



E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE



July / August 2008



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(Available each month to Tile Heritage members who e-mail the Foundation from the address they would like E-News sent to. Contact: foundation@tileheritage.org)

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Terra-cotta façade,
Howden Building, Oakland, California, 1925.



Floral Depot, Oakland, California.
Terra Cotta by N. Clark & Sons, 1931.

Tiles and Terra Cotta in Uptown Oakland

The **Oakland Heritage Alliance** (OHA) presents a walking tour of tiles and terra cotta in Oakland, California on **Sunday, August 24th from 10 a.m. to noon** hosted by tile historian Riley Doty. (Several other members of the Tile Heritage board will be present.) The group meets at the southeast corner of 17th St. & Webster Sts. (the Howden Building).

Riley explains, “We will explore twenty buildings—exhibiting a variety of styles—whose facades are clad with architectural ceramics. All were built between 1914 and 1931 during a period when fired pottery materials were used on the exteriors of many important structures. We'll examine the nature of this medium and its unique beauty, emphasizing its special needs in terms of maintenance, preservation, and restoration.”

Admission for OHA members: \$10. General: \$15. Pay cash at the starting point. And if you are a Tile Heritage member, please introduce yourself!

Saving Batchelder Tiles—You Can Help

According to **Scott Herhold**, writer for the *Mercury News*, in his article published on June 17th, an organized and well-spoken neighborhood group in San Jose, California has been instrumental in convincing the city's department of parks and recreation to refurbish their local public swimming hole, the 81-year-old **Ryland Pool** just north of downtown.



Ryland Pool, San Jose, California, in its heyday, circa 1928.
Photo courtesy History San José.

Designed by architect **Charles S. McKenzie** and built by the San Jose Rotary Club for \$9,200, the large oval pool (68 by 89 feet) has cost about \$1.5 million to bring back to life, and the expenses aren't done.

A local group calling itself **Friends of Ryland Pool** is trying to raise money to restore thirty-six



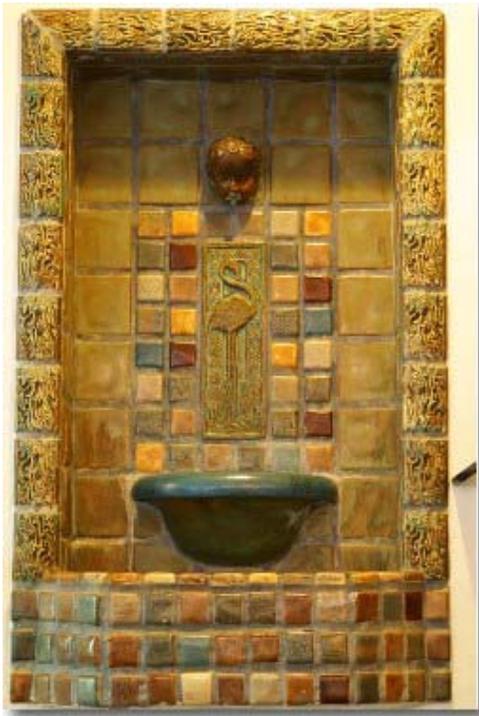
Ryland Pool today.
Note the tiles, painted over, on the pool's edge.
Photo courtesy of Cynthia Batchelder.

historic tiles that adorn the outside of the pool's raised border. The 6x6 tiles made by **Batchelder-Wilson** in Los Angeles depict a Dutch boy reclining before a row of houses (Design #78). The tile is one of several with Dutch themes thought to be designed by **Anne Harnett**. Sadly, most of the tiles at the pool are covered with layers of hard-to-remove paint, and the group has hired **Carey & Co.**, an architectural firm in the Bay Area that specializes in historic restoration, to advise on refurbishing the tiles.

You can help save the tiles! Buy a Ryland Pool t-shirt with an illustration of Batchelder's reclining Dutch boy on the front. It comes a several bright colors or in white and in a variety of styles. Click on www.vendome.org, scroll down a bit, and you'll see the Ryland Pool Store on the left. Or to make a cash donation go to the 13th Street NAC page, www.northside-sj.org/13thstnac/, and select "Donate to Friends of Ryland Pool." The proceeds from both sites go directly to help restore the Batchelder tiles.



Note the reclining Dutch boy on the Batchelder tile, partially restored.
Photo courtesy of Cynthia Batchelder.



