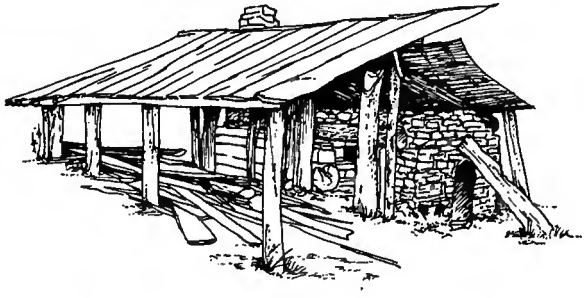
Cheever Meaders, circa 1933. (Photo by Doris Ulmann.)

The Meaders Family
North Georgia Potters

Ralph Rinzler and Robert Sayers



Smithsonian Folklife Studies
Number 1

Smithsonian Institution Press
Washington, D.C.
1980

The publication of this monograph was made possible in part by a generous gift to the Office of Folklife Programs by Mrs. Jackson Burke, Member, Smithsonian National Associates Board.

Designed by Janet B. Stratton

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Rinzler, Ralph.
The Meaders family, north Georgia potters.

(Smithsonian folklife studies; no. 1)
Bibliography: p.
1. Meador family. 2. Pottery, American—Georgia.
3. Folk art—Georgia. I. Sayers, Robert. II. Title.
III. Series.
NK4210.M35R56 738'.092'2 [B] 81-607995
AACR2

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

Contents

Editor's Preface

In 1978, the Smithsonian Office of Folklife Programs established *Smithsonian Folklife Studies* to document, through monographs and films, folkways still practiced (or recreated through memory) in a variety of traditional cultures. Drawing on more than a decade of research accruing from fieldwork conducted for the Program's annual Festival of American Folklife, the studies are unique in that each consists of a monograph *and* a film, conceived to complement each other. The monographs present detailed histories and descriptions of folk technologies, customs, or events, and include information about the background and character of the participants and processes through photographs (historical and contemporary), illustrations, and bibliographies. The films, on the other hand, add a living dimension to the monographs by showing events in progress and traditions being practiced, the narrative being provided mostly by the tradition bearers themselves. Thus, while each monograph is planned to permit its use independent of the film (and vice versa), their combined study should enhance the educational and documentary value of each.

Smithsonian Folklife Studies grew out of discussions begun as early as January 1967, when the Institution began plans to convene a group of cultural geographers, architectural historians, and European and American folklore scholars in July of that year. One recommendation of the conference stressed the need for new directions in documentation to keep pace with the ever-broadening scope of the discipline, as it extends from the once limited area of pure folk*lore* research to encompass all aspects of folk*life*. It was proposed at the time that the Smithsonian establish model folklife studies, although no specific forms were prescribed. (The Festival was one form developed to meet this challenge.) The new publication program, therefore, makes available studies which approach earlier research from new perspectives or investigate areas of folklife previously unexplored.

The topics selected for the publications range widely from such traditional folklore interests as ballad singing to newer areas of concern such as occupational folklore.[1] Included are studies of "old ways" in music, crafts, and food preparation still practiced in ethnic

communities of the New World, centuries-old technologies still remembered by American Indians, and "homemade" utilitarian items still preferred to their "store bought" counterparts.

Nearly all these traditions have been transmitted orally or absorbed through repeated observation. Several generations of Meaders family sons, for instance, began to learn pottery-making while at play around their father's shops.[2] As a youth, Cheever Meaders even built a miniature kiln, while his son, Lanier, remembers as a small boy being spun around on the potter's wheel for pleasure. Similarly, William Baker's exposure to Ojibwa Indian drum traditions began when he would sit on his father's lap and be allowed to tap on the drum with a small stick, but only softly and on its edge.[3] Later, he and friends would "play" at having their own Indian dances behind the house in the evening, much to the amusement but encouragement of their parents. Learning traditions in this way, of course, extends beyond childhood. The degree to which oral tradition operates, even among today's blue collar workers, has been described by Robert S. McCarl in a collection of essays on occupational folklore.[4] As McCarl points out, "technique [which] reflects the 'working knowledge' (what you need to know to do the work) of any work . . . is passed from one worker to another through imitation and instruction. . . ."[5] Because words cannot always communicate, apprentices must be *shown* the technique.

Many of the activities documented in the *Studies*, however, are practiced in a world apart from that of the factory; therefore, by modern standards of mass production, the technologies shown may seem inefficient and imprecise. In some of them, the proportions used, arrived at through years of trial and error, are often inexact (viz., Cheever's recipe for ash glaze, "roughly two churns of settlin's to three of ashes," or his recipe for lime glaze, which differs from that of his wife), or even measured using the human hand as Paiute craftswoman, Wuzzie George, does to space the bindings on her duck decoys.[6] It is also a world where the craftsman eschews technical terminology, preferring instead to attach names to his products which relate them to resemblances elsewhere, where a southern folk potter describes his kiln as a "railroad tunnel" or a "ground hog," or an Ojibwa Indian refers to the cloth tabs which decorate the sides of his traditional drum as "earflaps."

Many of the traditions presented in the *Studies* date back to times

when the pace of work and passage of time were relatively unimportant. It was an age when Cheever could spend hours grinding his clay with a mule-drawn pug mill ("I just like it that way"), and William Baker could take pride in stitching by hand every inch of the several layers of cloth decorating his drum ("I could use a sewing machine, but I'd rather use my own handpower. You won't see anything on my drum made by machine."). But deliberateness is often commensurate with accomplishment, and, for the folk potter and Indian drummaker, quality in their products results from the care and time devoted to their manufacture.

The decline of many folklife traditions has paralleled the general social breakdown of communities, in many instances the result of advances in technology. Concurrent with this social dissolution has been the disappearance of many utilitarian items which the maker traditionally created for himself or his family. When commercially produced glassware appeared for home canning, it doomed to eventual extinction the churns and jugs Cheever Meaders, the farmer/potter, had turned and fired for use by his wife and neighbors in making butter, or pickling meat and vegetables. When Nevada marshlands were closed to Paiute Indians, it forced them to depend on food supplies from white trading stores. This precluded the need for a Wuzzie George to weave a small bag from tule reeds to collect duck eggs, a staple of generations before her. Or, as drummaker Bill Baker laments, today Ojibwa singers find it expedient to purchase marching-band drums from music stores for their dances, thus marking the passing of the former practice of his people to construct a dance drum as a communal activity in which all took pride.

Many of these traditions are near extinction or still alive only in the memories of the oldest members of a community. Because a major role of the Smithsonian is that of a conservation institution, the Office of Folklife Programs accepts the obligation to document the traditional folkways it researches, and its early commitment to film them should be noted. During the 1967 Smithsonian conference, Ralph Rinzler's roughly edited film footage of Georgia folk potters was shown to demonstrate a new approach in describing the technology behind artifacts in the Smithsonian's collection of folk material culture. The edited version of the film *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters* has become *Smithsonian Folklife Study* No. 1a, after supplementary film and a soundtrack were added. This screening of

the pottery film took place at a time when film documentation of folklife was a novelty. In fact, in 1967 the American *Encyclopaedia Cinematographica* listed a silent film on Amish breadmaking as its single motion picture entry to describe American folk culture. This dearth of folklife films reflected the fact that, for the most part, folklorists were continuing to document more the artifact than the craftsman. As Archie Green has noted, ". . . the material favored, metaphorically or literally by most American folklife specialists is still the boat or the basket, and. . . the object itself gets billing over its maker."[7]

Folklorists have not been alone, however, in being late to recognize film documentation as a necessary adjunct to verbal descriptions of culture. The late anthropologist, Margaret Mead, whose efforts helped to establish the Smithsonian's National Anthropological Film Center in 1975, recently took to task her own discipline's continuing refusal to appreciate the value of film documentation: "Department after department, research project after research project fails to include filming and insists on continuing the hopelessly inadequate note-taking of an earlier age; while before the fieldworkers' eyes the behavior which film could have caught and preserved for centuries (preserved for the joy of the descendants of those who dance a ritual for the last time and for the illumination of future generations of human scientists) disappear. . . ."[8]

In expanding our study of folklife beyond mere artifacts and texts, we have come to recognize that much of what we witness is performance. And though performance can be described verbally or transcribed in print, only through sound motion picture can we hope to capture the complete flow of events, the character of their performers, their speech patterns, moods and personalities. Hence, by incorporating artifact, text, and performance in our complementary monograph/film publications, we bring to readers and viewers, respectively, the immediacy and subtlety within folk culture. Essentially, it is our large aim to document folklife in all its dimensions.

Thomas Vennum, Jr.
General Editor
Smithsonian Folklife Studies
August 1980

Introduction

> This handmade pott'ry is going to be *gone* after a while. You take it plumb outta existence, nobody to make it, and in ten years people'd be wondering how that's made. "How'd them to make that? How's that piece of pott'ry made? I just don't see how it's done."
>
> Cheever Meaders
> May 1967

In the spring 1967 *Keystone Folklore Quarterly*, Henry Glassie addressed from a scholar's perspective the same issue which Cheever covered from his potter's viewpoint:

> When the scholar...finally turns to the study of American material folk culture, he will find a great abundance of material awaiting him by the roadside, in attics and museums...but few—and daily fewer—who know well how that material came into being. He will also find that the majority of the American reports of folk technology are unfortunately superficial and that of even superficial ones there are not many.[1]

During that same period, early in 1967, Secretary S. Dillon Ripley brought together a group of Smithsonian scholars to discuss with Henry Glassie and me the role the Institution might play in folklife research. The group agreed that a number of interesting research and presentation models would be appropriate for folklorists to develop in a museum program, and in preparation for a July conference, "Folklife in the Museums," we designed and began fieldwork for this Meaders monograph/film project. In response to the Secretary's metaphorical suggestion, "Take the instruments out of the cases and make them sing," we also planned for the National Mall a summer folklife festival to accompany the conference. We then showed the "rough-edit" of the film at the conference. Clearly, the issues addressed above by Meaders and Glassie were in the air in the mid-60s and formed part of the rationale for the establishment of a program in folklife research at the Smithsonian.

Figure 1. *Eastern seaboard of the U.S., showing location of White County, Georgia, (white square) in relation to Atlanta.*

We made a commitment to document the kinds of objects found in the museum with particular focus on the function of the objects in the society which produced them and the technology which lay behind their production. We intended to retain, in our publication, as much of the language and perspective of the craftsmen as possible; this, with a view towards capturing the spirit of the people, their humor and values as well as their attitude towards their product, their technology, themselves.

It seemed appropriate to combine film and the printed page in a fashion that would allow each to offer what it alone could do best. To permit the careful scrutiny of detailed data in a way which film cannot provide, we decided to present the basic technological information, drawings, and facts in the printed document. The film would then contain the illustrative material complementing the printed monograph, thus permitting one to hear the craftsmen and watch them carry out each step of the complex of processes described in the monograph. We determined to shoot elapsed-time footage, framing the full coordinated body of the working craftsman when feasible. As a result, "reference prints" now available with the Meaders film show elapsed-time shots of Cheever turning a pitcher and Lanier turning a churn. This footage enables potters, ethnographers, and interested observers to see the entire turning process and to compare the Meaderses at work in their own shop with footage of potters in other parts of the world. We developed this plan in consultation with Leslie Greenhill, then American Editor for the West German-based *Encyclopaedia Cinematographica*, to whom we express our gratitude for advice and guidance during the months prior to filming the Meaders family and at critical points in the editing process.

While some general shooting guidelines presented by the *Encyclopaedia* proved useful, we decided at the outset to abandon the particular approach of the *Encyclopaedia* that uses film (usually silent film) as the primary medium and includes background notes in an accompanying brochure of modest length (four to eight pages). Rather, we favored in-depth documentation in which the printed and the film media could fully complement each other in a mutually interdependent relationship. Our plan did not seek to address the interests of a general audience with a "human interest" film, nor did we consider it important to make a film which would necessarily stand on its own, apart from the monograph. Instead, we wished to accomplish

the basic task of complementing the monograph with information that the printed word, diagram, and photograph could not convey.

The approach of the *Encyclopaedia* may be adequate for comparative research in the natural sciences; history and the social sciences, however, concern themselves with *people* whose verbal communication more than equates with their other expressive modes. While faithful transcription of interviews might appear in a brochure accompanying a silent film, a transcription cannot convey the meaning and savor carried by inflection and regional speech styles—important communicative devices. Thus, we edited the sound track of the film entirely in the words of the two potters. (To make all of the potters' statements readily accessible—especially to those for whom English does not serve as a native language and who would find southern Appalachian speech challenging—a complete transcription of the sound track appears as Appendix C to the monograph.)

The decision to use the film and the illustrated printed page in this fashion guided planning from the outset. We intended to reach three groups:

1. scholars—ethnographers, folklorists, anthropologists, historians, cultural geographers;

2. crafts workers interested in the techniques and aesthetics of other craftsmen;

3. students of history and culture.

We listed these three groups in order of priority because we determined the methods of documentation by the needs of the first group with the thought that if we met the ethnographer's needs we would adequately cover those of the other two groups. While an active dialogue on the theory and method of ethnographic filming was in its nascent stages in spring 1967, the virtual explosion of published information in this area began within a few months of the shooting of this film. Although we obtained guidance on techniques primarily from the *Encyclopaedia Cinematographica* literature, a useful seven-point checklist of standards for the filming of research footage, almost identical to the standards we employed, appeared a number of years later.[2] Also, an interesting exchange of perspectives on both the shooting and editing of research footage came out in an article by

E. Richard Sorenson seven months after our filming of the Meaders family.[3] The article offers suggestions on the shooting, organizing and categorization of footage and film and provides a brief historical background on film as a research tool from 1882 to 1966.[4] In commentary, a group of distinguished scholars responded to Sorenson's ideas as formulated in the article. A useful concept which emerged from the article defines the "demonstrative film" as one in which "sequences found in research films...have been organized, edited, rearranged, and augmented...to demonstrate a discovery, summarize data, consolidate findings, present knowledge, give a point of view..."[5] In this sense, *The Meaders Family* functions as a demonstrative film intended to summarize accurate film data for comparative ethnographic research. In brief, it serves as the motion-study component of the Meaders family pottery technology.

We undertook this study as the first contemporary Smithsonian research project using the methods and perspectives of folklore/folklife scholarship. On February 13, 1967, I visited the Meaders family for the first time. Having already visited sixteen other southern American traditional potters between April 1964 and that morning, I was aware of the kinds of changes which had taken place at most of these potteries.[6] In almost every case, electric power had replaced the draft animal. Potters fired their kilns with gas or oil in many cases and used packaged glazes. These are but a few of the most common changes. Although I had never visited the Meaderses' kiln site, I had read about the family more than a decade earlier.[7] As I entered the house, Mrs. Meaders (Arie) encouraged me to speak loudly with Mr. Meaders (Cheever), pointing out that he was hard of hearing. I went into the front room where a lean man of 80 sat near a pot-bellied stove smoking his pipe. In a loud but friendly voice I spoke out, "Mr. Meaders, my name is Ralph Rinzler. It's good to meet you after reading about you in Allen Eaton's book for many years."

Unimpressed, Cheever looked up, took his pipe out of his mouth and quietly replied, "A feller sure can read about a lot of no-account things these days." A bit surprised, I mustered a chuckle to which he responded with a grin, "Oh, just sit down there, boy."

After a brief talk, we walked through the kiln site and ware shop. Unlike all other southern potteries I had seen, this one seemed to be untouched by the availability of contemporary technology with two exceptions. There were electric lights in the ware shop and, just

outside the door, an electric-powered pug mill which I later learned had been built by Cheever's son, Lanier. I discussed with them my desire to gather examples of their pottery for the Smithsonian and within a few weeks wrote to them asking if they would allow us to make a film of their operation, spring weather permitting. They agreed to help with advice and guidance. Ten years later, reflecting on a decade of interviews, filming sessions, and telephone queries, Lanier confided to me, "If I'd known that you didn't know *anything* about pottery-making when you come down here, why I would have told you a lot more."

We developed the filming plan with economy in mind: we could not afford a crew directed by a seasoned ethnocinematographer. At the time, the Smithsonian did not have a film unit within the Office of Exhibits Central. The Office of Public Affairs made available an Arriflex M camera and generously detailed to the project cameraman Albert Robinson, accustomed to filming receptions and official functions. Richard Farrar, a member of the staff of the Smithsonian Photography Laboratory, served as assistant cameraman. Under a separate arrangement, I secured the assistance of a friend with some experience in field filming, Robert Glatzer, who agreed to serve as director of photography. He also shot material for intercutting, using his own Bolex. We used the Arriflex for all synch-sound shooting, and for this camera we established basic guidelines. It would take no zoom shots. Before filming any sequence, we would discuss what needed to be in view, what processes required elapsed-time shooting, the specific framing of each process, the angles and lighting requirements. Occasionally, a flood light burned out, and before we could get to a nearby town for replacement lamps, we faced the problem of filming certain processes with inadequate light rather than miss them entirely. When Cheever did not feel well enough to work, we filmed processes which did not require his involvement (such as clay digging or the gathering of "settlin's" for glaze preparation). A checklist of the essential processes had been prepared with the help of Arie and Cheever. We worked from that list, but we did not film each process in the sequence in which it appears in the film.

In only one case did this nonsequential approach have a significant effect on the film's accuracy. Although we had written and telephoned to establish a calender for our arrival and for the filming schedule, the natural work rhythm of the pottery went forward at its own orderly

pace. Thus, we arrived just as a kiln had been loaded and contained its preheating fire in preparation for full firing the following morning. We began with the firing of a kiln load of pottery, and then proceeded in succeeding days to film the making of the next kiln load. By the time the filming sessions were almost complete, the kiln load which had been fired on the first day was cool enough to be unloaded. Thus, all of the pottery which is seen in production throughout the film is not the pottery unloaded at the end of the film.

We conducted interviews on-camera and off-camera during rest periods each day when the potters temporarily suspended work in the ware shop or around the yard. We carried out additional interviews in the house each evening. The bulk of the interview sessions, beyond this, took place during the February 13, 1967, visit with the Meaderses and during an extended field trip, conducted July 28-August 3, 1968, with Robert Sayers, then an undergraduate summer intern at the Smithsonian Folklife Office.

No process in the film was artificially staged or recreated. No process or implement was revived. No equipment used in the film had been retired earlier in favor of newer equipment and then brought back in the interest of showing an earlier form of technology. Lanier, working on his own, would have ground his clay in his self-styled electric pug mill instead of with a mule, but Cheever hewed close to familiar ways:

> I'm used to grinding them with a mule. . . I never done nothing else. I just like it. It ain't as fast as grinding it with a machine, but I don't care anything about hurrying anymore. Gonna take my time from here out.

On Thanksgiving Day 1967, six months after filming, Cheever died. He had developed a modest local reputation as a fellow with whom one could visit and talk over problems, and he was well loved in the area. A neighbor commented on his passing, "It was as if a great tree had fallen." Beyond Cheever's considerable charm and personal generosity, he served as a veritable catalogue of potter's know-how. Had we delayed the filming of his kiln site, we would have missed sorely the decisive contributions which he made, and the significance of a metaphor familiar amongst ethnographic filmmakers would have been driven home:

> "Chaque fois qu'un vieillard meurt en Afrique, c'est la bibliotheque d'Alexandrie que brule." ("Each time an elder dies in Africa, it is the

library of Alexandria that burns.")[8]

Rooted to one kiln site for seventy-four years, Cheever had important insights to contribute. Compare the rationales offered by Cheever and Lanier for "piecing" a large churn. One attributes the maintenance of this tradition to habit while the other provides a concise functional rationale, accompanied by references to the currency of the practice among local potters. Not only would we have found that kind of data unavailable had we made this film after Cheever's death, but the operation of the pottery, kiln architecture, and use of certain equipment would also have been strikingly altered from that seen in the film. In late 1967, a new kiln had to be constructed. Lanier built his kiln on a different site and model from his father's, and he designed it to burn a combination of oil and wood. Years later, he returned to Cheever's basic kiln form and fuel with only slight modifications. Lanier retired the mule after Cheever's passing and dismantled the mule-powered device, the timbers of which soon completely rotted away. He replaced it with his homemade electric pug mill. The pottery yard no longer has an array of display tables since green ware now dries in the ware shop where Lanier stores it after firing. The site of Cheever's kiln has become a grassy mound, and the glaze rocks, one worn through, stand unused behind the ware shop near Lanier's new kiln site. Antique dealers now sell face jugs, which Lanier prices at $20.00, for as much as $400.00, dubbing them "early American folk art." While some traditional craftsworkers and performers accept the designation "folk artists," Lanier wryly shrugs off attempts to make precious the rustic, primarily utilitarian ware he has produced since childhood at the family kiln site.

One dimension of the research, not fully developed here but worthy of mention, deals with the changing environment against which the Meaders family maintains this substantial body of tradition. This monograph focuses on the type of operation characteristic of small southern stoneware potteries from the time of early settlement until the period between the two world wars. In the days before the advent of mass-produced tin cans and glass bottles, before the mechanized commercial dairy and the home refrigerator, the potter functioned as an indispensable adjunct to rural life. Through the nineteenth century, general stores in all parts of the South maintained large stocks of preserving vessels, pitchers, churns, and jugs freighted to

them by pottery entrepreneurs.

The potters themselves clustered around naturally occurring clay deposits, thereby creating numerous "jugtowns" of a dozen shops and more. While the ceramic product turned out by these potters varied with the area, its clays, its traditions, the basic steps in the production process varied little throughout the South. Most of these men fashioned their own tools with the assistance of local blacksmiths, built their own kilns of homemade bricks, and processed their own clay and glaze materials. And while the potters and the society around them regarded pottery-making as a respectable and reasonably profitable trade, its adherents rarely sought—or found—the professional status of their fellows in the North. More often than not, southern stoneware potters worked anonymously, characteristically combining pottery-making with farming.

Because of their late entry into pottery-making, the Meaderses did not enjoy too many years of great stability in their chosen craft. Even as they developed skills and built a clientele, changes were on the horizon, changes that would bring about a social and economic transformation with the dawning century. For a few years, however, they worked in an environment not very different from that of the previous decades.

During these years, the economy of White County, Georgia, depended upon agriculture. Settlers for the most part occupied subsistance farmsteads, congregating occasionally at a few tiny general stores that dotted the countryside. Of these, the Leo store and post office stood closest to the Mossy Creek voting district. Several times a year, business took the family a three-mile distance to the county seat, Cleveland, which boasted a physician, a dentist, an attorney, a courthouse, and two dry-goods stores; these trips, however, depended on necessity.

The trade network, in which the Meaderses participated actively, relieved the isolation of their rural existence to an extent. Wagon freighters criss-crossed the region, trading produce and bringing news to the outlying settlements. After 1895, these wagoners introduced commercially manufactured glaze materials to the potter's benefit and, after 1900, introduced vast numbers of glass bottles and "tin" cans to his eventual disadvantage.

The Gainesville-Northwestern railroad further eroded the area's isolation when, in 1912, it pushed a spur line through from Gaines-

Figure 2. *The old and the new in White County: Hunt's crossroads store, Mossy Creek* and *The Golden Pantry convenience market, Cleveland.* (Photos by Robert Sayers, 1979.)

ville to the lumber mill at Helen, with a stop at Cleveland. Following its arrival, many White County residents, after cotton picking, took the train to market in Gainesville where they exchanged part of their harvest and other farm produce for ready-made goods unavailable closer to home. Nearly all of the Mossy Creek women, for instance, used the occasion to purchase their camp-meeting finery in advance of that momentous event held every August.

By 1925, the pace of change had quickened appreciably. The automobile arrived on the scene heralding a veritable revolution in lifeways. After 1930, work crews graded and paved the road past the Meaders pottery to link it with the Appalachian Scenic Highway extending from Canada to Miami, Florida. The Rural Electrification Administration brought in electric power lines in 1936 to include most of Mossy Creek—a great boon to an area formerly dependent on kerosene for illumination.

Two additional events—the Great Depression and World War II—capped the decline of the small family farm. Although a number of returning war veterans attempted to resume farming in the mid-1940s, most "went busted" within the space of a year or two and ultimately decided to seek employment opportunities away from home—notably in the automobile manufacturing centers of the North. Only part of this out-migration diminished as a result of the growth of local commerce after 1950. Commercial poultry and dairy farms sprang up along with cattle and hog ranches. New lumber mills appeared to exploit the region's timber resources. In addition, zipper and textile factories moved into the area between 1952 and 1954.

While growth in the local economy has not been dramatic, it has been fairly steady to the present. Cleveland gradually acquired one bank and then a second, a small Baptist junior college, a department store, and several used car dealerships. Today it is only a two-hour drive on well-maintained thoroughfares from downtown Atlanta and is instantly in touch with the world through radio and television. As the "Gateway to the Smoky Mountains," the town sees a fair number of tourists, some of whom have established homes locally. Longtime residents appreciate the fact that the newcomers have not yet transformed Cleveland into an ersatz Bavarian village complete with A-frame cabins and gingerbread as has happened in nearby Helen, Georgia. There persists, however, a feeling that too much change has already destroyed much of the social fabric of the community.

Remarks one native, "[The oldtimers], they're here only you can't recognize them anymore; they seem to have lost their identity."

Against this backdrop then, we see the Meaders family. Something of an anomaly for their adherence to traditional ways, they are actually not so much unlike other Clevelanders—not actively resisting change but not being seduced by it.

It is our intention that this study, in addition to its purely technical function, reflect something of the quality, vitality, and humanity of the Meaders family. This is not a complete history of the family nor does it attempt to present the Meaders pottery tradition as representative of a regional style. John Burrison (Associate Professor of Folklore, Department of English, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia), to whom we are indebted for his careful review of this manuscript, plans a substantial book on the subject of Georgia pottery. We are equally indebted to Nancy Sweezy and Vernon Owens of Jugtown Pottery for their perceptive examination of the manuscript and for their helpful comments on technique and traditions.

The Meaders family, beyond the full participation of Cheever, Arie, Lanier, and his brother, Edwin ("Nub"), has graciously assisted us in our efforts to gather information over the years during which we prepared this monograph/film publication.

Robert Glatzer directed photography and guided the first "rough-edit" of the film shown at the Smithsonian Folklife Conference in July 1967 and to the American Folklore Society in a plenary session of its 1967 annual meeting in Toronto. Our thanks go to him for providing guidance and skill not, at that time, available within the ranks of the Smithsonian staff.

Mike Herter undertook the arduous technical and creative task of editing the picture and soundtrack and deserves full credit for skillfully cutting fifteen hours of interviews and 8,000 feet (almost four hours) of footage into a succinct thirty-one minute film. The National Anthropological Film Center kindly provided editorial guidance and equipment during the editing process.

Harry Segedy generously assisted us in securing, from the Berea College archives, copies of Doris Ulmann's 1930s still photographs of the family and worksite. *Foxfire* magazine also provided much needed cooperation in securing photographs and assisting with interview material. Terry Zug, whose important work in southern pottery is

well known to scholars, kindly provided bibliographical background material for which we thank him.

From the outset, Roger Abrahams, Archie Green, and Henry Glassie sought to interest the Smithsonian administration in including folklore and folklife scholarship in its range of ethnographic perspectives. Beyond those important considerations, they provided encouragement and more than a few keen insights at key steps along the way; we can never properly thank them for these.

Kate Rinzler conducted interviews in May 1978 with Arie Meaders which any man would have bungled; her success in these provided valuable information on the uses of stoneware pottery in the farm dairy and kitchen. Beyond this, she and our colleagues, Thomas Vennum, Archie Green and Jeffrey LaRiche, have read the manuscript and commented freely with marked generosity.

Finally, Sarah Lewis coordinated communications with all of those involved, kept track of photographs, recordings and stray bits of data over an eight-year period, and saw to it that nothing disappeared permanently. To all of these good friends and colleagues we feel a sense of gratitude, but beyond all, we thank the Meaders Family whose patience, kindness, and good humor know no bounds.

Ralph Rinzler
Smithsonian Institution
August 1980

Figure 3. *John Milton and Mattie Lambert Meaders.* (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Homer Allison, Winder, Georgia.)

The Meaders Family

> I remember very distinctly about Pa talking with my older brother, said: "We'll just put us up a ware shop, we'll have something to work at." And course they were young, chucky boys, that just suited 'em. They just cut the logs and pulled 'em right up to that place where that old chimley's at and built the shop.[1]

The founding of the first Meaders pottery during the winter months of 1892–93 was hardly an auspicious occasion. If the account of Q. Meaders, one of the founder's sons, is to be believed, it began as something of a whim, as a diversion from farming and as a means to gain a small supplemental income. Since the Meaderses had virtually no antecedents in the field (unlike many of their potter neighbors in the hill country of White County, Georgia), it was mostly chance circumstance that brought them to pottery-making at such a late date.[2]

In spite of the fact that the Meaderses are not descendents of one of the early "dynasties" of southern hand-craftsmen, some details of family history bear mentioning. The earliest Meaders in the state of Georgia was a former Virginian, John Meaders, who accepted an offer of homestead land in gratitude for service performed during the American Revolution. Settling with his wife, Mollie Justice, in the vicinity of Fort Norris, Franklin County, between 1790 and 1800, he set about clearing his land for farming.

While family members continued to live in the Fort Norris area through the last century, we know that one of John Meaders's grandsons, Christopher M. Meaders, traded his property in November of 1848 for a 260-acre parcel of farm land some 30 miles to the north in adjoining Habersham (later White) County. Here the latter man established his own farm, raising a few hogs and head of cattle and sowing a yearly crop of corn, oats, hay, sorghum cane, and garden vegetables. He also seems to have been involved in cotton cultivation to some extent, as the crop, at the upper limit of its arable range, sticks in the memory of one of his descendents: "I heard my granddaddy talk about the 'darkies,' he called them. They'd have to every night pick the seed out of the cotton until they picked a shoeful

of cotton seed." Indeed, in the census of 1850, Christopher M. Meaders is listed as being a prosperous small planter with property, including a dozen slaves, valued at 3,000 dollars.[3]

Prosperity was short-lived, however. When the Civil War came in 1860, two of Christopher M. Meaders's sons were drawn into the conflict and were never seen again. Family members who survived the war seem to have had difficulty recouping their losses, and in a few years the eighth child and remaining son, John Milton Meaders, inherited most of his father's estate. (fig. 3). A taciturn, humorless man noted mainly for his unusual strength, John M. had very little disposition for farming.[4] Rather, for years he maintained himself at odd jobs like blacksmithing, wagon building, and carpentry. At other times he found solace hauling wagonloads of farm vegetables between north Georgia hamlets. As his youngest son remembers: "Well, Pa was a-wagoning. He was a terrible fellow to go back over the mountain and take a load of produce and buy up a big coop, chicken bed full of chickens. Take 'em off to Athens and he'd make money on 'em." Along with his staples, John M. Meaders also freighted jugs, churns, and pitchers for his potter neighbors.

Given his background and personality, it seems surprising that John M. would elect to enter into such a disciplined craft as pottery-making. Nevertheless, he apparently found his neighbors' success at the trade irresistible: "They was other pott'ries around here that was making good about it and he decided he had the boys—let them go to making it." His son also suggests that the decision was influenced by his experience as a merchandiser of ceramic ware: "Well, he'd always try to take a load of this pott'ry ware over there [to Athens] to swap for chickens. They'd trade for the ware. And [if] he hadn't a-been a-wagoning so much with his team across there and buying up stuff and selling it, I don't think he ever would have put [a shop] up." In any event, the germ of an idea had taken hold, for at length John M. Meaders called his growing family together in the fall of 1892 and announced his intention to build a "ware shop."

Construction began just before Christmas. While a black stonemason named Chapman worked at erecting a fieldstone fireplace and chimney, John M. Meaders's older sons built up the rough-hewn pine walls of the shop, chinking the logs with red clay.[5] Other construction around the pottery yard—which was situated directly across the road from the family's two-story farmhouse (see fig. 10)—included a "rail-

road tunnel" kiln and a mule-drawn "mud mill," the latter used to grind the blue and yellow stoneware clay that traveled in narrow veins on the family property.

By springtime, everything was in readiness. Neither the pottery's founder nor any of his six sons, who ranged in age from six through nineteen, could turn ware, so John M. cast about for a journeyman to turn piecework and to teach his boys the art.[6] Williams Dorsey, a local potter then in his late twenties, was the first to fill this position, turning ware at an agreed-upon fee of two cents per gallon capacity. He was later replaced by another neighbor, Marion Davidson.

For the first few years, the John M. Meaders pottery provided only an occasional diversion from the older agrarian routine. Mostly the family patriarch hauled his produce, tended his little farm, and in spare moments burned a kiln load of ware. By 1895, however, his three oldest sons, Wiley, Caulder, and Cleater, were becoming proficient enough at turning that the business was finding a life of its own. Wiley Meaders, a powerful man of 230 pounds with a large frame and unusually long arms, was especially adept at the work and served as a model for his younger brothers who rapidly assimilated skills of their own.

