

*To Witness the Past:
African American Archaeology
in Alexandria, Virginia*



Catalogue of an Exhibition

Alexandria Archaeology
Museum
1993

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To Witness the Past:

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Alexandria Archaeology
105 N. Union Street, #327
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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1993

INTRODUCTION

The City of Alexandria's archaeologists have studied the town's African American archaeology since 1978. This catalogue is a summary of findings from archaeological investigations of 25 free black residential sites, two slave sites, and three manufacturing sites where blacks worked. These archaeological studies have included a great deal of research using historic documents relating to the sites, their inhabitants and the development of African American neighborhoods in Alexandria.

The reader will note that each archaeological site referenced in the catalogue has a number, based upon a national archaeological system. In Alexandria, archaeological sites are numbered as follows: 44 (Commonwealth of Virginia), AX (Alexandria) and a sequential number based upon the registration chronology with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources. More than 160 sites in Alexandria have been registered to date.

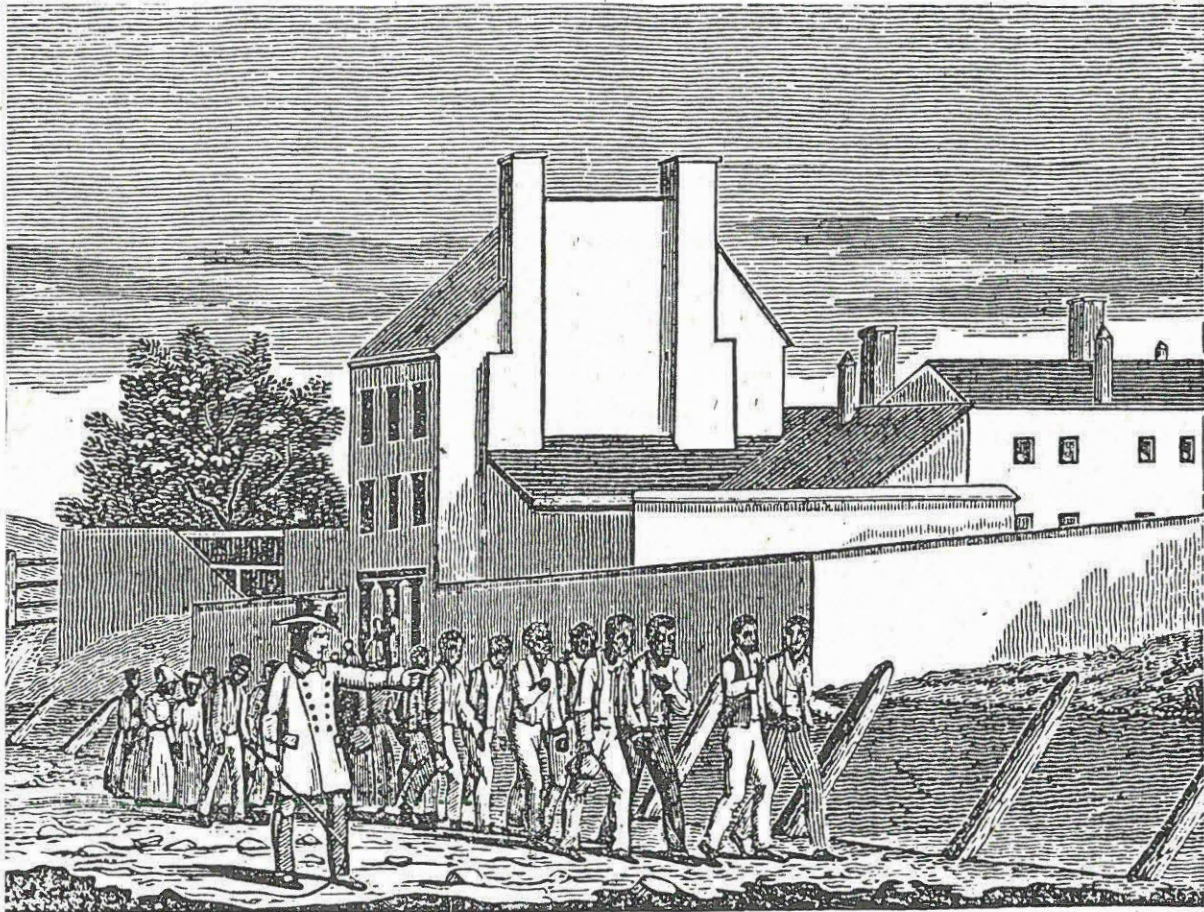
Most of the artifacts selected for the exhibition **To Witness the Past: African American Archaeology in Alexandria, Virginia** represent everyday household objects. Other objects on display have not been interpreted as African American in prior exhibits and publications. They are the products of black labor—Alexandria pottery, glass, and artifacts used by blacks to make sugar and glass.

The archaeological investigations contributing to our knowledge of African American heritage were primarily conducted by Alexandria Archaeology with the assistance of hundreds of volunteers. Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources provided much of the funding. The State Archaeologist and archaeologists working for private site owners have also studied sites which are presented here. Although standard histories and many documents are often silent about African American lives and accomplishments, the artifacts are tangible witnesses to the past.

Slavery in Alexandria

Until the end of the 18th century, virtually all African Americans living within the current boundaries of Alexandria were slaves. By 1755, just six years after Alexandria was founded, the town's population included about 372 African Americans—all slaves. The federal census first enumerated free blacks in 1790, when 52 free blacks were counted in Alexandria. Yet 91 percent of Alexandria's blacks were still held as slaves.

