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# An English Porcelain Maker in West Troy

by *Warren F. Broderick*

**T**he Village of West Troy is well known in conjunction with the manufacture of stoneware in the 19th century and was truly one of the major centers of American stoneware production. Located in Albany County on the west bank of the Hudson River opposite the City of Troy, West Troy was incorporated in 1836 from area communities known as Washington, Port Schuyler, West Troy, and Gibbonsville. West Troy became the City of Watervliet in 1896. The Erie Canal passed through the length of the village, just south of its second junction with the Champlain Canal. West Troy was tied culturally and commercially to the small community of Green Island and the textile center of Cohoes, both located to the north, and to the City of Troy to the east.

A large United States Arsenal was constructed at Gibbonsville after the War of 1812, and the area surrounding the Arsenal soon developed rapidly as a commercial and industrial center. Within a few years, West Troy became a major canal and river port teeming with activity and the crime, poverty, and frantic lifestyle associated with such rapid growth. Its population had reached 8,306 by 1860. The first stoneware pottery was established there by Sanford Perry in 1833 at a site along the Erie Canal on Champlain Street, and under various owners it existed there until destroyed by fire in 1845. Following that fire, Nathan Porter and George Fraser opened a new pottery at the corner of Washington and Schenectady Streets, which

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operated under various owners until 1899. During much of that time period, it was simply known as the “West Troy Pottery.” William Warner, another well-known potter, worked in West Troy between 1836 and 1839, between 1841 and 1856, and again between 1861 and 1870 at his new factory just east of the West Troy Pottery. Edward Selby and his sons manufactured earthenware at West Troy between 1870 and 1903. Stoneware enthusiasts are quite familiar with blue-decorated jugs and crocks manufactured in West Troy in the 19th century, but few are aware that Rockingham glazed ware, porcelain, and other unusual ceramic products were also produced there from the 1840s to the 1860s. For more than twenty years, West Troy was the home of Samuel Walker, well known in British ceramic circles as an important pioneer in the manufacture of fine porcelain. And now one small but very important piece of artifactual evidence documents that Samuel Walker also made porcelain in West Troy.

Samuel Walker was the son-in-law of William Billingsley (1758-1828), whose ceramic achievements both in decoration and in the manufacture of fine quality porcelain bodies are well known among ceramic collectors and historians. His life and achievements have been described, albeit sometimes inaccurately, in three major 19th century works by Haslem, Jewitt, and Turner.<sup>1</sup> The errors these works contained have been corrected during this century through the exhaustive research of both E. Morton Nance and W. D. John. Nance's highly detailed treatise *The Pottery and Porcelain of Swansea and Nantgarw* (London: Batsford, 1942) and John's works *William Billingsley* (Newport: Ceramic Book Co., 1969) and *Nantgarw Porcelain* (Newport: B. H. Johns Ltd., 1948) provide the source for the information on the lives and careers of Billingsley and Walker which are summarized here. It is difficult for photographs to convey the beautiful translucence of their porcelain, but the color plates in *Nantgarw Porcelain* show the exquisite painting and gilding on many of the pieces.

William Billingsley was born under poor circumstances in Derby, a major ceramic center in north-central England, in 1758. At the age of sixteen, he was apprenticed to William Duesbury, head of the Derby Porcelain Works, to learn porcelain decorating. He soon gained a reputation as one of the most-skilled decorators and also began to experiment with improvements in porcelain bodies. English porcelain makers were continually trying to develop a formula which could

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produce porcelain as beautiful and translucent as that produced at Sevres, France, and yet one not so fragile that it could not be successfully produced in quantity. Billingsley married Sarah Rigley in Derby in 1780, and his first daughter Sarah, later the wife of Samuel Walker, was born there in 1783. He had a son, who died at childbirth, born in 1793 and a daughter, Lavinia, born there in 1795. In that year Billingsley was offered an opportunity to become more directly involved in the operation of a porcelain factory; therefore, he left his native Derby.

With the financial backing of John Coke, a young, wealthy gentleman of Nottinghamshire, Billingsley set up such a factory at Pinxton, some fifteen miles north of Derby. Here he produced a limited quantity of beautiful soft-paste porcelain, but this venture did not prove a financial success. In 1799, he left Pinxton and removed to Mansfield, seven miles to the northeast. At Mansfield, Billingsley did not engage in porcelain manufacture, but worked out of his home, decorating porcelain for a number of wealthy clients, which he continued to do until 1803 when he again decided to become involved in the manufacturing aspect of the porcelain industry.

In 1803, with his young daughters whom he needed to assist him with his work, but without his wife who would never live with him again, Billingsley removed to a small place called Brampton-in-Torksey in Lincolnshire, some distance east of Mansfield. He established a small factory here, financed at first by one Henry Bankes. The latter's financial support ran out in 1805, and Billingsley succeeded in entering a partnership with four men who could financially support his venture. These men consisted of William Sharpe, a painter and glazier; Benjamin Booth, a printer; James Walker, a farmer from nearby Fillingham; and the latter's son, Samuel Walker. It was at this time that Samuel Walker apparently first became acquainted with Billingsley and his daughter, Sarah.<sup>2</sup>

