

SHARDS

A Newsletter of the China Students' Club of Boston

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January 2008

A Message from Our President

I am at the end of the year, and time seems to have slipped away from me—as it often does. My tree is not up, my holiday cards remain unsent, and my house is a disaster. I have also not sent in any objects from my collection for consideration for the China Students' Club 75th anniversary exhibition. Perhaps some of you are in the same boat. (I certainly thank those who have already sent in their object submissions!) So I issue a gentle reminder. . . . Please take the time between a slice of spiral ham and a couple more cookies to admire your ceramics collection. The focus or theme of the 75th anniversary exhibition deals with ceramics made or used in New England, from the 17th to the 20th century. Select one to five objects that you are particularly proud of, and send photos with some written comments to my attention. I want to encourage our many members to participate, because having a variety of ceramics will only enhance the exhibition. The committee is especially looking for Chinese export porcelain, New En-

gland art pottery, New England redware and stoneware, souvenirs and commemorative items, and imported European ceramics. The deadline for submissions is December 31st, but we will accept submissions up until our next CSC meeting on January 24th. The selection committee, composed of Cheryl Robertson, Louise Richardson, and myself, will be meeting in January to review submissions. If you have any questions about your collection, feel free to call or email me. I would be more than happy to help you decide what to offer for the exhibition.

I wish all of you and your families a very happy holiday season and a fantastic New Year!

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Christian Jörg on "Japanese Export Porcelain for the West" Reviewed by Jeff Brown

An exciting and varied 2007-2008 program year was inaugurated for the CSC by guest speaker Dr. Christian Jörg, Professor in East-West Interactions in Decorative Art at Leiden University. Despite unseasonably and uncomfortably warm temperatures, a large group gathered at The College Club to hear Dr. Jörg speak on one of his many fields of expertise: "Japanese Export Porcelain for the West."

Japan is unique in the Far East in that it started porcelain production rather late in its history, around 1600. There was a long tradition of earthenware and stoneware production, but porcelain had always been imported from either China or Korea. In the 1590s the Shogun invaded Korea and, although his military mission was a failure, he did succeed in returning home with two Korean potters. Arita and the area around Nagasaki

became major centers of porcelain production with the discovery of good sources of local clay. Unlike Chinese clays that needed to be mixed with petuntse, Japanese porcelain stone is pure enough to be used on its own. Its only fault is that it is heavy and prone to sagging in the kiln. Wares were simple and made for the local markets between 1600-1650. Production grew slowly during that period, Chinese porcelain being the emulated model. But, in these early examples one can already see the Japanese aesthetic coming through in asymmetrical designs and the use of white space.

The arrival of the Dutch was crucial to the story of Japanese export ceramics for the West. The Dutch East India Company had a presence in Batavia (now Jakarta) since 1602, where they basically re-created a small

Continued on page 2



Japanese Export Porcelain for the West

Continued from page 1

Dutch city, right down to the steep-gabled houses and canals. Dutch trading settlements like these spread from India to Burma to Malacca. One of these settlements was on an artificial island called Deshima in the harbor at Nagasaki. Here the Dutch were allowed a tiny window to trade with Japan, a country otherwise completely closed off to Western powers. The Dutch had replaced Portuguese traders who proved a bit too zealous in their attempts to convert the locals to Catholicism. The Japanese were more accepting of the tolerant Dutch who were there to trade, not proselytize. This relationship stayed in place for over two centuries, the Dutch being the West's only connection with Japan.

While these contacts were being made, the Dutch were actively trading with China, bringing in great quantities of Chinese porcelain called "kraakware," for which the folks back home were developing an avid taste. By the 1640s, there was great civil unrest in China as the Ming Dynasty was collapsing and the Chinese kilns fell into disarray. This led to two developments: the growth of the Delftware industry in Holland, and the encouragement of the Japanese kilns to produce porcelain in the Chinese style to keep up with the profitable demand back home.

