

# ANTIQUES

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## FANCY ROCKINGHAM POTTERY

### *The Modeller And Ceramics In Nineteenth Century America*

RICHMOND, VA. — How a distinctly English pottery became a uniquely American one is the subject of the new exhibit "Fancy Rockingham" Pottery: The Modeller and Ceramics in Nineteenth Century America," on view at the University of Richmond. Some 70 pieces of Rockingham pottery — all from private New York area collections — tell the story of relief molded earthenware in America.

Rockingham pottery takes its name from the estate of the Marquis of Rockingham in Yorkshire, England, where potters in the mid- to late Eighteenth Century created household objects with a characteristic lustrous mottled brown glaze. When Rockingham appeared in America around the 1820s, it acquired a whole new array of colors and patterns. Ceramics scholar and exhibit curator Diana Stradling says the term "Rockingham," strictly speaking, describes only brown glazed ceramic objects.

"Fancy Rockingham," Stradling adds, "refers to ornamented or relief molded ceramic pieces." While the term "fancy" suggests the elaborate or expensive, it was used in the late Eighteenth and first half of the Nineteenth Century to describe decorative art objects with lively decorative, narrative or ornamental patterns, regardless of the color. "Fancy" goods were all the rage from about 1790 through 1840, and some said they were designed to stimulate the imagination and spike creativity.



Daniel Greatbatch's "Wind-swept Daisies" pitcher was made between 1865 and 1870 and is attributed to the American Pottery Company. It is executed in a matte red-brown slip coating on a gray stoneware body with an interior matte putty color glaze. The vase was made in an array of colors.

The story of American Rockingham has some curious twists and turns that came to light only in the Twentieth Century as collectors began to gather the wares. Some pieces originally assumed to be English turned out to be American; some pieces with the mark of one American pottery were identical to others from different potteries. There seemed to be no rhyme or reason or means of classification until the wife of one collector, exasperated with the clutter of pottery around her, arranged the collection by decorative motif: flora, fauna, literary, historical. Then it became clear that nearly identical design elements prevailed, regardless of the pottery where a piece was made.

The wares on view are displayed according to theme and form, although separate space is given over to the four early master molders of "Fancy Rockingham" — Daniel Greatbatch, Charles Coxon, James Jones and Stephen Theis.

The English potters, modelers and designers who arrived in the United States in the 1820s and 1830s brought their techniques with them and went on to produce "Fancy" pieces of decorative and utilitarian relief molded ceramics in a variety of styles, glazes and materials. While most artisans arrived at Ellis Island in New York Harbor, and many made the Jersey City potteries their first, and some-

By Frances McQueeney-Jones Mascolo

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Lions were among the most popular animal figural ceramic objects. The one pictured was made in 1849, stands 9 3/4 inches high and is marked: "Fenton's Enamel, Bennington, Vt."



An octagonal covered storage jar marked "Boston Earthen Ware Manuf'g Co." was made in the 1850s in a mottled brown glaze over clear glaze on cream color body. It was modeled with gothic arches surrounding trefoils and has foliate elements around the handle.

