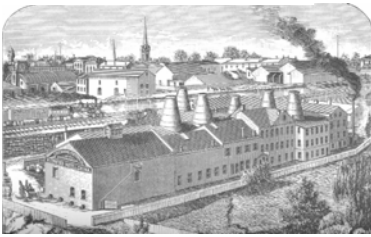


# TRENTON POTTERIES

Newsletter of the  
Potteries of Trenton Society



## *American Belleek, Cybis and Boehm Exhibit at the Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie Mansion*

Mayor Douglas H. Palmer announced that the Trenton City Museum at Ellarslie Mansion in Cadwalader Park and the Trenton Museum Society will present “American Belleek, Cybis and Boehm” from April 4th through November 2009. This is a new display of some of the finest porcelains ever made in Trenton. In addition to selections from its permanent collection, the Museum is fortunate to be able to show many special items from five long-time collectors of American Belleek. Each brings to his or her collection special interests from them have been selected some of the most outstanding pieces from the “first flowering” of American Belleek. This exhibit also serves to remind the viewer that the Boehm and Cybis firms originated in Trenton. The examples chosen for the exhibit are a combination of technical mastery and creative artistry.

American Belleek began during the last quarter of the 19th century and continued into the first decades of the 20th century. Early predecessors include porcelain manufactures such as Tucker in Philadelphia and a popular unglazed white porcelain called parian. Technological advances during the Civil War period led to an extensive American Ceramic Display at the Centennial Exposition of 1876 in Philadelphia. Among the twenty American displays were some of this country’s finest examples of parian porcelain and china. However, English and European work over shadowed the American entries; nonetheless, the Centennial

Exhibition introduced American potters to the naturalistic forms, creamy body and lustrous opalescent glazes of Irish Belleek wares.

In the decade following the Centennial Exhibition John Hart Brewer of Ott & Brewer aspired to create the equivalent level of quality in Trenton. Isaac Broome, a noted sculptor who had previously created the parian Baseball vases for the Centennial Display and the Cleopatra bust in 1877, was one of several fine modelers and designers who worked on the new fine art wares. Brewer eventually brought over William Bromley, Jr. to create the Belleek style body. By 1883 Ott & Brewer had a line of belleek products available for sale.

Other firms followed, most notably Willets and the Ceramic Art Company (CAC), who would also achieve very fine quality Belleek wares. Talented artists such as Isaac Broome and Walter Scott Lenox trained and worked in several Trenton potteries, which resulted in a distinct Trenton style of American Belleek ware. Other firms elsewhere in the country, particularly in East Liverpool, Ohio and New York, pursued the same excellence and would each develop its own unique style.

Trenton’s style is an eclectic mix of naturalistic designs with shells and flowers coupled with an exuberant use of gilding, gold and silver overlay, lustrous glazes, and enamel painting. The style varies from Ro-

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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 – Jay Lewis; 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*

## American Belleek

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mantic to Rococco Revival to Art Nouveau, sometimes all on the same piece. In tandem with the Belleek productions there are also influences from the more traditional Worcester and Sevres china painted within panels or freely circumnavigating the object. Painting is both figural and landscape. The entire country became enamored with this style and amateur painting clubs sprang up everywhere. The Trenton potteries continued to attract professional artists, such as William Marsh, William and George Morely, Hans Nosek, especially to the Cerarmic Art Company, which became Lenox, Inc. in 1906.

The creation of fine art ware such as Belleek was so costly that most firms in Trenton were only able to sustain production for a few years. Ott & Brewer failed in 1894 and Willets only produced American Belleek for a few years. In contrast to other Trenton firms, the Ceramic Art Company (CAC) and

later Lenox worked on a different model, creating only fine wares and factory decorated art wares. Once established, Lenox remained successful for almost 100 years.

The exhibit at the Trenton City Museum opened on April 4th in conjunction with The Potteries of Trenton Society (POTS) Symposium entitled "Art Revealed by Industry: Painters, Sculptors and Designers Create Trenton's Ceramics." It will remain open through mid November 2009.

*This exhibit is made possible in part by the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission through funding from the Mercer County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment of the Arts. Programming and additional exhibit support are provided by the Trenton Museum Society.*



*The Trenton City Museum is owned, maintained and operated by the City of Trenton, Department of Recreation, Natural Resources and Culture, Division of Culture and is located at the Ellarslie Mansion in Cadwalader Park. Hours are Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 A.M. to 3 P.M. and Sundays, 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. The Museum is closed on Mondays and Municipal Holidays. Visit [www.ellarslie.org](http://www.ellarslie.org) or for additional exhibit information contact the Museum Director, Brian O. Hill, at 609-989-3632.*

## Spring Symposium 2009

If you attended the recent POTS/NJSM symposium (April 4) on the role of designers in Trenton's potteries you know that the speakers were excellent, the audience enthusiastic, and the State Museum gracious as always. We also had a terrific surprise: the Trenton City Museum (Ellarslie) gave us a peek at their new exhibition of Trenton belleek from local collections, even before the labels were finished. We saw some great work and had a chance to chat about Trenton belleek with the ware's true believers.

The board is glad to see the growth in audience size and enthusiasm for the symposia. We are especially gratified by the synergy of inter-

est that has developed among the city's museums and POTS members. This year in addition to the Trenton belleek exhibit at Ellarslie, the State Museum opened a retrospective exhibit of their Ceramic Art Company/Lenox holdings following the large gift from Lenox China company's archives.

