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ARTHUR EUGENE BAGGS, AMERICAN POTTER.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1963
Fine Arts

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ARTHUR EUGENE BAGGS, AMERICAN POTTER

DISSERVATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Roberta Stokes Persick, B. S. in Ed., A.M., M. F. A.

*****

The Ohio State University
1963

Approved by

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INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of this study, the desire has been to present the life story of Arthur Eugene Baggs. To do so has entailed an investigation, not only of his accomplishments, but also the setting out of which he emerged, the conditions which helped to mold his life and his work.

To present the life story of a man necessitates the conjuring up of his spirit, the awareness of his presence. Without this, the written words are as so many statements of facts—cold and lifeless. The search for the spirit leads the searcher over many paths, down which the subject of the quest has walked at some other moment in time. Many paths are found to be closed or covered over by the impenetrable weeds and tangles of the passing years. Fog hangs heavily over some, so that the vision is blurred, and only a misty glimpse can be obtained. The traveler squints his eyes and with arms outstretched feeling for the way, hopes, by chance, he eventually will stumble his way through the maze.

Such a journey the writer has embarked upon. She has dared to believe that she might see something of the spirit, the light that shone in the man, Arthur Eugene Baggs.
CHAPTER I

THE EARLY YEARS OF ARTHUR BAGGS

Arthur Eugene Baggs was born October 27, 1886, in the village of Alfred, New York. His father was Vernon Andre Baggs, son of Elisha Larkin Baggs and Roxanna Sunderland Baggs. His mother was Mary Green, daughter of John Chandler Green and Emily Sherman Green.

The village of Alfred was a small community, but a rather unique one in that Alfred's citizens supported a university. Arthur's mother, Mary Green, had attended Alfred University, just as her parents before her. The family for a long time had resided in Alfred. Arthur's father, Vernon Baggs, came to Alfred from Rhode Island where his father, Elisha Harkin Baggs, was a school teacher. Elisha Baggs was a friend of William C. Kenyon, President of Alfred University. It was through this friendship that Vernon Baggs came to Alfred for his education. After completing his education Vernon Baggs remained in Alfred, became a merchant in the village, and also took an active part in the affairs of the University. For many years he
was a member and President of the Board of Trustees until his death.¹

Arthur was the only child of Mary and Vernon Baggs. His early activities were much the same as the other boys of this small community. He attended the local grammar school and supplemented his formal education by roaming the countryside, exploring the wonders of the woods and hills, and keeping check, of course, on all of interest that might be happening within the village. His boyhood curiosity led him to seek the habitats of birds and bugs, bringing home with him whatever could be easily transported in stuffed pockets. His random discoveries expanded into categorized collections which eventually included birds' nests, butterflies, moths, bugs, snail shells, fossils, rocks, bones, and various other treasures. To each, he assigned a Latin name, the accuracy of which could be doubted, but at any rate, this was the scientific procedure. To be a scientist when he grew up was the goal of his boyish dreams at this time.

His fascination for collecting extended into another area which led him to deliver what was probably his first public oration. At the time of his graduation from grammar

school in 1900 he stood before an audience of local townsfolk and discoursed on the subject of philately, presenting what he thought to be the pleasures and profits of stamp collecting. This eventful night in June, in Fireman's Hall, marked for young Arthur Baggs what was the most torturous and yet the most triumphant moment of his life. He had delivered that speech without breaking down. It was over! He had lived through it.  

The summer's vacation afforded more time to watch the construction of a new building going up on the University's campus. Such an activity was of great interest to the boys in this small village. Young Arthur and his friends made daily examinations of the building's progress. The curiosity with which Arthur followed the activity was little more than the fascination of watching the bricks go higher and higher. He did not know then that this building was to play a dominant role in the shaping of his life. He had yet to discover that his interests were soon to be absorbed with earth and fire.

Someone else was watching the construction of this building, perhaps more carefully, and undoubtedly with far greater awareness of its significance. To this man, Charles F. Binns, the bricks rising higher and higher meant

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2Incomplete biographical sketch. no date.
the realization of a dream coming closer to actuality. The building was to represent the beginning of a new adventure in education. It was to be the New York School of Clay Working and Ceramics. The first of its kind, it was to be the pioneer in the field of ceramic training for artists as well as for engineers.

In the same month of June in the year 1900 that Arthur Baggs spoke of philately, Charles Binns, too, delivered an oration. At the time of Alfred University's commencement exercise, the ceremony of laying the corner stone was also observed. Charles Binns, the Director of the new ceramic school, spoke of its great future.

I see the school thronged with busy workers. I feel the throb of the engines, and I hear the roar of the kilns. I see clay from all parts of the state... being wrought here into all sorts of wares. I see those who dream of graceful form and glowing colors realizing by work of the hands the creations of the brain. I see issuing from these walls a succession of students who shall be called to take charge of clay working establishments in all parts of the country. I see technical and training schools arise... their professors are men from Alfred... There are times, and... this is one of them, when young men may be pardoned if they see visions, the old men if they dream dreams... I say that there be hidden here vast possibilities, and that all things are possible to those who believe.

If this were only a vision then, Charles Binns was...

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fortunate to live to see it come to pass. Arthur Baggs was soon to become a part of this dream come true.

In the autumn of 1900, Arthur Baggs enrolled in the Alfred Academy. After three years he had completed his requirements, passing the Regents credits for entrance into the University. In 1903, at the time of graduation from the Academy, Arthur stood before the townsfolk for a second time. All of the people were familiar to him, many were friends he had known all his life. But today, they were strangers again. He did not give a second oration but he had written the class song. As he sang it with the others, he stared at the words before him as if he were seeing them for the first time, not daring to raise his eyes.

While at Alfred Academy, Arthur decided he wanted to study to become an artist. The only available source of art instruction was at the new ceramic school. During his last semester at the Academy, Arthur made an agreement whereby he was admitted to the drawing class at the ceramic school. This arrangement was more like a bargain. It was drawing instructions which he wanted, and it was prospective students that Professor Binns was seeking. Arthur had to promise to enroll as a ceramic student the following autumn. To get the drawing instruction which Arthur wanted

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4 Incomplete biographical sketch. No date.
most at that time in his life, he agreed to Professor Binn's condition. If he were going to get the chance to learn to draw he would go along with this "clay stuff".

When the autumn semester of 1903 began, Arthur was among the members of Professor Binns's Freshman class. Many years later when reminiscing about these beginning years, Arthur Baggs remarked:

> From the very first day when he [the Baggs boy] slowly and laboriously built a little bowl out of clay coils his doom was sealed. Clay and glazes and fire were the playthings he had been looking for.\(^5\)

In 1936, at the time of the presentation of an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree, Arthur Baggs was asked to place on exhibit some of his pieces of pottery. Among the pieces selected appeared the first pot that he had made. Its significance he explained.

> My first pot, September, 1903. I had a grand time making it and was a clay fan from then on. Remembering this helps me to realize that some equally crude attempts by beginners may be important to them even though they look pretty sad to me.\(^6\)

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\(^6\) Note, originally attached to the display of the pot.
CHAPTER II

EARLY GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF CERAMIC EDUCATION

Before proceeding further with Arthur Baggs's work as student, potter, and teacher, it seems fitting that a background be laid, providing a setting of time and circumstance into which Arthur Baggs found himself. The moulding of his future years was dependent upon the conditions of the ceramic education of the day and the touch of an inspiring, devoted teacher.

Arthur entered the ceramic field during its infancy of growth and development. A few men with vision and foresight had begun to take steps which were to change considerably the ceramic industry and art.

The Ohio State University
Ceramic Engineering Department

The first major step was made in 1894 when at The Ohio State University, a Ceramic Engineering Department was established under the direction of Edward Orton, Jr. Prior to this time, various Associations had been formed which were attempts to promote ceramic progress: Illinois Clay Workers Association in 1876; Ohio Drain Tile and Brick Association in 1878; National Brick Manufacturers'
Association in 1886. Each of these groups published trade journals which, in their own way, contributed information with the idea of sharing and expanding knowledge for all those interested. The establishment of the Ceramic Department at The Ohio State University in 1894 was a direct outgrowth of the sincere efforts on the part of such associations to make possible formalized, technical, ceramic training. It was hoped that scientific training could eventually overcome the many reoccurring problems which vexed the clay workers and could provide more efficient production. With the efforts of Edward Orton, Jr., encouraged by the National Brick Manufacturers' Association, a program of study was planned and put into practice which was designed to provide the necessary training in ceramic problems.

**American Ceramic Society**

Professor Orton extended his influence still further when he took part as a member of a nucleus group of men to form the American Ceramic Society in 1899. This was a small body of men with their eyes to the future, who could foresee their country's progress in the ceramic industry only through application of scientific methods. The forming of this Society was an expression of discontent with prevailing conditions. To be able to compete with foreign trade, to meet the standards of the other countries,
the American clay workers had no other choice but to discard an outmoded way of thinking. Too many clay workers up to this time knew no method of working other than a continuance of practices already proven with some degree of success. They seemed to show little or no interest in shifting their procedure from an empiric one to a scientific or technological one. Perhaps they mistrusted the man of science, were afraid they would lose their jobs, or doubted that scientific methods could be an improvement over the methods they knew.

With the very first meeting of the American Ceramic Society in 1899, Mr. Charles Binns, a charter member, addressed the group with a plea to the clay workers of the United States for the necessity of establishing scientific foundation for future progress. This plea expressed a need which several other far-sighted men undoubtedly recognized when they formed the Society. Not too much had been done up to the turn of the twentieth century toward applying science to the pottery industry in the United States. Very little research had been carried out. Very little literature had been made available.

As for published literature, Mr. Binns, in his address
to the Society, "Use of Equivalent Weights,"¹ accounted for all publications known to him. Simeon Shaw was the first known writer in the English language who combined some scientific thinking with the more customary empiric approach. However, this did not have any effect upon the industry in England. Salvetat, in 1857, published Lecons de Ceramique. Seger, in 1896, published in German, his scientific findings in clays and glazes. Karl Langenbeck, in 1895, published Chemistry of the Potter. This was a work in English, the first one since the time of Simeon Shaw, which applied chemical laws to ceramics specifically. The Langenbeck work was little understood by practical potters, and the foreign works of Salvetat and Seger were nearly nonaccessible due to the language barrier. Mr. Binns, in 1897, published his Ceramic Technology which arose from a need to establish some scientific basis for the teaching he carried on in his classes in Trenton, New Jersey.²

What Mr. Binns proposed at this first meeting of the Society was the use of chemical symbols and formulae and a satisfactory table of weights. When each man became

²Ibid., p. 7.
familiar with such information his own thinking and experimentation would become simplified; he would be able to convey his ideas clearly to other informed men; he would be able to derive knowledge from discussions and papers dealing with new investigations. This new informed clay worker, thus, would expand his horizons. At least, he had nothing to lose. He could not ignore the progress being made in other countries where more scientific procedures were being employed. He could not convince the progressive minded clay worker that old emperic methods—even with many years of trial and error—could adequately explain the happenings in the great mystery of clay and fire. If experience were joined with scientific knowledge, how much better equipped the clay worker would become. If potters were to meet the new demands of the day they must come to the point of accepting a change in thinking. They no longer could remain complacent with conditions as they stood, while the rest of the world moved on ahead without them.

It was Mr. Binns's proposal that the Society take a definite action to make available a means of supplying scientific knowledge: a list of chemical symbols, formulae and equivalent weights of substances commonly used in the ceramic industry. This proposal was met by President Wheeler
by forming a committee of Mr. Binns, Mr. Zimmer, and Mr. Orton to work out and produce this information.

The following year, 1900, the committee presented to the Society their Manual of Ceramic Calculation. When some of the members complained that scientific terms and formulae were only confusing to them, Mr. Binns and Mr. Orton attempted to convince them that chemical symbols were used precisely to remove confusion from communication with each other. Once these symbols are learned, they would have the same meaning to everyone who used them. Ideas could be simply stated, clearly understood.

In one of the discussions where personal opinions were being aired concerning whether or not in future meetings chemical terms or common terms should be used for the benefit of every one present, it is very interesting to see the firmness with which both Mr. Binns and Mr. Orton maintained their stand. 3

Mr. Binns:

I think this discussion will do good. It will make the position of those using the formula clear to those who are not, and perhaps raise more sympathy in the minds of those using them for those who are not. It is a matter which is not new to us. We have threshed it out over and over again, and when

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we published our manual of ceramic calculation, Professor Orton and I had about the nearest approach to a fight we ever had, about it. I had pretty much the idea announced here today, that we ought to go to the level of those who did not understand chemistry and life them up. He took the ground that we must presuppose some knowledge of chemistry, because it is absolutely impossible in a book like that Manual of Ceramic Calculation to put it in any other way; and those who did not have it, must refer to some elementary book where they can get a knowledge of the elements of chemistry . . . It is just because formulae are simple that they are used, not because they are complicated. And I counsel those who do not understand them to get right down to it, and learn to understand them, right away. By so doing they will find an enormous accession of power and understanding.

Mr. Orton:

But it would be wrong to let people think the Society was formed wholly for the uplifting of the present generation of clayworkers . . . In fact . . . this Society was formed . . . from motives of distinctly another sort. It was from a desire of educated and trained ceramic workers to get together and discuss freely and in congenial society, the things for which they cannot find sympathetic ears elsewhere; and by exchange of knowledge, to broaden and perfect themselves . . . In my judgment, the greatest good this Society will ever do, will be to set a goal before the American clay worker to which we can inspire him to climb. We should not try to smooth his path too much, or to lift him to this goal; encourage him to climb to it . . . But in a generation, or two, we shall see ceramics lifted from the position of a crude trade up to that of a refined and highly technical art.

It is interesting to note here the fact that some of the members of the Society had pooled their talents and had set before themselves the task of translating from German
into English the works of Hermann Seger. Those men in the Society who could read German realized the importance of the Seger findings. For the betterment of the ceramic industry they were willing to offer their assistance to make available to English speaking potters the tremendous contributions of the German scientist. The translations were completed and published by the Society in 1902, in two volumes: *Collected Writings of Dr. Hermann August Seger.*

**Volume I**

(A) Treatises of general scientific nature

(B) Essays relating to Brick and Terra Cotta, Earthenware and Stoneware, and Refractory Wares.

**Volume II**

(A) Essays on Whitewares and Porcelain

(B) Travels, Letters and Polemics

(C) Uncompleted works and extracts from the archives of the Royal Porcelain Factory.

**Arts and Crafts Movement**

With the efforts of the American Ceramic Society, ceramic education seemed to be making progress scientifically and technically. However, there was another factor
underway which was soon to make itself known as an important influence upon the potter: the Arts and Crafts Movement. A significant indication that crafts were experiencing a revival was the forming in 1897 of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts. This was the outcome of a successful crafts exhibition held there.

As the craft entries on exhibition were evaluated, two problems seemed to present themselves for consideration. (1) Many of the entries revealed a serious need to provide some of the craftsmen with artistic training. Much of the work lacked a knowledge or comprehension of good design which gives expression to creative exercise. (2) Many of the works revealed a serious need for improvement in the technique of handling the various materials.

The Boston Society of Arts became the first organized group to work toward establishing certain aims and standards intended to improve the artistic and technical quality of the crafts. As a result, other communities were encouraged to organize and to form a more direct guiding influence upon the aspiring craftsmen.

The "Principles of Handicraft" presented on the first page of a 1912 issue of Handicraft magazine, a monthly publication representing the Arts and Crafts Movement, reveals
some indication of standards set up for improving crafts and craftsmen. The principles listed:

Motives . . . the love of good and beautiful work as applied to useful service, and the need of making an adequate livelihood.

Conditions. . . natural aptitude, thorough technical training, and a just appreciation of standards. . . . He craftsman should exercise the faculty of design in connection with manual work, and manual work should be part of his training in design.

Artistic Co-operation. When the designer and the workman are not united in the same person they should work together, each teaching the other his own special knowledge, so that the faculties of the designer and the workman may tend to become united in each.

Social Co-operation. Modern Craftsmanship requires that the idea of patronage be superseded by that of reciprocal service and co-operation.

... The results aimed at are the training of true craftsmen, the developing of individual character in connection with artistic work, and the raising of standards of beauty in objects of use.4

Technical and Art School
Trenton, New Jersey

Another significant event took place in 1897 which was, in its way, an attempt to combine ceramic training both scientifically and artistically. In Trenton, New Jersey, a small body of men decided to do something to meet the needs of the local industries. They planned to

establish a school which would provide training in art along with training in science. It was hoped that by combining the two, the school could better serve the community. It was not to be specifically a school for ceramic technology but to give due attention to developing workers with a better awareness and understanding of good design. The country at the time was not without art schools but this was a venture to bridge the gap between fine art and its direct application to an industrial product. Charles Binns, recently arrived from England, was asked in 1898 to take charge of the new school to be known as the Technical and Art School.

**New York State School of Clayworking and Ceramics, Alfred, New York**

In the year 1900, another state, New York, was making plans to establish a school for ceramic training. Mr. Binns was invited to take on the responsibility of bringing the school into material realization. This meant resigning from his position as principal at the Technical and Art School. He decided in favor of this new challenge.

The school, called the New York State School of Clayworking and Ceramics, was located in Alfred, New York, a small village, but the location of a liberal arts school, Alfred University. It was the second state school in
the country to provide opportunity for ceramic science.

In organizing the school, specific needs were realized and established as primary goals:

1. To serve as an experiment station and assist in developing the resources of the State in clays and shales.

2. To stimulate the production of fine pottery and porcelain.

3. To educate students in every branch of clay working.5

From the beginning, plans included attention to art as well as to science. Mr. Binns's belief was that every clay worker should have both scientific and artistic knowledge. One complemented the other. The clayworker who merely was concerned with technique or theory, and not concerned with artistic use of form, glazes, and decoration, lessened his ability to be a good craftsman. Likewise, the clayworker who does not have at his command, knowledge of scientific procedure, in matters of his clays, glazes, and fire limits his capacity to produce beautiful pottery.

It was most desired to have this combination in each clayworker. However, owing to the demands of concentration in special study and work it was hoped that technicians and designers could work hand in hand, stimulating each other

and offering each talent for the benefit of the better clay product.

The program of study took three forms: (1) full course of four years in technology, (2) course of two years in practical clay-working, (3) course of two years in applied art.\(^6\)

In an article for *The Craftsman*, in 1903, "Education in Clay," Mr. Binns discussed the ceramic art program, believing this to be of interest to *The Craftsman* readers.\(^7\)

Believing that each student's training should be based on both science and art, Mr. Binns set about the task of providing this training simultaneously. Miss Adelaide M. Blanchard of Boston was placed in charge of design instruction. Each student received instruction and practice in drawing exercises for "elementary and applied design." Since most of the students had seen very little of "artistic pottery" and had little idea of how to produce it, they began first with a study of forms. By means of the molding process they provided themselves with experience in handling clay and applying designs. The students also were exposed to instruction in chemistry. This

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\(^6\) Ibid.,

\(^7\) Ibid., pp. 8-9.
knowledge was deemed imperative as the understanding of materials used by the potter is so essential to intelligent use of design.

This was just the beginning, the acquainting the student with elementary knowledge of design, form, and composition of materials. With this as a springboard, the student launched off on his own, pursuing a personal interest, be it throwing, molding, or glazing. Whatever the choice, he was obliged to pursue it to some degree of accomplishment. He had to be patient, working always with the purpose of understanding. Since his time was limited it was necessary to avail himself of various interests in order that his comprehension of ceramic art could be expanded to fuller dimensions.

By the time his course of study was completed, the student would have attended classes in calculation and composition of glazes and clays; attended lectures on production of all ceramic wares, be it brick or porcelain; attended lectures on the history of ceramic art of the many cultures of the world. But most important, he would have spent much time in experimentation. Often it was likely to have been a search to duplicate a specific historical specimen, in matter of glaze and body; or at other times he was given certain suggestions for trial from which
he was to proceed toward, for him, unknown results. In any case, the student was encouraged to seek understanding through trial and experimentation. The study of glazes was extremely appealing to Mr. Binns and it is no wonder his students were guided attentively along such learning. Mr. Binns was interested especially in matt glazes. He presented a paper to the American Ceramic Society in 1903 dealing with the development of matt glaze. Other types of glazes—crystalline, for example—were given attention. The students were made to realize the utmost significance of a full understanding of the materials, their properties, their reactions in combination with one another, and their response to the fire.

Besides the usual courses of study conducted throughout the school year, Mr. Binns instituted a Summer session designed primarily for teachers in the public schools. This is one more illustration of his sincere interest in the encouragement of pottery-making at all levels. He desired the clay worker in the factory to be more than a performer of a monotonous mechanical duty. He wanted him to have a feeling for beauty in the product of his craft. Where could there be a better time to begin developing

this sensitivity to pottery than with the child? The child approaches clay with all the freshness and exhuberance that comes naturally with being young and full of wonder. This is the time to feed the hungry appetite for life with the food of beauty; the time to instill the love for craftsmanship; and to fan the spark which keeps alive the burning quest for the never-ending store of knowledge. This is the time—before the spirit is crushed and deadened, and the job in the factory becomes just a job.

In 1902, one of Mr. Binns's summer students submitted an account to Keramic Studio, a monthly magazine, of the favorable reaction to this teachers' class. Apparently Mr. Binns gave them much to aspire to, for the writer related that the work was "based on sound theory and beginning with the preparation of clays and glazes, the whole field of ceramic art has been laid open to the students." Something else the writer mentioned which seems to bear witness to Mr. Binns's personal philosophy is the fact that the school withheld no secrets. Mr. Binns was always willing to offer suggestions and his notebooks were ever available to the students.

CHAPTER III

CHARLES FERGUS BINNS

It is useless to attempt to surmise what the life and work of Arthur Baggs might have been had there never been a Charles Binns. An undeniable fact remains, Fate chose the co-existence of the two men. How much influence Mr. Binns extended in the charting of the course of life Arthur Baggs was to follow cannot be properly measured. But by reviewing, briefly, aspects of Mr. Binns's life, one might become more aware of the strong personality—a noble man, indeed. It was Arthur Baggs's fortune to be placed under his guidance.

Charles Binns was a mature man of forty-one when he arrived in the United States in 1897 to make his home and to establish his career in a growing country full of promise for a bright future. His previous training and work had prepared him well for the role he was soon to play as a guiding mind in America's ceramic industry, art, and education.

As a very young boy, Charles Binns was intrigued by the "grown-up" conversations which frequently occurred at home among his father and friends. Charles Binns's father,
Richard W. Binns, was managing director of the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works. It was his custom to hold meetings and discussions at home over matters of both business and pleasure. Richard Binns was an amateur archeologist. He and some of his friends explored the nearby English countryside, investigating Roman ruins and frequently salvaging Roman pottery and relics.

Already stimulated by his father's influence, Charles Binns, at the age of fifteen, became apprenticed to the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works. Rather than being assigned to any one particular station, he was at liberty to see the whole factory in operation. Thus, at an early age he obtained a comprehensive understanding of the workings of a pottery. Young Charles Binns displayed a strong interest in mathematics and natural science for which he took prizes at school. He made special trips twice a week from Worcester to Birmingham to study chemistry which was to help him master the problems of ceramics. Charles Binns served the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works, beginning in 1872 as an apprentice; in 1885, becoming manager of the company's sales office in London; and later, in 1894, returning to Worcester to take charge of the newly established chemical laboratory.

In 1893, at the occasion of the World's Fair in Chicago,
Charles Binns made his first visit to America to represent his company, the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works. The impressions made upon him at that time, by the country and by the people he met, influenced greatly his later decision to move his family to the United States.¹

Religion as a way of life

What appears to have been a dominating force in Charles Binns's life was an unshakable faith in the power of God. Those who knew him best recognized his dedication to live a Christian life. That he continuously sought to follow what he felt to be the will of God has been borne out in his many words and deeds which have fitted into a lifetime of love and labor.

J. F. McMahon, now Dean of the State University of New York College of Ceramics, Alfred, New York, but formerly a student and assistant to Professor Binns, speaks of this religious aspect.

Whatever he [Professor Binns] did, he did in faith of God and under His guidance. His Christian principles guided his daily tasks, and his Christian philosophy was ever present in his discourses . . . . The living of a Christian life was to him the most important of all his duties. His, however, could never be considered a passive or selfish sort of

¹"Charles Fergus Binns," a biographical sketch in collaboration by several members of the Binns family.
Christian life, for he always found time to assist others in finding themselves and in living a fuller life.  

Professor Binns was a lay minister while at Trenton, New Jersey. Upon his arrival at Alfred, a Seventh Day Baptist community, he immediately set about to establish a religious service within the Episcopal tradition for his family of wife and five children. He found a few Episcopal members of the faculty and student body but the deeply spiritual quality of his sermons, and the beautifully delivered services soon attracted many of the students, faculty and townspeople of various other denominations. After twenty-one years of voluntary service as lay minister, accepting no financial contributions, he was recognized by the Bishop of Western New York State for his devoted work for the Church. In 1922, Professor Binns was ordained into the priesthood of the Episcopal Church. This invested him with the added authority to administer regular communion and other sacraments of the Church. Of his many honors and tributes, this ordination of priesthood gave Mr. Binns his greatest satisfaction.  

It was written of him:

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3 "Charles Fergus Binns," a biographical sketch in collaboration by several members of the Binns family.
Religion to him was a very real thing. He was pious, but not prudish. He was sincere, but not sentimental. His religion was not alone a matter of shrines and rituals and platitudes, although he believed so thoroughly in the true, the good, the beautiful. He made everything tributary to the attainment of these high aims. He was a builder of ideals. He first constructed them in his own soul and then strove to reproduce them in the lives of others. I have watched him at his beloved wheel, molding with his hands a thing of beauty from the plastic clay. With the same gentle touch he transformed the lives of those who worked with him, for they yielded to his kindly voice and winsome manner, and then stayed firm in the warmth of his companionship, as does the clay in the heat of the oven.  

Writings of Charles Binns  

Much of his character radiates through his words which have been recorded. Mr. Binns seems to have been a man who could express his ideas fluently. He was a frequent contributor to the American Ceramic Society Bulletin and Transactions and to other periodicals: The Craftsman and Keramic Studio. His articles have aided greatly in gleaning some of the insight into his thoughts and plans for the future of ceramic art.

His writings, when viewed as a whole, bear out a great continuity of thinking. He was much concerned that the potters' work should become more systematic, more scientific in approach to eliminate the haphazard methods.
currently employed at the turn of the twentieth century, he abhorred the secrecy with which the potters surrounded their work, fearing that someone else might learn their carefully guarded recipes. It was just such an attitude that Mr. Binns attempted to dispose of by joining with other interested men to discuss openly any and all problems which could be benefited by each other's suggestions. He constantly urged his fellow men and students to persist in experimentation, to keep looking for solutions. But above all, he must have the desire to share his discoveries with others. Whatever information can be passed on may just contain the seed which grows and develops in the thoughts of another man.

