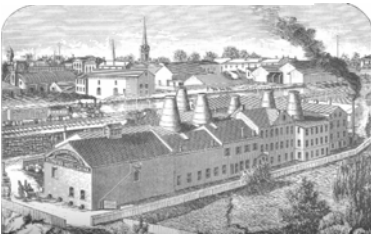


TRENTON POTTERIES

Newsletter of the
Potteries of Trenton Society



Revelation Kilns at Maddock's and Lenox in Trenton around 1900

Jacqueline Beaudry Dion and Jean-Pierre Dion

An early catalogue "Revelation China and Pottery Kilns" by H. J. Caulkins and M. C. Perry showed the tremendous popularity of these portable kilns among artist-potters, schools and professional manufacturing potteries throughout North America. Among those are Maddock and Lenox of Trenton whose testimonials are reproduced here along with some notes about the Revelation kilns.

By 1897 Horace B. Caulkins from Detroit had built up a successful dental supply and developed portable kilns for firing false teeth (Figure 1). He adapted one on that year for firing decorated china and asked his neighbour Mary Chase Perry, artist potter and later of Pewabic Pottery and Tile fame (Figure 2), to "travel the country demonstrating it." They went into partnership and a few years later developed the Revelation Kilns. The H. J. Caulkins & Co. Ltd., Manufacturers of China and Pottery Kilns and other High-Heat Furnaces, was located at 24 Gratiot Avenue, Detroit, Michigan. It published in 1905 or 1906 a fully illustrated 90-page catalogue from which we borrow freely the following testimonials and pictures of kilns, some used in Trenton by Thomas Maddock's Sons Co. and by The Ceramic Art Co. of Walter S. Lenox. This catalogue is a rare public source that discloses names of the Revelation kiln users.

These kilns, as opposed to the built-in kilns, were called portable and weighed from 300 to 6000 pounds. The

larger ones could accommodate as many as 9 dozen American tumblers at a time. According to Emma Robert, Secretary of the Handicraft Guild, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with their large kiln, from fifty to seventy-five good-sized pieces of pottery could be fired at once. The Revelation kilns were lined throughout with fire-brick, an important factor in the development of clear colors and enamels. Kerosene oil was used, a cheap and safe fuel. With kerosene oil there is no possibility of discoloration, from gases or sulphur, the latter apparently a constant menace to all potters of the time. No saggars are needed since the

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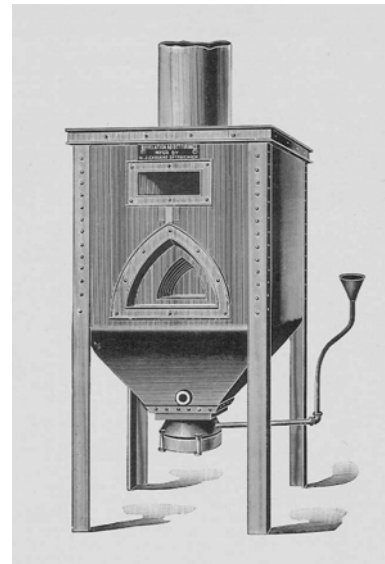


Figure 1. Revelation tooth furnace. By 1905 all the tooth manufacturers in the world, except one English firm, were supplied with it.

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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 – 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

Revelation Kilns

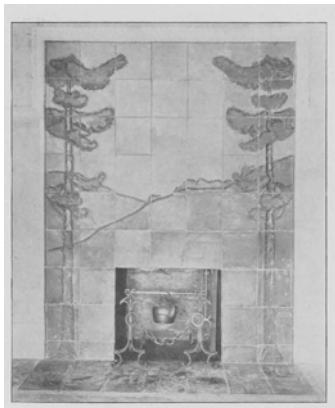


Figure 2. Fireplace with Pewabic matt glazed tiles made in Revelation kilns. The tiles have a soft grey above, green pine trees with dark brown trunks, and golden yellow hills and hearth.