Potter Neighbors

It is important to realize that the Meaders pottery was situated in one of the most active pottery districts in the South. As early as the 1840s, several "jug manufactories" were established in southern White County, in a roughly five-square-mile block of land encompassing the Leo and Mossy Creek voting districts. Later, as many as sixty potters worked in the area—all presumably drawn to the region's ample deposits of high-firing stoneware clay. Names of prominent families in the trade during the latter half of the nineteenth century include, among others, Brownlow, Chandler, Craven, Davidson, Dorsey, Pitchford, Sears, and Warwick.[7]

Some of the White County shops were simple one- and two-man affairs with modest outputs of farm canning and dairy ware; others were more like small factories, mass-producing whiskey jugs and hiring professional itinerants for turners. Despite differences in scale, nearly all of the shops turned out the same sturdy, functional ware. The artisans worked in relative anonymity and gained such skills as

they could muster by association with family members and other potters, since formal apprenticeships were rare. Their standing in the community amounted to nothing higher or lower than that of their farmer neighbors. In fact, most of the White County potters—though often descended of several generations of ceramic artisans—were themselves farmers. As a group, therefore, these "hill country" craftsmen were somewhat different from stoneware potters elsewhere in the United States.

Although much has been made of the solitary life of the folk potter, in terms of social intercourse, the White County artisans seem not to have distanced themselves too greatly from one another. Some intermarriage between families occurred, and there was a commingling of associations as would be normal in any rural settlement. Especially during the month of August, the area was alive with activity. For two weeks, people in the community would set aside their work and ferry their wagons, their milk cows, and their poultry down to the Mossy Creek Campground for camp meeting. Each of the older families in the region owned a plank "tent" in the tabernacle circle. Country people who lacked such amenities ate their dinners on the ground, sitting where they had a good view of the twice-daily sermons, most notably the weekend "preaching sermons" of the prominent Methodist and Baptist elders.

Among the Meaderses' potter neighbors just after the turn of the century were several of the Dorseys, Asbury Warwick, Billy Pitchford, and "one of the Cravens"—all of whom had ware shops within a mile or two of the family. Another neighbor, Loy Skelton, was not himself a potter but contracted with local artisans to turn ware in his employ.

Certainly the most prominent of the remaining potters were the Dorseys. All descended of "Old Man" David Dorsey (who drifted into White County before the Civil War "in the interest of pottery"), these included Joseph Tarpley ("Tarp") Dorsey, who ran a shop with his seven sons; William Fowler ("Daddy Bill") Dorsey and his three boys; and William David ("Little Bill") Dorsey, who owned a third pottery which he operated with his brother, Bob. The Meaderses were especially close to the Dorseys, in part because of a marriage between Daddy Bill Dorsey and John M. Meaders's younger sister, Fannie.

Another of the remaining potters occasionally in the area was Will Hewell, an itinerant, who shifted between his homesite at Gillsville,

Hall County, and several of the White County shops. Besides being an excellent wheel mechanic, Hewell was considered the best ware-turner in the region and had a lasting influence on his compatriots in this regard.

The Business of Pottery

As production potters, the north Georgians worked with considerable dispatch and valued a man for his ability to replicate a small inventory of forms over and over again with speed and efficiency. According to Cheever Meaders, John M.'s youngest son, a top pottery turner with an assistant to handle the grinding and clay balling could turn upwards of 300 gallons a day in medium-size ware. The average turner, on the other hand, typically produced a yield of 200 gallons in churns or 150 gallons in jugs for a day's effort. In his prime, Cheever worked as many as twelve hours at a stretch to meet his production goals: "Make a big bunch of pitchers, churns in the daytime and then after work, eat supper, then go up and put handles on 'em." In so doing, he complained that he rarely had a moment's relaxation: "No, I was thinking about that dollar."

Those shop owners who secured labor by hire generally paid their turners a piece-work standard of two cents a gallon, with oversize and fancy vessels commanding higher wages. During the 1920s, a few of the best journeymen made three cents a gallon, but this increase was lost with the onset of leaner times. By the time the ware was glazed, burned, and loaded up for hauling to market, its value to the owner stood at eight and ten cents a gallon depending on the distance it would have to be freighted. The retailer, usually a crossroads merchant or a hardware store proprietor in one of the larger towns, would in turn increase his selling price 75–100 percent over cost.

Where he could, the potter or ware shop owner liked to sell directly to the consumer and thus take a higher profit. Toward this end, the Meaderses constructed a big shelter next to their kiln, and whiskey blockaders and Gainesville-bound wagoners periodically availed themselves of the protective covering for the night (fig. 4). It was common to find these visitors sharing in the family's activities for a few days—their mules quartered in John M. Meaders's large barn or pastured nearby—while they waited for a load of pottery to emerge from the kiln. Even local farmers would drop by occasionally to barter

Figure 4. *The Meaders pottery yard, circa 1910. The men from left to right: Lewis Quillian ("Q."), Cheever, John Milton, and Casey Meaders; foreground: Johnnie May and Lizzie Meaders. Note the protective "shelter" for wagon freighters in front of the kiln, the mud mill in the center of the photograph, and the ware shop and glazing rocks to the right.* (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Homer Allison, Winder, Georgia.)

poultry, eggs, and "mountain syrup" (sorghum molasses) for a needed vessel or two. Since pottery was somewhat "seasonable" as a product, vessels like preserving jars and syrup jugs were sold mostly at harvest time, while other forms like pitchers and butter churns were popular throughout the year.

Although considerable ware was "traded out" of the yard in this fashion, it was also the practice—especially during the late summer and fall months—for the potter or some member of his family to solicit business along the road or in the towns. After the senior Meaders retired from wagon freighting, the job fell to his fifth son, Q., who found the work greatly to his liking: "Oh, good Lord, it was wonderful, boys, just wonderful to do that in the fall of the year [and] summertime. Boys, it's just the grandest living there is."

For a long while, Q. hauled a load a week, packing 250–400 gallon loads of pottery throughout north Georgia and into the mountain and piedmont counties of North Carolina. At other times Q. hauled apples, chestnuts, and cabbages down to the central part of the state. Typically, stores like the Palmer Hardware Company in Gainesville would "bill out" their orders to the pottery. When the ware was ready, Q. would fill his straw-lined wagon bed with churns, pitchers, and

crocks, cover them with a sheet, hitch up his two mules, and depart down the trail.

Short hauls would last one or two days. Other trips up through the Blue Ridge Mountains—to hamlets like Franklin, Hayesville, Murphy, Hiwassee, and Blairsville—took a week or longer, during which time Q. solicited business store by store. Most such trips were uninitiated by his customers; yet the potential gains were great, as Q. felt he could charge any price he wanted for the ware. (Regular customers, by contrast, were charged a fixed price and, in return, entered into an agreement with the wagoner to pay for any ware damaged in transit.)

At night, Q. camped out along the road in a "protected zone:" "You know, a man was protected on the side of the road. He can stay in so many feet of the road and he doesn't have to ask a man where it's at either. And he can burn anything [for firewood], any tree in so many feet of the road." Visitors would drop by late at night to while away a few hours in conversation and often to bargain on a piece of pottery. Because of local ordinances concerning peddlers, this situation had some potential for trouble:

> They had [a law] over here in North Carolina—Murphy, all up through there. I went over there one time with a load of ware and some people come out there. And I was waiting on a merchant to come. I told this man, I said, "How much do you want?" He said, "I want about 50 gallons [of] them four gallon churns." I says, "All right." Told him my price and went to setting it out. I thought he was the merchant that I was supposed to see.
>
> After I found out that he wasn't, I said, "Look here, I can't sell you this ware." He says, "Why? I'll pay you for it." I says, "I know, but there's a law to keep me from selling this in your country—I'm from Georgia." He says, "They don't nobody know that but you, you're the only fella knows." And he says, "I'm the sheriff of this county and," he says, "I *want* it." I says, "All right, you got it!"

If such circumstances proved an occasional irritant for the wagoner, serious discomfort came with the advent of cold weather. On one selling trip over the mountain in the company of his younger brother, Q. found himself stranded in a sudden snowstorm. Sleep came fitfully as the pair huddled overnight in an old storehouse, though the brothers fared better than one Hall County potter/freighter whose ear reputedly "froze to the wagon wheel" as he lay slumbering in the snow.

Around 1923 the road in front of the Meaderses' ware shop was graded. Described in its former state by Q.'s nephew, Lanier, as being "more like a pig trail or cowpath," the road was now accepting of more modern transportation. "They used mules to grade it with, and Model T. Fords started running over it right quick. [When it rained] right there in front of the house was a nice mudhole and it wasn't nothing to look out there and see that mudhole full of Fords. You could see half-a-dozen in it any time you looked out."

Q. eventually traded his team-and-wagon for one of the motor vehicles—a 1924 Chevrolet pickup truck—but the change was not a completely satisfactory one. Lanier continues:

> [My Uncle Q.] loaded the truck down one night and the next day we got up about six o'clock and started out. We got about four miles from home and the back tires... we'd go about half-a-mile and one would blow out [under the weight of the pottery]. We got four miles that first day [so] we left the truck and walked back home.
>
> We got up early the next morning and when we got back to the truck it was surprising that all the tires on it was still standing up. And we started out again and, I don't know how come it was, but we went till about 11 o'clock before another one blowed out. And we fixed that one, just had to pull off and fix it and put it back on. Surprisingly enough, that was the only flat tire we had that day. We got back home just before night. Believe it or not, my uncle got so disgusted with it he just set down in the road and bawled like a baby. He won't tell you that but he did.

The Decline of Pottery-Making in White County

Although the Meaderses and their neighbors worked initially in a period of relative stability, the eclipse of traditional pottery-making was well under way during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Among the factors related to this decline was the appearance of large numbers of glass bottles and tin cans after 1900 which, combined with a change in the way foodstuffs were processed, threatened to dislocate much of the potters' trade. Adding to the problem was the advent of Prohibition in Georgia in 1907, which was accompanied by surveillance on producers of whiskey containers.

As a result, by the start of World War I, the only shops remaining in the local area were those of the three Dorsey families, Loy Skelton,

and the Meaderses. Around 1920, an extended family of potters, the Browns from the Atlanta area ("Old Man" Jim Brown, five of his sons, and his brother, Ulysses Adolphus ["Dolphus"] Brown), put in a brief appearance in White County. They associated themselves with the Daddy Bill Dorsey shop—though they turned ware for Loy Skelton and for the Meaderses as well—and had a reputation for being "extra good, fast turners." Wanderlust, however, overtook the Browns and, except for Dolphus who remained around Cleveland for a few years to operate his own shop, they disappeared almost as rapidly as they had arrived.

Despite this small ripple of new activity, events in general continued on a downward slide. Little Bill Dorsey, employed part-time as a revenue officer, was killed in the line of duty in 1921. Even though his brother tried to maintain his shop for a few more years, the enterprise was a failure. Daddy Bill Dorsey, never a turner himself, stayed in business until the Browns departed, at which time his sons also drifted off to other pursuits. Tarp Dorsey's death in 1925 left his shop in the hands of his heirs, two of whom—sons Williams and

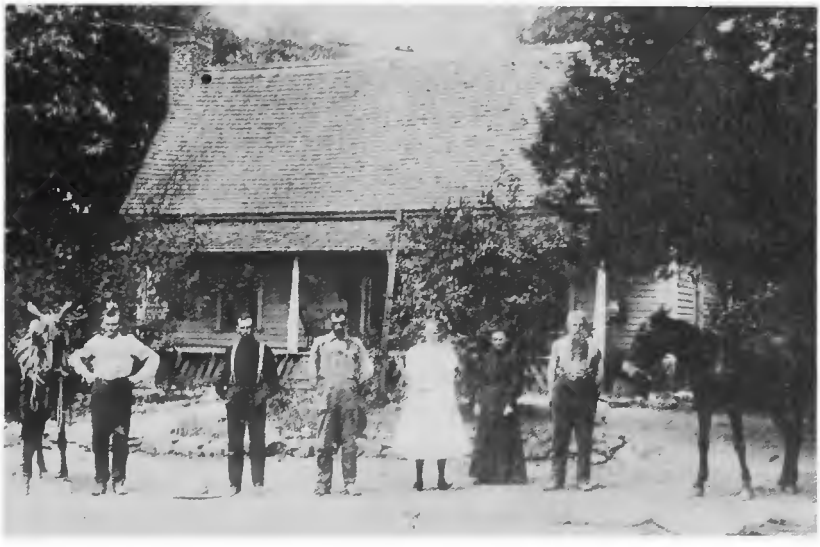


Figure 5. *The Meaders homeplace, circa 1910. From left to right: Casey, Q., Cheever, Johnnie May, and Lizzie Meaders with their father, John M. Meaders. The mules are "Lou" and "Bird."* (Photo courtesy of Mrs. Homer Allison, Winder, Georgia.)

Jim—kept it alive until 1938. Aside from a single Meaders establishment, only Loy Skelton's pottery persisted into the 1940s before death claimed his chief turner, Will Hewell.

All of John M. Meaders's sons (except Caulder, who opted for the life of a "railroad man") pursued the potter's trade through this twilight period (fig. 5). The two oldest brothers, Wiley and Cleater, built their first shop together across the creek below their father's pottery sometime after 1910. Around 1920 the two parted company; Wiley, a bachelor until his middle years, moved to a new location due east of the family homeplace, and Cleater relocated in Cleveland, where he worked with his nine children before his death in 1934. Cleater's sons continued to operate this pottery for another four years before abandoning the effort and moving to Atlanta.[8] Casey, after marrying in 1917, located his shop down by the bridge. A short time later he left White County altogether for the life of a journeyman potter in the Carolinas. Although Q. never established his own shop, his work as a wagoner was invaluable to the family and continued through his retirement around 1945. For his part, Cheever, the youngest son, fell heir to the shop across the road from the homeplace—the original and present Meaders pottery.

Cheever Meaders

Cheever Meaders gave as his birth date January 21, 1887, although a family Bible records the event as occurring one day later. Of average height and weight, Cheever had few outstanding physical characteristics. His quick wit, sociable style, and quiet, determined way did stand, however, in marked contrast to the dark manner of his father.

As the youngest of the six Meaders boys, it was only normal that he should join them in the family industry. Having completed his formal schooling in the fourth grade, Cheever entered into pottery-making full time and was an accomplished turner by the age of fifteen. One of the advantages of Cheever's junior status among the brothers was that, unlike them, he was never impelled to move away from the homeplace to establish his own shop. Instead, when John M. Meaders built a new cottage for his immediate family in 1919, just a few hundred yards below the pottery, Cheever and his wife of five years, Arie, moved in as well.

Eight children—a like number of sons and daughters—were born

to Arie and Cheever Meaders in little more than a decade following their marriage. The girls helped their mother with the household and dairy chores and also assisted with the loading and unloading of the kiln where extra hands were needed. The boys divided their time between hoeing and pulling fodder in the fields, on the one hand, and hauling clay and cutting firewood for the kiln, on the other. Two of the four sons also helped "waitin' on a fella" in the ware shop, balling the clay and setting it out for the turner. For a brief period around 1921, the Meaderses had several of the Browns in their employ as turners, as well as an elderly German named Paige Eaton. In addition, a black man, J.P. Thomas, served as a general laborer. Before too long, however, the help drifted away, leaving Cheever and his family to carry on alone. For his part, Cheever worked right along with his boys going into town maybe once every other week ("not for loafering or anything like that," maintains his son, "mostly on business").

In spite of this heavy regimen of work, occasions were found for recreation. Standard fare included local square dances, tent and medicine shows, and "Western" films at the Cleveland movie theater. More often the activities were kept at home. "It was pretty much of a gathering place, sort of like a crossroads store" in the description of one family member. Dolphus Brown would drop by with his fiddle on Saturday nights, and Cheever would join him on mandolin. Q. recalls that "Cheever was one of the music makers; he could play a mandolin till it'd just talk." Cheever's sister, Johnnie May, would accompany the men on piano, and sometimes a neighbor would bring over a banjo or an autoharp to complete the musical ensemble.

It is not at all certain that Cheever Meaders had committed himself wholeheartedly to the potter's life as he entered the third decade of his life. Much had changed about the trade by the 1920s, and the coming Great Depression was soon to bring about the demise of the remaining potteries in the region—including those of his brothers. The fact remains, though, that when hard times hit, Cheever simply reduced the scale of his operation, burning his kiln on a monthly rather than a weekly basis and calling on family members to help him keep the shop in order. In some ways, the lack of competition and the reduced standard of living worked to Cheever's advantage, as his son, Lanier, relates:

People used more of our ware then and somehow they managed to find

> a nickel or a dime or a quarter to buy a four or five gallon churn. If anybody didn't have a job, they'd have a garden. And if they didn't grow it, they didn't eat. If they didn't *preserve* it after they growed it, they didn't have it to eat then. And that's the reason, I reckon, the churns sold so well.

Even though his customers were thus assured, Cheever still found it necessary to lower his prices by more than half. Money for living expenses was always in short supply and seemed to come in as much through fortuitous circumstances as through day-to-day sales. Continues Lanier:

> Everything began to look kind of bleak and dreary around here, wasn't much doing, and groceries was getting kinda low. Wasn't right sure if there was going to be any more [pottery-making]. This man Holloway come by, and he was on his way to Gainesville where he run a small crossroads grocery store. Had a load of chickens and eggs and one thing and another. He stopped to find out if he could get any churns,and he wanted 200 gallons as he went back. Settled on a price of eight cents a gallon. And when he come back, he had 16 dollars to pay for it. It seemed like that 16 dollars lasted for 12 months.

Around 1933, a stranger—a small, rather frail woman named Doris Ulmann—made her appearance at the pottery. She was accompanied by a younger man, John Jacob Niles, who served as her guide and escort.[9] The pair explained to the Meaderses that they were canvassing the Appalachian region in search of old-fashioned craftsmen to photograph. Although Cheever apparently responded in a favorable manner to this overture (both his and his brother Cleater's potteries were photographed), he failed to place any great importance on the event. Even when the pictures were later incorporated in Allen Eaton's *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* (1937), along with brief descriptions of the two potteries, the family was not overly aroused by such unexpected attention (fig. 6).

Of much greater significance for business, in the family's estimation, was the improvement of the road past the shop. Smoothed out and blacktopped during the mid-1930s, it rapidly developed as a conduit for carloads of builders, contractors, and "rich folk from New York," all speeding south in response to a "Florida boom." Quite naturally, many stopped long enough at the Meaders pottery to browse and to buy souvenirs for their new homes. At first, the tourists were content to purchase Cheever's standard offerings—churns,

Figure 6. *Cheever Meaders and his children, circa 1933. From left to right: John Rufus, Margie, Cheever, Annie, Reggie, Mary Nell Whelchel (Cheever's niece), Edwin Truitt ("Nub"), and Quillian Lanier ("Lanier").* (Photo by Doris Ulmann.)

pitchers, and jugs. After a time, though, they began to bring him molded artware vases and pictures from magazines to copy. Vexed by these requests ("I'll tell you, that got next to him when they'd ask for something that hadn't been made," relates Arie Meaders), he later relented if for no other reason than to prove to the visitors that he was up to the task. Some pieces so displeased him the way they came out of the kiln that he tossed them by the roadside, where snow drifted over them. It amused Cheever mightily when customers later rescued them from the snowbank.

Except for Cheever's personality and the advent of World War II, the Meaders pottery might have followed the trend of other remaining ware shops in the South by assuming a greater share of the tourist and gift shop trade. With a slowing of business and with his sons in Europe, however, Cheever elected to return to that which he knew best—the making of stoneware churns. These he supplemented with occasional large orders from a Cleveland florist for unglazed redware flowerpots. Neither enterprise proved very successful. Iceboxes were beginning to appear in the region, and the churns were too large for

these facilities. The florist, on the other hand, sold the business after a year or two, and orders for flowerpots ceased.

Even after the war, with the sons' return, matters did not improve appreciably. All four, it seems, were loathe to resume working in the ware shop—even had there been any work. One eventually found a job with a local lumberyard, another on a poultry farm, and a third hired out as an electrical handyman. The fourth secured part-time employment in a textile mill and, later, in a sheet metal shop.

During the next several years it is clear that work at the ware shop was not entirely finished, even though Cheever protested that he "couldn't hardly give a churn away." When the old log building began to succumb under an invasion of termites and woodsawyers, a second tarpaper-covered shop arose almost simultaneously in its place. A final churn turned in the old building and inscribed with the memorial date, "November 11, 1952," is still in the possession of the Meaders family. Except for the new shop (and a new kiln built two years later on the site of at least four previous kilns), very little else about the pottery was deliberately changed. Left intact were the archaic clay and glaze mills in the yard as well as the foot-operated treadle wheels indoors.

On March 3, 1957, the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* published a feature article in its magazine section about the hold-out potter and his solitary pursuit in north Georgia (fig. 7). About this same time, an American Automobile Association tour map began listing the pottery as a visitor attraction. Contrary to what one might have expected, though, the resultant flood of tourists was not greeted by Cheever with any great enthusiasm. Nearly every weekend brought carloads of sightseers, who parked their vehicles in a long line around the bend in the road. Cheever tried his best to accomodate the visitors, demonstrating and explaining his work. But when they began to arrive during the week as well, he had had enough. Once and for all, he announced, it was time at age seventy, that he should retire and try something else.

Indeed, it took a remarkable event to lure Cheever back into the ware shop. Arie Meaders, Cheever's wife, explains:

> Cheever had quit. It was in October, my birthday was the 25th day of October. And I decided being as he's getting out of there, it'd be a good thing for me to get in there now and try *my* hand at the wheel. And I went up there right after dinner, built me up a little fire, fixed me up

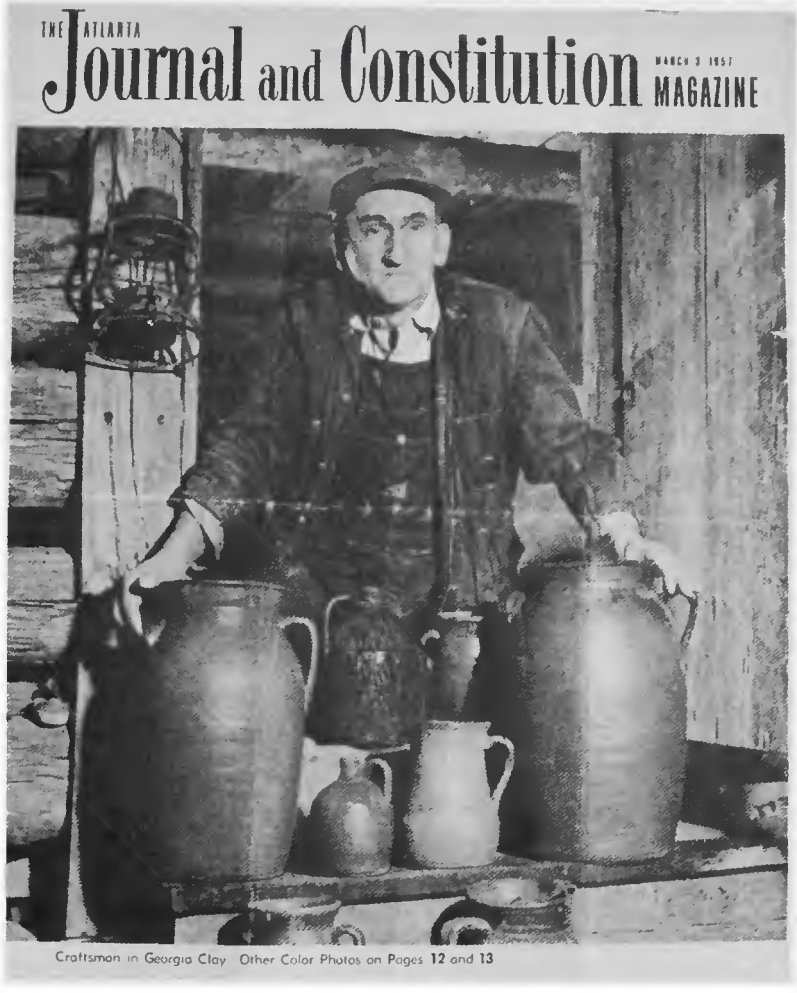


Figure 7. *From the March 3, 1957* Atlanta Journal and Constitution.

some clay and worked it out. And got on the wheel.

Done that for two or three days, kept doing that. And they decided to watch me and see what I's a-doing. So Cheever and Lanier both come up there and peeped into the window to see. I don't know what they thought, they didn't say nothing and I didn't say nothing. I didn't care. And from then on I just kept on working on the wheel and making little pieces and getting little bigger and little bigger and got to where I could make a pretty good piece.

Mrs. Meaders had never been much involved in the "men's work" of pottery-making, having spent most of her married life tending the children and the house. As the occasion warranted, she helped out in the shop working "like a hired hand," but she had rarely turned ware nor had she been encouraged to do so. Now on her sixtieth birthday, with Cheever proclaiming his impending retirement, she felt she had little to lose: "I just got to wanting to so bad, I just tried it."

What happened next would have been difficult to anticipate. Arie's artistic abilities complemented her willingness to experiment beyond the conventions of traditional pottery-making. Thus she was inspired to create her own attractive assortment of "art pottery"—fancy lidded jars, platters, sugar bowls, and creamers—many of the pieces embellished with applied and painted grape clusters, morning glories and dogwood blossoms. In time, she also began to experiment with new glazes and oxide paints. Very little of the ware was reminiscent of her husband's work. "He couldn't make the things that I could vision in my mind," was Arie's explanation. In the end, Arie's vision of what she wanted contributed to ware that combined significant elements of old and new.

Prior to Mrs. Meaders's experiments, a crafts enthusiast from Atlanta named Marianne Kidd had exhorted Cheever with little success to explore new avenues, make new things. When the visitor returned in 1957, she was apparently astonished to see what Cheever's wife had accomplished. Her enthusiasm was so infectious that Arie today credits Kidd with being her major inspiration. The conclusion of the story is that, with so much attention being paid his spouse's work, Cheever simply rolled up his sleeves and resumed his own career.

Altogether, Arie Meaders's creative period lasted some thirteen years. After her "discovery," Cheever fixed up a wheel for her in the back room of the shop where she could turn when she felt inclined to do so; later she moved up to her son's wheel in the front room. Two years after her husband's death, Arie finally retired. Her influence is seen, nevertheless, in some of Lanier's more recent work.

As he grew older, Cheever confined his turning mostly to small ware—pitchers and jugs—along with a very few plates, cups, saucers, and mugs for people who owned summer cabins in the mountains. His resolve not to branch out into tourist knick-knacks remained firm, although he sold much of his and Arie's ware to crafts distributors in

Atlanta and Asheville. Cheever's work remained so true to tradition, in fact, that retailers would wait patiently for him to phone with the news that another kiln-load of ware was ready. By nightfall they would be at his door.

In his eightieth year in 1967, Cheever divided his time between the pottery and his vegetable garden. Age was finally exacting its toll, for he complained: "I been in this shape. . . I've seen people doing pott'ry that would finally get to where they couldn't make a thing. The only thing they could do was just quit and go off and set about and walk about, doing some little something for a half-a-day. And then come back here next morning and go to work, make a piece of pott'ry good as they ever did. I get that way sometimes." On such occasions Cheever would rise with his roosters and hike up the mountain to play his French harp and reminisce:

> I'd like now to get out on the road if there wasn't so many cars. And have a load of something with a team of mules. And late in the evening drive out to someplace where I can tie 'em up and feed 'em and get my old coffee pot, my old frying pan that I used to have, and have something in my ration box to cook, some bread cooked up. Fix my supper. Maybe lay around there before I go to bed—call it bed, it wasn't bed—maybe lay down on a pallet here around the fire. Put an old sack over my head and go to sleep in the summertime. Yeah, that's the way we used to lay out when the ground wasn't so damp, you know. Ground dry, warm. Sleep just like going to the graveyard.

Lanier Meaders

Cheever Meaders, the master potter, died November 26, 1967. Shortly before his death, he had reflected on his unique place in the modern world:

> I'm the only fellow that's at work, nobody ain't a-learning it. Can't get 'em to learn it. I'd teach boys and girls up here, but no, it's get in a car and down the road. They just won't learn it.

Cheever's prognosis of events may have been a bit too pessimistic, especially in light of the perseverance and modest financial success of his bachelor son, Lanier. However, even Lanier was at one time an unlikely successor to the potter's job. Like his father, by turns quick-witted and quietly introspective, he was not always willing or able to

cope with a world peopled by art collectors, entrepreneurs, and others who sought to lionize him as the embodiment of a disappearing art. The great frustration Lanier has felt at times can be sensed in this comment the year following his father's death: "I wanted to make a barn out of it [the shop] one time, but I got talked out of it no sooner than I mentioned it. I never did mention it again." Most of his adult life, in fact, Lanier has worked away from the pottery.

Born in 1917, the second of four boys, Quillian Lanier Meaders entered into a somewhat abbreviated apprenticeship in the family business. As a small child, his older brother had spun him around on the wheelhead while his father was busy with other chores. As he matured, he was expected to help out around the shop doing "just about anything that anybody else didn't want to do." Meanwhile, assembling those skills necessary to turn ware, Lanier and his brothers occupied spare moments creating scaled-down versions of their father's vessels, which they burned, suitably, in a miniature kiln. Learning continued until age seventeen, when all of these newly gained skills were brought to culmination with the firing of Lanier's first kiln load of churns.

The times were difficult, however, and production was down. War followed on the heels of the Great Depression, and in a short time Lanier had to set pottery-making aside to enter the service. Upon returning to the homeplace in the mid-1940s, he found the pottery in a moribund state, even though his father was still filling orders. Deciding that turning ware was just "too much of a job," Lanier shifted to farming for a time. He then went to work outfitting house trailers in a Gainesville sheet-metal factory, though he continued to live at home.

When Cheever renovated his ware shop in 1952, Lanier offered his assistance and, in fact, stayed on through the winter to help fill a backlog of orders. By February of the next year, with the ware shelves in the new shop lined to capacity, Lanier again determined to let his father carry on alone. This time he found work in a textile mill, though the demands of the job affected him physically to the point where he had to retire for six months of needed rest. Eventually, he moved back to the sheet-metal shop where he remained for five more years.

On the day the Smithsonian crew came to film the Meaderses in May 1967, Lanier was tending his cousin's chicken farm, though still

residing in his parents' small cottage near the pottery. Not having the familial responsibilities of his brothers, he was reasonably free to come and go as he desired and was consequently instrumental in setting up scenes for the Meaders film documentary. While helping his father turn ware on a periodic basis, Lanier still seemed indecisive about his own role in the family business. Six months later Cheever was dead.

The rather sudden turn of events clearly left the younger Meaders in difficult circumstances. For a time he plowed with Cheever's mule, Jason, in the garden but concluded ruefully that "nobody could work a mule that [Cheever] had anything to do with for over a year." So he sold the animal. His efforts in the ware shop were concentrated on filling large orders for the Smithsonian museum shops and for the Georgia Mountain Arts Center near Vogel State Park.[10] He also built a new kiln—a project long overdue and a source of some personal satisfaction when it was burned for the first time in January of 1968 and found to be basically sound.

None of these activities convinced Lanier that pottery-making should become a serious, full-time occupation, and that summer he resumed work in Gainesville, welding mobile home chassis. Customers all the while sought him out at the pottery, making considerable demands on his time. That Lanier was himself concerned about the future of the family enterprise at this time is reflected in a comment he made to one of the authors in 1968: "This place here will go when I go. This place will go with me because they'll be nobody else left to carry it on. And without it, what they get here they can't get anywhere else. I know that for a fact or I wouldn't be here."

