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Article Summary: The Lincoln Pottery Works made crocks, jugs, and other ceramic goods at a factory on South First Street in Lincoln from about 1880 until sometime after 1900. Archeologists excavated the site during the summer of 1986, and this paper is the resulting report.

#### Cataloging Information:

Names: Webster Eaton, Orasmus "O V" Eaton, Annie Eaton, Jack Loffink, Don P Marsh, Charles Rumble, Joseph Eneix, Nellie Eaton, Peter Dreith, Harold Hanneman, Anna Knaub

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Photographs / Images: 1888 Map by Dell Darling showing the location of the site; steel engraving of the Lincoln Pottery Works, 1882; Webster Eaton; Sanborn insurance map, 1884, of the Lincoln Pottery Works; Lincoln Pottery Works stoneware and crocks; site drawing of the Lincoln Pottery Works 1986; excavation of LPW's south kiln, including exhaust flue; Sanborn insurance map, 1903 of the Lincoln Pottery Works; LPW stoneware preserve jars and jugs; Table detailing Vessel Types and Frequencies at the Lincoln Pottery Works site; drawing of four gallon crock with LPW logo

# THE LINCOLN POTTERY WORKS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

*By Peter Bleed and Christopher M. Schoen*

In 1984, while surveying the proposed right-of-way for a street now called "Capital Parkway-West," Nebraska State Historical Society archeologists discovered the remains of the Lincoln Pottery Works. Their preliminary research revealed that this company made crocks, jugs, and other ceramic goods at a factory on South First Street in Lincoln from about 1880 until sometime after 1900. Their work also showed that the factory site would be entirely destroyed by the new road construction. In accord with federal law, they recommended that the site be studied before being destroyed. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Railroad Transportation and Safety District contracted with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to do this work, and the authors of this article supervised excavation of the site during the summer of 1986 and early spring of 1987. A report presenting the results of the archeological investigations has been prepared.<sup>1</sup> This paper presents the historical background of the LPW as revealed by historical documents, interviews, and archeological findings.

Although the broad outlines of the firm's history are relatively easily traced, details of its operation, appearance, personnel, and production are scanty. It was founded in late 1880 by Orsamus V. "O. V." Eaton, who

operated it with his older brother, Webster Eaton, until about 1902, when the business failed. By 1906 the pottery works factory had been demolished, and by 1907 several small houses were on its site.

A search for documents failed to locate any of the firm's business records, and none of its illustrated catalogs have been found. There are no known family records available on the Eatons and no photographs of the factory building. However, land records and commercial literature on early Lincoln make it possible to outline the company's history and show the context within which it operated. In addition to these sources, newspaper stories tell us something about the Eaton brothers. Overall, the Lincoln Pottery Works project presented an unusual opportunity to look at a specific early Nebraska business that would otherwise remain little known.

## CONTEXTS OF THE LPW

The factory was built about 1/4 mile east of Salt Creek on part of the creek's flood plain, a location subject to yearly spring flooding. The soil at the building site was fine sandy silt, which supported a thin cover of grass and small trees.

The Burlington mainline ran two blocks east of the site, and a large switching yards sat only a few blocks to the northeast. Railroads were economically important to the LPW, but they also set South First Street apart from the rest of the city. A few areas to the west of the LPW had been platted for house construction in 1880, but

there were few if any houses or other buildings in the area when the LPW was constructed. The LPW was so isolated from the center of Lincoln that it was not even included in the bird's eye view maps of the city which were published in 1884 and 1889.

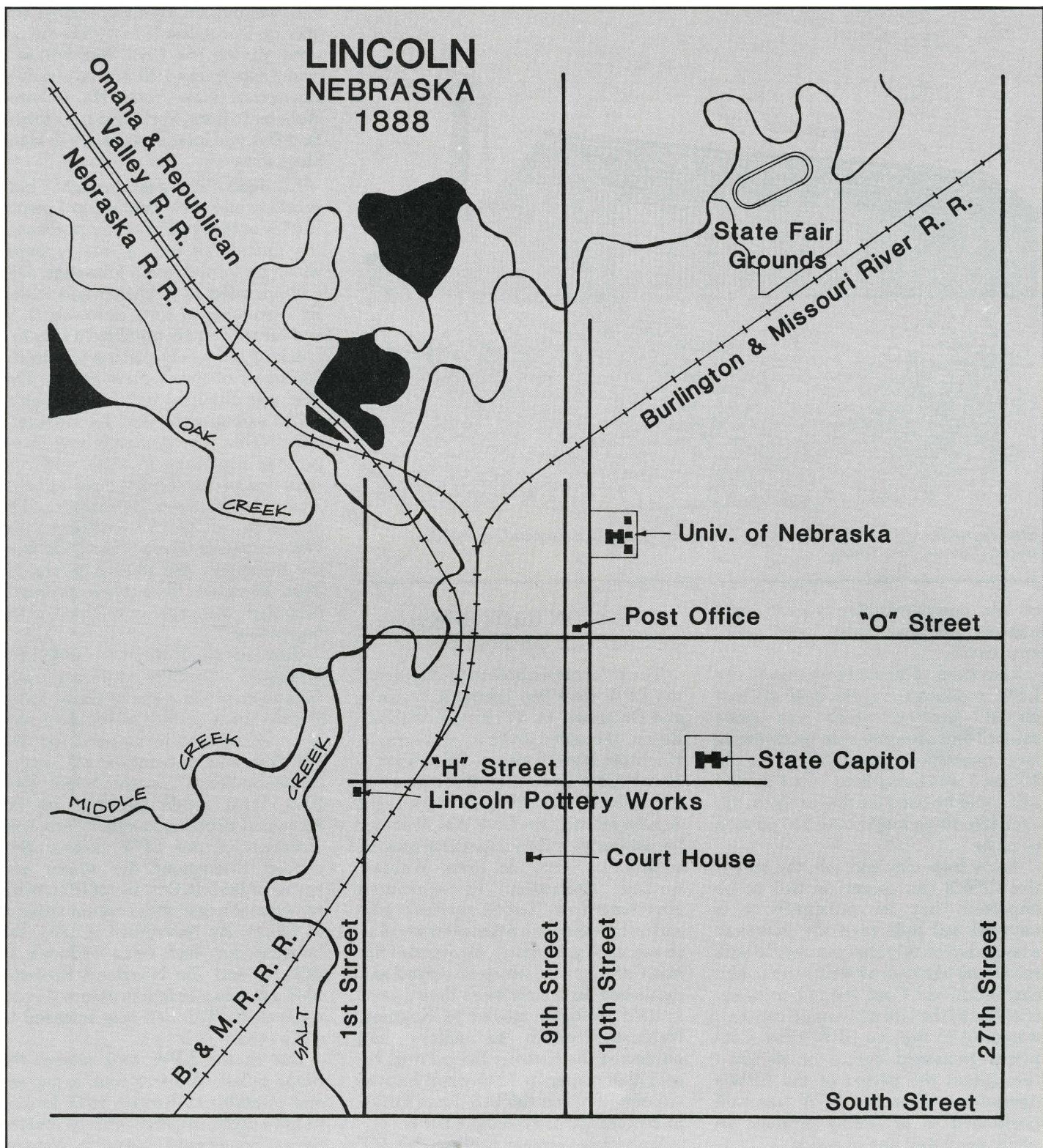
When the LPW was founded, Lincoln was a prosperous and rapidly growing city. In 1880 Lincoln's population stood at 13,003, up 430 percent from the previous decade. The potentially inflated 1890 census counted 55,154 Lincolnites, a further growth of 324 percent.<sup>2</sup> Lincoln's growth paralleled Nebraska's. All of these people moving to Lincoln and the surrounding Plains represented a huge market.

