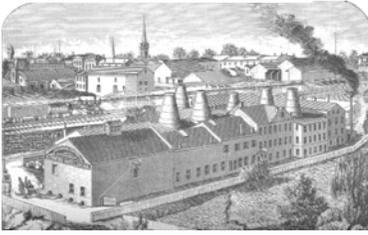


# TRENTON POTTERIES

Newsletter of the  
Potteries of Trenton Society



## *Flow Blue Ceramics from Trenton*

*By Agnes Holst*

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in January/February 2010 issue of Blueberry Notes, the official newsletter of the Flow Blue International Collector's Club, Inc. It is reprinted here with permission.*

Trenton potteries came into their own in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. We researched four of those potteries that produced flow blue: Mercer, Burgess and Campbell, Burroughs and Mountford, and the Cook company.

Of the four Trenton potteries studied, Mercer pottery was the most prolific, with several well-known patterns such as PAISLEY, LUZERNE and HAWTHORNE. Several members of the club generously shared photos of Trenton potteries' items in their own collections along with the Trenton City Museum, the Replacements web site, eBay and the Trentoniana collection in the Trenton public library.

These patterns were produced in a wide variety of shapes: plates of various sizes, butter pats, gravy boats, soap dishes, covered vegetable dishes, other serving dishes, soup dishes, soup tureens, decorative bowls and trays, teapots, creamers, pitchers, shaving mugs, jardinieres, bread trays and children's tea sets to name a few. These were not strictly utilitarian designs. Mercer produced some beautifully detailed products with embossing and gold trim.

Mercer used several different back stamps on its products as seen in Figure 1.

One interesting thing discovered was that Mercer's LUZERNE pattern is identical to the WALDORF pattern made by the New Wharf Pottery company in England (Figure 2). The only difference was the mold from which the plates were made. New Wharf pottery used several different molds in the production of WALDORF. I could find only one mold used by Mercer. Also, there is a lot of gold on the New Wharf plate. In most cases, the amount of gold on Mercer pieces was minimal.

PAISLEY is another pattern that was produced by Mercer. It, too, is remarkably similar to an English pattern. If you look at the GAINSBOROUGH pattern by Ridgways, it looks very much like Mercer's PAISLEY, the main difference being Ridgways' use of tubular flowers as part of the design (Figure 3)

These examples make me think that there was no such thing as Intellectual Property back then.

I don't know of any English pattern that resembles Mercer's HAWTHORNE, which is an all-over pattern of flowers and berries (Figure 4).

Since the convention I have found another item on eBay made by Mercer, a lovely gilded Imari style eight inch ladle. This is the only Imari style item I have been able to find produced by any Trenton pottery (Figure 5).

Burgess and Campbell is another pottery that helped put Trenton

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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*

## Flow Blue Ceramics



Figure 1. Examples of back stamps used by the Mercer Pottery Company. (Continued from page 1)

on the map. Its BALMORAL pattern (Figure 6), also known as ROYAL BLUE, was produced by three potteries in England. The Thomas Hughes company called it FLORAL, J. Dimmock called it SENATOR and John Maddock called it ROSEVILLE.

Obviously, Intellectual Property had yet to be born.

There has been some controversy over the Royal Blue name on Burgess and Campbell products. Was it a pattern name or a line of china? In researching this question, I came across two treatises on the subject of American pottery written by Edwin Atlee Barber. In the first, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, published in 1901, he states, “they are now stamping all of their porcelain goods in blue color with the back stamp.”

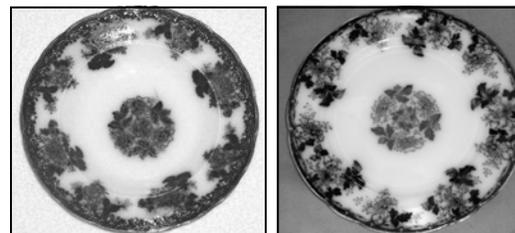


Figure 2. WALDORF, above left, Replacements; LUZERNE, above right, Marilyn Sharko

In another book, *Marks of American Potters*, published in 1904, he states, “On semi porcelain with blue decorations beneath the glaze, ‘Royal Blue’ marks were printed in the same color.” When you take these quotes into consideration along with this mark (Figure 7) it appears that Royal Blue indicates a line of china, not a pattern name. I think I’m in good company there because Bill Liebeknecht of Hunter Research and the Potteries of Trenton Society has come to the same conclusion. The backstamp in Figure 8 is evidence that Royal Blue is not a pattern name. It is found on two plates from the collection of Louise Mason (Figure 9).

