

*National Greek Orthodox Shrine*

1735-1810

*Avero site*

*Archaeology at the*  
**NATIONAL GREEK ORTHODOX SHRINE**  
*St. Augustine, Florida*

Microchange in eighteenth-century Spanish  
colonial material culture

**Kathleen A. Deagan**

*Florida State University Notes in Anthropology*  
Number 15



*A Florida State University Book*  
**UNIVERSITY PRESSES OF FLORIDA**  
Gainesville

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*Background and introduction*

**T**HE SITE Located at 39 St. George Street, St. Augustine, Florida, is known today as the National Greek Orthodox Shrine. Now owned by the National Greek Orthodox Church, the site did house the first chapel of the St. Augustine Minorcan population after they fled Turnbull's abortive New Smyrna colony in 1777 (see Gannon 1965:86-89). For 60 years before that, however, the lot was owned by a prominent St. Augustine \*criollo [all words preceded by an asterisk are explained in the Glossary of this book] family, and was occupied by them until the departure of the Spaniards in 1763. This 60-year period was the primary focus of the

archaeological exploration of the site that took place in the summer of 1974. Material from the period of the Minorcan chapel is also discussed in this work.

The exploration, carried out jointly by Florida State University, the National Greek Orthodox Church, and the Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board had three primary objectives:

The first of these was to gather information about the architecture of the earliest building on the lot and its subsequent evolution. This information is treated in Chapter 2.

The second objective was the definition and illustration of Spanish colonial material culture, both its items and their complexes, which were recovered from tightly dated and sealed proveniences. The peculiar architectural nature of the shrine made this possible through a series of superimposed, unbroken and well-dated \*tabby floors, each sealing a layer of soil and cultural debris. Since much of Spanish material culture as it is now known is poorly placed in time and space, this objective was considered to be a particularly important aspect of the project and is treated in Chapter 3. Even though this objective is primarily chronological, the nature of micro-change in material remains can be studied in relation to change in social and cultural conditions. To provide data on the articulation between material and social subsystems is the primary goal of historical archaeology.

The third objective of the project was to provide a preliminary picture of *criollo* material culture in St. Augustine during the eighteenth century. By this time, the Hispanic residents of the town had undergone 200 years of adjustment to the isolated conditions of the colony (see Gannon 1965; Tebeau 1971) as well as to the nature and resources of the Florida environment. The result was the crystallization of a distinct colonial culture.

This was not a homogeneous culture, however, for by the mid-eighteenth century there were a variety of groups in St. Augustine, including *criollos*, \**peninsulares*, \**mestizos*, free blacks, Indians, and Canary Islanders. Earlier research in St.

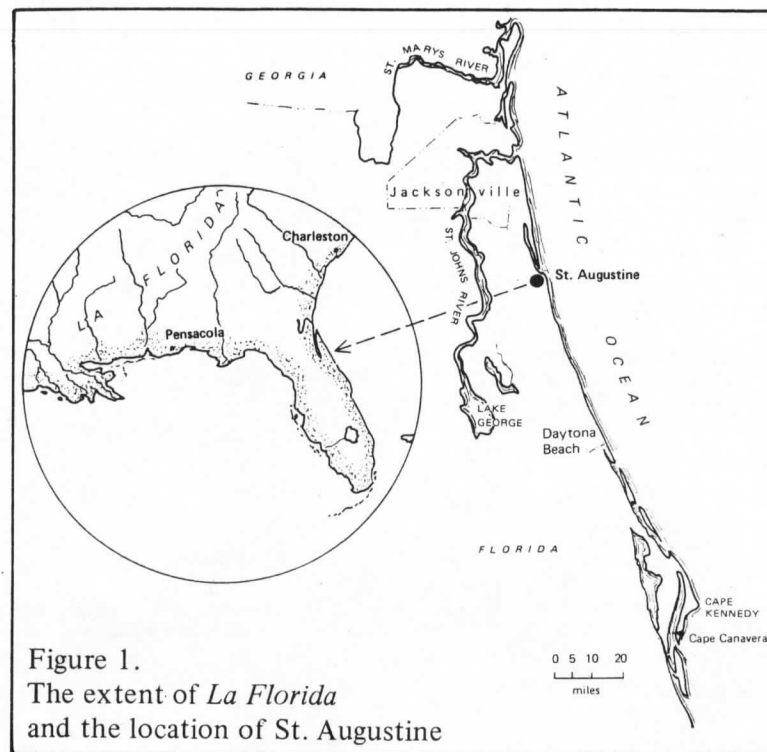


Figure 1.  
The extent of *La Florida*  
and the location of St. Augustine

Augustine has investigated a *mestizo* household of the eighteenth century (Deagan 1974 *a,b*), and the project at the National Greek Orthodox Shrine was intended to test the assumption that a *criollo* assemblage and adaptation would be distinct from those of a *mestizo* household and would also show less aboriginal influence. This final objective is covered in Chapter 4.