The number of slaves living in Alexandria generally increased through the 19th century until the Civil War. However, slaves represented a smaller percentage of the black population than earlier, as more people with free status moved into Alexandria, and others gained their freedom. In 1860, half of the 2,801 African Americans living in Alexandria were slave and half were free. Only a few slave names are known. These mainly come from advertisements for runaways, or for hiring or selling slaves. Often, in deeds, manumissions or other records only first names are used for slaves. It is through careful archaeological and historical research that slavery in Alexandria can be understood, and the contributions of often nameless people can be identified.



Slave trader and slaves outside the Franklin and Armfield Slave Pen. (From the *American Anti-Slavery Broadside*, New York, 1836 as reproduced in Artemel et al. 1987, courtesy of Engineering Science, Inc.)

The Alexandria Slave Pen

One of the most infamous slave trading establishments of the 19th century was situated in Alexandria at 1315 Duke Street. The building still stands, although the two walled side yards, kitchen and stables are no longer preserved. The main building served as the office area, and there is some evidence that slaves may have slept in the basement.

The site (44AX75) was investigated archaeologically by Engineering Science, Inc. prior to development. The basement of the main building and a portion of the east yard (women's area), as well as the west yard (men's area) at 1317 Duke Street were excavated.

Archaeologists uncovered structural remains relating to the whitewashed brick wall surrounding the men's yard and a line of post holes for posts which once supported a shed roof. The artifacts which were discovered offer a glimpse into the lives of slaves who waited here for sale and transportation south. In the north basement, about a foot below the floor, ceramics and a ginger beer bottle fragment were found. Also unearthed were an unglazed clay marble, an orange clay pipe stem with a molded decoration, and an 18th century Chinese coin.

- 1 **1857 U.S. Penny**
44AX75-VI-Ft.3-D
- 2 **Ch'ing Dynasty Coin**
China, Emperor Ch'ien-lung, 1736-1795
44AX75-XVI-C



Object 2, view 1



Object 2, view 2

A Slave Household

One of the most important discoveries in African American archaeology in Alexandria was made in 1978 before the construction of the Courthouse on the 500 block of King Street. The City archaeologists and hundreds of volunteers worked for more than a year to excavate and preserve 2,000,000 artifacts and dietary remains from this site (44AX1). Most of the artifacts came from deep brick shafts which were filled with trash in the 19th century.

Many of the brick shafts on the block contained similar artifacts which were discarded by middle class merchant and artisan families. But one shaft contained artifacts which were clearly different. This shaft had an unusually large number of serving vessels. It also contained a variety of unmatched transfer printed ceramics, rather than the matched sets of dishes which were discarded in the neighboring merchant sites. The assemblage was distinct for another reason. It included a larger percentage of older objects, which were used for many years before being discarded. Painstaking historical research revealed that this shaft was located behind a small, one-story wooden house which was occupied consecutively by two African American women and their households from 1839 to at least 1855.

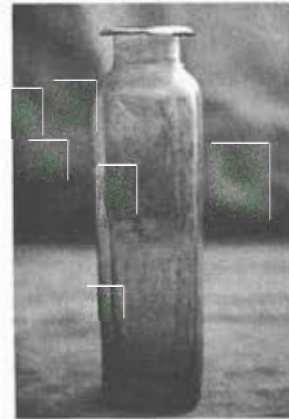
The artifacts unearthed during the excavation date to the occupation of the property by one of the women, Harriet Williams. Records show she lived in the house from 1849 until 1855, and possibly until 1861. Tax rolls record that her owner, Samuel Lindsey, lived just three doors away. We do not know the exact size of Harriet's household, but toy marbles were found on the site as well as a Franklin's Maxims child's cup, indicating that at least one child may have lived on the site during Harriet's residency.



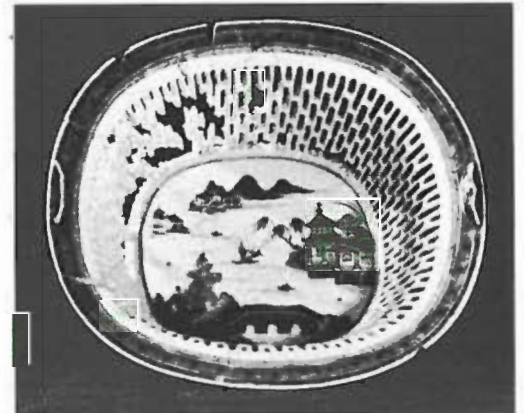
Fire Co. #1 in front of Harriet Williams' house on South St. Asaph Street, around 1870. (Courtesy of William Smith.)

Other artifacts discovered during the excavation document a finer material culture inside the house than its exterior would indicate. For example, a brass bedpost, porcelain candlestick, essence bottle and decorated clay pipe attest to a quality of life quite different than that found in free black households just a few blocks away. Also uncovered were a lead crystal wine glass, French wine bottle seal, nine porcelain tea cups, bone china serving pieces, as well as a Canton fruit basket, all of which show access to more expensive goods than have been found on free black sites.