Among the first tasks facing the new arrivals, whether they came from eastern states or foreign countries, was setting up a kitchen, and among the most critical utensils to the late nineteenth century homemaker were crockery mixing and serving bowls. As a family became more established, still other crockery containers were added to the kitchen cupboard to help in cooking, curing, preserving, and serving food. As the only company in the state making domestic pottery at this time, the LPW was able to fulfill a basic need of virtually all new Nebraskans.

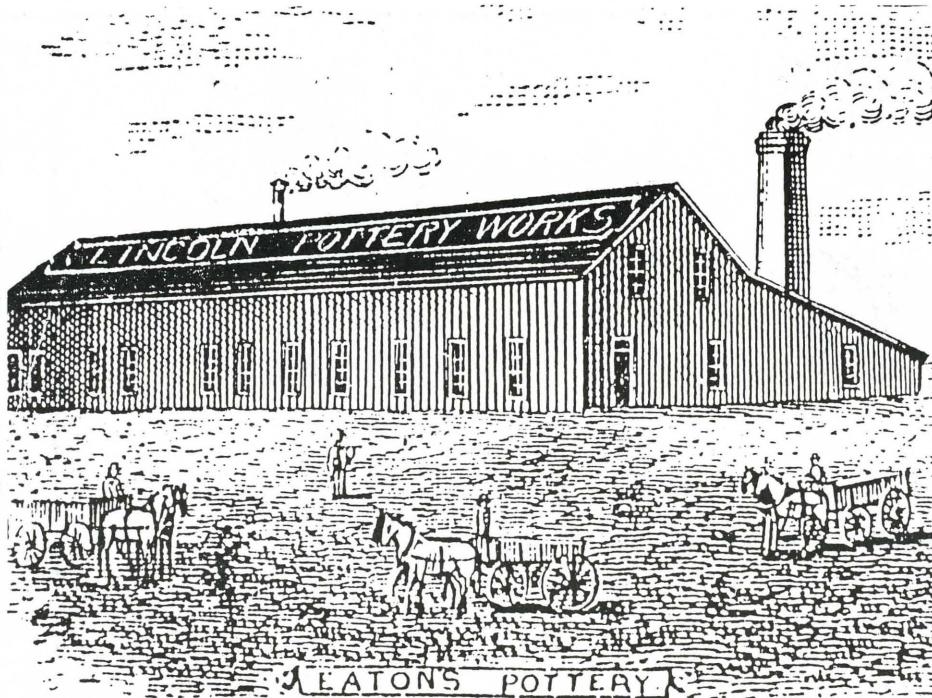
In addition to a large and growing market for domestic ceramics, Lincoln had other qualities that made it a good location for a pottery company. Several active clay pits were located near the factory. Brickworks operating in and around Lincoln probably indirectly helped the LPW by supporting a corps

Peter Bleed, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, was principal investigator for the Lincoln Pottery Works archeological project. Christopher M. Schoen was the project's field director and is a research archeologist at UNL.

Lincoln Pottery Works



Map by Dell Darling.



Steel engraving of the LPW, 1882. From J. H. Pierce, *Lincoln, Nebraska Capital Illustrated* (Lincoln, NE: 1882).

of kiln operators, clay workers, and masons familiar with kiln construction.<sup>3</sup>

Like many of its contemporaries, the LPW produced a great deal of "salt glazed" pottery, which was made smooth and impermeable by throwing large quantities of wet salt into the hot kiln as it was being fired.<sup>4</sup> Low quality salt could be used for this process, but each kiln firing might take 100 pounds or more.

Aside from clay and salt, the rest of the LPW's raw materials had to be imported, but its proximity to a national rail hub gave the company easy and relatively cheap access to bulk resources like coal as well as specialty clay products.<sup>5</sup> Coal, the major industrial fuel of the late nineteenth century, was used to fire the LPW kilns. Coal prices remained stable or declined throughout the period of the LPW's operations. Thus the LPW was well positioned to profitably produce an easily marketed line of goods.

#### THE EATON BROTHERS, FOUNDERS OF THE LPW

The principal figures in the history of the LPW were two brothers, Webster and Orsamus "O. V." Eaton. Webster Eaton, the older brother, was born in Brighton, New York, on December 5, 1839.<sup>6</sup> After more than three years of service with the First New York Light Artillery during the Civil War, Webster joined the westward migration, moving to Iowa in 1866. In Iowa, Webster worked alternately in appointed government or "public service" jobs and on newspapers. After a few years as an assistant postmaster, he founded the *Red Oak Express*, which he edited and published for a little more than a year. In 1872 Webster moved to Kearney, Nebraska, where he edited and published the *Kearney Daily Press*. He sold that paper in 1875 when he was appointed to run the U.S. Land Office in Bloomington, Franklin County.

Webster's younger brother, "O. V."

as he was apparently always called, was born on December 1, 1843.<sup>7</sup> He did not serve during the Civil War but as a young man learned the potter's trade in Rochester, New York. He followed Webster to Iowa, working in a pottery in Red Oak and later at a pottery in Hamburg, Iowa.

