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Cover Page Footnote
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The Westward Expansion of Domestic Queensware: The Red Rose Transit Site, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

George D. Cress, Rebecca L. White, Ingrid A. Wuebber

Archaeological excavations undertaken by URS/AECOM at the Red Rose Transit site from 2008 through 2010 revealed a late 18th- and early 19th-century A horizon and yard deposits, a stone-lined well, a redware kiln, and evidence of brass manufacture in the south half of Lot 104. These deposits and features, located beneath 19th-century train-shed tracks at the corner of Chestnut and Queen streets, produced a small quantity of domestic queensware. Lancaster was the gateway to the West for the shipment of goods in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The presence of domestic queensware at the Red Rose Transit site indicates the ware was available and in use by consumers in Lancaster. This inland city likely played an important role in the ware’s distribution farther west.

Introduction

AECOM Corporation (formerly URS) performed Phase IA, IB/II, and data recovery archaeological investigations for the Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA) in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, from 2008 through 2010 (fig. 1). The archaeological investigations were carried out in conjunction with the construction of the proposed Lancaster Intermodal Transportation Center (LITA). These improvements entailed ground-disturbing construction that would impact potential archaeological resources within historical Lots 103 and 104 (fig. 2). Archaeological excavations undertaken by AECOM at the Red Rose Transit site in 2009 revealed a late 18th- and early 19th-century A horizon and yard deposits, a stone-lined well, a redware kiln, and evidence of brass manufacture in the south half of Lot 104. These deposits and features, sealed beneath 19th-century train-shed tracks at the corner of Chestnut and Queen streets, produced a small quantity of American queensware. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, Lancaster was the gateway to the West for the shipment of goods. The discovery of domestic queensware at the Red Rose Transit site indicates the ware was available and in use by consumers in Lancaster. This inland city, located approximately 80 mi. from Philadelphia, also likely played an important role in the ware’s distribution farther west.

Archaeological investigations at the location of LITA yielded a multicomponent site spanning occupation from Lancaster’s initial log-house settlement in the 1740s through the use of the site as the Pennsylvania Railroad Lancaster Station and Depot. This site was a major transportation center established in 1833 and employed into the early 20th century (fig. 3). The archaeological excavations focused on the western half of the project site, an area extending approximately 140 ft. east from North Queen Street. The focus of the excavation was on the backyard areas of houses fronting on Queen Street where there
was potential for shaft features (privies, wells), yard deposits, and other related domestic features dating prior to the establishment of the railroad depot in the 1830s (Fig. 4). The investigations revealed artifacts and structural elements for each period of occupation from the mid-18th through the early 20th century.

**The Development of Early Lancaster: 18th and 19th Centuries**

The city of Lancaster was the earliest established interior town in Pennsylvania and served as the county seat. Formed in the 1730s, the city was incorporated as a borough in 1742. Lancaster was established on the 500 ac. of land Andrew Hamilton granted to his youngest son, James Hamilton, in 1734. Andrew Hamilton had established the Lancaster townsite, the county seat for the newly formed county of Lancaster, in 1730. Lots were set aside for the courthouse, jail, and market house. Part of the new town was already occupied by a small settlement of perhaps 200 people that had begun in 1721 or 1722 (Ellis and Evans 1883: 361, 377; Sener 1901: 3).

James Hamilton divided Lancaster into a grid with four quadrants (later, wards), using Queen Street and King Street as the dividing lines and placing the courthouse square at its center. The Dark Hazel Swamp, which lay in the central core of the new town site, was drained and filled in 1745.

By 1789, the year in which George Washington began his first term in the office of president, Lancaster was still the largest inland town in the United States, boasting about 678 dwellings and a population of 4,200. A stream of Germanic artisans skilled in metal, leather, and wood crafts contributed to an increasingly diverse manufacturing and commercial economic base (Ellis and Evans 1883: 22). The enterprising inhabitants included 36 shoemakers, 30 carpenters, 25 tailors, 22 butchers, 25 weavers, 25 blacksmiths, 17 saddlers, 14 hatters, 12 public bakers, 11 cooperers, 7 gunsmiths, 7 wood turners, 7 nail makers, 6 dyers, 5 rope makers, 5 “tiners,” 5 silversmiths, 4 tanners, 3 potters, 3 coppersmiths, 3 “skindressers,” 2 brass founders, and 1 brush maker. Lancaster had 3 printing presses, 3 breweries, and 40 saloons (Klein 1921: 18).

One of Lancaster’s earliest industries was the manufacture of guns, documented as early as 1754. The city was also noted for the manufacture of gunpowder and uniforms used in the patriot cause (Ellis and Evans 1883: 369).

**The Red Rose Transit Site**

In the late 18th and early 19th century the Red Rose Transit site Lots 103 and 104, north and south, were occupied by a variety of tradesmen: William Lind, a baker; Jacob McCully, a tallow chandler (soap and candles); Jacob Bitner, a house carpenter; Christian Kieffer, a coppersmith; Casper and Michael Ehrman, brass founders; John Kremer, a
cooper; Thomas Hinkle, a saddletree maker; and an unnamed redware potter (URS 2010: 3.8–22).

