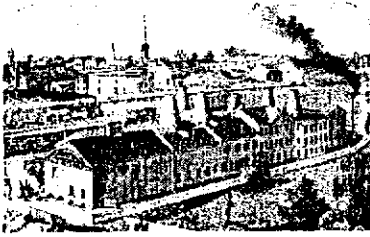


# TRENTON POTTERIES

Newsletter of the  
Potteries of Trenton Society



## William Richards' Sugar Processing Pottery 1760-1786

William Liebeknecht

A stone-lined rectangular pit from the Lambert-Douglas Plantation site [28Me273], located on Trenton's waterfront, contained hundreds of waster sherds from sugar loaf molds within its fill. The date of these sherds is currently indeterminate, for the pit contained artifacts ranging in date from the 1770s to the mid-1840s. Three additional sugar loaf waster sherds were recovered from a nearby sealed component along the former river bank dating from *circa* 1740 to *circa* 1780. These sherds were most likely manufactured by William Richards, a wealthy merchant and entrepreneur who was known to operate a stoneware kiln 2200 feet south of the stone-lined pit from Lambert-Douglas Plantation site *circa* 1760 to 1787 (see the August/September issue of *Trenton Potteries*). Recent excavation of the kiln failed to recover any sugar processing pottery sherds, since a stone-

ware kiln would not be suitable for the production of sugar loaf molds, it is probable that Richards operated more than one kiln. Richards also manufactured crucibles, which he advertised in 1774. No crucible sherds were recovered from the excavations at the stoneware kiln site, further suggesting the presence of a second and possibly a third kiln. Since the manufacturing of crucibles does not involve the addition of salt or lead glazes, a single purpose-built kiln would have been suitable for both the manufacturing of sugar processing vessels and crucibles.

The sugar loaf molds were used to hold crystallized sugar after it had been boiled. The molds were placed point down into vase-shaped syrup jars. A hole at the end or apex of the molds (bunghole) allowed the liquid molasses to drain into the jars as the sugar crystallized in the mold. The unglazed low-fired body of the molds also allowed for evaporation through the side walls. The open end was then capped by a purpose-built circular cover (redware, stoneware or possibly wood) (Plate 1). The lids or covers were probably used to keep insects and animals away from the sugar while drying. When the drying process was complete the molds were turned over and the conical sugar loaves were pushed out using a stick (Figure 1). This process was repeated multiple times (each time increasing the quality of the sugar). The finished loaves were used commercially and in homes.

Sugar loaf mold manufacture was a specialized task, not done by most potters. The manufacturing of molds required wooden or hollow cast-iron core molds with training in their use.

(Continued on page 2)

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The Potteries of Trenton Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study and preservation of Trenton's ceramic past. Officers: President - Patricia Madrigal; Treasurer - Amy Earls; Secretary - Christy Morganstein. Board: Ellen Denker, Barbara Goldberg, David Goldberg, Richard Hunter, William Liebeknecht, Molly Merlino, George Miller, Brenda Springsted. Newsletter Editor: Patricia Madrigal

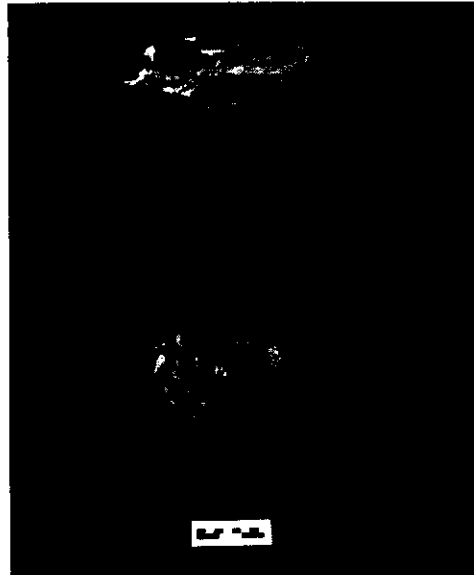


Plate 1: A reconstructed sugar mold, jar and lid from the Lambert-Douglas Plantation site.

Drawn Turner

## *Sugar Molds*

*(Continued from page 1)*

Typically sugar loaf molds were manufactured in England and France. For the most part, sugar loaf molds found on sites in the United States suggest non-local manufacture, possibly England, France, Spain, Portugal or Holland (Hurst 1977; Brooks 1983). The earliest production of domestic sugar processing pottery was at the Green Spring Pottery in Virginia from circa 1646 to circa 1650 (Straube 1995). Other sites in the Middle Atlantic region containing potentially domestically produced sugar processing pottery include the Metropolitan Detention Center Site (36Ph91) located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Louis Berger & Associates 1997) and the Faneuil Hall site in Boston, where sherds were warped and over-fired rendering them useless as sugar molds (Louis Berger & Associates 1993).

