

Some of America's best-loved art pottery is signed *HT*. A pair of scholars decipher the Marblehead code—and reach unexpected new conclusions.

MARBLEHEAD REVISITED

The Myth of Hannah Tutt

By Jonathan Clancy and Martin Eidelberg

All pottery illustrated in color, except as noted, is from the collection of Two Red Roses Foundation, Tarpon Springs, Florida, and those photographs are by Rudy Ciccarello, © Two Red Roses Foundation.



Above Although this particular vase is unsigned, other examples of this model from the Marblehead Potteries are signed "HT," which indicates that they were designed by Arthur Irwin Hennessey and executed by Sarah Tutt.

Some of the best designed and most skillfully-crafted ceramics of the American Arts and Crafts movement were made by the Marblehead Potteries in Marblehead, Massachusetts.¹ Founded in 1904 by Dr. Herbert J. Hall, it was one of several therapeutic workshops he established in his sanatorium for mentally fatigued patients and reflected his belief in the restorative function of handicrafts. The institution was intended to serve women, but soon it was reported, "men as well as women are now enjoying the recuperative effects of this unique sanatorium."² Arthur E. Baggs (1886-1947), still a student in ceramics at Alfred University, was hired in 1904 to run the pottery, teach the patients, and serve as principal designer. Before long, the pottery was spun off as a separate, commercial operation and moved across town. Its wares debuted with great success in December 1907 at exhibitions in New York City and in Chicago.³

This study results from research undertaken for the exhibition *Beauty in Common Things: American Arts and Crafts Pottery from the Two Red Roses Foundation*, on view through February 15, 2009 at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Florida. Displays include the Marblehead vases shown here, as well as important pieces from Rookwood, Newcomb, Teco, and more (727-896-2667 or www.fine-arts.org).



Two Red Roses Foundation.

A primary aim of the Arts and Crafts movement was to recognize the contributions of both the designer and fabricator of each object. Appropriately, in a 1908 article, Hall proudly named the entire staff of the pottery. After explaining Baggs's role, he elaborated: "The other

designers are Mr. A. I. Hennessy and Miss Maude Milner. The decorator is Mrs. E. D. Tutt, the thrower Mr. John Swallow and the kiln man Mr. E. J. Lewis."⁴ Hall also acknowledged that Annie E. Aldrich and Rachel Grinwell [sic for "Grinnell"] occasionally contributed designs, and that the potter's wife sometimes assisted "during rush times." The operation was small in terms both of staff and equipment, yet it was estimated that "the output is over two hundred pieces weekly."⁵

The Problematic Hannah Tutt

Despite the pottery's excellent reputation—both then and in our time—substantial misunderstanding has existed regarding its staff, the dating of wares, and its system of marks. A persistent myth regards the identity of the decorator whom Hall referred to as "Mrs. E. D. Tutt." Since the late 1960s, and certainly since the seminal 1972 exhibition *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America*, her first name has been designated as Hannah.⁶ Apart from a few recent demurs, almost all scholars since have concurred, misled by the initials "HT" on so many of the vases.⁷

Part of the difficulty in untangling this myth is that there was indeed a Hannah Tutt in Marblehead at

Above and top left Designed and executed by Arthur E. Baggs, ca. 1907-08, this vase exhibits Baggs's conjoined "AB" mark as well as the Marblehead Potteries clipper ship with "M" and "P."

Above left Arthur E. Baggs, seen here in a photograph taken about 1928, oversaw the work of the Marblehead Potteries from its founding in 1904 until its closure in 1936.

precisely this time. Born in 1860 to John S. and Sarah B. Tutt, she had an older brother Edward.⁸ Hannah's career was fairly mundane. Her first occupation, recorded in the 1880 census, was working for a seed company.⁹ In 1895, she was listed as working as a clerk for a local shoe factory.¹⁰ Throughout much of her life she was a bookkeeper and, at least through 1910, continued to serve the local shoe industry.¹¹ Census records for 1920 indicate that she worked once again as a clerk for a seed house.¹² Little else has been uncovered about her life. By 1931-32, she had become the secretary of the Marblehead Historical Society, probably through the efforts of her relative Richard Tutt, who was both the Town Clerk and a selectman.¹³ During Hannah Tutt's long life, she never had any direct connection with the pottery, and the seeming correspondence between her name and the initials "HT" on the Marblehead vases proves merely coincidental.

