

## Analysis of Glass Beads

Sites 9Ge37 and 9Mg99

WILL EVENTUALLY APPEAR IN  
REPORT 1979a

During salvage excavations at the Curtright Factory site 9Ge37 and the Park's Mill site 9Mg99, a small collection of glass beads was recovered. This report will present a descriptive and comparative analysis of the 21 beads recovered from these sites. Most beads recovered are typical of types present throughout the 19th century on Indian, African slave, and perhaps Euro-American sites. The interpretation advanced is that the beads represent activity by Afro-American slaves during the period prior to the Civil War.

Glass beads are classified according to their manufacturing processes, structure, colors, and when present, types of decorations. Two major manufacturing processes were in use during the 19th century: the hollow cane technique and the mandrel wound technique. In the hollow cane technique, a large bubble of glass is drawn out into a long tube, or "cane", which is then cut into short sections for beads. Frequently such cane beads were then tumbled over heat with a polishing agent to round and smooth the beads, and are therefore known as tumbled cane beads. Mandrel wound beads are produced by winding a molten thread of glass around a spinning rod, or mandrel, until a suitable sized bead is built up.

The beads are further classified according to their structure. Simple beads are composed of one layer of glass, compound beads are composed of two or more layers of glass, and complex beads have applique or inset decorative elements. No complex beads were recovered from sites 9Ge37 or 9Mg99. See Good (1972) for further discussion of bead manufacturing techniques and typology.

Finally, beads are classified according to their colors. Since a standard color chart was not available to this author, color descriptions are general. Specific proveniences of all beads are listed in Table I.

#### BEAD TYPES

##### Drawn Cane Beads of Simple Construction

- Type 1. Translucent navy blue faceted bead of simple construction. The bead is made from a hexagonal cane which has had six facets cut on each end, leaving a central row of facets from the original cane. 4.5mm diameter. 2 specimens.
- Type 2. As above, but translucent green. 4-9mm diameter. 3 specimens.
- Type 3. As above, but translucent deep cobalt blue. 7mm diameter. 1 specimen.
- Type 4. Opaque turquoise blue donut shaped bead (tumbled). 5mm diameter. 1 specimen.
- Type 5. Transparent clear tubular bead (untumbled). 3mm diameter by 15mm long. 1 specimen.
- Type 6. Translucent opalescent light blue donut shaped seed bead (tumbled). 3mm diameter. 1 specimen.

##### Drawn Cane Beads of Compound Construction

- Type 7. Translucent light navy blue faceted bead with an inner core layer of light blue glass. This bead is made from a hexagonal cane and is faceted as Type 1, 2, and 3 above. 4.5mm diameter. 2 specimens.
- Type 8. Translucent blue-green faceted bead with an inner core of light blue translucent glass. Clore variant of Type 7. 6mm diameter. 3 specimens.
- Type 9. Translucent red over opaque white core donut shaped seed bead (tumbled). 2.5mm diameter. 1 specimen.

#### Mandrel Wound Beads of Simple Construction

Type 10. Opaque black oval shaped bead. 7mm diameter. 15mm long. 1 whole and 1 fragmentary specimen. Both heavily patinated.

Type 11. Transparent amber oblate spheroidal bead. 8,9mm diameter . 2 specimens.

Type 12. Opaque black spherical bead. 11.5mm diameter. 1 specimen.

12A C  
Other Beads

Type 13. Faceted jet bead with tapering hole. 9.5mm diameter. 1 specimen.

#### Discussion

Several of the bead types are common on nineteenth century Indian sites throughout North America, especially the faceted types 1,2,3,7, and 8 and the seed bead type 9. Table II lists comparative data for the 12 glass bead types. The four Indian sites represented in Table II were chosen as representative examples, but numerous other occurrences are known. These faceted bead types are often referred to as "Russian beads" in much early bead literature, since they are found on Russian contact sites in Alaska; however, as can be seen in Table II, they also occur throughout North America in areas never contacted by Russian traders.

Recently historical archaeologists have noted the presence of these faceted bead types on plantation sites in contexts indicating their use by Black slaves (Table II). This would seem to be a likely explanation for the Wallace Reservoir beads, since slaves were known to be present at at least one of the sites.

The possibility that the beads were also utilized by the Euro-American inhabitants of the sites cannot be rejected, however. Similar beads were found at the Suffolk site in Virginia (Table II) and McCary (1956)

states, "During the 1850's and the 1860's, the white women used the clear faceted and the colored faceted beads of the Suffolk types for making all sorts of odd ornaments including small hot pads and fringes for various bits of household finery." McCary also illustrates a string of beads containing these faceted types "obtained a few years ago from an old Negro woman." In general, these faceted types seem to be utilized most frequently for trade with more "primitive" groups. They were widely traded in North America to Indian groups and Black slaves, and were also traded in Africa. Their relatively large hole diameters made stringing possible on a variety of cords, thongs, or other fibers available to any group.

Other beads worthy of some mention include Type 9, a form of the Cornaline D'Aleppo common on Indian sites of the 19th Century; Type 11, probably a rather recent bead perhaps dating to the 20th century; Type 5, a long "bugle" probably from the late 19th century; and the faceted jet bead, Type 13, probably dating to the Victorian Era.

In conclusion, 21 beads were classified in 13 types. There is an amazing correspondence of types between the two sites (Table I). While this should be expected since the sites were contemporary, the correspondence is so striking as to suggest that both sites probably had the same ultimate source of supply. The presence of Negro slaves at the sites probably accounts for most of the beads, however, use by Euro-Americans cannot be ruled out.

Marvin T. Smith

Laboratory of Archaeology

University of Georgia

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TABLE I

Provenience of Beads

- Type I. Ge37 Prov 2 Ln 84; Mg99 Prov 4 Ln 42.
- Type 2. Ge 37 Prov 15 Ln 15; Mg99 Prov 4 Lns 229, 231.
- Type 3. Ge 37 Prov 14 Ln 17.
- Type 4. Mg99 Prov 4 Ln 249
- Type 5. Mg99 Prov 4 Ln 13.
- Type 6. Ge37 Prov 14 Ln 17
- Type 7. Mg99 Prov 4 Lns 233, 242.
- Type 8. Mg99 Prov 4 Lns 35, 233(2)
- Type 9. Mg99 Prov 4 Ln240.
- Type 10. Ge37 Prov 15 Ln 12; Mg99 Prov 4 Ln 195.
- Type 11. Mg99 Prov 0 Ln 103; Prov 5 Ln 17.
- Type 12. Mg99 Prov 4 Ln 13.
- Type 13. Ge 37 Prov 3 Ln 16

Table I

## Comparative Analysis

Bead Types	Indian Sites			Slave Sites			Euro-American Sites	
	Chieftains (1800-1837) Georgia (SMith 1974)	Guebert (1719-1833) Illinois (Good 1972)	Wichita Sequence, Texas (Harris and Harris 1967)	Rabbit Hill (1865-1885) Oklahoma (Pearson 1978)	Hermitage, Tennessee (Good 1976)	Rayfield Plantation (1834-1865) Georgia (Ascher and Fairbanks 1971)	Kingsley, Florida (Fairbanks 1974)	Suffolk, Virginia Early 19th Century (McCary 1956)
1	X							X
2		X	1820-	X				X
3		X	1820-					
4								
5								
6								
7	X	X	1767-	X	X			X
8								
9	X	X	1836-50					
10								
11					X			
12					X			

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