

The Ebey & Murphy Pottery

by Greg Mathis

JOHN NEFF EBEBY

In 1825 John N. Ebey came from Columbus, Ohio, to Springfield, Illinois, and erected a small kiln and began the manufacture of red ware. He is regarded the first potter to advertise stoneware in Illinois. The editor of the January 7, 1882, *White Hall Republican* newspaper states that "From the veteran potter, J. N. Ebey, we learn some hitherto unpublished facts, relating to the early history of the pottery business in the vicinity of White Hall. John Neff Ebey writes substantially as follows: 'In the fall of 1827, I first passed over the ground where White Hall now stands. I was then manufacturing earthenware in Sangamon County. Michael Baker, formerly and since a citizen of White Hall, who was working for me and learning to turn ware, informed me that there was fine white clay in that vicinity. I loaded an ox wagon with ware. drove over the beautiful, but unimproved intervening prairies to Kinthead's Point, some 10 miles east of Carrollton. I sold the ware to A. M. Kennett, father of Mortimer Kennett, since mayor of St. Louis. Thence I went to the little pottery run by William Heath, father of N. P. Heath, since deceased, on the land now owned by Nancy Evans, south of S. M. Henderson's present residence. Heath built the first kiln, and made the first ware ever manufactured in Greene County. The second kiln was built west of Simeon Ross' present residence.

Heath was using what was known as the Ross clay. I took a part of a load of the clay home with me for painting purposes on common pottery. In 1832, while yet in Springfield, I became very anxious to manufacture stoneware. I tested all the clay in the vicinity, with a proportion of the Greene County clay, and all except the latter was a failure. That proved so encouraging, that

in 1833, I went to the little village of White Hall, got the numbers of the clay land, and went to Edwardsville and entered it, and in April moved into the front room of a little house near where the old M. E. church stands. Dr. William Holliday occupied the front room. I bought an old log cabin, moved it to the lot now owned by Dr. Chapman, and there turned the first stoneware made in Greene County. I had no kiln, but I hauled the Greene ware to Edward Heath's redware kiln, then used by Michael Baker, and there burned the first stoneware ever burned in the County. It was a very good, common article. I sold part of it to Joshua Simonds, who sold dry goods in a small tenant house, near the present site of the post office. From this time until 1864, a period of 31 years, but little was done in the way of manufacturing stoneware, and from that date the history of the business is familiar to the people of White Hall, and the state at large.”

The *Sangamon Journal* of Springfield, Illinois, posts “Potters Ware / established in Springfield, near the public square, a potter's ware manufactory; and will be able to supply all others in his line of business on good terms. Wanted -- in exchange for ware, clean cotton and linen rags: For which two and a half cents per pound will be allowed. Most kinds of country produce will also be received in exchange for ware: Signed John Neff Ebey, Springfield, November 10, 1831.”

In 1864 John N. Ebey again located at White Hall, coming from Chapin with his family, residence, shop and all. In the thirty-one years that he had been absent from White Hall, he had been engaged in the manufacture of stoneware at Manchester, Winchester, Ripley and Chapin.

Upon his return from Chapin to White Hall, this time to remain, Ebey located his residence on the north side of Bridgeport Street, on lot 8 of Miln's Addition. From Chapin to White Hall in 1863, John Neff Ebey moved his house in section by horse and wagon. This house and his plant were located on the east side of White Hall.



ceiling seam

wall seam

floor seam



Upstairs window views of the Ebey kiln on adjoining lot location.

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58

In 1868 C. B. Ebey, a son of John N. Ebey, built a shop and kiln near the site at present occupied by A. D. Ruckel & Son's plant. This was operated by Ebey in the manufacture of stoneware until 1874, when he disposed of it to L. C. Murphy and E. M. Bates. Murphy & Bates continued the business until 1878, when they sold the lots and plant to D. C. Banta, who conducted a stoneware business there until 1880. Then he leased it to J. B. H. Nevius & Sons, who operated it until 1883, when, their lease having expired, Mr. Banta sold the property to A. D. Ruckel, now

A. D. Ruckel & Son, who greatly enlarged the plant and extended the business. This plant is located on the east side of Worcester Avenue, on lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, in Isaac D. Vedder's Addition. Mr. Ruckel in 1898 erected a two-story brick building, 51 feet wide and 104 feet long, and installed steam power. A. D. Ruckel & Son were the first to successfully use the filter press in washing pottery clay in this vicinity.