Petra Williams, on page 198 in her first book, *Flow Blue China, an Aid to Identification*, called this pattern ROYAL BLUE, but it is obvious that she did not have all the facts at hand.

(Continued on page 3)

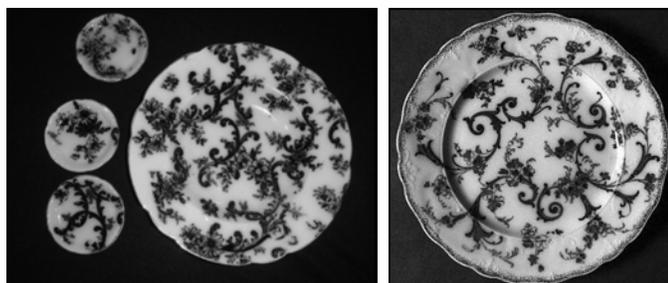


Figure 3. PAISLEY (Mercer) above left, JoAnn Woodall GAINSBOROUGH (Ridgways) above right, Replacements



Figure 4. HAWTHORNE (Mercer) bone dish

# Flow Blue Ceramics

*(Continued from page 2)*

The Burroughs and Mountford Company had several patterns that had the look of Royal Doulton. In the Figure 10, a biscuit jar, pitcher and bone dish by Burroughs and Mountford are on the top shelf and underneath is a moon vase by Royal Doulton. All are in an IRIS pattern and come from the collection of Dan and Haya Sapira.

The similarity is amazing.

It makes me wonder whether Burroughs and Mountford copied Doulton's style, or whether the artist moved to America and worked for Burroughs and Mountford. One interesting thing about the back stamp on Burroughs and Mountford's pieces is that it is the first time that "trade mark" was included. Could it possibly be that Intellectual Property was being born?

In addition to the IRIS pattern they produced a CARNATION (Figure 12) and a THISTLE pattern (Figure 11). There was also a pattern that looks like a full blown tulip, but I could not find "tulip" as a pattern name.

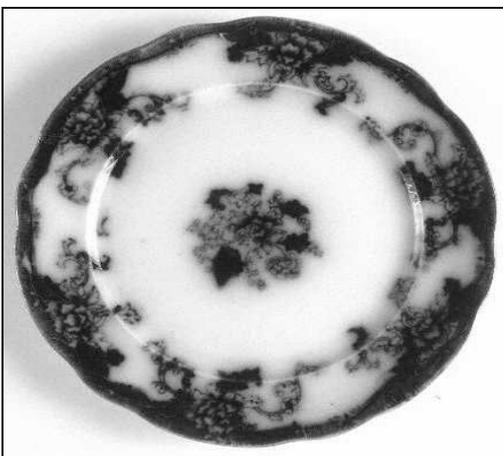


Figure 6. BALMORAL (Burgess & Campbell Replacements Ltd.



Figure 5. Gilded Imari-style ladle from Mercer.

The Cook pottery produced the VERNON pattern as seen in the photos below. "Mellor & Co." was one of the back stamps used regularly by the Cook Company (Figure 13).

There is obviously more research to be done. There were at least two other Trenton companies that made some flow blue: Scammell and Greenwood, but those will have to wait for another research project.

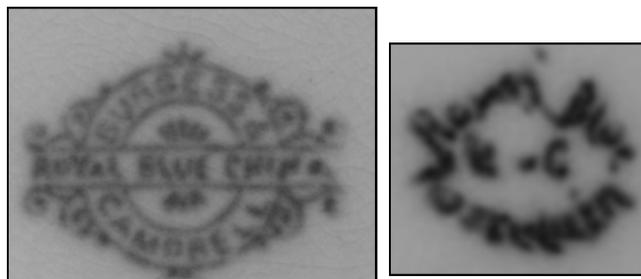


Figure 7. Royal Blue china backstamps.