(Continued from page 1)

flames do not come in contact with the ware. It could also create alternatively reducing and oxidizing temperatures quickly and accurately. Adelaide Alsop Robineau, the Editor of *Keramic Studio* and founder of the Robineau Pottery (Figure 3), wrote on August 3, 1900: *Your Revelation kiln ...is by far the most satisfactory. My firing of lustres has been especially improved since I used it...* Another letter from the Robineau Pottery, dated October 1, 1905 states that *...your kiln has given us very satisfactory results in our work on porcelain at high temperature. It is especially well adapted for the oxidizing atmosphere, and we are obtaining very fine crystalline glazes with a regularity which would be impossible were the ware enclosed in saggars, as it is in an ordinary kiln....*

Taxile Doat of the Sevres Pottery, France, writing to Mrs. Robineau said: *I wish to compliment you in regards to your crystals. I do not know of any finer or obtained with this regularity and persistency...This confirms the theory of the Caulkins kiln and its perfect oxidizing action on account of the muffle principle....* One may recall that a few years later, at the 1911 Turin Exposition in Italy, Robineau won the highest award for her porcelains and a *Diploma della Benemerenzza* declaring her porce-



Figure 3. Robineau porcelains. Finest examples of glazes with crystallization.

lains the finest in the world.

Again on the question of saggars, Mary Louise McLaughlin from Cincinnati wrote on October 2, 1905: *The great, especial advantage of the kiln is the avoidance of the necessity for using saggars and the accompanying annoyances connected with wad-clay for sealing them....* William Lycett, the illustrious china decorator from Atlanta, considered the Revelation the best portable kiln on the market as did the potter and celebrated author W.P. Jervis. W. A. Pickard from Chicago had eight such kilns in active use in his decorating room, a picture of which is shown in the Caulkins catalogue on page 37. The State geologist Earle Sloan used the Caulkins furnaces in all his pyrometric tests up to 2500° F, in connection with his work *Clays of South Carolina*. It was also used with perfect satisfaction at the Convent of the Holy Name, in Montreal, Canada.

The manufacturing firms throughout the country also adopted the Revelation kiln as a complement to their built-in kilns, notably the Bell pottery, Findlay, Ohio; the Goodwin Pottery, East Liverpool, Ohio; the J.B. Owens Pottery, Zanesville, Ohio; Onondaga Pottery Co., Syracuse, New York; and in Trenton, Thomas Maddocks Sons Co. and The Ceramic Art Co.

On September 27, 1905, the Thomas Maddock's Sons Co. wrote: *...We beg to state that this [Revelation] kiln is giving entire satisfaction, and we find it very convenient in the matter of making trials and for the purpose of getting through matchings...* Walter S. Lenox, President of The Ceramic Art Co., wrote on October 11, 1905: *We have been operating the large Revelation*

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Revelation Kilns

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Kiln, which you built especially for us, almost constantly for about one year in firing our best grades of decoration. We are pleased to say that the kiln has given us the most satisfactory results and we are contemplating placing an order with you for another kiln of the same kind.

Biographies of Mary Chase Perry, Adelaide Alsop Robineau and Mary Louise McLaughlin can be found, for instance, in the book by Clark and Hughto, which also displays on p. 69 the Revelation kilns in use at Pewabic Pottery, c. 1910. The story of the Maddock's Sons Co. is well told in their 1910 book *Pottery* in connection with sanitary wares while the Lenox China is documented by George Sanford Holmes in his 1924 book.

Although likely to be partial or biased, the advertisement trade catalogues, such as the Caulkins' one, are often a rich source of historical data providing information not seen elsewhere.

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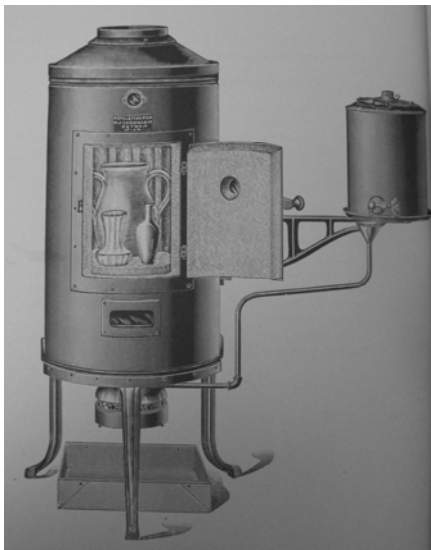


Figure 4: Revelation school kiln. Inside measurements 10x15 inches. Specially built for firing modeled clay pieces requiring heat up to cone 2.

