

20th Century Colorado Pottery By Tom Cotter, 2014

Of course, Colorado pottery making dates to before Columbus arrived to claim our “New World” for Spain. The Puebloans made pottery long before Columbus planned any vacation cruises and condos around the Caribbean. However, with the discovery of extensive, high quality pottery clay deposits near Golden and Garden of the Gods by the late 19th century, accompanied by population growth west of the Mississippi, it was only natural that “the New Americans” should join in the trade. I hope to lend a perspective on a few of those Colorado artisans who created a legacy for us to enjoy.

Among the first to form a pottery works in Denver and Colorado was the Queen City Pottery Company in 1892, producing jugs, crocks, pitchers and other house wares. The Western Pottery Company essentially replaced Queen City in 1906. As stoneware declined in use for shipping and storage with better refrigeration and canning processes, stoneware use declined and Western went out of business in 1936. **(picture 1, Western Pottery footwarmer)**

Englishman Frederick J. White and 55 years of age, came to Denver in 1893 with his family, forming F.J. White & Son with Frank (the son) in 1894. After the death of Frederick in 1919, the small operation under Frank moved to his South Logan Street house. Hand-made art pottery continued until Frank’s death in 1960. Unique hand-thrown Denver White art and tableware pieces are greatly in demand and hard to find.

William A. Long came from Steubenville and Zanesville, Ohio (the home of Weller, Roseville, and Owens potteries) in 1895, founding Denver China and Pottery in 1900. His fine artworks included Denver Lonhuda, a brown slip glaze pottery with air brushed designs that he had developed in Ohio. **(pictures 2&3, rare Lonhuda vase and mark, courtesy of Harold and Carole Keller, Littleton)** He added bisque pieces and a line called Denaura with a dark matte finish, mainly in green. However, he sold his business to Western Pottery in 1906 and returned to the East.

Mainly for health reasons from tuberculosis, Artus Van Briggie, one of the premier art pottery designers and makers in U.S. history, moved from Cincinnati and Rookwood Pottery to Colorado Springs in 1899. Perfecting a unique Ming Dynasty-inspired glaze, he began to make pottery, then founded Van Briggie Pottery in 1902. Soon after, he married Anne Lawrence Gregory, an artist and teacher he met during studies in Europe. Anne became president after Artus' all-too-early death in 1904. Though her presidency only lasted until 1912, her and Artus' designs and techniques carried the company into the 21st century. The Van Briggie Memorial Pottery building on Uintah, still used by Colorado College, provides a valuable tribute to the Van Briggies and to those that followed. Numerous tiles decorate the outside of the building and remind us of the flame of genius that first fired the company. His matte finish combined with nature-inspired designs and colors initially caught the Art Nouveau wave and all these continue to create demand. Yet those few years of the Van Briggies might be underappreciated if not for efforts by designers and artists such as Nelson Curtis, William Higman, Gene Hopkins, Craig Stevenson, Nellie Walker and George Young. Continued experimentation with glazes (matte and glossy) and colors, introduction of designs with Indians and animals, and remarkable devotion to art have left us with a treasure trove of works. (picture 4, Hopi Maiden, Mulberry glaze , courtesy of Harold and Carole Keller, Littleton; picture 5 Turquoise Bowl, courtesy of JoEllen & Rob Winther, Broomfield; picture 6 Tiles, courtesy of JoEllen & Rob Winther)

Another pottery master from Zanesville, Ohio, John J. Herold, joined with the finances of Adolph Coors, Sr., to found Herold Pottery in Golden in 1910. (picture 7&8, Herold Cream & Sugar, courtesy of JoEllen & Rob Winther, Broomfield) Like Artus Van Briggie, Herold's respiratory problems prompted his move to Colorado. Although Herold left the firm in 1912, Herold Pottery continued until 1920 under the guidance of Adolph Coors, Jr., then became Coors Porcelain. Fortunately for Coors, malted milk could be made from malted barley formerly used for beer production, but banned during prohibition from 1914. Oh, and malted milk was stored in ceramic containers! The boom of the 1920s brought demands for dishware, satisfied in bright colors by Rosebud and Rockmount lines, as well as in pastels by Mello-tone and decalware in a number of patterns.

Geometric Art Deco-inspired vases began to appear during the early 1930s in a wide range of pastels, shapes, and sizes. And later, the repeal of prohibition brought back beer and Coors mugs to hold them. Coors Ceramics, then Coors Tek have continued the development and production of advanced technology ceramics. (pictures 9-12, Malted Milk mug, Rosemount pieces, Decalware set, courtesy of JoEllen & Rob Winther, Broomfield)

Headlined by P.H. Genter, Cecil Jones, Eric Hellman, a group of artists and businessmen joined to form the Broadmoor Art Pottery and Tile Company in Colorado Springs in 1933. With the depression in full swing, they only lasted until 1937, when the factory was moved to 9th and Speer in Denver. J.B. Hunt and P.H. Genter ran the works until 1939, finally closing that chapter of Colorado pottery companies. (pictures 13-15, Pitcher, Broadmoor Mark, Pup, courtesy of JoEllen & Rob Winther, Broomfield)

A number of other companies have graced the front range from Ft. Collins to Colorado Springs. This presentation will hopefully provide interest to explore these local artistic wonders. Often, the Earth provided colors and shapes; Colorado artisans transferred these to memorable pieces that represent a vibrant and vital part of our state's history.

The beauty, variety and quality of American pottery and glass are represented in museums and antique and collectibles shows throughout the year. Everyday and Art glass and pottery are highlighted at 40th annual Rocky Mountain Depression Glass Society (RMDGS) show glass and pottery show on April 26th (10-5) and April 27th (11-4), 2014, in Castle Rock, CO.

Pieces similar to those described here, as well as other vintage American made glass from the 1800's to the 1970's, including Early American Pattern Glass, cut glass, carnival glass, depression glass, elegant depression era glass, kitchenware, mid-century glass will be available at the show and sale. Also included for sale will be pottery such as Fiesta, Van Briggle, Roseville, Franciscan and more. Whether you are seeking a decorative item for your home or trying to complete a set of dinnerware, you will have a vast selection at the show. In addition, there will be a seminar offered by Early American Pattern

Glass expert Frank Blosser, seminars by Bob and Helen Jones representing the Museum of American Glass in West Virginia, and an informative talk by Tom Cotter, glass historian and long-time Cambridge Glass collector. Thirty-three dealers at this show will also offer antiques and collectible items related to the American glassware and china for sale. The show will be held at the Douglas County Events Center, 500 Fairgrounds Road (Exit 181 – I-25) in Castle Rock. Please visit the RMDGS website to learn more about their club and show: (www.RMDGS.com) & ([SHOW](#)). The show will feature an exhibit of Ruby (red) glass to commemorate the Club's 40th Anniversary show. There will also be additional table displays of elegant and EAPG glass. There are hourly door prizes for adults and a special \$25 door prize just for children every 2 hours during the show. The Events Center and vendor booths are easily accessible for the disabled community. Please feel free to submit questions about this article or about the show etc. on the club's website. A club member will get back to you with an answer. The Club will also have members and the extensive Club library available for questions and research.