Little porcelain seems to have been manufactured at Brampton-in-Torksey, and this partnership was dissolved on November 21, 1808. The notice of dissolution was carried in the *London Gazette* of April 5th and 9th, 1808, and stated that Samuel Walker would assume all of Billingsley's debts.<sup>3</sup> Billingsley then left with his two daughters and, accompanied by Samuel Walker, tried to locate work elsewhere. Following an arduous journey to Worcester, Coalport, Swansea, Gloucester, and Bristol, described in a touching letter of October 24, 1808, from Sarah to her mother, the party finally arrived for a second time at Worcester, where William and Samuel succeeded in finding low-paying jobs at the Royal Worcester Porcelain Works.<sup>4</sup>

The superb decorating of Billingsley and the workmanship of Walker, already described as a first class pottery technician, attracted the attention in particular of Martin Barr, senior member of the firm of Barr, Flight and Barr, the proprietors. In 1812, Martin Barr had Samuel Walker engaged in the construction of a new reverberating or reflecting type kiln. The secrets of porcelain manufacture were so closely guarded that Walker accomplished this work at night at Worcester. In that same year Samuel Walker married Sarah Billingsley on September 22 at Claines Parish Church on the outskirts of town.

On November 17, 1812, Barr, Flight and Barr granted Billingsley and Walker £200 on a bond with the stipulation that the potters “for ever hereafter forbear from communicating and imparting the secret . . . relating to a new method of composing porcelain.”<sup>5</sup> Martin Barr died on November 10, 1813, however, and the remaining partners appear to have been less interested in investing capital in these experiments than merely in producing cheaper, more easily marketable porcelain. As a result, soon after Martin Barr’s death, Billingsley and Walker quickly left Worcester to open a new pottery where they could carry on their experiments. They could not legally disclose the secret formula to a third party but could use it to produce porcelain themselves. Nonetheless, Flight and Barr were concerned, for a year later they wrote Samuel Walker cautioning him that the secret formula could not “profit of any partners.”<sup>6</sup>

After their sudden departure from the Worcester pottery, Billingsley and Walker removed to Nantgarw (pronounced Nant-garoo), a small mining village located seven miles northwest of Cardiff, in Glamorganshire, Wales. The strange name of this rural settlement would later become synonymous with the finest quality of English porcelain. How the potters discovered this isolated community remains the subject of conjecture. They probably liked Nantgarw because the cost of living was inexpensive, coal was located nearby, and the village was situated along the Glamorgan Canal, facilitating the importing of clay and the exporting of the finished product. Following their removal to Nantgarw, William Billingsley began using the fictitious surname “Beeley” instead of his real name. Ceramic historians have surmised that he sought secrecy at this isolated rural location to both avoid creditors and to conduct his experiments in a clandestine manner. The kilns at Nantgarw were in fact hidden from the sight of the outside world.<sup>7</sup>

The pottery at Nantgarw was constructed adjacent to the canal and connected to a dwelling later known as the "Pottery House." Possibly through the assistance of Thomas Pardoe, a porcelain decorator familiar with Billingsley's work, the firm secured the financial support of William Weston Young, a surveyor from Newton. Young had already advanced the partners £600 by the spring of 1814, and the factory began to produce porcelain for the first time. The quality was excellent, but the output, due to breakage during the firing, was unfortunately quite low. Young's free capital ran out in 1814, and he thought it might be possible to obtain a special grant from the British government to keep the factory operating. Young persuaded Sir John Nicholl, an influential land-owner and member of Parliament, to forward a "Memorial," written by Billingsley, Walker, and himself, to the Secretary for the Lords of Council for Trades and Manufactures. The Memorial, dated September 5, 1814, reads as follows:

To the Right Honorable The Lords of the Committee of Council for Trade. The late arrangement between this Country and France, in fixing a tariff on different Commodities and Articles of manufacture, and the probability of a commercial Treaty between the two Countries, has induced us, the undersigned memorialists to lay before your Lordships the following statements.

It is now many years since France has taken the lead in the manufacture of Porcelain;—the Government of that country finding the benefit likely to result from it both as to immediate Profit to the Manufacturer, and also to the national reputation, has exerted itself to carry the Art to its highest Perfection, by encouraging able Men (including both Chemists and Painters) to turn their attention to the subject. English manufacturers have also exerted themselves in the Competition, and much Capital has been expended on Trials for the purpose of improvement; but that the success hereto has not been equal to the Exertion is sufficiently proved by the importation of white French Porcelain continuing to be a very considerable and increasing Amount; the selling price of which for the last thirty years, has been near three Times that of the best English white Porcelain.

This being the present state of the Case, your Memorialists have to state to your Lordships that they have, either separately or unitedly have been engaged for some years (near Twenty on the whole, but the last seven very closely) in trials for the improvement of British Porcelain; and that they have at length succeeded (with articles intirely of British Produce) in making a porcelain equal in every respect to the French; and to the intent that your Lordships may be satisfied of the truth of their assertion they will, at any Time when called upon, furnish a number of Pieces both glazed and unglazed for your Lordships' Inspoecion; or to be compared with any ware of French or any other manufacture . . . one or more of the Principals engaged in the manufactory will also be ready to attend

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your Lordships to explain any Thing necessary to be explained, and give such further information as the Case may require.

