

# Mercer Pottery

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<b>Other Names</b>	Mercer Pottery Company; Union Electric Manufacturing Company; Union Electric Porcelain Works, Inc.
<b>Present Day Municipality</b>	City of Trenton
<b>Historic Municipality</b>	City of Trenton
<b>Historic Location</b>	Railroad Avenue near North Clinton Avenue; Railroad Avenue opposite Ott Street; Railroad Avenue near Perrine; 39 Muirhead Ave.; 19 Muirhead Ave.; 30 Muirhead Ave.; 27 Muirhead Ave; 31 Muirhead Avenue
<b>Years in Operation</b>	1875-1946
<b>Owners/Operators</b>	James Moses (1875)

## PRODUCTS

<b>Tableware</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Garden Ceramics</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rockingham</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Other</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Hardware</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Art Ceramics</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Toilet Sets</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Sanitary ware</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Hotel China</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Electrical porcelain</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

## ADDITIONAL PRODUCT INFORMATION

white granite and c.c. ware, also decorated goods, stone, porcelain and hotel ware (Main and Fitzgerald 1877); Mercer China (Woodward and Hageman 1883:692-693); pottery ware (Industrial Directory 1906); porcelain ware (Industrial Directory 1909); dinner and hotel ware (Industrial Directory 1918); general ware; electrical porcelain (Industrial Directory 1927); dinnerware (Industrial Directory 1931); china, special and electrical porcelain (Industrial Directory 1938); electrical porcelain, porcelain specialties (Industrial Directory 1940-41)

Toilet sets (1885).

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## **MAP REFERENCES**

Everts & Stewart 1875: shown as "Mercer Pottery Co."

Robinson 1881, plate K: shown as "Mercer Pottery Co."

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Sanborn 1874 (1886), plate 12: shown as "Mercer Pottery Co."

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Sanborn 1927, vol. 1, plate 53: shown as "Mercer Pottery Co."

Franklin 1930, plate 30: shown as "Mercer Pottery Co."

## **IMAGE REFERENCES**

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Quarter Century's Progress 1887:290

City of Trenton Tax Assessor Records: show floor plans for twelve buildings located at 39 Muirhead Avenue

## DUN COLLECTION

June 19, 1878: Mercer Pottery Co. – “James Moses, brother of John Moses of Glasgow Pottery, runs this ... reported to be worth \$50K ... doing well considered to be good for business contracts” (1 [44]:22).

July 30, 1879: Mercer Pottery Co. – “James Moses married man aged 35 ... An Englishman ... He was formerly a partner with his brother John Moses but dissolved 3 or 4 years ago taking over \$23K cash. He is now President of the Mercer Pottery Company and is making money rapidly and building and furnishing a house. Is a careful prudent & hardworking man in good credit and will meet contracts” (1 [44]:22).

## NOTES

"China clay is obtained from the celebrated banks on the Brandywine, Delaware and Chester Counties, Pennsylvania; the feldspar from Maine, and is considered the best in the country, while the flint comes from Maryland" (Everts & Stewart 1875:XII).

"The Mercer Pottery was built in the year 1868. It is one of the finest and most substantial structures in the city. Composed of stone, with slate roofs, entirely new, and having been erected all at one time in the most modern and approved form, the buildings have as great a capacity as and better facilities than some larger establishments. When in full operation, it is able to produce \$15,000 worth of ware per month.

... In the year 1875, Mr. James Moses (formerly secretary and treasurer of the Glasgow Pottery Company) purchased the establishment, and since that time he has continued to run it under the old firm name of The Mercer Pottery Company...

A full line of the grades of ware manufactured, and which may be found at the works at all times, is as follows: White granite and C.C. ware, also decorated goods, stone, porcelain and hotel ware. Having an extensive decorating establishment on the premises, that branch of the business is a specialty" (Mains & Fitzgerald 1877).

"White granite ware is manufactured here, but the principal business is the manufacture of what is termed Mercer china, a specialty of this pottery. This is like French china, but lacks the translucency of that ware. This establishment has eight kilns, and two hundred hands are employed" (Woodward and Hageman 1883:693).

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"The Mercer Pottery Company show the latest production in their favorite line of Mercer china. The "Alaska" is the only square toilet set that I have ever seen, or, at least, so near the prevailing shapes in table ware as to be classed among the square forms. The principal feature of this set, aside from the novelty in shape, is the excellent surface which it presents for the application of fine decorations, and the several new designs which have been prepared for it make it one of the most attractive novelties of the season" (Trenton Evening Times, Sunday, November 15, 1885).

"Mr. Moses invented a new line of goods, now known as Mercer china, for the Centennial Exhibition, which gained him a reputation and a demand for his productions which enabled him to gain, in a few years, his present ample fortune ... The premises occupied by the Mercer Pottery consist of an extensive series of two and three story buildings, admirably equipped with all the latest improved facilities as regards machinery, apparatus, and modern labor-saving appliances. Ten expert assistants and four hundred operatives are employed in the various departments, and the machinery is driven by a superior hundred-horse power steam engine. The company utilizes eight burning and four decorating kilns, and their sales aggregate over \$300,000 annually at the present time. The company manufacture extensively the famous Mercer china, which ware was the first and is still the finest American semi-porcelain. These productions are superior to the best imported goods, and are unrivalled for finish, quality, beauty of design, and artistic excellence. They are everywhere recognized and appreciated by the trade as standard productions, and always command a ready sale wherever introduced. The trade of the house extends throughout all sections of the United States" (Quarter Century's Progress 1887:290).

Produced the commemorative plate for the 250th Anniversary of the Settlement of Trenton (250th Anniversary of the Settlement of Trenton 1929).

Buildings demolished 1939-1940 (City of Trenton Tax Assessor Records).

City and state directories from 1926 to at least 1946 also list the Union Electric Manufacturing Company as being at this address on the rear of the property. The Union Electric Manufacturing Company was located at Hamilton Avenue and Clark Street prior to relocating here.

# 1880 Industrial Census

Mercer Pottery

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## Pottery Name in Census

Mercer Pottery

## Capital Invested

\$100,000.00

<b>Number of Hands</b>	200
<b>Males Above 16</b>	125
<b>Females Above 15</b>	25
<b>Children</b>	50
<b>Work Hours in a Day (May to November)</b>	10
<b>Work Hours in a Day (November to May)</b>	10
<b>Skilled Mechanic Wages Per Day</b>	\$2
<b>Ordinary Laborer Wages Per Day</b>	\$1
<b>Total Wages in Year</b>	\$75,000
<b>Months in Full-time Operation</b>	9
<b>Months in 3/4-time Operation</b>	3
<b>Months in 1/2-time Operation</b>	0
<b>Months Idle</b>	0
<b>Value of Material (Including Mill Supplies and Fuel)</b>	\$75,000
<b>Value of Product</b>	\$200,000
<b>Number of Boilers</b>	1
<b>Number of Engines</b>	1
<b>Horse Power</b>	75