

TRENTON POTTERIES

Newsletter of the
Potteries of Trenton Society



The Glasgow Pottery and the Boston Tea Party Centennial

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John Moses (1832-1902), an Irish immigrant, erected the Glasgow Pottery in Trenton probably in 1864 concentrating on the production of white earthenware (C.C., granite ware and hotel ware) and later including some Parian ware. It was soon considered one of the best potteries of its kind in the country, giving employment to more than 200 people and having by the mid-1870s the best and most modern machinery for the manufacture of pottery. John Moses is credited with the introduction of color decoration on table and toilet sets, which in the early pieces consisted of plain color bands and gold lines. So said Barber in 1893, adding the puzzling sentence: "At the time...there was only one man in Trenton who understood this branch of the art, who did all the decorating for the ten potteries then in operation", without identifying the man in question. All the decoration was done outside of the factory until 1880. By 1897, the plant had 9 large kilns and 2 decorating kilns. David J. Goldberg in his careful study "Preliminary Notes..." (1983, revised 1998) presents his latest findings about the Glasgow Pottery, expanding on Barber's text and rectifying it on some aspects.

The Glasgow Pottery made quite a reputation for itself with the production of commemorative pieces and souvenir wares, including the set produced in 1873 for the Centennial of the Boston Tea Party. The granite ware

cup has the printed signature of John Hancock with a scroll below and the letter H in the center; the saucer is inscribed "Centennial Commemorative Celebration of the Boston Tea Party Dec. 16th, 1773" and in the center "Philadelphia" surrounding the date 1873 (Figure 1). Printed under glaze underneath the saucer is "Glasgow Pottery/Co./Trenton/ N.J." (Figure 2). This set was exhibited in the Newark Museum in 1915 (number 89 of the catalogue *The Pottery and Porcelain of New Jersey prior to 1876*) and again in 1947 (number 181 of the catalogue *The Pottery and Porcelain of New Jersey, 1688-1900*), but was not illustrated in these catalogues. The cup and saucer set shown here is from the authors' collection.

John Hancock is the one who originated the boycott of British tea, which eventually led to the Boston Tea Party. On December 16, 1773 the citizens of Boston destroyed 340 chests of tea, which the tea ships wanted to unload under cover of their artillery. "Last night," says John Adams, in his journal, "three cargoes of Bohea tea were emptied into the sea... This destruction of the tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid, and inflexible, and it must have so important consequences, and so lasting, that I cannot but consider it as an epoch in history." It was effectively to lead to American Independence and John Hancock was the very

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first one to sign the Declaration of Independence. It is a facsimile of his signature, such as reproduced in MacKay's *History of the United States* (c. 1860) (Figure 3), which was used by John Moses on the commemorative cup.

There also exists a valuable John Moses' invoice, shown on Amy C. Earls' web site, for four dozen of these Centennial cups and saucers sold on December 10, 1873 to Mrs. Charles P. Smith for a total of \$6.00. Cups and saucers would have been much more expensive 40 years earlier. John Moses, in his 1895 paper, wrote: "The prices asked for china during the days of this early factory [Tucker & Hemphill, 1830s] were such as the buyer of today would scarcely care to pay...saucers, \$1.50 to \$2.00 per doz., cups, \$1.50..."

Another Glasgow Pottery commemorative cup and saucer was on display in the same 1947 Newark Museum exhibition (number 182 in the catalogue): decorated with gold, blue and red bands around the rims it has the G. Washington printed signature surrounded by 13 gold stars on the side of the cup and "1774/Congress

1874" in the center of the saucer. The 1956 Trenton Exhibition contained three more commemorative wares made by the Glasgow Pottery (numbers 230, 231 and 232 in the catalogue *Early Arts of New Jersey / The Potter's Arts c. 1680-c. 1900*). The first is a splendid vase with cover and two handles (twisted serpents), having the portrait of George Washington on front and Martha Washington on reverse (a gift of the late Miss Helen Moses). The second one, which was also on exhibition in 1915, is a cup and saucer, with a pink matte glaze, the cup bears the seal of the State of New Jersey while the saucer has "NEW JERSEY THE BATTLEFIELD OF THE REVOLUTION/1776-1876" printed in black and marked "Glasgow Pottery Co. Trenton N.J." The last one is also a cup and saucer, with bands of red and blue, made for one of these Centennial tea parties held throughout the country in 1876. On the saucer is printed in black "1776/Centennial/1876" and on the cup is inscribed "Lady Washington Reception/Jersey City/Jan. 28 1876". The saucer has the marking of the Glasgow Pottery as pictured above. The well documented elec-

Figure 1. The Glasgow Pottery of Trenton did several commemorative white ware pieces in the 1870s, including this Boston Tea Party Centennial cup (below) and saucer (right), made in 1873.

