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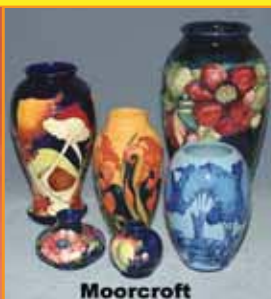
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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to the May/June 2009 issue of *Discovering ANTIQUES!*

Are you a pottery collector? The following will be of interest to you. First, I am proud to announce that the article and information about Athabasca Clay Products Ltd., is being printed FIRST in *Discovering ANTIQUES!* The author, Conrad Biernacki, is also a pottery collector. Receiving a piece of Athabasca pottery as a gift, he became curious and started investigating. The article is the result. Note your calendars - on June 21, 2009 Athabasca Pottery Discovery Day will be held at the Athabasca Seniors Centre, 4810 - 48 Street, Athabasca, AB. Displays will be set up for viewing and invited guests include the former owner of the pottery and employees, curators from the Royal Alberta and Royal Ontario Museums, Conrad Biernacki and collectors. I hope you will attend and help celebrate a piece of Alberta history!

As always, when visiting one of our advertisers, be sure to let them know that you saw their ad in *Discovering ANTIQUES!*

Jan Mather, Editor

Discovering ANTIQUES

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Front Cover: This vase is an example of the pieces produced at Athabasca Clay Products Ltd. Courtesy Gene and Gail Sabo.

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Table of CONTENTS

- 8 cfcn
- 14 matchholders
- 16 travel back in time...
- 18 shows & auctions
- 20 athabasca clay products ltd.
- 30 antique education on the rise
- 32 the collector and the shop
- 34 discovering us near you



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Often when writing articles I prefer to pick topics of an historical nature. This year, 2009, marks my tenth year of writing for various publications. In my early years of collecting, very few topics have eluded me. One area that has a loyal following and may not be too well-known is the Old Time Radio (OTR) collector. There are, and have been for many years, radio collectors – be it battery, transistor, electric, bakelite, etc. This is another division of that, if you will. OTR collectors search for anything relating to the history of radio, books, magazines, promotional items, local radio station give-aways, even local radio listings clipped from newspapers.

Another popular collectable is radio shows. The purist will prefer shows on reel-to-reel tapes, although other formats exist which include 33 1/3 LPs, cassette tapes and 16 inch transcriptions. 16 inch transcriptions were the records actually used by radio stations in the early years. They were 16 inches in diameter and featured a complete radio

...continued on page 10



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CFCN Continued from page 8.

show. A special transcription turntable was needed to accommodate the 16 inch records. With some hunting, the 16 inch records and turntables do surface. Reel-to-reel tapes can be obtained from dealers that specialize in that format, or from other collectors.

Over the years in Calgary many radio stations have come and gone. The first was CFCN which went on the air in 1922 (now CKMX). As well, CFAC aired in the 1920s; CJCJ (100 watts) in the early 1930's; and would become CKXL in 1950 (10,000 watts). Later stations would include CHQR, CJAY, and others. The focus of this article will be CFCN.

W. W. Grant started a broadcasting operation in High River, Alberta in 1921 and he later moved it to Calgary. CFCN went on the air May 18, 1922 and it was the first commercial station in Canada - the first of many records held by CFCN radio.

CFCN had many locations over the years — 544 Crescent Road, the Carlton Hotel, the York Hotel, Toronto General Trust Building, 12th Avenue and 6th Street SE and Broadcast House in 1960. The first transmitter was on Scotchman's Hill overlooking the Calgary Stampede grounds. In 1931, CFCN's power was increased from 500 to 10,000 watts making it the most powerful radio station west of Montreal, Quebec at that time. The second transmitter was built in Strathmore, Alberta. The third transmitter was added in 1946 south of Calgary and in that same year, the kilocycles for CFCN were changed

from 1010 to 1060 which is where the station can still be found today. The 1010 frequency went to CBX an Alberta affiliate of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which was a regulator and a competitor. In 1965, CFCN built a 50,000 watt transmitter. In the mid-1920's, CFCN, *The Voice of the Prairies* as it was known, manufactured radios called "peanut tube sets." They were sold to the public in an effort to create more listeners.