Introducing Sarah Tutt

These findings leave us with the question of the real identity of "Mrs. E. D. Tutt." Our research shows that she was Sarah W. Main, almost the same age as Hannah and also a native of Marblehead. She had been born in 1859 to the rope-maker Richard Main and his wife Eunice (née Whippen).¹⁴ Little in Sarah Main's early career suggested that she would become involved with the arts. Her first recorded job, held by 1880, was in a

local shoe factory.¹⁵ By 1886, she worked as a teacher.¹⁶ Then, at age 32, on October 29, 1891, she married Edward D. Tutt, Hannah's brother.¹⁷ Edward Tutt spent his life in Marblehead, working in various professions, none of which were related to the arts.¹⁸ Around 1880 he and Hannah were still living at home and, like his father, he farmed.¹⁹ Between 1886 and 1895 he worked as a clerk at a seed company.

Sarah Tutt was associated with Marblehead Potteries seemingly from its start. Hall's text clearly places her there by 1908, but her mark—a "T"—appears on still earlier vases. In the 1920 census she was listed as "Art Decorator" at a "Pottery."²⁰ Her career at Marblehead was remarkably long and, in her later years there, she advanced to the position of manager.²¹ Widowed in the 1920s, she stayed on at work. By 1935, when the pottery was getting ready to close, Sarah Tutt was listed only as a clerk, and antiques were apparently sold in the shop.²² When the pottery closed the following year, the seventy-seven-year old Tutt did not seek new employment.²³ On May 26, 1947, at the age of eighty-seven, she died from a stroke.²⁴

Decoding the Artists' Signatures

How then are we to understand the "HT" signature which appears on so many Marblehead vases? The answer is that this and other sets of initials on the undersides of Marblehead vases, such as "AT," "MT," and "ABT,"



Left and below This circa 1908-1911 Marblehead Potteries vase bears the Marblehead clipper-ship mark as well as the "HT" that misled scholars for so long. This combination of initials is now recognized to indicate a design by Arthur Irwin Hennessey, executed by Sarah Tutt.



Above and right Designer Maude Milner seems to have worked only briefly for Marblehead; therefore, vessels like this circa 1907-1910 example, marked "MT" (for Milner as designer, Sarah Tutt as decorator), are rare and restricted only to the pottery's first few years.

are artificial compounds. The first initial represents the designer's family name, while the second letter stands for the family name of the craftsman who executed the object. In all instances the "T" belongs to Sarah Tutt. The great scholar of American pottery, Paul Evans, correctly proposed that the initial "H" refers to the designer Arthur I. Hennessy.²⁵ Similarly, we would propose that vases marked with an "M" were designed by Maude Milner, and those with an "A" were designed by Annie Aldrich. Not least, works marked "AB" or "AEB" were designed by Arthur Baggs.²⁶ This system of marks emphasizes the significant part Sarah Tutt played as the pottery's primary decorator, and offers insight into the various designers' roles.

Evidence supporting our premise comes from extant Marblehead vases. There has never been any question that an "AB" or "AEB" monogram represents Baggs's work, as a tall vase decorated with a pine branch confirms. It corresponds to a model shown in 1907 in New York, which was illustrated at that time as having been designed by Baggs. That there are no other initials incised on the base suggests that Baggs both designed and executed it himself.

