

WPA Press

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WISCONSIN POTTERY ASSOCIATION

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Meeting and Presentation Schedule for 2000

January 11 - California

Figurals (Part 2), by Elaine Staaland.

February 8 - Clewell Pottery,
by Betty Knutzen.

**March 14 - Early Wisconsin
Stoneware**, by Mark Knipping.

**April 11 - American Studio
Art Pottery (Part 2)**, by Paul
Donhauser.

May 9 - Monmouth Pottery
(tentative).

June 13 - Hull House Pottery.

July - No Meeting.

August 8 - WPA Picnic.

**September 12 - To Be
Announced.**

October 10 - Cowan Pottery,
by Mark Bassett.

**November 14 - Camark
Pottery**, by Nicol Knappen.

December 5 - Holiday Party.

- Barbara Budig, WPA Program
Committee

A New Year's Toast

As we enter a New Year and a new millennium, I want to express a few thoughts as the outgoing Wisconsin Pottery Association (WPA) president and to propose a toast for the New Year. First of all, it was a pleasure to serve as both vice-president and president of the WPA. I know that members hesitate about committing to a two-year stint as a club officer. I had my doubts too. What made the experience pleasurable was the support that I received from the membership, especially the other officers, and key committee members that work very hard to see that the projects we work on succeed. Luckily I found the work to be a 'shared' experience, with everyone working towards a common goal. It was a very rewarding experience.

Secondly, I'm very proud of what was accomplished by our association this past year. Beginning in December 1998 we

established the WPA web page at www.wisconsinpottery.org through the help of Tim Zinkgraf who continues doing a great job of updating it and giving us access to our own piece of the 'net'. I can't think of a better advertising method for our organization. In the spring, we published our first newsletter. Kari Kenefick has done a terrific job taking on the duties of editor and has provided us with another vital communication tool to reach our membership. In August, we had our most successful pottery show and exhibit ever and in the last newsletter we discussed key WPA members that made this event successful. This fall, we've seen a growth in our membership to nearly 90 members. That's a long way from the group of 12 that met informally for the first time at David and Betty Knutzen's house back in the winter of 1993. In addition the past year saw 9 WPA meetings with very

interesting speakers on a wide array of topics, thanks to the diligent work of the program development committee.

As we look forward to the year 2000, I believe that we will continue to grow as an association. We have many projects on our burners, one being our August 26th Pottery Exhibit and Show. The positive press and word of mouth advertising we've received about last year's show should propel us to further success this year. (Don't forget that we're looking for Illinois Potteries for our 2000 exhibit!)

On-going projects include continued work with the Arts Council of Edgerton on the Pauline cabin relocation and historical marker project, development of a traveling exhibit, oral histories on potteries such as Pittsville, and last but not least, further development of our web page and newsletter possibilities.

We've been fortunate these past few years to have had the support of two influential groups, the Wisconsin State Historical Society and the Ceramic Arts Collector's Association. Both have helped us to achieve our successes. Many thanks for their continued support!

Although it came down to the final hour, I'm pleased that we have had two excellent members step forward to become president and vice president; Barb Huhn and Kari Kenefick. We also have Scott Grant contributing as secretary and Janet Walbarger in training for the treasurer position. Good luck to all the officers. They deserve our support.

Lastly, to all the members,

please join me in a toast to the New Year and the new millennium: *"To continued growth and excitement for the WPA, to continued good fellowship at our meetings, to exciting finds for our members (whether they may be the Show and Tell heart-stopper type of thing, or that scratch-your-head piece destined for the mystery table). Happy 2000 to you all!"*

- Jim Riordan, outgoing WPA President



Arts Council of Edgerton Projects Update

Ori-anne Pagel recently updated us on the projects being undertaken by the Edgerton Arts Council (ACE) and members of the WPA. The Pauline Jacobus log cabin was moved from its original site over several weekends during the month of October. Brush around the area was first removed before the cabin was thoroughly photographed. The parts of the cabin were numbered and the roof, windows and doors removed before the logs were removed. The various parts of the cabin are being stored until they can be reassembled in early Spring of 2000. All the work of cleaning the area and moving the logs was done by volunteers including WPA members Betty and Dave Knutzen and Ori-anne and Paul Pagel. The fireplace still needs to be moved and will be moved intact after the concrete slab is poured on the new site downtown. Cost estimates to complete the slab, move the fireplace and rebuild the cabin are

approximately \$10,000. The long term plan is to rebuild the cabin, obtain a historical marker for the site, acquire the original pottery barn and build a museum to house a collection of Pauline pottery.

