



The Quarterly Publication of the Majolica International Society

# Majolica Matters

[www.MajolicaSociety.com](http://www.MajolicaSociety.com)

September 2008

## Convention 2009, New York, New York

By Wanda Matthes

**What:** The 21st Annual Meeting of the Majolica International Society  
Meeting and mingling with majolica friends  
Member collector presentations  
New York members share their collections in their homes  
Majolica Heaven Preview Party, cocktails amongst marvelous majolica  
Majolica Heaven... the finest majolica on the planet for purchase!

**When:** Thursday, April 30th -Sunday, May 3rd, 2009

**Where:** New York City, New York  
Hilton Hotel  
Avenue of the Americas at 53rd Street  
Phone direct: 212-586-7000  
Rate: \$269 for reservations made before the deadline

### **What you should expect from this convention**

Fabulous member collections to be seen  
Fantastic majolica to be purchased  
Foremost majolica dealers in the world present their wares  
Fantasies to be had about those pieces you purchase or you would love to purchase  
Fabulous restaurants, theatre, museums and shopping  
And most of all... friendships to be enjoyed with fellow MIS members.

Thanks to all the members who have already completed and returned their "Convention Surveys" by email, thus allowing Ed Flower, our VP in charge of programs, a head start on the difficult task of arranging the logistics which will give attendees the opportunity to visit all the New York area member's homes and collections.

If you have not completed a survey, please take a moment to fill out the copy which was enclosed in with this issue of Majolica Matters and mail it to Ed ASAP! The next issue of Majolica Matters will contain your formal Convention Registration Form.

**SEE YOU THERE**

# MAJOLICA

"Always" in Season

## **Make your plans for New York City 2009. Set the date aside.**

**Date:** April 30 - May 03, 2009  
**City:** New York City, New York  
**2009 Hotel:** Hilton - New York,  
1335 Avenue of the Americas

### **Inside this issue:**

New York City Lights up for YOU!



**Baltimore potteries:** Edwin Bennett and Company, and D.F. Haynes, also known as Chesapeake Pottery



**More --- Member Hutches:**



## **Baltimore Majolica, the Two Men Who Produced It**

By Deborah English



**Pitchers by the D.F. Haynes Company**  
Photo, Chesapeake Home Magazine, Nov. 2005

### **How to identify Baltimore Majolica**

We begin with two Baltimore potteries, specifically Edwin Bennett and Company, and D.F. Haynes, also known as Chesapeake Pottery. Both companies were praised for their contributions to American ceramics, and won many awards for excellence in design and craft. Edwin Bennett eventually assembled the largest pottery in the United States. David Haynes was deemed one of the finest American ceramics artists. Together, they produced high quality wares that met with great commercial success.

One distinguishing characteristic of Baltimore Majolica is that the relief and color usually appear on a white or cream-colored ground. It is thought that this was homage paid to Wedgwood's elegant Argenta ware. Often, this white ground is manipulated to resemble a naturally appearing form, such as tree bark or straw. At other times, it is polished smooth, like the finest porcelain dinner services. Blackberry brambles are the most commonly represented motifs, though other naturally appearing flower groupings appear, such as strawberry blossoms. Most of the factories' production consisted of tablewares, and other ornamental household items, such as clocks and mirror frames, though there are reports of some monumental pieces. Occasionally turquoise was used in the surface painting, but the favored colors seem to have the dark raspberry red and browns you can see here. It is fortunate that the two companies presented here were diligent about marking their wares.

In 1973, the Maryland Historical Society held an exhibition entitled, "Edwin Bennett and the Products of his Pottery". There were one hundred pieces or more in the show, most belonging to descendants of Edwin Bennett. A partial list of exhibited wares is at the end of the article. Romaine Sommerville, then a curator at the MHS, (now with the Baltimore Museum

of Art), wrote the accompanying essay, entitled, "Edwin Bennett and the Products of his Baltimore Pottery". Sadly, there are no images in the catalog, and so, many of the most exuberant items are not pictured here. (*Sommerville is quoted here, as are Edwin Atlee Barber, Victoria Bergensen, and Charles M. Rebert. A bibliography is at the end of this article.*)

The histories of the two companies are complexly intertwined. Furthermore, as corporate structures shifted, so did the names and the identifying marks on the bottoms of the wares.



