

# TRENTON POTTERIES



Newsletter of the  
Potteries of Trenton Society

## Minutes of the Potters Union Transcribed by Richard W. Hunter

The late David J. Goldberg, a founding member of the Potteries of Trenton Society and well-known collector and expert on the Trenton potteries, amassed many ceramic treasures and pottery industry memorabilia during his extraordinarily productive life. Among these items was a ledger book containing the minutes of early organizational meetings for what soon became the Potters Union. I have recently acquired this ledger book, thanks to the kindness of Barbara Goldberg.

The ledger entries document the minutes of meetings held over two main periods when Trenton potters were developing an effective organized labor voice: from August 1868 through May 1869, and from November 1874 through October 1879. POTS plans on transcribing these meeting minutes and making them available on our web site. As a first step we are publishing here, in two successive newsletter issues, excerpts of the minutes from the 1868-69 period.

The very first entry, included here in its entirety, is dated August 17, 1868 and documents a substantial gathering of pottery workers intent on establishing a union. A prominent union organizer named Jonathan C. Fincher was present at this initial meeting and gave an inspirational lecture to the assembled crowd. Subsequent minutes from meetings held periodically through the end of 1868 (further excerpted below) mostly relate to the formation and ongoing business of the hollowware pressers branch union, although the activities of the amalgamated union and branch unions of the flat pressers and kilnsmen are also occasionally referenced. Over the final five months of 1868, the hollowware pressers union established membership dues and a code of rules; set in motion fund-raising

efforts centered on a New Year's concert and ball; and heard their first grievance (over piece rates).

The minutes of meetings held between January and May 12 of 1869 (to be excerpted in the next issue of the newsletter) document several more grievances and the onset of a strike that was to last into late August of that year. For background on the potters strike of 1869, readers are referred to Marc Jeffrey Stern's *The Pottery Industry of Trenton: A Skilled Trade in Transition, 1850-1929* (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick 1994). All of the minutes of 1868-69 were recorded by John D. McCormick, who served as Secretary to both the hollowware pressers branch union and the amalgamated union throughout this period.

The excerpts which follow contain some limited commentary (shown in italics) to help guide the reader.

—Richard W. Hunter

Trenton, N.J., Aug. 17, 1868

Pursuant to a call that appeared in the *True American*, the potters of Trenton met at the house of Mr. C. Rumpf, corner of Kossuth and Clinton sts., in large numbers. The meeting was organized by Mr. Richard Jackson, who nominated Mr. John Wag President. Mr. Wm. Rae was nominated Vice President, and Mr. John D. McCormick, Secretary. All these officers were elected unanimously.

The President, on taking the chair, stated that the object of the meeting was to form a Potters Union, and made some further remarks.

On motion, Mr. Jonathan C.

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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, Richard Hunter, Jay Lewis, Emma Lewis, William Liebeknecht, Molly Merlino, George Miller, Brenda Springsted. Newsletter Editor: Patricia Mad-

## Minutes of the Potters Union

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Fincher, editor of the *Industrial World*, who was present, was requested to address the meeting. Mr. Fincher complied with the request, and spoke at considerable length upon the subject of Trades Unions and the benefits to be derived from co-operation. A note of thanks was tendered to Mr. Fincher.

Mr. George Lawton moved that the meeting proceed to organize a Union. Carried with enthusiasm.

Mr. Sedmond moved that a committee be appointed from each pottery to determine the standing of the different branches of the trade in the Union about to be formed. Adopted.

Mr. John Monroe moved that this committee be composed of three persons from each pottery – one from each branch, and that the kilnmen, who were not present in large numbers, be notified by a member of each committee. Adopted.

The following is a list of the hollow-ware and flat pressers that composed the committee:

Bloor & Co.—	Richard Jackson , John Wag
Moses & Co.—	John Monroe, John Barlow
Millington & Co.—	James Reed, Samuel Randalls
Yates & Titus—	Wm. Umpblee, John Shepperd
Brearley & Stephens—	Ralph Martin, Rob't Whelan
Taylor & Co.—	Wm. Pope, John Broughton
Speeler's—	Thomas Cooper, Arthur Cooper
Moore & Co.—	Henry Drake Ford, Hugh Kearney
Cook & Co.—	James Witmore, Charles Anderson
Cheeseman's—	John Taylor,

Coxson & Co.—	John Humphreys Mr. Brunt, Wm. Brammar
Young & Co.—	Enoch Thomas, Edward Babcock
Cores—	Christopher Riley, Leonard Foster
Mower & Hill—	Henry Potmore

The members of this committee were elected by the meeting. Mr. Fincher offered the use of a room in his office for the committee to meet. His offer was accepted, and,

On motion, the committee was ordered to meet at the office of the *Industrial World*, corner of State and Warren sts, on Wednesday evening, the 19th inst., at 7 ½ O'clock.