In 1868 he disposed of this property to W. W. Hubbs, Sylvester Moore and John Miller. These three men had previously been engaged in manufacturing stoneware at Ripley. For a short time, immediately previous to coming to White Hall, they had resided at Frederick, Schuyler County, Illinois, and operated a small stoneware plant.

Mr. Hubbs soon purchased the interests of Miller and Moore in this plant, and continued to operate it until 1875, when he sold to George Hill, who continued to manufacture stoneware, enlarging the plant and extending the sheds and kilns north onto the lot now occupied as residence property by W. P. Neutzman. Steam power was installed in 1881 and the plant further enlarged. This same year Lyman T. Prindle, Mr. Hill's son-in-law, purchased a half interest. This plant was operated under the firm name of Hill & Prindle until 1894. Soon after this the plant was sold to Dr. H. W. Chapman, who leased it to Fred and Otis Brooks. They operated it about one year. In 1897 the Brooks brothers bought the property from Dr. Chapman, and operated it for several years, when Dr. Chapman again took it over. In the spring of 1902 Dr. Chapman remodeled this plant at a cost of \$700.00 and then leased it to H. C. Morrow, who operated it for stoneware manufacture and experimentation until October 29, 1902, when it was completely destroyed by fire. The ruins were cleared away and the lots sold for residence purposes. (Eva Dodge Mounce, John A. Walthall, and David A. McGuire, *The Potteries of White Hall*, Foundation for Historical Research of Illinois Potteries, 1988: pp. 1, 3.; and Mathis, *Pottery Town*, 2018: pp. 36-40.)

CRONOLOGY OVERVIEW OF JOHN NEFF EBEBY

1825 Columbus, OH to Springfield, Ill.

1827 visited White Hall clay banks.

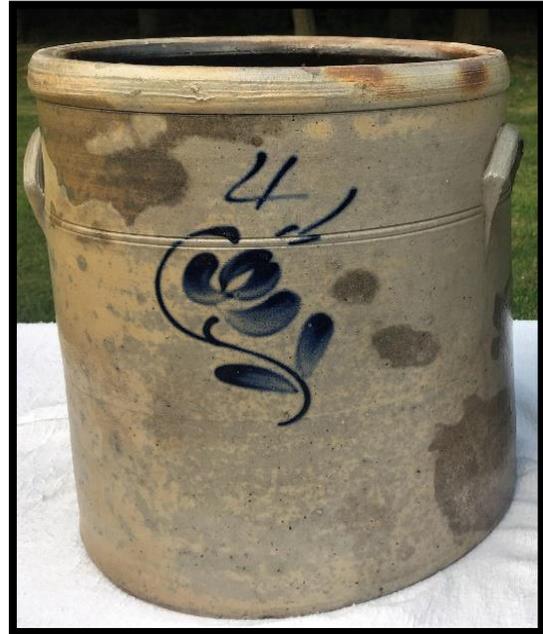
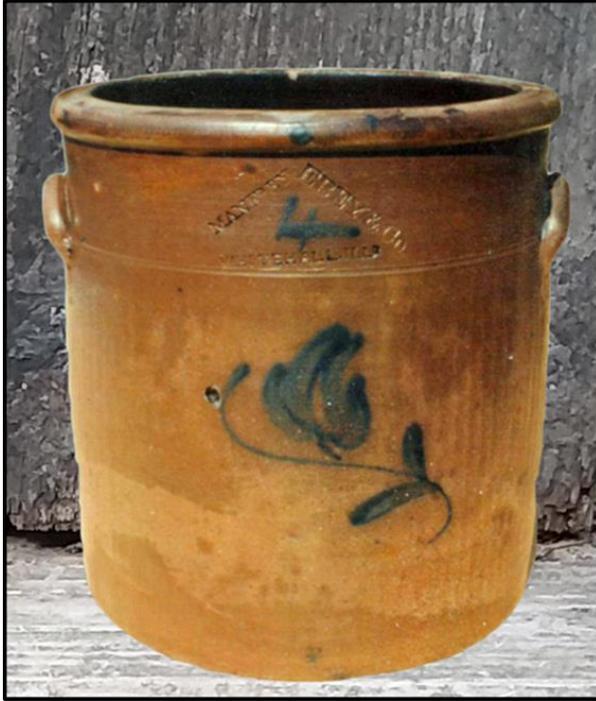
1833 he burned one kiln of salt glazed ware at the White Hall Heath kiln

