

“Hittin’ the Bottle: An Analysis of the Glass Bottles
From the First Pensacola Lighthouse Keeper’s House”

by

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(Figure 1)Excavations at 8ES64, the site of the first Pensacola lighthouse keeper's residence, recovered thousands of glass bottle fragments. Liquor, wine, medicine, and food condiment bottles were all noted among the 3,035 glass fragments analyzed in the lab. By looking more closely at the minimum vessel count for one of the features, we hoped to identify and recognize deposition episodes and patterns. A comparison to other domestic and military sites was also conducted to identify these patterns of deposition.

(Figure 2) We conducted the bottle minimum vessel count on the collection from Feature 715, a large refuse pit located behind the site of the lighthouse keeper's residence. This feature was chosen for the number of bottles and bottle fragments it produced, and also for its wide variety of bottle types. Seven hundred and thirty two bottles and bottle fragments were recovered from this one feature, almost 25 percent of the bottle glass found at the entire site. Research questions dealt with the origin of these bottles. Are these from the lighthouse keeper and his family? Or could the large number be explained by the various military presences in the area?

In conducting the bottle minimum vessel count, glass was divided by manufacture method and color. Mends were identified between fragments. We determined the presence of a vessel by either a bottle base, or a bottle fragment that didn't match in color or manufacture

method with any other specimen. Analysis identified 70 bottles.

(Figure 3) I further researched vessels that contained embossing or maker's marks for dating and content information. These are my main references.

(Figure 4) One aspect I analyzed was manufacturing methods. Of the 70 bottles, 23 percent are free blown, 33 percent are mold made, 17 percent are panel, and 27 percent are of unidentified manufacture. Mold made bottles, the majority in the collection, are common finds on 19th century sites. We identified bottles blown in a mold, made from the 1730s to the late 19th century; a bottle made with a Ricketts-type mold made from 1820 to the 1920; and bottles made with two-piece molds, made from 1810 to 1880. Panel bottles are also mold-made, and usually contained patent medicines. Free blown bottles continued to be made into the 1800s, but began to occur less frequently. Had this been a 18th century site, the number of free blown bottles would have been much higher. As expected, these percentages indicate a 19th century site.

(Figure 5) When broken down by manufacture method and glass color, mold made bottles of light to dark olive green in color predominate in the minimum vessel collection. Free blown bottles of light to olive green are next. Though the number of dark olive green free blown bottles is low for this feature, many are present in the site assemblage. Bottles of this glass color and manufacture method contained wine, liquor or champagne. Since clear glass became the predominant color of bottles in the 20th century, we expected to find more olive green glass wine

and liquor bottles at this 19th century site.

(Figure 6)I also looked at usage types. Of the 70 bottles, 3 percent were used for food, 46 percent for beverages, and 10 percent for medicinal purposes. The remaining 41 percent were of undetermined use.

(Figure 7)The bottles used for food storage and condiments included a green London Mustard panel bottle, made with a mold in use from 1810 to 1880. These mustard bottles are a common finds on 18th and 19th century sites and have been found on sites from Williamsburg, Virginia, to coastal South Carolina.

(Figure 8)An aqua cathedral bottle used for food storage was also identified. Our fragment is similar to bottle A in the top photograph, collected from Camp Baird, a Civil War site in South Carolina. Cathedral bottles are frequently found on Civil War sites. No other food storage bottles were recovered from this feature.

(Figure 9)The bottles identified as beverage use contained either wine, champagne, or liquor. No ale, soda, ginger beer, or lemon extract bottles, all of which are common on Civil War encampment sites, were identified.

(Figure 10)One olive green bottle has "PATENT" embossed on the shoulder, and was made with a Ricketts type mold. This type mold was in use from the 1820s to the early 20th

century.

(Figure 11)I also identified as a beverage container an aqua mold made bottle with "Whitney Glassworks Glassboro NJC" on the base. From 1887 to 1918, Whitney Glassworks produced bottles for beer, bitters and other medicines and beverages. This bottle dates to the occupation of the range light keeper's house, which was built in 1898 on top of the original lighthouse keeper's residence.

(Figure 12)We also identified a light olive green mold made liquor bottle with "McCully & Co. Pitts" on the base, dating from 1841 to 1886. Wilson identified a bottle with the same mark at the last Fort Union, 1863 to 1891, which was a United States Army post located in present day New Mexico.

(Figure 13)Another beverage container identified is a dark amber mold made liquor bottle with "Willington Glass Works" on the base. Willington, a Connecticut company, made bourbon whiskey bottles from 1815 to 1873. Two other mold made beverage containers had marks which couldn't be identified: one with the base mark "P", and the other with the base mark "E."