Two years later, Lanier suffered a heart attack which interrupted his work at Gainesville and apparently brought him home for good. Concentrating on small improvements around the pottery yard for the first nine months, he gradually found his way back into the ware shop. Today Lanier keeps his own schedule and seems to be free from many of the pressures that bedeviled him in former years (fig. 8). A sensitive man of varying moods, Lanier once offered this assessment of his work:

> Well, it's just a trade. It's a gift that a person come by. I could no more stop this than I could fly an airplane. I'm just into it. I'm not going to stop it, can't stop it. I reckon I'm just supposed to do this. All of my movements, all of my work that I've done all my life has led straight to

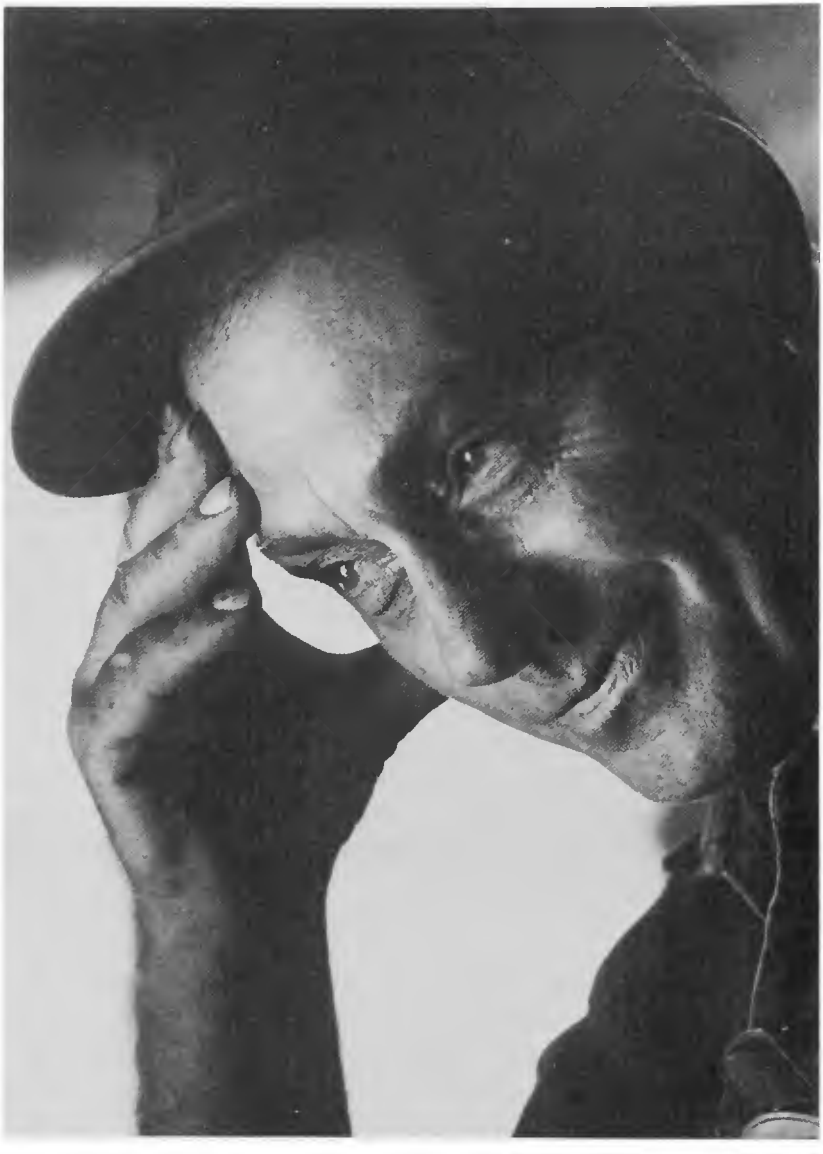


Figure 8. *Lanier Meaders.* (Photo courtesy of Lanier Meaders.)

this place right here. And every time I come about it, I get just a little bit deeper into it. I'm about so deep in it now that I can't get away from it.

Work Processes

Our approach to pottery technology is a step-by-step reconstruction of work around the Meaders pottery as would have occurred during Cheever Meaders's last year. Since the Smithsonian Institution was filming the family in May of 1967—six months before Cheever's death—this time frame allows for a coordination of film and monograph. Interview materials were collected in that year and in 1968. To apprise the reader of events that have occurred from 1967 to the present, a separate short section compiled from interviews with Lanier Meaders and his mother in 1976, 1978, and 1979 has been appended to the narrative body.

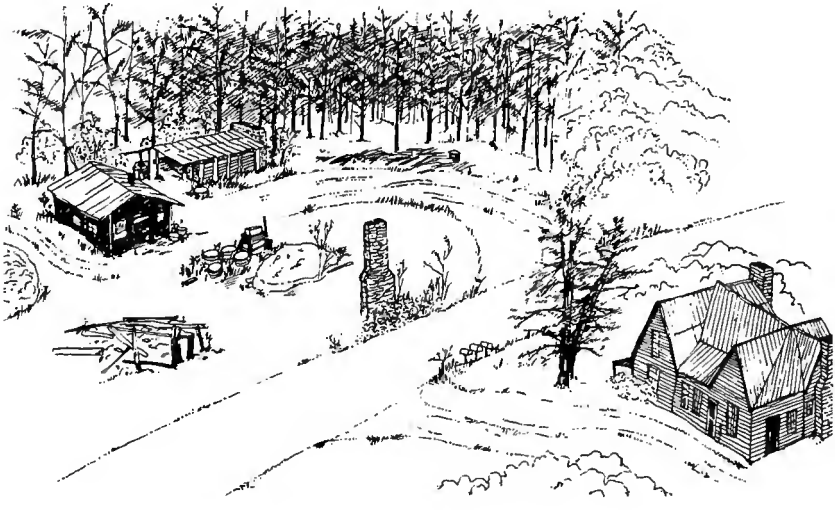


Figure 9. *The Meaders pottery site, circa 1978-79.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

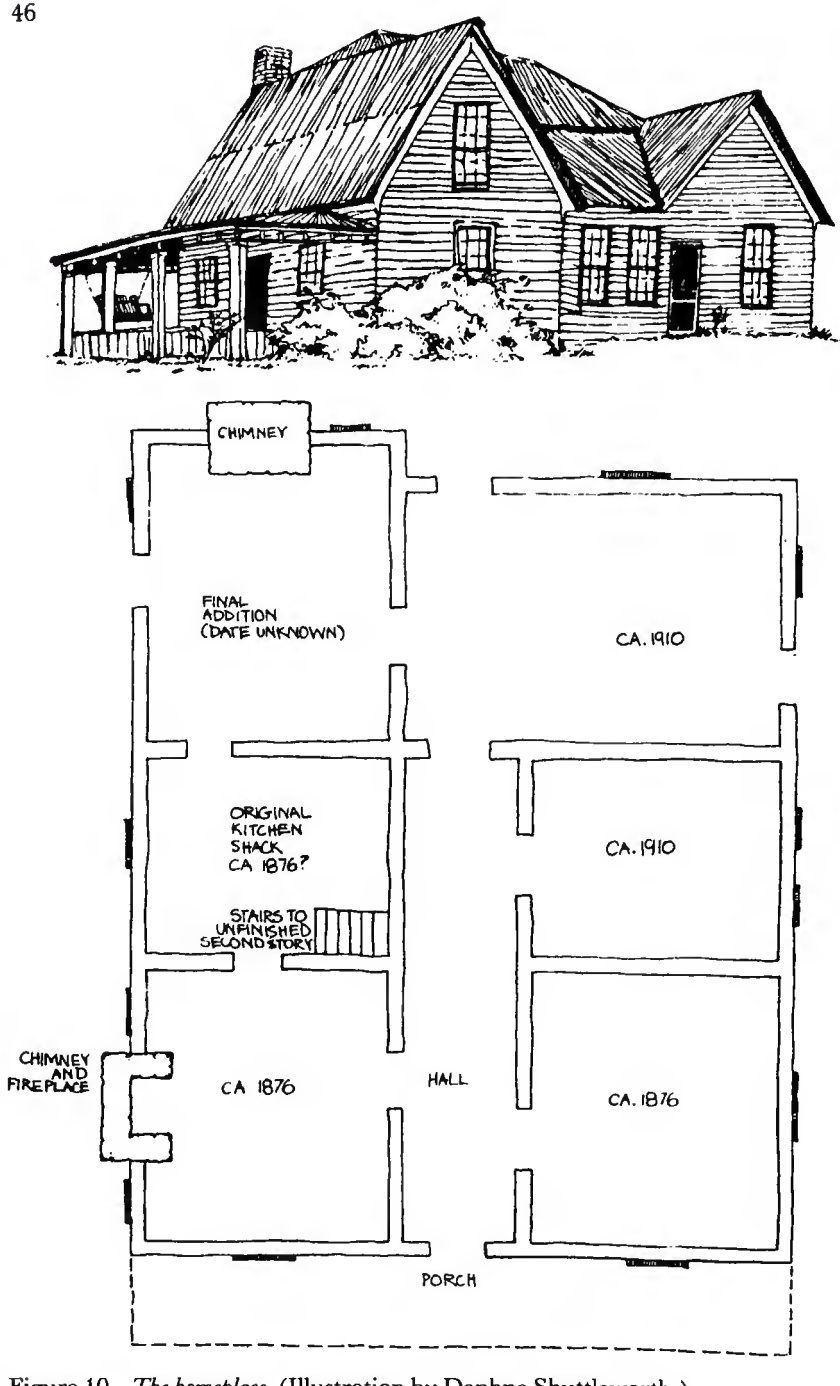
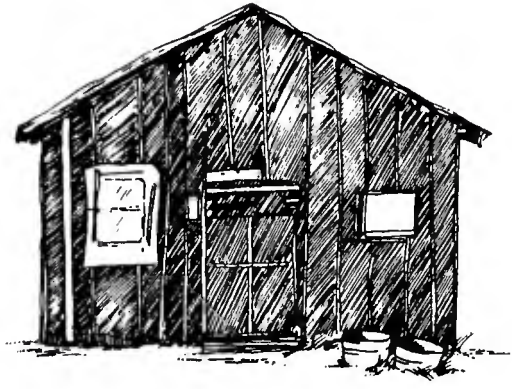


Figure 10. *The homeplace.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)



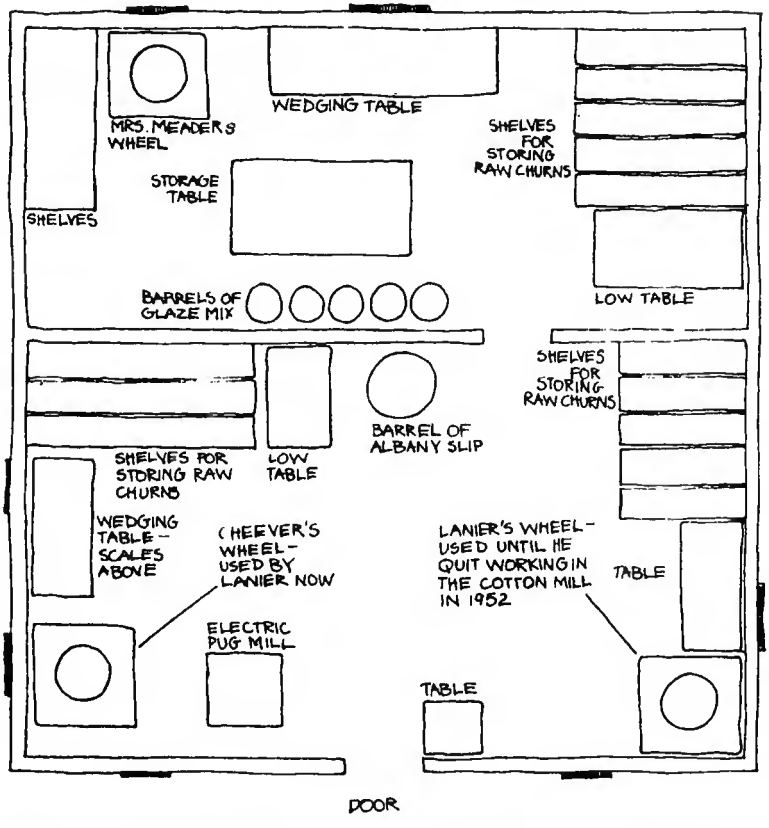


Figure 11. *The ware shop, 1967-68.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

The Ware Shop and Pottery Yard

The tenor of activity around the pottery during the few days of filming was slow-paced and relaxed. Each morning, Cheever, age eighty, and Arie, seventy, would follow the wooded path behind their cottage down to the shop where they were joined by their son. Pooling their labor, Cheever and Arie did most of the light work such as clay weighing and balling, while Lanier was left with the more strenuous chores of clay digging and glaze grinding. Both men shared in the ware turning.

The site of most of this activity, the *ware shop*, was a rude tarpaper-covered structure, divided inside into front and back rooms (fig. 11). Built in 1953, it replaced two earlier ware shops (dating to 1892–93 and circa 1900, respectively), the remains of which were still visible in another part of the yard. The back room of the existing shop was used mostly for storing unfired and finished ware and was also the location of Arie Meaders's wheel. The front room contained Cheever's and Lanier's wheels plus assorted barrels, shelves, and tables to accommodate a clutter of raw materials and equipment. Natural light flooded in through small windows overlooking either wheel and was at times augmented by the illumination of a bare lightbulb hanging overhead. Heat during the winter months was provided by a cast-iron wood stove positioned in the center of the room.

Outside, the pottery yard harbored a small trove of preindustrial craft paraphernalia: a primitive mule-drawn clay mill, a hand-powered glaze mill, and a wood-burning kiln (fig. 12). Toward the road was the stone chimney from the original ware shop, while off to one side of the yard was a waster dump comprising seventy-four years of castoff potsherds. For all of this, the Meaders pottery was not a museum. Through the years, new equipment replaced the old, including an electric pug mill which Lanier confected in his own design while employed as a sheet-metal worker. For the most part, however, father and son refused to abandon a system of gauges, weights, and measures, a basic inventory of ware, and an approach to craft that were all reminiscent of a prior period of southern life. Each step in the manufacturing process was reasoned and economical, yet conformed to methods of a century earlier.

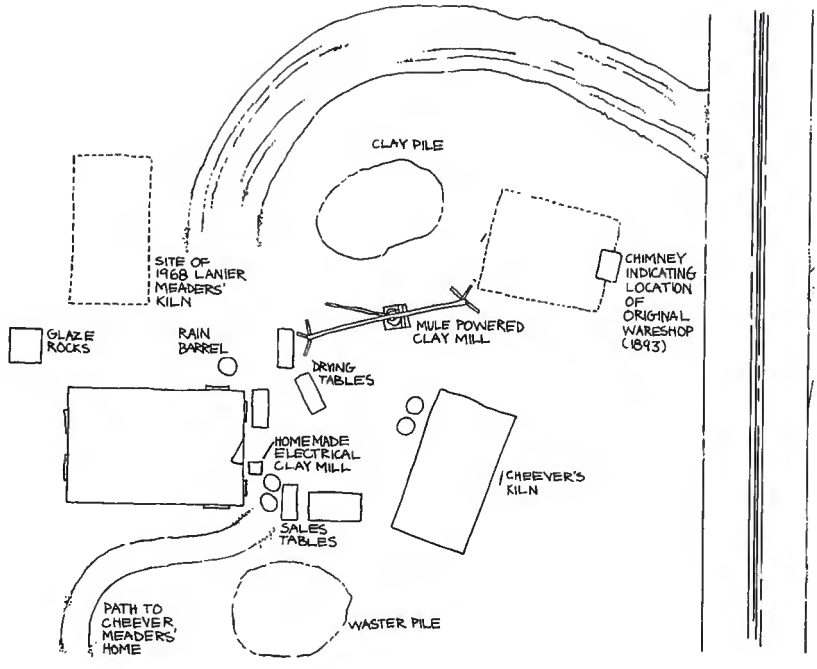


Figure 12. *The pottery yard, 1967-68.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

Clay Digging and Processing

In making utilitarian pottery, the essential ingredient is dense, high-firing stoneware clay. The Mossy Creek area of White County, Georgia, had been known for its valuable clay resources as early as 1830. Thus it was that, when the Meaders family took up the craft, they did not have to look very far afield for their raw materials. In fact, sufficient pockets and veins of stoneware clay were found on their own property that for a few years they even rented a portion of the land to another local potter, Williams Dorsey, to mine.

Such plenty did not continue indefinitely, however. By 1920, the Meaderses had dislodged so much clay from their land that they were obliged to transfer their mining operation to the property of a neighbor named Cooley, paying a dollar for every load carried away. When this source was depleted, the Meaderses moved on once again,

extending their search into the next valley and as far south as Hall County. Between 1946 and 1967, Cheever Meaders removed a quarter-acre's worth of clay from a site three miles distant from the pottery, paying a rental which ranged from an early figure of five dollars per two-ton truckload to later figures of ten and fifteen dollars.

In 1967, Lanier Meaders returned to this latter site. Surveying his clay beds in the fall of the year, when the rains were less frequent and the water table had receded a bit, he disavowed having any sixth sense about where to find good pottery clay, "nothing except an alder thicket or something like that." Rather, he simply noted that the best veins usually occurred in low-lying areas along creek beds and other damp spots.

Often in the course of digging, Lanier would encounter two or three different-appearing clays, and he would sample each. Pebbles and coarse grit were obvious deleterious features, but sometimes were unavoidable. Even Cheever was reconciled to the point of view that "one oughtn't be too choice" about one's materials. The best clay, the younger Meaders asserted, lay about two feet below the surface, where it tended to run in streaks from two to six feet wide: "As long as it lasts, you can stay with it, but there's no set pattern to it. It's just like gold; it's where you find it." Lanier was searching for a *bottom clay*—in this instance, a fine mica-impregnated blue-gray substance that had characteristics of toughness and resiliency. Stooping over to pick up a likely handful, he first rolled it about in his hands forming a soft ball. This in turn he worked out to a cylindrical shape some four inches long and three-quarters-of-an-inch in diameter. If he could bend the cylinder in two without breaking it in the middle, he was satisfied he had found good pottery clay; if it broke he would toss it back in the swampy hole.

Lanier shoveled his material right into the back of his pickup truck in order to minimize the number of trips—usually one or two a year—he had to make to the clay pit. Cheever, on the other hand, usually piled his desirable clay next to the diggings, leaving it there for a month or more to *weather* before hauling it off to the pottery.

Back at the pottery yard, Lanier separated the clay into piles based on color and texture. On one typical day, he had assembled five different mounds—four *yellows* and a *blue*—next to the clay mill. The big pile of blue clay, he explained, was composed of "brash, short" clay that turned poorly by itself unless mixed with various of the fine-

textured yellow clays in the other piles.[1] Consequently, Lanier mixed and matched until he achieved the desired combination. In his estimation, "there's no clay that I ever found that would work by itself that come from a [single] pond. You've got to go to two or three [ponds] anyhow and get the clay from them and mix it all together so it'll work good. It might sound foolish but that's the way it is." Occasionally, Lanier would add kaolin from a small local deposit to his clays to improve their turning quality by "toughening" them. He also kept a supply of fine-grained red clay on hand for manufacturing unglazed garden vessels like flower jars, vases, wash pots, and bird houses.

Until the late 1960s, the Meaderses used a mule-drawn *mud mill* for their clay-grinding operation. Lanier had already added an electric pug mill (which he designed and built himself from salvaged scrap metal) to the family's operation; his father, however, was afraid of the new machine and left it to Lanier "to fool with." During filming, and through the remainder of his days, the older Meaders insisted on working in the fashion in which he was most comfortable.

In appearance, the mud mill consisted of a wooden tub inside of which multiple flat wooden blades fanned out from a rotating central shaft (fig. 13). As the shaft turned, the blades coursed through the the clay. Explained Lanier about this detail of construction, "You see the way these pegs are put in this staff going up and down, the way they're trimmed? They're flat on the bottom and kind of rounded off toward the top on the front side, and that gives the clay sort of an uplifting motion as the mule pulls this thing around."

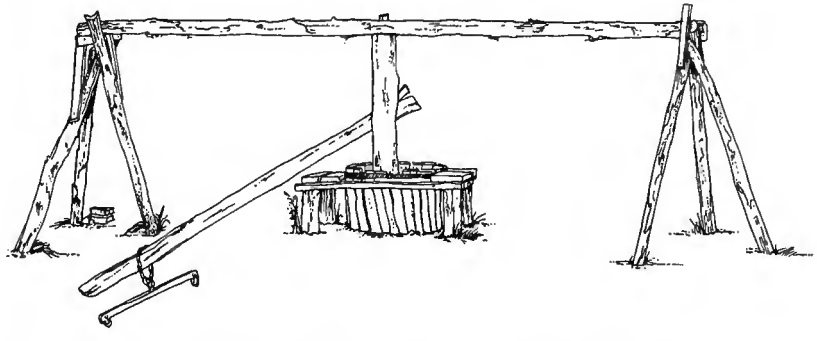


Figure 13. *The mud mill.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

Figure 14. *Cheever grinding clay with Jason, 1967.* (From the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.*)

With Jason, Cheever's mule, tied securely to a long tongue extending from the central shaft, the older Meaders led the animal around after Lanier had filled the tub with raw, wet clay (fig. 14). Cheever characteristically let Jason follow his own course, as he stopped now and then to nibble the grass. As man and animal circled about the mill, Cheever kept up a steady chanting: "C'mon boy, c'mon. Walk over here, walk over here a little bit. Don't get too fast, take it easy, we'll get some grass in a minute. . . Might near got it ready. We'll be making some churns and jugs out of it, we sure will."

Lanier, who advocated the electric mill (fig. 15), was admittedly less sentimental about the old grinding operation which produced little more than a day's turning clay for a two-hour effort. Yet he clearly enjoyed seeing the old contrivance in motion. And after his father's final exchange with the mule, when the clay had reached the right consistency at last, Lanier gathered it out of the mill by hand and piled it on a board where he *blocked* it for carrying into the shop.

Figure 15. *Lanier's electric mud mill.* (Photo by Robert Sayers, 1979.)

Turning A Vessel

It was, I'd say, twelve to fifteen years ago. There come some folks [from] over at Clarksville and wanted to see me get my hand out of a jug. I told 'em, "all right," and I went ahead and went to work making the jug. And over on the right hand side of the shop over there, there was another piece of pott'ry they was a-looking at and taking all their time over there.

And while they done that, I put the jug's mouth on the jug. I told them, "Here is that jug made." Well, they jumped around, it surprised them so they didn't know what they was a-doing. Says, "Here it is, we've come fifteen miles to see how a fella gets his hand out of a jug, and we never seen how it was done." I told him, "It's *magic*." "Well," he says, "We want you to make another'n, but if it's magic we want to stand back a little bit!" Well, then I put another piece of clay on the wheel and made a jug that showed 'em just how it was made.

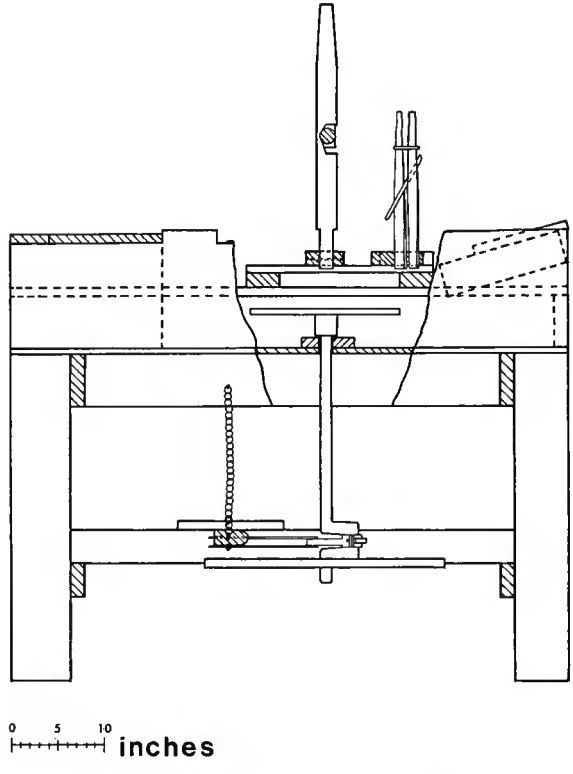


Figure 16a. *Potter's wheel and crib — side view (See fig. 19).*

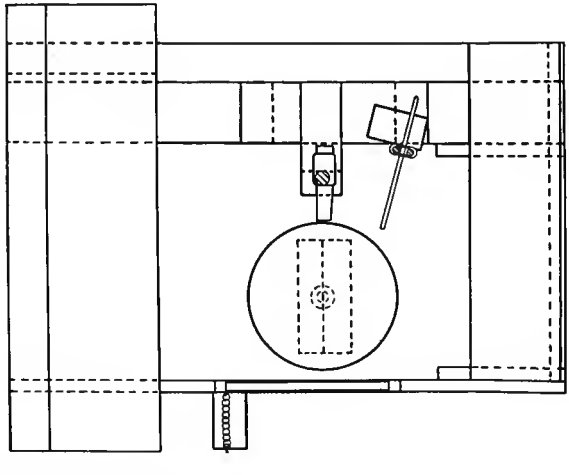


Figure 16b. *Potter's wheel and crib — top view.*

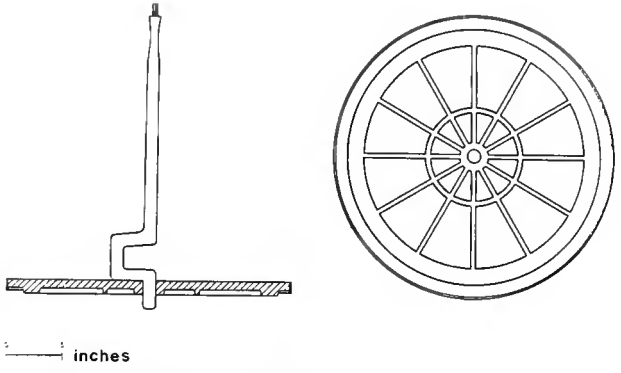


Figure 16c. *Crankshaft (left) and flywheel (right).*

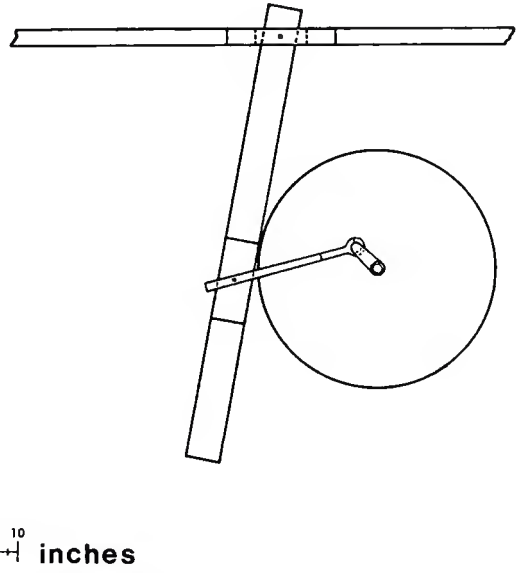


Figure 16d. *Treadle and flywheel assembly.*

To Cheever Meaders there was something magical about jug-turning, and when the mood struck him he took considerable delight in demonstrating his skills to outsiders. It concerned him, however, that "they's none of these young boys'll learn it at all; there's too much of something else for 'em to see." Yet Cheever supposed correctly that few boys in 1967 would wish to expend the necessary years of patient study. Seconded Lanier:

> I guess it would take about fifteen years for a person to get to where they can really learn it, really work at it. Of course, a man just starting out, try to make a living at it, he'll starve to death. And if he owes anything, or in debt, he'll lose everything he's got.

He acknowledged that someone who undertook a five- or six-year apprenticeship with an expert could conceivably find success. He hastened to add, however, that "you get discouraged at this right quick."

In turning ware, father and son both used foot-operated treadle wheels, or *turning lathes* as other White County potters called them (fig. 16). These differed from the familiar artist's kickwheel in the sense that the potter's foot was brought into contact with a treadle bar connected to the axle rather than directly with the flywheel. Standing or, more often, leaning back against a padded rail, he maintained a steady pumping rhythm with his foot causing the device to rotate. Not only was this arrangement less taxing than kicking a heavy disk around, it also allowed the potter to vary his turning speed without braking.

Cheever's treadle wheel was manufactured at a Rome, Georgia, foundry around 1918 for his neighbor, Little Bill Dorsey. Upon Dorsey's death three years later, the wheel passed to a member of the Meaders family and was subsequently purchased by Cheever. Among its turning parts were an iron crankshaft with a U-shaped bend to create an eccentric motion, a heavy metal flywheel, and a *headblock* on which the potter worked. A wooden *box* surrounded the whole apparatus as a support and also served for temporary shelf space (fig. 17).

Cheever's headblock measured about fifteen inches in diameter and was fashioned from four pieces of plywood which had been glued together and machined flat. While other potters, including Lanier, later abandoned this form of headblock for a cast-metal variety,

Figure 17. *Crib assembly, showing ball opener/bottom gauge and height gauge.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1978.)

Cheever preferred a wood turning surface throughout his life.

In preparing to turn a vessel, the potter would break off a chunk of clay from a moist block stored nearby and place it in the pan of a makeshift scale (fig. 18). Built by Cheever's father in 1922, the "scale" amounted to little more than a hanging balance beam (scrounged from a fence rail) with a board to hold the clay at one extreme and an assortment of odd weights—part of a fertilizer distributor, a ball peen hammer head, and several broken plow points—on the other side of the fulcrum point. The weight load was repositioned along the beam to slots corresponding to the size of the vessel to be turned: half-gallon, one gallon, two, three, four, five, six, and seven gallons. Clay was added to or taken away from the board pan until a balance was achieved.

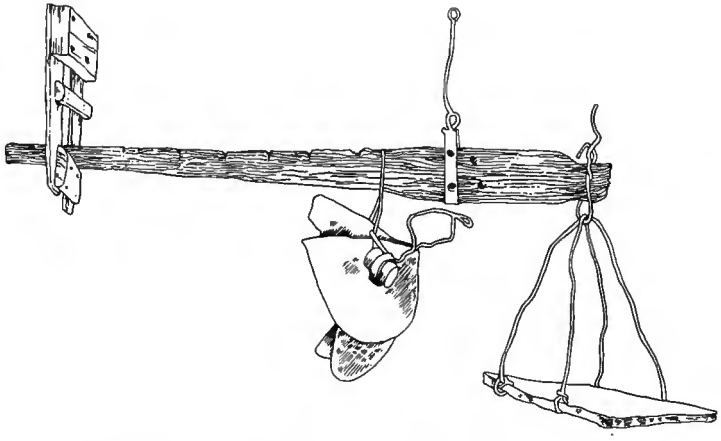


Figure 18. *The clay scale.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

Cheever and Lanier favored four-gallon ware and smaller, although both turned ware as large as six gallons on occasion. By Lanier's recollection, "I ain't made but one eight-gallon churn that I can remember, and when I finished it, I marked it nine and I think it held seven." Just as an indication of the amount of clay used in turning, the Meaderses estimated the real weight of material for a one-gallon piece at ten pounds and, for a six-gallon piece, twenty-two pounds.

By weighing their clay balls, the pair was reasonably assured that

vessels turned to the same height and volume would have an equivalent and uniform wall thickness—an important consideration in burning. It bears noting that Cheever would, on occasion, test the volume capacity of his ware using half-gallon glass jars for a standard. (Lanier presently uses one-gallon plastic milk jugs for the same purpose.) Thus, when a customer complained that he was being shorted on volume, Cheever could safely offer to prove the worth in his ware—provided the skeptic was willing to pay for overage.

After weighing, the potter would next begin to work his clay into an airless ball, kneeding it like bread dough and slicing it repeatedly over a taut wire. Called *wedging the clay*, this energetic process commonly fell in earlier years to a *ball boy*, who worked up several oblate spheres at a time, placing them to the potter's left as he turned at the wheel. As the potter set the finished vessels off to his right, the same ball boy would also remove them for drying to a separate part of the shop.

Wetting the headblock, the Meaders potter threw one of the prepared balls down as close to dead-center as he could. "The main thing about turning a churn or any kind of pot," offered Lanier, "is learning how to *center* the clay on the wheel. Unless that is done to start with, well, you might as well not try it." Both Lanier and his father could shift a smaller ball to the center of the revolving wheel by hand pressure, but a large ball had to be more nearly centered to begin with.

Once in position, the potter opened the clay mass with his hand and with a contrivance known as a *ball opener*, a hinged wooden lever attached to the wheel crib. In addition to drilling a center hole in the spinning clay, the device also served as a *bottom gauge*, that is, its action was halted one-half inch above the headblock. Potters who eschewed using a ball opener/bottom gauge were courting trouble, in Cheever's estimation: "That's to give me the thickness of the bottom. If the bottoms is too thin or too thick, they will crack in drying and then in firing" (fig. 19).

In *pulling up* or *running up* a cylinder, the potter made several smooth motions, contouring and shaping the sides of the cylinder with each pull. All vertical pottery started in this fashion with the potter's hands, one inside and the other outside the cylinder, carefully drawing it higher. A rule of thumb at this stage, according to Lanier, was to maintain a top diameter narrower than the bottom diameter: "If the top of it ever gets larger than the bottom, you'll usually lose it."

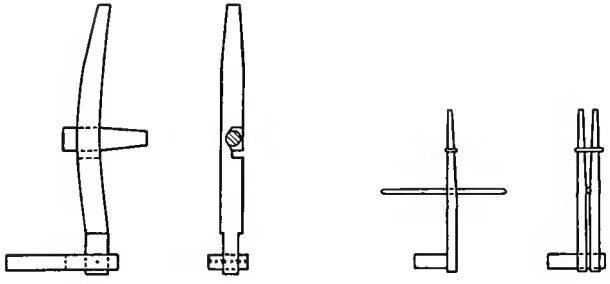


Figure 19. *Ball opener/bottom gauge and height gauge.* (Illustration by Vinton Wolfe.)