In 1880 business brought both brothers and their families to Lincoln. In May of that year Webster purchased the *Lincoln Globe*, a weekly paper which he turned into a four-page daily and operated as publisher and editor. By November of 1880, however, O. V. and his wife Annie obtained a title to a block of ten newly platted lots in the 700 block of South First Street. This land was obtained with a mortgage of \$3300 extended to O.V. by Webster's wife, Nellie. The company was incorporated sometime in 1880, and construction of the factory building must have begun soon thereafter. The mortgage of O. V. suggests that Webster was involved in the LPW from the beginning, but during its earliest days he must have been primarily occupied with the operation of his newspaper.

Starting in November 1880, the Hoagland Brothers Lumber yard began extending a line of credit to the Eatons for a variety of building supplies which were to be used for "the erection and reparation of several frame buildings" on the South First land. With goods supplied by the Hoagland Brothers Lumber Yard, construction of the LPW factory proceeded throughout the winter and spring of 1881. In October of 1881, when repayment began, this account stood at \$1,280.25. By November of 1881, the balance due had been reduced to \$425.25, and the Hoagland Brothers filed a mechanics lien to assure regular repayment. The lien was released in early 1883.<sup>8</sup>

But as the LPW took shape, the *Globe* failed. Webster took a partner and co-editor in January 1881. In July he gave up his interest entirely, and the paper soon ceased operation. Webster

## Lincoln Pottery Works

continued to be involved in the LPW, but in 1882 he also accepted appointment in Lincoln's main post office.<sup>9</sup> In the years that followed, he continued to work in the post office and to describe himself as a "journalist" and "entrepreneur."

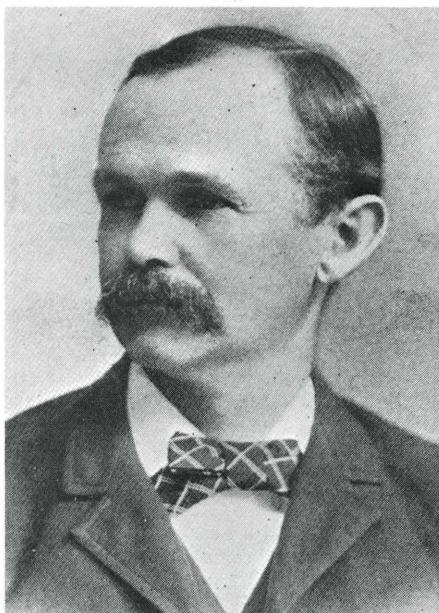
Operating the LPW seems to have occupied O. V.'s full time during the 1880s and early 1890s. The entire time they were in Lincoln, O. V. and his wife Annie lived immediately next to the LPW factory at 715 South First. Sanborn insurance maps suggest that this was a modest frame home with only two or three bedrooms. Jack Loffink, who was a boy in the South Bottom neighborhood at the turn of the century, remembered that the Eaton home was elaborately decorated and that the front lawn was filled with large flower pots and statuary. It appears that O. V. may have been flamboyant and that his home was an advertisement for his wares. He was also a skilled potter and demonstrated his craft at events like the 1893 Nebraska State Fair.<sup>10</sup>

O. V. shared his brother's interest in Republican politics and as the company became well established, he put those interests into action. O. V. was elected to the Lincoln School Board in the 1892-93 term and after a year off in 1894, served continuously until 1898.<sup>11</sup> He was chairman during his last year on the board.

### PERSONNEL OF THE LPW

Historical records tell very little about the lives of the people who worked at the LPW. But references to the LPW in early commercial literature on the growing city of Lincoln indicate that the company had a fairly large work force. In the early 1890s, one promotional description of Lincoln stated that the company employed "25 hands" in the manufacturing department and had three traveling salesmen spread over Nebraska and Kansas.<sup>12</sup>

Some information about who the LPW "hands" were is contained in Lincoln's city directories. The 1889 directory is especially useful since it lists the



Webster Eaton. From W.W. Merrit, Sr., *A History of the County of Montgomery from the Earliest Days to 1906*. Courtesy of State Historical Society of Iowa.

city's residents both alphabetically and by street address and gives an occupation for each. Don P. Marsh, who lived across the street from the pottery works at 724 South First, is listed as a "potter" in the alphabetical directory and as a "pan moulder" in the street directory. O. V.'s next door neighbor, at 725 South First, was Charles Rumble, another potter. Finally, the 1889 directory lists Joseph Eneix who lived around the corner from the factory at 100 G Street as another potter. Presumably all of these men were LPW employees.

Since the names of only four potters show up in the 1889 city directory, it is likely that many of the rest of the "hands" who worked in the factory were either women or children. The fact that several of the LPW employees lived in the immediate vicinity of the factory suggests that the workers formed a closely knit group. Interestingly, archeological excavation at the pottery works site revealed neither a privy nor significant food or domestic

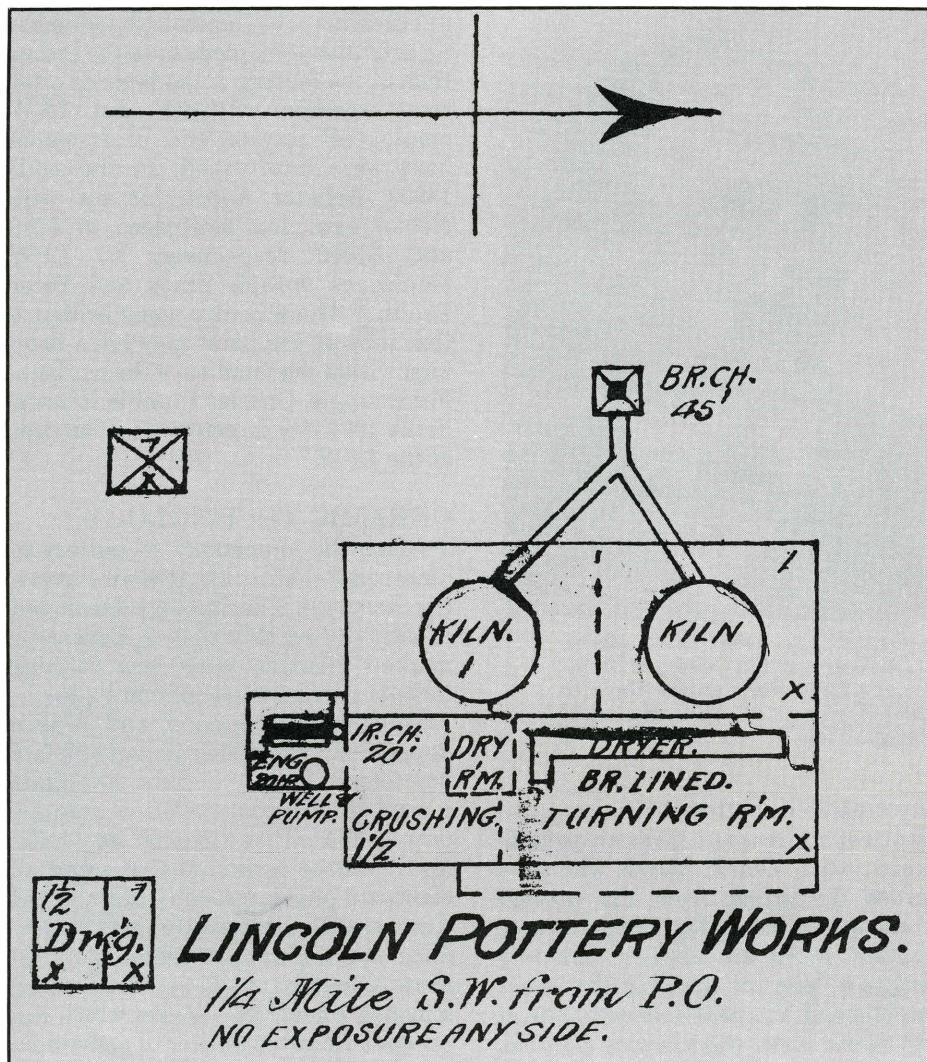
debris. This could indicate that domestic activities took place at home rather than at the factory. Land records offer some specific evidence that LPW employees' private and professional lives were intertwined. In the mid-1890s Webster Eaton (or his wife Nellie) extended mortgages of \$250 and \$1000 respectively to LPW employees Joseph Eneix and Peter Dreith.<sup>13</sup> There is also some evidence that jobs at the plant may have been kept within the families of the workers. For example, Charles Rumble is listed in the 1902 city directory as a "laborer at the LPW."

