

WPA PRESS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WISCONSIN POTTERY ASSOCIATION

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### From the President..

Thank you Members!

We are almost thru the first half of our 10th year and have accomplished a great deal, thanks to the wonderful work of so many of our members. We have a web site which is second to none in the pottery world. We have a great newsletter with much good information. We have had good speakers and meetings which were interesting and informative. Members have brought many pieces of pottery to share or identify (not always successfully). We put on a very nice display of Wisconsin Pottery at the Wisconsin Antique Dealers Show in Waukesha. We have made a \$500 grant to the Pauline cabin restoration project and

the grant has already generated a \$500 match! We have a library of tapes and journals ready to be utilized by the membership. And our big show, sale and exhibit is well on its way again this year. A very good start on our 10th anniversary year. Now we just need to come up with a 10th anniversary/Holiday extravaganza. Any ideas and volunteers would be greatly appreciated. Thank you everyone for a wonderful and productive 9 1/2 years.

*David Knutzen, WPA President, 2002*

### WPA Calendar for 2002

- July**—No meeting
  - August**—No meeting
  - August 24**—**WPA Annual Show and Sale** featuring Redwing Pottery; Alliant Energy Center, Madison
  - September 10**—**Ceramic Arts Studio** by Tim Holthaus
  - October 8**—**Blue and White Pottery** by Bill Engel
  - November 12**—**Edgerton Potteries Part II** by Mark Scarborough
  - December 4**—**WPA Holiday Party** (note that this is the *first* Tuesday in December)
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*All meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month (except July, August and December) at the Shorewood Hills Community Center.*

## Pauline Log Cabin Update

*Progress is being made on restoring the Pauline Log Cabin in Edgerton, Wisconsin. Ori-Anne Pagel provided the following progress report in early June:*

The grounds, footings and slab floor for the Pauline cabin have been provided by the city of Edgerton. The city will also provide landscaping for the cabin grounds. The cabin's fireplace and chimney are still in the rebuilding process.

The very exciting latest news is that the four cabin walls are up; all of the logs are in place with the chinking yet to be done. The foundation is vented and framing of the

windows has also been done. The next goal is to find funding for the roof.

The Arts Council of Edgerton (ACE) has set a goal of completing the Pauline cabin restoration this year, in time for the 2003 Sesquicentennial. Funding to date has been provided by the Wisconsin Pottery Association, the Edgerton JCs, Reporter Helen Everson and Walt and Liz Diedrick.

Ori-Anne invites all to stop in Edgerton and see the cabin's progress at the end of Lawton St.!

If you interested in helping to fund the log cabin restoration and in learning more about the art pottery history of Edgerton,

you may be interested in this book: *Edgerton's History in Clay: Pauline Pottery to Pickard China*

To purchase a copy send a check for \$13.00 to:

Arts Council of Edgerton  
104 W. Fulton St.  
Edgerton, Wisconsin 53534

The book is \$10.00 plus \$3.00 for postage & handling.

- Editor, WPA Press

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## PRESS RELEASE

### The WPA's Annual Show and Sale

The Wisconsin Pottery Association (WPA), in conjunction with the Red Wing Collectors Society, Inc., will host "The Red Wing Legacy: Stoneware, Art Ware and Dinnerware", an exhibit of the pottery made at Red Wing, Minnesota from 1861 through 1967. The 300+ piece display will focus on art pottery, but rare early salt glazed pieces, RumRill, kitchenware, and lamps will also be shown. And, as an extra attraction, examples of all of Redwing's dinnerware patterns will be displayed. Educational materials on the history of Red Wing pottery will also be provided.

The exhibit will include many examples of rare early stoneware and figurines.

The Red Wing Legacy: Stoneware, Art Ware and Dinnerware, will be held in jointly with the WPA's top-flight Pottery Show and Sale, featuring 50 of the nation's best dealers selling all types of antique and col-

lectible pottery. WPA members will informally identify and evaluate pottery for visitors, limit one evaluation/one piece per admission.

Ray Reiss, well-known photographer and author of two Red Wing Art Pottery books, and a book on Red Wing dinnerware, will be the featured guest at the Pottery Sale and Exhibit. Mr. Reiss will give a presentation about Red Wing Art Pottery.

