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Author(s): Laurie A. Wilkie

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LAURIE A. WILKIE

Glass-Knapping at a Louisiana Plantation: African-American Tools?

ABSTRACT

During the analysis of glass artifacts recovered from undisturbed archaeological contexts at Oakley Plantation, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana (16WF34), a number of glass sherds were found to have retouching and edge damage consistent with wear found on utilized lithics. Of these, 35 sherds were determined to exhibit significant evidence of use as tools. These tools were recovered from four African-American assemblages dating from the 1840s through the 1930s. This paper discusses the analysis of these tools, whether variations among the tools are representative of distinct types, a review of the occurrence of similar tools at other sites, and whether the tools can be considered to be of uniquely African-American origin.

Introduction

During archaeological excavations in 1991 and 1992, 35 utilized glass sherds were recovered from assemblages dating from the 1840s to the 1930s at Oakley Plantation, West Feliciana, Louisiana (Table 1). These investigations were conducted as a follow-up to an earlier surface survey by Holland and Orser (1984), and further explored several features identified by them. In each instance of glass tool occurrence at the site, strong oral historical or documentary evidence associates the archaeological assemblages with African-American occupants.

Oakley Plantation was founded in 1796 as a cotton plantation in Feliciana Parish of Spanish West Florida. At its economic peak in the 1840s, the plantation comprised over 3,000 acres of land and over 200 slaves (Wilkie 1994). The plantation remained in the ownership of the same family and was continuously farmed by African Americans until the 1940s. In 1947, 100 acres of the plantation, including the planter's house and plantation yard area, were sold to the State of Louisiana for preservation and interpretation as the Audubon State Commemorative Area.

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Three loci excavated during the 1991 and 1992 field seasons provided the archaeological materials for this study (Figure 1). These areas were defined as features in the Holland and Orser (1984) surface collection, and to maintain continuity for management purposes, feature numbers used by Holland and Orser were retained. Each of Holland and Orser's (1984) features—better thought of as loci—represented clusters of archaeological features associated with two house areas. The loci investigated included a cabin and yard area which were occupied throughout the antebellum and postbellum periods (Features 5, 29) and a house built by 1920 and occupied until 1949 by Sam Scott and his wife Nettie Scott (Feature 30). Specific details of excavations at each of these areas are given in the following discussion.

Mean Artifact Dates, a variation on South's Mean Ceramic Date method, which incorporates datable artifacts such as metals and glass in addition to ceramics, were used to date the assemblages. The author has found that manufacturing date ranges on artifacts such as glass, plastic, and rubber can provide tighter chronological control for late 19th- and early 20th-century sites than ceramics alone. For a detailed discussion of individual features and strata, see Wilkie (1994) and Wilkie and Farnsworth (1992, 1993).

TABLE 1
NUMBER OF TOOLS RECOVERED FROM EACH
AFRICAN-AMERICAN
ASSEMBLAGE AT OAKLEY

Assemblage	Mean Artifact Date (MAD)	Number of Tools Found
Features 5 and 29 (Antebellum)	1842–1843	5
Feature 5 (Silvia Freeman family)	1897	22
Feature 5 (Delphine and Eliza Freeman family)	1923	8
Feature 30 (Samuel and Nettie Scott)	1938.5	0