### CERAMIC TECHNOLOGY

Given the importance of pottery in nineteenth century life, it is not surprising that ceramic technology developed rapidly during this period. Especially marked changes were new forming techniques and more efficient kilns.

To speed production and reduce dependence on skilled personnel, late nineteenth century potters developed a semi-mechanized means of forming pots called either "jigging" or "jollying."<sup>14</sup> These techniques required an elaborate physical facility but allowed a potter with a crew of helpers to produce masses of essentially identical vessels. Instead of a flat potter's wheel, a jiggling wheel has a socket which can accept a reusable plaster of paris mold that has the shape of the vessel to be made. By use of a template, a "bat" of clay is transformed in the spinning mold into a pot. This process required far less skill than traditional hand throwing.

A second major change that took place in nineteenth century ceramic technology was improvement in kiln design, which made pottery firing more efficient, cheaper, and predictable. A kiln is basically a solidly built structure that can have heat fed into it faster than the heat can flow out. In simple kilns the fire is built below the green pottery, which is fired as the natural draft brings the heat upward through the structure. Such kilns, called "updraft kilns," are



Sanborn insurance map, 1884, of the Lincoln Pottery Works. The shaded areas reflect tints used by the insurance company to indicate different types of construction materials.

dirty and relatively inefficient, because the heated air passes directly into the kiln and stays only a short while.

To solve these problems, nineteenth century kiln designers developed the "downdraft kiln," heated by fireboxes arranged around the kiln *at floor level*. From the fireboxes, the heated air is directed to the top of the structure by baffles inside the kiln. These interior walls are called "bag walls." The top of a downdraft kiln is sealed so that the heated air next can be drawn *down*

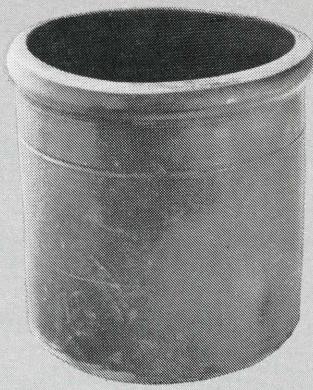
through the green ware. This longer path means that ash generated in the fireboxes does not reach the pots. Additionally, the heated air is mixed and drawn evenly through the kiln. To establish a draft and exhaust the hot air, downdraft kilns must have flues below the kiln floor which connect to a chimney high enough to catch the wind. The chimney has to stand some distance from the kiln and needs one or more adjustable baffles, which the operators can use to regulate the flow

of air through the system.

Several downdraft kiln designs were patented in the latter 1800s and offered to the ceramics industry by firms that specialized in kiln building. However, the cost of kiln construction was so high that innovations in kiln design did not necessarily result in improved pottery making. Of 174 kilns in use at thirty-seven American potteries surveyed by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1910 only *one* exhibited a newer downdraft design and nearly fifty percent had been in operation for more than fifteen years.<sup>15</sup> Most of the firms reflected in that survey appear to have been located in Ohio. This may suggest that western potteries like the LPW (which used the newer downdraft kilns) were better able to make use of "state-of-the-art" kiln designs during initial kiln construction.

The rest of the work that went on at the LPW is harder to determine, but a detailed study of the U.S. pottery industry from 1900 to 1910 suggests what life and work at the LPW may have been like.<sup>16</sup> The Commerce Department study drew on census data and on a survey of the major pottery companies active in the United States between 1900 and 1910. It makes no specific reference to the LPW, although it may have been included in the survey sample. The study does suggest that all American pottery companies were organized in much the same way and, furthermore, that companies like the LPW, which were involved in mechanized "jigging" of pots, had especially refined and complex organization.

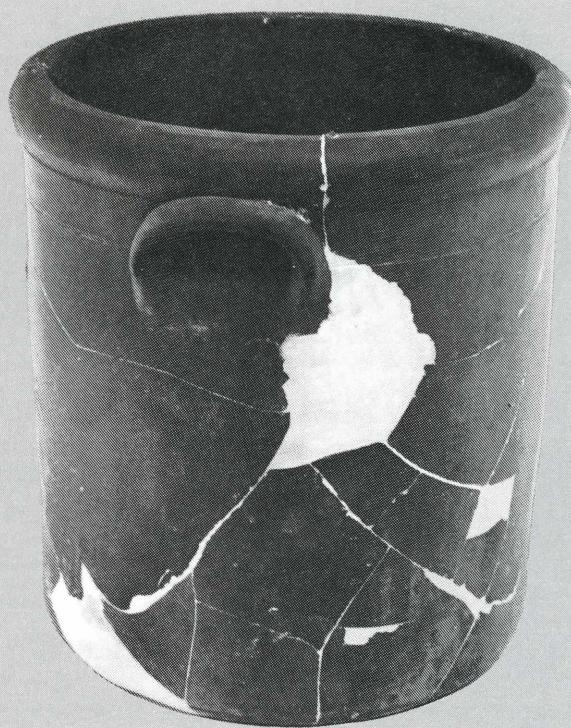
The central figure in a turn-of-the-century pottery was the jiggeman, the skilled workman who formed vessels with either a jiggling or jolly machine. The jiggeman was a contractor who agreed with his employing pottery to furnish a certain number of "green" vessels at an agreed price. The usual situation was for the pottery to furnish the jiggeman with a clean work station, plaster of Paris molds, and prepared clay. The jiggeman, in turn, usually



