

# WPA PRESS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WISCONSIN POTTERY ASSOCIATION

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### FROM THE PRESIDENT..

Dear Members:

At the September meeting I expressed my gratitude for all of the fine work you have done in making our Show, Sale and Exhibit such a success. It is because of your dedication and hard work that our small organization has been able not only to produce one of the finest pottery show and sales in the Midwest, but also to mount extraordinarily comprehensive, educational exhibits of various major potteries in the American Art Pottery movement.

Beginning in 1993 we have put together 8 large exhibits: Madison Ceramic Arts Studio (2 exhibits of 800 plus pieces), The Potteries of Wisconsin, Haeger Pottery, Roseville Pottery, The Potteries of Illinois, Weller Pottery and now, a magnificent exhibit of Red Wing Pottery. Seven years ago we decided to combine the exhibit with a quality art pottery show and sale. We have just completed our 7th very successful show and sale with 52 dealers pro-

viding 167 tables of fine art pottery, which provides not only the temptation/opportunity to add to our own collections but also is an education in itself. We and the 841 attendees had an excellent opportunity to look at and learn about a wide selection of American vintage and contemporary pottery as well as some fine European pottery.

Not only do we have fun learning about all the pottery and figurines, we also provide the opportunity for people in Wisconsin and surrounding states to see and learn. And thanks to Tim Zinkgraf, who places our annual exhibits on the website where many others can learn about the potteries we have featured.

Our evaluation table at the annual Show and Sale has become very popular, providing both a service and another way to educate the public, and ourselves, about pottery. Thanks to Kari Kenefick, the WPA Newsletter, the *WPA Press*, is another very fine educational vehicle to spread knowledge about art pottery.

When we organized 10 years ago, we had a desire to share our knowledge and excitement about art pottery, further our own education and find mechanisms to share that knowledge and excitement with others. I believe we have been very successful in doing so during our first 10 years. But, as you all know from watching our collective failures with our monthly mystery pieces, we have plenty to learn during our next 10 years. It will be exciting—thanks to all of you for making the WPA a successful and fun organization.

*David Knutzen, WPA President, 2002*

### WPA Calendar for 2002

- October 8—Blue and White Pottery** by Bill Engel
- November 12—Edgerton Potteries Part II** by Mark Scarborough
- December 4—WPA Holiday and Tenth Anniversary 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 September:*

We are almost there! Much of the restoration has been paid for, including some replacement logs and other missing pieces. We have received in kind donations for the roof, floor, stones, etc. to lower the costs. The reconstruction of the log walls and the roof are completed above a well-ventilated foundation. The framing of the door and the windows has begun and they have finished the chinking between the logs. The fireplace is in progress and as soon as we have the funds we can lay the floor and reconstruct the half loft. To date we have

raised over \$18,000.00 and need about \$11,000.00 in additional funds to complete the cabin restoration.

In terms of who the contributors are, some community organizations have donated much, while others need to be encouraged to donate. Many companies such as Alliant, Gilman, Walmart, Target, Lab Safety and others will match personal donations of either funds or volunteer time, so please pass the word. We will help with any of the necessary paperwork to get these matching funds; our phone number is 884-6787.

Tom Goodger from Milton created log cabin bank as a fundraiser for the cabin project. The banks have been placed in 18 local businesses to help collect donations.

Our hope is to get the last \$11,000.00 needed to complete our Pauline Jacobus Log Cabin project. We would like to collect the contents of the banks on or about September 15th.

It remains to be seen which bank, bar, restaurant or store can raise the most in donations to complete the cabin. This update is hopefully another way to spread the word and encourage new donations so that we are able to complete the project this season. The grand opening is planned as one of the Edgerton Sesquicentennial events in 2003.

*- Ori-Anne and Paul Pagel, WPA Members, and representatives of the Pauline Log Cabin Restoration Project, Edgerton, WI.*

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## WPA GATHERS STEAM

*The following article was reprinted, with permission, from the Journal of the American Art Pottery Association, Volume III, No. 4, (July-August 1993). Written by then JAAPA Editor and WPA founding member, Nicol Knappen, it provides a few insights into the beginnings of (as well as wonderful optimism about) the Wisconsin Pottery Association. As the WPA approaches the end of our tenth year, it seemed appropriate to take this look back.*

By Nicol Knappen

The informal pottery gathering here in Madison that I wrote about a while back continues to evolve. I report on it here, feeling certain that this sort of thing can and should happen everywhere.

