Glass Vessels from a Late 19th – Early 20th Century Residential Site: A Preliminary Study

Ya Qi MO, Nina LE, Kiara Y.R. KIM, Sarah RANLETT, Michael BRAND, Trevor J. ORCHARD

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Introduction

The Schreiber Wood Project (SWP) documents a late-19th century settler-colonial cultural landscape located on the University of Toronto Mississauga campus occupied by the Schreiber family.

Glass Vessel Assemblage

We examined the glass vessel assemblage primarily at two locations (AjGw-534 and AjGw-535) and a variety of associated landscape features.

From 2013 to 2021, the SWP has accumulated a total of 9900 glass artifacts, of which 2644 belong to glass vessels. Glass vessel artifacts are divided into the following classes: Kitchen/Food, Personal Artifacts, Furnishings, Tools/Equipment, and Indeterminate. Of the identifiable artifacts, the Kitchen/food class predominates, with bottles the most abundant type.

Here we highlight a few interesting examples from the range of vessels that appear in the assemblage.

Mason Jars

- Manufactured by Diamond Flint Glass Co., Montreal (1903-1913)
  - Locations include Toronto, Hamilton, Redcliff
- Made at least four jars for T. Eaton department stores in 178 Yonge St., Toronto (1896) and 345 Portage Ave., Winnipeg (1905)
- Artifact was probably the last in the Eaton series (1910)

Gray’s Syrup of Red Spruce Gum

- Schreiber family cookbook lists mason jars as a preparation item for marmalades, soups, and other preserved fruits recipes
- Suggests possible uses for the jars found at the sites

Underwood Inks

- Manufactured by Underwood Inks, New York-based company that manufactured inks, typewriting inks, and ribbons
- Brands established in Toronto and London
- Artifact likely an ink bottle, not a refillable container for typewriters
- Adds to the diversity of utilitarian vessels at the site
- Developed by Henry R. Gray (1859) and was later sold to Kerr-Watson & Co. (1875)
- Provides insight into the types of pharmaceutical products available to and commonly used in 19th century households

Conclusion

The investigation of select artifacts reveal diverse aspects of the Schreiber family’s everyday lives, including connections to local markets, food consumption, and medicinal remedies. As glass vessels are often common elements in the household with various uses for the jars found at the site, provides insight into the types of pharmaceutical products available to and commonly used in 19th century households.

References

- Underwood, Lucien Marcus, and Howard James Banker
  • Made at least four jars for T. Eaton department stores in 178 Yonge St., Toronto (1896) and 345 Portage Ave., Winnipeg (1905)
  • Developed by Henry R. Gray (1859) and was later sold to Kerr-Watson & Co. (1875)
  • Provides insight into the types of pharmaceutical products available to and commonly used in 19th century households

- The Eaton series (1910)
  • Contains Gray’s Syrup of Red Spruce Gum, a medicinal syrup (patented in 1872) for “coughs, bronchitis, asthma, and other throat affections”
  • Developed by Henry R. Gray (1859) and was later sold to Kerr-Watson & Co. (1875)
  • Product widely supplied to the public through physicians, hospitals, and pharmacies across Canada
Schreiber Wood Project
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Table 1. Summary of glass vessel assemblage by class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact Class</th>
<th>Number of Artifacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furnishings</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen/Food</td>
<td>1190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools/Equipment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Artifacts</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeterminate</td>
<td>1354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>2644</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here we highlight a few interesting examples from the range of vessels that appear in the assemblage.

Underwood Inks

- Manufactured by Diamond Flint Glass Co., Montreal (1903-1913)
- Locations include Toronto, Hamilton, Redcliff
- Made at least four jars for T. Eaton department stores in 178 Yonge St., Toronto (1869) and 345 Portage Ave., Winnipeg (1905)
- Artfact was probably the last in the Eaton series (1910)

444 Spadina Avenue

- “444 SPADINA AVE TORONTO” leads to the current-day address of Toronto’s Red Room pub
- During the Schreiber family’s occupancy, the address belonged to two consecutive druggists: Hooper & Co. (1890-1897) and Fraser Alexander R. (1898-1901)
- Establishes potential Toronto storefronts from which the Schreiber family may have accessed pharmaceutical and medicinal products

Mason Jars

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- Suggests possible uses for the jars found at the sites

Gray’s Syrup of Red Spruce Gum

- Contains Gray’s Syrup of Red Spruce Gum, a medicinal syrup (patented in 1872) for “coughs, bronchitis, asthma, and other throat affections”
- Developed by Henry R. Gray (1859) and was later sold to Kerry Watson & Co. (1875)
- Product widely supplied to the public through physicians, hospitals, and pharmacies across Canada
- Provides insight into the types of pharmaceutical products available to and commonly used in 19th century households

Conclusion

The investigation of select artifacts reveal diverse aspects of the Schreiber family’s everyday lives, including connections to local markets, food consumption, and medicinal remedies. As glass vessels are often common elements in the household with various and recycled uses, their period of use and purpose in the Schreiber family is not certain. The ‘everyday’ nature of the vessels contributed to some difficulty in investigating the maker’s marks through historical records. We encourage future studies to explore: 1) the production of a more extensive summary and characterization of the general glass vessel assemblage (i.e., bottle finishes), 2) further analysis of intersecting class/vessel type categories (i.e., medicinal bottles), and 3) wider investigation of the variety of available maker’s marks.