

Trenton Pottery Waster Tip Proveniences
Amy C. Earls
Compiled from author's notes
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George L. Miller and I surface collected on three turn-of-the-twentieth-century/World War I-era pottery waster dumps exposed by excavations along the N.J. Route 29 realignment and tunnel construction project in south Trenton from March 1998 through April 2000. The New Jersey Department of Transportation had hired archaeological firm Hunter Research of Trenton to monitor trenching and perform data recovery to mitigate impacts of construction on significant archaeological resources along the road. At the invitation of Hunter personnel we collected wasters and assisted in advocating for the national archaeological and historical significance of these pottery wastes. These collections are **nonrandom biased samples** in favor of decorated and marked wares.

Trenton, New Jersey, was one of two major American pottery production centers from the nineteenth to mid twentieth century (the other was East Liverpool, Ohio). Key potteries represented in the dumps include the Trenton China Company, Thomas Maddock and Sons (doing business as Maddock Pottery Co.) Lamberton Works, Joseph Mayer's Arsenal Pottery, and Mercer Pottery. Considerable historic documentation, including Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, correspondence, and pottery records, survives for these potteries and offers much research potential.

Hunter Research designated three dump locations within the overarching Waterfront Stadium Archaeological Complex (28Me266): the Waterfront Stadium Dump, the Lalor Street Dump, and the New Lamberton Street Dump (Table 1). Each of the three dumps contains hotelwares from the Lamberton Works pottery operated by the Trenton China Co. and its successor, Thomas Maddock and Sons. The New Lamberton Street Dump consists of material removed from the Route 29 impact area and redeposited at the corner of Lamberton Road and the 195 connector. Hunter Research personnel used marked sherds to date the dumps (tables provided by Hunter Research listing badge/client, merchant, decoration, and marks, 10/21/98). Significant amounts of sponge and Victorian majolica wasters from Joseph Mayer's Arsenal Pottery occur in the Lalor Street and New Lamberton Street dumps. Mercer Pottery sherd concentrations occur in the Waterfront Stadium Dump.

Table 1 Waterfront Stadium Archaeological Complex Dumps Collected by Miller and Earls

Dump No.	Dump Name, Date	Factories	Ware
1	Waterfront Stadium ca. 1918–23	Maddock Pottery Lamberton Works Mercer Pottery	Hotelware (decor.) Printed tableware
2	Lalor Street ca. 1912–21	Trenton China Co. Maddock Pottery Co. Lamberton Works Joseph Mayer's Arsenal Pottery	Hotelware (undec.) Hotelware (decor.) Sponge, majolica
3	New Lamberton Street	Trenton China Co. Maddock Pottery Co. Lamberton Works	Hotelware (undec.) Hotelware (decor.)

	ca. 1906–12	Joseph Mayer's Arsenal Pottery	and sanitary ware Sponge, majolica
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The dumps' integrity is limited, with most contexts mixed and some containing household as well as factory waste. The presence of kiln furniture, block molds, misfired wasters, and biscuit sherds were reliable indicators of factory waste as well as possibly unmixed contexts. These concentrations within the larger dump area are noted below.

The waster dumps show types of wares made in Trenton at the turn of the twentieth century, including types that may not be well represented in modern collections. Maddock's Lamberton Works sold its hotelwares to a national market, and the contents of all three dumps demonstrate the wide range of this production line. The dumps contain abundant technological evidence, such as factory tools, kiln furniture, block molds, and manufacturing failures showing the results of inadequate temperature control. The abundant hotelware marks, in particular, record a variety of information, including in addition to the patterns the factory's clients (e.g., the Stevens Hotel, Chicago) and merchants (Albert Pick, Chicago), as well as maker (Maddock's Lamberton Works) and body (Lamberton China, Trenton China, or American China).

The Arsenal Pottery wasters document production in Trenton of two types that survive on the antiques market: cut sponge and American majolica. Although the sponge sherds occasionally are marked, their Trenton origin has been obscured by the presence of two Mayer factories, one on either side of the Delaware River. The long-lived factory (1881–present) in Beaver Falls, Pa., originally owned by Joseph, Arthur, and Ernest Mayer, is much better known among collectors than the earlier Arsenal Pottery (1876–1905) in Trenton, owned by James and Joseph Mayer (Liebeknecht 2001:1). Both factories used pseudo-British coat of arms backstamps, with the Trenton firm using the wording Mayer Pottery M'f'g Co. (see two examples of marks in the Photo Gallery section of the Potteries of Trenton Society website, http://potteriesoftrentonsociety.org/majolica/mayer_marks.html). These marks often do not provide factory location, however, and some contain only initials, rather than names, further contributing to confusion in identification (in fact, Lehner's 1988 dictionary of marks does not have a listing for the Arsenal Pottery or the Trenton factory but only for the Beaver Falls location). Thus the sponge-stamped wares marked Mayer are often wrongly attributed to the Beaver Falls, Pa., factory (e.g., see Robacker and Robacker 1978: 79 illustration of plates marked Mayer Mfg. Co.). An exception is Kelly, Kowalsky, and Kowalsky (2001: 102–104), which incorporated information from waster dump collection to correctly attribute extant vessels to Trenton. The sponge waster sherds in the Hunter Research (Liebeknecht 2001) and Earls collection demonstrate the variety of Trenton's Arsenal Pottery production of this ware.

Based on surviving vessels on the antiques market, the sponge vessels produced by the two factories appear to be large identical except for color palette (the Trenton facility did not use red or black; Liebeknecht 2001: 2). Bill Liebeknecht suggests that the Trenton factory ceased production of spongeware after 1883, when they began producing majolica ware, and sponge production shifted to the Beaver Falls pottery (Liebeknecht 2001:2), which had opened two years earlier. Other Trenton factories producing sponge at the turn of the twentieth century include Willets Manufacturing Co. and Columbian Art Pottery (Earls Collection; Robacker and

Robacker 1978; Kelly, Kowalsky and Kowalsky 2001: 102–105). Trenton potteries making sponge ware may have shared a common cut-sponge supplier, making attribution based on sponge motifs difficult. Note that unlike British sponge wares of the mid nineteenth century, the Trenton sponge versions occur on tableware, not teaware, vessels.

American majolica (often termed Victorian majolica by collectors to distinguish it from European wares) is even less commonly recognized as a Trenton product because marks are rare. Researchers, antique dealers, and collectors commonly identify Mayer majolica as made in East Liverpool, Ohio, or Britain. Not until the Route 29 archaeological work has this ware been firmly attributed to Mayer by the presence of waster sherds and association with marked sponge wasters. For the first time in over 100 years Mayer's majolica can claim its rightful place in New Jersey and American ceramic history (Liebeknecht 2000). In addition to the limited-access gray literature of archaeological reports, the Photo Gallery section of the Potteries of Trenton Society website (<http://potteriesoftrentonsociety.org/mayer.html>) provides a readily accessible source for identification, illustrating 14 Mayer majolica vessels and matching waster sherds from Hunter Research's collection on the waster dumps. The sherds in the Earls collection offer the potential to identify other surviving vessels as Trenton products.

The naturalistic shapes of the majolica produced by Mayer's Arsenal Pottery are decorated with broad swathes of painted color. The non-molded surface formed by a jolly (interior of hollowares) or jigger (backs of flatwares) template is covered with a ground or mottled color. Unlike British Victorian majolica, the Mayer version is not limited to the low-fired beige-colored body typical of the former; this collection demonstrates that many sherds have well-fired white granite bodies.

The letterhead of an 1897 letter from the Mayer Pottery Manufacturing Co. of Trenton lists the firm as manufacturers of majolica and white granite (underglaze and enamel decorations). In 1893 Edwin AtLee Barber (1971: 241) described the Arsenal Pottery of the Mayer Pottery Manufacturing Co. as "probably, at the present time, the only concern in the United States which manufactures the so-called majolica ware." Van Hoesen (1973: 160) describes the Mayer Pottery as one of only six U.S. firms to produce American majolica ware in the 1880s–1890s.

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Mayer Pottery Manufacturing Co.
1897 Letter to the Bonnot Co., East Liverpool, Ohio. George L. Miller Collection.

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Waterfront Stadium Dump/ Dump 1

Maddock's Lamberton Works decorated hotelware

Mercer Pottery green and blue printed tableware

Trench K, triangle between Cass Street, Route 29, and Lamberton Street

ca. 1918–23

Collected 3/19/98

3 boxes: 1 plastic shoebox, 1 pink plastic box, 1 yellow plastic box

Based on the 1904 map the site is along a residential block next to a small feeder canal along the former Race Street connecting the Delaware River with a creek. The area was mixed residential/industrial at the time, with the Maddock, Mayer, and Resolute potteries two blocks to the north.

An 1890 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Trenton in the Delaware & Raritan Canal volume shows the Trenton China Co. at Third Street/Lalor and the canal. The Maddock Pottery bought this for their Lamberton Works two years later, and this pottery was the source of the wasters across the street from the Mercer Co. Waterfront Stadium. Fuel was coal.