Despite this demand for the Chinese style, the Japanese potters stubbornly infused their work with designs and details typically Japanese. A hybrid style developed and it sold just as well, if not better than the pure Chinese pieces back in the Netherlands—despite its painting being somewhat naive, bordering on crude, when compared to the Chinese. The only problem was that the Japanese could never match the Chinese in production volume, and so there were complaints about quantities never being enough to meet demand which, of course, fueled demand for even more.

In addition to underglaze blue and white, the Japanese had started experimenting with polychrome enamels in the 1640s, and the Dutch soon started exporting these back to the Netherlands where their popularity proved profitable. This early enamel style split into two major groups: the Kakiemon style and the Imari style. The Kakiemon style is characterized by its use of white space, spare, asymmetrical application of subject matter,

and very refined forms, the best being produced from 1680 until 1700. It was later copied by Chelsea, Bow, and even Delft. Another specialty of the Kakiemon potters were figures, especially of elegant women, most likely used as a touch of exoticism in the early Dutch interior. The Imari style is interesting in that it emanated from one family of potters in the Arita area and is characterized by its use of underglaze blue, overglaze iron red and some gilding, sometimes a little green or black as well. The Imari was another hot commodity for the Dutch buying public. Dinner, coffee, and tea wares were all produced in this palette, as well as large garnitures, vases, and chargers. Keep in mind the heaviness of the Japanese porcelain stone—these pieces usually have spur mark on the bottom, remnants of the spurs used in the kilns to

Continued on page 3



Kakiemon elephant, 17th c.



VOC (Dutch East India Company) charger, 17th c
Arita, Peabody Essex Museum



Japanese Export Porcelain for the West

Continued from page 2

keep these pieces from sagging.

Despite all its popularity, though, the Japanese potters just could not keep up with demand and low costs. By the 1680s China's civil unrest was over, the kilns were operating under the patronage of a new Qing emperor, and quality and quantity of porcelain were up as the costs came down. The Japanese could not compete

and by 1683 "official" trade in Japanese porcelain was suspended. But, due to its popularity back home in the Netherlands, private trade continued throughout the 18th century with special orders, some based upon European prints and designs, as well as pieces with armorials and monograms, and the traditional Imari wares. This trade ended only when Japan opened its ports to all Western traders in the mid 19th century.



Left: Arita vase; Center: Imari vase; Right: two wrestlers, ca. 1680, Peabody Essex Museum

David Barker on "The Staffordshire Phenomenon"

Reviewed by Jeff Brown

The CSC convened in late October to hear Dr. David Barker, FSA, an archaeological consultant and ceramics specialist, speak on "The Staffordshire Phenomenon." Dr. Barker opened with an appropriate quotation: "You can't drink tea from a tea cup without the aid of the Five Towns. You can't eat a meal in decency without the aid of the Five Towns. For this the architecture of the Five Towns is an architecture of ovens and chimneys. For this the atmosphere is as black as mud. For this it burns and smokes all night so it's a stink compared to hell. For this exists so that you may drink tea from a tea cup and toy with a chop on a plate. All the

everyday crockery in the kingdom is made in the Five Towns; all and much beside. Whenever and wherever in all England a woman washes up she washes the product of the district. Whenever and wherever in all England a plate is broken the fracture means more business for the district."

Dr Barker pointed out that not only to England, but to the greater part of the known world this quote can apply—such is the extent of the Staffordshire phenomenon. How did Staffordshire arrive at this position in just a matter of two centuries? Well, contrary to some

Continued on page 4



David Barker on “The Staffordshire Phenomenon”

