

GREATER JEFFERSONTOWN

HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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August 2015 Meeting

The August meeting will be **Monday, August 3, 2015**. We will meet at 7:00 P.M. in the meeting room of the Jeffersontown Library at 10635 Watterson Trail. The speaker will be Chuck Parrish, the retired historian of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. He will present "Heroes at the Falls," based on his latest book.

From 1880 to 1915, the crew of Station #10 would risk their lives to rescue boats, crews, passengers and cargo which had the misfortune of wrecking while attempting to navigate the treacherous Falls of the Ohio. These courageous men would have the distinction of serving aboard the only Federal lifesaving station on the inland waterways of America. The Lifesaving Service became part of the United States Coast Guard in 1915, and maintained a presence at the Falls until 1971.

Chuck Parrish retired from the Corps of Engineers – Louisville District with 32 years of service. He is active in numerous historical organizations and projects: Louisville Historical League; Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial Committee; Farnsley-Moreman Landing (Ohio River); Louisville Marine Hospital; Howard Steamboat Museum; River Heritage Museum (Paducah); Lock and Dam #52 and #53 preservation, Ohio River; preservation of Life Saving Station #10, Louisville; and Belle of Louisville Centennial Committee.

Chuck has authored numerous articles on history of navigation development in the Ohio Valley and he co-authored of "The Commonwealth's Waterway: A History of Navigation on the Kentucky River," co-authored "Triumph at the Falls: The Louisville and Portland Canal," and co-authored volume three of "The Falls City Engineers: A History of the Louisville District, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers." He also wrote a booklet on the history of navigation development at the Falls of the Ohio, and wrote the narrative for a series of interpretive signs at the McAlpine Locks and Dam project, Louisville.

Chuck served as Chair of the Steamboat Bicentennial Committee celebrating the observance of the bicentennial of the first steamboat on the Ohio River, 1811- 2011, coordinating regional activities along the Ohio, production of a DVD on 200 years of steamboating, and publication of a book of essays dealing with the subject, as well as giving many presentations on the history of steamboats.

The Greater Jeffersontown Historical Society meetings are now held on the first Monday of the even numbered months of the year. Everyone is encouraged to attend to help guide and grow the Society.

Urton Lane Extension

At the June meeting, prior to Anne's presentation, Judy and Ron Steinhauer reported on a meeting they attended concerning the Urton Lane extension that has been in the works for several years. Mayor Fischer said money for building a bridge over the railroad tracks behind St. Michael Church has been budgeted.

As more monies become available the project will be completed. The first phase of the project is to be from Shelbyville Road to Taylorsville Road. District 20 Councilman Stuart Benson held a meeting on

June 29 at the Middletown Fire Department where maps and a discussion were to be presented. At our meeting a discussion followed.

The project maps can be found on Benson's web page. Go to stuart.benson@louisvilleky.gov. Scroll down to "Metro Councilman Stuart Benson-Louisville Metro Government." On that page go to the right side of the page under the City News banner and click on "Metro Council District 20." On that page scroll down on the left to "Urton Lane Corridor Information." The 2nd, 4th, and 5th sets are the maps showing the route. You can enlarge the maps using the (+) & (-) box at the bottom middle of the page.

June 2015 Meeting - At the Conrad-Seaton House **Earthenware Potters of the Falls Area - What a Crock!**

Anne Bader gave a presentation about old crocks and other pottery by potters from this region. Anne is putting together a book about crocks and potters from the area in her spare time.

A good friend gave Anne her first crock and being a great archeologist and as inquisitive as she is, Anne was hooked, or as she put it, "her friend set her down this road of addiction." Part of it was also a thought that somehow all the pottery pieces that are dug up ought to be able to be used for dating purposes, since designs, shapes, and methods change and trend over time. She had two pieces on the screen dug up down in Riverport off the Greenbelt Highway that were thought to have been potted locally, but were later identified as being made elsewhere. So she thought she would attempt to use trends, etc., and write a little article about Louisville potters. Devoting a chapter to each potter/company and since the more they dug, the more potters and companies were found, the article became a book she says that now will be need at least two volumes.

The question was how to date pottery? There is redware, made by Conrad Valentine, yellowware, whiteware, and stone wear. Types of glazes, early glazes had lead in them, and stamps or maker's marks changed over time.

As they got into it Anne realized that Kentucky, and the Louisville area especially, were a potting center with a great source of desirable clay. The Indian Trail and Okolona areas contain a lot of New Albany shale that is impervious to water and doesn't drain well – the cause of all the flooding. There were a number of kilns in the Bishops Lane, Progress Boulevard areas. Smoketown got its name because of all the kilns burning around there.