The Pottery Show/Sale, and the exhibit "The Red Wing Legacy: Stoneware, Art Ware and Dinnerware" will be one day only, Saturday, August 24, 2002 in Madison, Wisconsin at the Alliant Energy Center, off Rimrock Road.

To get to the Alliant Center from I-90, take exit 142A, Hwy 12-18, west 5 miles to Exit 262, Rimrock Road, then right (north) ¼ mile. For a map, visit our website. The Exhibit and Show will be open from 9am until 4pm. Admission will be \$4, or \$3 with a print out from the WPA website or

any official WPA coupon or display ad.

This will be the Wisconsin Pottery Association's seventh all-Pottery Show/Sale and Exhibit of American Art Pottery. The WPA is a non-profit organization formed in 1992 by collectors interested in studying and promoting collectible pottery. The WPA meets monthly; meetings feature speakers and informal discussions on pottery.

For more information, write to the WPA: P.O. Box 8213  
Madison, Wisconsin 53708-8213  
or visit our website:  
[www.wisconsinpottery.org](http://www.wisconsinpottery.org)



**Red Wing Vases:** (left) A classic Nokomis glazed Red Wing vase from the 1920s; (center) A two-toned RumRill vase circa the 1930s; (right) A 1930s RumRill Athenian vase with Art Deco nudes. Photos courtesy of Chris Swart.

### About Red Wing Pottery

Red Wing, Minnesota, was home to the manufacture of utilitarian stoneware, art pottery and dinnerware from 1861 until 1967. The great American art potter Susan Frackelton sent her salt-glazed ware from Milwaukee to be fired at Red Wing in the 1890s, and the company made pig figurines and other novelties as early as 1885.

But this work was insignificant compared to the huge quantity of stoneware produced there and shipped throughout the country. John Paul was the first known maker of jugs, crocks and jars in Red Wing, and was active in 1861. He was followed by the Red Wing Terra Cotta Company (1866–77), and the Minnesota Pottery (1875–77). Encouraged by nearby clay deposits and ready access to water, fuel, and transportation, three other companies were soon started: the Red Wing Stoneware Company (1877), the Minnesota Stoneware Company (1883), and the North Star Stoneware Company (1892). These three organized the Union Stoneware Company in 1894 to act as their single sales representative.

In 1896, North Star was absorbed by the other companies, which in turn merged in 1906 to form a single entity, Red Wing Union Stoneware. The new company

adopted two “paired leaf” logos as trademarks. Around this time, a transparent white glaze replaced the salt glaze or brown alban slip used previously, and a little later, stamped labels and decoration replaced freehand artwork.

Pieces with the new white glaze, but with hand decoration are known as “transitional pieces” and can be dated to the turn of the century, as can the “red wing” trademark, first used in 1909.

Turn-of-the-century production at Red Wing was diversified in other ways. Red Wing was making spittoons, umbrella holders, jardinières and gardenware by 1900. And, like other stoneware makers, the art pottery craze of the late 19th century led Red Wing to make its first true art ware.

“Brushed Ware” was made by a number of stoneware producers including Red Wing, Monmouth (Illinois), and Robinson-Ransbottom (Ohio). Color was applied to molded stoneware, and then lightly brushed away, leaving contrasting areas on the embossed design. Author and Red Wing expert Ray Reiss (*Red Wing Art Pottery*, 1995) notes this was a part of Red Wing’s regular production by 1906 and remained a staple until at least the 1930s, if not longer. (Brushed ware is still being made by Robinson-Ransbottom, among

others, for garden use.)

More conventional art pottery was first made at Red Wing in the 1920s, becoming a staple, along with lampbases, by 1930. Red Wing art ware from this decade usually has a circular blue ink mark and molded form numbers. The shapes were designed by in-house potters, often in the Neo-Classical and Egyptian Revival styles.

Notable artisans from this period through the 1940s included George Hehr, Lou McGrew and Teddy Hutchison. Glazes were most often glossy yellow or green, with mulberry, dark blue, and others produced to a lesser degree. Red Wing also invented a complex glaze called Nokomis, which was a mottled mix of green, blue, tan and gray shades. It is highly prized today.

But the story doesn’t end there. For more information on Red Wing artware, stoneware and dinnerware, and the history of Red Wing pottery, join us at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison, WI, on August 24, 2002.