The Designers Aldrich, Milner and Grinnell

Of great significance is a rare, early Marblehead vase with a band of flying geese. This model—and perhaps this very vase—was exhibited in 1907, and subsequently

illustrated with a specific ascription to "A. E. Aldrich."²⁷ That publication, along with the incised "AT" on the bottom of the vase, confirms that the "A" in the monogram refers to Annie E. Aldrich (1857-1937), an artist about whom little is known.²⁸ She was born in Rhode Island and established her residence in Roxbury, outside of Boston. A member of the Boston Art Club, she exhibited paintings there several times. She was evidently in Marblehead by 1907 and worked briefly at the pottery. In 1910, she boarded at 113 Front Street, but by 1912 had returned to Roxbury.²⁹

The brevity of Aldrich's tenure at Marblehead is confirmed by the rarity of her initial on existing ceramics. Moreover, the vase just discussed has a distinctive mark for the pottery. Although it appears to be the standard die-impressed mark of a galleon and waves used through



Above, left and right Boston-area artist Annie Aldrich worked briefly at Marblehead Potteries. The "AT" mark indicates that she designed this vase decorated with flying geese, which was then executed by Sarah Tutt, ca. 1907. The absence of both the "M" and "P" and the circle around the clipper ship are also indications of a very early date.

Below A 1908 article in *Keramic Studio* depicted a number of Marblehead Potteries vases and listed their designers, providing a valuable clue to the re-interpretation of marks.



A. E. Aldrich

A. R. Bogg
Handicraft Shop, Marblehead, Mass.

A. J. Hammon

the pottery's existence, it is not flanked by the customary "M" and "P" representing the pottery's initials. Also it lacks the circle which normally encloses the composition. These missing elements suggest that this is an early mark, used only briefly at the start of the pottery. Indeed, at the beginning, the operation was known simply as "The Handicraft Shop," and when this model was exhibited in New York in 1907, that was still true.³⁰ Aldrich may have worked with the pottery during just this initial stage, before the name "Marblehead Potteries" was invoked, sometime in 1908.

A covered jar with a conventionalized design reaffirms our understanding of this system of signatures. The jar is monogrammed "MT" and, according to our supposition, must have been designed by Maude Milner and executed by Sarah Tutt. When this model was shown in New York in 1907 and published in 1908 by Dr. Hall, Milner was specifically designated as the designer.³¹ Here too, the earliness of this covered jar is established by another distinctly early mark: an "M" and a gracefully curved, "V"-shaped device. This early, hand-incised mark predates the die-stamped ones with a ship, and has been reasonably explained as an "M" for Marblehead conjoined with a conventionalized seagull to denote the port town.



Vases in tones of green, with designs in olive brown and black. Tall vase and jar designed by Miss Maude Milner. Small vase and bowl designed by A. I. Hennessey.



Photograph by Robert A. Ellison, Jr.

The scarcity of Maude Milner's initial on Marblehead wares is likewise attributable to her brief tenure there. Born in England in 1870, she came to the United States in 1873.³² Her father worked in a Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile mill and she studied at the Massachusetts Normal Art School. By 1901 she was a drawing instructor in North Andover, a position held through at least 1905, and she must have come shortly thereafter to the Marblehead Potteries.³³ Milner was perhaps the most cosmopolitan of the pottery's employees, traveling to Europe in 1910.³⁴ Although a proficient designer, by 1911 she had moved to Connecticut.³⁵ This fact helps to explain why pieces with her initial are rare and restricted to Marblehead's early production.

There is almost no trace of Rachel Grinnell at the Marblehead Potteries and were it not for Hall's reference to her as a supplier of designs (although he mistakenly called her "Grinwell"), her presence there might have gone unobserved. A professional painter from Brookline, Massachusetts, she took up residence in Marblehead around 1906, but her stay was brief. By 1907 she had returned to Brookline.³⁶ No works with her initial have come to our attention, again emphasizing the shortness of her stay there.

