

# Bennington Pottery

Pottery has been an important part of Bennington for almost as long as Bennington has existed. Less than 25 years after the town was settled, John Norton started making and selling Redware. It was the beginning of a pottery business that would continue in Bennington for more than 125 years.



In the 1800s, people used pottery a lot more than we do today. It was used to eat off of and drink out of, but it was also used while making food and, especially, for storing food.

A lot of what the Norton Pottery Company made was meant to be really useful and wasn't too fancy. This object, for example, was used for giving chickens drinking water.



## How Was It Made?



When the Norton Company first started making pottery, skilled potters would have “thrown” each piece by hand, shaping the clay as it spun on a disc called a wheel. Later, machines were invented that more easily shaped the clay. That meant that pottery workers did not have to be skilled at working with clay. It also meant that every piece made using the same mold would be exactly the same size and shape.

Look for the signs in this gallery that tell you the funny-sounding names of the machines used to mold clay.

# A Tale of Two Pottery Companies



C. W. Fenton

John Norton's grand-daughter, Louisa, married Christopher Weber Fenton who worked for the Norton Pottery Company. In 1847, Fenton started his own pottery company, which eventually became the United States Pottery Company.

The pottery made by the United States Pottery Company was often more decorative and fancier than what was made by the Norton Company.



## A New Glaze

Glazes are what give pottery its color and texture. There are many different types of glazes, many of which you can see in this gallery. Look for a selection of pottery pieces (called shards) that you can touch. Each has a different glaze.



Fenton and the United States Pottery Company created a new glaze, called "flint enamel" which became very popular.

This water cooler uses the flint enamel glaze. Can you find it in the gallery? Can you find any other examples of flint enamel?



By the 1890s, Mason jars and other lighter-weight storage options were replacing pottery. The United States Pottery Company had gone out of business in 1858, and Norton closed in 1911. Today, Bennington Potters, begun in 1948 by David Gil, carries on the tradition of pottery production in the region.