#### Project limitations

The objectives and achievements of the project were limited to a certain extent by the nature of the excavation. While the investigation of the interior of the standing structure strengthened the diachronic study, it excluded the possibility of obtaining information about the back lot elements of

Table 3 – Continued. Nonceramic material from the Averro site

Phase	Room A				Room B				Loggia				Totals			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<i>Beads</i>		3		1		2	1							5	1	1
<i>Ornaments</i>																
ring					1								1			
chain							1								1	
thread					2 <sup>e</sup>								2			
carved bone					1 <sup>f</sup>								1			
earring (brass)						1	1							1	1	
<i>Stone</i>																
marble		1			1		2				1		1	1	3	
mortero			2		3								3	2		
<i>Flints</i>																
French		2			1		2	1					1	2	2	1
English		1	1		1								1	1	1	
spall	1		3			1	1					1	1	1	4	1
chert core																

Phase	Room A				Room B				Loggia				Totals			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<i>Lead</i>																
seal		1													1	
weight						1									1	
shot						1				1					2	
<i>Pipestems</i>																
4/64-inch diameter	2	3	1		1	2							3	5	1	
5/64-inch diameter	4	12	3	5	2	3			2	1		2	8	16	3	7
6/64-inch diameter		1		1	1				1			1	2	1		2
<i>Pipebowl</i>		1													1	
<i>Brick</i>																
sandwich brick	1		1		2	1							3	1	1	
red brick				3												3
barrel tiles			1												1	

a – blade. b – cannonball fragment. c – pulley. d – side plate. e – silver. f – fan fragment.

## Phase 2: Nonceramic material culture

### Containers

As in phase 1, no metal containers were found, and the primary nonceramic container material was glass. Table 4 shows the distribution of glass in phase 2. From the small sample recovered, olive-green wine bottle fragments were the most frequently found. Case bottle fragments and medicine vial fragments were also present. None of the original containers were reconstructable.

Drinking glass fragments were from tumblers only; no goblet stem, lip, or foot fragments were found. The tumblers fragments are shown in Figure 30.

Smaller containers were of aqua or clear glass, and no whole examples were found. An aqua base (3 centimeters), and a square bottle with beveled corners made of clear glass were recovered. A fluted bottle portion of clear glass is illustrated in Figure 30. Although this glassware cannot be definitely identified by origin, its association with a predominantly Hispanic material assemblage, in addition to the lack of resemblance to French and British assemblages (Noel-Hume 1970:60-75; Brown 1971), suggests a Hispanic origin for the glass in phase 2.

### Ornaments

Beads, buttons, buckles, and an earring portion are included in this category and are illustrated in Figure 31. The beads from this phase were of three varieties: two wire-wound glass (one blue, one white), two elongate teardrop-shaped amber beads, and one jet rosary bead similar to that found at the de la Cruz site (Deagan 1974a).

Two buckle fragments and two buttons were found in this phase. The buckle fragments were brass and silver; and both appeared to be quite small, possibly of shoe or clothing buckle size, though the fragmentary nature of these items made positive identification impossible. The buttons included one whole button with a portion of a gilt backing adhering, while the other was a fragment of a white glass button.