Hall's text placed Milner on the staff, while Aldrich and Grinnell were only "friends of the pottery," yet each had only a brief association with the pottery. In an article for a medical journal, Hall stated "this pottery is made by five people, two of whom were originally patients."³⁷ Which, if any, of these women had been under his medical care is moot, but the phase of accepting designs from patients was evidently brief and part of Marblehead's transition from a therapeutic workshop to a professional pottery.



Private collection, New York. Photograph by Robert A. Ellison, Jr.

All images The 1908 article in *Keramic Studio* (top left) names Maude Milner as the designer of this circa-1907 covered jar (above). Marks on the base (top right) include an early Marblehead mark (an "M" for Marblehead with a device possibly representing a seagull) and an "MT" indicating Milner as the designer, and Sarah Tutt as decorator.



Above Although this example is unsigned, other examples of this circa-1911 vase bear an "HT" mark indicating Arthur Irwin Hennessey as designer, Sarah Tutt as decorator.

Hennessey's Role Reconsidered

By contrast, the frequency with which one encounters the "HT" signature on Marblehead's wares reveals Arthur Hennessey's role as a principal designer. Born in 1882 to a local fisherman, he remained interested in sailing throughout his life.³⁸ In the city directory for 1901 his profession was listed as "yachtsman."³⁹ By 1905 he was clerking in a shoe store, and the following year his occupation was listed as "painter," presumably a house painter.⁴⁰ Early on, Hennessey was drawn to metalworking, and it may have been through that medium that he became associated with Dr. Hall's Handicraft Shops. In 1906-07, he and Baggs attended Denman Ross's design class at Harvard.⁴¹ It is tempting to think that Hall may have been describing Hennessey when, in 1914, he described a "young man" working in the city who came under his care. Hall commented that this man "was given simple decorative work to do in pottery under expert observation" as well as "systematic instruction in design," and then noted that "he is today a most valued designer and craftsman."⁴² By 1907, the city directory listed Hennessey's profession as "metal worker," a designation that remained in place through at least 1913.⁴³ Hall's 1908 article attests to Hennessey's role as a designer for the pottery, as do contemporary publications which link him to specific vases.⁴⁴ A 1916 article named Hennessey and Baggs as the pottery's two designers, though Hennessey seems to have severed his connection soon thereafter.⁴⁵ Significantly, his name does not appear in the

Footnotes

¹ For the pottery's early history, see Marilee Boyd Meyer and Susan J. Montgomery, "Marblehead Pottery: Simplicity and Restraint," *American Ceramic Circle Journal* 14 (2007): 153-74.

² "Work for Nerves: Handicraft Sanatorium for Run-down Patients," *The Adair County News*, Columbia, Ky., August 30, 1905.

³ See, respectively, "Ceramic Crafts at the National Society of Craftsmen Exhibition," *Keramic Studio* 9 (February 1906): 230-32; *Catalog of the Sixth Annual Exhibition of Original Designs for Decorations and Examples of Art Crafts Having Distinct Artistic Merit* (Chicago: 1907), 16-70. Entries nos. 55-80 are listed under "Baggs, Arthur E.—The Handicraft Shops, Marblehead, Mass., A. E. Baggs and assistants, makers."

⁴ Herbert J. Hall, "Marblehead Pottery," *Keramic Studio* 10 (June 1908): 30.

⁵ "Marblehead Pottery," *Glass and Pottery World* 16 (July 1908): 21. Hall, "Marblehead Pottery," 30, made a similar claim.

⁶ Martin Eidelberg, "Art Pottery," in Robert

Judson Clark, ed., *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1876-1916*, exh. cat. (Princeton: Princeton University Art Museum, 1972), cat. nos. 281, 283-84, 286. See also Paul Evans, *Art Pottery of the United States* (New York: 1974), 159-60.

⁷ See Michael Michoud, "Hannah Tutt: Myth or Reality," <http://www.helium.com/user/show/175386>. Meyer and Montgomery, "Marblehead Pottery," 166, recognized that the attribution to Hannah Tutt is problematic but treat the initials as denoting a single person.