Backhoe Trench K was 13 ft deep and hadn't reached sterile; it was unstable so couldn't be left open for long. The materials represent mixed industrial and residential trash dumped along the canal banks. The pottery waste appeared to outnumber the nonpottery in the deposit. Exposed waster tip consists of coal ash, iron, kiln furniture, biscuit wasters, and glazed sherds, along with bottle fragments and some bone. Most is glazed and decorated hotel china or white earthenware. We collected a few pieces marked Lamberton China, and most of the rest is marked Maddock's Trenton China. All of the marked biscuit pieces are Maddock's Trenton China. Other marks: U.S.M.C. 1919, retailer's marks, Anchor Pottery, International Pottery. Decoration types: printed, decal, band & line, sponge. Also common but not marked are Mercer Pottery printed patterns.

Lalor Street Dump/ Dump 2

Trenton China Co. undecorated hotelware

Maddock's Lamberton Works decorated hotelware

Joseph Mayer's Arsenal Pottery sponge and majolica

West of intersection of Route 29 and Lalor Street, on the river bank at the base of Lalor Street
ca. 1912–21

Collected 9/27/98, 10/11/98, 11/29/98, 9/18/99

11 boxes: 1 banker's box, 1 Staple's copy paper box, 1 plastic shoebox, 1 New Balance shoebox,
1 file folders cardboard box, 1 white hinged plastic box, 3 yellow and 2 green plastic boxes

On 9/25/98 Bill Liebeknecht called to say that Hunter had found a dump with materials from four potteries during monitoring at the base of Lalor Street at Riverview Cemetery. The potteries include Maddock's Lamberton Works and a Maddock sanitary plumbing facility, as well as the Trenton China Company and Mayer's Arsenal Pottery.

This dump contained several concentrations along the river terrace. On the south end at the base of Lalor Street is the main Maddock concentration, with apparently more biscuit-decorated sherds than in the Waterfront Stadium Dump. Artifacts included abundant Maddock's Trenton China biscuit and glazed sherds, a plaster mold of a cup, a small fire brick, and kiln furniture. Another collector found a mold with matching cup and a mold for two different handles. We collected a Mott Iron Works toilet tank fragment occurred on the river bank in this area.

At the north end were relatively large undecorated biscuit sherds from the Trenton China Co. (The pottery was directly east a few blocks, on the canal.) The wasters were much less dense than the Maddock dump, but there were similar fragments of large saggars, wads, pins, and slag. In addition to Trenton China Co. marks were Cook and Hancock, biscuit Lamberton China, and other marks. Trenton China Co. wasters collected along Lamberton Street downriver from the main Maddock Pottery dump concentration on 11/29/98 seemed to be less mixed than the rest of the materials bulldozed along this road; these included a fragments from a stack of collapsed glazed plates, a plaster mold for a hotelware coffee cup incised ". . . offee" on the bottom, and a cracked porcelain cup containing blue slag. The mold may show that pulldowns or jigger/jolly machines were used in the Lamberton Works factory.

Mayer/Arsenal Pottery materials occurred near Maddock hotelware wasters in Dump 2 as well as farther north. We collected unmarked sponge sherds on 10/11/98 and Mayer marked sponge and unmarked majolica on 9/18/99, where north of the Trenton China Co. concentration we found a dense concentration of Mayer wasters eroding from a cutbank in association with saggars, coal, plaster, etc. We collected a handle and majolica ewer mold, the latter matching undecorated biscuit and glazed sherds. The latter documents the use of pulldowns or jolly machines in the Arsenal Pottery, as is also confirmed in an 1897 letter (see introduction).

New Lamberton Street/ Dump 3

Trenton China Co. undecorated hotelware

Maddock's Lamberton Works decorated hotelware

Maddock sanitary wares

Joseph Mayer's Arsenal Pottery sponge and majolica

northeast of Route 29/Lamberton Road connector to 195 CHECK MAP @ south end of Riverview Cemetery

ca. 1906–12 (or –1922? see below)

Collected 10/25/98, 4/8/00

3 boxes: Everlast shoebox, 2 yellow plastic boxes

On 10/21/98 Bill Liebeknecht called to say that material from a third Maddock Pottery waster tip has been dumped at Route 29 south of the Riverview Cemetery. They collected 100 marks from this dump, which has been destroyed by construction. This is redeposited material.

There were several large backdirt piles. The one closest to the river (west) contains Maddock Pottery sanitary plumbing debris. We collected setter rings, handle knobs, balls (used for grinding?), and slag. One of the setter rings was dated 1922.

Most of the remaining sherds were from a large backdirt pile in the southeast corner of the lot. We found biscuit sherds marked Trenton China Co. and biscuit and glazed sherds marked Lamberton China. Some Maddock hotelwares also contained retailer's marks. In addition to the hotelwares were Mayer majolica and sponge wares. Also present: kiln furniture.