

# THE MISHLER TILE COMPANY OF RAVENNA, OHIO

By Bob Treichler

It probably goes without saying that when you write a book, it's impossible to include everything you find. Similarly, as soon as the book appears, some information turns up that you wish might have been included. So, because quite a few Ohio Bottle Club members own my book, it is my intention to provide supplemental and newly discovered information through the club newsletter.

The focus of my book, "A History of Northeast Ohio Stoneware", was on the early potters and how they came to this area. Relatively less emphasis was placed on the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century manufacturers, in part because there were so many, and they tended to be corporations with lots of investors that served as board members or partners. Often, their involvement was with money, not craftsmanship. Initially, I considered the Mishler Tile Co. of Ravenna, OH to be one such firm, but more recently I have found some information about their connections to the other historic potting families. Accordingly, they are the subject of my first supplement to the book - expect another to appear in next month's newsletter.

## The Mishler Family -

The first Mishler to come to Ohio was Samuel who in 1834 moved by covered wagon from Cocalico Twp., Lancaster Co., PA. His initial land purchase was 60 acres southwest of Mogadore, and his holdings in that area grew over the years. During that time, he also sold some land to other settlers (one early sale was to the Frederick Young, Sr. family). Samuel Mishler is recorded as having four sons, but only the youngest of these, Henry, was a potter. At age 15, he was living in the home of David Young (see info about the Young family on pages 77 & 78 of my book) during the time David was listed as a potter in North

Springfield very near to Solomon Purdy and his son, Henry. Speculatively, this was a time when several young men were being trained in the potteries of North Springfield (now Ellet). It is most likely that this was the Purdy operation, but P.H. Smith was also located there (see page 79 of my book). Initially, Henry probably worked for one of the many potteries then located around Mogadore, but it appears that he and two nephews, Frank and Milton Mishler (sons of his brother, Jacob) opened their own pottery around 1879. Henry continued to list himself in the census as a potter until 1900 when he was a widower living in the home of his son, Scott. Scott also became a potter and claimed that occupation through 1900. However, by 1920, his father had died, and he was listed as a machinist in an auto plant.

During their lifetimes, the Mishlers were involved in a variety of business ventures. In 1873, Milton Mishler and another cousin (Joseph, a son of his uncle, John) opened a general store in Mogadore that lasted for six years. Thereafter, the family pottery operated for about 15 years in Mogadore before Milton attempted to move the business to Canton, OH. It was announced in the trade journal, *Clay Record* (Vol. 5, no. 9), that they would "continue mfg of meat tubs and other stoneware" and that machinery "suitable for the mfg of vitrified brick" was being installed. The plant opened in August 1895, but soon went into receivership (1898) and was sold at sheriff's sale just ten months later for 2/3 of its appraised value. Milton and his family had moved to Canton prior to 1880, but after that business failure, they moved to Ravenna, OH where a new clay product manufacturing facility was begun.

The Mishlers were also inventors and filed at least four different patents related to ceramic production. Henry patented a simple "potter's tool" in 1892 and turned over the patent rights for a marble-making machine to his two nephews later that same year. Two years later, Milton and Frank jointly patented a machine for making ceramic cylinders with numbers on one end. These were sunk into the ground to serve as cemetery lot markers (see attached patent drawing). Milton also patented a device for making


various sizes of clay balls that were used in industrial applications. Products derived from the Mishler brothers' patents seem to have been among those made at the Ravenna plant. However, there are reports that a variety of other molded clay products, including toys, were made there. So, by 1900, Milton was living and working in Ravenna and his son, Robert, was involved with the firm. Milton's brother and partner, Frank Mishler, continued to reside in Mogadore listing his occupation as "manufacturer". Their uncle, Henry, also remained in Mogadore with his son. Scott. Milton's 1900 census entry listed him as a "Mfg. Clay Goods", but whatever the firm (with its various names, Mishler Tile, Mishler Toy Co., etc.) made, they did not seem to prosper. By the time of the next census (1910), all of the family members were gone and/or in other occupations. Henry died, nephew Frank became a banker, Milton became a real estate agent and later a cost accountant. Milton's son, Robert, lived in his mother-in-law's home and worked as a salesman. By 1920, Robert had moved to The Bronx and later became a NY radio executive (with his father living with him). After Milton's death in 1940, Robert returned to Ohio and worked at the Ravenna arsenal during the WWII years.

It does appear that the Mishler's ceramic product operations in Ravenna were sold and continued under new management. The John E. Albright Co. and later the firm of Albright & Lightcap subsequently moved to Limaville, OH and were recorded as makers of ceramic marbles and the grave lot markers based on the Mishler patent (see ad from 1908, *Parks and Cemeteries*, a trade journal). The Limaville plant burned in 1911.


So, why does the Mishler family now become of sufficient interest to be documented? My answer is that new information links them more closely to the families that have been included as a part of the stoneware heritage of Northeast Ohio. There are really several links. One such link is provided by the common Lancaster County areas of origin of the Mishlers and the Youngs back in Pennsylvania. Both of these families were also active participants in the same church, The Church of the Brethren

(often called German Baptist) that was not far from their properties. Perhaps the most defining link is the recently discovered presence of Henry Mishler in the home of David Young at a time when both were probably being trained as potters. Further, Henry Mishler's nephews, Milton and Frank, must also have been familiar with the trade because, as children, they lived next door to another potting family, the Miniers (also German Baptists - see p. 73 of the book). Accordingly, it seems that the Mishler family provides another example of the characteristics so typical of the lives of stoneware makers. In their case, as in several others, some members of a family already residing in the area took advantage of the opportunity to learn this trade and to carry it on by involving future generations. As ceramic production evolved from a craft to a manufacturing process, the development of new techniques provided new opportunities. However, as with other families, the later generations witnessed the decline of this industry.

M.B. & F.J. Mishler Machine for Making Grave or Lot Markers



**WHITE GLAZED**  
**TERRA-COTTA**



**GRAVE AND LOT MARKERS**

DURABLE AS GRANITE    WHITE AS MARBLE    CHEAP AS WOOD  
Write at once for Prices and Particulars.

**ALBRIGHT & LIGHTCAP CO., Limaville, Ohio**  
(Successors to M. B. Mishler, Ravenna, Ohio.)

Patented May 29, 1894

Fig. 1.

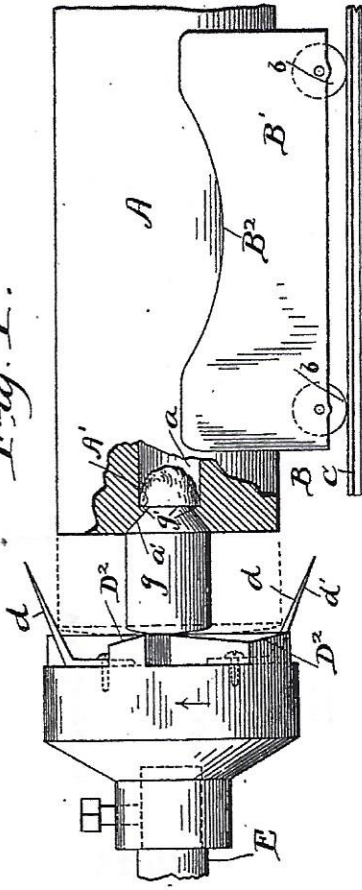


Fig. 2.

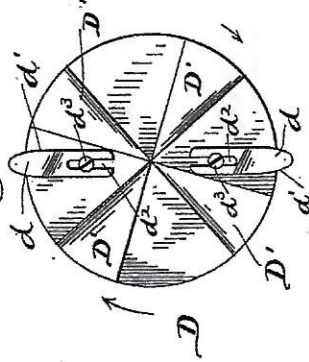


Fig. 3.

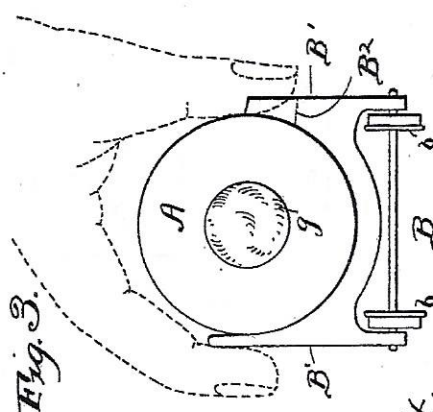
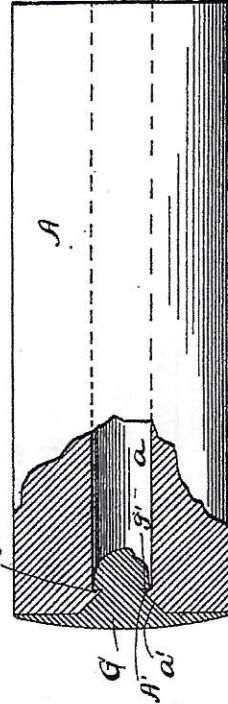


Fig. 4.



Witnesses:  
E. B. Gilchrist.  
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Inventors  
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