Many locally produced radio programs were featured on CFCN over the years. "Cy Ebineser & the Kid," later renamed the "CFCN Oldtimers" was an old time music program that held the record for the world's longest continuous weekly radio program. It began in 1924 and ran until the 1980's. It could be heard Fridays from 9:00pm until midnight. Many well known names appeared on this show including Cy Hopkins, Ma Trainor, accordionist and long-time leader Tony Neidermayer, Hod Pharis, a disc jockey, and recording artist, Vic Siebert who became part of the nationally known group, Sons of the Saddle, and others who got their start as an Oldtimer. The Oldtimers did record six long playing records and copies are highly sought after by collectors. It should be noted that the most famous Oldtimer, who joined the show in 1928, was Wilf Carter. H. Gordon Love managed CFCN at that time and he arranged for Wilf's first recording session at RCA Victor's Montreal studio in December 1933. Since then, Wilf has recorded hundreds of records. He also had his own 15 minute spot on a daily program on CFCN.

...continued on page 12

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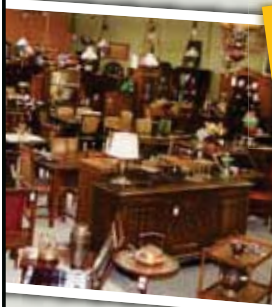
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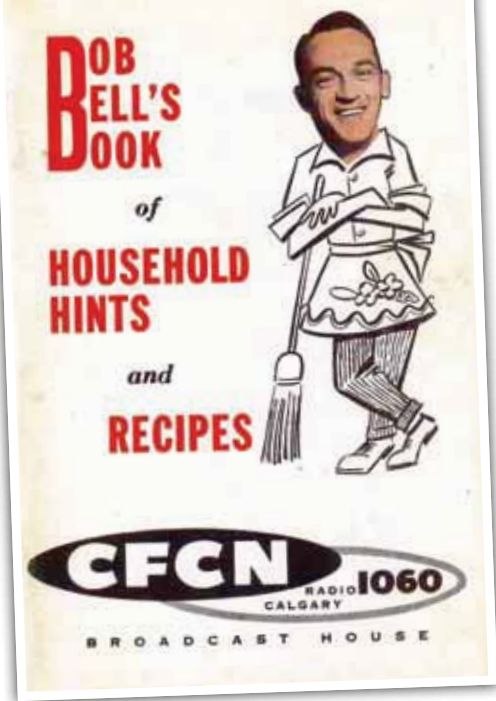
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CFCN Continued from page 10.

The western group "Sons of the Pioneers" were also first introduced to Canadians on CFCN radio. Another recording star to appear on CFCN with his own show was "Ray Little and his Radio Cowboy Show." Ray, with his wife, Ann, and band members Doug Goldsmith (Goldie) and Jimmy Daughtry performed for many years. Many Ray Little song books were given away as well as calendars to many loyal listeners. J. B. Ham also gave away song books. He along with Chuck Irvine and others comprised the "Red Head Jamboree" with Red Head Gas and Oil sponsoring the radio program. In the 1930's, another well-known figure to appear on the CFCN airways was Crescent Heights High School (Calgary) principal and Alberta Premier, William Aberhart, known as "Bible Bill." He had a very popular radio program called the "Prophetic Bible Institute."

The radio station can claim other firsts — under the direction of H. Gordon Love, CFCN was the first radio station to sell advertising space; and in 1935 aired the first commercial newscast with Texaco as the sponsor. The first remote broadcasts came in 1955. The longest

single radio station remote in radio history, in both time and distance, occurred in 1965; another CFCN record. Prominent sports reporter, Henry Viney and partner, Doug Smith stationed themselves outside the International Olympic Committee doors in Rome, Italy where they adlibbed for 3 hours and 20 minutes before finally being able to announce that Banff, Alberta had lost its bid for the Olympic games.

One of the popular long-running morning shows was "The Breakfast Bell" hosted by "Mr. Words" Maac McC Calder and "Mr. Music" Bob Bell. Bob Bell was a CFCN fixture for many years and was a mentor for many up-and-coming announcers including long-time Calgary disc jockey and host of the now popular Classic Country 1060's "Barn Dance Saturday Night," Jimmy Hughes. For many years, Bob Bell featured "Household Hints," a daily program offering solutions to everyday problems. Numerous housewives received his book of household hints and recipes which was given away by CFCN radio. Over the years, other books were given away by CFCN. Religious programming often offered song books. "Sunrise Gospel Hour" was one such show in the 1930's.