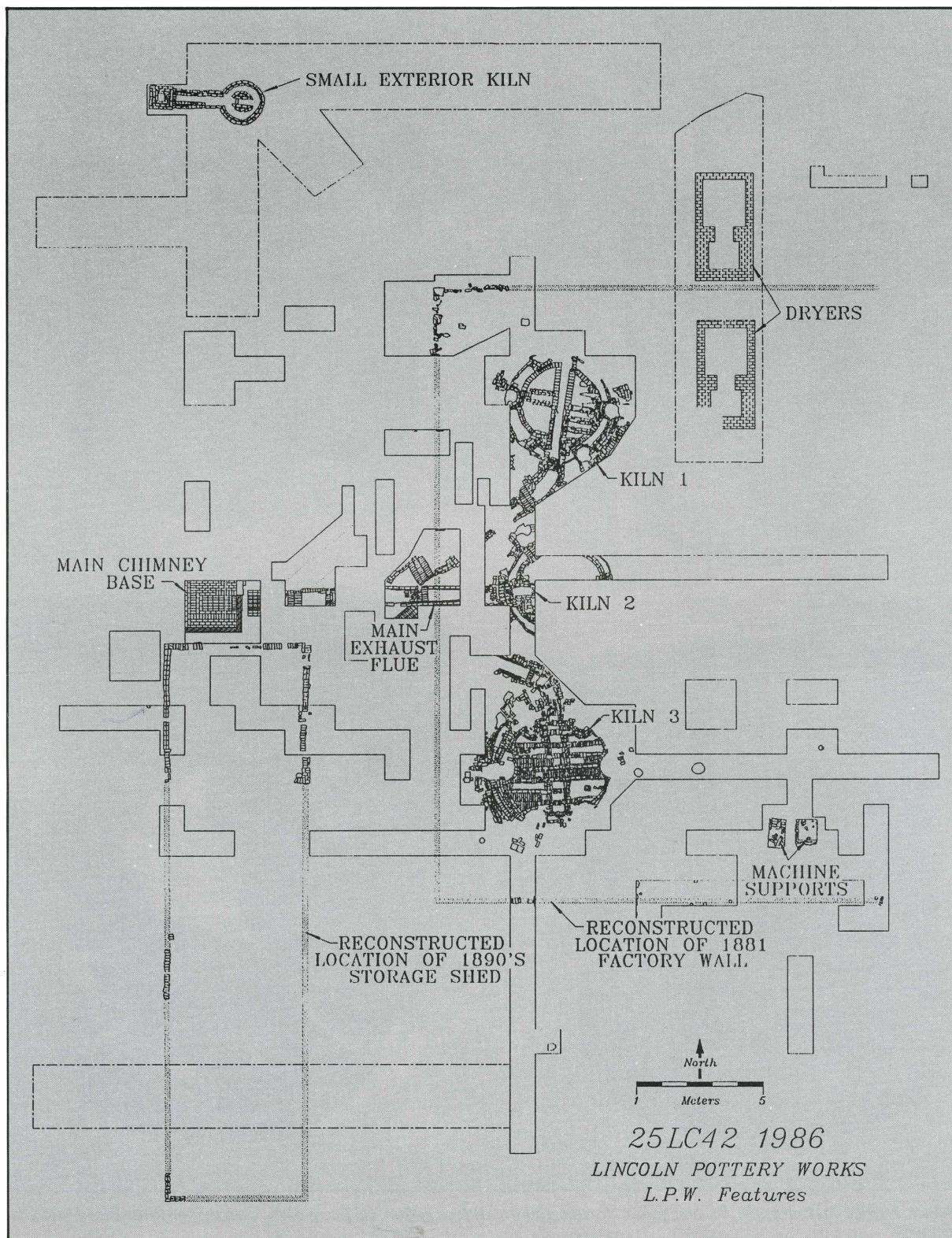
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LPW stoneware, crocks: (a) two quart, (b) one gallon, (c) two gallon, (d) four gallon, (e) five gallon. Courtesy of Peter Bleed and Christopher M. Schoen.



## Lincoln Pottery Works

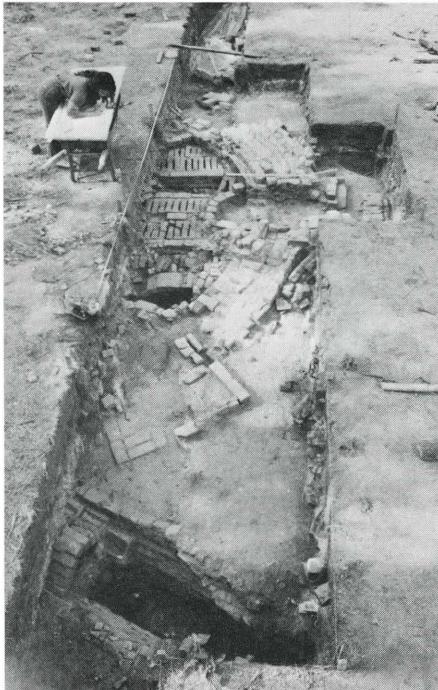
hired four helpers: a clay carrier, who brought prepared clay to the jiggerman's work station; a batter out, who flattened wads of clay into bats; a mold runner, who took the newly formed clay vessel to a drying area; and a finisher, who detailed the dry, finished piece. All of these workers were paid on a piece-rate basis. The jiggerman would usually keep about forty percent of the rate. The batter out got another twenty percent, the mold runner fifteen percent, and the finisher about twenty percent. This left only five percent for the clay carrier, who could service several different jiggers. It was estimated that an average jiggerman made about \$.46 per hour. Really efficient workers producing high rate items could make as much as \$.83 cents an hour.

Operation of the kiln required the efforts of other specialists. Skilled kiln placers packed the green vessels into the kilns. A fireman supervised the heating and cooling of the kiln. Emptying the kiln was hot and dirty work that was assigned to unskilled drawers.

