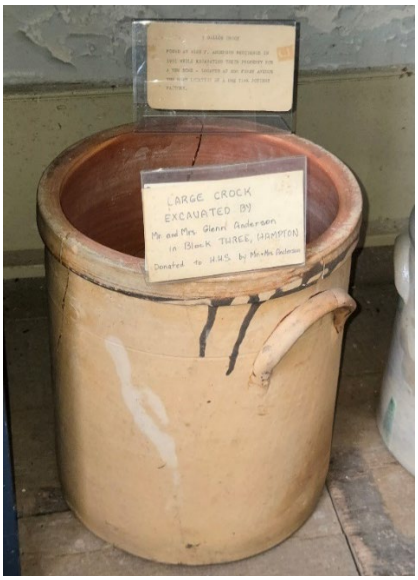
Exploring Hampton's Pottery Heritage: The Story of a Clay Crock



Tucked into a display at the Hampton Historical Society's Blacks Store, a cracked clay crock tells a story larger than its plain surface suggests. A note records that Glen and Ilene Anderson excavated it in 1951 while digging the basement for their home at 200 First Avenue, near the Mississippi River and only about forty feet from the former Fullerton pottery site. The vessel has no maker's mark, only an embossed number 5 on its upper exterior to indicate capacity, and its reddish color points to iron-rich clay. It is not the refined stoneware one might associate with Red Wing, Western, or Blue Label pieces, and a long crack from top to bottom means it can no longer hold water. Yet that damage is part of its appeal: the crock survives as a humble witness to Hampton's clay-working past, when everyday wares such as crocks, jars, churns, jugs, and flowerpots were shaped from local materials and fired for use in homes, farms, and businesses.

Hampton's pottery industry was once substantial enough to support several makers, including Hugh Fullerton, Edward and Hiram Rhodes, Benjamin Haverling, and Mr. Humberstone. Fullerton, who came to Hampton about 1853, became the longest-lasting figure in the trade, working with potters such as his sons Henry and Charles, Isaac Keller, and William R. Casey. His enterprise later expanded beyond household pottery into drain tile, paving slabs, brick, fire brick, terra cotta, and flowerpots; local accounts note that brick from his works was used in the present schoolhouse. In June 1876, the Moline Review reported that H. & H. C. Fullerton had completed a substantial kiln measuring 8 by 10 feet and 10 feet high, built at a cost of about $8,600, and the 1876 Warner and Beers Illinois atlas listed Fullerton's Hampton operation as a manufacturer of fire brick, terra cotta, and all kinds of flowerpots.

Other pottery sites dotted the village as well: Hiram Rhodes's two-story brick pottery stood near what is now the northeast portion of Heritage Park; Benjamin Haverling's pottery stood on lots now associated with 204 Second Avenue and 205 Third Avenue; and the Fullerton works stood near 110 First Avenue, close to where the crock was found. Whether this particular crock came from Fullerton's kiln cannot be proven, but its location, material, and form fit squarely within Hampton's manufacturing story—a story of clay, fire, labor, and useful objects that outlasted the shops that made them.