Cheever's contouring tool was his *chip*, which was used only on the outside surface of the cylinder (fig. 20). During his lifetime, he whittled numerous chips in dogwood, maple, "or some kind of gum or fine-grained timber," smoothing the finished product with a piece of glass or grinding it on a grind stone. His favorite chip, though, was fashioned from a splinter of heart cedar about four inches long and three inches wide with a working edge tapered to one-sixteenth inch in thickness.

Lanier used a steel version of Cheever's chip, which he liked to call a *scrape*. His reasons for using the latter tool were related to his choice of headblocks:

> On a steel block the wooden chip will wear out too quick and so we use a steel chip on it. And it lasts pretty good. [On the other hand], you didn't use a metal chip on the wooden headblock because it would hollow it out. And if you've got a hollow place in it, you can't keep your bottom straight, you can't keep [your ware] the same thickness all the way through and, nine times out of ten, you'll crack it open.

Contouring tools. (Photos by Ralph Rinzler, 1978.)

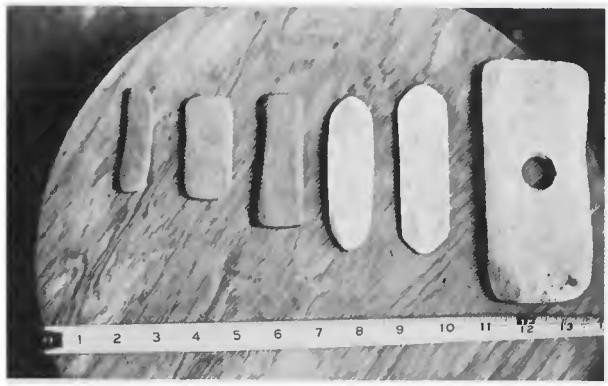
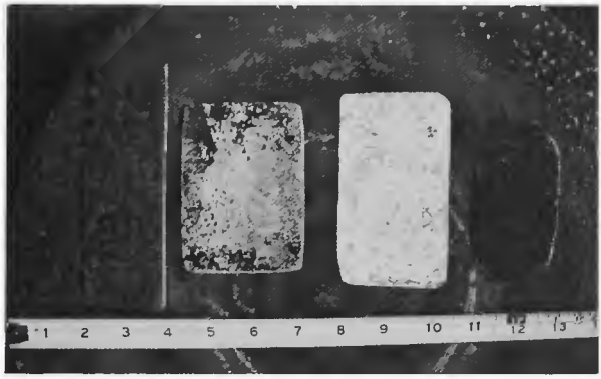


Figure 20a. *Wooden chips: From left to right, the first two are used on small vases, the third on medium-size vessels, the fourth and fifth on churns. The latter have sharpened ends which are used to cut or piece the cylinder and trim its bottom. The final chip belonged to Q. Meaders and has a hole in the center for his middle finger. All are made from cedar wood, except the second one from the left, which is dogwood.*

Figure 20b. *Metal chips, or "scrapes:" From left to right, the first and third are used for trimming the bottoms of smaller vessels; the second and fourth are used for shaping and trimming large ware, respectively. All are 12-gauge steel, except for number three, which is aluminum.*



Unlike many other potters who gauged a vessel's diameter by laying a stick across the cylinder's mouth, the Meaderses did not concern themselves with measuring this dimension. Remarked Cheever, "Well, no, [I've] got no gauge for making the width of 'em, wide, but. . . I made so many I can just tell."

On the other hand, father and son did measure height. A simple measuring stick fixed to the back wall of the crib had along its edge marks for two-, three-, four-, and five-gallon sizes. Much earlier, the Meaderses had determined the relationship between the height of the unfired cylinder and the gallon capacity of the finished vessel as it emerged from the kiln. Secure with this knowledge, they marked off the intervals on their *height gauge* (see fig. 19). As they pulled their cylinders to the required height, flaring the rim out slightly, they could be confident that the finished piece would hold the correct gallon amount, or slightly more. The measuring stick at some point had been broken off above the five gallon mark, so Cheever had to rely on guesswork when he desired to turn a six-gallon churn (figs. 21, 22, and 23). However, little if any of this size ware was being made toward his latter days.

In turning large ware, both Cheever and Lanier tended to *cut* or *piece* their tops; that is, they pulled their cylinders up in two sections. Cheever, for example, in turning a four-gallon churn, would first *run up* a small cylinder with an upper lip on it (roughly the top quarter of the completed piece), cut it off with his chip, and set it to his left on the shelf running alongside the wheel crib. He then pulled up the remaining three-quarters of the churn, rejoined the top, and "welded" the two sections together with his tool. Tolerances, or differences in diameter between top and bottom cylinders, could vary by as much as an inch, since he knew the clay would stretch in the joining.

According to Cheever, piecing was an accepted practice of longstanding among White County potters:

> That's a very common thing to a potter. They do that in order to get the top heavy enough for the churn to stand, to keep them from warping about in the drying. And to get 'em big enough. I seen my brother, Wiley, the Browns worked down here for my Uncle Bill [Dorsey], just about all of 'em done that. I wouldn't make a big churn without it.[2]

Cheever had another reason for piecing aside from those mentioned, and Lanier simply followed his example: "It's just a habit I

Figures 21, 22, 23. *Turning a six-gallon churn.* (Photos from the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.*)

Figure 21a.
The clay ball on the wheel.

Figure 21b.
Centering the clay.

Figure 21c.
Opening the ball.

Figure 22a.
Cutting top from clay ball.

Figure 22b.
Pulling up new cylinder.

Figure 22c.
Replacing top.

Figure 23a.
Rejoining top and bottom.

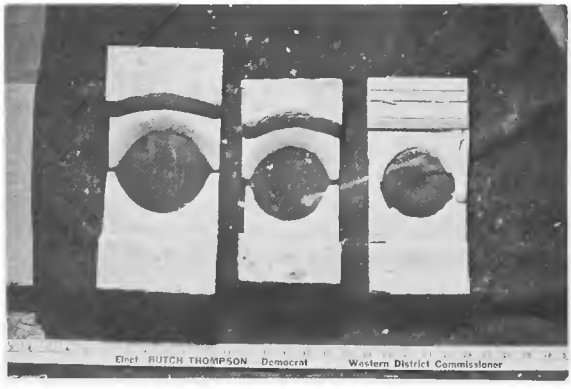
Figure 23b.
Lifting vessel from headblock.

Figure 23c.
Adding handle.

Wooden pottery lifters.

Figure 24a. (Photo from the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.)*

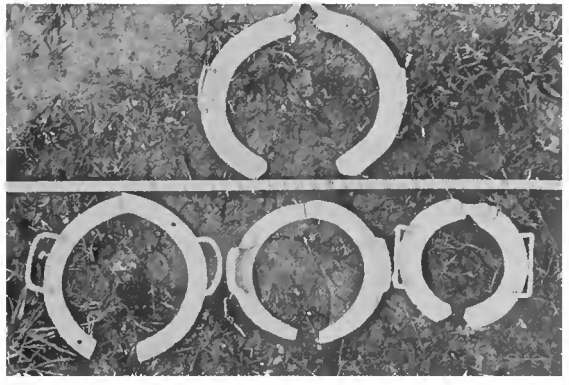
Figure 24b. *From left to right, these half-gallon, quart, and pint-size lifters were all made by Cheever Meaders around 1960 from treated Ponderosa pine. The lifters on the right have interlocking slides along either edge.* (Photo by Robert Sayers, 1979.)



Metal pottery lifters.

Figure 25a. (Photo from the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.*)

Figure 25b. *The smallest lifters were made by Lanier Meaders for half-gallon vessels; the next size, by Lanier's brother, John, for two-gallon ware; and the third largest, by one of Daddy Bill Dorsey's relatives for three- and four-gallon pieces. The large lifters were made by a black country blacksmith, Sam Hamilton, in 1927 and were used by the Meaderses on rare occasions for transporting enormous ten- and twelve-gallon vessels.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1978).



got into just watching my dad about forty years ago. His left arm is cripple, you know, and the elbow had been broke, and he couldn't bend it, and he couldn't reach the bottom of the churn. . . But mine's not broke, and it's long enough to reach the bottom, but I just got in the habit of doing it. And I don't see any reason to change it now."

Cheever's brother Q. also pieced, but he contended that he did so mostly because age had placed limitations on his natural abilities. In this light, he saw piecing as only a necessary inconvenience that tended to slow the potter down: "Frank Bell wouldn't [piece]. Oh goodness, he'd just run that up there before you've got time to turn around hardly. And Wiley, he didn't do it either when he was young. And I had one brother, Casey—now he wouldn't cut his jars. Pshaw, he'd pull it up there in just a little bit and turn it back, shape it all, and get another one."

Whether a vessel was pieced or not, the process for finishing it was the same. Once the cylinder had been drawn up to the prescribed height on the height gauge and shaped to the desired profile, the potter would even the top with his chip or scrape, dress the bottom slightly, and incise one or two decorative rings around the shoulder—the Meaders trademark. Generally speaking, two rings went on churns and other large ware and one ring on smaller items, like pitchers, gallon jugs, and mugs. Before cutting the vessel loose from the headblock, Cheever would moisten the inside with a damp sponge: "That keeps the bottom from cracking when it goes to drying." Finally, he ran a length of screen wire under the spinning vessel, cutting it from the block and further reducing its bottom thickness to about five-sixteenths of an inch.

In Cheever's youth, two assistants would have lifted the finished piece off of the headblock together (with four hands) and set it with care on a waiting board. In time, however, someone appeared with a set of pottery *lifters*—wood-handled affairs that slid under the bottom edges of the ware—and these rapidly caught on with local artisans (fig. 24). Pottery lifters were made in different sizes to accomodate varying bottom diameters, and the Meaderses therefore have several sets. In recent years, the larger wooden lifters have been retired from use in favor of hinged-metal caliper lifters that close and lock around the bottoms of big vessels, such as churns (fig. 25).

After the newly-turned, or *raw*, ware had stiffened slightly, and Cheever and Lanier could find respite from turning, one or the other

would roll out short pieces of soft clay for handles. These consisted of a slab *lifter* on one side of a churn and a looped *ear* on the other. One end of the latter was affixed to the vessel wall and the free end carefully coaxed to the required length, clipped off, and pressed in place. Rough, artless affairs, these handles were nevertheless sturdy and unlikely to break off.[3] A last task before setting the unburned ware in the back room for final drying was to scratch the gallon capacity beneath the lifter in vessels of greater than one gallon size, the numeral being incised with the ball of the potter's forefinger.

Glazing the Ware

Cheever Meaders's favorite and most dependable glaze was his *ash glaze*. Although in later life he prepared his own glazes infrequently—using commercial materials as a substitute—he nevertheless husbanded his energies for this finish. In preparing the ash glaze, Cheever would first gather ashes from the kiln firebox, sifting out rocks, fire coals, nails, and other foreign matter in the process. At the same time, he would send Lanier across the road behind the homeplace to collect buckets full of red silt *settlin's* to be ground up with the ashes.[4] These settlin's, which served as a binder to keep the ashes from flowing off the ware, were similar to pottery clay and, like the latter, tended to change "hog by hog and sow by sow" in the meadow ground because "that's what's buried there." Regardless of this fact, Lanier explained, they served their purpose well.

Previously, Lanier would have scoured the neighborhood for broken window panes and discarded soft drink bottles, an errand he remembered running frequently as a youth. The glass was used to control the glaze's melting temperature but also gave it a lustrous appearance. Tamping the broken sherds into a fine powder, using an iron rod and an auto oil pan for his mortar and pestle (fig. 26), at length he collected the end product in a tin can.

In mixing the three ingredients, the settlin's were first sifted through a strainer and then combined with the wood ashes. Measurements were not very exact (an "old crude process," offered Lanier): roughly two large churns of settlin's to three of ashes. Added to this was a much smaller quantity of the powdered glass plus water from a rain barrel, the only source of water at the work site. In all, Cheever and Lanier made up thirty or forty gallons of glazing solution, which they

Figure 26. *Tamping glass.* (From the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.*)

expected would suffice to coat 400–450 gallons of ware, a kiln load.

The Meaderses' *glaze mill* (or *glazing rocks*) passed from neighboring potter, Billy Pitchford, to Cheever's brother, Cleater, and finally to Cheever in the 1920s (fig. 27). The latter man replaced the original worn bottom stone in 1933 with a large slab of blue granite, unearthed when the road was being graded. At first, the cartwheel-shaped top piece simply lay in place on the new bottom stone, with clay built up around its edges to keep glaze from seeping out. Thirty-four years later, however, the flint runner had actually worn a three-inch depression into the bottom stone, the result of continuous turning.

Like the Meaderses' treadle wheels, the glaze mill was partly the handiwork of a local blacksmith (fig. 28). A three-quarter inch shaft penetrated the bottom stone and was received by an iron cross, or *spider*, laid into a chiseled-out space on the underside of the runner (fig. 29). The space between the two stones could be increased or decreased by adjusting a lower support on which the base of the shaft rested.

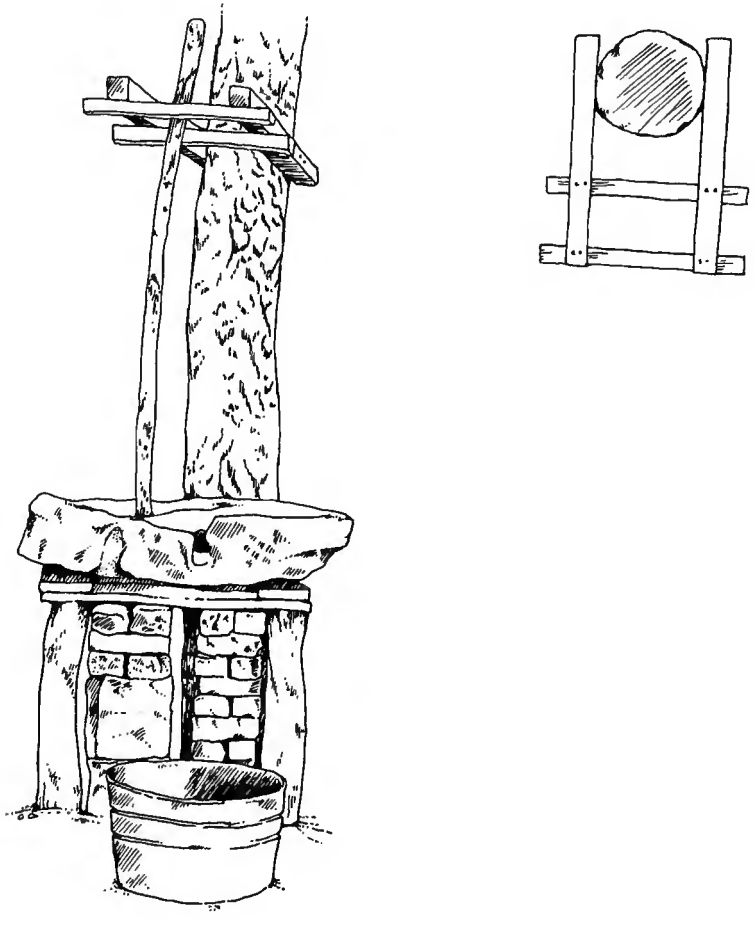


Figure 27. *The glazing rocks.*
(Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

The glaze mill assembly.
(Illustrations by Vinton Wolfe.)

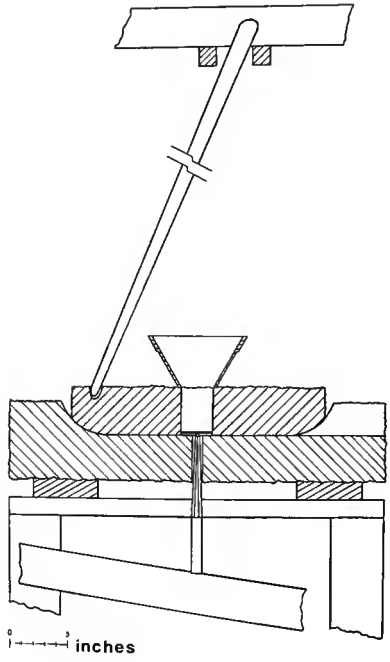


Figure 28a.
Glaze mill — side view.

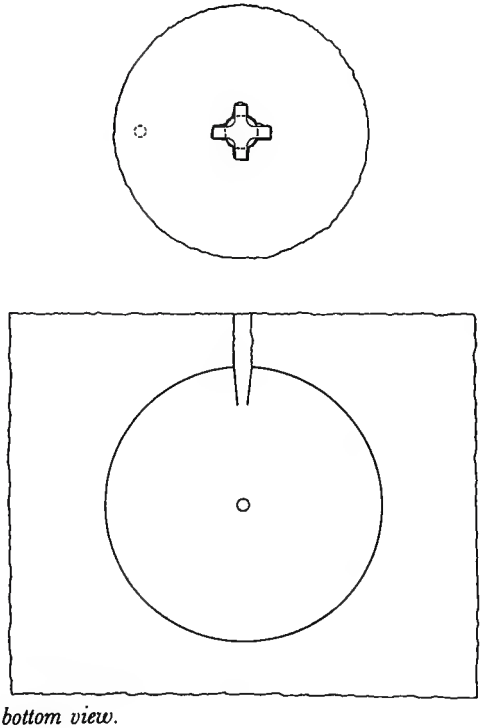


Figure 28b. *Left: Runner stone — bottom view.*
Right: Base stone — top view.

Figure 29. *The bottom side of the upper glaze rock, showing placement of the spider.* (From the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.*)

In grinding the ash glaze, the glazing solution was poured through a hole in the runner's center (fig 30).[5] As it trickled down around the spider and between the rocks, Lanier would "rare back" on a long pole made from a pine sapling that was supported overhead by a wooden framework. "And if you had [the handle] between your shoulders, it'll

Figure 30. *Pouring glaze through the center of the runner.* (From the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.*)

turn. It took a strong man to turn it. And if a small, weak man could stay on it long enough, it'd make a man out of him. . . or kill him, one" (fig. 31).

After a few "man-killing" turns of the handle, a steady stream of glaze began to flow out along a channel, or "trench," in the bottom stone, down an improvised clay spout, and into a waiting churn or pitcher. Lanier took this processed solution and recycled it through the mill, as it took two or three grindings to reach a consistency that was neither too thin nor too thick to properly coat the ware.

In applying the glaze solution, Cheever commonly employed a deep wooden glazing box, although he had accepted Lanier's substitution of a galvanized metal laundry tub for the same purpose in 1967. First, stirring the mixture to dissolve as much of the sediment as he could, he dipped and rolled his ware in the tub, taking care to cover all surfaces evenly inside and out (fig. 32). Afterwards, each piece was set on a plank to dry and extra solution dripped on to cover up fingerprints and other imperfections. Care was taken at this stage

to handle the glazed ware very carefully, as the ash glaze was thought to have a peculiar "rotting" effect on the clay body causing it to *draw* and crack. During burning, however, this effect was said to be neutralized.[6]

Figure 31. *Grinding the glaze solution.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1967.)

Figure 32. *Glazing a pitcher.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1967.)

Burning the Ware

In 1967, Cheever and Lanier found it desirable to *fire*, or *burn*, their kiln every other week during warm weather. Usually they would wait until the weather was clear, when conditions of rain or high humidity did not prevail—otherwise, dampness kept the heat from peaking, and water trickling down the chimney would spoil some of the ware.[7]

Cheever's *railroad tunnel* (or simply *tunnel*) *kiln* held approximately 400 gallons of churns, crocks, pitchers, and jugs. In most cases, only one or two varieties of ware were fired each time: 100 large churns and crocks, for example, or 165 smaller pieces like pitchers and jugs. Other times, large and small ware might be mixed, as in a hypothetical assortment suggested by Q. Meaders: 25 four-gallon vessels, 25 threes, and maybe 50 twos and 50 ones. The kiln accommodated as many as 300 of Arie Meaders's ornamental vases, plates, and cookie jars which were usually burned separately, as their glazes matured at a lower heat than those on the utilitarian ware.

The best arrangement to facilitate loading, or *setting*, the kiln involved three persons—one outside the kiln, one at the entrance, and the third crouched in the ware bed—with each handing the ware to

the next (fig. 33). In general, the *upper end* of the kiln held the smallest ware, so that the *draft* through the chimney would not be impeded. Along the sidewalls were placed churns of the three-gallon variety, to insure even heat distribution. Just inside these rows went the four-gallon churns, and through the center of the kiln—the hottest area—the fives and sixes. On those rare occasions when the Meaderses mixed two or more different glazes in the same burning, they took care to see that those glazes maturing at an excessively high heat went in the center. Finally, additional small ware, such as one-gallon pitchers, was positioned behind a temporary low wall at the edge of the *firebox*. The wall protected the ware from being singed by the fiery *blast*.

Setting the kiln.

Figure 33a. *Small ware placed on "setters."* (From the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.*)

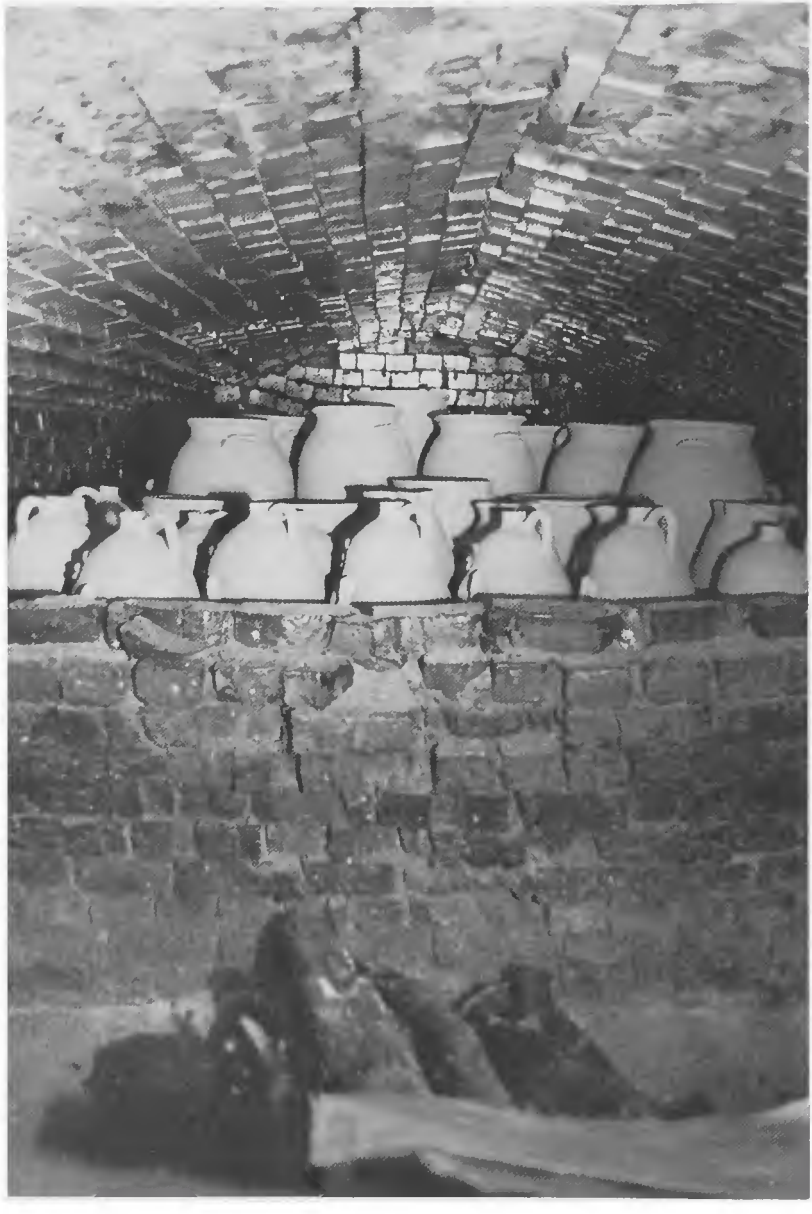


Figure 33b. *The placement of large and small ware in the kiln behind a protective firewall.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1978.)

All of the traditional ware was placed directly on the sandy floor of the kiln with a finger-width space left between vessels. Arie Meaders's artware was placed atop ring-shaped *setters* of diameters between one and four inches, which her husband had fashioned from a mixture of red clay and kaolin. The setters protected the small vases and cookie jars from adhering to the sand and permitted some stacking.[8]

It was Cheever's practice to start burning his kiln around four o'clock in the afternoon. Initially, he would clean out the firebox from the previous burning (some ashes of which were used in his glaze mixture). He would then start a small *tempering* fire of green pine, or occasionally oak splinters, in the pit. Explained Lanier, "When you start the fire in it, it's more or less like starting a campfire. Get the fire going pretty good and just keep building on to it. And the clay has minerals and moisture in it that has to be cured out. The moisture can be dried out if you take your time about it, but if you try to rush it, it gives you trouble."

At firing, the front loading port of the kiln could be bricked up all at once or in stages. Lanier felt the decision depended on what he was doing at the moment. In any event, the door was sealed and daubed with mud before the fire was very warm, leaving just enough *draft* around the bottom to insure a flow of oxygen to the fire (fig. 34). All loading of fuel after this point took place through an opening in the front left side of the kiln just above the firebox. After about six hours of *slow firing*, with fuel added hourly, the potters stoked the fire and retired for the night.[9]

Returning to work the following morning before dawn, the elder Meaders restored the fire in the firebox and prepared to add his better fuel to the blaze. The best-firing wood by Cheever's estimate was "hard pine" with "lots of terpentine and resin in it." In previous years, such wood had been plentiful, and local potters had busied themselves stripping surrounding mountainsides of trees. According to Cheever's neighbor, Guy Dorsey, "Whenever you was gonna go *blasting off*, where you could stand about three feet outside that door where you was pitching it in, that blaze meets you, catching hold of it. That's the kind of wood I love to burn. I bet you could burn a whole kiln of ware as hot as it could get with regular pine wood." In time, however, the good fuel gave way to "sorrier" wood and waste from the sawmills. The Meaderses in 1967 mostly obtained slabwood from a local peddler at a cost of $12.50 a cord—a reasonable price, yet a far cry

Closing the entrance. (Photos from the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.)*

Figure 34a. *Bricking the entry, leaving draft holes at bottom.*

Figure 34b. *Daubing the entry with mud.*

from an earlier dollar-a-cord.

As the burning proceeded apace, Lanier increased his activity, cutting and splitting the timber into eight-foot lengths: "When it first starts to burn, I start chopping the wood up. It don't take much more than a good truckload [a cord-and-a-half] for a burn." Lanier tended not to feed the fire according to any schedule ("just whenever you can put to it"), although his father's intervals were estimated at every half-hour through noon, 15–20 minute intervals from noon until 5:00 P.M., and almost continuously until around 7:00 P.M.

The fire at its peak glowed white hot, imparting a transparent appearance to the ware in the kiln. As the flames swept through the structure from the firebox to the chimney, they became visible outside, where they began to "feather, to springle out, more or less like a branch on a tree, and it's more or less free-floating" (fig. 35). At this point, anywhere from fifteen to eighteen hours into the burning, the kiln would have reached a maximum temperature of 2000–2200°F.[10] Checking to see that most of the smoke and soot had been burned away inside the structure, father and son worked to maintain this heat for at least another hour. According to Lanier, "[The fuel] will burn just as fast as you can put it in; it's just a continuous job. If you can stand to stoke the thing for two hours without turning around, it's much better. But can't nobody do that. It's so hot against it that you have to put a little bit in it and move back and cool off."

Ware losses were sometimes sustained in the old days when, through faulty judgment, a burning was terminated too soon. Some White County potters, like Guy Dorsey's father, would remove a brick at the chimney end where they guessed the coolest spot in the kiln would be located. Dropping wooden splints through the opening, they could see their ware, "and when those sticks hit down at the bottom of those churns in the upper end of the kiln, that blaze would flare up and shine against [them], and if it shined glassy [the glaze] was done melted down to the bottom [of the ware]. If it wasn't, you'd plug the hole and give it more time." Other potters would hook out *trial pieces* at this point to see whether or not their glazes had melted sufficiently.

Late in life, Cheever Meaders developed his own version of the pyrometric cone for accurately measuring the peak heat in his kiln. Taking a handful of sediment from his glaze tub (the same glaze that was applied to the ware in the kiln), he would place it in a rag,

Burning the Ware. (Photos by Ralph Rinzler, 1967.)

Figure 35a. *Blasting off.*

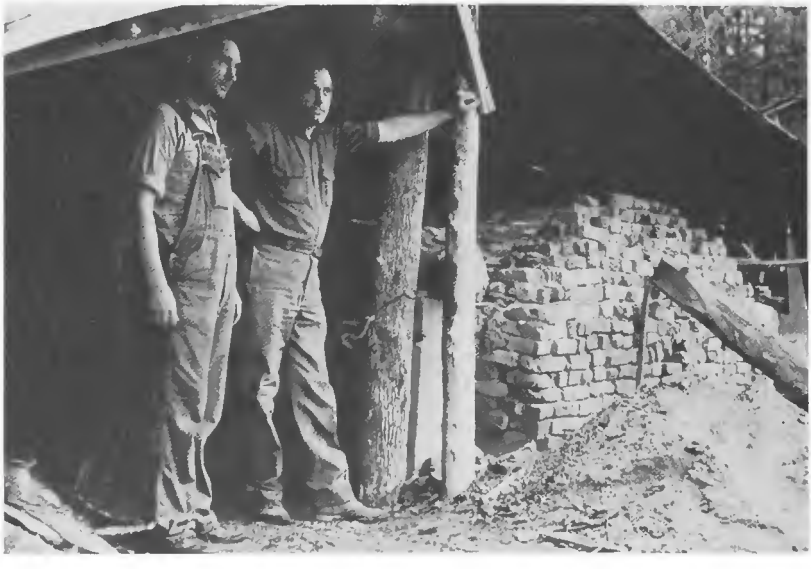


Figure 35b. *Lanier and his brother, Nub, the day following the burning.*

squeeze the excess moisture out, and then mold the remaining plastic substance into a finger-size cone. Fixing this to a clay holder, he then set it in the kiln's cool spot prior to burning. When that spot reached the appropriate temperature, the cone would wilt meaning that the glaze on his ware had run sufficiently: "It's the most accurate thing that I can get to burn a kiln of pott'ry up there. I know my glazing, and when that cone up there melts down slick, then I know my pott'ry is glazed." If a portion of the ware in the kiln carried a different glaze, additional cones matching those finishes were added: "Then I just keep firing until that last cone melts down."

When it was finally determined that everything had burned sufficiently, father and son stopped adding fuel and closed off all of the *draft holes*. This would keep cold air from getting inside the kiln and doing "mischief" with the ware. They then retired for the second night.

Early the next morning, Cheever was up and poking his flashlight in a *peep hole* to get a glimpse of the results. Because the kiln was still much too hot for unloading, he shortly reclosed the opening.

Several days later, Cheever and Lanier unloaded the kiln: "Sometimes we can't hardly wait till it cools off to take a pole and start fishing a few pieces out so that we can look at it—I reckon it's just anxiety." As with loading, the job benefited from several pairs of hands. After boards had been placed across the firebox, the first man entered the low aperture and began to hand the ware out to his assistants (fig. 36). It was still rather warm inside, provoking Lanier to comment, "It's a little too warm. I think that's the reason that all of us is bald-headed, it burnt the hair off our heads." When unloading was finished, the man inside the furnace eventually reappeared covered with ashes and soot.

Once out of the kiln, the vessels were placed on the ground to cool, a process that produced an odd tinkling sound that was to continue for several hours. In contrast to the older potters who often blew into or "thumped" their ware on the ground, listening for a telltale sound that would indicate a fissure, Lanier contented himself with a visual inspection: "Course some of it's a little better than other—the glaze is not what it ought to be on some of them—but most of it is all right." On the average, the Meaderses could anticipate that the larger share of their ware—usually ninety percent or better—would come out as expected. Because of the vagaries of the raw materials, however, they could never be absolutely certain of success. Once, for example, a load of churns was lost because, in the final analysis, the vessels' walls

Unloading the kiln. (Photos from the film, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters.*)

Figure 36a. *Lanier and Nub in the kiln, handing the ware out to Cheever and Q.*

Figure 36b. *Q. relaying the ware from the mouth of the kiln to an assistant.*

had been turned too thin for the clay they were using. More commonly, damage consisted of underfired bottoms and singed surfaces. All such failures went on the *jar pile*—a mounded, sprawling accumulation of broken or badly fired ware. The remainder was set out on tables in the yard to attract passersby (fig. 37).

