

British Hollow Pottery - Ethan Griffith

Buena Vista, Grant Co.

1850 -188?

Ethan Griffith was born April 15, 1803, at Warrington, York County, Pennsylvania, son of Joseph and Rebecca Cook Griffith. He married Ruth Harlon, born February 16, 1801, on April 20, 1825. Their marriage brought together two quite distinct religious backgrounds, she from a family belonging to the Society of Friends, or pacifist 'Quakers.'

In 1805, William and Charity [Harlon], with six children, emigrated to and settled in Clinton Co., Ohio, their place of residence being east of the road leading from "Dakin's Corner" to Clarksville, and about two miles south of the first named point. On this farm William died May 3, 1845, and was buried in Friends' Burying Ground at Springfield Meeting House, located now in Adams Township, Clinton County, Ohio.¹



Figure 1 one gallon jug attributed to the British Hollow Pottery. The slip resembles Albany. It is hard and dense, resembling stoneware.

By 1846 the couple had relocated to Illinois, where on January 7, 1846, he was 'Ordained Seventy' as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or Mormon religion at their Temple at Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois. This was only two years after church founder Joseph Smith had been dragged from jail at Nauvoo and murdered by an anti-Mormon mob. After Smith's death leadership of the church passed to Brigham Young, who in 1846 led almost the whole Mormon community across Iowa to Council Bluffs on the Missouri River, and then on to the Great Salt Lake a year later.

With all the associated unrest fostered by 'Gentiles' against Mormons, it is not known why Griffith chose to turn north instead of west, but north he went into the southwest Wisconsin lead mining district. Here he followed two occupations for the rest of his life as potter and hardscrabble lead miner among the immigrant population of British Hollow and the village of Buena Vista, named after an American victory in

the Mexican War on February 22-23, 1847.

Griffith settled in District Number 24, Grant County, Wisconsin before the township lines had been surveyed. In 1850 as head of a mining household, Griffith was said to be 57 (he was 47) called himself a Potter, from Pennsylvania, who owned a parcel of land worth \$50 (probably a mineral claim). Wife Ruth reported to be 65 (she actually was 49) from Ohio apparently fed and cared for seven others: William (25, a miner), Mary A. (20), Joseph (19, a miner), Edith (18) was at school, Charatz A. (15) at school, Rebecca J. (11) also at school, and Robert Cardy (25), a miner from New York.²

Ten years later Griffith, 57, called himself a lead miner, owned \$300 in real estate and \$200 in savings. His age and that of wife Ruth differed from a decade ago, now 57 and 58, then 54 and 65 and now her place of birth is shown as North Carolina instead of Ohio (the family moved to Ohio when she was four years old). Apparently, something happened with Mr. Cardy, the boarder of 1850, for ten years later he had vanished but Griffith daughter Edith Cardy (28) and granddaughter Mary E. Cardy (8) lived in the Griffith household.³



Figure 2 1868 Plat Map of Grant County

By 1870 Ethan and Ruth Griffith settled down on a small farm in the Town of Potosi. Now at 67 and she at 68, he reported being an "Apirian" or apiarian, one who keeps and raises bees; she still was "keeping house."⁴ He tilled four improved acres valued at \$400, owned two milk cows, one other cattle, and two swine. Production included 40 bu. "corn", 120 bu. oats, 30 bu. "Irish" potatoes, 100 lbs. of butter and one ton of hay. He slaughtered \$25 in livestock last year and valued his annual farm production as \$173. His wife Ruth died here just three years later, September 8, 1873.

The last glimpse we have of widower Griffith is the census of 1880, when at age 77 he again called his occupation as Potter. His widowed daughter Edith Harris (44) lived in and worked as a milliner and as her name changed again during the decade, we might assume she had remarried but Mr. Harris no longer was a member of the household. Granddaughter Mary E. Cardy (27) lived in and kept house.⁵ Ethan Griffith is believed to have died at home on April 22, 1884, at the age of 81.

An 1868 map of Grant County contains a map of Buena Vista Village, with the Griffith property on the east road fork just north of the roadway split, all in Section 23 in the Town of Potosi.⁶ Almost all the houses have vanished now, but at one time this was a thriving mining village just north of British Hollow, today marked by a stone schoolhouse.