Because of the Falls of the Ohio Louisville became a transportation hub and with the river if other clays were need they could be easily shipped in. German potters migrated here bringing their traditions with them. Louisville, while never becoming as well-known as areas in Riverpool, Ohio; it was still a very important potting area.

Anne showed a slide about Conrad Valentine, the first documented potter in Jefferson County active from 1803-1837, he came up from the North Carolina, mid-Atlantic area and was highly skilled in slip-decorating cupboard wares. His son William worked with him and took over the business, and Conrad may have employed others and is thought to have had slaves.

Anne has sent a 400+ page report on Conrad to the state for review. But she says every time they do more digging on the Conrad-Seaton property they learn more about him. Recently a couple from Florida stopped in to Corn Island Archeology with a picture of original portraits that are in the Westwood house on Six Mile Lane. The present owners of Westwood weren't sure who the persons in the portraits were, only that a deed restriction required they remain with the house. They think they are Conrad and his wife, Polly Ann Yenowine. There is speculation they may have been painted by John J. Audubon, who is known to have been in the area in the early 1800s. Anne plans to ask the owners if she can get in and take good pictures of the portraits.

There have been reports that there were as many as twenty redware potteries in Jefferson County but Anne has only been able to document Valentine's. She is not saying there weren't others, only that the only one she has been able to document is Valentine's.

In the digs on the Conrad-Seaton property they have done during J'Town's Gaslight Festival they have found a fair amount of lead used in the glazing. This year Anne wants to investigate the kiln area more. She has told the property owner, Phil Stone, she is ready to dig up the asphalt parking lot and under the modern addition built on a concrete slab in the 1970s.

Anne showed pictures of many of the pottery pieces found during the digs, illustrating the unique edge decorations Valentine used and how colorful his work was. With her work Valentine is now getting the attention he deserves.

Jacob Lewis Pottery, 1815-1840s. Lewis was a son of a surveyor, not a potter but a business man, and located his business at Main and Jackson Streets. Supposedly the oldest pottery in Louisville, Lewis incorporated in 1829. He recruited two noted English potters from Staffordshire, Jabez Vorey and William Frost, who had immigrated together to Pittsburgh in 1827 and came to Louisville in 1829. History says the two of them left Lewis at some point, went up to Troy, Indiana, started the Indiana Pottery Company that failed, returned to Louisville and set up shop across the street from the Lewis Pottery. At any rate by 1839 the Lewis pottery was shut down and Vorey and Frost continued on for a few more years.

The Lewis Pottery was bounded by an alley that ran for several blocks and was used for goat races. It was named Billy Goat Strut Alley.

While the Lewis Pottery produced mainly stoneware, the reason they recruited Vorey and Frost was to make cream and whitewares, fine queensware that were decorated with colored bands and mocha (vine-like patterns circling the exterior of the vessel), and embossed designs. The manufacture of these more refined products was just never successful. Anne had a picture of a bunny made by Lewis and until the University of Kentucky Archeological Survey did some research, the bunny was the only thing known about Lewis Pottery.

Jay Stottman and UK went to the site of Lewis Pottery and under a parking unearthed the circular floor of the kiln. They found wasters of the fine whiteware in the kiln site proving that Lewis was successful to a point. This kiln evidence is what Anne hopes to find when she digs wider and deeper on the Conrad-Seaton property.

George W. Doane set up his pottery just across the street from Lewis at Main and Preston, probably where Vorey and Frost ended up having their pottery, because they also had worked for Doane, who was not a potter, but again a businessman. Doane pottery ran from 1838 and was closed by 1850 when Doane decided to go into politics. Anne considers Doane to be a first rate potter, mostly of stoneware, and was very excited talking about him. He too tried to make the finer whiteware and was not successful. When archeologist, Jay Stottman, dug up the old Hay Market that used to be located in that area, he found several pieces made by Doane and found the glaze on the pieces just wasn't stable. Others working for Doane were John Hancock, (no – not that one), Martin Doll, and George Melcher.

Anne had gone through all of Louisville's advertisers starting in 1828 looking for pottery ads and she found one for Doane Pottery. The Speed Museum has the most famous Doane crock. Carved into its surface is the title "Homeward Bound", above that a sailing ship is carved into it and at the bottom it is marked Louisville, Kentucky.