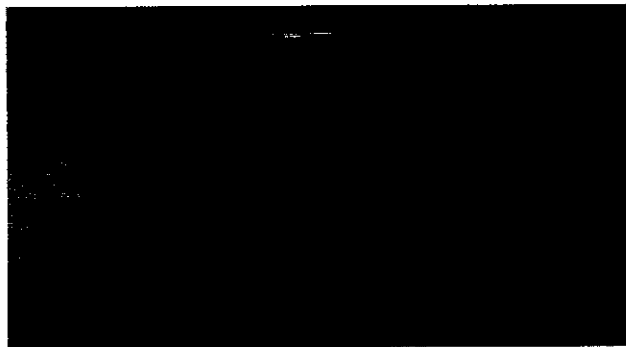
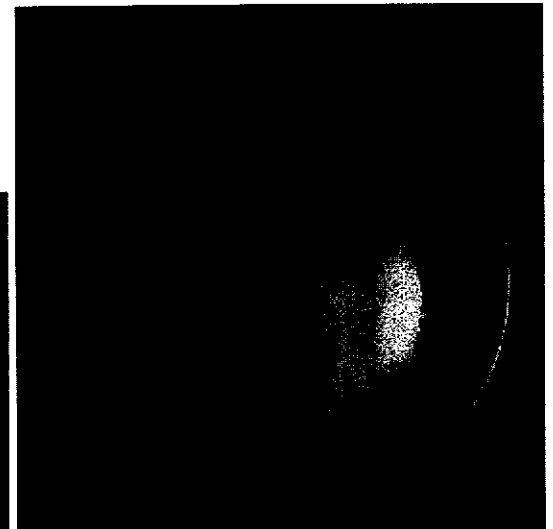


Figure 2. Backstamp from the John Moses Boston Tea Party commemorative cup and saucer.



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tronic paper written by Amy C. Earls (July 2005) provides illustrations of some Glasgow Pottery commemorative tea sets.

The resentment of the Boston citizens following the 1767 act of the British parliament laying duties on tea, paper, colors, etc. is the main reason leading to the 1773 Boston Tea Party. John Moses, who spent a good part of his life fighting to uphold the protective tariff on American crockery, must have been particularly pleased to record that event on pottery.

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Figure 3. Facsimile of John Hancock's signature, from MacKay's *History of the United States* (c. 1860).

Two Important Spring Sales of Trenton Porcelain

Ellen Denker

Collectors of Trenton's porcelain had opportunities at two major collections this spring. Important pieces from David and Barbara Goldberg's collection were sold at David Rago's auction house in Lambertville, New Jersey, on March 12 and portions of the Lenox corporate collection were sold at Christies, New York City, on April 20. The late David Goldberg, an attorney, amateur historian, and POTS founding board member, and his wife Barbara had assembled over the past two decades a highly important collection of parian and belleek porcelains made by Ott & Brewer, Willets Manufacturing Company, and Ceramic Art Company/Lenox China. The Lenox corporate collection is being dispersed by Brown-Forman, which retained the company archives when it sold Lenox to Department 56 last September (see the December 2005 issue of *Trenton Potteries*).

Readers of this journal are no doubt aware of the importance of the fine art porcelain made in Trenton between 1875 and 1920. With its biscuit finish, parian porcelain is a convincing alternative to marble statuary. Ott & Brewer, with the help of sculptor Isaac Broome, made a spectacular display of parian at the 1876 Centennial exhibition in Philadelphia. Several items in the Goldberg collection were from that era, including the bust of a child, which brought \$1,500; a portrait of Benjamin Franklin that fetched \$2,520; and busts of Virgin Mary and Christ which sold for \$3,600 each.

Porcelain decorated in the Japanese taste by several Trenton companies also sold for significant

sums from the Goldberg collection. A bulbous Ott & Brewer vase with gilded bird and branch on a matte-green ground resembling a Japanese bronze sold for \$7,200; while a *Ne Plus Ultra* Greenwood vase with a gilded flower spray on deep cobalt blue ground brought \$3,240. And an early Lenox ewer with gilded birds went for \$2,760.

Although these sums were significant for American porcelain, they couldn't compare with the prices for art pottery sold earlier the same day. For example, a vase by Mississippi potter George Ohr brought \$84,000. Despite its rarity, Trenton porcelain is not as avidly collected as American art pottery. According to Dave Rago, the Trenton material is "so rare, it's hard to generate collecting interest in it. How do you build a new collector base for things when examples aren't readily available?"

The sale at Christies on April 20 presented a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to purchase items that have been closely held in the corporate collection of Lenox China. Thousands of pieces had been retained by the company from its beginning as the Ceramic Art Company in 1889 to document its production. Although Brown-Forman is donating much of this material to the New Jersey State Museum and the Newark Museum, some of the finest pieces that had been on display in the company's museum went to auction.

A lot of two important examples of the work of Kate Sears sold for \$8,400. Sears was a decorator at Ceramic Art Company between 1891

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and 1893. Using only a pen knife, she carved charming putti and beautiful young women in clay vases before they were fired. Her work was never developed as a commercial product, and until recently most known examples were retained in the company's collection from the time they were made.

The standout lot, however, was a pair of large vases decorated with Turkish figures by Lucien Boullemier that brought \$28,800. The vases had been included in the landmark American porcelain exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1989. In addition, many significant pieces

painted by William Morley and Hans/Jan Nosek were included in the Christies sale. A large Ceramic Art Company vase decorated with iris by Morley brought \$1,080; while a large vase of baluster form decorated by Hans Nosek with the figure of a beautiful young woman seated next to a pond fetched \$5,400. And a set of nine plates decorated by Morley with various specimen orchids brought \$5,760.

Despite the rarity and quality of the material, some lots in the Christies sale did not sell, perhaps confirming Mr. Rago's observation that advanced collectors of Trenton porcelain are scarcer than the china.



Top Left: Pitcher/Vase, belleek porcelain with gilded decoration, Ceramic Art Company, about 1895. Photo courtesy of David Rago Auctions.

Top and Left: Virgin Mary and Christ, parian porcelain, modeled by Isaac Broome for Ott & Brewer, signed by Broome and dated 1876. Photo courtesy of David Rago Auctions.

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Potteries of Trenton Society

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