

MEDALTA'S PITCHERS

This issue of the newsletter differs somewhat from previous ones in that it largely deals with a single topic, Medalta's Pitchers. In past issues I have covered a specific type of pitcher such as the ship style (Issue 5) and the Elite (Issue 7), and under new decorations or advertising other styles, but I have never taken the opportunity to discuss the evolution of Medalta's pitchers.

This article will do that, presenting the pitchers more or less in chronological order from the earliest ones to the latest. In addition it will be necessary to limit the discussion of each as space simply will not allow me to show the full range of decorations, and I will only be able to give a sampling of the named or advertising pieces. It was my intention to discuss the related items such as hot water pots and the hotel china pieces, but after putting it all to paper that too was not possible due to space limitations.

Basically, this article covers the styles of pitchers that were sold for home use, as opposed to restaurant use, and most of these were ones that came in a variety of sizes. The majority was made using yellow-burning fat clay, but others were made using the grey stoneware clay and, in later years, the white burning semi-porcelain clay.

In discussing the pitchers, I have indicated what Medalta called the style of pitcher whenever it was known from, invoice records, catalogues, letters or what have you. Medalta's name for the pitcher is given in quotation marks, and where the name is not known, it is not placed in quotation marks.

"Cane Pitcher" (1922-1926)

1, 1.5, 2 & 3-pints

The "Cane Pitcher" is advertised and illustrated in Medalta's 1924 catalogue as being "Glazed in a rich yellow color. Sizes 1, 1½, 2 and 3 pint." Although the first record of this pitcher is in the 1922 price list, it likely came into production much earlier and perhaps even as early as 1916. From an illustrated ad we know that the parent company, Medicine Hat Pottery Co. Ltd. (1912-1914) made at least two styles of pitches, and while the ad is not sharp, one of the pitchers appears to have a general tankard shape.

The Cane Pitcher looks very similar to the one that replaced it in 1926. The main difference is in the shape of the handle and particularly the pronounced spur at the top of the handle, but from

the few samples that I have seen, it appears that the spout is also more delicate than its replacement. The other difference is that the size is not impressed into the bottom of this early style while it is on the later one.

How do you tell a Medalta pitcher from ones made by other firms? I really have no idea. The only reason I know of the differences at all is from the catalogue illustration, and the fact that I was able to record two examples dating to about 1922 in the possession of a descendent of Mr. U.S. Grant, one of the plant's owners in 1922. One of these pitchers was unusual as it was glazed in a light blue, quite similar to what Medalta later called helio.

That this pitcher was replaced by the new tankard pitcher in 1925 or 1926 is inferred from a letter dated 13 July 1926 that states: "We observe that you have sent us some two quart Brown Pitchers, straight-tall, similar to your old style Yellow Pitchers." We will examine that new style tankard pitcher after discussing the Brown Pitcher.

"Brown Pitcher" (1924-1932)

1, 2 & 3-pints

This pitcher, also illustrated in the 1924 Medalta catalogue, remained in production for almost ten years, a testament to its sturdiness if not its stylistic appeal. It was made from stoneware clay which was covered with a rich Rockingham (dark brown) glaze, and it came in 1, 2 and 3-pint sizes.

Because it is an early item, perhaps even made before 1924, it is not found too often marked with

Medalta's identifying name. The 1, 2 and 3-pint sizes of this pitcher have been recorded bearing the round format G.9 stamp, and the only other oxide stamp seen so far is the small maple leaf stamp G.23 on a 1-pint pitcher.

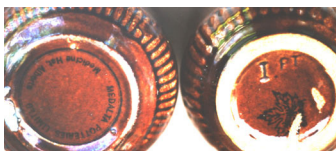


Contents

MEDALTA'S PITCHERS	1
PACIFIC GREAT EASTERN	10
Questions and Answers	10
FOLLOW-UP:	10

The size of the pitcher is indicated by an impressed mark found on the bottom of the pitcher. The 1 and 2-pint sizes include the PT abbreviation while the 3-pint one is a numeral alone.

This impressed numeral is one of the means that I use



to identify Medalta's brown pitcher from others, probably English ones, that were available in the marketplace. All examples of pitchers which I have seen with a Medalta stamp have had the size impressed in the bottom above the center, and therefore I have drawn the conclusion that most, if not all, not marked as to size are not Medalta's.

The other difference that stands out is that the ribbing on the bands at the top and bottom of the pitcher is much thicker on Medalta's pitchers than on unmarked examples. In other words the ribbing on Medalta's pitchers while fewer in number is thicker and more dominant than on other pitchers.



One example of this pitcher was actually finished in a royal blue glaze, but I doubt that anyone will ever find another one. The owner's father was Mr. U.S. Grant, one of Medalta's owners in the 1920s, and this pitcher was one of many unusual and often experimental items brought home from the plant.

The Medalta Review

Editor: Ronald M. Getty
216 Maddock Way N.E.,
Calgary, Alta T2A 3X3 Canada
Phone: 403-273-1132
gettyr@nucleus.com

Photographer: Collectors
Design & Layout: Tony Hansen

Published & Distributed by:
The Friends of Medalta Society
703 Wood Street SE
Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8S9
Phone or FAX (403) 529-1070
Dianne Finch, Chairman
info@medalta.org

The Medalta Review is published quarterly in the interest of keeping collectors of Alberta made pottery informed on newly found products, current prices, history of the potteries and other aspects relating to the Alberta pottery industry. Each issue includes a Hycroft and Medalta section. Other columns will bring you reports regarding Alberta Potteries (Wyatt and Yuill), Athabasca Potteries, Medicine Hat Potteries (Little Chief), Medalta (1966) Ltd., Provincial Industrial Enterprises (PIE) or Sunburst Ceramics, and our question and answer column will reply to inquiries from our readers and museum visitors.

