

Hammett Pottery Cottage Inn 1856 -1861

And where, you might ask, is the village of Cottage Inn? Or where was Cottage Inn? For it is no more, its location marked by a red frame schoolhouse and a few cholera burials sealed in lime mortar since an 1850's epidemic. Its closest neighbor is Belmont, some six miles southwest, near where delegates to the first territorial legislature met in the capitol or Council House in 1836 to select Madison as the new territorial capital. At one time, though, The Cottage Inn, a rural tavern hostelry still standing nearby (although much altered) from which the village took its name, served stagecoach and freight wagon traffic between Mineral Point, Wis. and Galena, Ill., another mining settlement located farther southwest. It was here that British potter George Hammett arrived in the mid-1850's, near the farm of his brother-in-law Frederick William Randall Chadwick who went by the name Randall Chadwick. In show business he was known as 'The Scotch Giant'.

By all accounts Chadwick was a very large man indeed, born in Devonshire, England, some say in 1812, others in 1816. He found a niche within a nineteenth century fascination with giants, when people recorded all manner of curious statistics about them:

*The Death of Giant Chillcott
Died last week, aged 60, at Trenaw,
in the parish of Tintagel [Cornwall,
England], in consequence of an
apoplectic fit, a person commonly
known by the appellation of, Giant
Chillcott. His height was six foot four
inches, without shoes: he measured
round the breast, six feet nine inches:
round the full part of the thigh. three
feet four inches, and weighed about
460 lbs. He was almost constantly
smoking: the stem of the pipe he used
was about two inches long and he
consumed three pounds of tobacco
weekly The curiosity of strangers who came to visit him gave him evident pleasure,
and his usual address on such occasions was, "Come under my arm, little fellow."¹*

*[Miles Darden of Tennessee 'said to be the largest man in the world':] ... He was quite
active and lively, and labored until about four years ago, when he became so fleshy that*



Figure 1 Ovoid earthenware jar with tall, thick collar and turned foot. Bands of coggled ornament (impressed using a toothed wheel) at base of collar and at neck, above a band of coggled arch shapes. Two applied lug handles. Interior of rim has ledge for lid (now missing). All-over greenish-black glaze; unglazed collar. From the collection of the Kenosha Public Museum.

he was compelled to stay at home, or to be hauled about in a two-horse wagon. In 1839 he made a contract with a tailor to furnish him a suit of clothes for \$50 - the cloth was to cost \$5. Upon measurement it took 12 yards of cloth. So the tailor lost \$10 [for the material] and the making. The tailor states that three men. each weighing over two hundred pounds, put the coat on, buttoned it around them, and walked across the square at Lexington. ... it took thirteen and one-half yards of flax cloth, a yard wide, to make him a coat ... sixteen yards of cambric for his shroud ... twenty-four yards of black velvet to cover his coffin; one hundred and twenty-five feet of plank to make his coffin.²

Chadwick married Scottish-born Jane Grey, described as "a large woman" (over six feet tall) on May 23, 1842, and soon after was discovered working as a brick and stone mason in New York City by showman Phineas T. Bamum. By 1845 the couple appeared as "*The Scotch Giant and Giantess*" or simply as "*The Randalls*" in various exhibitions and eventually at Bamum's "*American Museum*" attraction, where Chadwick appeared dressed in a kilt and tall bearskin hat to accentuate his size.

Family records say that the Giant and Giantess were both 7 feet, 3 1/2 inches tall and weighed 450 pounds. Bamum's ads credit them with "Combined height of over 14 feet, combined weight of over 700 pounds."³

Later that same year, Chadwick and his wife appeared on the streets of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, reportedly to join her relatives in the area.

The Scotch Giant and giantess are in town. He is 7 1/2 and she 6 1/2 ft. high.⁴



This picture, a daguerrotype, is the only one known to exist of Wisconsin's "Scotch Giants," Jane Grey Chadwick and her husband, Frederick W. R. Chadwick. Both were more than seven feet tall and lived in Lafayette County when they weren't traveling for circuses.

