

**WPA PRESS**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WISCONSIN POTTERY ASSOCIATION

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WWW.WISCONSINPOTTERY.ORG***Spring has sprung!!***

In this April 2000 issue of the *WPA Press* we welcome spring, the season of renewal. As you know that means garage sales, yard sale, and estate sales, as one's trash becomes another's treasure. For those of us that avoid travels on icy winter roads, it is also the season to finally get out and see the sites. So many antique malls, so little time.

In this fourth issue of the *Press* we'll add a destination to your spring list of adventures. WPA President Barb Huhn has provided places, dates and times for the American Association of Art Pottery (AAPA) annual meeting in Minneapolis, in May. Although a little further down the road, we also have information on how our annual fundraiser, the August Exhibit and Sale is shaping up. Information regarding our monthly reminder cards and a *passing* to note round out our news items. Last but not least, the *Press* features founding club members Betty and Dave Knutzen, as well as tales of recent presentations by Betty, Elaine Staaland and Mark Knippling. We even have some information about the WPA website, for those of you that haven't gotten to it yet.

Enjoy your travels and remember to join us **April 11** for the next meeting at the Shorewood Community Center.

- Kari Kenefick, editor, WPA Press  
*WPA Press*  
Issue IV

***Postcard Meeting Notices***

Recently we set about polling individuals as to whether or not they would be able to do without a monthly postcard reminder for our meetings. Everyone polled keeps a calendar and, given the regular schedule of meetings, concluded that they could do without the postcard.

Actually producing the postcard for the whole group is more complicated than it initially appears because we have a single database of addresses, which changes every month. One person has to maintain the database and make a new set of labels from it every month. It was suggested that e-mail notices be sent, but the e-mail database changes even faster than the street address database and our computer users are typically still in the workforce and/or are raising children, necessitating the keeping of a personal calendar anyway.

There is the issue of the cost of the newsletter. It costs the club approximately \$600 per year to send the postcards and with the added expense of sending this newsletter our mailing and copying budgets are stressed to the max. There are so many vital projects out there that we would like to support that it seems a shame to continue the postcards for those who don't

absolutely need them.

At our last meeting Ori-anne and Paul Pagel updated us on the Edgerton projects. Donations for a window in the Pauline Log Cabin will be \$300. My first thought was "Well, there's half the savings from not sending postcards this year..." So, as with my own personal budget, this savings will spend itself before it's even saved. It is important to us however to have everyone come to the meetings. For that reason please let us know if you wish to get the postcard reminder. For those of you who absolutely rely on the postcard we will still make it available. We anticipate that the number will be small enough that someone will be able

**WPA Calendar 2000**

**April 11**—American Studio Art Pottery, Part 2; Paul Donhauser

**May 9**—Works Progress Administration and Cowan Pottery; Mark Bassett.

**June 13**—Hull House Pottery; TBA.

**July**—No Meeting.

**August 8**—WPA Picnic.

**August 26**—Annual Exhibit and Sale.

**September 12**—TBA.

**October 10**—TBA.

**November 14**—Camark Pottery; Nicol Knappen.

**December 5**—Holiday Party.

*All meetings at the Shorewood Community Center except for the August picnic .*

to hand write the few postcards every month. Please let us know if you would like your postcard to continue. The rest of us will rely on the schedule printed quarterly in the *WPA Press*.

- Barb Huhn, *WPA President*

### ***Exhibit Committee Update***

The exhibit committee has been very busy with the planning and development for our upcoming exhibit, "Clay and Craft: The Art Pottery of Illinois". We continue to be involved in the process of procuring examples from potential collectors and pottery dealers to represent the potteries that we are planning to show. Tracking down leads, talking up the success of our past exhibits and pottery show, and reassuring potential donors are just some of things we're currently doing. It seems to require being part detective, and part salesman in order to achieve success in recruiting someone to donate pottery for the event. This is especially true for collectors that are not familiar with the WPA.

