

Nineteenth Century Brooklyn Potteries

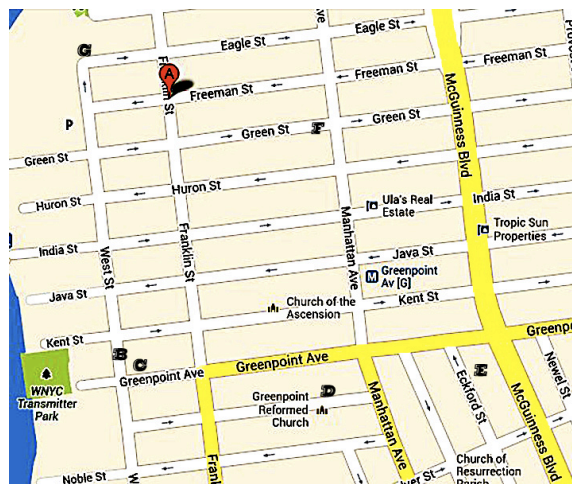
NINETEENTH CENTURY BROOKLYN POTTERIES

Michael Padwee

**"Behold this cup within whose bowl,
Upon a ground of deepest blue
With yellow-lusted stars o'erlaid,
Colors of every tint and hue
Mingle in one harmonious whole!"**

(*Kéramos*, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

Brooklyn, and especially Greenpoint, have been important for the development of the pottery industry on the East coast in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the early 1800s "Green Point" was an active industrial area: "the ship-building industry [was] one of the most potent factors in the development of Green Point. ...the new industry appeared here about 1840. The place was well adapted for this new departure, for the beaches on the East River front were of fine white sand. The expanding world commerce following the overthrow of the Napoleonic power and the expansion of American commerce created a demand for strong, swift, and easily handled ocean carriers. This demand was met in the creation of the historic American clipper ship, long reputed the best and fastest in the world. ...By 1860 the Five Black Arts, so called, Printing, Pottery, Gas, Glass, and Iron, were firmly established. (William L. Felter, *Historic Green Point*, The Green Point Savings Bank, (1919), pp. 28, 47)



Greenpoint Potteries: A. Freeman Street near Franklin Street, Cartlidge & Co (1848-55).; B. 98 West Street, Faience Manufacturing Company; C. 39 Greenpoint Avenue, Volkmar Ceramic Works (1895); D. 136 Milton Street, House of Thomas Smith, owner of Union Porcelain Works; E. 300 Eckford Street, Boch Brothers (c.1844/50-1862), and, later, the Union Porcelain Works (1862-1922); F. 156 Green Street, Empire China Works (1867-19??); G. The American Porcelain Mfg. Co. (1855-56) was on Eagle Street near West Street. The Charles Graham Chemical Pottery Works (1878-c.1913) at 966-1018 Metropolitan Avenue is not on this map. (Map courtesy of maps.google.com)

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Although we don't know if all of the buildings marked on the map above are currently the original pottery factories, many of the factory buildings in this area shared similar features: "Among these...are relatively narrow building widths arising from functional requirements; in industrial buildings, before the advent of artificial lighting, the need to bring ample natural light to the interior dictated a narrow width which, in turn, led the typical factory to take the form of an I, or of an amalgamation of wings in the shape of an L, U, H, or E. Flat roofs, similarly, were practical features that were characteristic of the era's industrial buildings. The regular pattern of window openings allowed for even interior illumination... [Brick] was usually chosen for factory walls and facades because it was among the most fire-resistant materials then available. Regular fenestration patterns and long...brick facades would project a strong, solid, and attractive image for the company." (Donald G. Presa, *Eberhard Faber Pencil Company Historic District Designation Report*, Landmarks Preservation Commission, New York, NY, October 30, 2007; Designation List 397, LP-2264)



THE CARTLIDGE PORCELAIN WORKS, GREEN POINT, N. Y.
(Drawn from Memory by Mr. C. W. A. Cartlidge.)

(Barber, p. 16)

By the 1880s all of Brooklyn's pottery industry was contained in Greenpoint, except for the International Tile Company and its successors in Gowanus. The major potteries and potters during this period were Thomas Smith and the Union Porcelain Works, Charles Cartlidge & Company, James Jensen and the Empire China Works, Charles Graham & Company, William Boch and Brothers, and Edward Lycett and the Faience Manufacturing Company, and the Charles Volkmar Ceramic Company.

Charles Cartlidge & Company

"Established by Englishman Charles Cartlidge in 1848, Messrs. Charles Cartlidge & Co. manufactured tea sets, pitchers, busts, and other porcelain works in Greenpoint. The area near Freeman and West Streets was once referred to as 'Pottery Hill' due to Cartlidge & Co. and other porcelain manufacturers in the area."

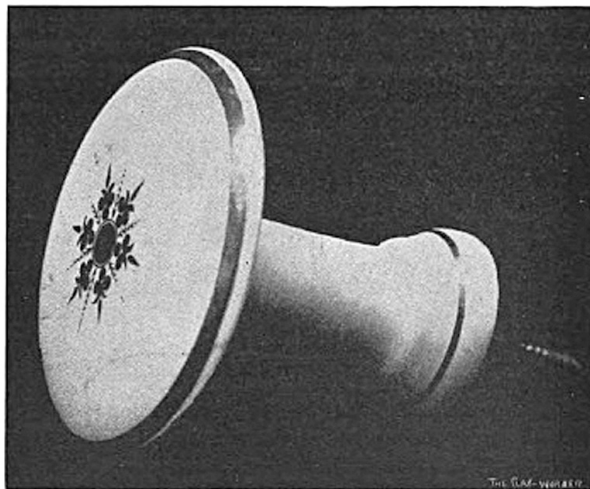
<https://sites.google.com/site/brooklynqueenswaterfront/neighborhood-histories/greenpoint>

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Edwin Atlee Barber wrote a brief history of the “ first soft porcelain* factory in this country, which was established at Green Point, Long Island, in 1848. ...The founder of the Green Point works was Mr. Charles Cartlidge [1800-1860],...an accomplished potter... .” (Edwin Atlee Barber, *Historical Sketch of the Green Point (N. Y.) Porcelain Works of Charles Cartlidge & Co.*, reprinted from *The Clay-Worker*, Indianapolis, 1895, p. 4) Cartlidge was born in 1800 in Burselm, Staffordshire, England into a family of potters. In 1832, after an apprenticeship to a potter, Cartlidge went to work for Joseph Stubbs at Dale Hall, Burselm, and managed his pottery business. Cartlidge was sent to the United States on a successful mission for Stubbs, and as a result was offered a position in the U.S. by William Ridgway, the largest producer of English wares at the time.” (Barber, pp. 4, 6, 8)

*[Soft-paste porcelain is a type of a ceramic material, sometimes referred to simply as "soft paste". The term is used to describe soft porcelains such as bone china, Seger porcelain, vitreous porcelain, new Sèvres porcelain, Parian porcelain and soft feldspathic porcelain, and is also used more narrowly to describe clay bodies mixed with glass frit... . It was called "soft" because of its inability to hold rigid under high temperatures compared to hard-paste porcelain. ...Soft-paste is fired at lower temperatures than hard-paste porcelain... . The lower firing temperature gives artists and manufacturers some benefits, including a wider palette of colours for decoration and reduced fuel consumption. The body of soft-paste is more granular than hard-paste porcelain, less glass being formed in the firing process." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soft_porcelain)]



DECORATED CURTAIN KNOB. Green Point Porcelain. Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia.

(Barber, p. 22)

“Cartlidge became the manager of the Ridgway agency and when Ridgway closed its doors in the U.S., Cartlidge opened his own factory in Green Point in 1848. At this time, according to Cartlidge, there was a demand “for porcelain door furniture... . It was only

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a limited manufacture, however, and was soon subjected to home competition. A Dutch workman, with his four sons [probably William Boch], who were employed by me, carried off as much of the art as they could acquire and set up in opposition. Then an Englishman and his four sons, all of whom had been in my employ, did the same thing." (Barber, pp. 4, 6, 8, 16)

"The factory also produced porcelain buttons, produced by the Prosser method*, and encaustic floor tiles, "...about six inches square...made by inlaying clays of different colors in geometrical designs--red with black scroll-work; a cane-colored device in a red ground; red and white, and a combination of blue and white, in imitation of marble, much used at that time as a flooring for halls. Hardware trimmings and door furniture, however were the staple productions of the Green Point works in the early years... . These consisted of door and room signs, number plates for church pews, shutter, door, window, curtain and drawer knobs, bell pulls, door and number plates, keyhole escutcheons, furniture castors, stair carpet plates, speaking tubes and rosettes." (Barber, p. 18) Cartlidge also produced "...inkstands and chessmen, cane heads and endless other novelties, which at the Crystal Palace in 1858 won a silver medal 'for the excellence of the porcelain body and the gilding'."

(<http://www.noteaccess.com/APPROACHES/DecorativeAA/PAmerican3.htm>)

*[This refers to the method of dust-pressing tiles, patented in England by Richard Prosser in 1840. This method facilitated the mass-production of printed and relief tiles. Arts and Crafts and other handmade tiles are usually produced by the "wet clay" method.

(http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=72099&partId=1)]



231.—ELIJAH TATLER. BORN 1823.
DIED 1876.

"Tableware in bone china was produced in commercial quantities...[, and the]...best decorators were soon procured to ornament it. Among the artists engaged...were George Washington, Frank Lockett, son of George Lockett, a well-known color-maker and manager for the Alcocks, of Burselm, and Daniel Smith, who came from the Dav-
enport works of Longport, England--all flower painters. Elijah Tatler was also employed [...there].