Figure 37. *Display tables in the pottery yard.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1967.)

The Ensuing Years: 1968–1979

Since his father's death, Lanier Meaders has maintained the family pottery and continued its operation in much the fashion just described. Still, there have been changes. A multilane interstate highway (U.S. 129), constructed in 1962–63, now bypasses the pottery to the west, leaving Lanier relatively free of the crush of visitors that so frustrated his father's last years. Nevertheless, as soon as the potter opens his furnace (he fires the kiln now at irregular intervals from spring through fall), customers appear without advertising.

Lanier turns mostly face jugs these days to accommodate a backlog of requests for the humorous vessels. He complains, though, that he gets tired of making face jugs—he estimates that he has turned some 4,000 to date—and often takes a day off from work or spends his time

making more functional ware: "Well, I make churns, pitchers, flower pots—something that people use, something that working people need." At his house he keeps several five- and six-gallon decorated vases "just to look at" and vows that he will someday accumulate a small collection of his different pieces.

Those alterations that have been made around the shop and pottery yard have been mostly undertaken for convenience and saving time. The electric pug mill now sits next to his wheel inside the ware shop, where it is most accessible during work. The old clay mill, on the other hand, is sunk into a decaying pile outside and, except for the wrought-iron band that encircled the tub, has completely deteriorated. Lanier has also replaced the original cast-iron stove that warmed the shop in wintertime with a larger heater fashioned from two oil-drums.

In the yard, the glazing rocks, eroded through years of turning, have been abandoned like the clay mill to a corner out of the way of traffic. Lanier expresses the intention now and then of having a new bottom rock quarried, but presently contents himself with using commercial glaze materials in place of the stone-ground variety. Because he can substitute calcium carbonate "whiting" and a readily available "patent glaze" for ground glass and settlin's in his ash glaze (the two are still mixed together with local ashes), the problem is not a pressing one.

Shortly after Cheever Meaders's old tunnel kiln was filmed in 1967, it, too, deteriorated to the point where it had to be abandoned. Lanier immediately constructed a new furnace that he maintained by means of a partial rebuilding of the outside walls every two or three years. With this new kiln, he experimented by adding oil burners, which, when used in combination with wood firing, functioned reasonably well. Beset by technical problems and the rising expense of fuel oil, Lanier has since disassembled his burners and returned to wood-firing alone. For the time being, at least, he is able to secure ample supplies of scrap lumber for fuel from a local sawmill.

One final and perennial problem is finding turning clay. When access to clay beds that he and his father had mined for over twenty-five years was withdrawn, Lanier was forced to search further afield for resources. Presently some of his clay comes from Banks County around the town of Homer. Ocmulgee red clay and kaolin are obtained in the Macon area and are now stored in barrels in the shop,

while a prefired and hammered clay "grog" is imported from Michigan. These materials Lanier mixes together in the yard, using a mechanical roller pulled by a tractor.

Despite these alterations—brought on more by necessity than by desire—the Meaders pottery today continues in a resolutely traditional manner. One who returned to the pottery after a decade's absence would have found little changed. For his part, Lanier Meaders seems inclined to leave things basically the way they have been. He will probably build more shelves in the shop to accommodate a growing business, and he speaks of adding a small oil-fired kiln that will allow him to burn ware on inclement days, when his main kiln would otherwise stand idle. The only certainty is that modest financial success and limited needs allow him, generally, to turn what he likes and to work when he pleases.

The Ware

> I can make any piece of any size I want to and any shape I want to. If I wanted to make a jug, I'd make one. If I wanted to make a pitcher, I'd make it. Flower pot, bowl, just anything of the kind. And then all them shapes that a potter puts out is in his head—every one of 'em.

By almost any standard, Cheever Meaders was an accomplished craftsman whose abilities might have carried him in a variety of creative directions. Historically, however, we have to accept that he was chiefly a production potter, constrained by the practical needs of his customers. Even as his original clientele slipped away, Cheever remained committed to what he knew best and did not actively seek to alter either his ware or his technology. As a point of departure, therefore, in describing Cheever's product, it serves us well to pay some attention to the rural farm economy of his younger years.

During the heyday of pottery-making in north Georgia—the period roughly from the time of the Civil War through the first two decades of this century—the potters' customers were farmers, farm merchants, and small-time whiskey distillers, all of whom had use for enormous numbers of standardized pitchers, churns, preserving crocks, and jugs. As a result of this forthrightly pedestrian clientele, very little of the potters' ware was created or valued for its decorative function. Rather, as vessels destined for the kitchen and pantry, durability was the criterion of greatest importance to the customer. This was true even though many of the pieces were endowed with sturdy, vigorous—even pleasing—proportions, highlighted by an assortment of attractive glaze finishes like the ash glaze.

White County potters, to be sure, were not blind to the decorative possibilities in their ware. Many showed a clear preference for one glaze over another—a preference that arguably had as much to do with appearance as with utility. Each potter also had his own distinguishing trademark or flourish, such as prompted Cheever Meaders to boast: "I can tell a piece of my pott'ry, if I was to see it in New York, just pass by and see it, I could tell it. . . ." Even today we are aware, for example, that most of Cheever's loop handles are rather flat and

thin with a slight twist to one side, while those of his son, Lanier, are more nearly rounded in cross-section. Whether these idiosyncracies can be laid to "style" or "habit," it is nevertheless the case that they are and were recognized as differences.

On the other hand, few of the White County potters bothered to inscribe or stamp their ware during the early period. For a brief time during the 1920s, one of the Meaders brothers, Cleater, stamped some of his Albany Slip-glazed ware with his name and also CLEVELAND POTTERY CO., but he was the exception. For his part, Cheever refrained from identifying his ware by mark until very late in life. There are a few vessels with his inscriptions, such as one bearing the date of his old ware shop's demise in 1952 and another with the cryptic notation: ChEEVER MEAdERS/CLEVELANd GEORgIA/MOSSSY CREEK gREEN. It was not until a year or two before his death, however, that he allowed Arie to make the bottoms of his vessels with his initials, CM.

In the same light, it is instructive to refer to Lanier's attitude about identifying marks. In 1968 he told one of the authors: "Nobody'll ever know where [my ware] came from. Never put any name on a piece of it. It's just one of those things, I reckon, that you don't have to do to get along with it or sell it." For reasons of his own, Lanier changed his mind the following year with a result that was not entirely unanticipated. As his mother remembers: "I tell you, [the customers] they went crazy a while. I never seen the like of it in my life. Some people couldn't get enough of [Lanier's vessels]. Buy twenty-five at a time, then come back for more." Now the remaining Meaders potter frets that his customers have become spoiled, that they value pedigree as much as utility.[1]

The prior discussion obscures somewhat the fact, that, even during the earliest period, White County potters responded to forces promoting change. Mid-nineteenth century jugs and churns were, as a rule, more globular in cross-section than were later jugs and churns—an evolution that can be laid perhaps to regional (and national) perceptions of style.[2] Technology and altered economic conditions also played a role, as when commercial glaze materials began to replace the homemade finishes after 1895, or when tin and glass containers displaced similar stoneware vessels a few years later. When speaking about individual artistry and experimentation, however, while present at times in the work of the Georgia potters

(especially in whimsical pieces like face jugs), it was muted by the demands of the trade. This regimentation, of course, was relaxed with the decline of subsistence farmers as a clientele and their replacement by tourists and folk-art collectors. Nevertheless, Cheever and Lanier Meaders were both slow to acknowledge any fundamental change in the expectations of their customers—and, as such, were content to be production potters.

Stoneware in Farm Life

Because the uses of stoneware pottery are closely associated with the cycle of farm activities in the region, it is helpful to describe some of these activities. Arie Waldrop Meaders, born in 1897, relocated with her family from Franklin, Macon County, North Carolina, to White County, Georgia, in 1911—three years before she married Cheever Meaders. Settling with her parents plus eleven brothers and sisters in Zion community about two-and-a-half miles from her future husband, she grew up in a fairly typical farm family.

In early spring, the Waldrops sowed their garden in beans, beets, turnips, okra, tomatoes, cabbage, onions, and mustard greens. About the same time, they also planted their fields in cotton and corn, the latter interspersed with pumpkins, peas, and cornfield beans. Pumpkin seeds also found their way into a nearby sorghum patch. As described by Arie, this was a time of continuous and intense activity.

Her father plowed all the day with oxen, and later, as the family grew and the work load increased, with mules. He prepared his ground, planted his seed, and cultivated his crop as it matured through the growing season. While he busied himself with the plowing, the younger Waldrops walked along the rows of plants, hoes in hand: "If there was anything in the row that the plow didn't get, he made us cut it out. We'd go twice between the rows, next to this row going this way and next to the [opposite] row coming back. He kept us right in there to keep us out of menace."

This daily round of activity was highlighted by three meals. Around five each morning, Mr. Waldrop would start a cooking fire in the kitchen fireplace. While waiting for the coals to approach bread-baking temperature, Mrs. Waldrop would fry the morning's ration of meat and gravy in a large skillet. She also parched wheat for her husband's "coffee." Immediately following breakfast, father and

children would file out to the work place.

There they stayed, plowing and hoeing until midday, when they were treated to a modest dinner of soup beans, buttermilk, and perhaps a helping of rhubarb or cobbler pie. Afternoons, the children returned to the fields, working until an entire patch was weeded. Once a week, they added clothes washing to their chores, which meant that work was seldom finished before nightfall.

The final meal of the day consisted of the remainder of the beans, a few fresh vegetables, milk, bread, and butter. After supper, the young Waldrops entertained themselves until bedtime: "We played just as long as we could play. Lotta times just get out there and turn tumblesets in the grass—just tumble over and over."

A mixed crop of oats, wheat, and rye planted the previous fall matured in June and, in short order, was ready for the cutting, thrashing, and separating operations. This was usually accomplished with help from the surrounding farmers: "We'd get the neighbors to come in and help cut the wheat and help tie it, you know, cradle it with one of them old wheat cradles. The thing about that wheat was to get it shocked up before it rained on it. And we'd get help there, and Mama'd always cook for them a mid-evening meal, you know, and take it out for them."

At thrashing, the farmers would once again work in rotating fashion: "That was a big gathering time. And whichever one was going to have his wheat thrashed next, he was sure to be there. And then the next neighbor, he was gonna be there to see when they was gonna thrash his wheat. They helped one another out, you know, and Papa'd go and help them. It was all work."

Finally, as winter approached, the family busied itself with the corn harvest and fodder pulling: "We pulled fodder back then. We didn't have much hay to cut; we had a few patches that was pretty good grass, and, best I know, my daddy cut it with a mowing blade. He would cut the tops off of his corn from the ear up and shock that, and then we'd come along and pull what blades was left from there down. And then we'd let the corn dry out until long about the last of October, first of November. And then we'd gather the corn and put it under the shed."

Not every year, but occasionally, the Waldrops sponsored a corn shucking. Family members piled the corn ears under a shed next to the crib and awaited their guests who were expected to stay through

dinner and supper. After the shucking and supper were finished, the children would sometimes amuse themselves in a line game like "twistification." Arie's father, however, took a dim view of most such entertainment:

> My daddy never would allow no dancing or nothing like that around. After the shucking was over, he thought everything oughta be so-so. I remember one time our neighbor had a corn shucking, and they had a dance afterwards. All us kids did want to see that dancing so bad, and we begged Papa to let us stay after the corn was shucked so we could see that dancing.
>
> He agreed to let us see it done, but, oh, he thought that dancing was just awful. And we stayed and watched. Well, lawd-a-mercy, I enjoyed it! They made music, and the girls and boys square-danced around, and it was just amazing to me to see them dance to that music. It was beautiful to me! He thought that it just wasn't right for boys and girls to get that close together. Oh, he was an old fogey, I want to tell you. I just wonder how he got through his courtin' days [laughter].

Farm Dairy Crocks

Pottery for the Waldrops' and Meaderses' dairying chores included a variety of specialized churns, pitchers, and crocks for collecting milk and processing cream, butter, and buttermilk. Like her mother, Arie Meaders milked her cows mornings and evenings, processing what the family could not drink into her dairy by-products. (Otherwise, it was lavished on Cheever's hogs.) As recently as twenty years ago, Arie was still milking and churning by hand. It was only with the growing burden and cost of caring for dairy cows that the Meaderses discontinued the practice and turned to commercially available milk, cream, and butter. Even today, Lanier Meaders still turns a few dairy vessels for local old-timers.

In processing milk, the women would collect their twice-daily milking into two-gallon *broad-top pots*, also called *straight-up jars* because of their straight sides (fig. 38). At the time, Cheever notes, "they just wasn't any buckets about." If the farmer's wife were to make buttermilk and butter, she would take care to strain her morning's milking in a *cream-riser*—a low, broad-brimmed pan covered with a piece of cloth tied around the rim with string. Skimming off only the cream that did not penetrate the cloth, she would then pour this together

with the previous night's whole milk into a three- or four-gallon churn: "They strain the milk up in them straight jars, and the cream rises on the milk. And then they just take a spoon and run around the top and push the cream off into a churn [with the night's milk]. And when they get enough in the churn, they churn."

In actual practice, Arie Meaders would wait another day until the churn's contents had thickened, or clabbered, before inserting her wooden dash into the vessel. The latter, a short dowel with a cross-piece plunger at one end, was secured through the center of a wood (or, very rarely, ceramic) lid which allowed it to move up and down and which kept the milk from splashing out of the vessel. If the milk was cold, it could take a considerable amount of churning to produce results; if it was warm, it might take but a few minutes. On occasion, if the milk and cream had clabbered too greatly, it would resist churning, but this happened only infrequently. Usually the layer of cream would rapidly turn to butter. Then it would be skimmed off, salted, and pressed into molds. The remaining thick buttermilk (left after the butter had been removed) went into two gallon pitchers and was consumed by the family immediately (fig. 39). The empty butter churn and other dairy pots were set up on posts in the hot sun to disinfect.

Figure 38. *Four dairy vessels: The cream riser and two broad-top pots on the left were made by Lanier Meaders, circa 1968–70, and are coated with ash glaze. The last broad-top pot is an early Meaders pot (turner unknown). A second type of creamriser, a handle-less variety with a broad, low profile is perhaps better known than the one shown here.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1979.)

Figure 39a. *A pitcher thrown by Cheever Meaders.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1979.)

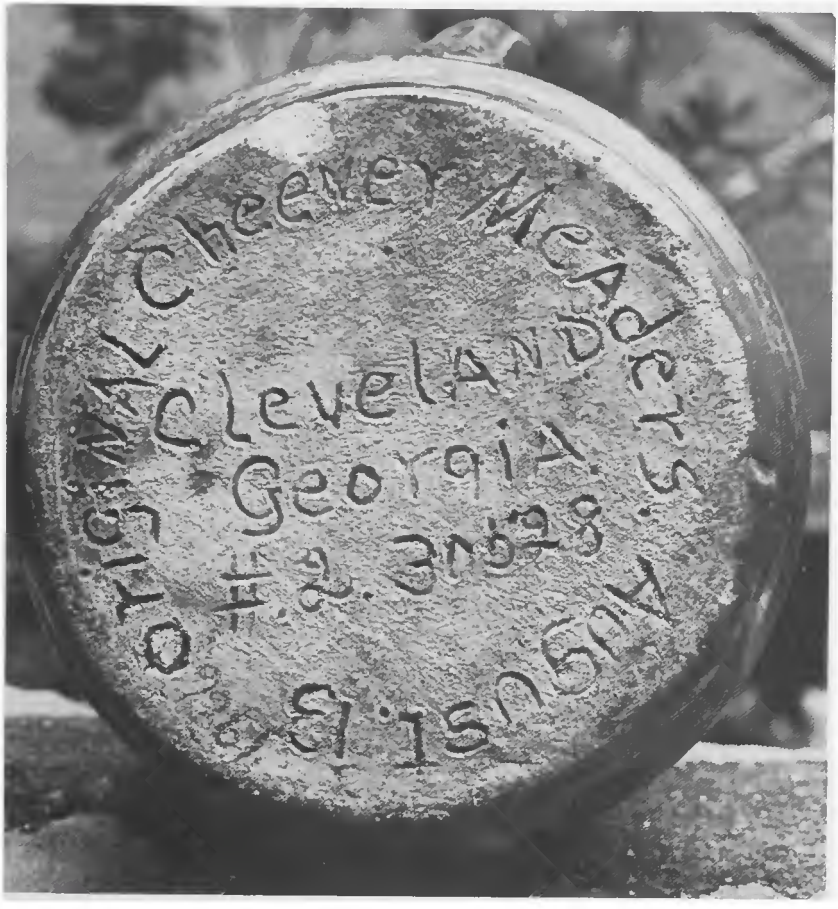


Figure 39b.
Bottom of the pitcher, showing mail route number and recently assigned zip code whimsically added. (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1979.)

What milk the White County farmers could not drink within a day or two was carried off to the springbox, a large lidded container positioned directly over a running spring. Wiley Meaders had a springbox on his property where he set his milk crocks on a rock to cool. A few families in the community where Arie's parents lived lowered their milk on a rope down the well—a hazardous procedure should the liquid spill and contaminate the fresh water supply. With the introduction of iceboxes during the 1920s and 1930s, these practices were discontinued.[3]

Storage Ware for Autumn Canning

In the late summer and fall, demand increased markedly for storage ware in which to preserve, or *put up*, a wide variety of farm meats, fruits, and vegetables. It was a time of considerable activity for Cheever Meaders, who, like all potters in the region, was taking in his farm harvest as well as trying to keep up production in the ware shop. For him it meant round-the-clock effort: "Oh, good grief, couldn't do it! What about six or eight wagons a-standing up there, come every day a-wanting pott'ry to put their stuff in, and us might near working day and night at it. It was more so that way in the fall of the year when stuff was getting ripe and ready to put up."

In preserving meat, butchered beef and hog meat were mostly dried and cured in a smoke house; other meat was salted and layered in long bins. When Arie Meaders was a youth, some local hunters brought her family their rabbit catch, which the Waldrops skinned and hung in the chimney jamb for smoke curing. When Arie's mother desired to cook one of the carcasses for gravy and meat, she would simply haul it down from its perch.

A popular alternative to drying meat was to pickle it in four-gallon churns (fig. 40). Hog meat was very often prepared in this manner. Because the pickling was done in vinegar solution, the churns were not sealed tightly; only a wooden lid was set in place to keep foreign matter out. What was important, however, was that the pottery vessels be completely leak resistant, as Lanier Meaders cautions: "If you butcher a beef and start pickling the beef in the churn and the vinegar starts dripping out without your knowing, it isn't long before you've got a rotten can of beef." Consequently, the Meaderses nearly always applied their most durable glaze, ash glaze, to their pickling churns. Smaller churns were also used to store lard—a mainstay for shortening, seasoning, and frying.[4]

Like meat, winter vegetables were preserved in a variety of ways. During the growing season, the Waldrops and Meaderses gathered and ate fresh cornfield beans while they were still "green and snappy." Later, at harvest time, most of the remaining beans were thrashed out and were either dried in the sunshine on board scaffolds or were threaded together in their pods and hung up on the porch or in the kitchen. Once dried, these "leatherbritches" were then stored away in wooden sugar barrels. Prior to cooking, they were soaked in warm

Figure 40. *A four-gallon churn commemorating the demise of Cheever's old ware shop in 1952. Albany Slip and lime glaze used together.* (Photo by Robert Sayers, 1979.)

water and washed; then they were simmered in a pot with ham meat and salt until tender. Beans that were left on the vine to dry were used in soup. After picking, these were laid out on a sheet in the hayloft and beaten out of their hulls with a pole.

Roasting ears of corn were boiled, their kernels removed, and the latter dried on a scaffold. Sweet potatoes were prepared in similar fashion: boiled with the skins on, the yellow potatoes were then peeled, sliced, and laid out to sun-dry. After attaining a "hard and glassy" look, they were tied up in cotton sacks and stored away for the winter. In restoring the vegetables to edible condition, Arie's mother would place them in a stoneware cooking pot and pour boiling water over them, letting them soak overnight.[5]

Arie's mother kept large churns of pickled beans and cabbage kraut in her farm kitchen atop her plank-lidded meat box. Smaller churns containing "salt pickles"—green tomatoes and cucumbers prepared in brine solution—went on a shelf above. Pickling was a special chore and took place mainly during the cool months of September and October, as vegetables prepared in this manner kept poorly in warm weather.

To pickle beans, Arie would soak some of her leatherbritches in warm water for around two hours, then wash and cook them. Afterwards, the beans were interlayered with rock salt in a four-gallon churn, and the vessel was filled with water. The vegetables were weighted down with a clean white flint rock or a large river pebble.

In pickling cabbage kraut, Arie would mince her cabbage in a wooden tub using a straight-handled hoe known as a "kraut cutter." Again, the vegetable was packed in a five- or six-gallon storage container with alternating layers of salt. Unlike the ordinary churn, however, this container—known as a *kraut jar*—had an especially wide mouth and a turned-out lip, or "flange," which allowed a cloth to be more easily secured around the top (fig. 41). Aside from the cloth, which allowed the contents of the kraut jar to "work" properly and which kept insects out, the vessel was never sealed.

Salt pickles were kept in smaller stoneware jars. The tomatoes and cucumbers were packed in their respective containers and then scalded with a boiling mixture of sorghum syrup, salt, and water. The jars were covered and set aside for eight or ten days, after which the pickles were ready to eat. A special combination of green tomatoes, cabbage, and hot peppers, known as "chow chow," was prepared in

water and washed; then they were simmered in a pot with ham meat and salt until tender. Beans that were left on the vine to dry were used in soup. After picking, these were laid out on a sheet in the hayloft and beaten out of their hulls with a pole.

Roasting ears of corn were boiled, their kernels removed, and the latter dried on a scaffold. Sweet potatoes were prepared in similar fashion: boiled with the skins on, the yellow potatoes were then peeled, sliced, and laid out to sun-dry. After attaining a "hard and glassy" look, they were tied up in cotton sacks and stored away for the winter. In restoring the vegetables to edible condition, Arie's mother would place them in a stoneware cooking pot and pour boiling water over them, letting them soak overnight.[5]

Arie's mother kept large churns of pickled beans and cabbage kraut in her farm kitchen atop her plank-lidded meat box. Smaller churns containing "salt pickles"—green tomatoes and cucumbers prepared in brine solution—went on a shelf above. Pickling was a special chore and took place mainly during the cool months of September and October, as vegetables prepared in this manner kept poorly in warm weather.

To pickle beans, Arie would soak some of her leatherbritches in warm water for around two hours, then wash and cook them. Afterwards, the beans were interlayered with rock salt in a four-gallon churn, and the vessel was filled with water. The vegetables were weighted down with a clean white flint rock or a large river pebble.

In pickling cabbage kraut, Arie would mince her cabbage in a wooden tub using a straight-handled hoe known as a "kraut cutter." Again, the vegetable was packed in a five- or six-gallon storage container with alternating layers of salt. Unlike the ordinary churn, however, this container—known as a *kraut jar*—had an especially wide mouth and a turned-out lip, or "flange," which allowed a cloth to be more easily secured around the top (fig. 41). Aside from the cloth, which allowed the contents of the kraut jar to "work" properly and which kept insects out, the vessel was never sealed.

Salt pickles were kept in smaller stoneware jars. The tomatoes and cucumbers were packed in their respective containers and then scalded with a boiling mixture of sorghum syrup, salt, and water. The jars were covered and set aside for eight or ten days, after which the pickles were ready to eat. A special combination of green tomatoes, cabbage, and hot peppers, known as "chow chow," was prepared in

Figure 41. *Three storage vessels: a syrup jug, a churn, and a kraut jar in three- and four-gallon sizes. All were turned by Lanier Meaders, circa 1968-70.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1979.)

identical fashion.

For farm fruit, blackberries and huckleberries were dried on scaffolds like the corn, beans, and sweet potatoes. At night and during cloudy weather, the berries were removed to a rack above the kitchen fireplace, where the drying continued. Any berries that were not eaten outright were canned in small preserving crocks, known locally as *fruit jars* or *fruit cans*. These distinctive vessels had small mouths, usually around two inches wide, and were turned in quart, half-gallon, and gallon sizes. Filled with whole or mashed berries (for jam) plus sorghum syrup, they were closed off by pressing tight-fitting wooden lids into their tops, then sealed with beeswax or wheat starch. Following this, the vessel mouths were covered with cheese cloth or clean sheeting, a layer of brown paper, and more sealant. Finally, stout cord was tied around the crocks' lips, or *charms*, and covered again with beeswax or starch. Stored in some cool part of the house, the fruit would keep through the winter, all the while "accumulating one of the finest wines that you ever seen," according to neighbor potter Guy Dorsey.

The Meaders family in the early part of this century turned out as

Figure 41. *Three storage vessels: a syrup jug, a churn, and a kraut jar in three- and four-gallon sizes. All were turned by Lanier Meaders, circa 1968-70.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1979.)

identical fashion.

For farm fruit, blackberries and huckleberries were dried on scaffolds like the corn, beans, and sweet potatoes. At night and during cloudy weather, the berries were removed to a rack above the kitchen fireplace, where the drying continued. Any berries that were not eaten outright were canned in small preserving crocks, known locally as *fruit jars* or *fruit cans*. These distinctive vessels had small mouths, usually around two inches wide, and were turned in quart, half-gallon, and gallon sizes. Filled with whole or mashed berries (for jam) plus sorghum syrup, they were closed off by pressing tight-fitting wooden lids into their tops, then sealed with beeswax or wheat starch. Following this, the vessel mouths were covered with cheese cloth or clean sheeting, a layer of brown paper, and more sealant. Finally, stout cord was tied around the crocks' lips, or *charms*, and covered again with beeswax or starch. Stored in some cool part of the house, the fruit would keep through the winter, all the while "accumulating one of the finest wines that you ever seen," according to neighbor potter Guy Dorsey.

The Meaders family in the early part of this century turned out as

many as 300–400 stoneware fruit jars at a time at their pottery and, like Arie's mother, reserved half-a-dozen or more for their own pantry. Because of their similarity in size to glass containers, however, fruit jars were among the first vessels to be discarded from the potters' ware inventory.

The new glass jars began to appear in the White County area just after 1900. They came with porcelain-lined zinc lids that were screwed over rubber seals, an arrangement that proved easier to use and more hygienic than the previous method. Yet several factors kept glassware from replacing stoneware all at once. One was price: the glass bottles were initially very expensive, at least to the upland folk who still practiced a subsistence mode of living. Another was that only the half-gallon bottles approximated the size of the ceramic vessels; the rest came in half-pint, pint, and quart sizes and thus found a different function in the kitchen.

Perhaps the most important reason for the glassware's poor initial acceptance in the region hinged on the community's reluctance to alter a tried-and-true way of doing things. Arie Meaders's mother, curious by nature, bought some of the half-gallon glass jars around 1908 or 1909 and immediately set about putting up her summer fruit. The reaction of her neighbors to the strange experiment was immediate and pronounced, according to Arie:

> I remember the first glass cans she ever bought. Well, everybody told her, "Liddy, you're gonna get killed is what you're gonna do. You're gonna kill your family with them glass cans. Why, they'll break in the food and every one of you'll die!" "Oh," she said, "I'm not afraid of them." And she wasn't, she went ahead and used them.

Eventually, even the faint-hearted came to accept the new containers, and ceramic fruit jars declined to the point where they assumed only a marginal role in farm canning.

Another way to preserve fruit was "bleaching." Apples and peaches were commonly prepared in this manner. Washed, peeled, and sliced, the fresh fruit was raked to the sides of a large wooden tub, while a small stoneware vessel filled with fireplace coals was lowered in the center. Sulfur was added to the live coals, and the whole affair was covered with a quilt and, over that, a length of oil cloth. After the apples or peaches (they were never bleached together) had yellowed in the resultant vapor, they were removed from the tub and stored either

many as 300–400 stoneware fruit jars at a time at their pottery and, like Arie's mother, reserved half-a-dozen or more for their own pantry. Because of their similarity in size to glass containers, however, fruit jars were among the first vessels to be discarded from the potters' ware inventory.

The new glass jars began to appear in the White County area just after 1900. They came with porcelain-lined zinc lids that were screwed over rubber seals, an arrangement that proved easier to use and more hygienic than the previous method. Yet several factors kept glassware from replacing stoneware all at once. One was price: the glass bottles were initially very expensive, at least to the upland folk who still practiced a subsistence mode of living. Another was that only the half-gallon bottles approximated the size of the ceramic vessels; the rest came in half-pint, pint, and quart sizes and thus found a different function in the kitchen.

Perhaps the most important reason for the glassware's poor initial acceptance in the region hinged on the community's reluctance to alter a tried-and-true way of doing things. Arie Meaders's mother, curious by nature, bought some of the half-gallon glass jars around 1908 or 1909 and immediately set about putting up her summer fruit. The reaction of her neighbors to the strange experiment was immediate and pronounced, according to Arie:

> I remember the first glass cans she ever bought. Well, everybody told her, "Liddy, you're gonna get killed is what you're gonna do. You're gonna kill your family with them glass cans. Why, they'll break in the food and every one of you'll die!" "Oh," she said, "I'm not afraid of them." And she wasn't, she went ahead and used them.

Eventually, even the faint-hearted came to accept the new containers, and ceramic fruit jars declined to the point where they assumed only a marginal role in farm canning.

Another way to preserve fruit was "bleaching." Apples and peaches were commonly prepared in this manner. Washed, peeled, and sliced, the fresh fruit was raked to the sides of a large wooden tub, while a small stoneware vessel filled with fireplace coals was lowered in the center. Sulfur was added to the live coals, and the whole affair was covered with a quilt and, over that, a length of oil cloth. After the apples or peaches (they were never bleached together) had yellowed in the resultant vapor, they were removed from the tub and stored either

in barrels or in four gallon churns, where they kept almost indefinitely. Arie preferred barrels because the wood let the moisture escape, thereby avoiding a slick, watery buildup. To cook the bleached fruit, Arie's mother shoveled coals onto her fireplace hearth, atop which she set a stoneware pot. The fruit was spooned into the vessel, which was already filled with hot water to prevent its cracking on contact with the coals, and was left to steam and cook through.

Apples were also sun-dried like berries, salted to deter worms, and stored away in handspun cotton sacks.[6] Later, they were cooked in sorghum syrup in a one-gallon pitcher and the resultant apple butter processed in fruit cans in the manner described earlier.[7]

One final domestic activity, in a sense related to food, was the manufacturing of soap. Hard soap and washing powder were luxuries unknown to Arie Meaders's family before 1912. Instead, the Waldrops, like their neighbors, washed their dishes and clothes and scrubbed their floors with homemade lye soap. In making the soap, the family collected fireplace ashes through the winter in an ash hopper. From mid-February through March, Arie poured branch water through the ash hopper until sufficient amounts of lye dripped from a spout at the lower end into a waiting stoneware pitcher. When enough was collected to make a wash pot full of soap, Arie's mother would boil it until the concentrated end-product was "strong enough to take the hide off her tongue."[8] Scrap meat and skins were added to the boiling lye and stirred until dissolved. Once cooled, the resultant soft soap was spooned into a tightly-constructed wooden box made for the purpose. There it was allowed to "age."

During the fall, this same lye was also used to make corn hominy, a special treat for Arie. Arie's mother boiled her corn kernels in the lye until their skins fell away. Following that, the corn was washed, cooked again, and then stored in a four-gallon churn. When the family wanted to eat it, the hominy had to be baked in a baking oven and then pounded to fine bits with an iron mallet. Afterwards, it was cooked before the fireplace in a skillet of bacon drippings.

Jugs

Probably the ware form most identified with the southern pottery trade is the jug. Jugs, of course, were widely manufactured for a thriving spirits industry all during the last century and accounted for a

large share of the potters' business. Even after prohibition was declared in the state of Georgia in 1907, illicit distillers ("moonshiners" or "blockaders") continued to patronize White County artisans.[9]

Most whiskey jugs were turned in the one-gallon size, with a small mouth and tapered neck to seat the cob stopper correctly. Cheever Meaders turned a few two-handled jugs in the five-gallon size for the specific purpose of hauling moonshine, but these were a custom item. His brother, Wiley, likewise manufactured five- and six-gallon mixing churns for the same clientele; because of their large size, he was paid an inflated ten cents a gallon for his extra labor.

Whiskey jugs, like meat-preserving churns, demanded a high standard of work in terms of strength and nonpermeability. They were, therefore, carefully turned and took the potters' best glazes. Cheever was especially proud of his jugs as the following account indicates:

> Fella lived back up here named Powers. I made him a bunch of jugs one time. He wanted twenty, said he wanted to put twenty gallons of corn whiskey in 'em. Hell, I made 'em until they held. And he got 'em, filled 'em up, and was back in the hollers there somewhere. And it was pretty hard to pack them out, and he simply put 'em in a stump hole. Fella went home and taken typhoid fever, and it was eight weeks before he seen 'em again. And he said they held, never lost a drop out of them twenty jugs.