Other collectables relating to CFCN exist such as ashtrays, photographs, "CFCN" stamped copies of 45 rpm records and possibly recorded transcriptions of actual radio shows. As the years go on, the give-aways change with the times; for example, compact discs are now given as a prize instead of long playing albums. No longer are there 15 minute radio shows, nor are there any programs named for their sponsor, or air time given to household hints. Some memorable disc jockeys who became household names include D'Arcy Scott, Ned Corrigan, Don Thomas and Gord Kelly.

There are still stations replaying the old time radio shows from the 1930's and 1940's. Years ago, CFCN had such a program called, "Crystal Set Theatre" with host (and old time radio collector) John Truber, who replayed vintage programs from his own collection.

CFCN, *The Voice of the Prairies* became the New Mix 1060, then CKMX and is now Classic Country 1060.

RADIO'S GOLDEN DAYS MAY BE GONE, BUT MANY FOND MEMORIES REMAIN.

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*By Susan Holme Manyluk,
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“Something to keep matches in...” covers a surprisingly diverse range of items and materials; from the very utilitarian to the ornate, the cheap to the costly and the simple to the very elaborate.

For hundreds of years, homeowners and individuals were motivated to facilitate the ability “to light a fire.” Fire...to provide much-needed warmth, to light the darkness, and to cook the day’s sustenance became imperative from mankind’s earliest days. Primitive man banked his fires, jealously guarded the last coal and ember, and welcomed with joy the first spark and puff of smoke each morning. Fire was survival, comfort, inspiration and joy.

Therefore, the invention of “The Match” can be viewed as a tremendous step for mankind’s ease, and a huge saving of time. No more running to the neighbours to borrow a few live coals; no more pointed sticks to twirl by hand or with a bowstring, to create fire by friction; no more striking elusive sparks that would repeatedly wink out before landing in the tinder.

Lo and behold! The Match meant instant flame. Touch it to some dry and finely shredded organic material, add kindling a bit at a time, then some larger combustibles; and finally a few hefty split logs, some lumps of coal, well-dried peat turves, or even freeze-dried prairie buffalo chips — for lack of any other fuel. Keep an eye on it, feed it as needed; and warmth, light and savoury aromas were your reward. Praise be, for this simple ignition tool!



The box of matches you see pictured is the most common brand available in Scandinavia and has been in production for many, many years. Tordenskjold translates into English as Thundershield, and was the name given to a famous Danish naval commander by the name of Peter Wessel. He was, in fact, of Norwegian birth but was in the employ of the Danish king Fredrick IV during the early 1700's, and had a brilliant career opposing the Swedish Crown's ambitions to control all the lucrative shipping and trade in Northern Europe. On his flagship, *Laaland*, Tordenskjold was instrumental in defeating the Swedish military aims with unorthodox naval manoeuvres and daring-do; and though often outgunned, emerged victorious. He was more Viking than Admiral, more gallant than military adherent; striking his enemies like a thunderbolt, indeed. Thus, his handsome visage has graced billions of matchboxes — even though he died young and very tragically in a duel with a German colonel in Hanover, whilst on a leave of absence from his post as Vice-Admiral of the Dano-Norwegian fleet.

A match (like a man) that strikes like a thunderbolt should be treated with respect. Early matches were self-igniting and could be lit by striking on any rough or sharp surface. Rubbing against one another in a trouser pocket could — and did — result in some unexpected fireworks. Consequently, the trouser match safe or vesta case was invented. Often made of sterling silver and ornately chased and engraved; match cases were meant to be portable and were often given as presentation gifts, or as love tokens from those at home and far away. Look for initials and dates, beautiful craftsmanship and silver hallmarks which will identify country, and sometimes

year of origin. These clues are a fascinating footnote to an earlier time and place. I have two sterling silver match cases, one is my grandfather's from 1903; and one was given to a favourite uncle to be carried in the inside breast pocket of his formal clothes. It is less than a centimetre thick, in order not to create an unsightly bulge in a suit jacket, but still has room for about a dozen matches.