If you like to make plans, mark the date April 17, 2010, on your calendar for next year's symposium, which will be held again in the State Museum's auditorium. We are still working on the topic, knowing that the diversity of Trenton's ceramics is a source of continuous interest to our members.



*Clockwise from top left: Ulysses Dietz, Emma Lewis and Ellen Denker at the morning reception; Ulysses Dietz and Robert Cunningham examine one of the exhibit cases at Ellarslie; symposium attendees mingling at the morning reception.*

## *Gift of American Ceramics To Metropolitan Museum of Art*

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has accepted the promised gift of 250 exceptional examples of American art pottery from the collector Robert A. Ellison Jr. The collection – which spans the years 1876 through 1956 and represents all regions of the nation – ranks among the foremost of its kind, and will be unveiled on the mezzanine level of the Museum's Charles Engelhard Court when the second phase of the newly renovated American Wing opens on May 19, 2009.

Thomas P. Campbell, Director of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, commented: "I am delighted to announce Robert Ellison's generous promised gift of American ceramics. To be shown publicly for the first time this spring in an exhibition space dedicated to the material, these superb works reveal the 80-year history of the artistic pottery movement in the United States, from its start around the time of the nation's centennial to the mid-1950s, when the contemporary pottery movement began. Individually, each is a wonderful object; shown together, they delight the eye and will surely stimulate new interest in American ceramics among the general public and specialists. It gives me particular pleasure to note that the inaugural presentation of this important new acquisition – a truly transformative addition to our collection of American decorative arts – will be part of the celebration surrounding the re-opening of much of The American Wing."

Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, the Anthony W. and Lulu C. Wang Curator of American Decorative Arts, continued: "Amassed over the course

of four-and-a-half decades, Bob Ellison's collection of American ceramics is unparalleled in quality and depth. These varied and noteworthy works represent his abiding curiosity about an art form that – at the time – was both overlooked and underappreciated. At the Met, where the collection will be prominently displayed and seen by thousands of visitors each year, it will serve as an important and accessible resource."

Outstanding works from every major American pottery and many lesser-known but historically significant potteries are featured in the collection. The objects range in size from miniature vessels a few inches tall to plaques, lamps, and large-scale vases measuring more than two feet in height. Among the highlights are 16 extraordinary vessels by the renowned Biloxi, Mississippi, potter George E. Ohr (1857-1918), whose eccentric wheel-thrown vessels presaged abstracted forms by nearly half a century. Noted works from quintessential Arts and Crafts potteries, like Newcomb, Grueby, Rookwood, Marblehead, and Saturday Evening Girls are represented in depth. The holdings of refined and unusual glazed pieces of Chelsea Ceramic Art Works are without peer. The collection also encompasses singular examples by such distinguished 20th-century artists working in ceramics as Henry Varnum Poor (1888-1970), Hunt Diederich (1884-1953), and Peter Voulkos (1924-2002).

The primary catalyst in the development of the American art pottery movement was the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, which introduced the American public to ceramics of the highest quality from Europe and

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## *Gift of American Ceramics*

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Asia. This influence continued until 1956, when the California potter Peter Voulkos altered traditional wheel-thrown vessels into sculpture-like shapes, ushering in the era of contemporary ceramics.

The May 2009 opening of The Charles Engelhard Court, balcony galleries, and early American period rooms marks the completion of the

second part (begun in May 2007) of a project to reconfigure, renovate, or upgrade nearly every section of The American Wing by 2011. The third and final phase will involve a total renovation of the American paintings and sculpture galleries and the addition of eight completely new galleries for the display of the Museum's superb collection of this material.

## *Historic Eastfield Village Workshops 2009*

### **OUT OF THE WOODS: A Staffordshire Family of Potters & Its Influence on 18th & 19th-century British Pottery June 26-28, 2009.**

Great changes swept across the British pottery industry during the era of industrialization. Many of the designs and innovations that propelled the advances were the work of members of the Wood Family. Whether it was furnishing models and molds for a myriad of items to other factories, designing and creating beautiful ornamental figures, or expanding their ventures to other countries, the Woods - Aaron, Ralph, John, and Enoch among them - were always at the forefront of the industry in the Potteries. In the past few years, a considerable number of new documents relating to the family have come to light. Their contents, as well as continued research on existing pots and archeological sites, have increased our understanding of just how important their work was to this industry.

We are fortunate again to have a large number of shards from several sites in Burslem that are associated with the Woods. This also includes a number of their marked pots. Shards include many from the 1831-35 deposit found at Burslem Town Hall Site by the Time Team in 1999.

New Feature: The schedule for this year includes something new. On Friday evening, we will have a period dinner prepared and served in the Briggs Tavern for all attendees at no extra charge. That evening will include an informal opportunity to display and discuss pots and shards as well as an informal presentation on dipped wares repeated from the 2009 New York Ceramics Fair Lecture Series.

For registration information and a complete listing of lectures being offered this year, please visit [www.greatamericancraftsmen.org/workshops/classes.htm](http://www.greatamericancraftsmen.org/workshops/classes.htm).

## *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 Membership \$25

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

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

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

email \_\_\_\_\_

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

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