Your memorialists have also to observe that the Article they manufacture is not the result of fortuitous Combinations, but is formed on true scientific principles, and they feel confident, if properly encouraged, that they will be able to make still further Improvements;—also, with regard to the formation of their Ware, they will undertake to make any article the French or any other People can make, and with as much Taste and Precision as they do; but, the manufacture being in an Infant State, they are not yet furnished with those Models that an older Establishment must necessarily be in Possession of.

Your Lordships must be aware that it is often the Case that Men of real Talent, capable of benefiting their fellow Citizens and the Nation at large, are so confined in their Exertions for want of Capital to pursue their Object in an efficient Way, that it sometimes happens, after a life spent in meritorious and persevering Exertions, the benefit of their Discoveries falls to the share of others; and not unfrequently, the Discovery itself dies with them, and is lost to the Public. In these respects your memorialists have to state to your Lordships that, by great Exertions of their own, and with the employment of a capital of about Two Thousand Pounds, they have brought their manufacture into such a State as to produce about twenty-five Dozens of ware (plates) per week; and they find their Capital (so much having been expended in Trials and Erections) but barely adequate to this;—now this quantity; and, when compared with the quantity of white French porcelain imported, is very trifling; and, without some further assistance, they must be a long Time before they can manufacture on such a Scale as to do away with the necessity of importing French porcelain;—therefore, should the Quality of their ware prove satisfactory, they submit to your Lordships the Propriety of giving them encouragement and assistance in any Way your Lordships may think proper, in Order to forward the supply of the Market with English porcelain. It is needless for your Memorialists to state to Persons of your Lordships' judgment and knowledge, what great encouragement would also hereby be given to Artists in a variety of the higher Branches of Painting and Designing, as well as the tendency it would have to advance the national manufacturing reputation.

Your memorialists having thus stated to your Lordships in as concise a manner as they can, the present State of the Trade in general, and of their Manufactory in particular, pray your Lordships to take their Case into consideration, and to assist them in any Way it may appear to require. They beg leave to state to your Lordships, that on the conclusion of the Treaty of Amiens, the Government of France sent a Service of Porcelain as a Present to Lord Hawkesbury, in Order to exhibit their own Superiority. —They would theretofore suggest to your Lordships the Propriety of presenting a Service of Porcelain to some principal Personage in France, in order to shew the advance made in the British Manufacture—

They also pray your Lordships to take into consideration the Propriety of laying an additional Duty on French Porcelain, to act by Degrees as a Prohibition:—for that the present Duty, tho' high, has not that Effect is evident from the great importation of French Ware, that which nothing

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can be a clearer Proof of the state of the two manufactures . . .

Signed— Samuel Walker,  
William Beeley,  
William Weston Young

Manufacturers of Porcelain, Nantgarw-near  
Cardiff—  
Glamorganshire—<sup>8</sup>

The Council, an advisory body to Parliament, met on September 12 to consider the financial request contained in a “porcelain memorial of Messrs. Walker & Co.” Unfortunately this request for a special subsidy was considered “contrary to the General Policy of this Government to encourage any particular Species of Manufacture by an Advance of Money.”<sup>9</sup> Besides, they “knew of no such Fund from which it could be derived . . . nor have no authority to direct such an issue.”<sup>10</sup> Their polite refusal was contained in a September 12 letter to Sir John Nicholl.

The memorial reveals that Billingsley had devoted nearly twenty years to the improvement of the porcelain body, indicating that he had in fact begun his experiments while a young decorator at Derby. It is also noteworthy that the firm had expended £1,200 at Nantgarw in an attempt to make the pottery there a commercial success. But the potters were now desperate for financial backing. One of the Council members, however, was personally attracted by the translucent beauty of samples which the firm had submitted before that Board. This person was Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820), a renowned scientist and botanical explorer, who was also a connoisseur of fine porcelain. Banks recognized that Nantgarw porcelain was potentially as fine as the best French or Oriental porcelain in his collection, and contacted his friend, Lewis Weston Dillwyn, proprietor of the Cambrian Pottery at Swansea. Dillwyn visited Nantgarw and soon decided to finance Billingsley and Walker in their venture.

**D**illwyn arranged for the removal of the entire pottery operation to Swansea in October of 1814. The “Cambrian Pottery” there was run by the firm of Dillwyn and Company, the other partners being Timothy and John Bevington. Walker was appointed “sole china maker” and placed in charge of the newly created porcelain works, and Billingsley was placed as head of the decorating shop. Billingsley continued with his experiments, but Dillwyn to some extent, and especially his more conservative partners, expressed doubts that these experiments would ever prove successful. Walker was, more than his

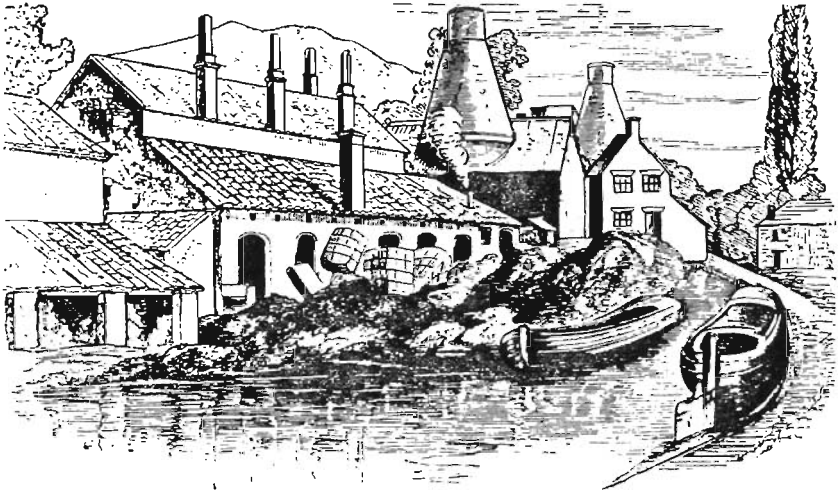


Fig. 1650.—Nantgarw Works.

