

STORIES of New Jersey

PREPARED FOR USE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY THE
FEDERAL WRITERS' PROJECT of the WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
1060 Broad Street, Newark, New Jersey

SCOTCH PLAINS
No. _____
PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE STORY OF LENOX POTTERY

Americans, who accept as a matter of course the outstanding achievements of our scientists and engineers, are sometimes surprised to learn that in the field of art, as well, we have achieved international importance.

Included in the permanent exhibition in the Ceramic Museum at Sevres, France among the rare and beautiful wares of Europe and Asia, are several examples of Lenox china, the product of a factory in Trenton, N. J. and the result of long and patient effort on the part of a man who devoted his life to the accomplishment of an ideal, despite the handicaps of poverty and discouragement, and the added burdens of blindness and paralysis.

Walter Lenox, as a school boy in Trenton, where he was born in 1859, used to stand for hours before a little pottery which he passed daily, fascinated by the transformation of the dull lumps of clay into beautiful shapes and forms as the rapidly spinning potter's wheel turned under the hands of the artisan. Young Lenox resolved that he would master this craft, one of the most ancient of mankind, and produce finer ware than any he had yet seen.

As an apprentice he learned how to make pottery. In his leisure hours he studied and experimented with design and color. Finally he became art director of the Ott and Brewer factory at Trenton and while there learned from Irish artisans, imported for the purpose, some of the processes of manufacturing Belleek -- a particularly fine ware. But to accomplish his purpose it was necessary for Lenox to have his own plant. He was able to raise the money, but his backers were skeptical. They stipulated that the building should be designed as a tenement should the pottery fail.

The manufacture of cheap ware in large quantities would assure quick and large profits, while delicate and finely wrought ware would have a limited market. But Walter Lenox had one aim -- quality. He was convinced that if he could produce something truly fine and beautiful the public would ultimately recognize it.

At this time unscrupulous china manufacturers in the United States were in the habit of marking their ware with English stamps in order to sell their goods. No one would believe that really fine china could be produced in America. Lenox was too proud and honorable to employ such unworthy methods and he resolved to stand or fall on the merits of his products.

Failure followed failure before he produced the lovely, creamy, richly glazed china that proudly displays the Lenox stamp. In 1895, just as Walter