Subscription is \$20.00 per year. Back issues are available from the Friends of Medalta at \$5.00 each plus postage and handling.

Copyrighted by the Friends of Medalta Society. Reproduction of any part of this document is unlawful without written permission.

CANE PITCHERS



Glazed in a rich yellow color.
Sizes 1, 1.5, 2 and 3 pint

BROWN PITCHERS



Glazed with a rich Rockingham glaze.
Sizes 1, 2 and 3 pint.

"Tankard Pitcher" (1926-1932) 1, 1.5, 2 & 3-pints

Effectively this is the same pitcher as the one marketed as the Cane Pitcher. The main outward difference is in the shape of the handle, which no longer has the pronounced spur at the top. New moulds must have been made as the size marking is now found as an impression on the bottom of the pitcher. The marking is a plain number and it is found above the center of the pitcher's bottom.

The sizes remained the same at 1, 1.5, 2 and 3-pints, but by 1930 they had started advertising availability in colours of green, blue or yellow (cane). The common colour found in the marketplace is the yellow one, and to date I have only seen a few glazed in solid blue or green. Several brown pitchers have shown up though, and they could well be from the order of 3000 pitchers placed by Eaton's of Winnipeg for its Made-in-Canada Spotlight Sale.

But these plain solid colours were nothing compared to what was on the horizon. Medalta's artwares were about to hit the market, and this style of pitcher was destined to be the first truly decorative pitcher that you could acquire for your breakfast table. And from the number of decorated pitchers that can be found in collections, they were very well received.



The common glazed patterns found on this style of pitcher include a pair of silhouetted owls in a tree, a mill (blades behind a building), a cottage and a sailboat. The rarely seen finishes are the brown, fuzzy owl and plums. The detailed owl and plum designs are accented in gold, and for that



reason Medalta's production cost was increased four fold. The following taken from the 1930 stock ledger provides a comparison for the different decorations as well as plain ones.

size	plain	owl/mill	gold owl/fruit	quantity
1-pint	\$1.25	2.00	4.80	per doz.
1.5-pint	1.50	2.40	5.60	per doz.
2-pint	1.90	2.80	6.40	per doz.
3-pint	2.40	?	?	per doz.

The 1931 stock ledger shows that the cottage and ship decorations were the same price as the owl and mill ones.

The 1-pint pitcher was the item chosen for the Ogilvie venture in 1928, and while I do not know the exact cost it was around 10 cents per pitcher. These pitchers were not marked with a Medalta stamp.

The 1-pint decorated tankard pitcher was used a few years later, probably in 1930 or 1931, as another Ogilvie premium. The number of merchants taking part in the giveaway and the quantities ordered were probably small judging by the few pitchers that have been preserved in collections.

The hand-decorated pitcher was also a popular general advertising premium for the years 1930 and 1931, particularly in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. So far four Manitoba and seven Saskatchewan merchants have been recorded. In this group of eleven you can find four owl, one cottage, five mill and one sailboat decorations and seven were in the 1-pint size and four in the 1.5-pint size.

Generally speaking this seems to have been a sound pitcher well accepted by the homemaker. In fact, I only ran across one complaint in the Medalta letters. It was from Medalta's Toronto agent who in a letter dated September 7, 1926, stated:

"We have just received a small shipment of the above, [1 pt. Plain Brown Pitchers] which are similar to your Yellow Pitchers, and observe that they do not hold one pint. We think that you should look into this!"

I presume Medalta looked into this matter and corrected it, but you never know, as making all new moulds would be an expensive proposition. If you are a pitcher collector perhaps you could check the measurements of each size and for each of the different pitchers that Medalta made over the years. I wonder just how accurate they were?

"Barrel Pitcher" (1930-1938) 1-quart

This was a popular style of pitcher judging by the length of time it was in production and by the numbers that you see for sale and in collections. It was

sturdy and it was also one of the few pitchers made by Medalta that was listed in one size only. An undated illustrated sheet dating to about 1932 stated: "Glazed Brown, Blue or Green. One size only, 1



quart."

But in fact there were probably two distinct sizes of this pitcher, and for sure there were two distinct moulds. The earliest variety is the one that is marked with the numeral "3" on the bottom as well as the impressed M.1.b Medalta stamp. It is both smaller in diameter and height when compared to the later variety. The later variety is impressed with Medalta's M.22 stamp and the size indication has been deleted from the mould.

I think it is safe to say that the first and smaller variety, or the one marked with the M.1.b stamp, dates from 1930-1932. The larger variety dates onward from 1932 until production ceased, and the stamp found on it is the M.22 stamp. The example shown here is rarely seen as it has an additional oxide stamping saying "PRODUCT OF CANADA".

As to colours, you can find this pitcher in cane (yellow) as well as the ones listed above, but brown and green are the most frequently seen colours. Blue is the colour that is seldom seen, and since the stock ledger stops listing it after 1931, blue may have been discontinued. As well, plain cane is not seen very often, and I must admit that the examples seen so far are not very attractive.

