



July 28, 2008

For Immediate Release

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Westmoore Pottery creates pieces reflecting the rich history of pottery in North Carolina

Seagrove, NC - David and Mary Farrell, the potters of Westmoore Pottery, are known for making historical Redware and salt glazed Stoneware. They have been in business for 31 years. As a young child, Mary always knew that she was going to be a potter. She loved all kinds of pottery, but as she got older, she was drawn to historical pottery. David was interested in history first, and then became interested in pottery. "As a child he made more sculpture pieces, and he sold them to make money in college", said Mary. They both did pottery in college outside of North Carolina, but both ended up at Jugtown Pottery as apprentices. Their first shop was an old grocery store that was owned by Ben and Lucille Owen. "It was nice having Ben as our landlord. We got a lot of encouragement from the older generation of potters", Mary explained as she decorated a beautiful redware plate. Redware is made from clay that has iron in it, and has been fired at a low temperature. It was used by Colonial and early Americans, and was the main type of pottery made in North Carolina up until the 1850's. Salt glazed stoneware was brought to this country by settlers from Western Europe. It is a process that was originally developed in Germany. It involves placing unglazed pottery into a kiln, and slowly heating it to a temperature of 2300°F. Salt is then placed into the kiln. At that high temperature, the salt vaporizes, and then blends with the heated clay to create a unique glaze.

According to Mary, there are not many reference books that detail the older North Carolina pottery. Westmoore Pottery does not make Native American pottery, as they focus on the pottery styles made by immigrants from Europe. She said that they rely on the old pots themselves in museum collections or in private collections. "We actually learn a lot from the broken pieces because you can see how it was constructed. We also get a lot of information from archaeologists", she added.

The colors of their pieces are the natural clay colors themselves. Before 1800, the colors that were used included oranges, browns, creams, various shades of yellow, and green. A clear glaze is then placed over them. The decorations tend to more floral. They also reflect the natural movement of the wrist. "There are a lot of common themes like that all over the world. They are just common human hand movements. It is not that the people were influenced by anything. For example, making the 'comma' shape, which is common to a lot of cultures", explained Mary as she waved her wrist in the air to demonstrate.

Westmoore Pottery pieces have been featured in numerous Hollywood movies, documentaries, and on display in historical homes and museums all over the country. The first movie in which they were contacted to provide pottery was a 1995 Walt Disney Pictures feature film entitled "Tom and Huck" directed by Peter Hewitt. According to Mary, they received a phone call "out of the blue" requesting about 5 pieces for the movie. Now she knows how the Hollywood film producers they have found them, and it is mostly through their web site. If it is for an historic movie, they will call historic sites for

referrals. Unfortunately they don't have a lot of lead time to provide pieces for movies. "They will call on a Thursday, and ask for the pieces by Monday. We have to ship from what we have. We do have a lot of pieces on hand, especially from the 1700's", said Mary. In addition to Hollywood, they provide period pottery for historic homes such as Monticello that need pieces to complete the display for a room that is to be decorated. David and Mary also provide pottery for cooking programs that historic sites do across the country. Many locations used the authentic pieces in their demonstrations to the point that they wore out. They then turn to Westmoore Pottery to provide them with replacement pieces. They have many pieces from the 1600's, the 1700's and the early 1800's in their retail shop located on Busbee Road, in the Westmoore region near Seagrove.

"Come to Seagrove, but don't rush. Spend some time here. There are a lot of different styles of pottery. View it as an area. To buy from the people that actually make the pottery is really special. It is a pretty area too!" encouraged Mary. For a listing of all of the members and the events presented by the Seagrove Area Potters Association (SAPA), please go to www.discoverseagrove.com. Explore America's largest community of working potters. Discover Seagrove.

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