



Tile Heritage Foundation

for research and preservation of ceramic surfaces

Founded in July 1987 Tile Heritage is celebrating its 35th 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 Summer 2022

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The Smith residence in Alpine, California with its
clinker brick chimney and stone foundation.

All photos courtesy of Dave Smith

My Patient Quest for Grueby Tiles

By Dave Smith, longtime THF member

In 1983, I traveled to St Louis to meet my future in-laws. I had always enjoyed antiquing and had recently gotten the bug to collect American art pottery. In one antique store on Cherokee Street, I was handling some antique tiles when the owner suggested that I look in the basement. Walking down, we found hundreds of new old stock tiles from circa 1900, Grueby, AETCO and Trent. The store owner said that they were rescued from the basement of an old hotel with the wrecking ball literally ready to do its work. There had been picture tiles but he had sold those. Over a period of a few years, I bought all the tiles as I could afford them, paying \$5-6 per square foot of tile.

My Patient Quest for Grueby Tiles...

I was in the process of building a Craftsman home for my wife and me, acting as designer, carpenter, mason and tile setter, working evenings and weekends. We had little money. I used the beautiful gun metal grey AETCO tiles, with highlights of green and red, in a fireplace primarily of river rock and the dark yellow Trent tiles in a Craftsman style fireplace in the master bedroom. I set these myself.



Trent Tile, Trenton, NJ, warms the master bathroom, the tiles likely produced in the 1920s

The rest sat in storage for years as I gradually accumulated more Grueby tiles and the house grew. I've always seen the promise in architectural antiques, collecting tiles, windows, clinker bricks and hardware, to my wife's chagrin.

David Rago recovered a lot of tiles remaining at the last Grueby production site and put them up for sale but I couldn't afford them.



River rock fireplace with the American Encaustic (AETCO) hearth in the living room.

Eventually, eBay came on line and I watched for tiles. After a few years, I noticed quantities of Grueby tiles being offered. I contacted the seller and it turned out that David Rago's daughter Denise had been given the remaining Grueby tiles to sell online. Denise was lovely to work with and helped me with the price when buying large quantities of tiles. Over a period of a couple years, I bought hundreds of tiles, primarily in Grueby green, tan and dark brown. The pile in storage grew.



Grueby Faience hexagons adorn a bathroom floor.

My Patient Quest for Grueby Tiles...

About 25 years ago, a friend, who was also a patient, bought a beautiful Grueby green and yellow frieze along with a good quantity of 6x6 Grueby green tiles. He had plans for them and it took years of negotiations to get them. The clincher was that I was preparing to retire and he needed a lot of dental work. Finally, his breaking teeth and pain allowed us to come to an agreement involving a trade of dental work for the tiles. I've always felt that he got the best part of the deal, but he was a friend also.

We added to our house, including another full bath and decided to convert one existing bath into a powder room, and we got to use the first of the Grueby tiles. I could afford to hire a professional this time. I contacted the Tile Heritage Foundation, which I had belonged to for a while, for the name of someone in the San Diego area experienced in setting antique tiles. Chuck Fitzgerald was highly recommended. Not only is Chuck very skilled but great with design and easy to collaborate with.

My wife had wanted a new, larger kitchen and dining room from the time I built our first small kitchen. About 7 years ago I finally could start the new rooms. While helping with the framing, I had the epiphany that we were getting older and wouldn't be able to enjoy the existing house if either of us wound up with a wheelchair or walker. So, we doubled the size of the project and added a second story handicapped accessible master bedroom.

My 70th year I started a clinker brick and river rock chimney in the Greene and Greene style. The Grueby green frieze and tiles were to be used on the fireplace of that chimney. It was to be set into an inglenook in the room between the kitchen and dining room. My wife calls it the "holding room." My heart was set on a copper hood and surround for the firebox and a copper motto plaque: "By Hammer and Hand Do All Things Stand." Hans



Chuck Fitzgerald, master tile contractor, poses before his Grueby tile masterpiece.

Lieber, a copper smith, agreed to fabricate the copper work.



"By Hammer and Hand Do All Things Stand," from a blacksmith's song.