We have been fortunate to have a network of helpful dealers that sell at our pottery show who either have some pieces that they are willing to lend, or know of someone that might have a collection that would help us. Thanks to Chris Swart and Glenn Clark for this connection! These resources, combined with our more traditional sources, club members that have always been helpful in donating pieces for the exhibit, we think will lead to another outstanding exhibit this year. (Of course we are a little biased.)

The potteries that we currently are considering include: Abingdon, Anna, Cliftwood/Morton, Chicago

Crucible, Eugene Deutch, Haeger, Hull House, Lictonware, Monmouth/Western Stoneware, Norweta, Norse, Pauline, Pickard, Pillin, and Teco. That's 15 potteries with an Illinois connection, a pretty comprehensive list, although there are some obscure potteries that we haven't been able to locate.

This represents a lot of organization in terms of dealing with a variety of collectors that these pieces will come from. Chris Swart is currently researching information on these potteries for a press release to be completed soon.

We have also started doing some on-site visits to view potential exhibit pieces. On a recent Saturday, we went to Chicago to see a collection that we are very excited about. However, we cannot disseminate any information on the collector at this time; as most of you know, for security purposes we do not disclose the names of any of the potential donors.

In February, the exhibit committee met with Elaine Staal and a hotel representative at the Marriot to view and discuss the exhibit space. We will be using a room that was not used during last year's pottery show. It is located near the entrance of the pottery show area. We felt that the space will meet our needs and will be easy for attendees to find.

Our next meeting is Thursday March 30th, as the planning continues. We'll again be going over the exhibit acquisitions list, but will also be discussing the design and layout of the exhibit.

Exhibit Committee members include; Tom Tompkin, Tim Zinkgraf, Rose Lindner, Jim Riordan and Jim Tyne. If you have any questions or suggestions please contact any of us.

-Jim Riordan, *Exhibit Committee*

### ***In Memoriam***

Karen Hafstad, former WPA member, passed away in December after a long illness. She was 53. Karen was unable to participate in the club as much as she would have liked, but she remained a loyal supporter of our efforts in the Cambridge area, and always helped with publicizing our annual Show. Karen was employed at the Cambridge Antique Mall and is missed by all who knew her.

- Chris Swart, *Annual Exhibit and Sale Publicity Manager*

## **ART POTTERY CONVENTION TRAVELS TO MINNEAPOLIS**

The Annual Convention of the American Art Pottery Association (AAPA) will be held May 4th to 7th, 2000 at the Radisson Hotel South and Plaza Tower, Minneapolis, Minnesota. This four-day event features a pottery show and sale, a major art pottery auction, and educational seminars.

### **AUCTION**

At 6:00 P.M. Friday, May 5th, the 2000 AAPA Benefit Auction of donated and consigned ceramics begins. The auction includes pieces by Roseville, Weller, Rookwood, Grueby, Teco, Van Briggle, Red Wing and contemporary potters Kurt Wild and the Scheiers, to name a few. Admission is free and the auction and preview are open to the public. The preview opens at 3:00 PM.

### **POTTERY IDENTIFICATION PANEL**

From 10:30–12:30 P.M. Saturday, May 6, the public is invited to bring their questions about pottery and pottery items for identification to a panel of knowledgeable experts.

### **SHOW and SALE**

The Pottery Show and Sale will be open to the public on Saturday, May 6th at 12:30–5 PM. This prestigious show features America's most prominent pottery dealers. General admission is \$5. Hours on Sunday, May 7th will be from 12:30–4 PM.

### **CONVENTION SPEAKERS**

The Convention kick-off for AAPA members will be a banquet held Thursday evening, May 4th at the Hotel. The Keynote Speaker will be Dr. Marion Nelson who will present an overview of Pewabic Pottery. Dr. Nelson, a retired professor

of art history from the University of Minnesota, is a collector and researcher. His book "Art Pottery of the Midwest" was published in 1988. He has long been recognized as one of the nation's leading experts on the decorative and fine arts of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Friday, May 5th, Steve Schoneck will talk on the Minneapolis Handicraft Guild. Steve is a collector and dealer who specializes in art pottery. He has been president of the Minnesota Art Pottery Association and is a frequent speaker, who has shared his expertise with talks on several different potteries.