*The primary references for this article were “Red Wing Art Pottery” by Ray Reiss, 1995, and “Art Pottery of the Midwest” by Marion John Nelson, 1988.*

## Niloak Pottery

At the March 2002 WPA meeting, member Peter Flaherty spoke about Niloak Pottery. Niloak, known by some as "swirl" pottery for its characteristic blend of several clays, was made in Denton, Arkansas, where the particular type of clay could be mined. The method of mixing this unique clay was patented in 1928, while the Niloak name was trademarked circa 1925.

Swirlware may have its origins in early Japanese potteries, perhaps as far back as the 1600s. English agateware was produced in the mid- to late-18th or 19th centuries and its marble-like style is also considered by some to be the antecedent for Niloak swirlware.

In the beginning, Niloak also made pots from nonswirled clay, after the Hywood style, but later this style was abandoned.

Niloak pottery features castware pieces such as an ewer and creamer, vases, bowls, jardinières, match trays, candlesticks, and chamber pots. Also small figurals - a polar bear, kangaroo with boxing gloves. Peter noted that the noncastware pieces had an uncanny similarity in size for handmade ceramics. The miniatures, those pieces under 6" in height, are very desirable and quite difficult to find.

By 1929 Niloak had reached its peak popularity, except for a period during World War II when the company aided the war effort by making coffee mugs, clay pigeons and insulators. The firm had a government contract some of these wares, but a fire ended this successful venture.

In the late 1930s Charles Heiten tried to rebuild interest in Niloak pottery. Unfortunately, Heiten drowned in 1944. In the 1940s Niloak attempted to diversify and expand. They made plasticware and dishes and did some work for Western Stoneware and Ransbottom potteries, as well as others. In 1945 there was a huge fire at the pottery and by 1947 the company was nearly finished. In the 1940s the Wilburn Tile company ceased production of the castware pieces.

Niloak employed a man by the name of Stoin, an engineer that developed some very nice glazes but who only stayed with the company one year. A later employee, Howard Lewis, attempted to replicate these glazes, with some good results. (Lewis later worked for Rosemeade.)

Niloak pottery has been called Missionware and has had many imitators and imitations. Evans made "Desert Sands" pottery in California. These pieces looked somewhat like swirl, but the clay was a darker brown. The pieces had a high gloss

glaze, with bright colors. Evans also made a matte glaze. Pieces are not marked but the shapes strongly resemble Niloak.

Another imitator, Stehm, was based in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. This pottery was marked "Ozark"—but Stehm ceased production of this pottery when the Niloak patent issued in 1928. Stehm also used speckled blue interior glaze.

Fluron was a blue swirled pottery, made using blue quartz bound with chemicals. This pottery is notable for its odd smell.

In addition, swirl pottery was made by WA Gordy as Georgia Art Pottery; Rosemeade made some swirl pieces; and from Silver Springs, Florida there was a style that was chalky looking with caramel or yellow-brown inside that was also similar to swirl pieces.

In 1993 David Gifford wrote a book on Niloak. In 2001 a second volume was published. Mr. Flaherty noted that with the second book in particular, prices went up and availability of pieces went down. Larger pieces of Niloak, those 12-14" in height, are difficult to find. Peter noted that they can be found if you shop for Niloak in Arkansas, but they also are very expensive. Good marketing and the Niloak patents are considered responsible for the success of Niloak.

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## American Indian Pottery

Steve Drake spoke to the Wisconsin Pottery Association in May on the subject of American Indian pottery. A native of southern WI, Steve recalled seeing American Indians selling pottery along the roadside during his childhood. Perhaps his affinity for this pottery was natural: Steve was connected to American Indians through his father, who trapped and hunted with Native American friends. Steve noted that American Indian pottery is not wheel made, but rather frequently created using coiling techniques. The type of clay used is whatever is available locally and fir-

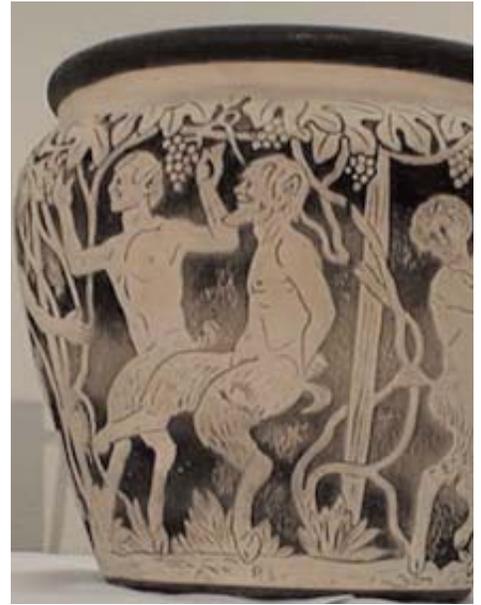
ing is usually done in outdoor kilns.