(Barber, *Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, p. 448)

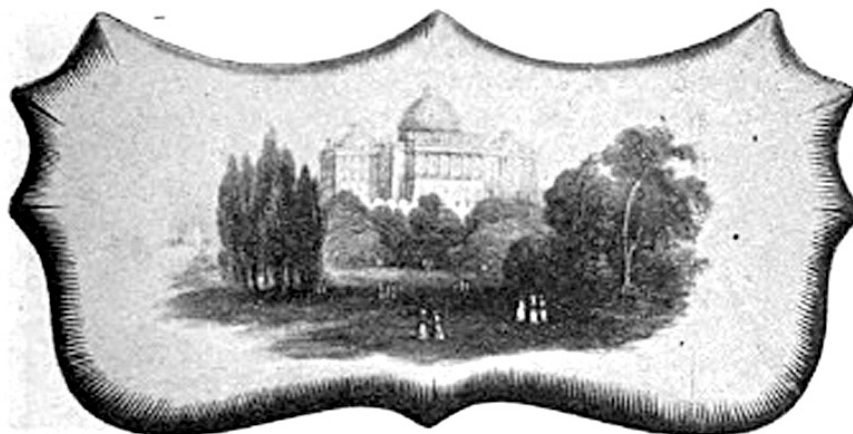
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PORCELAIN DOOR KNOBS. After Audubon. By Elijah Tatler.

(Barber, p. 33)

“[Tatler] painted landscapes, water views, figures, Watteau scenes, birds and animals, having formerly served an apprenticeship at Minton’s in England... . [...After] the closing of the Cartlidge works, he established a decorating business in Trenton, N.J. ...Among the best works of Elijah Tatler were some fifty or sixty designs of land and fresh-water birds, painted in natural tints after Audubon’s Birds of the State of New York.



VIEW OF THE CAPITOL AT WASHINGTON. Painted by Tatler.

(Barber, p. 35)

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“These were executed on large door and finger plates, doorknobs and keyhole escutcheons... . . .The finest painting of Mr. Tatler’s which has survived...is a miniature representation, on a small elliptical medallion, of New York Harbor, showing the Battery and shipping on the water front, and the spires and buildings of the city in the distance.” (Barber, pp. 27, 30)



(Barber, p. 34)

Cartlidge employed George Washington as a copper-plate engraver, but he was also a “clever painter”. (Barber, p. 28)

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FRENCH CHINA PLATE. Decorated by George Washington.

(Barber, p. 29)

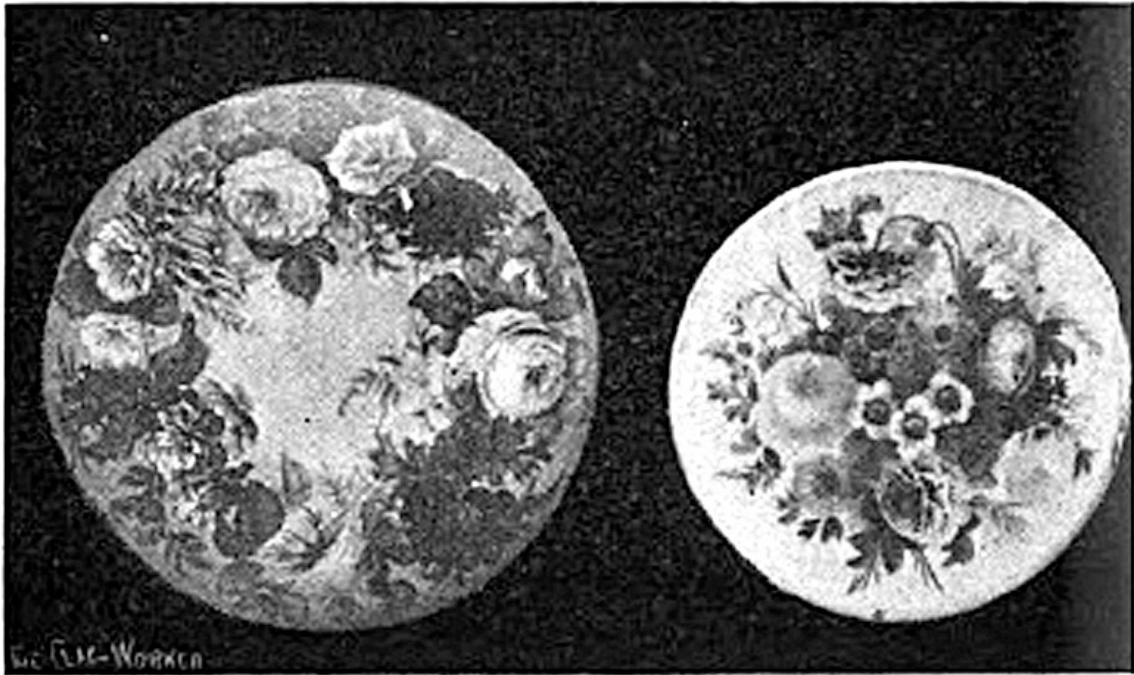
As, also, was Frank Lockett:



DOOR PLATE. Hollyhock Decoration. Painted by Frank Lockett.

(Barber, p. 28)

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PORCELAIN BOX LIDS. Painted by Frank Lockett.

(Barber, p. 30)



JOSIAH JONES.

(Barber, p. 38)

One other artist hired by Cartlidge was the modeler Josiah Jones (1801-1887). Josiah Jones was hired before the erection of the Green Point factory. He was a brother of Mrs. Cartlidge and was trained in the potteries in Burselm. He "...began modeling for some of the foremost potters of England. His work...consisted of statues...of original design, busts and medallion portraits of prominent people... . He also executed...copies of well-known works of ceramic art, such as lithophanes or transparencies for gas shades... . The Portland vase was also copied... ." At the Cartlidge factory Jones at first designed relief tableware, mantel ornaments, such as statuettes, and drinking mugs with lizards and frogs in relief, among others. Then, he began to design art pottery, many from engravings. There were "a series of oval plaques with relief designs representing characters from Scripture and works of standard authors. Of those, a head of Judas Iscariot was...among the best."

(Barber, pp. 39-40)

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PARIAN PLAQUE "JUDAS ISCARIOT." Owned by Miss Alice C. Ferguson.

Parian plaque of "Judas Iscariot" by Josiah Jones. (Barber, p. 45)

Jones "modeled a number of medallion portraits of prominent Americans, including George Washington, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay and Zachary Taylor, which were produced in fine porcelain*. [He also created] some exquisite little jewelry relief portraits of members of Mr. Cartlidge's family in bisquit porcelain... ." (Edwin Atlee Barber, *Early Pottery Moulds in America*, The Clay-Worker, Vol. XXII, No. 1, July 1894, p. 22)

* The Cartlidge firm always described these as bisque porcelain.
(<http://www.noteaccess.com/APPROACHES/DecorativeAA/PAmerican3.htm>)

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Zachary Taylor (Barber, op. cit., p. 48)

Jones also patented a method of making porcelain doorknobs while employed by Cartlidge: “Jones...worked with mineral knobs of unrefined clays. He obtained a patent for mottling the knob (grinding rather than wedging the clays) to produce a knob less likely to fracture.” (Maud Eastwood, “Ceramic Door Hardware, Establishing Provenance”, *The Doorknob Collector*, Antique Doorknob Collectors of America, Eola, IL, No. 78, July-August 1996, p. 7)

Josiah Jones “continued at the Green Point establishment until it closed, and afterward assumed the management of a porcelain manufactory at Kaolin, S.C., where he remained a short time[, after which he] then settled in Trenton... .” (Barber, *ibid.*, p. 46)

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Wedgwood-type cameo portrait of Mrs. Robinson Tyndale by Josiah Jones. (Barber, p. 59)

As mentioned above, Charles Cartlidge's Greenpoint Pottery exhibited wares that won a "first premium" award at the Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1853 in New York. At that time Cartlidge had four kilns in operation and employed about sixty workers. (Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, *American Porcelain, 1770-1920*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989, p. 21) In 1855 this firm dissolved and reorganized as the American Porcelain Manufacturing Company, but no success was attained and the works were closed the following year. Thus expired the most promising pottery venture in America up to that time.



Pitcher, American Porcelain Manufacturing Company, 1854-56. (American Studies Galleries, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

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Failure was due to operating along the lines of mediaeval times and the output did not meet a popular demand. The day of the artist-artisan had passed and workmen producing on a large scale at low cost had arrived. (William L. Felter, *Historic Green Point*, The Green Point Savings Bank, 1919, p. 52) Thomas Smith, on the other hand, the owner of the Union Porcelain Works after 1862, was one of the first to "modernize" his plant for large-scale, low-cost production, and this pottery was a success.



Porcelain Pitcher Decorated with an American Eagle and Shield, Charles Cartlidge and Company, Greenpoint (Brooklyn), New York, mid-19th century, the pitcher decorated with relief molding depicting an American eagle supporting the spout above a broad shield inscribed with the name "VANDERBILT" in red and white, and gilt, the sides further decorated with gilt highlighted oak leaves and acorns. Charles Cartlidge, Pitcher, made 1848-56. (Photo of pitcher in the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, "Edward Lycett and Brooklyn's Faience Manufacturing Company", courtesy of Michael Padwee)

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William Boch & Brothers, Thomas Smith and The Union Porcelain Works



136 Milton Street, once the residence of Thomas Smith

A few years ago Susan Tunick, the founder of [Friends of Terra Cotta](#) and the author of *Terra Cotta Skyline*, showed me some photos of a tiled fireplace in a house in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. The house at 136 Milton Street was once the residence of Thomas Smith, the owner of the Union Porcelain Works, and now it is the Greenpoint Reformed Church. Only the fireplace remains of the original interior decoration: the cameo tile plaques on the sides of the fireplace and the blue and white 2"x2" and 4"x4" tiles have been identified as made by the Union Porcelain Works.