On Saturday morning, May 6th, Darlene Dommel will speak on "Art Pottery in the Upper Midwest: Its Origins and Regional Influences." She is a collector and dealer who has interviewed and written about many of the pottery principals over the past thirty years. She has written "Collector's Encyclopedia of the Dakota Potteries" and "Collector's Encyclopedia of Howard Pierce Porcelain." Her new book "Collector's Encyclopedia of Rosemeade Pottery" will be published in 2000.

On Sunday morning retired ceramics professor and studio potter Kurt Wild will present "About My Work: Past and Present." He attended Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, majoring in ceramics under Maija Grotell. His claywork has been chosen in over forty juried exhibitions, and, among his awards, he has been named "Outstanding Teacher in the Humanities" at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

### **AMERICAN ART POTTERY ASSOCIATION**

The American Art Pottery Association is a national association

of Art Pottery collectors and dealers formed to promote the understanding, appreciation and recognition of American art pottery. Membership is \$35 single; \$40 double.

The Association publishes a bimonthly JOURNAL with in-depth articles on pottery, exhibition news and book reviews, historical reprints and more. Much of the information in JOURNAL articles is based on original research and not easily found elsewhere. AAPA proceeds are used to publish the JOURNAL, and to fund the group's annual donation of pottery of museums, plus a Scholarship program.

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Those wishing additional information on the Convention and its related Activities can find it on the Association website:

<[www.amartpot.org](http://www.amartpot.org)>. The website is a major online resource for pottery collectors and dealers. It includes well over 150 links to sites related to pottery, a pottery events calendar, a "theft alert" and a growing pictorial database of art pottery fakes, forgeries and reproductions.

For additional convention information, contact Monna and Les Cochran at 612-890-2759

<[lescochran@aol.com](mailto:lescochran@aol.com)> or Sue and Gordon Hoppe at 612-546-7461

<[ghoppepots@aol.com](mailto:ghoppepots@aol.com)>. For information on the AAPA, please contact Acting President Linda Carrigan, P. O. Box 710, York Harbor, Maine 03911

<[lindacarrigan@webtv.net](mailto:lindacarrigan@webtv.net)>. Individuals wishing to join the AAPA should contact Secretary Patti Bourgeois at

P. O. Box 1226, Westport, Massachusetts 02790

<[patspots@ma.ultranet.com](mailto:patspots@ma.ultranet.com)>.

- Barb Huhn, WPA President

## **WPA Online**

The website of the Wisconsin Pottery Association is becoming a great place for information that you can't find anywhere else on the web and a great place to start your search. The website is the only location I've found with information on Pauline Pottery and most other Wisconsin Potteries. People have linked to it for their web auctions and people are constantly asking for prices for pottery featured on the site. Currently over 150 a day are looking at the Wisconsin Pottery Association's Website.

Another reason people come to our website is that it constantly changes. Currently there is over 10 megabytes of pictures and information. The entrance or front page of the website is

**www.wisconsinpottery.org**. On the front page is the current highlights of the website. For example, you might see a note on an upcoming presentation, the banner for the Wisconsin Pottery Association's Show & Sale or a project that members of the association are working on. This page allows you to find the most current information without having to search the site to find it. There is also a link to the main home page.

The home page is **www.wisconsinpottery.org/home.htm**. You can get to this page by pressing the large "ENTER" on the front page or clicking on the pot with the word "Home" located on the bottom of every page on the site. This is the main place to start your search for information. From this page you can link to a history of Wisconsin Potteries, information on the organization, an archive of the *WPA Press*, info on how to join, our calendar, directions to the meetings, contact members of the

club and to other sites. What makes us unique on the web is the link on this page for "Pottery Histories".