⁸ For Hannah Tutt's birth, see *Massachusetts Vital Records 1841-1910* [Massachusetts State Archives, 1860] 132: 232.

⁹ Federal Census, 1880, roll T9 528, enumeration district 163, page 36.

¹⁰ *Naumkeag Directory for Salem*, etc. (1895), 827 and 808.

¹¹ From 1904 to 1912, Marblehead city directories listed Hannah Tutt as a bookkeeper working in Salem; e.g., *Naumkeag Directory for Salem* (1904), 383, 394. The 1910 Federal Census (roll

T624 586, enumeration district 417, sheet 8A) listed her as a bookkeeper in a "shoe factory." Then she worked as a clerk in Marblehead; see *Naumkeag Directory for Salem* (1918), 1193.

¹² Federal Census, 1920, roll no. T625 691, enumeration district 205, sheet no. 8A.

¹³ Polk's Salem (Essex County) Directory, (1932), 847, lists her profession as "historian" but in subsequent years it was made clear that she worked for the local Historical Society. The 1948 city directory shows she had moved into Richard Tutt's home at 11 Maverick Street and, by the following year, no longer had her position with the Historical Society.

¹⁴ From 1860 through 1880, Richard Main was listed as a rope maker. See Federal Census, 1880, roll T9 528, enumeration district no. 163, page 35, under the surname "Maine." Meyer and Montgomery, "Marblehead Pottery," 166, recognized her first name was Sarah but offered no documentation.

¹⁵ Federal Census, 1880, roll T9 528, enumeration district 163, page 36.

¹⁶ *The Marblehead Directory* 1886, 55.

¹⁷ *Massachusetts Vital Records 1841-1910* [Massachusetts State Archives, 1891], 415: page 430.

¹⁸ Federal Census, 1860, roll no. M693 496, Marblehead, 47. His father, John, was listed as a shoemaker.

¹⁹ Federal Census, 1880, roll T9 528, enumeration district no. 163, page 1.

²⁰ Federal Census, 1920, roll no. T625 691, enumeration district 205, sheet no. 4A.

²¹ By the 1929 edition of *Crosey's Salem, Peabody, and Marblehead, Massachusetts Directory*, 988, she was listed as manager.

²² *Polk's Salem Directory* (1935), 957, 986.

²³ *Ibid.* (1936), 1008, will listed Sarah Tutt at the Marblehead Pottery. In the 1937 edition, 868, no employment is listed.

²⁴ *Massachusetts Division of Vital Statistics, Standard Certificate of Death for Sarah W. Tutt*, June 2, 1947.

²⁵ Evans, *Art Pottery of the United States*, 160. On the preceding page, apropos of a vase signed "HT," he named Hannah

pottery's 1918-20 record of wages paid.⁴⁶ The 1920 federal census lists his occupation as a manufacturer of boats.⁴⁷

These few observations reveal unsuspected aspects of the history of the Marblehead Potteries and the people associated with it. Given the fullness of Hall's 1908 description of the staff, scholars perhaps took it for granted that things remained essentially the same for the next decades, but this clearly was not the case. The early departures of Aldrich, Milner, and Grinnell, the surprisingly larger role played by Hennessey, and the longevity of Sarah Tutt's stay should cause us to reevaluate our understanding of the Marblehead operation. An important aim of the Arts and Crafts movement had been to credit the individual workers whose identities were often hidden. This brief study moves us in that direction.

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Right This circa 1907-1910 vase with an "MT" mark was designed by Maude Milner and executed by Sarah Tutt.

Tutt as the decorator and did not mention Hennessey.

³⁵ "The Ceramic Crafts at the National Society of Craftsmen Exhibition," 231.

³⁷ *Loc. cit.*

³⁸ Chris Petreys et al, *Dictionary of Women Artists*, 3 vols. (Boston: 1985), 1: 10; Peter Hastings Falk, ed., *Who Was Who in American Art 1564-1975*, 3 vols. (Madison, CT: 1999), 1: 77.