I remember ... the Scotch giant, who worked in the lead mines, and [as] a teamster driving two yokes of oxen. He was over seven feet tall and big in proportion. He would carry a pig of lead in his hand as he walked along that would weigh fifty to sixty pounds [standard weight was 70 pounds] and would use that to block the wheels of his wagon when the oxen were resting on a hill. We called it 'chalking' a wagon. When [he] would start his teams again after a rest, he would not throw the pig of lead back on the wagon but would walk along carrying it in one hand.⁵

... my father's nearest neighbor was Randall, a Scotch giant, seven feet six inches tall, who in the summer time

traveled with Barnum's circus. Randall lived between Mineral Point and Platteville... Most giants are monsters - not well proportioned; but he was a splendidly proportioned fellow and although weighing 420 pounds, had no extra avoirdupois tissue. From his

thumb to the end of his little finger he would span thirteen and a half inches. One day he came to my mother and wanted to get a setting of duck's eggs. He was bare-headed, and when she asked him what he had to carry them in, he said that one of his hands was sufficient - and indeed he did carry that whole setting home in his hand. Randall had bookish tastes, and many of his friends gave him books. Among others he had Rollin's Ancient History, which I borrowed from him and read during that summer when I was watching Brown's wheatfield [against grazing cattle, 1846]

In winter time, when the circus business was shut down, and Randall had nothing to do in his own line, he used to haul lead. He would load up the metal with his bare hands, picking up pigs [or ingots of lead] weighing from seventy to seventy-five pounds, and easily piling them up.⁶

In building [split rail] fences he picked up a rail in either hand as readily as if they were hoop-poles, and he would swing up from the ground over his head with perfect ease a big plow, poising it as one would a club. Barrels of whiskey he was wont to lift by the chine with his fingers.⁷

The Large Man. During the past week we were favored with a visit by the Indian giant, so called, though why, we are at a loss to understand; for there is certainly very little, if any Indian about him. He looks to us precisely like a Mulatto ... He certainly is a large man, however, measuring some seven feet two inches in height. ... the Scotch giant who was through this country some six or seven years ago, was considerable [sic] taller, as we remember him ...⁸



Figure 2 Building used by George and John Hammett for the pottery. It was originally built by Randall Chadwick in 1846 or 1847. Written on the back of this photo in pencil: "Cottage formerly lived in by Randall Chadwick and wife Jane... Sam James in doorway, his son Russel at left." From the collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Chadwick bought 155 acres of land in sec. 30 of the Town of Kendall in La Fayette County on Dec. 4, 1845, located diagonally across the road from The Cottage Inn stagecoach stop. Here brick and stone mason Chadwick built a small stone building "With his own hands in 'round 1846 or 1847"⁹ which is believed to have been his earliest residence on the farm:

[In 1934] it is an old stone building. Was in Fair state of preservation until struck by a violent wind within a year. It blew part of the roof off and shook the building up so much that it is not safe for hogs any more.... The Home of the Pottery Works I only wish you could see the giants [sic] work in laying these stones. and the chimney they built right in the wall. As a rule the large heavy stones were laid nearer the ground, decreasing in size and weight as the height increased. The stringers [ceiling joists] are fair sized loggs [sic], not large, and the rafters fair sized poles. Logs [joists] and [rafter] poles nicely hewed on two sides Before the wind struck it milch cows were kept in it. The stanchions are still there.¹⁰

The 1847 Wisconsin Territorial Census enumerates four white males and three white females living in the Chadwick household, suggesting hired help or helpful relatives operated the farm while Chadwick focused on his teamster and circus activities.¹¹

Chadwick's brother-in-law potter George Hammett and wife Charlotte arrived near Cottage Inn and in March of 1853 bought a quarter section (40 acres) of land in the Town of Elk Grove. Hammett had been

temporarily or seasonally working as a potter in Galena, living on Gratiot Street there. The A.M. Sackett Pottery was located on Gratiot Street in Galena and is probably where George Hammett worked.¹² On Sept. 8, 1853, Hammett purchased 6 acres of land from Chadwick at Cottage Inn which fronted on "*the Main Traveled Road that runs from Galena to Mineral Point*" and is believed to have included the small stone building for \$500.¹³