*Copy of engraving from The Ceramic Art of Great Britain new edition, revised (New York 1883) page 575, by Llewellyn Jewitt.*

father-in-law, willing to compromise in the formula for a porcelain body which might be somewhat less beautiful but more readily produced for commerce. Billingsley eventually tired of the limitations placed on his experiments at Swansea and returned to Nantgarw on December 23, 1816. Walker continued to manage the porcelain works for Dillwyn and Company until September 28, 1817, when he joined Billingsley in Wales. In the meanwhile, Walker's wife, Sarah, died on January 1, 1817, and was interred at Swansea.

A dispute arose between Dillwyn and his partners, and the firm broke up in 1817. The Bevingtons continued to operate the Cambrian Pottery afterwards but only manufactured earthenware; they had never been enamored with the many problems associated with the manufacture of porcelain. So long as Dillwyn was involved at Swansea, Walker was needed to manage the porcelain factory, but as soon as the firm broke up, Samuel recognized the need to find a "new situation" as soon as possible. A remarkable surviving letter from Walker to Josiah Wedgwood, written just as the former was leaving Swansea, reads as follows:

Swansea Sept. 28. 1817

Sir,

I hope the contents of this letter will prove a sufficient apology for my troubling you on the present occasion, no doubt you have heard of the Swansea Porcelain. I have Manufactured it for Messrs. Dillwyn & Co these



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three years very much against my inclination in consequence of circumstances that cannot be entered upon here. I have been trying for a separation this two years but without effect. a favourable circumstance as at length happened, the death of Mr Dillwyn Father in Law as caused him to give up both pottery and China Manufacture. I am now intirely at liberty from all my engagements.—I can make the finest China in the Country, much finer than as ever been made at Swansea, and equal to the best French porcelain.

I have also after several years close application to the study of porcelain & Pottery, just finished the most beautifull article of the latter kind that as ever been seen in Europe. I have compared it with Chineas, Dresden, & French Porcelain and am very happy to say, it is a finer white & a finer richer Glaze and a more Elegant appearance on the table altogether than any of them, from this discription of it you will be able to judge some little of its qualities.—I have never shown any specimens of it to Messrs. Dillwyn & Co. for reasons above alluded to.

Messrs. Haynes & Son, Bankers Swansea, have taken the Pottery & China Manufactory. I have shown a piece or two to them, they are quite inclined to give me every encouragement both in the pottery & China Manufactory. I have thought it most prudent to consult some English Manufacturer before I form any arrangement with them, one of the old partners till remains in the new firm, is the reason why I wish to change my situation, should you think the matter worth your attention, I should be glad of the favour of a line or two as early as possible. waiting your reply—

I am

Sir,

Your most Obed Servt.

Samuel Walker

PS. I am going a journey in the country for a week or two, should you write directly your letter will meet with me by directing as follows—

S. Walker

Nantgarrow,

near Cardiff

Glamorganshire

to be left at Nantgarrow Gate

[addressed to] J. Wedgewood Esqr.

Atturia

near Newcastle Staffordshire<sup>11</sup>

When Walker arrived at Nantgarw to join his father-in-law, he found that Billingsley had begun to reestablish the pottery there during the previous year. William's remaining daughter, Lavinia, died on September 18, 1817, at the age of twenty-one years. Billingsley's distraught state at that time is vividly conveyed in a letter written that day to his wife Sarah, who was still living in Derby.<sup>12</sup> But no doubt Walker's return gave him the impetus to seek additional funds needed to reopen the Nantgarw porcelain works. William Weston Young furnished them £1,100, and an additional equal sum was obtained

from ten local country gentlemen, one of them being Sir John Nicholl. This enabled Walker and Billingsley to increase considerably the output of fine grade porcelain produced at Nantgarw, and the leading dealers in London could take all that Nantgarw would produce. Billingsley's reputation as a decorator notwithstanding, most porcelain produced at Nantgarw was shipped out undecorated to be painted and gilded in such a manner that it rivaled that of Sevres. Richard Millward, when working at the factory as a boy, remembered that "Walker visited the metropolis in connection with the sale of undecorated porcelain."<sup>13</sup>

Millward remembered the factory employing eight adults and twelve children at that time. He described Billingsley as "a thin man of middle height, fair with grey hair . . . pleasant speaking but very hot tempered. He kept a horse whip to thrash the boys and girls if they neglected work." Walker, on the other hand, "was a young man, about thirty or thereabouts, . . . of middle height, fair, and not so hasty in temper as his father-in-law." Millward remembered young children of Samuel Walker's living at the "Pottery House" at Nantgarw. For two years Billingsley and Walker worked with great energy to produce the finest porcelain manufactured in England to that time. "Failure meant poverty and starvation."<sup>14</sup> But by late 1819 their sources of capital had run out, and the partners were in serious financial trouble.