Since the LPW was a relatively small concern, and far removed from the centers of ceramic production in Ohio and New Jersey, the degree to which it displayed these organizational patterns is not certain. Certainly the company was using state-of-the-art mechanical equipment. It may also be significant that Don Marsh was recorded not simply as a potter in the 1889 city directory, but as a "pan moulder." That specific reference may indicate that craft specialties were recognized and important to LPW workers. Specialist organization may also explain why so few potters are listed in the city directory.

### THE LPW PHYSICAL PLANT

The only known image of the LPW is a steel engraving which appeared in an 1882 commercial guide entitled *Lincoln, Nebraska-Capital Illustrated* by J. H. Pierce.<sup>17</sup> This illustration, along with Sanborn Insurance Company maps and the list of material included in the 1883 Hoagland Brothers lien,



Excavation of LPW's south kiln, including exhaust flue. Courtesy of Peter Bleed and Christopher M. Schoen.

provides some specific information about the appearance and construction of the factory building.

The 1884 and 1886 Sanborn maps indicate that the main factory building was of frame construction.<sup>18</sup> The 1882 illustration suggests that the walls were made of vertical planks possibly with batten boards. The front (east) side of the building was 1½ stories high with a gabled roof. The western half of the building, where the kilns were located, appears to have had a sloping "lean-to" roof, less than a full story high.

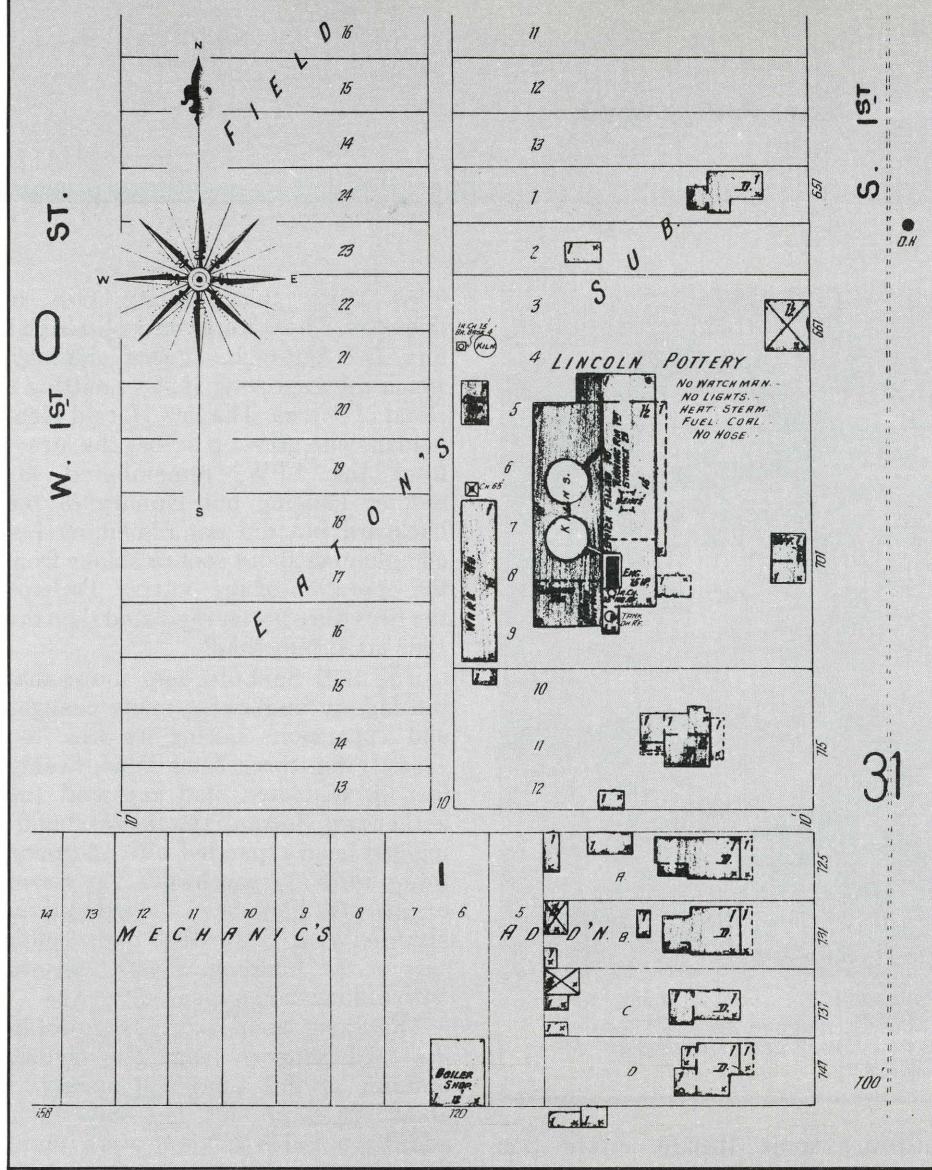
The Sanborn maps indicate that a steam engine was located in the south end of the building. The steel engraving shows its twenty-foot iron chimney belching smoke. A clay crushing machine, a well, and a pump are also shown in this portion of the building. Most of the eastern half of the building was devoted to turning and drying facilities made of brick. The 1884 and 1886 Sanborn maps show two round

kilns more than twenty feet in diameter. These were vented through a forty-five-foot-high, square chimney, which the engraving shows emitting a cloud of smoke. The late Harold Hanneman, who grew up across the street from the LPW, remembered his mother hanging out laundry in the backyard but did not remember her complaining about soot or smoke from the operation of the pottery. Perhaps the fires were better regulated than the 1882 artist indicated!

The 1891 Sanborn map shows that the factory underwent many changes and expansions during its first ten years. First, three brick kilns, twenty feet in diameter, had replaced the earlier two. Second, the factory building had been expanded with additions to the north and southwest. The steam engine may have been moved and an elevated water tank added to the south side of the building. Finally, several outbuildings had appeared.

This same basic facility is shown in the 1903 Sanborn map. The factory building at this time still measured about 120 by 58 feet. The only major addition noted in that map was a round kiln some four feet in diameter which was built outside the main building on its northwest side. The 1903 map also shows only two kilns inside the factory building. It is not certain if these indicate that only two of the previous three kilns were in use or if one of the earlier fixtures had actually been destroyed. In any case, this last map of the LPW may also indicate that the main smoke stack had been rebuilt to stand sixty-five feet high.

The major features excavated during the 1986 field season were the remains of the LPW downdraft kilns. Inside the factory building area we found three large kiln bases. The northernmost of these appears to have been out of use for some time. The southern kiln had been thoroughly demolished, but it appeared to have been the last one in use at the factory. It was still directly connected to the flues and chimney system.



Sanborn insurance map, 1903, of the Lincoln Pottery Works.

The 1903 map also shows that several small houses had been built along First Street near the factory. By 1903 a "boiler shop" was operating on West G Street, just around the corner from the LPW. Since the pottery went out of business and was demolished about this time, the nearby boiler shop would have provided a ready market for its steam engine and other salvageable equipment. It may explain why no boiler parts or related machinery were recovered archeologically.

#### PRODUCTION OF THE LPW

Several early commercial guides to Lincoln list the kinds of items made by the LPW and describe the level of the company's production. In 1893, for

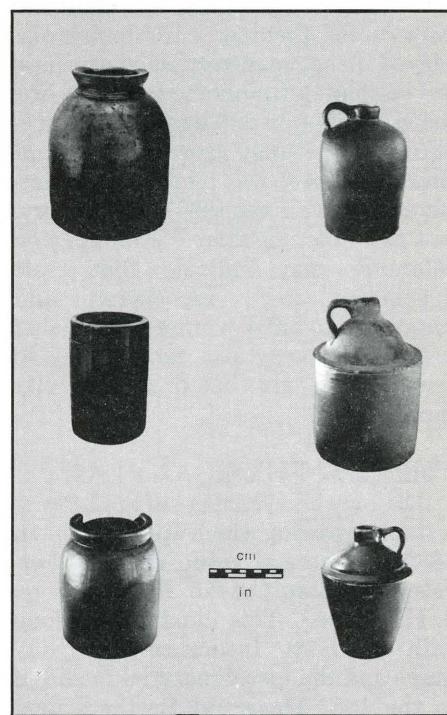
example, *Pen and Sunlight Sketches of Lincoln* lists the output of the factory as "every variety of stone and crockery-ware, milk pans, beer mugs, large jars, stone churning tubs, water jars, stone pitchers, Boston bean pots, jugs, butter pots, preserve jars."<sup>19</sup> This and other sources make special mention of the LPW "terra cotta" ware, which included "flower pots, vessels, cuspidors, urns, vases, hanging baskets, etc." The list of "Special Premiums" for the 1887 Nebraska State Fair includes one pair of LPW "lawn vases"

*LPW stoneware preserve jars and jugs. Courtesy of Peter Bleed and Christopher M. Schoen.*

worth \$15 and another lot of "flower pots and hanging baskets" worth \$6.<sup>20</sup>

Commercial descriptions of the LPW clearly emphasized the most positive aspects of its operation. They present clear evidence that the company was able to achieve a large output. The 1893 capacity was described as "10,000 gallons of stoneware each week."<sup>21</sup> And in 1891 "over 300,000 pieces of stone ware - the equivalent of 70 carloads - and 1,500,000 flower pots" were said to have been made and sold.<sup>22</sup>

The assemblage of vessels recovered during archeological excavations offers the best record of the LPW's inventory. A list of the types of vessels recovered from the site is presented in Table 1. Characteristic LPW wares are also illustrated. In all, the remains of some 14,650 different vessels were recovered from the site. Only a handful were marked with the company's name. The illustrations presented here show all of the numbers used to indicate the capacity of LPW vessels and all of the other marks and logos known to have been used by the company.



## Lincoln Pottery Works

### THE END OF THE LPW

After several decades of fantastic growth, Lincoln's population declined sharply between 1890 and 1900 when a serious depression and drought struck the surrounding farm country. Nationally, there was a money crisis, which caused tight credit and many bank failures.

In addition, the LPW had to contend with special problems caused by basic changes in the ceramics industry. Beginning in the 1890s, the pottery industry was challenged by glass bottle and jar manufacturers, who offered alternatives to the bulkier ceramic containers. Tin cans and enameled steel utensils were widely available by this time. In addition to these alternative products, by 1900 a few very large potteries came to dominate the ceramics industry.<sup>23</sup> However, O. V. Eaton was ready to meet all challenges.

In February of 1896, the LPW, with O. V. Eaton described as the "owner and proprietor," obtained a loan of \$3000 from the First National Bank of Lincoln.<sup>24</sup> This loan was secured by assigning to the bank a warranty deed for the entire company. When the loan was repaid the title would be returned, so that the deed functioned as a mortgage. The deed that accompanied the loan carefully differentiated O. V.'s home from the factory site so that it was protected, but with the loan, the bank became the actual owner of the LPW.

It is not clear why O. V. needed the money or why he decided to undertake a loan at such a precarious time. It is likely that the loan paid for the construction of an external kiln, the new sixty-five-foot chimney, reconstruction of the interior kilns, and other modifications to the factory which are shown on the 1903 Sanborn insurance map. This construction must have taken place in the late 1890s.

Whatever the purpose of the loan, the balance was reduced until May of 1901, when the amount due stood at \$905. At that time, the company was declared to be in default and a sheriff's deed transferred title to the bank. The

Table 1  
VESSEL TYPES AND FREQUENCIES AT THE LPW

TYPE OF VESSELS	NO. OF VESSELS	% OF ASSEMBLAGE	NO. OF SHERDS
Cylindrical Crocks	3,966	27.04	5,126
Butter Crocks	168	1.15	509
Kitchen Bowls	1,224	8.35	1,567
Milk Pans	237	1.62	285
Indeterminate Bowl Rims	4,172	28.45	4,570
Jugs	319	2.18	526
Butter Churns	82	.56	155
Canisters	59	.40	100
Preserve Jars	58	.40	235
Lids	1,484	10.12	1,595
Misc. Stoneware	69	.47	248
TOTAL STONEWARE	11,838	80.72	14,916
Cuspidors	93	.63	376
Flower Pots	2,459	16.77	3,666
Saucers	173	1.18	197
Misc. Terra Cotta	102	.70	209
TOTAL TERRA COTTA	2,827	19.28	4,448
TOTAL LPW ASSEMBLAGE	14,665	100.00	19,364

Lincoln Coal Company joined the action with an additional claim of \$265.49 for coal which had been delivered to the LPW. The entire matter was resolved on the steps of the county courthouse on June 20, 1901, when a sheriff's sale sold the company and closed all claims against it for \$860.<sup>25</sup> The buyer was Webster Eaton.<sup>26</sup>

The company may have remained in operation after the sale, although it could not have lasted long. As a young boy growing up near First and H Streets, Harold Hanneman recalled going with his mother to buy several pieces of pottery at the LPW about 1904. At that time the sales office was a small building near the front of the factory lot. Jack Loffink, another long-time area resident, remembered helping women load flower pots into their

buggies from what was probably the same building in 1902 or 1903. Neither man could recall the factory building, and it is possible that production ceased soon after the sheriff's sale but that sale of the existing stock continued. The factory building was certainly gone by 1905, when the site was sold as a series of individual house lots.<sup>27</sup>

