking the inscribed data of grave markers, architecture has much greater complexity. Having been built for human occupancy, it responds in very direct ways to people's needs. Classic has observed that historically oriented folklorists have concentrated on architecture because the material survives, it is geographically sited, and it is complex. It is both a work of art and a tool for living, combining aesthetic with utilitarian drives at a variety of conceptual levels.²² Town and

²² Classic, "Folkloristic Study," p. 15.

²³ Hauser, "Sociology of Art," pp. 474-76.

city planning, that is, architecture on a larger scale, share these qualities. In the case of less complex alterations in the physical landscape a distinction must be made between conscious shaping, as in plowing or the construction of a stone wall, and simple behavioral consequences, such as accumulations of animal bones indicative of eating habits.

Applied Arts

Applied arts (furniture, furnishings, receptacles), like architecture, are a partnership of art and craft, of aesthetic appeal and utility.²⁵ They lack the rootedness of architecture and, except in the case of material retrieved archaeologically, present greater hazard in associating objects with their originating culture. Applied arts, however, have an advantage in their simplicity of function which makes it easier to isolate that potent cultural indicator, style. As discussed above in *Cultural Perspective*, the fundamental values of a society are often unexpressed because they are taken for granted.²⁶ As a result, they are manifest in style rather than in content. Stylistic expression can be affected by functional utility or conscious purposefulness. The configuration of a tool or machine is almost completely dictated by its use; the configuration of a story or a play or a painting may be similarly conditioned by its content or message. In architecture and the applied arts form and function are partners. Where the function is simple and constant, as with teapots or chairs, it can be factored out. The remaining

Winterthur Portfolio

and mental problems. Early economies developed a salt trade. Salt containers historically occupied a place of honor at the dinner table, and it mattered who was seated above or below the salt. Salt appears frequently in biblical imagery, representing desiccation and purity. People dream of salt. Human life emerged from brackish pools, the saline content of which is encoded in the human bloodstream. Salt has ritual functions associated with baptism; salt water is put on the infant's lips in Catholic baptismal rites; the forms of early trencher salts derive from medieval and renaissance baptismal fonts. Many body fluids are salty—blood, urine, tears—and in some cultures are associated with fertility rites. These scattered observations suggest the multiple possibilities for cultural investigation that can arise from one simple applied arts object.

Devices

Devices—implements, tools, utensils, appliances, machines, vehicles, instruments—constitute the most problematic and, to date, a relatively unproductive range of artifacts for the study of material culture. Much of the scholarship on devices has been taxonomic, recording functional details and mechanical variations. Little writing has been culturally interpretive except on the automobile, a machine with powerful personal stylistic overtones.²⁷ Theoretical writing that relates devices to culture has dealt with the stylistic modification of machine forms to make them culturally acceptable

variable is style, bespeaking cultural values and attitudes in itself and in its variations across time, space, class, and so forth.

There is, of course, significant cultural evidence in the utilitarian aspect of artifacts. Both architecture and the applied arts, by their use in a wide range of daily activities, especially domestic, are bearers of information about numerous, sometimes quite private, reaches of human experience. Another student in my material culture course, Barbara Mount, studied a seventeenth-century Boston trencher salt. We take salt for granted because our contemporary (largely processed) diet more than satisfies our requirements. Yet the physiological need for salt is fundamental; if deprived of it we, like all animals, would have severe physical

²⁸ The English usage of the term *applied art* is preferable to the American *decorative art* for the latter term is ambiguous. The term *applied art* is preferable because essential character is the combination of aesthetic and utilitarian roles. Since the term *art* common to both terms takes care of the aesthetic aspect, it seems sensible to have the descriptor emphasize utility, that is, *applied* rather than *decorative*.

²⁹ See also Prown, "Style as Evidence," pp. 69-71.

and pervasive images of technology in the popular mind.²⁶ But there has been little cultural analysis of the devices themselves, and no theoretical literature has as yet established a technological or scientific counterpart to the link between art and beliefs.²⁷ Certain devices have particular promise for cultural interpretation. For example, clocks and watches, linked with a significant aspect of everyday human experience—time—surely have cultural significance. Ocular devices—telescopes, microscopes,

²⁶ For example, Roland Barthes, "The New Carotid," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (1971; reprint ed., New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), pp. 88-90.