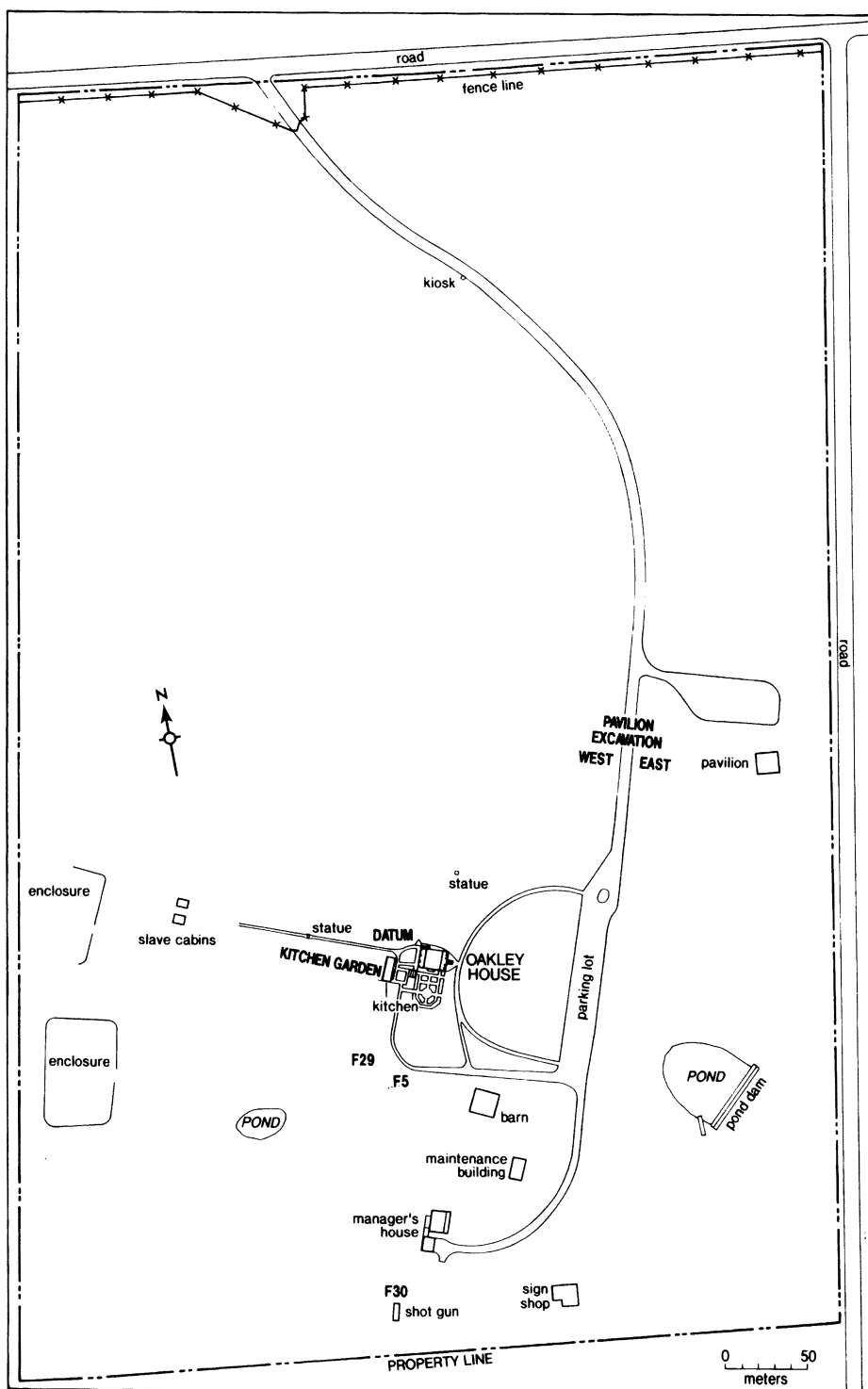


FIGURE 1. Archaeological Features at Oakley Plantation associated with African Americans.

Feature 5

The area designated Feature 5 was described by Holland and Orser (1984) as a possible house site. In 1991 the area was tested with four 1-m units and three shovel test pits. The brick foundation of a pier and beam house were identified in association with mid- to late 19th- and early 20th-century materials.

Further testing was undertaken in 1992 to determine the preservation of the structural remains and the extent of the yard area deposits. A 7-x-9-m excavation grid (Grid A) of 1-m units was laid out and oriented along the brick foundations found in 1991 to insure that as far as possible, excavation units outside versus under the structure would be distinct. Both a second 3-m square grid (Grid B) was laid out to the west of Grid A and three additional 1-m units were placed to the south of Grid A to examine further a major artifactual concentration found in 1991.

During the course of excavation, a number of archaeological features were encountered at this locus, including three shallow trash pits, 25 postholes representing the extent of the house, a brick-mining pit, and three trenches. Each of these components was excavated separately, and color, diameter, shape, and depth recorded. This information was important in establishing the chronology of, and associations between, archaeological features at this locus.

Large quantities of material cultural remains were recovered from undisturbed contexts immediately around and under the house, and in the western yard area of the house. Materials recovered from stratigraphic levels and archaeological features determined to be of the same age through their *termini post quem* have been treated as single assemblages. In this way, three assemblages representing activities related to three occupations of the house were identified archaeologically.

Antebellum materials were recovered in the southwestern area of Grid A from a dark grayish-brown mottled clay overlying the sterile clay level and from two small trash pits and provided a Mean Artifact Date (MAD) of 1842.5 (Wilkie

1994:178). Above this level was a yellowish-brown to dark yellowish-brown mottled loam which contained artifacts dating to the end of the 19th century. Additional materials from this time period were recovered from postholes and another small pit. Materials from this level provided a MAD of 1897 (Wilkie 1994:180–181). A brownish-yellow loam overlying the 19th-century strata contained early 20th-century materials which provided a MAD of 1923 (Wilkie 1994:182–183).

