



Tile Heritage Foundation

for research and preservation of ceramic surfaces

Founded in July 1987 Tile Heritage celebrates its 26th anniversary this year. Supporters like YOU... members, major contributors, industry sponsors, generous grantors... everyone... have made possible the continued fulfillment of the Foundation's mission to Document and Preserve tile history in the U.S., both past and present. THANK YOU!



E-News for Fall 2013

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Spring Lake Plaques Preserved

Architect/engineer E.H. Schneider seized the moment in the late 1920s to add these appealing decorative terra-cotta plaques to the design of the North End Pavilion in Spring Lake, New Jersey in 1931. We have yet to discover the maker.

Spring Lake, an oceanside haven for the wealthy, mushroomed in growth during the last quarter of the 19th century. Huge hotels were built along Ocean Avenue, attracting visitors principally from New York and Philadelphia, many of whom took up residence for the entire summer.

By the 1920s the borough's council





Original fireplace in Roosevelt School, Cranford, NJ.

Flint Faience Fireplace Finds a New Home

From [Larry Mobley](#)

Well, we finally reinstalled the Flint Faience fireplace in Cranford, New Jersey. The tiles came out of the Solomon Schechter Day School, the former Roosevelt School, in Cranford three years ago while the building was being demolished. The fireplace and animal tiles were in the kindergarten classroom; others were on the stairway and entrance to the school, which had been built in 1927. Because of the demolition in progress I saved what I could.

The photo without the raised hearth is the original fireplace from the school. In September 2010, I had four days to remove the fireplace and extra tiles. We found the 3x3 animal and blue field tiles under multiple coats of paint in a border around the classroom. Extra 6x6 gold tiles and chair railing were removed from the front entrance stairway. (See [E-News February 2011](#).)

I then brought the tiles home to my studio in Cohoctah, Michigan to clean them. I didn't work on them fulltime but my time would add up to about five days. This was part of my original contract. Cement and grout were removed from the tiles, which were cleaned with 7 n One Tile Cleaner from ESP Sales. All tiles were boxed and then stored at my home because the school district had no money or place to store



Newly installed Flint Faience fireplace facade, Cranford Community Center, Cranford, NJ.

Flint Faience Fireplace (continued)

the tiles. Over time I worked on repairing the tiles that were broken or where the glaze was peeling. I glued the broken tiles together with super glue, filled the gaps with plaster and painted.

After cleaning the barnyard mural I discovered that the way it had been originally installed was wrong. There was part of the duck's tail in the middle of the mural where it didn't belong! For the reinstallation the Cranford Preservation Board decided to change the position of the tiles in the mural when I went back to install the fireplace in October 2013. The fireplace was installed in the lobby of the Cranford Community Center, 220 Walnut Avenue. The board also decided to raise the hearth six inches up from the floor. The base was built by Chris Siano, a local contractor. We used the extra tiles I had removed to raise the hearth so that no one could trip on the tiles.



Rearranged Flint Faience mural at the Cranford Community Center. The duck has now retrieved its tail!

We made some changes on the fireplace to make it suitable for the space. Blue tiles were taken from the mantle to use on the raised hearth and 3x3 blue tiles on the side of the hearth. Gold tiles from the hearth were used in the firebox and the extra gold tiles were used on the side and top of the fireplace. The space between the tile and wall will be covered with oak plywood paneling. The tiles were glued to the drywall form with thin set at ¼-inch grout joints and grouted with natural grey grout. It took three days to recreate the fireplace. Karen Mobley helped unpack tiles and set out the numbered tiles in the proper order. The biggest help was her talking to the people that were asking questions so I could work with little interference!

Maureen Starzdon, who spearheaded the project in Cranford, is having a plaque made with the animal tiles and wainscoting trim.

What Goes Around Comes Around...

Last spring Don Sbicca in Monrovia, California contacted Tile Heritage with some decorative tiles he wanted identified. What differentiated Don's request from others received at THF was that his tiles were not only familiar but related back to the Foundation's earliest days and the unearthing of one of the largest privately held collections of historic California tiles ever amassed!

Back in 1985 Don and his wife had added on to their home and were in need of tiles. Somehow they became aware of a deceased "tile guy" who had lived nearby, and they went to have a look. A young man who was emptying four small warehouse buildings just down the street; he lived in northern California and was a tile setter himself. He had many pallets of field tile as well as other pieces in large quantities he was shipping up north. The couple ended up buying the salvage rights to the remaining mess of tiles in the four buildings. Among the debris Don found a small box tucked away in the back corner. In it were 26 Pomona 4 1/4" tiles depicting three different hand-painted gulls in flight. Not having found any field tile to match, they kept the tiles in the box... for 28 years!



