



E-NEWS FROM TILE HERITAGE



March and April 2009



(Available each month to Tile Heritage members who e-mail the Foundation from the address they would like E-News sent to. Contact: foundation@tileheritage.org)



**A tribute to the former Steinhart Aquarium
by Bill Granizo (Guillermo Wagner Granizo), 1991.
Formerly hung in the basement of the aquarium,
today its whereabouts unknown.**

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Did You Know?

Tile Heritage now offers **MEMBER DISCOUNTS** on both books and catalogs: 20% (or 25% if you contribute \$100 or more in membership dues each year)! For books see www.tileheritage.org/THF-Book%20List.html for catalogs see www.tileheritage.org/THF Catalogs-Page 1.html

How easy it is to join Tile Heritage or renew your membership? See www.tileheritage.org/JoinTHF!.html

By contributing \$100 or more you may participate in the **MEMBER TILE GALLERY!** See www.tileheritage.org/THF-MemberTileGallery.html

By being a Tile Heritage member, contributing to the Doty Research Grant, or providing tiles for the Foundation to sell at the tile festivals around the country, you will be honorably listed on the Tile Heritage website at www.tileheritage.org/THF-Supporters.html

You will never miss “E-News.” **NEVER!** See www.tileheritage.org/THF-Publications.html



James Dawes carefully cuts into the grout joint, removing the historic Solon & Schemmel tiles from the old Steinhart Aquarium. Photo courtesy of Riley Doty.



Protected by the “rebreather,” James Dawes demonstrates the extraordinary skill needed when removing old tiles.
Photo courtesy of Riley Doty.

acknowledge the efforts made by the architects and staff to carefully remove the historically significant tiles that the public had come to identify with the old aquarium, reinstalling many of them in strategic locations in the new building.

As reported in “E-News” in October of 2004 (see www.tileheritage.org/THF-ENews10-04.html), **James Dawes** of PlaceMakers Inc was the tile contractor charged with the delicate job of removing the decorative tiles from the old

Steinhart Aquarium Revisited

The recently reopened **California Academy of Sciences** in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, is a multifaceted scientific institution committed to leading-edge research, to educational outreach, and to finding new ways to engage and inspire the public. The new building, nearly 10 years and \$500 million in the making, is a masterpiece in sustainable architecture, blending seamlessly into the park’s natural setting and offering hundreds of innovative exhibits and thousands of extraordinary plants and animals.

The **Steinhart Aquarium** has a new home in the building with 38,000 live animals from around the world, representing more than 900 separate species. But most important for our purposes is to



The historic tiles have been reinstalled around the perimeter of the "Swamp."

site for reinstallation in the new building. Fortunately, a significant number of the tiles, produced at **Solon & Schemmel** in San Jose in 1923, now adorn the perimeter of the "Swamp" as well as the wall adjacent to a nearby gift shop. The tile contractor was **D&J Tile Co., Inc.**, one of the largest tile firms in the San Francisco area.

The Academy, platinum-rated for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), was designed by **Renzo Piano**, who stands among the world's greatest architects. It has been said, "Piano achieves a rare melding of art, architecture, and engineering in a truly remarkable synthesis. He celebrates structure in a

perfect union of technology and art." Certainly the inclusion of the Solon & Schemmel tiles provides an important acknowledgment of the tiles' artistic merit.



Tile wall in the new Steinhart Aquarium showing the historic tiles used as decorative inserts.

Royal Oak Reuses Every Last Tile

Diana Barrer, THF member in charge of PTA Communications at **Jane Addams Elementary** in Royal Oak, Michigan, reports on the completion of another beautiful drinking fountain installation at the school. There were extra **Flint Faience** tiles from a recent fireplace restoration (see <http://www.tileheritage.org/THF-ENews10-08.html#royalOaks>) that **Larry Mobley** combined with new tile from Royal Oak ceramic artist, **Laurie Eisenhardt**. The bullnose tiles, the small squares and the giraffe are from Flint Faience, and the tiles surrounding the giraffe are the "Sunflower Series" tiles that are new from Laurie. The panel was installed above a drinking fountain upstairs at the school. "Again, we can't thank you enough for your information and expertise." And that's what we're here for!



Laurie Eisenhardt and Larry Mobley pose beside the tile panel before it is installed on the wall above.
Photo courtesy of Diana Barrer.



"Folded Fly" by Phyllis Pacin.
Photo courtesy of the artist.

Phyllis Pacin Exhibits in the Bay Area

Phyllis Pacin is participating in a group exhibit at **PARC (Palo Alto Research Center)** from April 6 through June 30, 2009. The Center, located at 3333 Coyote Hill Road, Palo Alto, California, isn't open to the public but visits (Mondays-Fridays) can be arranged through Lisa Fahey (650-812-4489).

