



***The Potter's Reach in 19th-Century Ontario* by Moe Johnson (Sonderho Press, 2023, 684 pages, hardbound, \$135 [Canadian] or \$99 [U.S.] plus S/H from Moe Johnson [www.moejohnson.ca]).**

Moe Johnson has written a refreshing history of Ontario's pottery in the 19th century in the context of the region's economy. He looks at the technological developments of the industry and at its social impact. As a result, this is not simply a book of names and pictures but is a chronicle of why Ontario's potters immigrated to the region from Europe, where the protective but age-old guild system was declining, and from the United States, where, as had already occurred in Europe, industrialization was extending into all areas of commerce.

Canada was a place where potters could continue their craft and make a living. Their concentration on the craft of pottery advanced the establishment of stoneware for the pervasive consumption of wine and spirits and also for the economically significant home dairy industry, which

utilized pottery in every facet of production and storage.

But by the 1870s jugs and jars were being replaced by glass, and the dairy industry was transitioning to tin pails, treadle-powered barrel churns, and, ultimately, large creameries. All signaled the demise of Ontario's pottery industry. As a last gasp, the potteries produced a short-lived run of decorative pieces for the home, which kept them afloat for a while longer.

By 1910 there were only a few potteries still operating in Ontario, and those had mostly been reduced to firing bricks and flowerpots. In 1919 the last pottery, operated by the determined and ambitious Humberstone family, succumbed.

Johnson details the work of Ontario's talented potters with gorgeous illustrations. Just as importantly, he also tells us the whole story of that region's pottery industry: how it started, how it innovated, and how it was an economic driver for the potters and for the people who lived there.