

BOOK REVIEW

Ceramics in America 2004

I love *Amazon.com*. One can preorder books as soon as one sees a title or review that seems of interest even if it's not yet in print. Better even, one can order it with one click of the mouse and it arrives, at my house anyway, before I can make time to drive over to the local Borders bookseller. I must have seen the announcement of the 2004 edition of Chipstone Foundation's *Ceramics in America 2004* somewhere. I ordered it with "1 click". I received an email notice that it was on the way. I had forgotten what it contained that I wanted to read! I have two other volumes of this great reference work, edited by Robert Hunter, which I bought from a WIS speaker. I must have wanted it badly as it cost \$37.50. But with Amazon, one gets free shipping at that price, in the US anyway. When it arrived, I anxiously unwrapped it and started from the back flipping through the (336) pages. Quickly and almost by accident my eye fell on a terra cotta basketweave jug, and on the facing page a caneware basketweave potpourri basket, both by Wedgwood and both right up my color alley. I turned back and lo and behold, the title of the article is "The Little Engine That Could: Adaptation of the Engine-Turning Lathe in the Pottery Industry" by Jonathan Rickard and Donald Carpentier. Didn't take long for it to register why I ordered *this* book! The article is 22 pages long and profusely illustrated. The black and white large photo opposite the first page of text is an archival photo of the ornamental engine-turning lathe in the basalt room at Etruria, 1941, a tool those of us who have had the pleasure of visiting Barlaston have seen in the Museum.

The article follows the story of engine-turning even before Josiah's use of his engine-turning lathe, to the recent past in which two gentlemen, including Mr. Carpentier the lead author, construct engine-turning lathes of their own following the historic procedure, to see what made it tick and to help de-mystify how the 18th century technology really worked. The description of the process, and the results, as well as the development of who was using what sort of lathe for pottery in Josiah's time is very illuminating. Having lived with a hobbyist woodworker for a time, at least the terminology was familiar and made for an easier read. My engineer daughter now owns her father's fancy wood lathe, perhaps I should see if she can adapt it for pots! This is an article not to be missed for those collectors who are interested in resources and history of how Wedgwood got from there to here over the past two plus centuries and certainly more insight into Josiah's influence on the development of more than simple potting.

Of interest also to Wedgwood collectors, and especially perhaps our friends "down under", is the article entitled "An 'A-Marked' Porcelain Covered Bowl, Cherokee Clay, and Colonial America's Contribution to the English Porcelain Industry" by Dr. Ross Ramsay and associates. "Cricket, the quintessential English pastime, is in this account the link that brings together such seemingly disparate elements as a porcelain covered sugar bowl in the collection of the museum of the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC), Cherokee clay obtained from North Carolina, the nascent English porcelain industry of 1743-1744, and colonial America's fledgling ceramic tradition." This is an interesting article regarding the importation of Cherokee clay into England, but does not mention any Wedgwood connection. The initial use of Cherokee clay from North Carolina began earlier than Josiah's importation of same. His hearing about the quality of it, and seeing examples, led him to import several tons of the fine clay. Earlier experimentation and export to Britain of the clay are attributed to others, and to the Bow factory. It is clearly the conclusion of this highly technical and scholarly paper that the Cherokee clay was being used commercially by at least 1743 or 44. "Such developments owed a great deal to American enterprise, which to date has been largely overlooked...we suggest that there would be a basis for proposing that Andrew Duche', a first-generation Philadelphian, be recognized as one of the founding fathers of the English and American porcelain industry." Known to many of us, ceramic historian Terrence Lockett is also quoted in this paper. The MCC connection is very interesting in that one "A marked" sugar bowl inherited by them in the 1960s has set off such in-depth and important research. This article would be of interest to many Wedgwood collectors who are also, once again, interested in background and technical knowledge. Australian collectors would be well-advised to wangle an invitation to the MCC for a look-see at the beautifully hand-painted sugar bowl and lid!

Yet one more article piqued my interest in relation to Wedgwood. In a long and again well-illustrated article by Ivor Noel Hume, "A-Hunting We Will Go! From Vauxhall to Lambeth, 1700-1956", a collection of English brown stoneware mugs and jugs of 18th to 20th century manufacture is described. There is a table of close-up photos of the sprigged designs, very well photographed and described. Six of these looked very familiar, i.e., appearing to be what we call Muses. Certainly more crude than the crisp jasper designs we love, but the look is definitely there, along with trees, animals, people and geometrics. If one has any interest in brown stoneware this article is most informative.

Contained in this handsome volume are thirty articles in total plus *Checklist of Articles, Books, and Electronic Resources on Ceramics in America Published 1998-2004*, and an Index. Among the Editorial Advisory Board for Chipstone Publications is David Barker, Keeper of Archaeology, City Museum and Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent, whom many of us met in England in October, 2003. One of the Book Reviews is by Miranda Goodby, also one of our WIS 2003 speakers. The Index is detailed, and the *Checklist of Resources* is extremely detailed and useful. The ISBN for this book is 0-9724353-3-6 and it is distributed by University Press of New England, Published by the Chipstone Foundation, Milwaukee, WI, about whom one can learn more by viewing www.chipstone.org.

Printed on heavy matte paper with soft cover and beautiful endpaper illustrations, this volume weighs three and one half pounds and is going to be expensive to ship no matter from where you buy it (except Amazon of course), but with the bevy of interesting, well-researched and varied articles, it will be a valued addition to any ceramic collector's library. From the Editor comes this timely quote: "Collecting without an underlying research interest is usually a somewhat soulless pursuit that can result in an accumulation with little meaning." Perhaps the recent explosion of Wedgwood-related publications will convince more and more collectors to rely more heavily on resource materials, increase their own libraries, and in general, learn more about their collecting passion.

If you are interested in the contents of the 2001 and 2002 volumes, each containing at least one Wedgwood related article, email and we will accommodate your request. For descriptions of the contents of this and earlier editions of *Ceramics in America*, go to www.amazon.com and simply type in the title, i.e., *Ceramics in America 2003 (2001, 02, 03 or 04)*. The introduction to the book is reproduced and the contents discussed. Did I mention that the cover and endpaper illustrations on all four volumes are gorgeous?

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