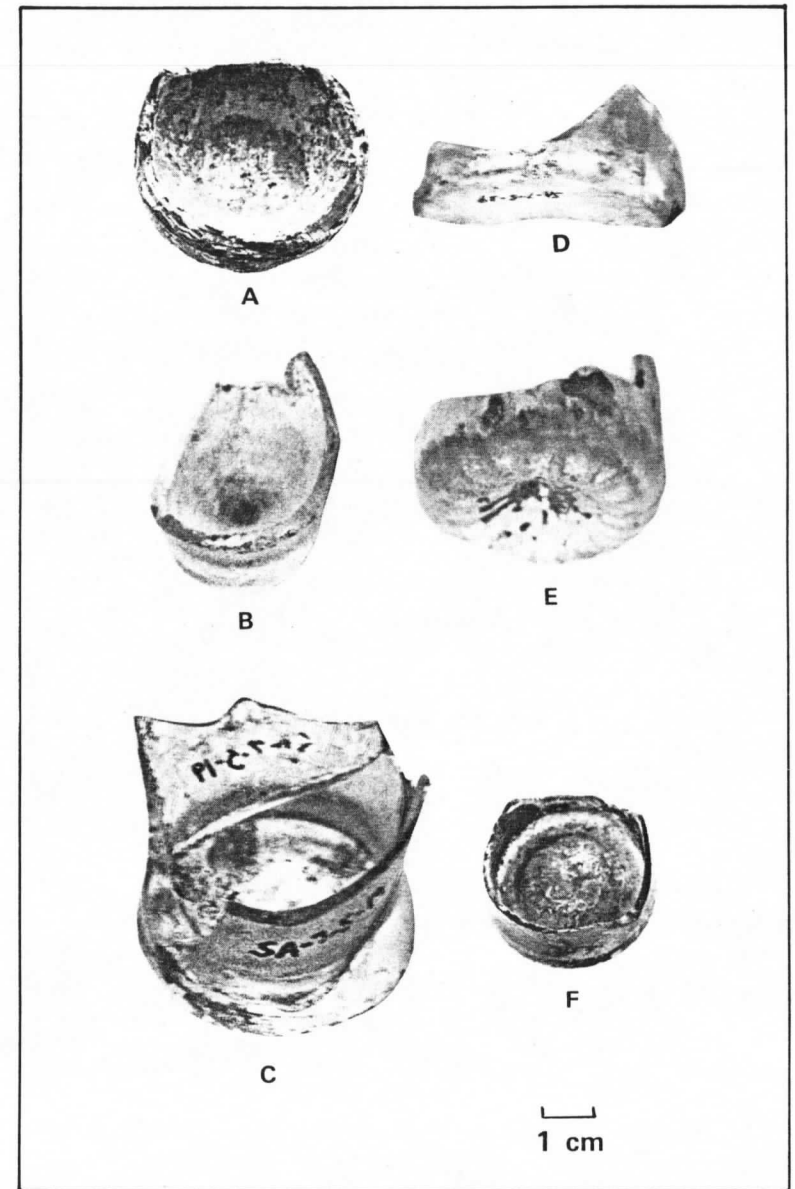


Figure 30. Phase 2 glassware  
(a) – (e) tumbler bases; (f) aqua glass medicine vial base

The earring fragment was a brass earwire which apparently at one time had a dangling portion (at the time of this writing an identical earring with the dangling portion attached was recovered from the de Hita site in St. Augustine, the lot to the north of the Avero site once occupied by Antonia de Avero's sister Juana [see Figure 31]).

*Tools, implements, and building materials*

Table 3 and Figure 32 show the distribution and nature of these items in phase 2 proveniences. Of the iron artifacts, nails are by far the most numerous. A knife blade with a fragment of bone handle attached and a fork fragment with one remaining tine were also of iron.

Figure 32 shows the notable brass artifacts recovered at this level. These include a spigot, probably used as a wine barrel tap; a thimble; and the opening spout from a powder bag, which had a valve adjustment. A portion of a ramrod handle and a musket sideplate were also recovered. The sideplate was of the variety issued to the Spanish infantry in 1752 (Brinkerhoff and Chaimberlain 1972:34) and is identical to one recovered at the de al Cruz site (Deagan 1974a).

A fragment of the sandwich brick discussed under the phase 1 heading was also recovered in a phase 2 provenience.

*Miscellaneous*

A fragment of a lead bale seal was possibly from a bale of British merchant's wool; it is similar to seals known to be of that function (Noel-Hume 1970:269-271). The fragment is unfortunately bent and eroded so that the stamp is not distinguishable; however, it is known that "European goods," which may well have included cloth, entered St. Augustine from the English colonies during this time (Harmon 1969:83-87). The royal storehouse in St. Augustine also contained "cloth" and "wool thread," which may have been in sealed bales (Contaduria 1742).

A single white stone marble was recovered, similar to examples from the de la Cruz site (Deagan 1974a) and of a type which reached a peak of popularity in Europe at about 1740 (Randall 1971:102-105).