Other pocket match holders were very elaborate as well, with oilskin liners or other waterproofing additions. This was to protect matches from moisture in case of an unexpected dunking or drenching. Favoured by seamen, hunters and soldiers, these were an attempt to keep matches dry and usable under adverse conditions. As pipe, and later cigarette and cigar smoking became common in the latter part of the 1800's, having a dry match available was vital. World War I veterans often talked of the frustration of damp matches in the soggy trench-warfare, which was a big part of that particular horror show. Rent the DVD *Passchendaele*, the Canadian-made movie from 2008, directed/produced by Paul Gross; and watch for the “dry match” moment early in the show. And in the final battle scenes, watch for big, tall “Johnson,” the Canadian farm boy character — who happens to be your author's son — and utters the poignant words, “Bring on The Hell.” Life is a movie, sometimes. . . .

Next issue, we will exposé a variety of match holders for household use. Stay tuned. . . .





TRAVEL BACK IN TIME AT THE KOOTENAI BROWN PIONEER VILLAGE

By Farley Wuth, curator, Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village, Pincher Creek, AB

Step back into those bygone days of the Western Canadian frontier! The Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village is southern Alberta's premiere heritage facility, a must stop for any person seriously interested in our pioneer past or for those wanting to know more about antiques. A fantastic opportunity to visit this lovely facility occurs while it is hosting "Antiques on The Creek" during the August long weekend. From the 1st to the 3rd there will be a number of antique dealers from across western Canada selling their wares on site.

Nestled along the tree shaded Pincher Creek as it quietly meanders through the picturesque ranching settlement of the same name, the Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village truly offers those vintage glimpses into our glorious past. Depicted here on two blocks of well manicured garden grounds are exciting reminiscences of pioneer life on the Canadian Prairies from more than a century ago. Come see what Pincher Creek has to offer!

Two museum complexes accompanied by 16 heritage buildings adorn these eye-catching grounds. The historical flagship is the 1883 log three-room cabin once belonging to our beloved John George "Kootenai" Brown, the Irish-born turned Prairie Canadian outdoorsman who became the first Dominion Park Warden at Waterton Lakes. Flanking this structure are two Northwest Mounted Police buildings, the first being the original barn from their 1878 Horse Ranch here at Pincher Creek and the second being an Outpost established less than a decade later along the banks of the Kootenai (now Waterton) River. Father Lacombe's 1885 Hermitage, constructed of logs from the Beauvais Lake area and the quintessential one room country school from the Fishburn District, the first rural school to be established on the southwestern corner of the Canadian Prairies; proudly face each other on the Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village grounds. These impressive icons are but a few examples of the local historical diversity to be found within the Kootenai Brown

Pioneer Village. Also featured are a series of old store fronts and commercial exhibits, housed in the recently renovated Reg & Mildred Beere Exhibition Hall, and a well stocked gift shop and extensive archives located in our welcoming centre, Pioneer Place.

Our grounds, featuring nearly forty stunning gardens, are visual feasts for the eyes. Arranged as pioneer plantations, they bespeak of traditional gardens on the Canadian Prairies. The grounds are meticulously maintained and picnic tables and benches are tastefully arranged to take best advantage of the spectacular vistas. Newly added is our Community Gardens, located on recently acquired lands on the far eastern portion of our grounds.

Operated by the Pincher Creek & District Historical Society, the Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village also promotes the area's vibrant history through a vast array of innovative programs and publications. Special events are held throughout the calendar year, and we offer school groups unique on-site educational sessions. Guided tours are available for booked groups. The long weekend in August, we are hosting an antique sale featuring a wide variety of private antique vendors from across Western Canada. We also are re-issuing our local history book, *Prairie Grass To Mountain Pass*, so we invite the descendants of our pioneers to submit their family histories for this publication. Please contact the Curator Farley Wuth at fswuth.kbpv@gmail.com for further info on this very important project.

The Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village is open year round with summer season hours mid-May through early September seven days a week 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. During the winter we are open weekdays 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Please join us in celebrating our local past. Walk the boardwalks into history! For more information about Antiques on The Creek and our other events visit our website at www.kootenaibrownpioneervillage.org.

Written In Submission for the May/June 2009 Issue of the Discovering Antiques Magazine. Researched, Written & Submitted By: Farley Wuth, Curator, Kootenai Brown Pioneer Village, P.O. Box 1226, Pincher Creek, Alberta. T0K 1W0 Telephone: (403) 627-3684. FSW C.C. Monday, 30th March 2009.