Pomona tiles designed by Cecil Sanders.
Collection of Don Sbicca.

Regarding the tile collection itself: Henry Krier, an eccentric tile contractor, who developed his reputation during the 1920s and '30s, stockpiled leftovers from his jobs in the warehouses adjacent to his home in Monrovia. Henry Sr. died in '67 at age 80; his son, Henry Jr., the "tile guy" referred to above, had carried on the family business. (See "The Legacy of Henry Krier" by Lynn Downey in *Flash Point*, vol. 2, no. 3.) The young man from northern California was Richard Baratta, whose father Rick was a beneficiary of the Krier estate. Realizing the artistic and historic value of the collection, Rick chose the tiles for his portion of the settlement. And after tiling two houses in the Sacramento area, Rick contacted Tile Heritage to determine what to do with the bulk that remained!



Atrium of a home on Rossi Street in San Francisco.
Courtesy of Olga Khroustaleva.

As for the gulls, they "flew" into our lives upon meeting the late Cecil Sanders at his home in Grass Valley, California in the late 1980s when we were actively engaged in tape recording the "seniors" of the industry. He had worked as a designer at the Pomona Tile Company in Pomona for about five years in the early 1930s, producing these birds in flight among other decorative motifs. At 79 years old at the time he was as spry as a young kid, aghast that anyone would be interested in his short life as a tile maker! (See "Profile: Cecil Sanders in *Flash Point*, vol. 1, no. 4.)

What goes around comes around. It's been quite a "flight."

PROFILE Cecil Sanders: "You're opening up a big can of worms!"

When Spanish tile became popular and swept the country in the 1930's, Cecil Sanders had just begun working for a small tile plant in Pomona, California, called Pomona Tile Company. Like most of the workers who made ashtrays and other trinkets on their off-duty time, Cecil made a tile table top, drawing and glazing a free hand design of Old Ironsides. He ran it through the kiln overnight and when he arrived at work the next morning, the boss and several others had congregated around the piece of art. "Did you do this?" the boss asked Cecil, who figured he was about to lose his job for using the kiln. When Cecil admitted the piece was his, the boss offered him a job as head of the decorating department!

The tile plant owner's faith in Cecil's talents was not misguided. In those days, to keep the colors of the various designs from running together, it was necessary to have a wide ugly brown line an eighth of an inch wide separating them. Cecil realized how bad this looked so he

searched for a way to make a thin line to draw the designs yet keep the colors separate. At first he mixed ball clay with honey as this was the only thing he could find to keep the clay together. "But when I left a design overnight, the mice would eat it away because of the honey." Finally he noticed one day that the jar of turpentine he had left sitting in his window had evaporated and left an oily resin. He tried mixing it with the clay, and it worked. He contacted chemists in New York and they sent him some of this oil of turpentine.

He then took an old alamite gun,

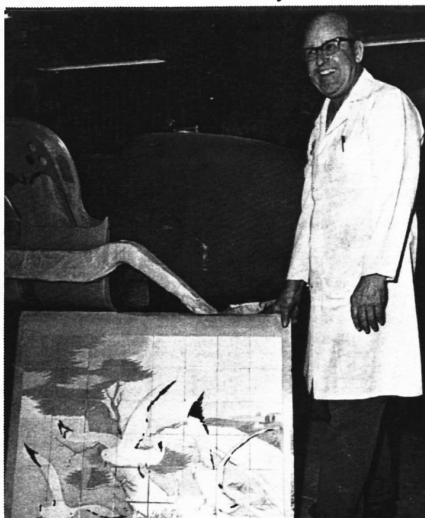
had a brass tip made with a small hole and, using this mixture of oil and ball clay, made thin lines on the tile much

like those of a cake decorator. The lines were raised which kept the colors separate, and they didn't fire out in the kiln. His method was successful and all but revolutionized the decorative process. In fact, he was sent to other tile plants to teach his new method.

Another of his discover-

ies was when the kiln master made a mistake and fired some Chinese red tile at too high a temperature. He was

...continued below ...



Cecil Sanders displays tile work, 1969

PROFILE

...continued ...

about to throw it out when Cecil saved it, put it into a design and called it Morocco red. "From then on, we couldn't burn enough tile to keep up with the color demand."