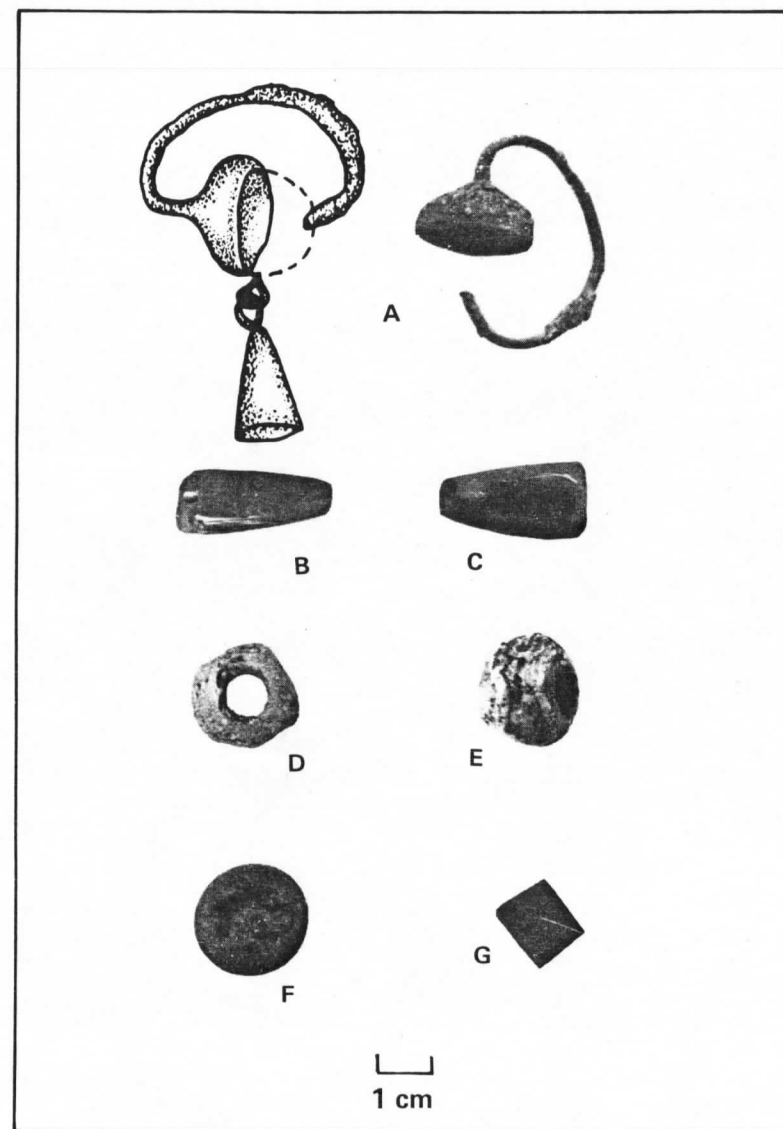


Figure 31. Phase 2 ornaments  
 (a) brass earring fragment; (b) ring; (c) amber beads;  
 (d) marvered white glass wire-wound bead; (e) patinated  
 wire-wound bead; (f) brass button; (g) jet rosary bead

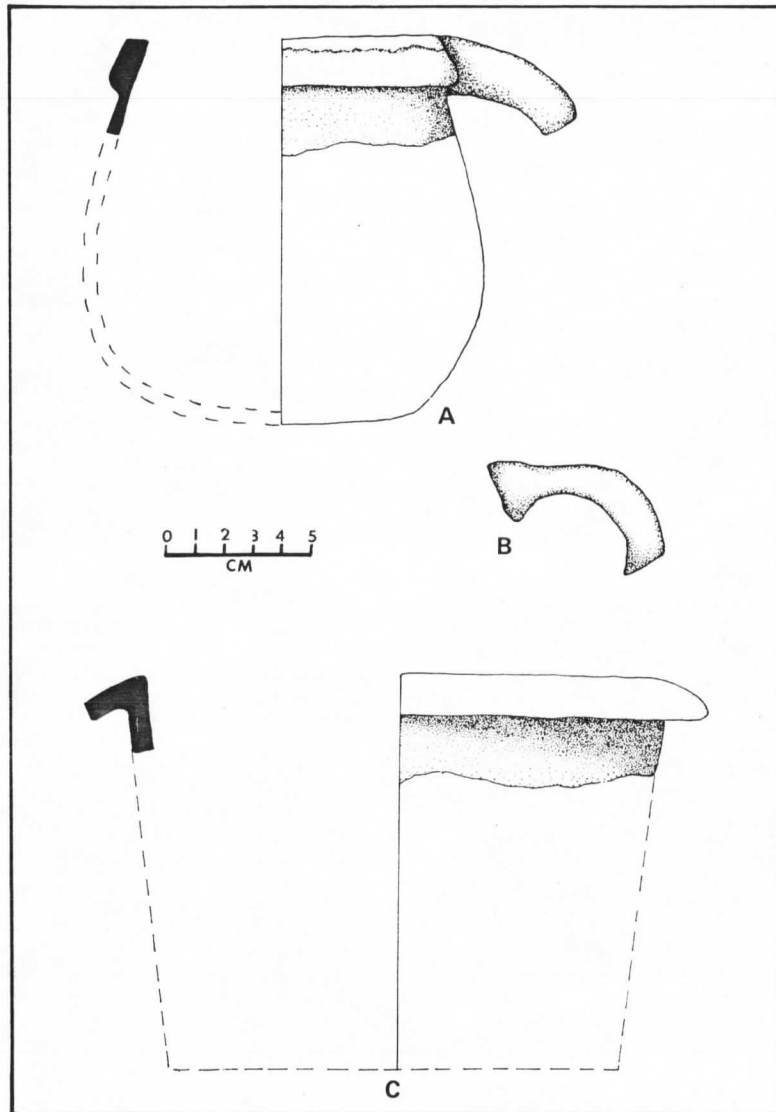


Figure 34. Phase 3 ceramic forms  
 (a) green glazed pipkin; (b) unglazed pipkin handle; (c) green and orange El Morro ware wide-mouthed jar

### Phase 3: Nonceramic material culture

#### Containers

In this level also, no containers other than ceramic or glass were recovered. Glass distribution, with olive-green wine bottle fragments predominating, is shown in Table 3. Much of the glass was fragmentary, and very little formal or functional information could be derived. The most notable aspect of the glass assemblage was the presence of a single wine goblet base fragment, the first recovered at the site. The absence of wine goblet fragments up to this point, when they are associated in the assemblage with a greatly increased proportion of British ceramic wares, suggests that wine goblets were primarily a British commodity and were most frequent in the Spanish colony during the latter part of the first Spanish period, when British trade was at its greatest tempo. This suggestion needs, of course, to be tested at other Hispanic sites in which a study of microchange is possible.