By April of 1820 they had left Nantgarw and moved to Coalport, where they obtained employment from John Rose, proprietor of the Coalport Pottery. They continued to be involved directly in the manufacturing process, and according to Jewitt, some of the finer pieces of Coalport porcelain date from this period.<sup>15</sup> It was at Coalport that William Billingsley died on January 16, 1828, in his seventieth year. He was interred as "William Beeley" in the nearby Parish of Kemberton. According to Jewitt, Walker, a "remarkably clever workman," continued to "improve the art of china making" at Coalport for a while after Billingsley's death. Exactly how long remains a mystery. Franklin Barrett believed that Walker left Rose's factory after Billingsley died in 1828.<sup>16</sup> Halsem understood that "shortly after Billingsley's death" Walker "came to America."<sup>17</sup> Now we know that Samuel Walker and his family did not arrive in America until 1842, therefore leaving a fourteen-year period in his life and career unaccounted for.

**S**amuel Walker and his family, namely a second wife Sarah (born circa 1815) and a daughter Mariah (born circa 1834), arrived in New

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York City on April 22, 1842, on the ship "Monument" bound from Liverpool. The ship's passenger list states that Walker was about fifty years of age and a "mechanic" by profession.<sup>18</sup> Jewitt believed that Walker, after removing to America, "established a pottery, which became very successful."<sup>19</sup> Edwin A. Barber, then the foremost authority on American ceramics, wrote in his *Pottery and Porcelain in the United States* in 1893 that Walker "came to America with his family . . . and about 1850 established a pottery at West Troy, N.Y., which was named the 'Temperance Hill Pottery.' Although in Great Britain," Barber continued, "he had been indented with the higher art movements in the porcelain factories . . . he seems to have been content to engage in the manufacture of Rockingham ware, in a small way, on this side of the Atlantic. His principal products were tea-pots, pitchers, and toys, which he continued to make for a number of years. He died in poverty some ten or twelve years ago, [circa 1880] at an advanced age."<sup>20</sup> John Spargo, presumably quoting Barber, included "George Walker" among his listing of potters.<sup>21</sup>

It should be pointed out that up to this time, all American works, including Barber's, have mistakenly referred to Samuel Walker as "George Walker." The error, initially found in the works by Haslem and Jewitt, seems to have been the result of their misreading "C.W." (which stood for "China Works") on the back of some Nantgarw pieces as "G.W." for "George Walker." This error was then perpetuated as one author borrowed it from another's work.

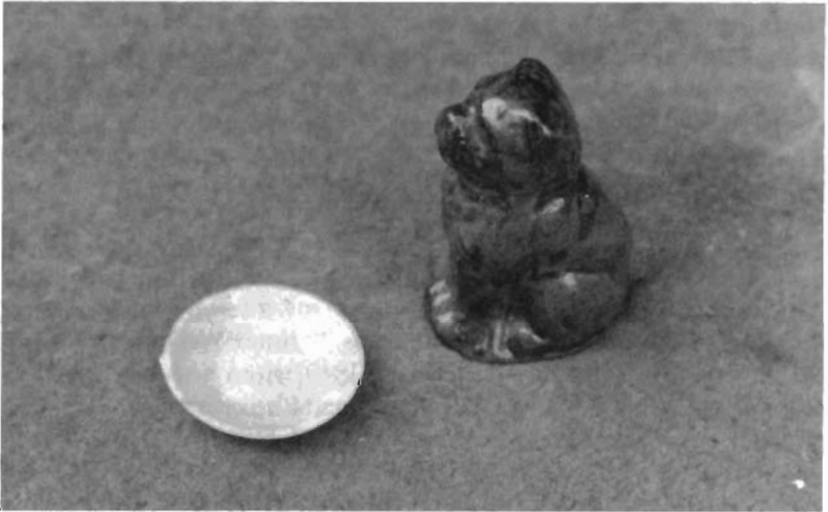
"**T**emperance Hill" was the name given to a neighborhood in the Second Ward of the Village of West Troy, a few blocks east of the location of the village's major potteries. Samuel Walker can first be documented in West Troy on June 26, 1849, when he leased lot number 779 on the east side of Chapman Street (the current Seventh Avenue) south of Buffalo Street (the current Fifteenth Street), from Samuel Sweet.<sup>22</sup> This lease included a \$6 annual rent for its first five years and \$10 annual rent for the remaining ten years, and it mentioned improvements to be made to the property. Walker's home still stands on this site; its present address is 1408 Seventh Avenue.

In 1857 Sweet sold the land to Anna Reese, but this sale did not appear to negate Walker's lease.<sup>23</sup> A mortgage given by Sweet to Reese was foreclosed in Albany County Supreme Court in 1862, and while the property was sold at a Sheriff's sale, Walker appears to have continued to use the land.<sup>24</sup> The property first appears on a tax roll for

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1854, and the 1858 tax roll identifies it as a “pottery.” This year the land was valued at \$100, and Walker’s tax was 75 cents.<sup>25</sup> Tax rolls are missing for the years 1849-1865, but those for 1866-1868 still list this property as a pottery. The 1869 tax roll does not show Samuel Walker as the owner or lessee of any real property in West Troy. He evidently had extended his fifteen-year lease for an additional five years but gave up use of the property in 1869.

