



***Archaeological Field School on
Edgefield, South Carolina
Pottery Communities***



University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign



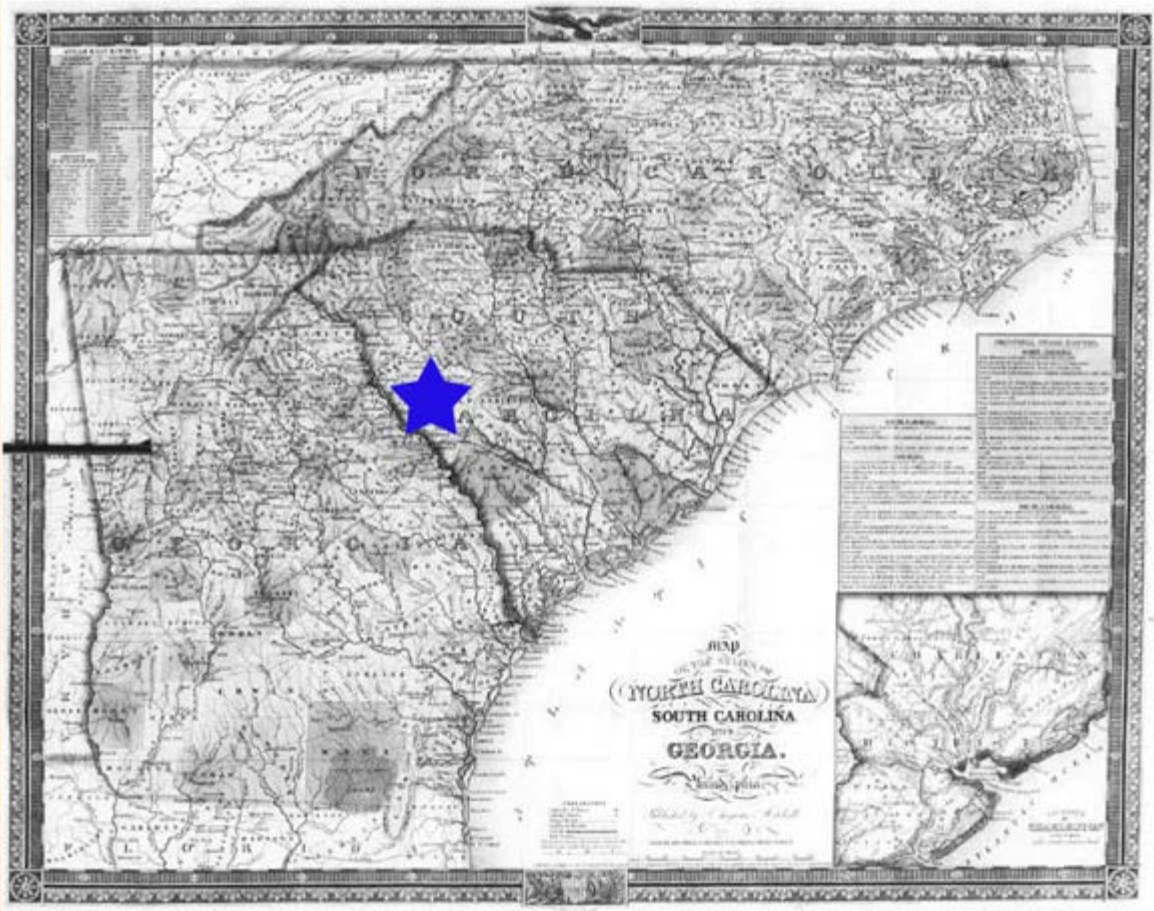
Anth. 454-CF and 455-CF (6 credits; 6 weeks)

May 23, 2011 to July 1, 2011

This field school will provide training in the techniques of excavation, mapping, controlled surface surveys, artifact classification and contextual interpretation. Students will work in supervised teams, learning to function as members of a field crew, with all of the skills necessary for becoming professional archaeologists. Many students from past University of Illinois field schools have gone on to graduate study and professional field-archaeology positions. Laboratory processing and analysis will be ongoing during the field season. Evening lectures by project staff, visiting archaeologists, and historians will focus on providing background on how field data are used to answer archaeological and historical research questions.

Historical Significance and Project Background

The first innovation and development of alkaline-glazed stoneware pottery in America occurred in the Edgefield District of South Carolina in the early 1800s. It remains an enduring mystery as to how these new ceramic methods were developed in that place and time, and how the techniques of clay choice, temper, and glaze developed over the following century. These potteries employed enslaved and free African-American laborers in the 19th century, and the stoneware forms also show evidence of likely African cultural influence on stylistic designs. Edgefield potteries thus present fascinating research questions of understanding technological innovations and investigating the impacts of African cultural knowledge and racial ideologies on a craft specialization during the historic period in America. This project entails an interdisciplinary, collaborative, and archaeological study of the first development in America of alkaline-glazed stoneware pottery forms, the development of that South Carolina industry over time, and the impacts of racism and African cultural influences on those processes.



Mitchell 1835 map of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, with the Edgefield District highlighted by star (archival map image courtesy Hargrett Library Digital Collections, University of Georgia, <http://www.libs.uga.edu/>).