I have observed one other colour variation, which I thought, was fairly attractive. It too was cane or yellow, but in addition the hoops around the staves of the barrel had been accented with a light brown. To me, this example looked more like a barrel than the common green or brown pitchers.

And as a final note I should mention that I have not yet recorded any advertising examples of this pitcher. It would have been difficult and perhaps expensive, but not impossible, to apply a merchant's name thanks to the detail of the staves and hoops.

"Ship Pitcher" (1932-1938) 1, 1.5, 2 & 3-pints

This style of pitcher was selected to replace the once popular Tankard Pitcher. I suspect the name "Ship Pitcher" came into use due to the popularity of decorating this pitcher with the sailboat design, but who knows. If it has the appearance of a ship, it totally escapes me.



Its introduction is documented from the 1932 stock ledger where it is listed as the new shape pitcher. As far as I can tell it was discontinued by 1938 as it does not seem to be mentioned in the Medalta letters after that date and there are no advertising pieces dated after December 1937. The only definite reference I have is to getting rid of old stock in October 1938.

"The following is the stock of ship pitchers, which we have in the old warehouse. Mr. Cumming wishes you to get in touch with Mr. Easman of the Hudson's Bay Co. and sell the lot at a straight price of 15 cents net."



The sizes and Medalta name appear as impressed stampings on the bottom of the pitchers. The Medalta name is seldom found as an oxide stamp and therefore it is difficult to date items more precisely than within the given range. Occasionally the stamping is very hard to read or missing but I am sure it is due only to a well-worn mould or a heavy glaze. The size is not just a numeral but is followed by the pint abbreviation PT.

As was usual for the 1930s the pitcher could be obtained in solid colours of yellow, green or blue and a variety of decorations including the owls in tree, cottage, mill and sailboat. Most of the decorations can be found in handpainted or stencilled varieties. In one instance, the usual mill was replaced with the classic dome-shaped Dutch windmill with its four large blades.



Once again this pitcher was a popular advertising premium. Ogilvie's merchants used it in the one-pint size, and so far over 20 different stores have been recorded. The owls in tree was the most popular decoration, followed by the mill. The cottage, sailboat and Dutch windmill were seldom used but at least one of each has been recorded. I do not know for sure what year Ogilvie used this pitcher but it was likely 1932-1935.



The ship pitcher was also a popular general advertising item and so far it has been recorded for over 25 merchants. Most were general stores but an elevator company, a dairy, a plumbing firm, two hardware stores and three garages also used it. The dates of use for this group of businesses cover the period 1934 to 1938. The most commonly selected sizes were the 1 and 1.5-pint but at least two firms used the larger 2-pint pitcher. So far, I have recorded no use of the 3-pint pitcher as an advertising premium.

"Corrugated Pitcher" (1935-1938)

1, 1.5, 2 & 3-pints

This line of pitchers was introduced about the same time as the corrugated mixing bowls. It has both the Medalta name and the size impressed on the bottom of the pitcher. The 1, 1.5, 2 and 3-pint size markings are little more than a plain numeral, but some sizes are followed by what can best be described as a quotation mark. The marking certainly does not resemble "Pt." as far as I can tell.



The colours were solid and you could find the usual crimson, helio, green or



cane. It appears that you could get any size in any colour but I have seen so few 3-pint sizes that I cannot be sure. So far that size has been seen in green only. Once again the plain cane or yellow

does not appear too often, likely due to its lack of appeal.

I am not aware of any hand-painted, stencil or decal decorations on this style of pitcher.

Sometimes Medalta bent over backwards to help its customers. One such instance was recorded in a letter dated June 17, 1938, sent to the Medalta factory from its Calgary office.

"There was a young lad in the office today, very anxious to get a one pint corrugated pitcher for making up a set. We have none here, and although he tried every store in town, he was unable to get one. Please, therefore, give one of these pitchers to the Medicine Hat Cartage driver, so that same arrives here tomorrow night. The driver can bring this up loose in the cabin of the car, and when this boy calls for same he can make a nominal charge. Please be sure that this is a one pint helio corrugated pitcher - no other color will do."

I wish the letter recorded the age of this lad, but I imagine he was not too old.

This letter may also be an indication as to when this pitcher was discontinued. Perhaps it was not being made any more, accounting for why the lad had difficulty finding it in any of the Calgary stores. In any event it is seldom mentioned in any of the Medalta papers after 1938, and when it is mentioned, it is unclear as to whether or not it was still being made.

"Cyma Pitcher" (1937-ca.1940)

1, 1.5 & 2-pints

This style of pitcher was produced using the yellow-burning fat clay. So far I have not recorded any that were made using the white semi-porcelain clays developed by Ed. Phillipson. It is not mentioned very often in the Medalta papers, and for that reason there are some aspects about it that remain in question. The known sizes include the 1, 1.5 and 2-pint pitchers, but the large one is not seen very often.



The pitcher was presumably introduced in 1937, as it is not mentioned in the stock ledger for 1936 or in the few letters that have survived from that year. It is not even mentioned in the 1937 letters, but as it was used to produce a royalty collectible marking the coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on May 12, 1937, we can at least infer that it dates to the early part of 1937.