Death of the Scotch Giant [July 18. 1854]

*Died at La Porte, Ind., on the 19th inst. [sic], of apoplexy, Mr. F.W.R. Chadwick, better known as the 'Scotch Giant'. Mr. Chadwick resided near Cottage Inn, La Fayette county, in this state, but at the time of his death was traveling with a show in connection with Franconi's Hippodrome.*¹⁴

Death of the Scotch Giant

*The La Porte (Indiana) Whig of the 19th ultimo, contains the news that the well known Scotch Giant who has traveled through the country for some years, for the purpose of exhibition, died in that place the day previous. He had stopped at the Teagarden House, ... with his wife ... somewhat overcome with the heat and dust. During the evening he asked for some water and immediately fell dead upon the floor. His remains were taken to his residence in Wisconsin.*¹⁵

*While Chadwick and his wife lived at Cottage Inn he worked as a teamster and stone mason. He died ... in 1854 at the age of 42 years and was buried in a cemetery at the Cottage [Inn]. His bones were later moved to the cemetery in Belmont. His jawbone, which would encompass a normal grown man's face with room to spare, was purloined by one of the attendants.*¹⁶

*[George] Hammett knew [F.W.R.] Chadwick for the past 30 years and knew Chadwick's mother when they had lived in Devonshire, England. Chadwick's father had died many years earlier... Charlotte Hammett, wife of George Hammett, was the only surviving sister of F.W.R. Chadwick; her sister Elizabeth had not been heard from for 26 years and was presumed dead; brother Hedman disappeared at sea 24 years earlier ...*¹⁷

Following the Giant's death in 1854, it appears that his sister inherited his farm, which then was operated by her potter husband. Hammett converted Chadwick's former stone building for use as a pottery workshop, and opened for business in 1856:

POTTERY!



THE subscriber having just started a Pottery at Cottage Inn, LaFayette Co., would respectfully inform the citizens of Mineral Point and surrounding country, that he is prepared to manufacture, and will keep constantly on hand—



Butter Pots from 1 to 6 gallons.

Churns, from 3 to 6 gallons.

Preserve Jars, from 1-2 to 3 gallons.

Milk Pans, from 1-2 to 2 gallons.

Pitchers of various sizes.

Flower Pots “ “

Stove Crocks, &c., &c.

which will be sold on reasonable terms.

Orders punctually filled, and the wares packed in the best manner for transportation.

Please call and examine his stock

GEORGE HAMMATT.

Cottage Inn, LaFayette co, Wis. Dec. 13, 1856. 6m49*

Figure 3 Announcement in the Mineral Point Press about the newly started pottery.

[written 1934] Met a man yesterday past 80 years, an old neighbor of Hammett's and learned something of interest. He told me that when one wished anything made in this line, he just went to Hammett's and described the article as best he could and they went to work while you stood there and saw the Pottery worker make it, accepting your suggestions as he went along ...¹⁸

[In 1934] You asked as to the price of the Pottery [To my surprise] on meeting an old neighbor of the Hammett's ... to have her answer at once as to the price. The fixed price was ten cents a gallon. I suppose the minium [sic] price for any piece of Pottery would be ten cents and from there up it was sold at the fixed price as stated.¹⁹



Figure 4 The waster dump yielded these broken freshwater clam shells used for shaping rims and polished beef bones used for smoothing.