(Photos courtesy of the [Friends of Terra Cotta](#))

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"Smith, an important figure in the history of the district, had been trained as a builder and worked in that trade for nearly thirty years before retiring to Greenpoint where he had come into possession of a bankrupt porcelain factory. He purchased a large tract of land on Milton Street and over a period of years built on it. Since he retired from the trade because of ill health, it is improbable that Smith acted as mason or carpenter on [this house] but it is evident by comparison of interior and exterior features that he was the architect who designed them. [Smith also used] the refuse from the Union [Porcelain] Works as part of the aggregate for the cement used for the building foundation... ." (City of New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Greenpoint Historic District Designation Report*, 1982, pp. 6, 11-12)

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(Photos courtesy of Michael Padwee)

The church still uses Union Porcelain Works dinnerware (marked on the reverse) at some functions.



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If you walk to the corner of Milton Street and Manhattan Avenue, you will come to the restored "Keramos Hall" (861 Manhattan Avenue), built by Thomas Smith and now a pharmacy and office building.



Between the two indented windows on the second floor, and on the two stair risers at the building's entrance are more tiles. The tiles between the windows are assumed to be by the Union Porcelain Works. The tiles on the stair risers are the same as those in Thomas Smith's residence

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"Keramos Hall was built in 1887 by Thomas C. Smith, who owned Union Porcelain Works on Eckford St. ...One of the pieces shown by Union Porcelain at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876 was the Keramos Vase, which commemorated [Longfellow's poem](#) of the same name and was embellished with raised designs depicting the history of ceramics. ...Soon after exhibiting the Keramos Vase, Smith constructed Keramos Hall as a commercial building with space for civic organizations (Greenpoint Hebrew Civic Club, the Progress Club, the Young Mens Republican Club, Greenpoint Taxpayers and Citizens' Association, etc.) and professional trades such as attorneys and engineers. ...Keramos Hall fell on hard times and at some point it was reclad in vinyl... . Nevertheless it was still included in the Greenpoint Historic District [...and] [Kamen Tall Architects](#) were hired for the re-

cent restoration... ." (MatthewC, "Forgotten Greenpoint: Keramos Hall On Manhattan Ave", <http://greenpointers.com/2013/03/11/forgotten-greenpoint-keramos-hall-on-manhattan-ave/>)



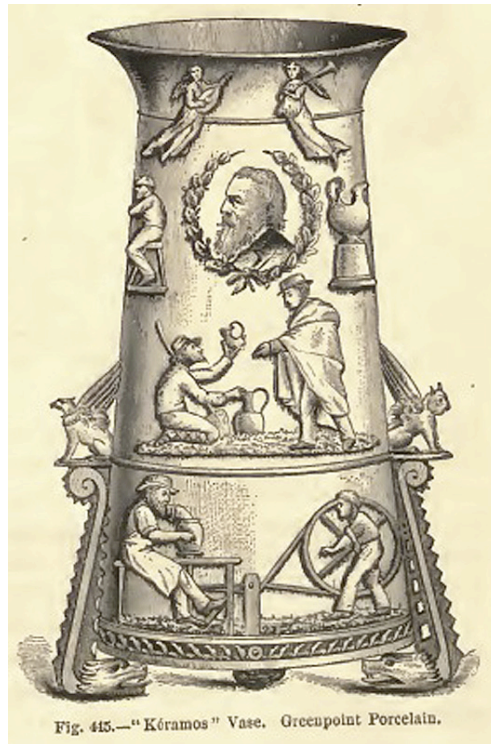
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(Photos courtesy of Michael Padwee)



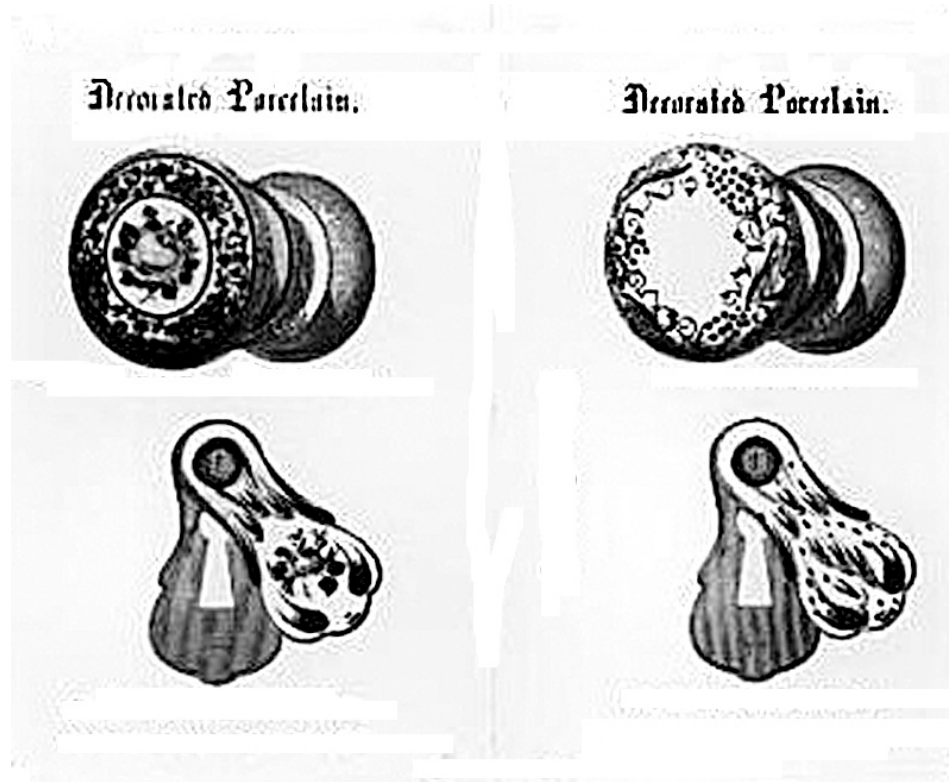
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"In panels on the base the potters of all ages are seen at work... Above these, on the body, are reliefs illustrative of the pottery of Peru, Italy, France, Spain, England, and other countries. As we turn it round, the advance of ceramic art is seen as in a diorama, and amidst the various scenes appears in relief the bust of the poet whose song inspired the work. The form of the vase is singular, simple, and severe, but well suited to the artist's treatment of his subject. Its rigidity is considerably softened by the quaint, projecting feet and the figures they support, and by the decoration surrounding the flaring top." (Jenny J. Young, *The Ceramic Art*, Harper and Brothers, 1878, pp. 475, 477)

In the United States, in the nineteenth century, hard-paste "true" porcelain became the material of choice for presentation pieces and for finely decorated wares sold to wealthy consumers. There were a number of attempts to produce true hard porcelain, or china in the United States, but all were unsuccessful except for the Union Porcelain Works. (William L. Felter, *Historic Green Point*, The Green Point Savings Bank, 1919, p. 52)

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(From an 1861 Union Porcelain Works Catalog in the Library of Congress)

“The porcelain trimmings that had been a specialty of the Charles Cartlidge company were also the mainstay of the firm William Boch and his two brothers, Anthony and Francis Victor, founded in Greenpoint on Fifth (later Eckford) Street, near Greenpoint Avenue, sometime around 1844. (William’s sons William junior and Nicholas entered the firm at a later date.) When the Boch brothers exhibited at the New York Crystal Palace in 1853, their display, which included ‘stair rods, and plates of decorated porcelain; plain and gilded porcelain trimmings for doors, shutters, drawers, &c,’ must have resembled Cartlidge products. [...Besides these, in 1855 they also advertised] ‘All kinds of house, lock, & furniture trimmings, porcelain pitchers, mugs, vases, and other fancy wares. Also, porcelain lamps, images, and other decorations for graveyard monuments... .’ The prodigious number of relief-molded pitchers made by William Boch and Brothers, like those of their neighbor and competitor, utilized designs borrowed directly from the eighteenth-century rococo, many of which were to remain popular with the middle-class market for decades. Molds from both factories [Boch and Cartlidge] may have been in circulation throughout the period; some of them may even have been acquired by the proprietors of the successor to the Boch brothers firm[, the Union Porcelain Works in the 1860s].” (Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen, *American Porcelain, 1770-1920*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989, pp. 24-25)

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A William Boch & Brothers pitcher. (Photo from the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, “Edward Lycett and Brooklyn’s Faience Manufacturing Company, courtesy of Michael Padwee)

The Union Porcelain Works began “...with one small kiln...on the site of the present works, for the manufacture of doorknobs, etc.,... . . .They proved unsuccessful, and the works passed into the hands of a stock company, who succeeded in inducing Thomas C. Smith, then a prosperous architect and builder in New York, to loan them considerable sums of money. The [Civil] war came on, the company failed, and Mr. Smith found himself obliged to take the factory for his debt. In 1863 he was in Europe, and embraced the opportunity to visit the porcelain factory of Sevres, in France, and some of the English potteries in Stoke-on-Trent; and when he...returned home he had fully made up his mind to undertake the manufacture of hard porcelain.” (“The Famous Old Union Porcelain Works of Brooklyn”, *The Pottery, Glass & Brass Salesman*, Vol. XV, No. 3, Feb. 15, 1917, p. 41)

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Union Porcelain Works hearth tiles. (Photo courtesy of Michael Padwee)

“The manufacture of hard porcelain tiles [had] become an important branch of the business of this factory. These tiles are made both thick and thin, in underglaze decoration, and are claimed to be the only tiles made in this country which will endure the heat of a hearth fire. They are decorated with figures of griffins and other fancy designs. The overglaze method has also been applied to tiles for mantel facings and wainscoting, and on the walls of the private office of the establishment may be seen a series of large tile panels embellished with paintings representing the ancient ceramic processes of Egypt, as depicted on the pyramids. [Now lost!]” (Edwin Atlee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1901, pp. 256-257)



A 3" towel hook, a cupboard knob and a name plate, all in porcelain. (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Accession Numbers 68.87.61, 68.87.64 and 1995.150.2)

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300 Eckford Street where the Union Porcelain Works factory used to be.