**Rockingham Jugs by Bennett and Company**  
Photo, Chesapeake Home Magazine

### **The Edwin Bennett Company**

Edwin Bennett was born in 1818 in Derbyshire, England, the third son of a ceramics family. His older brother James was master potter at the Woodville Potteries, and Edwin was probably apprenticed to one of the firms in the area. James emigrated to the United States in 1834, settling in Jersey City, where he worked for Jersey City Pottery, apparently a common starting point for young ceramics artists coming from England. From there, he went to Troy, Indiana, where he worked for the Indiana Pottery Company, which was famous for its white ware. There, he contracted malaria, and poor health forced him to move to East Liverpool, Ohio. Once there, he found a good supply of clay perfect for the production of yellow ware. He settled there and with his partner, Anthony Kearns, established the first pottery in that area. (East Liverpool became famous in later years for its ceramics.) In 1841, James sent to England for his brothers Daniel, Edwin and William, all of whom were professional potters. Thus was born Bennett & Brothers, which was the first company to produce Rockingham ware in the US. In 1844, they decided to relocate to the East, hoping to find an easier method of shipping their wares to cosmopolitan centers and better supplies of coal to fire the kilns. They settled in an area near Pittsburg and resumed production of yellow wares and Rockingham, with larger facilities than they had had before. Examples of their work were shown at the American Institute in New York



and at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. In both cases, they received awards.

In 1846, Edwin Bennett left Bennett and Brothers and built a small pottery in Baltimore. E. Bennett Chinaware was probably the first pottery south of the Mason-Dixon Line. The firm was near the waterfront, in the Canton neighborhood. He was twenty-six years old and by this time, had married Jane Houston. His brother William joined him two years later, and the company became E. & W. Bennett.

In 1850, the Englishman and accomplished modeler, Charles Coxon, joined the brothers. The Maryland Institute (College of Art) awarded the firm medals for its fine "Queensware" products. Bennett and Coxon won acclaim with Coxon's celebrated "Rebekah at the Well" Teapot. Coxon stayed with the firm until the 1850's. The teapot remained in production for many years.



**"Rebekah at the Well" Tea Wares in Rockingham glaze. Photo, Chesapeake Home Magazine**

Charles Coxon's arrival freed up time for Edwin to seek out better sources of clay and to establish more vital business relationships. This proved helpful to Edwin, who was already building his company by buying other potteries.

During the Civil war, Edwin moved his family to Philadelphia and production at the Baltimore plant faltered. In 1864, there was a fire at the pottery, with losses estimated at \$1,000. Business resumed in 1865. (Sommerville, MHS)

In 1856, William left the company, owing to poor health. In 1869, although Edwin was of "robust physique and personality" (Sommerville), at the age of seventy, he felt the need for more assistance. He hired Philip Pointon, a Parian expert, from the East Trenton Pottery Works. (Bergensen, p. 96). Pointon apparently became interested in the Majolica glazes and began experimenting. Sommerville mentions "a salmon colored jardinière with gold flecks..... and a large Griffin

*Fern Stand of Robin's egg blue... majolica glaze on a white body." (Sommerville MHS)*

One of the first majolica pieces produced by the Bennett Company was the Sunflower Syrup Jug. It was very popular and continued in production for many years.



**Edwin Bennett Sunflower Syrup Pitcher  
Photo, Collector's Encyclopedia of Majolica, p.57**

In 1890 and 1891, Edwin was president of the American Potter's Association. Bennett had not only acquired Chesapeake Pottery, but other firms as well, including the Maryland Pottery, which made sanitary wares. With all the acquisitions, his pottery had become the largest in the United States. In its hey-day, the factory had fourteen large kilns, and five decorating kilns. It employed five hundred artisans, and it consumed eight thousand tons of clay and coal annually. (Sommerville, MHS)

In 1887, Bennett acquired Chesapeake Pottery, formerly D.F.Haynes. Chesapeake had already been producing majolica on a limited scale. In 1893, the partnership accelerated majolica production and introduced Albion ware. They also turned their attention to Art Pottery with the line Brubensull, a name derived from the names of the officers of the company, Brunt (formerly of Chesapeake), Bennett and Sullivan. Edwin Bennett remained with the company until his death, at ninety, in 1908. The company survived until 1938, when the Depression finally closed it down.