Historical Context for Feature 5

The construction of the cabin at Feature 5, based upon its architectural style and archaeological remains, probably took place in the 1840s (Wilkie 1994). Given the proximity of the cabin to the planter residence, the antebellum materials recovered from Feature 5 are most probably associated with an enslaved family that worked in the great house.

Henry Cummings and John Hulbert, former tenants of Oakley, both described this feature during interviews as corresponding to the location of the “cook’s house” which was lived in by the African-American Freeman family (Cummings 1991; Hulbert 1992). Most clearly, they remembered a woman named Delphine Freeman working in that capacity during the 1920s and 1930s but thought that her mother had also been a cook. Delphine Freeman had inherited the position from her mother, Silvia Freeman (Wilkie 1994:199–201).

Silvia Freeman and her family worked as domestic servants for the Matthews family through the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The late 19th-century materials from Feature 5 are most likely associated with their occupation of the cabin. Silvia Freeman’s employment began sometime in or prior to 1886, when William Wilson and Isabelle Matthews owned the plantation. After Isabelle Matthews’s death, Silvia Freeman and her family continued to work as domestics for Lucy and Ida Matthews.

The earliest documentary evidence available for Silvia Freeman is found on her marriage license. On 5 June 1875, Lewis Freeman paid

\$50.00 for a license to marry Sylvia [sic] Hill. The date of their actual marriage was not recorded by the parish (West Feliciana Parish Records 1875). Lewis Freeman's family is known to have lived in this ward and parish as early as 1870, but Silvia Hill does not appear in the 1870 West Feliciana census (U.S. Bureau of the Census [USBC] 1870). In 1880, the census shows Silvia Freeman living with Lewis Freeman and their two sons, Joseph and John, at Oakley. Lewis Freeman's occupation was listed as "planter" and Silvia Freeman's as "farming" (USBC 1880).

The earliest reference to Silvia Freeman working in the house as the cook is an 1886 ledger entry in the Oakley Collection. No mention of Lewis Freeman is made in the ledger; however, Silvia Freeman's youngest child was born in 1889 and bears the last name Freeman, suggesting that Lewis Freeman had passed away no earlier than 1888. By 1900, Silvia Freeman is listed as a widow in the manuscript census (USBC 1900).

Silvia Freeman appears to have passed away between 1900 and 1910; she does not appear in the 1910 census. By 1910, Eliza Freeman, presumably "Lizzie" in the 1900 census, and Delphine Freeman were both still living at Oakley. Eliza was working as a servant and Delphine as a cook (USBC 1910).

The Freeman daughters appear in the 1920 census as well; Eliza is listed as "Louisa" Freeman, and still employed as the Matthews house servant (USBC 1920). Henry Cummings (1991) remembers Eliza and Delphine Freeman living together at the plantation through the 1930s but had no clear recollection of their daughters. The 20th-century materials recovered from Feature 5 are most probably related to the Freeman sisters' occupation.

Feature 29

Feature 29 was not previously identified by Holland and Orser (1984). During the 1991 surface collections, a concentration of mid-19th-century artifacts was found eroding at a tree base located to the northwest of, and in close

proximity to, Feature 5. A 1-m unit was subsequently excavated to a depth of 40 cm below the surface at this locus. Large quantities of household refuse dating to the 19th century were recovered (Wilkie and Farnsworth 1992). Two additional 1-m units were excavated in 1992 to define further the deposit. Both 1992 units were excavated to depths of 40 cm below the surface and contained concentrations of antebellum household materials. No evidence of architectural remains was found at this loci. Intact, antebellum deposits including pearlwares, shell-edged whitewares, and green-glazed redwares, were recovered, concentrated between 20 and 30 cm deep. These materials place the MAD of this locus at 1843 (Wilkie 1994:185), comfortably within the antebellum period and very close to the 1842.5 date for the antebellum materials recovered at Feature 5.