Figure 8. Burgess & Campbell Royal Blue China backstamp.

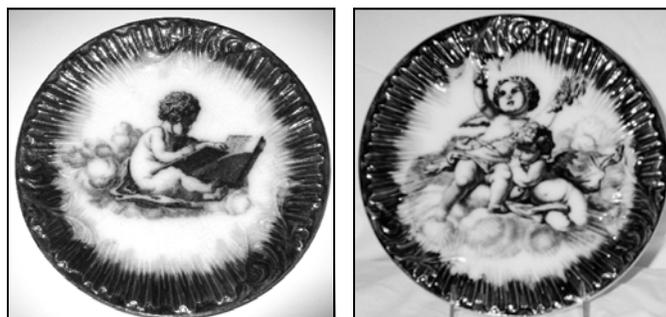


Figure 9. Plates bearing the backstamp in Figure 8.

# Flow Blue Ceramics from Trenton

Figure 10. Top shelf: Burroughs & Mountford biscuit jar, pitcher and bone dish. Bottom: Moon vase by Royal Doulton.



Figure 11 (below) Burroughs and Mountford THISTLE pattern.



Figure 12 (right) Burroughs and Mountford CARNATION pattern.

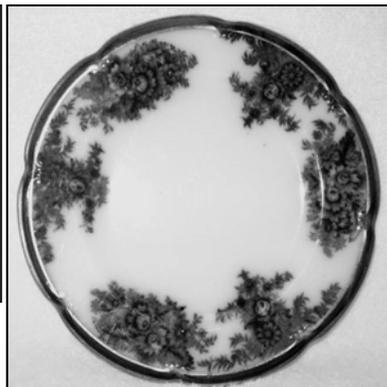


Figure 13. (above and right) VERNON (Cook) marked Mellor & Co. Courtesy of Eric Brown



LUZERNE (Mercer) soup tureen and undertray - BBN file photo.

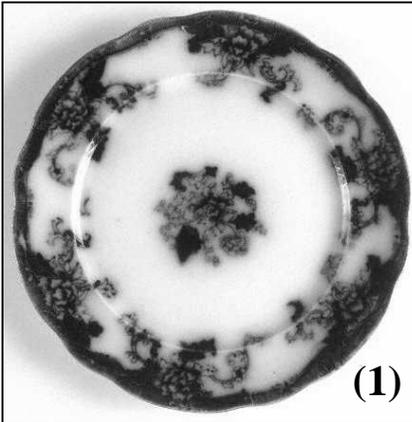


WILTON (Burgess & Campbell) tab-handled bowl - Eric Brown.

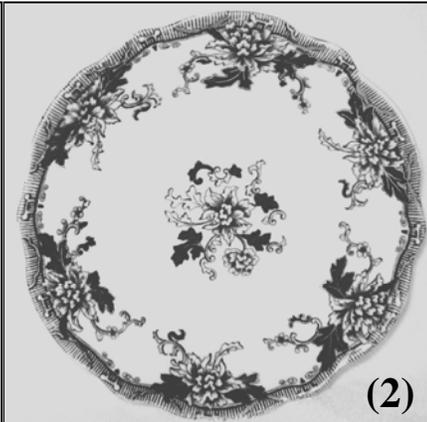


BALMORAL (Burgess & Campbell) two tureens, covered vegetable and ladle - Fran Skinner.

