

JACK MCKITTERICK-CLAY AND OPTIMISM FOR POTTER

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Jack McKitterick of Port Elgin, prepares to fire a piece of pottery in his homemade, wood-fired kiln. One of the few wood-fired kilns in the area, McKitterick uses hard maple from the Stevens-Hepner Company for fuel.

Jack McKitterick discovered the art of creating pottery almost a decade ago and decided that with patience and professionalism he could make it his livelihood.

He moved to Port Elgin late last year and began building a wood-fired pottery kiln behind his 530 Mill St. home.

While much of his knowledge of the craft is the product of years of experience, McKitterick also took, as well as taught, pottery courses at the Abertham Cultural Centre in Vancouver and Vancouver Arts School.

Although his wood-fuelled kiln may well be unique to the area, it is the second that McKitterick has built for himself.

For McKitterick, the firing of a piece of pottery is of the utmost importance. The process is time consuming. The pieces are placed in the walk-in brick kiln and sealed up while they are heated by a fire of maple wood. The firing continues for 10 to 12 hours and the temperature rises to 2300 degrees F. Another two days must pass before the kiln is cool enough to be opened and the final product examined.

The wood flames impart their own subtle tones to the pottery and the flecks of ash blend themselves with the glaze. His method may be ancient and time-consuming but they work. McKitterick said his traditional approach to pottery making is almost the same as that used 1000 years ago in China during Sung Dynasty.

Potters would be much more appreciated if the public knew the difference between pottery and ceramics.

The stoneware McKitterick makes in his kiln will not leak he said, because the clay is vitrified or fused by the extreme heat of the firing.

The most quickly done and yet most complex aspect of pottery is the shaping of the clay on a wheel.

Using his foot-powered wheel, he spins out tea pots, casseroles, cups, dishes and planters. "A medium sized tea pot

takes about 5 minutes to make. The lid and handle come next and they are fitted to the pot. - the time adds up."

He gets his clay from Toronto. The fascinating thing about his pottery clay is its composition. The ingredients come from almost all regions of the United States and parts of Canada.

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A STAINED GLASS WONDERLAND IN PORT ELGIN

For anyone who enjoys or collects stained glass, a visit to Al and Peg Mansfield's home in Port Elgin is like walking into wonderland.

The couples cozy home located in Shakespeare Estates, just south of town, contains numerous pieces of custom made stained glass articles, designed and made by Al with Peg's very capable help and advice.

After retiring in 1970, Al began working with stained glass when his wife asked for a lamp. He signed up for a course and attended one class before deciding he could learn more on his own.

Buying a book and learning by trial and error, an exciting but time consuming hobby began to take shape.

The Mansfields moved to Port Elgin in April, 1982 and retail their stained glass from their home. The couple have been summer residents since 1954. Originally from Britain, the Mansfields emigrated to United States following World War II and came to Canada in 1951.

Continued on next page