At the Chicago World's Fair (1893), Bennett showed examples of work that included pieces from an earlier

period. Barber says that these include “a bust of George Washington, done in Majolica in 1850 (Edwin Atlee Barber, *The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States*, p.198). Bennett also exhibited ‘a pair of mottled majolica vases, two feet in height, with raised grape-vine designs and lizard handles, in 1856; an enormous octagonal majolica pitcher, with blue brown and olive mottled glazes, 1853.” (Barber, p. 198) Barber also mentions a “large majolica jardinière, three feet in height, consisting of a trefoil basin supported by three griffins. This was designed by Mr. Herbert W. Beattie of Quincy, Mass., and was produced in robins-egg blue, lemon, and other colors.” (Barber, p.199)

A date in the mid-1850’s seems a little early, given the prevailing modern ‘wisdom’ about Majolica’s introduction to the US in 1876 at the Philadelphia Exhibition. Yet, in his book, *American Majolica 1850-1900*, M. Charles Rebert states,

“In their experimentations, the Bennetts found a way to apply vitreous colors under a clear and hard white glaze that brought high-relief portions into focus, thus adding more importance to those areas. Using white clay, Edwin Bennett molded a bust of George Washington, as well as a sage-green marine pitcher with a griffin handle on a body of a fish swimming in high relief... This new experimental earthenware with its clear vitreous colors was introduced to the public as “majolica” in the mid-1850’s. America had its first look, and acceptance was immediate. The timing, too, was perfect, for Herbert Minton had just introduced his own majolica collection at the Crystal Palace in London. News crossed the Atlantic that America had its own majolica creator--- Edwin Bennett--- and the buying public took note enthusiastically.” He continues, “Bennett subsequently went on to produce octagonal majolica pitchers, coffeepots, syrup jugs and serving pieces in this brand-new line of majolica. And he did so twenty years before most other American potters could pronounce the word.” (Rebert, p. 17)

In *Majolica, British Continental and American Wares*, Vicotria Bergensen says that majolica production did not begin until 1878 when Philip Pointon came to Bennett. “Although the Sunflower pieces are considered Majolica, they were apparently not considered such by Bennett. In fact, the pieces seem to be painted with enamels, rather than majolica glazes” (Bergensen, p. 96)

This discrepancy can be explained. Coxon, with his background as an English potter, surely knew the trends occurring in British wares, trends that led Minton and his fellows to market Majolica. It is likely that he brought these ideas with him to America. After all, at what point does a Rockingham glaze become Majolica?

In a chapter on New York ceramics, Barber mentions that Mr. John Bennett, who one presumes to be

another member of the family, came to New York in 1876 and introduced his “method for producing faience under glass” (Barber, p. 305) There is no mention of John Bennett in the material on the Edwin Bennett Pottery.



**Umbrella Stand attributed to Chesapeake Pottery, Dawes page 166**

#### **D.F. Haynes and the Chesapeake Pottery**

David Francis Haynes was born in Brookfield, Massachusetts, in 1835. In his late teens, he began work at a pottery shop in Lowell. His employers were pleased with his artistic abilities, and his position was elevated accordingly. Barber says that he was admired for his strength in “construction and ornamentation”. Young David was sent to England to represent his employers, although sources do not tell us what his duties were.

In 1856, he began a career with Abbott Rolling Mills, producers of iron armor plate; such as was used to



protect naval ships. After the war, he was transferred to Virginia, where he began work with a subsidiary whose products included iron ore and industrial clays. In 1871, he took a position with company that provided pottery to sellers around the Chesapeake Bay.

References to the David Haynes Pottery usually begin around 1881, when he bought out Henry and Isaac Brougham, and John Turnstall, owners of the troubled Chesapeake Pottery. The location was, like Bennett's, very near the waterfront, in the Locust Point section of Baltimore. Some references place the date at 1885, when he purchased the firm from Edwin Houston Bennett. Whatever the original date was, he won critical praise from the start. His trip to Europe and his exposure to the treasures there had proved a revelation to him. He enjoyed his reputation as the "Baltimore Perfectionist". (Rebert, p.49) He was joined by Edwin Houston Bennett, son of Edwin Bennett of Bennett and Company, who became the "junior member" of the firm (Rebert, p. 322)

Upon Haynes' return to America from England, he had recognized that this country had not yet developed a style of its own. Furthermore, as he looked for modelers to fashion his products, he saw that there were too few whose skills met his needs. As a result, he ended up designing and modeling most of the patterns himself. Even so, or maybe because of this, his reputation for excellence in design and construction was paralleled by no one in America.