Sherds from the Lambert-Douglas Plantation site are also warped and over-fired and are thus considered wasters. It seems likely that William Richards, who was active in the West Indian trade, produced these sugar loaf molds for export to the sugar plantations of the Caribbean Islands.

Many merchants in 18<sup>th</sup> century-British America traded directly with the West Indies, sending flour, lumber, livestock and preserved foods to the islands in exchange for sugar, molasses and rum. Richards was no exception (Woodward 1941). Richards, a native of Barbados, maintained several local businesses that catered to the West Indian trade. Richards frequently advertised that he carried an "assortment of West-India goods" at his Lamberton store "as low as can be purchased in Philadelphia" (Nelson 1917:260). As a savvy merchant and native of the West Indies, Richards would probably have been familiar with the process of purifying sugarcane. In 1781 William Richards advertises a general assortment of goods

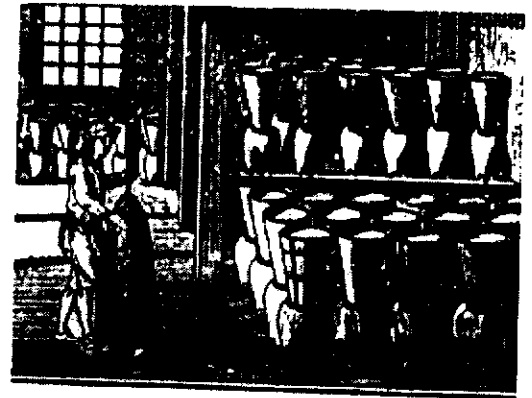


Figure 1: A mid-18th century illustration depicting sugar processing (Diderot Plate 41 Sugar V).

from his store at Trenton landing including "...West-India rum... Loaf, lump, muscovado and Spanish sugars... and molasses" (New Jersey Gazette, Dec. 17, 1781). Most of the exported sugar was raw or coarsely refined into a form of brown sugar known as muscovado. Refined white sugar commanded a much higher price than brown sugar.

### The Waster Sherds

#### *Molds*

Two-hundred forty-two sugar mold sherds, representing a minimum of eight molds, were recovered.

All of the mold sherds were over-fired, vitrefying the bodies and rendering them useless for drawing moisture out of the sugar syrup. The color of the bodies ranged from reddish brown to dark grey/brown. The majority of the sherds exhibit interior striations from multiple directions resulting from smoothing. Reconstructed molds show severe warping from over-firing. This would suggest they were wasters and not sold as seconds. It also implies they were manufactured a short distance from where they were found since wasters were rarely transported great distances. Mending revealed at least two sizes of

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Sugar Molds

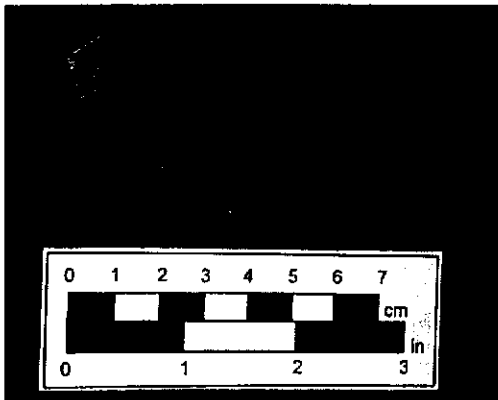


Plate 2: A sugar mold inscribed with a script "3".

molds, the first measuring 37.5 centimeters tall (taken from a nearly complete mold with a full profile) and the second between 58 and 64 centimeters tall (projected). Although warped, the diameter of the shorter mold was calculated based on its circumference to be 17.8 centimeters, which would place this mold within the smallest of six known size ranges (Brooks 1983). One of the taller molds is incised with a script number "3" while the smaller, near complete mold exhibits a partial incised number which appears to be the number one (Plate 2). It is not known whether the numbers reflect the size or the capacity of the molds.

### Covers/Lids

Twenty lid sherds, representing a minimum of five lids, were recovered.

Several purpose-built circular covers were recovered with the sugar loaf molds. These covers or lids were wheel-thrown with cut, beveled edges and centered pitch-type grips. The covers were manufactured in redware and stoneware. Redware examples all measure 7 inches in diameter while the single stoneware example measures 7.5 inches in diameter (Plate 3). The covers would not have been seated internally and appear to be designed to extend over the edge of the mold by resting on the flat lip of the sugar mold. Lids of this type have not

been previously recognized on sites containing sugar pottery. It may be that since these lids are basically flat covers, they may have been misidentified. Lids of this nature may also have been made of wood and may not have survived.