He challenged the manufacturers to arouse themselves from their mental slumber. He felt that not enough time was being spent on research, not enough attention was being given to developing a taste for inquiry. If it were such that every manufacturer would devote himself to research with as much time as possible, and then take pleasure in passing along the fruits of his discoveries to others, the ceramic industry would thus progress beyond any dreamed of success. This idea was very optimistic and focused far into the future, for the situation as it existed fell considerably short of such ideals. It had been deplored by Mr. Binns and
other leading men of the Society that too often willingness to share knowledge was overshadowed by a stronger motivation of secrecy. Rather than helping one another with the greater good to the improvement of the ceramic industry of America, potters had jealously guarded their activities, fearing that by accident their recipes might fall into the hands of a competitor. This desire for secrecy had been largely to blame for the lack of acceptance of scientific procedure advanced by Mr. Binns and Mr. Orton from the onset of the Society's activities.

Mr. Binns, to illustrate his point that secrecy was a ridiculous practice, showed that by calculating scientifically a number of "secret" glazes, the chemical formulae were found to be amazingly similar, if not identical.

Mr. Binns did not exclude the busy teacher from his responsibility to pursue new ideas. Speaking for himself, he commented that after long hours of patiently going over familiar material with a struggling student it was a relief to retreat to the laboratory "after hours" and work out an idea which came first to him in theory during wakeful nights or rare moments of freedom during the day. In fact, he was of the opinion that one found time to do the things of most interest. Time, therefore, is not a determining factor. It is all a matter of interest.
His illustration of this idea makes his point clear:

It has often been remarked that the nature of the work to be performed measures the amount of time available for the performance. No young man, for example, ever pleaded want of time as an excuse for not calling on his lady love, nor will pressure of other work ever keep the devoted experimenter away from his pestle and mortar.\(^5\)

Mr. Binns recognized knowledge as power. The man who would desire true success could find it through patient and diligent search for new discoveries. Even if success seems slow in coming, or new discoveries do not provide material gain, it is the searching that is important—the mind ever reaching beyond that which is at hand. This is the source for strength. The desire for success for itself is an unwholesome foundation on which to invest one's energies and time. Success should be thought of only as a by-product of one's labors, not as the chief goal. If there is no pleasure in the searching, then there can be no true success.

Mr. Binns quite pointedly said as much in an address to manufacturers, "The Art of Manufacture and the Manufacture of Art."

But I say to you that the man who sticks in his office only long enough to make money enough to

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have time enough to get away to the country club to play golf is not the successful man. He says in effect, "this job of mine is not a life, it is only a living. If I can make it profitable I will get my fun outside of it." The fact is that if a man does not get any fun out of his daily work he should hunt another job, for the life is more than meat. 6

There are many times in Mr. Binns's writings when his words touch upon sheer beauty in expression as well as in thought. At the occasion of the Society's recognition of a group of young men who had demonstrated their ability and willingness to contribute to the advancement of ceramic knowledge, Mr. Binns praised them for their outstanding work. He had great faith in their ability to carry on into the future the high ideals which he and the other devoted pioneers had so laboriously but lovingly set to motion.

To these young men he opened his heart:

We extend to each and all of you the right hand of fellowship hoping that the ability you have severally shown in your chosen field of labor, and the devotion you have exhibited to the common cause may prove to be but a beginning.

To some it has fallen to turn the hard and crusted soil and to cast in a handful of seed; but it is upon you, the men of youth and fire, that the burden of the fight must eventually fall. You will meet with discouragement, disappointment and perhaps failure; but sooner or later you will hear the rustle of the growing grain, and it may be that you will even catch the golden gleam that heralds an abundant

harvest. It will come. You are working for the future, and such work demands an unusual measure of self sacrifice. Be not cast down if the ripening seems to tarry, but learn with patience to labor and to wait.7

Clay and glazes, wheel, "Indian pots," and fire

As is to be expected, Mr. Binns revealed frequently throughout his writings his personal feelings about art and the value of the crafts to the welfare of human beings. It was mainly through clay and fire that he expressed ideas though he never seemed to think of a pot as an end in itself. There is much more significance than what meets the eye. He was much more concerned with what the process of making did to the maker. The excellence of the pot was the inevitable outgrowth of the sincerity of the potter. When he learned to understand his materials, know how to control them, yet at the same time be able to yield to their individual qualities and limitations, it was the potter who gradually came into existence. His own character was being formed. The pot will reflect all that the potter is; the potter can be no more than the pot is. Mr. Binns never said this in so many words, but his writings

are so permeated with the idea that it would be impossible not to see it this way.

Clay is willful. It can yield so beautifully to the master's touch, it can tauntingly refuse to obey a less skilled hand. But to the master and as well the novice, clay responds to the desire for individual expression. What is expression if not the materialization of an idea? This is the difference between the work of a child and a true craftsman. The child's approach is that of play; it is imitative but not expressive. The craftsman's work is the realization, in visual form, of an idea, an informing thought.

In his article, "Inspiration in Material," Mr. Binns stated:

To the artist, clay affords, in a higher degree than any other substance, the inspiration of solid thinking and enables him to offer his ideas to the world in fact rather than in representation. 8

Mr. Binns talked about the potter's wheel with a great deal of respect. In fact, he said: "A potter without a wheel seems like a man without a wife--incomplete." 9 The

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wheel had been criticized by some for being mechanical and that all machine work was bad. For them he merely made an analogy: the designer of handmade furniture does not think of building with rough logs or whittling it out with a jackknife. The wheel for the potter is no more than the plane or lathe is to the carpenter. If his pottery should bear the marks of the wheel from the making then the wheel is more an extension of the potter's hand, less a tool or machine. As he said:

If the wheel enables the artist to produce work which would otherwise be impossible, work which is at once true and pure and self-expression, surely this is its justification.\(^{10}\)

Mr. Binns referred to hand-built pottery as Indian pottery. He declared its beauty as being derived from the process of formation. More irregularity, more plastic quality shows itself as the personal imprint of the potter's skills. It is to be valued no less than the wheel-thrown pot, for both can be true expressions of the potter's art. In fact, in 1904, when his article, "Clay in the Potter's Hand," appeared in The Craftsman, he pointed out that Indian methods were becoming very popular in studio work. Painting on factory made ware was becoming less appealing. The experience of making one's

\(^{10}\)Ibid.
own pottery, whether by wheel or Indian methods, was be­
coming more challenging, and many interested craftsmen
were taking to the clay-bins instead of the paint brush.

This new venture naturally called for additional
knowledge; for creating beautiful pottery is dependent
upon the potter's mastery of materials. As to the under­
standing of materials, Mr. Binns did much to make available
what he knew to all those who were willing to make the
effort to learn. For those he could not reach personally
through class instruction, he tried to reach through
writing. There were his books, of course, which were
valuable guides. The Potter's Craft, published in 1910,
followed the procedure of information given in school:
a study of clay and glazes, forming processes, decoration,
kilns and fire.

When Taxile Doat's series of articles, "Grand Feu
Ceramics," appeared in Keramic Studio, May, 1903, to
September, 1904, Mr. Binns was ready with praise for this
outstanding contribution to the enthusiasm and the edu­
cation of all the would-be potters. He added to these
articles, information not covered by Mr. Doat, but some­
thing Mr. Binns felt American craftsmen needed to know,
namely: the nature of clays with special attention to those
clays available to American potters. This information

Glazes were very dear to the heart of Mr. Binns. They afforded a never-ceasing quest for revealing their mysteries. The wealth of variations, just awaiting to be discovered lured him always to his mixing table. Here he found great satisfaction, even in spite of much labor and puzzlement. Discouragement he bore patiently for he knew the joy when his efforts were rewarded with the discovery of something new.

His love for the beauty of glazes left no room for concern with painted decoration. In fact, the glaze was the decoration. He expressed the idea so well, it would be unfair not to allow him to speak here:


A piece of brilliant porcelain is, in itself, a decoration, and to daub it with painted flowers or distorted landscapes would be an attempt "to gild refined gold or paint the lily." To endow either porcelain or pottery with brilliant color, pulsing with life and radiance, or with tender texture, soft and caressing; color and texture which owe their existence and their quality to the fire,--this is art. For this the artist-potter lives; rejoicing if his kilns, even through weariness and pain, shall once and again give birth to some precious piece, which is, in itself a justification and a joy.\textsuperscript{14}

When the pot has been formed and glazed it is then entrusted to the powers of the fire. When the pot leaves the potter's hands the work is just begun. It is the fire that gives strength and lasting life. "... the ordeal of the fire is inevitable. This fact constitutes at once the potter's trial and his triumph, and gives to clay work its fascination and its fallibility."\textsuperscript{15}

At the occasion of his being awarded an honorary degree, Doctor of Science, 1925, his address was entitled, "E Concrematione Confirmatio."\textsuperscript{16} This he translated as,

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{15} C. F. Binns, "Clay in the Potter's Hand," \textit{The Craftsman}, Vol. VI (1904), p. 162.
\item\textsuperscript{16} C. F. Binns, "Doctorate Address," \textit{American Ceramic Society Bulletin}, Vol. IV (1925), p. 331.
\end{itemize}
"Out of the fire comes firmness, through stress we pass to strength." He not only thought of fire as giving lasting strength to pottery but meeting the challenge of everyday problems, mastering the difficulties instead of shunning them is to be considered the fire that builds and strengthens the character of a man.

Mission of the crafts

One of the most impressive qualities of Mr. Binns was his ability to grasp a situation in a broad over-all sense as well as to carefully notice the smallest of details. In reference to the latter, his patient labor over the complexities of glazes may be cited as only one example. To the former, reference is being made here to his understanding of the relationship of the craftsmen to the culture of the times. It is not an easy matter to see beyond one's own immediate situation, but for Mr. Binns it was possible to see the character of our American society at the turn of the twentieth century, the craftsmen within it, and the direction the future must take.

His attitude was one of optimism. The future looked bright. As he said, a new Renaissance was on its way. Our society for a while had been in the captive clutches of industrialism, but signs of escape were being noticed. Before
the coming of industrialism, the craftsman had an honored place in society. "Every workman was an artist, and every artist was a workman." Quality of workmanship was esteemed. A man's honor and reputation was staked on his ability to give the very best of his talents. The crafts of his hands were given care and thought; they were made to endure. Upon the advent of industry on a mass scale, the crafts underwent a great change. A single item could be reproduced by machine a hundred-fold in less time than the craftsman could produce one. When quantity was available, the expense was lessened, thereby a product could be indiscriminately dispersed to the mass market. When low expense was available it seemed to be accompanied by a low standard of taste. Because it was easy for the machine to embellish any article with any amount of ornamentation, there grew to be a misunderstanding of what was the true value of a product. Excessiveness became the rule, simplicity, the outcast. Elaborate decoration was lavished upon the wares. The machine poured out indifferently thousands of items, each alike with no individual differences. The personal touch of the craftsman was gone. So was his concern for simple beauty. The order of the day was always for something new and different. An obsession developed for novelty in any form. Manufacturers were obliging in responding to the
demand with objects senseless to the subtleties of quiet, honest beauty.

In the course of time, a change of direction had been noticed. The opening of the twentieth century was bringing with it a "coming to senses," a shaking off the futile race for novelty, and returning once more to sound basic principles of design.

This interest in a truer art was seen by Mr. Binns in several ways. (1) Throughout the country there was growing an interest in returning to production of hand crafts. This common interest has been referred to as the Arts and Crafts Movement. In the country and city alike, individual workers were seeking to try their hands at making something by their own efforts. Cities formed societies and workshops for groups to aid one another in knowledge and interest. The country workers were beginning to form community enterprises to develop a means of support. In both city and country, sales rooms were set up to provide contact between craftsmen and interested customers. (2) Cities were beginning to realize the value of parks and open spaces, and an attempt to improve the appearance of public buildings and streets was being made. (3) Individual homes were showing signs of casting aside the overloaded parlor of all its brick-a-brack and knickknacks. (4) The arts and crafts had reached
the attention of the press. Readers sought out news of craft activities and exhibits. Comments abounded, in favor and against. 17

The craftsman had not yet been lifted to his former state of respectability. The debasement of the crafts during the machine's supremacy had left him with little regard as being a valuable member of society. But time was changing and once more there was bright promise of craftsmen and artists being one and the same.

Again it is with great pleasure to permit Mr. Binns to tell us in his delightful manner:

In this country there are hopeful signs. A lusty youth has no thought but to feed and grow, but ere long some shy damsel will captivate him with her eyes. America is in the growing stage. Life's young blood is coursing fiercely through the veins of her sons, but now and then a glance is bestowed upon art and her beauty; the youth is beginning to take notice. 18

Crafts, to Mr. Binns, had a mission to perform for this growing America. The very shaping of its character was at hand. What the nation needed most in its waxing strong and straight was its binding affinity to sincerity


and simplicity. The crafts could help. For any man who could see and desire these qualities in an art could surely feel the same for his own being. If such man were many, indeed to fill the nation, what a blessing this would be!

Mr. Binns emphasized these two qualities: sincerity and simplicity, because he viewed the nation with sober eyes. As blissful as his dream might be there was still the present state to reckon with. He viewed the general way of life as: "living beyond one's means, the lavish use of veneer and imitation in the industrial arts, the general desire to be accepted at a fictitious valuation." This to him was lack of sincerity.

The crafts, as his remedy, offered to the worker the opportunity to become acquainted with honesty. The true craftsman loves his material, respects its personal character, finds joy in his labor for itself and not for profit or praise. If every man would choose to examine his own life with the same care and respect, and dare to let himself be judged by the quality of his work, the nation as a whole is bound to be affected. Each craftsman who picks

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up his tool in the name of honest labor can surely inspire others around him to follow.

Simplicity can be determined by the number of desires with which we surround our lives. If we gather to ourselves a complexity of possessions and activities our attention is thus divided and nothing is of any great value. "Complexity, whether of things or thoughts, is opposed to quality."20

To Mr. Binns, the average home reflected the accumulation of clutter, most of which was a confusion of unrelated objects whose function was of little more regard than to collect dust. It was quite believable to see the average mind in the same state of affairs. Simplification of home surroundings and daily thoughts with time to seek the beauty in restraint and repose leads to comforting pleasure and clarity of purpose.

The crafts develop character. They bestow upon man an appreciation for the good and the real standards of evaluation. He learns to judge himself and other men with the same true eye he sees the clear, sound craft of his own hand. Sincerity and simplicity—these our nation must recognize.

20 Ibid.
The mission of the crafts is to teach these things and the more firmly they take possession of the American people the more persistently will they preach and the more patiently will they be heard.  

Charles Binns as a teacher and leader of men

J. F. McMahon, in his article, "Charles Fergus Binns," spoke of Mr. Binns as he was known as a teacher.

Teacher

Students whose privilege it was to take lectures from Professor Binns regarded him as a truly great teacher. Before a word was spoken, a respectful hush fell over his class room. The student, having confidence in his teacher's knowledge, listened attentively as that knowledge was being ably imparted to him. One was conscious that teaching was a pleasure to the teacher and that underlying a demanding delivery were qualities of patience for and understanding of the student. On leaving the class room, the student was aware of his own responsibility regarding what he had heard and was inspired to learn more about the subject.

When, as a freshman, you heard him say, "If you are made of the proper metal, we can temper you; if not, we can do little with you," you really wondered whether or not you could be tempered and how long it would take. When, as a sophomore, you had to submit questions to him for answering you knew he was right when he said, "I can tell more concerning what you know by the questions you ask me than by the answers you give to my questions." When, as a junior and senior, you felt free to go to him with your problems, you knew you would obtain a considered opinion. When you heard his final wish for you as you stood proudly in your cap and gown, a large lump would come in your throat and you could say nothing of what you felt.

Ibid.
His teaching went beyond ceramics. He seasoned his ceramic discourses with words and phrases which caused one to consider those things that are far more important than the knowledge of a subject. Perhaps the following excerpts from lectures given by him before faculty gatherings will explain his own concept of a teacher.

"Knowledge of student personality is most important in our work. We must be able, if we are to be successful teachers, to prove student character, to detect signs of failure, and to hail evidences of improvement. We must be ready to call the erring student to task in a loving way, not content merely to give the story to the registrar and record a failure in indelible ink.

They are with us but four years at the longest and in that short time it is laid upon us to counteract the influence of an unhappy home, to sun life into a stunted character, to curb gently a too headstrong ambition, to satisfy the cravings of a hungry mind, to stimulate a jaded appetite for knowledge— in a word to take such material as comes to hand and shape it into a man."

When asked the question, "What influence did Professor Binns have on your work?", Arthur Baggs made this reply.

A strong influence in many fundamental ways. I think he gave to all his students a deep respect for ceramics as a profession and for honest, thorough craftsmanship. Dinnerware or brick or sewer pipe or unique individual pots: all were things to be made with pride in the fine quality of the product. No student who got his viewpoint could ever be really happy in turning out cheap, trashy stuff simply because it would sell. And by the word cheap I am not referring to price. Professor Binns was conservative. I suppose that influenced me too, although I have always been tremendously interested in all sorts of exploration off the beaten tracks. I do a great deal of such experimenting

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both technical and artistic. I enjoy it thoroughly, but I seldom produce things which I really like except in a staid and sober groove which probably seems "old hat" to most contemporary ceramic artists. The main value of my prospecting journeys is that sometimes I dig up a hint or two which others can develop into something good even though I cannot. That brings satisfaction. The greatest reward teachers get is in imagining that they have helped to give a starting push and an occasional lift to a few people who finally start climbing fast. Really these talented students would be good anyway, but we teachers have to kid ourselves into thinking that we contribute something. Probably the things which really count are the basic things: ideals, standards, ambitions. In firmly establishing these on a high plane Professor Binns was a great teacher.23

Thus, is the man Charles Binns—the man whose appointed time and place in life was brought to bear on the life of the young Arthur Baggs. To such a teacher, director, friend, the eager and sensitive youth must have looked with admiration. Their close association as teacher and student, as friends, as fellow experimenters in the wondrous mysteries of clay and glaze nurtured enthusiasm for the potter's craft and the conviction for the sincerity of it as a way of life. Thus, for the young potter, his master not only guided him through the arduous command of a craft, he also revealed what life meant to him, what he cherished as noble and good.

23 A. Baggs, Letter to Wallace S. Baldinger, Lawrence College, Appleton, Wisconsin, in connection with a collection of pottery to be exhibited in Appleton.
Arthur Baggs spent two years, 1903-1905, at Alfred's Ceramic School working under Mr. Binns's direction, following along the procedure as discussed in a previous chapter. Working with clay forms and glazes was fascinating to Arthur. He thought it a lot of fun, and evidently Mr. Binns recognized a talent which had much potential strength. At the end of the second year, 1905, Mr. Binns recommended Arthur for a summer job, teaching pottery making in a small craft shop in a small village, Marblehead, Massachusetts. The position was a rather unique one at that time for the students to be taught were patients in a small private hospital. The hospital was unique in that it was the first venture into the now well known field of occupational therapy. Dr. Herbert J. Hall, a young physician in Marblehead, believing that his patients with nervous disorders could be encouraged back to normal health by occupying their minds and hands with working in crafts, set up a small sanitarium equipped to provide
treatment by means of carefully supervised work in several crafts. 1 The patients have been described by Dr. Hall as:

... well-to-do patients, who have broken down nervously or physically, who have not been able to keep up with the demands of social, business, or professional life. But the problem is the same in many ways, whatever the class of patients. There is a nervous exhaustion, which accompanies almost any trying illness or any severe injury. Many a patient comes to the sanitarium unable to read or to carry the thread of a simple story. 2

Dr. Hall began with the crafts of weaving and basketry. He decided to add pottery to the activities, and this resulted in his request to Professor Binns at New York State School of Clay Working and Ceramics for a teacher.

Arthur Baggs's responsibility there was to help organize a pottery studio-shop, and to instruct the patients in the craft of pottery making. Naturally, there was a limitation of financial support for getting together essential equipment for such a shop. He had at his disposal—and no doubt disparagement—a small china painter's furnace for a kiln. As for the rest of the necessary equipment, it was meager but with much courage Arthur set himself to the task before him.

Mr. Baggs in later years, recalling that first, eventful summer, remembers himself as a "green, inexperienced,

1A. Baggs, An unfinished biographical sketch.

2Herbert J. Hall, Occupational Therapy.
shy boy of eighteen who discovered a few nerves of his own in the effort to direct his somewhat erratic pupils."\(^3\)

Of Dr. Hall, he said:

Dr. Herbert J. Hall was a remarkable man. He was one of the pioneers in America in using what is now well known as occupational therapy. He treated people with shattered nerves by putting them to work at interesting crafts. Pottery was one of these selected occupations. The pottery instructor's job was to help these nervous invalids to build up their pots and their lives without too many catastrophes. Dr. Hall's understanding mind was sympathetic toward the nervous instructor as well as the patients and the boy was allowed to stay.\(^4\)

In one of his letters home to his parents Arthur described the patients with whom he worked.

Many of the patients are people of artistic taste and ability who can do good work with a little practice . . . There are not many patients here now and some of them don't look much in need of treatment. There is one old fat man from Providence . . . You wouldn't think he had a nerve in his body but he claims he has. Then there is another healthy looking man who looks to me as if he had better nerves than I have but he is taking wood carving to cure them. Most of the patients, however, look their part and I guess are not fakes. I should think they could get well here if anywhere.\(^5\)

The village of Marblehead made an equally strong impression upon the youth. He liked Marblehead from the very

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\(^3\)A. Baggs, Biographical sketch submitted to President J. N. Norwood, Alfred, New York, June 1936.

\(^4\)A. Baggs, An unfinished biographical sketch.

\(^5\)A. Baggs, A personal letter to his parents.
first. Perhaps the charm of this old fishing village helped him through the difficult summer. Marblehead suited his temperament then, his first summer away from home and family, and for the rest of his life that was to follow. His descriptions of Marblehead to his parents reveal much of his sensitivity to these new surroundings.

Well, it's a swell place—can't say too many good things about it. I like the place and like the people very much and see no reason why I should not have a very pleasant summer if I can make good with the glazing proposition and if I keep well and you at home keep well.

I am writing this in my little room on the top floor of the handicraft shop. I am sitting by a window looking out on a harbor filled with beautiful yachts of all descriptions. Across the bay are houses of two large yacht clubs—the Eastern and the Corinthian. A narrow neck of land extends from the opposite shore to this and beyond this sand colored streak is the ocean gray blue today in the haze, with one or two small islands showing dimly against the gray sky. The air is quite still and the boats make beautiful reflections in the water. In at the window comes the salt sea smell—you know the kind—and the sharp spat spat (or some other sound) of the naptha launches dodging about among the larger boats. Oh, it's a nice place to be all right. I do wish you could all be here to enjoy it with me.

July 16, 1905

Last night after dinner I took quite a long walk around to the other side of the harbor where the yacht club houses and other fine residences are. It is a beautiful place over there by night at least and it must be

6 A. Baggs, A personal letter to his parents; the first letter after arrival at Marblehead, July 8, 1905.
fully as beautiful in the daytime. It was just twilight when I reached the other side and the view as I looked back at the town was—! The sunset had been brilliant and the sky behind the town was still flooded with orange and gold and purple. Against this glowing background the quaint irregular skyline of the clustered houses stood out sharply with just darkness enough over all to give everything a picturesque appearance. It was worth the price of admission.

I think the town is much more beautiful and interesting in the early evening or in moonlight than in the daytime. In the half darkness you get a picture at almost every turn and there are plenty of turns for it is the craziest old town that ever happened. Boston isn’t in it for crooked streets.7

The summer passed all too quickly. Much of Arthur’s time and energy was spent in attempting to develop satisfactory glazes with the supplies and equipment the budget would allow. Much of the experiments proved disappointing to him. He was dissatisfied with what he had accomplished and he so much wanted not to be a failure at his first job. With the encouragement of Dr. Hall, Arthur decided not to return to Alfred and college but to remain in Marblehead for the following year. This decision was based partly on his determination to "make good" at his job and also because he was greatly interested in the work he was attempting to do.

7A. Baggs, A personal letter to his parents, July 16, 1905.
Dr. Hall was interested in the idea of the pottery craft shop becoming self-supporting. He tempted Arthur with the suggestion of producing pottery wares to be sold to the public aside from the regular teaching activities. This suggestion suited Arthur. He spent many long hours in experimental work and endured many moments of discouragement. Gradually the Marblehead pottery found itself gaining recognition in craft exhibitions and the better stores in several of the eastern cities.

In one of his letters home he discussed his work with the Marblehead wares.

Dec. 1, 1906

Luck seemed to be with me and most of the things turned out very well indeed. The experiments I have been trying have worked out very satisfactorily and in my last kiln I got very good results in four new styles of ware, all of which are different from any pottery now being made so far as I know and any one of which will, I think, be worth pushing as a characteristic Marblehead product. I have never been satisfied with the work we have done because, although it was pretty good, it was not very different from a lot of the other potteries of the country and I wanted something distinctive that no one else could make. I have been experimenting every chance I got and now I think I have at last "hit it". As I said, I think any or all of the four styles I have developed will be worth pushing and now I am going to push for all I am worth. I feel much more encouraged and confident of success than ever before.

8 A. Baggs, A personal letter to his parents, December 1, 1906.
Arthur remained at Marblehead for four years. Each of these years he had to face the decision of whether to continue with his college education or to continue with his job at Marblehead. It was hard enough to justify his staying to himself but it was even more difficult to announce to his parents that he must postpone his college work for another year longer in order to reap the benefits of his labors to get the Marblehead pottery going. For each year there was some specific incentive to stay. Sometimes it was the beginning of a new production item. Sometimes it was Dr. Hall's pleading with Arthur to stay because things were going so well or badly as the case might be. Each year seemed to be the turning point when the pottery was at the brink of reaping benefits, artistic and financial, from the long slow effort.

During those four years that Arthur remained in Marblehead: July, 1905 to September, 1909, the little pottery studio turning out a line of ware which became known distinctively as Marblehead wares. Since Dr. Hall was in constant need financially to maintain his hospital he felt justified in turning the shop over completely to commercial production. In 1908, Arthur was relieved of his instructional duties and took over the management of the pottery studio as an independent enterprise. The pottery craft as
part of the treatment for the nervous patients was dis-continued.

In 1907, Marblehead pottery was exhibited and received an award at the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts exhibition, Copley Hall, Boston, Massachusetts. In 1908, the ware was exhibited at the National Society of Craftsmen, National Arts Club, New York. This was followed by Tiffany and Company's invitation to place Marblehead wares for sale in their pottery department. The ware was placed also in other exclusive shops throughout the country. The Marblehead Pottery became recognized and appreciated nationally. Newspaper and magazine reports were favorable. At its own doorstep, Marblehead Pottery salesroom became a busy place with visits of summer guests to Marblehead who found delight in the appealing pottery produced there. Whenever it appeared in exhibits throughout the country, it was praised for its high standards in artistic taste.

From the catalogue of the exhibition in 1907 of the Society of Arts and Crafts of Boston, comes the following comments with regard to all the pottery selected for exhibition. This gives some idea of the taste the Boston Society was trying to foster and shows the appreciation for Marblehead ware.
The exhibit of pottery including the broad field of modeled and moulded work, has been selected for simplicity and beauty of form and the quality of glaze and decoration, the intention being to indicate definitely, that neither complexity of form and design nor variety of glazes in a single piece tend to increase the merit.

The treatment of modeling of surface and texture are marked elements in the pottery chosen, and much originality is apparent in the work shown by the various potters and decorators.

In all cases the value of the pieces exists more in the proportions, colors and surfaces than in the attempts at elaboration in design.\(^9\)

The Marblehead pottery seemed to fit the qualifications. Whenever the ware has been described it has been attributed the qualities of directness and simplicity. The forms and decoration were not at all pretentious but radiated a feeling of honesty.

It is quite understandable that considerable experimentation was carried out with forms, glazes, and decoration. However, the forms were based on the everlasting traditions of the craft: bowls, plates, vases, jars, teapots, candlesticks, and the like. Most of the ware was undecorated. When decorating was used, it was kept subdued and consisted of conventional patterns using flower or sea motifs. The standard glazes tended to be matt, lending a soft richness

\(^9\)Catalogue of Exhibitions of Society of Arts and Crafts, Copley Hall, Boston, Mass., (Feb. 5-25, 1907).
to the colors. The colors, like the forms, seemed to reflect the simplicity and calmness of the surroundings. The gray, green, blue, wisteria, brownish yellows, so characteristic to this spot by the sea, contributed a gentle beauty to the earthy ware. One of the colors which brought recognition to the Marblehead Pottery was the "Marblehead blue." Mr. Baggs spoke of it as being especially kind to flowers. In addition to the general production of Marblehead ware, there were many experimental pieces with unusual glazes or decorative techniques. These pieces bore the personal signature of Arthur Baggs.

In 1912, Arthur Baggs published an article, "Modern Maiolica," in the Handicraft, a monthly publication which represented the Arts and Crafts Movement. The article described the new experiments in tin enamel faience at Marblehead, and something of the history of tin enameled pottery from the time of ancient Assyrians and Babylonians through the Hispano-Moresque ware, Italian Maiolica, and Delft ware of Holland. Although highly developed in other countries at other period of time, it was believed by Mr. Baggs that tin enameled ware was a new development in American pottery, never having been featured by any American manufacturer. Marblehead Pottery's special exhibition of fifteen pieces of the tin-enameled faience at the
March, 1912 exhibition of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts and four pieces exhibited in New York, December, 1911, were believed to have been the first public exhibition of this type ware in America.

Mr. Baggs, in his article discussed the ware.

The attempt to make tin-enameled pottery at Marblehead grew out of the wish to produce ware for certain table uses—not dinner services but perhaps tea sets, drinking mugs, and bread and milk sets for children, small breakfast or luncheon sets; special dishes for various uses. To these the Marblehead matt glazed ware is unsuited . . . The requirements were a white or light colored body which could be made into thin ware without serious warping, a smooth, nonporous glaze, a not too difficult method of applying decorations in a palette of soft colors, the whole to burn at a comparatively low temperature into a dense ware with good "ring" and no "crazing". Experimental work was started along two lines—underglaze decoration on light colored bodies covered by transparent glaze, and painted decorations over opaque enamels. The latter process was finally chosen as offering greater opportunities for decorative work. . .10

Mr. Baggs directed the entire activities but he employed other assistance to keep the Pottery operating after Marblehead ware began to be produced on a commercial basis. For the most part, Mr. Baggs designed the shapes and decoration of the pottery. Arthur Hennessey did some designing of decoration for the pottery and also for other departments of the crafts shops. John Swallow, an experienced English

potter, did the throwing on an electrically powered wheel. Another man prepared the clays. Mrs. Edward D. Tutt was the business manager and had charge of the sales room. Arthur Baggs, in addition to designing shapes and decoration, prepared the glazes, fired the ware and took charge of the production. Gradually the staff had to be increased; for instance, a man to apply glazes, help with the firing, finishing pottery after throwing, etc. Unlike most of the Marblehead industries which were based on summer tourists, the Pottery for quite some time operated the year round. It kept open every winter through the year 1929. Nineteen hundred and thirty was the first winter the production ceased. However, the Pottery was open every summer through 1940. By the fall of 1940, the shop was completely closed, the land was cleared of all buildings.\footnote{Correspondence with Mrs. Arthur Baggs, March 19, 1962.}
CHAPTER V

FURTHER EDUCATION: ALFRED AND NEW YORK

The thought of continuing his education persisted in spite of his ties to the Marblehead Pottery. During the year 1907, Arthur Baggs attended Saturday lectures at Harvard University, given by Dr. Denman Ross on "Theory of Pure Design". Arthur expanded his knowledge of pottery making through his own practical experience. Nevertheless, the winter of 1910 found him at last back at Alfred, ready to resume his college training. He did not enroll in class work until the spring semester. Instead, in the back yard of his parents home he set up a small work shop and kiln. Here he commenced to experiment with glazes and also to carry on production of wares for the Marblehead Pottery. He made an agreement with Dr. Hall that while he was away from Marblehead he would still contribute his professional knowledge as to glazes and designs. He also agreed that he would spend at least four months out of each year at Marblehead. The little pottery studio he set up in Alfred was intended to provide a place for such work and experimentation necessary for his own satisfaction and also for
the benefit of Marblehead Pottery. He was expected to carry on production and sale of wares in Alfred as well as at Marblehead. With the help of his mother and a student hired for parttime work the little Alfred pottery shop was a successful venture.

Now twenty-four years old, Arthur enrolled in college and continued for three semesters, ending in June, 1911. His major concern was to take the courses and to do the things he wanted to do in classes and his workshop without much consideration for degree requirements. Outside activities consumed much of his time. Arthur took on the responsibility of being the art editor of the college year book, Kanakedea; serving on the college literary publication; and indulging in a lot of tennis playing.¹ By June, 1911, Arthur had still at least a year of course work to complete before being allowed to graduate. To get a degree was not of uppermost importance to him. He still yearned for more general art training, believing this was his greatest need at the time.

The Fall of 1911 found Arthur no longer in Alfred but in New York City. At the Art Students League, 1912-1913, he studied drawing, painting and sculpture. He frequented the museums, galleries, shops, and libraries, looking at

¹A. Baggs, A biographical sketch, Dec. 28, 1938.
art, reading about art, trying to discern what it was all about.

From 1911 until 1920, Arthur divided his time between Marblehead and New York City each year. During the years 1913 to 1920, Arthur held a parttime position teaching pottery classes at the Ethical Culture School. From 1919 to 1920, he taught at the School of Design and Liberal Arts.

During this period of working and studying in New York, Dr. Hall decided in 1915 to move his sanatorium from Marblehead to a new location--Devereaux, Massachusetts. He was faced with the problem of what to do about the Pottery which had been of such great interest to him from the time of its beginning. The agreement was made that Arthur would buy it. Arthur had been the Pottery's director for a number of years, but in 1915 he became the sole owner. 2

By this time, after much experience of studying, potting, and teaching, Arthur had arrived at a point of understanding where his deepest interests and desires lay in regard to his future life's work. In 1913, from New York to his parents in Alfred, Arthur confided in a letter that

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.}\]
he was now all the more interested in becoming a first-rate potter than a third-rate painter.

In 1915, Arthur Baggs was awarded the Mrs. J. Ogden Armour Prize of $50 at the Annual Exhibition of Applied Art at the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois.

Nineteen fifteen was the year of Arthur's marriage to Helen Dorothy French of Lynn, Massachusetts. To them, two sons were born: Arthur Eugene, Jr., and Hartwell French. Arthur Baggs suffered two great losses in his young family: his wife in 1919, and his youngest son, Hartwell, in 1921. In 1921, Arthur Baggs married Laura Esther Trowbridge. To this marriage, a daughter, Mary Trowbridge, was born.³

³A. Baggs, Biographical sketch submitted to President J. N. Norwood.
CHAPTER VI

ARTHUR BAGGS AT COWAN POTTERY

Marblehead Pottery continued to turn out its quality wares. It continued to be in demand, gaining more and more recognition and appreciation by the public. In 1925, Arthur Baggs left the Pottery once more for a portion of each following year. He was persuaded by a friend of long standing, Guy Cowan, to work with him at the Cowan Pottery in Rocky River, Ohio. He was to serve as designer and ceramic technician.

He found the experience both challenging and valuable as the Cowan Pottery operated on a considerably larger scale than his own pottery at Marblehead. The Cowan Pottery employed other designers. The prospect of this stimulating contact with other ceramic artists was of considerable importance in making the decision to join his friend, Guy Cowan.

In a personal letter, dated March 6, 1929, Arthur Baggs discussed his move to Ohio.

When I first began studying pottery in the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred, New York, one of my fellow students was a slim, blonde boy with a flair for drawing and chemistry. His name was Guy Cowan. I went east and he went west and the years
went past. We both made pottery and liked each other's work which we saw from time to time.

I had developed at Marblehead a small studio pottery whose product gradually found its way into a few good shops in nearly all parts of the country but had never been really pushed from the sales end. Cowan meanwhile, had directed his effort more effectively at the commercial market and had gained a successful national distribution of his product in department stores and art shops which brought him in 1925 to the point where he wanted someone to relieve him of part of the work involved in the constant developing of new lines.

He persuaded me to join his organization on a part-time basis, and from the fall of 1925 to the early summer of 1928, I gave about nine months per year to resident work in the Cowan Pottery Studio in Rocky River, Ohio, spending my summers still in Marblehead where I continued the making of Marblehead Pottery on a somewhat reduced scale of production.

My work with the Cowan Pottery was largely in developing glazes and decorative processes with an occasional small design contribution to the regular line and a number of special, individual signed pieces of various types, most of which were used for exhibition and publicity purposes.

During the school year of 1927-28, I was also connected with the Cleveland School of Art where I conducted a class in pottery making one day a week.

I enjoyed my Cleveland connections very much; liked my associates, liked the city, thought I was rather permanently settled and bought a house.

The awards won during this period of time, 1925-1928, included: Boston Society of Arts and Crafts medal, 1925; Charles Binns medal for achievement in ceramic art,

1A. Baggs, Letter to Mrs. Miriam B. Pearce, Hillside Studio, Newton, Mass., March 6, 1929.
1928; First prize for pottery at Cleveland Museum of Art Annual Exhibition, 1928.
Arthur Baggs's stay in Cleveland proved to be a brief period of time. In 1927, The Ohio State University approved a plan to establish a Ceramic Design Department to complement its already existing Ceramic Engineering Department. Arthur Baggs was approached to head this new department. After much "searching of the soul" he agreed to take up this new responsibility. He resigned his connections with Cowan Pottery, moved his family to Columbus, and in the fall of 1928, began his work setting his department in order.

Proceeding with a discussion of his work at The Ohio State University necessitates a turning back momentarily to view the conditions which brought forth this newly created Ceramic Design Department.

The need for a school, on collegiate level, to train and produce designers capable of raising artistic standards among dinnerware manufacturers, was felt as far back in time as the conception and establishing of the American
Ceramic Society in 1899. While at the beginning, the most urgent concern of the Society was to establish a scientific basis for all further experimentation and production, there was also an awareness that design in American dinnerware products was in considerable need of improvement.

Through the years several voices were raised with the plea to manufacturers to turn attention to the importance of raising the artistic quality of American dinnerware. Perhaps the most eloquent and persistent of these voices was that of Vice-President of the American Ceramic Society, 1900, Mr. Binns. He commenced to call attention whenever he could to American tableware manufacturers' tastelessness in the products they produced. The following quotation taken from Mr. Binns's comments during a discussion of "The Possibilities of Porcelain in the United States," seems to be the very heart of a theme Mr. Binns was to touch upon many times during the years to follow.

Every time I go to New York I am deeply vexed, and frequently driven into righteous anger, on seeing the contents of the china stores, where the fine services and fine vases are found ... I speak of porcelain only ... are without exception imported. Now I think it is a crying disgrace to our country (and I class myself as an American) that we are
not making fine porcelain. I do not know the smallest reason why we should not.

Mr. Binns employed all his persuasive powers through several formal addresses on the subject to the Society and very frequently he injected his ideas wherever he could find the opportunity to make his point. His point was this: America needed to produce a fine whiteware. His training had been based on English bone china and it was a great dream of his that someone would venture the American counterpart. He was insistent that this fine ware should be china. His enthusiasm for it can surely be felt in his remark, "There is nothing on the face of the earth which beats for beauty the English bone china dinner-plate." 2

Mr. Binns hoped that someone could be convinced that producing bone china in America would be worth the effort. If need be, only a small body of men, forming a nucleus, could begin in a modest way, working their way up to a profitable enterprise, both in finance and pride. Even if a financial profit be slow in coming, couldn't there be


some manufacturer who would risk a loss in the beginning
in order to give to America a ceramic product respected
for its beauty and refinement? One must not measure beauty
in terms of expense. To produce a fine ware is not to
think of profit as the primary goal.

Mr. Binns was convinced that the effort eventually
would be profitable. Bone china had proved so in England,
and in America also, if one noticed the thriving importation
of it. In America, only Rookwood and other faience pot­
terries were producing wares worthy of comparison with the
work of other countries. Rookwood had had such a start as
suggested by Mr. Binns, beginning with a small but enthu­
siastic group and growing into a creditable business and
still being able to uphold a high degree of artistic per­
formance. This had been an accepted practice in European
factories producing fine wares. The large manufacturers of
England, Vienna, and Berlin had begun in a very small way. 3
In America, however, conditions were somewhat different.
A paying business had most often been the source of in­
spiration rather than a fine product. And too, in America,
the hereditary system of occupation was not practiced.

3"Discussion on the Subject of Possibilities of
There was not the passing on from father to son the pride of a skill or product.

In 1901, as President of the Society, still hopeful that he could encourage the taking up of fine china, Mr. Binns presented a paper, "The Birth of English Porcelain." His study began with the Dutch importation of Chinese wares which had set all of Europe in a frenzy to find a means of making such a ware at home. He discussed in rather full detail from 1744, the early experiments in England which developed gradually into the bone china which is known today. He mentioned the factory of Worcester in operation since 1751, as being one of the oldest factories of fine china and still in existence today. This history was presented with the purpose of pointing up the fact that in the eighteenth century a few determined men started at a primitive beginning and rose to a high degree of development both in technical skill and in refined, artistic taste. Why did Americans of the twentieth century shirk away from attempting to rise to this accomplishment, not to mention exceeding it?

In 1902, as the retiring President, Mr. Binns gave as

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his address to the Society, "The Progress of Ceramic Art." He did not neglect in his survey to point out the lack of progress in producing an American fine china. He praised the leadership in the manufacturing of ceramic building materials, the area where technology had been employed in the interest of progress. He could not bestow the same praise to the manufacturers of whiteware. They, of all the ceramic field, had participated the least in the affairs of the American Ceramic Society. They had likewise benefited the least from the advances in new knowledge.

In 1910, Mr. Binns presented another paper to the Society, "A Plea for Bone China." Again he patiently called upon American whiteware manufacturers to seriously consider the English bone china as a product worth developing at home. We still were being faced with the large amount of English ware imported to America. Americans should at least try to produce something equally desirable.

If American dinnerware manufacturers remained, for the most part, unmoved by the constant accusations that American dinnerware products were inferior to those of other


countries, there occurred in 1904, an event which revealed that American wares were artless. If America were to strive for excellence, the manufacturers must consider the position of the artist in ceramic industry as a vital one.

This point was clearly and somewhat shockingly brought out at the time of the St. Louis Exposition in 1904. The products of the American ceramic industry were placed side by side with those products of other ceramic producing countries of the world. There was no great concern over the comparison in products such as building materials or in the application of mechanical methods of production, for it was in this area that American ingenuity had been put to its best use. Nor was there any dissatisfaction with the distinctively American product, hotel china, which in itself is a worthy contribution. It was in the production of the finer dinnerwares that America made a deplorably poor showing. There were accounts of the ceramic exhibit by various people, and Mr. Binns was not one to let the matter pass by without comment. He presented a paper to the American Ceramic Society, "Lessons from the St. Louis Exposition." He found that many

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American manufacturers had not bothered to submit their entries. America was hardly represented in her own country, while countries such as Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, England, and Japan showed far more wares in spite of the considerable transportation expense.

What was the reason for this apparent lack of interest on the part of American dinnerware manufacturers? Why were the few wares which were shown so far inferior to those of other countries? These were problems which troubled Mr. Binns. He already was aware of what might be the answer. He had spoken of them before but the obvious display of America's weakness was laid bare for all the world to see. He hoped that this might serve to alert attention toward seeking out a remedy.

What Mr. Binns saw was a nation of pottery manufacturers who had no "distinctive merit" of their own. They were content to produce an inferior ware merely because it was the most economical and least difficult to manufacture. There was not even the desire to promote it, such as it was, as witnessed by the lack of participation in the Exposition. It was said by some observers that American manufacturers were ashamed to appear in competition with foreign neighbors. Whatever the reason, the facts were obvious to Mr. Binns and others that something had to be done
to encourage a production of more worthy wares.

The heart of the trouble seemed to lie in the fact that the pottery manufacturers, in most cases, were artless. They did not seem to recognize that good design requires thoughtful consideration. They were content, for the most part, to repeat the same forms and decorations over and over, and also to secure them from a source—from abroad, usually—which could supply the same to any manufacturer. This is what Mr. Binns meant by his term "distinctive merit." As he said, any stock order could be filled by twenty manufacturers, with no noticeable difference. Nor can the manufacturer get himself "off the hook" by thinking he is providing artistic pottery ware when, in reality, he is only offering novelty. Fluted edges and florid scrolls do not sufficiently solve the problem. The matter still stands—the manufacturer is artless. To spare himself from this dilemma he must be willing to accept the additional expense. He cannot afford to ignore beauty nor can he expect to obtain it effortlessly. A growing interest on the part of the consumer in the more artful ware of Europe was making itself felt by increased purchases. The tariff which America imposed could not hold back the desire to satisfy a more refined taste. The American manufacturer was to be
called to hand for failure to keep pace with public demands. He must be inconvenienced in his sole concern for economy of production to increase expenditure for designers. He must have faith in their ability to invest his wares with a sense of dignity. He must be courageous enough to be original, to produce something which is his, and above all, to aspire to place his wares with the very best the world has to offer.

This is the lesson Mr. Binns saw at the Exposition. There was much hope for America. The limitless supply of clays and increasing knowledge of clays, glazes, color, and fire, were the substances with which to work. But excellence demands more than this. There must be the resourceful mind, the mind which can turn familiar, ordinary materials into something alive and beautiful.

This idea has been summed up and more aptly stated in Mr. Binns's own words.

The fair recently held at St. Louis may be made useful in this regard, and to American ceramists the occasion is one of importance. Two things are commonly sought by one who is interested, novelty of idea and quality of execution. But in what does novelty exist? Given the necessary materials and conditions, what new arrangement or combination is possible? Body, glaze, and color are, like the poor, always with us, and the methods of formation, burning, and decoration are essentially constant. Quality may be found in two directions; one mechanical, the second artistic. In the former, the application of the skill of the hand, or the more perfect
action of the machine may be considered; in the latter, where the influence of art comes into being, the whole question becomes one of individual perception, for in art one man is blind while his neighbor sees. 8

Mr. Binns took advantage of every opportunity he could to keep calling attention to American manufacturers's lack of concern for good design. Throughout most of his writings in the years to follow is one underlying thought—we, as a nation, must strive for excellence and be satisfied not to rest contentedly with anything less. In 1923, 9 and again in 1928, 10 he felt it necessary to present to the American Ceramic Society formal reminders of America's low standards for providing the public with the good design which it demanded. The manufacturers could not sit back and ignore the increased importation of foreign wares. A growing proportion of the American consumer desired more quality in their choice of dinnerware than they could find at home.

8 Ibid.


Mr. Binns challenged the Society to ask itself the straight-forward questions. Do we care? Are we satisfied to continue as we now are, producing an uninspiring ware most economically mass produced, aimed for a nondiscriminating taste of general consumption? It seemed to Mr. Binns that many of the manufacturers did not care, did not mind resigning to the superiority of foreign imports, and were content to continue the production of the less-than-best as long as it could be sold and a financial profit realized. This relates to the point of his message: America could not afford to be so casual. The state of affairs of the day was not to be considered alone, the future was at stake. America must look ahead, and plan with the vision of the nation's progress. In totality, this was more than the day's material affair, it becomes a moral issue. The potter could not escape the responsibility of his place in the society of the human race, namely: to uphold standards for life, noble in thought, rich in deed.

America's inferiority was the most obvious in the use of decoration. Primarily, decoration consisted of patterns, purchased from a supply of stock patterns, and applied by a factory worker whose training had been only in the manipulative skill of his job. This process
involves little consideration of decoration to form. What seemed to have been the most convenient was application of pattern to any form regardless of the aesthetic effect. Mr. Binns did not condemn the printed patterns, as such. He believed there were and could be more desirable patterns. Their application to the ceramic forms when used sensitively could be a valuable process of commercial decoration. What he did condemn was the acceptance of this method as the only desirable one. Much harm is done when the personal element is eliminated—the individuality of the designer and the distinctive quality of the manufacturer.

A desire to produce beauty in dinnerware is one thing, a desire to produce money is quite another. From the most obvious indications, beauty had been cast aside to an incidental role while emphasis had been centered around production with the greatest amount of expediency and economy for the return of the greatest amount of profit. The manufacturers were wrong in assuming that, even though there was a certain percentage of the consumer market which demanded the better ware of foreign make, they had, on the other hand, the masses, the majority of the American consumers who were less demanding of quality. Good design does not of necessity imply a greater expense. To
regard the masses as all of one taste is an injustice.

In countries such as France, Germany, and England, the designer had been recognized as a valuable asset to the manufacturer. He was not regarded as an expense. The value of his contribution could be noted by the high quality of wares appreciated both at home and abroad. In America, the designer was much less appreciated. More often than not he was regarded as an additional overhead expense. If the American manufacturer could be persuaded to recognize the designer's potential worth there could be no doubt that both financial profit and respectable wares would be the outcome.

The American Ceramic Society in 1918, with its interest in promoting the progress of all phases of the ceramic industry, formed a separate section to be devoted primarily to the interests of design. This took the official title of Design Division. It was hoped that through an effort to stimulate interest in the importance of good design, the American dinnerware could assume a new position. This would take time, but it must be done.

The establishing of the Ceramic Design Department in 1927 at The Ohio State University can be viewed as the materialization, finally, of the many hopes and plans to train young men with both artistic and technical skills.
The state of Ohio, as one of the major areas in the country for ceramic industry, seemed a likely place for setting up an institution for training and producing men capable of meeting the needs of Ohio's ceramic industry.

In 1927, ceramic education was not new. Europe had schools providing thorough training, though not on a collegiate level. In America, instruction in pottery making was being given in many high schools throughout the country. Formal courses were offered in certain colleges and universities: Columbia University, University of Cincinnati, Iowa State College, University of North Dakota, University of Oklahoma, New York State School for Ceramics and Clay Working, Pratt Institute, and University of Washington. However, none of these schools directed the training of the students specifically toward industrial leadership.11

The plan to set up a program for ceramic designers at The Ohio State University got underway largely by the influence of Mr. Ross Purdy, General Secretary of the American Ceramic Society, and later by the Ohio Ceramic Industries Association. Industrial and University officials approved the plan, and funds were set up for the necessary equipment. George W. Rightmire, President of

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The Ohio State University; George Arps, Dean of the College of Education; and James R. Hopkins, Chairman of the Department of Fine Arts, gave encouragement to the proposed plan of study worked out by a faculty committee. This plan was approved by the general faculty and the Board of Trustees of the University. A sum of $15,000 was allotted to provide laboratories with necessary equipment for the production of clay ware. In addition to the laboratory experiment with claybodies, glazes, forming and decorating processes, additional courses were included in the overall program provided in other related departments: fine arts, ceramic engineering, engineering drawing, chemistry, and mathematics.¹²

Primarily, the purpose of the school was to produce artists, artists who could apply their talents to industrial ceramic production. This implied a twofold concentration. Not only was the graduate expected to have studied painting, design, art, and history, but, also, he was expected to have worked with specific materials encountered in ceramic production. Thus, he should have an understanding of clay, glazes, kilns, and methods of

processing. This is high expectation—to require that the graduate bring to his new job so thorough a training. Yet, if the school were to be justified at all the young graduate must be ready to lead. He must be equipped to meet the demands made upon him. These demands were of no small significance. The artist must know the possibilities and limitations of his materials and processes and be able to visualize and carry out designs of form and decoration adjustable to the factory production system. He must be alert to market demands, and be equipped with the desire to provide the very best in artistic taste and quality.

Unjustly so, in a sense, the artist was on trial. He must prove his worth before he was to be accepted. His value to the dinnerware manufacturer was not unanimously accepted or appreciated. With what seemed to have been dogged resistance to change, many of the pottery manufacturers clung tenaciously to the idea that employing artists was excess expense. They were not needed—so long as decalcomania was a convenient means of decoration; the clay body, glaze, and forms were of serviceable nature; and there were sales to a large portion of the American consumers, even though a nondiscriminating one. In short, too many of the American dinnerware producers were content with
second-rate ware—artless production, void of the genuine pride in quality.

It had become the artist's responsibility to prove his services were advantageous, to convince the pottery manufacturer that proper training could provide the combined technical and artistic skills within the same individual—heretofore, a rare combination, but one very vital to progressive production. Such trained men could be valuable assets as designers, plant operatives, technicians in glazes, bodies, colors, and processes.

The men of vision who were aware that technological knowledge alone was not enough saw clearly the only path to pursue. The artist was indispensable. It was futile to leave to chance those aspects of production which rested in the realm of beauty and refinement. It is to these men of vision that much credit is due for their efforts to bring about recognition of the artist's worth to the ceramic industry. This was the dream of those men of vision. The dream came true when support was granted to establish the Ceramic Art Department at The Ohio State University.

Prior to the selection of a director for the Ceramic Art Department, correspondence had been carried on between Mr. Arthur Baggs and Mr. Ross Purdy, General Secretary to
the American Ceramic Society. Some of this correspondence in the form of penciled notes, evidently intended as preparatory composition for a more formally presented letter addressed to Mr. Purdy, has been preserved. It is interesting to see what depth of thinking Mr. Baggs gave to Mr. Purdy's questions concerning plans for the new Ceramic Art Department.

Your letter regarding the ceramic art course at Ohio State University was forwarded from the Cowan Pottery Studio to Marblehead, Mass. where I am spending the summer in my own little pottery plant.

You are asking for suggestions on what seems to me to be a very hard problem. I have known, of course, for some time that a department of ceramic art was being planned at O.S.U. and that Mr. Rhead was the probable selection for director. Considered from all angles it seemed to me that he was much the best man for the job; in fact, I have been unable to think of any other available man who would at all meet my conception of what the position requires. This does not mean that I consider Mr. Rhead the ideal director but that he more nearly approaches the right combination of art training and plant experience than others in the field.

If Guy Cowan would undertake it I believe he would be an excellent man to head the department. But I don't think there is any possible chance of his considering it. In fundamental taste I think Cowan rates above Rhead. In technical facility and diversified experience in large plants probably Rhead has the edge, although Cowan has had a wider plant experience than most ceramists. In my opinion, Cowan is the best qualified man I know for the job and I am not saying this because he is my boss or with any idea that he could be persuaded to take it on.

There are several men in the country who have done sound artistic work in pottery in small studio plants.
Probably any one of these men, including myself, has sufficient taste and design training to qualify in that respect but we lack the all-important knowledge of industrial practice on a large scale and the limitations imposed by volume production and distribution. Then, too, there are men, again including myself, who can produce good stuff but have not the right personality or temperament to teach and inspire others. Your job wants a very special kind of man who is hard to find.

This spring I recommended a young man for the ceramic job at the University of Cincinnati to succeed Mr. Volkmar. This man, Mr. Harold S. Nash, has been hired for that position next year. I believe he will handle it well. He has taste, brains, pottery experience in small plants and glass experience in a large plant. Also, I think he is of the right type to teach successfully. He would be a good man to keep an eye on for future development but he is signed up for the coming year at least. He also needs large plant experience in whiteware, terra cotta, etc.—some of which he may get in summer vacation work later.

Doubtless there are men in the industry whom I don't know, men of ability and taste who are really responsible for fine artistic work with which their name is never connected because they are only units in big organizations. But such men in all probability could not be tempted away from their jobs by a teacher's salary.

Frankly, I don't know whom to suggest. It is too bad Mr. Rheud has decided not to undertake it. He had the qualifications.

As to the scope of the course, it seems to me that almost the whole effort should be directed to the needs of the large industrial plants. This course should bring something new to the field of ceramic art education if it is to justify itself. There are schools at present which offer excellent training to the prospective individual studio potter. At Alfred, for instance, the student in the art department gets a groundwork of sound taste in design, high ideals of craftsmanship and enough technical knowledge and
practice to work out his ideas easily and satisfactorily by himself after he leaves college. If he has anything worth expressing as an individual potter he knows how to go after it with the foundation he has acquired. But his effort and thought in school have been chiefly centered on producing forms, glazes, and decorations without considering the problem as anything more than the making of units of beauty and interest to himself.

In training designers for industrial work the same fundamental taste and feeling for the fitting treatment of the material are the all important things to be taught. But it would be a fine thing if from the very outset of his course in ceramic design the student who has industrial work in view could be led to see his problems in terms of large scale production. Of course, at first the student would know nothing of technical processes and the limitations imposed by them. But his designs would be criticized not only by asking the questions, "Is it beautiful in line, proportion, color, etc.?" but also, "Can it be easily manufactured in quantity by one of the common factory methods?" "Is it something which a great many people would like to own because it is definitely useful and appropriate to modern home decoration?" "What are slight changes which without decreasing its effectiveness as a design would make it easier and cheaper to produce or would perhaps widen its appeal to prospective buyers?" Even before the student knew what the instructor was talking about he would begin to get the idea from such criticism that there are a great many things he wants to learn in addition to the mere building up of pleasing line, form, and color arrangements. Many of these things he would be continuously learning in his technical classes and he would soon begin to inter-relate all his courses and get the feel of the thing as a whole. Even in his smallest design efforts he would be thinking of product. Before his course was ended he should be able to think quite intelligently about it.

Perhaps this idea of teaching design with an eye continually on the market is heresy from "true artists" point of view. I don't know, for I am not artist enough to condemn all things that are made in quantity and are "so commercial." I don't think that a student
with a real feeling for fine design would ever have
that instinct spoiled by being led to consider the
practical problems of production and market. Nor
do I think that a mediocre designer can ever be made
into a fine one by teaching him to scorn the idea of
wares inexpensively made in large volume and to aim
only at unique individual productions for the select
few who care to pay the price of exclusiveness. No
one admires more than I do the fine work of the best
individual potters. But the development of such
workers is not, as I see it, the function of the
proposed course. What is needed is to train artist-
technicians who shall bring into the factories stan-
dards of sound taste in design, working out through
factory methods all of the artistic charm they can
pack into their product, proud to be able to create
beautiful, inexpensive things for the masses. They
will know enough of the problems of the plant manager
and the sales manager to be able to speak the same
language and work with them in complete harmony. If
they call themselves design engineers or almost any-
thing but artists it may be an advantage. The word,
art, has had so much bunk connected with it that I,
for one, don't much blame industrial men for looking
askance at artists. However, a really good designer
could make money for any ceramic plant in the country
and sooner or later that is going to be proved just
as Frank Holms has proved it for Lennox.

Some of the things I think such a course should in-
clude are these:

First and most important.
I The development of taste in design.
1. Through careful analytical study of the best
ceramic work of all times, from museum pieces
and pictures. These to be studied not so much
for their literal design but in the effort to
learn what ceramists of the past can teach; of
how each material can be fittingly used to de-
velop its own characteristic qualities; to dis-
cover what appropriate forms and types of deco-
rations have been evolved in vigorous, plastic
earthenware and stoneware, in fine porcellain, in
terra cotta and tile, in glass. This study of
the work of the past should by no means give the
student the idea that nothing except the
traditional can be good. It should, rather, be a survey of what has been done in the field, made in the same way that an engineer attacking a research problem seeks first to review all that other men have learned about his subject.

2. Through intensive study and practice in the basic principles of creative design applied to definite practical problems in ceramic manufacture.

This course in design with a certain amount of practice in drawing, modeling and mechanical drafting should occupy rather more than half the student's time during the entire course, I believe. It seems to me futile to attempt to train students as finished draughtsmen or sculptors in this course. But they should be given enough work of this sort to enable them to express their ideas definitely and to execute ornamental patterns skillfully. To be a good designer one need not be able to draw or model the figure perfectly. Such ability comes only from years of intensive study. He can always find skilled draughtsmen and modelers who are perhaps lacking in creative ideas but who can execute in detail another man's creation. But the designer must have a strong feeling for the right and tasteful thing. If that can be given him he will have the foundation, without which all the technical facility in the world will not assure his doing anything good except by accident.

II Technique and factory practice.
1. Bodies and clay shop processes.


3. Decorative processes.


III Ceramic Calculation.
A foundation course in the mechanics and mathematics of calculating body and glaze formulae and the planning recording of experimental research work.
One suggestion I would make in regard to equipment. I think it would be of great importance to have as complete a representation as possible of fine examples of all branches of ceramic work available for constant reference and study. In the case of modern work actual pieces could be obtained. The fine work of the past would largely have to be studied from photographs and colored plates. Many splendid books are to be had. They are expensive but I know of no better way of investing one or two thousand dollars than in providing a reference library of the best books and as good a collection of actual specimens as can be obtained. Not only pieces of fine taste should be included in this collection but also works which are obviously poor in design and lacking in fitness to the material of which they are made. Concrete examples of good and bad taste side by side will help a teacher to clinch the principles he is talking about in a way nothing else can do. Perhaps manufacturers whose products happened to be chosen to illustrate mistakes in taste would resent the publicity but I imagine all of us have occasionally produced atrocities which would come under that head—I know I have.

If manufacturers were asked to contribute to the school museum examples of their best and worst sellers in a given price class over a period of years, it would furnish very interesting material. I have enough faith in the instinctive taste of the much maligned buying public to believe that in a given price class the best sellers are the best designs and the things which fail commercially almost invariably have some fundamental fault in design. I would like to see a collection assembled on the lines I have suggested and turned over to a jury of artists for judgment. I believe in most cases the supposedly expert selection would coincide with the verdict of the public.\footnote{A. Baggs, Letter to Mr. Ross Purdy.}
An additional piece of correspondence pertaining to Mr. Baggs's acceptance of the position as director of the Ceramic Art Department, is a copy of the letter sent to Mrs. Miriam B. Pearce, Hillside Studio, Newton, Mass., March 6, 1929. Part of this letter has been referred to earlier in the account of Mr. Baggs's work at Cleveland, Ohio.

I enjoyed my Cleveland connections very much; liked my associates, liked the city, thought I was rather permanently settled and bought a house.

Then along came representatives of Ohio State University at Columbus with a proposition that upset all my peace of mind and forced me to make an important decision.

The state of Ohio had appropriated funds for the establishment of a new Department of Ceramic Art at the University. They already had the oldest and in some ways the finest Department of Ceramic Engineering in the country but little attention had been given to the artistic phase, the actual designing of ceramic products. Now, with the general awakening of industry to the value of design, the ceramic manufacturers of Ohio had persuaded the legislature to finance this new course whose purpose should be to train designers who could enter the ceramic industrial plants with a fundamental knowledge of both design and ceramic technology.

They wanted a man to take charge of this new course and some optimistic friend in a rash moment had suggested me. The idea was somewhat breath-taking. A hard matter to decide. I had never thought of the teaching profession as being my job at all. I was a craftsman, was happiest when doing things with my hands. "But," said the persuaders, "you will have four free months each year to give to your personal production besides the opportunity to carry on a certain amount of such work along with your teaching
during the year." That argument had its appeal. Then, too, there was something very worth while in the idea of helping to mould boys and girls into efficient workers in a much neglected field. I did not feel at all amply qualified for such a task but finally I decided to attempt it.

So, since last October, I have been at The Ohio State University planning and installing machinery and workshops, visiting industrial plants, working out tentative courses of study, getting ready to start the department really functioning next fall when the first of the regular students of the course will begin their ceramic laboratory work after two years of general art and scientific fundamentals in the Fine Arts and Engineering Departments.

If the success of the venture depended on myself alone I would not dare tackle it. But the University has a strong Fine Arts Department headed by Prof. James R. Hopkins, a painter of national reputation. Sculpture is in charge of Erwin F. Frey who is not only a sculptor of marked ability but has had ceramic experience in terra-cotta and other branches. Design is in the very competent hands of Felix Payant. Several other excellent teachers with those mentioned will give the students a sound artistic foundation. My job is to help them to translate it into ceramic production. Even here I shall be greatly aided by the splendid Ceramic Engineering Department of the University. So, I am starting the work hopefully, trusting that we shall be able in time to turn out students with enough taste and training to make themselves of real value to the ceramic industry.

That's my story up to now. I'm still a craftsman but my moulding is to be done with human material as well as with clay. It scares me a bit but I shall try hard to make a workmanlike job of it. And I hope still to do a lot of my own pottery production both at the University and in my little Marblehead shop by the sea.\footnote{14}

\begin{quote}
A. Baggs, Letter to Mrs. Miriam B. Pearce, Hillside Studio, Newton, Mass., March 6, 1929.
\end{quote}
In the following excerpt taken from penciled notes for an address, Mr. Baggs indicates at least one type of product he was considering for experimental production in his newly established ceramic art workshop.

Last summer, on a lazy afternoon by the sea where a few members of this group happened to have come together to talk shop, I made a rash promise. I told Harold Nash that I would dig out a paper for this meeting. February seemed a long way off then. Besides, I had an idea that I thought would be interesting to play with and I expected to have a well equipped workshop by the first of December at the latest. So I thought that with the help of a few students I could work out some experimental product which with a brief explanation would constitute my report.

Somehow, at least a couple of months must have completely missed me since then for here is February, my workshop is still under construction and no product whatever has been made.

Now I don't see the value of taking up much time in telling what I would like to have done. Results are the things that really talk convincingly and I haven't any, although I'm still going to try for some at my first opportunity.

Just as a suggestion for discussion of possibilities I will state briefly the little design problem which I thought of working on.

It is becoming increasingly popular to give thought to the attractiveness of kitchens and kitchen equipment. The color waves of enamel and Duco flow gaily over everything from knife handles to the garbage can. Possibly when the tide ebbs we will find some of our kitchens stained a bit too brilliantly and promiscuously for artistic comfort. But anyhow, we are kitchen conscious. We have decided that they ought
to be good looking. Now there is quite a sizeable field of pottery production devoted to kitchen wares: mixing bowls, baking dishes of all sorts, casseroles, bean pots, pie plates, covered jars. This product is of three general types. One sort is usually made of a stoneware body fired at about cone 7-8, some as high as 10, rather thick and heavy; sometimes glazed inside only, sometimes glazed all over with top and bottom rims often scraped so that the pieces may nest without sticking together. Another type is made of a red burning clay lined with a white slip and glazed with a clear glaze, probably at about cone 05-03. Both these types are made in large quantity production and sold very cheaply. A third type is more expensive, made of true porcelain, the body is thoroughly vitreous and resistant to temperature changes. Baking and cooking dishes of this sort now on the market are fine technically and many of them good in design, probably because they are formed with the main idea of fulfilling their practical function with little or no conscious attempt to be beautiful.

What I had in mind was not to make a mean "arty" attack on this good sane, practical kitchenware but to see if it might not be possible, by means of slight refinements of form and color and the application of certain very simple decorative processes which would not greatly increase production cost, to work out a few kitchen utensils which would strike a somewhat new and interesting note. It's a much easier thing to suggest than to do. I believe, however, that there would be a fair sized market for such things, even at prices somewhat higher than the examples now on the market.

I hope to try it out later. Meanwhile, I offer it as a point of discussion. Would such a product find ready sale? How much increase in price, if any, would such a product bear provided it were distinctly more attractive than the cheaper wares? Even at no increase in selling price, would it not pay a manufacturer to give serious effort to such design improvements as might be made without increased production cost? Or is it a staple line which sells
in a certain regular volume regardless of small differences in appearance?

So much for that. I'm sorry it is only a suggestion not backed up by actual samples as I had intended.\(^{15}\)

Additional comments in the report were given to discussion of the workshop equipment and layout, the merits of the teaching personnel, and the proposed courses of study. In regard to design, Mr. Baggs stated:

There seems at the present time to be a real awakening among all manufacturers to the value of good design. Even in the ceramic industry which has been slower than some others to respond to this demand for better looking products, there is a very hopeful outlook. Progressive plants are more and more employing art directors of sound training and ability. The industry needs them. Where are we going to get them? How can we start the boys and girls who come to college on the right path to lead them into these positions?

I think Prof. Binns knows more about the answer to that question than any of the rest of us. He has been innoculating students with the germs of taste and high ideals of craftsmanship for years, long before the industry generally got at all excited about art and design. I think it may be said that Prof. Binns more than any other man has fed the flame of ceramic art development in this country. This course we are starting at Ohio State is merely carrying on the torch with the special motive of furnishing more artistic fuel for the large industrial furnaces.\(^{16}\)

In conclusion, Mr. Baggs commented on a significant part of the student's training.

\(^{15}\)A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for a paper, probably to be presented to the American Ceramic Society, 1929.

\(^{16}\)Ibid.
Throughout the course we hope to do a great deal of plant visiting with the students. Perhaps one of our greatest potential assets is the nearness of the University to many branches of industrial work. The students will, if possible, be placed in summer jobs in the plants and every effort will be made to establish live contact between the industry and the school. We hope, too, to be able to visit the annual China and Glass Exposition in Pittsburgh to study products from the viewpoint of the current market. Constant study of the wares offered in the stores and in the magazines will form a definite part of the student's assignment.

We hope to inspire high artistic ideals but we intend to frankly accept the fact that to be an industrial designer one must adapt his artistic expression to the limitations of volume production and the general style trends which determine quantity distribution. I, for one, refuse to believe that a thing must be cheap art to sell cheaply and in volume. I think it is a most interesting challenge to the artist to prove that fine, tasteful products can be made and sold with equal or greater success than that attained by wares of mediocre or bad artistic conception.\footnote{Ibid.}

In 1937, about eight years after the Ceramic Art Department had begun, Mr. Baggs addressed the Ohio Ceramic Industries Association with a report on how the ceramic art project had been developing. The report itself is not available but a portion of the report has been preserved in the form of penciled notes.

When the Ceramic Art Division was started its chief designated purpose was to train designers for the ceramic industry. A four years curriculum was laid out which combined fundamental training in drawing, modeling, design and art history—regular courses
of the Fine Arts Department—with certain courses in the Department of Ceramic Engineering—these to be tied together through laboratory and shop practice in the actual designing and production of ceramic products from the raw materials. It was not expected, nor desired, I think, that enrollment for this specialized field would be large. The laboratories and equipment were designed to take care of a total of twenty five or thirty students. From the beginning the facilities of the department were not confined to those majoring in the subject. Opportunity was offered for students to elect certain courses in ceramic art in order to broaden their general education in art or engineering or industrial arts. From all these and other branches of the University have come an increasing number of elective students who wanted experience and knowledge of pottery making to supplement the work of their own specialized fields. Many of these students have become so much interested that they have come back for more through continued courses covering three to six quarters, although they have not undertaken to complete the whole specified ceramic art curriculum. Few students have entered for the regular four year course and almost no effort has been made to recruit freshmen for this specialized curriculum. Elective students have so steadily increased in numbers and interest that the equipment and facilities of the department have been overtaxed. Designed to handle the production of twenty five people the space and equipment is hardly adequate for a total of sixty to eighty workers which has been a usual quarter's quota during the past two years.18

The notes end at this point, unfortunately. In his introductory remarks he proposed to give a brief account of the ceramic design project as it had developed and also to offer suggestions to increase its effectiveness along

18 A. Baggs, Penciled notes in preparation for report to Ohio Ceramic Industries Association, 1937.
industrial lines. This latter part is not available.

The report which was given to the American Ceramic Society, "Ceramic Art at Ohio State University," in 1936, was of a slightly different nature. Here he discussed at some length student instruction. Since students came from various programs of study: fine arts, art education, ceramic engineering and others throughout the University, working out suitable teaching methods had become a real challenge. The method of instruction most generally favored was described by Mr. Baggs as resembling the old guild workshop. Rather than formal instruction, a better system seemed to be that of students and teachers working together. The student would receive guidance and assistance in his own special problems but at the same time would be able to observe the teachers doing work of their own. By this means, the students, if alert, might observe many varied operations going on simultaneously.

Mr. Baggs stated the aims of the department as follows:

In general, the aims of the department have been these: to expose the student as thoroughly as possible to the fascination of ceramics in all its varied phases and endless possibilities; to furnish a well-equipped shop in which he can go as far as he will in the pursuit of knowledge and skill through actual creation of products from the raw materials; to aid him by certain informative courses in the history and technology of ceramics and by fundamental art courses; always to

19 A. Baggs, "Ceramic Art at Ohio State University."
provide help from instructors when needed, but to encourage initiative through independent planning and development of individual problems rather than to carry each student through the same specified routine.  

For Mr. Baggs, teaching, itself, was experimental. What might be suitable direction for one student might be unsuccessful for another. With the welfare of the student always in mind, what seemed to be most important was to allow a program to be flexible enough in order that each student could pursue a special interest. Consequently, some students showed a considerable preference for glaze experimentation, others for sculpture, still others for one or more of the forming processes. By encouraging this specific interest, it was hoped that the student would derive more benefit than he would by following a plan of activities to be carried out by everyone. Experimental work of all kinds was especially encouraged. As a result, much interesting knowledge was gained; but above all, the spirit of adventure, exploring, inventing, was instilled which is an invaluable habit of thinking to carry on through a fruitful life.

Mr. Baggs headed the Ceramic Art Department but he

was aided greatly by his highly qualified and well chosen staff. In 1929, Edgar Littlefield, a graduate of the Ceramic Engineering Department, The Ohio State University, was the first member added to Mr. Baggs's department. In 1930, Carlton Atherton of Syracuse University, pupil and teaching associate of Adelaide Alsop Robineau, was added. Paul Bogatay, who had worked under Mr. Baggs's direction on a design problem for the dinnerware industry from 1930-1933, was retained as a member of the teaching staff. In 1934, Margaret Steenrod, a graduate of the Ceramic Art Department, The Ohio State University, joined the staff, completing Mr. Baggs's Ceramic Art Department personnel.

**Design Problems of the Tableware Industry**

The Art Division of the American Ceramic Society for a long time had been perplexed with the problem of how to interest the tableware manufacturer in the services of capable designers. The subject of how to get more trained designers into industry had repeatedly come up before the annual meeting but any resultant action was practically nil. The industrialist showed no genuine interest in the various schools offering ceramic art. He had no inclination
to encourage it nor to provide position in his plant for the graduates of such schools. Without co-operation from industry the schools could not fulfill their mission. The Art Division, in 1929, determined to succeed in arousing interest, sent a report to the Trustees of the Society pointing out the need for some kind of action to bring about a closer relationship between the ceramic design schools and the pottery plants. The Trustees, in sympathy with the Art Division, decided upon an investigation to determine what was felt to be the desired technical and artistic qualifications of the industrial ceramic designer. This would be an aid for the schools to plan the training program to best meet the needs to the ceramic industry. Plant executives and school leaders were invited to consider the problem and submit suggestions. Much time and effort went into meetings, correspondence, and plant visits in order to arrive at a thorough comprehension of the problem. The report, "Design Problems of the Tableware Industry," by Arthur Baggs and Marion Fosdick, was part of this response.

In February, 1930, at the Annual Meeting of the American Ceramic Society held at Toronto, Ontario, Mr. Baggs, together with Miss Fosdick, reported to the Art Division what they felt were pertinent observations of the present
situation of the ceramic industry. Part of this report included a discussion of the training of ceramic designers in schools. Miss Fosdick was familiar with the program at Alfred which had been in operation since 1901. Mr. Baggs by now had the opportunity to justify the rather intensive study so recently begun at The Ohio State University. They hoped by giving such a report, industries could be made to see the importance of their support and co-operation with the schools, in order that the schools could better function in supplying the kind of training so desperately needed.

The Baggs-Fosdick report considered the following points of interest.

**Design training**

Design is the most important element in the overall training. A highly developed sense of creativity and taste needs much experience and encouragement. The study of design should be approached from both the historical and creative points of reference. Thus, the history of art in general lends an understanding of the development of styles and the cultures which produced them. The creative design allows for the functioning of observation and imagination. It is here that direct contact with the
materials and processes is necessary. The student by his own experiments discovers the relationships and thereby strengthens his ability to think and to plan accordingly.

The ability to design is further developed by practice in drawing—freehand and engineering, painting, and modeling. These aid in control of skills.

Imagination is the one necessary ingredient of a successful designer. If all of the study can be geared to developing this one faculty, the time will have been well spent. If the designer is alert he will make use of his ability to observe. He will be conscious of the people who will be his prospective consumer power—their tastes, their habits, their way of life. In short, ceramic products can be determined by needs which arise from the manner in which people "think, work, play, and entertain their friends." In addition, the designer is wise to keep abreast of trends in the other arts, such as architecture, interior design, painting, and sculpture.

The extent of the technical training was expressed in the report in the form of questioning. How much ceramic technology was necessary for the designer? It stands to

reason that the designer who is thoroughly familiar with the technical aspects of production has far greater possibilities of contributing valuable service to industry. Therefore, is it not feasible that the designer's training program should include the study of: clays in composition, preparation, and forming processes; glazes and color with calculation of formula; operation of kilns and control of fire; and also problems in sales and distribution. The training in these technical problems should be of fundamental and basic nature with a general knowledge of the whole ceramic field. Upon completion of the four year program, and when the student has chosen his area of specialization, then should be the time to direct training to meet specific needs. Ideally, these areas of specialization could best be handled if divided up among different schools. For example, whiteware provided for in one school, terra cotta in another, and possibly glass in still another.

Need for improved design as a merchandising factor

Tableware manufacturers had not been keeping pace with other manufacturers in observing and supplying consumer demands. More of the public demanded higher standards in taste along with better technical quality. The tableware manufacturers seemed not to have noticed this public interest
in better design. Neither had they seemed to notice the profit to be gained by good display and enthusiasm engendered in the sales personnel.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Present sources of tableware design}

With the exception of Lenox Pottery and a few other large, more progressive manufacturers, the majority of the tableware manufacturers had not made use of a special designer. The new lines of ware were arrived at by decisions made by the plant owner and the salesman. More important to the usual plant was a decorator who could copy patterns given him and a moldmaker who could also follow patterns for forms furnished him. These men, however skillful, did not supply the need for new designs. They could follow but could not lead.

Decalcomania provided another substitution for a designer. This was an easy enough matter. Where was there any need for a designer when the only decision to be made was selecting a pleasing decal which could be easily applied? Anyone could do this.

Often when artists had been consulted to execute designs, results were not always successful, due to the

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid. pp. 12-13.
lack of the artist's understanding of the ceramic media.\textsuperscript{23}

**Importance of the decalcomania manufacturer**

Because of their strategic position of being the chief source of decorative patterns for many pottery plants, much responsibility is placed upon the judgment of decal manufacturers for designs provided. In a sense, it was the decal manufacturers who established the character of the decorated ware. If the tableware industry were to continue with this method of decoration, then the decal manufacturers should exert considerable effort to provide good leadership. They must employ creative, imaginative artists, and must encourage experimentation with new types of decoration. There should be some means of discouraging imitation, some means of protecting the designs from exact or close copying.\textsuperscript{24}

**The price factor**

A common fault among American manufacturers was seen to be an overemphasis on the prices of the wares, a competition with one another in low prices instead of better

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\textsuperscript{23} Ibid. pp. 13-14.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. p. 15.
quality. Each seemed to be afraid to risk coming out with a new line at an above average price. Not all of the American consumers placed the cost foremost in their consideration of a tableware. The consumers wanting novelty, good design, good quality, would be willing to pay more if they found what they liked. What is more, consumers are inclined to be impressed with the prestige factor associated with a well-known name. The Lenox ware was cited as an example of being well-known and respected for good quality.

Tableware manufacturers were making very little use of national advertising. Either they had not observed or they were not impressed by the success of other manufacturers who were willing to invest large amounts of money in advertising to harvest greater dividends. 25

**Types of ware best suited to modern demands**

One feature of tableware which seemed prevalent at the time was the preference of the consumer for smaller sets of dinnerware, less formal and better fitted for specific occasional use, such as for breakfast and luncheon, for different seasons, and for room decor. The trend was moving

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toward several sets rather than the one standard set in regular use. This desire for change requires a greater and more attractive production from which to choose. Not only would the decoration be affected but the forms of the pieces, as well. A growing interest was seen in square and octagonal shapes. Mainly, there was an interest in something new and different, something which could catch the eye and satisfy the whims for "up-to-the-minute smartness." A few of the American manufacturers were meeting this demand but not soon enough or adequately enough to prohibit the prosperous flow of foreign made ware, such as the gaily colored peasant ware from France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and Spain, and the wares from England, Germany, and Japan which provide bright underglaze decorations, glazes of bright colors, and varying textures.

American wares had ventured forth in some respects with tinted bodies; colored glazes over embossed decoration; matt, textured, and salt glazes; painted underglaze decoration; and the revival of the process of printing from engraved plates. American efforts were improving but they were too timid to be very adventurous. There are great possibilities and challenges just waiting at the designer's fingertips. With all of this there should be
a word of caution. One could go to extremes with undesired results. To be faddish or recklessly modernistic could be disasterous, bringing about a spreading mistrust of anything modern or of contemporary feeling. It is the good designer who knows how to use restraint for the sake of good taste; but at the same time, he should be able to impart a certain flair of originality for the sake of freshness and newness.