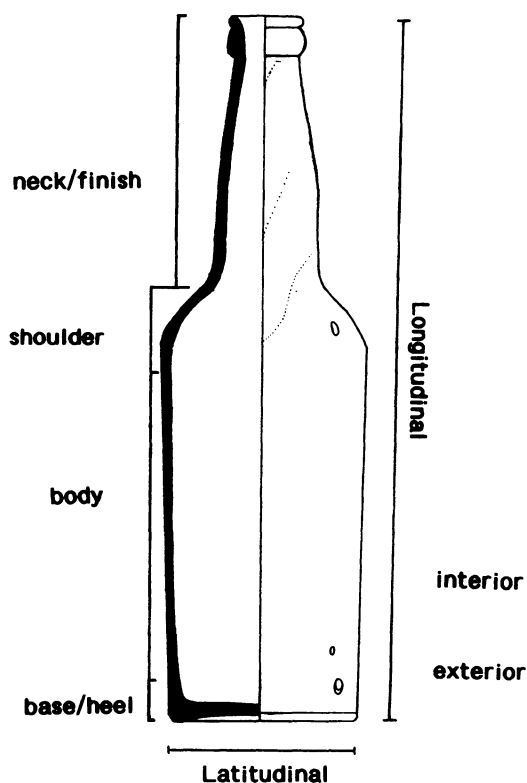


FIGURE 2. Terms used to describe bottle anatomy and sherd orientation during analysis.

TABLE 2
CONTINGENCY TABLE: RETOUCH VERSUS
ANGLE EDGE

Edge Angle	Retouched	Not Retouched
Less than 35°	0	11
Greater than 35°	24	0
Total	24	11

Although it has not been possible to determine which enslaved family may have been associated with the antebellum deposits at Features 5 and 29, the spatial and chronological proximity of these deposits suggests that the two groups of artifacts may both represent the activities of the same enslaved African-American family. Accordingly, glass tools from the antebellum period deposits at Features 5 and 29 were analyzed as a single group.

Feature 30

Feature 30 is the location of the only standing tenant house remaining in the park, and excavations in this area were directed in relationship to this architectural feature. During testing in September 1991, a 5-m grid was excavated north of the house to test the extent of a midden deposit first identified in the summer of 1991. These units contained large quantities of glass, plastic, ceramic, and metal artifacts dating between the 1920s and the 1940s, all concentrated in a soft, black oily midden soil that was 15 cm thick close to the building, and thinning to only a couple of cm thick at the west and north edges of the grid. The back room of the house served as the kitchen, thus likely explaining the large concentration of artifactual materials behind it. The MAD for this feature is 1938.95 (Wilkie 1994:187).

This house is known to have been built about 1920 by African-American Sam Scott. Henry Cummings (1991) remembered Sam, also called

Sammy, living in the house with his wife, and for a time, his father. Sam and his wife had no children. John Hulbert (1992), the Scotts' nephew, was also able to provide information about the family. According to Hulbert (1992) and Cummings (1991), the Scotts were the only family to live in this house; therefore, the assemblage recovered here must be associated with them. While no glass tools were recovered from this assemblage, this feature was the only one at Oakley Plantation to produce steel razor blades. The possible impact of razor blades on glass-knapping traditions will be discussed below.

Description of the Glass Tools

In analyzing the 35 glass tools—nearly all made from fragments of glass bottles or jars, it was necessary to define descriptive terms that both reflected the nature of the raw materials used to construct the tools as well as those attributes of the tools which were functionally meaningful. To achieve this end, a standardized set of descriptive terms was used during analysis to describe the portion of the original bottle being utilized, the orientation of the sherd in the original vessel, and the interior and exterior of the bottle. The description of bottle components is drawn from Jones and Sullivan (1985:77, Figure 52) and is comprised of finish, neck-finish, shoulder, body, heel, and base.

In lithic analysis, flake tools typically are described and measured relative to the bulb of percussion (Keeley 1980; Vaughan 1985). Since glass sherds lack such a percussion bulb, it is necessary to use other means to describe them. The form and use of bottle sherds as tools is in part dictated by the original shape of the vessel. To describe the orientation of the utilized edge relative to the sherd's original position in the bottle, the circumference of the bottle is called the latitudinal plane, and the vertical aspect of the bottle is called the longitudinal plane. Therefore, utilized edges that would have been parallel to the base or finish of the intact bottle are referred to as longitudinal edges, and those

that would have been perpendicular to the base and finish are referred to as latitudinal edges (Figure 2).

Other variables considered as potentially important attributes include the presence/absence of retouching, the angle of the utilized edge, the shape of the utilized edge, the distribution of use wear along the utilized edge, and placement of the contact edge or leading aspect (Keeley 1980:21) relative to the interior or exterior of the original vessel. To determine whether different attributes were meaningfully linked, contingency tables were constructed to determine if there were meaningful relationships between attributes and, therefore, typological differences between the tools (Sackett 1989).

This level of analysis formed the foundation for microwear analysis and for identifying relationships between use and morphology. Through this analysis, meaningful relationships were established between retouching, edge angle, and sherd orientation. In addition, some patterns related to the portion of the bottle utilized, and the nature of the tools has been established.