### Syrup Jars

Twenty sherds from syrup jars, representing a minimum of four vessels, were recovered.

Waster sherds from several stoneware hollowware vessels appear to be syrup jars. These vessels have tapered bodies with a bulbous shoulder restricting to a rolled wide mouth rim. The jars are undecorated, salt-glazed wheel-thrown vessels, typical of utilitarian storage vessels. All of the jar sherds were recovered from the nearby Lambert-Douglas House site from the basement fill. Other stoneware sherds from this context of similar fabric have been attributed to William Richards. One jar from this assemblage has been almost completely mended (Plate 4). The base of the jar has a 12.7 centimeter diameter while shoulder has a 19 centimeter diameter. The mouth has a 11.4 centimeter diameter and the height of the vessel is 25.4 centimeters. A Diderot image (Figure 2) clearly shows a syrup jar matching this description. Brooks (1983) states that in 1722 J. B. Labat



Plate 3: Circular covers for sugar molds.

## Sugar Molds

recommended the use of a solid stable base such as produced by local potters versus the use of French style syrup collecting jars with feet which were easily broken.

Louis Berger & Associates, Inc.  
1993 Archaeological Investigations at the Former Town Dock and Faneuil Hall, Boston National Historic Park. Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., East Orange, New Jersey.

Louis Berger & Associates Inc.  
1997 Archaeological and Historical Investigation of the Metropolitan Detention Center Site (36PH91), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Louis Berger & Associates, Inc., Washington, D.C.

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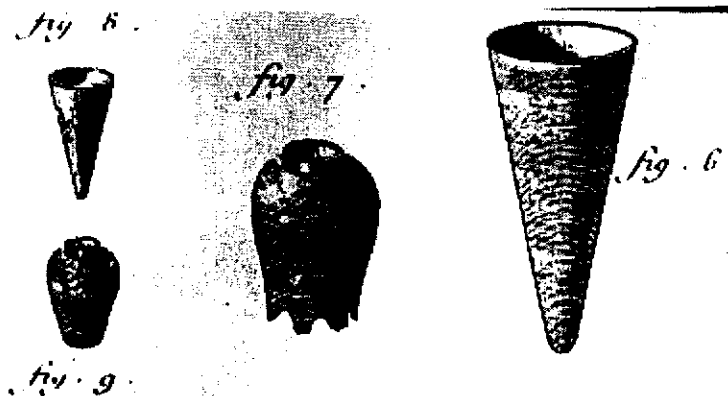


Figure 2: An eighteenth-century illustration depicting sugar processing equipment, including a syrup jar (fig. 9) similar to the one recovered from the Lambert-Douglas House site (Diderot Plate 480).

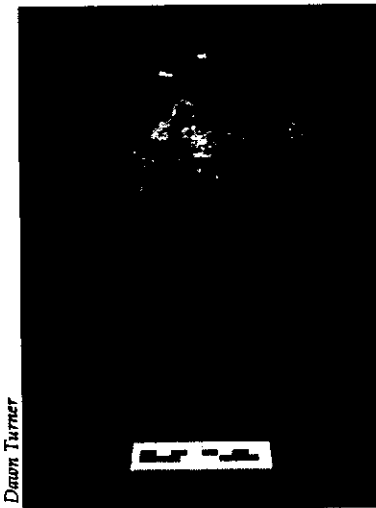


Plate 4: A stoneware sugar syrup jar recovered from the Lambert-Douglas House site.

## *Stangl/Fulper Pottery*

*Amy C. Earls*

Of the few bottle kilns remaining in the United States, three are in New Jersey; not in Trenton, a major American pottery center for 70 years, but rather in nearby Flemington at the site of the old Fulper Pottery #2. When the Stangl/Fulper Pottery expanded production in 1926, it took over the old Anchor Pottery on New York Avenue in Trenton. By 1935 the Fulper #2 factory in Flemington had been converted into a company showroom and sales outlet, but Stangl/Fulper wares continued to be made in Trenton until 1978.

