

WITHIN THE COLLECTION

A LOOK INSIDE THE FORT VANCOUVER MUSEUM



CERAMICS: SPODE TRANSFERWARE

NCRI CURATION SERIES NO. 6



CERAMICS: SPODE TRANSFERWARE

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Introduction


By Robert J. Cromwell, Ph.D.

Fort Vancouver National Historic Site

After nearly 20 years of conducting research on archaeological sites associated with the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), it is easy for me to state that ceramic sherds manufactured by the Spode/Copeland & Garrett/W.T. Copeland & Sons (from here on, Spode) are one of my favorite to discover and analyze. My 2006 Ph.D. dissertation was a socioeconomic analysis of Spode ceramic sherds recovered from both Fort Vancouver and its associated employee village. During the many thousands of research hours I have conducted at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, some of my best have been spent analyzing Spode transfer wares. Other staff members at the site have even given me the nickname of the "Sherd Nerd," which I gladly answer to! It has been with great pleasure that I've assisted with the production of this publication; it is the culmination of a career-long dream to help develop such a guide to the archaeological Spode ceramics here.

As an archaeologist, I have been trained to see artifacts as imbued with elements of culture, in that they capture both symbolic and actual components of the past people who made and used them. I like to say that, of all the artifacts commonly discovered at Fort Vancouver, the ceramic wares – and specifically the Spode ceramic wares – are veritably "dripping with culture." Very few other artifact types in the massive archaeological collection of over 2 million items can tell us as much about the past as even a diminutive ceramic sherd.


What can such a sherd can tell us? The date range of manufacture (sometimes within a five year span); the likely date range of an archaeological deposit (with enough other sherds present); the place of manufacture; the intended use (by vessel form); and the



forms of actual use (with evidence of use wear). Beyond these inferences, an analysis of patterns across a site or between sites can also be used to form hypotheses on the socioeconomic abilities of the associated household; the possible ethnicity, consumer choices, and diet or cooking techniques of the owners; and the marketing prowess of the HBC and the Spode company, to name a few.

Such sherds, and specifically the transfer printed white earthenware tablewares manufactured by the Spode firm, will commonly account for nearly 25% of an archaeological assemblage associated with fur trade contexts at the site (ca. 1829-1860). Due to HBC support of British industries in the goods they ordered, a nearly exclusive contract between the HBC and the Spode Company spread ceramic wares throughout North America from 1836-1847. At Fort Vancouver, clerk records indicate that over 400 Spode ceramic vessels were imported and available for sale every year. This has resulted in ceramic wares manufactured by Spode representing almost 90% of the ceramic sherds in the fur trade component of the museum collection. One pattern, Delhi, post-dates the HBC occupation of the site and was likely imported by suppliers to the U.S. Army or the St. James Mission. Although there are many transfer print patterns in the collection that date to the military period, Delhi is the only one manufactured by the Spode Company so far identified.

The dominance of Spode ceramics, combined with archival records and over 70 years of research on ceramic artifacts from sites throughout northern North America, results in an incredible body of knowledge on the names and date ranges for almost 70 different transfer print patterns. As demonstrated in this publication, these patterns represent a wide variety of themes, including landscapes (both European and Europe's interpretation of Asian) floral elements, geometric designs, and moral lessons based on fables. The patterns came in a wide variety of colors, with a medium to dark cobalt blue being the most common, but ranging to brown, red, pink, purple, and black, as well as a dark blue "flow."



Transfer print decoration revolutionized the production of Staffordshire ceramic wares in the late 18th century. Prior to this point, all potteries were reliant upon artists to hand apply decorative elements either under or over glaze, with paint brushes, sponges, or drip pots. The transfer print process was developed independently by both Josiah Spode and Josiah Wedgwood after about 1760, and became the predominant decoration technique applied by these potteries throughout the 19th century. The transfer print manufacturing process is further detailed later in this volume.

This volume is organized alphabetically by the primary pattern name. These pattern names were given by the Spode/Copeland company, and most of the names were verified by the factory pattern books, company catalogs, or names on the original copper plates by Lynn Sussman of Parks Canada. The authors attempted to identify the most intact artifact samples of each pattern and color variation represented in the museum collection, and a variety of vessel forms—especially when those forms necessitated design variations.

A data table is included for each artifact, which includes the following information: the Fort Vancouver catalog number, alternate pattern names (where applicable), vessel type (form), FOVA variety number (derived from National Park Service archaeologists Jake Hoffman and Lester Ross, earthenware type number (derived from archaeologists David and Linda Chance and Caroline Carley, color of the decoration, dimensions, dates of manufacture, dates of use, and the general location where the artifact was found. The inclusion of the Ross and Chance & Chance variety numbers is in an effort to provide an easily cross-referenced source for future researchers.