A few years ago the owners of this property unearthed a two-inch diameter porcelain saucer, with the words “West Troy Por[celain]” impressed in the back. This unique artifact conclusively documents that Samuel Walker manufactured a crude form of porcelain at his “Temperance Hill Pottery.” Sherds of porcelain, white-glazed and Rockingham glazed earthenware, and stoneware with various glazes have been dug in the garden to the rear of this property. A unique three and one-half inch tall Rockingham glazed earthenware bulldog, which reportedly came from this neighborhood, is doubtless one of the toys manufactured by Walker which Barber alluded to in his work.



*Porcelain saucer and Rockingham glazed earthenware bulldog, both products of Samuel Walker in West Troy, New York.*

The 1850 Census for West Troy shows Samuel Walker, a potter sixty years of age, born in England, living with his second wife, Sarah, aged thirty-four, also born in England, and a daughter, Mariah, aged sixteen and born in England. Samuel is first listed in the 1854-1855

Directory for West Troy as “\_\_\_\_\_ Walker, potter bakery, house Chapman near Buffalo.” In the 1858 Directory he is listed as “Samuel Walker, potter, house Chapman near Buffalo,” and in 1862 as “Samuel Walker, potter, house River near Ferry.” In 1862, he was probably living with his daughter Mariah, wife of boatman Hiram Rogers, and not at the Temperance Hill pottery. Despite his being in West Troy from circa 1849 to 1877, he is only found in three Directory listings. He is not listed in the 1855 and 1865 Censuses either.<sup>26</sup> We might surmise that he travelled frequently in conjunction with his work and was therefore unavailable when directory and census information was collected.

Samuel Walker owned three other lots of land in West Troy. These lots, numbered 903, 904, and 905, were located on Quackenbush Street (the present Eighth Avenue) one block east of his Chapman Street pottery. He purchased them in 1860 and sold them in 1867<sup>27</sup> It is doubtful that there was any activity at this site, for tax rolls describe them as being “vacant.”<sup>28</sup> Walker may have purchased these hoping to establish a new pottery on the site if he was forced to vacate the land he leased on Chapman Street or may have used them because they contained a source of earthenware clay.

Samuel Walker is listed in the 1860 Census for West Troy as a “stoneware worker” aged seventy-five with his wife, Sarah, aged forty-five. Usually census occupations merely identify men as “potters,” but the 1860 Census is quite specific, calling some men in West Troy “stone-ware maker,” “china-ware maker,” and even “setter and burner in pottery.” In addition, the industrial schedule for this particular Census lists Walker as operating a “stone-ware pottery.” This was evidently a small operation compared to that of Messrs. Porter and Fraser a few blocks away. Walker had invested only \$300 in capital, had only ten tons of clay on hand valued at \$50, twenty cords of wood valued at \$100, and a general assortment of stoneware on hand valued at \$500. These entries in the 1860 Census indicate that Walker was producing stoneware (or earthenware?) at this time rather than porcelain or china. The pottery mentioned in the industrial schedule was probably the Temperance Hill Pottery but may have been the Warner pottery under Walker’s management. The solution to this question may lie in the missing tax rolls for this period.

The Walker family is listed in records of Trinity Episcopal Church in West Troy from 1850 until the 1870s. They are listed in a membership list for 1850-1851, and an entry dating from the period 1860-1861 states that Sarah Walker removed to Norwich, Connecticut, and returned in the spring of 1862. This entry may indicate that Samuel

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Walker removed to Norwich for a year or two to work with Sidney Risely, a potter of English background who operated a pottery in Norwich for many years.

Samuel's second wife, Sarah, died about September 16, 1862, and was interred in the since-destroyed "North Village Cemetery" at West Troy.<sup>29</sup> At this time Samuel was living with his daughter Mariah Rogers on River Street (the current Broadway) near Ferry Street (the current Fourteenth Street.) He is shown at this location on the 1870 Census and said to be eighty years old. No occupation is given because Walker was probably retired from his trade. He is likewise listed in the 1875 Census at this location (his age is still given as eighty), which states he is a naturalized citizen. I have not, however, been able to locate either his declaration of intention of naturalization record in Albany, Troy, or New York City.

Two other unusual pottery ventures in West Troy during Samuel Walker's tenure there merit close attention because Walker may have been involved in them in some way. In September of 1859, after the Bennington pottery establishment of A. A. Gilbert and Company had ceased operation, a group of skilled potters from Bennington formed a "joint stock company" to open a new business in West Troy. The principal documentation of this venture is found in the following notice which appeared in the *Bennington Banner* of September 30, 1859:

NEW JOINT STOCK COMPANY.—It having become apparent to every one, and particularly to the workmen in the U.S. Pottery of this village, that operations in that establishment would soon cease for the present at least, eight of the best workmen came together and formed a joint stock company, sent an agent to [West] Troy, and made arrangements with the proprietors of the old stone-ware pottery for their works, and are now engaged in rigging it up for the manufacture of the same kind of ware as has been turned off at the United States. The names of those connected with the enterprise are as follows: Enoch Moore, S. Theiss, G. B. Sibley, T. Frey, Peter Steinbach, Wm. Leake, John Leigh, Jacob Mertz. They have our best wishes and we hope they will meet with good success.<sup>30</sup>

Spargo obtained additional information regarding this enterprise from W. G. Leake, son of William Leake, one of the participants. Some of the partners lost their life savings in this short-lived venture, including William Leake, who became bankrupt. The enterprise lasted only a few months, and a limited amount of stoneware, Rockingham glazed ware, parian, and china were believed to have been produced here.

