

## Book Review

*Potteries: The Story of Trenton's Ceramic Industry.* By David Goldberg.  
Published by the Trenton Museum Society, 1998.

David Goldberg, an avocational historian and expert on the Trenton ceramic industry, wrote the *Potteries* monograph in 1983. It has been revised and re-released in 1998. Subtitled *Preliminary Notes on the Pioneer Potters and Potteries of Trenton, New Jersey, The First Thirty Years 1852-1882 (And Beyond)*, it is indeed that and much more.

The pottery industry is examined in roughly chronological order with an emphasis placed on the people who established and ran the potteries. One of the fascinating aspects of the early potteries is the movement of managers, owners, designers, and decorators from firm to firm. This gave the budding industry much vitality but left the historical record a bit complicated. Often early information published about pioneering efforts is false or misleading and Mr. Goldberg seeks to untangle the confusion.

One example of the confusion concerns the "Colonel Ellsworth Pitcher," an early white earthenware piece. The pitcher was made by Millington, Astbury & Poulson in 1861 in commemoration of the shooting death of Colonel Ellsworth, a young protege of Abraham Lincoln. Examples of this piece are marked and highly collectable. The designer of this notable pitcher has been dispute for a century. Edwin Atlee Barber, an important writer on early American potteries, attributed it to Josiah Jones, a designer who moved from New York to Trenton in the late 1850's. However, in 1915 Miss Minnie Coxon claimed that her grandfather, Charles Coxon, designed the pitcher during his brief stint at the firm. The issue of who designed this pitcher has yet to be fully resolved.

Mr. Goldberg's discussion of each enterprise includes detailed information on location, ownership, dates of operation, wares produced, maker's marks and number of kilns. Mr. Goldberg also describes how the industry became established in Trenton and illustrates the connections between the industry here and in other locations, such as Bennington, Vermont. I would have appreciated a map to orient myself, as I am relatively unfamiliar with Trenton, but this does not detract from the monograph, which contains a wealth of information. Although the book focuses on the first thirty years it does take care to bring the potteries up to the present in terms of final closing and the disposition of buildings and kilns.

The book is available from the gift shop at the Trenton City Museum for \$10.50. It can be ordered for \$11.50 (the extra \$1.00 covers postage) from Molly Merlino, The Trenton Museum Foundation, P.O. Box 1034, Trenton, NJ 08606.

*Reviewed by Brenda Springsted.*