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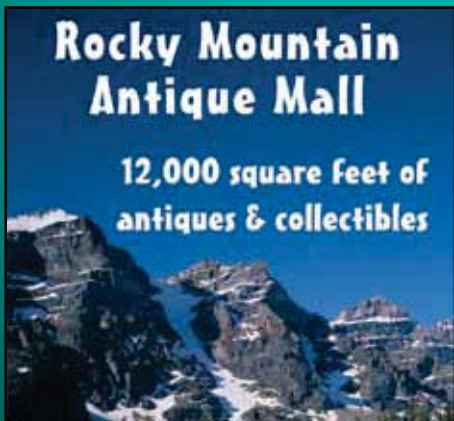
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Athabasca Clay Products Ltd.

A Truly Western Canadian Pottery

By Conrad Biernacki



Stylized birds (see sidebar next issue) and the Thunderbird from the Haida of the Northwest Coast were popular designs on vases by Athabasca Clay Products. Turned on a potter's wheel by Alfred Messerli, they were painted by Pat Johnson (left) and Eialin Armfelt (right). Courtesy Gene and Gail Sabo

Last Christmas, a friend gave me a Canadian pottery vase. That's not unusual. Everyone knows that I enjoy pottery, and that any piece, including yet another Blue Mountain Pottery swan, would be a welcome addition to one of many collections displayed throughout the house, on (and under) the dining room table, jamming shelves in the basement, and (sadly) in plastic tubs under beds and in the garage. I had never seen a vase like this before. It was red earthenware turned on a potter's wheel in a very pleasing shape, and decorated with a hand-painted band of stylized birds. After admiring it for a moment (and appreciating the absence of any chips or cracks), I turned it over to find the impressed mark MADE IN ATHABASCA CANADA.

I've recently spent a lot of time researching and collecting pottery from the Medicine Hat and Redcliff areas of southeast Alberta (Medalta Potteries, Alberta Potteries, Medicine Hat Potteries, Hycroft China,

Sunburst Ceramics, and many others). Occasionally, I'd find references to a pottery in Athabasca that I'd file away for future investigation. Now was the time.

But first let me tell you about someone who you might think would be least likely to ever own a pottery—Edward J. Polanski. Born in Redwater, Alberta, in 1933, he became interested in electronics and attended the Radio College of Canada in Toronto from 1952 to 1953. Returning to Alberta, Ed's career in the television industry began in 1956 when he started selling TV sets and installing antennas in the newly electrified rural areas surrounding the small village of Thorhild (86 km north of Edmonton). Recognized as the pioneer in providing cable TV service to sparsely populated rural areas, Ed established the CATV network in northern Alberta in 1960. Its success was based on the use of transistors rather than vacuum tubes for transmission. It was the first time that this technological innovation was used in North America. One of the pioneers of cable TV in Canada, Ed established the QCTV cable network in west



Courtesy Alfred Messerli

Edmonton in 1970. It was at the same time that Jim Shaw began Capital Cable in the east half of the city. In 1987 Ed sold his company to Videotron of Montreal. Today, it is part of Shaw Communications, one of the largest such companies in the world.

“‘Typical, gambling, reckless entrepreneur that I am,’ says Ed, ‘I ended up with a pottery I never intended.’” (p. 178, Marylu Antonelli and Jack Forbes, *Pottery in Alberta: The Long Tradition*, 1978.) “It all started when Ed and a few potential business partners began discussing the possibility of developing the town of Athabasca’s high quality red clay deposits,” explains Ed’s wife Phyllis in a recent telephone conversation. (Athabasca is 140 km north of Edmonton.) “They were all enthusiastic about establishing a pottery that would benefit the community. But when it came time to take action, my husband was the only one willing to move forward. It wasn’t meant to be a career change, just an adventure on the side.”

Athabasca Clay Products Ltd., in business from September 1964 to late 1968, was on the south side of 50th Avenue (the first east-west street south of the Athabasca River) between 48th and 49th Streets. The rented, two-storey, grey stucco building was once a furniture and woodwork repair shop owned by Steve Schinkinger. It was occupied by business offices before the pottery moved in. (Demolished around 1979, the property is now part of the north parking lot for the Buy-Low Foods store.) It has been estimated that Athabasca Clay Products produced about 150,000 pieces. Local collectors and many

residents in town have a strong attachment to them. “I find that whenever it becomes available, the prices make it uneconomic for us as dealers to compete with collectors,” says Charles Bazalgette of Old Crow Antiques in Athabasca. “If there is any locally, I never see it. So I guess people hang on to it.”