Cecil made numerous tile murals for residential bathrooms and public places as well. He remembers a fountain outside the Veterans Hall in Pomona. His largest work was an 8 x 10 foot panel of a lake scene for a hotel in San Diego. The tile work was fronted by rocks with real water running over them.

The gull painting illustrating this article has a strange history. Cecil, when he did it, considered it a cull, and he sold it for \$5.00. Twenty years later, his brother-in-law, who

operated a second hand store, bought the tile from an estate. Cecil saw it, recognized it as his own, and bought it back for \$4. Now, of course, his family won't part with it. His grandson, a tile contractor in southern California, now holds the mural in safe keeping.

Born in Houston, Texas, in 1909, Cecil was a designer for Pomona Tile for five and a half years in the early 30's and never made more than \$19.80 a week. In the early years he commuted from Lawndale, a distance of some 40 miles each way, on motorcycle before purchasing a Star roadster once his job was secure. He might have spent his entire career there had his boss, Leonard Johnson, agreed to give him a raise!

After Pomona Tile, Cecil designed for Redondo Tile, a small tile

company called "Hodjo" and Vernon Potteries in Los Angeles and later held a number of jobs before being employed as a metal shaper by Harrah's Automobile Collection (now the William F. Harrah Automobile Foundation) in Reno, Nevada. At his home in Grass Valley, Cecil, now 79 years old, busies himself with the restoration of his 1904 one-cylinder Cadillac.

Reacting to this renewed interest in his long forgotten past, Cecil stared off into the distance and commented with a sigh, "You're opening up a big can of worms!"

Note: This article (in part) was first published in Harrah-scope, the monthly bulletin of Harrah's Club, Reno, Nevada, May 1970.

“Airfield Dreams”

Artist **Marlo Bartels** imagines himself laying in a field of California poppies and lupine, gazing up through the fragrant foliage of orange groves, a familiar experience for many in and around Brea, California, many years ago.

Today that memory has been rekindled by “Airfield Dreams,” an Art in Public Places project on the site of a 1920s airfield in Brea, southeast of Los Angeles. Completed in June of 2013 the work was nine months in the making and includes 32-feet of undulating seating featuring the portraits of famous barnstormers along with six 12-foot, three-sided columns of colorful mosaics.



“Airfield Dreams” by Marlo Bartels. Brea, California, 2013.

From <http://www.marlobartels.com> Marlo has been producing and installing permanent wall pieces, sculpture, murals and functional art since 1977. He works with ceramic tile, terrazzo & stone; shaping, forming and glazing the clay elements by hand. With the support of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C., he has developed new techniques for fabricating furniture and sculptures, using tile facings on ferro-cement with polystyrene substrates. His work includes sculpture, indoor and outdoor walls, fountains, floors and functional art and features durability and low-maintenance. Colors are myriad, non-fading and resistant to graffiti.



In “Airfield Dreams” the blue and white tiles are a mosaic of Marazzi; the 3 5/8" x 7 5/8" tiles around the base are Endicott, expressing a 'terra cotta rainbow©'; and all of the flowers were custom, made by hand in Marlo Bartels' studio in Laguna Beach, California.

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the THF archival project!**

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***Your contribution is valued and essential
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**THF is focused on an ambitious goal - raising an additional \$15,000. by December 31st., 2013
for this purpose - *MATCHING AN ANONYMOUS GIFT!***

*We also have an additional two year Archiving Fulfillment plan with budgets outlined
for 2014 & 2015. (Details are available in a formal Strategic Plan document.*

E-mail for details: foundation@tileheritage.org

To date Sponsor, Member and Grant FUNDING accomplishments include:

- Digitizing and forming a searchable database for the sizable slide and photography collection of over 42,000 images.
- Digitally recorded, accessioned and archived historic tiles that have been donated to Tile Heritage over the past 26 years, representing a collection numbering over 4,000 different American tiles.
- Accessioned and archived the historic tile catalog collection of over 600 items as well as the collection of over 2700 historic and contemporary periodicals.

Now our full focus in on the ephemeral (historic & contemporary tile industry documents) files that contain roughly 40,000+ items. Work is underway, under the direction of a volunteer professional archivist, THF staff and other volunteers preparing the material for a database and an internet accessed finding-aid index.

Visit www.tileheritage.org to make a **DONATION** today!

THANK YOU!