The Stangl/Fulper potteries began in 1814 at the Hill Pottery on Mine Street, Flemington, which produced utilitarian redware and drainage pipes. In 1858 Hill Pottery employee Abram Fulper bought the business. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the Fulper Pottery was producing utilitarian cobalt-painted stoneware crocks, earthenwares, and architectural tiles. The Fulper Pottery began experimenting with artwares in the 1890s, and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was producing arts and crafts styled wares. Solid colored-glaze artwares were produced in the 1920s. In the 1940s, with foreign suppliers cut off from the American market, the Stangl/Fulper Pottery expanded its lines of sgraffito (hand-carved) and hand-painted dinnerware based on Pennsylvania German styles.

Three kilns dating from 1924 to 1930 extend above the roofline at the old Fulper #2 factory at 50 Mine Street and Stangl Road, now a Pfaltzgraff outlet. Robert Runge (author of the *Collector's Encyclopedia of Stangl Dinnerware*) and Diana Bullock-Runge opened a museum display in the largest of the kilns. The display includes Fulper stonewares, Stangl artwares, plaster models and working molds, advertising, and historic photographs and is open seven days a week during

the store's normal business hours.

More details on the kiln display are available at [www.stanglpottery.org](http://www.stanglpottery.org). The Stangl Mold Rescue section of this website contains photographs of Stangl molds, saggars, and wareboards that had been stored in a warehouse in Millville, New Jersey. Examples were used in the kiln display and were distributed to the Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie, the State Museum in Trenton, and the Stangl/Fulper Collectors Club.

The Stangl/Fulper Collectors Club is working to preserve the pottery's heritage by establishing a permanent museum in either Trenton or Flemington, and it is hoped that this museum would be a repository for the rich oral histories and documents available on this pottery as well as a research collection for scholars and students. The museum also plans education and community outreach activities, including a Trenton Makes annual festival.

The club has over 500 members and produces a quarterly newsletter. All proceeds from sales of t-shirts, sweatshirts, and mugs picturing the Stangl/Fulper kilns, as well as reprinted Fulper catalogs, benefit the museum. The reprints of 1924, 1925, and 1927 Fulper catalogs feature Fulper Fayence, Fulper Porcelaines, and other artwares. The sites of the original Fulper Pottery, Hill and Fulper family homes and other related sites can be viewed from the street. The Stangl/Fulper Collectors Club had historical markers placed at three of these sites in January of this year. The June display at this store featured Stangl designer Rose Herbeck's drawings and watercolors from the 1960s and 1970s.

### **For More Information:**

*Details on the Stangl/Fulper Museum and Collectors Club may be obtained from P.O. Box 538, Flemington, NJ 08822 or [www.stanglfulper.com](http://www.stanglfulper.com). Visitors to Flemington can obtain a Stangl/Fulper Historical Trail and map from Bob Perzel at Popkorn Antiques, 3 Mine Street. The Hunterdon County Historical Society at 114 Main Street (open Thursdays or by appointment) has three display cases of Fulper and Stangl wares, and the library has photographs of unusual Fulper lamps. Other displays may be seen at local antique shops as well as shops and flea markets in Hopewell, Lambertville, and New Hope.*

## Mr. Young's White Bird Whistle

David Goldberg

A simple white bird whistle, made in Trenton, New Jersey by William Young in 1853, marks the beginning of America's pottery industry.

The English lost two wars in a vain attempt to keep political control over their American colonies. They were more successful, however, in the economic wars that followed. Efforts by American potteries to compete successfully against English and other foreign competitors during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century generally met with failure. Potteries such as Tucker, Charles Cartlidge and Fenton's Bennington works did not survive long. During most of this period, the former Colonists remained primarily dependent on English products. American entrepreneurs were unable to compete effectively against imported goods. Most American potteries were limited to the production of red ware, Rockingham or yellow ware. These products were inferior to the English white ware products which dominated the market.

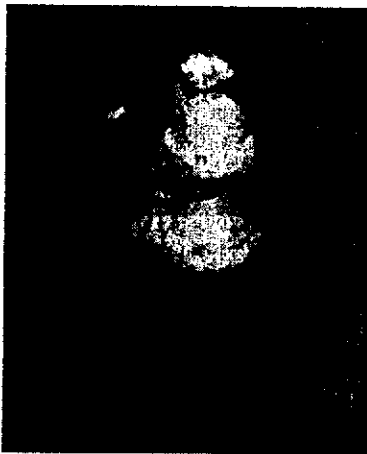
Although some early potters attempted to market white ware products, none had enduring success. It was not until 1853, when William Young and his partners developed and sold white ironstone pottery, that American potters had a product that was cheap and good enough to compete against the English. Young was able to gain a foothold in the American market. Young's success quickly convinced Speeler, Taylor and Bloor, who also opened their pottery in 1853, to follow his lead and encouraged other potters to set up their businesses in Trenton. By 1868, 15 potteries were operating in Trenton and all but one of them concentrated on white ware products. Trenton's white ware experience was carried to East Liverpool, Ohio, by William Bloor when he returned to that city from Trenton in 1871. In the 25 years that followed the

making of this whistle, America had developed a major pottery industry. The industry was concentrated primarily in Trenton and East Liverpool and largely relied upon white stoneware products of the kind that Young had pioneered to obtain and hold a share of the American market.

