

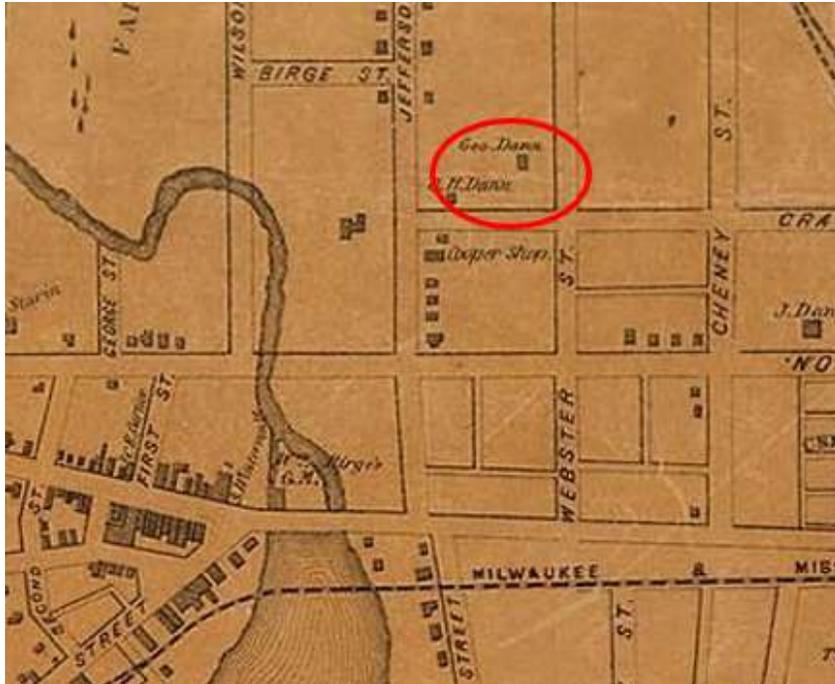
# Whitewater – Cravath Street Pottery

## About 1847 to 1852

George Dann started making pottery in about 1847. The *Early Annals of Whitewater* contained the following biography of him.<sup>1</sup>

*“George Dann. — Was born in Stamford, Conn., March 28, 1807, and spent all his early life on his father's farm. He was the oldest of a family of fourteen children. He was married to Lucretia Jane Clason, March 27, 1827, one day before his 20th birthday. He had to buy the remaining time before he was twenty-one from his father. After two or three years, the young couple moved to Troy, N. Y., where they remained about nine years, and then removed to Oneida Co., N. Y. In June, 1845, Mr. Dann came to Whitewater and engaged in the barrel manufacture and brick-making. Later, with his son Sylvester, he manufactured barrels and barrel stock in Fort Atkinson, until timber became scarce in Bark woods, when the mill was moved to Wonewoc, Wis. He retired from active business a few years before his death, which occurred, Dec. 2, 1880. He was one of the strong, rugged pioneers of Whitewater, a man of remarkable vigor and energy. He was industrious and frugal, a generous friend, a kind neighbor, a lenient creditor, and an honest, public-spirited citizen.”*

The biography does not mention pottery-making, but a letter from Thomas Mountford suggests that Dann had already started making pottery by 1847.



On February 19, 1847, Thomas Mountford wrote a letter to his father in England, mentioning that he had an opportunity to buy a pottery and brickmaking business along with eighty-three acres of land, presumably from George Dann. The Cravath Street Pottery<sup>2</sup> was the only pottery in the area that fits the description. Dann's main occupation was cooper, so if Mountford had gone for the deal Dann would presumably focus on barrel-making. At the time, Thomas Mountford was working at the Fremont Street Pottery.

Figure 1 George Dann's pottery was located on the northwest corner of Cravath Street west of Webster Street. This lithograph shows the pottery site in 1857, several years after the pottery closed.

In February 1847 Mountford wrote:

*"I would have liked you to have come out, very much, next Spring, as I was about to buy a house and 83 acres of land; and a brick yard; and a pottery. I could have bought the whole for two thousand dollars by paying half in ware and half in cash. The property is very cheap and all ready for business. But as you are not coming out at present I shall decline buying it."*<sup>3</sup>

The 1850 Products of Industry Schedule includes the following information about Dann's pottery business.<sup>4</sup>

- Capital invested: \$500
- Revenue for the past twelve months: \$1,000
- Fifteen-thousand gallons of "pottery ware" produced. (That comes out to 7 cents a gallon at retail.)
- Two male workers averaging \$22/month in wages.
- Power source – "horse" (for grinding clay) and "hand" (for kick wheels)
- Lead, clay, and wood inventory value: \$172.



*Figure 2 George Dann was "was industrious and frugal, a generous friend, a kind neighbor, a lenient creditor, and an honest, public-spirited citizen" He passed away in 1880. Smiling during portraits was not encouraged.*

By comparison, the Fremont Street pottery was considerably larger in 1850, with ten workers and \$5,000 in revenue in the past year.<sup>5</sup> The Fremont Pottery was located about four blocks to the west.

The Products of Industry Schedule also lists Dann's two other businesses – Cooperage and Brickmaking. The cooperage had four employees and \$1,500 in revenue, and the brickmaking business had seven employees and \$1,200 in revenue.

The clay source for brick and clay was east bank of the river near Cravath Street. While this location was different from the quarry on the north side of Whitewater used by the other three potteries in town, the clay came from the same layer, and presumably had the same characteristics. To date, no sherds have been recovered from the pottery site, but it is likely that their pottery similar to other early Whitewater pottery. Pots that we suspect were made by the Cravath Street Pottery are shown in *Figure 3*.

How long the pottery operated after 1850 is not known, but the 1853 State Gazetteer reported that Whitewater had "1 manufactory of pottery ware", so the pottery business was probably closed by then.<sup>6</sup>



*Figure 3 We attribute these to either the Cravath Street Pottery or the Fremont Street Pottery. They all appear to be decorated by the same artist with a style unlike other presumed Fremont Pottery pieces. Notice the disconnected leaves along the stem of the flower. The rim finish, ear handles, and forms are also distinctive. These are the only three pieces known to us with this style of decoration.*

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Annals of Whitewater 1837-1867 By Prosper Cravath, 1906

<sup>2</sup> A map and directory of Whitewater, Wisconsin Elkhorn, Wisconsin: T. B. Redding and J. J. Watson City and County Map Publishers 1857, Redding, T. B.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Thomas Mountford of Whitewater, Walworth County, Wisconsin Territory, dated February 19, 1847, to Barnet Mountford in *The Potters' Examiner and Emigrants' Advocate* 7, no. 26 (June 26, 1847): 198. From [www.chipstone.org](http://www.chipstone.org) 3 article.php/75/Ceramics-in-America-2003/

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Products of Industry Schedule for Whitewater 1850 and 1860

<sup>5</sup> [www.madefromclay.org](http://www.madefromclay.org) *Whitewater – Fremont Street Pottery*

<sup>6</sup> Wisconsin State Gazetteer 1853