



EVERGREEN PLANTATION CERAMIC ANALYSIS



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ABSTRACT

The Evergreen Plantation is a historical site and is one of the most preserved plantations in the United States. The Evergreen Plantation Archaeological Survey began in 2018, under Dr. Mehta. The research aimed to develop a comprehensive study of the plantation and the lives of the people who lived and worked there. Regarding the research I've done includes the collection of quantitative and qualitative data from the artifacts found at the plantation, an analysis of the ceramic artifacts, the creation of a chronology from the ceramic artifacts, and a detailed look into the morphology of the ceramics. Ceramic artifacts carry a lot of information with them and are especially useful in dating sites, and when analyzing the structure of the potsherds we can form a better understanding of the daily lives of the people on this plantation. All this information is to develop an accurate picture of plantation life and further our understanding of black history in the Southern United States. The sorting of the artifacts and the analysis of the ceramics were input into Excel. Further, the ceramic analysis involved the consultation of already established pottery databases to accurately obtain dating and type information. The potsherds that maintained enough form information will be illustrated. The resulting information and chronology shows a date range between the late 18th to early 20th century and the type of the ceramic artifacts were mostly kitchen wares, pointing to utilitarian uses. The research is still ongoing so there is potential for data fluctuation.

METHODS

- Sorting and collecting through all artifacts and recording artifact position, material, and form and inputting the data into Excel
- Sorting all ceramic artifacts into a secondary collection and labelling where each piece was found, who found it, and the date it was found
- Physically numbering each ceramic artifact with the survey abbreviation, year, and a serial number
- Photographing both sides of each ceramic artifact and creating a photo label
- Analyzing each ceramic artifact by referencing existing ceramic type databases
- Recording the ceramic type, form, color, date range, and photo label of each piece into a separate Excel spreadsheet.

The next steps of this research are to analyze the remaining ceramics to create a more robust chronology as well as to take the potsherds that maintained a lot of form information and utilize archaeological illustration methods to draw a scale replica of the vessel that could visualize and convey the morphology.

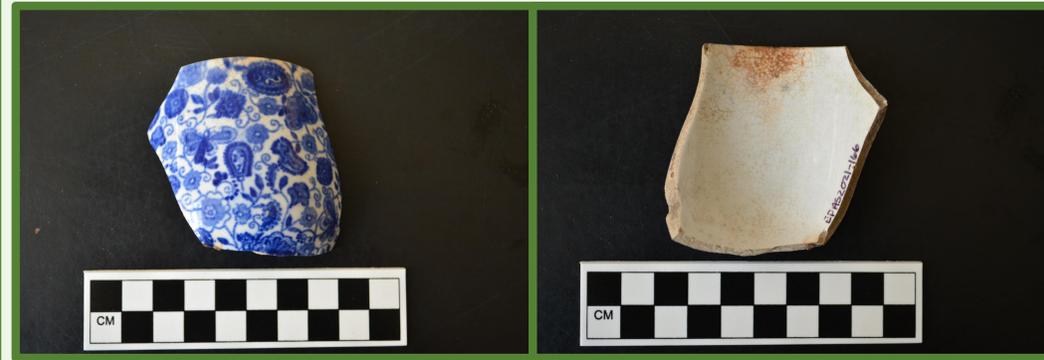


Fig. 1. & 2. Pearlware Transfer Print Mug with blue floral design (1784-1840) (Fig. 1. Exterior, Fig. 2. Interior)

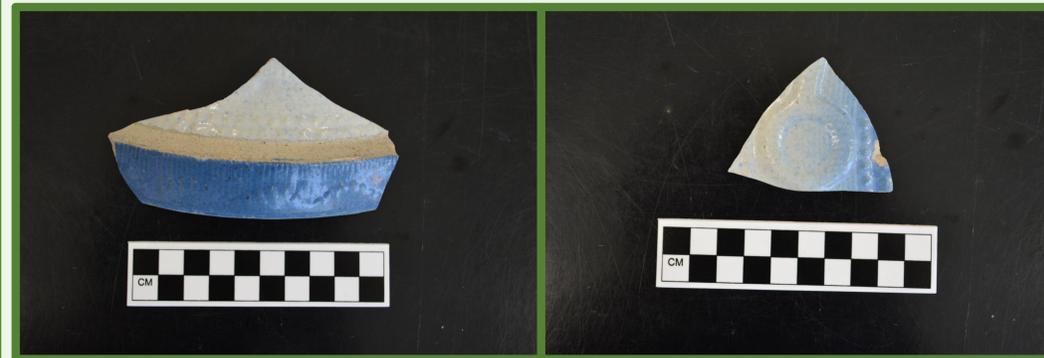


Fig. 3. Rhenish Blue/Gray Stoneware Chamber Pot Rim (1575-1775)
Fig. 4. Rhenish Blue/Gray Stoneware Chamber Pot/Jug with molded circle (1700-1775)



Fig. 5. Annular Banded Bowl with black bands and yellow accents (1790-1840)
Fig. 6. Pearlware Hand Painted Polychrome + Blue Cup with floral design (1815-1830)



Fig. 7. Pearlware Transfer Print, Scalloped Plate Rim with blue floral design (1784-1840)
Fig. 8. Whiteware Plate (1820-present) with green maker's mark, possibly Crown Pottery Co. (1879-1955)

RESULTS

While the research is still ongoing, from the data collected so far, the majority of artifacts have been dated around the early to mid-19th century, namely the antebellum period. Most of the artifacts are whiteware which have a much broader date range (1830-present), though there are key potsherds that pinpointed more precise dates, such as a hand painted polychrome cup (1815-1830) and a pearlware transfer printed mug with a green floral design (1829-1840). There are also a few outliers, some artifacts potentially from before the American Revolutionary War, including multiple pieces of Rhenish Blue/Gray Stoneware (1700-1775). On the other end of the spectrum, a stoneware bottle with a maker's mark from Glasgow Pottery dates from around 1917-1941. The artifacts themselves are, all but spare a few, kitchenware. A few ceramic insulators were also discovered. All the ceramics analyzed so far point to utilitarian use.

DISCUSSION

The data collected largely supports existing research on the history of the Evergreen Plantation. There is documentation of 54 enslaved individuals in 1835, which is roughly around the timeframe many of the artifacts were dated. Most of the artifacts were also found around the cabins the enslaved people lived in, so the fact that they are mostly utilitarian and are lacking any elaborate ornamentation is conventional. The evidence of artifacts dating after the American Civil War and into the mid-20th century is also supportive of the established history of the plantation because the Evergreen Plantation continued to operate after the war and is still an active privately owned sugarcane plantation. The presence of the pieces of Rhenish Blue/Gray Stoneware that date between 1700 and 1775 are intriguing as the plantation wasn't built until 1777. The artifacts could have been obtained before its construction and then were eventually brought there, but there is also the possibility of researcher error, though the potsherds attributed to this classification are almost identical to the description of the Rhenish Blue/Gray Stoneware. Completing the analysis of the ceramics will be able to give us a more robust chronology, and a further analysis of the other artifacts found during the excavations will help to create a more comprehensive understanding of what and when things were used in the context of daily plantation life in the Southern United States. The totality of this research lends to the better understanding of the history and day-to-day life of enslaved individuals in the United States as well as post-war working conditions of plantation workers.

REFERENCES:

