



# Making My Mark at MSU: Maker’s Marks

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## Introduction

During the summer of 2015, MSU Campus Archaeology Field School excavated 5 units behind the Administration building. Ceramics with maker’s marks were among the artifacts recovered. By identifying which companies used which marks, we can date the ceramics and learn the meaning behind them, how long they were made, and the type of dishware they were printed on. Maker’s marks are a very important characteristic for dating historic ceramics.




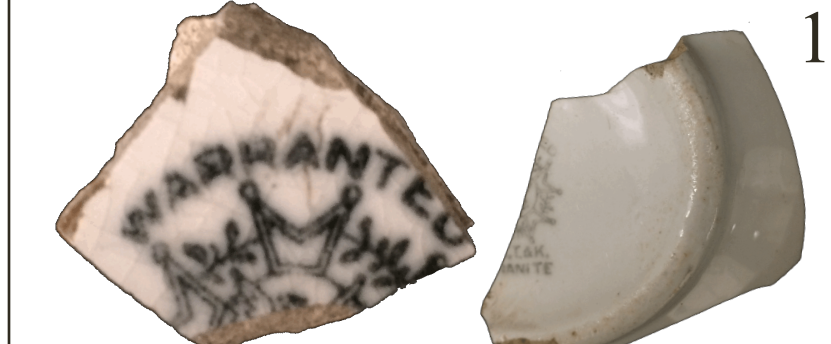







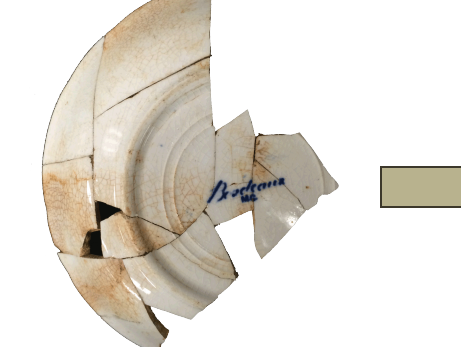



## Types of Ceramics

- Coarse Earthenware: soft, porous, coarse
- Stoneware: Grey, hard, non-porous, coarse
- Porcelain: Translucent, hard, non-porous
- Whiteware: No tint to glaze, primarily decorated with prints, decals, flow and transfer prints were most popular

Marker’s marks were printed on different types of ceramics that were used to make dishware such as plates and bowls. The type of ceramics used is important when trying to determine the value of a product. This information can often lead to understanding which company was popular during the time period. The time periods are associated with specific maker’s marks.

## History

The ceramics are debris and trash from the remodeling of the Gunson house in 1924. They were dumped by the Red Cedar River and covered with dirt to prevent over-flooding. This may have caused the ceramics to break into pieces. Also, some of them were burnt and had some discoloration from being in the dirt over a long period of time.

Companies	Origin	Date Range	Maker’s Mark and date of existence
Knowles, Taylor & Knowles	East Liverpool, Ohio	1854 - 1931	 1905 - 1929  1900 – 1920s  1890 – 1907
Edwin M. Knowles China Co.	Chester, W. Virginia	1900 - 1962	 1900 - 1948
Homer Laughlin China Co.	East Liverpool, Ohio	1871 - present	 →  1900 – 1960 March 1924 or April 1914  1901 - 1915
Warwick China Co.	Wheeling, W. Virginia	1887 - 1951	 Unknown
Johnson Brothers	Staffordshire, England	1883 - 2003	 1913  →  1883 - 1913  1900+  →  1920
Onondaga Pottery Co.	Syracuse, NY	1871 - 2009	 →  1897 – 1946 July 1914  1890 – 1893  →  1885 – 1890
Unknown	England	Unknown	 Post 1837
George Jones	Staffordshire, England	1862 – 1951	 1867 – 1873
Charles Ahrenfeldt Limoges	Limoges, France	1884 – 1969	 →  1894 - 1930
Mercer Pottery Co.	Trenton, New Jersey	1865 – 1930s	 →  Unknown
W. Adams & Co. Tunstall	Staffordshire, England	1769 - 1956	 →  1891 – early 1900s
John Maddock & Sons	Staffordshire, England	1855 - 1987	 1906+

## Discussion

Maker’s marks can help determine the company, origin, and date in which it was produced from. By analyzing the maker’s marks and identifying the type of ceramic we can determine the worth and value.

Porcelain is a type of fancy ceramic. Like the Limoges maker’s mark, the ceramic is porcelain. It is possible that it was from the Gunson house and not the dormitory.

The origin of the companies tells us that MSU’s dishware were from around the word and not just in the US.

Some ceramics were dated with the maker’s marks. Onondaga Pottery Co. printed their ceramics with a number and a shape.

## Results

From the collection of maker’s marks we can conclude three things:

1. The site ranges between 1890-1925.
2. The ceramics represents more than the kind you find in a dorm suggesting that some of the ceramics are from the Gunson house.
3. Fancy ceramics with elaborate designs may have been selected by a woman.

## Acknowledgment:

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References available  
upon request