Hammett divided his time between the substantial farm (153 acres valued at \$3,260) and the pottery, though he called himself a potter. In 1860 he was 50 years old; wife Charlotte was 47, both born in England with a personal estate of \$500. Irish immigrant Andrew McElhalan, 31, boarded with them as a farm laborer. Theirs appears to have been a cash crop form of agriculture, albeit modest in return. Four horses were available for tilling just over 100 acres of improved land, but they owned only one cow and one pig for home milk and meat consumption, in all valued at \$218. They harvested 200 bu. of Indian corn, 40 bu. of Irish potatoes, and 10 tons

of hay, all crops which would find a ready market at the nearby Cottage Inn. Fifty pounds of butter from their single cow may have been consumed at home, but likely a portion of that also found its way to the inn.²⁰

Son John, 26, also listed his occupation as potter. He was married to Jane, 27, born in New York, and they had sons George, 5, and Alonzo, age 4. Alfanso Collins, 18, a day laborer, boarded with them. A nearby resident later noted that the pottery was a family affair:

... Mr. [George] Hammett, Maker of Pottery, his wife Charlotte ... and their two sons. John, a good Pottery Maker and George, a helper.²¹

Potter Hammett became embroiled in a dispute with neighbors Jones in 1861, in which he

<i>complains for the pasturing of two cows at \$5.00 each</i>	<i>\$10.00</i>
<i>damages for burning fence rails</i>	<i>1.50</i>
<i>witness fees</i>	<i><u>.75</u></i>
	<i>\$12.25</i>

The case was decided in favor of Hammett by a local Justice of the Peace but was appealed by the defendants Jones to circuit court. The suit, which was initially settled July 15, 1863, listed costs of \$8.32 in clerk fees, \$10.00 lawyer costs, \$27.20 in witness fees, and a \$1.00 court fee. Both Hammett and Jones 'Made their Mark' instead of signing their names, suggesting both parties could neither read nor write, but the court reversed the Justice's ruling, instead finding in favor of Jones.

Shullsburg, Dec. 2nd, 1861.

Received of George Hammet [sic] a receipt given to Christopher Boyer for 55 gall. Earthen ware at 8 cents pr. gal. \$4.40 of same being in full [payment] for Justice fees in the case of George Hammett vs. Samuel Jones and George Hammett vs. William Jones. [signed] Henry H. Ensign. ²²

[Ensign was the Justice of the Peace who decided the original complaint in Hammett's favor, for which service the potter was charged a fee of \$11, only to lose on appeal. Apparently his tussle with justice cost Hammett \$69.77, at least part of which he paid off in pottery ware.]

There was a man who teamed with the giant and he said he never knew a finer man, very strong and most accommodating. In this way he became friendly with the Hammetts. Many years after the Giant's death and the death of Mrs. Hammett occurring [sic], when Mr. Hammett remarried, they called on ... a Justice of the Peace to perform the Ceremony Before starting Mr. Hammett inform[ed] the Justice that he had no cash but would give him plenty of pottery. A son of the Justice told me of it recently.²³

In 1870, George Hammett no longer appeared as a resident of the Town of Kendall, though son John (37) remained there at Cottage Inn Post Office with wife Jane (38), son John (15) and Estella (6). Both males reported their occupation as "laborer."²⁴ Their fortunes were modest, with but 2 acres of land valued at \$400, three horses and one milk cow valued at \$395, 50 pounds of butter churned and \$40 worth of animals slaughtered in the last year, for \$50 total value of annual farm production. Of the pottery at Cottage Inn nothing more is heard.

Other writers have stated that the Hammett pottery operated from 1845 through 1879. They may be right, but this author could find no evidence for operation beyond opening in 1856 and paying his court costs with pottery in 1861. (The apocryphal story about paying for his second marriage in 1882 with pottery does not reveal the location of that event.) Others have claimed that Randall Chadwick worked in the pottery with Hammett, but as the Giant died two years before the pottery opened this is probably not the case. Recent writers claimed that the lead ingots Chadwick carried to chock his wagon wheels weighed 300, 400, nay, all the way up to 800 pounds apiece, when the standard in the lead trade was 70 pounds each (that's still a bunch to carry uphill in one hand). One can readily appreciate how the Paul Bunyan tales got started.