The technological innovation of alkaline-glazed stoneware pottery was introduced in North America by potteries operated by Abner and John Landrum in the Edgefield, South Carolina area in the first decades of the 19th century. These technological developments by entrepreneurs of Scots-Irish heritage played out in a landscape shaped by racial difference. Numerous African-American laborers, including "Dave the Potter" who added inscriptions to his vessels, worked at these production sites. Advertisements in local newspapers in the early decades of the 1800s listed enslaved laborers with skills in pottery production. African Americans most likely participated in all phases of the production process, such as: building and maintaining the kilns; digging and transporting clay; working and grinding raw clay in "pug" mills; chopping wood for fuel; preparing glaze mixtures, tempers, and clay pastes; turning the pottery wheels and shaping the vessels; and loading and unloading the kiln firings.

As local historians Holcombe and Holcombe (1989: 22) observed, the "District's ceramic entrepreneurs would never have been able to manufacture such large quantities of Edgefield wares without the slave participation." Indeed, in the period of 1800-1820, the recorded number of enslaved African Americans in the surrounding area had increased to comprise half of the Edgefield District's population. An illegal transport of enslaved laborers on the ship *Wanderer* delivered 170 newly-captive Africans to the Edgefield District in 1858. The production of remarkably shaped "face vessels" at local potteries have also been analyzed as presenting evidence of



the influence of stylistic traditions from cultures of West Central Africa.

This project seeks to undertake detailed archaeological investigations of principal sites in Edgefield, conduct archival research, and start a multi-year community engagement and education program related to these subjects.

Archaeological field schools and research teams at such pottery sites can explore both the production facility remains and the residential sectors for the enslaved and free African-American laborers.

Primary research questions include: (1) examining the distribution of work areas and residential locations in each pottery site and analyze the degree of spatial segregation due to the impacts of slavery and racism; (2) understanding differential uses and development of those work and residential spaces, as reflected in archaeological features and artifact distributions, and the degree to which variations correlate with different racial categories associated with the occupants; (3) analyzing faunal and botanical remains to explore and contrast dietary and health patterns between residential sites and the degree to which variations correlate with different racial categories associated with the occupants; and (4) understanding the development and changes over time in the technologies of pottery production at these three manufacturing sites.

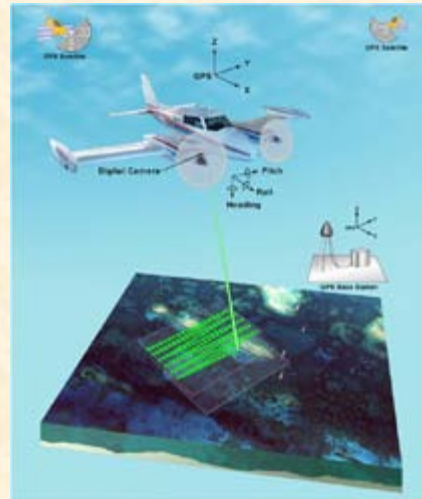


Field School Overview

This six-week archaeological field school will focus on the site of Landrumsville, later called Pottersville, where Abner Landrum started the first stoneware production facility in the Edgefield district in the early 1800s. We will excavate the kiln and related production areas and conduct surveys to locate the house sites of the craftspeople and laborers who created the Pottersville village surrounding that manufacturing facility. Instructors will include Prof. Fennell, U. Illinois doctoral student George Calfas, and archaeologist Carl Steen of Diachronic Research Inc., among others. The instructors

and students will stay in local housing in the Edgefield area during this six week field school, and visit nearby archaeology sites and museums on weekend trips.

For additional information about this field school opportunity, please contact Chris Fennell by email at cfennell@illinois.edu, by cell phone at 312-513-2683, or check his [faculty](#) web page for background information on the multi-year archaeology project in Edgefield, South Carolina. You can also contact George Calfas at gcalfas2@illinois.edu. A recent article, "Archaeological Investigations and LiDAR Aerial Survey in Edgefield, South Carolina," *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* (Dec. 2010) ([.pdf](#)) provides updates on our survey plans for 2011.



To apply for participation in this fieldschool, please download and complete a short [application form](#) and submit it to Prof. Fennell by March 25, 2011. Students will be notified of acceptance no later than April 8, 2011. Accepted students should register for the related course numbers (listed above) for the summer session. Please note that all students must register for both courses (a total of 6 credit hours). Students from colleges other than the University of Illinois can register through our exchange program and receive transfer credits.

Background Readings and Resources

Use the following resources to learn more:

- [Carolina Clay and Dave the Potter \(L. Todd\)](#)
- [Edgefield Pottery District History \(SCIway\)](#)
- [Dave the Potter \(SCIway\)](#)
- [Edgefield Face Vessels \(Smithsonian\)](#)
- [Edgefield Face Vessels \(Chipstone\)](#)
- [Old Edgefield Folk Potters \(M. Newell\)](#)
- [Industrial Pottery in Edgefield \(C. Steen\)](#)
- [Dave the Potter \(U.S.C. Aiken\)](#)
- [Ferrells' Old Edgefield Pottery \(SCIway\)](#)
- [Ferrells' Model of Pottersville \(SCIway\)](#)
- [Storage Jar by Dave Drake \(Phila. Museum of Art\)](#)
- [South Carolina during Reconstruction \(SCIway\)](#)
- Books and Articles --

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Maintained by
Christopher Fennell