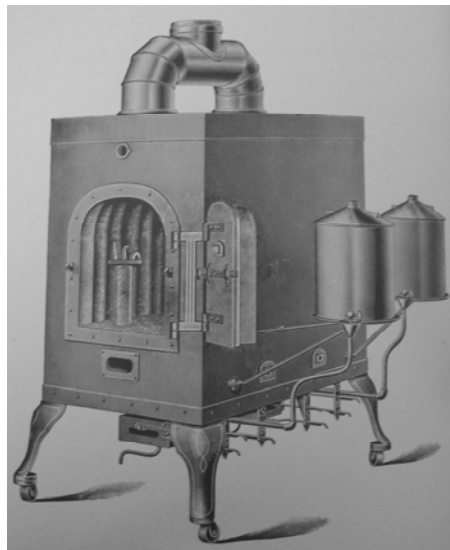


Figure 5: Pottery kiln for small manufacturing company, with 2 burners. Inside measurements : 18x20x33 inches. Price \$175.

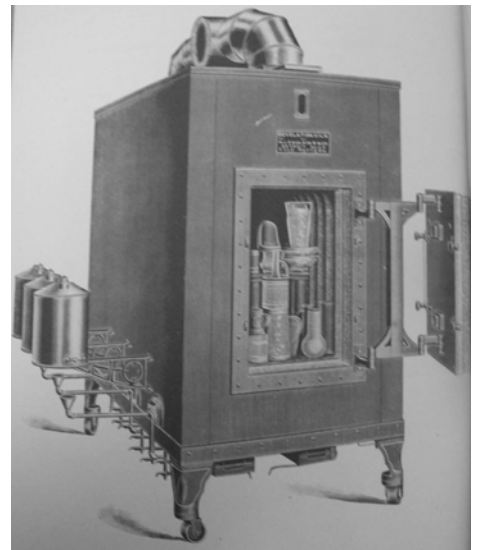


Figure 6 : Large pottery kiln with 6 burners and separate combustion chambers. Inside measurements: 32x36x48 inches. Price \$475.

Ceramics in America 2007

Reviewed by George Miller

Rob Hunter has produced another great addition to the ceramics and archaeological literature with the publication of the 2007 volume of *Ceramics in America*. This volume shines a light on the dark area of the translucent soft paste porcelains. Archaeologists rarely get beyond describing these wares as being soft paste porcelain. While there are a number of books on English factories that produced these wares such as Bow, Chelsea, Derby and Worcester, none of them pull all of the information together for an overview of these elusive wares.

The 2007 volume of *Ceramics in America* begins with a reprinting of Graham Hood's slim volume on the Bonnin and Morris Philadelphia porcelain factory with all new color photographs of the wares and some of the excavations by Garry W. Stone and Paul Huey. This is followed by a reprint of an important article by Michael Brown on the history of the factory. Alexandra A. Kirtley produced a catalog of all the known surviving Bonnin and Morris pieces and their histories. Gavin Ashworth has rephotographed these vessels as well as almost all of the other photos in the volume. Finally, Michelle Erickson recreated the process of producing a Bonnin and Morris pickle stand with a very detailed set of photographs of making the various molds and assembling the final object.

Until the publication of this volume, it was assumed that Bonnin and Morris produced the first porcelain in the United States beginning in 1770. However, Stanley South's excavations of John Bartlam's wares at the Cain Hoy site in South Carolina have

shown that Bartlam was producing soft paste porcelain between 1765 and 1770. Rob Hunter, Stanley South and Lisa R. Hudgins have articles on these discoveries again with excellent color photos. These articles alone would make the volume worth adding to your library, but there is much more.

