

Tile Work

Historic Santa Barbara Courthouse

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The history of the distinctive and popular dinnerware known as Apple began with the discovery of clay deposits in Placer County, California by Charles Gladding and Peter McBean in 1875. They promptly established the Gladding McBean Company in nearby Lincoln and began the production of sewer pipe. By 1884 they were also producing the trademark California terra cotta and tile building materials. But it was the acquisition of tile manufactures Tropic Potteries in Glendale in 1923 which was to pave the road to the production of dinnerware.

Gladding McBean obtained from T.C. Prouty the formula for a talc based process for the production of earthenware ceramics. Andrew Malinovsky was brought in to refine the process and by 1928 "Melinite" was patented. By 1932 Gladding McBean was ready to join in the production of tablewares decorated with colored glazes to satisfy the growing demand in California.

Production of Franciscan Pottery began in the Glendale plant in 1934 with Weller Pottery alumni Fredrick J. Grant and his wife Mary responsible for operations and design. By 1935 there were fifteen patterns including the original solid color El Patio and Coronado. The name Franciscan Pottery was changed in 1936 to Franciscan Ware to capture a more upscale audience. In 1939 the hand painted underglaze patterns were developed which would lead to the introduction of Apple in 1940.

A merger with the Lock Joint Pipe Company resulted in a name change to Interpace Corporation in 1962. Wedgwood Limited purchased the company in 1979, renaming it Franciscan Ceramics, Inc. The Glendale plant was closed in 1984 and the operation was moved to England where Apple is produced today by the subsidiary Johnson Brothers. Some original pieces are not currently being produced while some new pieces have been added.

There are also many decorative tiles from Tunisia. These tiles can be found at the main stair (upper right), Mural Room Lobby and edge detailing of a few arches in the building.



Staircase

Main



Apple Dinnerware



Tile Detail



Tile Detail: Mural Room Lobby



Tile Seat: Main Entry



Tile Seat: Main Staircase



Tile Detail: Mural Room