Athabasca Clay Products used unique kaoliniferous clay deposits found along the banks of Tawatinaw Creek, a tributary of the Athabasca River that winds

...continued on page 22



Ed Polanski, founder of Athabasca Clay Products (photo taken 1979). Courtesy Ed and Phyllis Polanski



Eialin Armfelt decorates an ashtray with an incised design, 1967. Dorothy Nielsen Collection, Athabasca Archives

through town from its source in the Columbia Icefield in Jasper National Park on its way to Lake Athabasca which empties into the Arctic Ocean. This clay was first used by at least 1909 when George Green established a brickyard in Athabasca Landing (the settlement became a town in 1911 and changed its name to Athabasca in 1913). His clay was dug from somewhere east of the village. From 1912 to 1913, Claude Thillet operated a rival brickyard near Colinton, 4 km to the south. Using clay found on the property, the company also made pottery as reported by the *Athabasca Times* (July 31, 1913). "Vases, pitchers, jars and flower pots of good and neat designs came out without a flaw, hard and solid...E. Walden, who has

charge of the work, is confident that the products can be enamelled and that the clay will absorb coloring matter." (Hired in 1913, Edwald Walden was a potter from Germany who had previously worked in the United States.) Encouraged by these initial results, a complete pottery plant was installed. "The tastefulness of the designs and the manner in which the various articles are finished indicate that Mr. Walden is an artistic as well as a practical potter." Because of the quality of the pottery's wares and low production costs, the plan was to supply all the retail outlets in Western Canada, undercutting eastern manufacturers. But the company closed when it was realized that the new railway lines to the Peace River district would bypass Athabasca. Edwald then established his own pottery, but his achievements remain to be discovered.

Athabasca clay from the Loxam farm (east of the town along Tawatinaw Creek) was used by the Edmonton brick company Northwest Ceramics, later called Northwest Brick and Tile, from 1958 until it closed in 1996. It was owned by Medicine Hat Brick and Tile, called I-XL Industries from about 1968, a subsidiary of Redcliff Pressed Brick founded in 1912. (Bricks were first made on the Edmonton site in 1907 by Acme Brick using clay found on the property. From 1952 to 1957, the plant was owned by the British firm Borneo Clay Products



Ken Polanski (Ed's nephew) sprays a piece of pottery with background colour before it is painted or incised with a design, 1967. Dorothy Nielsen Collection, Athabasca Archives

...continued on page 24

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*After pieces are removed from their moulds, Dorothy Nielsen smooths the rough edges and removes the mould lines, 1967.
Dorothy Nielsen Collection, Athabasca Archives*

Athabasca Continued from page 22.

and called Alexandra Brick and Tile.) The same clay has been generously provided by the Loxam family to the Athabasca Pottery Club since its founding in 1961. Active today, the club still digs and processes clay for its members.

In the beginning, the decorative wares made by Athabasca Clay Products were turned on a wheel by Alfred Messerli, a potter from Switzerland. After he left in late 1966, the pottery switched to using moulds. Two hundred were purchased from Arnel's Ceramic Molds in Portland, Oregon (owned by Macky Ceramic Products since 2004, see www.mackymolds.com), and perhaps other suppliers. Production resumed in February 1967. Using slip casting techniques rather than a potter's wheel increased output by 10 fold and reduced unit production costs by more than 250 percent.

On the wheel, Alfred produced about 20 to 30 pieces a day. These included a variety of vases, bowls, candy dishes and ashtrays. They were decorated with a variety of designs that were either painted or incised into the surface of the piece before firing. Although many

examples are painted in black leaving the natural red clay as the background, other colours, including blue, green, yellow, brown and pink, were sometimes painted or sprayed on. Eialin Armfelt, from Denmark, was the first decorator. Her early motifs included maple leaves, blueberries, and what became the pottery's most popular design—a scene with Canada Geese and bulrushes (the name Athabasca is believed to be a native word meaning The Place of the Reeds). Later, she added whooping cranes, the Provincial wild rose, and mountain and prairie scenes. First Nations designs included Northwest Coast totem pole figures of the Haida, geometric patterns, and stylized birds.