Finding useful information about pottery on the web is very difficult. Since the group has given presentations on so many different potteries over the years, we have a valuable basis as a starting point for collecting more. This page started out as a listing of the presentations given, but is evolving into a central collecting point of information.

Looking at this page, you can see if the website contains any information about a pottery or if its likely to be added in the future. For example, Bauer has never been a subject of a presentation or show, so for right now there is no information on it. If the pottery has been the subject of a presentation, its likely that someday more information will be online after someone watches the video on the presentation or looks through their notes. Frankoma Pottery was presented in October of 1999, and currently there isn't a link, but in the near future pictures and information from the presentation will be online. As soon as that happens, the Frankoma listing will connect to a page built on information from the presentation; the basics on where the pottery was located, its dates of operation, Related Pages and Related Links. Under Related Pages will be items that are on the Wisconsin Pottery Association's website. They could be articles from the newsletter, presentation information & pictures or items specifically done for the website. Under Related Links will be informative links on that pottery when ever such links are available.

What can you expect in the future? Of course there will be more information and pictures on

Wisconsin Potteries. Coming soon will be information on Madison Ceramic Arts, Century House, Norse and Pittsville. In anticipation of the August 2000 Show & Sale—"Clay & Craft: The Art Pottery of Illinois"—there will be information on the potteries covered by the exhibit.

Since the web is an international source for information, the WPA website will soon have links that will translate the pages into other languages. A search engine for just the site will be a useful tool as well.

- Tim Zinkgraf, WPA webmaster

## ~~~~~ **WPA Communication Tools**

When we first began our foray with the *WPA Press* and our website there were those who questioned the value of having them (KK gasps!). What about the cost/benefit ratio? Was it really worth the considerable money, time and expertise of a few tireless workers to keep these things up and running?

Recently we received an e-mail that I think speaks volumes to this question. While "surfing the web" Lynn, the daughter of Hyalyn Pottery owners Les and Fran Moody, found our website. Her e-mail to us is as follows:

"I was stunned to stumble onto the information about Hyalyn. I am Les and Fran Moody's daughter. I worked for Hyalyn as a salesperson as a teenage (summer job) and even designed one decal. I have a pretty good collection of the catalogs and a fairly decent idea of what went on. My mother will be 95 in April and is no longer in great health though I think her doctor says she is in good health for her age. She had a couple of TIAs (trans ischemic attacks) last summer, which didn't help. If you have ques-

tions about Hyalyn, let me know. I know where Herb Cohen is. Whatever. Lynn”

When I read the e-mail I was struck by the power of the web to connect people with valuable information. How nice for Fran Moody to find out, however late in life, that she has left a legacy and that there are a growing number of people who are coming to value her life’s work as art. I was reminded of the experience of Betty Harrington, of Ceramic Art Studio, who in the last few years of her life was able to gain the recognition due her. How many times have we heard about people who passed away without revealing their techniques, formulas and other historical information? Were it not for our website and interested members, Lynn’s collection of catalogs and other historical information might have ended up at the curb during a particularly energetic Spring housecleaning.

Several years ago I was vacationing in South Carolina and came across about 10 pieces of studio pottery in an antiques shop. The beautiful colors, design, artist signature and elaborate coding on each piece intrigued me. The story, in short, is that someone inherited hundreds of pieces of pottery, the life’s work of this gifted studio potter, threw away the diary he kept of his projects and sold the pieces for little or nothing at a garage sale. The antiques store owner bought the vast majority and approached the state historical society in New Hampshire, where the artist had lived, willing to sell them at cost. They weren’t interested! The remaining few pieces were all that was left. I think this is tragic but how much moreso if it had been a major pottery archive such as Hyalyn?

Thanks to the existence of the WPA and the good work of Tim

Zinkgraf, these connections can be made, people will be able to connect with others who do care about maintaining and disseminating this information, and artists unlike this poor fellow from New Hampshire, will be assured of a measure of respect from collectors and peers.