Calco wall fountain, 1926.

Calco Hoodwinks Visitors

A resident of Glendale, California wrote recently that several visitors to his 1926 home felt certain that his tile fountain must be **Batchelder**. His instinct told him differently, but he wasn't sure. Tile Heritage to the rescue (and at no charge!):

This is a Calco fountain, made by the **California Clay Products Co.** in South Gate. It's 100% Calco: the flamingo, the cherub, the basin, the plain glazed tiles and the decorative border. And, importantly, it's in pristine condition!

It is likely that **Rufus Keeler** was the plant manager at Calco when these tiles were made. In 1926 he left the Calco factory, accepting a job at the **Marblehead Land Company** in Malibu to establish **Malibu Potteries**. Many of the designs and glazes seen in Malibu tiles today were derived from Calco.

Moravian Tile Festival '08

With each visit to the **Moravian Pottery and Tile Works** in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, the fascination with **Henry Mercer's** fabulous, concrete building intensifies. The tiles, of course, are quite wonderful in themselves, but walking around each of the many corners outside provides a curiosity with every turn. Why the arch, why this niche, why that tiny little window? Every architectural feature is a study in itself.



Moravian Pottery and Tile Works
at sunset.



Distinctive niche at the
Moravian Pottery and Tile
Works.

The mid-May **Tile Festival**, the 11th annual event organized by curator **Vance Koehler**, drew over 1600 people despite the unpredictable weather. With only three tents this year the traffic was constant and intense. For the most part it's a pretty tile-savvy group that attends this festival, partially because of Mercer's eccentric reputation, the local promotion for the event, and the fact that it has occurred on the same weekend for so many years. Many of these people attend every year and have developed quite sophisticated and discriminating tastes; they know what they like!

And this year, more than any other for sure, people came intending to buy. We kept thinking, "It's got to be the rebates!" Of course, there were the "lookers," those who meander through the tents with no intention of spending any money, but these were few and far between.

Most who surveyed the Tile Heritage tables, loaded with such a wide assortment of artistic samples donated by tile makers from throughout the U.S. and Canada, picked up what they wanted and stood in line patiently waiting to pay.



The "Big Top" at Tile Festival '08.



The Tile Heritage booth was non-stop busy!

At one point on Sunday afternoon, the skies opened up and it poured down rain. Within minutes we had ankle deep water flowing through our booth. The staff was racing about spreading straw everywhere in a vain attempt to keep people's shoes dry. We were sure the weather would discourage the attendees from buying. To the contrary, the harder it rained the more people, crammed as they were under the canvas "big top," seemed to spend like there was no tomorrow. It was a marvelous two days! **A special "thank you" to all who sent tiles this year!** All donors are acknowledged at www.tileheritage.org/THF-Supporters.html.

Nocera Makes Art for Everyday Life

Driving north from Bucks County along the Delaware, in most locations adjacent to the canal that parallels the river, provides a step back in time to when the river itself was the primary route for trade and commerce. For 40 miles in the middle reach between Pennsylvania and New Jersey, you pass through the dramatic Delaware Water Gap Recreation Area, one of the most strikingly beautiful stretches of wild water in the country. Then from Port Jervis north, the river widens as the more rugged terrain is left to the south, transforming the countryside into lush rolling hills.



The home and studio of Anne and Ed Nocera, Nocera Art Tile, outside of Milanville, Pennsylvania.



Ed begins by pressing moist clay into the plaster mold.

We were seeking Milanville, one of the many tiny towns along the Upper Delaware, to visit our friends **Anne and Ed Nocera** at **Nocera Art Tile**. Little did we know that it would be easier for Ed to come and meet us than for us to try to find their place unguided. (In fact, the same was true when we left!)

The pottery occupies the entire first level of their 3-story home, which they share with Ed's father who has his private quarters upstairs. The house itself is a converted and considerably expanded schoolhouse, the old Calkins School, sheltered by huge evergreens, and sporting a sizeable pond out back.



Sheila Menzies observes the tile-making process.



The thickness of the clay in the mold is of primary importance.

We were fortunate as Ed was engaged producing one of his 12 x 12 Lion Head tiles, so we got the opportunity to watch the master potter in action. Anyone who thinks that all you have to do is push that soft clay into a mold has a lengthy lesson to learn. The key is in being certain that clay penetrates the deepest recesses in the mold and then, importantly, that the thickness of the clay is consistent in all the nooks and crannies of the mold's design.