Correlating Attributes

Visual observation indicated that the tools fell into two rough groups, including those that had no retouching (n = 11) and those that were unifacially retouched (n = 24). To determine whether retouching may have served a functional purpose, a contingency table was constructed comparing the presence of retouch and the angle of the utilized tool edge. A general relationship has been established by lithic researchers be-

TABLE 3
CONTINGENCY TABLE: RETOUCH VERSUS
LONGITUDINAL/LATITUDINAL UTILIZATION

Utilization	Retouched	Not Retouched
Latitudinal Edge	0	11
Longitudinal Edge	24	0
Total	24	11

TABLE 4
CONTINGENCY TABLE: EDGE ANGLE AND
ASSEMBLAGE OF RETOUCHEE TOOLS^a

Edge Angle	Assemblage		
	Antebellum	Silvia Freeman	Delphine and Eliza Freeman
40°	0	1	0
50°	0	3	6
60°	1	6	2
70°	0	5	2
80°	1	0	0
Total	2	15	7

^a Retouched tools listed in Table 3 comprise these tools.

tween angle edge and use. For instance, whittling activities are usually associated with acute angles, whereas planing is usually associated with more obtuse edge angles (Keeley 1980:16–17). These criteria were compared, since edge angles had been observed to cluster below 35 degrees and above 45 degrees. The contingency table relating these two variables demonstrated that all of the tools with retouch had edge angles of greater than 35 degrees, while all tools lacking retouch had edge angles smaller than 35 degrees (Table 2). When a second contingency table was constructed relating longitudinal/latitudinal edge utilization with presence/absence of retouching, a correlation was found. All tools with retouching, a total of 24, were utilized on the latitudinal edge of the sherd, while all of the unretouched sherds were utilized on their longitudinal edge (Table 3). A comparison of edge angle by assemblage demonstrated that 60 degrees was the most common edge angle, with Silvia Freeman’s assemblage demonstrating the greatest variation (Table 4).

Glass bottles/jars served as the raw material for all but two of the tools, with wine bottles being the most commonly used. The other two tools were made from tumbler sherds. Addi-

tional comparisons were made to determine whether certain components of the bottles were preferred for retouched versus unretouched tools. Components of the bottles used for tools fell into the categories heel and base, neck and finish, shoulder, and body. Both heel and base and neck and finish are combined because tools were derived from both of these elements, as compared to body and shoulder sherds, which did not contain portions of any other bottle part. This analysis demonstrated that body sherds were most often used for tools. Base and heel sherds were only used to manufacture retouched tools (Table 5), but were by no means the exclusive choice for these tools.

Given the variety of bottle parts represented, several tables were then constructed to compare the distribution of bottle parts being utilized. Within each of the assemblages, body sherds were the most common. Shoulder sherds, used for both retouched and unretouched tools, were only associated with the assemblage of Silvia Freeman (Table 6). Whether the selection of the shoulder sherds represented a personal preference or a functional decision may be clarified when microwear analysis is conducted.

Visual observation suggested that the shape of the contact edge, in addition to edge angle, may be an important attribute for the retouched tools. Retouched tools were found to have concave-or convex-shaped contact edges. Comparison of the shape of the contact edge with bottle part (Table

TABLE 5
CONTINGENCY TABLE: RETOUCH AND BOTTLE ANATOMY

Bottle Part	Retouched	Not Retouched
Heel and Base	4	0
Neck and Finish	1	3
Shoulder	3	1
Body	16	7
Total	24	11

TABLE 6
CONTINGENCY TABLE: ASSEMBLAGE VERSUS BOTTLE ANATOMY

Bottle Part	Antebellum	Silvia Freeman	Delphine Freeman
Heel and Base	1	1	2
Neck and Finish	1	2	1
Shoulder	0	4	0
Body	3	15	5
Total	5	22	8

7) demonstrated that convex edges were almost exclusively associated with body sherds. Analysis of edge angle with the shape of the contact edge (Table 8) demonstrated that convex contact edges were associated with edge angles of 50–70 degrees, while concave contact edges were associated with a broader range of edge angles (40–80°).

Other correlations failed to reveal meaningful trends. A comparison of edge angles with bottle parts found no correlations. An ambiguous correlation is related to the orientation of leading edges. The majority of the recovered tools utilized the exterior wall of the bottle as its leading or contact edge. However, five examples of interior wall contact edges were included in the assemblage of Silvia Freeman (Table 9). The use of interior versus exterior walls may represent a personal preference, as this decision affects how one grips the tools.

Exploring Potential Functions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis. First, there are clear correlations between the presence/absence of retouch, edge angle and utilized sherd edge, suggesting the presence of at least two tool types. The first type can be defined primarily as retouched, the second type as unretouched (Figure 3).