- 3 **Whiteware platter**
Willow pattern, blue transfer print
English, ca. 1830-1860
18 x 14"
44AX1-Ft.V-Cat.#146
- 4 **Stemmed wine glass**
Cut lead glass with twelve flutes
2.5" dia., 4" h.
English or American, early 19th century
44AX1-Ft.V-Cat.#g182
- 5 **Wine bottle seal**
"Muscat Frontignan"
French, 19th century
1.5" dia.
44AX1-Ft.V-Cat.#g147
- 6 **Essence bottle**
Green glass with chamfered corners and
glass-tipped pontil mark. Similar bottles
have been found with paper labels
advertising essence of peppermint.
19th century
5.25 x 1.25"
44AX1-Ft.V-Cat.#g3
- 7 **Canton fruit basket**
Porcelain
Chinese, ca. 1800-1830
10.5 x 9.5", 4.25" h.
44AX1-Ft.V-Cat.#49
- 8 **Ink bottle**
Cobalt blue glass, umbrella type
mid-19th century
2 x 2 x 2"
44AX1-Ft.V-L.2
- 9 **Clay pipe**
Molded horse motif
early 19th century
44AX1-Ft.V-Surface



Object 6



Object 7



Object 9

10 **Brass finial from bedpost**

19th century
2" dia., 2.25" h.
44AX1-Ft.V-L.3



Object 10

11 **Porcelain candlestick**

Molded acanthus leaf pattern
European or American, mid-19th century
44AX1-Ft.V-Cat.#30

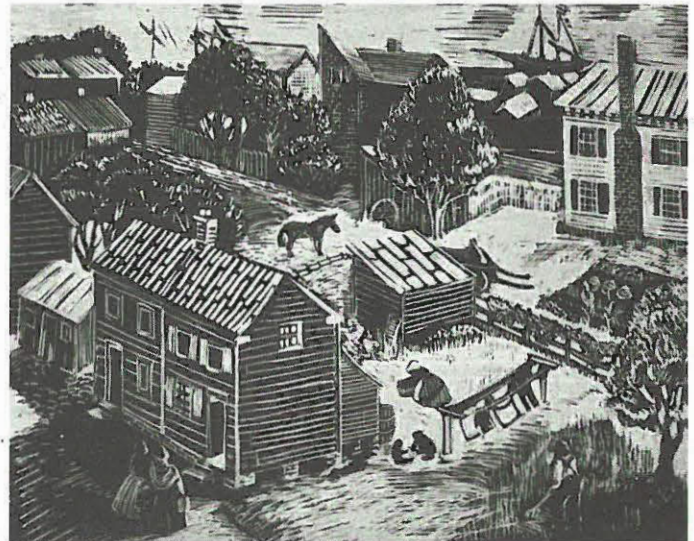


Object 11

African American Freedom in Alexandria

While only 52 free blacks lived in Alexandria in 1790, a wave of newly freed people caused the population to grow to 836 by 1810—a 600 percent increase in just 20 years. Now more than a third of the African Americans in town were free. While the total population of blacks did not dramatically change again before the Civil War, the number of those who were free continued to increase each decade until 1840. In that year, 60 percent had free status. Free blacks constituted almost one fifth of the town's residents.

The earliest free black neighborhoods—the Bottoms and Hayti—can both be traced to land transactions from two white families over a number of years. They provided the foundation for the long-term residence of black families on several adjoining properties. By 1810, four separate residential clusters had started. At the end of the century these small neighborhoods had expanded and connected into an open-ended circle around King Street. Two additional neighborhoods—Cross Canal and The Hump—had taken shape in the northern part of town.



Conjectural drawing of the Brooks and Dudley homes at 420 and 422 South Royal Street, in Hayti. Property owner James Coleman's Fairfax Street house is in the background. Evidence of the house foundations, shed and wash lines were found in the excavations. (Artwork by Karen Murley.)

The Bottoms Neighborhood

In 1799, on the 300 block of South Alfred Street, stood the small, frame homes of the William Goddard and the Pompey Porer families. Probably unpainted and facing a dirt road leading down into a low-lying bottoms area, the houses were new. The two families paid James and Alice Lawrason, a prominent business family in partnership with Quaker Benjamin Shreeve, an annual ground rent for their 25 by 100 foot lots. By 1816, six other families had made similar agreements with the Lawrasons to live on the block.

The enclave of eight black homes gained another neighbor when the Lawrasons established a ground rent in 1818 with the trustees of the Coloured Baptist Society. This is the earliest African American congregation recorded in Alexandria. In 1992, the congregation of Alfred Street Baptist Church funded archaeological excavations near their 1855 church before constructing an addition. Archaeologists from Engineering Science, Inc. uncovered artifacts in the backyard of one of the early black homes (44AX161). The Alfred Street Baptist Church still stands as a landmark to the earliest free black neighborhood and the first known black congregation in Alexandria.

An important discovery was also made by the City archaeologists in the yard of the Moses and Nancy Hanless home at 916 Gibbon Street. Excavation revealed a well made of three wooden barrels with metal hoops which was full of the Hanless family's domestic trash. The artifacts are the only ones excavated from a well in an Alexandria free black property. The objects, many of which are quite large and complete, provide a glimpse into a working class free black home in the mid-19th century.



Students and archaeologist Laura Henley Dean excavating the African American neighborhood known as The Bottoms in 1979.