We hope you enjoy this guide to the types of Spode transferwares archaeologically recovered at Fort Vancouver National Historic Site. As with the rest of the *Within the Collection* publication series, it is one way we can bring you “inside the collection” to experience the resources of this national park.

The Transfer Printing Process

Transfer printing refers to the method of transferring a design onto an unglazed earthenware vessel after an initial firing. Below is a brief summary of the steps in the process:

An artist's drawing is hand engraved onto a copper plate.

The color (made from inorganic metallic oxides mixed with oils) is rubbed into a hot copper plate, and the excess carefully scraped off.

The plate is cooled, and then tissue paper specially prepared with a soap sizer is placed on the copper engraving. Both are run through a press, forcing the paper into contact with every line of the drawing.

The plate is heated once more, to dry the paper and soften the color, then the tissue paper print is carefully pulled away from the engraving.

Sections of the print are cut out and positioned on the vessel. They are held in place by the tackiness of the color. The center design goes on first, then the border. The print is rubbed down with a brush lubricated with soft soap.

Figure 1: Saucer with tissue paper still adhering.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Next, the saucer is immersed in water so that the tissue paper is washed off, leaving just the print behind.

Figure 2: Saucer with tissue paper removed.

The saucer is fired at a low temperature to “harden on” the print. *Figure 3: After the color is “hardened on”, the piece may be dipped in glaze without damaging the design.*



Figure 3



Figure 4

Note that the color is not yet blue. *Figure 4: Saucer with glaze on one half only, to demonstrate how the white glaze completely covers the design.*

The saucer is then fired to 1070° centigrade. *Figure 5: The brilliant blue part of this saucer was glazed; the darker matte blue is an unglazed portion shown as a comparison.*



Figure 5

The reaction of the silica in the glaze with the cobalt in the color produces the famous Spode blue. *Figure 6: This saucer was completely glazed, then fired to show a finished product.*



Figure 6

Photos in this section by Christina Stolmeier.

Aesop's Fables (The Fox and the Grapes)



Catalog #10384

Alternate Pattern Name

Vessel Type cup

FOVA Variety #7002

Earthenware Type E.T. 50

Color blue

Dimensions DIAM 121 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1830-1860

Dates of Use ca.1830-1860

Location Fort Vancouver - Privy near Bachelors' Quarters

Aesop's Fables (The Sow and the Wolf)



Catalog #19892

Alternate Pattern Name

Vessel Type plate

FOVA Variety #7002

Earthenware Type # E.T. 50

Color blue

Dimensions L 96 mm W 52 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1830-1860

Dates of Use ca.1830-1860

Location Village

Aesop's Fables (The Fox and the Lion)



Catalog #19896

Alternate Pattern Name

Vessel Type unidentifed

FOVA Variety #7002

Earthenware Type E.T. 50

Color blue

Dimensions L 93 mm W 74 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1830-1860

Dates of Use ca.1830-1860

Location Village

Aesop's Fables (The Wolf and the Crane)



Catalog #19898

Alternate Pattern Names

Vessel Type vegetable dish

FOVA Variety #7002

Earthenware Type E.T. 50

Color blue

Dimensions L 152 mm W 95 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1830-1860

Dates of Use ca.1830-1860

Location Village

Aesop's Fables (The Wolf and the Lamb)



Catalog #19900

Alternate Pattern Names

Vessel Type unidentified

FOVA Variety #7002

Earthenware Type E.T. 50

Color blue

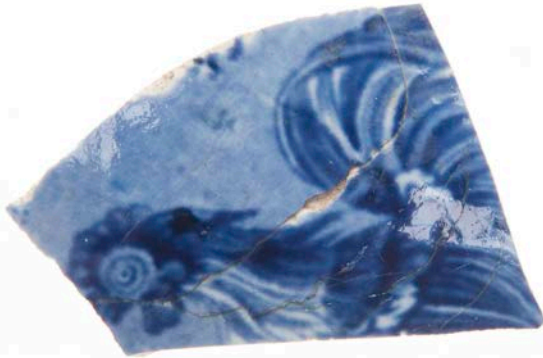
Dimensions L 70 mm W 48 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1830-1860

Dates of Use ca.1830-1860

Location Village

Aesop's Fables (The Ass, the Lion, and the Cock)



Catalog #19901

Alternate Pattern Names

Vessel Type unidentified

FOVA Variety #7002

Earthenware Type E.T. 50

Color blue

Dimensions L 46 mm W 27 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1830-1860

