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Book Review: Pottery Works: Potteries of New York State's Capital District and Upper Hudson Region by Warren F. Broderick and William Bouck

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POTTERY WORKS: POTTERIES OF NEW YORK STATE'S CAPITAL DISTRICT AND UPPER HUDSON REGION by Warren F. Broderick and William Bouck 1995, Dickinson University Press, Canbury, NJ, 285 pages, \$59.50.

Reviewed by Paul R. Huey and Lois M. Feister

This book continues a trend toward regional pottery studies that was begun by Lura Woodside Watkins in 1949 with her now-famous study of New England redwares.

Broderick and Bouck have gone a step farther, however, by concentrating on one single region. As a result, they are able to provide much more information about the potters themselves and thus give a human dimension to a material culture study.

The specificity of such a regional concentration may appear to be less appealing to a wider audience. With this book, however, this approach should be very useful to archaeologists. Earthenware and stoneware made in the upper Hudson Valley area at and above Albany were shipped south to New York City and New Jersey, east and north to New England and Canada, and west to western New York State. As a result, the sherds and whole vessels appear throughout the northeast. The authors illustrate one vessel marked with the name of a grocer in Montréal, over two hundred miles away from its manufacturing site in Albany.

The pottery industry began with the making of pan tiles in the Albany area in the 17th century, grew slowly in the 18th century, and in the early 19th century began to develop rapidly as the area became an important center for both earthenware and stoneware manufacture. As the ceramic industry of the New York City/New Jersey area declined in importance, many of the potters, following the market, appeared in the upper Hudson Valley area to reestablish themselves. Readily available in the region were redware clay supplies (including the famous Albany slip), firewood, salt from Syracuse, and minerals from the Adirondacks, while there was also access to an excellent system of canals, navigable rivers, and paved roads.

The authors begin with a summary of the technology of pottery manufacture consisting of well-written, easily understandable descriptions. Then they offer a chapter on each location or area (Albany, Greenbush, Lansingburgh, Troy, West Troy, Greenwich and Galesville, Mechanicville, Northumberland, Fortsville, and Galway), finishing with the large pottery plants in Fort Edward and Sandy Hill, some of which lasted until 1942. In addition, there is a useful chapter written by Patricia Barbanel on the 17th-century potter "Kees Pot." Appendices include descriptions and wage lists from rare publications, a list of pot-

ters in Fort Edward other than the proprietors (it is rare for anyone to note the workers), and a summary of potters' marks giving the business location of each and the page number(s) in the text where each is discussed. The list of potters' marks is an especially useful index and reference tool. Endnotes are offered for each chapter, there is an extensive bibliography, and the book is well indexed. At the end of the chapters on Albany, Troy, and West Troy (present Watervliet) are lists of various potters whose names are identified in directories and census listings but about whom little else is known and who are thus not discussed in the main text. The authors have done much to make this book a "user-friendly" reference.

As noted above, the authors are able to reconstruct many of the individual potters' life stories by using immigration lists, shipping records, military records, church records, cemetery records, newspaper articles, and advertisements. Some potters were traced back to their origins in England and Germany. An abundance of original documentary research is presented. One outstanding contribution is the story of Samuel Walker, a potter of West Troy who arrived in New York from Liverpool in 1842. Born in 1786 in Lincolnshire, Walker had married into a pottery-making family and by 1808 was working at Worcester. He later worked at Nantgarw, at Swansea (where he was placed in charge of the newly created porcelain works in 1814), and at Coalport, and he conducted extensive research on porcelain-making. Significantly, an artifact that was excavated on the property in West Troy (Watervliet) where Samuel Walker established his pottery about 1849 is a crudely-formed white porcelain 2-inch saucer marked WEST TROY POR[CELAIN].

The book documents the many out-of-state origins and connections of the individual upper Hudson Valley area potters, both as to whence they came and to where they later went. These places include, for example, Maine (Portland), Connecticut (Norwalk, West Hartford), Massachusetts (Whatley, Worcester), New Hampshire (Keene, Templeton), Vermont (Bennington), New Jersey (South Amboy, Newark, Caldwell, Cheesquake), Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, Frankford), Virginia (Charles City), Province of Ontario

(Toronto, Louth, Brantford), and Province of Québec (St. Denis, Iberville). Another pattern of interest that emerges is the spirit and bravery of many of the potters, such as Brickner, Reily, Hilfinger, and others who served in the Civil War and were desperately wounded, imprisoned, or otherwise suffered terribly.

All of this, and much more, not only makes the book more interesting but offers valuable social history. Archaeologists also can appreciate the attempts to learn more about particular potteries through the authors' examination of sherds and kiln wasters from the actual sites. The sherds offer new information about techniques and vessel forms that cannot be discerned from the published sources. In addition, the authors pose useful research questions for future archaeological work in the area and have identified the locations of various pottery sites.

The chapters are heavily illustrated with excellent photographs of complete marked vessels from each pottery, newspaper advertisements and price lists, period maps, lists of marks for each, and other photographs if available. The book measures 8.5 by 11 inches, and this large format allows for clear, large-sized illustrations. Although the format is attractive and the binding is sturdy, in some places footnote numbers are missing or references are incorrect. There are numerous typographical errors. Mistakes in the compass directions of streets in urban areas occur at least twice. In one illustration, the photograph caption clearly is in error in transcribing the pottery mark that is shown, and another vessel is described as "a typical and the most outstanding piece of Paul Cushman's work." These shortcomings, however, do not detract from the great usefulness and value of this important book. Curiously, the copyright notice authorizes individuals to copy material from the book for internal or personal use provided that a base fee of \$10.00 plus 8 cents per page per copy is paid directly to the Copyright Clearance Center.

One hopes that a new trend has been initiated by John L. Cotter, Michael Parrington, and Daniel G. Roberts in summarizing and publishing the results of archaeological work, much of it previously unpublished, in a given urban area such as Philadelphia. Likewise,

one hopes that perhaps Broderick and Bouck's work is the beginning of a series of concentrated studies of local industries that had their effects in widespread areas. Social historians will find the detailed life stories useful; material culturists will be interested in the details about the industry; archaeologists will find the information about manufacturing techniques, dates of business, and pottery marks valuable. Besides, any book dedicated to a 24-year-old cat has to be interesting!

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