12 **Pearlware plate**

Blue shell edge
English, ca. 1780-1820
9" dia.
44AX8-Ft.E-Cat.#39

13 **Whiteware pitcher**

Annular finger-painted design
Brown, blue and white coils on black background, with green and brown rim, white handle and spout.
English, ca. 1830-1860
3.5" dia., 5" h.
44AX8-Ft.E-Cat.#21

14 **Whiteware tea cup**

Red and black enameled
English, ca. 1830-1860
4.5" dia., 3" h.
44AX8-Ft. E-Cat. #2

15 **Metal decorative pieces**

These may have been trim from Neo-Classical style furniture legs, or possibly vases. Painted blue and gilt with palm leaf pattern.
19th century
44AX8-Ft.E



Objects 12, 13, 14

16 Oyster shells

Oysters were a common part of the 19th century diet. The shells were sometimes used for walkways and drainage.
mid-19th century
44AX8-Ft.E-L.16

17 Seeds

Cherry, squash and peach
mid-19th century
44AX8-Ft.E-L.13

18 Seed pot

American, mid 19th century
2.5" dia., 2"h.
44AX8-Ft.E-Cat.#77

19 Marbles

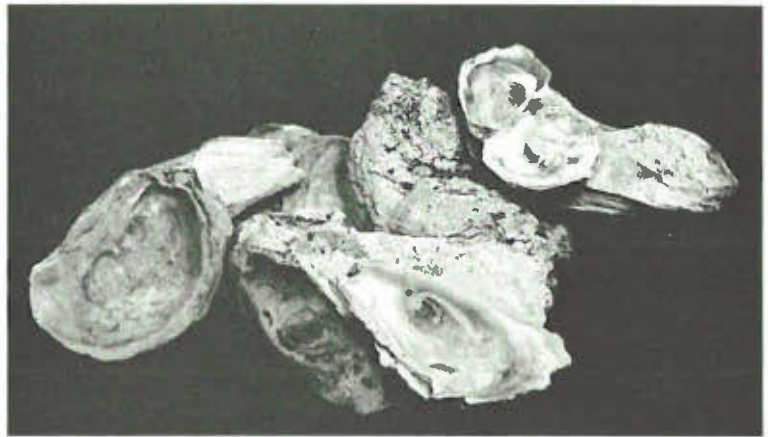
In the 19th century the game of marbles was commonly played by men, rather than children.
German, 19th century
44AX8-Ft.E-L.11

20 Clay pipe

Molded acanthus leaves
mid-19th century
44AX8-Ft.E-L.5



Object 15



Object 16

The Hayti Neighborhood

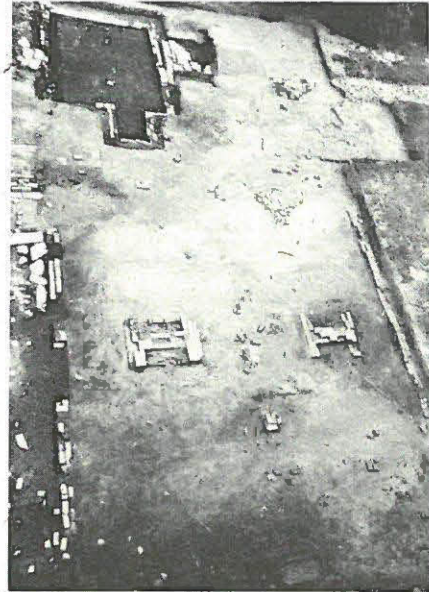
Even before 1810, two free blacks were living on the 400 block of South Royal Street on land owned by the Quaker Hartshorne family. The Hartshornes rented five more houses to black families by 1819. Occupying adjoining lots as in the Bottoms, the seven families formed the nucleus of Hayti for many years. The neighborhood name, "Hayti" (pronounced "Hay-tie"), derives from the island now called Haiti. African slaves won their freedom from the French on Saint-Domingue (1791-1803), and the island was renamed Hayti. The name may have provided hope of independence to free blacks who still knew that their own freedom was tenuous and largely at the discretion of whites.

The City archaeologists and volunteers worked for three years to study and excavate historic Hayti. The most intensive investigation occurred on the lots at 418, 420 and 422 South Royal Street (44AX30).

As in the Bottoms, the Hayti artifacts did not include exotic items or fine wares, such as the slave Harriet Williams' Canton fruit basket. The dishes and glassware were commonplace, inexpensive and unmatched. The artifacts often show heavy signs of wear on their bases, indicating many

years of use. Most of the glassware consisted of utilitarian bottles, which held medicines and beverages. Many of the ceramics were already quite old when they were discarded. More than one third of the dishes discarded on this site at the end of the 19th century were made in England prior to 1820. Rather than primarily throwing away serving vessels and teawares, the Hayti families discarded artifacts used for all household functions: storing, cooking, serving and eating food, serving tea or coffee, personal hygiene (chamber pots), recreation and personal adornment.

While the artifacts discarded on Alexandria's African American sites are virtually all from the European tradition of manufacture, we do not know if they were used differently in black homes. In 19th century Alexandria, African American culture was forming, much of which would not leave a tangible record. Social relations, spirituality, food preparation and healing practices could all have been African American, while the dishes, bottles, dolls, marbles and even the remains of pets found in the archaeological investigation were reflective of 19th century urban American life.



House foundations at 418-422 South Royal Streets. A cellar hole and fireplace from Joseph Coleman's cooper shop, later a free black residence, is at the top of the photograph. Beneath that can be seen the two chimney footings on the adjoining wall of the Brooks and Dudley duplex. Royal Street is to the left.