Anne's crew was digging at Riverport in southwest Jefferson County and they unearthed a top of a crock and some smaller pieces. They told Anne they thought they had found a George Melcher crock. Very excited, Anne says she jumped into the hole and looked at it for some time. She finally realized it was not a Melcher crock but one made by Doane, it had his name on one of the smaller pieces. And then they found a second crock. Anne was beside herself, jumping around and screaming she said. She was very excited just telling us about it. She had a picture of a Doane crock that had recently been auctioned off in Tell City, but Anne didn't find out about the auction until after the fact. She was very disappointed. The buyer let her take a picture of it for her book. Doane's mark is interesting in that he engraved his name in an arc and put a small star in the middle of the arc under his name. The area they were excavating in Riverport was pre-1840/1850. The glazes on the excavated pieces were different as were forms. So she felt, hey, we can do this. We can use these differences to definitely age what is found.

Next up was John George Keizer, born in Bavaria in 1810, a potter from the Jeffersontown District according to the 1840 Jefferson County census with two sons under the age of five.. He may have worked for Conrad and left the area after the pottery closed sometime after 1837. By 1843 he is placed at Hancock and Market close to where the old Vorey and Frost pottery was. He eventually made his way to New Albany and was widowed by 1880. Anne found little else about him.

There were other potters working downtown. Charles Burkhardt was one of them, 1851-1861. They all seem to be in the same place. They would take over the Vorey or Lewis potteries using the same kilns as business failed or potters died or moved on. She had advertisements for him that said he was located on "North Side – Main Street – bt. Hancock & Clay". Outside of the advertisements and other information out of the City Directory, Anne has not found anything else about Burkhardt and some others- no pieces, no marks, other paperwork, etc.

One of the most important potteries was Melcher Pottery, a large German family of potters out of Bavaria, including brothers Dennis, Anton, Henry, Valentine, and George and cousins, nephews and more. These were utilitarian stoneware potters, using very little, if any decoration, with Dennis being the first and he may have taken over the old Lewis pottery when he started in business. He is listed in the 1843 City Directory at the corner of Jackson. August Uhl, who moved to Evansville, may have worked with the Melchers at one time. Anne has some pieces of both potters in her collection.

If you look at an 1800s fire insurance map of the Portland neighborhood, you will find a block marked "potters shop" in the place that Anton Melcher had his business on the Portland Turnpike at 14th Street.

Anthony Melcher Pottery ran 1851-1870. Anton died in 1854 and is buried in the Portland Cemetery. His wife, Catherine took over, invested \$8,000 in 1860, and employed ten hands.

By 1861, brother, Henry, is either helping out in the business or has his own pottery close by in competition with Catherine. Henry was the first to use the name, Louisville Pottery, in 1867-68. By the 1870s business had declined and most of the Melchers had moved out to Missouri and Iowa.

Anne had two ads out of the City Directory one for Anthony Melcher Pottery and one for Mrs. A. Melcher & Co. Pottery after he had died. (Ed. Note – Cemetery headstone is marked "Anton", ads are "Anthony".)

She also had pictures of the Melcher marks. Anton marked his - A. Melcher & Co., Manufacturer or Manufacturers, depending on who was running the pottery at the time; and Henry marked his - H. Melcher & Co., Maker. Anne showed an early A. Melcher mark and commented she didn't have any crocks with that mark, so she will have to continue buying crocks until she gets one. So if she

continues researching just the various marks, with how they changed over time, that should be a good way to assign age to pottery.

Anne has a 5-gal. Melcher butter churn crock she calls her best piece. She has been asked several times to part with it. And she has other Henry Melcher crocks and a couple that looked like flat-bottom bowls, she called milk pans. They look like old redware that V. Conrad might have made, not typical Melcher stoneware. But Henry started later than Anton, so a guess by Anne and other experts she has had look at them, is maybe they are early Henry or practice pieces he made.

Anne is in somewhat of a dilemma, she has had many offers for her pieces and would do well if she let them go after getting all the information she needs from them, but she feels she has a very comprehensive collection of local pottery that should be kept together, but she is running out of space. Her plan is to find someone like maybe the Speed Museum, who could interpret and display them appropriately.

Anne has whiskey jugs, a couple of gallons in size, made by Anton and Henry Melcher, and that she likes to compare side-by-side for the differences, and she has a 4-gal. whiskey crock that she hoped the contents lasted for a year or two back in the day.

