

Artifacts

Most people probably do not think of pieces of bricks, bottles and wood as artifacts. Yet, these are precisely the sorts of things that can help archaeologists better understand historic sites like Bailey's Dam. Most of the things archaeologists have found at the site support written or illustrated accounts of how the dam was built. Yet, some of the objects paint a more detailed picture of the past.



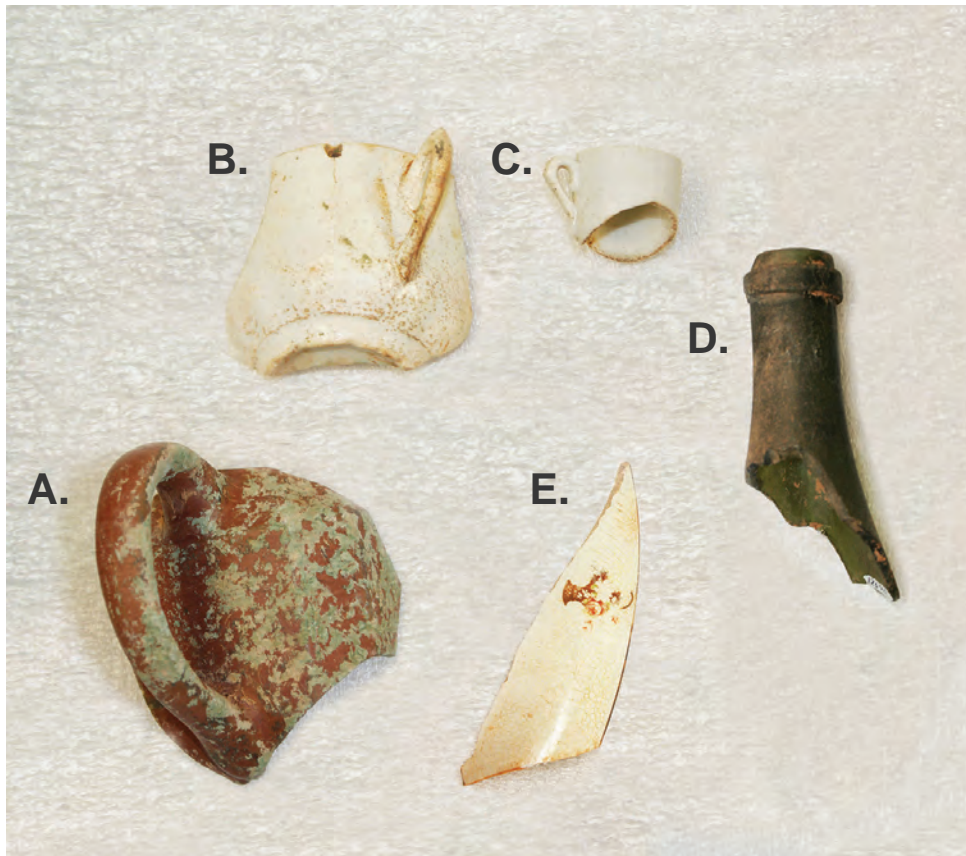
Brick and Stone

According to the historical drawing, stone was used to fill Bailey's "cribs of stone." However, archaeologists found that clay and sand were actually used to fill the cribs. Soldiers seem to have simply packed rocks and brick on top of the cribs. Archaeologists found both rock and brick in the crib area. The rock at the site could have been in the river naturally. However, only people could have put the bricks there. The bricks used in the crib dam came from buildings in Alexandria.



Ceramic and Glass

Researchers found some Civil War-era ceramic and glass fragments on the banks of the river. Archaeologists found a stoneware jug fragment (A), and porcelain teacups (B and C). One of them seems to have been for a child or perhaps a doll (C). Glass objects include a green bottleneck (D). They also recovered a fragment of a china plate (E).



Metal

Archaeologists found metal objects along the east and west banks of the river near the dam. Hinges, an axle, nails and metal straps were recovered. They did not find the iron rods used to hold the cribs together that Bailey noted in his illustrations and reports. Bailey and others wrote that machine scraps were used as fill. However, archaeologists did not find any machine parts. They did find several iron spikes, however. These spikes may have originally been used to support a boat mast like the one archaeologists found that had been used to build the tree dam. (Left to right) Metal hinge, axle, curved metal hinge, and an iron spike.



Wood

Archaeologists found wooden posts and tree trunks along the river floor. On the western bank, these timbers are planks and beams originally taken from buildings in Alexandria. These are the remains of Bailey's "cribs of stone."

On the eastern bank, archaeologists found pine and hardwood tree trunks. Soldiers had removed the branches from the trunks and cut the tips of the trees to a point. Based on their position, they must have placed them in the water with their tops downstream. Yet, historic illustrations had shown the trees placed with their tops facing upstream. A boat mast was also found among the logs that made up the dam on the east bank of the river. This supports the idea that people used any materials they could find to build the dams.



(Left) Exposed section of the tree dam. The cordage used to bind the trees together did not survive, but the molding it left behind can be seen at the bottom of the timbers. Photo courtesy of Coastal Environments, Inc.

(Lower left) Archaeologists discovered this octagonal timber in the tree dam section of the site. It may have come from a building in Alexandria or could be from a river boat's mast.

(Lower right) Exposed corner section of a crib dam. Photo courtesy of Coastal Environments, Inc.