Besides serving as whiskey containers, stoneware jugs were used by farmers as water canteens. They also functioned as sorghum syrup receptacles. These *syrup jugs*, in sizes ranging from a half-gallon to three gallons, were manufactured in formidable numbers by White County potters and were stored away by their customers until cane harvest time (see fig. 41). Like fruit jars, however, the vessels were eventually replaced by a commercial product (in this case, cheap tin ware) and ultimately disappeared from the potters' stock-in-trade.

Another specialized jug was the poultry fountain, locally called a *chicken jug*. Early versions of these unusual vessels had clay-plugged mouths and a lip pinched out around their bottoms for a drinking trough. They were filled through the lip and then set upright in the poultry yard. Later chicken waterers had a small side hole near the bottom for a feeder, plus a separate walled dish for a base.

Of all the Meaderses' jugs, none has engendered greater interest among collectors than their *face jugs* (fig. 42). The introduction of the

Face jugs.

Figure 42a. *The jugs in this photograph were made in 1967 and 1968. The smallest is by Cheever, the other two, by Lanier.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1979.)

Figure 42b. *These later jugs were made by Lanier a decade after those in the above picture.* (Photo by Robert Sayers, 1979.)

form in White County is generally credited to Gillsville potter Will Hewell, who worked in the area periodically between 1910 and 1940. The Browns, who worked around Cleveland in 1920 and 1921, also knew the form, and Brown family descendants continue today to make face jugs at a pottery near Asheville, North Carolina. That Cheever Meaders recalls as a boy seeing a three-foot example occupying a corner of his grandfather's porch may mean that face jugs have even deeper roots in the region.

Thus the local origin of the form remains a mystery. In an engaging aside, Lanier Meaders muses that the ultimate origin of the face jug may lie with the Viking adventurers of the North Atlantic: "They settled most of the world anyhow, they were a seagoing people. And all their ships, you know, wooden ships, had some kind of a head on them: a dragon or bird head or some kind of animal."

In view of their popularity with customers, it is surprising that these intriguing jugs were never considered as more than ephemera by family members. Cheever, ever the production potter, disliked the time spent modeling the faces and complained that his fingers were "too stiff" for the chore: "People ask for 'em, but I ain't fooling with it much. Don't like to make 'em. Too much work. If I make one, set it off, and time I get it decorated and fixed up, I could turn two or three other pieces of some kind. I could turn two pitchers, and I never have yet made enough pitchers."

Cheever continued to manufacture face jugs in his last year primarily because they were profitable. His pieces retained a primitive simplicity with their rough, unshaped eyebrows, their pinched-off clay noses, and their china and ceramic tile teeth. In marked contrast to these are the face jugs presently being made by his son, Lanier.

Lanier Meaders's attitude toward his specialty jugs is almost as cavalier as his father's: "Well, they're nothing except to make somebody mad with. They can be used for that pretty well. Tell a fella it had his picture, you'd have to fight him after he's seen it. They're about the ugliest thing a person can make." On the other hand, since around 1969 Lanier has taken great care with his modeling. Approaching "sculptural realism" (though still grossly exaggerated), his jugs now have caved-in cheeks, quartz eyes, and finely detailed lips, ears, and eyebrows. Each vessel has its own "personality," conveying a great deal of the maker's wit and talent. Some of Lanier's

more unusual pieces include horned "devil jugs" (jack-o-lantern-type jugs with perforated features allowing a candle to show through), two-faced Janus jugs, and comical wig stands. For the sake of diversity, the younger Meaders enjoys caricaturing real-life individuals, among them the famous (Field Marshall Montgomery) and the not so famous (a customer at the Cleveland laundromat).

Since 1969 Lanier has signed the bottoms of most of his face jugs in script with the occasional addition of CLEVELAND, GEORGIA. Lest he be accused of taking his work too seriously, he rejoins, "People want something that is no good, something that they can't use up except to just sit around and look at it." As for his face jugs, "they have no earthly value at all."

Other Traditional Ware

Miscellaneous oddments made by the Meaders family and their neighbors in times past have included gallon bed-pans (*slop jars*) turned for the local hostelries; miniature versions of the standard jugs, crocks, and pitchers for children's play; and unglazed pipe bowls. Neighbor potter Guy Dorsey remembered sitting in front of his burning kiln as a youth, chunking the firebox, and leisurely fashioning pipes in a lead mold: "Then the next time I burnt, you could just fill a flower jar full of them, burn a peck of them at a time. Then you get one of these creek bank canes for a stem. Man, there's been many a pound of homemade tobacco burned in them." Guy also recalled rolling clay into balls and firing them for marbles: "You know, I used to think that if we could get ahold of a set of store-bought marbles, we'd fly!"

Cheever Meaders also manufactured large numbers of red earthenware flowerpots, much like those in common use today. The unglazed pots were hauled to hardware stores in the larger towns and were a trade staple. Cheever continued through the 1940s to make this sort of ware, at one time selling most of his produce to a florist in Cleveland.

Nontraditional Ware

With the accretion of small changes in the regional economy and in people's lifeways, the Meaderses' market for traditional stoneware experienced a considerable decline. The end of subsistence farming

and the introduction of new labor-saving products and devices, like glass and tin containers, iceboxes, and electric refrigerators, all affected the pottery business. Still, Cheever Meaders persisted for as long as he was able in making "nothing but big churns and jugs and the like of that" in standardized shapes and sizes. The more anachronistic his work became, the more petulant he grew in reply to his critics (and well-wishers) who encouraged him to change.[10]

Whether through stubbornness or design, a traditional inventory of ware is still, more than a decade after Cheever's death, the basis of the Meaders operation. Almost no accommodation has been made for the commercially glazed, brightly colored gift-shop items which have become the mainstay of other surviving potteries in the South. Cheever did try to adjust to the requests of his customers for urn-like vases, bean pots, cookie jars, and other nontraditional forms during the difficult period from the late 1930s forward. But he preferred to turn churns, crocks, pitchers, and jugs, as does his son today.

Lanier Meaders has certainly benefitted from a resurgence of requests for the older forms—albeit from unexpected sources. In 1972 he turned a full set of his older vessels for the Tullie Smith House Restoration in Atlanta. He also supplied the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., with a representative sampling of his wares. Other pieces he sells to folk-art collectors and to specialty shops in the larger southern cities, such as Asheville and Atlanta.

In the past, Lanier has been tempted to increase his output of bird houses, vases, and other ephemera, admitting that many small pieces turn a larger profit than a few large ones: "Well, the kind of stuff that brings in the most money is the kind of stuff it takes the smallest amount of clay to make. You take a churn: it's got enough clay in it to make ten or fifteen dollars' worth of small stuff."[11] But he adds quickly: "'Course there's a lot of junk stuff out there, these ornaments. Don't like to fool around with that, but I do do it."

At the urging of friends, Lanier has increased his prices modestly—from fifty cents a gallon for churns in 1967 to $1.25 a gallon for the same pieces in 1978, and from $2.00 to $10–15.00 for a face jug. (Most of the face jugs are subsequently resold by antique dealers for many times these prices.) Lanier claims he would like to withhold a large share of his output for two or three years, and only then release it for sale at a greatly inflated price. But he probably will not, he adds somewhat cryptically, as "people done got ruined."

Figure 43. *Nontraditional art pottery.* (Photos by Robert Sayers, 1979.)

Figure 43a. *Vase and pitcher made by Cheever in 1934 or 1935. Bristol Glaze and cobalt.*

Figure 43b. *Roosters by Arie in 1969, Bristol Glaze and chrome oxide.*

For her part, Arie Meaders has not been constrained in her work by any particular notions of traditional versus nontraditional ware. Never an active participant in the older industry (even though she was clearly influenced by the work of her husband, son, and their male co-workers), Arie was free to experiment widely in creating her novel art pottery. The fact that her active period from 1957 until 1969 coincided with the growth of a collectors' market for "folk-art" doubtless added further impetus to such experimentation (fig. 43).

At first, Arie fashioned simple wall planters—objects which to her had an important function in the home. Finding success with these, she graduated to making decòrated jars, platters, sugar bowls, creamers, mugs, and clay pipe bowls. A clay menagerie of partly turned, partly hand-built pheasants, owls, roosters, quail, and chickens are among her best-known forms. Cheever even allowed his wife to embellish some of his tall vases.

Arie would begin work by carefully cleaning her clay of pine bark, pebbles, sticks, and other matter—a fastidiousness foreign to Cheever.

Figure 43c. *Decorated vases turned by Lanier, circa 1964. Bristol Glaze and chrome oxide.*

Also unlike her husband, who preferred to turn his vessels to a mental image, Arie would sit down with paper and pencil and painstakingly plan out individual forms and design features. Some of her ware was adorned with applied clay grape clusters and dogwood blossoms; other ware had painted on it morning-glories and butterflies in metallic oxide paints. As a result, Mrs. Meaders's work—based on what she thought would sell, mediated by her own creative impulses—has uniquely individualistic characteristics about it. Explains her son, Lanier, with more than a trace of pride, "The kind of stuff that she makes isn't made anywhere else in the world. And there ain't anything that can be compared to it."

For the most part, Arie Meaders has retired today from pottery-making and devotes her energies to a local civic organization, the Mountaineer Friends, where she shares home cooking and canning recipes, braids rugs, and crochets afghans for the Cleveland fall festival. In spite of her absence from the shop, her art pottery is well remembered by collectors and family friends.

Figure 43d. *Five-gallon jardinier by Lanier in 1976. Spar glaze.*

Glazes

A characteristic, though unusual feature of the north Georgia pottery industry is its preoccupation with wood ash and slaked lime glazes—technically known as alkaline glazes. While a majority of stoneware potters in the continental United States salt-glazed their ware, the Georgians (as well as their neighbors in the Carolinas and Alabama) created an assortment of dark green, brown, rust, and camel-colored finishes, using various combinations of wood ashes, slaked lime, sand, broken glass, and pottery clay. Many of these glazes, because of odd surface features and textures—complex drip patterns, striations, and rivelets—bear descriptive names like "tobacco spit" and "watermelon."[1]

The Meaderses sometimes used *Shanghai glaze* as a substitute name for their ash glaze and, in so doing, generated a small ripple of excitement among pottery historians.[2] Because nearly identical stoneware glazes are used in China, Korea, and Japan (and not, significantly, in Europe, where the American pottery tradition originated), several researchers have proposed a link between oriental and occidental traditions. Whether such a Deep South "connection" actually exists or not, the isolated occurrence of a wood ash and lime glazing tradition in this hemisphere is, of itself, remarkable.[3]

Alkaline glazes continued in use in White County past 1895; in that year, however, they were challenged by a commercial substance known as *Albany Slip* in recognition of its origin in New York's Hudson Valley. Nearly all of the local potters experimented with this so-called *patent glaze* and some even discarded their older finishes in favor of Albany Slip.

It is interesting to note, in light of the foregoing, that glaze "secrets" seem to have been of little moment among the White County potters. Different families tended to favor their own special finishes and were perhaps disinclined to share information. Yet apparently, because the materials were limited and because most of the glazes were known elsewhere, there was little call for secrecy. "It's just common everyday stuff," in Lanier Meaders's telling, "a person probably eats it everyday

and don't know it." The real secret, in his view, came from experience, in knowing the peculiarities of one's raw materials in order that a degree of consistency was achieved. Lanier's father shared this view:

> I expect I know more stuff that you can get out here and pick up and make glaze [with] than any man around here. Now you take this old black sand you see drifting along the road, and take white sand, and you take lime: you get too much of one thing, it'll throw the whole batch of glazing outta shape and you won't have no pretty ware. You just gotta know how to mix it.

The Alkaline Glazes

Stoneware glazes of the alkaline variety are among the hardest and most impermeable of any kind known to folk potters. The basic chemistry of such glazes is fairly simple, combining three oxides: calcium oxide, silicon dioxide, and aluminum oxide. While these three substances by themselves are almost unmeltable under ordinary conditions, combined in the right proportions they yield a very fine glaze at temperatures ranging from 2000°–2400°F.

As for the needs of White County artisans, all three oxides were readily available in only two or three basic raw materials: calcium oxide in either wood ashes or slaked lime rocks, and silicon dioxide and aluminum oxide in ordinary pottery clay.[4] Generally speaking, the wood ashes or slaked lime served as the glaze's "fluxer," or melting agent, while the clay became the "binder," the material that controlled the temperature at which melting occurred. In some instances, not enough silica was present in local clays to prevent excessive running, so potters would add sand or powdered glass to their mixtures to achieve this end.

It is certainly true that the use of impure raw materials greatly limited the potters' ability to control certain properties in their finishes —notably, color and texture. Proportions and firing temperatures were also limiting factors. Because of these circumstances, considerable variability exists even within categories of alkaline glazes. It is, nevertheless, possible to discuss here the more general attributes of the different glazes.

Ash Glaze

At one time, ash glaze was the most widely used glaze in White County. Local potters found it relatively easy to prepare and also found pleasing its translucent brown or green appearance.

In making ash glaze, the potter ground together wood ashes and clay *settlin's*—the latter a fine reddish silt collected locally. Cheever Meaders preferred using oak ashes in his glaze mixture, although he acknowledged the suitability of other hardwood ashes. Pine ashes were sometimes employed, better materials lacking, but they tended to flow off of the vessel (to "puddle") during firing and had to be fixed with an extra measure of settlin's. This, in turn, had its limitations, since "the more settlin's you use, the harder it is to melt in the kiln."

Periodically, local farmers would bring slaked ashes to the shop, a by-product of home soap-making, and Cheever was always happy to get these. Through "slacking," as Arie called the process, the lye was leached out, and the ashes, as a consequence, did not burn her husband's hands as they ordinarily might have: "I've had to grease and doctor his hands a many a time—[the lye] used to crack your hands."

Unslaked ashes also were said to endanger the newly glazed ware by causing the clay body to *draw* during drying. This last problem was recognized by other potters in the vicinity, including Guy Dorsey: "After it'd glaze, you had to handle that ash glazing pretty easy till you got it in the kiln, because that ash glazing somehow nearly rotted that clay. . . it'd break just like everything. But after it's burned, it's all the same."

Around 1908, approximately the time when Ball jars were being introduced into the area, the Meaderses began adding glass fragments to their ash glaze. This was done largely to make up for a deficit of silica in the glaze mixture—a potential source of trouble since it could cause premature melting—but as an added benefit produced a shinier ware surface. During the early years, this material was very scarce, according to Cheever Meaders: "They'd pick up every little piece they could find anywhere. You didn't get much glass back then." Although Cheever once profited from someone else's disaster when a "Ball wagon" overturned in his neighborhood, mostly he depended on his farmer friends to save their broken jars and bottles.

Ash glaze remained Cheever's favorite until his death. Because of the eroded condition of his glazing rocks in later years and because of the arduous labor involved, he turned at length to using substitute

ingredients. Calcium carbonate "whiting" plus a mix of Albany Slip and pottery clay replaced the stoneground glass and settlin's and were combined with the usual sifted ashes from the kiln. The resultant glaze approached the appearance of the earlier finish and is still being used by Cheever's son, Lanier.

Lime Glaze

Tarp Dorsey, in Cheever Meaders's estimation, consistently employed the "best glaze of them all," the lime glaze: "He'd use nothing else but that lime glaze, and he'd make some good pott'ry. It was that glaze he put on it, would make it endurable, make it hold, no seepage. He made pott'ry hold just like bottles."

In most respects, lime glaze was identical to ash glaze, except in the substitution of one calcium oxide (slaked lime) for another (wood ashes). As a result, this glaze burned to a finish that ranged from light gray to camel color instead of dark brown or mossy green.[5]

The Dorseys were in the habit of journeying over to the Walker lime quarry in adjoining Habersham County, some twenty-five miles distant, to gather up wagonloads of the bluish rocks. Back home, they burned the accumulation in their kiln firebox to speed its decomposition. Once crumbling set in, they then shoveled the rocks out of the furnace, placed them on boards, and poured water over them. During the slaking (or *slacking*) process, according to Guy Dorsey, the lime rocks "would go to smoking and smoke just exactly like something that caught a-fire." Eventually, they were reduced to powder.[6]

Cheever Meaders experimented a bit with lime glaze, although he apparently never used the finish to any great extent. In his glaze mixture, he combined three measures of slaked lime with one measure of pottery clay and another of "pretty white sand" that he scooped up where it drifted in the woods between the pottery and the Leo post office. He ground his materials two or three times through the glazing rocks to reduce all of the particles to the same consistency.

Flint Glaze

Another Dorsey specialty, flint glaze, combined slaked lime, pottery clay, and pulverized flint rocks. Like lime glaze, flint glaze melted at a very high temperature—around 2300°F—which was the source of its durability. The resulting ware surface came out ivory or light golden green in color. Once again, Cheever Meaders experimented briefly

with this glaze, purchasing preprocessed flint dust from a distributor in Wheeling, West Virginia. According to brother Q., he would sometimes add glass to his mixture to alter the temperature at which the glaze flowed.

Iron Sand Glaze

Finally, an alkaline glaze associated locally with the Craven family was called iron sand glaze. The mixture combined wood ashes, settlin's, and a dark red sand to produce a matte brown or rust finish unlike any other in the White County potters' inventory. When Cheever made this glaze, he collected his iron sand from a ditch about four miles from the shop. According to Q., the family mixed three measures each of iron sand and settlin's with an unspecified measure of ashes. Cheever's wife, Arie, noted that ground glass was sometimes added as well.

Albany Slip and Other "Patent" Glazes

Before 1895, the glazing process for White County potters was a time-consuming operation involving the collection and tedious preparation of unrefined local materials. This situation changed dramatically with the introduction into the region of Albany Slip. An unadulterated river clay found in areas of upstate New York, it had the advantage that it could be applied directly to the ware without any advance straining or grinding. The result was an opaque reddish or chocolate brown glaze that was not altogether unpleasing in appearance.

There is some disagreement among Meaders family members as to the circumstances surrounding Albany Slip's arrival on the local scene. As Cheever Meaders recalls, the family first received word of the glaze while traveling through Banks County in 1895 or 1896:

> I remember how we got the address of it. My oldest brother, Wiley, Pa, and myself was coming from Banks County driving a team of mules. He'd been down to his sister's twelve to fourteen days building a house. And we come back up by the Hewell Pottery down there, and Old Man Hewell was telling Pa and Wiley about it and giving them the address [of the distributor].

Q. Meaders has this contrasting account:

> Our neighbor [who] lived right up the road here was named George

> Pitchford, and he saw the advertisement in the paper and wrote to the company at Albany, New York, for particulars. And they furnished him the particulars, and from that address, why, we was all ordering Albany Slip glaze. And that was in 1896–97, along in there. And then there was another pottery shop over here, Mr. Dorsey, and he got to using it, too.

Both accounts clearly point to the fact that Albany Slip was rapidly disseminated throughout the region within a short time of its arrival. It seems, in fact, that nearly all of the local potters were experimenting with the new glaze, ordering large barrels of the material from the M.V.B. Wagoner Company at Albany, New York. Enthusiastic proponents of Albany Slip included members of the Pitchford family, Daddy Bill Dorsey (probably the Dorsey cited by Q. Meaders), plus Little Bill Dorsey and his brother, Bob. Tarp and Williams Dorsey, apparently resisted using the patent glaze until around 1920, and then used it only as an adjunct to their lime and flint glazes. According to Williams's son, Guy:

> It had been used a long time before we ever commenced it. They learned over there at our place that they could sell it about as well and burn it hard with a whole lot less work [than the older glazes]. You handle one of those old-time glazing mills all day long and it's pretty bad on you. [So] we got to ordering that Albany Slip. It come in big barrels, and you take and go to soaking it, and the first thing you know, it'd just work up and be plumb fine. It didn't need no grinding, and it made a pretty jar, too.

For their part, the Meaderses saw both advantages and disadvantages in using Albany Slip. In support of the patent glaze, Q. offered, "All you had to do was just wet it up and get it the same consistency that we wanted and dip ware in it—or baptize it, as the Baptists call it—always enough would stick on the ware to glaze it."

Cheever, on the other hand, had serious reservations. A common complaint was that Albany Slip was not as reliable as the alkaline glazes in sealing fissures (*blow-out holes*) and other imperfections during firing: "We'd stay with that old glaze because we'd work a clay that had some grit in it and little particles of wood and the like of that. Well, if you use that ash glaze on it, it'll run and fill them places up. But the Albany Slip wouldn't do that. You've got to have a clay that's got nothing in it to put that Albany Slip on; if you don't, your pott'ry will leak." Moreover, Cheever found that the patent glaze tended to

melt at a relatively low heat—around 1800°F—quite a bit lower than the vitrification temperature of the stoneware clay. The result was that a high percentage of the Albany Slip-glazed vessels left the kiln with underburned bottoms.[7]

It is, of course, possible that the alkaline glazes with their translucent appearance, their earth tones, and their interesting drip patterns simply looked better to the Meaderses than did the rather drab Albany Slip. In the final analysis, however, appearance seems not to have been as vital a concern as utility. In Arie Meaders's assessment: "Well, we didn't think about it that way. Just so we got it on there so it would stay, where it'd hold water."

In any event, the Meaderses did find some use for the patent glaze and, in later years, when the quality and availability of Albany Slip began to decline, ordered a similar glaze material mined in Michigan. Unlike the earlier product, which burned to a brown or reddish finish, *Michigan Slip* produced a dark black surface.

One experiment with Albany Slip remains to be mentioned. According to Cheever Meaders, on at least one occasion (the exact date is not known) the family combined salt-firing with Albany Slip glazing. On that occasion, Cheever burned a kiln load of patent-glazed vessels in the normal fashion, then allowed the kiln to cool slightly. Directly, he shoveled rock salt into the firebox, where it vaporized and reacted chemically with the first glaze. The result was "some of the prettiest, yellowest ware you ever seen."

Q. Meaders also recalls such an experiment. In his telling, the family glazed the ware first with a patent material (probably Albany Slip) imported in 400–500 pound barrels from the Alfred O. Ernest Company, South Amboy, New Jersey. Each barrel cost $2.00 and sufficed to coat several kiln loads of ware. "We'd make up a vat with that and glaze the ware in it, just that alone. And then when we put it in the kiln and fired it so it got to a certain heat—say 2200°—then we wouldn't put in no more wood for a while. And when the heat began to cool down, we'd throw salt in there on that. Just common salt and it would produce a *white glaze.*"

While this procedure has been described elsewhere as having been attempted by southern potters, it seems to have had no lasting impact on the Meaderses' operation.[8] Damage to the kiln through repeated salt-firing (the salt coats the interior walls of the structure and makes any succeeding firing of nonsalt-glazed ware exceedingly risky) must

surely have influenced the Meaderses' decision to abandon the experiment. In any event, it has not been revived during the modern period.

Bristol Glaze

Another commercial glaze material, Bristol Glaze, was introduced to White County potters by the Brown family during the early 1920s. A mixture of feldspar, whiting, and zinc oxide, it normally produced a translucent white or gray finish upon firing. Cheever Meaders incorporated Bristol Glaze around 1925 in his already growing inventory of glazes. To match the material to the vitrification temperature of his clay body, he sometimes had to add local pottery clay for a binder.

In 1935 or thereabout, Cheever produced a number of small vases and pitchers in an obvious attempt to cater to a growing demand for curio items. Surviving examples of these have a cobalt blue band painted around their centers and are overglazed with a light green or yellow finish—a mixture of Bristol Glaze and pulverized lime.

More recently, Arie Meaders has used Bristol Glaze to coat some of her art pottery. For her animals, for example, she first limned in the details with zinc, chrome, or lime-oxide paints ordered from a supply house in Draytonville, New York. She then glazed over these with the patent finish.

Lead Glaze

Mostly because of its toxic properties, lead glaze found little favor with the Meaderses. Cheever ordered some of the material through a local paint store in 1937 or 1938, having read about it in a trade journal. He discovered soon after, however, that it was unsuitably matched to his stoneware, puddling rather than adhering to the clay body. In later years, Cheever occasionally added white lead to a number of his other glazes to lower their melting temperature. He also found that red lead could be used for small decoration, although it had to be mixed with flint dust to prevent excess running. Neither practice continues at present in his son's work.[9]

Spar Glaze

In an effort to substitute commercial for indigenous materials in the preparation of a useful alkaline glaze, Cheever Meaders during the 1950s began to manufacture spar glaze. This finish combines prepulverized feldspar, calcium carbonate "whiting," and Albany Slip and

burns to a light or dark green color depending on the proportions of ingredients used. Although the Meaderses considered spar glaze to be an effective replacement for their favorite ash glaze, its constituents are actually closer to those in lime glaze.

A flower crock made by Cheever Meaders in the 1950s is inscribed CHEEVER MEADERS/CLEVELAND GEORGIA/MOSSSY CREEK GREEN in apparent reference to the spar glaze. This rare signature piece may have been Cheever's attempt to capitalize on the new glaze by associating it with his pottery. But Arie Meaders thinks the "Mosssy Creek Green" appellation was coined by tourists: "They'd call it [the spar glaze] green and it wasn't green. It was a clear glaze, transparent." She feels all of the concern only confused her husband, though the unmistakable inscription on Cheever's vase leaves this interpretation open to question.

Arie herself used the spar glaze for some of her earliest pieces of art pottery. Cheever used both it and unadulterated Albany Slip for his later face jugs. For his part, Lanier Meaders coats the larger share of his ware today with spar glaze, which he finds is a reasonable approximation of an older, homemade finish. Nevertheless, he would like to return to making ash glaze when it is feasible to do so.

Kilns

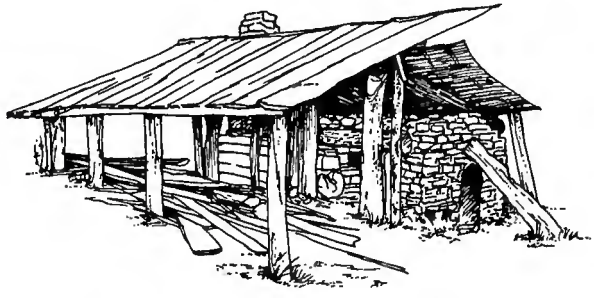


Figure 44a. *Cheever's kiln, 1967.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

Lanier Meaders's kiln, a long, low affair covered by a *shed*, sits in the yard by the ware shop. The ruins of a second, older kiln built by Lanier's father in 1954 and last burned in 1967 lie off to the other side of the yard closer to the road (fig. 44). Except for minor structural differences, both kilns function similarly, and both would be identified by the family as *railroad tunnel* (or simply *tunnel*) *kilns*.

The latter designation is clearly descriptive of the furnace's low rectangular profile and arched-over top. Although kilns varied somewhat in size, a typical White County structure measured about fifteen feet long and seven feet wide, with a ware capacity around 400–450 gallons. Lanier likes to call his kilns "downdrafts" by virtue of their raised floors (a foot or more above ground level) and sunken fireboxes; technically, however, they are more properly updraft kilns, inasmuch as none has a subterranean chamber through which heat can be drawn under the ware bed.

It is fortunate that Cheever's kiln had not been demolished before this study was undertaken, for it affords a look at an interesting design variation. In most respects the two kilns are similar: both are built completely above ground, and both have equivalent dimensions and ware capacities. Cheever's kiln is different in its being situated against an earthen embankment at the *upper end* (the chimney end), whereas

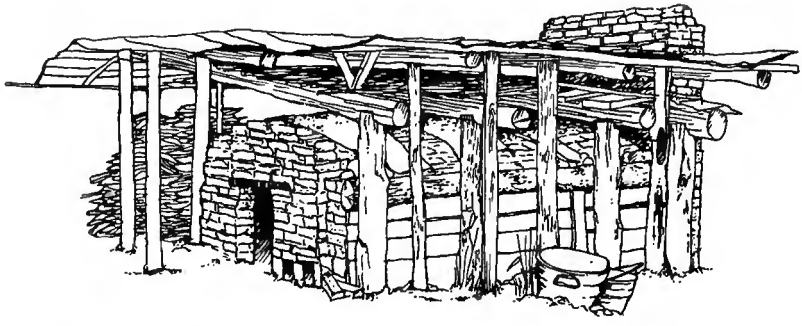


Figure 44b. *Lanier's kiln, 1979.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

Lanier's stands clear in the yard. This does not seem to affect the overall functioning or accessibility of either. Rather, the main difference between the two is the placement of the loading port. Cheever's kiln opens for loading and unloading at the *lower end* (the firebox end), a location which, in most respects, makes good sense, as it is much less complicated building the door here rather than through the chimney (fig. 45). It also makes loading a fairly simple task. A problem occurs with unloading, however, since a person entering the kiln must crawl over a still-smoldering firebox—an uncomfortable task. Apparently the older Meaders appropriated this design from his uncle, Daddy Bill Dorsey, who constructed a similar kiln early in the century. Beyond this, it is not clear how widespread this variation was among White County kiln builders.

As noted, among Lanier's modifications, when he built his own kiln in 1967, was the repositioning of the doorway through the chimney end (fig. 46). He also departed from tradition by adding oil furnace blowers to his kiln; these entered through two *draftholes* at the base of the firebox and were ignited with an electric arc. After "studying on" the idea for a while, Lanier convinced himself that the convenience and time savings more than justified the $150 expense the alteration required. At the time, he commented, "It works better, it's less work, and you can turn the oil on and off and leave it; you don't have to stay with it."[1]

Problems developed, however. Soon after adding the furnace blowers, Lanier found that the kiln did not seem to heat evenly from one end to the other. Moreover, the kiln was attaining a maximum

Cheever's kiln, 1967. (Illustrations by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

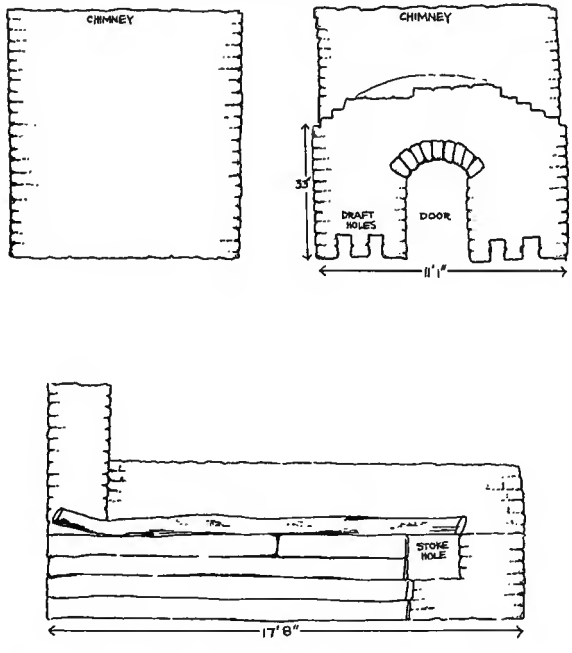


Figure 45a. *Exterior.*

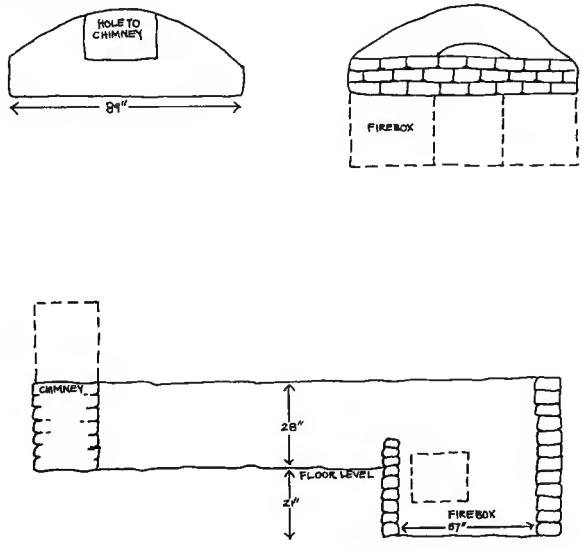


Figure 45b. *Interior.*

Lanier's kiln, 1968. (Illustrations by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

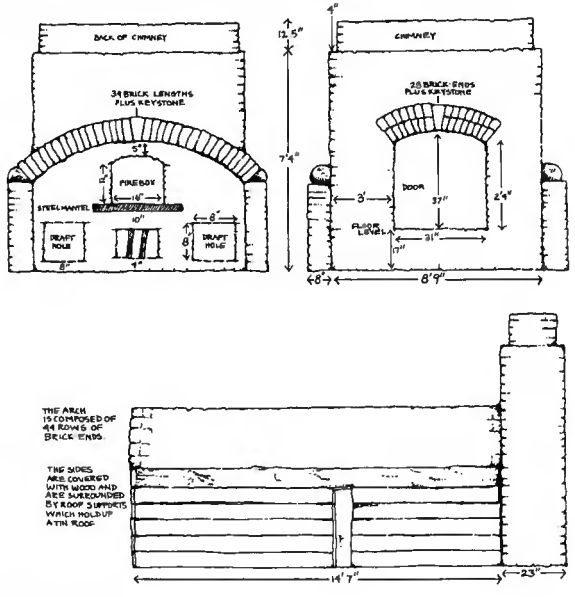


Figure 46a. *Exterior.*

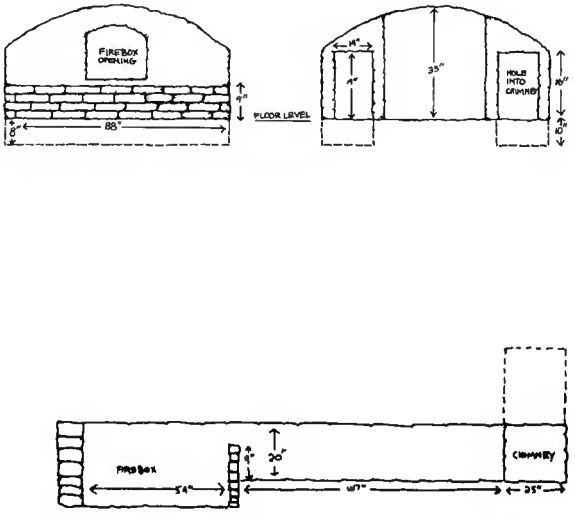


Figure 46b. *Interior.*

temperature of only 1700°F—considerably less than the 2000°–2300°F needed for stoneware firing—and required a supplement of wood fuel along with the oil. Because of these difficulties, and with the price of fuel oil climbing steeply, Lanier abandoned the innovation. Today he has returned to wood firing exclusively.[2]

Other Kilns

Although the majority of kilns built in White County were of the railroad tunnel variety, local potters, including the Meaderses, experimented with other designs. John M. Meaders, Cheever's father, built a large capacity walk-in kiln around 1906 on the advice of an Atlantan, Lee Daniel. The Tarp and Williams Dorsey shop also built a similar *stack kiln* around this time with the assistance of a neighbor, Loy Skelton.

