

## Dishware and Ceramics



Ceramics in general are less time-sensitive than cans and bottles, but they are sometimes helpful in dating an historic-era site. Here are a few clues to look for.

### Maker's Marks

Potteries in Europe and the US often put identifying marks on the bottoms of plates, bowls, and other dishware. The designs tended to change over time, and so a particular mark sometimes indicates when – and where – the dish was made. (Chinese potteries also often marked their wares, but these are not legible to most of us.) Because the style changes can be very subtle, it's best to take a close-up photograph of the mark for later comparison with references. Also be sure to copy down any lettering, in case it's not readable from the photo. Good references for makers marks include these:

- *Ceramic Marks from Old Sacramento, California Archaeological Report No. 22* by Mary Pratzellis, Betty Rivers, and Jeanette K. Schulz 1983
- *Handbook of Pottery and Porcelain Marks* by John P. Cushion 1980
- *Encyclopedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks* by Geoffrey A. Godden 1964
- *The Handbook of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks* by Geoffrey A. Godden 1968
- [http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page\\_id=22207](http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=22207)



James Carr's New York Pottery  
(1852-1889)

R. Cochran & Company, Glasgow,  
Scotland (ca. 1857-1918)

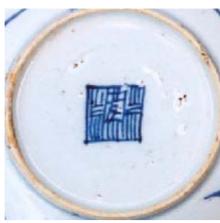


Possibly Jacob Furnival, Cobridge, Staffordshire,  
England (ca. 1845-1870)



Examples of Chinese Ceramics

Chinese Maker's Mark



### Specialty Brands

Some specialty types of ceramics can be useful for dating a site, especially if we know the year they were first manufactured. For example, the popular "**Fiestaware**" line began production in 1936. Certain colors of Fiestaware can be dated even more precisely: cobalt blue and light green were made from 1936 to 1951; turquoise from 1937 to 1969; rose, gray, and forest green from 1951 to 1959. The original line stopped production between 1973 and 1985. "Modern" Fiestaware dates from 1986 to the present.



Light Green Fiestaware Bowl Ca.1936-1951



Fiestaware Fragments Stand Out in the Snow

Another specialty type is **Enamelware** or **Graniteware**. This is actually steel or cast-iron with multiple coats of enamel applied over the metal. While there are newer items of this line, these are light-weight and comparatively flimsy; old or "vintage" enamelware (pre-1940) is heavy and substantial, and will have multiple coats of thick, glossy enamel. Many old pieces also are marked – look for Kockums or GM marks on the bottoms. The most common enamelware/graniteware pieces in California sites tend to be coffee pots and large cooking pots with bail handles.



Modern Enamelware

### Ceramic Smoking Pipes

These little clay tobacco pipes are common on 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century sites in California. Most were imported from Great Britain, and especially from Scotland. If you find these at a site, you can be confident that the site includes an historic-period component.