Smith made some improvements in the manufacturing process over the years: “the potter's wheel, which for more than three thousand years had been so fully identified with all fictile manufactures, is now obsolete and is abolished from the Union Porcelain Works. In its place there are long tables, before which a row of employees are stationed, and in front of each one are perpendicular and horizontal revolving disks, which are put in operation by a mere pressure of the knee on a lever. Beside each operator is a mass of the dough, irregularly shaped, perhaps in the form of imperfect tubes. The disk, or revolving head, being at rest, the operator puts upon it a mold, the interior of which is of the exact form of the exterior of a bowl, or cup. Into this he inserts one of his dough tubes and the disk is set in motion, the plastic mass being pushed with his fingers out against the side of the cavity.” (“The Famous Old Union Porcelain Works of Brooklyn”, *The Pottery, Glass & Brass Salesman*, Vol. XV, No. 3, Feb. 15, 1917, p. 43)

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A 9 15/16" diameter plate, "Bird on Branch", c. 1877. (Brooklyn Museum of Art Accession Number 68.87.48, gift of Franklin Chace)

The Union Porcelain Works used "Kaolin or porcelain clay of the very best quality and the purest of quartz and feldspar [which] are the constituents of the body of natural porcelain, or China, as it is more commonly called. All other wares...use more or less of the common cheap ball clay. At the Union Porcelain Works the molded and dried wares are placed in single layers, carefully separated and supported in the seggars, and these seggars, carefully placed one over the other, are wheeled into the upper part of the great kilns, where the heat is much less intense than in the lower part, being, as we may say, the waste heat of the lower kiln. Here, at a temperature of about 1,500 deg., they remain from thirty to thirty-five hours... . [When the pieces are cooled and] taken out of the seggars [i.e., fire-clay containers that hold the wares to be fired in the kiln] they are brittle and porous, not very hard, and can, if necessary, be trimmed in the lathes. They are now ready for the glazing. The material for the glaze is the same as for the ware itself, except that the proportions are entirely different in order to make it fluent and flux at the same time that the body becomes vitreous. The glaze must be reduced to the most impalpable powder, and suspended in large tubs of water, by constant stirring. The biscuit ware is dipped into this and quickly absorbs the water, leaving the glazing compound in a nearly dry paste upon the ware. [...The glazed pieces] are put in the lower division of the kilns and the fires urged until a heat of from 4,000 to 5,000 deg. is obtained, sufficient to make the whole of each piece, glazing and body, perfectly homoge-

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neous and vitrified. They are now finished wares. They will not craze or crackle or stain, whatever may be the fluid placed in them and whatever the degree of heat to which they are subjected." ("The Famous Old Union Porcelain Works of Brooklyn", *The Pottery, Glass & Brass Salesman*, Vol. XV, No. 3, Feb. 15, 1917, p. 41)



5 3/4" x 5 7/8" octagonal plaque of "Charlotte Cushman, Authoress", c. 1876.
(Brooklyn Museum of Art Accession Number 2006.6.2, gift of Joseph McCrindle)

The Union Porcelain Works had a distinctive mark consisting of an eagle with an "S" in its beak. "According to Lehner's book on US marks on pottery and porcelain, 'The representation of an eagle's head with the letter S in its beak was filed for registration on May 4, 1877, by Thomas Smith and Sons.' The 'S' evidently stands for Smith."
(<http://r-infinity.com/Companies/>)



The U.P.W. eagle head mark. (Photo courtesy of [Elton Gish](#))

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"It was Thomas Smith's ambition to create an American style in ceramics, distinct from contemporary European models. The result...was an eclectic selection of symbols, usually from literature or everyday American life, applied to conventional forms. [...In] anticipation of the nation's Centennial, in 1874 Smith hired the sculptor Karl L. H. Mueller [(1820-1887)]...as the firm's chief designer. Mueller, the son of a goldsmith, was born in Coblenz, Germany, and studied at the Royal College at Coblenz and at the Royal Academy at Paris... ." Mueller emigrated to the United States in 1850 and showed his creations at New York's Crystal Palace in 1853, at the National Academy and at the Brooklyn Art Association, among others. "Under Smith's direction Mueller created a number of decorative pieces during the 1870s." (*In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986, p. 476) Jenny Young commented on the UPW decorative wares: "We nowhere see a copy of ancient statuary or feel a breath of borrowed inspiration. Every subject is taken from modern literature, or from life in America in the nineteenth century." (Jenny J. Young, *The Ceramic Art*, Harper and Brothers, 1878, pp. 478)



One piece has under it the words "Stitch ! stitch ! stitch !" and presents us with a softened illustration of Hood's poem. We say 'softened,' because the artist has preferred wisely or not we will not now determine to tone down the unutterable misery of the picture, in which the 'woman sat in unwomanly rags, plying her needle and thread.' The unspoken weariness and mingled longing and resignation are here, but the squalor and wretched poverty are rather suggested by the broken box upon which the needle-woman sits, than forced upon our notice." (Jenny J. Young, *The Ceramic Art*, Harper and Brothers, 1878, pp. 477-478)

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(*Poet's Pitcher*, Dallas Museum of Art, gift of the 1990 Dallas Symposium; <http://amica.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/AMICO~1~1~41791~86850:-Poet-s-Pitcher-?qvq=w4s:/what/Decorative%20Arts%20and%20Utilitarian%20Objects/when/1877;/lc:AMICO~1~1&mi=6&trs=14>); "...a bisque porcelain pitcher..., which in 1876 was a presentation piece to E. J. Brockett. Finely moulded heads of Milton, Ossian, Shakespeare [sic], Dante, Homer, and Virgil are seen with trophies and allegorical figures above and below." (<http://www.noteaccess.com/APPROACHES/DecorativeAA/PAmerican3.htm>)

Karl L. H. Müller designed the UPW's "Century Vase", which was exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. "Manufactured exclusively for the...Centennial International Exhibition, the century vase is embellished with events from America's past as well as scenes of modern progress and industry. George Washington adorns the center of both sides, seemingly observing such famous scenes as William Penn's treaty with Native Americans and the Boston Tea Party. Other scenes in enamel of plowing with a mechanical harvester are placed against fast moving steamboats and sewing machines, the last a recent invention. An image of a potter using a steam-powered jigger to make a pot unabashedly advertises American ingenuity. Bison heads serve as handles while smaller heads of creatures indigenous to the new world, such as a walrus, act as a conspicuous sign of plenty. This narrative of American nationalism is enlivened by beautifully executed polychrome, gilding, and inventive shallow relief sculpting at the base." (<http://www.afanews.com/articles/item/1486-american-decorative-arts-at-the-worlds-fairs>)

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Two versions of Karl L. H. Müller's Century Vase. The first is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's collection. The second is 12-3/4 x 10 x 7-1/4 inches, and is "based on a pair of vases created for the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and is one of about sixteen known copies that measure ten inches shorter than the original design. This vase...is of particular significance as it is incised with the designer's signature under the shoulder of the relief of Washington. The only other known signed example is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and it has been suggested that the inscription combined with hand detailing, also seen in this example and its mate, indicates Muller's personal hand."
(<http://fineart.ha.com/c/item.zx?saleNo=5065&lotNo=66070#Photo>)

Another piece made by the Union Porcelain Works for the Centennial Exhibition was a "Liberty cup and saucer".



The Liberty Cup "displayed figures of Mercury and Justice flanked by corn and tobacco plants with the handle portraying the figure of Liberty." (City of New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, Greenpoint Historic District Designation Report, 1982, p. 7) (Photo from the Metropolitan Museum of Art collection;
http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/10004902?rpp=20&pg=1&rndkey=20130624&ft=* &when=A.D.+1800-1900&where=New+York+City&what=Saucers&pos=6)

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At least two pieces by the Union Porcelain Works, modeled by Müller, comment on racism and the nation's immigration policies. The first was a pitcher that depicts a scene from a Brete Harte poem, "The Heathen Chinese", and has been interpreted as against the then current immigration policy of the United States which banned Chinese immigration.