The presence of these atypical structures was probably related to the importing of Albany Slip glaze into the county, since the new glaze material lent itself well to ware stacking, where the runny, unpredictable alkaline glazes did not. Remembers one family member, "You could glaze in that Albany Slip and rub the top of a churn off and set another'n on top of it, could burn two with that glaze where you're just burning one now." Stacking proved to have its problems, however, as the bottom layer of vessels next to the firebox tended to overheat and crumble, toppling its load into the flames. Thus the venture was short-lived: "That was expensive; we lost too much work."

Q. Meaders acknowledged seeing another variety of kiln in White County in 1925 or 1926, although it is not clear whether any Meaders built such a structure. These *groundhog kilns* were similar in shape to the railroad tunnel kiln but were partially buried in the sides of hills or in the ground for the insulation this arrangement afforded.[3] (The name "groundhog" is a descriptive one, likening the subterranean placement of these kilns to an animal burrow.) Common in other parts of the South, including the Jugtown district of west-central Georgia, they were apparently rare in White County.

If the Meaderses ever built any groundhog kilns of their own—Q.'s account is not clear on this point—they apparently reverted in time to the more familiar railroad tunnel kiln. In any event, Q. found much that was desirable about the groundhog: "It would hold the heat better, and it was easier to get around. It was a better kiln than any we ever had."

Rebuilding a Kiln

Pointing to his father's old ware furnace in 1967, Lanier Meaders had this comment: "That kiln there is about had it. A person wouldn't think so, but now it is. I know the shape that it's in. I know what it's built of. But, for some reason a kiln never burns good until it's just ready to fall in. When it reaches that stage, it just does better work than it has any time before."

Perhaps the most onerous task facing a potter is rebuilding his kiln. Besides interrupting his work routine, complete reconstruction invites any number of difficulties. First, there is the sheer effort involved: the work at best takes several days and requires several tedious operations. Then, there is the expense, since building materials are relatively costly. Even with the new kiln in place, problems of uneven heating and dripping mortar often plague such structures.

As a result, many potters like Lanier attempt to prolong the life of their existing kilns through a partial rebuilding of damaged parts every two or three years. Yet few kilns endure for more than seven or eight years of constant burning before they are glazed over on the inside and dangerously unstable structurally. A total rebuilding is thus the only answer.

Through the early years of this century, kiln-building was a common activity in White County. Potters usually built their own kilns, and they also made their own bricks. A number of the Dorseys were especially adept at the latter task.

Homemade bricks were fashioned in wooden hand molds about eight inches square and four inches deep. Fifty thousand or more of the clay and straw bricks were stacked together in honeycomb fashion (leaving a hand-width *draft* between bricks) to create one great, long *brick kiln*, fifty to seventy-five feet on a side. Fifteen fireboxes (or "eyes"), each about thirty inches high and eighteen inches broad, were positioned at ten-foot intervals and were connected by deep flues to a large central chimney. Burned very slowly to a cherry-red temperature of 1500°–1600°F, the brick kiln would stay hot for a month's time, all the while consuming around forty cords of wood. Once the process was completed, the makeshift structure was disassembled, and the bricks were dispersed to local potters and contractors. "They went just like apples a-falling off a tree," according to Q. Meaders.

Today, Lanier Meaders can buy all the bricks he needs from a

building supply concern in Gainesville: "They ain't firebricks, but a good Georgia clay brick." He also recycles bricks from wrecked buildings around Cleveland. Compared with the old handmade variety, these modern bricks are slightly less than half as large: 8" x 3" x 2" (fig. 47).

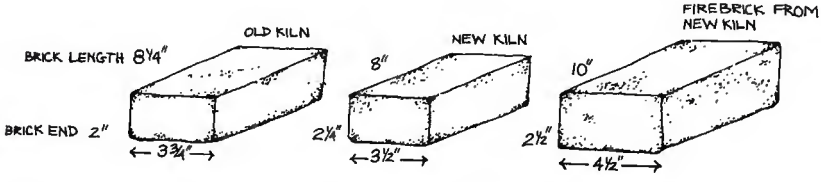


Figure 47. *Left to right: Bricks from Cheever's and Lanier's kilns.* (Illustration by Daphne Shuttleworth.)

In rebuilding his kiln, a potter would normally try to salvage what materials he could from his earlier structure. It was a common practice as well to rebuild on the old foundation. However, when Lanier constructed his new ware furnace in 1967, he was loathe to spend the time cleaning up around his father's kiln, so he simply changed locations, setting his foundation on ground closer to the ware shop.

Both Lanier and his father made their initial calculations of floor space by positioning a few pots in place on the ground and estimating the total capacity of the kiln from that. Earlier potters might have used a long stick as a unit measure for determining wall lengths and widths, but the Meaderses did the rest of their figuring using a carpenter's square. As one family member cautioned, "You can be off half-a-brick, and that's gonna throw your arch out."

After measurements were made, the Meaderses built up brick sidewalls to a height of about eighteen inches. Just inside these, they planted temporary wooden supports upon which to set five crescent-shaped *arch boards* (fig. 48). According to Lanier's uncle, Q., "It's best to have that many, because between those arch boards, the lumber might swagger [sag] a little bit, and that would leave a swag place in the arch."

With the supports in place, the builders laid a six-inch-wide plank lengthwise over them, starting along one side. Atop the plank, they laid three rows of bricks. Working from the opposite side, Cheever and Lanier repeated the process: a plank was laid over the arch boards and covered with bricks. Subsequent boards were then positioned and bricked over, working from both sides toward the top of the arch. Finally, along the centerline of the kiln, a row of *wedge bricks* was laid to support and *key* the weight of the entire arch when the infrastructure (the arch boards and supports) was removed: "We always tried to key that kiln so tight till that arch would raise up off of those boards." The task accomplished, the builders finally grabbed hold of the plank ends on which the bricks formerly rested and pulled them out. They then removed the arch boards and supports.

Final tasks included building the floor, front end, and chimney. The entire job of rebuilding took the Meaderses four full days—two days to complete the sidewalls and arch and two days to fashion the front end, floor, and chimney. Later, father and son added the characteristic lean-to (or *shed*) over the top to protect the structure from the elements.

Figure 48. *Forms for kiln arch construction.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1978.)

★ ★ ★ ★

The Meaderses are among the very few remaining folk potters in the United States—perhaps even the most traditional in both practice and outlook. Thus it is difficult not to be astonished by their pottery at first encounter, for only a few hours' drive separates it from downtown Atlanta, Georgia. This separation, however, as we have seen, is one of time as well as space.

Because of the Meaderses' adherence to nineteenth-century ways, we tend to elevate them to the status of "folk artists." For the most part, however, their work is not a personal expression of some deep inner urging as, say, the apocalyptic images of the visionary painter, but rather a sturdy craft with utility, not artistry, in mind.

Further, we view people like the Meaderses as somehow immune to change, content to let events in the world at large pass them by. Indeed, we embrace the quilter, chairmaker, or potter precisely because of his or her disinclination to "keep up with the times." And yet even this is something of an illusion. As indicated throughout this monograph, the Meaderses have been buffeted by social and economic forces beyond their controlling. For example, in some ways the present success of the youngest Meaders, Lanier, completes a circle, inasmuch as it is principally a new clientele of folk-art collectors that encourages him to work in mostly traditional forms.

The Meaderses at times seem bothered by the inordinate attention paid them. They are happy that success has its financial rewards, but recognize its disadvantages as well. In a recent interview, Lanier confided to one researcher:

> . . . I just don't want to have to put up with the notoriety! People have always come and bothered me right at the most inopportune time. I've wondered if everybody in the world is that way. When I go to sit down to eat, then somebody comes and starts rapping on the door. People come hunting this place and hunting me. I'm getting to where I don't know him [meaning himself]: "Well [I tell them], he's up there someplace. ."[4]

Lanier has a quality present in many residents of the Old South—a kind of laconic view of the world that combines both humor and introspection. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain his true feelings about those who visit him. That he does profit in some measure by such experiences seems clear, as he told one of the authors, "There

are kinds of people out there I never even knew were out there."

In conclusion, it is fortunate that a family like the Meaderses still practices its endangered craft, for it affords the opportunity to study folk artisans and their activities in the workplace without having to rely exclusively on historical documents, oral accounts, and artifacts to reconstruct such events. Our especial attention to ethnographic context has been in part a response to those researchers whose point of departure has been the object, leaving the maker obscured and unimportant. While much can be learned from the scientific collection and organization of artifacts, we believe that it is not only important but paramount to restore the craftsman to his rightful place in the process.

Figure 49. *Arie and Lanier Meaders.* (Photo by Ralph Rinzler, 1978.)

Appendix A: Meaders Genealogy

Two branches of the Meaders (Meader, Meador) family, originating possibly in southern Dorset or Devon, England, were located in America's Northern and Southern Colonies by the mid-seventeenth century. The Georgia Meaderses are most closely related to the latter branch, although details about family members through the period of the American Revolution are very sketchy.[1]

The first Meaders to concern us is one John Meaders, a Virginian and Revolutionary War veteran, who relocated with his wife, Mollie Justice, to Fort Norris, Franklin County, Georgia, between 1790 and 1800. Franklin County was created in 1784 as a haven for ex-soldiers and their families and was early populated by Bushes, Garrisons, and Turks, as well as Meaderses, all of whom clustered in the vicinity of the Indian fort for protection. Mollie Meaders apparently preceded her husband in death and is interred near Arp, Banks County, Georgia; John Meaders seems to have removed to Tennessee in later life and may be buried there.

John and Mollie Meaders had nine daughters and one son, Barnabas ("Barna"). Barna Meaders (1783–1861) and his wife, Jane Garrison (1785–1879), spent their lives farming in the Fort Norris vicinity. They had ten children including a son, Christopher.

Christopher M. Meaders (1808–1886) and his wife, Candis Garrison (1817–1893), spent their early years at Fort Norris but traded their property in 1848 for land in adjoining Habersham (later White) County, where the last five of their twelve children were born. Although Christopher M. Meaders achieved some success as a "planter" in the new locale, his fortunes were reversed during the Civil War. Two sons lost their lives in the conflict, leaving only one male heir, John M. Meaders.

John Milton Meaders (1850–1942) was a jack-of-all-trades. Besides farming, he was a blacksmith, a carpenter, and a wagon freighter. He also founded the first Meaders pottery with his six sons during the winter months of 1892–93. These sons were Wiley Christopher (1875–1965), Caulder (1877–1947), Cleater James (1880–1934), Casey (1881–1945), Lewis Quillian (1885–1976), and Cheever (1887–1967). John M. Meaders and his wife, Martha Hannah ("Mattie") Lambert (1848–1896), also raised three daughters, none of whom was involved in the pottery business. A sister, Frances Luvinia ("Fanny") Meaders, married William Fowler ("Daddy Bill") Dorsey, a neighbor potter.

Cheever Meaders (1887-1967), the youngest son of John M. and Mattie Meaders, was the last of the six to work at the pottery trade, maintaining the original family ware shop until his death. Of four sons (and four daughters) born to Cheever and his wife, Arie Waldrop (b. 1897), only one, Quillian Lanier (b. 1917), continues as a potter. The other three sons—John Rufus (b. 1916), Reggie (b. 1919), and Edwin (b. 1924)—have, for all purposes, abandoned the trade.

Quillian Lanier ("Lanier") inherited the family business upon his father's death in 1967 and today continues as the sole Meaders potter at that site. A bachelor, Lanier is the last active link in the family chain.

Appendix B: Interviews

The following interviews are the result of fieldwork by Ralph Rinzler (February 1976), Ralph Rinzler and Robert Glatzer (May 1967), Ralph Rinzler and Mike Herter (October 1976), Ralph Rinzler and Kate Rinzler (May 1978), and Robert Sayers (July/August 1968 and January 1979). The original tape recordings, along with the edited transcriptions have been deposited with the archives of the Office of Folklife Programs, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

1967

Cleveland, Georgia	February 13	Ralph Rinzler with Cheever Meaders
	May 2	Ralph Rinzler with Cheever Meaders
	May 2	Ralph Rinzler with Lanier Meaders
	May 3	Ralph Rinzler with Cheever Meaders
	May 6	Robert Glatzer with Cheever and Arie Meaders
	May 7	Ralph Rinzler with Lewis Quillian Meaders
	May 7	Ralph Rinzler with Cheever Meaders
Phone Interview	November 16	Ralph Rinzler with Arie Meaders*

1968

Cleveland, Georgia	July 29	Robert Sayers with Guy Dorsey and Lanier Meaders
	July 29	Robert Sayers with Lanier Meaders
	July 30	Robert Sayers with Lanier Meaders
	July 31	Robert Sayers with Lanier Meaders
Hall County, Georgia	August 1	Robert Sayers with Harold Hewell and Lanier Meaders
Cleveland, Georgia	August 2	Robert Sayers with Guy Dorsey and Lanier Meaders

1976

Cleveland, Georgia	May 9	Ralph Rinzler with Lanier Meaders
	May 9	Kate Rinzler with Arie Meaders

1979

Cleveland, Georgia	January 13	Robert Sayers with Lanier and Arie Meaders*

*These interviews were not taped.

Appendix C: Film Sound Track Transcription

"The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters" was filmed in the late spring of 1967 in White County, Georgia, using an Arriflex for sync-sound shooting and a Bolex for material to be used for intercutting. All sound was recorded on a Nagra II at 7.5 i.p.s. with an A.K.G. D18 microphone.

C - Cheever
L - Lanier
R - Ralph

Cheever and view of home place.

C: My name is Cheever. . . Cheever Meaders. I's born in 18 and 87, the twenty-second day of January, up there in that house. . . right up there, old house place. . . and pretty good fellow yet. I think there's a whole lotta work left in my hide yet. . . I'm feeling better. . . .

L: Well, I reckon my grandfather started it. He helped do it, anyhow. I think some of my dad's older brothers was the ones that actually started it, and he took it up. But he was just, oh four or five years old when they started it, and he just grew into it. . . and that, I reckon I done the same thing.

Still photographs of family
1) John M. Meaders
2) Cheever and two children
3) Cheever and family in front of kiln.

My first memories were of this place here. Watching my dad, I guess I was just still crawling around on all fours. I used to get up on this wheel, get up on this top wheel, this head block they call it, my older brother'd spin me around on it. He'd turn the wheel and I'd set on it. Look kinda foolish now looking back to things like that.

Digging the Clay

View of clay pits where Lanier and Edwin are digging clay.

L: In any direction that we want to go within two miles of this place, we get most any kind of clay we was looking for. You'll usually find three or four different kinds of clay in one clay pond. Course it is. . . we have to dig it in the fall of the year when the water in the ground is at a low tide. There's no clay that I ever found that would work by itself that come from a pond. You've got to go to two or three more anyhow and get the clay from them and mix it all together so it'll work good. I have five different kinds right there. Three of them is a yellow. . . four of them is a yellow clay and the other one is a blue clay. Mix two of them together, you still can't use it. Mix the other three with it, then it makes a good turning clay. You can go on with it.

Processing the Clay ("Grinding")

View of mule-powered pug mill.

L: Well, we call it a clay mill. It's for mixing the clay. . . we call it grinding the clay. You see the way these pegs are put in this staff going up and down, the way they're trimmed? They're flat on the bottom and kind of rounded off toward the top on the front side, and that gives the clay an uplifting motion, as the mule pulls this thing around. And as it comes up, it leaves a hole behind that peg, and the clay just rolls back in and just keeps it mixed up real good. It takes about an hour and a half to two hours to grind a mill in this with a mule, and that's enough to last about a day and a half for one man, if he wants to work at it. If he don't, he can make it last a week long.

Cheever leads mule around while grinding clay.

C: Come on, we'll keep going. Get some grass in a minute, come on. Come right on, boy. Getting tired? You ain't done nothing in a week. Looks like you wouldn't tired out too quick.

I'm used to grinding them with a mule, there. I never done nothing else. I just like it. It ain't as fast as grinding it with a machine, but I don't care anything about hurrying anymore. Gonna take my time from here out.

Lanier then empties mill, wedges clay into block, and carries it into ware shop.

L: Well I reckon this is the only place like this in the whole United States. Everything is gone modern, using machinery. Now, where else would you find an old mill to use a mule to it. . . and where else would you find a mule? Well, there's no reason to change it. I wanted to make a barn out of it, one time, but I got talked out of it no sooner than I mentioned it. I never did mention it again.

Weighing, Wedging, and Turning a Half-Gallon Pitcher

View of Cheever cutting off chunk of clay with wire, weighing it, and, while Arie wedges it, Cheever explains scale and use of ware he is about to make.

C: It takes about ten pounds to make a gallon piece, for a one-gallon jug or pitcher. That'd make a half, half-a-gallon size.

This weight here, that's for a four-gallon size. That's a pretty good churn, and they generally use them for milk churning, old-time churning with a churn stick. And then they use that four-gallon size for pickling beans, and kraut, beet pickles, and the like of that. And then we get down here to this five-gallon size. That five-gallon size is made for the same thing. Now, you take two five-gallon churns, and fill it up full of pickle

beans, you got ten gallons, and that there does a family almost through the winter. It wouldn't me, though.

R: What is that for, Mr. Meaders?

Cheever throws, centers, raises a pitcher, and removes it from wheel.

C: That is the gauge. That's to give me the thickness of the bottom. If the bottoms is too thin or too thick, they will crack in drying and then in firing. That's one thing you've got to watch, is the thickness of the bottoms. Used to make pott'ry this way, and they never would gauge the bottoms, and they lost all kinds of pott'ry in drying. If you left it too thick, be too heavy and likely to crack. . . cracks come in it, go plumb through it.

This clay works good. . . good clay, and every pull I make across it gets it thinner. I always like to make 'em thin enough. If they're too thick when you go to fire 'em, well, you don't have to run the fire as fast, you got to run the fire slower. If they don't they'll "fleek" (Cheever's pronunciation of flake), pieces blown out of 'em.

Now, he's finished up. I'm ready for cutting him loose.

Cheever explains and shows height gauge.

This is my measuring stick. This gives me the height of the pott'ry. This here first mark, here, twelve inches is about the height we run a one-gallon piece. Well then, we move up here a little further, two inches, to a two-gallon piece. Now, if I can pull it up to that and a little bit more and spread it out, it always holds what I marked it. Got no gauge for making the width of 'em, wide, but. . . I made so many I can just tell.

Wedging and Turning a Six-Gallon Churn

Lanier wedging at bench next to his wheel.

L: What I'm doing now is wedging the clay, getting the hard places out of it, knocking the air out of it.

Lanier scrapes wheelhead to clean it.

The main thing about turning a churn or any kind of a pot is learning how to center the clay on the wheel. Unless that is done to start with, well, you might as well not try it.

Lanier throws, centers, makes top portion of churn, and cuts it off, sets it aside. He opens the ball with "ball opener," pulls up cylinder, places top on cylinder, and blends two together.

You make the top on this first and cut it off and set it aside and use it later. It's just a habit I got into just watching my dad about forty years ago. His left arm is cripple, you know, and the elbow had been broke, and he couldn't bend it, and he couldn't reach the bottom of the churn, and it in that shape. But mine's not broke, and it's long enough to reach the bottom, but I just got in the habit of doing it. And I don't see any reason to change it now.

This rig makes the bottom and opens the ball out at the same time; ball opener I'd guess you'd call it. It would seem appropriate. Now, that's the bottom. . . which is about a half-inch thick right now. But when that's cut loose from that block, it'll be about five-sixteenths.

Well, you have to have a lot of determination. . . to get in, to start, it's discouraging when you first start. And a lot of people's gonna be disillusioned that's trying to learn it. I guess it would take about fifteen years for a person to get to where they can really learn it, really work at it. Of course, a man just starting out, try to make a living at it, he'll starve

to death. And if he owes anything, or in debt, he'll lose everything he's got. But if he worked for somebody else that knows what they're doing for about five or six years and then try it on his own, he'll usually make a success of it.

C: Well I make my churns in two pieces. That's a very common thing to a potter. They do that in order to get the top heavy enough for the churn to stand, to keep them from warping about in the drying. My brother, Wiley, the Browns worked down here for my Uncle Bill, just about all of 'em done that. I wouldn't make a big churn without it.

I don't know what's going to happen to the pott'ry interests through here. There's nobody a-learning. They's none of these young boys'll learn it at all. Ah, there's some of 'em did learn but they won't work at it. There's too much of something else for 'em to see. It's a... you get at that wheel, go to making... you've got to be there at that wheel. You can't get out here and look at the world a-passing by. I've got one boy, he was up here the other day, and he can make right pretty little stuff, make pretty pieces, but they're small. I don't know, some people can learn and some can't. I've seen boys come in here, and men, do everything they could to learn, and the more they'd do the less they know.

Lanier removes churn from wheelhead with lifters. Puts handle and ear on churn.

L: Well, I've got some things here that are called lifters. These things have been used... I know I'm the third generation that's using these same lifters.

Clay has to be somewhat softer to make a handle than it does for a churn. You have to stretch it out, like stretching

rubber.

C: I'd make right up around a hundred, right around seventy-five and a hundred gallons a day in big churns. And I don't believe I ever made two pieces alike, they'd be a little difference in them. But, I put my handles on alike, and the lifters on the churn. That's how I can. . . I can tell a piece of my pott'ry, if I was to see it in New York, just pass by and see it, I could tell it, except in a flower pot, they're made every way, you know, no certain shape for a flower pot, something to hold a little dirt in the bottom, and a hole and a flower set in it.

View of greenware drying in sun.

L: Well, you're trying to preserve the old things that has been, and things that are going out. When I go, this place will go with me, because they'll be nobody else left to carry it on. And without it, what they get here they can't get anywhere else.

MAKING ASH ("SHANGHAI") GLAZE— WOOD ASHES, LOCALLY DUG CLAY "SETTLIN'S", GROUND GLASS

C: Yes sir, that's the first thing that was ever used here for a glaze. Take three measures of ashes and one of the settlin's, mix it together.

Lanier digging settlin's in open field. He bags it and carries it home.

Gathers ashes and settlin's and pours water into mixture.

L: These settlin's are in a small place here. I think they used to be an old mill pond here, and this is the silt that settled into it. It has all kinds of minerals in it, come off of these old hills around here. It's mostly red clay is what it is.

C: We use some clay in the glaze, but now that clay won't melt by itself. I always

use wood ashes, something like that. Well, I had to be sure and get pure ashes.... Didn't, why I had nothing to melt. That there tin oxide in the ashes'd melt. Well, if you use ashes that won't melt, you got no glaze at all.

L: Well, the first thing we do is sift the ashes out, get the nails and rocks and one thing and another out of it. Then we go wet the settlin's. Use churns to measure it in; you use four- or five-gallon churns of the ashes, and you use two of the settlin's, mix them up, and strain them out, get the rocks and roots and one thing and another out of them, and then powder the glass. We use an iron rod and the metal container, we just pour it in it, any old fruit jars and broke window lites, or just anything that was glass.

C: Old Uncle Billy Pitchford, he used to use that glass powdered up, and there was several of them used it, but the glass was so scarce... they'd pick up every little piece they could find anywhere; you didn't get much glass back then. And as time come along, it got where I could use it; I expect it was about nineteen-hundred-and-eight, why, it pretty plentiful around.

Lanier pounds glass bits in oil pan of truck, using fence stake.

He adds glass to glaze mixture.

Lanier assembles the glaze rocks and grinds a batch of glaze.

L: You put it all together and mix it up and then run it through the rock. We use a glazing mill. It's something similar to a mill rock. This is the only one that I know of that's in existence anywhere.

Well, that's just a cross, just an iron cross. The underneath the top rock, it's chiselled out for that cross to fit up in it. The bottom rock has a hole down through the middle with an iron shaft coming up, and the top rock is right

down on top of that. . . . The way you adjust the weight of that rock is you lift this up just a little or, or let it down, whichever way it needs to go. There's a hole down through the middle of that top stone to let that stuff go down through it and get under that rock. Of course this is all done by hand. Sometimes a person don't want to do things and this is one of them.

Well, pottery like this, the way it's done, old way, it's not a thing in the world but just man-killing work from start to finish.

He immerses a jug in tub full of glaze.

The best glazes goes on the churns. The churns are used for processing food, and if you've got an inferior glaze on it and start pickling the beef in the churn, and your vinegar starts to dripping out, it ain't long, you've got a rotten can of beef. Best we ever use is that ash glaze. When you put it on a churn and fire it, it'll move just a little when it's melted. It'll run on the churn. But the commercial glaze, it just melts and that's it. It don't even move.

Firing the Ware

Lanier starts fire in kiln.

C: At one time, they used to be nine pott'ry shops here in White County. And all of them was in operation. And they sold everything they could make. Used to put up a lot of beans, see, to pickle 'em, and kraut, and milk, vegetables, all kinds, they had to put in this pott'ry ware, because they wasn't much of nothing else to put anything in, you know. Sold all the pott'ry they could make.

He bricks up front and builds up fire; flames are eventually seen leaping from kiln chimney.

L : But, that kiln there is about had it, it. . . I know the shape that it's in. I know what it's built of. But, for some reason a kiln never burns good until it's just ready to fall in. The front of it there can be bricked up at most any time. It can even be bricked up before the fire's even started in it. The only thing about it is to have enough draft to the front of the kiln to keep the fire going good. After you get the fire started, it takes about ten to twelve hours to temper this clay out, that's to keep it from busting and cracking when it gets too hot. A clay has minerals, such as sulfur and salt, that has to be cured out. You have to judge from the clay that you've been using and the glaze that you've been using. Then, you just keep building up the fire, you know, to a crescendo, and when you reach the peak on it, well, what you are really looking for then, looking at the top of the chimney, when a blaze begins to feather, begins to springle out, more or less like a branch on a tree, and it begins to turn rather white in place of red, well, when it begins to do that, it's time then to begin thinking about looking on the inside of the furnace and see what's happening, because it's just about the time, then, for you to quit.

I could no more stop this than I could fly an airplane. All of my movements, all of my work that I've done all of my life has led straight to this place right here. And every time I come about it, I get just a little bit deeper into it. I'm about so deep in it now that I can't get away from it.

Cheever inspects kiln load by peering through front with flashlight.

Kiln is loaded.

C: Well, I would farm a little, you know, not much, but I'd see to that pott'ry works. I enjoyed firing it, glazing it. Of course, I could make any piece of any size I want to, and any shape I want to. If I wanted to make a jug, I'd make one. If I wanted to make a pitcher, I'd make it. Flower pot, bowl, just anything of the kind. And then all them shapes that a potter puts out is in his head. . . every one of them. Yes sir, I enjoy working in that clay. And this handmade pott'ry is going to be gone after a while. You take it plumb outta existence, nobody to make it, and in ten years, people'd be wondering how that's made. "How'd them to make that? How's that piece pott'ry made? I just don't see how it's done."

C: (Plays a tune on the harmonica) That song was in the "Windows of Heaven" song book. I used to help singing too.

Glossary

Albany Slip: A riverine clay mined in New York State and used as a glaze material by folk potters throughout the eastern United States. Albany Slip was available to artisans in White County, Georgia, after 1895 or 1896.

Arch boards: Wooden supports used in kiln construction. These boards were contoured to the shape of the kiln arch and remained in place until the latter was "keyed" and could support itself.

Ash glaze: A variety of alkaline glaze, combining wood ashes, clay "settlin's," and sometimes glass fragments or sand. Also called "Shanghai glaze" by the Meaderses, this was and remains the family's favorite glaze.

Ball boy: In former times the potter's assistant whose task it was to prepare the clay balls and who also removed the finished vessels to another part of the shop for drying.

Ball opener: A simple wooden device which the potter employs to drill a hole in the center of his spinning clay ball. Attached by a hinge to the wheel crib, it is positioned to fall directly over the midpoint of the headblock. In addition to mechanizing the initial stage of the turning process, the ball opener also serves to gauge the bottom thickness in the finished vessels, since its action is halted half-an-inch above the turning surface. As a result, it is also sometimes referred to as a "bottom gauge."

Blast: A term descriptive of the internal condition of the kiln as it approaches peak temperature. "Blast" refers to both the intensity of the heat and the sheets of flame that sweep through the structure from firebox to chimney.

To "blast off:" To push the kiln to its maximum heat through a continuous feeding of wood fuel into the firebox. Blasting off usually follows a long period of "slow firing," during which the kiln's internal temperature is allowed to increase only gradually, and represents the final stage in firing before the kiln is allowed to cool.

To "block" the clay: The process of fashioning the raw clay from the ball mill into large oblong "blocks" for carrying into the ware shop. These blocks are either stored in plastic sheets (to preserve their moisture) or are immediately broken up into chunks, weighed, and balled for turning.

Blow-out holes: Imperfections in the clay body of fired ware, resulting from

the presence of air pockets, twigs, or other foreign matter not removed during balling. Such blow-out holes are sometimes sealed when melted glaze runs into them.

Blue clay: Of the several clays recognized by the Meaderses, "blue clay" (actually blue-gray in appearance) is considered to be the coarsest in texture but also the toughest and most resilient. Usually blue clay is combined with other clays to obtain an optimum turning material.

Bottom clay: Stoneware turning clay found in wet lowland areas of White County, usually about two feet below the surface of the ground. The term probably refers to the location of the clay and not its specific characteristics.

Bottom gauge: See "ball opener."

Box: The wood framework surrounding the potter's wheel. The box provides temporary shelf space for the artisan and also captures the clay slurry and water that escapes the turning surface.

Brick kiln: A temporary kiln formerly used by White County potters to manufacture their building materials. Brick kilns were constructed of the same clay bricks that, after firing, would be incorporated into the walls, floor, and arch of the ware kiln.

Bristol Glaze: A commercial glaze material combining feldspar, calcium carbonate whiting, and zinc oxide. Bristol Glaze was first brought to the attention of White County potters by members of the Brown family.

Broad-top pot: A wide-mouthed stoneware dairy crock which was produced in half-gallon, gallon, gallon-and-a-half, and two gallon sizes, the last size being the most common. Broad-top pots were also called "straight jars" or "straight-up jars" in recognition of their vertical profile.

To "burn" a kiln: The process of firing the ware following loading. Various stages in the burning cycle include "tempering," "slow-firing," "blasting off," and "shutting down."

Butter churn: One variety of churn which was commonly turned in three and four gallon sizes. Butter churns were usually fitted with a perforated wooden lid, the center hole accepting the handle of the dash stick.

To "center" the clay: The process by which the potter, using his hands, maneuvers the spinning clay mass to the exact center of the headblock prior to "opening" the ball.