Our original get-together included about 15 people, and most of us have continued to meet monthly. Our first three meetings were in a member's home. Looking for a more public meeting place, we met once in a rented community center room before finding a free space in a church. A name was selected—the Wisconsin Pottery

Association—and interim officers were elected. We agreed to contribute \$8 in dues and \$1 per meeting.

The group has decided to remain closed to new members until it is fully organized. A committee is looking into by-laws and legalities: we are filing for not-for-profit incorporation this month (if I recall correctly, it's costing us about \$35 here in Wisconsin).

Our meetings begin informally; many of us bring new pottery finds or mystery pieces and these are put on a table for comments, questions and general admiration. After 45 minutes or so we get down to business. An agenda is distributed, minutes are read, the agenda is worked through and it is so wonderfully organized you can hardly stand it. We have other committees which meet and report to the group at large. A planning committee met to discuss and propose a standard meeting format so that when open membership begins new members won't feel left out. And, after soliciting ideas from members, a program for the coming year was suggested.

Our most active committee is one working on the Ceramic Arts Studio of Madison project. It meets nearly weekly (and has subcommittees of its own). We are planning a one-day (October 17) exhibit of about 300 pieces of CASM in conjunction with a Madison antiques show. The purpose of this event is to publicize our oral history project, hoping to flush our former CASM employees. We have made contacts with the local papers and TV stations and plan to put out flyers in antique malls and shows in the four-state area. We have asked members to subsidize exhibition expenses (about \$15 to \$25 each) and we're looking into other sources of funding.

Now, aren't you inspired? Go ahead, call up a couple of pottery friends, network a little, and get started! It's so incredibly pleasant to spend time with other pottery people: for one thing, we all speak the same language.

*We thank Nicol and the JAAPA for allowing us to reprint this historic article!!*

*- K. Kenefick, Editor, WPA Press*



**Redwing Exhibit Wares.** These photos show some of the earliest Redwing pieces, stoneware crocks (transition and elephant ear stonewares) left, and, in the right photo, brushed ware (top left) and other utilitarian pieces, bottom, such as the large cylindrical bread box, lower right. Photos courtesy of Kari Kenefick.

### 2002 Show and Sale Revisited

While three months have passed and a new season is upon us, a look back on the 2002 "Show and Sale", our annual educational exhibit and fundraiser, is certainly in order. For the many club members that generously volunteered their time to set-

up, run and teardown the exhibit and booths, for all the hours of advertising and soliciting dealers, and all the planning that goes into this annual production from January until the *big day* in August, many persons deserve a pat on the back! Here are a few select photos as reminders of the beautiful exhibit we had, and just a few of our wonderful volunteers. Enjoy and con-

gratulations on the kudos we've heard from around the country on what a nicely run, well-attended Show and Sale it was.

- K. Kenefick, *WPA Press*



**Just a few of the volunteers...Left:** It wouldn't be a Show and Sale without Bob and Lee at the Registration table. How many hands did they stamp? During the day we had more than 800 people pass through the gate. **Right:** Rose and Nicol examine a piece of pottery at the increasingly popular Evaluation table. Photos courtesy of Kari Kenefick.

## Illinois Museum Greatly Expands Art Pottery Exhibits

By Richard Mohr

In September 2002, the Krannert Art Museum at the University of Illinois - Urbana completed renovations on its Moore Gallery of Decorative Arts. The rearranging, refreshing, and expansion of the Gallery quadrupled the size of its already impressive display of American art pottery. Sixty-two pieces have been drawn from storage and now join some twenty pots already on permanent display. Nearly all of the displayed pottery descends from a study collection that was assembled in the mid to late 'teens by the University's Department of Ceramic Engineering and which from 1916 to 1959 was displayed in a pottery museum in the University's Ceramics Building (see JAAPA cover story, 13:6, November 1997).

Most of the recent additions to the Moore Gallery are housed in four new display cases. The pots are individually labeled and grouped by maker. An introductory text is given for each company. The new cases display Rookwood (9 vases), Owens (5), Teco (4), Newcomb College (4), Fulper (3), Wheatley (2), Van Briggles (11 early vases), Dedham (5 cracklewares), Grueby (4, including a 12" vase), Weller (6, including 2 Sicardos), and Roseville (9 early vases). The Roseville suite includes examples of the Mongol, Crystalis, and Fujiyama lines, plus the magnificent hand-modeled dragon vase illustrated in Mark Bassett's *Understanding Roseville Pottery* (2002, p. 12).