All retouched sherds are worked on a latitudinal edge and have an edge angle of greater than

35 degrees. The steep edge angle that these tools possess suggest that they functioned as scrapers. The reason for the selection of the latitudinal edge for working may be related to comfort in gripping the finished tool or may reflect differences in ease of knapping along the edges. Given that these tools are retouched, their production required a certain degree of knapping ability and investment of time. They appear, therefore, to be intentionally produced tools.

Convex and concave contact surfaces were noted among the retouched tools; however, it is unclear whether these are meaningful attributes. Concave edges had a broader range of edge angles and bottle body sherds associated with them than did the convex edges. Further exploration of these issues through microwear analysis and comparison with other assemblages is necessary further to define the significance, if any, of these differences.

Bottle bases and heels were used exclusively for retouched tools. Bottle body sherds were the

most common (24 of the 35 tools). Shoulder sherds ($n = 4$) were only utilized by Silvia Freeman's family. Likewise, Silvia Freeman's assemblage is the only one to include contact edges on the bottle interior. Without an additional level of analysis, such as microwear, or the comparison of these tools with similar examples from other sites, it is not possible to determine which patterns reflect the preferences of the tool knappers/users or represent functional differences.

All of the unretouched sherds exhibit edge wear damage—scarring, pitting, and chipping—on their longitudinal or utilized edges, and all have edge angles of less than 35 degrees. Longitudinal edges are potentially longer and straighter than are latitudinal edges, suggesting that such tools may have been used for cutting rather than scraping. Since longitudinal tools lack retouching, it is not clear whether they were intentionally produced or if glass sherds from broken bottles were selected to be used as expedient tools when necessary. They may, in fact, represent tools of convenience rather than forethought.

Examination of the unretouched tools demonstrates that the wear damage on eight of the 11 was irregularly distributed along the length of both surfaces. This form of wear is typically associated with longitudinal motions, such as sawing or cutting (Vaughan 1985:20). The remaining three examples exhibit dense scarring on both edge surfaces. The motion associated with this distribution is less clear, for such wear has been found associated with both transverse and longitudinal motions (Vaughan 1985:20–21). However, the general pattern suggests that these tools were likely to have been used for cutting rather than scraping.

Putting the Tools in Context

Oral history and an evaluation of other cutting tools recovered from the African-American assemblages at Oakley can provide some insight into tool use. Mintz and Price (1976:48) have documented the use of broken bottles by Africans during the middle passage to shave tradi-

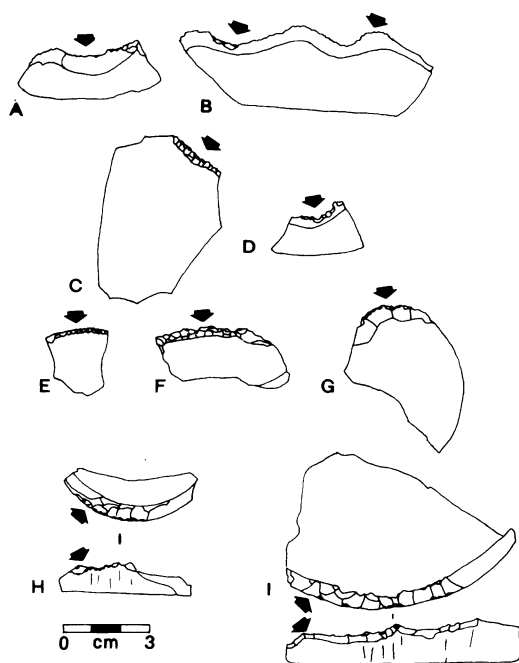


FIGURE 3. Examples of retouched and unretouched tools from Oakley Plantation: A–B, unretouched tools; C–I, retouched tools. Arrows indicate utilized edges.

TABLE 7
CONTINGENCY TABLE: CONTACT EDGE SHAPE
VERSUS
BOTTLE PART ANATOMY, RETOUCHE

Bottle Part	Contact Edge Shape	
	Convex	Concave
Base and Heel	0	4
Shoulder	1	2
Body	10	6
Neck Finish	0	1
Total	11	13

*Table 3 comprises this same sample.

tional designs in their hair. The practice of using broken glass as a razor was common in the Bahamas until the 1930s (Ferguson 1995).

In Louisiana, John Hulbert (1992), a former tenant of Oakley, remembers glass tools used on the plantation to smooth axe and hoe handles in the 1930s. He indicated that making such tools was not a skill he possessed, stating that some people on the plantation knew how to break glass in a certain way to make a tool. He compared the use of these tools to the way a razor blade was used for the same purpose. His description suggests that the production of these tools was a specialized skill not shared by the entire tenant population.