On December 8th ACE is hosting visitors from the Wisconsin Arts Board, Local Arts Agency and the State Humanities Agency to discuss grant possibilities. ACE is involved in so many different arts outreach programs that there are always many worthy projects which compete for grant dollars. Recently, the WPA donated \$150 to ACE specifically for use in the Pauline Jacobus log cabin project.

According to Ori-anne ACE credits the WPA as being instrumental in getting this project started and is grateful for our continuing support. WPA, through its involvement with the initial tour, letters, our website, physical help and donation, has been instrumental in pushing this project forward in the busy agenda of the ACE. Ori-anne specifically noted that the reason the city granted the building site downtown was due to Rick Dexter's support and commitment in helping to get a historical marker for the Pauline Pottery.

The WPA is proud of its members who are participating in making this dream come true. Special thanks go out to Paul and Ori-anne Pagel, Dave and Betty Knutzen and Rick Dexter.

If you would like to participate by sending a monetary gift a special Log Cabin Project

Account has been set up with the Bank of Edgerton, Main Street, Edgerton, WI, 53534.

- Barb Huhn, WPA President

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*Featured WPA Member –  
Ed Arnold*

*Editor's Note: Each edition of the WPA Press will feature a club member. The goal of these brief interviews is to help us get to know one another and learn about each others collecting interests. Ed and I had a chat in early December:*

Ed has been a member of the Wisconsin Pottery Association (WPA) since August of 1997. He learned of and became interested in the WPA during the 1997 Show and Sale, which featured an exhibit of Wisconsin Potteries. Ed is a collector of Pittsville pottery and saw notices in multiple newspapers throughout southern and central Wisconsin for the '97 Show and Sale, noting that the exhibit would feature Wisconsin potteries. Knowing that there wasn't much information available on Pittsville and always looking for more pieces for his collection, Ed went to see the exhibit. And then he joined the club. At that 1997 WPA Show and Sale, Ed talked with Nicol Knappen, one of the charter members of the WPA. Ed mentioned to Nicol that he had a funeral card for Father Willitzer, the founder of the Pittsville, WI pottery. And we've at the WPA been learning about Pittsville ever since.

Ed says that he is strictly a pottery collector and doesn't frequent estate sales, but meeting other collectors in the WPA has

helped his collection. He has purchased Pittsville pieces from other club members; Ed says that through the club he has enhanced his Pittsville collection and education. He pointed out that while there are no books available about Pittsville he has learned about pieces he didn't know existed by seeing pieces that other people have.

But actually, while gaining information about his favorite pottery, Mr. Arnold is doing much to enhance the WPA and its members information regarding this mid-1900's pottery, founded in Pittsville, WI by a Catholic priest.

As it turns out, Ed grew up in Pittsville, WI and was a parishioner of Father Willitzer's. As a boy in Pittsville, Ed and a friend would go to the pottery's dump, where they would play, pulling out broken pieces to take home and make flower pots of (we won't mention when this was or how old he was at this time, so as to not disclose his age, one of the agreements made before he consented to this interview...).

Ed moved on from those early "collecting" years to become an entomologist. Now retired, Ed worked for the State of Wisconsin, serving as the State apiarist for several years. Ed pointed out that bees have diseases, as cattle do, and need to be inspected. Bee keepers move their colonies south for the winter and there are inspections of these migratory bees to prevent diseases from spreading. Ed also worked with gypsy moth control programs, which involved hanging traps in Christmas tree orchards. Those of us that like to

tromp through Christmas tree farms to pick out a tree each December appreciate that these orchards are still filled with trees!