**D.F. Haynes Chesapeake Pottery majolica ware in the Blackberry Pattern, Rebert page 58**

Like Minton and Henry Cole, Haynes felt it a personal mission to elevate the humblest cup to an object worthy of praise, and to make his products affordable to everyone. For this reason, even the most modest of his products received the same attention as the most elaborate. He encouraged the American Potter's Association to begin a school to train young potters in the craft. He was lauded for the experimentation with the kilns, and was an important part of the Chesapeake Pottery creative team.

When the company was founded, majolica was already a popular product. Haynes' first majolica line was called "Clifton Décor", *"and belonged to the majolica family, but was superior in body and glaze, and was pronounced by judges equal to the famous Wedgwood ware of that grade."* (Barber, American Pottery, p. 323) One of Clifton's most common themes was the Blackberry Bramble, a rusticated version of Wedgwood's design. Haynes then introduced the Strawberry pattern, which, like the Blackberry, was used extensively in dinner wares.



**Avalon Faience Chesapeake Pottery, Rebert page 59**

The next product line was "Avalon". The body is a soft ivory color and is decorated with sprays of relief-molded flowers, often lightly painted and tipped with gold. "Calvertine" was another similar product, but decorated in bands, with overlays of relief and gold paint.



**Avalon Faience Chesapeake Pottery, Rebert page 57**

These he followed with "Avalon Faience". Avalon is smoother in its body than its forbearers, and its body is a darker, sandy color. He used the familiar themes of Blackberry and Strawberry, but these were painted over the glaze and then refired. The result is a refined, more formal product. Avalon was so popular that Haynes expanded the line to include, pots, clocks, toiletries and many other useful objects.

D.F. Haynes, like the Bennett Company, made many

other wares besides majolica. These included among others, Parian, the beloved "Severn" ware, and the "Castillian" line of toilet wares, known for its beautiful interpretation of Moorish designs

## NEW WARES CHESAPEAKE POTTERY, BALTIMORE, MD.



BRAMBLE LEMONADE BOWL—Five Shells

Clifton Ware, Avalon Ware, Ivory Ware, Cecil Ware, Parian Ware.

The high degree of success attained in the manufacture of these Wares has never been equaled in the history of American Potting.

SEND ORDER FOR SAMPLE LOT.

D. F. HAYNES & CO., SOLE PROPRIETORS.

### Chesapeake Pottery Advertisement The ad claims both "Cheap" and "Beautiful"

The pottery's successes encouraged expansion, and this strained the assets of the company. In 1887, Haynes was forced to give up the company at a trustees' sale, and the purchaser was Edwin Bennett of Bennett and Company. Thereafter, the company became known as Haynes, Bennett and Company. The two men worked in happy collaboration, until Edwin sold his share to Edwin Houston Bennett, who then sold his share to Frank Haynes, son of David. The pottery's name was changed back to D.F. Haynes and Company.



Avalon Faience Chesapeake Pottery, Rebert page 59

David Haynes died in 1908 at the age of seventy-three, and his son ran the company alone. Nationally, potteries were beginning to fire their kilns with gas, instead of coal. The Haynes Company did not have the resources to make the conversion. Additionally, competition from Pennsylvania was eroding Haynes'

market base. The company closed in 1914, and the location was sold to a sugar refinery.



Avalon Faience Chesapeake Pottery, Rebert page 59

### References and Further Reading:

Edwin Bennett and the Products of his Pottery Exhibition Catalogue, **Romaine Sommerville**, Maryland Historical Society, 1973

The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States, Edwin Atlee Barber, A.M., PH.D.

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Majolica, British, Continental and American Wares, 1851-1915, Victoria Bergensen, Barrie & Jenkins, London, 1989

American Majolica, 1850-1900, M. Charles Rebert, Wallace Homestead, Des Moines, Iowa, 1981

Majolica: A Complete History and Illustrated Survey, Marilyn G. Karmason with Joan B. Stacke, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, Updated version, 1989, 2002.