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Historical records contain a little information about the partners. Enoch Moore, who had previously been a foreman at the U.S. Pottery and who had manufactured yellow ware at the Swan Hill Pottery in South Amboy, New Jersey, during the 1850s, is listed as a “potter” in West Troy directories for 1860 and 1861.<sup>31</sup> He is then believed to have returned to his native Vermont. Stephen Theiss (Tice) was a native of Mons, Belgium, who had worked for the U.S. Pottery as a mold designer and glaze mixer from 1850 until 1859. He is found in the 1860 Census and directory for West Troy, and after returning to Bennington for a while, worked in South Amboy; Worcester, Massachusetts; and Philadelphia. Theophilus Frey had worked as a decorator at Sevres, France, for twelve years before coming to America. He worked at Bennington between 1849 and 1859 and after leaving West Troy, removed to Trenton, New Jersey. Peter Steinbach, a native of Frankfort, Germany, also worked at the Kaolin, South Carolina, pottery in 1857-1858 and remained in West Troy until 1865, longer than any of his counterparts.

William Leake (Lake) was a potter from Staffordshire who worked at Bennington in the 1840s and 1850s, being responsible for glazes and molds and especially noted for the production of ceramic vases and photograph frames. He is listed in the 1860 Census for West Troy but soon thereafter returned to Vermont. In later years he removed to Elizabeth, New Jersey, with his son, to work for the firm of L. B. Bierbower and Company, making Rockingham and other “enameled” wares. John Leigh (Lee), an English-born mold maker, is shown in the 1860 Census and directory listings for West Troy, but apparently left soon thereafter.

Other potters found in West Troy in 1860 seem to have been connected with this venture in some way, possibly as employees of the pottery. William Anderson, another English-born potter who was a kiln-pacer at Bennington, is shown in the 1860 Census and the 1860 and 1861 directories in West Troy. John Ball, another Englishman who worked at the U.S. Pottery, is listed in the 1860 Census for West Troy, which calls him a “stone-ware maker,” and the 1860 directory as well. An entry in the records of Trinity Episcopal Church dating from 1860 states that Elizabeth, wife of John Ball, removed to England with her sick husband.

That Census also lists John Hescirt as a “chinaware maker” born in Baden, Germany. Hescirt appears in only that one record in West Troy. Another “china-ware maker” from Baden listed in that Census is Fred Landholt (Lentot), who is also listed as a potter in the 1860 Directory. John Tunnicliff, a potter from Staffordshire who worked at

Bennington from 1853 onward, is listed in the 1860 Census which gives his occupation as “brickmaker.” He is listed in directories from 1859 through 1862, which give his occupation as a potter. The German-born potter Augustus Smith (1811–1881), who worked in Albany from 1841 until his removal to West Troy in 1848, is listed as a “china-ware maker” in the 1860 Census. Likewise listed is his son, Lewis Smith (1841-1905), who later would become proprietor of the West Troy pottery in the 1880s and 1890s. While the Smiths were not from Bennington, they were doubtless associated with the Bennington potters’ venture at West Troy if they were makers of white ceramics.

The location of the pottery used by the “Bennington potters” has not been positively identified. This would seem likely to have been William Warner’s pottery along the Erie Canal, south of Schenectady Street (the present Thirteenth Street), which may have been inoperative since 1856 when Warner apparently left West Troy to open a pottery in Toronto, Canada.<sup>32</sup> Warner is not shown in the 1860 Census for West Troy. This may be the “old stone ware pottery” referred to in the *Bennington Banner* article above.

Another intriguing pottery opened in the West Troy area in 1860. This was located in the Town of Watervliet, just north of the West Troy village boundary. It consisted of a substantial three story brick structure occupying four lots on the west side of Erie Street (the present Cohoes Road, Route 32), nearly opposite the famous Erie Canal weighlock. This “large structure for the manufacture of earthenware” was constructed by Monroe (Munro) Jones, backed by four substantial mortgages taken out in 1860 and 1861. This was a large mechanized factory, for one of the mortgages speaks of a “steam engine and its connections to the boiler and to connections to the kilns for burning ware and to all the shafting, belting and general machinery . . .”<sup>33</sup> This property, located in a neighborhood called “Durnville,” was valued at \$4,500 in West Troy tax rolls for 1861 through 1863. The tax for 1861 was \$42.30.<sup>34</sup>

Little is known about Monroe Jones himself. He first appears in directory listings in adjacent Green Island in 1856 as a coal and wood merchant. He purchased lot numbers 3, 4, 5, and 6 on Erie Street on May 1, 1860, and began to erect his pottery on the site.<sup>35</sup> It was operative the next year in the “manufacture of earthenware, whiteware and potteryware.” The same records state that Jones paid “artisans” to work for him. It is safe to assume that some of the



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“Bennington potters” were employed by Jones in the early 1860s, but the exact nature of his products is uncertain. The pottery seems to have succeeded for a while, for the R. G. Dun correspondent noted that Jones was “a single man, hard worker, sober and sticks close to business and will make money.”<sup>36</sup>

In 1857 Monroe Jones had purchased 83 acres of land in the Town of Easton, Washington County, just east of the Hudson River, for \$1,350. This land was apparently purchased for clay deposits it contained, for the deed refers to the “clay flats” there. He sold the land in 1859 for \$800.<sup>37</sup> Either the clay had proven unsatisfactory, or Jones needed the cash to help finance his pottery in West Troy.