It's interesting how often historic tiles prove to be the inspiration behind a contemporary tile maker's passion. In the case of the Noceras it was a visit to the Arts



Nocera's art tiles on display. Note the finished Lion at the upper left.

& Industries building at the Smithsonian in 1985 where the geometric and encaustic tile floors (incidentally, reproduced by H&R Johnson in England) tantalized the couple ("stunned" is the word they use!). They returned to their studio determined to forego the ceramic vessel in favor of ceramic tile. Thus **Nocera Art Tile** was born—"to make art that becomes a part of everyday life."

"Being small is fine with us. Making all our tile in house lets us personalize each client's order and oversee its production every step of the way. And, because everyone on the team is passionate about ceramic art, it makes the studio's work some of the most distinctive tile designs on the market." See www.art-tile.com.



At Bantam, it's all about color!

At Bantam it's the Color that Counts

Once back on I-84 we crossed southern New York State south of the Catskills, through Middletown, to marvel, if for only a moment, at the grandeur of the Hudson, a magnificent waterway, contributing to so many important events in the state's and this country's history—and well before.

Leaving the Hudson Valley and crossing into Connecticut, we took Route 202 northeast to find little town of

Bantam just south of Litchfield. It was there in 2004 that **Darin Ronning** and **Travis Messinger** established **Bantam Tileworks** on the main road adjacent to the Bantam River.





The ridges and recesses accentuate this glaze's color variation.

where he observed a Tiffany glass tile close-up. Specifically, it was the layers of color that caught his fancy. And, as a result, it's the glaze effects that are of primary importance at Bantam.

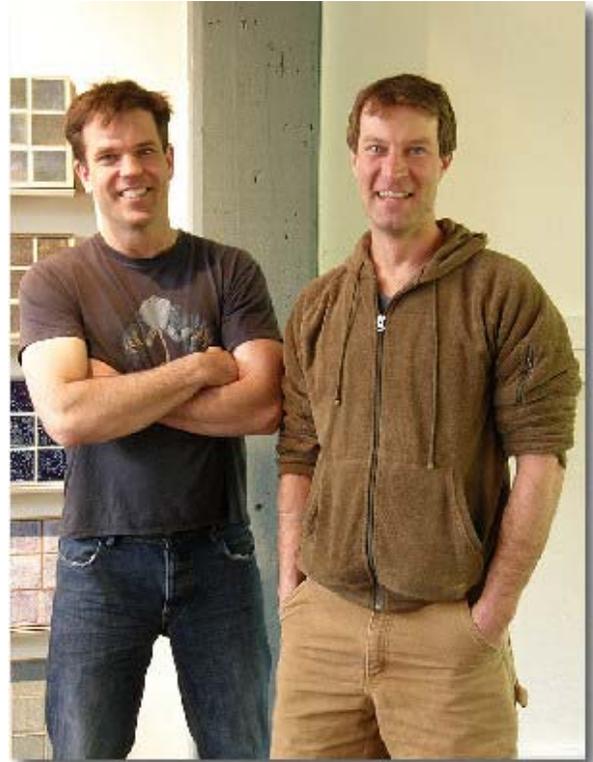
You'll find 100 glazes to choose from at **Bantam Tileworks**, each with its own unique range of color. These are the culmination of 8000 glaze tests, and the collection continues to evolve. The studio occupies the ground floor of a renovated brick warehouse. As you descend the staircase, it's the color that's there, mounted on the walls, to greet you, followed then by the charm of the two tile makers themselves.

Take a minute and delve into Bantam color at www.bantamtileworks.com.

The pair had operated a coffee shop and tableware store in lower Manhattan that specialized in artisan-made ceramics. They decided to move out of the city following the tragic events of 9-11.

Showroom display at Bantam Tileworks.

Like the Noceras, Darin's fascination with tiles originated at a museum, this time the Metropolitan Museum of Art



Darin Ronning (left) and Travis Messinger founded Bantam Tileworks in 2004.



Even the trees take on new life at Luna Parc.