Sometime before World War I area residents set up a community baseball field immediately west of the LPW site. This field remained a local attraction until the 1930s. It has been gone for some time, but old timers still remember it and call the area "The Pot Works." However, memory of the LPW faded fast and remarkably completely. Mrs. Anna Knaub, who lived in the house at 701 South First from 1924 until 1944, visited our excavations dur-

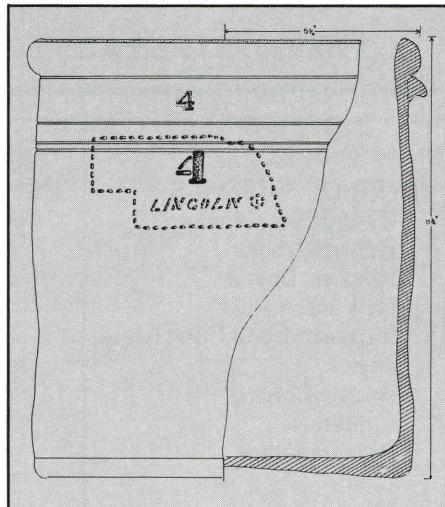
ing the summer of 1986 and was both surprised and amazed by the massive kiln foundations that we had exposed in what had been her back yard. She recalled that the area had never supported a garden, but she had never heard of the Lincoln Pottery Works.

O. V. Eaton continued to live on South First Street even after his factory was gone, remaining active in community affairs. In 1905 at the age of sixty-two, he was successful in his race as a Republican candidate for Lincoln alderman. However, he died November 6, 1905, beneath the wheels of a railroad switch engine in the Burlington yards near his home.<sup>28</sup> A coroner's jury found that the death was accidental, but eighty years after the event, Jack Lofink reported that many area residents felt that the death may have been a suicide. Webster Eaton died on June 15, 1907, after a paralytic stroke.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Research on the LPW raises some general questions about the spread of industry into Nebraska and the rest of the Great Plains. The example of the Lincoln Pottery Works indicates that the transfer of industrial technology from more established parts of the country was complex. The potters who worked at the LPW, for example, used state-of-the-art equipment and facilities that may have been more modern than those of contemporary eastern firms. The rise and fall of the LPW is an interesting example of a specific Nebraska company. It also raises questions about technological and economic development on America's industrial frontier.

A great deal about the Lincoln Pottery Works remains unknown, and it is probable that many details of the company's history and operation will never be determined. However, the LPW archeological project has shed new



Four-gallon crock with LPW logo.  
Courtesy of Peter Bleed and Christopher M. Schoen.

light on both this particular company and Nebraska's history. The project reveals how the methods of archeology can be applied to even the recent past to augment historical records that may be incomplete or overlooked.<sup>30</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Christopher M. Schoen and Peter Bleed, "The Archeology of the Lincoln Pottery Works, 25LC42," 1989. Submitted to the Lincoln-Lancaster County Railroad Transportation and Safety District, Project Number RR-6970, Nebraska State Historical Society. Bleed and Schoen, "Archeology Uncovers Century-old Factory," *Cornerstone*, vol. 8, no. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Neale Copple, *Tower on the Plains* (Lincoln, NE: Lincoln Centennial Commission, 1959), 83.

<sup>3</sup>A. T. Andreas, comp., *History of the State of Nebraska*, V. II (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1882), 1055.

<sup>4</sup>Georgeanna H. Greer, *American Stonewares* (Eaton, PA: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 1981), 224-25.

<sup>5</sup>See Robert W. Fogel, *Railroads and American Economic Growth: Essays in Econometric History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964).

<sup>6</sup>Webster Eaton obituary, *Lincoln Daily Evening News*, June 15, 1907.

<sup>7</sup>Orsamus Eaton obituary, *Nebraska State Journal*, November 7, 1905.

<sup>8</sup>Mechanic's lien, Office of the City Clerk, Lincoln, Nebraska.

<sup>9</sup>Andreas, *History of Nebraska*, 1064.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas H. Hyde, *What about Nebraska and Lincoln, the Capital?* (Thomas H. Hyde, 1893), 65.

<sup>11</sup>Orsamus Eaton obituary, *Nebraska State Journal*, November 7, 1905.

<sup>12</sup>Lloyd Shaw, *Lincoln - Early History* (Lincoln, NE: State Journal Company, n.d.), 100.

<sup>13</sup>Mortgage, Office of the City Clerk, Lincoln, Nebraska.

<sup>14</sup>Emile Bourry, *A Treatise on Ceramic Industries* (London: A. B. Searles, Scott, Greenwood and Sons, 1911), 161.

<sup>15</sup>U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Miscellaneous Series No. 21, *The Pottery Industry* (Washington: GPO, 1915), 239ff.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>J. H. Pierce, *Lincoln, Nebraska Capital Illustrated* (Lincoln, NE: 1882), n.p.

<sup>18</sup>The Sanborn Map Company's insurance maps of Lincoln, Nebraska, 1884, 1886, 1891, 1903, describe the Lincoln Pottery Works. The maps are available at the Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln.

<sup>19</sup>Anonymous, *Pen Light and Pencil Sketches of Lincoln* (Chicago: Phoenix Publishing Company, 1893), 116.

<sup>20</sup>Premium list, Nebraska State Fair, 1887 (Lincoln: Journal Company Printers, 1887), 16.

<sup>21</sup>Hyde, *What about Nebraska?*, 65.

<sup>22</sup>*Pen Light and Pencil Sketches*, 116.

<sup>23</sup>See Gary and Bonnie Tefft, *Red Wing Potters & Their Wares* (Menominee Falls, WI: Locust Enterprises, 1981).

<sup>24</sup>Legal notice, *Nebraska State Journal*, March 26, 1901.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Mortgage in title abstract of 710 South First Street, copy in possession of authors.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Lincoln City Council minutes, November 6, 13, 1905, microfilm copy at Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>29</sup>Webster Eaton obituary, *Lincoln Daily Evening News*, June 15, 1907.

<sup>30</sup>The LPW project was supported by a contract from the Lincoln-Lancaster County Railroad Transportation and Safety District. Howard Gunderson of the RTSD was most helpful. John R. Bozell and John Ludwickson of the Nebraska State Historical Society oversaw the project for the RTSD and were instrumental in seeing it to a successful conclusion.

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