- 21 **Chamber pot**
Banded yellow ware
American, ca. 1845-1880
9" dia., 5.5" h.
44AX30-Ft.99
- 22 **Case bottle**
Dark green glass with blowpipe pontil
ca. 1780-1850
3.25" dia., 9" h.
44AX30-Ft.51
- 23 **Ink bottle**
Brown salt-glazed stoneware
English, ca. 1800-1880
2" dia., 2" h.
44AX30-Ft.51-Cat.#R88
- 24 **Master ink bottle**
Brown salt-glazed stoneware with Albany slip
American, ca. 1850-1880
2.5" dia., 6" h.
44AX30-Ft.51-Cat.#R90

25 Rockingham tea pot

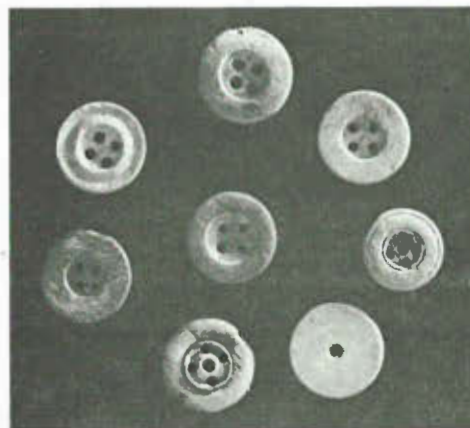
"Rebecca at the Well"
Edwin Bennett and Co., Baltimore,
ca. 1846-1880
5.5" dia., 8.25" h.
44AX30-Ft.51-Cat.#62



Object 25

26 Bone buttons

Bone buttons were used on underwear and shirts. The one-hole button would have been covered with fabric. Many buttons were found in the yard, near post-holes from a clothes line.
American, 19th century
44AX30-1N/12W-L.2
44AX30-3S/1W-L.3
44AX30-4S/5W-L.3
44AX30-5S/0W-L.3
44AX30-6S/2W-L.3
44AX30-6S/2W-L.3
44AX30-6N/2W-Ft.86K
44AX30-1S/5W-Ft.26B



Object 26

27 Brass military buttons

Uniform buttons do not necessarily indicate that the wearer served in the military. Antebellum military buttons appear frequently in slave assemblages. Some may have been attached to surplus military coats, or may have been reused on other articles of clothing.
Embossed with the American Eagle
American, ca. 1850's
44AX30-2S/1W-L.2
44AX30-3S/3W-L.2

28 Pierced Spanish silver real

This coin was very badly worn by the time a hole was pierced in it. The seal and crown can just barely be seen. Pierced coins are commonly found on African American sites, and were used as personal ornament in Africa.

Spanish, 18th century
44AX30-6S/7W-L.2

29 Pierced and carved silver dime, or Love Token

These were commonly presented to loved ones in the 19th century, but may also represent the African tradition of pierced coins.

Monogram "MM" and border carved on obverse

American, 19th century
44AX30-4S/4W-L.1



Object 27

30 Bisque doll head with blond hair

German, ca. 1880
0.75" h.
44AX30-4S/5W-L.2

31 Bisque doll head

German, ca. 1870
1" h.
44AX30-3N/7W-L.2

32 Painted marbles

German, 19th century
0.75" dia.
44AX30-5N/5W-L.3

**33 Grey salt-glazed stoneware
preserve jar**

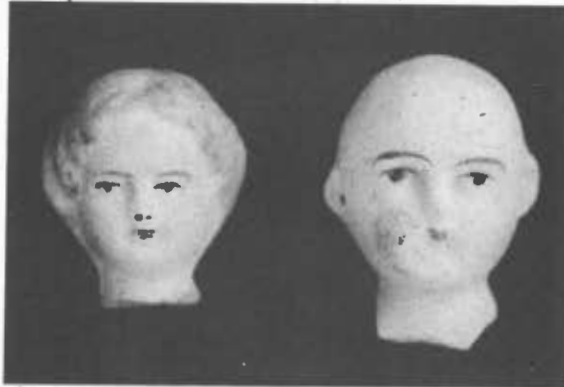
Cobalt blue vine decoration
American, mid-19th century
4" dia., 3.5" h.
44AX30-Ft.51-N2

34 Whiteware plate fragment

This plate was sold by the Quaker
merchant Robert Hartshorne Miller,
whose shop stood on King Street.
The plate dates from before 1846,
when Alexandria was a part of the
District of Columbia.
Mark printed over-glaze,
"Manufactured (for) Rob^t H. Miller
Alexandria D C"
English, ca. 1822-1846
44AX30-2S/1W-L.3