1833-34 removed to Manchester, Scott County

1834 – 64 potted in Manchester, Winchester, Ripley, and Chapin

1864 John N. Ebey again located at White Hall, coming from Chapin with his family, residence, shop and all. In the thirty-one years that he had been absent from White Hall, he had been engaged in the manufacture of stoneware at Manchester, Winchester, Ripley and Chapin. Upon his return, this time to remain, he located his residence on the north side of Bridgeport Street, on lot 8 of Miln's Addition. The plant was located on the east side of Worcester Avenue, on lot 6 of Miln's Addition. Mr. Ebey operated this plant about four years. This was a stoneware plant. Mr. Ebey brought with him from Chapin the first pan moulds used in making crocks that were used at White Hall. In 1868 he disposed of this property to W. W. Hubbs, Sylvester Moore and John Miller.

1868 He disposed this property to Hubbs, Moore, and Miller, and became a hardware and mill merchant.



4 gallon White Hall, Illinois, cobalt hand decorated Ebey vessels. cc: 1870

CHARLES BOND EBEBY

1868 John Neff Ebey's son, C.B. Ebey built a shop and kiln nearby the future site of the A.D. Ruckel plant, off Worcester Street., adjacent to property of John Neff Ebey.

1868-1874 C.B. Ebey operated this plant.

1874 Plant was sold to L.C. Murphy and Bates, that sold out in 1878 to D.C. Banta.

1878-80 Banta conducted business there until 1880 when he leased it to Nevius & Sons

1883 Nevius lease expired. Banta then, 1883, sold the property to A.D. Ruckel. This plant located on the east side of Worcester Ave., lots 1, 2, 3 & 4. in Isaac D. Vedder ADD. (Eva Dodge Mounce, John A. Walthall, and David A. McGuire, *The Potteries of White Hall*, Foundation for Historical Research of Illinois Potteries, 1988: pp. 1, 3.)

Noteworthy is Charles Bond Ebey was born near Ripley on May 16, 1847. Sometime previous to the Civil War he converted to God. While being the age of 18, in the last year of the war, he enlisted as a soldier in the Union Army. Five brothers in the family entered the service of the Union Army. While in the war, he lost the grace of God.

In 1866 he married to Miss Martha Godnell at Greenville, Illinois, and in 1868 he was reclaimed and united with Methodists Episcopal Church. Two years later he sought and obtained sanctification for work in the Christian ministry. Upon receiving a copy of *The Free Methodist*, he became interested and dedicated to the Free Methodist Church with his brother-in-law L.C.

Murphy

On February 12, 1872, Charles Bond Ebey's remaining life purpose and passion took an evangelistic turn toward church and his preaching. Due to his wife's ill health he moved to California's warm climate in 1888. He made many achievements in his church assignment.

He died on June 17, 1908, at Hermon, California. (*History of the Free Methodist Church*, pp. 223-4)

L. C. MURPHY

Notable is that in 1863 Augustus Pierce, a native of Ohio, came to White Hall from Winchester, Scott County, Illinois, and developed a stoneware plant. Pierce erected a kiln at the corner of Bates Avenue and Lincoln Street, on the northeast corner of lot 376, block C in Bates' addition to the City of White Hall. After operating it for some years, Mr. Pierce sold the plant to Frank Clemens, locally known as "Dutch Frank." This plant was destroyed by fire in 1874.

At the time of the fire the plant was still the property of Mr. Clemens, was leased it to L. C. Murphy, who was operating it. Thus, in 1874 Murphy leased the Clemens Pottery that was destroyed by fire in 1874.