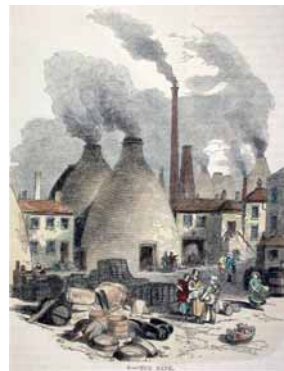
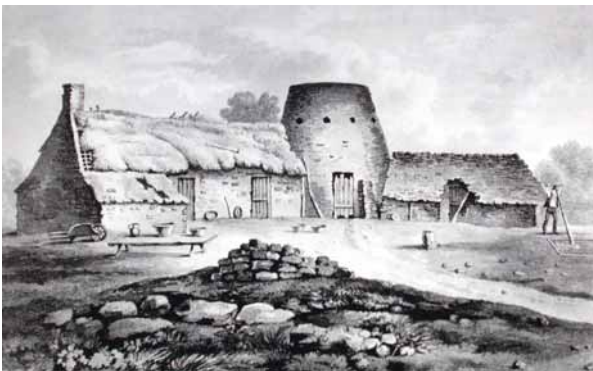
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old established beliefs that everything started with Wedgwood, a simple pottery industry was in place by the 17th century. Single kiln workshops producing slipwares dotted the countryside. From these workshops, in the short expanse of a couple of decades, sprang an industry that would become global in its extent. A unique confluence of social and economic factors came into play that would make Staffordshire an industry leader in ceramics production.

At the heart of the district is Stoke-on-Trent, a landlocked village, not exactly conducive to a thriving export business. But it had natural advantages that more than made up for its geographical disadvantages: the area was covered in coal pits. Coal to fire the kilns was even more valuable a resource than clay, as it took approximately 12-15 tons of coal to fire one ton of clay. Fortunately, clay too is found in North Staffordshire in proximity to the coal—your two key ingredients lying side by side! But, as mentioned, all this industrial potential existed in a bit of a backwater. By the 1770s there were many roads leading into the district, mostly turnpikes, mostly in deplorable condition. Carriage costs were high. Despite this, where there’s a buck (or pound) to be made, things get done! There are examples of Staffordshire butter pots in Virginia dating to the early 17th century, so from early on location did not hinder the potters. By 1715 there were an estimated 50 single kiln workshops centered on Burslem. Each one employed on average 10 people, a lot of them children. All steps of potting and single-firing production were done within these small

workshops. By 1720 things started to change radically. The growing popularity of tea had a great impact on the industry, providing a market for more upscale, refined products. The production process now changed—pieces were now twice-fired, which improved the quality of the objects. Virtually overnight the style of wares changed with new forms and new decorations appearing. At this point we see the arrival of salt-glazed stoneware. Within the workshops new technologies developed, the crank wheel replaced the potters’ kickwheel, and turning was introduced to create a thinner, more elegant body. Even the mixing and drying of clay was improved—no longer done in outdoor pits, all processes were brought together inside under one roof. For the first time we see the division of labor, these workshops now becoming what we’d recognize today as factories. From the 1720s on factories were being built with 2-3 kilns: one for biscuit firing, one for glaze firing, and one for salt-glaze firing. Around 1740 molds were introduced to create new forms, requiring another specialty, the mold carver and maker. New ingredients needed to be imported. White firing clay had to be brought in for the new stonewares, and flint, which needed to be added to the clay for it to accept higher firing temperatures. Flint needs to be heated, crushed and ground into a slurry, hence another subsidiary specialty was added to the process. The clays came from Devon and the flint from the southeast coast. Both were shipped in, as much by water as possible, and then overland.

Continued on page 5



Left: An early (c. 1700) potter’s workshop with a single oven

Center: 19th-century print of a typical pottery factory, or ‘pot bank,’ with several ovens

Right: Creamware plate with bat-printed decoration, late 18th c.



David Barker on “The Staffordshire Phenomenon”

Continued from page 4

To get raw materials in and finished products out a grand solution was devised: The Trent and Mersey Canal which linked the Staffordshire potteries with the sea-ports of Hull and Liverpool, and effectively with the world. The cost of carriage dropped by about 75% and great factories were erected along the canal. Business boomed.

America was one of many markets for those manufacturers who were designing wares for the new republic. They would go on appealing to the American consumer well into the 19th century. By 1835, the U.S. replaced Europe as the number one market for the Staffordshire potteries. But Staffordshire crockery went all over the world, to the Caribbean, South America,

India, and East Asia.