A note of thanks was tendered to Mr. Rumpf for the gratuitous use of his room.

On motion, Mr. Fincher was requested to give a report of the meeting in the next issue of his paper, and the Secretary to furnish a report for the *True American*. On motion, the meeting adjourned to meet at the same place on the evening of the 24th inst.

Trenton, N.J., Aug. 19, 1868

The Committee on Organization elected at the preliminary meeting held on the 17th inst. met at the office of the *Industrial World*. The meeting was called to order at 8 O'clock – John Barlow was elected President, and John D. McCormick, Secretary. The object of the meeting was stated, and the following named Kilnmen were elected to fill the committee from the different potteries:

Yates & Titus—	Henry Hall
Brearley & Stevens—	Edward Cassidy
Moore & Co.—	George Gibbons
Cook & Co.—	John Machen

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## Minutes of the Potters Union

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Cheesemans—John Campbell

Mower & Hill—George Harrison

Reports were received and accepted from the following potteries:- Bloor & Co., Moses & Co., Millington & Co., Yates & Titus, Taylor & Co., Moore & Co., Brearley & Stevens, Cook & Co., Cheeseman's - Coxson & Co., Cores, and Mower & Hill, twelve potteries, Speeler's and Young's not being represented.

On motion of Mr. Monroe it was declared to be the sense of the meeting that each branch have a separate union and treasury; but that all branch unions contribute an equal proportion to a general fund to be used for defensive purposes. In case of strikes the money in the defensive fund can be used by the strikers, but no other moneys without the consent of the branch unions not in the strike. The motion was adopted.

Trenton, N.J., Aug. 24, 1868.

*[The potters meet to discuss when the branch unions should meet (the hollow ware pressers on the 25th; the flat pressers on the 26th; the mould makers on the 27th, and the kilnmen on the 28th), when the general union should meet (September 7), and how many representatives from each branch should attend the general council (no more than three).]*

Trenton, N.J., Aug. 25, 1868.

The Hollow-Ware Pressers met at the place appointed. John Monroe was elected Chairman *pro tem*, and John D. McCormick Secretary *pro tem*.

A motion was adopted that when permanent officers be elected they hold office for only six months.

The meeting went into nomination of permanent officers, and elected for President, George Goderidge; Vice

President, Henry Drake Ford; Secretary, John D. McCormick; and Treasurer, Edward Dwyer.

It was moved that a committee be appointed to draw up a Constitution and By-Laws, said committee to consist of George Goderidge (President), John Monroe, Ralph Owen, and John D. McCormick (Secretary). Adopted.

It was moved that three trustees be elected to bank all the funds in the hands of the treasurer belonging to the society, over a certain amount, to be specified hereafter. Adopted.

Anthony Milne, John Monroe, and John Reed were elected trustees.

On motion, 25 cts. per week was the sum decided upon to be paid by members, that 9 cts. of that be paid into the general fund, and that an entrance fee of \$1.00 be required, which could be paid any time within six weeks. Adopted.

It was moved that a collector be appointed on each pottery, whose duties will be to collect all dues from members. Ad't'd.

The following members were elected to represent the Union in the General Council: George Goderidge (President), Peter Mitchell, and James Dougherty.

A motion was adopted that the President and Secretary be empowered to purchase the necessary books for the Union, to be paid for out of the funds of the society.

It was moved that the next meeting be held at the same place on September 1st, to hear the report of the committee on rules. Adopted.

It was moved that the Secretary notify the potteries not represented about the meeting. Adopted. Adjourned.

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*Trenton, N.J., Sept. 1, 1868.*

*[The Hollow-Ware Pressers meet again. They discuss initiation fees, and decide that the \$1.00 fee will not be required until October 3, but that payments may begin on September 5.]*

*Trenton, N.J., Sept. 7, 1868.*

A general meeting was held at the usual place. At 8 O'clock the meeting was called to order, the vice president in the chair. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved.