#### Ornaments

Ornaments from phase 3 included beads, buttons, and a length of small brass chain (Figure 35). A portion of an earring wire similar to that illustrated for phase 2 was also present.

A small shell with drilled holes was of particular interest and could have been used as a clothing decoration or as a small button. The shell was of the variety *Trochidae tegula lividomaculata*, more commonly known as the West Indian top shell, which is found in shallow water from the Florida Keys to the West Indies. The natural outer surface of the shell can be removed, leaving a pearly coating (Morris 1973:116). This was done in the case of the shell at the Avero site, although there is no way to determine if this was a locally made ornament or was imported from Cuba already sewn to clothing. The other buttons were of molded glass with small flakes of gilt paint still adhering on the back, incised shell (possibly of local manufacture), and brass.

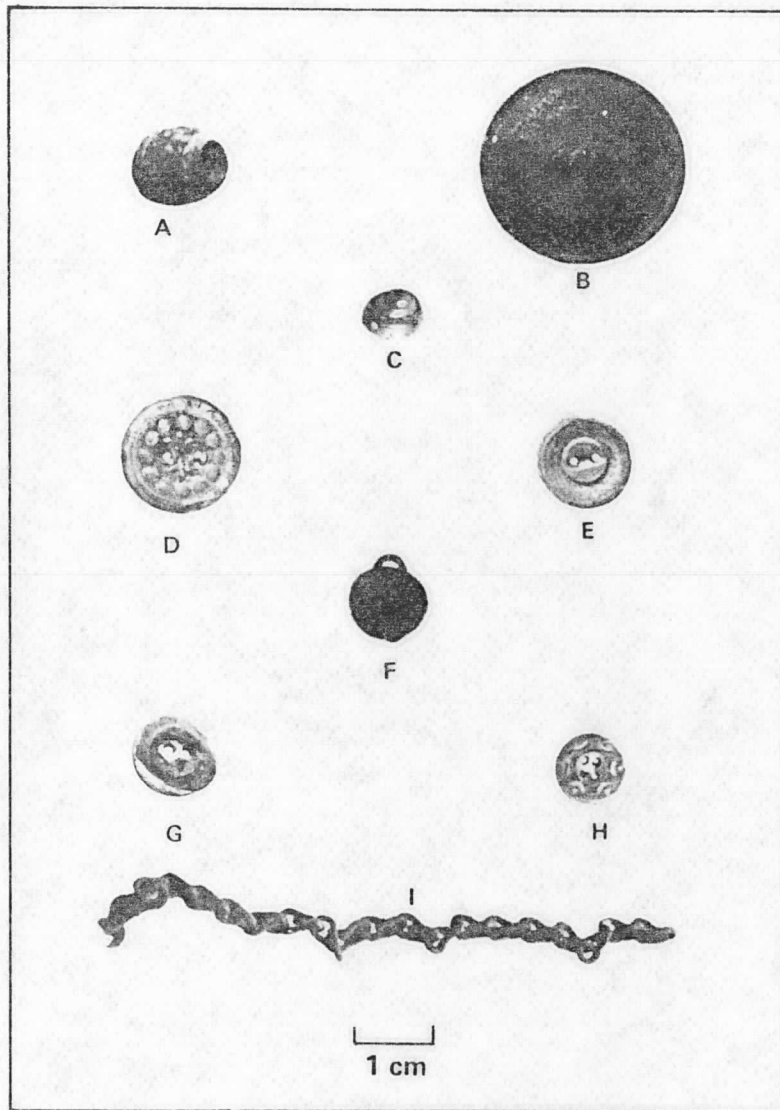


Figure 35. Phase 3 ornaments

- (a) blue wire-wound bead; (b) brass button; (c) shell ornament;  
 (d) glass button; (e) – (g) carved bone buttons;  
 (h) brass cuff button; (i) brass chain

#### *Tools, implements, and building materials*

Nails predominate in the metal assemblage, the only other iron objects being a portion of a flintlock, badly corroded, and a cannonball fragment. The sandwich brick noted in phases 1 and 2 is present also in phase 3.

Probably women's activities are indicated by a brass thimble and a basalt *mortero* fragment.

#### *Miscellaneous*

Gunflints, pipestems, and three stone marbles are included in this category. Two flints were the light brown "French" flints, and one each of the dark grey "English" flints and spalls were present (Noel-Hume 1970:219). Of the four pipestems recovered, none bore marks.