On top of dinner wares all manner of other products were produced, such as jam, ointment, and cosmetic pots, some bearing the retailers’ marks. Special orders from clubs and cruise lines, schools, and institutions (“Badge wares” as Dr. Barker calls them) were accommodated. By 1850 there were about 30,000 people working for the pottery industry. These factories spawned all manner of subsidiary businesses and professions—shippers, modellers, engravers, independent decorators, millers of clay and flint, makers of paints and inks and the purveyors of transfer papers.

Anywhere else in the U.K. wherever and whenever a new factory or pottery was established it based itself on the successful Staffordshire model, truly a Staffordshire phenomenon.



Above, left: Slip-decorated earthenwares excavated in Burslem, of a type which are found in North America and the Caribbean; c. 1690-1700



Above, right: White salt-glazed stoneware plate with ‘barleycorn’ moulding—a staple of the Staffordshire pottery trade from the 1750s to the 1770s

Right: ‘London’-shape bowl and jug with dark blue printed patterns ‘Washington at his own Tomb’ and ‘La Fayette at Franklin’s tomb,’ made by Enoch Wood of Burslem for the American market; c. 1825-1827





**Nonie Gadsden on “Art and Reform: Sara Galner,
The Saturday Evening Girls, and the Paul Revere Pottery”
Reviewed by Jeff Brown**

The first half of our program-year concluded with a talk by Nonie Gadsden, the Carolyn and Peter Lynch Assistant Curator of Decorative Arts, The Arts of the Americas, at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Nonie spoke on “Art and Reform: Sara Galner; the Saturday Evening Girls, and the Paul Revere Pottery.” Nonie’s research into this subject began when she met Boston resident Dr. David L. Bloom about two years ago and learned that his mother, Sara Galner, was one of the original Saturday Evening Girls. We spend so much time at CSC studying the ceramics themselves, it was a treat to hear the early history of this famous pottery told through the personal story of one of its first decorators.

The Paul Revere Pottery was in business from 1908 until 1942, first in Boston’s North End and later in the city’s outskirts in Brighton. The story of Sara’s life and experience at the Paul Revere Pottery offers profound insight into the history of the progressive cultural, social, and design reform movements in Boston at the beginning of the 20th century. Through the history of the pottery, its products, and its workers, one can study contemporary issues in education, labor reform, the role of women in society, and the belief in the power of art to uplift and inspire.

Sara Galner immigrated to the U.S. in 1901 at the age of six from Galicia on the eastern end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, now in the Ukraine. Her father, Baruch, was a butcher and the family settled in Boston’s North End, a small neighborhood packed with tenements of mostly Italian and East-European Jewish immigrants.

The troubling conditions in the North End did not go unnoticed by Boston society. Many strong reactions rose, from those who feared the rising rate of immigration and wanted to curb it, to those who wanted to help those living in the slum assimilate and thrive in their new country. Many charitable organizations were founded in the North End by reform-minded Bostonians. One prominent organization particularly connected with our story was the North Bennet Street Industrial School. North Bennet Street was a settlement house that focused on manual training. The school provided classes

in woodworking, printmaking, etc. for boys, and domestic-related training for girls. They experimented with joint programs with local public schools, including the Hancock School where Sara was a student. They ran free community programs in training classes, social activities, and a reading room. Sara took all the classes she could “as long as they were free” (as she later said) and loved spending time in the reading room, despite her parents’ disapproval.

The head of the Girls Reading Room was Edith Guerrier, a well-bred, well-educated young woman. She started a library reading group to engage the girls with great literature. The group met on Saturday evenings and was so popular that they organized themselves into a formal club: The Saturday Evening Girls. The SEG became so popular that other groups formed around different curricula, naming themselves after the day of the week on which they met. During this time a noted Boston philanthropist, Helen Osbourne Storrow, came upon the scene. An avid supporter of these clubs, Storrow even established a summer camp for these girls who seldom, if ever, escaped life in the tenements. Along with Guerrier and Guerrier’s friend Edith Brown the women decided to establish a pottery. In 1908 Storrow purchased and renovated a building on Hull Street in the North End to house the new pottery and the ever expanding library clubs. They named it Library Club House and it contained a kiln and workrooms in the basement; the first floor had pottery decorating studios and salesrooms, while there were library club rooms above and a top floor apartment for Guerrier and Brown. And so the group started out to learn the pottery business. Guerrier said that they named the operation “Paul Revere Pottery” because the building was in the shadow of the Old North Church. The historic and patriotic connotations of the name contributed to the choice.