Even its end date is not clear, but for now I have placed it at 1940 as some sizes were still being produced then. One letter suggests that Medalta intended to replace it in 1938 (see letter quoted under Elite Pitcher), but for whatever reason that never happened. I must presume that there was a continuing demand for this product.

There were several new features introduced with this pitcher that Medalta had not done before. It was the first one, which actually had its name, Cyma, impressed into the bottom of the pitcher, along with the size and the Medalta name. The size like others before it was the numeral followed by the "Pt." abbreviation. The name Cyma is in upper and lower case script style lettering.



It was the first squat pitcher that Medalta produced. It looks more like a gravy boat to me than a milk or cream pitcher although it was marketed as such. The Associated Dairies Ltd. in Vancouver ordered sets for a promotion consisting of one 1.5-pint Cyma pitcher in mahogany brown and six cereal bowls in assorted colours. Apparently the cost to the Associated Dairies was \$.845 per set as given in a document dated May 9, 1940.

The pitcher was also cast which may be why Phillipson wanted to replace it. Pouring slip into a plaster mould and waiting for it to dry was certainly more time consuming than other manufacturing methods, but it did have several advantages. The form could be more ornate with fancier curves and the walls could be much thinner, and they were. If you compare this pitcher to many of the other styles that Medalta made, it is thinner walled.

In January 1938, Ogilvie Flour Mills of Medicine Hat asked about prices of stamped 1-pint Cyma pitchers and were advised that they could be supplied in a plain yellow glaze at 18 cents each. A month or so later, Ogilvie's was advised that white lined, with red band and decorated with G38/4, Cyma pitchers could be provided at 26 cents each. And Ogilvie did purchase some Cyma pitchers, if not this year within a year or two, as at least two Ogilvie/Merchant pitchers have shown up in collections.

"Basket Weave Pitcher" (1938-ca.1945) .5, 1, 1.5 & 2-pints

This is the only pitcher made by Medalta to which a style number was assigned, but even though it was given No. 84 it was more commonly referred to as the B/W Pitcher in the Medalta records.



While we do not have a firm date for the introduction of this product, it was either late 1937 or early 1938 as indicated by a letter dated July 2, 1938.

"These pitchers must be as described, that is with the basket weave part in helio, crimson or green and the rest of the pitcher in cane. ...The original sample which Mr. Cunliffe submitted to us last winter was in two colors and that is the type of article required."

By March 1938 you start to find orders for the basket weave pitcher, and although the records are skimpy you still find this pitcher being sold in 1945.

As typical for mould-made pitchers of this period, the style number and size are impressed in the bottom of the pitcher. You do find "Medalta" impressed as well but it seems to be quite erratic. You can find many examples in various sized pitchers where the Medalta name is either absent or perhaps just obliterated. On the other hand most pitchers, even the ones with the impressed Medalta name, are well marked with an oxide stamp.



The sizes were not the usual ones but rather the 1/2, 1, 1.5 and 2-pint pitchers. Medalta's larger 3-pint size for which there was little demand had been dropped while the smaller 1/2-pint size had been added to keep the pitcher as a four piece set. In this style of pitcher the size is usually followed with the pint abbreviation "PT."

The colours and decorations used on this pitcher were quite varied. The Marshall-Wells catalogue for 1940 advertised the available colours as cane, crimson, helio and green. In a letter dated 20 December 1941, Medalta advised the Hudson's Bay Company of Winnipeg that the "colours are cane, teapot brown, green and crimson.

The two-tone pitchers as requested in the letter quoted above are also found, as are ones with the stencilled cows and cottage decorations. And you can also find pitchers with a floral decoration around the top of the pitcher.

They must have had a large number of moulds for the making of this pitcher, and in all likelihood they changed through time although I have not yet tried to identify or document these changes. My reasons for saying they exist include the fact that the style number can be found as just the number "84" or as "No. 84". In one example, a half-pint pitcher, the "4" was backwards. It is hard to imagine how this could have happened but it did!



If you check the heights and/or diameters of any given size of pitcher you will also find great variability, perhaps another indication that the moulds were changed. Also as the handles were applied, you will find a great range in the shape of the handle and where it was applied to the body.

It appears that all sizes of this pitcher were used as advertising premiums, although it was not selected as a premium too often. Only some six or so occurrences have been recorded so far, covering general stores, a dairy and a hotel. In addition, it was used by The Hanna Cooperative Association to advertise Ogilvie's products, and if used by one store, other stores will undoubtedly show up in time. The advertising is invariably located at the top on the smooth portion of the pitcher.

One request that came Medalta's way is recorded in letters dating to October 1938. The plant advised the head office in Calgary that "H.H. Schneoder is interested in a basket weave pitcher, with a cow or house decoration and his own name on the other side." to which the head office replied on October 11th:

"Replying to yours of the 9th in connection with Mr. Schneider requiring some basket weave pitchers, decorated

and his name stamped on the side, you will use your decorated prices for this item G38/3, G38/10, and add 2c per article for stamping. The cost of the stamp is to be paid by Mr. Schneider. If this man intends giving these away in place of Calendars or some such item, it will be in order for you to give him a discount of 50%, and you will have to explain to him that this discount is only given under these circumstances. In other words if the pitchers are for resale the discount rate of 40% will apply."

