



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME XXXI

NUMBER 4

DECEMBER 2020

"African-Americans and Potteries in the Early 19th Century New York Metropolitan Area"

by Mark Shapiro, Studio Potter and Proprietor of
Stonepool Pottery, Worthington, Massachusetts

Sponsored by Ellen Brennan-Galvin

On Monday, December 14 at 2:00 p.m. EST, Mark Shapiro will deliver a lecture via Zoom that will explore the little-known topic of African-American potteries in our New York Metropolitan area in the early 1800s.

During his recent Smithsonian Artist Residency, Mark Shapiro studied the National Museum of American History's celebrated Remensnyder Collection, which includes some of the finest examples of early American salt-glazed stoneware. Mark will speak about two stories behind these pots: that of the New York City African American master potter Thomas Commeraw and the 1818 slave-trading scandal that enveloped New Jersey's Morgan and Van Wickle pottery families.



Oyster Jar for Daniel Johnson, by Thomas W. Commeraw, New York City early 1800s. Salt-glazed stoneware, H. 9", Diam. 4", National Museum of American History Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Thomas Commeraw was a major early New York City stoneware potter, but our understanding of him changed when Crocker Farm's Brandt Zipp discovered he was

listed as “a black” in the 1800 U.S. census. Further research revealed him to be a community leader, member of the First African Church, voting rights activist, and supplier of jars to New York’s free black oystermen. But why would such an accomplished master craftsman emigrate to Sierra Leone in 1820, leaving his country of birth and city of business? The course of his career illuminates the deteriorating status of African American freemen (and many small master craftsmen) during the first decades of the 19th century during the economic expansion and the boom-and-bust cycles of the new republic’s early capitalism.

Just two years before Commeraw’s departure, and across from the harbor from which he embarked, two prominent New Jersey men at the heart of the early stoneware industry became embroiled in a slave-trading scandal. In the spring of 1818, Charles Morgan conspired with his brother-in-law, Judge Jacob Van Wickle, to delude, kidnap, and then falsify documents for several cargoes of enslaved new Jerseyans bound for New Orleans. Although the two were indicted by a grand jury, neither man nor their many collaborators were punished. Setting the great accomplishments and travails of Thomas Commeraw against the historical realities evinced in this scandal attests to the narrowing horizons for free and enslaved blacks in the early Republic and the hardening of the structures of racism that plague us still.

Mark Shapiro is a potter in Western Massachusetts who has sought to bridge the gap between contemporary studio potters and historical researchers, curators, and collectors. With an undergraduate degree in anthropology, and after six years working as a sculptor in New York in the early 1980s, he moved to Worthington, Massachusetts and founded the Stonepool Pottery on a property that had been on the route of the Underground Railroad. Shapiro is a frequent workshop leader, lecturer, curator, panelist, and writer, and is a mentor to more than half a dozen apprentices who have trained at his Stonepool Pottery. His work is in many public collections, including the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.; the Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina; the Newark Museum of Art; the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse, New York and the Chipstone Foundation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His work was featured in the World Ceramics Biennial in Icheon, Korea. His interviews of Karen Karnes, Michael Simon, Paulus Berensohn, and Sergei Isupov are in the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, and he edited *A Chosen Path: The Ceramic Art of Karen Karnes* (UNC Press 2010). Shapiro is on the advisory board of *Ceramics Monthly* and is a contributing editor to *Studio Potter Magazine*.

A founding member of POW! (Pots on Wheels!), he also heads the Apprenticelines Project, which seeks to promote and expand apprenticeship. In 2018–19 he was a Smithsonian Artist Residency Fellow studying the Remensnyder Collection at the National Museum of American History.

You are invited to register for the Zoom webinar.

When: December 14, 2020, 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Topic: "African-Americans and Potteries in the Early 19th-Century New York Metropolitan Area," by Mark Shapiro, Studio Potter and Proprietor of Stonepool Pottery, Worthing, Massachusetts. Sponsored by Ellen Brennan-Galvin.

Register in advance for this webinar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_krW2aYXOQLif-IZUiMhIFA

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.



Three-Gallon Jug with Quadruple "Clamshell" Motif, by Thomas W. Commeraw, New York City, early 1800s,. Salt-glazed stoneware, approximately H. 15"; Diam. 9.5". Private collection.

Long-time Board Member Lillian Johnson has Died

It is with great sadness that we inform the CCC membership of the death of long-time board member Lillian Johnson at the age of 85. Lillian served on the group's board over many years, most recently as chair of Credentials. We will miss her participation in CCC events and her cheerful greeting at the door of our meetings.

