

New Darien Historical Society Display of Pottery Shows 'Tupperware of 19th Century'

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A spittoon, beer bottle and milk pan are part of a unique collection of Norwalk Pottery items featured in the exhibition “Shards of History” now at the Darien Historical Society.

The display features several stoneware and redware pieces manufactured in Norwalk during the 1800s, when that city was known throughout the United States for producing top-quality pottery.

“Glazed pottery items were once as ubiquitous as Tupperware is today,” said Richard Prowse, who with Tracy Goodnow, loaned the pieces to the Museum and co-curated the exhibition. “It was used to store everything — oysters, beer, water, pickles — you name it, there was a special vessel designed to hold it.”

Prowse, a longtime collector of Norwalk Pottery, will discuss the display and answer questions on Sunday, Nov. 17 from 2 to 4 p.m. at the Darien Historical Society.

In the days before iceboxes and refrigerators, pottery vessels helped keep perishable foods at cool and even temperatures and glazed stoneware crocks adorned American kitchens from the 1600s through the early 1900s.

Shaped on a potter’s wheel, the potter then scratched a design on the surface using cobalt blue paint. Many vessels on display feature whimsical designs, which are reminders of the utilitarian artistry of an earlier era, said Goodnow.

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Advances in glass, canning and refrigeration made crockery obsolete, and Norwalk's pottery factories eventually fell to ruin, Prowse said.

Tours of the Museum and its exhibitions are free for members and \$5 for non-members.

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