Majolica, Nicholas M. Dawes, Crown Publisher, Inc., New York, 1990

Please send your comments and material for the newsletter to:

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### ATTENTION - Holiday Photos Needed

It's always fun to share member's "Holiday" majolica photos in the pages of Majolica Matters. Please send us photos of how you alter your majolica displays during the Holiday Season. Your creativity can help us all grow! Send to [wanda@emajolica.com](mailto:wanda@emajolica.com).



## How Our Hutch Happened

By Denise Buysse



Our hutch idea hatched at the 2nd Western States Meeting at Loretta Graham's house. Maryanne Leckie asked John and me if we'd like to have the West Coast members over to see our collection. Of course, I said we'd be delighted. We had just seen Loretta's great collection and two marvelous "wardrobe hutches" filled with her best pieces.

When we got home and looked around at our majolica there was a problem in John's mind. The majority of our majolica was upstairs. He wanted members to see lots of good pieces as they first came into the house. I have floor to ceiling bookshelves in our living room but they are filled with books, sentimental things and heirlooms of my mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers. John wanted me to cart all the ancestors stuff upstairs and replace the living room shelves with majolica! The nerve! That seemed like quite the chore and besides, I like the shelves the way they are, so like all good couples --we compromised! We decided to get a wardrobe piece like Loretta's to show off our best stuff! Then came the hunt for the right wardrobe. We had the space of an old closet to work with--height and width constraints but John

kept looking diligently for months and finally found the perfect piece on E-bay. An 1880's French mirrored wardrobe at a great price! We got it home and stripped the mirror off the beveled doors making them clear, refurbished the wood and added mirrors, shelves and lighting. A real plus was all this was accomplished for a fraction of what we would have paid at the antique store!



Then we decided on our favorite majolica to fill the shelves. I also thought the hutch would have the added benefit of keeping the maid from clunking the expensive pieces. How wrong I was.... I found her in there moving everything so she could clean the mirrors underneath! The hutch actually holds quite a bit more than I expected. We got most of our favorites in and are quite happy with the results!

Thank you Maryanne for the incentive, thank you Loretta for the inspiration!



## Travels for French Palissy

By Lisa Gaffney

My hotel appropriately was on Rue Serpente.



Last year with a trip to Portugal I started my travels to study the spectacular naturalistic pottery that is Palissy ware. My guides were Marshall P. Katz's website and two fabulous books. My passion for this unique style has inspired me to learn all I can about its start and evolution. Palissy ceramics bring together a fascinating history and a singular and compelling expression of nature that has had several revivals.

This year Paris was my destination, a place where Bernard Palissy worked for many years. Paris is where he died in the Bastille in 1590 for being an unrepentant Huguenot. Bernard Palissy was spared the death sentence, because, although he was much the struggling artist and naturalist for many years (even burning the floorboards in his house to keep his kilns going) he had attained the patronage of Catherine de Medici, Queen of France. She commissioned Palissy to create a grotto in the Tuilleries Gardens of which only fragments remain.



Paris is filled with history, and it is fascinating to follow the threads of events. Francis I, King of France, in the early days of Bernard Palissy's life, had a famous symbol of a salamander, a very common motif in Palissy's work. Henri II, son of Francis I, married Catherine de Medici, whose patronage led Palissy to success. Visiting the site of the Bastille, I passed through the beautiful 16<sup>th</sup> century Place des Vosges, where Henri II died while jousting. Looking for a restaurant one evening, I came upon Rue Bernard Palissy, where he lived while in Paris.

The Musee du Louvre has a room devoted to the 16<sup>th</sup> century ceramics of Palissy, salle de Bernard Palissy. The watery works are spectacular and evocative.

Moving to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the French Palissy ware that came from the new interest in naturalism that arose in the mid 1800's, the Musee des Arts Decoratifs has a wonderful, but small collection.



Musee du Louvre, Salle #30 Bernard Palissy,  
Ceramique francaise, XVI-XVII siecle



Musee du Louvre, Salle #30 Bernard Palissy,  
Ceramique francaise, XVI-XVII siecle



Musee des Arts Decoratifs





**Musee des Arts Decoratifs**

I had planned to make a trip to see the collection of Musee des Beaux Arts de Tours mentioned in Marshall Katz's book, but the charming Majolica Society Parisian dealers, Philippe Meunier and Jean Defroccourt, told me that most of it had been auctioned off but, perhaps I would like to see part of it. They showed me the spectacular pieces they had acquired from the museum in their beautiful and elegant showroom.