Object 29



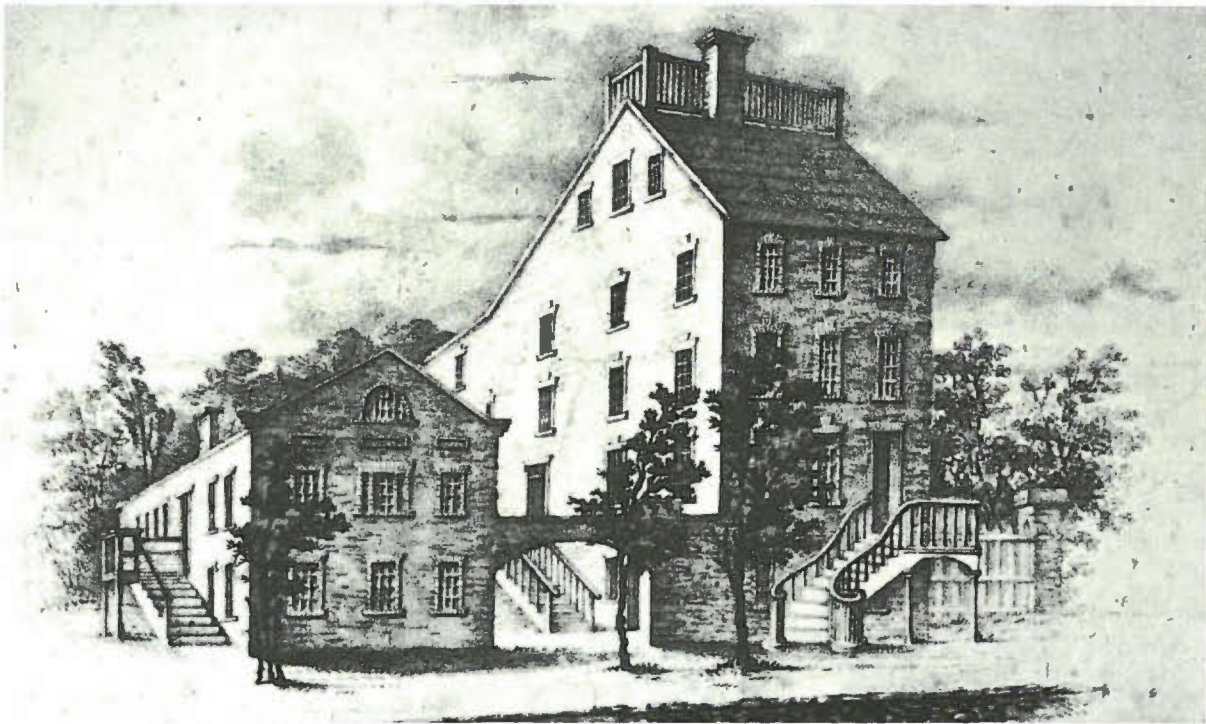
Objects 30, 31



Object 34

Working in Alexandria

For more than one hundred years before the Civil War, African Americans, both enslaved and free, provided the bulk of labor to manufacture Alexandria's major products—rope, bricks, ships and sugar. Many free blacks were self employed as draymen, seamstresses, laundresses, coopers (barrel makers), and market gardeners. In the first several decades of the 19th century, black men had a variety of skilled occupations ranging from trunkmaker to house joiner, ship carpenter, baker and soapmaker. Several free black men ran their own tavern establishments. Increased mechanization in the mid-19th century brought about a reduction in the number of blacks in the skilled trades as new European immigrants worked in the railroad, iron foundry, locomotive shop, and state-of-the-art cotton manufactory. The excavation of several manufacturing sites provided information about the technology used by skilled blacks to make products, such as sugar, pottery and glass.



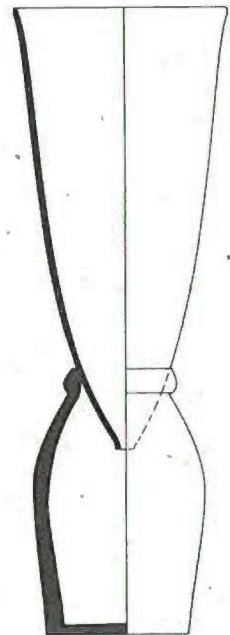
The Hoffman Sugar Refinery on North Washington Street, showing the typical multi-storied brick structure with slate roof. (Wedderburn 1907.)

The Alfred Street Sugar House

City of Alexandria excavations at this site (44AX96) in 1987-1992 were the first at any sugar refinery in North America. In the early 19th century Alexandria was the third largest manufacturer of refined sugar in the United States. William Moore opened a sugar refinery on the 100 block of North Alfred Street around 1804. Jacob Hoffman opened another one block away on the 200 block of North Washington Street (44AX170) in 1815. Each refinery site included a five story brick

refinery, a large dwelling for the owner, spacious gardens around the house, warehouse space, and presumably a place for six to 13 slaves to live.

On the main floor of the refinery, the slaves boiled and filtered the raw sugar with lime water, probably produced from oyster shell and Caribbean coral found at the site. (A Spanish coin found among the coral highlights the link between Alexandria and sugar production in Spanish-speaking islands such as Cuba.) This boiling and skimming process must have involved some safety risks. George Berry, owned by sugar refiner Daniel McLean, might provide one example. Berry's description in the Free Negro Registry of 1821 stated that he had "a scar on his right wrist caused by a burn." The sugar went through several labor intensive steps as it was refined. The slaves stirred the liquid sugar in the cooler until it crystallized, and then poured it into as many as 5,000 ceramic cone-shaped earthenware molds and added a wet clay slip. The slaves lifted the molds by a pulley system to the upper stories, where they were placed in earthenware syrup jars. The syrup dripped out of the mold into the jars, leaving hard, white loaves of sugar. More than 10,000 fragments of sugar molds and syrup jars were excavated at the Alfred Street Refinery and a nearby shop basement (900 King Street, 44AX113). The refinery closed by 1828.



The cone shaped earthenware sugar mold was placed inside a syrup jar during the claying process, in which the sugar dried and whitened. The molasses dripped out of the sugar into the glazed jar. (Barr et al., in press.)

35 Syrup jar

The earthenware jars were glazed on the inside to hold the molasses which dripped from the sugar mold. The heavy rounded rim supported the weight of the mold.
Alexandria, ca. 1804-1828
44AX113

36 Syrup jar sherds

Stamped "J MILLER, ALEX"
Alexandria, ca. 1804-1828
44AX113

37 Sugar mold sherds

Rim and tip of unglazed earthenware mold. The molds were shaped over a form so that sugar loaves of uniform size could be produced.
American, ca. 1804-1828
44AX96

38 Sugar mold tip

Tip of large mold of marbled clay, stamped "IG"
French, early 19th century
44AX113



Objects 35 through 38

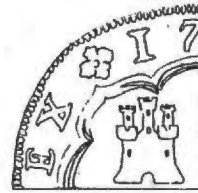
39 Silver real, quarter bit piece

- Spanish coins were cut into bit pieces, as change. This coin and sherds of waterworn pottery were found with coral, shells and sand which originated in the Caribbean, probably near Cuba.