"My love of clay goes back to the first grade and my first clay project, a sombrero ashtray.

What I remember most is the smell of the damp clay and the tactile pleasure of wetting the piece to keep the clay soft while I worked. I loved the feel of it—the slippery surface contrasting with the solidity of the underlying form." For more of the biographical sketch:
www.viewpointceramics.net/viewpoint_2000/pacinchil.htm

An approximately month-long solo exhibit at **World Ground Cafe** in Oakland ended in April. A wonderful article about Pacin's work appeared in the March 2009 MacArthur Metro (neighborhood) newspaper, concurrent with the show. And on the front page, no less! See

www.artistsguilds.com/ceramics/PhyllisPacin.htm



Phyllis Pacin in her studio in Oakland, California.
Photo courtesy of the artist.



Ginger Dunlap-Dietz with the "lunch bunch" at Morgan Road Elementary School, Liverpool, New York.
Photo courtesy of the artist.

Ginger—Dragged Kicking into Mosaics

Ginger Dunlap-Dietz did an Artist in Residence with a New York State grant at **Morgan Road Elementary School** in Liverpool, New York in 2007. All of the 60 or so 6th graders worked with a poet and wrote a poem about something in their lives. They then made a sketch based on an idea in the poem. At that point Ginger came into the school and worked with the kids to translate their sketches into clay tiles.

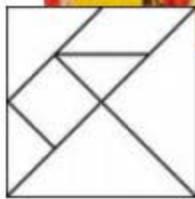
The first school project Ginger did back in 2001 was a direct result of her being dragged kicking to **Isaiah Zagar's workshop** in Philadelphia, part of the Tile Heritage symposium in '98 (of course, she had a great experience). When she returned to Syracuse from Philadelphia, her

partners at **Eureka Crafts** asked her to permanently mosaic the gallery entrance (see www.eurekacrafts.com/wall.htm). A schoolteacher saw the work and decided to do a mural project at her school, asking Ginger to be the lead artist for her grant. Over the next six years Ginger headed up projects at ten different schools in the Syracuse area, most of them quite large and three of them as outdoor installations. All of the projects were different as each was planned for a particular school with its own themes, kids, teachers, administrators and parents in the mix.

In almost all of the projects she was able to get the teachers and administrators to come in for a tile making session and then she got parents to come in to help with the installation. What she loved most about the projects was that the children worked hands-on from the first ball of clay to the last grout polish.

For the **Morgan Road Elementary** project Ginger used tangram shapes for the tiles, cutting a square into five triangles, a square, and a rhomboid, using these pieces to form various figures and designs. Because the theme of the school character education was diversity, she used rainbow-colored glazes.

The parents, teachers and children all were involved with the installation of the mural with Ginger and her helper right on site in the front hall of the school. She was at the school two and a half months, about average for a project of this size.



Detail of the mosaic wall with an illustration of a tangram attached.
Photo courtesy of the artist.



The completed mosaic mural installed in the front hall of the school.
Photo courtesy of the artist.

Tiles on the I-5 Part III – North to Washington

As we described in February's E-News, [Tiles on the I-5 Part II](#), Interstate I-5 bisects the westernmost states from Mexico to the Canadian border serving as a conduit of industry and commerce, of which tile making is an integral part. In Part II we shared a narrative of our travels in Oregon last fall. Now in Part III we cover our trip through the State of Washington, our intended destination. The impetus for the journey was an invitation from [Artisan Tile Northwest](#) in Seattle to participate in the group's third annual **Handmade Tile Festival** in early October.



Howie has never looked so good!

Site Specific at Totten

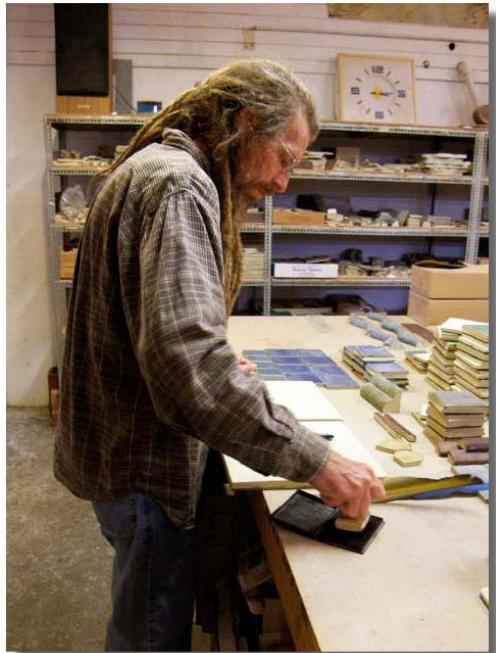
Crossing the Columbia River we entered Washington seeking the township of Winlock, a few miles west of I-5, about an hour's drive north of the border. Our destination was **Totten Tileworks**, practically legendary in the Northwest as a quintessential art tile studio in the Arts and Crafts tradition. We found it easily enough—once we reached the active, sometimes thundering, railroad—in a renovated old creamery adjacent to the tracks.