Anton W. Sauer (1858-1890) is another small pottery located at 281 East Main Street near Clay Street, that didn't last for long – 1869-1886. Again the location puts it where the old Lewis or Vorey potteries were. Three of Sauer's sons, Charles(21), Henry(18), and Anton(15), as well as three other men worked with Anton in the pottery. Following the father's death, his wife continued the business as Washington Pottery and moved it to 626-627 East Main, the old Burkhardt Pottery. Sauer hired sons of the Melcher sons. Anne again had ads from the City Directory for both addresses that put them near Clay and Hancock.

Notice that all of these are German potters and the dates of operation vary depending on the resource.

The largest pottery was the John Bauer Pottery Works/Preston Street Pottery (1878-1901), located in the 2100 block of Preston between Woodbine and Preston Court. It is now under an earthen berm of an I-65 entrance ramp. Why this one was out in the County and not downtown is not known. Bauer employed some of the Melcher and Sauer brothers to assist him and in 1878, his brother, J. Andy Bauer, who had been working across the river in barge building, joined the pottery business.

Trying to determine the age of the pieces is confusing to Anne because the glazes are different on pieces believed to be made in the same time frame. Bauer's pots, jugs, and crocks all have the same shapes and handle configuration for all sizes, but the glazes and colors vary in a group. She will figure it out she says.

Bauer died in 1901 and his wife and children ran the pottery until 1905 when they sold it to Sylvester Snyder as the Louisville Pottery Company.

Anne had plans and pictures of the pottery. It had four large kilns next to one another and abutting the business were people's homes. No clean electric energy then, kilns burned wood – smoke, ash, and soot!

Sunday Murphy, friend of Anne's, saw a note written and signed by John Bauer on the company's note paper on eBay, bought it and gave it to her.

Talking about glazes, people realized that the lead in the early glazes was killing them. Early pewter had the same lead problem. Redware was fired at a lower temperature and broke easily, but it needed a

glaze to keep it from oozing liquids like a terra cotta flower pot. Stoneware was fired at higher temperatures and had less of a problem. The lead was ground into a fine powder, applied to the piece and then fired. That is why Anne is finding so many lead clumps in the Conrad-Seaton yard. Most of the pottery though used a salt glaze but redware didn't take a salt glaze very well.

The dark brown glaze came from what was known as Albany Slip that came from a high-iron content clay found in the Hudson River valley and was used from 1825-1940. But as stoneware became more prevalent by 1890, Bristol Slip, made with ceramic chemicals containing feldspars and zinc oxide, was mostly used.

After seven years with his brother, J. Andy Bauer moved to Paducah, Kentucky and opened his own pottery on Trimble Street. His wares were very plain, utilitarian pieces, except for some small advertising jugs for merchants where he used cobalt for color. By 1896 the business took off when he made an extensive line of stoneware he marketed through the Midwest as being from the "Largest Factory in the South." He started taking trips to California and by 1910 he decided to stay and started a pottery in Los Angeles that closed in 1961.

Everyone knows about Bauer Pottery, Anne says. She has several pieces. One she has is engraved John Bauer Pottery Works, 2122 Preston Street, Louisville and Paducah.

After moving to Los Angeles, J. Andy changed his style and became very famous for his brightly colored ring ware that has become very collectable and created competition from firms like Homer Laughlin's Fiesta Ware, which is also very collectable.

The potters of J & H Thomas Pottery were of Scottish descent. The father, William established his pottery in the 1860s, at the Point out Frankfort Avenue in a pottery built by someone else. William started as a brick maker. Records showed he used 21-tons of clay annually and employed twenty-one hands. His line was mostly willowware and rockingham ware. Lewis, Vorey, Frost, and Thomas, all English potters, were making the finer ware, while the Germans concentrated on the cruder and more utilitarian stoneware.

The Thomas pottery was located at Adams and Van Buren Streets and in 1891 it became the Mansion, Dolfinger and Miller Pottery. The site has been excavated archeologically when Anne was with AMEC. Anne had a fire insurance map that placed the pottery in the block and the location of the kilns on the property. So here is where the Dolfinger China business probably got its start.

When they excavated the site they found deposits of the beautiful, fine white clay and it was still malleable and could still be used after all these years. Anne had pictures of the excavated floors of the large circular kilns, pictures of a chamber pot and bowls that were found, and of the kiln area before excavation. One piece they made was a little ceramic pig, with its feet tucked in and a cork in its tail. Engraved on the back of the pig was, "If you want some suck on..." It was a whiskey decanter small enough to fit in a coat pocket. You may have seen one on Antiques Roadshow.

