

Excelsior Pottery

4C

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Other Names | Willets Manufacturing Company |
| Present Day Municipality | City of Trenton |
| Historic Municipality | City of Trenton |
| Historic Location | Brunswick Avenue near City Limits; Southard Street; 400 Southard Street |
| Years in Operation | 1879-1909 |
| Owners/Operators | Willets Brothers [Joseph, Daniel and Edmund] (1879-1910) |

PRODUCTS

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

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT INFORMATION

white granite, c.c., decorated ware, and porcelain hardware trimmings (1878 Price List); thin opaque porcelain and hotel ware, white granite, c.c., decorated ware, majolica goods, porcelain, hardware trimmings, etc. (Industries of New Jersey 1882:206); white and decorated pottery, underglaze printed dinner, tea and toilet ware for the jobbing trade; Belleek, art porcelain, superior opaque porcelain, thin and hotel, white granite and c.c. ware, fine decorated dinner, tea and toilet ware (Board of Trade 1900); earthen and chinaware (Industrial Directory 1901); electrical porcelain (Industrial Directory 1909); majolica, including doorknobs (Snyder and Bockol 1994:140)

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MAP REFERENCES

Robinson 1881, plate P: shown as "Excelsior Pottery Works The Willets Mfg. Co."

Haven 1882: shown as "Willets Manufacturing Co. Pottery"

Sanborn 1874 (1886), plate 3: shown as "Willet's M'F'G Co's Pottery"

Sanborn 1890, plate 18: shown as "The Willets Manuf'g Co. Mfg's of White and Decorated Pottery, Belleek, and Sanitary Ware"

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Scarlett & Scarlett 1890, plate 77B: shown as "Excelsior Pottery -- The Willets Mfg. Co."

Lathrop 1905, plate 9: shown as "Willets Mfg. Co. Pottery"

Sanborn 1908, vol. 1, plate 46: shown as "The Willets M'fg. Co. Pottery Works"

United New Jersey Railroad & Canal Company c. 1914: shown as "Willets Mfg. Co. Pottery"

IMAGE REFERENCES

Historic photograph of the Southard Street bridge over the Delaware and Raritan Canal looking northeast along the canal, c. 1890 (Source: Trenton Public Library, Trentoniana Collection).

Trenton Board of Trade 1900:82: engraving of Willets Manufacturing Co.

DUN COLLECTION

April 15, 1879: Willets Manufacturing Company [Trenton and 50 Barclay St., NY; crockery] – “This is a New Jersey Corporation, organized at Trenton, N.J. about 2 years ago ... they succeed to the business of Wm. Young’s Sons at Trenton and to the business of E.J. Willets & Co. in New York The real estate & Factory were purchased in the name of Edmund Willets for \$65K ...” (much more follows on NY and Trenton aspects of the business) (3 [46]:141).

November 22, 1879: William Young’s Sons reports now as “Willets Manufacturing Company” (2 [45]:362).

NOTES

"... the Willets Manufacturing Company are making extensive additions and improvements" (Trenton State Gazette, Monday, March 8, 1880).

"The business was established originally about the year 1853, by William Young & Sons and was one of the first and best-known potteries in Trenton. The Messrs. Willets succeeded to the business in 1879 and under their vigorous management the works were enlarged to their present dimensions. They carry a vast stock and do an immense annual business. Their manufactures embrace thin opaque porcelain and hotel ware, white granite, C.C., decorated ware, majolica goods, porcelain, hardware trimmings, etc.

The premises embrace some six acres in extent, upon which are erected some of the most complete structures anywhere to be found, all of them fully equipped for the work with the most improved machinery and tools known to the art. The buildings are twenty-two in number and are chiefly of brick. The main building or east front is 415x75 feet in size, two and three stories in height, with four wings, 30x80, 50x80, 30x50 and 20x80 feet, all of brick, also two and three

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stories in height. To the rear of these wings is another building, 150x100 feet, of brick, and is three stories and a basement in height. Another is of brick, four stories in height and 50x125 in size; another, 50x125, two stories in height. A dozen others are of various dimensions, together with sheds, stables, etc. There are eleven large kilns for ware, two decorating kilns and one kiln for miscellaneous work, making in all fourteen kilns. The motive power is derived from a forty-five-horse power engine and three large boilers, which also heat the buildings by means of steam pipes. Steady employment is given to three hundred experienced hands, embracing some of the best-known artisans in this country. The facilities for shipment by rail or water are unsurpassed, a canal basin adjoining the premises ... " (Industries of New Jersey 1882:206).

"The rapid growth of the Willets' Manufacturing Company's works is probably the best indication of the remarkable expansion of the pottery business in the city of Trenton. It is a most fitting circumstance that the large factory which has just been completed by the addition of several large buildings, should have arisen from the nucleus of the first pottery established in Trenton" (Trenton Evening Times, Sunday, November 15, 1885).

"Manufacturers of white and decorated pottery, underglaze printed dinner, tea, and toilet ware for tax jobbing trade. Belleek, Art Porcelain, Superior Opaque Porcelain, Thin and Hotel white granite and cream colored ware, fine decorated tea and toilet ware" (Trenton Board of Trade 1900).

"Excelsior Pottery Company forfeited its charter in 1910" (Secretary of State 1914).

In 1879 it was known as "Willets Company." In 1882 the pottery consisted of twenty two buildings, with fourteen kilns; it employed three hundred hands (Harney 1929).

" ... among its wares was at least one improbable item, a majolica doorknob. While Willets Manufacturing Company produced many marks for its other wares (including white granite, semi-porcelain and Belleek) no marked majolica wares have been found to date" (Snyder and Bockol 1994:140).

Detailed history provided in Hunter Research, Inc. 2005:8-11.

1880 Industrial Census

Excelsior Pottery

4C

Pottery Name in Census

Willets M'fturing Co.

Capital Invested

\$100,000.00

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|---|-----------|
| Number of Hands | 260 |
| Males Above 16 | 175 |
| Females Above 15 | 35 |
| Children | 50 |
| Work Hours in a Day (May to November) | 10 |
| Work Hours in a Day (November to May) | 10 |
| Skilled Mechanic Wages Per Day | \$2 |
| Ordinary Laborer Wages Per Day | \$1 |
| Total Wages in Year | \$70,000 |
| Months in Full-time Operation | 12 |
| Months in 3/4-time Operation | 0 |
| Months in 1/2-time Operation | 0 |
| Months Idle | 0 |
| Value of Material (Including Mill Supplies and Fuel) | \$60,000 |
| Value of Product | \$175,000 |
| Number of Boilers | 3 |
| Number of Engines | 1 |
| Horse Power | 130 |