The author has seen only two examples of Griffith's ware, an ovoid jug and pot, both unglazed but with a high degree of polish, light brown color, very smooth and crisp in the turning. The jug was marked with numerous swellings or gas bubbles in the clay, the ovoid jar with a crisp stamp "2" pressed into its rim closely resembling a "2" stamp used nearby at the pottery of George Hammett.

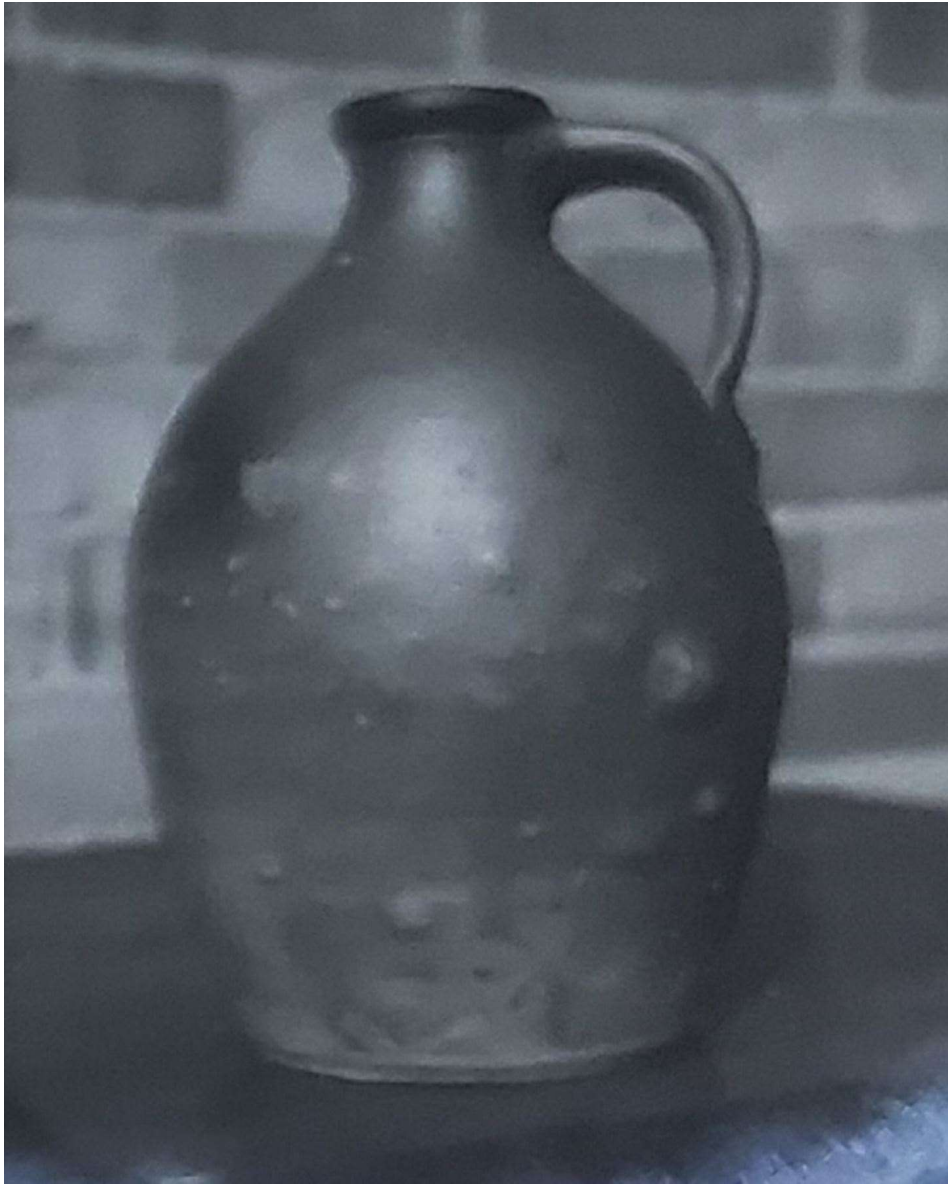


Figure 3 Unglazed ovoid jug attributed to the British Hollow Pottery. High-fired red/brown clay with a high sheen with flattened handle attached just below the flattened lip with a thumb press at the base. The surface is badly blistered and pocked in firing. Purchased in 1972 by the author from Bob Camaro who found together with the jar in Figure 3. Bob has seen about 18 similar pieces. 11 ¾" tall.