A biographical sketch of John Hammett appears in a Missouri local history of 1884. It appears to suffer from indefinite antecedents, vague use of pronouns and a jumbled chronology, but here it is, the good, the bad, and the ugly of local history:

John H. Hammett

Mr. Hammett was born in England, July 5, 1833, the son of George and Charlotte (Sanders) Hammett of Scotland. He moved to Canada with his father's family, and entered into the pottery business in April 1847 [three months shy of his 14th birthday]. After a time he moved to Milwaukee where he remained about two years. and then went to Galena, Ill. and lived for ten years. He was married March 12, 1854, to Miss Jane Pardy, of New York; she was a niece of Col. Robert J. Ingersoll. To this union was born three children, two of whom, Charles and Ella, are now dead; the other is George Hammett. Mrs. Hammett died in January. 1878. Mr. Hammett was afterward married March 26, 1882 to Mrs. Caroline Rhodes, daughter of Luke and Mary (Beardsley) Cheney of New York. After marriage. Mr. Hammett located at Galena, Illinois, and engaged in the pottery business for seven years. He then moved to Terrapin Ridge, Illinois, from thence to Iowa. and afterwards to Lafayette County, Wisconsin. He later returned to Galena, where he remained six years, and then moved to his farm.

Mr. Hammett enlisted in the Federal army, October 6, 1861, in Co. D, 45th Illinois infantry, under Col. Smith. He was in 27 engagements of the war, including the battles of Shiloh, Vicksburg, Ft. Donelson, Corinth. Duck Creek, Atlanta, Kingston. and Bentonville. He was mustered out at Louisville, Kentucky in the grand muster out of 1865. He was wounded at the battle of Kingston. He has been a prominent member of the Grand Army of the Republic since the end of the war. Mrs. Hammett has been a member of the M[ethodist] E[piscopal] Church since 1881. Mr. Hammett owns 200 acres of land valued at \$5,000. He is successfully engaged in the pottery business; bought his present pottery works in 1881.²⁵

During the early 1970's the author had the privilege to surface-collect shards from the Hammett pottery site. At that time the Chadwick building corners and partial foundation walls outlined the pottery's shape and location. The floor was of sand-molded brick stood on edge, laid in a herringbone pattern. The surrounding ground was thick with shards being rooted up by hogs confined in that area. In 2019 a muddy horse corral occupied this site and the pigs, the shards, and the foundation stones no longer are to be seen. A second area of shard concentration now is covered by a metal garage and machine shed. Piles of glaze-covered brick and shards were pointed out to me in 1974 by the resident farmer, who said he gave up trying to pull a plow through that field because of the mass of brick and broken pottery found there. This concentration may have been removed and destroyed when a gravel pit was opened at the site during highway construction ca. 2000.



Figure 5 Primitive pipe bowl, hand formed and unglazed found at the Hammett Pottery site. It may have been discarded because it was burnt during firing.

The shards are remarkable, with some of the most distinctive rims and deep profiles seen anywhere in the state with glaze colors closely resembling Galena pottery ware. Two types of jug tops were found, one a simple blob top resembling Galena jugs but without the 'string tie' groove, while others have deep compound turnings formed with a rib. A few enigmatic iron tools were found, as well as broken freshwater clam shells used for turning rims and polished beef bones used as smoothing ribs. Much of the ware is stamped with capacity numerals or incised by band. Two fragments of coggle-wheel decoration also were found, along with some dipped or brushed in clay slip. One particular piece of interest is a "penny clay" pipe bowl with a very short stem formed over a man's thumb (you can

see the thumbnail imprint) which was overburnt in the kiln and discarded. (One would fit a hollow stick or chicken leg bone into the short pipe stem for use and did not have to worry about breaking off a fragile clay stem.) The clay is documented to have been dug on a farm a half-mile east of Belmont Mound, and the glazing material, said to be of "partial zinc composition" was bought at a mine 3 miles south and 1 mile east of the kiln. Two zinc ores. sphalerite and smithsonite (called "blackjack" and "drybone" by the miners) are found mingled with galena or lead ore in the Mineral Point Mining District. Walnut-sized lumps of galena ore were found mingled with pot shards around the Chadwick foundation. Use of local ores is borne out by the wide range of colors seen in Hammett's kiln waste, much of it bright green and orange with yellow and red spots, some pieces melted into black slag by a kiln gone bad. He

threw stacking rings for the kiln, cut into segments, and fired for use as stilts and wedges to support ware during firing.