#### Phase 4, 1763–1810: Ceramics

The fourth phase of activity on the site encompasses both the British (1763–1781) and the second Spanish (1781–1821) periods. With the end of the first Spanish period came also the end of the aboriginal population of St. Augustine and a nearly total replacement of Spaniards by Britishers (Puente 1764; Dunkle 1958).

This population reorientation is dramatically reflected in the ceramic assemblage from this phase by the drop in the proportion of aboriginal San Marcos ceramics from 33.3 percent in phase 3 to 0.6 percent in phase 4. Conversely, both British and oriental ceramics double in proportion (Tables 1 and 2).

Little new ceramic information was derived from the phase 4 assemblage. Tables 1 and 2 and Figures 36 and 37 show the forms and distribution of the ceramics.

Although the proportion of the coarse earthenwares in the assemblage drops considerably, they are still present. The phase 4 coarse earthenwares include Mexican Red Painted, green, brown, and honey-colored El Morro ware, and the clouded ochre and brown ware first noted in phase 2. Olive jar fragments both glazed and unglazed are also present.



Little evidence of earthenware form was present, and this is illustrated in Figure 37. A plate form was indicated in the clouded ochre and brown ware, a small green lead-glazed bowl form was present, and a straight rim with a pinched decoration in El Morro ware yielded evidence of form.

The majolica in phase 4 is primarily of the Puebla varieties, supporting the seriation based dates for this ware suggested by Goggin (1968:25-27; 210).

One highly unlikely element was present in the ceramic assemblage from this phase. This was the occurrence of 122 sherds of St. Johns Plain pottery, a chalky aboriginal ware associated with the historic Timucua Indians of Florida (Goggin 1952). Since all the sherds came from the same provenience, and since the last Timucua Indian was recorded as dying in 1725 (Valdes 1729), the St. Johns sherds most likely were present as an heirloom or object of late eighteenth-century interest in antiquities.

#### Phase 4: Nonceramic material culture

Items of nonceramic material culture were scarce in phase 4. It should be noted, however, that the occupation of the site was very sparse and irregular during this period (see Chapter 1). The distribution of the material is shown in Table 3.

#### Containers

No evidence for metal containers was recovered; glass was again the only material recovered (other than ceramics) that indicated containers. No case bottle or drinking vessel fragments were recovered, but the proportion of clear glass fragments was higher than in any other phase. A single small fragment of milk glass was also recovered.

#### Ornaments

Five buttons, one bead, and a brass buckle fragment were the only ornaments recovered in phase 4. The buttons included 3 single-hole bone, one plain brass disc, and a small, white glass button.

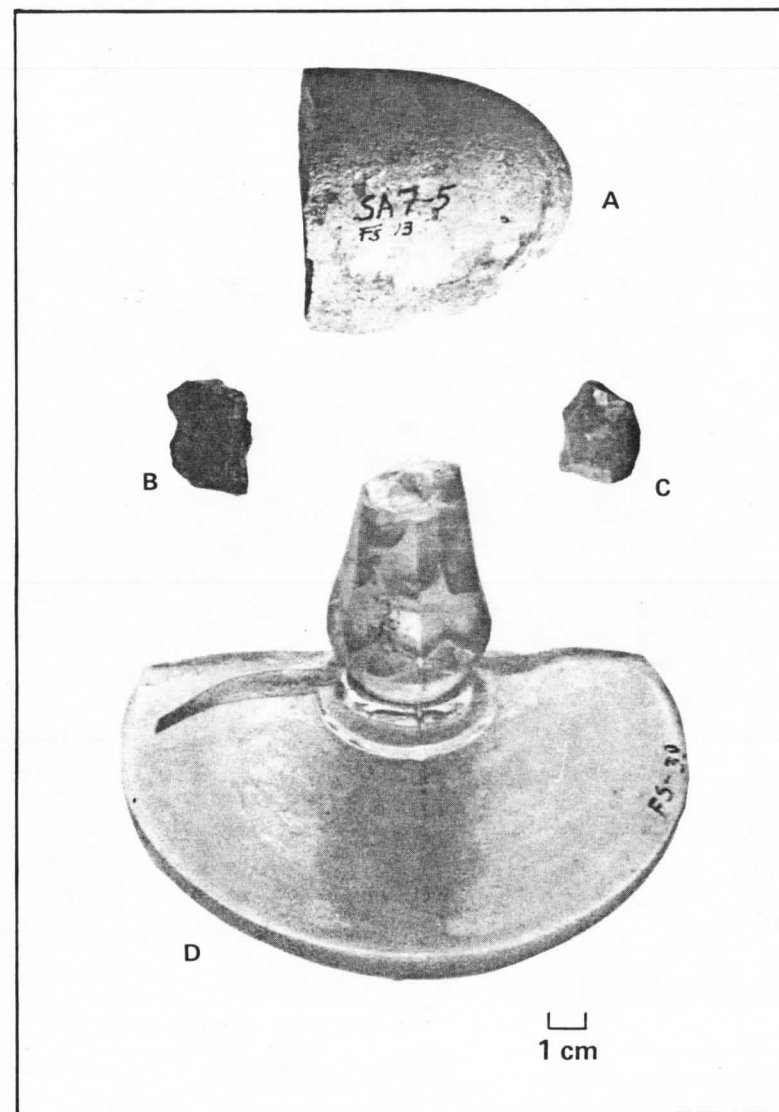


Figure 38. Phase 4 nonceramic items  
(a) basalt mortero fragment; (b) and (c) gunspalls;  
(d) glass goblet base