Lynn’s e-mail was forwarded to the Boones who did the presentation on Hyalyn for us last year. I am hopeful that they will be able to update us after they have had the chance to contact Lynn. I anticipate that we will ask Lynn for copies of her catalogs and try to organize a formal oral history project. If anyone else would like to contact Lynn please let us know and we will find a way, with the Boones, to approach her in an organized manner.

Again, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tim for his work on the website. Were it not for Tim, the website, at the level he maintains it, would be prohibitively expensive to have done professionally. There is not a more attractive and interesting pottery website anywhere on the web.

Thank you Tim!

- Barb Huhn, WPA President

**Editor’s Note:** In addition to thanking our webmaster, it goes without saying that without the WPA founders and members that have dedicated themselves and the club to education, those club members that have tirelessly organized, researched and presented information on various potteries, *and* those that saw fit to record these presentations, there would be far less information for our website. Our hats off to ALL of you, as well! -KK

## ***WPA Featured Members: Betty and Dave Knutzen***

On a dark, February evening I drove north around the big lake (one left and two rights) to the home of Dave and Betty Knutzen. I was lucky to find them with an open evening, having just returned from a Redwing festival in Minnesota. Betty and Dave agreed to talk a bit about their collecting and interest in antique pottery. The dark night brightened considerably, as the Knutzens discussed how they got started collecting, the pottery, the ins and outs of trying to price pieces they buy and sell and what their experiences have been working with online auctions such as eBay, and finally what they, charter members of the WPA, hope for the future of the Wisconsin Pottery Association.

First of all, what got the Knutzens started with collecting? Betty noted that she had a “few pieces of flea-market quality Roseville” in “a previous life”. She and Dave initially found that collecting/antiquing provided them a way to have a life away from work. Betty retired in 1988 and was looking for a good hobby (something to keep her out of trouble, no doubt). Collecting back in those days, Betty and Dave reminisced, might result in a find of 10–12 pieces of Roseville at one time!

Betty eventually became interested in repairing pottery—perhaps it was those early flea market-quality pieces? She traveled to Appleton and took a course in ceramic repair, then hung out her repair shingle. If Betty’s experience is any measure, there is quite a demand for ceramics restoration.

Before this interview I’d heard from WPA members that Betty is very good at restoration work. Betty and Dave and I briefly discussed

what place repair has in the collecting business. Betty showed me some pieces of pottery that she had repaired. The mended spots were barely detectable after her work was done. Betty emphasized that a good restoration should not be detectable.

This raised the question, is a repaired piece as valuable as one that has never been damaged? Obviously not, but it can be very hard to distinguish a repaired/restored piece. A natural question then is, do people have damaged pieces repaired and sell them as like new? The Knutzens maintain that a good, reputable dealer would never sell a repaired piece without marking it “restored”. They told about a piece that they bought online. It was described as excellent, but when it arrived and was examined, it was obvious that the piece had been repaired. The piece was returned to the surprised sellers, who had not noticed the repair. But it is easy to see what a delicate subject restoration can be in the buy/sell world.

On the other hand, if one had an heirloom vase from one’s immigrant great great grandfather, and your favorite cat or dog knocked it over, breaking it while chasing away an intruder, you might wish that you knew someone as skilled as Betty, that could effect a nearly perfect restoration. Betty emphasized that a restorer cannot make a damaged piece of pottery new, but she/he can greatly improve the appearance of the piece.

*(It is important to note here, that Betty is no longer does restorations.)*

Betty and Dave agreed to discuss, in general terms, their experiences using the online auction company eBay ([www.ebay.com](http://www.ebay.com)). The Knutzens have been interested in eBay for over a year now. As many do, they started out just buying, but

have now graduated to selling pieces on eBay as well. Any of you that have spent an evening organizing pieces to sell complete with electronic images, writing descriptions and getting it all correctly linked to the selling page know that while it’s all quite do-able, it does take some time and organization to sell pieces on eBay. So, is there a reward for the effort?

