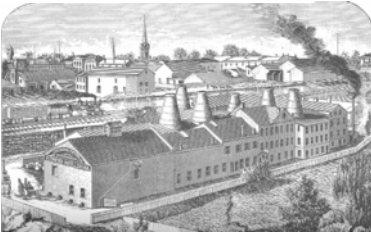


TRENTON POTTERIES

Newsletter of the
Potteries of Trenton Society



The Star Porcelain Company

Patricia A. Madrigal

Since c. 1905 the Star Porcelain Company has been operating from their plant at 75 Muirhead Avenue in Trenton. This area of Trenton, known as Coalport, was home to a number of potteries, including John Maddock & Sons Coalport Works (later the Bartley Crucible and Refractory Company), the Greenwood China Company, and the Mercer Pottery Company. Star was one of the last potteries operating in the area when it closed c. 2001.

The Star Porcelain Company specialized in manufacturing electrical porcelain, specialized parts used in a multitude of electrical items, from transformers to spark plugs; railroad switches to electric outlets. Star manufactured parts to order and designed pieces to client specifications.

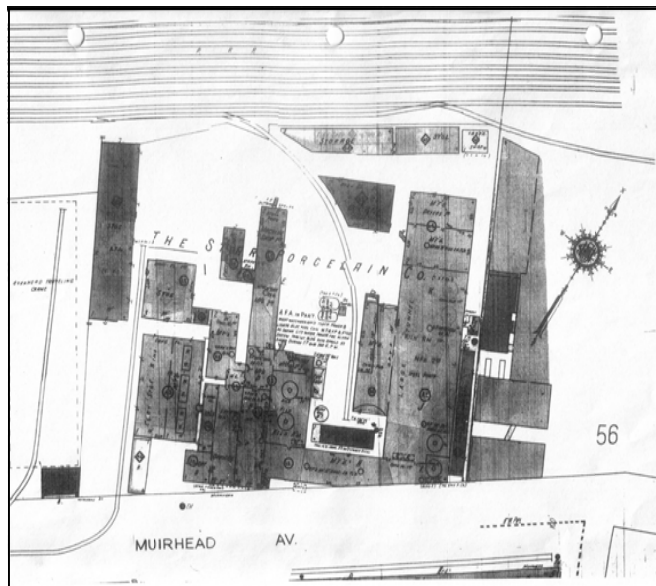
Early in 2006 the building was purchased and rehabilitated for a tenant. POTS was contacted during this time

and invited to come and tour the building during its renovation. In March, Richard Hunter, William Liebeknecht, and Patricia Madrigal paid a visit; we toured the entire building and took over 150 photos. William Liebeknecht returned in April when one of the large tunnel kilns was being dismantled. He took an additional photos of that kiln.

On the following pages are photos of the building and kiln demolition. The photographs were taken by Richard Hunter and William Liebeknecht.



Above: Exterior view of the Star Porcelain Company, facing east.



Left: Sanborn Insurance Company map from 1955. Note the bottle kilns (the donut shapes). The bottle kilns are no longer standing; they were demolished within the last 50 years or so.

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The Star Porcelain Company1

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 – Brenda Springsted. Board: Ellen Denker, Richard Hunter, Meta Janowitz, Jay Lewis, Emma Lewis, William Liebeknecht, George Miller, Brenda Springsted, Rebecca White. Newsletter Editor: Patricia Madrigal

Star Porcelain Company

The interior of the Star Porcelain Company looked as though the workers were planning to return. Everything was in place as it was left, from the trays of bisque ware waiting to be glazed to the glazing buckets, to the instructions on using the kiln and the safety notices. *Clockwise from the top:* The second floor was fitted with yards upon yards of track. Trays of ware were placed on the carriers that hung on the tracks, and these were then moved through the plant as needed. Switches on the tracks, similar to that found on railroad lines, changed the direction the trays moved. Two large tunnel kilns were located on the ground floor. The Robertson tunnel kiln (below right, sign below left) stood in the center of main building as was approximately 80 feet long. The doors were cemented shut and could not be opened.



Star Porcelain Company



A second tunnel kiln (left), manufactured by Allied, was located along the northeast wall. The lighting did not permit us to see the interior, but with the flash on the camera, we were able to record the inside of this kiln. Clipboards and signs near the kiln gave precise instruction on how the ware was to be loaded and unloaded.

The Robertson kiln was demolished in April in order to free up floor space for prospective tenants. Below left is an interior shot of the kiln during demolition. Note the shelves on the left and right, with heat vents along the center trough. Below right are the metal heating tubes near the entrance to the Robertson kiln.

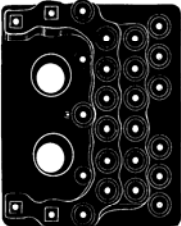


Star Porcelain Company

Star Porcelain produced electrical porcelain products to order. Using specifications provided by their client, their engineers drew up the specifications for the molds needed to produce the ware. To the right is a board with examples of the electrical porcelain produced by the plant; more samples are located in the bins below the board. Below are two advertisements from the Star Porcelain Company. The advertisement below right has an engraving of the plant. Note the two bottle kilns in the center left of the engraving. These kilns are depicted on the Sanborn insurance maps of the time, but were demolished in the latter half of the 20th century. (In fact, none of the bottle kilns that once defined Trenton's skyline has survived.)



VITREOUS ELECTRICAL INSULATING PORCELAIN



THIS illustrates a railway signal base of "Nu Blac" body and glazed black. This material was developed in order to meet an increasing demand for a material that could take a good uniform black glaze and have high dielectric and mechanical strength. Many manufacturers are now substituting this material for others because it does not show discolorations due to handling in assembly. This material can be molded as easily as our regular white electrical porcelain.

Manufactured by
THE STAR PORCELAIN COMPANY
 TRENTON, NEW JERSEY
 ESTABLISHED 1899

The Largest Manufacturer of Special ELECTRICAL PORCELAIN



This view of the Star Works gives some indication of the extent and permanence of the plant behind the service rendered to Star customers.

WITH SERVICE COMES THE POWER TO SERVE YOU WELL

Both plant and staff are to be considered in any evaluation of the ability of Star to serve you intelligently, honestly and promptly. An isolated product may be good, but unless you know something of the men who make it and the capacity of the plant in which it was made, you cannot judge of its makers as a source of supply. We would like to have you know us better. We trust that, for those who do not already know us well, this may serve as an incentive to better acquaintance.

Whether you need to make use of the skill of our electrical, mechanical and chemical engineers, our design facilities, or merely desire to have your blue prints and formulas rigidly followed in production—Star has a Unique Service to Offer to You.

★

The STAR PORCELAIN COMPANY
 Trenton, N. J.

Star Porcelain Company



During the tour of the plant we came across a large storage room filled with shelves that reached nearly to the ceiling. On these shelves were the metal molds used to manufacture electrical porcelain. They were labeled and organized by client. Metal molds provided greater precision in the manufacturing process, and did not wear out as quickly as plaster molds, an important consideration in the manufacture of electrical porcelain.



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:

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