The reports of committees were next in order, and were as follows: The hollow-ware pressers reported having effected an organization, elected permanent officers, and representatives to the amalgamated board, and passed a code of rules. The flat pressers reported substantially the same, and that 25 cts. a week was the sum to be paid by members, ten cents of which goes to the amalgamated board. The kilnmen presented a similar report. The mould makers were not represented, and made no report. All the reports were accepted.

The committee on organization was discharged – The meeting adjourned to meet on the 14th at the same place.

*Trenton, N.J., Sept. 8, 1868.*

The Hollow-Ware Pressers met at their rooms at 8 O'clk, the President in the chair. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved.

On motion, the resolution declaring that 9 cts. be the amount paid on each member into the amalgamated fund, was repealed.

On motion, ten cents was declared to be the sum paid on each member into the amalgamated fund.

On motion, the meeting was de-

clared ready to receive the names of members and the collectors from the following potteries reported, from Cheeseman's, one; Cook & Co., one; Moore & Co., ten; Bloor & Co., five; Moses & Co., eight; Millington & Co., four; Yates & Co., one; Total, 30.

On motion, a committee of four was elected, consisting of Jas. Britt., Geo. Goderidge, Edward Dwyer and Peter Mitchell, to visit the potteries not represented and to try to induce the men to join the Union.

On motion, the delegates to the amalgamated board were instructed to use their influence to have a rule adopted to the effect that members shall receive no benefits from the amalgamated fund until they are three months clear on the books. Adj.

*Trenton, N.J., Oct. 13, 1868.*

A meeting was held at the usual place, the vice president in the chair. The following named were elected to represent the Hollow-Ware Pressers at the Amalgamated Board: John D. McCormick and John Monroe. Adjourned to meet on the 20th inst.

*Trenton, Nov. 17, 1868.*

The Hollow Ware Pressers met at their rooms, the vice president in the chair. The minutes of last meetings were read and approved.

Henry Drake Ford was elected President; vice [president] George Gotheridge [was] expelled, and John Monroe [elected] Vice President.

The following members were elected to represent the Union at the amalgamated board: Joseph Cotton and John Monroe. Adj.

*Trenton, Nov. 24, 1868.*

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The Hollow Ware Pressers met at their rooms, the vice president in the chair. The minutes of last meeting were read and approved.

A motion was adopted that 100 copies of the rules be printed. Also that the Union keep their own money, but pay their proportion of the expenses of the amalgamated board, which is to be continued.

The trustees were requested to bank some of the funds in the hands of the treasurer. The Sec. was authorized to draw on the treas. for stationery.

It was moved and carried that the Hollow Ware Pressers give a Concert and Ball at an early day to be determined by the committee

*Trenton, Dec. 1, '68.*

*[The hollowware pressers meet to plan the ball and concert.]*

*Trenton, Dec. 8, 1868.*

*[The Hollow Ware pressers meet to discuss the details of the ball.]*

*Trenton, Dec. 15, 1868.*

A communication was read from the Flat Pressers, in which they expressed their approval of the action of our union in regard to the entertainment on New Year's night, and promised a hearty support to the enterprise. Also, one from the Cincinnati Union, in which the necessity of being amalgamated was urged. Both communications were accepted and filed.

*[The first grievance is filed.]*

Mr. McCormick brought a grievance before the union in regard to a large granite Ewer that the firm of Hill & Moyer would only pay 9's price, for the Ewers of every Pottery in Trenton were measured, and it was found that the Ewer in dispute was as large as the

largest 6's, and larger than some. In view of the facts in the case, the union, by a unanimous vote, instructed Mr. McCormick to make no more of them at 9's price, and that the union would support such action.

*Trenton, Dec. 22, 1868.*

*[The Hollow Ware Pressers continue planning the ball.]*

In regard to the dispute relative to the Granite Ewer made at Hill & Moyer's, it was reported that the firm refused to pay 6's price, in consequence of which the man who made them lost four days.

This brought up the question, how much will the union pay a day in cases like the above. After some debate, it was, on Motion, decided that the union pay \$1.50 a day for lost time, in individual cases like the one in question. On motion, Leonard Foster and Henry Drake Ford were appointed a committee to wait on Hill & Moyer, relative to the question in dispute, and report at next meeting.