²⁷ John Kasson, *Childhood in the Middle: Technology and Reform from Voltaire in America, 1774-1900* (New York: Grosvenor Publishers, 1978), and Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

²⁸ From the fact that salt can be achieved in time, Glasie speaks of the importance of halos as well as banjo playing for folklorists ("Folkloristic Study," p. 4), but it remains to be seen whether this assertion will be validated. Glasie had discussed banjos briefly earlier in *Patterns in the Material Folk Culture of the Eastern United States* (1968; reprint ed., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pp. 22-24, but did not follow through to any cultural interpretational theory.

eyeglasses—also readily suggest themselves as extensions of the fundamental human activity of seeing. Although there may be cultural potency in a wide range of device materials, a question persists. Does the fact that they have been less successfully interpreted as cultural evidence than have other categories of artifacts simply reflect the present state of scholarship and scholarly interest, or are there fundamental differences in the nature of certain artifacts that affect their value as cultural evidence? We will consider one aspect of this question in the conclusion.

Conclusion

We have discussed the categories of the materials of material culture in a sequence moving from the more aesthetic to the more utilitarian with, given the broad scope of the categories, considerable overlap. Does the position of a general category or a specific artifact on such an aesthetic/utility scale provide any index of evidential promise?

The cultural interpretation of artifacts is still too young as a scholarly enterprise to permit final or fixed generalizations regarding the comparative potential of artifacts as evidence. But the weight of scholarly evidence, if one simply compares the body of cultural interpretation in the literature of art history, architectural history, and the history of applied arts with the literature of the history of science and technology, suggests that it is the aes-

tive stage, are largely derived from the practice of art history, and when artifacts are subjected to that analysis, they are analyzed as if they were works of art. Where devices respond to this mode of analysis—as, for example, in the perceptions of my colleague Margaretta Lovell regarding sewing machines, buttons and switches, calculators and buses—they do so not in terms of what they do, but rather in the way they are formed and the way in which they operate, that is, their style. If the cultural significance of a device is perceivable in its style rather than its function, then there is reason to conclude that, for purposes of material culture analysis, the aesthetic aspects of artifacts are more significant than the utilitarian. Why this should be the case is explained by Jan Mukarovsky.¹⁸ Mukarovsky observes that all products of creative human activity reveal intention. In the case of implements the speaks specifically of implements, but his argument holds for all devices), that intention, purpose, or aim is directed externally, outside of the implement itself. An art object, on the other hand, is self-referential; it is an aim, an intention in itself. Man is a user of an implement—he applies it externally; man is a perceiver of art—he refers it to himself. Virtually all objects have an artistic dimension; only with devices do we encounter a class of objects that approaches the purely utilitarian. Even there, most devices incorporate some decorative or aesthetic elements, and every device can be contemplated as

thetic or artistic dimensions of objects, to whatever extent and in whatever form they are present, that open the way to cultural understanding. The straightforward statements of fact in purely utilitarian objects provide only limited cultural insights. The fundamental reason why the cultural interpretation of works of art has been more fruitful than that of devices is the disparate character of the material itself. Art objects are the products of the needs of belief; devices are the products of physical necessity. Inasmuch as material culture is fundamentally a quest for mind, for belief, works of art are more direct sources of cultural evidence than are devices. Although devices clearly express human attitudes and values in regard to achieving control over the physical environment, the correspondence between the device and the need that brought it into existence is so direct that there seems little need for further investigation. And yet, there are devices such as clocks and telescopes with clear cultural significance. Moreover, devices respond as well as the other categories of artifacts do to the analytical procedures outlined earlier in this essay. Those procedures, especially in the descrip-

an art object, a piece of abstract sculpture, completely apart from utilitarian considerations.

It is characteristic of an implement that a change or modification affecting the way it accomplishes its task does not alter its essential nature as a particular type of implement. But a change, even a minor change, in any of the properties of a work of art transforms it into a different work of art. Mukatovsky's example is a hammer. Viewed as an implement, a hammer that has its grip thickened or its head flattened is still a hammer; but the hammer as an art object, an organization of certain shapes and colors and textures, becomes a different object if the organization of design elements is altered; if the plain wooden handle is painted red or the cleft in the claws is narrowed. The explanation for this, and here we enter the realm of semiotics, derives from Mukatovsky's premise that every

²⁰ Margaret Lowell and I caught a course in material culture, Jan Mukatovsky, "The Essence of the Material Culture," *Proceedings of the American Anthropological Association*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977, pp. 219-24, and *Structure, Sign, and Function: Selected Essays*, trans. and ed. John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 220-25.