# 4

## *Implications of the Avero assemblage*

**T**HE PARTICULAR Processes which resulted in a series of sealed proveniences at the Greek Orthodox Shrine allow a summary of diachronic trends in Spanish colonial material culture. When placed within their cultural and economic contexts, these trends should be able to provide an index to the accuracy of predicting or defining the nature of culture change through the nature of artifact change. The summary statements which follow should be treated as hypothetical, as suggestions which remain to be tested.

*Criollo* culture in St. Augustine – Summary

Change through time in *criollo* material culture is reflected dually in the ceramic assemblage:

(1) in the proportion of local versus imported utilitarian ceramics, and

(2) in the proportion of non-Hispanic European and oriental ceramics in the assemblage.

The ceramics from the Avero site indicated an increase in utilitarian European earthenwares, accompanied by a decrease in aboriginal utilitarian earthenwares through time. This is probably related to three factors:

(1) the decreasing aboriginal population of St. Augustine and thus the decreasing availability of aboriginal ceramics;

(2) the increasing amount of foreign trade and the increasing punctuality of the *situado* through the eighteenth century; and

(3) the increasing prosperity of the Avero site's inhabitants through the eighteenth century.

The second trend in the ceramic assemblage, that of the changing proportion of non-Hispanic European and oriental ceramics, is indicated by very small but increasing proportions of these ceramics through time. This is probably a result of a balance between *criollo* preference in ceramic wares, prosperity, access to the *situado* goods, and availability of non-Hispanic goods.

Vessel forms from the site did not reveal a great deal of new information other than an indication that the site's inhabitants preferred large, flat-based Hispanic storage vessels. The presence of the plate forms in San Marcos ceramics suggests a preference for Colono-Indian forms (Noel-Hume 1962) since, apart from a single rim of a small pot, these were the only discernible aboriginal ceramic forms.

Spanish majolica maintains a fairly constant proportion in the assemblages through time, although it drops considerably in phase 4. This is not unexpected, however, since the availability of creamware and pearlware, in addition to the fact of

British occupation during part of this phase, would certainly act to reduce the use of majolica.

British ceramics increased steadily through the four phases of site occupation, for the reasons discussed above. Oriental porcelain was scarce throughout the assemblage; two sherds were from phase 1, and one from phase 3. Eight sherds of British porcelain were recovered from phase 4 contexts. The absence of oriental porcelain in a first-Spanish-period assemblage was unexpected, since it would have been available in Mexico through the Manila Galleon trade for inclusion in the *situado* (Fairbanks 1973:163).

It seems possible that the absence of porcelain might stem less from the inability to afford it than from the absence of cultural preference for the forms and functions of porcelain in the colonies—that is, tea equipage. Very little tea equipage—cups, saucers, or teapots—has been found on first-Spanish-period sites, which suggests that tea drinking was not an important part of the Hispanic tradition.

French faience occurs only rarely in the assemblage, the first appearance being in phase 2. It occurs here earlier than on British colonial sites (Noel-Hume 1970:141). This is probably due to the political alliance between France and Spain and the absence of the trade embargo discussed in Chapter 3.

The glass assemblage from the Avero site was small but it had some interesting characteristics. The most apparent of these was the virtual absence of wine goblet fragments. This was suggested in Chapter 3 to reflect trade conditions and Hispanic preference. The wine goblet was a British commodity, widely used in Spanish St. Augustine only when available through illicit trade. The limited area of site excavation, however, cannot be ignored as a possible factor in the scant recovery of goblets. It is possible, although unlikely, that the total wine goblet distribution was confined to an unexcavated area of the site.

Tumblers in a variety of sizes and styles occurred with greater frequency than goblets, which suggests either a preference for this kind of drinking vessel or a readier availability

of it through the *situado*.

Most of the glass recovered at the site was from olive-green bottles. These were so fragmentary, however, that reconstruction and comparison were impossible.

Kaolin pipestems were another unexpected element in the assemblage, made conspicuous by their absence. This is a sharp contrast to most British colonial sites, as well as to other Spanish colonial sites in St. Augustine and Pensacola (Deagan 1974a; Smith 1965). It was suggested in Chapter 3 that the absence of numerous pipestems may indicate a Hispanic or an individual preference for cigars or non-smoking; however, the possibility of sampling distortion is quite likely in this case, since pipe smoking or discarding may have occurred in the back lot of the site.

