

PIECES OF THE PAST

BROKEN pottery can't tell us anything, right?

Wrong. In fact, there are few artifacts more informative than pottery. Archaeologists study patterns of change and pottery has changed in form and function over time. Broken pieces of pottery can tell archaeologists about how people live, where they come from, who they interact with, and even how old a site is.

When archaeologists study pottery, they separate it into "types" based on form, function, and design. In other words, what shape is it, what is it used for, and how is it decorated? Using types allows archaeologists to track changes in the way pottery was made, used, and decorated.

Another clue that archaeologists look for is the *temper* material. Before clay is hardened in a fire something must be added to keep it from cracking - this is called *tempering*. American Indians often use sand, crushed shells, or plant fibers to temper their pottery.



Cordmarked

Pottery can provide clues about travel and interaction. This cordmarked design is found in areas closer to the Gulf Coast. How did it end up at the Leake Site?



Plain

Even undecorated pottery can provide archaeologists with valuable information, such as how it was made and what materials were used.



Check Stamped

Pottery can help archaeologists date a site. Because it tends to be found deeper in the ground, archaeologists know that this type of pottery was made during the early years of the Leake Site's occupation.



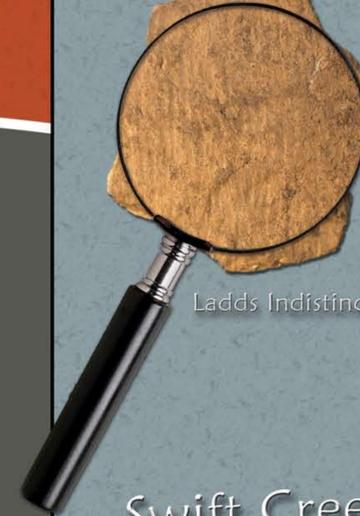
Swift Creek Complicated Stamped

Depending on what the designs are meant to be, they could reveal information about the religious views of those who made them.

Archaeologists found this type of pottery associated with the later years of the Leake Site's occupation.



Ladds Diamond Check Stamped



Ladds Indistinct

Design Discovery

At the Leake Site archaeologists discovered a new type of pottery decoration which they called "Ladds Stamped."

Look carefully at both pieces of pottery to the left. Notice the fine lines? Those designs aren't found on other pottery. Archaeologists think they may have been made using crinoid fossils.

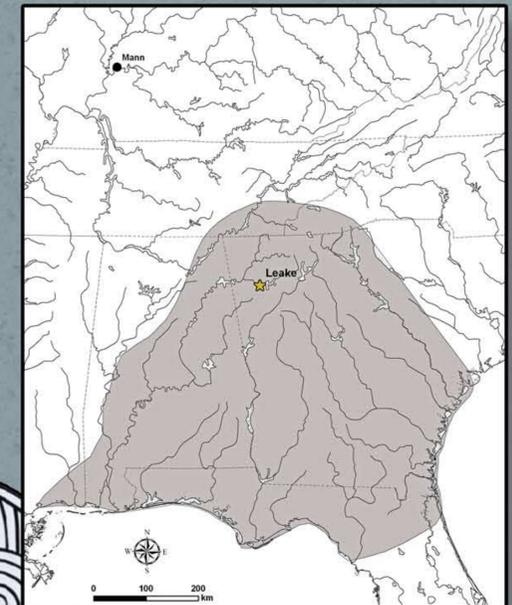
Crinoid Fossil

Archaeologists think the fine lines on the pottery sherds to the left were made by pressing this kind of marine fossil into the clay. What do you think?



Swift Creek Connection

Swift Creek Complicated Stamped



Archaeologist Frankie Snow has recreated hundreds of Swift Creek designs by comparing pottery from different sites. Do you see the similarities between this design and the piece of pottery above?



Snow Swift Creek Design #140. Courtesy Frankie Snow

The shaded area shows how widespread Swift Creek pottery is - it's been found all over Georgia!

Archaeologists uncovered an amazing connection between the Leake Site and a site far outside the Swift Creek area. A piece of Swift Creek pottery, found at the Leake Site, was made at the Mann Site in southern Indiana.



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