(Permanent collection, Brooklyn Museum of Art, photo courtesy of Michael Padwee)

The other piece comments on the same immigration policy, as well as racism towards Afro-Americans. "The theme of [the piece pictured below] is a very daring social commentary on the treatment of the negro and chinaman at that time. It reflects the debate surrounding the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which virtually ended Chinese immigration until 1943. Chinese immigration to the United States began in earnest with the California Gold Rush of 1848. After the completion in 1869 of the transcontinental railroad, largely built by Chinese workers, and an economic downturn in the 1870s, many Americans began to resent competition for scarce jobs. Anti-Chinese riots and overt discrimination culminated in 1882 with the passage of the act. Although this figural group incorporating 19th century stereotypes has been interpreted as a statement in support of Chinese exclusion, it is more likely a cry against it. A child wearing the cap of liberty shares the American eagle's nest with a black child, who, though included, is pressed down, and the Chinese man's attempt to join them is clearly futile. ...The boy wearing the liberty cap has his arm around the eagle symbolizing America and is sitting on the colored person to keep him from reaching the eagle. The chinaman is climbing up the side of the nest to reach America and take his part of the pie... . A very good representation of the politics going on at the time of the late 19th century. ...The piece is superbly modelled and in great condition. [...It] is solid and weights about 12 pounds which is a lot for any porcelain figurine. It looks like it was turned on a potting wheel and seems to be carved out of a solid block of porcelain. The bottom has the lines from turning and

Nineteenth Century Brooklyn Potteries

one large hole. The figurine is...11.5 inches tall and the bottom is 7.5 inches in diameter.” (<http://www.porcelainbiz.com/porcelain/americanfigurine1.htm>)



(Photo courtesy of [Matthias Blume](#))

Another decorative, utilitarian piece by Müller was in the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit in 2013.



A water filter, c. 1882. (Photo courtesy of Michael Padwee)

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In addition to Karl Müller Thomas Smith hired the well-known artist, John Mackie Falconer to decorate Union Porcelain Works' products. "Falconer (1820-1903), was a central figure in the cultural life of nineteenth century Brooklyn — a hardware merchant and amateur artist who persisted in his varied involvements in art with 'untiring zeal' over a period of some sixty years. As a prolific painter and etcher, he documented the rapidly disappearing architectural remains of Brooklyn's Dutch and English past. As a connoisseur, he formed several important private collections of books, prints, and paintings. And as a patron and promoter of the arts, he counted among his good friends such eminent American artists 'as Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, William Sidney Mount, and Jasper F. Cropsey.' In 1851, Falconer became an honorary member of the National Academy of Design and also served as recording secretary of the New York Society for the Promotion of Painting in Water Colors. The Society exhibited members' works at the Crystal Palace in 1853, including two of Falconer's landscapes. When he moved from Manhattan to Brooklyn about 1858, he became involved with Brooklyn's artistic community, joining the Brooklyn Sketch Club and the Graham Art School and was very active in the Brooklyn Art Association which became an important institution in nineteenth-century Brooklyn. He was also a member of A. Cardat's French Etching Club and the New York Etching Club, and was a fellow of the London Society of Painter-Etchers." (City of New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, *Greenpoint Historic District Designation Report*, 1982, pp.6-7)

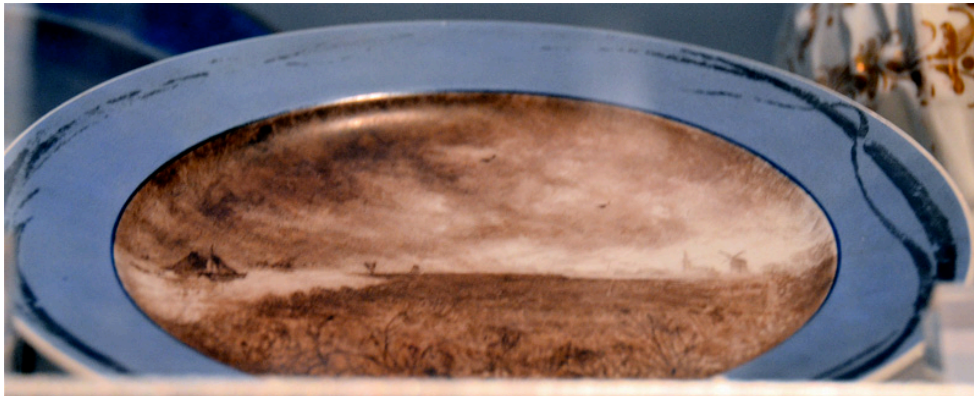


Plate decorated by John Mackie Falconer, c. 1876. (Brooklyn Museum of Art Accession Number 66.27.2, gift of Queensborough Public Library)

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Plate decorated by John Mackie Falconer, c. 1876. 9 1/2" diameter. Marked on back of plate: "39bis/at Newtown Creek/Long Island/Augt 1851/by J.M. Falconer/Brooklyn L.I./Augt 9th 1876/(Limoges China)". Scene of a rustic cottage and chickens. (Brooklyn Museum of Art Accession Number 66.27.1, gift of Queensborough Public Library)

By the end of his life in 1900, Thomas Smith had built the Union Porcelain Works into a large and important industry that consisted of the works, themselves, and a quarry and mining lands in Branchville, Connecticut. In addition he owned twelve lots on Oakland Street in Greenpoint, houses at 119, 127, 131, 133, 140, 143, 145, and 149 Milton Street, the Keramos Building, and land holdings in Georgia. ("Fraud and Undue Influence Are Charged, but the Contestants Ask for a Delay", *Brooklyn Eagle*, Apr 25, 1901, p.20)



A vase designed by Karl Müller for UPW. (Vase in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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A vase in the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, designed by Karl Müller for the Union Porcelain Works. This looks similar to the “Keramos Vase”. (Photo courtesy of Michael Padwee)

The Empire China Works

The Empire China Works, 156 Green Street, was founded by James L. Jensen in 1867. “Mr. Jensen...is of Danish birth, having been born in the town of Flanceburg in 1837. He came to this country at an early age and engaged in the hardware business. In 1867 he opened the Empire China Works in Greenpoint, of which he is...sole proprietor.” (“New Appointments On The Police And Fire Boards”, *The New York Times*, Vol. 22, No. 6825, August 3, 1873, p. 5, col. 2)

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Empire China Works pitcher from the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, "Edward Lycett and Brooklyn's Faience Manufacturing Company". (Photo courtesy of Michael Padwee)

Along with other pottery works concentrated in Greenpoint, the Empire China Works produced pitchers, bowls, door knobs, cameos, and busts, and this company exhibited its products at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. After 1890 this company was known for the porcelain wiring cleats it produced for electric lighting. "Porcelain wiring cleats were not used in the very early days of house wiring. [Workers] simply strung insulated-covered wires along the walls using wooden knobs and blocks of wood to attach the wires and ran them to the center of the room to drop a light down from the ceiling. ...By 1891...insurance companies refused to tolerate wooden wiring devices because of the fire hazard. Porcelain wiring devices had to be used to get insurance.

This produced a huge demand for porcelain wiring devices with several manufacturers offering to meet the demand. ...The first manufacturers of electrical porcelain were Empire China Works in Greenpoint, NY (Brooklyn - 1889) [...and] Union Porcelain Works in Greenpoint, NY (Brooklyn -- 1890). Others quickly followed their lead. ...The business became quite competitive with many companies going bankrupt, buying out others, and later transforming their manufacturing as times changed. The business had great fluctuations in demand and suffered under organized labor demands since the manufacturing of electrical porcelain is very labor intensive." (<http://r-infinity.com/Cleats/>)

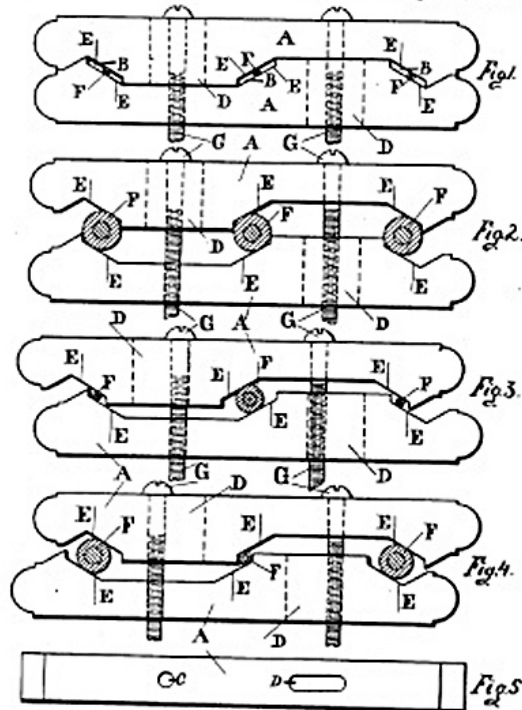
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(No Model.)

H. P. BALL.
CLEAT FOR ELECTRIC WIRES.

No. 458,964.

Patented Sept. 1, 1891.



WITNESSES
Wm. McKim
C. C. Estabrook

INVENTOR
Henry Rice Ball

An early patent drawing for electrical cleats. I have not been able to locate any marked as made by the Empire China Works.



Union Porcelain Works electrical insulators. (Photos courtesy of Elton Gish, [http://www.r-infinity.com/Standard Porcelain Insulators/MainPage.htm](http://www.r-infinity.com/Standard_Porcelain_Insulators/MainPage.htm))

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Glazing insulators in a porcelain factory, c. 1920. (*The Clay-Worker*, Vol. 73, No. 2, Feb. 1920, p. 148)

Charles Graham Chemical Pottery Works, 986-1018 Metropolitan Avenue

My house was built in 1891 and had an attached “shack” with a slop sink that was original to the house. The sink was made by the Charles Graham Chemical Pottery Works of Brooklyn (1878-c.1913).

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Our sink after it was removed from the attached shack. The Charles Graham marking is impressed in the upper right of this photo.

Charles Graham was also represented in the Brooklyn Museum exhibit with a Bib Faucet.



9 ½ in. x 16 ½ in. x 5 1/2 in.