The earliest archaeological features encountered during the excavation were exposed in the south half of Lot 104 and consisted of the following: a mid-18th-century yard deposit/A horizon with artifacts ranging in date from 1745 to 1773, corresponding to the occupations of the property by the Shankmeyer, Schreiber, Fortinee, Ox, and Snyder families; a stone-lined well mentioned in a 1749 property partition between John Shankmeyer and John Schreiber; the remains of a redware kiln dating to the 1760s–1770s; and a trench related to the Ehrman brass foundry, known to have been in production on the property between 1777 and 1833. Christopher Ox, and subsequently Melchior Snyder, Sr., and Jr., retained ownership of the south half of Lot 104 during the 1760s and 1770s (URS 2010: 3.8–22).

In 1777, brass founder Casper Ehrman purchased the south half of Lot 104 from Melchior Snyder, Sr. The manufacture of brass, a mixture of copper and zinc, was a family operation, and Caspar’s son, Michael Ehrman, also became a brass founder, starting a
Figure 3. Aerial view facing north, showing the Phase IB/II excavation site. (Courtesy of URS/AECOM; photo by George Cress, 2009.)

Figure 4. Overall plan view showing Phase IB/II and data recovery excavations. (Base map by Scott Hood [2009]; map by Thomas J. Kutys, 2017.)
business in partnership with Philip Fordney in 1818. Michael Ehrman continued as a brazier until 1833, when the property was sold to the City of Lancaster for the development of the Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad station. In the early 1830s, the railroad acquired the lot at the northeast corner of North Queen and Chestnut streets for its right-of-way, as well as a small train depot. The city bought the south half of Lot 104 from Michael Ehrman for $2.500 in March 1833. In 1859, the railroad constructed a new station on the northeast corner of North Queen and East Chestnut streets. The railroad depot remained until it was demolished in 1929 (URS 2010: 3.8–22).

A wide variety of artifacts, spanning the period of occupation between the mid-18th century and the early 20th century, were recovered from the site excavations. The artifact assemblage represented all phases of occupation: domestic, manufacturing, commercial, and transportation. Domestic occupation spanned the mid-18th through the late 19th centuries, with the earliest single-story log houses fronting on Queen Street in the 1740s later replaced by late 18th- to mid-19th-century brick dwellings.

Archaeological evidence associated with the two manufacturing-related activities were revealed during the course of the project. The existence of the redware kiln structure, along with kiln furniture, roofing tiles, and redware wasters, was only discovered through archaeological excavations. Casper and Michael Ehrman’s brass foundry was initially identified during documentary research into the property and the location confirmed during the archaeological excavation by the recovery of crucible fragments.

Date ranges of ceramic types recovered from the excavation units (Test Units 3–10) in Lot 104 indicate the period of greatest deposition was ca. 1820, with the largest percentage of datable ceramics ranging between 1800 and 1830, during the ownerships of Casper and Michael Ehrman. Several sherds of domestic queensware were identified among the artifacts from these excavation units.

American Queensware in Lancaster

Queensware Vessels

Fragments of thin-bodied, refined-earthenware vessels with a pale-yellow, clear lead glaze were recovered from the excavation units and the well. The examples from the units were somewhat larger in size, and several of the sherds featured distinctive splashes of green decoration, possibly copper oxide, applied beneath the glaze (Fig. 5). These sherds exhibited many of the same characteristics as the more complete domestic-queensware vessels recovered by AECOM archaeologists during excavations along the I-95 corridor in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Cress et al., this issue). By comparing the queensware from the two sites it was possible to identify two different vessel forms among the Lancaster sherds. Some of the rim and base sherds represent a saucer or shallow dish, while others appear to be fragments of the base and body of a Chinese-shape bowl (Fig. 6).

The American-queensware vessels from the Lancaster site were probably purchased locally and used by members of the Ehrman family. Many of the advertisements for American queensware encouraged support for locally made goods, which likely appealed to the Ehrmans, who were themselves involved in a domestic industry.

Marketing American Queensware in Lancaster

In the “Phase IB/II and Data Recovery” report from 2010 (URS Corporation 2010), the authors suggested that the queensware sherds recovered from this project may have been made in Philadelphia or Lancaster. Subsequent research into domestic-queensware production has not uncovered any evidence of attempts to manufacture this type of ceramic in Lancaster. In the years since the completion of the technical report the authors have encountered additional examples of queensware in excavations in the Philadelphia area that match
Figure 5. American queensware recovered from the Red Rose Transit site (36LA1494) in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Top row: rim fragments from bowl form. Bottom row: interior and exterior views of a saucer or shallow dish. Notice the crazing of the glaze on all examples. Also note the fine brown flecks most pronounced on the rim (top right). (Photo by Rebecca White, 2010.)

Figure 6. American queensware excavated from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, 36LA1494. View of the exterior body and base of a Chinese-shape bowl with a freestanding foot ring. (Photo by Rebecca White, 2010.)
closely with the sherds recovered from Lancaster. (URS 2012: 5.2–5; AECOM 2018). Subsequent research into period documents and advertisements shows three potential sources that marketed and sold queensware in Lancaster.

