Introduction to Pewabic Pottery

In the early 1900s Mary Chase Perry (later Stratton) made many advances with glazes and pottery vessels. She also started making tiles at this time, her own home being the first opportunity to apply her ideas. For her East Grand Boulevard house in Detroit, architect William B. Stratton asked Perry to create tiles for a fireplace. After making the first one by hand, a plaster mold she cast from the original was used to create the rest. Perry's handmade tiles with rounded edges and varied surfaces appealed to Stratton and others, and orders for additional fireplace tiles came in.

With these orders the pottery began to grow. In 1901 Perry began working from a carriage house on Alfred Street. She adopted the name Pewabic Pottery in 1905, and a new studio was built in 1907, the present day location, on East Jefferson Avenue. Over the years the pottery created fireplaces, floors, fountains, and other architectural pieces for a variety of private and public buildings in Detroit and the suburbs, East Lansing, Ann Arbor, and elsewhere throughout the United States, including the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C.

Mary Chase Perry Stratton's death in 1961 did not immediately result in the closure of the pottery, as her assistant oversaw production through 1966. Henry L. Caulkins, a son of Pewabic's co-founder, inherited the pottery after Mrs. Stratton's death and began to explore the possibility of its donation to MSU. This was completed in 1965.

In 1979 the private, non-profit Pewabic Society, Inc. was founded and two years later MSU transferred ownership to the Society, which continues to run the pottery today.

The Kresge Art Museum created this brochure as a resource for the general public and educators to discover the numerous examples of Pewabic Pottery installations on the MSU campus. The walking tour takes approximately one and a half hours. More information about Pewabic Pottery, including the exhibit Pewabic: A Century of Michigan's Art Pottery (10/22 — 12/18/05) can be found at www.artmuseum.msu.edu, under Current Exhibitions.

Route of Walking Tour:
1. Kresge Art Museum
2. Alumni Memorial Chapel
3. Kedzie Hall – North
4. MSU Union
5. Cowles House
6. Landon Hall
7. Yakeley Hall
8. Williams Hall
9. Shaw Hall
Pewabic Pottery of the MSU Campus
Numbers refer to location on the map on the back of the brochure

1. **Kresge Art Museum**

Exhibit: *Pewabic: A Century of Michigan’s Art Pottery*

Kresge Art Museum’s collection has one monumental vase created by Mary Chase Perry Stratton in the 1920s. Measuring 22 inches high with a glaze inspired by Babylonian pottery, it is an excellent example of the iridescent glazes for which Pewabic became known. This vase was given to MSU President John Hannah by Henry L. Caulkins, son of Pewabic’s co-founder, when MSU took it over in 1965.

4. **MSU Union**

The Collegiate Gothic MSU Union was originally built by Pond and Pond in 1924. In the 1949 addition, Pewabic tile was commissioned for three fireplaces including one in the Women’s Lounge and two in the basement Men’s Lounge (today the Computer Center and the U-Cue Billiard Room).

**Restricted access to women’s lounge.**

4. **MSU Union**

5. **Cowles House**

Living room and dining room fireplaces and floors in the vestibules.

**Not open to the public.**

Pewabic tile was commissioned by Ralph R. Calder for the living room, library fireplaces and floor of the vestibules during its renovation in 1950. Iridescent tiles line both fireplaces and make up the hearths.

6. **Landon Hall**

Landon Hall contains sculptures that while not made by Pewabic Pottery, were fired and glazed there. In 1946 Leonard D. Jungwirth, Assistant Professor in MSC’s Department of Art, with visiting sculptor Charles Rudy created twelve bas relief sculptures for the Landon and Yakeley Hall cafeterias. They were fired and glazed at Pewabic to their specifications in 1947. The three sculptures above the east fireplace depict scenes related to food. Above the west fireplace the three sculptures depict music.

7. **Yakeley Hall**

Yakeley Hall, like Landon Hall, includes another project that Pewabic assisted with. The six bas relief sculptures (15” x 19” x 4” each) in this cafeteria were created by sculptor Charles Rudy. Pennsylvanian by birth, he was known nationally for his sculpture and worked as a visiting professor at Michigan State College in 1946. The three sculptures above the east fireplace depict men preparing food. The three sculptures above the west fireplace depict women.

8. **Williams Hall**

Pewabic tiles line two nearly identical fireplaces in the basement Recreation Rooms in Williams Hall. Presently only Recreation Room A is accessible, though images of both are included on this website. These fireplaces are faced with 6 x 8-inch green matte tiles. The upper corners are accented with a grouping of tiles measuring 8 x 8-inches, framing a flower pattern square tile. Smaller multicolored tiles also accent the middle of each fireplace. Green matte square tiles make up the hearth.

9. **Shaw Hall**

Pewabic tiles are found around two fireplaces in the dining room and fireplaces in both the east and west living rooms. The dining room fireplaces are created from diagonal halves of tiles. These unglazed triangular shapes exhibit a range of colors from light tan to red. The west living room fireplace is composed of 8 x 8-inch tiles glazed to create a mottled green effect. These were installed to create a stopped out effect. The east living room fireplace is installed similarly but its 8 x 8-inch glazed tiles appear brown with green highlights.

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Exterior stone plaques feature shields accented with multicolored Pewabic tiles that reflect light when the sun shines on them. Nine in the upper corners are placed on top of open books while an equal number without books accent the exterior towers. The North Kedzie entrance two-story lobby has over 100 various colored 4 x 4 inch Pewabic tiles on the upper concrete brick walls. Nine carved decorative relief friezes below each window are bordered on the sides with Pewabic tiles glazed in the blue, green, brown, and iridescences that Pewabic is most known for.

Foyer, aisle, and altar Visiting hours vary. The chapel is closed to the public during private events and ceremonies.

Unglazed Pewabic tiles cover the floor of the chapel. A brown-tan color, these 4 x 4-inch tiles were commissioned by the architect Ralph R. Calder in 1950 and completed in 1952. Pewabic fulfilled several commissions for churches in Detroit including the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer and the Cathedral of St. Paul.

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