3 gallon Bee Sting cobalt hand decorated “Ebey & Murphy/White Hall” jar. cc: 1874

C.B. EBAY & L.C. MURPHY

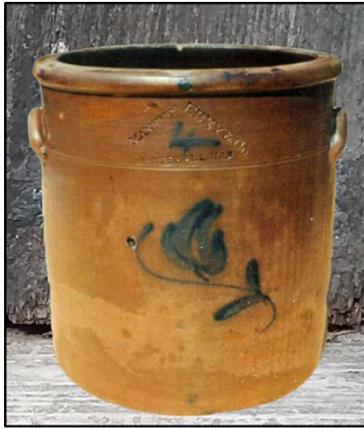
1874 operated together very briefly. One known marked vessel. Charles Bond Ebay pursued a Free Methodist ministry that ended his pottery manufacturing interest.

L. C. MURPHY & E. M. BATES

1874 purchased the C.B. Ebay operation

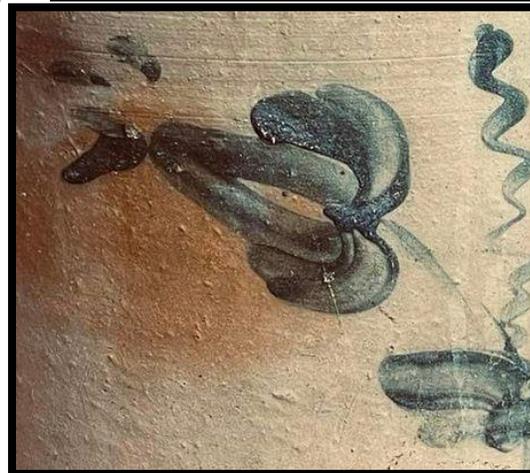
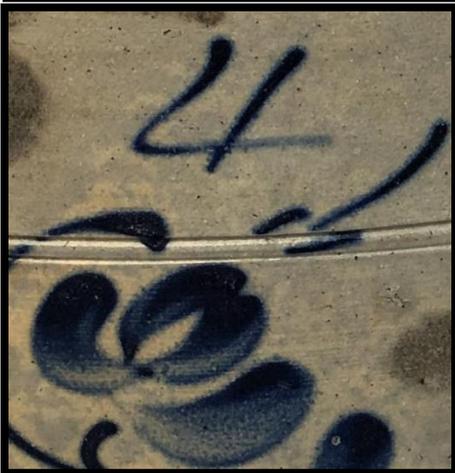
1876 purchased the Davis Bros pottery

1878 sold their Ebay Pottery location to Banta.



“MNFD BY / EB EY & Company / WHITE HALL, ILL” cc: 1870

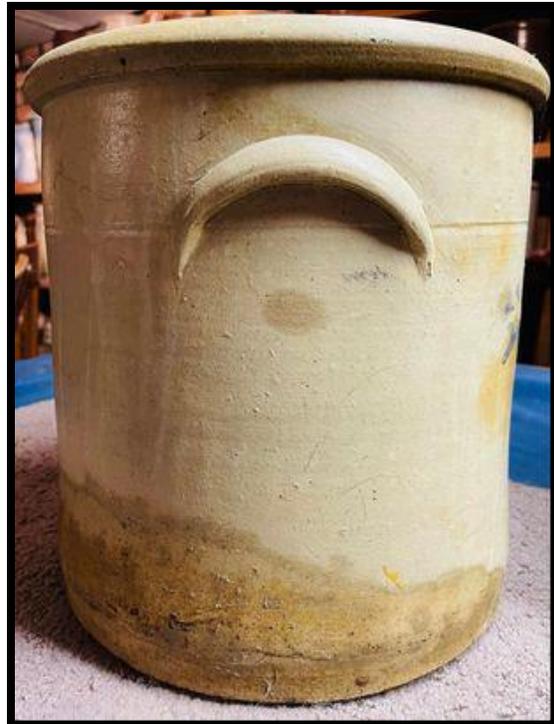
Cobalt hand decorated flower, stem, and leaves.



Ebey decorative trait of cobalt “spikes” shooting from flower.



John Neff Ebey vessels w/ impressed stamp "J.N. EBAY / WINCHESTER / ILL."



Similarity in design and dimension of rims, handles, primary treatment groove, and vessel base traits.