“Charles Graham Works is best known for its industrial stoneware ceramics such as the giant spigot seen here. In the mid-1880s, in order to diversify the output and gain a share of the domestic consumer market, Graham patented a resist process to decorate vases made of the same stoneware with Japanese-inspired motifs then in vogue.”
(http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/2343/Bib_Faucet; Gift of Emma and Jay Lewis to the Brooklyn Museum of Art)

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(Graham photos courtesy of Michael Padwee)

The Faience Manufacturing Company



98 West Street, Greenpoint. This building and the building that held Charles Volkmar's pottery connected via internal passageways. They may have opened to a common field-type area in the backs of the buildings in the 19th century where the kilns were probably situated. (Photo courtesy of Michael Padwee)

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The Faience Manufacturing Company was organized in 1881 by Bernard Veit, a millinery goods manufacturer and importer, Joseph Offenbach, an exchange broker, Joseph Baruch, Veit's son-in-law, and Veit's sons, Felix and Morris.

The pottery produced "Ornamental, white-bodied earthenware...French-inspired relief decorated barbotine ware...characterized by an earthenware body with applied underglaze painted flowers." This was not a true barbotine decoration which "entailed painting on a ceramic vessel in slip impasto that had been colored with mineral oxides...", but the term was used by American potteries.



"1881-1883, cream-colored earthenware [vase, barbotine decorated], painted mottled blue-glazed ground applied with three-dimensional polychrome-glazed blossoming leafy branches, 7 1/2 inches tall, 8 1/2 inches diameter..." (Barbara Veith, *Aesthetic Ambitions: Edward Lycett and Brooklyn's Faience Manufacturing Company*, University of Richmond Museums, 2011, p. 42)

The Faience Manufacturing Company also produced Limoges-inspired pieces painted with flat underglaze colors.

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c.1881-1883, cream-colored earthenware, painted under the glaze with flat polychrome decoration. (Photo of piece in the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, courtesy of Michael Padwee)

The pottery diversified its production to include a red flambé glazed double gourd form vase, Palissy-inspired maiolica, and pottery with streaked or mottled glazes. (Barbara Veith, *Aesthetic Ambitions: Edward Lycett and Brooklyn's Faience Manufacturing Company*, University of Richmond Museums, VA, 2011, pp. 14-15)



Flambé-glazed, double gourd-shaped vase.
(Photo from the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, courtesy of Michael Padwee)

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According to Edwin Atlee Barber, Edward Lycett (1833-1910) had carried on an extensive decorating business in New York City since 1861, where he employed from thirty to forty people in painting and gilding imported wares. He joined the Faience Manufacturing Company in 1884 and assumed the direction of the factory.



EDWARD LYCETT.

(Edwin Atlee Barber, "The Pioneer of China Painting in America",
The New England Magazine, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Sept. 1895, p. 34)

Being a practical potter, as well as an artist, Lycett set to work to compound better bodies and glazes and to design new shapes and decorations. A fine grade of true porcelain was introduced by Lycett, but it was fired in the reverse of the usual method, being burned hard in the biscuit and softer in the glaze, thus possessing all the advantages of a faience or earthen body and the superior glaze of high porcelain. Before leaving the company in 1890, Lycett developed a luster glaze, which he used on tiles and called them "Persian lustres". (Edwin Atlee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1901, pp. 314, 316, 318-319)

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“A large granite vase, in the Persian style, designed and painted by Mr. Lycett. ...The ground is a dark bronze, over which conventionally treated flowers,...are executed in dull tones of color and outlined with raised gold, while the embossed and perforated work, handles, and foot, are covered with gold of different tints. The height of this vase is forty-two inches... .” (Edwin Atlee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1901, p. 314)



”A dolphin-handled vase, twenty-eight inches high... . The ground is of pale ivory tint, on which aquatic plants are painted in subdued tones, enriched and re-heightened with veinings and outlines of raised work in gold and bronzes. ...The handles are covered with mat gold and a peculiar dark gold bronze... . The body is a fine *faience*, which may be described as a superior quality of white granite ware.” Designed by Edward Lycett and decorated by Joseph Lycett, c.1889. (Barber, p. 317; Photo from the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit)

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"Mr. Lycett is particularly proud of his dark, oven-fired blue, painted under the hard glaze, or over the fired glaze and refired at the same heat, known as King's Blue or Royal Blue at the Sevres works, or Mazarine Blue in England. ...This blue was used in many of the best pieces produced at the Green Point works, in bands and solid grounds, on which the raised gold work was particularly effective." (Edwin Atlee Barber, "The Pioneer of China Painting in America", *The New England Magazine*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Sept. 1895, p. 44)



Designed by Edward Lycett, c. 1886-1890. Cream-colored earthenware, with ivory- and blue-glazed ground, painted with sepia enamel, and flat and raised gold paste decoration. 27 inches tall, 14 1/2 inches diameter. Gift of Todd Michael Volpe to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Barbara Veith, *Aesthetic Ambitions: Edward Lycett and Brooklyn's Faience Manufacturing Company*, University of Richmond Museums, VA, 2011, p. 98)

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While at the Faience Manufacturing Company "Lycett introduced an innovative shop practice of interchangeable parts to create the firm's unique shapes. Originating in the Staffordshire potteries, this progressive production technique employed molds to speed and diversify production. Exotic Near Eastern–inspired, long-necked bulbous shapes that recombine a variety of elements with exaggerated openwork handles and covers became hallmarks of the firm.



(Photo from the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, courtesy of Michael Padwee)

"Decorative motifs were also used interchangeably. Lycett employed twenty-five highly skilled decorators, including former Royal Worcester artisans James and Sidney Callowhill*, to paint the firms vessels with exuberant Asian-inspired flowers..., birds and insects..., dolphins..., and Near Eastern arabesques, ogees, and scrolls, as well as jeweled and luster decoration...in vivid enamels enriched with raised gold paste.

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(Photo from the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, courtesy of Michael Padwee)

"...More often, flat and raised gold paste bands divide the body into horizontal compartments..., a standard design practice of the Aesthetic movement that allowed for a more eclectic combination of motifs. Impressive in size and technically complex in decoration, the Faience Manufacturing Company's wares exhibit a self-conscious boldness that is distinctly American and illustrate the firm's ambitious response to European competition." (Veith, Barbara. "Edward Lyce (1833–1910)". In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–; http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/lyce/hd_lyce.htm)

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(Photo from the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, courtesy of Michael Padwee)

*[According to Barbara Veith "The identities of [Faience's] decorators are largely unknown... . However, through family correspondence it is known that James Callowhill (1838-1917) and his son Sidney (1867-1939), formerly of Royal Worcester, were working at the Faience Manufacturing Company by 1886." ("Edward Lycett and the Faience Manufacturing Company" Vieth, Barbara, *The Magazine Antiques*; Jul 2001; 160, 1, p. 88; ProQuest Research Library, p. 84) It is also known that James later worked with his brother, Thomas Scott Callowhill, who became the artistic director of the Providential Tile Works in Trenton, New Jersey in 1890.]

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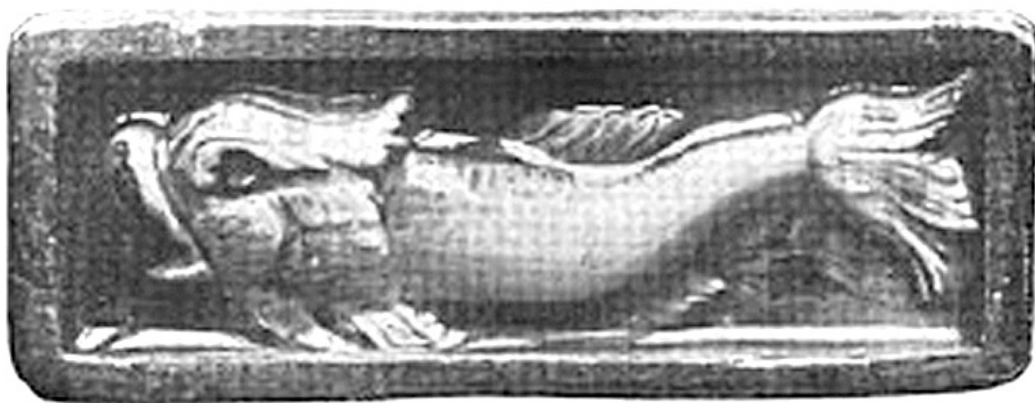
Lycett painted the tiled fireplace surround with peacocks and jackdaws after Walter Crane's design of Aesop's "Vain Jackdaw". (Edwin Atlee Barber, "The Pioneer of China Painting in America", *The New England Magazine*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Sept. 1895, pp. 33, 48) The 17 5/16" tall vase designed by Lycett with polychrome peacocks is the only vase with this same design according to Barbara Veith. (Barbara Veith, *Aesthetic Ambitions: Edward Lycett and Brooklyn's Faience Manufacturing Company*, University of Richmond Museums, VA, 2011, p. 76)

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"A series of four tile panels, six by eight inches..., were painted by [Edward] Lycett in 1875, after the early Italian style. These were figure subjects in brown and white over a gold ground... ." (Edwin Atlee Barber, "The Pioneer of China Painting in America", *The New England Magazine*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Sept. 1895, p. 41)