The pottery created a variety of domestic wares, their most popular being “Bread and Milk” children’s sets that could be personalized. The girls signed “S.E.G.,” the date, and their initials on most of the pieces they

Continued on page 7



Sara Galner and the Paul Revere Pottery

Continued from page 6

decorated. In purpose and product the Pottery was a shining example of the early 20th century Arts and Crafts movement. This progressive ideology encouraged handcraftmanship, the integration of art into everyday life, and healthy working conditions for artisans. Arts and Crafts proponents believed that creating and understanding art could improve a person both morally and spiritually.

Edith Brown had worked as a children's book illustrator and her designs were freely borrowed for the Pottery. Her work shows the influence of two leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement: Walter Crane and Arthur Wesley Dow. Crane's style combined static imagery and bold lines with the black outlines, flattened forms, and solid colors he admired in Japanese prints. This influence is clearly evident in the Pottery's decora-

tion. Dow emphasized the importance of spacing in design and advocated simplification, repetition, and bright color, all also evident in the work of the SEG.

In 1908, Sara graduated from 8th grade (all the law required at the time) and had to go to work, despite her teachers imploring her father to let her continue her schooling. He refused. Eventually, the Pottery lured her to a position of full-time decorator for \$7 a week, and as a decorator she excelled. The Pottery also excelled in sales and quality, soon outgrowing their small showroom and workshop. The Hull Street Club House was sold and the money used to buy land and build a new pottery in Brighton. The wares were advertised in national publications and the pottery took on special commissions for public and private institutions—including wall tiles for the Forsyth Dental Infirmary for Children, a build-

Continued on page 8



Sara Galner decorating a vase at the Paul Revere Pottery



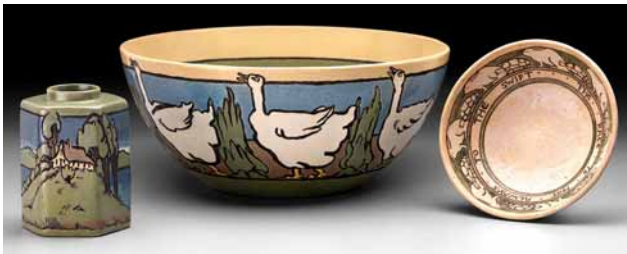
Sara Galner and the Paul Revere Pottery

Continued from page 7

ing recently purchased by the MFA with all the tiles still in situ. The Pottery even won a bronze medal for a 5foot tall tile picture exhibited at the Panama Pacific Exposition in 1915. Sara then went to work in the Pottery's first retail store on Boylston Street and in 1917 she was sent to Washington to open a shop in the capital. Soon after her return to Boston in 1919 she met a young man whom she eventually married in 1921. Sara stopped working at the Pottery once she was married, but stayed in close touch throughout her life with the friends she

had made at the Paul Revere Pottery. Those ten years spanned the peak of the firm's production in terms of quality, creativity, and popularity.

Sara's experiences of immigration, living in the North End, her schooling, her involvement with the SEG and employment at the Pottery give us a personal view, a real life experience to help us better understand the history of the pottery itself and more generally the many reform movements active in Boston at the turn of the 20th century. (*More pictures on back page.*)



Some Paul Revere Pottery products



Pot decorated by Sara Galner (left); marked on bottom "S.G." for Sara Galner and "S.E.G." for Saturday Evening Girls; dated 12/9/12, and price-tagged at 75 cents (above)

We regret to announce the death, at age 45, of Tracey Albainy, formerly curator of decorative arts and sculpture in the Art of Europe Department, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. CSC members will remember her for her 4/28/05 lecture on "A Decade of Acquisitions at the MFA, 1996-2005." We shall miss her.