Along with this forward look there was also a backward look for tableware design. There was considerable demand for past styles—Early American, for example. It was not suggested that today's designers copy these past styles but the Baggs-Fosdick report called attention to the fact that much could be learned by studying them and seeking out their basic qualities which have given them a timeless appeal. 26

General Education Board Scholarship

One other result of the intensive investigation by the Art Division of the American Ceramic Society was the offer from the General Education Board (Rockefeller Foundation), represented by Charles R. Richards, to provide a sum of money to finance a scholarship which would be a

26 Ibid. pp. 18-20.
research in tableware design. This should insure a co-
operation of school and plant. Most encouragingly, this
was an indication that industry was consenting to recog-
nize the potential value of artists.

The scholarship consisted of $8,000, to be extended
over a two year period of time, beginning July, 1930, to
be granted to The Ohio State University. The stipulation
was that the emphasis of the work was to be in "ceramic
design applied to tableware, with provisions for research
as to technical and market requirements."27

Mr. Baggs, in his report, "Design Problems of the
Tableware Industry," discussed the tentative plan for the
work to be undertaken. A designer of "marked creative
ability, initiative and energy" would be searched for.
He would devote full time to the work. He would be given
assistance from students and instructors who also would be
involved with studying the problem. Representatives from
the factory would be made available at the school from
time to time to maintain the professional contact. Experi-
mentation would be carried out directly under plant con-
ditions whenever possible. To give assurance of success,

27 E. de F. Curtis, "Art in Industrial Ceramics,"
American Ceramic Society Journal, Vol. XIII (1930, Part II),
p. 7.
co-operation from the industrial plant was much needed and could be provided for as follows:

(1) By allowing those engaged in the study to make frequent visits to the plants, observing production methods and receiving the benefit of the practical experience of plant executives and foremen in meeting some of the problems which will develop.

(2) By lending various skilled tradesmen to the school for certain periods during which their salary and extra expenses will be paid by the school.

(3) By furnishing for experimental uses at the school certain standard articles in various stages of production, such as plates in greenware, bisque or glazed; also, possibly furnishing occasionally a quantity of prepared clay, special saggers, or other equipment.

(4) By firing in the factory kilns from time to time, test material which the school wishes to prove out under plant conditions.

Mr. Baggs included in his tentative plan the desirability of submitting, upon completion of the scholarship work, "a review of tableware production and decorating processes giving in condensed form the essential information about each with special reference to the limitations which the process imposes upon design for quantity production." 

This grant to The Ohio State University by the General

28 Baggs and Fosdick, op. cit., p. 23.

29 Ibid., p. 23.
Education Board seems to have been met with general appro­val, and at the same time acknowledged new respect for the Art Division. Mr. Curtis, in his "Notes on the Annual Meeting, Art Division Sessions," at Toronto, 1930, commented on the fact that the Art Division had become a vital part of the Society with forty or fifty persons taking an active part; whereas before the meeting in Toronto, the Art Division was regarded by most as "a pleasant unimportant appendage to the Society," with less than a dozen members giving any assistance. The report presented by Mr. Baggs and Miss Fosdick "Design Problems of the Tableware Industry" had been received with interest, "proving conclusively that he [Baggs] has a fine understanding of the situation and that the grant by the General Education Board will be ably directed. The paper and discussion lasted nearly the full three-hour period."  

The next step was to secure the designer. Requests for recommendations were placed before each member of the White Wares Division and the Art Division of the Society, and also a selected list of art schools. Many recommenda­tions were made and the one selected after much careful

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consideration was felt to be the "best possible design student, a young designer of real promise," Mr. Paul Bogatay. 31

In December, 1930, Mr. Baggs reported to the American Ceramic Society the awarding of the General Education Board Grant to Paul Bogatay. Mr. Bogatay was graduated from Cleveland Art School in 1928, highly recommended for his talents in design. He attributes to Mr. Baggs his first experience in clay while he was a student at Cleveland Art School. Preceding the awarding of the General Education Board scholarship, Mr. Bogatay served as a designer for Cowan Pottery. His experience in designing for clay products gave him a background with which to approach his new assignment. 32

In the first of the reports on the progress in the research, Mr. Baggs gave account of the first five months. Mr. Bogatay devoted this time to getting a better understanding of his work through visits to plants, observing the types of wares and decorating processes, and conversing with men who had working experience in the various aspects

31 A. Baggs and M. Fosdick, op. cit., p. 23.

of production and sales. His time at the University had been devoted to making many sketches. At times, he worked with Mr. John C. Wheatley, a decorator, borrowed temporarily from an industrial plant, and Mr. Frederick H. Rhead, art director of the Homer Laughlin China Company.³³

Mr. Baggs had been appointed chairman of a committee to discuss and work out the details of the two-year research problem. Other members of the committee were Theodore Lenchner, Paul E. Cox, Charles Leigh Sebring, and Frederick H. Rhead. In outline form the following was the proposed program:

(1) Blue prints of standard tableware shapes, round and square.

(2) Survey of tableware industry covering syndicate, premium, department store, and special ware, both domestic and foreign. Comparative discussion of these wares.

(3) Studies on shape construction (preliminary studies to be confined to 7-inch plates).

(a) Plain shapes
(b) Broken-edge shapes (Gadroon type, etc.)
(c) Verge treatments
(d) Modeled shapes

(4) Study of color and textures (colored glazes and bodies adaptable to plain shapes.

(5) Study of over- and under-glaze decalcomania decorations for syndicate ware, department store products, and special ware.

(6) Over- and under-glaze printing.

(7) Other decorative processes.\textsuperscript{34}

On July 3, 1931, a year following the granting of the scholarship, Mr. Baggs reported to the General Education Board on the progress made during the past twelve months. One set of blue prints, for the round shape, had been prepared and sent to the tableware manufacturers, and appeared in the American Ceramic Society Bulletin, July, 1931. The blue prints for the square shape were to follow soon. "These two sets of drawings supply fundamental reference material which the factories have not had in definite form. They should be of real value to designers and business executives in the tableware plants as an aid in the discussion and planning of new shapes."\textsuperscript{35}

Much co-operation had been given by the manufacturers in the way of counsel and constructive criticism and the

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid.

liberty to use plant facilities. Especially appreciated was the compatible relationship between the designer, Paul Bogatay, and the men of the plant with whom he had contact. This was considered imperative to the success of the research study. At the first year's end, it was felt that a good start had been made and there was much promise for the coming year.

In September, 1931, the blue prints for the square shape dinnerware appeared in the Bulletin of the American Ceramic Society. In January, 1932, the third of the series of blue prints appeared. These blue prints illustrated numerous possibilities in shapes which could be arrived at by varying the proportions of simple basic forms. The blue prints so far had been submitted jointly by Mr. Baggs and Mr. Bogatay.

The General Education Board scholarship was set up to cover a two year period of time, beginning July, 1930, and ending July, 1932. However, due to the nature of the work, two years seemed too short a time. Consequently, funds


were conserved and stretched in order to extend the working time for an additional year. It was also hoped that supplemental funds could be contributed by the tableware industry. A report of the work accomplished since the last report was submitted by Mr. Baggs, July, 1933.  

(1) **Embossed Patterns.** A series of shells for plate forms were obtained from several tableware manufacturers. Embossed patterns were applied, returned to the plant, molds were made, and ware was produced. The plates were returned to the University for experiments with underglaze and overglaze decoration relating to the embossed patterns.

(2) **Decalcomania Studies.** A period of four months was devoted to the concentration of patterns suited to decalcomania. These color sketches were shown at the May, 1933 meeting of the White Wares Section of the Ohio Ceramic Industries Association. Designs suitable for hotel or household ware were given considerable attention. These were rendered in black and white. Also, other black and white sketches were rendered with the idea of their serving as souvenir plates commemorating the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. This project was promoted by Mr.

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Ross Purdy of the American Ceramic Society. Interest in these designs seemed to be shown by some of the manufacturers. This encouragement led to the decision to make available for commercial use all of the designs produced in the research study.

Work being carried out at the time of this report involved experimentation with various decorative processes in over- and under-glazes, stencil and air brush, rubber and sponge stamps, and brush painting. These experiments were to be continued in addition to a continuation of the shape construction problems but of more complex nature.\textsuperscript{39}

Unfortunately, the entire project was due to end by June, 1933. Funds appropriated by the General Education Board were depleted. The cherished hope that additional funds would be forthcoming from industry to support a continuation of the valuable research already in progress seemed to be denied. The principal reason was not that of a lack of interest but rather the unfavorable character of the times, the general economy of the entire country. Had this research been carried out under more favorable circumstances, where manufacturers would have been more

\textsuperscript{39}Ibid., p. 228.
inclined to expand instead of conserve and cut back, it is quite certain that more success would have been evident.

Mr. Baggs made suggestions for other problems he hoped would be taken up in the future. These ideas, listed below as he expressed them, give indication of his absorption in the problems of tableware production. His acknowledgments to the industries and individuals for their generous co-operation throughout the three years research program and his expressed confidence that progress in the tableware industry would continue, gave indication of his reluctance to be too disheartened by what he called "the rather doubtful immediate future and the depressing recent past."

Mr. Baggs's suggestions for investigation are as follows:

(1) The compiling of a history of the dinner plate for publication, showing outstanding examples of shape, decoration, and color treatment from earliest times to the present with an analytical study of the principles of design involved and notes on the cultural background which produced the various styles.

(2) Certain studies which perhaps occupy a borderland between art and engineering, such as a study of cross-sections of plates with compilation of data on strength, warpage in drying and firing, comparative weight, and beauty of line and form.

Another similar study might attempt to secure fundamental data on the designing of spouts that pour
more efficiently and of handles that offer most convenience to the user.

(3) Development of little-used decorative processes, ways of making transfer prints other than lithography and engraving, and development of new tints in the colored-body pallete. These and other semi-technical studies would seem to have a place in tableware design research.

(4) Market studies. A research field in itself and probably not wisely to be undertaken except in collaboration with trained commercial investigators.

It is to be hoped that the beginning which has been made in establishing a continuous specific study of tableware design problems will not be allowed to lapse just as it is acquiring enough momentum to become more and more effective.

Despite the rather doubtful immediate future and the depressing recent past, progressive development in the tableware industry will continue. Growth in the right direction will depend on active influences consistently maintained. An organized continuous research in design can not fail to exert increasing benefit as it progresses.  

Honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters

When a man has dedicated his life and energy to his work with unselfish and untiring interest his efforts cannot easily go unnoticed nor unappreciated. So it was with Arthur Baggs when Alfred University conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. Alfred, New York had been his boyhood home and the New York State

40 Ibid., p. 228.
School for Clayworking and Ceramics located on the Alfred University campus, with Mr. Charles Binns as a guide, had been the foundation for the life's work he was to fulfill. The occasion was the Centennial Commencement exercises, June 10, 1936, and Mr. Baggs was to hear words of tribute paid him in recognition of his achievements in ceramic art. Miss Marion Fosdick, a Professor of Ceramic Art, and a dear friend of long standing, in presenting Mr. Baggs for the degree, spoke these words of praise:

The development of ceramic art has progressed since prehistoric times as a living need of humanity. In that field this man has explored and worked very patiently. He has an imagination which can create from a chance product a beautiful achievement. He has an understanding of the aesthetic, technical, and spiritual values necessary to a mature artist. By all these qualities he is recognized nationally as a master craftsman and a teacher of the highest caliber. In meeting him one thinks not only of the professional man but of the man who achieves spiritual as well as material beauty in his career.

Production laboratory

At the time the Ceramic Design Department was approved in 1927, the underlying plan was for the training of ceramic designers for industry. The General Education Board grant, from 1930-1933, was utilized to bring this plan to a more fruitful materialization.

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The next major step in this direction was Mr. Baggs's proposal for establishing a production laboratory or "pilot plant". Its purpose was to provide a testing ground for new ideas in pottery production and a training ground for ceramic designers. Mr. Baggs set forth his proposal in an address given, in probability, to the Ohio Ceramic Industries Association. The report has been preserved in the form of a personal typed copy. No official publication is available. The exact date of this report is not known. The report in its entirety has been introduced here in order to give evidence to Mr. Baggs's wide scope of planning.

A PRODUCTION LABORATORY FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN CERAMIC DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Ceramic Education at the Ohio State University is well established along three separate but closely allied lines of effort. Its Department of Ceramic Engineering was the first of its kind in the world and has maintained its position in the front rank. Ceramic research is carried on with noteworthy success in the Experiment Station. The most recent addition to the trio is the Ceramic Art Division of the Department of Fine Arts. Here emphasis is placed on the training of artist-technicians who can create attractive and well made ceramic wares. Students study ceramic design not by drawing pictures on paper but by working with clays and glazes and fire. Many excellent individual pieces are produced. Pleasing relations of color and texture, interesting decorations, unusual shapes, promising technical experiments with materials and processes,
are developed in the routine work of staff and students. Many of these if put into production would be marketable merchandise. Some of them, if offered to the public, would contribute modestly to the variety and quality of American commercial ceramic art.

Established manufacturers are naturally conservative about trying out new designs or unusual types of body, glaze or decoration. They prefer to follow closely the well defined trends of public preference. They cannot afford too much experimenting in the wares which they decide to place on the market in large volume. They tend to look with suspicion at the creations of "artists" unless such works fall in a recognized groove of proven salability.

A Proposed New Ceramic Project

In all the ceramic activities of the University, ideas turn up from time to time; possible improvements, new combinations of materials and techniques, fresh design creations. Even in the case of developments which indicate great promise, there is always a lag between the germination of the idea and the definite industrial attempt to put it to work. Good germs may lie dormant for years or finally die because they are not nourished at once to a state of growth which is able to be seen and measured.

The project here proposed would add another ceramic activity to the campus picture; a production laboratory in which promising starts could be subjected to practical quantity testing and market exploration. Its major purpose would be to give a tryout to many things which have not yet arrived at the point of sure acceptance by manufacturers or buying public. Not all such experiments would succeed but some of them would quickly justify their promise and point the way to extended industrial application. A part of the usual lag would be taken up. Even in the case of unsuccessful attempts, something would be gained in discovering unforeseen "bugs" and trying to eliminate them. Such a workshop could give real service as a half-way-station between the laboratories and studios of the University and the mass production
of the factories. Although small, it would be competently supervised and efficiently operated. Skilled professional workmen with the help of advanced students would produce ceramic wares by factory methods. Small editions of the items attempted would be placed on sale in the regular retail market channels. Arrangements could be made for these wares to be shown in leading stores throughout the country. A month's trial on the counters would furnish information about the public's reaction which no buyer or art director could accurately predict.

In this way certain innovations which large manufacturers would not consider exploiting could have their premiere in the market long before they could normally get any chance to meet the public. Not all of them would be hits, of course. By no means all of the carefully, but somewhat timidly, chosen offerings of the large commercial plants are sellers.

This research laboratory could give a modest try to anything that showed freshness or promise. Occasionally, something good would prove salable in a big way. In such cases provision would be made for industrial plants to have the privilege of taking over and continuing production in whatever volume seemed justified. As a laboratory for market testing of new designs and new wares, such a workshop would fill a need and would help both the designer and the manufacturer.

In addition to its value as a market feeler and feeder, a workshop of this kind can be of great educational service to students of both ceramic art and ceramic engineering. It will offer to these students observations and participation in actual commercial production, limited in volume but efficiently carried on under skilled professional supervision. To prospective ceramic designers it will present a link between their individual design expression in unique pieces which they execute by hand and the flood of wares which they see filling the stores and roadside shops. Having a part in the quantity reproduction of good things will give them a respect and sympathy for the industrial viewpoint. They will acquire practical knowledge of factory methods and limitations, of market demands, of the business as well as the art of potting. The Ceramic Art Division, through this enterprise, may be
brought closer to industry with increased mutual interest and understanding.

The enterprise would not be intended as a profit maker but as a self-supporting research project. If properly directed and operated it should sustain itself after the first year. Profits, if any, would be absorbed in improved equipment and added personnel.

**BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT**

**Location**

Large room in rear of Hayes Hall now occupied by the Department of Military Science. Advantages:

1. Equipment supplemented by existing ceramic art laboratories in same building.
2. Easy access for participation by students of Ceramic Art and Ceramic Engineering.

**Equipment**

Kilns and equipment amounting in total cost to about $7,000.00.

**Added Personnel**

1. A good mold maker who also has general knowledge of pottery processes.
2. A factory trained craftsman familiar with general production methods.

These key men would spend perhaps two thirds of their time in routine production. They would also serve as parttime instructors in their special skills for the benefit of advanced students.

**Direction**

The staff of the Ceramic Art Division.
Consulting Advisers

The staffs of the Ceramic Engineering Department and the Engineering Experiment Station.

Designs

Staff and students of the Ceramic Art Department. Designs which meet the approval of the directing staff may be accepted from any source.

Participation by Students

Advanced students of ceramics may receive credit for participation in the work of the production laboratory. Arrangements can be made for certain students to earn partial self-support from work in addition to that done for credit.

Marketing

Arrangements can be made with stores such as Macy's and Marshall Field's to display the line for sale throughout the country so that a cross section of customer reaction may be obtained.

ESTIMATED BUDGET

Annual Running Expenses

Salaries for added personnel........... $4,000.00
Labor (mostly by advanced students).... 2,000.00
Materials .................................. 500.00
Fuel, light, power, etc. (Univ. contribution).
Sales costs, office expense,
packing, etc. .......................... 2,000.00
Total ...... $8,500.00

Annual Receipts From Merchandise Sold

Estimated wholesale value of salable product .........................$10,000.00
Note

These estimates represent what might reasonably be expected after the product had been organized and operating for one year on the suggested scale. The first year's development work would have to be underwritten for at least $5000.00. The second year should be self-supporting.

A Starting Plan

Under present circumstances it will perhaps be impossible to start the project on the scale proposed above. A practical beginning can be made by securing the following things:

1. A space of about 5000 sq. ft. of which only half would be required at the outset.

2. A kiln and other items of equipment amounting to a cost of about $2500.00.

3. Services of the maintenance department for installation.

It is hoped that most of the equipment may be obtained through the backing of ceramic industrial men. The present staff of the Department of Fine Arts can make a modest start. When promise of success is reasonably demonstrated it should not be difficult to secure backing for expansion. Eventually it is desired to employ two skilled professional craftsmen who will carry on production under staff direction with the help of student participation. If the project works, salaries of added personnel and operating expenses will be met by income from sales and royalties. It is not too optimistic to hope for such an outcome within two years.42

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42 A. Baggs, "A Production Laboratory for Research and Development in Ceramic Design and Technology," a personal copy of report believed to have been given to Ohio Ceramic Industries Association, circa 1942.
At the 1944 fall meeting of the Ohio Ceramic Industries Association, Mr. Baggs presented a paper as an official announcement that installation of the production laboratory had begun.\(^{43}\)

Although the University approved of the plan, it could not finance the entire setup. The University agreed to provide support in the way of space, light, heat, power, and fuel for the kilns. Twelve thousand dollars in the form of cash and equipment had been provided by The Ohio State University Development Fund and men of ceramic industry. With this much and with the hope that additional assistance would be forthcoming, the little factory, or pilot plant, as it was referred to, was begun. Space in Hayes Hall was obtained and provided with adequate floors, floor drains and sinks, electrical connections for machinery, and provisions for gas, water, compressed air, and lighting. A Simpson dry clay mixer and a gas kiln of about twelve cubic feet capacity were in process of installation at the time of Mr. Baggs's report. However, most of the needed equipment was on order but delivery could not be expected before the summer of 1945. Additional money would

be necessary for new personnel and general operating expenses. Mr. Baggs restated his belief that the Production Laboratory was a great step toward progress in American ceramic design. Although the war years had delayed the materialization of his plan, and even at the time of his report progress was slow in coming, Mr. Baggs expressed his hope to begin production in a modest way with the Fall Quarter, 1945. With machinery difficult to obtain and sufficient financial backing not yet secured, Mr. Baggs seemed determined to carry out his plans and confident in the co-operation of industry to lend support. Mr. Baggs's death, only three years later, denied him the full realization of his long labored plans. His expectations for the pilot plant went with his passing.

Personal data (a partial listing)
1928-1947

Awards and honors:

1933 Second Annual Robineau Memorial Ceramic Exhibition Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, Syracuse, New York, First Prize for pottery.

1934 Third Annual Robineau Memorial Ceramic Exhibition Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, Syracuse, New York, Juror.

1935 Fourth Annual Robineau Memorial Ceramic Exhibition Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, Syracuse, New York, Second Prize for pottery.
1936  Fifth National Ceramic Exhibition
Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, Syracuse,
New York, Juror.

1937  Sixth National Ceramic Exhibition
Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, Syracuse,
New York, Honorable Mention.

Twenty-seventh Annual Exhibition, Columbus
Art League Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts,
Columbus, Ohio, Jurors Special Award in
Pottery.

Exposition Internationale des Arts et des
Techniques, Paris, France. Diploma de
Medaille d'Or.

Exhibition of Contemporary American Ceramics
Shown in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and England
Juror. Entered five pieces of pottery. Two
pieces were chosen for the American Ceramic
Exhibition at the San Francisco World's Fair,
1939.

1938  Seventh National Ceramic Exhibition
Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, Syracuse,
New York. First Prize for pottery.

1942  Thirty-second Annual Exhibition, Columbus Art
League, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus,
Ohio. Special Recognition for Sustained Ex­
cellence.

Twenty-second Annual Exhibit of Cleveland
Artists and Craftsmen, Cleveland Museum of
Art, Cleveland, Ohio. Juror.

1943  Thirty-third Annual Exhibition, Columbus Art
League, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus,
Ohio. Mrs. Frederick Shedd Pottery Prize.

First Biennial Ceramic Show for Artists of Ohio
Butler Art Institute, Youngstown, Ohio. First
Prize for pottery.
1946  Regional Center for Eleventh National Ceramic Exhibition, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio. Juror.

1947  Twelfth National Ceramic Exhibition Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts In Memoriam---pottery by the late Arthur Baggs.

1954  Forty-fourth Annual Exhibition, Columbus Art League, Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, Ohio. (posthumous) Award for Distinguished Service in the Arts.

Examples of work included in the following museums:

- Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts.
- Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts, Columbus, Ohio.
- Cranbrook Museum, Cranbrook School, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.
- Metropolitan Museum, New York City, New York.
- Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey.
- Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, Syracuse, New York.

Name listed in:

- Ohio Art and Artists
- Who's Who in America
- Who's Who in American Art

Membership:

- American Ceramic Society, 1909
  Chairman, New England Division, 1923
  Secretary, Art Division, 1928
  Elected Fellow, 1930
  Chairman, Fellows' Committee on Awards, 1935
  Chairman, Art Division, 1938

- Keramos, Honorary Ceramic Fraternity, 1938

- Tau Sigma Delta, Honorary Fraternity for Architecture and Fine Arts

- Columbus Art League, 1929
  President, 1937-38, 1938-39
Columbus Gallery of Fine Arts
Columbus Philharmonic Association
Northminster Presbyterian Church

Publications:


"Things We Ought to Know about Pottery," Ohio State Educational Conference, The Ohio State University Bulletin, Vol. XXXV, No. 3 (September 15, 1930).


"Whiteware at Cone 06 Biscuit, Cone 015 Glost," Ceramic Age, Vol. VI (1934).


CONCLUSION

Arthur Eugene Baggs died February 15, 1947, from a heart attack. He was survived by his widow, Mrs. Laura Trowbridge Baggs; his mother, Mrs. Vernon Baggs; a son, Arthur Eugene Baggs, Jr.; and a daughter, Mary Trowbridge Baggs.

Mr. Baggs lived with a faith, undaunted by the many obstacles he faced, that what he was trying to accomplish eventually would be a reality. He was aiming for higher artistic standards in American ceramic industry. He sought to do this through helping the industrialists to recognize the undeniable value of trained ceramic artists and providing the necessary training for the artists to be worthy of the trust invested in their creative talents. His was the kind of faith that held to a vision when at times it appeared all others had wavered. There can be no measure placed upon the hours of time spent in planning or the drawing upon his strength and patience to endure the struggle. There must have been many times that he felt a painful disappointment when other minds were reluctant to accept and when other hands were slow to act. How much more heartening it could have been had industrialists
been able to possess the same clear vision. Yet, the true measure of his character can be found in his faithfulness to his mission, his constant hope that though success be slow, it was inevitable.

There can be no doubt that Arthur Baggs lived out his life the very model of all that his teacher, Charles Binns, had expected of a man. Mr. Binns, to be sure, must have looked with admiration through the years upon the unfolding of this noble character, Arthur Eugene Baggs.
APPENDIX

A COLLECTION OF TALKS, NOTES, AND LETTERS

BY ARTHUR BAGGS

Mr. Baggs's concepts of ceramics in its many aspects of teaching, industrial production, and as a way of life are very closely related. Throughout his writings: published and unpublished articles, personal letters, preparatory notes for lectures and demonstrations, his thoughts pertaining to ceramics in its many facets are clearly revealed. Because his interest was so genuine and wholehearted, whatever he said seems to bear witness to his love for ceramics and the dedication of his life to helping others find equal satisfaction.

Mr. Baggs did not write for publication to any great extent. However, he often contributed reports, talks, lectures, and demonstrations to many and varied group meetings. He frequently was requested to give information through correspondence. Fortunately, copies of a portion of his papers and correspondence have been preserved by his family. For the most part, the body of material consists of carbon copies or penciled notes to clarify his thinking in preparation for letters or talks. Selections
were made from the papers to present here Mr. Baggs's expression through written words of his thoughts about ceramics. The writings are arranged in two groups: thoughts pertaining to the teaching of ceramic art, and thoughts pertaining to ceramic art in industry.

Teaching of ceramic art

As a teacher, Mr. Baggs felt great responsibility for the young minds put into his charge. There was no handbook for guaranteed success in the task of teaching. Teaching, for Mr. Baggs, was experimental—certainly not haphazardly—but rather, based on much concern and consideration for the good of the student to help him develop the possibilities of which he is capable.

In a letter to Mr. Wallace S. Baldinger, in 1944, upon request Mr. Baggs stated his objectives.

I suppose that since I have become a teacher my chief objective is to light a fire of interest in students, a few of whom I hope and believe, will go on burning until they far outblaze the starting flame. In my own attempts to make pots I do not think of myself as an "artist." A liking for honest craftsmanship and a strong interest in exploring and experimenting occasionally results in a piece which has artistic merit as a by-product. When I think that has happened I am greatly pleased and a little amazed. But for a clearly defined concept of what is good and what is bad and how to produce "art"—don't ask me. I think it just grows, somewhat rarely, out of intense interest and enthusiasm, an honest, intelligent use of whatever the medium of expression may be, and a lot of hard, patient work.
What I try to do is to expose students to the contagious germs of an interest in ceramics and let nature take its course. A few will become ceramic artists or product designers; others will do valuable work as contributors to technical developments in the ceramic field. Both types are needed in the general progress of American ceramic art.

At the 1935 Fall Meeting of American Ceramic Society's Art Division, a paper was presented by Mr. R. Guy Cowan, "Art, Industry, and Education in Ceramics."