I personally met Ed when the WPA convened at the Monona Terrace. I arrived at the meeting to learn that there was a man that had inquired about 'Kenefick' after seeing my nametag on the table. When we bumped into each other later that night, Ed mentioned that he was a Delta Theta Sigma member and knew my father and uncle from the fraternity here in Madison. (It can be frightening to meet people that knew your parents during their undergraduate days, but this was pre-1960s, and to date Ed hasn't revealed anything about my father that I hadn't already learned.)

Father Willitzer started the pottery in approximately 1931, to provide employment opportunities for local people. The pottery was in existence until 1943 although it went through some tough financial times even during that period.

Ed claims to have first taken an interest in collecting Pittsville pottery when he saw a piece during his father's funeral. The Pittsville funeral home made it a practice to display pottery owned by local people and so had a few pieces on exhibit - sort of the local museum or archive. Ed says that there is a pottery museum in Pittsville, but that he has more pieces in his personal collection than the hometown museum has. Of course as is frequently the case, Ed points out that the Pittsville locals are really not very interested in the pot-

tery, other than as a source of employment while it was open. As with Pauline pottery from Edgerton, WI, even today there is not a lot of Pittsville pottery in Pittsville.

- Kari Kenefick, WPA Press Editor

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Additional information on the Pittsville Pottery, taken from the 1997 WPA Exhibit Brochure:

The Pittsville Pottery was started by a Catholic priest named John Willitzer. Seeking industry for his local parish in Pittsville, Wisconsin, Willitzer, a German immigrant, sent local clay samples to Meissen, Germany for analysis of its suitability as a manufacturing clay body. A Dr. Julius Bidtel wrote back saying that it could be used for pottery. In 1931 the Wisconsin Ceramic Company was incorporated with the priest as president and with a capital of \$75,000. A plant with a kiln was quickly built.

The Depression, however, was not the ideal time to start a new business, and the firm failed in 1932. Willitzer paid \$27,000 out of his own pocket to disgruntled stockholders, then started the business up again by himself with limited success. The new venture failed in 1936. In 1939 Father Willitzer gave James Wilkins and his son William a half interest in the pottery, which then operated until about 1943. James Wilkins had been a ceramicist at the Muncie Pottery of Muncie Indiana. Thus, some of the ware produced at Pittsville bears great similarity to that produced by Muncie, both in respect to shapes and glazes.

Although Pittsville Pottery was not widely distributed, and certainly no long in production, local collectors estimate that as many as 50 different shapes may have been produced.

- Nicol Knappen, WPA

Editor's Note: WPA members Dave and Betty Knutzen are working with Ed Arnold on an oral history of Pittsville Pottery. Stay tuned for what promises to be the most definitive information to date, on the Pittsville Pottery!

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*Consider Serving on the Executive Committee*

I'm writing today because I want to help demystify the holding of offices for president and vice-president in the WPA. We are very fortunate this year in that Kari Kenefick has accepted the nomination for vice-president, ascending to the presidency next year. Last year the situation was more serious and there were discussions of disbanding the offices of president and vice-president. If no one would accept the position it would significantly change what we could accomplish with our current structure. The discussion occurred this year as well, before Kari accepted the nomination, leading me to want to share some thoughts with you.

The first is that making the two year commitment is not as ominous as it sounds. This year we had 8 regular monthly presentations, a tour of the Ephraim Pottery, the picnic, the show/exhibit and the holiday party. I would have attended these events whether serving as vice-president or not. In addition