The importance of Young's white ware to the creation of the American pottery industry makes his White Ware Bird Whistle an object of historical interest. This whistle, which when blown through the tail still emits a strong, piercing sound, is impressed with the name "Wm Young Trenton." In 1931, it was part of the private collection of George S. McKearin, Hoosick Falls, New York. Mr. McKearin was an avid collector of early American pottery and glass as well as a dealer and author. Many of the finest examples of American pottery and glass in museums today were acquired from him. The catalogue for a 1931 Exhibition of his Collection included a group of whistles and this description of Young's whistle:

*No. 159 was made a Trenton, New Jersey about 1853 by a potter named Young. It has the name "Young" and word "Trenton" incised in the base. It is said to have been the first piece made by him in Trenton. It was an old custom of English potters in starting work in a new place or opening a new works to make a "lucky piece," oftentimes a toy.*

The success of America's pottery industry was build upon its white ware. Young's whistle is a reminder of what followed its creation and deserves a special place in ceramic lore. It bestowed good luck on Young and his partners who prevailed when so many of their predecessors had failed. Its call heralded the arrival of Trenton as a force to be reckoned with in the pottery world.



Thomas Young's white bird whistle, manufactured in Trenton in 1853.

## *Dish Discovery Day: A Smashing Success*

*Ellen Denker*

We saw some wonderful surprises at Dish Discovery Day in October. A standing room only crowd gathered on a lovely warm Sunday afternoon and brought with them family treasures that turned out to be fascinating pieces of ceramic history as well. POTS board members George Miller, Amy Earls, David Goldberg, and Ellen Denker worked hard to puzzle out the mysteries. When we examined these family treasures, we found rare Stangl pottery from the 1930s, Chinese export porcelain of the 1800s, a Corday figurine of the 1940s, delicate Trenton belleek, and a variety of table and toilet ware from Trenton's leading potteries such

as Mercer Pottery and Lenox. The strangest item we saw was a teapot, possibly English, with two pouring spouts. The most interesting item from the historical point of view was a shaving cup for the Sons of St. George, an early Trenton fraternal organization that included many pottery workers. The cup was made by Lenox.

We had so much fun at our first Dish Discovery that we have decided to make it an annual event. Watch your POTS newsletter and the local newspaper for the next installment and bring in your treasures. You might discovery something wonderful.

## *POTS Update*

### **Lectures**

David Goldberg will speak at Ellarslie, the Trenton City Museum, on Sunday, March 25, 2001 at 2:00 p.m. His lecture topic is "Trenton's Potteries – Where Were They? What Did They Make? What Happened to Them?" The talk is part of the Senator Joseph P. Merlino Lecture Series, sponsored by the Trenton Museum Society and the Potteries of Trenton Society. The talk is free and open to the public.

### **Teacups to Toilets**

The Potteries of Trenton Society has applied to the New Jersey Historical Commission for a grant to reprint *Teacups to Toilets: A Century of Ceramic Manufacture in Trenton, Circa 1850-1940*. We should know the outcome of our grant application by the end of March.

## *Exhibits*

### **Stangl Pottery, 1924 to 1940**

Ellarslie, the Trenton City Museum is showing "Stangl Pottery, 1924 to 1940," through February 4, 2001. The exhibit, presented in conjunction with the Stangl/Fulper Museum, Inc., and Popkorn Antiques, features the collection of Peter and Sheryl Meissner. Mr. Meissner is president of the Stangl/Fulper Collectors Club.

The Trenton City Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11:00-3:00 and Sunday from 2:00-4:00.

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Newsletter of the  
Potteries of Trenton Society

## *POTS Membership*

Membership in the Potteries of Trenton Society is open to all interested in Trenton's pottery industry and the ceramic products manufactured here. We welcome pottery workers, historians, archaeologists and collectors. Your contribution is used to support newsletter, lecture, meeting, and conference costs.

Annual Memberships:

\_\_\_\_\_ Regular (\$20) \_\_\_\_\_ Couples (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_ Students (\$15, with ID) \_\_\_\_\_ Seniors (\$15)

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