This letter illustrates several points. Firstly, I am not sure of the spelling of the Merchant's name as each letter gives a different spelling. Eventually, that is if an order was even placed, one of these pitchers will show up and hopefully that will give us the merchant's name and perhaps the location of his store. It also shows that the merchant was charged for the cost of the rubber stamp and extra for the actual stamping. Lastly it shows the discounts that were available depending on whether or not the item was a giveaway.

"Elite Pitcher" (1938-ca.1946)

.5, 1, 1.5 & 2-pints

This pitcher was intended to replace the squat Cyma pitcher and perhaps in time it did, but for several years both styles were in production. It was similar to the Cyma style in that it was also a fairly squat pitcher; however, its walls were thicker and the spout was sturdier. It also came in much the same sizes, ½, 1, 1.5 and 2-pints, and it too had the name Elite and the size impressed into the bottom.



Examples can be found using both the yellow and the white-burning clays, and as the letter below shows it was jiggered rather than slip-cast.

In a few of the Medalta letters, this pitcher is referred to as the "Pear Pitcher" but eventually the name "Elite" was chosen. One letter dated April 2, 1938, states:



"Re the decoration of the Three Sisters and Mount Rundle on the Cyma pitchers: This decoration is of a very attractive design. It takes three stencils and a little brush work to complete it. However it could be done in one color and one stencil such as the house decoration. We really recommend the first one and although it requires more work which will increase, yet it should be a much better seller. We have made a new pitcher - called "Pear" - corresponding in shape and handle to the non drip teapots. This pitcher will replace the Cyma pitchers, which are casted. The Pear pitcher is jiggered with handle attached and is really of a very pleasing shape. We told Mr. Perry not to sell any Cyma pitchers with the above decoration, told him to only get the opinion of the trade on this decoration. We will have samples of the Pear pitcher next week."

While the date of introduction is well documented to 1938, the date when it was discontinued is still open to question. One commemorative ½-pint pitcher dated 1944 has shown up so we can presume it was still in production at that time. I have found no listings for it after 1944, and the Medalta stamps that have been observed on it probably all date before 1947.

To an enquiry from a Jasper, Alberta, store for souvenir suggestions Medalta replied on April 19, 1938:

"We would suggest the following, small Elite 1/2 pt pitcher with colored decoration of Three Sisters, Mount Rundle, No 1 Vases with mounted police, Hat Ash Trays, Flat Ash Trays, or you may ask them to supply us with some scenic photography for silhouette treatment."

It was some twelve years after first reading this letter in 1981 that a collector finally sent me a picture of the Mount Rundle decoration, and it is a beauty (see Newsletter No. 7). So there is still hope that the Three Sisters decoration will show up!

Another ½-pint pitcher that showed up a year or so ago was a Calgary Stampede souvenir. It depicts a cowboy on a bucking bronc, the image in browns against the usual honey coloured background.



Other decorations that you can find on this pitcher include the maple leaves and two or three different floral patterns. Many of the pitchers are white lined but you can also find them in solid colours. So far the range includes a royal blue, cream, yellow, crimson, black at the rim flowing into a deep red, and a blend of greens sometimes with a dash of blue included.

The ½-pint Elite pitcher with accompanying sugar bowl was also used as an Ogilvie/Merchant advertising item. On June 11, 1938, Medalta quoted prices for items decorated with G38/10, shaded golden brown, and stamped with the Ogilvie/Merchant name: the 6" salad bowl would be 14 cents and the ½ pint Elite pitcher 19 cents. I believe that the Elite pitchers with Ogilvie advertising that you find in collections date to 1941 rather than 1938, but perhaps some date this early.



"Tankard Jugs" (1938-1954)

.5, 1, 2 & 4-pints

I am not going to discuss this style of pitcher in detail at this time, as I will cover it more fully in a future issue of the newsletter when I discuss hotel wares. The reason for including it here is that



the pitcher was also available for domestic use using colourful lithograph decorations, along with being the pitcher marketed with the Mountain Trails and the Cattle Country series.

While I prefer the term Hotel Tankard Pitcher, Medalta's 1947 Hotel China catalogue lists this style of pitcher as a jug, and it is that document that provides the four sizes that one could acquire. The three smaller sizes are all fairly easy to find in the marketplace, but not so the large 4-pint pitcher. It is seldom seen and, so far, all examples that I have recorded have been for use in restaurants judging by their colour, striping or naming.

It appears that the size of the pitcher was not marked on the piece in any fashion, either as an oxide or an impressed marking.

Semi-Corrugated Pitcher (1939-ca.1940) 1/2-pint

This pitcher is probably the hardest to find of all pitchers made by and stamped with Medalta's name. Why? because it is one of the moulds acquired by Medalta when they took over some of the assets of P.I.E. As only one example has shown up so far, it must not have become a main production item, and I would guess that it was made for only a year or so. The mark found on the pitcher is the G.33 stamp.



While I have not seen a pitcher of this style made by P.I.E. as yet, I am certain of its origin as it matches a sugar bowl, which was marked with a P.I.E. stamp.

The pitcher stands 3.63 inches high, is 1/2 pint in size, and has no impressed markings on the bottom. The bottom quarter has a series of some six encircling, stepped grooves or what Medalta called corrugated. The example in the Glenbow Museum's collection is glazed cream or pinkish purple in colour.