I've been able to use almost all my Grueby tiles for the fireplace, floors and side board. A retinal tear and Covid-19 have restricted what I can personally do these days, but if I ever get the plans out of the County of San Diego Building Department I'm determined to see the house finished after almost 40 years.

Joseph Arthur D'Eath:

A Man with a Mission

*From grandson Joseph Pokorney,
longtime THF member*

Joseph Arthur D'Eath was born in Toronto on July 8th, 1887, the 13th of 13 children. It is likely that he learned the trade as a teenager. In 1908 at the age of 21 he married and the couple moved to Vancouver, a dramatic move that brought greater opportunities.



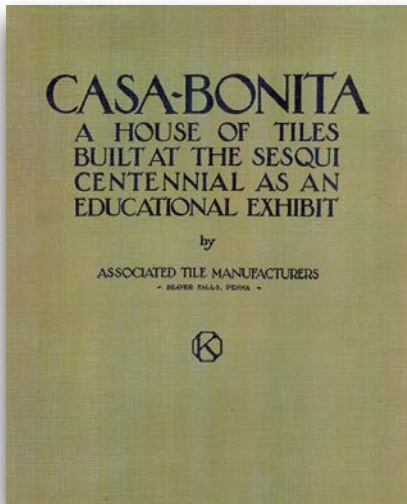
Dressed smartly with a bow tie (fourth from the left), the young Joe D'Eath joins his fellow tile setters in Vancouver, BC.

Both photographs courtesy of Joseph Pokorney.

a completely tiled interior residence to showcase and promote the use of ceramic tile in residential construction. (A copy of the catalog is available from Tile Heritage for \$20.)

Later in Chicago Joe was involved in tile sales working with both Franklin and American Olean as their sales rep with a large showroom downtown that I remember visiting as a child. He reportedly wrote a newsletter titled "Joe's Jibes" aimed at the growing number of tile setters working throughout the U.S.

As he and my grandmother traveled in later years, he collected unusual tiles, many now installed in our home.



In 1914 the couple emigrated to the U.S. via Blaine, Wash. and six years later relocated to Muskegon, Mich. where he continued to work as a tile setter for many years.

In 1926 he worked as a tile setter on the Casa-Bonita Display House that was part of the Sequa-Centennial International Exposition in Philadelphia. The house was built with



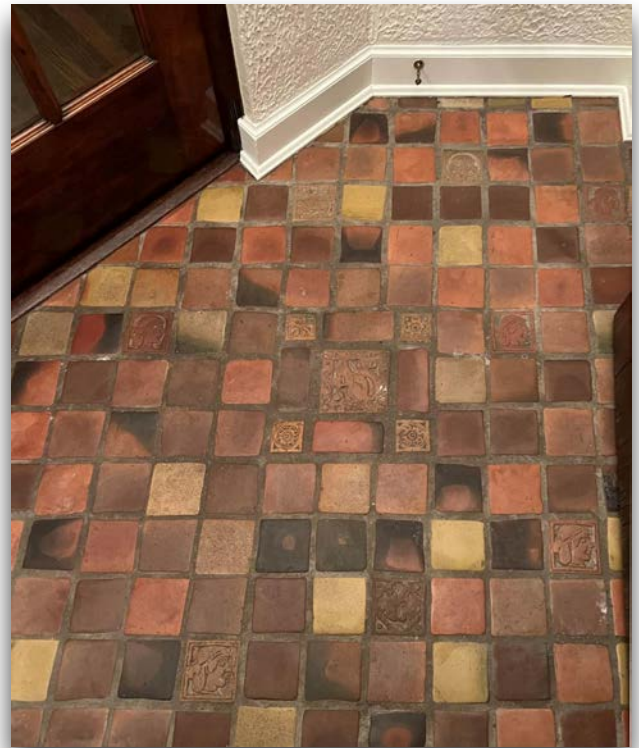
Joe D'Eath, obviously a successful tile salesman, well-dressed and relaxed, stands before his store in downtown Chicago, following World War II.

More Nemadji tiles

From Ben Tyjeski, with special thanks



Samples of floor tiles from a residence in Beverly Hills on the far south side of Chicago, some previously identified as those produced at Nemadji Tile & Pottery Co., Moose Lake, Minnesota during the late 1920s. The tiles to the left and upper right are approx. 3 3/4" square.