Steve noted that the American tourist may have saved American Indian pottery. The Harvey Company helped to develop southwestern U.S. tourism. They capitalized on and promoted Native American crafts, which people bought, took home and shared with their neighbors. The railroad was the main source of access to the southwestern United States until the 1960s when people began traveling with their own cars, allowing more frequent stops and visits to locations providing these souvenirs for sale.

- Editor, WPA Press



American Indian pottery bowl as shown by Steve Drake. Photo by Kari Kenefick.



**Weller Pottery:** (Left) Burnt Wood family pieces with Lebanon vase second from the left; (middle) rare Claywood humidior in the foreground, with two Burnt Wood vases behind; (right) Dechiwo piece featuring devil design. Photos courtesy of Tim Zinkgraf, WPA.

**Early Weller Patterns: Claywood, and Burnt Wood**

*Bill Barker, a Madison-based Weller collector, was our featured speaker for the April 2002 WPA meeting. Mr. Barker is fan of and spoke about several of the earlier Weller pottery lines.*

Weller was considered the largest pottery in the world in the early 1920s. Freight cars full of pottery were produced during this period. Rudolph Lorber, a very gifted potter and modeler, was employed by Samuel Weller. Lorber is responsible for Forest, Woodcraft, Claywood and Burnt Wood lines of Weller pottery. Figures including devils, women and children were used to decorate another Lorber-designed line called Dechiwo. All Wellerware was molded pottery, which generally is noted to have lines on the sides, showing where

the seam in the mold was. Around the 1920s here was a switch in the public's tastes in artware to handmade pieces. So Weller started working to camouflage molded pieces so that they looked handmade. This deception can be seen on Claywood and Burnt Wood pieces where the mold lines on either side were incorporated into tree trunks, or horizontal decorations/marks were made across the mold lines. Some Burnt Wood pieces are six sided, another means of hiding mold marks.

Another style element of Claywood and Burnt Wood pieces is the golfball-like dimpling done to the clay surface to mimic the pyrography (wood burned) style popular during this period.

Pieces in the Burnt Wood line are rarely marked, but if marked are seen with an

incised, block-styled "WELLER" on the bottom of the piece. Burnt Wood is valued and popular for its art nouveau styling. The interior glaze on Burnt Wood pieces is usually honey to mahogany in color.

The Claywood line followed Burnt Wood, and featured vertical ribs that were raised from the clay surface and were painted, once again in an effort to hide mold lines. The Claywood line has art nouveau and art deco influences—and has been considered transitional and unique for its use of multiple styles. Recurring motifs on Claywood pieces are stickleback fish and spiders. Claywood pottery was often decorated with thick green glaze, particularly the larger pieces, such as jardinières. Some light blue Claywood is seen, but it is uncommon.

- Kari Kenefick, Editor, WPA Press

**World's Fair Pottery**

WPA member Tim Zinkgraf is collecting information for an upcoming article on World's Fair Pottery and he'd like to hear from you. Do you collect it? What pieces do you have? To share your information, contact Tim, WPA's webmaster, at

[webmaster@wisconsinpottery.org](mailto:webmaster@wisconsinpottery.org)

or send him mail in care of:

WPA  
P.O. Box 8213  
Madison, WI 53708-8213





**Red Wing Pottery and Designers.** Left: Example of Red Wing stoneware in the form of a canning jar; Center: Birch bark canoe form from the 1960s; Right: 1939 World's Fair plate designed by Charles Murphy for Homer Laughlin. Photos courtesy of Chris Swart and Tim Zinkgraf.

### Red Wing Designers, Part II

*In the March 2002 issue (12) of the WPA Press we featured Eva Zeisel, one of three prominent Red Wing pottery designers. Although Zeisel designed only one line of dinnerware for Red Wing, Town and Country, it was such a popular line that Zeisel is included with Belle Kogan and Charles Murphy as the eminent art pottery designers for Red Wing pottery. In this issue we take note of designers Kogan and Murphy.*

**Belle Kogan** was an industrial designer long before women entered that field. She operated her own studio in New York City from 1930–70, specializing in giftwares and housewares, newly recognized merchandise areas for which Kogan was a pioneer.