(Figure 14)One of the more interesting finds was a light olive green free blown wine bottle, with a Margaux Medoc glass seal on its shoulder. In 1855, the wines of the Bordeaux region of France were classified according to price and prestige. Margaux was included with

only three other chateaux as producing a first-growth wine, a high honor considering there are around 8,000 chateaux in Bordeaux. The classification continues to this day, and a 1994 vintage will run you about \$2000 a bottle. No date was found for the bottle from Feature 715, and it wasn't determined whether or not the seal was used before the 1855 classification. At Fort Laramie, Wyoming, Rex Wilson identified another first growth Bordeaux bottle listed in the post trader's records from the 1880s. Perhaps a post trader ordered our bottle for an officer, or it may have been a gift to the lighthouse keeper, who couldn't have afforded the fine Bordeaux on his salary. However, bottles of fine wines were coming into North Florida at the time of the Civil War, as evidenced by the cargo of the shipwrecked Maple Leaf, a Federal steamship sunk April 1, 1864, in the St. John's River near Jacksonville.

(Figure 15) Another wine bottle fragment from Feature 715, which could not be attributed to any one bottle in the minimum vessel count, is an olive green mold made fragment with Haut Barsac on the seal. Barsac is a commune of Sauternes, a dessert wine producing region of France.

(Figure 16) Bottles used for medicinal purposes include two Schnapps bottles: a light olive green panel bottle, and an olive green mold made bottle embossed "UDOLPHO WOLFE'S / SCHIEDAM/AROMATIC / SCHNAPPS." This product was introduced in 1848, and is described as a medical gin tonic, diuretic, antidisepctic and cordial. A similar bottle was found at Fort Union, which dates

from 1865 to 1890.

(Figure 17) Another medicinal bottle identified is a light green free blown round bottle for Johnson's American Anodyne Liniment. This liniment "for external and internal pain", dates from 1810 to post- 1900, as this advertisement "From Madison to McKinley" boasts.

(Figure 18) A light blue patent medicine panel bottle for "Chamberlain's Cough Remedy," available beginning around 1881, is also in the minimum vessel collection. I've tentatively identified another light blue mold made patent medicine bottle as being "Dr. McLean's Strengthening Cordial & Blood Purifier." Only a fragment with "... GTHENI...//... IAL..." is present. I searched a database of patent medicine names developed by Dr. William Hunt Jr. of the National Park Service, Midwestern Archaeological Center in Lincoln, Nebraska. I narrowed down the selection by comparing the fragment with descriptions in Richard Fike's "The Bottle Book." This product is described as a "product to tone up and strengthen the system." The earliest advertising date listed is 1865.

(Figure 19) As an additional analysis, I compared this collection with two domestic and two military sites in order to evaluate quantities of bottles expected at these two different types of sites. I used the percentage of bottle glass fragments in comparisons for the two domestic sites and one of the military sites, Camp Baird, since no bottle minimum vessel count had been completed. For the other military site, Folly Island, a minimum vessel count had been completed, and I used that in the comparison.

I compared the minimum vessel collection from Feature 715 with two 19th century domestic sites, one in Tennessee and one in South Carolina. The 840 Highway Corridor site, 40WM153, in Tennessee, was occupied in the first half of the 19th century. Bottle counts totaled 81 fragments, with liquor bottle fragments representing 26 percent. At the South Carolina domestic site, the Futch site, 38HR245, artifacts associated with a middle class pig farmer residence were recovered. Bottle counts totaled 198 fragments, with liquor bottle fragments at 24 percent.

The two military sites used for comparison were the Folly Island site, and the Camp Baird site, both in South Carolina. Both are Civil War encampments. Archaeological investigations at the 1863 winter encampment on Folly Island turned up thousands of bottle fragments. At one Folly Island site, 38CH966, 413 bottles, mostly ale, were counted in the minimum vessel analysis. The area is thought to have been a bottle dump, which would explain the high number. At the Camp Baird site, 6,753 glass fragments were found. There were 1,223 fragments from beverage bottles, including whiskey, soda and ale; 3,542 from food containers; and 814 from medicinal bottles.

When compared with the two domestic sites and the Camp Baird military encampment, Feature 715 had a higher percentage of wine and liquor bottles. The Folly Island site's higher number is explained by its being a suspected bottle dump. The majority of bottle fragments recovered from Camp Baird were for food storage and condiments, whereas only 3 percent of

the bottles identified in the Navy Lodge Feature 715 MNV were for food. Glass food containers are commonly recovered on Civil War encampment sites.

(Figure 20)The results of my research on the bottle collection from Feature 715 make it difficult to attribute Feature 715 to either a military or domestic occupation. The dates of the bottles span the 19th century, and there were both military and domestic presences in the area during this time. The usage type percentages don't match that of either domestic or military sites. If this is a domestic refuse dump, then the residents were drinking a lot. If this was a military dump, then where are the food containers? It appears the feature is a mixed refuse deposit, used throughout the 19th century, by both the military and the residents.