The tiles below are approx. 2 3/4" square at the corners and 5 3/4" square in the center. Other Nemadji decorative installations have been identified in other homes in Chicago's Beverly Hills as well as Duluth and Pittsburgh, Penn. They are rare!





Rivard residence in Portland, Oregon.

Quintessential Handcraft

From Sally Rivard, Portland, Oregon

Hello Tile Heritage,

I am sending you photos of the fireplace in our 1930 Tudor-style house in Portland, Oregon. The fireplace is 72 " wide by 49 " tall (excluding mantel). The Center tile with the tree is 8 1/4 x 9 1/4. The border pieces in the floor are 5 1/2 x 1 3/4. Can you identify the tiles?

I had initially contacted the Batchelder researchers at the Pasadena Museum of History but they said this was not Batchelder tile; they could not find it in the 1923 catalog. We do not have any other historical information about our house and would appreciate any information you can find. Thank you.

From Joe Taylor: Sally, thanks for contacting Tile Heritage. These are Handcraft tiles produced by the Handcraft Tile Company founded in 1926 by Florence May Austin in Milpitas, California just north of San Jose. She designed all of the Handcraft tiles prior to World War II. No other company at the time produced tiles with such raised rounded edges. They are distinctive and you have taken extremely good care of your mantel. Could you please send us a picture of your home from the street? I'd like to feature your fireplace in our "E-News." No address needed. Thank you!

Sally's reply: No problem, our fireplace would be honored to be in the newsletter. Here is an image of the front of the house. We are impressed with the speed of the identification, and excited to have this new piece of information. Thank you very much.



"Up From the Deep"

Submitted by the artist

Katharine Arrow's mosaic mural, her first large scale project, was designed for the exterior of her home just inside the entrance to her back yard in Larkspur, California. The 7.5' x 10' mural took on a life of its own as a place to explore and unify mosaic techniques and materials in a 'blue mind' environment. Over seven years Katharine created the sea creatures, and in February 2019 she started the cut tile portion of the mural. Due to space constraints, the mural was made in several sections and put together for the first time in October 2021. Fingers were crossed that it would fit together and that it would look as envisioned. It did!

Laurel True was brought in to consult from the start. "Laurel was an advisor, mentor, and enthusiastic supporter through all stages of the design and implementation.



See <https://photos.app.goo.gl/ZwJP5G6ULC3DCSsi7>



"Up From the Deep," a 7.5' x 10" mosaic mural by Katharine Arrow, installed by Phylece Snyder and Tim Volz, October 2021.

"I knew I was over my head with this project and would need help along the way. I can't imagine what a hot mess it could have been without her help," the artist acknowledged.

The mural materials are Heath and McIntyre tile seconds, handmade ceramic tiles, smalti, mirror, marble, granite, and recycled jellybean glass. All tile except the sunbeams were hand cut using Starrett nippers and Monolit nippers.

The exterior installation onto the stucco home started with leveling, then thin-setting with Laticrete 254 Platinum and screwing down Wedi Board for the substrate. Katharine used the Tile Tape method to build her mosaic so tile setters Phylece Snyder and Tim Volz had sheets of mosaic to 'burn' into the thinset. Critical to installation was planning; grid marks on the tile tape matched with the grid marks on the Wedi Board. Setting and grouting took five days. Custom's Prism Cape Grey grout was used, Snow White for the 'sandy bottom' area, Custom blends for the sea turtle. The project was completed on October 30th.



From collector Stephen Visakay (left): When I was a teenager, I noticed, more than once, Janeway cigarette boxes, plates, dishes, tiles advertised by Georg Jensen in the newspaper, maybe in *Life Magazine*. Her whimsical paintings stuck in my mind. Then I met historian Vicki Jenssen (right) and learned of her book on Carol Janeway and realized it was her painting the trays that I had remembered.

I saw this Janeway tray come up on eBay for \$55 plus \$40 for shipping, ouch! Who's going to pay forty dollars for shipping? No wonder no one was bidding on this. I emailed the seller, who would not come down on her shipping price. We went back and forth, and finally she came down to \$45 on the tray... done. Later I was thrilled to see the same tray in the Georg Jensen catalog that Vicki had posted on the web. I have the tray and dearly love it.

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