to these club meetings, we held (only) monthly executive meetings. Various committees meet, such as the Program Committee and Exhibit Committee, and just like any regular member, the VP or president are welcome but not required to attend these additional meetings. When I was first asked to to be the VP I initially declined. "I only know about English pottery," "I'm new to the club", "I don't know more than a handful of members", and "I don't think I have that much time to spare", were a few of my reasons. Having stepped down from the presidency of a community board of a different organization, which required several nights per week, fundraising, maintaining a hired staff, etc., I was not ready to jump back into the fray. One-by-one our friend Jim Riordan put my fears to rest. Don't get me wrong—a great deal of work is done in the WPA every year. There is a small core of members who readily volunteer to do the vast majority of it. Many times during my tenure as VP this year I've thought "Is this it? Is this all I have to do?" Offers to assist are more often than not declined by the core workers [you know who you are : )] who have been doing the work for years. As VP my main responsibility has been to call for volunteers to serve at the exhibit and sale and this duty practically took care of itself, as people readily agreed to fill one or more slots. I've taken 4 or 5 photos at every meeting for the scrapbook and met with the membership committee informally after our monthly meet-

ings. I spent the year watching Jim and I have already outlined a similar schedule for next year's agenda/meetings. Whenever I had questions or concerns the core group was right there to answer them. Nine out of ten times whatever it was had automatically already been done by one of the core group members.

What I have received from this year as VP has been invaluable to me as a member and beginning collector. I've been privy to an insider's view of the history of the club and it's members. As executive meetings are held in a round robin manner I've enjoyed visits to member's homes and glimpses of amazing collections I might not have otherwise had the opportunity to see.

Lastly, may I remind past presidents that they can serve on the executive committee again and I encourage you to think about doing so. Ideally, the VP's and presidents should alternate between long-time and newer members, combining a fresh eye with the wisdom of the original vision for the club.

In the future please consider serving as a club officer. Take a chance and you may find yourself, like me, pleasantly surprised by your own experience as a WPA officer.

- Barb Huhn, WPA President-Elect

### *Tips for Selling Online*

So you want to sell on eBay (or any other online auction)?

It's the middle of winter and you have a couple of items that you're wondering why on earth you bought last summer at that flea market or garage sale. You could really use the space or money for something else. Before eBay, selling one or two items was next to impossible and you usually didn't get a price that was near its value.

eBay created a wonderful way to sell just one or two items, instead of trying to save them all for your annual garage sale. This article is going to talk about the one thing that can make or break a sale on eBay: Pictures.

In only the rarest of cases will you get a decent price for an item if you don't have a picture for it. If you have a 1931 Wisconsin Blue Book in good shape, you'll probably get the same price with or without a picture. But if you have a blue Rookwood vase without a picture, you will probably not generate any interest and only low bids. Even the lowest quality picture will give bidders some confidence that they are bidding on the article that you described.

How do I get a picture on my computer? This depends on how much you want to spend and how often you're going to need a picture. If its only once or twice, ask a friend with a digital camera or scanner. If you bring an item to a WPA meeting, I would probably take a digital picture for you, if I have space on my

camera and I could then email it to you.

When you develop film, many places offer digital pictures on disk for a small fee. Digital camera can be quite inexpensive considering that you never have to pay for photo development again. The cheapest digital camera, starting at \$35, is attached to your computer and is sometimes called a video conferencing camera. The picture shown here was quickly taken with one (I didn't even adjust the focus). It only has a resolution of 320 x 240, but it shows the item and with a description, you could easily sell this 1940 Golden Gate Bridge Piggy Bank.

Starting around \$100 and going up to several hundred dollars are digital cameras that look like regular film cameras. What you buy depends on what you're going to use it for. If it is just for selling items, go inexpensive (640 x 480 resolution), but if you're taking family pictures, get the higher resolution, higher priced cameras. For selling on eBay, 640 x 480 is probably the highest resolution that you need.

So you have the picture, now what?

Well, you've got to post it to the Internet. But before you post, you need to check a few things. Pictures saved in certain formats have file sizes that are smaller. One of the default formats for pictures on the Internet is a JPEG or JPG. Most programs that come with your (digital) camera will let you save a file as a JPG and a JPG will compress the information in the picture so it takes up less space.

A JPG can be 5 to 10% of the size of a TIF or BMP.



Tim Zinkgraf shares his collection *and* tips on how to get photographs online. Photo by Tim Zinkgraf.

What this means is that the picture will display in 1/10 the time.