The discussion following the presentation included a statement by Arthur Baggs.

Fundamentally, I agree with his conclusions. The longer I attempt to teach ceramic art, the less I feel that I know how it should be done. Teaching is experimental work. I have been trying out things for several years, but I am not yet qualified to give advice about a definite curriculum. I have discovered what all teachers know, that a student with exceptional ability and willingness to work hard will grow and develop and become a useful person, no matter who his teachers are or in just what way information is fed to him. If our schools were made up entirely of this type of students, we teachers would feel less futile. But how can we take the casual, course-passing individual who has no particular urge or ability or industry and turn him into a potential industrial designer? I do not know.

As our schools are set up at present, we have to face the fact that few of the people we get to work upon are of that rare sort who will go ahead under their own steam. How are we to supply to the majority of

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1A. Baggs, Carbon copy of letter to Mr. Wallace S. Baldinger, Lawrence College, Appleton, Wisconsin, November 21, 1944, in connection with a collection of pottery to be exhibited in Appleton.
our students this steam, plus the knowledge they need, plus habits of hard work, plus the elusive thing called taste or design instinct or what you will? Can any teachers or any system of carefully arranged courses give these things to the average "run-of-the-kiln" student so thoroughly that he or she will magically become a valuable industrial designer or a first-rate individual craftsman or teacher? Again, I do not know.

If an ideal school could be founded where carefully selected students could be intensively trained in ceramic art, a somewhat higher average product might be expected. But we can not do that. We must take them as they come and try to make them useful. We teachers are trying. We are conscious of the urgent need to improve our results. We are eager to receive help and constructive suggestions.

It is not known the time or occasion for the following comments. They exist as a page of notes jotted down, but reveal much consideration on the matter of how to teach.

To what extent is it practical for a "design" teacher to attempt a highly diversified program of "experiences" with materials? Will the mechanics of stocking and keeping in order these materials and tools seem too difficult and confusing to the average teacher? Is the average teacher competent in his own experiences and interests and tastes to lead intelligent exploration of these materials, or will class procedures tend to become just prescribed routines guaranteed to end in "pretty" results but lacking much of the desired creative investigation. The results will impress parents and school administrators more if the teacher rather definitely plans and dictates products and procedures. Will that furnish for the kids the best stimulant to curiosity and intelligent

discovery which is so great a part of any real creative impulse?

Is there any virtue in letting an exploring student follow his own paths, right or wrong, for awhile before he is warned and pushed out of his "mistaken" by-path into the smoother road of the orthodox way? Will he not get more understanding of the material by being allowed to do some "wrong" things with it if he feels so inclined? He may discover for himself why they are wrong and will then really believe it. Just possibly, too competent steering in the orthodox techniques and safe design taste sometimes stifle imagination and a real creative urge. The creative urge is something more than the wish to repeat or copy another person's creation. It is possible that too great emphasis may be placed on an acceptable product as the end point rather than on understanding the nature and possibilities of a material? Some teachers can promote the first of these objectives quite successfully without half understanding the second even in their own minds.3

In 1944, Mr. Baggs suffered a leg injury due to having been struck by an automobile. A good friend from college days at Alfred, Ruth Canfield, wrote a note to him upon hearing of the accident. The note is here included along with his reply.

To Arthur Baggs,

News of your recent accident has just reached me.

Always since the great days with Professor Binns--especially since he left us--it has seemed to me that there is just one who truly carries his message in his way--and that is you.

It may be sentimental to want it to be so, but

3A. Baggs, A page of notes. No date.
the importance of his work and his way grows with me, never decreases.

So do take good care of Arthur Baggs—we need him.

Yours very truly,
Ruth Canfield

Dear Ruth Canfield,

You believe in flowers for the living, don't you? Your note is warming, lifting to a morale which droops too often in the normal daily round. I'm with you in the growing realization that we who had our youthful ambitions touched and ignited by Professor Binns were fortunate. If we can pass on, even to a few, a spark of his clear flame of enthusiasm and sincere respect for the thing we are trying to do, we are not as futile as we sometimes feel. I suppose that Professor Binns himself, like all teachers, had his low moments when it seemed that fire kindling was a slow and dubious business and that there was a lot of wet fuel in his woodpile. Someone wrote a line about teachers "... men of little showing—but their work continueth—greater than their knowing." I suppose that hope is the basic support of a teacher's ego.

Thank you for your note. My leg is mending nicely and I expect to be back on the job again in a few weeks.

With best regards
Sincerely yours,

The four short statements following do not touch directly upon teaching but they do reveal Mr. Baggs's attitude toward working with ceramics. His own personal enthusiasm must have inspired those students working near him.

4 Note from Ruth Canfield, New York, April 16, 1944.

A. Baggs, Penciled note, preparatory for a reply to Ruth Canfield. No date.
This summer I am having fun making experimental pots. Most of them fall far short of what I am shooting at but that is another penalty of growing older and more critical of your own work. A strange thing is that I find I can get a lot of pleasure out of just trying to improve something even when I am sure that at best I'm not going to be at all satisfied with it. So long as I can see a change or a touch which I think might help I just have to add it. Even in the end when I decide it does not measure up and destroy it, as I often do, I have enjoyed trying. That is lucky, for the things I do which really seem good to me are few and far between.

One of my vices is experimenting. When new materials come along I can't resist trying them out. Sometimes results are good. More often not so good. But the business of searching for new combinations and applications is for me one of the great pleasures of being a potter.

Exploring is almost a sin with me. Get's worse. I stray away from my supposed job of teaching to chase all sorts of unorthodox rainbows connected with bodies and glazes and methods that might possibly make better pots. Right now I am all excited about two or three such things which to me look good. Probably they are not very important but they are at least off the beaten track and I get a kick out of working on them. Maybe following a false scent is just as much fun for a hound as chasing an authentic fox. Anyway, I keep on hopefully sniffing along, letting out a yelp now and then to show that I am in earnest. Maybe I'll catch a rabbit sometime.

Continually I am influenced, stimulated, saved from

6 A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for a letter. No date.

7 A. Baggs, Part of information sent to the Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio, in connection with his being juror for the 22nd Annual Exhibit of Cleveland Artists and Craftsmen, April 7, 1942.

8 A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for a letter. No date.
false illusions about my own limited talents by contact with the best staff of colleagues with which a man could hope to work. Students, too, teach me a lot—sometimes more than I teach them I fear. I find it increasingly difficult to please myself with the things I try to make. But, on the whole, I think I am still alive and growing. That is all I ask of life—to continue to grow as long as possible.  

In a talk designed for prospective art students to The Ohio State University, Mr. Baggs expressed what he felt are opportunities of life at the University in general, and in the Fine Arts Department, specifically.

Ever since men began to use their brains and hands for anything beyond the struggle for food and shelter there have been a certain number of individuals who have had an urge to draw pictures, model forms and make things which they liked to look at and handle and enjoy, not for usefulness alone but for some personal quality and pride which they felt they had put into these works of their skill and imagination. Many other people who lacked the impulse to create such things, nevertheless, have found pleasure in seeing them, studying them, owning them. Some potential artists and many who are capable of gaining great enjoyment from intelligent art appreciation are found in every generation of boys and girls. The function of an art school is to furnish favorable surroundings in which students who have strong leanings toward any branch of art expression or appreciation may find opportunity to grow and mature through hard, enthusiastic work. An art school is not a place where one is "taught" art. It is, rather, a place where, if art is a vigorous seed in one's system, it will be offered every help in sprouting and growing. An art school is not a stamping press turning out standardized "artists"

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9 A. Baggs, Letter to Mr. Wallace S. Baldinger.
of warranted efficiency and guaranteed performance. It is more like a garden of good soil with sunlight and water available. Various growths which spring from it depend upon the individual seeds and the vitality with which they send down roots, push up blades. In other words, no school can make an artist, but an artist can be aided greatly in the development of his possibilities by the helpful training and suggestive leading which a good school and competent teachers can provide.

The department of Fine Arts at The Ohio State University is such a school. Its staff of twenty seven teachers and assistants includes painters, sculptors, designers, and craftsmen who have done and are doing professional work nationally of recognized merit. They are both teachers and producers of art. Their business is to lead and stimulate students in every form of artistic expression, to criticize constructively the progress of each individual talent, but not forcibly to mold the student into prescribed styles of technique or thinking. For some students a university art training has advantages over the more specialized and consequently narrower field of study offered by the professional art schools. All the regular curricula of the Department of Fine Arts include basic training in English, some branches of natural science, social science, thorough courses in art history, with possible electives in languages, history, mathematics, or almost any of the diversified fields of instruction which are offered in the University.

It is a broadening experience to be a part of the busy, happy crowd of young people who throng the campus. Third in size among State Universities, the Ohio State University is an important factor in American education. It's campus is one of the live spots where the men and women who will lead our country's future progress are preparing themselves today. Contact with these students who are specializing in other fields, working with them in classroom and laboratory and in general campus activities—these opportunities are assets and privileges of the University art school situation.
The Fine Arts Department is a comparatively small unit. This again is an asset because it makes possible a degree of friendliness through individual counselling and close contact between students and teachers, which is one of the most valuable features of the departmental policy. Each student has an adviser to whom he can go at any time for suggestions or for help in solving problems of any kind. Every teacher is interested in being a friend as well as an instructor. Students profit by accepting this opportunity to know their teachers and their fellow students better in the somewhat informal but busy atmosphere of serious work which characterizes the studios and laboratories. Students who work with enthusiasm and purpose find their efforts enjoyable—at times even exciting. Those who only come to play seldom stay. 10

On another occasion when Mr. Baggs addressed a group of students, he outlined briefly what a beginning course in pottery was to contain. Although this group of students were to have a rather condensed course, Mr. Baggs, nevertheless, planned for the maximum amount of instruction and experience. This talk, in a way, reveals what Mr. Baggs regarded as important factors for any beginner in pottery making.

We are going to spend one day a week for a time in learning what we can about pottery making. It is a large subject and obviously this course can only be an introduction. Our objective will be to gain an intelligent viewpoint regarding the craft, to establish a friendly interest in pottery which will add to our enjoyment and appreciation of all ceramic work. We will not have the expectation of becoming

10 A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for a talk to prospective art students. No date.
Page 146 is lacking. Filmed as received.

University Microfilms
Inc.
two years. You need not be discouraged if you don't quite master it in one or two attempts. But it is great fun to try and we hope to give you each two or three sessions of intimate contact with this most interesting of potter's tools.

The subject of glazes and their use is one of the largest fields in ceramics—far too large and too involved to be more than hinted at in a course such as we are attempting. We shall have some practice in the application of glazes, a very elementary consideration of their general composition, practical information regarding the making of certain useful glazes, and where other ready made glazes may be bought for use. The theory of glaze composition and the endless, experimental work involved in the development of new glazes is too long a story for us and is a subject for an advanced course.

The matter of firing the ware is also a long study and can be learned only from experience. We shall shortly have a new kiln added to those we already have and we hope to be able to get good results from it. You will be given some understanding of the working of these kilns and of the methods of placing the ware both glazed and unglazed, the temperature measurement and control, and other firing problems. But we cannot teach you how to invariably make your pieces come successfully through the fire. We don't know ourselves. Repeated experience is the only teacher and we can give you only a limited amount of that.

It may seem to you that I have talked more about the things we cannot do in this course than about what we can do. If so, I have done it not to discourage you but rather to keep you from underestimating the potter's craft. To many people, I believe, the making of pottery seems a sort of pleasant pastime which certain people indulge in much as many used to do a little china painting or pyrography, or as many now decorate furniture with Duco brushing lacquer and stenciled rosebuds. It is not that kind of thing at all and I have too much pride in my craft to allow anyone to suppose that pottery making can be taught in 15 lessons or 150 lessons. Thousands of able men have given their lifework to patient experiment and
painstaking artistic endeavor in the ceramic field only to feel at the end that the beckoning horizon of interesting problems to be solved was wider than at the beginning. That's the kind of a game it is. The more you learn, the better things you do, the wider become the possibilities you see ahead. It is not a craft that leads to dead ends.

As a medium for artistic expression pottery is worthy of one's best effort. It lasts. As you walk through the museums you will see little masterpieces of Egyptian ceramics which are as perfect in their delicate modeling and as pure in color as when they were taken from the kiln 4000 years ago. You will see magnificent Chinese pottery and porcelain never since surpassed either in form, color, texture, or technique preserved by the high fire through which it passed back in the Sung and Ming dynasties to show us of the present day, in absolutely unchanged condition, the beauty which the old Chinese craftsmen imagined and painstakingly realized.

Painting and sculpture have always outranked the decorative industrial arts in the minds of most critics. But in my prejudiced opinion there is just as valid a claim to greatness in some of the beautiful ceramics of the past as in the Venus de Milo or the Mona Lisa.

Now after making the craft seem hard and long to learn let me strike a more encouraging note. If one really has something to say it is not necessary to know all the words in the dictionary in order to express it. Beauty in ceramics is dependent not so much on finished technical skill and knowledge of the chemistry of glazes as upon design and fundamental taste. Much of the most interesting and artistically fine pottery at present being made in this country is the work of individuals who are not trained ceramists. These men and women started perhaps with a fairly workable clay, one or two glazes which they found in a book, a few samples of under-glaze color which they bought from a dealer in materials, and a storehouse of sound artistic ideas. Freely, boldly, with not too much worry as to whether their methods were orthodox or not they started making pottery. And some of it has remarkable charm even though a trained potter might find fault with it on
minor points of technique. Additional technical training would have helped them; is helping them as they get more experience. But the point is they had beauty in their heads and even with no more training than you may get in this short course they were by continued effort able to produce results which are thoroughly worth while.

You right here in this class can make interesting and beautiful pottery if you will work out with enthusiasm the simple problems we shall undertake, making use of the knowledge of design and taste which your work in the school has given you. We are not promising or even attempting to make you into finished craftsmen. If as a result of the course you learn to like pottery, to look at the examples of ceramic work you constantly meet with a more friendly interest and understanding, the work will have served its purpose.

Most of you are preparing to teach art. In many schools a fundamental knowledge of pottery processes may be a distinct asset to a teacher. While this brief course can scarcely give you all you need to teach pottery making it is hoped that it will at least start you along helpful lines and furnish an elementary groundwork on which you can build by further study and experience. I shall try to give you as we go along as much practical information as possible regarding suitable clays, glazes, kilns, etc. for use in school work. I would like to have you keep notebooks in which to record these points as they are brought out. They may sometime be useful to you.

Now in spite of all I have said about the difficulties of the game, don't let pottery frighten you. It is really great fun and the most successful way to attack it, I believe, is with the simple, unworried directness of a small child, plus much more than the average child's persistence. The most interesting things are often done in the simplest way. Intelligent effort will bring surprising progress. And however long you may continue the craft there will
always be other steps ahead to urge you on.\textsuperscript{11}

In a letter to Mr. E. de F. Curtis, Mr. Baggs revealed that a teacher's lot can sometimes have moments of discouragement. A portion of the letter is included here to indicate something of the seriousness with which Mr. Baggs felt about his profession.

I think the convention was pretty successful, everything considered.... Personally, I came back with much the same feeling I usually get from going through the pottery collections in a museum—a sense of being pretty much of a dud at my job but with a lot of ambition to improve. It does us good to see what the other fellows are doing. The results that Cowan and Mrs. Dyer are getting from their students in Cleveland and the interesting glass stunts which Harold Nash is pulling off in Cincinnati—to say nothing of the fine work from the Alfred crowd and the settlement houses—make me feel that I'm not half teaching ceramics. We had some good things from Ohio too, but what I am talking about is getting the subject over in varied and interesting fashion to the average student. I believe Nash is doing the best job of any of us in that. How long does it take to learn to teach? Much of the time, I fear that I ought to be back in my niche as a studio potter, where you don't feel responsible to a bunch of decent kids for not teaching them properly, nor to the political and personal vagaries of the industry and its important representatives.

I'm saying too much about my discouragements. You have 'em too now and then, I imagine. And if we keep on trying I suppose things get ironed out and gradually improve. On the whole, it's a good game.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11}A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for a talk to students in a beginning pottery class. No date.

\textsuperscript{12}A. Baggs, Carbon copy of letter to Mr. E. de F. Curtis, Wayne, Pennsylvania, March 19, 1931.
Mr. Baggs received a letter of request from Miss Lucia Mysch, Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana, for a discussion of the topic "Changing Philosophies in Relation to the Crafts". His reply to her is available in the form of notes jotted down in preparation for the more formal, thought-out letter. Precisely what the completed letter contained is not known, but general content can be deducted from the following comments.

Your second request for a statement on "Changing Philosophies in Relation to the Crafts" is not so easily handled. I fear that I have been so busy trying to be an honest craftsman and to introduce others to the possibilities for enjoyment and creative exploration which lie in the craft of my choice, ceramics, that I have thought little and read little about "Changing Philosophies." Who's philosophy is changing? Not that of the sincere craftsman, I believe. Surely the potters of the Sung dynasty, the glass workers of Venice, the Swiss watchmakers, the skilled cabinet makers of colonial America, all were drawn and held to their work by the same fundamental things which activate real craftsmen in all fields today: The characteristic beauty and personality of varied materials and the pleasure of discovering how to use those materials naturally in an expression of the craftsman's ideals of form and function.

Many craftsman through all periods have gone astray trying to force one material to be something other than its honest self, but the good ones from ancient Egypt to modern New York knew and respected their materials and instinctively emphasized rather than distorted or covered up their characteristic qualities. The pleasure derived from skillfully leading crude materials to realize at least a part of his hopes is a larger part of the craftsman's compensation in life than the money he earns. Even the skilled craftsman who merely carries out another's
design conception knows something of this satisfaction. . . . . . . . . . . .13

I suspect that if I attempted to write on that topic I would get fogged in a wordy mist through which my meaning, if any, might glimmer so faintly as to be thought either profound or ridiculous. Since the latter of these verdicts seems much more probable I refrain.

My personal feeling about crafts and craftsmanship has not changed so far as I know since I first became exposed to one of the many fundamental groups of materials and processes which have been keeping men busy ever since the birth of human curiosity with its urge to explore and experiment. I liked clay and the things that had been done with it. I wanted to be a potter and have been quite happily trying to learn something of that "long" craft ever since. The best thing about it is the fact that, as in any other branch of knowledge, the more one learns the greater the expanse of unknown territory which he glimpses ahead. That is my idea of a pleasant trip through life—to find constantly interesting things along the way but to see the road stretch out even farther with a gleam here and there along the horizon. I believe that "the crafts"—any craft—taken seriously because one likes and appreciates the material and really wants to say something with it, can return great values of happiness and satisfaction to those who follow it honestly and sincerely either as profession or hobby.

It is unfortunate, of course, that the name "craft" like the name "art" has become cheapened by careless use and commercial exploitation. Many of us have come to expect nothing but mediocre trash when we see either one of these terms prefixed to a product on the market. This is too bad but it has no relationship to the sincere admiration which we express when we say that a certain person is a real artist or a true craftsman. "Crafts" as they are sometimes taught

13 A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for letter to Miss Lucia Mysch, Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana. No date.
bear something of this commercial stigma. Trick ways of combining trick materials by trick processes using beautiful "art-designs" prepared by the instructor are employed so that from six easy lessons one can emerge with cute Christmas gifts for Aunt Jane, Cousin Ethel and the boy friend. Even from such an introduction as this, however, it is possible that a few persons with a strong creative urge might discover a friendly material which for them would open a door to new and satisfying achievement.

I cannot entirely disapprove any means, however faulty, of giving people the opportunity to enjoy the basic fundamental pleasure of making things with their own hands out of the earth's simple materials. It seems that these experiences ought to be given in such a way that the natural beauties and characteristic qualities of the materials will be appreciated and fittingly used by the student-craftsman. He should be led to think and design in terms of the stuff he is using, to seek out new ways of handling and processing which will bring out its best possibilities. Craft teaching which cultivates an intelligent friendly understanding of materials and promotes the logical growth of design out of that basic knowledge seems to me thoroughly worth while. Some contact with such teaching would be a good experience, I think, for every boy and girl.

When I say craftsman, I think of a person who knows and respects a material so thoroughly that whatever he does with that material is "in-tune" with its nature and personality.

In 1933, at the occasion of the National Conference on Subsistence Homesteading, Mr. Baggs was asked to speak to the Conference on the subject of pottery. The Subsistence Homesteading project was an effort on the part of the United States Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., to set up planned redistribution of the country's population. This was a "back-to-the-land and garden home
movement" intended to provide suitable environment for families to be self-supporting. Dayton, Ohio, had the First Homestead Unit and it was here that the Convention was held. Arts and crafts were to be included in the overall program in the Homesteading project, thus, the request for Mr. Baggs to discuss pottery as a contribution.

The following is Mr. Baggs's talk at the Convention.

As I understand it my contribution to this interesting discussion is supposed to be a sort of summary of evidence regarding the character and qualifications of the potter's craft as one of the candidates for admission to the right and privileges of a homestead community. We want to find out whether or not simple pottery making could be carried on in such a group with success; whether or not the activity would be a real asset to the community. We wish to consider its possibilities and also the limitations and the difficulties to be met in establishing such an undertaking on a sound basis.

In the effort to clarify my own thinking about this problem I have asked myself certain questions. Perhaps I cannot do better than to review these questions and their answers as I see them.

1. The fundamental question is this: What is our chief reason for proposing pottery or any other "homestead crafts" as factors in this scheme of living? Is it that we hope to make or save money by producing for ourselves dishes, furniture, and clothing more cheaply than they can be bought in the stores? If that is the only or even the main objective I think the whole project is futile. But, if these homestead crafts are introduced primarily as a means of getting more fun out of life, as paths leading to a more intelligent and satisfying use of leisure time, then the whole picture changes and I see them as most valuable additions to individual and community living.
In order to proceed then, I must assume that our objective is a richer life, with a richer pocketbook only considered as a secondary and rather uncertain possibility. We are proposing these various types of creative work because we believe that it is a fine and pleasant thing for people to make with their own hands and give their personal touch to as many as possible of their home utensils and furnishings. We believe that the joy and pride which come from shaping and processing crude materials into useful objects are real values in life which almost every person is able to enjoy in some degree if he is given a chance to develop his potential skills. The articles produced in various craft activities would have considerable money value. But of far greater importance would be the worker's increasing satisfaction and pleasure in the making of things which are truly his own.

Having thus justified the general idea in my mind I ask another question:

2. From a practical standpoint, is pottery a possible and desirable product to be included among Homestead Craft activities? As a haphazard undertaking by untrained individuals without supervision, I would say, no. As a community project with proper technical and artistic direction, I just as emphatically say, yes. The same untrained individuals who by themselves would struggle ineffectually with the seemingly difficult complications of the craft could quickly master its simple fundamentals when working under direction and with the added facilities which a centralized workshop would offer.

This brings us the third question:

3. Under what plan of organization could a small pottery making activity be successfully started? Pottery is not pottery until it is fired in a kiln. A kiln large enough to fire ordinary utensils and decorative objects even in moderate quantities is rather expensive to buy or build. The individual homesteader could not afford such a kiln. But in a small community shop there could be installed a kiln, simple equipment for preparing clays and glazes, and equipment for the forming and processing of pottery
and tiles. This workshop would be in charge of a trained pottery craftsman. It would offer a common meeting place and working place for all those in the community who became interested in the craft. In the shop and in their own homes they would carry on the various steps of pottery production under skilled direction and advice. All the firing of the products would be done in the community kiln. This plan would make it possible almost from the beginning to produce really sound and satisfactory objects for use in the homes of those who made them. In many cases, under the direction of an artistic craftsman such a shop might evolve a product which would have considerable sales appeal to the general public, and in the course of a year or two become not only self supporting but moderately profitable, to the extent of furnishing a living to the director and a few full-time and part-time workers. It would still continue in its main function of supplying the facilities for members of the community to work out their own creations in pottery and carry them through to the finished product.

If, as I believe, pottery as a homestead craft will be successful only as a co-operative project, what will be the minimum cost of establishing it on such a basis?

There would be needed a small building for a workshop, perhaps 30 ft. x 40 ft. A kiln of moderate capacity could be built for from $300 to $800. Other essential equipment and supplies would cost from $500 to $1000. A beginning could be made at a cost of $1000 in addition to the cost of the building. A trained director would have to receive a moderate salary in return for his services to the community.

If it were possible to finance the building and equipment of such a workshop on the same basis as the other homestead projects it is quite possible that certain young men and women with pottery training would be glad to undertake such a venture, building a shop and offering its facilities to the community at a moderate price, meanwhile developing a product which would be marketable as a further source of income.

In such a small shop as we are considering, what
sort of things could be produced which would fit into the homes and lives of the people? Of course it would be absurd to suggest that all the tableware, kitchenware, and decorative ceramic objects which are now so abundant and so cheap in the stores will be replaced by homemade products. The homestead potter will still buy probably just as much pottery as he ever bought. But he will also add to his home many distinctive and interesting things which he would not otherwise possess and which he will value because he made them himself—perhaps a tile mantel and hearth for his fireplace, a pottery lamp or two, ashtrays, flower bowls, and certain things for his table and kitchen: pitchers, jugs, salad bowls and plates, baking dishes, mixing bowls.

In the early days of the country and extending well into the middle of the nineteenth century, a great many little pottery shops were scattered over the country. In New England, the Carolinas, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio, these little potteries were making the simple utensils which their communities needed.\[14\]

Since this address seems to end so abruptly it is very likely that the penciled pages from which this address was recorded are a fragment and not the complete address.

At the Ohio State Educational Conference Tenth Annual Session, 1930, Columbus, Ohio, Mr. Baggs presented a paper: "Things We Should Know About Pottery." His subject was directed primarily to the Practical Arts and Vocational Section of the Conference.

14 A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for talk to National Conference on Subsistence Homesteading, Dayton, Ohio, December 8-10, 1933.
If my subject were stated, "Things I should know about pottery and why I don't know them," I could speak with conviction. There is an ever-increasing number of things which the worker in pottery finds he does not know. They keep teasing him to come along and find out. That eternal quest is one of the fascinations of the subject. Its variety and almost limitless possibilities give clay-working an interesting personality with which everyone should have at least acquaintance.

Clay is one of the kindest, best-natured raw materials that is provided for man's ingenuity to work upon. It is easy to understand the origin of the idea that man was created from clay. There is something in the very feeling of the soft, plastic substance that seems to stir the creative instinct. Not one person in a thousand, given a lump of moist clay, will refrain from pinching and shaping it towards some definite form. Moreover, clay is so kind that it responds to one's slightest effort, holds the impress of fingers or tools and leads one on to the development of an idea. A child, starting out perhaps with rather aimless pinching, will suddenly discover what looks like a rabbit or a bird—and immediately he is absorbed in a specific creation.