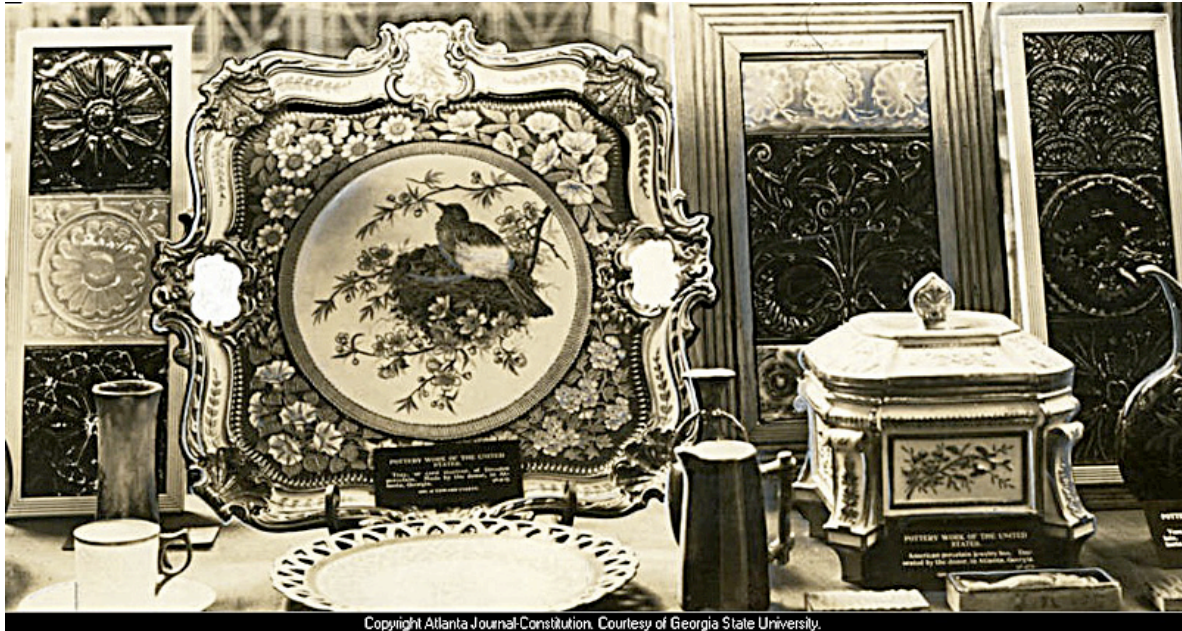
In 1890 "Lycett retired and moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to live with his eldest son William, who had established a china-painting business there. In retirement, Lycett returned to the detailed china decoration typical of his earlier career and conducted experiments with different types of surface decoration, including the luster glaze found on Middle Eastern tiles." (Veith, Barbara. "Edward Lycett (1833–1910)". In Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–; http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/lyce/hd_lyce.htm)



A 4" long dolphin paperweight/tile made by Edward Lycett. This is glazed with iridescent colors and is Lycett's reproduction of Persian Murrhine glazes. (Randolph I. Geare, "Ceramic and Other Arts of the Persians", *Keramic Studio*, Vol. X, No. 8, December 1908, p. 169)

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Lycett began donating some of his tiles and other works to the Smithsonian Institution after 1895, and in 1939 the Smithsonian held an exhibit showing some of his tiles with iridescent glazes.



Copyright Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Courtesy of Georgia State University.

Title: Lycett China pieces on display at the Smithsonian, Washington, D.C., March 1939. **Creator:** Atlanta Journal-Constitution. **Identifier:** AJCP552-058b.

Description: Newspaper caption attached to print verso: "Among the most interesting exhibits at the Smithsonian are the Lycett china pieces." Print verso inscribed: "Iridescent , glazed tiles, glazed soapstone in imitation of murrline [sic] and white porcelain manufactured by Edward Lycett at Atlanta, Georgia. Also Japanese eggshell porcelain and American faience jewelry box, vases and trays decorated by Edward Lycett, the pioneer of china decoration in the United States. An Exhibit in the Ceramics gallery of the United States National Museum, Washington, D.C."

Copyright: Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Citation: AJCP552-058b, Atlanta Journal Constitution Photographic Archives. Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.

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A Modern Imitation of an Ancient Persian Tile.
Showing the Re-discovered Iridescent Glaze.

(Illustration from *The Architectural Record*, Vol. XX, No.2, August 1906, p. 150)

Tile panel "in three colored divisions... . The upper design comprises three palm leaves with stems in a fawn color shaded with light blue. The middle division, eight inches square, is an iridescent design with scrolls. The lower division contains three indented discs, held together by bands and buttons, in the center intertwined with leaves." ("Clay Products in the National Museum", *The Clay-Worker*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, October 1900, p. 278)

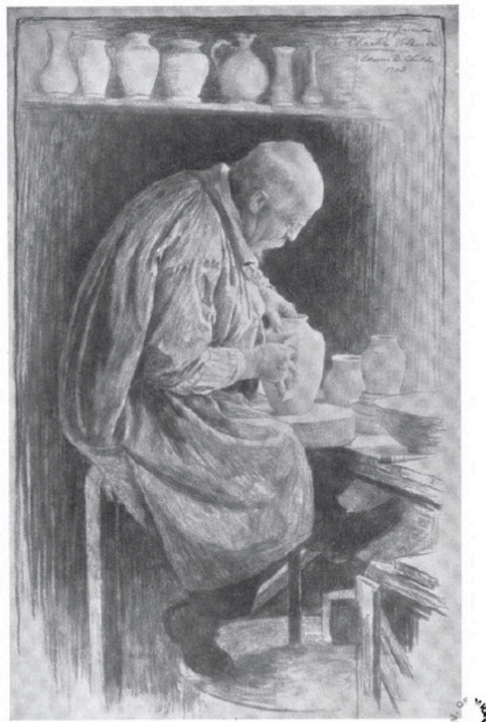
Barber had high praise for Edward Lycett and his contributions to the development of the ceramic arts in the United States: "Mr. Lycett's artistic career in America may be said to represent the history of china painting in the United States. ...His work has been so vastly more important than all the work in this field before him, that it is not improper to speak of him as the pioneer of china painting in America. From the beginning he has striven to elevate the popular standard of ceramic ornamentation by the example of his own fine art; and while others were governed in their perfunctory efforts by commercial considerations, he at all times has produced conscientious work of a high order of artistic merit... ." (Edwin Atlee Barber, "The Pioneer of China Painting in America", *The New England Magazine*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, Sept. 1895, p. 37)

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Lycett, and later, his sons, traveled the country giving classes mainly to women in china painting and decorating. They helped contribute to the eventual establishment of local arts and crafts groups and potteries in the United States.

Charles Volkmar

Charles Volkmar (1841-1914) was born in Baltimore, Maryland. Volkmar had “the great advantage of starting as an artist. ...His grandfather was an engraver, and his father, educated in Dresden, a portrait painter and a skilful restorer... . [He studied]...under Barye at the Jardin des Plantes, ...and...with Harpignies...in and around Paris. ...while located at a studio...near Fontainebleau,...he became interested in ceramics through the proximity of a small pottery in which he [...tried] his hand at painting underglaze. His first appearance at the Salon had been made in 1875, with two oil paintings, and he became a frequent exhibitor with paintings, etchings and pottery.” (William Walton, “Charles Volkmar, Potter”, *The International Studio*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 143, January 1909, p. LXXV)



By Special Permission

CHARLES VOLKMAR AT WORK
BY EDWIN B. CHILD

(William Walton, “Charles Volkmar, Potter”, *The International Studio*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 143, January 1909)

Another biographical sketch states that it was at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876 that Volkmar “saw for the first time a French pottery that was decorated with an underglaze ‘slip’. ...Fascinated..., he returned to France...to observe the local

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potters employing this method. Charles [joined] the Theodore Deck pottery, later taking an apprenticeship at the Haviland factory... ." ("The Volkmar Legacy to American Art Pottery", a booklet published by The Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut, 1985) "[Volkmar] took up the French technique of barbotine—painting on a vase with liquid clay or slip. [He was one] of the most skilled practitioners of this technique... ."

(<http://www.antiquesandfineart.com/articles/article.cfm?request=953>)



Vase, c. 1877-79, made in France. (Photo courtesy of Michael Padwee. Vase in the American Wing collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

Volkmar moved his pottery from place to place during the last part of the Nineteenth century and prior to his death. "Charles built a kiln at Greenpoint, Long Island, in 1879 where he produced tiles and vases. He was the first potter to use underglaze slip painting in the United States." (<http://siris-archives.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?uri=full=3100001~|213244!0>) "... [Volkmar] made vases and tiles depicting pastoral landscapes and barnyard scenes. Fireplace tiles produced under Volkmar's direction were shown at an 1880 exhibition of the Salmagundi Club. In 1882 Volkmar moved the pottery to Tremont, now the Bronx... ." (Norman Karlson, *The Encyclopedia of American Art Tiles*, Volume I, Region 2, Schiffer Publishing Company, Atglen, PA, 2005, p. 127)

In 1888 [Volkmar] moved to Menlo Park, New Jersey where he and J.T. Smith started the Menlo Park Ceramic Works. Volkmar "...used opaque glazes and low relief lines to define compositions, instead of the high line relief commonly employed at the time."

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(Karlson, p. 127) While they were partners, their tiles were marked “MENLO PARK/ CERAMIC WORKS/VOLKMAR TILES” on the reverse.