Why should I care if the picture takes 1/10 the time? Most people will not wait for a large picture to download so you're turning away potential bidders when your images take a long time to display. As a rule of thumb, I make sure that individual pictures are less than 15k. If I use multiple pictures, the total of all of the pictures should be under 100k. A program I use to convert and modify pictures is called IrfanView. It is free (PC-only) and available at: <http://stud1.tuwien.ac.at/%7Ee9227474/english.htm>.

Next up is where on the Internet you are going to post your picture. Remember what I said about a picture taking too long to display (people will give up and go shopping somewhere else)? The same thing can happen depending on where you post your picture. Personal experience has shown that AOL and Geocities are some of the worst sites for posting your pictures. Many times, the picture will download incredibly slow or not at all. At all websites per-

formance can vary from day to day, but local Internet server providers (ISP) in general tend to be good. But if you get messages from people saying your pictures aren't showing, you should try someplace else. One downside of your local ISP, is that posting a picture to their sites is usually a complicated process. There are many places you can post your picture that are free and simple to use.

I'm going to list two of hundreds of Internet sites you could use. They seem simple to get pictures posted, and in the limited experience I've had with them, they seem to have a decent response time for displaying pictures. The first is [www.honesty.com](http://www.honesty.com) and the second [www.homestead.com](http://www.homestead.com). Both use your web browser to post your pictures and don't require you to install a new program. "Honesty" asks you where on your hard drive the picture is and then they post it to the web and give you an address that you can then use on eBay. For example, the picture will have an address like [\[image.cgi?image=514956&name=pigbank.jpg\]\(http://image.cgi?image=514956&name=pigbank.jpg\).](http://images.honesty.com/cgi-bin/honesty-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Homestead is used to create web pages, but is just as easy to post pictures. You press "import", then select your files and they are kept in at a web location like [www.homestead.com/username/files/pigbank.jpg](http://www.homestead.com/username/files/pigbank.jpg). The advantage on "Homestead" is that the picture is in an easy-to-remember web location verses a complicated location on "Honesty".

I hope this article gave you a little insight into selling on eBay. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to email me at [webmaster@wisconsinpottery.org](mailto:webmaster@wisconsinpottery.org).

- Tim Zinkgraf, WPA Webmaster

*Editor's Note: There is no hyphen in Tim's email address – what you see above is an artifact of the newsletter, only. -KBK*

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Examples of Century House Pottery, as exhibited by Rose Lindner in November, 1999. Photos by Tim Zinkgraf.

Fall 1999 Presentations

After the September meeting, a tour of the Ephraim Pottery in Deerfield, we resumed regular meetings for October, November and December at the Shorewood Community Center.

Presenting for October, were Sandy and John Fiscus, with splendid examples and interesting discussion about Frankoma Pottery. John and Sandy were introduced as premier Frankoma collectors, and we were not disappointed.

Founded by one Mr. Frank, we learned about several 1930's marks found on this pottery and that Mr. Frank broke his molds when he retired. Figures, especially those by designer Joseph Taylor, are highly collectible.

In November Rose Lindner presented a historical perspective on both the Century House

and on the pottery that was produced there. Having grown up with a Century House mug in our kitchen cupboard (it has now been moved to the collectibles cabinet), I especially appreciated learning more about this pottery, as well as the lovely old stone building that graces University Avenue, near our monthly meetings, and that was earlier a tavern .

Rose told of how the tavern was purchased by a Chicago potter, Priscilla, who later married Max Howell.

Century House Pottery is unique for the fact that it is only fired once, versus a usual two-step process of first firing to bisque, then with the glaze.

Several of the more famous designers that worked on Century House Pottery include Zona Liberace (stepmother of the famous pianist) and artist

Aaron Bohrod, whose signature you see above. The pottery, well-known for customized plates, mugs and ashtrays was in production until 1963.

Examples can still be seen at the Century House, still run by the Howells. Max Howell ran the business until the mid-1980's, when his son Kirby took over. Priscilla died in 1994 and Max has since remarried.

Thanks to Sandy and John, and to Rose for their generous gift of time and energy in bringing these interesting presentations to the club!

- Kari Kenefick, WPA Press