Luna Parc: Meandering Through an Artist's Mind

We met **Ricky Boscarino** at the Tile Festival—his booth was opposite ours under the “big top”—and were invited to visit his home and studio, **Luna Parc**, before we flew back to California. In a sense his reputation preceded him as we had seen postcards and mutual friends had told us of his mosaic exploits. But no pictures or verbal descriptions could have prepared us for what we found, hidden in the woods as it is in Sussex County, New Jersey.

Ricky speaks of his Sicilian grandfather who in the early 1920s witnessed a miracle, a young crippled boy who was healed while attending church in Sicily. So powerful was the experience that his grandfather would cry whenever he retold the story. Were he to walk through **Luna Parc** today he would be awed by the miraculous, the boundless creativity of his grandson as reflected in every aspect of the surroundings.



Ever evolving, the home of Ricky Boscarino at Luna Parc.

Can there be randomness with intention? What appears as haphazard is in fact an artistic expression. The color and design, the architectural elements, the endless collections of both the unusual



Part of the “parade” of mosaic sculptures.

green grass and some flowers. But what predominates are the eclectic concrete sculptures and the variety of structures that are all decorated mostly in colorful tile and glass mosaics and further enhanced with attractive yet unusual objects that are either curious or amusing. At some point you realize

and the mundane all add to the stimulation. Are you lost or found? In a dream, perhaps, or somewhere on Earth? There is a degree of comfort in the familiar: a driveway and pathways through the property, tools that are used in the craft—the seemingly endless crafts—the occasional furniture, and the trees, chopped wood,



The artist’s studio and workspace.

that in experiencing his creativity firsthand you are meandering through the mind of the artist.

Luna Parc is the private home and workspace of its creator, **Ricky Boscarino**, who has kindly provided us all with a **virtual tour of Luna Parc**. Click on www.lunaparc.com/lunatour/ and once you’re there, take some time to enjoy it.



Detail of a window frame at Luna Parc.

Peace Valley For Sale

Peace Valley Tile, LLC, an award-winning southeastern Pennsylvania-based artisan/production tile studio, is for sale. See www.peacevalleytile.com.

Peace Valley has a well-established production line, beautiful glazes, thousands of molds and all necessary equipment. Over its 23 years in business, the company has established working relationships with architects and designers for high-end residential and commercial applications. All the pieces are in place for a successful, thriving tile business. Should the business stay local, the present owner would be happy to serve as consultant, if appropriate, on a limited basis.

Details available on request. Inquiries will be accepted until October 1, 2008. All reasonable offers will be considered. If interested, please contact Will Mead at 215 340-0888 or email will@peacevalleytile.com.



Peace Valley Tile, New Britain, Pennsylvania.



**Kirsten Walstead (left) and Norma Hanlon,
SoMi Tileworks, Minneapolis, Minnesota.**

Turning Tiles Green at SoMi

In our work and home life we are proud to say that we have a strong commitment to environmental consciousness and social responsibility. We have been making 'Green' tiles at **SoMi Tileworks** since our beginning in 1996.

We hand make every tile that we sell right here in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We buy our clay and glaze products from a company that is owned and operated in Minneapolis. We also work with and support locally owned businesses. Through employment, training and classes we are teaching people to keep the art of hand-made tiles alive in Minnesota.

Making our tile in the United States reduces the ecological impact of shipping tile from factories around the world. At SoMi Tileworks, we take environmental responsibility even further. Clay waste is saved and used to make more tiles. We reuse our clay boxes and recycle office materials. We even reuse the heat that the kilns create to help heat our tile studio in the winter.

Over the years, SoMi Tileworks has donated art pieces for auctions to help raise money for many art centers, children's art programs and other community organizations and projects.



SoMi Tileworks, 2008.

We love what we do and where we live. We believe that beautiful places deserve beautiful tiles. See www.somitileworks.com.



GreenDimes

GreenDimes was created to give you a choice about what gets into your mail box.

It's a fact of life these days. Almost every time we buy something, subscribe to a magazine or newsletter, or even enter our name in a drawing for a spiffy new car, we get on someone's mailing list. Thankfully, there is something we can do about it.

GreenDimes was created to give you a choice about what gets into your home's mail box, and what doesn't. As the trusted leader in stopping unwanted junk mail, we've worked hard to develop effective, long-lasting processes and procedures that really can cut junk mail by up to 90%.

It'll cost you a few dimes, but there are three rates to join/participate. For further details go to: www.greendimes.com/greendimes/HowItWorks.