It would be interesting to know at just what dim stage of man's development he first began to form clay into useful and ornamental objects. It would be more interesting to be able to reconstruct one of those great moments in prehistoric time when, through some happy combination of circumstances, it dawned upon the Edison of the time, that the thing to do with clay was to burn it and that when clay was heated to redness or beyond, it underwent a change which made it permanently hard and durable. This fundamental discovery was made very early in many parts of the world, for among the unearthed relics of the remotest civilizations burned clay objects occupy an important place. These unknown inventors were great men. What a thrill might one of them have felt could his imagination have foreseen even a millionth part of the developments down through the coming ages which he was starting by this union of clay and fire from which the ceramic industry was born.
Probably few of us have ever stopped to consider the extent to which ceramic products are interwoven in the fabric of modern life. The term ceramics, somewhat broader than our specific subject, pottery, includes not only clay wares but practically all non-metallic products which are developed under high-temperature treatment. All are closely allied in the nature of their raw materials and in the chemistry and physics involved in their combination and treatment. All are at least own cousins of pottery. Suppose for a few moments we look at the whole family.

One of the most convincing ways to prove the usefulness of anything is to try to do without it. We may not fully appreciate our thumbs until we smash one with a hammer and attempt to work with fingers only. Let us try to imagine our modern life without ceramics of any sort. Let us suppose that, through the action of some newly discovered ray, it were possible at a touch of a button quietly, painlessly, and instantly to remove all ceramic products, to make them vanish into thin air for a time and then return—oh yes, we shall want them back again! Let us suppose that Mr. Purdy, the secretary of the American Ceramic Society, decides to show the world the value of his products by suddenly depriving us of their benefits. In the grey dawn of a winter morning he presses the magic button, and for the time being things ceramic no longer exist.

Now in our cities built so largely of brick, terra cotta, and cement—all three ceramic materials—it is obvious that this experiment would cause a wholesale catastrophe. Since we do not want our demonstration to be dangerous, we must add a bit more magic to our consuming ray and specify that, while all ceramic products vanish under its action, the non-ceramic materials surrounding them or supported by them shall retain their ordinary positions and usefulness. All right then, let the play go on.

You have been sleeping peacefully, but suddenly you are awake and aware that a strong gale of cold is coming into the room. Only the sashes are left in the windows. Glass is ceramic. If your house is of brick or cement, its outer walls and chimneys have gone too, but by the conditions of our experiment,
the house is not wrecked and you can jump out of bed onto the floor and investigate. You press the wall switch to get some light, but no light comes. The bulbs have vanished as well as all the white porcelain insulating fixtures with which your wiring was installed. But daylight is coming anyway. You step across the hall to the bathroom. The familiar cold feeling of the floor tiling fails to greet your bare toes. You look around in the dim light. The place is vacant except for a wooden chair and some strange curved bits of metal pipe sticking up here and there. The tile walls, the enameled iron tub, the sanitary porcelain lavatory, the other fixtures are gone. The white handles that used to adorn the hot-and cold-water faucets were of porcelain and no longer exist. You cannot even see how startled you look in the mirror, for it, too, is among the missing. You dress hurriedly and rush downstairs. You snatch your glasses from the dressing table as you go, but the lenses have disappeared and without them the glasses are useless.

Downstairs in the living room, the early morning light reveals a ragged hole where the fireplace was. Smoke is drifting into the room from the furnace below, and you rush down to quench the fire before it ignites the wood around a brickless chimney. The furnace lining has vanished, too, you notice; that was of firebrick and went with the rest in our general removal of ceramic materials.

Coming back up to the kitchen, you reflect that it is fortunate that excitement has robbed you of your appetite, for the chances of getting breakfast are small indeed. The new enameled metal range, the enameled refrigerator, the kitchen sink, the tiled walls, have gone for the day along with all the glass, crockery, and enamel ware cooking utensils. The china and glass closets are bare. All through the house the vases, bowls, ash trays, lamps, all the little things of beauty in pottery and glass which added so much charm to your home, are conspicuously absent. It is a desolate place. Let's get out. Grabbing a stale bun from a kitchen shelf, you hurry out to the garage. One bite on the bun, and another surprise greets you. It is not an efficient bite. You discover that the expensive bridgework for which
you just finished paying the dentist is not doing its stuff, because the two artificial teeth which it held in place were ceramic productions and are taking their holiday with the rest. But on to the garage and to see what has happened to the rest of the town! The car will not start. Those little spark plugs of high-fired porcelain were ceramic, too. Anyway, the driving would not be good without the brick pavements. Beneath the streets, the sewer pipes and electric conduits are gone, too. Most of the buildings about the town are mere skeletons of steel or wood. You miss, especially, the terra-cotta contours of the American Insurance Union tower, the cement buildings, the stadium; and all have gone with the rest, for cement is a material which belongs to the ceramic family, too.

Industry, you find, has stopped, for industry demands power, and power means fuel consumption, which requires furnaces with heat-resisting linings. This brings us to clay products again. Transmission of electric power, too, demands insulators--ceramics once more. The shaping and finishing of steel in machine work is greatly dependent on abrasive grinding wheels which, again, are ceramic materials compounded of ground abrasive substances bonded with clays of fluxes and burned at high temperatures. No wonder industry stops when its ceramic aids are removed!

I think we will agree that a group of products so inseparably tied up with our daily routine, so essential to our comfort, so capable of adding to the refinement and beauty of our homes deserves a general intelligent understanding by our boys and girls. To be sure our subject, pottery-making, is only one branch of ceramics, but it is among the most important. It includes the dishes that grace or disgrace our tables, many of the choice articles of home decoration, as well as the useful crocks, bowls, and jars of the kitchen. Considered broadly, tile, terra cotta, and even brick must be thought of, as must certain more delicately formed units, as highly important in the functioning of complicated engines. What would be the value of gas without the spark plug, or of beefsteak without the porcelain tooth?
Or, what would be the value of tobacco to the Irishman of the comic strip without a clay pipe?

For many years a few of the most progressive private and public schools have offered instruction in simple pottery-making. Every year more schools are adding the subject to their curriculums. It seems reasonable to expect that industrial-arts courses of the future may quite generally include elementary ceramics. Through work with their own hands, through demonstration by instructors, through lectures, pictures, and visits to shops, museums, and manufacturing plants, high school students may gain a friendly appreciation for clay wares which will go with them through life. Then, too, their enjoyment of ceramic products will be increased. They will have better standards of taste by which to judge and choose such products for their own use. Occasionally a student will find in pottery an absorbing interest which will lead him on to a professional study and a life-work in the industry. But to every student such a course will bring a more intelligent view of an important basic industrial material, with some knowledge of its fitting and proper use.

A generation of boys and girls who have been introduced to pottery in high school will form a different buying public for ceramic products, too. The present well-defined demand for better design in all lines of industrial art is in no small degree the result of improved art teaching in the public schools during the past ten or fifteen years. Artistic growth and improvement in all our industries will come only in response to public demand. No factor is more powerful in shaping the future public taste than education in art and industrial arts which is given in our schools.  

It is not known the specific occasion at which time the following talk was given. Most likely the notes remaining do not constitute the complete address. However,

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the comments offered express much of what Mr. Baggs felt to be the purpose of a ceramic art school.

I appreciate very much the honor of being asked to talk to this group of people who are interested in ceramics from various angles. Some of you are ceramic engineers and technologists, others are professional or amateur potters, perhaps some are teachers and beginning students of pottery making. It is a bit difficult to know just what to talk about which will be of general interest to you all.

Coming, as I do, directly from Columbus, I suppose I ought to report to you first a problem which is absorbing most of the thought of ceramic leaders on the campus. It is not a new problem but recently it has assumed increased importance until suddenly it becomes vital. The idea may be stated briefly in this way, "can Ohio State beat Michigan? And how?" You may take that "and how" either as question or answer according to your own convictions, which is as close as I can come to a diplomatic and nonpartisan attitude.

Mr. Tait sometime ago asked me to furnish a title for such remarks as I intended to make. I didn't know just what I would talk about but I suggested Pottery Making as a Hobby. I don't know yet just what I shall say but somewhere in my ramble you are supposed to get the idea that designing and making things from clay is an interesting and worth while occupation whether it absorbs your business hours or your play hours.

I think I can truly claim to be a pottery hobbyist. At various times in my life I have tried it out from several angles, and I like them all. As a student thirty-three years ago I was first exposed to the contagion of clay and glazes and fire under Charles F. Binns at Alfred. The virus "took" and I have never been able to get it out of my system. My first job was along the lines now called occupational therapy but then a rather new experimental idea. Dr. Herbert Hall, a nerve specialist in Marblehead, Mass., thought it would be good sense to set some of his nerve-shattered patients to work on interesting crafts as a relief from too much rest and self absorption. He wrote to Professor Binns for a teacher of pots.
Professor Binns having few students at that time took a chance and sent a very green young sophomore named Baggs out for a summer job. I did not get back to college for five years but during that time we managed to develop a little studio pot shop which was producing a decent line of stuff and selling it in many shops around the country. I kept a part-time connection with the Marblehead pottery during the following several years while I was studying again in college and in art schools. In 1915, I became owner of the little plant and ran it for ten years until I joined the Cowan Pottery in Cleveland in 1925. Three years in this larger plant gave me a broader viewpoint on quantity production and market demands and a most interesting occupation in helping to develop glazes, processes, and designs. Then in 1928, came the opportunity to go to Ohio State as a teacher of ceramic art, which after much hesitation I accepted. This biographical stuff is of no importance except to show that I have had first hand experience in several of the types of occupation which are open to those who like pottery making. I have enjoyed them all and at any time during the whole period my idea of the most fun possible in leisure time has been the postman's holiday walk—in my case—making pots or experimenting with bodies, glazes, and processes. Pottery is my hobby, I like it and a part of my present job is to help others to like it too.

Now what is the purpose of a ceramic art school? Is its sole end and aim to train highly skilled designers for the large industrial factories? Probably that has been the first and greatest objective in the minds of those who have sponsored such schools. And rightly so. Such trained designers are needed and a market already exists for a few exceptionally good ones. But if I believed that the only useful, justified products of ceramic art training were the relatively few who have the required talents and qualities to succeed in industrial designing for the large factories, I should be greatly discouraged about the whole thing. In my opinion there are several useful, interesting, economically self-supporting careers open to persons of varying types and varying natural abilities who elect to study ceramic art. And those who undertake it will vary greatly in native talent, industry, energy and their personal slants on what kind
of occupation they can be happy in. One might as well attempt to turn all medical students into successful specialists in eye surgery as to try to make of every ceramic art student a potential art director for a large dinnerware plant. In both cases the market would be soon saturated. In both cases only a few of those who started would have what it takes to qualify. There are many varieties of useful doctors. There are many varieties of useful potters. I want to mention some of the interesting ceramic art activities which are going on outside the strictly industrial field and to try to point out ways in which they are valuable to the ceramic industry and to the general design for living.

I think we need and can use a great many people who are skilled enthusiastic workers in ceramic art along many different lines: industrial designers for quantity production; industrial research technicians on problems connected with bodies, glazes, colors, and decorative processes; designer-craftsmen who prefer to devote most of their efforts to creation of individual pieces or strictly limited editions rather than to designing for volume production. These are the individual and small studio potters who like to do the whole thing with their own hands. They seldom get rich but they have a good time at it. Frequently they produce work of real beauty and quality which receives serious recognition by critics and collectors. There is and will continue to be a definite, important place for workers of this type: teachers of pottery making in public and private schools, summer camps, etc.; salesmen and saleswomen in the ceramic merchandise field who know their product thoroughly; hobbyists who make pots in their spare time for amusement.16

In the following notes, Mr. Baggs discussed the necessary qualifications for a good ceramic designer and the kind of training to be given in ceramic art schools. He defended

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16 A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for a talk. Occasion is unknown. Approximate date, 1936.
specialized, technical training in opposition to training in pure fundamentals. It is not known to whom or at what time Mr. Baggs presented these ideas. These notes may not constitute the entirety of his presentation. Nevertheless, they lend much insight into his ideas regarding training for developing interests in the various directions ceramic art can take.

As I see it, the essential ingredients which go into the making of a good ceramic designer are these:

Enthusiasm and respect for his job. I have heard it said that most good potters are crazy. I agree that at least they are crazy about pots and potting. For them, nothing is so much fun as to explore the possibilities of leading clays and glazes through various forming, decorating, and firing processes to produce the useful, durable, beautiful objects which constitute ceramic art at its best. They like the stuff. And if they really like it they respect it for its own fundamental characteristics. They don't try to force their materials into forms and finishes which belong to other materials. They want clay to look like clay, not like wood or glass or metal. They want glazes to look like glazes, not like coats of paint. If they are glass designers they want to emphasize the life and sparkle, the glowing light-saturated brilliance which is glass and which potters can only envy.

The second element then, which our designer needs is intimate acquaintance with his materials and a first hand knowledge of how they work. I do not think that a true feeling for the right use of materials can be developed as an instinctive part of the designer's thinking until he has actually used these materials and processes with his own hands. You may read all the literature you wish about the perfect golf swing but no one ever gets the real feel of the thing or knows what it is all about until he learns it with a
club in his hands. Sadly enough, for most of us, after banging away for days and months and years the perfect swing still eludes us as an attractive goal on the far horizon. We can't all be good golfers and we can't all be good ceramic designers. But the point I am trying to make is that for the designer, a trained instinct for right use of materials is as fundamentally important as is the swing to the golfer. And I think that actual experience with materials and processes is the club with which the designer must practice.

This leads up to the third essential in a designer's qualifications. He must have outstanding natural ability fortified by a sound training in the skills of the artist: drawing, modeling, painting. Through study of all forms of past and contemporary art and especially through the attempt to create art of his own he must try to get an understanding of the underlying principles of design, the organization and orderly relation of forms, lines, colors and textures in combinations which are good looking. This design business, it seems to me, is the foundation of all good art: painting, sculpture, architecture, or pots. And it is something which does not always automatically develop along with skill in drawing or painting or modeling.

Thorough acquaintance with materials is essential in order to get a fundamental understanding of and feeling for the logical, fitting ways in which to use them. This is perhaps the strongest argument which can be presented for the attempt to teach ceramic art technology as a part of the prospective industrial ceramic designer's training.

These are days when specific technical college instruction along specialized lines is somewhat under fire. Some people doubt the wisdom of employing the student's time with laboratory work in the routine operations of any special branch of engineering or applied art. The cry is "teach fundamentals". Give the prospective engineer all he can absorb of mathematics, physics and chemistry. If he knows these from the ground up he will adapt his fundamental
knowledge to any of the branches of engineering in which he finds a job. He will soon find out the special techniques and applications in the plant or in the field, and because of his sound basic foundation will go ahead faster and farther than the man who has studied more specific technology but less fundamental science.

It sounds pretty reasonable and I suspect that if one were considering only the top ten per cent of outstanding students the best results could be obtained by feeding them fundamentals only. But not all those who take engineering courses could happily and successfully absorb the concentrated, advanced, high pressure math and physics, etc., which would send them on the way to be leaders of scientific advance. There are many men doing highly successful pieces of work in the engineering field who perhaps would have fallen by the wayside about junior year if the course had been all basic science and no specific applications. Some men's ability and enthusiasm center around applications and techniques and if these were omitted from the training offered some of these men would never get their engine going on pure science as an inspirational fuel. And, after all, it seems to me that the main purpose of a college training is to get the engine going, to rouse enthusiasm for something. Once under way these engines will go ahead on their own, developing the various horse powers for which they are potentially adapted. The boy who is destined to be a great research physicist will not be stopped or shunted off the track by a certain amount of applied mechanics or ceramic technology. On the other hand, to some splendid prospective workers in specialized branches a diet of pure mathematics and science might act like sand in the gears.

Give the prospective industrial designer drawing, design, painting, sculpture. Don't waste his time making pots or molds or compounding glazes. Teach him fundamentals of art. Develop his ability to draw, his sense of proportion and color. Develop his taste and his facility with pencil or brush and don't bother him with specific applications of his talent to craft work. If he is grounded in design principles and can draw and model he will pick up all he needs to know about
the techniques of pottery or glass or metal or what not in the factory.

Well—that is one opinion though not my own. I admit that an artist of outstanding ability with no technical training will doubtless soon become of more value as a ceramic designer than a well-trained ceramic technician of mediocre artistic talent. If I were choosing a ceramic designer between two candidates of equal natural ability and industry, one of whom had pursued his design education on paper while the other was working his out in clays and glazes and production of ware—given my choice of one of these, I would pick the one who had had his hands in the clay, who had made friends with his materials, had the respect for them and understanding of their limitations and possibilities which can come only from familiar contact. For a designer of clay wares, that is a fundamental of fundamentals, I believe. And I do not believe that the paper-trained designer coming from the usual art school can acquire a real instinctive feeling for the honest, sincere, right use of his materials simply by observing ceramic processes as they are carried on in the factory. He needs to form things in the clay with his own hands, to mix and apply glazes and colors and watch their behavior in the fire, experiment with decorative processes, try things out for himself. No one connected with a ceramic industry knows the low-down on the real fun of the game until he has made things from the raw materials with his own hands and carried them all the way from crude clay to finished ware.

We know that we cannot train students in ceramic art in such a way that all of them will become top-notch designers for industry. Now and then one comes along who has what it takes and our schools can help him on his way. But the "run-of-the-kiln" students, what about them? Is the preparation of industrial designers the only function which may be regarded as useful and justified in a ceramic art course? I do not think so. If I did I should not be trying to teach the stuff.

All of this controversy about fundamentals versus applied specialization seems to boil down to the fact
that all courses in engineering, art or what have you are too short. We try to jam into four years a little knowledge about so many things. In five or six years a better job could be done. In senior year the average student is just beginning to find himself.

In thinking about an ideal set-up for a professional ceramic art school it has always seemed to me that it would be desirable to limit it largely to graduate students or their equivalent. Students could enter it from two distinct backgrounds—some after an engineering training, some after a training in art. The school would be a meeting place and melting pot for the two groups who would work together on the problem of designing and producing good looking ceramic products.

The school facilities would include a small working plant producing wares of various types on a small scale but professionally made. Two or three key men, skilled factory craftsmen, would give a part of their time to small quantity reproduction of wares designed in the school. Their remaining time would be given to instructing the students in their various professional skills; throwing, jiggering, mold-making, factory decorative processes. So far as the students were concerned the objective would not be to train them as professional throwers, jiggemen, etc., but to give them enough experience in doing these things so that they completely understand the ways in which their conceptions may be carried out and the possibilities and limitations of each. This general instruction and practice in processes and skills would be new stuff to both groups, equally profitable and interesting to both. Courses would also be offered in such subjects as the following: drawing, sculpture, design—primarily for students with engineering background but open to all. Ceramic art history—a review of ceramics of all time with special attention paid to contemporary products. Wares of various periods would be studied not only from the art appreciation viewpoint but with technical diagnosis and the attempt to employ similar techniques in the production of products acceptable in the current market. This course would be given to all students. Ceramic materials and processes—a course dealing with the composition
and proper treatment of ceramic bodies, glazes, and colors—primarily for students with art school background but open to all. A great deal of laboratory experimental work would be done and this work could be so planned that advanced experiments could be carried on by the engineers while the students with no previous experience along such lines were doing more elementary things.

All through the school the effort would be to encourage experiment, development of fresh ideas, new adaptations of old processes, perhaps new processes. Certain designs worked out by the students would go into small quantity production and would be offered for sale, thus furnishing a limited but significant testing ground for marketability. Each student would carry through his designs individually, but in the case of those selected for reproduction, this reproduction would be done by the school's small factory. 17

In correspondence with Mr. Carlton Atherton, Washington, D. C., 1944, Mr. Baggs discussed plans for a new building. He referred to his plans for graduate student work.

I believe that the greatest contribution which the ceramic art division can make to the training of designers and technologists (not engineers) for professional work in industry or teaching or individual studio production will be through emphasis on the development of superior courses and facilities at the graduate level.

Just an hour or two before your letter came Ed and I were talking about the fine possibilities for definitely professional training which could be worked out with a group of graduate students, all seriously bent on ceramics as a job, but coming to us from such varied backgrounds as ceramic art schools, art schools, ceramic engineering schools, or simply from

17 A. Baggs, notes. Undesignated. No date.
plant or studio experience in which they had shown high quality performance . . . I believe that our big job with the undergraduates is to offer "service courses" contributing a useful element to general education . . . Undergraduate courses in ceramics must, of course, be adequately maintained and constantly improved . . . But I am ambitious for us to develop in the graduate area the best spot in the country for a ceramic artist to polish off his professional training. I am sure we can do it.  

Ceramic Art in Industry

The following is an article as it appeared in Design, April, 1935.

"The Ceramic Artist's Job".

Some of our schools are attempting to start a few students on a long road leading to an interesting life work for those who can qualify finally as creative ceramic artists for the industry. What is this goal at which they are aiming? What do we mean by Ceramic Art, anyway? No doubt many associate the term chiefly with china painting. Everyone has a wife, mother, sister or aunt who once "took lessons" and decorated china. It was an interesting development, this widespread vogue for amateur overglaze painting, upon which Design's predecessor, Keramic Studio, was founded and supported for many fruitful years. But Ceramic Art means something much broader and more fundamental than mere surface ornament, important as that may be.

There is a wide variety of useful products of clay, glass and enamel which we classify under the general term "ceramics". In the making of these products highly specialized knowledge is required; knowledge of raw materials and their processing, familiarity with their limitations and possibilities. Both the

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ceramic engineer and the ceramic artist must know these materials and how to make them behave. But in the study of these fundamentals the engineer and the artist or designer approach the subject from different points of view and with varied objectives. The engineer is concerned with learning how to control his materials and keep them working smoothly through the manufacturing procedure. He does not worry about what to make, but he must know how to make efficiently whatever article he is assigned to produce. The ceramic artist, on the other hand, gives his main consideration to the product itself. How can he combine and process the available materials to develop good-looking, useful articles which will meet specific needs? What shapes will best perform their function? What colors and textures fit the current trend of public taste? What decoration, if any, does this vase or that plate need to make it appeal to the customer when passing through the store? The ceramic designer is always thinking in terms of finished product: seeing in every experimental body, glaze, or decorative process, possibilities for application to some definite project which he thinks will be attractive and salable. It is the business of the trained ceramic engineer so to control and perfect manufacturing operations that losses will be minimized and profits made. The ceramic artist's job is to keep the flow of ideas for smart, useful and tasteful ceramic merchandise coming along with equal smoothness. No degree of manufacturing efficiency is sufficient in itself to bring continued success to a dull, lifeless, badly designed product.

The ceramic artist should be a technologist as well as a designer so that he may plan intelligently such things as are within the practical limitations of his medium. Body and glaze composition, intricacies of form and ornament, design of moulds, complicated methods of decoration—all may cause production troubles. Knowledge of how to avoid such difficulties is as much a part of ceramic art as the ability to plan a pleasing decoration for a plate.

A ceramic artist, then, is one who is able to visualize finished, attractive salable ceramic products; who has the necessary technical and artistic knowledge to carry his vision from raw materials into concrete form. His conception includes not only superficial
ornament but the quality of body and glaze to meet specific uses; the basic form which will most simply and attractively fulfill its purpose and at the same time be capable of easy production by practical methods; surface enrichment by color, texture, or pattern which will truly contribute to the beauty of the whole. To succeed industrially he should be an alert student of the trends of taste in his own and allied fields, but he should have standards of honesty and sincerity which will hold him back from the pursuit of cheap trashiness in the effort to "give the public what it wants." The public is probably ready to welcome better, simpler design than many manufacturers are offering. Automobiles, refrigerators and washing machines are proving that functional efficiency, simplicity of line and form and restraint in ornament are potent sales factors. Ceramic product designers who will put this same sort of straightforward, common sense sincerity into their work should find a receptive market. The industry can use such artists.

The following notes are Mr. Baggs's discussion of ceramic artists with particular emphasis on designing for commercial wares.

Two weeks ago in Columbus a group of industrial men from all over the state met for the first Ohio State Industrial Research Conference. It was a step in the general project of organizing and co-ordinating all the research possibilities of the University laboratories and staff, and bringing them into more effective co-operation with industry. At a dinner meeting the speaker of the evening was Charles F. Kettering, head of research for General Motors. He gave a splendid talk: sane, sensible, amusing, convincing. In a way, it seemed to debunk research as one sometimes thinks of it—as the solemn, abstruse higher mathematical deliberations and profound conclusions

of super-scientists. His description sounded more like a good free for all fight with a problem by a bunch of enthusiastic fellows armed with fundamental knowledge plus a lot of common sense and curiosity. It was a story of difficulties and failures and dead ends turned to new and better directed paths by intelligent watchful analysis of why things went wrong. It was a story of refusing to believe that a thing cannot be done simply because the experts in the field say it is impossible. "Scientific research," he said, "is very scientific after it is finished. While in progress it may be decidedly accidental." "Intelligent ignorance," he said, "is often a valuable factor." It is possible to "know too much that isn't so." The talk left one possibly a bit disillusioned about the omniscience of researchers but more firmly convinced than ever of the value and the fun of research work.

As I listened to Mr. Kettering, I wished that I had the ability to stand up before a group and do the same sort of thing in regard to the ceramic art idea--debunk it, take all the highbrow implications out of the term, show it on the plain common sense basis where it really is and still leave the impression that it is vastly important and a splendid job to work at. A ceramic artist after all, is just a potter or a glass maker or an enameler who is so enthusiastic about the material he works with that he wants whatever he makes to be good looking as well as useful. He wants it to have the qualities which he believes are inherent in that material. He does not want it to look like wood or stone or metal or marble--just clay or glass, or enamel at it's best, in well proportioned form and pleasing and appropriate color and texture. He wants the various articles which he makes to be so designed that they will do efficiently what they are supposed to do. He wants his stuff to sell and he knows that people buy things more because of pleasing appearance than for any other reason. So he devotes his thought and skill to designing articles which he thinks are as beautiful and as practical as he can possibly make them within the price range which his product has to meet. If he does this conscientiously he is a ceramic artist whether his product sells for ten cents or five hundred dollars. I have always felt that it is a greater and more difficult achievement to design really
fine things which will sell cheaply in large volume
than to produce unique pieces for which a limited
few will pay high prices. The unique individual
pieces are perhaps more fun for the designer but I
know that personally I would get a great kick out
of designing a small article which received the O.K.
of a million or two people as a ten cent store best
seller.

A thing which seems regrettable is the apparent idea
that a distinct line exists between the "commercial"
and the "artistic" in ceramic production. I have
known individual potters who could express only half­
hearted enthusiasm for well designed technically
sound articles of real beauty, simply because these
pieces were made in quantity in a factory and seemed
to them "so commercial." I have known factory men
who seem to regard the whole eager army of amateur
craftsmen in pottery as "a bunch of crazy artists"
making negligible trash, trying to exploit lack of
skilled technology under the magic but misused name
of "art". The fact is, of course, that every potter,
whether he runs a factory or operates a tiny portable
muffle kiln, is trying for the same thing—to make
the finest, best looking product he possibly can make
within his limitations. The commercial plants
limiting factor may be price, the demands of the mar­
et which absorbs its product. Its designers know
that they could make better things. And they try to
do so. But the only things they can make with profit
at their price scale are those which will sell in
enormous volumes. Naturally, they follow along proven
lines of public demand. Naturally, they are hesitant
in launching designs and styles which are off the
beaten track. The small-time potter on the other hand
can try all the ideas which he can think of and find
a sale for them in small quantities or as unique
pieces. His limitation is lack of equipment, facili­
ties, and professional technical skill with which to
reduce his relatively high costs and improve the
technical quality of his product.