The best piece among the newly displayed pottery, though, is the outsized, self-described "Chicago News Papers" jug

(1879) by Cornwall Kirkpatrick (1814–1890), who together with his younger brother Wallace (1828–1896) established the Anna Pottery (1859–1896)



**Cornwall Kirkpatrick, the "Chicago News Paper directory jug, 1879.** 22" H, hand-thrown, incised stoneware with cobalt worked into incising prior to receiving a light salt glazing. Signed with two squares at bottom edge: "C.&W. Kirkpatrick / Anna Ill / August 10 1879 // Anna Pottery / Anna Ill" and on the lip: "C & W Kirk."

in the far-southern Illinois town of Anna (illustration 1). This 22-inch tall, D-handled whiskey jug has been given a vitrine to itself, so its overall design of incised texts can be read in the round.

The jug is a whimsical business directory of Chicago's publishing industry. Into the jug's hand-thrown stoneware body are incised, in facsimile, about 130 business cards for Chicago newspapers and other periodicals, some with titles in German, Polish, and Swedish. Each card presents the name of a publication and its address, usually its editor, and sometimes its publisher.

Apparently as a joke, Cornwall incongruously smuggled onto the jug a card for the liberal newspaper from his decidedly non-Chicago hometown—Anna, Illinois's Union County News (1879–82).

The cards are strewn across the top of the jug like confetti, but gradually solidify into contiguous blocks of text toward the bottom. Interstices formed by skewed, overlapping cards are filled with dotted cross-hatching. Every bit of space is filled with something. Before giving the jug a light salt glazing, Cornwall worked cobalt blue into the incising to make the cards and cross-hatching more legible. The occasion for this directory jug is not known, but it may well have been made as a complement to an officers' directory which Cornwall made for the 1879 run of Chicago's annual Inter-State Industrial Exposition (1873-92).

The Krannert Art Museum's "Chicago News Papers" jug is one of only about ten known examples of Cornwall's directory wares and the only pure business directory. All of the other directories present the personnel and prize categories of local or regional fairs. The Krannert jug is also the only Kirkpatrick directory ware that is on year-round public display anywhere—an extra reason for visiting the Museum's splendid art pottery offerings.

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Richard D. Mohr is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Illinois–Urbana and author of *Pottery, Politics, Art: George Ohr and the Brothers Kirkpatrick* (Univ. of Illinois Press, Spring 2003).

## Book Review:

### *Ceramic Arts Studio: The Legacy of Betty Harrington*

By Donald-Brian Johnson, Tim Holthaus and Jim Petzold

#### ABOUT THE BOOK

*Ceramic Arts Studio: The Legacy of Betty Harrington* by Donald-Brian Johnson, Tim Holthaus and Jim Petzold, is the first comprehensive look at the Studio and its principal designer. In addition to a complete visual depiction of virtually all pieces released by CAS, the book includes detailed information on the firm's early years, as well as Betty Harrington's artistic pursuits after its close. Vintage catalogs, ads, and original designs are included, as well as a current inventory/price guide. Completing the Studio picture are interviews with company owner Ruben Sand, early designer and co-founder Lawrence Rabbitt, Studio personnel, family members, and of course, Betty Harrington herself. While definitely a useful guide for today's collectors, *Ceramic Arts Studio: The Legacy of Betty Harrington* is also an in-depth guide to the life of an artist.

#### FOREWORD

By Marion John Nelson, Ph.D.

"Without the stimulus of ballyhoo, an increasing number of Americans are coming to think well of American wares for use as accessories in decoration of the home. The gradual disappearance from the market of imports has had much to do with this attitude, of course. Yet even before recent disturbances, we were beginning to discover a special merit in the creations of our own country, and to note, frequently with great surprise, that given the necessary encouragement our designers and craftsmen were capable of work that could hold its own with that of the best designers and craftsmen anywhere. All the while, we were producing home decorative items of authentic American inspiration, rooted in the traditions of our own soil and our

own people, expressive of the social, cultural and regional differences which make the United States so rich in its varied appeal. Let us not slacken in our promotion of things American!"