Dave and Betty seem to feel that shopping and selling on eBay can be as much fun as going to a mall shop. As Dave noted, eBay is convenient, you have a large selection and a worldwide customer base, there are some good prices and you meet some really nice, trustworthy people, making for a quite pleasurable experience. One might wonder, with a shopping procedure that is somewhat anonymous and remote, what would result from the purchase of fragile, valuable merchandise that has to be shipped by mail. The Knutzens noted that through a couple of email exchanges, either as a buyer or seller, that they have actually established some friendships via eBay.

As sellers, the Knutzens appreciate the large, international group of buyers and the relatively short time for a sale (mall traffic is slow compared to eBay). Instead of placing things on a shelf and having no contact with the buyer, eBay results in direct communication between buyer and seller in order to close the sale and make the needed payment and shipping connections. Who says that the electronic world is a lonely, quiet place?

Online auctions like eBay can also be a very current source of pricing information. It’s practical to think that pricing guides and books are getting outdated as fast as they are printed. One good way to price a piece is to search online and see what others are selling it for. This

information can be very useful whether you are a buyer or a seller.

Betty and Dave talked a bit about how their collecting has changed/diversified. They generally have the same tastes in pottery, even after 10+ years of collecting. They both initially liked Weller and Roseville, but those prices climbed as the popularity of those potteries increased. They met Ray Reese, who wrote the Redwing pottery book. Interested in Redwing, they began collecting it, then the book was published and prices skyrocketed. A couple of years ago Dave's son bought a few pieces of Haeger pottery at a garage sale. It apparently caught the Knutzens' eye, as those that have seen their collection will recall. Thus they started buying Haeger a few years before it gained its current popularity. In 1939-45, as Betty and Dave note, Hickman, an excellent designer, was at Haeger. Haeger, for the uninformed, has two locations, Dundee and Macomb, IL, and is still made for and sold by florists.

Betty and Dave collect Ceramic Arts, the Madison, WI studio pottery especially popular in this part of the country. They also like North Dakota pottery.

Finally, as founding members of the WPA I thought it would be interesting to hear the Knutzen's thoughts about the state of the club, its accomplishments, and what they hope to see the club achieve in the future. Dave and Betty pointed out that several oral histories of Wisconsin potteries are currently in progress. For instance they are working with Mr. Ed Arnold on the history of Pittsville pottery.

Another long-term dream of the WPA has been to organize or create a central location for the exhibition of various Wisconsin potteries. On their travels Dave and Betty have

visited locations such as the Overbeck collection, which is housed in the basement of a public library. They note that the State Historical Society in Madison has a sizeable Frackleton collection that is in storage, due to lack of viewing space. Madison, as a home to potteries such as Ceramic Arts Studio and Century House, when added to the numerous other Wisconsin potteries, begs a central museum for long-term display of these potteries. Good security and appropriate exhibit space would be essential features of such a space.

Our thanks to Betty and Dave for remaining active, supportive members of the club, and adding to our body of information by their presentations. And thanks for their time and support of the *WPA Press* by agreeing to this interview.

- Kari Kenefick, editor, *WPA Press*

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***Clewell Pottery***

At the February WPA meeting we had the pleasure of learning about Clewell Pottery from Betty Knutzen. Always humble, Betty told us that before her research for this talk, she didn't know much about Clewell Pottery herself. However, unlike some of us, Betty does own a few pieces of this unique pottery, which she and husband Dave shared with the WPA in this February of this year.

Clewell is one of those potteries for which there is very little printed information. Betty went back through old journals seeking data for her talk. The following is a bit of what she learned and presented to the WPA.