As a so-called ceramic artist I suppose I should try
to boost for the importance of the design of the pro­
duct in making that product salable. This story has
been so often told and so well told in recent years
that it has become trite. Nobody needs to be
convinced that good looking merchandise moves faster than that which is ugly or commonplace. The greatest improvements in product appearance have been made by industrial designers in fields which in past years were given little attention as opportunities for the artist’s special talents--kitchen sinks, stoves, refrigerators, motor cars, airplanes, housings for all sorts of mechanical devices from cameras to slot machines, containers and packages for every product from perfumes to beer. Designing of this sort strips the problem to bare practical essentials, modifies basic forms and lines only slightly here and there to secure more pleasing relations and proportions. Meaningless additions of arty ornament which has no fundamental relation to the simple basic form and purpose of the object are left out. Ornament, if any, is used not to hide forms and surfaces but to accent certain form relations which contribute to the simple unity of the whole.

This general effort of designers to see things simply, to eliminate unessentials and to try to make the product express honestly the true characteristics of the material from which it is made and to fulfill its practical purpose efficiently, is what I understand as the meaning of the term, modern, or contemporary design. It seems to me sane, honest, and good. Many things which have been called modernistic do not fall into this category at all and, in my opinion, are carelessly thought out experiments whose only merit is novelty.

I think there is a fundamental change taking place in the function which an industrial artist or designer is expected to perform. Formerly, he was looked upon as a sort of tailor, a man called in to dress up and prettify the bare body of an object which someone else had created. He was a decorator and he tried as best he could to hang assorted scrolls and flowers, lion’s claws, dragons, acanthus leaves, and Greek frets over a cast iron kitchen range, for instance. In these days the industrial designer and the engineer work together from the ground up. The designer says to the engineer: What is the most efficient size and shape into which you can put the working parts of each section of your device? Could we perhaps change
slightly the relative positions of this part and that part without loss of function? Is there any real need for this gadget which sticks out here? Working together with mutual compromises they gradually evolve a result which not only looks better but sometimes may actually work better. The artist's trained ability to relate forms in pleasing proportions has been applied to the body itself rather than to its superficial clothing. Often the result is so good looking that it is left practically nude and we like it that way. Our kitchen range looks like a cooking machine and when it is combined with a modern sink, refrigerator, etc., we get a room which is so simple, efficient and sensible that we show it with pride to visitors.

This same general expansion of the artist's job extends to the designing of ceramic wares. More and more the ceramic industrial designer is given the chance to plan not only the applied decoration but the shape on which it is to be used. The most progressive factories are finding it profitable to employ well-trained product designers who plan and direct the artistic policy of the plant. Working in close co-operation with technical and sales executives these art directors are very useful men.

One of the reasons why some of our schools are offering courses in ceramic art is in the hope of starting a few students on the road which will lead them after years of experience and growth to useful positions as art directors in the large factories. Only a small percentage of those who undertake such training will have the required natural ability and qualifications to fill these big time jobs. But there are many other opportunities for usefulness open to persons who choose to study the design and technology of ceramic products.

A great many people in this country are engaged in various branches of ceramic art. Let us look for a few moments at some of the interesting activities which are going on here and there in which ceramic artists are concerned.

First, there is the industrial designers whose business it is to plan good looking merchandise for huge
volume production—articles which will sell not by hundreds but by car loads. This is a profession which demands not only trained imagination and design ability but experience and sound judgment of market trends, technical knowledge of quantity production methods with their possibilities and limitations. Their constant problems deal not simply with making beautiful and useful objects but in keeping costs within very close limits, in choosing designs which will have mass appeal, in modifying and perhaps sacrificing entirely many things they would like to do because these things will not fit into the price scale or the volume scale which the large plant must maintain if it is to keep moving. No student just out of school is going to fit immediately into such a job. A few of the ablest who like the challenge of the volume production problem will start working in that direction and eventually qualify. And there is a chance for them to start if they have fresh ideas and a great deal of energy and perseverance. The big plants are looking for good ideas and their art directors are ready to recognize real talent when it shows up. But ceramic artists from school cannot expect to start at the top. They must prove their worth before they become art directors in large plants.

There are many plants of moderate size which could profitably employ full time designers but do not do so, preferring to pick up designs here and there in rather casual fashion. A salesman brings in a good seller which is almost copied, a customer wants a series of bowls or lamp bases like So and So's but a little cheaper. From here and there a line develops after a fashion; but usually a trained designer in the plant would co-ordinate all these suggestions into a line which would have more unity of character, more distinction, and, I believe, more sales appeal than that which usually evolves. During the depression, plants have been slow to hire men for design development but with improved business there will be more openings for those who have good ideas and a knowledge of ceramic processes.

I have been speaking so far of the designer for quantity production. There is another type of ceramic artist who has his place too—the individual craftsman in pottery, the person who cannot be quite
satisfied merely to design for mechanical reproduction. He gets his real kick out of carrying the whole thing through with his own hands, forming, decorating, glazing, firing—all his own. Or if he does not do it all himself he likes to operate on a scale small enough so that he can at least control all the stages of production to meet his ideals of design, quality, and character in his ware. These are the small studio potters and the individual potters of whom there are many and will be more. They don't get rich very often but they have an interesting satisfactory occupation which offers adequate compensation to them for the perhaps larger incomes which they might make in another field. After all we have to pay for what we get. If we want to do a certain thing in a certain way because we like it we usually have to sacrifice something for that pleasure. And there are first rate potters who just don't want to make things by the ten thousands but do have great fun making a few things which are the finest which they can produce. I think they have a worthy spot in the ceramic art picture and I believe there will always be a place for them.

I know there are people who say that the day of the craftsman is past, that the only sensible thing for a designer to do is to forget hand work and design for the machine. No one will question the value of the machine or the beauty of the things which can be made by purely mechanical processes if they are designed to look like machine products and not like psuedo-handcraft products.

Mechanization of industry and machine art are fine. I am no reactionary lamenting the good old days of the all hand made. Mechanized production makes available for wide distribution at cheap prices more things and better things than ever could be furnished by the old methods of hand craftsmanship. The machine can create beauty and can inspire the best efforts of the designers who accept its limitations. They are emphasizing those qualities of clean cut simplicity and precision which the machine produces so easily and so well. They are wisely giving up the attempt to imitate hand craftsmanship with its charming accidentals and individual variations. There are certain things which the machine can do better than the hand.
All right, let's plan that sort of thing for our machines, make them in enormous quantities at cheap prices, and all enjoy them. That's fine. But is it all we want? I don't think so. There is something in all of us which rebels at too much standardization. We like to think that we are expressing our individuality here and there by the things we choose to live with. We don't want our houses, our furniture, dishes, or clothes to be just like those of our friends. We take pride in searching for and finding something new, something that can't be found in every department store. We get a kick out of making things for ourselves which are not just the standard things which anyone with the price may buy. Perhaps it is a dress, or a hooked rug or a built-in bookcase or a desk. Maybe it is a model of Great-grandfather's clipper ship or a water-color sketch of the lake at the summer camp. A great many of us have an inner wish to create something with our own hands. Or if we lack that we have the same wish in another form—to select things which are unusual and different to add to our surroundings, thereby proving our superior taste and discrimination or superior pocket book or something which sets us up a bit in our own estimation and we hope, in that of others. I think this is a pretty general instinct—this thing of wishing to create and possess the unusual either by personal craftsmanship or by personal selection of unique or at least uncommon objects made by others.

Because of this trait in human nature I think that always there will be market, limited to be sure, but constant, for good work by individual craftsmen and small manufacturing plants who will produce things which are distinctive and unusual. These products, however, must have real merit. They must have some quality of design, color, or treatment which sets them apart from the quantity production wares with which they cannot begin to compete on an equal price basis. The individual potter or the small plant has much more freedom to experiment with ideas which are off the beaten track than does the huge factory. If a large, highly mechanized plant commits itself to making a certain dinnerware shape, great expense is involved in getting set for volume production on that shape. Mistakes in judgment are very costly. Such plants cannot be blamed for being very conservative
in their reaction toward all ideas of shape, pattern, or process which have not been pretty well tried out in the market. The result, of course, is a general similarity in the products of large factories caused by their common wish to cash in on public demand as indicated by each good seller as it turns up. It is easy to criticize these big factories for their imitative tendencies and their hesitation about taking a chance with fresh design ideas, but it would be a tough spot for any of us who feel inclined to criticize if we were made responsible for the next year's dividends of one of these plants. And who is more responsible for these dividends than the men who decide what to make?

As a matter of fact, I think that our big dinnerware factories deserve not petty criticism but a great big hand for the developments they have made in the past few years. A lot of progressive experiments have been tried out in shapes, decorative patterns, body and glaze innovations, and new decorative processes. Some of these have proved not only interesting steps away from the beaten track but highly successful ones from the sales viewpoint. The artistic efforts in the dinnerware field seem to me very encouragingly healthy.

Well, I started out to present the idea that the small plant or the individual potter is in a position to do a great deal more experimenting with the design of his product than is the big-time producer of volume merchandise. Then I have credited the big plants with having done a lot of progressive work along these lines. But I still stick to my story that no matter what the large factories do there will always be demand for things which they are not doing and will not attempt because of the comparatively limited market. In this field of limited production at somewhat higher prices there will always be a chance for the small plant and the individual potter to market successfully products of real merit and distinctive, unusual quality.  

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20 A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for a talk. No date.
The following is a carbon copy record of a radio broadcast Mr. Baggs gave at Station WEA0, (now WOSU) March 14, 1929. This was one talk of a series, but the only one available at the present time.

It was one of those cold, disagreeable mornings following a night of high wind that whistled outside, rattled the windows, and made sleep a thing of shreds and patches. The bathroom was cold, the razor blades were all dull, and the last squeeze of shaving cream had been extracted from the tube the day before. By the time the morning dressing scramble was completed the professor was clothed after a fashion but not at all in his right mind. In fact, he was rather close to being sunk with an eight o'clock class only half an hour ahead. He dropped into his breakfast chair feeling a hundred years old and decidedly sour.

But somehow his mood began to change. The busy little coffee machine was perking cheerfully. Mingled aromas of Mocha and Java and crisping toast started working on one of his numbed senses and through his eyes the gay charm of brightly colored china began to register its subtle hint of summer sunshine and glowing gardens. He began to feel more human. Maybe life was not just stoking furnaces and running for eight o'clocks. Perhaps, after all, there were flowers under the snow and blue skies beyond the soft coal curtain. Possibly—just possibly—out on the fairways in another month or two he might break a hundred. Getting rapidly back to normal, you see.

Hope springs eternal but I submit that in this case, the click that released the spring was the gay little breakfast set that seemed just a bit extravagant at Christmas time but helped to warm the spirits all winter.

We are influenced more than we often realize by such small details of our surroundings as this which has been suggested. After all, when one stops to count up, most of us spend from two to four hours every day in close contact with dishes. Some of us only eat
from them. Others also meet them more intimately and continuously in setting the table, washing and putting them away. The attractiveness of our tableware in design and color, its quality of material and finish may contribute in no small degree to our general satisfaction; may help to give that sense of a refined harmonious setting for intelligent human beings which we like to feel in our homes.

As a rule, I believe, we don't give enough thought to our choice of tableware. Nor do we ordinarily have enough of it in our homes. We think too much, perhaps, of its purely practical aspect. We have one set of china which graces our table when we have guests. The rest of the time we eat from a good serviceable set of white earthenware with a rather commonplace decoration which was bought years ago, and promises to remain our daily companion until the last plate is cracked and the last handle broken.

Why not more variety? Few of us are satisfied to wear one suit of clothes or one dress continuously until it is worn out. Why not dress our tables as well to fit the varied moods of season or weather? The cheerful bright hued breakfast set for cold winter mornings, soft green or blue or gray wares for a lazy summer lunch. An almost crude peasant pottery tea service perhaps for outdoor afternoons and the more formal aristocratic quality of fine china with its richness of gold and color for formal teas and dinners.

"Very fine," you say, "its easy for him to sit there and advise that microphone to buy lots of beautiful dishes for the good of its soul. But these things cost money. We can't afford them." It may be that our ideas of what is extravagant expense for tablewares are based on frugal habit and tradition rather than on a careful analysis and appreciation of what real values of pleasure and satisfaction may be brought to our homes by these ceramic products. Many who don't hesitate to buy a new and better looking car every two or three years would consider absurdly large an annual expense of a hundred dollars for the wares that lend grace and beauty to our center of family life. Yet, by spending even fifty dollars each year for a few years, it is possible to acquire a much
more pleasing setting for our hospitality than most of us ever possess.

It is worth while to have our children grow up with tasteful and dignified surroundings even in these smaller details of life. These things register on your minds. Who of us does not carry somewhere in the back of his head a childhood memory of some particular set of dishes that was a part of the charm of a familiar home? Maybe it was the quaint shapes and soft, deep pink decoration of the ware that always greeted you at Grandmother's on Thanksgiving Day. You know now that it was old Spode but in retrospect it is just a warm color note in the picture that calls up faint scents of wood smoke and apples and turkey dressing, the flicker of fire light on old maple, the sound of Grandfather's hearty chuckle as he ceremoniously laid the wishbone on your plate.

When one stops to consider the intricate process by which tableware is made, the wonder is not that it costs so much but that it costs so little. About forty operations involving separate handling go into the making of so simple an article as a ten cent store tea cup. And many of these operations are possible only with highly skilled labor. In most branches of modern industrial production the automatic, or nearly automatic machine plays a large part in cutting down costs. But no one has yet devised anything approaching a machine that may be simply fed with clay and deliver satisfactory teacups. There seems to be something about clay that needs the human touch more than most materials to make it function properly. It may be that inventive brains have not been applied to the problem of automatic machinery in the tableware field with the necessary concentration. Doubtless much is yet to be done in this direction but I for one am rather glad that here is an industry that still demands many real craftsmen of the hand as well as mere oilers and feeders of smooth running machines. The labor costs of such craftsmen per unit of production is high. And labor is by far the greatest item in ceramic production cost. So when our American factories have to compete with the products of cheap European and Asiatic labor the situation becomes difficult even with the help of a tariff. The problem is
further complicated by the fact that the American public is still in no small degree under the delusion that anything really fine in the decorative arts especially, must come from abroad. There was a time when certain American manufacturers of tableware left off all trade marks from their product hoping that the public would think it of foreign origin and buy, as they knew they would not if it were branded American. Our self respect has improved since then but even now the best china stores show a far too small percentage of American made ware. This is due in part to the remnants of the old prejudice; in part, we must admit, to the fact that in the past very few of our manufacturers have given anything like the degree of consideration to design and quality which the best English and European factories have always maintained.

Such reputations as those of Wedgwood, Mintons, Spode-Copeland, Royal Worcester, Havilands, Royal Copenhagen, Dresden, were not built in a day nor are they the outcome of a policy of haphazard imitation of the current best sellers in competitive lines. Founded by master potters of high ideals, employing from the first the best artistic talent available in the designing of their wares, these famous factories strove not simply to produce something to sell, but to create distinctive lines which would bear an unmistakable personality. Each set for itself certain definite high standards of taste and quality and the degree in which these standards have been held to and built upon is the measure of the success which each has attained.

The American tableware manufacturers on the other hand, have, generally speaking, been more interested in quantity and low production cost than in creating fine design. In the competitive scramble to sell on a price basis, many improvements in production and technical quality of ware have been evolved. But many American factories in the past have not seen the wisdom of devoting adequate effort and expense to design. They have been content to let Europe set the pace which they followed with adaptations and near copies. That was a natural, though short sighted, policy during the earlier years. Great numbers of people needed dishes and cheap dishes. They were
not especially critical about artistic values. But in recent years with the general increase of wealth, the improved average living conditions, the increasing attention given to design and taste in home decoration both in our schools and in our current periodicals, a new buying public has developed. The average customer today is becoming critical of design, knows much more definitely what she wants and why. And the preference goes to wares which show distinction and personality which never is attained without trained, intensive study of the product from an artistic viewpoint as well as from the technical.

I don't mean to convey the impression that American tableware is an inferior product. In certain branches of the field such as the soft tinted, translucent type of china called belleek, our wares are second to none. The American pioneer in this field, Walter Lenox of Trenton, was a man with the high ideals of a Josiah Wedgwood. Through long years of discouragement he held to his determination to produce a tableware of the very highest excellence. Surrounding himself with men of unusual technical and artistic ability he developed an organization whose product has gained both artistic recognition and financial success.

We have here in Ohio two younger organizations manufacturing a splendid quality of belleek ware, beautiful in body and glaze, constantly improving in design. In Ohio are made lines of high grade heat resisting china, teapots, baking dishes, etc., which are not surpassed anywhere. Hotel china in America has reached a high development. Several different plants produce a sound vitrified body and glaze which meet the exacting requirements of hotel service. In decoration, also, much of this ware is tasteful and fine. American white earthenware or semi-porcelain—so called—has perhaps in the past made less artistic advance than have the types already mentioned. But at the present time several of the most important factories are showing notable progressive effort in design and a marked improvement in these wares in the near future seems certain.
In the next talk of this series we shall discuss more in detail the characteristics of some of the outstanding American and European tablewares with perhaps a few suggestions regarding table decorations, including not only earthenware and china but their ceramic cousin, glass.

To sum up the idea which this present talk is intended to convey—for our own pleasure as well as for the growth and development of the ceramic industry in our country—we, the American public need to increase our consciousness of the dignity and importance of the wares we use every day on our tables. It is the public today which is setting the styles. What we ask for, our manufacturers will find a way to produce. Let us set our standards of quality and beauty high. Then let us be willing to pay adequately for the product we demand.

In September, 1940, The Ceramic Industry published an article, "Will American Ceramists Accept the Challenge?" A copy of this article was sent to Mr. Baggs, along with a letter from Rexford Newcomb, Assistant Editor. Quoting from the letter in part:

This article, written as a result of our interviews with merchandisers of pottery and glassware, says that the American manufacturer can never replace imported ware. We feel that you should have an equal chance to express your viewpoint.

May we, then, ask you these two questions:

Is there any reason why the American manufacturer cannot put on the market a product to meet this challenge?

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21 A. Baggs, Copy of a talk given on radio broadcast station, WEAO, March 14, 1929.
What have you done to develop this market or create new ones?

Mr. Baggs's reply is available in the form of notes which may or may not be complete.

Here is your challenge:
(1) The American pottery and glass industry cannot possibly take over the market formerly held by European manufacturers. (2) Domestic manufacturers cannot produce ware equal in quality to imports. (3) They cannot meet the price of imported ware. (4) They do not have the skilled workmen and artists that Europe has. (5) The tradition behind imports and the fascination of the foreign stamp are too strong to beat.

These are old familiar statements. We have accepted these general ideas for years without much real effort to analyze and question whether they were truths or half truths. Perhaps we have rather lazily loafed behind such alibis as our good living standards and their accompanying high labor costs. Apparently we have recognized only two possible means of meeting foreign competition. We have cried for higher tariffs. Also we have really tried, with brains and money, to learn how to cut costs through improvements in mechanized production and scientific plant control. We have succeeded in this to a remarkable degree. In some types of product I believe that our mechanical efficiency can already cancel the wage differential between American and foreign labor. But cost alone is not the sole factor in the competition. "The tradition behind imports" is not entirely a snobbish worship of the "foreign stamp." It is probably true that Americans have had and still have an inferiority complex in matters of art and taste and that many persons blindly accept European or Asiatic origin as a guarantee of artistic excellence. It is also true that there is much sound justification for this general confidence. So many

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22 Letter from Mr. Rexford Newcomb, Assistant Editor, Ceramic Industry, September 6, 1940.
European and Asiatic potters have behind them a long record of fine pottery and careful designing, a pride of craftsmanship, a high standard of taste, and a persistent promotional campaign. Our grandmothers knew about Wedgwood and Spode and Copenhagen, and the glamour of their names has grown with the years through the sustained excellence of their products plus continued advertising.

A few of our manufacturers are beginning to make a real effort to build prestige around their names and to seek distinction in design. For the most part, however, through our comparatively short ceramic history, the American potter has been interested chiefly in volume of sales, quick and cheap. Whatever he could copy or near copy from Europe or his fellow Americans with the least expense and the surest promise of immediate popularity was grist for his mill. By and large, this has resulted in a lot of passable stuff, mostly imitative, seldom rising above mediocrity. Few reputations for high quality and artistic dependability have been built up.

This lack of concern with the problem of creative, distinguished, original design has been the industry's greatest blind spot, in my opinion. There now seems to be an increasing tendency to call in a few trained designers now and then rather than leave it all up to the salesmen and the decalcomania pedlars. This is all to the good. But if we are going to get and keep any sizeable proportion of the former import market the day will come when every successful manufacturer will feel it necessary and profitable to spend at least half as much money hiring specialized creative design brains as he now spends as a matter of course for his technical control brains. Other industries are paying real money for design. Why should the potter think he can continue indefinitely to borrow his or buy it for a song? Every plant needs an artist of taste and ability to work continually on development not only of immediate design problems but on a consistent long term policy aimed at creating and maintaining a standard of artistic quality which will build up personality and prestige for the plant. A few such men are now on the job but many more are
needed if we are hoping to supplant in any noticeable degree the potteries of the rest of the world. 23

In September, 1941, in response to a request from Mr. Wallace S. Baldinger, Mr. Baggs answered the proposed questions. What place does America now hold? Is there some distinctive form in American pottery which makes it peculiarly expressive of our national character?

"What place does America now hold?"

A personal estimate; not to be considered as fact.

1. In some types of ware such as hotel china and common semi-vitreous tableware America perhaps leads the world in technical excellency and production efficiency. In artistic quality I think we are still trailing, but improving. The present world situation gives American manufacturers a fine opportunity to show that they can supply certain market demands which formerly were filled by imported wares. I hope we will meet this challenge.

2. The work of individual American potters, while of little present importance commercially, is significant in showing a trend of increased interest in ceramic art. The number of competent "studio potters" is steadily growing. Public interest, stimulated by exhibitions such as the Syracuse National, is rapidly increasing. More and more art museums are including contemporary ceramics among their current exhibitions of the art of our time. Some enthusiastic critics have said that in the work of our individual potters we compare very favorably with other countries. I am a little more conservative than that. I think we are improving fast and will go faster. But I still think that several of the older countries, where the art has been taken seriously for a longer time, are setting the pace—or were before Hitler. Some of their good

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23 A. Baggs, Preparatory notes for reply to Mr. Rexford Newcomb. No date.
Potters are coming to America as refugees and are already helping to lift our general average. We are on our way, but we should not get too inflated by our present showing, encouraging as it undoubtedly is. There will be opportunities for really good potters to distinguish themselves in this country in the next ten years. Some day I hope we will lead the world in artistic quality as well as technical efficiency. We can if we really want to do it.

"Is there some distinctive form in American pottery which makes it peculiarly expressive of our national character?"

Here again I have to say that if there be such a form or quality I can't put my finger on it. Characteristic cultural pottery forms in the past evidently developed from constant refining of shapes for specific uses until they did their job smoothly and also were pleasant to live with. Comparatively isolated peoples naturally worked these things out in ways which quite definitely reflected national or group personalities. These basic traditions, evolved and rather firmly fixed centuries ago, have persisted long after the degree of isolation which produced them has ceased.

In the Americas, only the Indian cultures ever had a chance to develop in this homogeneous, unified way. From the outset our white culture has been a quite different thing. Its constantly changing, ever more complex growth is best expressed by the trite but descriptive figure of the melting pot.

In developing certain glazes, potters make "frits" in a large crucible where mixtures of glass-forming ingredients boil and seethe until finally the molten mass settles into quiet fusion. Only after fusion is complete and the melt has been cooled can its properties and qualities be judged and tested.

Post Columbian American arts are young. The complex "frit" has been too violently boiling in a stage of partial fusion. We cannot expect that test samples from the changing melt would exhibit a consistent character. But we have been building up something. As the total mass of material in a crucible increases and as fusion progresses, a point is reached where
small additions of new ingredients have less and less effect upon the ultimate composition of the whole. Perhaps our accumulated "batch" of glass has become large enough and is well enough fused to show consistently its predominant characteristics if we give it a little time to cool. It may be that our thinking and talking about an American expression in the arts is evidence of the beginning of a crystallizing period from which will emerge distinctive forms and qualities which we can honestly and proudly call ours.

I think little of this has happened yet in the field of pottery. To be convincing it must show itself in ways more fundamental than putting pictures of the "American Scene" on dinnerware or a carelessly superficial adaptation of Indian design motives to "art" pottery. Wiener Workstatte and Bauhaus inspirations put into efficient quantity production in the American way won't quite qualify either. Possibly such utilitarian steps as the making of good simple useful dishes to fit snugly into American refrigerators is a more authentic contribution. I suspect that the real American character in pots when it arrives will be discovered almost with amazement in some things which were made just to be useful and good looking in the best fundamental traditions of clay working. I don't believe their designers will have been aiming self consciously at expressing the character or tempo of American life. They will just hit it by trying to make things which they themselves would like to have around the house.24

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24 A. Baggs, Carbon copy of letter to Wallace S. Baldinger, Nov. 21, 1941.
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PLATE I

ARTHUR EUGENE BAGGS ca. 1936
PLATE IV

TEA SET. MARBLEHEAD POTTERY CO. 1907
MAIOLICA DECORATED BOWL ca. 1912
GLAZED CEMENT FLOWER POT OR. 1915
LARGE PLATE, MARBLEHEAD POTTERY CO. 1926
PLATE I

BOWL. MARBLEHEAD POTTERY ca. 1928
PLATE XI

ORANGE GLAZED BOWL 1929
COPPER RED DECORATED JAR 1931
PLATE XIII

COPPER RED DECORATED JAR or. 1931
YELLOW GULZES PITOHER 1934
PLATE XXI
UNGLAZED TRICK SPOUTED PITCHER 1938
FLANGED JAR ca. 1942
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I, Roberta Stokes Persick, born in St. Louis, received much of my formal education in the state of Missouri. I received a diploma from Roosevelt High School in St. Louis, 1942; a Bachelor of Science in Education degree from Southeast Missouri State College, Cape Girardeau, 1946; and a Master of Art degree from the University of Missouri, Columbia, 1952. My field of specialization throughout was art.

Becoming very interested in ceramics, I attended State University of New York College of Ceramics at Alfred, New York, where I received a Master of Fine Art degree, 1955. Still interested in ceramics, I attended The Ohio State University where I, at present, am working to meet the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

My professional experience has been in the field of teaching: two years as seventh grade teacher, Oak Forest, Illinois; one year as junior high art teacher, Alton, Illinois; and two years as assistant professor of art at East Carolina College, Greenville, North Carolina.

My husband, William Persick, has been appointed Chairman of the Ceramic Department in the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota. Beginning with the fall of 1963 we plan to make our home there.