Those wishing to learn more about Lillian's achievements and the many interesting activities in which she was involved and, in addition, add their condolences to her obituary should go to <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/lillian-johnson-obituary?pid=197120854>. There will be a family memorial during the summer of 2021, as well as a memorial tea for Lillian given by the Connecticut Ceramics Circle at the Bruce Museum once the Bruce is accessible.

Addition to CCC Directory

Please add the following new members to your CCC Directory:

Liz Collins, 828 Still Hill Road, Hamden, Connecticut 06518-1105
elizabethcollins12@gmail.com; 203.248.5915

Carla Dowben, 14 Loring Avenue, Providence, Rhode Island 02906
carladowben@gmail.com; 401.421.1366

A Pleasant Surprise for 2020: Zoom Lectures

Although we all continue to feel very much constrained during this time of Coronavirus quarantines, one happy and novel innovation has been the plethora of Zoom lectures being shared by an international collection of ceramics organizations.

We now share our lectures via Zoom with the same organizations that are sharing theirs with us: The French Porcelain Society, the Porcelain & Pottery Club of Rhode Island, the San Francisco Ceramic Circle, the English Ceramic Circle, the Société des Amis du Musée National de la Céramique, the Transferware Collectors Club, and the American Ceramic Circle.

For Zoom links to these lectures, be on the alert for weekly CCC MailChimp email messages, and take advantage of the option to participate in lectures with this international circle of ceramics enthusiasts!



Mark Shapiro at work at Stonepool Pottery.

Save the Date: Friday, December 4: Zoom Lecture from the Pottery and Porcelain Club of Rhode Island

On Friday, December 4 from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., the Pottery and Porcelain Club of Rhode Island will have a Holiday Party, a virtual "Road Show" with Nicholas Dawes, Senior Vice President of Heritage Auctions Special Collections. CCC members will be invited to attend via Zoom, and the link will be sent in advance of the date.

Reminder! Monday, November 30 Zoom Lecture from the Société des Amis du musée nationale de Céramique

« A la table d'un collectionneur – Histoire
de la porcelaine de Bordeaux »

"At the Table of a Collector -- The History of the Porcelain of Bordeaux"

Lecture by Jacqueline Du Pasquier, Honorary Director in Chief of the Patrimony and of the Museum of Decorative Arts of Bordeaux and Camille Jolin, Head of Collections of the XVIIth-XIXth Centuries at the Museum of Decorative Arts of Bordeaux.

Date and Time: 30 November, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. EST

Zoom Link : [https://zoom.us/j/94301789029?
pwd=OEIpbXpZZXFYbXJMZzErVXB1WHFqUT09](https://zoom.us/j/94301789029?pwd=OEIpbXpZZXFYbXJMZzErVXB1WHFqUT09)

Meeting ID : 943 0178 9029

Passcode : 255542

Books of Interest to Ceramics Enthusiasts

Majolica Mania: Transatlantic Pottery in England and the United States, 1850-1915

In conjunction with the January 2021 exhibit at the Bard Graduate Center comes *Majolica Mania: Transatlantic Pottery in England and the United States, 1850-1915* by Susan Weber, Eleanor Hughes, Catherine Arbuthnot et al.

This is the first comprehensive study of the most important ceramic innovation of the 19th century. Colorful, wildly imaginative, and technically innovative, majolica was functional and aesthetic ceramic ware. Its subject matter reflects a range of 19th century preoccupations, from botany and zoology to humor and the macabre.

Available from the Bard Graduate Center at <https://store.bgc.bard.edu/>. Susan Weber has also created a smaller booklet for \$20.

Ceramics in America 2019 (Ceramics in America Annual), Edited by Robert Hunter

This issue features ground-breaking discoveries for students of American Ceramic history. Available through the Chipstone Foundation at <http://www.chipstone.org/publications.php/2/Ceramics-in-America>.

Ceramics Masterclass: Creative Techniques of 100 Great Artists by Louisa Taylor

The author explores this diverse discipline by showcasing 100 of the most innovative and inspiring artists past and present, analyzing the techniques and methods used to create the works and the concerns which underpin their creative process. Available through Amazon.

Elsewhere in the Decorative Arts

Museums offering virtual tours of interest:

The Everson Museum of Art everson.org/virtual-programming/classes-and-studio-tours.

Spode Exhibition Online at spodeceramics.com.

The Chipstone Foundation at chipstone.org, click media, then making.

The American Ceramic Circle at americanceramiccircle.org.



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