39 Greenpoint Avenue. (2013 photo courtesy of Michael Padwee)

“In 1895 Volkmar returned to New York and opened the VOLKMAR KERAMIC CO., at 39 Greenpoint Avenue, Brooklyn, producing art tiles and household ceramics, primarily in a Delft-inspired style. The same year, he and artist Kate Cory established VOLKMAR & CORY in the Corona section of the Bronx. The designs produced here were similar to those of Volkmar Ceramic--Delft-style American scenes in blue underglaze on a white background. ...these pieces [had] ...a greater amount of detail and texture than the traditional Dutch [Delftware] ceramics. [This] work ...won a gold medal at the 1895 Atlanta Exposition. By late 1896, however, this partnership was dissolved. Volkmar continued the pottery alone as CROWN POINT POTTERY, and then as VOLKMAR POTTERY.”
(Karlson, p. 127)

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“ The Fireplace is faced with white-and-yellow tiles made by Charles Volkmar ”

Fireplace tiles made by Charles Volkmar for the mosaic and stained glass artist, Charles Lamb. (Alice M. Kellog, “An Artist’s Home in New Jersey”, *House and Garden*, Vol. V, No. 2, Feb. 1904, p. 66)

Edwin Atlee Barber described the technique developed by Volkmar for tile-making in 1901: “[This] fireplace illustrates “Mr. Volkmar’s method of decorating tile...in the use of enamels instead of transparent glazes, which he is able to shade to the most delicate and subdued tints, to match any variety of marble, onyx, or other material. His ‘old gold’ and ‘old ivory’ are just now popular for decorative purposes... . Another peculiarity of his tiles is the employment of slightly relieved lines, to indicate the design, in place of high-relief effects, which are often decorated in two shades of the same color, or in two harmonious colors of low, broken shades. Some of Mr. Volkmar’s tile work may be seen in the ceiling of the Boston Public Library, in light gray-blue coloring. In the Market and Fulton National Bank building, New York City, over eight thousand six-inch Volkmar tiles were used for wall decorations, in Romanesque style, the color scheme being old ivory, pale blue, and light maroon. Mantel facings and hearths, with raised designs,...finished in old ivory and gold, have also been made by Mr. Volkmar for many of the residences of prominent people.” (Edwin Atlee Barber, *Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, G.P. Putnam’s Sons, New York, 1901, p. 380)

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A Volkmar landscape tile. (Photo courtesy of the [Tile Heritage Foundation](#))

According to the Tile Heritage Foundation the "Menlo Park Ceramic Works...made enameled terra-cotta tiles for the Rockefeller mansion at Tarrytown, NY (tiles that matched the marble and onyx uses on other walls in the building... . The company provided terra-cotta panelling with high relief decoration in Italian Renaissance style, which was enameled to match marble wainscoting in the Rockefeller mansion in New York. Charles Volkmar decorated tiles with opaque enamels to tone with onyx, marble etc., or in old gold or old ivory." (Email to Michael Padwee dated 12/11/12 and titled "Fwd: Volkmar and Poor from THF files")

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PORTION OF FIVE-FOOT FRIEZE IN LOGGIA OF THE
ROCKAFELLER MANSION, TARRYTOWN, N. Y.

(Edwin Atlee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1901, p. 379)

Volkmar was an active member of the Salmagundi Club in Manhattan, and according to Bob Mueller, the Club's current archivist, introduced etching to, and taught etching at, the Club. Volkmar was also the official potter for the Salmagundi Club. "...In 1894, to raise money for the growing club's library, artist members were invited to decorate ceramic mugs, which were then fired by Charles Volkmar... . The club would host a dinner followed by an auction of the finished mugs... Over the years, many decorated mugs have been returned to the club and are on exhibit in the library... ."

(<http://www.nelso.com/us/place/332435/>)

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LIBRARY MUGS

Left to right: Chauncey F. Ryder, Corwin Knapp Linson, F. K. M. Rehn

Members' mugs that were not to be auctioned. (William Henry Shelton, *The Salmagundi Club*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1918).



(Photo taken by Michael Padwee with the permission of the Salmagundi Club)
Some of the Library Mugs in the contemporary Salmagundi Club Library.

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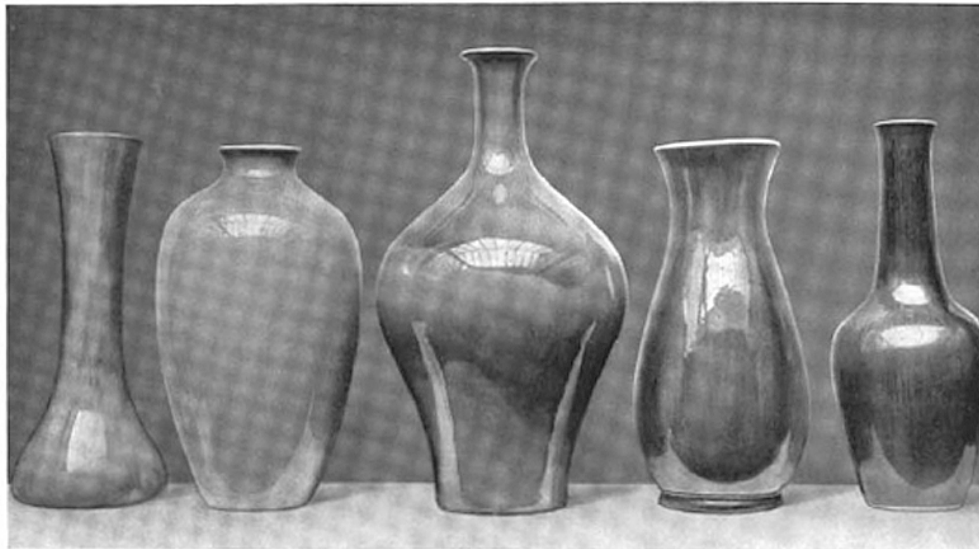
The tiled fireplace (designed and painted by the members*, glazed and fired by Volkmar) and some of the members' decorated mugs at the Salmagundi Club. (Pauline King, "Decorated Mugs at the New York Salmagundi Club", *The House Beautiful*, Vol. VI, No. 6, Nov. 1899, p. 281)

*["The large central picture below the mantelpiece was a Dutch landscape by A. T. Van Laer, and the upright panels at the sides of the fireplace were single figures by Paul Dessar and I. H. Josephi, each three tiles wide by eight tiles high, and the central design by Van Laer was irregular in form on forty tiles. Flanking this center design was a group of Dutch fishing boats by Will H. Drake on sixteen tiles and a Dutch landscape by J. J. Redmond." (William Henry Shelton, *The Salmagundi Club*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1918, p. 84)]

Volkmar was described as "...a modern Palissy. Like the French potter of the sixteenth century, he is willing to do the finest things in clay, and he is so critical of his own work as to sacrifice every piece which does not please his better judgment. He works in the spirit of a Greek potter of the best period: caring nothing for ornament that is not essential to the design; but strenuously seeking harmony of line, grace of proportion, depth and suavity of tone. His productions are not for the moment... ." ("An Arts and Crafts Exhibition", *The Craftsman*, Vol. II, No. 1, April 1902, p. 50)

"His son, Leon, was an accomplished potter and [in 1903] formed a partnership with [Charles]. When the kiln was moved to Metuchen, New Jersey, the name was changed to [Volkmar Kilns and then] Charles Volkmar and Son.

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CHARLES VOLKMAR, NEW JERSEY B. NEW YORK

VASEN MIT MEHRFACHEN GLASUREN

Volkmar vases with multiple glazes. (Clara Ruge, "Amerikanische Keramik", *Dekorative Kunst*, Vol. IX, No. 4, Jan. 1906, p. 167)

"In 1911 the partnership dissolved and Leon moved to Bedford, New York[...and] established Durant kilns... ." (<http://siris-archives.si.edu/ipac20/ipac.jsp?uri=full=3100001~!213244!0>) Charles Volkmar died at his home in Metuchen, New Jersey in 1914.

There were other ceramic artists and potteries in Greenpoint during this period. One such artist was Isaac Broome, who is listed in the *Lain's Brooklyn Directories* for (May 2) 1874- (May 1) 75 and (May 2) 1875- (May 1) 76. Broome is listed as living first at 175 Calyer Street, then 109 Java Street. In addition, there is anecdotal reference to Broome and a local architect, J. Charles Caspar (or Casper), being partners in a pottery that ultimately failed. (Caspar is listed as living at 175 Calyer Street in 1875-76, and may have owned the property.) The anecdotal reference further states that Broome had to shut down his kiln because it was a fire hazard. Broome is important as a sculptor and modeler for the Ott & Brewer Company in Trenton, New Jersey from 1876-c.1882; then at the Trent Tile Company from 1883-86; and the Providential Tile Works (1886-90), both in Trenton, as well as other tile and pottery companies. It would be interesting to know what he created, if anything, in Brooklyn.

I would like to thank Jay Lewis for information about the Union Porcelain works and Keramos Building tiles, and Susan Tunick of the [Friends of Terra Cotta](#) for her photos of the Union Porcelain Works tiles. Also, thanks to Ann, who runs the soup kitchen at [The](#)

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[Greenpoint Church](#), for the tour of Thomas Smith's ex-residence and for allowing me to take photos. In addition, the exhibit mounted by the [Brooklyn Museum of Art](#) under curator Barry Harwood, "Edward Lycett and Brooklyn's Faience Manufacturing Company" was an indispensable resource. A special thanks to Katreena Clark at the [University of Richmond Museums](#) for locating a catalog of this exhibit for me. I got started looking for Isaac Broome in Brooklyn thanks to Judi Wells and Scott Anderson, members of the [Potteries of Trenton Society](#), and historians of the Robertson Art Tile Works of Morrisville, PA. Thanks, also to Matthias Blume for the use of the photo of Karl Mueller's sculpture (<http://www.porcelainbiz.com/index.htm>), and to the [Tile Heritage Foundation](#) for their support.

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