From the reign of Phillip II

Spanish, 18th century

44AX96-CN197



40 Lump of white clay

Used in sugar refining, in the claying process.

19th century

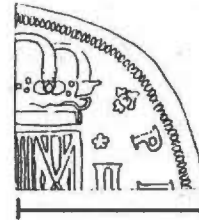
44AX96

41 Coral, shells and water-worn pottery

Coral was transported on the ships which carried sugar from Havana, and then was probably burned to make lime water used in the sugar refining process.

early 19th century

44AX96-Area 2A surface



1.5 cm

Object 39

The Alexandria Pottery Tradition and the Wilkes Street Pottery

Alexandria's potters manufactured earthenware and stoneware utilitarian vessels from 1792 until 1876. The earliest reference to African Americans associated with Alexandria potters is in 1800, when earthenware potter Henry Piercy offered a \$5 reward for the capture of a runaway slave named Nace. Nace was the property of a Mrs. Peake, and so may have been hired out to Piercy to work at his pottery (222 South Washington Street, 44AX87). Earthenware manufactured at Piercy's pottery has been found at many Alexandria sites.

The Wilkes Street Pottery (44AX29) was in operation from 1813 to 1876 under three different owners, John Swann, Hugh Smith and B.C. Milburn. This manufactory produced mainly stoneware. Rescue excavations at this site, conducted by the Virginia State Archaeologist in 1977, recovered more than 16,000 artifacts from the waster piles. Additional pottery produced at this site can be found in private collections and in museums. Records show that African Americans worked at the Wilkes Street pottery under the tenure of each owner. Unlike at the sugar refineries, not all of the workers were slaves.

In 1820, Swann employed six men and two boys, including three slaves. One of the slaves working in Swann's pottery was Thomas Valentine. He continued to work at the pottery after it was purchased by Smith, until 1829 when he gained his freedom. Records from the late 1820s and 1830s mention other people who worked at the pottery, many of whom were black. While some names changed annually, others such as Michael Morris and David Jarbour, both free blacks, remained constant for a number of years.

David Jarbour left a unique legacy—a personally signed stoneware jar, now in the collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA). On the bottom of the pot is inscribed "Maid by D. Jarbour." This large pot, the only extant Alexandria piece with a personal signature, may



David Jarbour, an African American potter who worked at the Wilkes Street pottery between 1816 and 1841, made this pot in 1830. The 28 inch high jar is one of the largest pots known from the Wilkes Street Pottery. (Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), Winston Salem, NC.)

have been a special show piece which marked the end of Jarbour's apprenticeship, or some other level of accomplishment. To what degree were David Jarbour and other blacks at the pottery responsible for the development of the Alexandria pottery tradition? It appears that Alexandria's stoneware was produced in part by blacks, and as such should be recognized as an element of African American material culture.



David Jarbour signed the bottom of this jar with the words "1830 'Alex' Maid by D. Jarbour." (Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA), Winston Salem, NC.)

Earthenware: The Piercy Pottery

Henry Piercy, 1792-1809

42 Jar

Orange glazed earthenware
ca. 1792-1809
44AX95-3KSW8-A3

43 Porringer

Orange glazed earthenware
From site of Piercy's China and
Glass shop
ca. 1796
44AX91-4KSW15-Cat.#4KS-13



Objects 43, 45, 46

- 44 **Pipkin (cooking pot)**
Earthenware with brown glazed interior
From site of Piercy's China and Glass shop
ca. 1796
44AX91-4KSW15-Cat.#4KS-44
- 45 **Pan**
Slip trailed decoration
ca. 1792-1809
44AX93-GB9-Cat.#67.1373
- 46 **Bottle**
Brown glazed earthenware
ca. 1792-1809
44AX94-Market Block Well B-67.1518
- 47 **Wasters and Kiln Furniture**
Piercy Pottery Site
220 S. Washington Street
ca. 1792-1809
44AX87
- a. Bottle fragments, grey salt-glazed stoneware
 - b. Pan fragments, slip trailed earthenware
 - c. Fire bars used for stacking pottery in the kiln
 - d. Milk pan fragment, orange glazed earthenware with brushed manganese decoration
 - e. Bowl fragments, brown glazed earthenware
 - f. Milk pan fragments, brown glazed earthenware

Stoneware: The Wilkes Street Pottery

John Swann, 1813-1825

- 48 **Jug**
Grey salt glazed stoneware with iron wash
ca. 1813-1820
44AX95-3KSW-5
- 49 **Milkpan**
Grey salt glazed stoneware with brushed cobalt stamped "J SWANN"
ca. 1820-1825
44AX1-Ft.B-Cat.RB155
- 50 **Chamber pot**
Grey salt glazed stoneware with brushed cobalt stamped "J SWANN"
ca. 1820-1825
44AX1-Ft.B-Cat.#RB71



Objects 55, 51, 48

H. Smith and Co., 1825-1841

- 51 **Cake pot**
Grey salt glazed stoneware with brushed cobalt
with typical "Alexandria Motif"
stamped "H. Smith & Co."
ca. 1825-1831
44AX1-Ft.B-Cat.#RB287
- 52 **Jar**
Grey salt glazed stoneware with brushed cobalt
stamped "H. Smith & Co."
ca. 1825-1831
44AX95-3KSW3-H-6
- 53 **Kiln furniture**
Wilkes Street Pottery, 621 Wilkes Street
ca. 1813-1876
44AX29

