

"CRESTHULL" REED-STEM TOBACCO PIPES

JAMES L. MURPHY

ABSTRACT

A series of 17 distinctive earthenware reed-stem tobacco pipes is described. Manufacturer and precise age are unknown, but the pipes are believed to be 19th Century American products. Several of these were originally described by Paul Cresthull (1969), who believed that they might be modern fakes produced for the antique market. Archaeological and historic occurrences eliminate this possibility, however.

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INTRODUCTION

Cresthull (1969) described a series of 6 earthenware reed-stem tobacco pipes which had been purchased from an antique dealer. He describes these as "made of a gray clay that has an orange-brown stain applied to the surface." In 1973 I purchased a set of 15 of these pipes from a Warren County, Ohio, antique dealer who had in turn purchased them from a commercial supplier. No information is available on the source or origin of these pipes. No reference in the literature is known, other than Cresthull (1969), and, for convenience, these may be referred to as "Cresthull Pipes" until something of their manufacture is known.

Cresthull (1969:53) believed that his pipes might be modern "fakes" made from old molds. and I concurred in this opinion at the time that I purchased my set; close examination of the specimens and the discovery of two undoubtedly genuine pipes of the same type, however, render this hypothesis extremely unlikely.

DESCRIPTION

The pipes are light brownish-orange in color, the result of a thin slip which may have been added after firing rather than before. The craftsmanship is of a very low quality, the pipes being badly smudged and marred, covered with fingerprints, and with no attempt made to remove the seam (mold mark). The pipes are very soft, and the orange slip is easily removed by the slightest amount of wear. Even the unused (purchased) pipes have the coloring removed in spots. The pipes are made of a very light colored clay containing large amounts of fine quartz grains, much like clay used in Pamplin, Virginia, pipes, though it is not believed that these pipes are the product of the Pamplin industry.

Salient characteristics of the various designs are shown on the accompanying illustrations and need not be detailed here. Measurements of the first 5 illustrated pipes (Figs. 1-12) have been given by Cresthull (1969: Table 2) and are not repeated here. Cresthull also illustrates 2 additional pipe styles, a soldier and a bearded man, which are not available in the present collection.



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FIG. 1: "CRESTHULL PIPES".

TABLE 1: MEASUREMENTS.

All measurements of "Cresthull" pipes in millimeters

Figure No.	Length	Width	Height	Bowl Dia. (inside)	Bore Dia.	Stem Dia.
13-14	35.9	22.7	40.8	17.0	6.9	17.8
15-16	27.6	26.9	24.0	16.8	7.4	18.5
17-18	28.2	23.7	38.2	17.5	8.0	20.2
19-20	47.9	24.4	48.7	17.4	9.6	21.8
21-22	37.4	25.8	38.7	18.2	8.0	19.6
23	37.0	23.6	35.1	16.3	7.6	18.5
24-25	41.6	24.2	49.0	16.9	7.8	17.8
26-27	47.5	28.8	54.0	20.0	9.9	20.4
28	44.8	25.0	45.0	18.4	10.5	21.5
29	43.4	28.4	43.6	19.1	9.5	21.9

Figures 21 and 22 illustrate a Queen Victoria figurine pipe different from the one illustrated by Cresthull (1969: Fig. 3; this paper, Figs. 4-6), a representation of her during middle or old age, suggesting a post 1860 period of manufacture. Measurements for this and the remaining "Cresthull" pipes are given above in Table No. 1.

The pipe illustrated in Figures 26 and 27 was purchased at a flea market and is known to have come from a farm house near Gustavus, Trumbull County, Ohio. It is greatly worn from use and is undoubtedly genuine. Additional evidence that these pipes do not represent modern reproductions is the specimen illustrated in Figures 30 and 31. It obviously is a minor variation of the type illustrated in Figure 29



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FIG. II: "CRESTHULL PIPES"

(a purchased specimen) but was found on a late 19th Century-20th Century historic site (Edinburg, Pennsylvania, limestone quarry) by Richard Gartley.

CONCLUSIONS

The "Cresthull" pipes illustrated in this note probably were manufactured after 1870 and before 1900. Evidence for their period of manufacture is slender at best, however, and there is no evidence as to place of manufacture. They are believed to be cheap American imitations of French clay pipes (Fresco-Corbu: 1962). Further work may eventually shed light on their precise age and origin.

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REFERENCES

Cresthull, Paul. "Styles of Detachable Stem Pipes". Maryland Archeology, Vol. 5, 1969 No. 2, Abingdon, Maryland.

Fresco-Corbu, Roger. "Faces on French Clay Pipes". Country Life, June 14, 1962: 1962 pp. 1445-1446.

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30



31

FIG. III: "CRESTHULL PIPES".