Jones was not, however, able to make enough profit to meet his considerable expenses. In 1861 he sold an interest in the property to a relative, Troy apothecary Chapin Jones. On June 26, 1862, the Dun correspondent noted that Monroe Jones had “failed” in his business. In January of 1863, one of the mortgage holders, Hiro Jones of Ballston Spa, brought action to foreclose on one of his mortgages. Monroe and Chapin Jones lost the property at a Sheriff’s sale held on May 26, 1863.<sup>38</sup> Monroe Jones was eventually able to satisfy the other three mortgages, but seems to have left the area by 1865. The pottery building was converted to a foundry, which shows on an 1866 map of West Troy.<sup>39</sup> An auto parts store presently occupies the site.

Much mystery still surrounds the careers of Samuel Walker and the other makers of porcelain and other unusual ceramics. Walker’s whereabouts between Billingsley’s death in 1828 and Walker’s arrival in America in 1842 need careful investigation in England. Nor do we know of Walker’s whereabouts following his arrival in New York City and his appearance in West Troy in 1849. Only two ceramic articles can be attributed to his “Temperance Hill Pottery” and none to the “Bennington potters” or to Monroe Jones. Scraps of information should be available somewhere to help fit the pieces of this puzzle together in better order. □

## Notes

1. John Haslem, *The Old Derby China Factory* (London, 1876); Llewellyn Jewitt, *The Ceramic Art of Great Britain*, new edition, revised (New York: 1883) and William Turner, *The Ceramics of Swansea and Nanutarw* (London & Derby: 1897).

2. Nance believed that Walker had first met Billingsley when the latter was at Mansfield, but offered no documentation for this claim.

3. W. D. John, *William Billingsley* (Newport, U.K.: 1969), p. 27; E. Morton Nance, *The Pottery and Porcelain of Swansea and Nanutarw* (London: 1945), p. 236.

4. John, pp. 33-34; Nance, pp. 263-264.

5. John, p. 36; Nance, p. 238.

6. Nance, p. 240.
7. For an illustration of the Nantgarw pottery, see Jewitt, p. 575.
8. Board of Trade In-Letters, vol. 92, no. 2181 (Public Record Office, London); quoted in Nance, pp. 243-245, and reproduced in Plate CI.
9. Proceedings of the Council for Trade and Plantations, September 12, 1814, (Public Record Office, London), quoted in Nance, p. 246.
10. Letter, September 12, 1814, Thomas Lack (for the Council for Trade) to Sir John Nicholl (Public Record Office, London), quoted in Nance, p. 246.
11. Wedgewood Museum Archives, Etruria, U. K.; quoted in Nance, pp. 281-282, and reproduced in Plate CIII.
12. Haslem, pp. 57-58; Nance, pp. 353-354 and John, p. 46.
13. Turner, p. 101 and John, p. 47.
14. Nance, p. 358.
15. Jewitt, p. 167.
16. Franklin Barrett, *Caughley and Coalport Porcelain* (Leigh-on-Sea, 1950), p. 41.
17. Haslem, p. 61.
18. Ship passenger list, April 22, 1842, National Archives.
19. Jewitt, p. 167.
20. Edwin A. Barber, *Potters and Potteries of the United States* (New York: 1893), p. 178.
21. John Spargo, *Early American Pottery and China* (New York: 1926), p. 226.
22. Albany County Clerk, Book of Deeds, vol. 117, p. 35.
23. Albany County Clerk, Book of Deeds, vol. 148, p. 78.
24. Albany County Clerk, Sheriff's Sales, Book 1, p. 203.
25. Albany County Treasurer, Tax Rolls, West Troy.
26. Albany County Clerk, Censuses, 1855-1875.
27. Albany County Clerk, Book of Deeds, vol. 180, p. 377; vol. 229, p. 207.
28. Watervliet City Assessor, West Troy Assessment Rolls.
29. Records of Trinity Episcopal Church, Watervliet, indicate that Sarah Walker was interred here on September 18, 1862.
30. John Spargo, *The Potters and Potteries of Bennington* (Boston: 1926), pp. 138-139.
31. John Gallo, *Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Yellow Ware* (Oneonta, New York: 1985), p. 28.
32. David Newlands, *Early Ontario Potters* (Toronto: 1979), pp. 69-71.
33. Albany County Clerk, Books of Mortgages, vol. 125, p. 202; vol. 127, p. 71; vol. 128, p. 107; vol. 131, p. 289.
34. Albany County Treasurer, Tax Rolls, Watervliet (Town), 1860-1863.
35. Albany County Clerk, Book of Deeds, vol. 164, p. 137.
36. Dun and Bradstreet, Credit Ledgers, New York State, vol. 3., p. 334. (Archives & Manuscripts, Baker Library, Harvard University, School of Business Administration, Boston)
37. Washington County Clerk, Books of Deeds, vol. 37, p. 449; vol. 41, p. 379.
38. Albany County Clerk, Supreme Court records, 1863.
39. *New Topographical Atlas of Albany & Schenectady Counties* (Philadelphia: 1866), p. 34.