From *The Gift and Art Buyer*, June 1943

I bought the first Ceramic Arts Studio piece I ever saw. It was in a jewelry store during the early 1950s, when I was looking for a gift to send relatives in Norway. There stood the *Square Dance Couple* in blue and yellow. When I turned them over and found they were made in Madison, Wisconsin, I thought, "what could be more distinctively representative of the American Midwest than these?"

My next encounter with CAS was years later in an antique shop, where I was struck by the sincere simplicity of two figurines in black and white. I turned them over, and to my surprise found the same mark, although the pieces were totally different in character from those I had sent to Norway. I was holding *Blythe* and *Pensive*. Again, there was a purchase, and these remain among my favorite CAS pieces.

The sincere simplicity in the best realistic works, and a sense of abstract rhythm and movement in the stylized works continue to be what draws me to Ceramic Arts. Favorite pieces beyond those mentioned are the kneeling *Madonna with Child* in blue; the *King's Jester Flutist and Lutist* in black, yellow and white, and most of the stylized dancers and animals. I consider *St. George*, *Lady Rowena*, and *Archibald the Dragon* to be Betty Harrington's most fanciful and technically challenging production group; here is a marvelous interplay of the heroic and the whimsical. The quality of the underglaze painting, the rhythmic flow of the design, and the whimsical charm of the interpretation of these characters from medieval lore make them classics of the American figurine.

Having long been a professor of art history, I have had to devote considerable attention to the fine arts, but feel completely

comfortable with Betty Harrington's work. It represents, on the one hand, simple sentiments and childlike imagination of the most genuine kind, and on the other hand, pleasing and often exciting interrelationships of form and color. These things are also the stuff of fine arts.

Positive characteristics in Harrington's best work, beyond charm, grace, and vitality, are the qualities of the semi-porcelain bodies and the effectiveness of the painting technique. Ceramic Arts Studio reverted essentially to the underglaze slip decoration, which over sixty years earlier got the American Art Pottery movement underway. An advancement over the earlier technique was the CAS one-fire method in which the glaze was applied directly over the slip-decorated green ware. This led to fusion of the slip and the glaze, which gives the appearance of a fine enamel.

There are, to be sure, many "kitschy" and "cutesy" Ceramic Arts Studio pieces, but one must remember that CAS was, of economic necessity, forced to reach the broadest possible public. The Studio picked up immediately on the demand for small decorative ceramics resulting from the loss of Japanese and German sources during World War II, and material of this type from the war period constitutes a unique body of American ceramic ware. Betty Harrington's figurines filled the bill precisely.

Harrington was genuinely gifted in the area of the charming figurine, and her technical quality remained consistently high. From a standpoint of subject matter, her typical work might be compared to that of Norman Rockwell. Harrington often presented such American genre subjects as black children, square dancers, and barefoot fishing boys in big hats. American life had never before, nor has it since, had such a prominent place in ceramic bric-a-brac.

Her figures in historic costume or from the theatre or ballet, on the other hand, reveal

exceptional reserve and elegance. There are indications that, had the opportunity presented itself, Harrington could have been as successful in a more rarified artistic atmosphere as she was in doing commercial work for the general public. The problem is that she would then probably not have given us that great legacy of figurines for which her talents were so exceptionally suited, and which even today are accessible to most of us. The Ceramic Arts Studio story is the story of Betty Harrington.

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Marion John Nelson, Ph.D.  
Professor Emeritus of Art History,  
University of Minnesota  
October 1999

*Dr. Nelson, long a champion of the work of Betty Harrington, and author of the*

*book "Art Pottery of the Midwest", died September 6, 2000. This Foreword, which he had graciously consented to provide prior to his illness, is drawn from his various writings about Betty Harrington's career. We are grateful to Lila Nelson, his wife, for permission to include Dr. Nelson's comments.*

*The WPA Press thanks member Tim Holthaus for providing this introduction and foreword to the forthcoming book about Ceramic Arts Studio and Betty Harrington, and for allowing us to reprint it in the newsletter.*

*The WPA Press is the quarterly newsletter of the Wisconsin Pottery Association. It prints in January, April, July and October of each year. Your contributions are welcomed. Tell us about a museum or antique shop you visited, trips you've taken, or a good pottery book you've read. Send your contributions to:*

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Finally, a few additional pictures of the excellent Redwing exhibit, produced by WPA member Sue Jones, for the 2002 Show and Sale. Left: One-of-a-kind plates and right, some of the Redwing figures.

