

Copper Alloy Escutcheon and Glass Fragments

This copper alloy (or brass) escutcheon, or decorative finish for a drawer or cabinet, indicates the presence of fine furniture in the house at the time of the fire. The 1799 Main House excavations have also revealed abundant glass, both intact and melted. When exposed to high heat such as a house fire, glass changes color and deforms by melting. It seems that in some areas the fire burned hotter, or perhaps for a longer time. Through clues such as condition of artifacts in different areas of the house site, we might be able to tell where the fire began, and where it did the most damage.



Figure 1. Copper alloy (or brass) escutcheon (*Photo credit: Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC*)



Figure 2. Historic wine bottles are a dark green color, as seen in this wine bottle “finish” or rim. Wine bottles were reused many times for storage and transportation of liquids and semi-liquid foods. Excavation in one back room of the 1799 Main House house revealed a large quantity of similar wine bottles, perhaps indicating a storage area. *(Photo credit: Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC)*



Figure 3. When dark green bottle glass burns, it changes color, becoming pale blue or blue-green. (Photo credit: Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC)

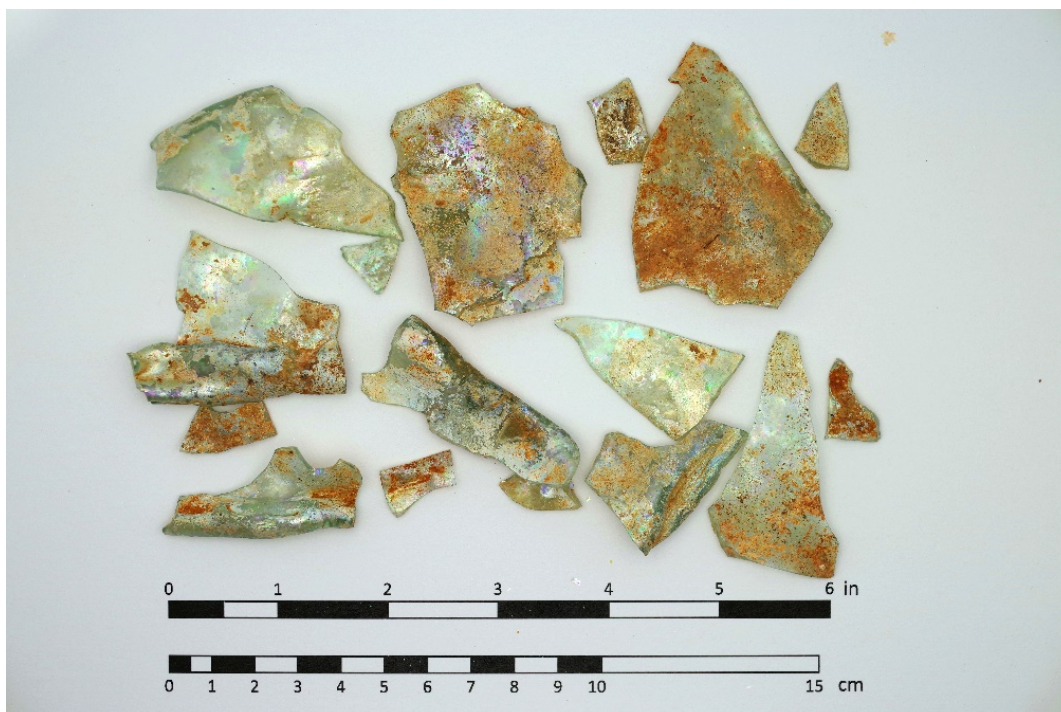


Figure 4. Misshapen (melted) window glass (Photo credit: Rivanna Archaeological Services, LLC)

Artifact Based Questions

1. What does this escutcheon indicate about the quality of furniture that James Monroe owned?
2. What were bottles repurposed for?
3. What would finding large quantities of glass in a small area indicate about that historical space?
4. How can the condition of artifacts help archaeologists determine the location of origin of the fire that destroyed James Monroe's home?