J. Victor Owen provides an excellent summary of the chemical make up of glassy, bone, soapstone and hybrid soft paste porcelains with information on the mix of these ingredients of porcelains from a large number of English factories as well as the porcelains from John Bartlam and Bonnin and Morris factories. This article will go a long way toward making these wares less opaque.

The quest for the secret of how to make porcelain has a strong relationship with alchemy and the alchemists who sought to turn base metals into gold. The arcanum was the secret of how to make porcelain that was highly sought by European and English potters. Glenn Adamson presents a good brief summary of this history of the quest and how it related to a changing knowledge of the chemistry involved in the production of porcelain.

Roderick Jellico and Rob Hunter went through the collections at Colonial Williamsburg and photographed a large number of the soft paste porcelains from that collection. These photographs and the documentary information will make this the first place to go for the identification of these wares from archaeological sites.

Amy C. Earls has put together a *Checklist of Articles and Books on Eighteenth Century Porcelain in America to*

(Continued on page 5)

The American Ceramic Circle Announces 2007 Awards

The American Ceramic Circle has selected two projects for awards in support of original research in the history of ceramics. Grants were made to Donald G. Carpentier for research related to *Saving the Early Technological Artifacts of the Spode Factory* and to Robert Doares and Barbara Wood for their continued research in Limoges, *Antebellum Production and Distribution of Haviland Brothers Porcelain*. The ACC awards up to \$5,000 for expenses associated with the preparation of scholarly papers based on original research in the history of ceramics. Grant recipients are required to offer completed papers for publication in the *American Ceramic Circle Journal* and may be invited to speak at an annual ACC symposium. The next deadline for completed applications is April 1, 2008.

Previous grant recipients whose articles appear in the most recent *American Ceramic Circle Journal*, (Volume XIV) are Charlotte Jacob-Hanson ("Further Findings on the Life and Career of Louis Victor Gervert"); Jonathan Gray ("An American and an American Trader in Wales: Fresh Insights into the Cambrian Pottery, Swansea, 1789-1810"); Robert Doares and Barbara Wood ("Archival Diversity and the Pursuit of Haviland Porcelain History"); Laura Murphy ("Parian Ware and the Development of An American Identity"); and Marilee Boyd Meyer and Susan J. Montgomery ("Marblehead Pottery: Simplicity and Restraint")

An application form and a statement of general principles pertaining to the grants process are available at the website www.amercercir.org. Questions may be addressed to ACC Grants Chairman, Susan Detweiler, Suite 12, 8200 Flourtown Avenue,

Wyndmoor, PA 19038, or by e-mail: sdetweiler@aol.com.

Founded in 1970, the American Ceramic Circle promotes scholarship and research in the history, use and preservation of ceramics. Symposia are held every November at various museums. Future locations include the Seattle Art Museum in 2007 and Baltimore in 2008. A limited number of scholarships to the symposia for students are available. For information about membership (including student memberships) and publications, contact Executive Director, Suzanne Findlen Hood, sfhood@acc.hrcoxmail.com.

Ceramics in America 2007

(Continued from page 4)

conclude the volume.

This volume is a great addition to the literature and it has many photos of wares from very short period of time because of the limited dates that some of these factories were in production. Particularly interesting is the use of underglaze transfer printing at the Bonnin and Morris porcelain works. The printing and painted styles of these wares will show up in the painted China glaze wares about a decade after they were being produced on soft paste porcelains, so the articles are also relevant to the study of the later earthenwares.

The 2007 volume of *Ceramics in America* is hard bound and is published by the Chipstone Foundation. 336 pages. List price \$65.00.

Collectible Restaurant China Subject of 2008 Symposium

The Potteries of Trenton Society in partnership with the New Jersey State Museum and the Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie, is pleased to announce a symposium on Saturday, March 8, entitled "Blue Plate Specials: Trenton's Restaurant China." The program has been organized in celebration of a significant gift of Trenton restaurant china to Ellarslie. The collection is currently featured in the exhibition *Dining Out On Trenton: Maddock and Scammell China*.