Dates of Use ca.1830-1860

Location Village

Aesop's Fables (The Goat and the Fox)



Catalog #21346

Alternate Pattern Names

Vessel Type platter

FOVA Variety #7002

Earthenware Type E.T. 50

Color blue

Dimensions L 250 mm W 245 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1830-1860

Dates of Use ca.1830-1860

Location Village

Aesop's Fables (The Leopard and the Fox)



Catalog #22571

Alternate Pattern Names

Vessel Type unidentified

FOVA Variety #7002

Earthenware Type E.T. 50

Color blue

Dimensions L 54 mm W 35 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1830-1860

Dates of Use ca.1830-1860

Location near East 5th Street



Catalog #9677 (Chamber pot lid)

Alternate Pattern Names	
Vessel Type	chamber pot
FOVA Variety	#7065
Earthenware Type	E.T. 5
Color	blue
Dimensions	DIAM 225 mm
Dates of Manufacture	ca.1848-1860
Dates of Use	ca.1848-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver- East Stockade

Alhambra



Catalog #9677 (Exterior chamber pot)

Alternate Pattern Names

Vessel Type chamber pot

FOVA Variety #7065

Earthenware Type E.T. 5

Color blue

Dimensions DIAM 225 mm

Dates of Manufacture ca.1848-1860

Dates of Use ca.1848-1860

Location Fort Vancouver- East Stockade



Catalog #9677 (Interior chamber pot)

Alternate Pattern Names	
Vessel Type	chamber pot
FOVA Variety	#7065
Earthenware Type	E.T. 5
Color	blue
Dimensions	DIAM 225 mm
Dates of Manufacture	ca.1848-1860
Dates of Use	ca.1848-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver- East Stockade

Alhambra



Catalog #9737

Alternate Pattern Names

Vessel Type cup

FOVA Variety #7065

Earthenware Type E.T. 5

Color blue

Dimensions DIAM 54 in

Dates of Manufacture ca.1848-1860

Dates of Use ca.1848-1860

Location Fort Vancouver - Privy near Bachelors' Quarters



Catalog #26498

Alternate Pattern Names

Vessel Type jug

FOVA Variety #7065

Earthenware Type E.T. 5

Color blue

Dimensions W 84 mm H 78 mm (largest crossmended fragment)

Dates of Manufacture ca.1848-1860

Dates of Use ca.1848-1860

Location Fort Vancouver

Antique Vase



Catalog #473

Alternate Pattern Names	Mimosa; Alba
Vessel Type	cup
FOVA Variety	#7003
Earthenware Type	E.T. 20
Color	blue
Dimensions	H 67 mm DIAM 127 mm
Dates of Manufacture	ca. 1847-1860
Dates of Use	ca. 1847-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver



Catalog #36413

Alternate Pattern Names	Mimosa; Alba
Vessel Type	plate
FOVA Variety	#7003
Earthenware Type	E.T. 20
Color	blue
Dimensions	L 255 mm
Dates of Manufacture	ca. 1847-1860
Dates of Use	ca. 1847-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver

Antique Vase



Catalog #9702

Alternate Pattern Names	Mimosa; Alba
Vessel Type	sugar bowl lid
FOVA Variety	#7003
Earthenware Type	E.T. 20
Color	blue
Dimensions	L 106 mm
Dates of Manufacture	ca. 1847-1860
Dates of Use	ca. 1847-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver - East Stockade



Catalog #8596

Alternate Pattern Names	B606
Vessel Type	flatware
FOVA Variety	#7136
Earthenware Type	
Color	brown
Dimensions	L 44 mm
Dates of Manufacture	ca. 1837-1860
Dates of Use	ca. 1837-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver - East Stockade

Antoinette



Catalog #94706

Alternate Pattern Names	B606
Vessel Type	plate
FOVA Variety	#7136
Earthenware Type	
Color	brown
Dimensions	L 84 mm
Dates of Manufacture	ca. 1837-1860
Dates of Use	ca. 1837-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver - East Stockade



Catalog #703

Alternate Pattern Names	Cairo
Vessel Type	washbasin
FOVA Variety	#7083
Earthenware Type	
Color	blue
Dimensions	L 101 mm (largest sherd)
Dates of Manufacture	ca. 1835-1860
Dates of Use	ca. 1835-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver

Arabesque



Catalog #7566

Alternate Pattern Names	Cairo
Vessel Type	unidentified
FOVA Variety	#7083
Earthenware Type	
Color	brown
Dimensions	L 46 mm (largest sherd)
Dates of Manufacture	ca. 1835-1860
Dates of Use	ca. 1835-1860
Location	Fort Vancouver - Chief Factor's House