Charles W. Clewell was a metal craftsman, not a potter. Paul Evans, in his text "Art Pottery of the United States" said that metal work-

ers and potters fed on each others' work. Some potteries of the early 1900s featured animals on their pots, not unlike metalwork. In addition, McCoy and Weller used glazes that had a metallic look. Rookwood potters and others used metal overlay on standard glazes. Charles Clewell also mixed pottery and metal, but he was the first to use an entire metal overlay.

Clewell was born in Ohio in 1876. He became an engraving apprentice, gaining employment with Diebold metalworkers.

Dick Sigafosse, in his book entitled "American Art Pottery" (1998) said that Charles Walter Clewell, of Canton, Ohio, started experimenting with copper, brass, bronze and silver products in about 1899, producing cast, hand-wrought and riveted pieces. In 1906 Clewell opened his first business and by 1909 had developed his metal-on-pottery technique. Clewell accomplished this by applying a skin-tight shell, often copper or bronze, over a clay pot. Clewell worked on this technique for years to perfect it. He was highly secretive about the process he used, but it appeared to be a form of electroplating. Several other ceramic and glass factories utilized electroplating during this same time period.

In terms of the clay figures utilized for his metal-covered pieces, Clewell is known to have used ceramics from Ohio potteries such as Owens and Weller .

The idea for the blue-green patinaed pieces that Clewell worked to achieve, is said to have come from his mother's kitchen. He liked the oxidized look of old metal and was known to have studied pieces in junkyards. Clewell was especially a fan of the patina that appeared on copper and bronze. In 1923 Clewell finally accomplished the color he



**Non-color representations of Clewell (left), eathernware (center) and stoneware (right) pottery. Photographs were taken at recent WPA presentations by Betty Knutzen (Clewell Pottery, February) and Mark Knipping (Wisconsin Earthenware and Stoneware, March). Photos by Tim Zinkgraf.**

sought to achieve—a more blue-green colored finish. His next step was to speed up the process used to achieve this perfect blue-green, and developed a way to stop the color before it advanced too far.

Clewell did not share how to achieve these patinaed colors with anyone. And no one has since replicated Clewell’s work. His only employee was his daughter, who worked as his salesperson.

In 1937 Clewell took some of his pieces to the Paris Exposition, where he was awarded a medal for his efforts.

Clewell production continued throughout his lifetime, with the exception of a 10 year period; from about 1940–1951 his work was discontinued while he worked for Timkin Roller Bearing Company. In 1965 at the age of 89, Clewell died. His daughter is said to have sold his remaining pieces. The Jessie Besmer Museum in Alpena, Michigan has an exhibit of 90 pieces of Clewell’s work.

**Marks on Clewell Pottery:** In his book “American Art Pottery”, Dick Sigafoose notes that Clewell pieces are marked with an incised “Clewell,” an impressed “Clewell Metal Art, Canton O.,” “Clewell

Coppers,” Clewell Canton O.,” or a “W” within a letter “C”.

-Kari Kenefick

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**California Figurals Part II**

At the January 11, 2000 WPA meeting, Elaine Staland entertained the club with her amazing collection of California figural pieces. Due to the wide variety of pieces and potteries represented, my notes from that evening don’t begin to do her presentation justice, but such an inspiring collector as Elaine begs at least an attempt at review of her presentation.

As Elaine told us, modern California ceramic figure production began in the mid-1930s, reaching it’s peak during the mid-1940s. Many small, family-operated companies were formed throughout California. In 1948 the business peaked with >800 ceramic companies in operation. However, many of these businesses closed after the war, when imports reappeared in the U.S. market. By the early 1950s approximately 90 ceramic businesses remained and only 3 firms were left by 1991. Elaine provided a list of 20 potteries for which she showed pieces and/or provided

descriptions and histories.

Rather different that a presentation about an early 1900s pottery that began in the functional sanitary porcelain or tile business, these mid-century potteries were all about whimsy and fun. Elaine put it best when she said that every collector should collect something purely for fun. Demonstrating a penchant for fun with collecting is something that Elaine did extremely well during her presentation. If she has the same passion for other collections of pottery/ceramics, we may have some very exciting presentations ahead of us! How about it, Elaine? Thanks for your time and effort in sharing your collection with us.