We welcome the following new CSC members: Marjorie Albright and David Stevens, Debby Bassett, Hollis Brodrick, Jeanne Dunn, Hallie Goelet, Polly Latham

Please send comments/contributions to: Yonathan Bard, 6 Holland Street, Newton, MA 02458; telephone (617) 244-7688, fax (617) 965-2897, e-mail (the preferred venue!) doryon@rcn.com



Upcoming Ceramics Events

CSC Meetings

All meetings at 1 PM at the College Club, 44 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

1/24/08, *A Change in Taste: Ming Porcelain and Ming Culture*, Robert D. Mowry, curator of Chinese art, Harvard University Museums

2/28, *Bits and Pieces*: members are invited to bring a piece or two for discussion

3/27, *People, Passions, Pastimes, and Pleasures: Staffordshire Figures, 1810-1835*, Myrna Schkolne, author and collector

4/24, *The Influence of Salt-glazed Stoneware on English Creamware Design*, Diane Edwards, CSC member

5/22, *Annual Meeting and Tea; Survey of Fireplace Tiles in Early Portsmouth, NH Houses*, Sandra Rux, CSC member.

Pottery and Porcelain Club of Providence Meetings

Please contact Mrs. Barnum, 401-861-6083, for meeting locations and to let her know that you will be attending.

2/13, 2 PM, *From Robust to Refined: Korean Ceramics of the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392)*, Robert Mowry, Curator of Chinese Art at the Sackler Museum, Harvard University

3/12, 2 PM, *Tempest in a Teacup: A Steamy Review of Early Asian Ceramics of the World's Favorite Drink*, Andrew Maske, Assistant Professor of Asian Art History, University of Kentucky.

Auctions

Note: some auction houses seem not to have finalized their 2008 sales schedule. Christie's will include many of their ceramics in general purpose "Interiors" sales, which we have not listed here.

Asian:

1/23, Christie's NY (Chinese export, incl. porcelain from Leo & Doris Hodroff collection)

3/18, Christie's NY (Japanese & Korean)

3/19, Christie's NY (Chinese)

4/26, Skinner Boston (incl. ceramics)

5/13, Christie's London (Chinese)

5/15, Christie's London (Japanese)

British and/or continental:

1/12, Skinner Boston (featuring fine ceramics, incl. Al & Carol Pierce collection of Wedgwood)

4/12, Skinner Boston (incl. ceramics)

Miscellaneous:

2/17, Skinner Boston (Americana, incl. ceramics)

3/19, Christie's London (19th century)

3/31, Christie's London

Fairs:

New York Ceramics Fair, The National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts, 1083 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 1/16/08-1/20/08.

Exhibitions:

Alistair Sampson Collection of English Creamware, ongoing at the Flynt Center, Historic Deerfield

Black & White Chinese Ceramics from the 10th-14th Centuries, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Vietnamese Ceramics from the Red River Delta, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Taking Shape: Ceramics in Southeast Asia, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC, through 2010

Form and Design in Glass and Ceramics, Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Maine

Fragile Diplomacy: Meissen Porcelain for European Courts, Bard Graduate Center, 18 West 86th Street, New York, NY, until 2/11/08

The Arnhold Collection of Meissen Porcelain, 1710-50, The Frick Collection, New York, NY, 3/25-6/29/08.

Tours:

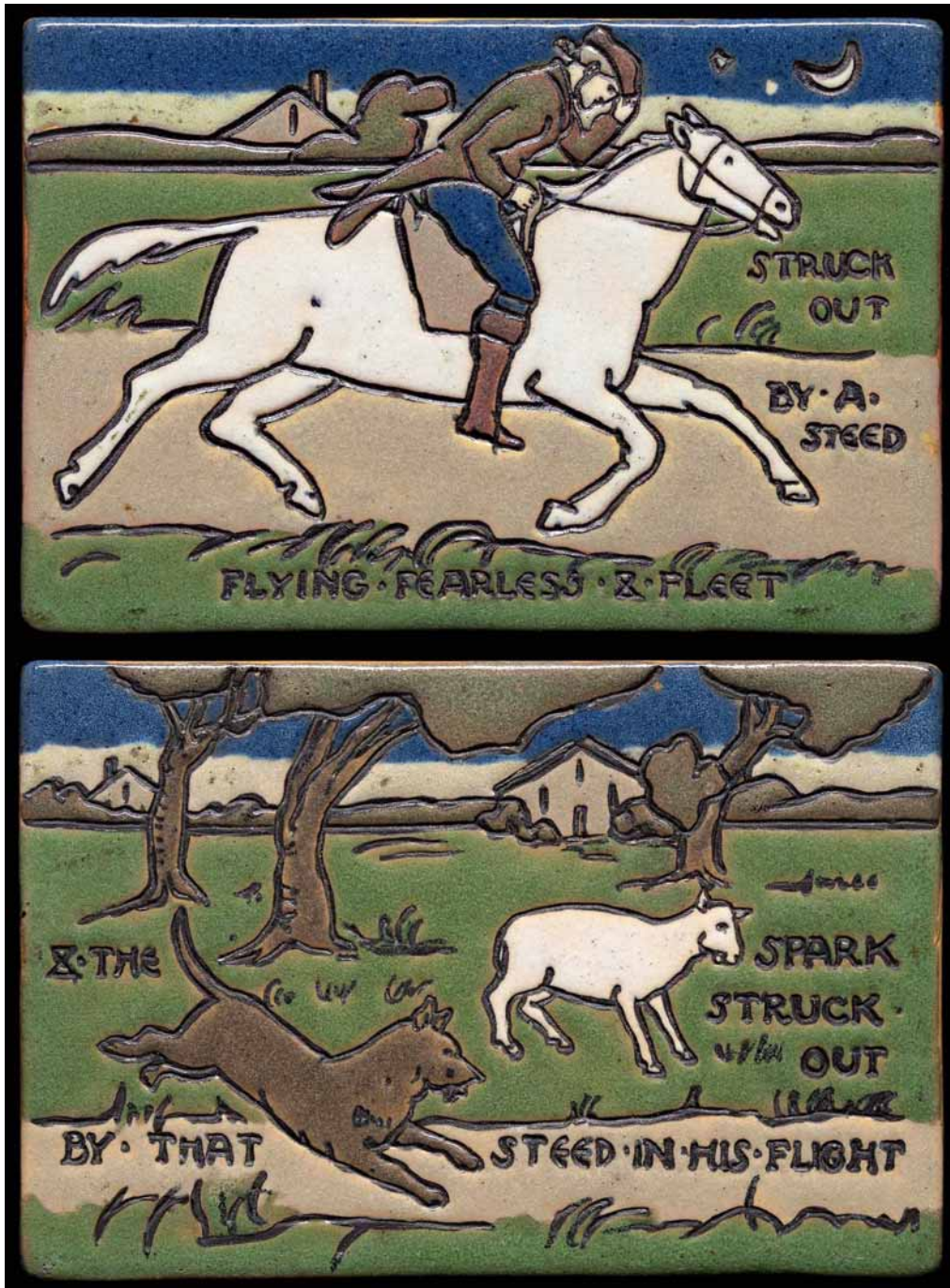
Journey to China: The Origins of Porcelain, sponsored by the American Ceramics Circle, 5/10/08-5/24/08. The itinerary includes Hong Kong, Xiamen, Dehua, Xian, Hangzhou, Shanghai, and Jingdezhen.

For more information, contact Meg MacDonald at Travel Muse, (617) 469-7370 or toll-free within the U.S. at 1-877-716-1776, or e-mail to meg@travelmuse.net.



Contents

A message from our president	1
Christian Jörg on Japanese export porcelain, report by Jeff Brown	1
David Barker on the Staffordshire phenomenon, report by Jeff Brown	3
Nonie Gadsden on the Paul Revere Pottery, report by Jeff Brown	6
Upcoming Ceramics Events	9



Paul Revere Pottery tiles