# Some More Examples of Flow Blue Produced in Trenton



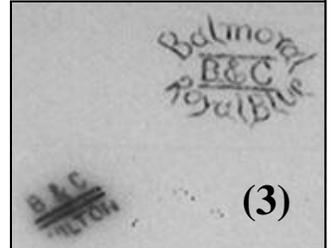
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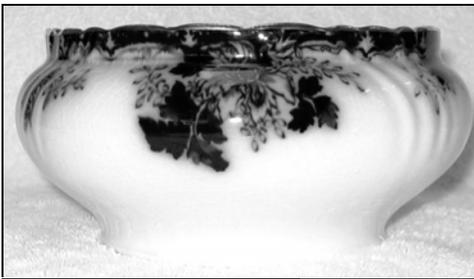
(2)

Burgess & Campbell produced two identical patterns: BALMORAL, flown, (1) and WILTON, not flown (2). The unusual double mark (3) is on a tureen in Fran Skinner's collection and includes both pattern names, BALMORAL (black) and WILTON (blue).

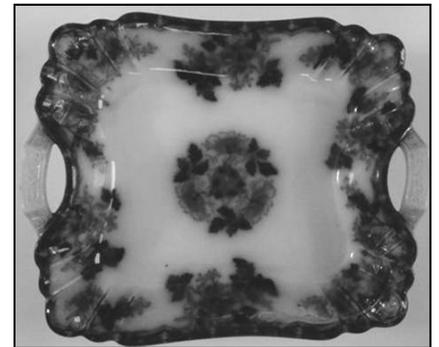
The BALMORAL plate (1) courtesy of Replacements Ltd. The WILTON plate (2) from the collection of Eric Brown.



(3)



LUZERNE (Mercer) bowl, above left, inside view, above right, two different Luzerne marks, left and right Eric Brown



LUZERNE (Mercer) handled tray Bob and Nancy Ferriani



PAISLEY (Mercer) gravy boats above, Alice Rohrbacher below, Joe Padilla



PAISLEY (Mercer) covered vegetable Agnes Holst



VERNON (usually made by Cook but marked Mellor & Co.) plate Eric Brown



HAWTHORNE (Mercer) bone dish, above left and jardinière, above right - JoAnn Woodall



VERNON (Cook Pottery) cup Eric Brown



Possibly TULIP (Ott & Brewer) pitchers courtesy of Trenton City Museum

## *Flow Blue Trenton Project*

*By Heidi Woolf*

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in January/February 2010 issue of Blueberry Notes, the official newsletter of the Flow Blue International Collector's Club, Inc. It is reprinted here with permission.*

I'm inquisitive by nature. When 2009 Convention Chairman Bill Leach invited me to work with fellow FBICC member Ag Holst to research flow blue made in Trenton, NJ, I welcomed the opportunity. I felt joy that this would be one way to thank club members who have nurtured my flow blue education and passion for collecting. Little did I imagine the adventure ahead.

At the start of the project, I owned no examples of Trenton flow blue. But within weeks, the stuff just began appearing! First, I acquired four soup bowls in LUZERNE by Mercer pottery. I was smitten! It was that ole "flow blue magnetism" that was enticing me once again! Since then I've purchased eight more pieces, including a rare ice cream set. Whoa...this project is getting expensive!

Then a notice in Blue Berry Notes invited club members to send pictures of their Trenton pottery to us. Ag and I loved receiving those emails with attached pictures. They gave us momentum for our project. Thanks, one and all!

Prior to this research, nearby



*Figure 1. Kiln furniture from a Burgess & Campbell waster dump.*

Courtesy  
Hunter  
Research

Trenton was just an Amtrak stop between Philadelphia and New York City. Now Trenton came alive with sights and sounds of yesteryear, of craftsmen, women and children, of artisans, and of canals, rivers and railroads busily fulfilling the eventual motto of the city: "Trenton Makes, the World Takes." The history angle of the project excited me!

There were leads to pursue in addition to several on the internet. At Bill Leach's suggestion, we joined the Potteries of Trenton Society. Through networking in this organization, we met Patricia Madrigal, President of POTS, and her co-worker and fellow archeologist, Bill Liebeknecht, who both work for Hunter Research in Trenton. The firm excavates historic sites in preparation for building roads and structures. They were extremely knowledgeable and helpful.