Diamond-Shaped Pitcher (1939)

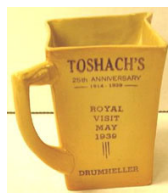
This piece was unique among the pitchers made by Medalta in that it was diamond-like in shape. I describe it as diamond-shaped rather than rectangular as the handle is attached to one of the corners, rather than the side, with the pouring spout at the opposite corner. Thanks to this shape, it could not be made quickly through jiggering or on the pot machine; it was made by the method of slip-casting, which undoubtedly would have increased its price.

It was a large pitcher available in one size only, and it stands about 6.63 inches high. There are no impressed markings on the bottom of the pitcher, and it was made using the yellow-burning clay.

It appears that this was a special pitcher designed and made for Toshach's store at Drumheller as it has neither been found as a plain

pitcher or one advertising any other merchant's name.

It was extensively covered with advertising on all four sides. All panels have "TOSHACH'S/25TH ANNIVERSARY/1914-1939" at the



top and "DRUMHELLER" at the bottom. But the central part differs for each reading "YOUR FAMILY/STORE FOR A/QUARTER OF A/CENTURY"; "FOOTWEAR/AND CLOTHING/FOR ALL"; "DRESSES/COATS SUITS/FURNISHINGS/BEAUTY PARLOR"; and "ROYAL/VISIT/MAY/1939". The lettering is a dark brown against a honey-coloured glaze.

Just how many pitchers were ordered is not recorded in the Medalta papers as the records for 1939 are all but missing. The year before, in 1938, Toshach's had the popular slogan "U O 2 B IN TOSHACH'S [picture of shoes]" placed on a mixing bowl, and the records indicate that they received 1200 of those bowls. I imagine that the diamond-like pitcher order was for a similar quantity, even though this picture is much harder to find than the mixing bowl. The reason for its scarcity is probably due to its shape and the relative thinness of the pitchers walls. It undoubtedly was chipped, cracked or broken quite readily.

E. A. Toshach (Eneas Albert) was a firm believer in the power of advertising. At one time he had roadside signs that kept you posted on how far you were from Drumheller and/or his store: "15 miles to Toshach's", "Toshach's dresses, 10 miles" or "only 5 more miles to Toshach's".

Beginning in 1929 and continuing through to 1939, Toshach's gave an advertising item to each of the families in and around Drumheller. Each fall, in time for Christmas, his children helped deliver the premium to the door of his many customers. I do not know what all the gifts were, or even if they were all pottery pieces, but most were. Some were made by British firms including a bowl and a calendar plate, but Medalta made a good number of them. These included: 2-pint ship shape pitcher with scene of coal tipples for 1934; teapot with Toshach's shoes slogan for 1935, mixing bowl with shoes slogan for 1938; and, the diamond-shaped pitcher for 1939.

"Cypress Pitcher" (1947-1954) .5, 1, 1.5 & 2-pints

This pitcher as far as I can tell was the last style produced by Medalta. It like the Cyma and Elite styles had the pattern name "Cypress" impressed in script on the bottom of the pitcher along with the size indication. Medalta also boldly advertised that it was "MADE IN CANADA" as that too was impressed in the bottom. In addition to these impressed markings, this style of pitcher is usually marked with one of Medalta's oxide stamps of that period.

It came in four sizes, 1/2, 1, 1.5 and 2-pint, and like the Elite pitcher could be acquired in solid colours or, more commonly, coloured ones that were white lined. The colour range includes white, yellow, pink, light blue, greyish-green and even one that had red speckles on a cream background.

The white-burning semi-porcelain clay was commonly used in making this item. So far the only examples made using the yellow clay was when Medalta



wanted to produce a cane or straw-coloured pitcher. A clear glaze over the yellow clay was all that was needed to bring out the cane colour.

The production date range of this pitcher is not well documented. It first appears in some of Medalta's production sheets dating to 1947, but it could well have been introduced a year earlier. I have not actually seen any items dating after 1951, that one being a dated advertising piece made for N.B. Vickers of Drumheller, but presumably it was available right up to the cessation of operations in 1954.

You can find odd coloured Cypress pitchers with no factory stamp on them at all. In many cases, these are pieces made between 1966 and 1986



by Medalta Potteries (1966) Ltd. of Redcliff. The Cypress pitcher was just one of dozens of Medalta's moulds acquired by the Redcliff factory after Medalta closed its doors. The one shown here has a band of red roses & green leaves around the middle.

OTHER PITCHERS

"Ice Water Jug" (1938-1954)

There are three distinct sizes of this jug: large, medium and individual (sometimes referred to as a miniature). The large and individual sizes are much more common than the medium size and both were available right through to 1954. I have seen so few of the medium size that I cannot be sure just how long it was in production.

Large Size:

On April 12, 1938, Brown & Hargrave Lim-



ited sent a pitcher to Medalta asking for quotes on quantities of 500, 1000, 2000 and 5000 in crimson, helio, green and cane. They advised:

"...this sample is submitted by Stedmans of Toronto and in the event of an order, jug is to be confined to them, for Canada exclusively. You might quote us on the jug as it actually is and also without the ice-lip."

A few days later the plant in Medicine Hat wrote to its head office in Calgary.

"...it would require two days work on a pattern, work and plaster would cost \$15.00. This jug is cast with handle on, and could be done at a rate of 125 per day, the same rate would apply to sponging and trimming. The weight of this article is 2 1/4 lbs. We do not make anything at the present time that is similar to this. With regard to the ice lip, it would make no great difference in the manufacturing of this item."