B.C. Milburn, 1841-1877

- 54 **Milkpan**
Grey salt glazed stoneware with slip trailed cobalt
stamped "B.C. Milburn ALEX^a 1 1/2"
ca. 1846-1867
44AX95-3KSW3-H4
- 55 **Pitcher**
Grey salt glazed stoneware with slip trailed cobalt
stamped "B.C. MILBURN ALEX^a 2"
ca. 1846-1867
44AX95-3KSW3-H4
- 56 **Milkpan**
Grey salt glazed stoneware with brushed cobalt
stamped "B.C. Milburn 1 1/2"
ca. 1846-1867
44AX108

The Old Dominion Glass Company

Four glass houses operated in Alexandria at the end of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th century. A large factory by Alexandria standards, Old Dominion Glass Company employed 250 people—black and white—in 1920. The company, which operated from 1901 to 1925, manufactured beer, soda, food, and medicine bottles. During holidays and between orders, the employees turned out novelty items, such as glass canes and pig-shaped bottles.

During construction of the Ramada Inn in 1972, Richard Muzzerole worked in a last minute rescue attempt to collect specimens which had survived the final fire that closed Old Dominion Glass (44AX84). He recovered glass working tools such as shears, tongs, a blow pipe, gauges and pieces

of glass molds. Many examples of wasters—misshapen bottles and pieces of decorative glass canes—were on the site. Many fragments of glass were also unearthed in excavations of the neighboring Alexandria Canal (44AX29), which had been filled with glass factory debris including lumps of amber colored glass and Portner's beer bottles.

Some of the glass company workers lived in a black neighborhood, called Cross Canal, which continued well into the 20th century. An oral history study conducted in 1981 with an African American resident of Cross Canal, Mrs. Virginia Knapper, provided a glimpse of what it was like to work at the Old Dominion Glass Factory.

The glass was made in something like a furnace. It was runny, well, it was more soupy than dough. I'd say it would be more like the dough you make pancakes [from]. They had these long tools that they stick in there and wind around until they got a certain amount...on the stick when they take it out...it looked like a stone...they rolled it up and down, up and down, and there'd be two of us sitting at the molds...I was a mold girl once, and then I also [did] what they used to call "snapper" when it came out of the mold. [I'd] be right there with my...gadget and snap it off...When I first worked there I was making \$3.00 [a week]...we got paid every two weeks...When the factory closed down I was making \$15 a week.

The Old Dominion Glass Co. may not be considered a traditional black site, but Alexandria's African American labor history is intertwined with white owned businesses. Many of the surviving bottles marked with "OD" on their bases are products of this African American labor.



"Carry-In Boy in a Glass Factory, Alexandria, Virginia" (Lewis Wickes Hine, Child Labor Series, 1909. Courtesy of the George Eastman House, Rochester, New York.)

- 57 **Bottles and artifacts from the
Old Dominion site**
Alexandria, ca. 1901-1927
44AX81
- a. Bottle base marked "WAS OD"
 - b. Portner's Malt Extract bottle
 - c. Portner's Tivoli Beer bottle.
 - d. Lightning stopper for Portner's Tivoli Beer
 - e. Chunks of waste glass
 - f. Sand used in manufacturing glass

- 58 **Bottles manufactured at
Old Dominion Glass Company**
Alexandria, ca. 1901-1927
44AX81
- a. Fragments of decorative glass canes and bottle stopper
 - b. Bottle base marked "OD" for Old Dominion
 - c. Panel Bottle marked "The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company Jersey City, NJ" (A&P)
 - d. Turlington Bitters bottles
 - e. Holy Water bottles
 - f. Medicine bottle marked "Especifico Valina"
 - g. Panel bottle marked "Harper's Headache Medicine, Washington DC"
 - h. Medicine bottles

- 59 **Tools used at the Old Dominion
Glass Company**
ca. 1901-1927
44AX81
- a. Gauge for bottle necks
 - b. Plate for panel bottle
 - c. Tongs
 - d. Blow pipe
 - e. Shears
 - f. Mold for neck of large jug

- 60 **Parts of machinery used at
the glass factory**
ca. 1901-1927
44AX81
- 61 **Mis-shapen bottle wasters
discarded at the glass factory**
ca. 1901-1927
44AX81



Objects 58 c, d, e and 59 c, d, e, f

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PRESERVING ALEXANDRIA'S CULTURAL TRADITIONS **Two Centuries of African American Heritage in Alexandria**

To Witness the Past: African American Archaeology in Alexandria, Virginia, was funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) in conjunction with the PACT series, "Two Centuries of African American Heritage in Alexandria." PACT, a coalition of 16 cultural institutions, is committed to increasing public awareness of Alexandria's diverse ethnic heritage. PACT's first area of exploration is the African American presence in Alexandria. In 1993 and 1994 a series of exhibits and public programs, will be presented to broaden public knowledge of the contributions of African Americans to Alexandria's heritage. This publication accompanies an exhibition at the Alexandria Archaeology Museum.

ALEXANDRIA ARCHAEOLOGY MUSEUM

Alexandria Archaeology, the nation's first community archaeology program, is a division of the Office of Historic Alexandria in the City of Alexandria, Virginia. Visitors to the Alexandria Archaeology Museum step into a working laboratory; where they can see the most recent archaeological discoveries from around the City. Museum exhibitions highlight excavations and research, and tell the story of archaeologists working to bring Alexandria's past to light. Visit the Alexandria Archaeology Museum in the Torpedo Factory Art Center, 105 N. Union Street, on the 3rd floor.

Alexandria Archaeology
Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia

