

Fonthill Collection Highlights - Henry Mercer's Art Pottery

Art pottery became popular in the early 20th century. It was generally made by hand versus machine, and potters and artisans collaborated in the completion of these pieces. Mercer's original Moravian Pottery and Tile Works catalogue books indicate that he offered his clientele approximately twenty-five forms of art pottery. Examples include: inkwells, bowls, cups, vases and wall-sconces.



F.23.093

"Four Head Bowl"

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1913 or later
Press-molded red earthenware round bowl with deep, concave walls sloping conically inward to a flat central field from a vertical short wall just below rim. Raised design on exterior composed of four relief human heads (or faces) set at equal distances.

While never as popular as his decorative tile, he sold approximately 4,000 pieces during the time he oversaw the Moravian Pottery & Tile Works. Frank Swain, who ran the Tile Works after Mercer's death, continued to offer these forms until his death in 1954.



F.23.119

"Ash Receiver"

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1913 or later
Press-molded red earthenware bowl in the shape of a small mortar, with a lug-like projection with rounded, contoured underside at each of the four corners of the wide, flat rim.



F.23.006

“Duck Head Bowl”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1913 or later
Press-molded red earthenware round bowl with deep, concave walls sloping inward. Two differing handles on opposite sides of the rim: one extends 1 1/4-inch from rim and is flat, and the other extends approximately 1 inch from rim, is rounded and post-like, and has a large, three-dimensional oblong animal head finial facing away from the bowl. Exterior of body is

molded with all-over design of an interlaced weaving pattern in low relief. Molded feet composed of crossed, rounded coils across center of bottom. Form inspired by Native American pottery of the Mississippi Valley.



F.23.010

“Sailing Ship Sconce”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1911 or later
Press-molded red earthenware wall sconce for single candle, composed of an arch-topped rectangular back section with impressed design composed of two large slightly recessed squares, each with the same profile sailing ship on waves. A semi-circular base section is joined at the bottom of the back section and extends outward, with a raised, slightly irregularly formed circular candleholder in center. Glazed; cream on dark blue, with red flush; glossy, even finish.



F.23.015

“Four Head Bowl”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1913 or later
Press-molded red earthenware round bowl with deep, concave walls sloping conically inward to a flat central field from a vertical short wall just below rim. Raised design on exterior composed of four relief human heads (or faces) set

at equal distances at each quarter around edge just below the rim, within a wide band of rounded beads. Below band, the body is molded with an all-over basket-like pattern in low relief; interior surface is plain. Completely glazed; gun-metal black enamel glaze all over.



F.23.022

Vase or Beaker

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, early 20th Century
Press-molded red earthenware vase of roughly hourglass shape with rolled rim. Unglazed with flat red slip. Found on site at Fonthill. An example of Mercer’s experiments with primitive firing techniques.



F.23.033

“Chinese Toy Bowl”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1901 or later
Press-molded red earthenware bowl of hexagonal shape, with slightly rounded walls rising from a short hexagonal foot to a wide, flat rim; modeled with raised border below rim, along corners and in center of each exterior side. Interior is rounded and smooth. Completely glazed; cream on green. Evidence of one firing suspension stilt in glaze on bottom.



F.23.047

“After Dinner Coffee Cup”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1908 or later
Press-molded red earthenware cup of roughly hourglass shape. Molded onto one side is a crudely formed rounded handle, slightly curled and turned down forming a knob at the rim; handle flush with the body down to the waist area and then sharply angling out and down to the base where it is attached. Glazed; exterior divided into three wide bands of cream on blue (1' at top), cream on brown (1 1/2' at middle) and cream on blue (1' at bottom). Interior glazed; cream on blue, with darker blue speckling.



F.23.050

Cup

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, early 20th Century
Press-molded red earthenware cylindrical cup (irregularly formed) slightly flaring outward at plain rim; outlined band around body demarcates base of cup. On front and back sides, positioned 3/4' below rim (in upper third of side) is a circular seal of approximately 1 3/4' in diameter, modeled in relief with a three-petal clover leaf surrounded with the Latin inscription, “Sigillum Germano Politanum.” Background is plain. Interior is roughly formed. Completely glazed; cream on green with red flush. Three firing suspension holes in glaze on bottom.



F.23.051

“Birds of Great Kimble Sconce”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1904 or later
Press-molded red earthenware wall sconce for single candle, composed of an arch-topped rectangular back section with impressed design composed of two large, double-banded circles, linked in center, each with the same robin-like bird perched on a leafy branch (representing “Spring”) in low relief. A semi-circular base section is joined at the bottom of the back section and extends outward, with a raised, slightly irregularly formed circular candleholder in center. Formed hole penetrating back section at top center. Glazed; cream on blue, with slight speckled effect and red flush; uneven glossy and crystalline finish. Reverse of back section is unglazed.



F.23.065

“Oval Dish”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1913 or later
Press-molded red earthenware rectangular-oval bowl with short, concave walls sloping into a wide, shallow central surface; a flat half-circular handle with rounded underside protrudes approximately one-half inch from rim in center of the two short sides. Rim protrudes out from body and is molded with a smoothed saw tooth, or notched pattern. Exterior of body is molded with a random pattern of low relief ridges; interior surface is plain. Completely glazed; cream on green, with slight red flush on exterior.



F.23.069

“Chicken Head Bowl”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, early 20th Century

Press-molded, red earthenware oval bowl with concave walls sloping into a shallow central surface; a flat, pointed handle with rounded underside protrudes 3/4' from rim in center of one

side; on the opposite side, a flattened, though three-dimensional bird head finial with large curved beak, round eyes, and stylized comb rises up above the rim from a contoured post and faces inward toward the bowl. Unglazed and smoked.



F.23.097

“Apple Butter Jar”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1913 or later

Press-molded red earthenware cylindrical jar with straight sides rising to shoulder and inset neck with slightly outward flaring rim with flattened top surface; outlined band around body demarcates the slightly formed base of jar. Plain. Completely glazed; cream on green, with some darker green speckling, and slightly red flush, especially around the rim. Three firing suspension holes in glaze on bottom. Form inspired by Pennsylvania redware pottery.



F.23.099

Cup or Creamer

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, early 20th Century

Press-molded red earthenware round cup with concave walls sloping down into rounded surface; molded with single band of raised rounded beads circling midsection of body; plain rim; flat bottom, no foot. A single, small open loop handle protrudes from one side, extending from rim's edge to midsection; a small 3/8-inch rounded lug-like handle protrudes from opposite side of rim. Completely glazed; cream on green, with red flush. Two firing suspension holes in glaze on bottom.



F.23.112

“Vicar Ink Stand”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1901 or later

Press-molded red earthenware inkstand, with 4” deep circular inkwell section with concave inner rim penetrating center of top. Design composed of relief tile design no. 58, “Vicar of Stowe,” impressed on four sides, with each side surrounded by a plain 3/8” border. A red earthenware domed circular lid with raised pyramidal finial on raised square-like central section, and circular base, fits over inkwell section. Inkstand and lid are glazed; cream on blue with red flush. A clear glass cylindrical insert, with slightly flaring rim, fits into the deep inkwell section.



F.23.114

“Castle” Lamp

Artist: Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1917 or later

Press-molded red earthenware castle-shaped table lamp, composed of three short towers, each with a single indented arch 'window' at the corner, arranged in a triangular formation and joined by a thick, arched triangular center section. A larger and taller tower with three indented arch 'windows' rises upward in the center and is surrounded at the base by a shallow recessed groove. Glazed all over; cream on blue, with red flush at edges. Firing suspension hole in the glaze on the bottom of each of the three smaller towers.



F23.116

“Wide Rimmed Soup Bowl”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, early 20th Century
Press-molded red earthenware round bowl, composed of round shallow interior section and wide, flat rim extending outward from the top edge. Exterior has rounded body with two lug-like protrusions at opposite sides of top, abutting to underside of wide rim; slight rippling effect molded into exterior surface of body, otherwise, undecorated. Completely glazed.



F.23.118

“Tall Vase”

Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, 1913 or later

Press-molded red earthenware cylindrical vase tapering upward from a round pad base and slightly flaring outward at the rim. Plain. exterior divided into three wide bands of blue, yellow-cream, and cream on blue. Interior glazed; cream over red, with blue underglaze around rim and streaking down sides. Bottom side of base is partially glazed along edges; remainder covered with blue slip.