The first shipping of these jugs occurred sometime between July 11 and August 18, 1938, but it was not long before changes were made. On January 8, 1941, Mr. Cunliffe received a surprise.

"We are sending to you by express, a sample of our new ice-water. We have improved the looks of this article and it is much more attractive now. As a matter of fact we have sent out this sample to Eastern Canada and we have received an order for 2000."

While I am not yet 100% certain what this improvement was, I believe it was primarily in the shape of the handle. The first pattern had a rather delicate handle, more or less round in cross-section, while the later one had a sturdier, rectangular shaped handle. Likely there were other changes as well, but as I was not aware of the fact that Medalta changed the moulds, I was not looking for difference when examining collections. Most of my entries did not even record the difference in handle shape as I was not even aware of that major difference, never mind what other difference there may be.



I did record a variation of up to half an inch in the height of the jugs measured at the spout, ranging from 6 to 6.5 inches. I also noted that some had an impressed Medalta stamp on the bottom while others were marked with oxide stamps. A few specimens have shown up with the impressed numeral "2" on the bottom, but most are unmarked as to size. Perhaps these difference, and possibly colours and/or white lining, may correlate with the change in moulds. Hopefully, some day I will find the time to go back and re-examine this jug in detail.

The jug is found in a wide variety of colours, likely reflecting its popularity and the long period of time it was in production. Medalta's oxide stamp, number G.60, shows that it was still being made in 1954. The jug can be found in solid colours or ones that are white lined. The range of colours is hard to describe due to subtle differences but it includes crimson, yellow, cream, mauve, light, medium and dark blue, light and dark greens, pink and grey.

At least two firms ordered the pitcher with its name on it, the Malibu Club and Elmwood. The Canadian Pacific Railway identified its jug by having C.P.R. impressed in the bottom in large letters, and in having it glazed in a special shade of blue. The C.P.R. jug was requested by Mr. L.H. Melville of Medalta Sales Reg'd., Medalta's Montreal agent, who wrote in early September 1940 that he was waiting "for the sample ice water pitcher for the C.P.R." And wait he did, getting some samples in October and others in December. The date when full production started is not recorded but it was likely in early 1941.

Tumbler Matching the Ice Water Jug:

The request for handled tumblers in colours matching the ice water jug came from Mr. B. Cunliffe on April 23, 1938, and later on November 12th, he requested the price of unhandled ones. So far I have only seen unhandled ones and they were all in solid colours including mauve, reddish-brown, light blue, cobalt blue,



yellow, green, crimson and even one which was a blend of greens with some blue. The tumblers have all measured about four inches high. The oxide Medalta stamps on the bottom of the tumbler suggest that this product was made only for a few years. So far I have seen none that date after 1942.

Medium & Individual Size:

The small or individual size (10 ounce) was introduced around April 1940, and the medium size a few months later as mentioned in a September 24th letter.

"Regarding the other samples of Ice Waters etc, we have only just started to produce the medium size... As we are not sure if you have a sample of a small or miniature size which is called a rum jar, we will also send one of these."

The individual size was likely produced right through to 1954 as one dating to 1953 has been recorded. It was listed in Medalta's 1947 Hotel China catalogue and presumably restaurants acquired it for table use.

The only named individual size ones seen so far was one bearing the gold crest of the RAF (Royal Air Force) against a gray-blue and one made for the Malibu Club. As to colours, they can be found in light blue, pink and yellow with a white lining and in a solid maroon glaze.

The medium size has shown up so seldom, only about five so far, that I cannot be sure that it was available right through to 1954. The jugs recorded in my notes have been glazed in blue or yellow.

Large Pitcher (1922-ca.1925) (possibly a Ewer)

This very large pitcher was identified as Medalta's as Mr. U.S. Grant brought it home from the plant around 1922. As usual for this early period, it had not markings on it, neither Medalta's name nor its contents.

The date range is highly speculative. It could well date before 1922 but we at least know it was in production by that time. As to when it was discontinued, I really have no idea. My reason for choosing 1925 is simply because no item like this shows up in the full set of 1926 and 1927 invoice records. Quite frankly I would not be surprised to find that it was discontinued before 1924.

The pitcher is glazed in a very dark brown. It is 8.75 inches high and 4.88 inches in diameter at the top (outside); it is slightly wider at the bottom, which measures 5.63 inches in diameter.

Medalta's records mention several possibilities, which could be this item. In 1927 the stock ledger list Buttermilk Jugs at ten cents each, and in comparison one gallon shouldered jugs are also listed at ten cents each. Could this large pitcher be a buttermilk jug? Would Medalta call an item with a spout a jug? I do not think that they would.

A document in the Medalta records, undated but around 1938, lists "Model Blocks and Cases" on hand, and in that listing is



found several possibilities. The first is a "Vinegar Pitcher" and the second is a "Large Pitcher for Wash Basin". While there is no way of knowing for sure, I believe this large pitcher to be the ewer of a basin and ewer set. My reasons are not strong, but an employee who started working for Medalta in the 1920s recalled that the basin/ewer set was glazed in a dark brown. At the time I spoke to him he was all but blind, negating the value of the photograph, which I had brought along. Secondly, there is no denying that this large pitcher is the right size for an ewer.