In an early email to Bill Liebeknecht, I asked him what he knew of flow blue china made in Trenton. Within 24 hours of contacting him - to his surprise and our delight - flow blue shards were brought up from their archeological dig taking place across the street from his office near the state Capitol. Hunter Research had found a Burgess & Campbell waste site! It was a real thrill to see and touch the shards which had been unearthed. Some had the Burgess & Campbell mark. But just as exciting was a rare "find" of a small flow blue knife edge used to prop up and separate items in the kiln (Figure 1). The knife edge is three-sided, and not very large, but there is an unmistakable "flow" on it. According to Bill Lieb-

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## *Flow Blue Trenton Project*

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knecht, this is not the first time flow blue shards have been discovered in Trenton. He told us there are many boxes of artifacts in the possession of the State of New Jersey, which might bear some investigation.

Contact with Trenton's historic institutions played a role in our research. The Trenton City Museum occupies the old Italianate mansion called Ellarslie, situated on 100 acres of Cadwalader Park. The mansion has been used as an ice cream shop, and the grounds for picnicking and an amusement park. Ellarslie also was once a monkey house!

At the Museum, Ag and I found a Lenox clock, which at first glance, appeared to be flow blue (Figure 2). Further examination revealed a painted surface resembling the look of a watercolor "wash." The Museum did not show flow blue amongst its many pottery examples, but we acquired two valuable reference works on Trenton potteries from their gift shop: *Potteries: The Story of Trenton's Ceramic Industry* by the late David J. Goldberg, and a small brochure titled *From Teacups to Toilets: A Century of Industrial Pottery in Trenton, Circa 1850 to 1940*, a collaboration of the NJ Department of Transportation, POTS, Hunter Research and others.

A visit to the Trentoniana collection at the Trenton Library was a time warp experience, providing some information about early potteries. Also, at my husband Lee's suggestion, he and I scoured boxes of old postcards at antique fairs.



*Figure 2. Lenox clock from the Trenton City Museum.*

We were exhilarated to find one rare early 1900's postcard depicting Trenton potteries (Figure 4).

But, sadly, there were no remains of potteries to tour in a city

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*Figure 3. Flow blue waster sherds. Courtesy Hunter Research.*

## Flow Blue Trenton Project

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where potteries once flourished. And flourish they did! A look at Trenton potteries location maps reveals that over a period of about 90 years, approximately 1850-1940, over 150 potteries existed, according to Goldberg. They employed many individuals who had a background as potters in England. Women and children were employed as well. Statistics show that the value of ceramics goods produced in 1890 was 6 million dollars in approximately 40 potteries! There reportedly were over 4,500 workers in 40 potteries in 1900! (*From Teacups to Toilets*)

Conditions conducive for potters and pottery began to be explored as early as 1680, but in earnest after 1850. There were rich finds of raw materials such as clay, temper and glaze materials in the area, and nearby Pennsylvania was rich in coal. The location of Trenton provided marketing opportunities, in part due to the Delaware & Raritan Canal, built in the 1830's, linking the Raritan River to the Delaware River to

the Atlantic Ocean. Soon numerous railroad companies joined the enterprise.

There was constant movement of potters and management between pottery companies, and buyouts of businesses. A strong connection with potteries in East Liverpool, Ohio, developed, allowing a cross-pollination of people and ideas. It is often difficult to trace pottery "genealogies" because of this.

The aim of the leading potters was to make Trenton the "Staffordshire of America," and this goal was heralded as not only possible, but achievable, in the last quarter of the 1800's. In fact, in 1882, one individual predicted that not only would Trenton become the Staffordshire of America, but that Staffordshire would become the Trenton of England! (See Goldberg's book.)