**Philippe Meunier and Jean Defroccourt Showroom**

Philippe and Jean were generous with information, kind enough to take me on a lovely walking tour, and were endlessly patient, accompanying me to the large antique market Les Puces de Saint - Ouen at Porte de Clignancourt. They also introduced me to dealer Laurence Vaclair whose Galerie Vaclair will be having an extensive Palissy exhibit starting Nov 13.



**Philippe Meunier and Jean Defroccourt Showroom**



**Dealer Laurence Vaclair's Shop**

Most fun for me was, having told Philippe and Jean that my favorite Palissy reference was the Sotheby's 2005 catalog of the collection of Paris decorator and dealer Mony Linz-Einstein....they directed me to her shop, Epoca, located near Musee d'Orsay.



**Epoca Showroom Item**



I loved her eccentric decorative arts and extensive collection of Palissy ware. She was very interested in the Majolica Society. I showed her the MIS web site, so we may have a new Parisian member soon.

As with visiting Portugal and studying their rustic, and sometimes violent, Portuguese Palissy ware, seeing the setting and context of the refined and serene French Palissy ware enhanced my appreciation and understanding. Perhaps the reaction to the human struggles of the 16<sup>th</sup> century world of Bernard Palissy, and the movement towards nature and away from industrialization, as well as, of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Palissy revival could be relevant today, in our world of mass production. Palissy pottery today still represents a small piece of a more naïve and natural world.



19<sup>th</sup> Century Palissy

## Auctions Results

Bonhams September 2008, New Bond Street, London.



A George Jones majolica game pie dish, cover and liner Circa 1875.

**Sold for £12,000 inclusive of Buyer's Premium.**



A Minton majolica game pie dish with fixed stand and cover Dated 1877. **Sold for £25,200 inclusive of Buyer's Premium.**



A Minton Majolica jardinière and stand Dated 1866. **Sold for £1,920 inclusive of Buyer's Premium.**



A very rare Minton majolica fish covered dish and cover Dated 1875. Estimate: £20,000-30,000 **Unsold.**

## Mary Delany's Hutch

By Mary W. Delany

Dear Wanda,

I am sending a photo of my Welsh Dresser which was in a 'Showcase' in Greenwich, Connecticut. It was a lovely "Show House"- The walls were painted with Iris etc; which you can see barely under the dresser on the left. A painted floor cloth and McGuire furniture but the Majolica really shows!

See you all in New York. Mary W. Delany



Showroom - with Delany Welch Dresser



Mary Delany's Welch Dresser



## How Should I Spend an Extra Day???

By Duane Matthes

One of my Matthes family cousins in the Chicago area was having a 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration that I thought I shouldn't miss. Wanda and I knew we could attend, if we kept everything to a long weekend with a flight up on Saturday morning for the event and spent Sunday with my two brothers and their families. Maybe then we would be able to have Monday and Tuesday to enjoy my hometown of Chicago... a city that both Wanda and I love.

The trip was "on" and the air and room bookings were made. Now, to fill that extra Monday and/or Tuesday. While we were drafting our plans, we received an email from Abra Wilkin about Society business. Somewhere in her reply Wanda, mentioned that we would be visiting Chicago. Abra quickly asked if we might be able to get together. After looking at all the options offered by Abra, based on her schedule, we chose to spend Tuesday afternoon with Abra and Jim at their lake home in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. Oh, the decision was made easy -- by Abra saying "all of my majolica collection is at 'the Lake'."



"Chris Crafting" around Lake Geneva

What a lovely afternoon we spent with Abra and Jim! Upon arrival Jim swooped us off our feet, and gave us a guided tour aboard one of his vintage mahogany decked boats for a water's view of all the huge homes around Lake Geneva (like "Wrigley", etc.). Very special - for sure!

Then Abra dazzled us with her vast and sprawling majolica collection. I knew we were in store for a special treat when I noticed Abra's huge



Minton Bowl through the glass refrigerated door, laden with home made coleslaw. Jim grilled fantastic bratwursts and hamburgers on his Weber Grill while Wanda and I enjoyed the cool summer breezes. When the grilling was done, we gathered for our photo "op", in the kitchen, and then we moved to the veranda for our beautiful and tasty lunch of Wisconsin Brats, Burgers, Beer and all the accoutrements, served on Minton leaf plates. A very special afternoon for us, with Abra and Jim, two really special people.