Perhaps some day a basin will show up and hopefully there will be enough similarities to determine that they are indeed a set. For now though the question of just what this large pitcher was used for will have to remain open.

You might be wondering why model blocks for long discontinued items would still be around in 1938, and while I do not know why, they indeed were. Ed Phillipson might have been the first superintendent to go through the blocks on hand and throw many of them out. It must have been difficult to know what to get rid of, as sometimes a request for an item that had not been made for years would arrive at Medalta's doorstep. The eggbeater jar was one such request, but the details of that story will have to wait for another time.

"Hall Boy" (1930-1934)

The first mention of this pitcher in the stock ledger is in 1930 and entries continue through to 1934. I believe it was discontinued at this time, but it was only a few years until it was remodeled and brought back as the Hotel "Hallboy Jug" in December 1940, usually in plain white or with green banding on white as shown here.

Once again the first example of this pitcher that I recorded was in the collection of Mr. U.S. Grant's daughter. It was produced in a stoneware clay, glazed with a dark brown, and typically for an early piece it had no impressed or oxide markings on it. The pitcher measured 5.5 inches high by 5.25 inches for the top outside diameter. When you look at the bottom of the pitcher it is concave or bowl shaped, and the handle is unique for Medalta pitchers in being block shaped or rectangular.

Another reference, one of the loose catalogue pages in the Glenbow Archives col-

lections, lists this pitcher as "Glazed White. One size only, 1 quart. Suitable for Hotel use." In another reference it states "Glazed a Grey stoneware color."

The half-dozen dark brown pitchers that I have seen have all been unmarked as to size or by a factory stamp, while the three or so stoneware

ones were all stamped with the Medalta G15 oxide stamp. As to a true white glazed one, I have not yet seen one.

Other Pitchers

A few other styles of pitchers or pitcher-



like objects are illustrated here but not discussed, as they will be dealt with in detail in other articles. These include hot and cold-water pitchers that were made for hotel use or to complement set of dishes made for home use. Similarly, creamers will be examined at another time. Most of these were for hotel use but some like the swirl pattern and thumbprint pattern ones were made for domestic use. •



PACIFIC GREAT EASTERN

As is often the case, when one item is listed on ebay and does well, it is quickly followed by a similar piece. Such was the case with some railway china bearing the logo of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway.



Both pieces are yellow white-lined with a black line or band around the rim. The crest itself is also in black. The 9½ inch dinner plate (no picture available) has a yellow rim with the white center being filled with a mountain/lake scene reportedly to be of Duffy Lake. The only other piece seen so far is the 4½ inch high tankard jug finished like the two pieces shown here.



The Worcester cup sold for about \$320.00 Canadian, and I can only wonder what it might have sold for if the matching saucer had been with it? The small creamer standing 2 5/8-inches high, the 3 oz. size, was a bargain at \$275.00! Once again, it was not a Medalta but rather a Railway collector who acquired these pieces.



As a final note, if my memory serves me correctly, two PGE pieces (a side plate and a cup) sold at the Sonntag/Shefernack auction sold for around the \$100.00 range. At the time I thought that they were a bargain, and indeed they were. And I have seen the dinner plates priced at over \$400.00 at antique shows. •

Questions and Answers

Email: From Saskatchewan?

Could you please assist me in dating and pricing this Medalta pitcher? It has a lot of small crazing and two chips on either side of the spout. I have attached two photos. Thanks very much for your assistance.
E.O.



Hello E.O.:

The tankard pitcher that you have was made between 1930 and 1934. It came in 1, 1.5, 2 and 3-pint sizes, and all but the 3-pint size are fairly readily found in the marketplace. I cannot be sure of the size of yours as you did not provide measurements, and I cannot see any impressed number in the photograph showing the bottom.



Crazing does not affect the price unless there is staining of the crazes, but the chips lower the price by at least 50%. Yours would likely fall in the \$60.00 to \$100.00 Canadian range. If it has advertising on the other side, then the price range would be at least double what I have given. If you have any further questions about this or other pieces you are welcome to email again or call me at 403-273-1132 after 6:00 PM. Best wishes. Ron Getty

P.S. After replying to this email, I saw the pitcher posted on ebay where the height was given as 6.5 inches indicating the 1.5-pint size. The initial asking price was set at \$195.00 U.S.!! Why ask for anyone's opinion if you are not going to wait for the answer? Needless to say, the piece did not get a bid at that opening price. •

FOLLOW-UP:

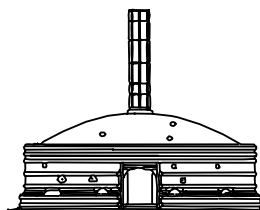
A Miniature Jug

Thanks to Alberta collector M.V. who acquired the miniature jug at the last Blue Mountain show, I can now show you a picture of it. The new find is the one with the naming within the rectangular border, and as you can see the layout of the factory's name is different from the more commonly seen Spadina Avenue Bridge, also shown here.



Another Fort Francis Pitcher

Shortly after the last newsletter came out this, this ship style pitcher was sold on ebay. As expected, it did quite well selling for \$335.00 Canadian. This is only the second example that I have recorded and as it is the hand painted sailboat, it likely dates 1932-1934. •



Friends of Medalta Society

703 Wood Street
Medicine Hat, Alta
T1A 8S9 Canada
Phone 403-529-1070
FAX 403-580-5868
<http://www.medalta.org>