- Kari Kenefick

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**Early Wisconsin Pottery**

On March 14 Mark Knipping of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin brought some of his stoneware collection to the WPA meeting, and demonstrated, perhaps inadvertently, that stoneware collectors don’t mess around. In case you think you like stoneware and might try to pick up a piece at a sale here or there, you might reconsider after hearing Mark’s

talk. It seems that the stoneware collectors are an extremely dedicated group, driving miles to sales, at all hours of the day or night, for a chance to add to their collections. What makes them do it?

Mark began his talk by explaining that potters learned early on that Wisconsin's soil was not really suitable for stoneware or earthenware. And that it was easier during the mid-19th century, to take the potter to the clay than the clay to the potter. Due to limited means of transportation back then, moving materials such as clay around was simply not practical.

But there was stoneware and earthenware produced in Wisconsin, and Mark explained the distinctions between the two potteries and production times. The earliest pieces produced in Wisconsin, were earthenware pots. Made of red clay, this product is also known as "redware". It is traditionally glazed on the inside only, as the Wisconsin clay resulted in a porous pot that would not hold liquid without the glaze, which served as a sort of lining. From the information Mark has gathered we know that one earthenware producer was still advertising his pieces in 1893, and that he died in 1899. (Sorry that poor note-taking prohibits me from providing further information, but other club members probably can fill in the gaps here.)

Along the shore of Lake Michigan clay could more easily be transported, which meant that potters didn't have to rely so much on the local supply and soil type. Thus Wisconsin stoneware was born. Pieces from as early as 1840s have been found. Mark pointed out that they differed from earthenware in that they tended to be made by factory, versus smaller home-based businesses for earthenwares.

Mark pointed out that the shape of some pieces helps tell their production dates. The earlier, 1840s jugs had sloping, less defined shoulders, while the turn of the century brought the "beehive" shape, with sharply defined shoulders.

There are serious quality differences between stoneware and redware. Redware was fired at about 1700°F, while stoneware was fired much higher, perhaps 2700°F. The higher firing temperatures vitrified the silica in the clay, literally turning it into glass. Thus stoneware is nonporous and holds liquid.

The early stoneware producers were commonly German immigrants as tells a common motif on stoneware, the tulip, popular in Germany as a design element. If you see a stoneware piece with a tulip flower (and this design appears to have been rather liberally interpreted in some cases, with flowers hardly recognizable as tulips in many cases) you can be fairly certain that it is a German potter's handiwork.

The heyday for stoneware manufactured in Wisconsin was 1848-1875, with the Redwing company firing up their stoneware kilns and production about 1862. It was interesting to learn that Redwing shipped it's stoneware all over the country, so Redwing Stoneware has a very large US-wide collecting market. It is very possible, and even believed by some, that Redwing drove a number of other stoneware producers out of business. Thanks to Mark for his fascinating presentation on very old Wisconsin pottery!

- Kari Kenefick

## *A Closing Note*

Thanks so much for the many contributors to this fourth edition of the *Press*. Contributions are so important to keeping this the club's newsletter (as opposed to the opinions of the editor, only).

As you read this issue (oh, guess you are done now) and perhaps grimace at the typos and questionable grammar or keep asking yourself why this or that was omitted, **write these questions and comments down**, either on a piece of paper, or at your computer. Then send them to me:

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Voicemail is ok, but speak slowly. My cat can only write so fast:

(608) 231-1549  
(Rude or undecipherable voicemails are disregarded.)

There, now: (A) you're a writer and (B) doesn't that feel better? Watch for your comments to be published in the July edition of the *WPA Press*. Written contributions are **always** accepted, and are subject to at least *some* scrutiny by the editor (definitely not a threat!).

See you April 11. Until then, happy hunting!! Kari