Charm: The slightly flared lip on the mouths of stoneware fruit jars. A string

is tied around the charm to secure the cloth and paper covering over the vessel's lid.

Chicken jug: A stoneware poultry fountain formerly made by the Meaderses and their neighbors. Normally turned in the same gallon size as whiskey jugs, chicken waterers were produced in two types. The first, and older, simply had a pinched out lower lip for a drinking trough. A later variety added a walled dish to collect water, as it dribbled out through a hole at the jug's base. In both versions, the mouth of the jug was usually stoppered with a ball of clay.

Chip: A wooden contouring tool employed during the turning process. Cheever Meaders' chip was hand-carved from a splinter of heart cedar, although he had also fashioned chips from dogwood and maple. Lanier Meaders used a chip (rechristened "scrape") made from sheet steel, which he found was more durable when used on a metal turning surface.

Churn: A general term for a wide variety of food-processing and storage vessels. The most popular sizes were three and four gallons, although some churns ranged as large as six gallons.

Cream riser: A low, wide-brimmed ceramic pan used in separating cream from whole milk. While the "milk pan" type of cream riser was the more common in White County as well as in other parts of the South, the Meaderses also produced a second (possibly later) variety, which looked very much like a squat pitcher. Cream risers were turned in one-, two-, and three-gallon sizes.

To "cut" a top: The process of turning large vessels in two pieces. For production potters like the Meaderses, effort (if not time) was saved by pulling cylinders up in two stages.

Draft: The flow of oxygen through the kiln while a burning is in progress.

Drafthole: Small openings at the firebox end of the kiln left unblocked during the burning to allow a controlled flow of oxygen through the structure. These are generally closed off, once the firing ceases, to protect the kiln's contents from cooling too rapidly.

To "draw" the clay: Said by the Meaderses to be the damaging effect of ash glaze on unfired pottery. The family was careful about handling glazed ware before burning because of problems with cracking and "rotting."

Ear: The looped handle on churns and other large vessels (often accompanied by a slab "lifter").

Face jug: A decorative whimsey produced by the Meaderses and their neighbors, originally for entertainment and now for commerce with collectors.

To "fire" a kiln: See "to 'burn' a kiln."

Firebox: A kiln's fire pit which, in the case of the railroad tunnel kiln, may be slightly lower than ground level. The term may also refer to the opening through which wood fuel is fed into the fire pit.

Flint glaze: An alkaline glaze combining slaked lime, pottery clay, and pulverized flint rocks. Flint glaze was most often associated among White County potters with the Tarp Dorsey family.

Fruit jar: A small-mouthed preserving crock used mainly for canning fruit. Fruit jars (also called "fruit cans") were turned in quart, half-gallon, and gallon sizes. Because of competition from glassware, ceramic fruit jars declined in use early in the present century.

Glaze mill: Cheever Meaders's "glazing rocks," which consisted of a circular runner laid atop a roughly square-shaped bottom stone. As the runner was turned, raw glaze solution was poured through a hole in its center and ground between the two rocks.

Glazing box: A deep wooden box formerly used by Cheever Meaders to apply glaze to his ware. Presently, Lanier rolls his vessels in a galvanized laundry tub full of glaze solution.

Glazing rocks: See "glaze mill."

Groundhog kiln: A type of stoneware kiln popular in parts of Georgia and elsewhere in the South. While similar in size and shape to the railroad tunnel kiln favored by the Meaderses and their neighbors, the groundhog kiln was partially buried beneath the ground or was backed into a hillside.

Headblock: The turning surface of the potter's wheel. Early headblocks in White County were of wood, but were superseded by a cast metal variety. Cheever Meaders used a wooden headblock throughout his life.

Height gauge: A measuring stick fixed to the wheel "box." The Meaderses pulled their cylinders up to a prescribed mark on their gauge and thus ensured uniformity along this dimension.

Iron sand glaze: An alkaline glaze combining wood ashes, clay settlin's, and a dark iron-laden sand. This glaze was locally associated with the Craven family.

Jar pile: Technically known as a "waster dump," the Meaderses jar pile is

simply an accumulation of broken and defective vessels in the pottery yard.

To "key" the arch: To lay in a series of wedge-shaped bricks along the centerline of a kiln's arch. These bricks support the weight of the arch.

Kraut jar: A type of churn with a wide mouth and turned-out lip, or "flange," used to secure a cloth covering. Made primarily for keeping cabbage kraut, these large jars were customarily turned in five- and six-gallon sizes.

Lead glaze: A type of clear glaze used very often in other parts of the country on red earthenware pottery, but rarely used on White County stoneware.

Lifter: A device used to lift vessels from the turning surface onto the wheel crib or a waiting board. Pottery lifters were made in two varieties: wood-handled lifters that were used in pairs and a metal caliper type that was hinged.

Lifter: The handle on churns, usually joined by a looped "ear" on the opposite side.

Lime glaze: An alkaline glaze combining slaked lime, pottery clay, and, sometimes, white sand. Lime glaze, like flint glaze, was a specialty of the Tarp Dorsey family.

Lower end: The firebox end of the kiln.

Michigan Slip: A commercial glaze material used by the Meaderses when its celebrated predecessor, Albany Slip, became unavailable. A darker material than Albany Slip, Michigan Slip burned to almost a black finish.

Mud mill: The Meaderses' name for their mule-drawn clay mill. The apparatus consisted of a large wooden tub with a revolving central shaft. Set into the latter was a series of flat blades which coursed through the raw clay as the post was pulled around by the mule. The Meaderses abandoned the use of their mill in 1967 in favor of an electric grinder.

To "open" a ball: The process, following centering, of drawing the clay away from the center of the ball and upward into a cylindrical shape. The Meaderses used a mechanical contrivance known as a "ball opener" to create the initial hole in the ball's center.

Patent glaze: The term widely given to Albany Slip. This usage is probably akin to "patent medicine," meaning some commercial preparation distributed to a mass market.

Peep hole: A small orifice in the kiln wall, through which the potter can observe the progress of his burn. Often, the kiln's attendant will intention-

ally leave a single brick unchinked with mud, so that it can be withdrawn as needed.

Pitcher: A standard ware form turned in half-gallon, one-, and two-gallon sizes. The larger pitchers were used for buttermilk. Pitchers were Cheever Meaders's favorite (and, with his customers, most popular) product, as they were sufficiently interesting to turn and yet not too heavy to pull up on the wheel.

Pottery yard: The area surrounding the ware shop, where outdoor activities, including clay grinding, glazing, and burning, take place.

To "pull up" a vessel: The development of a vertical cylinder using hand and chip. In general, the cylinder is pulled up (or "run up") by the potter in two or three separate smooth movements to preserve its contour and balance.

To "put up" farm produce: To preserve fruits and vegetables in brine, vinegar, or sorghum syrup. Generally, to "put up" has the same meaning as to "can."

Railroad tunnel kiln: A simple rectangular kiln with a firebox at one end, a chimney at the other, and a broad, low arch. Unlike groundhog kilns, railroad tunnel kilns are normally situated wholly above ground. Most have a ware capacity in the 400–450 gallon range.

Raw: Unprocessed, as in raw (unpugged) clay and raw (prefired) ware. Lanier Meaders also uses the terms "greenware" and "wet ware" in the same sense.

To "run up" a vessel: See "to 'pull up' a vessel."

Scrape: Lanier Meaders's steel contouring tool. See "chip."

Setters: Ring-shaped supports fashioned by Cheever Meaders to keep his wife's art pottery from coming in contact with the sandy floor of the kiln. During the early 1940s, he made dish-shaped "setting pots" for a similar purpose. Neither support resembles the three-footed "stilt" used by many contemporary potters.

Settlin's: A clayish silt mined behind the Meaderses' homestead and used as a binder in ash glaze.

To "set" the kiln: To load the kiln with ware prior to burning.

Shanghai glaze: See "ash glaze."

Shed: A wood and sheet metal covering atop the kiln used to protect the structure from the elements.

To "shut down" the kiln: To cease firing. At this point in the burning, no more fuel is added, and the draft holes are sealed to slow the flow of oxygen through the structure.

To "slack" lime: The Meaderses' term for slaking, the process of watering lime rock to bring about a chemical change. The resulting powder (calcium hydroxide) is used in lime glaze.

Slop jar: A ceramic bed pan, sometimes also called a "thundermug."

Slow-firing: After an initial "tempering" with green wood and splinters, a kiln is "slow-fired" with better fuel for about six hours, then allowed to burn uncharged overnight. Only after the ware and kiln have been uniformly heated is the burning allowed to proceed to its maximum temperature.

Spar glaze: A glaze used by Cheever Meaders during the 1950s. Combining powdered feldspar, calcium carbonate whiting, and Albany Slip, spar glaze is employed today by Lanier Meaders as a convenient substitute for ash glaze.

Spider: A cross-shaped iron cleat on the underside of the glaze mill's runner which accepts the end of a vertical axle.

Stack kiln: A kiln the ceiling of which is high enough to accommodate more than one layer of ware. For a brief period when the Meaderses and their neighbors were first experimenting with the relatively nonviscous Albany Slip glaze, they attempted ware-stacking in high profile kilns of this type.

Stoneware clay: A dense, high-firing potter's clay generally containing large amounts of silica. The term "stoneware" also applies to burned and glazed vessels manufactured from stoneware clay.

Syrup jug: A sorghum syrup receptacle made in several sizes from a half-gallon through three gallons.

To "temper" the kiln: The Meaderses' term for the initial stage in the burning process, when a small kindling fire is set in the firebox to "cure" moisture from the ware. Tempering may also include the succeeding period of "slow-firing."

Trial pieces: Whole vessels or clay slabs glazed like the production ware and placed with the latter in the kiln. These trial pieces were situated where they could be "hooked out" of the kiln through a small opening and thus inform the potter of the condition of his ware during the burning.

Tunnel kiln: See railroad tunnel kiln.

Turning lathe: A form of treadle-powered wheel used by White County potters.

Upper end: The chimney end of the kiln.

Ware shop: The Meaderses' two-room shop, inside of which ware is turned and stored away for drying.

To "weather" the clay: The Meaderses characteristically leave their clay piled up in the pottery yard or next to the clay diggings for a period of weeks or months to "weather." The value in this procedure is not known.

To "wedge" the clay: The process, much like kneading bread dough, of working the clay ball free of air pockets. Before turning, the ball is repeatedly sliced over a taut wire and the two halves kneaded together until a homogeneous mass is achieved.

Wedge brick: The bricks along the centerline of the kiln's arch which "key" or support its weight.

Whiskey jug: A popular variety of stoneware jug with a small tapered mouth to seat a corn cob stopper. Most of the Meaderses' whiskey jugs were turned in the one-gallon size.

White glaze: An unusual finish created by salt-firing over Albany Slip glazed ware. Q. Meaders recalls that the family experimented with this procedure early in the century.

Yellow clay: A medium-textured stoneware clay containing less "grit" than blue clay. Cheever Meaders said that Albany Slip adhered better to ware turned from yellow clay than it did to blue clay, possibly because it did not adequately seal all of the fissures left in the coarser substance.

Bibliography: Published Sources on Southern Stoneware Potters and Potteries

Anonymous. "The Meaders Pottery Today: Still Going Strong," *Foxfire* 2 (3-4) (1968): 7-9, 134-135.

Auman, Dorothy Cole, and Charles G. Zug, III. "Nine Generations of Potters: The Cole Family," in *Long Journey Home: Folklore in the South*, ed. Allen Tullos (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Southern Exposure, 1977), pp. 166-74.

Bridges, Daisy Wade, ed. *Potters of the Catawba Valley, North Carolina* (Charlotte, N.C.: Mint Museum of History, 1980).

Burrison, John A. *Georgia Jug Makers: The Story of Folk Pottery in a Southern State*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1973.

_____. "Alkaline-glazed Stoneware: A Deep South Pottery Tradition," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 39 (4) (1975): 377-403.

_____. *The Meaders Family of Mossy Creek: Eighty Years of North Georgia Pottery* [exhibition catalog] (Atlanta, Ga.: Georgia State University Art Gallery, 1976).

_____. "Folk Pottery of Georgia," in *Missing Pieces: Georgia Folk Art 1770-1976* [exhibition catalog], ed. Anna Wadsworth (Georgia Council for the Arts and Humanities, 1976), pp. 24-29, 66-103.

_____. "The Living Tradition: A Comparison of Three Southern Folk Potters," *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 7 (1-2) (1978).

_____. "Clay Clans: Georgia's Pottery Dynasties," *Family Heritage* 2 (3) (1979): 71-77.

_____. *Brothers in Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery* (Forthcoming).

Byrd, Joan Falconer. *A Conversation with Lanier Meaders* [exhibition catalog] (Cullowhee, N.C.: Western Carolina University, 1980).

Counts, Charles, and Bill Haddoz. *Common Clay* (Atlanta, Ga.: Drake House/Hallux, 1971).

Coyne, John. "A Dynasty of Folk Potters: The Meaderses of Mossy Creek," *Americana* 8 (1) (1980): 40-45.

Crawford, Jean. *Jugtown Pottery: History and Design* (Winston-Salem, N.C.: J. F. Blair, 1964).

DuPay, Edward L., and Emma Weaver. *Artisans of the Appalachians* (Asheville, N.C.: Miller Printing Company, 1967).

Eaton, Allen H. *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*. (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1937; reprinted by Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1973).

Ferrell, Stephen, and T. M. Ferrell. *Early Decorated Stoneware of the Edgefield District, South Carolina* [exhibition catalog] (Greenville, S.C.: Greenville County Museum of Art, 1976).

Greer, Georgeanna H. "Preliminary Information on the Use of Alkaline Glaze for Stoneware in the South: 1800–1970," in *The Conference on Historic Site Archaeology Papers 1970* (5) (1971): 159, 161-62.

_____. "Groundhog Kilns—Rectangular American Kilns of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 6 (1-2) (1977): 42-54.

_____. "Alkaline Glazes and Groundhog Kilns: Southern Pottery Traditions," *Antiques* 61 (4) (1977): 42-54.

Greer, Georgeanna H., and Harding Black. *The Meyer Family: Master Potters of Texas* (San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press for the San Antonio Museum Association, 1971).

Guilland, Harold F. *Early American Folk Pottery* (Philadelphia, Pa., and New York: Chilton Book Company, 1971).

Hough, Walter. "An Early West Virginia Pottery," *Report of the U.S. National Museum for the Year Ending June 29, 1899.* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1901).

Malone, James M., Georgeanna H. Greer, and Helen Simons. *Kirbee Kiln: A Mid-19th Century Texas Stoneware Pottery.* Office of the State Archaeologist Report 31. (Austin, Texas: Texas Historical Commission, 1979).

Ramsay, John. *American Potters and Pottery* (Boston, Mass.: Cushman and Flint, 1939; reprinted by Tudor Publishing Company, New York, 1947).

Rinzler, Ralph. "Cheever Meaders: North Georgia Potter (1887–1967)," in *Forms upon the Frontier*, eds. Austin Fife, Alta Fife, and Henry Glassie. Utah State University Monograph Series 16 (2) (1969): 77-78.

Sayers, Robert. "Potters in a Changing South," in *The Not So Solid South: Anthropological Studies in a Regional Subculture*, ed. J. Kenneth Morland. Proceedings of the Southern Anthropological Society 4 (1971): 93-107.

Schwartz, Stuart C. "Traditional Pottery Making in the Piedmont," *Tarheel Junior Historian* 17 (2) (1978): 22-29.

_____. *North Carolina Pottery: A Bibliography* (Charlotte, N.C.: Mint Museum of History, 1978).

South, Stanley, ed. *The Conference on Historic Site Archaeology Papers 1970*, vol. 5, pt. 2. (Columbia, South Carolina, 1971).

Sweezy, Nancy. "Tradition in Clay: Piedmont Pottery." *Historic Preservation* 27 (4) (1975): 20–23.

Vlatch, John M. *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press for the Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978).

Zug, Charles G., III. "Pursuing Pots: On Writing a History of North Carolina Folk Pottery," *North Carolina Folklore Journal* 27 (2) (1979): 34-35.

Notes

Preface

Notes

1. Byington, Robert H., ed. *Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folklife. Smithsonian Folklife Studies No. 3.* (Los Angeles, Calif.: California Folklore Society, 1978); reprinted from *Western Folklore* 37 (3) (1978) for the Smithsonian.

2. Rinzler, Ralph, and Robert Sayers. *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters. Smithsonian Folklife Studies No. 1.* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980).

3. Vennum, Thomas, Jr. *The Ojibwa Dance Drum: Its History and Construction. Smithsonian Folklife Studies No. 2.* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, [in progress]).

4. McCarl, Robert S. "Occupational Folklife: A Theoretical Hypothesis," in *Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folklife. Smithsonian Folklife Studies No. 3.* (Los Angeles, Calif.: California Folklore Society, 1978), pp. 3–18.

5. Ibid., p. 6.

6. Wheat, Margaret, and Katherine Fowler. *Tule Technology: Northern Paiute Uses of Marsh Resources in Western Nevada. Smithsonian Folklife Studies No. 4.* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, [in progress]).

7. Green, Archie. "Industrial Lore: A Bibliographic-Semantic Query," in *Working Americans: Contemporary Approaches to Occupational Folklife. Smithsonian Folklife Studies No. 3* (Los Angeles, Calif.: California Folklore Society, 1978), p. 91.

8. Mead, Margaret. [Introduction] "Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words," in *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, ed. Paul Hockings (The Hague and Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1975), pp. 4–5.

Introduction

Notes

1. Henry Glassie. "William Houck, Maker of Pounded Ash Adirondack Pack-Baskets," *Keystone Folklore Quarterly* 12 (1967): 23-54.

2. Alan Lomax, "Cinema, Science, and Cultural Renewal," *Current Anthropology* 14 (1973): 477.

3. E. Richard Sorenson, "A Research Program in the Study of Changing Man," *Current Anthropology* 8 (1967): 443-69.

4. For a fuller discussion of this history, see Luc de Heusch, "The Cinema and Social Science," in *Reports and Papers in the Social Sciences* 16 (Paris: UNESCO, 1966), pp. 44-63, and also Emilie de Brigard, "The History of Ethnographic Film," in *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, ed. Paul Hockings (The Hague and Paris: Mouton Publishers, 1975), pp. 13-43.

5. Sorenson, pp. 449-50.

6. Ernest and Walter Lee Cornelison, Rev. Herman Perry, Bybee, Kentucky; Norman Miller, Sprott, Alabama; Norman Smith, Lawley, Alabama; Davis Brown, Arden, North Carolina; Evan Brown, Arden, North Carolina; A. R. Cole, Sanford, North Carolina; Waymon Cole, Nell Cole Graves, J. B. Cole Pottery, Seagrove, North Carolina; Ben Owen, Plank Road Pottery, Seagrove, North Carolina; Melvin Owens, Seagrove, North Carolina; Vernon and Bobby Owens, Jugtown Pottery, Seagrove, North Carolina; Zedith Teague Garner, Robbins, North Carolina; Walter Owen, Pine State Pottery, Sanford, North Carolina; E. J. Humphries, Marshall Pottery, Marshall, Texas; H. Hancock, H. and T. Pottery, Asheboro, North Carolina.

7. Allen H. Eaton, *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1973), pp. 212-14.

8. Cited by French ethnocinematographer, Jean Rouch, at a session on urgent anthropology, Ninth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnographic Sciences, Chicago, Illinois, September 5, 1973.

Chapter I: Meaders Family

Notes

1. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are taken from interviews conducted by the authors and by Robert Glatzer and Kate Rinzler. A complete listing of these interviews is included as Appendix D.

2. John Ramsay, *American Potters and Pottery* (1939), had previously speculated that the family was working as early as 1830. The section in Ramsay entitled "Checklist of American Potters" carries the entry: "Cleveland (Walkerville), Waite [sic] County, Georgia. Meaders Pottery, c. 1830–1900; alkaline-glazed ware with distinctive pitted glaze, large jars; no mark; pottery at Leo, Georgia operated by same family." The two shops to which Ramsay refers are almost certainly those of brothers Cleater and Cheever Meaders, both of whom are mentioned in Allen H. Eaton, *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands* (1973).

3. John Burrison, *Georgia Jug Makers: The Story of Folk Pottery in a Southern State* (1973), p. 317.

4. One of John Milton Meaders's descendents has described him thus: "He's said to be one of the strongest men that ever been in this country. Well, he ought to have been; he never hurt hisself. But he was one of the generation that should never have been. He was the 'baby generation' of the Civil War. He was just a baby when slavery ended. He was just completely lost. He couldn't do nothing; he didn't know how to do nothing; he didn't want to do nothing; and he didn't do nothing. He was never a potter. The only thing he ever did was help my dad's oldest brothers put up the building there. I don't guess he'd ever have done that if he hadn't thought he'd be in their way. They said that when John died, he wanted them to bury him setting up. Well, he liked to set better than any man [Dad] ever knowed in his life."

5. Another version of the story gives the stonemason's name as Wiley Hudgins.

6. In order of birth, John M. Meaders's sons are Wiley Christopher (1875), Caulder (1877), Cleater James (1880), Casey (1881), Lewis Quillan, or "Q." (1885), and Cheever (1887).

7. See John Burrison, *Georgia Jug Makers* (1973), and *Brothers in Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery* (forthcoming) for an expanded history of the White County trade.

8. One of Cleater Meaders's sons, C. J. Meaders, Jr., has recently resumed pottery-making on a part-time basis.

9. See John Jacob Niles, *The Appalachian Photographs of Doris Ulmann* (Penland, N.C.: The Jargon Society, 1971) for an engaging account of his travels with the photographer.

10. See Anonymous in *Foxfire* (1968): 7–9, 134–135, for more details about the Smithsonian order as well as general information about the family and the pottery.

Chapter II: Work Processes

Notes

1. Nancy Sweezy of Jugtown Pottery, Seagrove, North Carolina, notes that "short" is the term used to describe clay that is not sufficiently plastic for turning. By combining short clay with other fine-grained clays, plasticity is added; however, if the clay becomes too plastic, it will shrink too much or will crack during the drying and burning stages. (Personal communication)

2. Piecing had the advantage of allowing the potter to maintain relatively uniform sides all the way up to the vessel's rim. This was a critical area in large, cumbersome storage churns that might be moved about frequently, or in butter churns that were required to suffer continuous blows of a dash stick.

3. Nancy Sweezy likens the making of a handle to milking a cow, the handle being actually pulled out of the butted chunk of clay. (Personal communication)

4. "Settlin's," or "sedlin's," is probably short for settlings.

5. After Cheever's death, Lanier placed a metal pot atop the runner stone. Corresponding holes in the bottom of the pot and the center of the runner allowed for a continuous flow of glazing solution into the mill, as he turned the apparatus.

6. This "rotting" effect can probably be attributed to the high alkaline content of the wood ash which, when used in an unslaked form, also burned Cheever's hands. Nancy Sweezy points out, however, that any raw glaze, including Albany Slip, is somewhat caustic and can damage the clay body.

7. It is noteworthy that, while the Meaderses often had difficulty attaining and holding a sufficiently high heat to complete their firing, they never seem to have been troubled by too much heat—especially the bizarre phenomenon known to other southern potters as "superheating." Louis Brown, an Arden, North Carolina, potter and descendent of the Browns mentioned in the preceding chapter, describes this condition as occurring mostly when the air is saturated with moisture, as during a "rain-like fog:"

> You can have a kiln that's burning pretty and almost like a lightbulb inside and have that kind of condition to hit it. It will turn that lightbulb to almost a reddish color. It's not the kiln cooling; it's the air that it's taking in. What effect it's having first is right at the firebox where it's going in. And then it'll gradually creep up into the kiln. If you're under those conditions you watch your kiln and leave it open and let your heat back out, because if you don't, your kiln's liable to superheat—just keep heating. And there's no fuel in it. It just gets hotter and hotter and hotter. If it does that, it'll damage your kiln; it'll melt them firebricks right out.

Lanier Meaders agrees that humidity has an effect on his kiln ("It gives it a different color"), but, when told this story, he commented that his heat has "always been too much under control." He added, "It ought to get out of control once in a while. Maybe it'd get hot!"

8. The setters also bring to mind an early family experiment with dish-like "setting pots" just after World War II. While these eventually cracked and were abandoned, the new setters appeared to be functioning without mishap.

9. The Meaderses never bisque-fired their ware before glazing, although the practice was known to Cheever: "Well, it would give [the clay body] a good shrinkage, you know, and kill everything in the clay out. And then you're pretty sure to get the color you want if you know the glaze you're mixing." He found through trials, however, that local clays would not withstand two firings and further felt that the practice was impractical so far as time was concerned.

10. Lanier Meaders estimated that the ash glaze would melt at about 2000°F, while other glazes, like lime and flint, melted at somewhat higher temperatures. His kiln reached a maximum of 2200°F: "You can put a piece of steel in there before it starts to burn, and when it's finished up, that steel will be melted and run over the place. The reason I know, I tried it."

Chapter III: The Ware

Notes

1. In 1970, Lanier's younger brother, Edwin ("Nub"), established his own ware shop on an experimental basis, apparently impressed by Lanier's success. Edwin turned a few jugs and pitchers plus an assortment of odds and ends—all marked EM—before abandoning the effort as a "crazy idea;" see John Burrison, *Georgia Jug Makers*, p. 382.

2. See Harold F. Guilland, *Early American Folk Pottery* (1971), for a discussion of stylistic changes in American stoneware pottery.

3. Iceboxes were in turn replaced by electric refrigerators after 1950.

4. Lard was superseded by commercial corn-oil products only during the last two decades.

5. Little luck was had preserving Irish potatoes by canning or drying, so farmers would usually store them unaltered in a dugout bank or cellar. Arie's father, having neither, piled his potatoes in the garden atop an earthen mound, which kept rain water from puddling underneath. The potatoes were then covered with a layer of dry grass or hay, a second layer of dirt, and finally a wooden shed. Beds of cabbage heads were similarly stored on a covered mound for the winter. Barring frost damage, both the Irish potatoes and the cabbage heads generally survived intact until spring: "They tasted a little earthy sometimes, but we didn't mind that."

6. Dried apples were incorporated in cobblers and, for those special occasions when the preacher dropped by, in fried "moon pies." The family also made "beer" by soaking dried apple peelings in water and afterwards adding syrup. In Arie's telling, the homemade brew "was good, most especially when the cows were dry."

7. Pumpkin butter was also stored in fruit jars after being cooked with sorghum syrup and spices. Generally, however, pumpkin meat was cut into half-inch rings and hung on poles in the house to dry. Sacked up after drying, it was later restored by cooking in water. The Waldrops ate pumpkin with butter or bacon drippings or sometimes as an accompaniment to spareribs.

8. Hard soap was not commonly available until 1910 or 1911, according to Arie, and her family did not begin using it until they moved to White County in 1912. At this time, they also began to purchase Gold Dust washing powder, though "it wasn't much better than just sand and baking soda mixed."

9. Burrison, *Georgia Jug Makers*, p. 306, notes that as early as 1849 potters were supplying the standardized containers to whiskey distilleries.

10. Nancy Sweezy remarks that Cheever's work is "heavy;" i.e., that it is typical of someone used to turning only large pieces. She adds that such potters usually find it difficult to create small ware, as the technique is very different (some utilitarian potters saying it makes them nervous to try delicate work). That may explain why Cheever was hesitant to try his hand at smaller pieces and refused to create items with tourist appeal. (Personal communication)

11. In the early days, smaller vessels were considered more expensive to manufacture than larger ones, since they brought less money but took up proportionately more floor space in the kiln; today, this situation is somewhat reversed, because the small artware sells well at a relatively higher price.

Chapter IV: Glazes

Notes

1. Southern alkaline glazes are discussed at length in Burrison's "Alkaline-glazed Stoneware: A Deep South Pottery Tradition" (1975) and in *The Conference on Historic Site Archaeology Papers*, ed. Stanley South (1970).

2. Cheever used "Shanghai glaze" interchangeably with "ash glaze," as did his brother, Q., who acknowledged that the former term had widespread currency with White County potters. The earliest published source on "Shanghai glaze" is Ramsey (1939), p. 213, who linked the term to the Meaders family.

3. Two recent books on Asian stoneware glazes are recommended reading: Joseph Grebanier, *Chinese Stoneware Glazes* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1975), and Nigel Wood, *Oriental Glazes: Their Chemistry, Origins and Re-Creation* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1978).

4. Wood, *Oriental Glazes*, pp. 9-10, comments on the advantage of adding stoneware clay to the glaze mix: "Not only do clay and ash, and clay and lime glazes make good chemical sense, they also solve the practical problem of applying the glaze to the raw pot and making it stay there as the pot shrinks, expands, and then shrinks again during the processes of drying and firing—the clay in the glaze 'keeps step' with the clay of the pot."

5. In comparing lime and ash glazes, Wood, *Oriental Glazes*, p. 9, also observes, "The commonest fault with glazes made from a mixture of ordinary clay and ash (from a technical rather than an aesthetic point of view) is that they tend to be too low in silica—the combined silica from the two materials being not quite enough to achieve the 'ideal' glaze, with the result that the glazes tend to run badly if overfired. A greatly improved glaze mixes limestone, or slaked lime, with highly siliceous clays." This is clearly the reason why White County potters often found it necessary to add powdered glass to their ash glaze and also why they judged lime glaze to be more "endurable."

6. In a 1933 issue of *Antiques* magazine, editor Homer Eaton Keyes paraphrases a letter from one of the Meaderses' neighbors, W. E. Wylam of Cleveland, Georgia: "The glaze is known as Walker glaze, from the fact of its derivation from a deposit of impure lime near Clarkesville, Georgia, known as Walker lime. This lime mixed with a local pottery clay was ground by hand in a small stone mill and applied to the ware. Its impurities doubtless account for the color variations observed.... Batches of this glaze are still fired. But as an extremely high temperature is necessary, a dark-brown glaze [probably ash glaze] which requires slightly less heat is generally substituted." (See "Perplexities in Pottery," *Antiques* 23 [2]: 54-55.)

7. Although it is not clear to what extent each of the Meaderses adopted Albany Slip into his glaze repertoire, some indications are given in a catalog retrospective of the family's work: John Burrison, *The Meaders Family of Mossy Creek: Eighty Years of North Georgia Pottery* (1976). Of the ware illustrated, those vessels attributed to Wiley, Casey, and Q are lime- and ash-glazed. Only Cleater's ware, made during the 1920s, is coated with Albany Slip. Cheever's early work is not represented in the catalog, although we know from family accounts that he utilized the patent compound from time to time—both alone and in combination with other materials. His preference, however, was for the alkaline glazes.

8. This technique is mentioned in Ramsay, *American Potters and Pottery*, p. 90, and in Burrison, "Alkaline-glazed Stoneware," pp. 380-81, without reference to the Meaderses.

9. Lanier had this comment when queried about lead glaze: "I would have no reason at all to use it unless somebody wanted something fixed up special. Then I would mix up something else and tell them that was it; they wouldn't know the difference."

Chapter V: Kilns

Notes

1. In redesigning his kiln for oil-burning, Lanier omitted the traditional stoke hole through the left sidewall. When he found it necessary to supplement his oil fuel with wood, he chunked the kiln through the center of the lower end. However, because the firebox was narrower from front to back than it was from side to side, he was limited to using five-foot slabs of wood for fuel rather than eight-foot slabs.

2. When we returned to the Meaders pottery in 1979, we discovered that Lanier had again rebuilt his kiln—this time in the image of his father's, with the loading port through the firebox end. Obviously, in the final analysis, this model proved the easier one to build and maintain.

3. A Hall County potter, Harold Hewell, notes that, instead of raising the floor above ground level and lowering the firebox for draft, as in the tunnel kilns, groundhogs were characteristically built on a slant, rising from lower to upper ends to produce a natural rising heat from firebox to chimney.

4. Byrd, Joan Falconer. *A Conversation with Lanier Meaders* [exhibition catalog]. (Cullowhee, N.C.: Western Carolina University, 1980).

Appendix A

Note

1. This abbreviated genealogy is compiled from information supplied by Arie Meaders of Cleveland, Georgia, and by Dr. Jessie Mize of Athens, Georgia. Published sources include: Leila Ritchie Mize and Jessie Julia Mize, *Threads of Ancestry* (Athens, Ga.: privately published, 1956); John Burrison, *The Meaders Family of Mossy Creek* (Atlanta, Ga.: Georgia State University, 1976); and *History of Banks County, Georgia, 1858-1976* (Author and publisher unknown). Other sources are: Daniel Burton Meador, *Genealogical Records of Some Members of the Meador Family Who Are Descendents of Thomas Meador of Virginia* (Fairhope, Ala.: privately published, 1968); and Granville Meader, *John Meader of Piscataqua: His Ancestors and Descendents* (Baltimore, Md.: Gateway Press, 1975).

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1981—330-311