Although Eialin left the pottery in 1967, her designs were adopted by Pat (Ryan) Johnson, who added some of her own motifs, including a doe and fawn, a jumping deer, and native children. Miloslav Tichy, from Czechoslovakia, worked at the pottery from April 1967 to September 1968 as a decorator and glazer. His designs included bison, deer, and leaves, as well as Eialin's stylized birds.

...continued on page 26

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Decorators signed their work on the bottom with their first initial. Eialin's mark was an elaborately scrolled E, while Pat used a simple P. They also added the initials of the potter. The overlapping letters AM are for Alfred Messerli and MT stood for Miloslav Tichy. Other staff included Dorothy Nielsen who smoothed the rough edges and removed the mould lines after the pieces were cast (often using an electric dentist's drill with various attachments), Bill Wood who prepared the raw clay, Norman Cowley who was probably in charge of the moulding process, and Ed's nephew Ken Polanski who sprayed on coloured backgrounds (yellow was achieved with a coating of clay from Estevan, Saskatchewan), loaded the electric kilns and looked after the firing.

In addition to the potters' and decorators' initials, Athabasca Clay Products were also identified with impressed marks (ATHABASCA CLAY PRODUCTS LTD. ATHABASCA ALBERTA CANADA, MADE IN ATHABASCA CANADA, and ATHABASCA), a raised mark (ATHABASCA ALBERTA CANADA), a decal or circular blue-printed paper sticker (ATHABASCA CLAY PRODUCTS LTD.), a circular black stamp (ATHABASCA CLAY PRODUCTS

LTD., MADE IN ATHABASCA CANADA, and MADE IN CANADA), and perhaps others. Some of the moulded pieces have the impressed name "arnel's," the company that supplied the moulds.

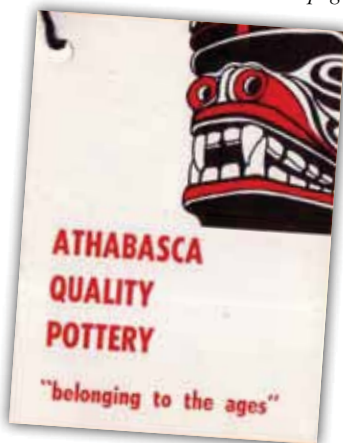
"We were trying to develop the same kind of market as there is for Eskimo carvings," explained Ed (p. 179, *Pottery in Alberta*). "We encouraged Indian help, researched Indian legends, and made designs based on Indian sketches and legends." Athabasca Clay Products seemed to enjoy much success and was sold in 46 gift shops in Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. (They also shipped processed clay to high schools in Alberta and Saskatchewan for use in pottery classes.) Athabasca Clay Products opened its own outlet at 11334 Jasper Ave. in Edmonton (opposite St. Joseph's Cathedral Basilica) in April 1966 selling both wheel-turned and moulded ware. Edward Pohranynchny managed the store from April to September 1966. (He had previously apprenticed as a radio and TV technician in Ed Polanski's Thorhild store from November 1959 to the spring of 1963.) Edward then worked at the pottery until April 1967 where he did everything from preparing

...continued on page 28



The bottom of each piece is usually impressed with the pottery name or labelled with a sticker or decal. This example was turned on a wheel and has the hand painted initials AM for the potter Alfred Messerli and an E for the decorator Eialin Armfelt.

Courtesy Gene and Gail Sabo



A hang tag highlighting the history of Athabasca and the quality of Athabasca Clay Products' wares was attached to each piece of pottery before it was sold. This example shows a Bear motif inspired by a Haida totem pole carving.

Courtesy Gene and Gail Sabo



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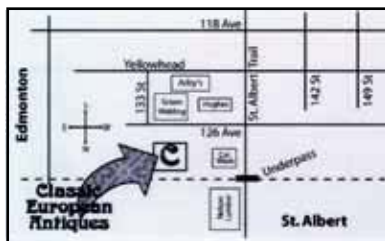
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Potter Miloslav Tichy dips a mug into a vat of glaze which will form a clear protective coating after firing, 1967. Dorothy Nielsen Collection, Athabasca Archives

the clay and casting to firing and glazing, as well as the bookkeeping. Terry (Coles) Raines became the next store manager until the spring of 1967, having previously worked at the pottery during the summer after graduating from high school. Joseph Polanski (Ed's father) later managed the store until it closed.

