



Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

Jarbour Jar

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Image: Jarbour stoneware jar. Photo, Collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Old Salem Museum & Gardens..

This large stoneware jar, measuring more than two feet high, was made by potter David Jarbour in 1830 in Alexandria. Jarbour had been born into slavery, but purchased his freedom in 1820 for \$300 from local merchant Zenas Kinsey.

Unlike Alexandria's antebellum sugar refineries, which were run exclusively with slave labor, Alexandria's potteries employed both free and enslaved blacks, as well as whites. From 1816 to 1840, Jarbour worked at the Wilkes Street Pottery, which produced gray and blue stoneware and some earthenware for more than six decades and had three different owners. Alexandria tax records indicate that Jarbour was employed by Hugh Smith when he made this piece.

This salt-glazed pot with cobalt blue floral decoration is the only known Alexandria piece with a personal signature. On the bottom, Jarbour inscribed, "1830 / Alexa / Maid by / D. Jarbour." It may have been a special show piece which marked the end of Jarbour's apprenticeship, or some other level of accomplishment.

The Jarbour jar is now in the collection of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts (MESDA) in Winston-Salem, N.C. It was featured in the Winter Antiques Show in New York City in 2007. To learn more about Alexandria pottery, visit the Alexandria Archaeology Museum and The Lyceum, Alexandria's History Museum.



"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.