*Trenton, Dec. 29, 1869 [1868]*

A report was received and accepted from the committee appointed to confer with Hill & Moyer relative to a granite ewer, stating that no satisfactory settlement of the question could be arrived at, and the committee complained of not being treated with courtesy by the manager.

*[Continued in the next issue.]*

## John Tassie, Lenox Chairman

John Tassie, former chairman and chief executive of Lenox, Inc., passed away November 25, 2002 in Princeton, New Jersey. Tassie joined Lenox in 1942 as an assistant plant manager; he rose through the company and retired in 1980.

Under Mr. Tassie's leadership, Lenox grew from a small company that specialized in high-end china sold in only the northeastern United States to a large company with over a dozen subsidiaries that manufactured a number of household products. By the time Tassie retired, Lenox became a Fortune 1000 company and had 55 percent of the nation's fine china market.

Tassie used sophisticated marketing and advertising to make Lenox a

household name and introduced several new sales techniques: market research; the first direct sales force by a china maker; selling china in five-piece settings rather than in 72-piece sets; and the first color national magazine advertising campaign. The most famous slogan from that campaign featured a man telling his bride-to-be, "You get the Lenox. I'll get the license."

Tassie, originally from California, graduated from Princeton in 1939. He enjoyed golfing, pheasant hunting, and sport fishing. He is survived by his wife, Ellen, two sons and five daughters, 17 grandchildren; and a great-granddaughter.

## POTS News

### Web Site

POTS has established a presence on the web. Our site, developed by board member Christy Morganstein, has back issues of *Trenton Potteries*, a bibliography of articles and books about Trenton's ceramic industry, and a section of links to other sites with information on Trenton's ceramics.

The Potteries of Trenton Society is hoping to use the web site to make available a wide variety of information about Trenton's ceramic industry. In the future we hope to see the Trenton Potteries Database, Teacups to Toilets, the Minutes of the Potters Union, and other valuable information posted on the web.

Come visit us at  
[www.trentonpotteries.org](http://www.trentonpotteries.org).

### David J. Goldberg Transportation Building Dedicated

The New Jersey Department of Transportation Main Office Building on Parkway Avenue in Ewing was named for David J. Goldberg in a ceremony on October 1, 2002. Mr. Goldberg, the first Transportation Commissioner, was a founding member of the Potteries of Trenton Society and an expert in Trenton's ceramic industry.

Over the years he conducted valuable research into Trenton's ceramic industry. His book, *Potteries, the Story of Trenton's Ceramic Industry: Preliminary Notes on the Pioneer Potters and Potteries of Trenton*, was published in 1998 and is available at the Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie.

### Information Request

For more information on the Potteries of Trenton Society, please contact Scott or Judi at 215-369-6735 or email at [floydandjudi@aol.com](mailto:floydandjudi@aol.com).

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## Membership Meeting, Sunday, May 4

Mark your calendars for Sunday, May 4, the first ever POTS members' gathering. Because POTS is a relatively small group, we can all get to know each other and find out what others look for and collect in Trenton pottery and porcelain.

We will start the afternoon with a one-hour show and tell session. Members who wish to share a special piece or find answers to a difficult puzzle piece can present them to the group for general discussion. Archaeologists Bill Liebeknecht and Patty Madrigal will set up a display of the latest interesting archaeological finds from downtown Trenton sites.

The "show and tell" session will be followed by a generous "meet and greet" period with plenty of time to

enjoy each other's company and taste some delicious tea cakes made by board members.

This event is free to members and their guests. Membership sign-up forms and back issues of our newsletter will be available. Everyone is encouraged to bring a prospective member or two.

We hope we see everyone --

**Who:** Members of POTS and everyone interested in Trenton's ceramic past

**When:** Sunday, May 4, beginning at 1:30 p.m. (finish at 3:30 p.m.)

**Where:** Ellarslie in Cadwalader Park, Trenton.

For more information, call Patty Madrigal at 609-695-0122 or email [pmadrigal67@yahoo.com](mailto:pmadrigal67@yahoo.com).



*Bill Liebeknecht, Bert Denker and Ellen Denker identify pottery at last year's Dish Discovery Day.*

We're on the web! Check us out at  
[www.potteriesoftrenton.org](http://www.potteriesoftrenton.org)

Phone: 609-695-0122  
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120 W. State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08608

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)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check payable to the Potteries of Trenton Society and mail to:

Potteries of Trenton Society  
Amy Earls, Treasurer  
P.O. Box 121  
Florence, NJ 08518