Peak production was 60,000 pieces a year with a maximum workforce of 16 employees. But the pottery never made a profit and lasted for only four years. Ed had hoped to get a contract from the Bay, but the department store chain was more interested in Blue Mountain Pottery. In the face of adversity, Ed maintained his optimism and believed that his pottery could break even and become profitable sometime in the future. In 1967, with strong Federal Government financial support and marketing assistance from the Research Council of Alberta, plans were being developed to build a huge new pottery that would employ 40 to 50 people and produce 250,000 pieces annually. The Federal Department of Trade and Industry was ready to assist in the development of the company's export markets, particularly the United States. "The main challenge," explains Phyllis Polanski, "was the high transportation cost for getting the finished pottery to market." When a licence became available for a cable TV station in Edmonton, Ed returned to his earlier career.

...continued in the next July/August '09 Issue

Acknowledgements:

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Conrad Biernacki is the programs manager at the Royal Ontario Museum and frequent exhibition curator at various galleries and museums. He is writing a book on Blue Mountain Pottery to be published by the ROM in 2010. You can reach him at conradb@rom.on.ca.



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Antique Education on the Rise During Recession?

ABAD ECONOMY SPURS GROWTH? While at first glance this statement might seem somewhat contradictory given today's economic woes, it would appear that a few sectors of the antique market are experiencing some rather significant gains in some rather unexpected areas. The Asheford Institute of Antiques, a professional-level distance-learning program on antiques and collectibles, recently announced that it's winter enrollment applications had spiked dramatically during the last quarter of 2008 - a somewhat surprising development when considering the overall state of today's current marketplace.

When contacted directly about the sudden rise in enrollments, Asheford Admissions Dean, Tony Drew, commented that, "In times of economic trouble, people often turn to education as a means to increase their income, and sometimes even as a catalyst to find a new career direction in life - we've seen it before." He went on to say that with the school's addition of an "appraising program," he thought there might also be more interest due in part to recent housing foreclosures and subsequent content sales - resulting in the increased demand for qualified appraisers. "Almost every other enrollment we take now is based on students wanting to

become antique and collectible appraisers," said Drew.

Long time industry analyst Jeffery Archer also noted that, not all areas of the economy are always affected adversely when it comes to a recession, "In fact," said Archer, "some sectors of the antique and collectibles market can offer tremendous value and superb buying opportunities for those with the right knowledge and expertise." Archer went on to say it shouldn't be a surprise when schools such as Asheford witness strong growth demand, "It's all about opportunity - when times are tough, people often seize the best options available to them - in this case it happens to be antique education."

The Asheford school, which recently celebrated its forty-second year this past week, marked the milestone with a small gala, during which school director, Charles Green commented, "It's nice to be able to provide our students with some positive growth potential - even in such difficult economic times."

For readers seeking more information about the antique course offered by the Asheford Institute of Antiques, they can be contacted at: 877 444-4508; visit their web site at www.asheford.com, or see ad in this issue.

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A classic library set up with matching leather chairs and crystal sconces.



Marlene discovered Classic European Antiques and with the assistance of Anneke and Hank, the shop's owners, has been able to add the desired pieces to achieve the vintage décor strived for throughout her home. She has a variety of rare antiques and her collection is now large enough to fill the average antique shop.

Two of her most prized pieces are a pair of 1940's chandeliers which hang from the 60-foot vaulted ceiling. (See page 2) Marlene has set up one room as a classic library, and it is perfectly finished with the set of matching antique leather chairs and table. Glowing from the walls is an identical pair of crystal sconces (see page 3).

Some of her more recent purchases include a collection of bronze horse statues, also from Anneke and Hank. Marlene's house abounds in antiques and vintage pieces which compliment not only each other, but their setting. Her home has been compared to an old European castle. With the assistance of Classic European Antiques, Marlene has been able to acquire the pieces she wanted

to complete the décor she envisioned in her large lake front home with the result being an not only furnishings and accessories, but an incredible personal collection of antiques and collectables.

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