The next potter up was James H. Miller. Born in Strasbourg, Virginia in 1814, he potted in New Albany, Indiana for a while and in 1837 moved to Harrison County. In 1840 he opened a pottery in Brandenburg, Kentucky. He is noted for his use of cobalt and free hand motifs. In 1884 floods destroyed his home and pottery. Miller died in Mauckport, Indiana in 1896. He is buried there and his house is still standing, though in poor condition, and is the oldest remaining house in Mauckport. He had connections to Valentine Conrad and Anne thinks he is one of the most interesting potters from the time period. She has a broken crock for which she paid a pretty penny.

Cobalt was not used by Louisville potters, so if you find any pieces from his time period made in the Louisville area, you can pretty well bet it is Miller's. His crocks sell for \$8,000-\$10,000 and Anne saw a couple pushed into a corner on top of an old rickety bookcase in the Brandenburg Library. They didn't realize what they had and Anne asked them to please move them to a better place. Miller's pottery was located on the old Olin Chemical Company property in Brandenburg and Anne really wants to get in and do some exaction to see if she could find the pottery. Anne had pictures of several of Miller's crocks. Almost all of them were heavily decorated with various designs and his name and Brandenburg, Kentucky boldly stood out. One crock attributed to Miller had Geo. W. Grosheiner, New Albany, Indiana, boldly written on it in cobalt blue.

In Charlestown, Indiana Anne found some crocks and jugs decorated in cobalt that looked a lot like Miller's work, and one had Charlestown written on it. There were some Kellers with a pottery located around Charlestown. But on the pottery website Anne put them on; other collectors and archeologists say it is Charlestown, Massachusetts. Anne feels this is odd, since it was purchased in Charlestown, Indiana, but she is still investigating it.

One other potter that used cobalt in the region was William Clark in Cannelton, Indiana. Clark worked in Jeffersonville for a while. A light brown crock of Clarks with some simple engraving recently sold on eBay for \$3,000, the one she ended up with is just a simple, dark brown crock.

You will see several crocks and such with cobalt decoration with merchant or individual names and Louisville, Kentucky on them. They are advertising pieces generally made in Pennsylvania. The Bauers, mostly John, made little advertising jugs with the Bauer names on them, and they also made the jugs for merchants all over.

Daniel Hooker was another later potter in Louisville whose work draws good prices. Anne showed one, well decorated in cobalt blue that she estimated for at least \$1200 and the plain one she had at much less.

Talking about how much stoneware was being made, some potteries were putting out 1500-1800 crocks a week. Prior to the 1840s there were very few glass containers being made and they were expensive. Glass containers go back even to colonial Williamsburg, but not commonly used for containers, but window glass was common. They had to have something for liquids and stoneware was easy to make and as someone commented a lot of things were destroyed during the Civil War. Glass didn't make a real appearance until later.

Unser Pottery 1866-1881, another German had his business in Jeffersonville, or Port Fulton, as it was known early on around where Jeff Boat is now. He had lived in Louisville for a while. He employed Valentine Melcher, William Clark, the Bauers, and others – many of the potters worked with and helped one another over time. His list of hands contained some of the better known potters in the area. He was one of the potteries that in 1873 was making 1800 crocks and jugs a week. Anne has four of his pots, which are very plain, little decoration, if any, and have his name and Jeffersonville on them.

Louisville Stoneware was created when Sylvester Snyder bought the John Bauer Pottery from John's widow and his children in 1906. Known for their hand-turned Cherokee brand of stoneware, both utilitarian and art pottery. Snyder operated it until 1938 when he sold it to his son-in-law John B. Taylor, who started many of the famous designs and ran it until 1970 when he sold it.

John and Vivian Robertson bought the pottery in 1971 and incorporated it as Louisville Stoneware and located it from Preston Street to Brent Street. It was sold to Christina Brown in 1997 and in 2007 to Two Stone, Inc., and renamed as Stoneware 1815, saying they can trace their lineage directly back to

Lewis Pottery on Clay Street in 1815. Anne isn't sure they can really do that. The old mark is an encircled side view of an Indian head with stars in the circle; the newer mark has no stars in the circle.

Hadley Pottery was founded in 1939 by Mary Alice Hadley and moved to the Story Avenue property in 1944. Mary Alice had been a designer and painter for Louisville Stoneware before she started her own business. She died in 1965.

These were the main potters in this area; there were many others and more in Lexington and other towns in the region.

Someone asked how the kilns were powered. The Manufacturers Index said you needed three things for a pottery – lead, clay and wood. The Index told you how many kilns a pottery had, how the lead and clay were ground, either by animal or steam, how many kinds and how much product was put out.

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