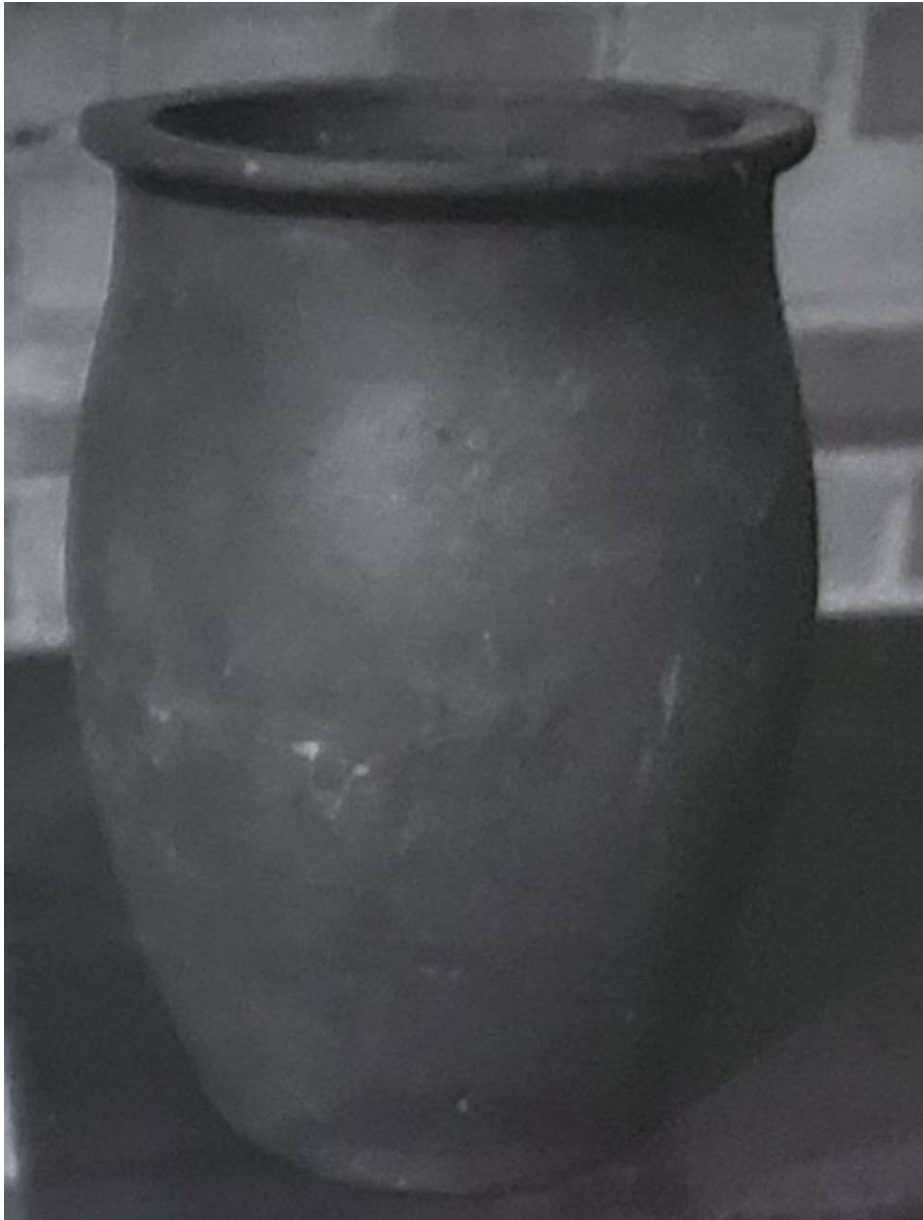


Figure 4 Unglazed ovoid food storage jar in a graceful form with flattened rim attributed to the British Hollow Pottery. High-fired red/ brown clay with a hard surface and high sheen. A "2" stamp on the rim is like capacity stamps on Hammett pottery.



References

- ¹ Ancestry.com, Harlon family genealogy.
- ² 1850 Manuscript Census, Grant County, District Number 24, p. 78.
- ³ 1860 Manuscript Census, Grant County, Town of Potosi, British Hollow District, p. 172.
- ⁴ 1870 Manuscript Census, Grant County, Town of Potosi, Vol. 11. p. 118.
- ⁵ 1880 Manuscript Census, Grant County, Town of Potosi, British Hollow District, Village of Buena Vista; microfilm roll P41533.
- ⁶ 1868 Grant County Plat Reed Mayer & Co