Totten Tileworks, Winlock, Washington.

his two assistants: **Marsha**, the mainstay of production, and **Howie**, a twenty-six year old blue and gold Macaw, orchestra maestro for the entire studio! With Howie as our enthusiastic guide, we toured the rambling studio spaces, observing all the works in progress, photographing the surroundings. There were many nooks and crannies, hidden rooms, and a delightfully wild garden featuring bamboo and natural flowing water

out back. Chuck's own home is incorporated at a different level in the old buildings, where he treated us to a tasty lunch.



Chuck Totten prepares some tiles for the Tile Heritage Collection.

Since the inception of the studio in the late 1980s Chuck's focus has been in the design and production of handmade tile and

architectural ceramics in the Arts and Crafts tradition. Inspired by the craftsmanship of this earlier time, he has masterfully preserved it in the execution of his own work—intricately carved designs and textures, subtle, soft and glowing glazes that upon installation inspire one to think of fine textiles rather than hard surfaces. Although his tiles can be found in some showrooms, Chuck specializes in designing site-specific installations. Take a tour of the installation gallery and sample boards at the website for an enhanced view of the breadth of his ceramic art:

www.tottentileworks.com.

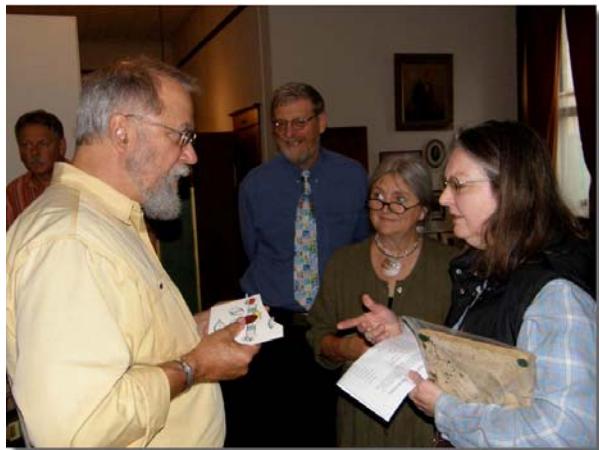


Interior of Totten Tileworks showing at least four different projects underway.

Handmade Tile Festival

In the late afternoon we were back on I-5 heading north to Seattle in a misty drizzle, looking forward to the tile festival the next day. [Artisan Tile Northwest](#), our host, is a non-profit group of tile makers in the greater Seattle area dedicated to the creation, promotion and preservation of the art and craft of handmade tile. This would be the group's third annual **Handmade Tile Festival**.

The festival began with a 3-hour reception on Friday evening at Pioneer Hall in the Madison Park district on the west shore of Lake Washington. Yes, it rained but not hard. In fact, we marveled that the locals walked about outside without any raingear as if the sun were shining. But the next day, the day of the festival itself, it RAINED and BLEW and the umbrellas, hats, boots and raincoats appeared out of nowhere! But the weather did not impede the traffic—over 600 people visited the festival that day, many purchasing tiles from the 20 participating artisans.



“Don’t blame me. I didn’t break it!”

judged by **Ron Endlich**, collector and tile aficionado, and the **Tile Heritage Prize**, awarded to the artist whose tile in the judge's opinion best represents the ceramic traditions in America, went to **Sallie Herling of Herling Studio** in Bellevue.

[Artisan Tile Northwest](#) must be commended for a superior event. The local newspaper publicity was second to none and resulted in people coming from all parts of the city. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* published a front page, full color article in its Life and Arts section a week prior to the festival featuring tile maker **Carol Rose Dean** and her handcrafted tiles. What a splash! In addition, the group placed sandwich boards in key locations but some distance away from Pioneer Hall to draw the public's attention to the sale. It worked! For more information on the organization, see [www.artisantilenw.org](#).



Handmade Tile Festival at Pioneer Hall in Seattle with Paul Lewing's tiles in the foreground.

Tile Heritage had several tables in the back of the hall where we displayed tiles donated by members and friends from throughout the country to sell (thank YOU! Find your names listed at [www.tileheritage.org/THF-Supporters.html](#)). We also had books and historic tile catalog reproductions for sale, and all were well received providing a nice fundraising aspect for the Foundation.

A tile exhibition of local artists' work, "Old Northwest," was



The Tile Heritage Prize won by Sallie Herling of Herling Studio in Bellevue, Washington.



Meredith MacLeod and John de Wit enjoy the moment in front of John's glass studio.

Magical Mists on Whidbey

At the close of the tile festival on Saturday we left on another adventure, this time a ferry ride to **Whidbey Island** in the northern part of Puget Sound about 30 miles north of Seattle. Our hosts were THF members **Meredith MacLeod** and **John de Wit**, both accomplished glass artists. Their home and studios are located in the misty, verdant woodlands above Cultus Bay.

In 1980 Meredith left the East Coast for a teaching assistantship with **Richard Posner** at the **Pilchuck Glass School**, founded by **Dale Chihuly**. There she met John de Wit and they married in 1986 and bought 5 acres on Whidbey Island where they started **Cultus Bay Glass Studio**. In the past 22 years

Meredith and John have constructed six buildings, a pet cemetery and many colorful and productive gardens, all decoratively enhanced with their art glass in its many forms.

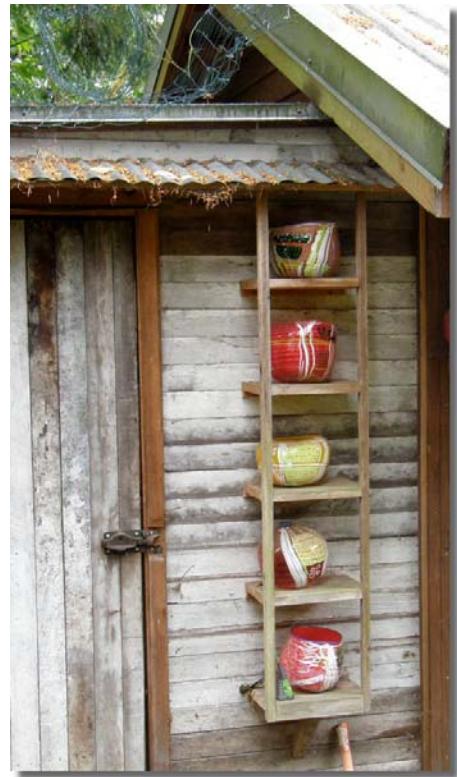
Meredith makes extraordinary glass tiles and melds her fine abilities as a printmaker with the glass medium. **John** produces hand blown glass vessels and sculptural pieces with expressionistic painting, texture and color for a dynamic result. Their lives together are an embrace of art, high spirit and

community. We found that on any given day fine food aromas filter from the kitchen and animated dialog can be engaged in with the numerous people from the island and the mainland who congregate there. Our two days with them were magical. To enjoy the breadth of their work visit: www.meredithmacleodartist.com and www.johndewit.com.



Meredith's glass tiles stand alone as art pieces.

Tiles, murals and mirror frames are stock items or can be specially commissioned as well. Carol is also a licensed installer and has been working in the building and tile trade for 18 years. See <http://deantile.com>. And our friend **Inge Roberts** has moved from the Bay Area to Whidbey and we stopped by for a brief visit. Inge is a fine ceramic artist who constructs her delicate pieces from paper-thin porcelain. Some of her most recent work can be seen at the Museo gallery on the island: www.museo.cc/2008/april/inge_roberts.html.



Samples of John's art glass appear in select locations throughout their property.



Carol Rose Dean combines both a tile store and studio at her Whidbey Island location.



A pristine example of a Low Art Tile from the 1880s, one of forty tiles gifted to Tile Heritage by Bob and Pat Smyth.

Historic Interlude Heading South

We had to work hard the next day to drag ourselves off island, to leave the place that had so seduced us. However, we had one final mission on the mainland before heading south—a visit with Bob and Pat Smyth in Bellevue. Bob, a longtime member of the Tile Contractors' Association of America, whom we had met at a TCAA convention in Savannah some years ago, had “a box of old tiles” for us to look at. Of course, we had to unwrap every one! There were forty tiles in all, mostly American from the late 19th century, including Low, Providential, and Kensington, among others, all in excellent condition. Suffice it to say, the box was full of “gold” and on behalf of Tile Heritage we gratefully carried off the booty!

Heading south again, when we reached California we saw that Mt. Shasta had re-capped itself with snow since we had passed it on our way north, a good sign for what we hoped would be a wet winter. All in all, our sojourn was most invigorating, being able to touch bases with so

many of the artisans who support Tile Heritage. It is their art that validates what we do, serving as a repository and documenting their work. This is their heritage, ours and yours.

Next month we review in hindsight our crazy Spring schedule as we pay tribute to SAMA, NCECA, Coverings, and the Tile Festival at the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works.



Mt. Shasta in northern California awaits a winter of rain.

[Click here to view past E-Newses!](#)