

GREAT & NOBLE JAR

Traditional Stoneware of South Carolina

CINDA K. BALDWIN



west into Stephen's Creek after receiving Little Steven's, Mountain, and Log creeks northeast of the town of Edgefield and Beaverdam Creek to the north. The Seerhanna, or Horn's Creek, which flowed into Stephen's Creek west of Edgefield, was the only waterway in the district other than the Savannah that held potential for navigation. Other small principle streams in the district included Wilson's, Henley's, Little Saluda, and Rocky creeks, which flowed into the Saluda River to the east; Shaw's Creek, joining with the Edisto to the south; and Cussaboe or Horse Creek, which flowed westward into the Savannah.⁵ Potteries were established near Beaverdam, Log, and Mountain creeks, on a tributary of Horse Creek, and on the banks of Shaw's Creek.

Edgefield County was first formed in 1785 out of the Ninety Six District by an act of the General Assembly. The Edgefield District was formed from the original Edgefield County. Edgefield was an operative judicial district from about 1800 to 1868 and included present-day Edgefield and parts of Aiken, Saluda, McCormick, and Greenwood counties. This period roughly coincides with the early developmental and peak periods of stoneware production in the area. Consequently, the most active phase of the alkaline-glazed stoneware tradition in South Carolina has come to be identified with the Edgefield District.⁴

The first Europeans to settle in the Edgefield area were Indian traders, who were active in the region beginning in the seventeenth century. Most of this territory had been in the possession of the Cherokee Indians, and the southern part, lying along the Savannah River, was used by other groups, such as the Creeks, as hunting grounds. Continual conflicts with these aboriginal groups discouraged permanent settlement in the region during the first half of the eighteenth century. The Yemassee War prompted the colonial South Carolina Assembly in 1717 to construct four key forts: Fort Moore (near present-day Augusta, Georgia); Congaree Fort (near the juncture of

Congaree Creek and Congaree River); Palacholas Fort (on the Savannah River); and Beaufort Fort (on Port Royal Sound). Fort Moore provided a measure of protection to the newly founded settlements in the Savannah River area. However, the Indian conflicts had caused much of the English frontier to be evacuated and depopulated, and concern about neighboring Indians persisted.

New Windsor was formed in 1755 by the Carolina colony as part of the Township Plan, formulated to encourage settlement of the back-country regions. Through the Township Plan eight tracts of approximately twenty thousand acres each were established at points along the major rivers through the interior, on the Waccamaw River (Kingston), Pee Dee River (Queensborough), Black River (Williamsburg), Wateree River (Fredericksburg), Saluda River (Saxe Gotha), Congaree River (Amelia), Edisto River (Orangeburg), and Savannah (New Windsor).⁵ The first permanent settlement in the Edgefield area occurred at New Windsor in approximately 1748, but this thinly settled township did not thrive, perhaps because of its close proximity to Augusta. Historian David Ramsay wrote that as late as "the year 1755 the country from the Waxhaws on the Catawba across to Augusta on the Savannah River did not contain twenty-five families."⁶

From 1756 to 1766 a great wave of immigration occurred into the region (see Figure 2.1). Immigrants included English, Scots-Irish, Welsh, German, Dutch, and French, with the English-speaking settlers being predominant. The major route followed by these settlers was along the Great Philadelphia Wagon Road that extended from Pennsylvania through Maryland and into Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. These people who moved westward into the frontier of Pennsylvania and southward into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia became the pioneers and frontiersmen who settled the back-



2.1 Map of the eastern United States illustrating the migration route followed by Scots-Irish immigrants who settled in South Carolina during the mid-eighteenth century.

country of colonial America.⁷ Consequently, as Robert Mills noted in 1826, unlike other areas of the state “Edgefield was settled principally, and indeed almost altogether, by emigrants from Virginia and North Carolina.”⁸

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Edgefield District was predominantly rural in character. Agriculture was a diversified activity in the upcountry during the first half of the nineteenth century. Cotton did not become a major cash crop in the region until the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney in 1793. In his textbook *A Geography of South Carolina*, published in 1832, Thomas P. Lockwood listed the agricultural products of the Edgefield

District as “cotton, grain of every description, and wool.”⁹ Corn, rice, indigo, tobacco, cotton, and sweet potatoes were grown on the plantations and farms of the area. In 1850 the value of produce from Edgefield market gardens was ranked the third highest in the state, and Edgefield led the state in the value of homemade manufactures, an index of self-sufficiency.¹⁰ The cultivation of cotton became increasingly important after the 1840s. South Carolina historian Lewis P. Jones summed up the transition from diversified farming enterprises to large-scale plantation agriculture: “With the spread of cotton, frontier entrepreneurs could gradually move from small operations to large plantations by the acquisition of more red land and more black labor to make more white cotton—and soon there was a new gentry of ‘cotton aristocrats’ who had had most unaristocratic grandpas.”¹¹

The expansion of the plantation system in upcountry South Carolina attracted planters from the southern part of the state to the area. An announcement of the sale of lots in Edgefield that appeared in the *Carolina Gazette* in September 1800 was aimed at South Carolina lowcountry planters intent on expanding their agricultural enterprises.

WILL BE SOLD

On TUESDAY, the 28th of October next, being the second day of the District Court of Edgefield, at that place,

A number of LOTS of LAND,

In that Village: a plan of which will be exhibited, and the conditions made known, on the day of sale.

The situation is high, pleasant and healthy, with several springs of most excellent water; twenty-three miles north of Augusta. This place will afford a very pleasant and safe retreat from the low country, in the warm and sickly season.

Arthur Simkins [justice of the peace].¹²

Edgefield was the most important town in the district, having been made the county seat in 1791 and incorporated in 1830. Referred to as Edge-