

The Jacob Bachley “Cat in Basket” Child Bank

by Greg Mathis



Sample of Jacob Bachley “Cat in Sack” molded bank figurals.

3.7’h, 2.5”w. cc: 1877

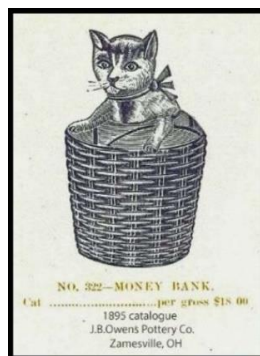
Various neatly colored cold painted examples are known to have surfaced in Union County, Illinois, that were obtained in local State and County Fairs and events. Crudely painted examples were likely paint decorated by a child, becoming a very special cherished bank figural. These encouraged saving money. Obviously, most were damaged and then discarded after removing saved coins. Ones that have survived time are now in the hands of Anna Pottery collectors. One is featured in the Kirkpatrick pottery display at the Stinson Library, Jonesboro, Union County, Illinois.

The Arkansas Weekly, Little Rock, Arkansas reports that “Jacob Bachley (1840-1885) the Arkansas art potter, known as Humbug Jake, the "pottery man” of Texarkana, originally trained at the Uhl Pottery in Evansville, Indiana. In the early 1870s Bachley worked with Lafayette Glass in Benton, Arkansas, and around 1875 Bachley was employed by the Anna Pottery, Union County, Illinois. In 1878 he ventured westward to Texarkana, where he partnered with Captain "Jack" C. Weed, a conductor with the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railway. The pair formed the Texarkana Pottery Company, with Weed as the proprietor of the "celebrated fancy pottery works" and Bachley as potter.

The *Daily Arkansas Gazette* reported on April 5, 1879, that “among our visitors yesterday was conductor J. C. Weed, of the Texas Division, St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad. Jack is proprietor of the celebrated fancy pottery Work of Texarkana, and we are pleased to know he is meeting unexpected success. His foreman is famous Humbug Jake, with many of us acquainted at the State Fair. He’s a skillful workman and designer. The many articles shipped from the establishment include hanging baskets, water pitchers, beer mugs, and so on.” This occurred at a State Fair in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The April 10, 1879, edition of the *Arkansas Democrat* reported “the guy is glazing the ware like porcelain and that’s almost transparent. In fact, it’s difficult to conceive people of the truthfulness of the statement that it is Arkansas made. The pottery is much finer than the average. Mr. Weed telling us that it really brings \$.12 per gallon. The novelty work is most striking and artistic, Mr. Bachley having crowned the exhibit with his own head and face. Among the most remarkable pieces are the Dog Catching the Rabbit, Darwinian Theory, Cat in a Sack, frog, and Arkansas Traveler in the Velvet Veiled Profit. If you failed to see this, you may miss half of the show.”

When and by whom the origin of the figural cat bank concept is not known, but its popularity and demand continued decades after Bachley’s death. One example appears in the J. B. Owens Pottery Company, Zanesville, Ohio, 1895 catalog Number 322 “Money Bank Cat.”



Note the numerous clear differences in the cat and basket features and design of this knock-off,” compared to ones attributed to Jacob Bachley “Cat in s Sack” bank figurals.