John Hulbert’s comment that only a few people had the skill to create these tools suggests that by the 1930s, when he was a child, this glass tool tradition may have been becoming less common. The Scott assemblage, Feature 30, contains none of these artifacts but does contain an artifact type not found in the other assemblages: razor blades. Razor blades are a versatile tool that can be used for cutting as well as scraping, depending upon the angle at which they are held. This metal tool can perform the tasks of the glass tools and maintains a functional edge for a longer period of time.

To determine whether there may be a relationship between the appearance of razor blades and the disappearance of glass tools in the Scott assemblage, a review of Oakley Plantation commissary ledgers from the 1890s to 1920 was conducted. These ledgers did not include any purchases of razor blades (Matthews 1889–1891, 1890–1901a, 1890–1901b, 1890–1901c; Matthews and Matthews 1902–1920a, 1902–1920b). The ledgers are nearly complete through the 1890s, and less complete for the remainder of this time period. However, enough of the records are available to demonstrate that razor blades, if available during this time period, were not commonly purchased. Archaeologically, the only other evidence of cutting tools recovered were two broken pairs of scissors from Silvia Freeman’s assemblage.

The lack of razor blades in Oakley’s commissary records may be related to the cost of purchasing these items. Razor blades, or blades for safety razors, were relatively expensive when first introduced. The 1897 Sears, Roebuck catalog ran the following advertisement for the Star Safety Razor:

An invention which obviates all danger of cutting the face. It is especially adapted to old and young, and is indispensable to travelers, miners and persons camping out. Blades of best steel and fully concave, which can be easily removed and placed in handle for strapping (Israel 1968:112).

The Star Safety Razor sold for \$1.50, and extra blades for \$1.00. Similarly, straight blade prices started at \$.60, and single-bladed pocket knives at \$.25, although both items were most commonly available in the \$1.50 price range (Israel 1968:112). In 1891, Silvia Freeman was earning \$4.00 a month, and had been working at that salary for at least two years (Matthews 1889–1891). The purchase of a knife or razor would therefore represent a significant portion of her monthly income.

No safety razors are listed in the 1900 Sears, Roebuck catalog (DBI Books 1970). By 1908, 10 safety razor blade replacements could be purchased through Sears, Roebuck and Company for

a price of \$.50 (Schroeder 1971:775). Straight razors were still the razor most commonly available through the catalog, with the cheapest option costing \$.96 (Schroeder 1971:773). Prices for pocket knives are not available in this edition of the catalog. The 1927 Sears, Roebuck Catalog advertised 10-packs of razor blades for as low as \$.54 (Mirkin 1970:529). Straight razors could be purchased for no less than \$1.25 (Mirkin 1970:529), while pocket knives ranged in price from \$.79 to \$1.89 (Mirkin 1970:510).

The cost of razor blades dropped relative to straight razors and pocket knives between the 1890s and the 1930s. It is possible that the availability of this cheap, commercially-made alternative eventually rendered glass-knapping obsolete. It is also possible that the Scotts, as an individual family, simply did not possess the knapping skills or chose not to participate in this practice. An understanding of glass tools in a broader regional and chronological context is necessary before such conclusions confidently can be drawn.

Razor blades are commonly used today by African Americans in rural Louisiana for cutting, scraping, and whittling (Bibens 1994). If kept in the proximity of the house, razor blades can be

TABLE 8
CONTINGENCY TABLE: CONTACT EDGE SHAPE
AND
EDGE ANGLE, RETOUCHED TOOLS^a

Edge Angle	Contact Edge Shape	
	Convex	Concave
40°	0	1
50°	3	3
60°	5	4
70°	3	4
80°	0	1
Total	11	13

^a Table 3 comprises this same sample.

TABLE 9
CONTINGENCY TABLE: LEADING EDGE FACE
AND ASSEMBLAGE

Assemblage	Leading Edge Face	
	Interior Edge	Exterior Edge
Antebellum	0	5
Silvia Freeman	5	17
Delphine and Eliza Freeman	0	8
Total	5	30

easily stored and used. Pocket knives are certainly a safer portable option. While not the focus of this paper, it is interesting to note that preliminary analysis by the author of artifacts from a late 19th- to early 20th-century trash pit at Crawford Park, 1MB99, an African-American midwife's house site in Mobile, Alabama, has also identified glass tools. All of the tools from that site are retouched and, given the outcome of the Oakley analysis, were probably used as scrapers. While no glass knives have been identified as yet, two pocket knives have been recovered. Again, razor blades may be present at the Scott house instead of glass tools because they may have represented a functional substitution of one artifact type for another.