product of human activity has an organizing principle and a unifying intention. Different observers may interpret that intention in different ways, but the artist(s) had a single purpose in mind. It may be unrealistic and unrealizable, indeed quixotic, for a maker to intend that his purpose be understood by all perceivers equally—in the same way and in the same degree as he understands it. Nevertheless, any fabricator must have that purpose, even unconsciously, in order to make. Therefore, objects are signs that convey meaning, a mode of communication, a form of language. The object may, like words, communicate a specific meaning outside of itself. This is the case with a content-filled art object such as a magazine illustration, or with an implement, a device. Such objects relate to external. But a work of art that is self-referential, that is, an artistic sign in and of itself rather than a communicative sign relating to some outside function, establishes understanding among people "that does not pertain to things, even when they are represented in the work, but to a certain attitude toward things, a certain attitude on the part of man toward the entire reality that surrounds him, not only to that reality which is directly represented in the given case."¹⁶ The art object is self-sufficient, and when apprehended evokes in the perceiver a certain attitude toward reality which resonates with the maker's attitude-toward-reality. Because we cannot really experience a reality other than the one

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into which we are locked in time and space, we can make only limited use of an artifact as an informational sign, as a referent outside of itself, as an implement. We are dependent upon the degree of identity between its original world and ours. We may still be able to use the hammer as a hammer, but we may not be able to cure illness with a shaman's rattle. We can, however, use the work of art as an autonomous artistic sign, as an affective link with the culture that called it into being, because of our shared physiological experience as perceivers and our sensory overlap with the maker and the original perceivers. This is the gift, and the promise of material culture. Artifacts are disappointing as communicators of historical fact; they tell us something, but facts are transmitted better by verbal documents. Artifacts are, however, excellent and special indexes of culture, concretions of the realities of belief of other people in other times and places, ready and able to be reexperienced and interpreted today.

¹⁹ Mikatowski, "Visual Arts," p. 257, and *Structures, Signs, and Functions*, p. 225.

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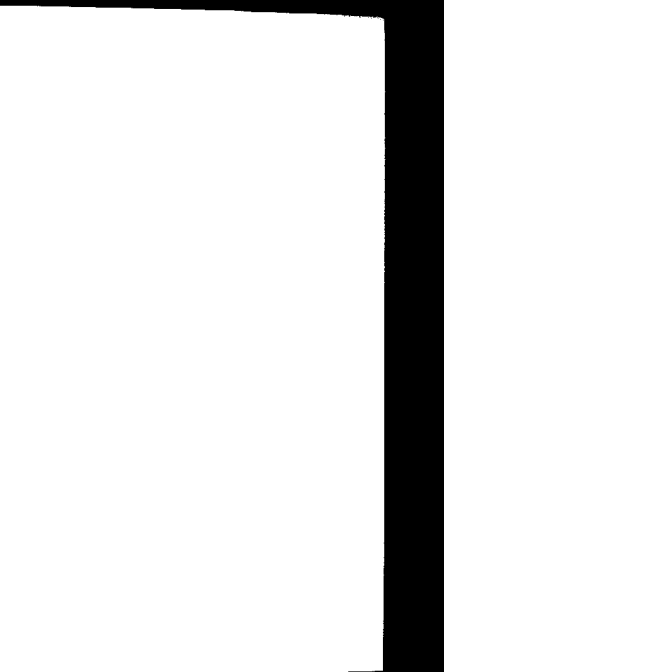
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Future Research:

Of Ghosts and Speculation uses the occasion of the first major exhibition of African American Face Jugs as a point of departure to celebrate and monumentalize these extremely rare, enigmatic, culturally significant forms while confirming the value of history as a necessary part of society. This project, a public archive that is meant to exist as a conceptual hybridization of a time capsule, seed bank and black box flight recorder, is in place as somewhat of a foil, tribute and living annotation to the face jug. It is designed to elicit reverence for these face jugs by engaging a community to value its own origin and identity through a greater intimacy with the scholarship surrounding these objects, an awareness of the value of history as both definite and speculative, and permanently archive a first-person account of one's own origin and identity, the very thing we have no conclusive answer for in the case of these face jugs. As scholarship continues to uncover and develop material, the remainder of this book and the associated digital storage media are open for the addition of relevant new knowledge, data, images, and observations, etc.

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For Rachel and Theo.