Through the years many internal and external conditions challenged the industry, causing many potteries to close. Wars draining the

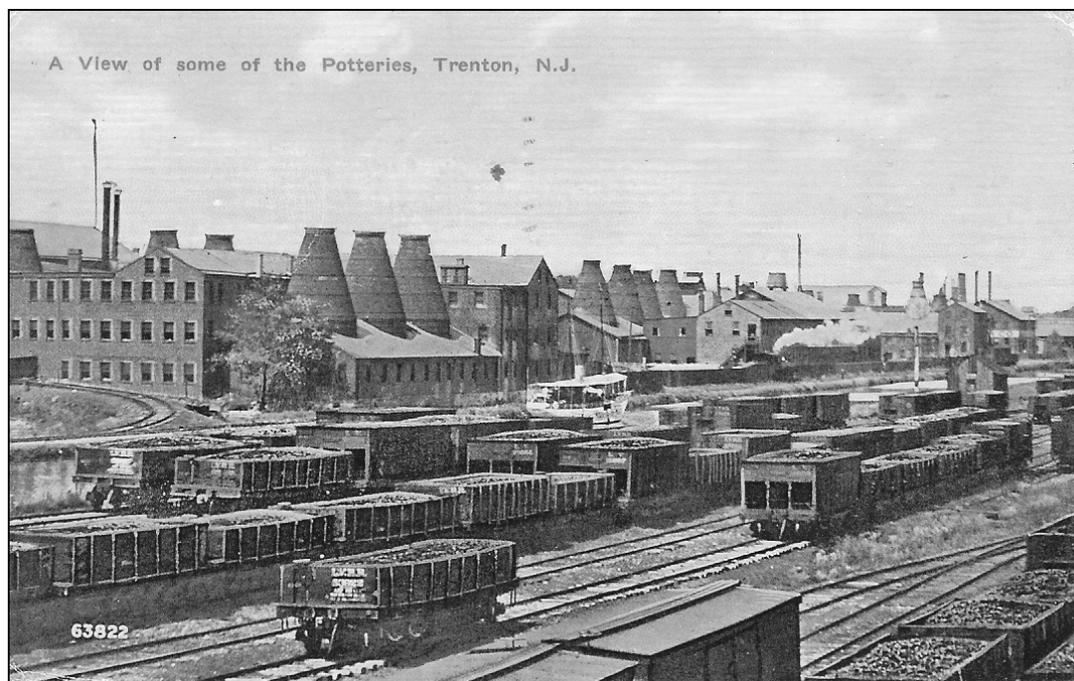


Figure 4. Early 20th century view of the Coalport section of Trenton looking across the Camden and Amboy Railroad and Delaware and Raritan Canal.

## Flow Blue Trenton Project



Figure 5. Mercer Pottery Company. Courtesy Trenton Public Library, Trentoniana Collection

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supply of manpower, nationwide economic conditions, relations between workers and management, and labor-saving machinery all took their toll. Today Lenox and American Standard exist, although not in Trenton. Art potteries Cybis Porcelains and Boehm, Inc. are still Trenton based.

In summary, our project confirmed that flow blue was made by these Trenton companies:

**Mercer Pottery** was one of the most successful potteries in Trenton. Organized in 1868 by James Moses, it continued to produce pottery for more than 70 years, closing in 1939. It became one of the major producers of crockery and dinnerware in Trenton. The company received a medal at the 1876 Centennial in Philadelphia for its white granite ware with gilding.

**Burgess & Campbell/International Pottery** established first in the 1850's by Henry Speeler, went through several acquisitions until it was sold out to William Burgess and John Campbell, who incorporated the business in 1879. They operated the company under their own names, and

also under the International Pottery Co. name until the 1930's. They doubled the size of their operations and discontinued the making of Rockingham and yellow ware changing to the manufacture of white granite and other related products.

**Burroughs and Mountford**, according to Edwin Atlee Barber in his book *Marks of American Potters*, "produced a large line of table and toilet wares and a number of characteristic styles of art wares, in bold ornamentation and harmonious coloring. Some of their larger vases, painted by a Japanese artist in their employ, were among the finest pieces of the kind ever produced in this country." They began business in 1879 and Barber says they discontinued business years before he wrote his book in 1904.

**Cook Pottery Company**, established by Charles H. Cook, purchased the Ott & Brewer Pottery in 1894. For a time, it produced Belleek products using Ott & Brewer molds. One of its best known pieces was a Spanish American pitcher honoring Admiral Dewey. The Cook Pottery Company closed during the Great Depression.

## *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.

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