³⁹ Aldrich's name and address appeared uninterrupted in the Boston city directories: e.g., 1906, 143; 1907, 142; 1908, 142; 1909, 142; 1910, 143; 1911, 144; 1912, 143. *Naumkeag Directory for Salem (1910)*, 990, lists her in Marblehead. Federal Census, 1920, roll no. T625 733, enumeration district 412, sheet no. 12A, lists her as "Artist."

⁴⁰ "Handicraft Shop" appears in the *Naumkeag Directory for Salem (1905)*, 964; also 1906, 943; 1907, 954. "The Handicraft Shop" was cited in "The Ceramic Crafts at the National Society of Craftsmen Exhibition," 230-31; also in *Catalogue of the Sixth Annual Exhibition*, 16.

⁴¹ Hall, "Marblehead Pottery," 30.

⁴² Milner's age was "2" when she arrived in New York on the *Adriatic* on March 11, 1873; see Records of the U.S. Customs Service, *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York, New York, 1820-1897*, roll 372, list 177. For an 1870 birth date, see Meyer and Montgomery, "Marblehead Pottery," note 21.

⁴³ *The North Andover City Directory, 1901*, 56, lists "Milner, Maud [sic]" as "supervisor of drawing." She was not listed in the Marblehead directories until 1910, at which time she was a boarder at 113 Front Street; see *Naumkeag Directory for Salem (1910)*, 1023.

⁴⁴ *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at Boston, Massachusetts, 1891-1943*, roll T843-152, July 15 to August 10, 1910, Menominee, page 1, line 27 lists "Milner, Maudie" of Marblehead, Mass.

⁴⁵ *Naumkeag Directory for Salem (1911)*, 953.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* [1907], 953. A Mrs. Lawrence Grinnell lived in Brookline, at 55 Menmouth Street. Perhaps she was a

relative with whom Rachel stayed. One can only speculate if she was the Rachel L. Grinnell, born about 1879, who lived in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

⁴⁷ Herbert J. Hall, "The Sanatorium of the Future," *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences* 145 (March 1913): 391.

⁴⁸ Hennessey's birth is recorded in Massachusetts Vital Records, State Archives, 1882: vol. 340, page 303. The *Naumkeag Directory for Salem (1901)*, 884, lists Arthur as a "yachtsman" and his father John as "fisherman."

⁴⁹ *Naumkeag Directory for Salem (1901)*, 884.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* (1905), 965; (1906), 944. He lived at 134 Front Street, the home of the shoemaker John Hennessey, probably his father, who then died on December 20 of that year. He continued to live there with his mother until about 1913 when they moved to separate houses on Pond Street; see *ibid.*, 1913, 960.

⁴¹ *The Harvard University Catalog, 1906-07 (Cambridge: 1907)*, 182, lists "Hennessey, Arthur Irvin [sic], Silversmith,

Handicraft Shop, Marblehead" as a student in Danman Ross's "Theory of Pure Design" class held on Saturday afternoons. See *ibid.*, 181, for Baggs.

⁴² Richard Cabot, "The Work Cure Better than the Rest Cure for Nervous Disorders," *The Lexington Herald (KY)*, October 25, 1914.

⁴³ *Naumkeag Directory for Salem (1906)*, 955; *ibid.* [1913], 960.

⁴⁴ Federal Census, 1910, roll T624 586, enumeration district 417, sheet 28, lists Hennessey as a "Designer" of a "Pottery."

⁴⁵ Gertrude Emerson, "Distinctively American Pottery, Marblehead Pottery," *Craftsman* 29 (March 1916): 672.

⁴⁶ This wage book, which remained with a Baggs descendant, covers the period from February 16, 1918, through March 27, 1920.

⁴⁷ Federal Census, 1920, roll no. T625 691, enumeration district 205, sheet no. 17A, lists Hennessey as a "Manufacturer" involved with a "Motor[?] Boat Business."