Chester County (Pennsylvania) potter, Thomas Vickers, first announced his manufacture of “domestic queensware” in February 1809 (Barber 1976: 437; White et al., this issue). The Vickers family daybook shows that, on 24 January 1810, he sold a large quantity of pottery to a William Green (or Greer) in Lancaster (Winterthur Library 1808-1813). Although to date no further information has been found to identify the customer, the large quantities of specific forms mentioned in the account suggest the merchandise was purchased for resale in a Lancaster shop. The Green/Greer account does not make a direct reference to queensware; however, the authors compared the entries with other pages in the daybook and noticed that Vickers appeared to follow a specific pattern and usually recorded the red earthenware purchases first. While some of the handwritten numbers listing quantities and calculating costs are difficult to decipher, several prices seem to match those listed elsewhere in the Vickers daybook as “queensware” or “fineware” vessels.

John Mullowny placed an advertisement in the Lancaster Journal in August 1811, offering an assortment of vessels manufactured at the Washington Pottery in Philadelphia (White et al., this issue):

The proprietors of the Washington Pottery, with confidence assures the public, that a constant supply of useful articles of earthen ware, will be kept for sale. Though the present demand would warrant rise in the prices, the ware is continued to be sold at the late reduced rates—a handsome gallon pitcher at 37½ cents, and other ware in proportion; the articles generally manufactured and to be had wholesale and retail, at the warehouse, in High, near Schuylkill Sixth street, are Gallon, half gallon, quart, and pint pitchers of various kinds. Tea pots, sugars, coffee pots, creams, cups and saucers, butter coolers, wine coolers, chambers, egg cups, pickling and preserving jars, basins, quart, pint and half pint bowls, garden pots of different sizes, mugs, goblets and tumblers &c. (Lancaster Journal 1811: 1)

Mullowny was interested in expanding his workforce at this time and added a note: “Apprentices are wanted, Journeymen Potters, will find constant employ, applications to be made at No. 228 Pine Street, Philadelphia, where orders for ware will be received as well as at the warehouse” (Lancaster Journal 1811: 1).

The following year another notice was published in the Lancaster Journal appealing to merchants located at a distance from Philadelphia:

The proprietor of the Washington Pottery, invites gentlemen from the country, who are friends of domestic manufactures, to inspect the articles manufactured at his pottery in Philadelphia; the assortment is useful and the articles firm, strong and durable. Orders with the cash, addressed to John Mullowny, High Street, Philadelphia will be punctually attended to. Printers of newspapers friendly to our infant manufactures, will confer a favor by giving the above a few insertions. (Lancaster Journal 1812a: 3)

This advertisement emphasized the usefulness and durability of his product with no mention of the variety of forms offered. Attached to a reprint of this advertisement that appeared in October was the following note: “Plates will be ready for delivery on the 10th October 1812 (Lancaster Journal 1812b: 4). To date no additional advertisements for the Washington Pottery have been found in this Lancaster newspaper.

A brief announcement appeared in a Lancaster newspaper in June 1818 that mentioned David G. Seixas, another queensware manufacturer from Philadelphia (White et al., this issue):

The New China Store. Established by D. G. Seixas, from Philadelphia, Is removed to the Store lately occupied by David R. Barton, deceased where will constantly be kept, a general and extensive assortment of Queens and Glassware of the first quality which will be sold,
additional examples of domestic queensware await discovery on contemporary sites and previously curated collections farther west.

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Barton’s store, which was at the corner of Queen Street and the Market Square, was offered for sale in March 1818 along with his merchandise, “consisting of dry goods and ironware” (Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser 1818a: 4). It is likely that Seixas hired someone to run the business in Lancaster since he was listed in the Philadelphia city directories as a “Queensware manufacturer” at “High W[est] Schuykill 7th Streets” from 1818 through 1822 (Myers 1980: 83). Although this notice does not specify whether the queensware was imported or of local manufacture, it is probable that Seixas was offering some of his own products from his Lancaster shop.

Conclusions

The archaeological excavations of the Red Rose Transit site in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, revealed features and artifacts related to each period of occupation of the site, from the mid-18th through the early 20th centuries. The variety of refined ceramics recovered from the site reflect an economic status corresponding to the expansion of the modestly prosperous proprietary, professional, and trade groups that made up the urban and small-town middle class of the early to mid-19th century.

As noted in other articles in this issue, there are relatively few marked examples of domestic queensware, and to date no known kiln assemblages exist so that an attempt to differentiate the products of the various queensware potteries can be made. Despite the difficulty in making a firm attribution, the documents and advertisements reveal that American queensware was indeed available in the city of Lancaster during this time. The discovery and identification of domestic queensware in Lancaster, even in small quantities, confirms the distribution of this ceramic beyond the Philadelphia area. Due to the position that Lancaster held as the gateway to the Western trade, it is anticipated that for cash, at reduced prices. Likewise Earthenware, of every description. (Intelligencer and Weekly Advertiser 1818b: 2)

Myers, Susan A.

Sener, Samuel M.

United States Geological Survey (USGS)

URS/AECOM Corporation
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