

**Aboriginal Ceramic Sherds from the Derrick Adams Site
(41WA100) in Walker County, Texas**

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Introduction

This report concerns the analysis of 16 ceramic sherds, six sherdlets (small sherds), and two pieces of burned clay from the Derrick Adams site (41WA100) in the Winters Bayou drainage in the southeastern part of Walker County, Texas (Moore 1990). This area is within the East Fork of the San Jacinto River basin, the Southeast Texas Archeological region (Aten 1983), and the geographic area of the Mossy Grove cultural tradition (Story 1990).

The ceramic sherds, sherdlets, and burned clay are from one shovel test and one test unit excavated during the course of a 1992 Rice University field school at the site. The shovel test (ST West) was excavated from 0-10 cm below the surface, while Test Unit 1 was excavated to 20 cm in two arbitrary 10 cm levels. The one shovel test contained one body sherd, six sherdlets, and a piece of burned clay. Level 1 (0-10 cm) in the Test Unit had one rim and three body sherds, while Level 2 contained one rim, nine body, and one base sherd, along with a single piece of burned clay.

Sherd Assemblage

The analysis of the sherds from the Derrick Adams site follows the analytical protocol recently defined by Ellis (2010:48-50) for the Southeast Texas Archeological region. The focus is on the determination of paste morphology, surface treatment, decorative treatment, vessel form as well as rim and lip profile, and firing environment for each sherd in the assemblage. Fresh breaks along the edge of each sherd were examined with a hand lens (10X) to make determination of paste morphology. Sherdlets (less than 1 cm in length and width) were tabulated by provenience, but receive no further consideration in this analysis.

The 16 sherds are from two different temper and paste groups: (1) untempered sandy paste body sherds, Goose Creek Plain, *var. unspecified* (Aten 1983:Figure 12.3; Aten and Bollich 2011), accounting for 81% (n=13) of the sample; and (2) bone-tempered and sandy paste sherds, not identified to a type or variety. These three plain rim and base bone-tempered sherds comprise 19% of the sherd sample from the Derrick Adams site.

The Goose Creek Plain, *var. unspecified* sherds are from thin-walled vessels with a coarse to fine sandy paste. The mean thickness of the body sherds is 5.51 ± 0.70 mm. Almost 40% of these sherds have been smoothed on their interior surface and 15% have been smoothed on their exterior surfaces, suggesting that they may be from jars and bowls. A range of firing conditions are represented in the Goose Creek Plain sherds, no one condition being dominant: fired and cooled in an oxidizing environment (30.8%); incompletely fired (7.7%); fired and cooled in a reducing environment (30.8%); fired in a reducing environment and cooled in the open air (15.4%); and smudged, sooted, or possibly re-fired (15.4%) (see Teltser 1993:Figure 2).

The plain bone-tempered sherds have a fine sandy paste. The bone temper is burned and coarsely-crushed before it was added to the paste. The two rims (6.6 ± 0.1 mm) have direct or vertical rims with rounded lips. The flat base is 11.5 mm, and would have provided a stable platform for vessel construction and later use. Both rims were fired in a reducing environment and cooled in the open air (Teltser 1993:Figure 2f-g), while the base came from a vessel that was fired and cooled in a high oxygen environment (Teltser 1993:Figure 2a).

Burned Clay

The low frequency (n=2) of burned clay at the Derrick Adams site suggests these burned clay pieces probably represent the incidental burning of clay from ovens and cooking pits, as well as pieces of clay that may have been used for plaster or lining of a house or outdoor food rack. The clay pieces were burned in both low oxygen and oxidizing environments, suggesting they were not smothered while they were being burned.

Conclusions

Sandy paste Goose Creek Plain, *var. unspecified* and bone-tempered/sandy paste sherds belong to the Mossy Grove ceramic tradition have been found in pre- and post-A.D. 900 archeological sites in Walker County and the Conroe-Lake Livingston area (see Aten 1983:292-293 and Figure 14.5). Aten (1983:295) suggests there is a modality in the occurrence of bone-tempered pottery, with it being found in very low frequencies as early as A.D. 540, but being much better represented after ca. A.D. 900. On that basis, the combination of Goose Creek Plain, *var. unspecified* sherds and plain bone-tempered sherds in the archeological deposits at the Derrick Adams site would seem to suggest that it was occupied after ca. A.D. 900.

More recently investigated archeological deposits at 41WA47 (Greaves 2002) and 41WA185 (Gadus and Fields 1997) suggest, however, that bone-tempered sandy paste ceramics are equally abundant in pre-A.D. 900 deposits. For instance, at 41WA47 bone-tempered and sandy paste ceramic sherds are found in deposits that date (at 1 sigma) between A.D. 70-900, while bone-tempered and sandy paste ceramic sherds from 41WA185 are in stratified deposits that date between A.D. 590-895 (1 sigma). Until a larger sample of sherds (including some decorated sherds and grog-tempered sherds) has been obtained from the site, along with radiocarbon dates, it is only possible to state that the ceramics at the Derrick Adams site may be from either/or Woodland or Late Prehistoric occupations. The absence of grog-tempered pottery at the site, even though the sherd sample is small, lends more credence to the possibility that the sherds obtained in the Rice University field school are from a pre-A.D. 900 occupation.

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