China made during the twentieth century for a variety of institutions, such as railroad dining cars, military mess halls, hotel restaurants, diners and cafeterias, has only recently become collectible. Although much of it is made abroad today, the U.S. was a significant producer of this material from the late 1800s to the late 1900s. Trenton was home to several of the most important producers of this material, including Greenwood China, Maddock China, and Scammell China. Speakers at this year's symposium will explain the historical significance of this ware and describe a variety of ways to collect it.

The program will feature three lectures in the morning and a catered lunch, followed by an introduction to the afternoon's reception and exhibition viewing at Ellarslie. Morning speakers include Stephen Harrison, who will present the keynote lecture as an overview of the history of restaurant china nationally. Mr. Harrison is curator of decorative art and design at the Cleveland Museum of Art and co-author of *From Tabletop to TV Tray: China and Glass in America, 1880-1980*. He will be followed by Brenda Springsted, archaeologist with Richard Grubb & Associates, who will discuss the history and wares of Greenwood China Company in a talk entitled *Built to Last, Greenwood China 1868-1933*. William Liebeknecht, archaeologist with Hunter Research Inc., will discuss *Maddock Pottery from Coast to Coast and All Points in Between: The View from a Waster Dump*, including a history of Maddock Pottery Company's Lambertton Works and the recovery of ceramic sherds

from the pottery's waster dump. Many of the customers served by this pottery are revealed in these discarded materials.

Following lunch Brian Hill, Ellarslie's Director, will give a brief introduction to the exhibition of Larry Paul's collection at Ellarslie and participants will depart for a reception and viewing of the exhibition. In addition, the New Jersey State Museum has currently on view *Fancy Rockingham Pottery, The Modeller and Ceramics in Nineteenth-Century America*. A stoneware or earthenware product with mottled brown glaze, Rockingham was made in many U.S. potteries, including several significant New Jersey makers. The exhibition was organized by the University of Richmond Museums, Virginia, and is currently circulating to select museums. Diana Stradling, author of the catalog that accompanies the exhibition, will present a walk-through of the exhibition. Symposium participants can take the walk-through and attend the reception at Ellarslie afterward.

This year's symposium will be held on Saturday, March 8, at the auditorium of the New Jersey State Museum, 205 West State Street, Trenton. The day will begin with registration and coffee at 9:30 a.m. The first lecture will begin at 10 a.m. The registration fee for the day includes the program, morning refreshments, lunch, the Rockingham walk-through, and the reception at Ellarslie.

Advance registration must be received by February 22 in order to attend at the regular fee, which is \$30.00 for members of POTS, the Friends of the New Jersey State Museum, and the Trenton Museum Society; \$35.00 for non-members. Registrations made after February 22 or paid at the door will be \$40.00. POTS takes checks or money orders only, no credit cards.

The New Jersey State Museum is a division of the NJ Department of State.

The Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie Mansion is owned by the City of Trenton, Douglas H. Palmer, Mayor, maintained and operated by the Department of Recreation, Natural Resources & Culture, Division of Culture.

Blue Plate Specials: Trenton's Restaurant China

Presented by

Potteries of Trenton Society
New Jersey State Museum
Trenton City Museum

Saturday, March 8, 2008

9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

New Jersey State Museum Auditorium, 205 West State Street, Trenton, NJ

Advance registration must be received by **February 22, 2008**; after that date, you must register on site. We regret that we do not take credit cards; check or money order only. All advance registrations must be made via the mail; telephone registrations will not be accepted. On site registration is \$40. Registration includes lunch.

Please Print

Name: _____

Affiliation (for name tag): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Email _____
(optional) (for email confirmation of registration)

Meeting Registration Fees:

Member Potteries of Trenton Society \$30.00 _____

Member Friends of the NJ State Museum \$30.00 _____

Member Trenton Museum Society \$30.00 _____

Non Member \$35.00 _____

Please circle your choice for sandwich (if no choice is made we will make one for you):

Cheese Turkey Roast beef Tuna

Registration will be \$40 the day of the symposium.

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

Potteries of Trenton Society, Amy Earls, Treasurer, PO Box 121, Florence, NJ 08518

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: _____

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