Majolica Dining with Abra and Jim Wilken, Wanda & Duane had a "ROYAL" lunch

## Upcoming Majolica Auction

### **Fall 2008 Majolica Auction**

Date: Friday, October 24th, 2008 at 3:00PM EST

Saturday, October 25th, 2008 at 09:00AM EST

Location: 501 Fairgrounds Road, Hatfield, PA 19440

Preview/Inspection Dates:

Friday, October 24th, 2008, 10:00 - 7:00 PM

Saturday, October 25th, 2008, 07:30 - 3:00 PM

Two day Majolica Auction which includes the Margaret Alexander Collection.



Majolica Auctions by Strawser Fall 2008 items



## **'Porcelain Doctor' Mends Broken Heirlooms**

**By Irv Leavitt and the Evanston Review**

Make a bad investment and the money's gone. Hurt a loved one's feelings and the words may hang in the air forever. But knock over an heirloom vase, smashing it to bits, and all is not lost.

Randi Tolsky-Schwartz can put it back together and make it almost look as if nothing ever happened to it.

"The Porcelain Doctor" is painted on her door, the entrance to the Raven & Dove Antique Gallery in Wilmette, the odd little shop she owns at 1107 Greenleaf Ave. It is rare to find a single store that evokes such disparate emotions. In the front, Schwartz sells a lot of shiny, pretty things -- necklaces that look like vines, bracelets that look like bottle caps, doorstops that look like high-heeled shoes. "Little kids really like coming here, I think, because it's so colorful," she said. But if the kids find the back room, they might not like it so much.

### **Like a Dentist's Drill**

Inside, Schwartz fixes china using the same acrylic compounds dentists use to fix dentures and teeth. And she uses a Dremel Moto-Tool that sounds a lot like a dental drill. Between the unmistakably familiar chemical smell of the acrylics and the buzz of the Moto-Tool, your teeth start to hurt as soon as you get through the door. It doesn't bother Schwartz. She was a teenage art student 33 years ago who brought what she learned as a dental assistant to a job fixing broken crockery at Marshall Field's. "They taught me things, but I taught them a lot, too," she said. Her deft hands and the fast-setting acrylics make neat work out of putting shards back together. But what sets her apart most may be what she does about the pieces her customers never bring in: the ones that tumbled unnoticed under the dresser. Typically, she makes a shell of self-stick tape, and lays filler across the tape to bridge the gap. It takes several layers, with hours of drying between each. Then she pares and sands the result until it's smooth.

### **Painstaking Work**

Out comes a paint brush a little thicker than an eyelash. Coat by tiny coat, she applies color to a vase's design, on a flower petal the size of a grain of rice. Finally, it looks just like the intact, 50-year-old petal alongside it.



"Color matching and color sense is the key to a lot of this," she said. Her display case, full of pieces waiting to be picked up, is like a museum exhibit. A pre-Columbian terra cotta idol has regained his lost arm and leg. A shattered 1909 calendar plate once more tells the date. Only a tiny scar on its back reveals that anything ever happened to it. A little 18th-century wooden bagpiper has regained his instrument, the sheared pipe reinserted in a redrilled hole. A repaired Lladro Don Quixote stands so tall he has to lay down on the shelf. "I get these a lot," Schwartz said. "Tall, skinny, with long legs. He's just made to be broken."

She said her typical restoration job costs between \$150 and \$200, often more than the value of the piece.



"That's not what it's about, though," she said. "Most of these things have sentimental value, and I'm really pleased to be able to bring them back."

## **Did We Know?**

### **Oleanders in Majolica Jug**

For Van Gogh, oleanders were joyous, life-affirming flowers that bloomed "riotously" and were "continually renewing" themselves. In this painting of August 1888, the flowers fill a **majolica jug** that the artist used for other Arles still lifes.



**Oleanders in Majolica Jug, 1888**  
**Vincent van Gogh (Dutch, 1853-1890)**  
**Oil on canvas; 23 3/4 x 29 in. (60.3 x 73.7 cm)**