Glass Tools: A Distinctive African-American Trait?

Intentionally worked glass artifacts are not a new phenomenon and have been recovered from both Native American and other African-American archaeological sites. This discussion will focus upon examples recovered from plantation contexts. Two antebellum and two postbellum planter assemblages were recovered from Oakley Plantation. Neither glass tools nor razor blades were recovered from any of the planter contexts, and Native Americans have not been clearly associated with the sites where these particular tool types were recovered.

TABLE 10
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES WHERE WORKED GLASS HAS BEEN
RECOVERED FROM NON-NATIVE AMERICAN CONTEXTS

Site	State	Site Type	Date	Ethnic Affiliation
Oakley Plantation ^a	Louisiana	Plantation	1840s–1940s	African American
Riverlake Plantation ^b	Louisiana	Plantation	1840s–1990s	African American
St. Rose Plantation ^c	Louisiana	Plantation	1790–1810	African American and Euroamerican
Bennett House ^d	Louisiana	Plantation	1840–1860	African American and Euroamerican
Crawford Park ^e	Alabama	Urban house	1890–1910	African American
Garrison Plantation ^f	Maryland	Plantation	early 19th c.	African American
Monticello ^g	Virginia	Plantation	18th–19th c.	African American
Levi-Jordan Plantation ^h	Texas	Plantation	?	African American and Euroamerican

^aWilkie (1994)

^bSite currently under study by the author

^cWilkie and Tannert (1994)

^dPort Hudson State Commemorative Area Archaeological Collections, Louisiana

^eSite currently under study by the author

^fKlingelhofer (1987)

^gPatten (1992)

^hAnonymous SHA manuscript reviewer (1995, pers. comm.)

In Maryland, Klingelhofer (1987:114–115) found an intentionally chipped tumbler at Garrison Plantation, and reported that similar artifacts had been recovered in Virginia. Patten (1992:6) reports the recovery of chipped glass from Monticello, as well as from other Virginia tide-water sites. The author has identified isolated examples of glass tools from the Bennett House and St. Rose Plantation, both in Louisiana. As noted earlier, significant numbers of these tools are currently under analysis by the author from Crawford Park, and from Riverlake Plantation, Pointe Coupee Parish, Louisiana. Excavations at Riverlake Plantation were focused on the African-American quarters buildings, which have been continuously occupied from the 1840s until the 1990s. Analysis of these materials is ongoing, but the glass tools from these sites will be compared with those from Oakley to determine if broader regional patterns are visible. Of

the sites known to the author to contain glass tools, the vast majority come from contexts that are either clearly African American or from contexts which may have been used jointly by African Americans and Euroamericans (Table 10). Such tools have been recovered from both rural and urban settings. At this point, however, published reference to glass tools recovered from strictly Euroamerican contexts has not been found.

What is not clear, however, is whether glass tools are more likely to be recognized in African-American assemblages by archaeologists aware of their presence in other African-American sites. It is important that non-African-American contexts for such tools be explored so that it can be determined whether their production and use is tied to a distinct ethnic heritage or whether they were broadly used by many ethnic groups. The association of such tools with

predominately female contexts at both Oakley Plantation and Crawford Park also suggests that glass flake tools, like prehistoric lithics (Gero 1991), deserve further attention for their potential engendered meanings.

Conclusion

Thirty-five utilized glass sherds from African-American contexts have been recovered from Oakley Plantation, West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana. Attribute analysis of these glass sherds has demonstrated that the sherds easily divide into two major groups which seem to be functionally significant, one group of unretouched sherds serving as knives, and the other group of retouched sherds serving as scrapers. Additional differentiations may be identifiable in conjunction with microwear analysis.

The tools were recovered from three different African-American assemblages at Oakley Plantation dating 1840–1930. No glass tools were recovered from the latest African-American assemblage, dating 1920–1940. It is unclear if the absence of tools from this context represents the abandonment of the tradition by this time period or simply represents the nonparticipation of this family. It is suggested that cheaper, commercially manufactured cutting tools such as razor blades may have replaced glass tools at this time.

In closing, the tools discussed in this paper were drawn from strictly African-American contexts. It is unclear at this juncture whether these tools are distinctly African American in nature or if they have only been recognized in African-American contexts. The majority of glass tools reported in the literature have been recovered from rural settings, and it may be that closer examination of glass from Euroamerican rural contexts will reveal the presence of similar practices.

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LAURIE A. WILKIE
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720–3710