#### The *criollo* assemblage—implications

The preceding summary of trends in the Avero site material assemblage suggests certain relationships between patterns in the material assemblage and the behavior which resulted in them. A brief review of the documentarily known cultural setting is appropriate before outlining these relationships.

The site of the National Greek Orthodox Shrine belonged to the Avero family as early as 1712 and possibly earlier. At this time, a tabby structure stood on the lot, which was replaced by the present structure between 1735 and 1743. During this time, Antonia de Avero inherited the lot and house and in 1735 married Josef Guillen, who, according to Antonia, established the large coquina house currently under investigation. Guillen was a captain at the presidio as well as a shrewd local businessman. Upon his death he left Antonia two houses, a thriving business of an unknown nature, and a number of slaves (Arnade 1962:18). Ten years later the well-to-do Antonia married Joaquin Blanco, a socially distinguished member of the presidio, who managed all of the

presidio supplies. According to Arnade, he was one of the administrative and social elite of the colony (1962:19). Blanco rebuilt or remodeled the house between 1753 and 1763 when he and Antonia left St. Augustine. There seems no doubt that the occupancy of the Avero house during the first Spanish period was marked by affluence and social prominence.

Once the first Spanish period ended in 1763, the house was abandoned and occupied only sporadically and briefly until it was rebuilt in 1810, as a result of the disrepair into which it had fallen.

From these summaries of the material assemblage and the documentary information, the following conclusions are suggested:

(1) Ethnic affiliation is reflected in material assemblages of the first Spanish period. In colonial St. Augustine, this is reflected in the proportions of items in the assemblage rather than simply by the range and variety of items. The most specific index to this is the proportion of aboriginal goods and techniques to European goods and techniques. A number of distinctions can be made between the *mestizo* de la Cruz site (Deagan 1974a) and the *criollo* Avero site, both occupied at the same time. The most apparent of these distinctions is in the ceramic assemblage, and the following table compares the assemblages from the two sites. The de la Cruz site occupation coincides most closely with the phase 2 and 3 occupations at the Avero site.

	<i>de la Cruz</i>	<i>Avero-2</i>	<i>Avero-3</i>
San Marcos	71 percent	43.3 percent	33 percent
Utilitarian			
earthenwares	2	16.2	31.6
Majolica	3	20.1	15.4
British wares	20	5.3	11
Porcelain	.9		.2

The differences in food preparation ceramics as well as in the proportion of majolica and British wares are striking. It might be suggested that the Avero family, having a direct access to the *situado* through Blanco, would have a higher proportion of Hispanic ceramics. Although the Avero family is a slightly exaggerated example, it is, hypothetically, still an example of differential access to Hispanic goods by different ethnic groups. It would specifically be expected that a *mestizo*, \*mulatto, or Indian household in St. Augustine would have a low (10 percent or less) proportion of Hispanic wares and a correspondingly high proportion of aboriginal and, possibly, British wares.

A comparison of ornamental items suggests another area of material distinction between *mestizo* and *criollo* assemblages. Jewelry at the de la Cruz site included only glass beads and a single \*figa pendant. At the Avero site from a smaller total sample, a more varied bead assemblage, earring fragments, a small brass chain, a ring, and a shell ornament were recovered.

It was noted that the de la Cruz site yielded no evidence of either medicine vials or drug jars, and this provides another contrast to the Avero site where both vial and drug jar fragments were found. This may indicate a preference for native remedies over European remedies by *mestizo* or Spanish-Indian households (in which the Indian partner was always a woman [Deagan 1974a]).

Another expected area of difference between *criollo* and *mestizo* sites was in the diet. Since the Avero site did not yield an adequate amount of dietary information, a comparison of *mestizo* and *criollo* diets was not possible.

(2) The Avero assemblage suggests that items which traditionally have been used as indices of eighteenth-century affluence—specifically porcelain and wine goblets—are not appropriate to Spanish St. Augustine. The absence of these items at the Avero site, which is known to have been occupied by an affluent and prominent family, suggests that the use of these

items was a function of access or preference rather than of affluence. On the basis of the present study, it is hypothesized that more appropriate indicators of affluence might be large house size and construction, a broad range of Hispanic ornaments, and a high proportion of Spanish majolica.

The above statements are intended to act as guides for interpretation and for the orientation of future research; it is to be expected that such work will refine and possibly modify the conclusions reached in this study.

The work at the Avero site leads us to remark that the understanding of the material culture of the Spanish colonial period may best be achieved through the observation of material patterns within a well-controlled, specific diachronic sequence. In this way, the nature of material microchange can be demonstrated and correlated with historical microchange. These conjoint procedures can reveal both the nature of a specific colonial culture and the relationship between material remains and colonial behavior.