A multi-talented designer with interests beyond ceramics, Kogan also designed housewares in glass, silver and other metals, plastics and wood.

Kogan was born in Russia and immigrated to the U.S. in 1906 at age 4. Her design talents were recognized at an early age when her work at her father's jewelry store was noticed by manufacturers. Belle began to study design, first at New York University, then at the Rhode Island School of Design.

While still in school, Kogan was simultaneously hired as a color consultant for a plas-

tics company and joined the staff designing metal merchandise for the Quaker Silver Co.

An example of her multiple talents, in 1933, Kogan displayed two sets of china dinnerware, a child's plastic clock, and a chrome toaster with a plastic base at the Art & Industry Exhibition in New York. Later, pressed-glass pieces that she designed for the Federal Glass Company sold in numbers above a million pieces.

Kogan revolutionized the use of plastic products through her designs. The melamine dinnerware she designed for the Booton Company helped to make plastic common in restaurants, public dining halls and homes and for outdoor picnics. Ceramics also improved in status due to Kogan's influence.

Red Wing issued 100 of Kogan's art pottery designs in 1938. She also created the Fondoso dinnerware line and her Magnolia line launched in 1940. In addition to Red Wing, Kogan designed ceramics for Brush Pottery Co., Haviland China, and the Nelson McCoy Pottery.

**Charles Murphy** was born in the pottery making mecca that is East Liverpool, Ohio in 1909. He later moved to Sebring, Ohio where his father worked at Saxon Potteries. As a child Murphy worked in the pottery during summers away from school. Murphy graduated from high school and

began studying painting at the Cleveland Art Institute, working weekends at Guy Cowan's pottery in Rocky River, Ohio. Murphy was talented enough to win a scholarship to study painting in Europe, but when he finished and returned to Ohio to open his portrait studio, the Great Depression was upon the U.S. and he earned little money. Murphy was asked to design some pottery for Charles Sebring—later he did work for Salem Pottery of Ohio, and around 1933 he worked as an assistant to Frederick Rhead of the Homer Laughlin Company.

At the 1939 World's Fair Murphy was chosen to paint a 40' x 14' mural for the American pottery industry exhibit. He also designed the decal for the World's Fair commemorative plate produced by Homer Laughlin, notable because Laughlin's designer Rhead was considered the foremost designer in the industry at that time. In 1940 Murphy joined Red Wing. He left for military service in 1943, returned and left again after a dispute in 1947, and eventually went back to work at Red Wing in 1953. Murphy got involved with the Bureau of Engraving in MIN and designed a duck stamp for them in the 1960s. Murphy also did a series of nature studies for the Badger Paper Company of Wisconsin, which led to a subsequent series on butterflies and small animals.

More information can be found in *Red Wing Art Pottery*, by Ray Reiss, 1995.

## Trip Reports: WPA Members Head South

*Apparently pottery collecting has a strong reverse migratory pull, as evidenced by the travels this past spring of Jim Riordan and Barb Reed, and also Dave and Betty Knutzen. Read on to "see" what they saw—first, Jim and Barb:*

### Antiquing, Southern Style

Barb and I and my recently retired sister Mary, made a March 2002 trip to Savannah, Georgia and Charleston, South Carolina. We traveled by van, driving from Madison to Chattanooga on day 1. As with most road trips it's nice to get out and stretch your legs from time-to-time, and being antiquers, we generally do this at an antique mall. My sister enjoys these stops as much as Barb and I, although she's a bit less crazed about them. Besides stretching, these stops also posed the challenge to find an undiscovered treasure in a totally unfamiliar place.

As antique dealers as well as collectors, Barb and I look at pottery and other collectibles for ourselves, but also for its resale value. Like most of our trips down

south we were largely unsuccessful finding much. And of course we found ourselves in a fair share of malls that offered...well, let's just say poor merchandise. We obtained a few items for resale at a mall in Macon, Georgia called the Big Peach Mall, on I-75. Savannah and Charleston had fine antique stores, but tended to be too pricey for us. However, both cities offered great architecture and history in terms of their antebellum homes and civil war battlefields. Another enjoyment was just walking the streets and spending time in the lovely squares both cities offer.