A small but fine collection of Hammett pottery is at the Wisconsin Historical Society in Madison (in storage but pictured on their website). These remarkable examples were collected by Atty. James Dolan of Platteville during the 1930's, and include a 5-inch jar, 6- and 8-inch jugs, two 2-gallon pots of different design, a large, handled crock (misidentified as by Hermann of Milwaukee), and a stunning demijohn of about 5-gallon size with lug handles on the sides, a massive jug-top opening (without handle) and yellow-green glaze. The Historical Museum also has part of a maple boot last used to make

Chadwick's giant footwear; the author took this to a shoemaker who measured it and said in today's sizes, the boot would measure a size 27. The Mineral Point Room collections in the public library of that city contain the Chadwick family Bible and photograph of the Giant and his wife. Much of Hammett's pottery has been sold over the years as 'Galena' for the high prices the latter commands. A practiced eye can discern subtle differences in shape, and a shard collection pictured on this website shows a range of stamped capacity marks, jug tops, and handle designs.²⁶ The similarities are understandable given that Hammett worked in a Galena pottery before starting his own.



Figure 6 Stacking rings dug at the pottery site.



Figure 7 Walnut sized lump of Galena found among pottery fragments.



Figure 8 This jug stands 6 1/2" tall. Bought at auction in 1984, its very elderly owner said that its very battered condition was because her grandpa used it as a canteen when he worked in the mines. The distinctive lip on this jug seems to have been used only on smaller sized Hammett jugs. The author has seen one in a one-gallon size. Similar small jugs in the collections of the Wisconsin Historical Museum and Kenosha Public Museum are pictured on this web site. From the collection of Mark Knipping.

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- ¹ Life in Cornwall, Vol. I, p. 58.
- ² *Evergreen City Times*, Sheboygan, Sept. 19, 1857, p. 1.
- ³ *The Capital Times*, Madison. Dec. 13.1952-
- ⁴ *Mineral Point Democrat*, May 16, 1845, p. 2.
- ⁵ Paul Noble's Reminiscences quoted in Southwestern Wisconsin, John G. Gregory, 1932, Vol. I, p. 604.
- ⁶ "Reminiscences of Early Grant County" in Wisconsin Historical Society Proceedings, 1909, p. 239.
- ⁷ *The Madison Democrat*, Aug. 14, 1920.
- ⁸ *The Whitewater Register*, June 19, 1858.
- ⁹ Letter, Attorney James Dolan of Platteville to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Nov. 16, 1934.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ 1847 Wisconsin Territorial Census (late), Lafayette County, Town of Belmont, p. 65.
- ¹² Pottery of the Galena Area by Wayne B. Horney
- ¹³ Lafayette County Register of Deeds, March 23, 1853, and Sept. 8, 1853.
- ¹⁴ *The Mineral Point Tribune*, July 27, 1854, p. 2.
- ¹⁵ *The Green Bay Advocate*, Aug. 10, 1854, p. 3.
- ¹⁶ *The Belmont Success*, Historical Edition, Oct. 23, 1936, p. 5.
- ¹⁷ Lafayette County Records of the Probate Court, Record 1559.
- ¹⁸ Letter, James Dolan to State Historical Society, Nov. 16, 1934.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ 1860 Manuscript Census, Lafayette Co., Town Belmont, p. 109.
- ²¹ Letter, James Dolan to State Historical Society, Nov. 16, 1934.
- ²² Lafayette County Clerk of Courts Records, Box 44. The original complaint and subsequent reversal are contained in the same box.
- ²³ Letter, James Dolan to State Historical Society, Nov. 16, 1934.
- ²⁴ 1870 Manuscript Census, Lafayette Co., p. 303.
- ²⁵ History of Marion County, Missouri. E. F. Perkins, St. Louis, Vol. 2, 1884. One might assume that "his farm" and the 1881 pottery were located in Missouri. "A rolling stone gathers no moss."
- ²⁶ *Cottage Inn Shards from the Hammett Pottery* www.madefromclay.org