On our way back north we stopped in Charleston, West Virginia (actually just outside of Charleston in Nitro—great name, huh?). That's where I found a very nice Burleigh Winter vase (shown at the April WPA meeting). The following day, Saturday, we did nothing but hit antique malls in the Columbus and Springfield, Ohio area. The Springfield malls can be intimidating for the uninitiated; they are huge! The Heart of Ohio mall, especially. We had modest success there, but enjoyed just seeing the scope of these malls. Our eyes were double-crossed from seeing too

much stuff that day.

Our last day of travel included a stop at the Centerville Antique Mall outside of Richmond, Indiana. Again, another big mall with a full restaurant inside. The highlight there was seeing the Overbeck Collection that is in the front showcase. It's a great collection of pottery you just don't usually get to see.

We made a final stop in eastern Indianapolis where Barb found a pair of Ceramic Arts wall plaques quite cheap, and my sister found a trunk with doll clothes included. My best find that day was Church's fried chicken for the drive home! Overall we had a good trip, celebrated our 4th wedding anniversary and felt thankful for the tips from Dave and Betty Knutzen and Jim and Ellen Tyne regarding the antique malls in Indiana and Ohio. Ask around before you travel—we've found pottery club (WPA) members very helpful with advice on where to go and what to see.

- Jim Riordan, WPA Program Committee chairman

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### A Visit with Kurt Wild

When we were in Florida we had the good fortune to be able to buy a beautiful vase done by Prof. Kurt Wild in his studio in River Falls, WI. We had seen several articles on Kurt Wild in the AAPA Journal and had been desirous of seeing his work but hadn't been bold enough to seek him out. But after purchasing his beautiful vase we were so impressed with his work that we contacted him thru his web site. He graciously invited us to visit him at his studio. Prof. Wild spent several hours with us explaining his technique and showing us how he

makes his beautiful pottery. He applies a thick glaze to pots thrown by several area potters and then applies the outline of his decoration onto the glaze. Then he uses the scuffito technique to define the various colored areas in the design. Then he painstakingly applies the soluble colorants he uses to the various colored areas of the design. When the pot is fired the colors emerge in the design. His geometric designs and stylized birds, animals, plants and insects result in an arts and crafts style. After showing us his studio and technique, Prof. Wild invited us into his home to show us the range of his innovative pot-

tery thru his career including Southwestern style Native American pottery which he has done. One of his outstanding and beautiful works was a complete set of dinnerware, which was done as a gift for his wife on Valentine's Day. We had a wonderful visit with Prof. Wild who has agreed to come and talk to us next year.

- David Knutzen, WPA President, 2002

*The WPA Press is a newsletter for members and friends of the Wisconsin Pottery Association. It is printed quarterly. Please send your comments, inquiries about, and submissions for the newsletter to Kari Kenefick at the address at the top of this page.*

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**Seagrove, North Carolina potteries:** Jugtown crackle glaze, a Jugtown Chinese blue and a Ben Owen III Chinese blue handled vase. Photos courtesy of David and Betty Knutzen.

### **The Potters of Seagrove, North Carolina**

On our way back from Florida in February we detoured thru North Carolina to find the small town of Seagrove, which was and is the heart of the North Carolina's 200 year old pottery tradition. Located just off of Interstate 73/74, Seagrove presently claims to have 90+ potteries in the area. It is also the site of the North Carolina Pottery Center, a nice museum that shows the wide range of pottery made in the

Seagrove area over the past 200 years and gives the history of the pottery tradition which went back to the late 1700's when English and German potters came to the area because of its excellent clay deposits. Utilitarian wares were produced up until the 1920's when glass, china and prohibition drastically reduced the demand for the local wares. A number of the potters, including the Busbee's at Jugtown, Ben Owen Sr. and the Cole family switched to the production of art pottery. The Jugtown Pottery and Ben Owen III are still

in business and producing high-quality pottery often using old glazes and shapes. Both have museums showing the history of the pottery and one can watch the potters at work and ask them questions about their art. Ninety other working potteries can also be visited if one has the time. Showrooms display pieces which can be purchased. Pictured are a Jugtown crackle glaze, a Jugtown Chinese blue and a Ben Owen III Chinese blue handled vase.

- David Knutzen, WPA President

