

FIRE IN THE FOOTHILLS: A COLLECTIVE PORTRAIT OF THREE NORTHEAST  
GEORGIA FOLK POTTERS

by

KATHLEEN GILLESPIE JACKSON

(Under the Direction of CAROLE HENRY)

ABSTRACT

This study examined the methods in which the techniques utilized in the creation of folk pottery were learned within generations of three Northeast Georgia folk potters. The qualitative methodologies of portraiture and narrative inquiry were used to explore the questions: (1) In what ways do the folk potters in this study describe their communities of practice?, (2) How have the available natural resources affected clays, glazes, and methods of production for three 21<sup>st</sup> century folk potters that arose from North Georgia traditions?, (3) How does each representative potter participant describe his/her quality or contribution to the aesthetics to the family's North Georgia folk pottery?, and (4) How is the aesthetic genealogy of traditional North Georgia folk pottery traced in each participant's folk pottery?

The study was conducted with three folk potters to seek understanding of the pedagogical means used and to decide if the methods are applicable to a high school classroom setting. Two of the participants had begun teaching an apprentice. In addition to observing the folk potters in action, interviews were conducted with the three folk potters and their families and a sampling of the lessons was videotaped.

Analysis revealed that pottery lessons were not conducted in a formal setting as practiced in the public school system. Instead, the majority of the lessons were learned by the younger family members by observing the more experienced, older family members. Although the settings are based on apprenticeship, some aspects could be replicated in the high school classroom.

INDEX WORDS: Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery, Folk Pottery, Appalachia, Portraiture, Narrative, Apprenticeship Learning, Qualitative Study, Communities of Practice.

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## DEDICATION

This endeavor is dedicated to my late parents and grandparents with love.

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There are many individuals that I would like to thank for their support and faith that this endeavor would eventually see its completion. I am grateful for the generosity of my mentors, colleagues, good friends, and family members whose kindnesses during this process have meant more to me than they will ever know.

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My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my  
friends-  
It gives a lovely light!

Edna St. Vincent Millay,  
“First Fig”, 1920



*Figure 1. (2013). Inside a traditional folk potter's kiln.*



*Figure 2. (2013). David Meaders' kiln firing.*

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

For as long as I can remember I have been fascinated with clay. When I was five years old, I liked to play in the creek behind my house and make mud pies with a neighbor friend. My high school pottery teacher took me to visit a famous craft gallery called the Signature Shop in Atlanta, and I think that may have been the point that I told everyone that I was going to be an artist. Although I am not a full time potter, it

has become apparent that all of my life experiences as student, teacher, artist, collector, researcher, curator, art gallery director, and grants writer have led me to this point.

The idea for this project began with my thinking about when I began making pottery such an important part of my life, especially folk pottery and how my early craft education influenced my perspective. I am haunted by clay and how folk pottery has remained steadfast in the South over two hundred years. My serious craft experience began at North Georgia College now called the University of North Georgia. The experiences of working with my teachers, being among craftspeople, being exposed to traditional crafts of Appalachia, exhibiting at craft shows in the tristate area, teaching high school in Appalachia, all played an important part in my life. It was during this time that I first met Mossy Creek folk potter Lanier Meaders. Today I am a doctoral student looking back at my craft education and the history and continuation of traditional pottery of northeast Georgia. I am choosing to focus my research on three folk potters whose work is playing an important role in keeping the traditional American art form alive.

Northeast Georgia's folk pottery tradition is nationally known. The Meaders family of White County, featured in Allen Eaton's 1937 book, *Handicrafts of the Southern Highlands*, was honored with a special event at the Library of Congress in 1978, when the Smithsonian Institution's documentary film on the Meaders Pottery was released. In 2000, Northeast Georgia received a Library of Congress "Local Legacies" designation for its pottery heritage and in 2005, the Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia opened with the mission to explore the historical importance and changing role of folk pottery in Southern life. From personal communication with According to Chris Brooks (personal communication, 2013), the Director of the Folk

Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia, N.E. GA is the last active pottery district in the United States where the transmission of knowledge is continuous. Only 30 living folk potters remain in the Northeast Georgia area, where "the potters learned the tradition from the family members and the tradition has continued" (Burrison, 2010, p. 30). Brooks explained that in order to be considered for inclusion in the museum, the potters have to meet three criteria: they must be trained by potters using the two hundred year-old traditional methods in this area; they should continue the learned traditions in their own work; and their work must be recognized as among the best quality folk pottery of Northeast Georgia.

Georgia folk pottery has a strong connection to my own history and experiences in craft. These experiences were pivotal in my development as an art educator and as an artistic individual. My appreciation for craft, especially pottery, was due to my Scotch-Irish, French, and Cherokee ancestors. One such ancestor, my great-great-grandfather Lyn Walker, owned a lime kiln in Habersham County near Clarkesville that served most of the pottery operations in Northeast Georgia including the Meaders, the Fergusons, and the Hewells during the 1800s. The alkaline glaze was known as the "Walker glaze" because it came from a deposit of impure lime located on his land.

### **Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia**

Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia opened in 2005 and is located in Sautee Nacoochee in White County. The museum was made possible by a generous donation by the former owners of the Standard Telephone Company who were collectors of folk pottery. The museum tells the rich history of the area through the

pottery dynasties that originated in the area. The pottery tells the story of the mountain heritage and folk traditions of Southern Appalachia. Changing exhibits of folk potters support the permanent exhibits with helpful wall text.

The Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia building, and 150 piece permanent collection house together, valued at more than three million dollars were donated by the former co-owners of Standard Telephone Company which served a large portion of Northeast Georgia from 1904 until it was sold to Alltel in 1999. The co-owners of the Standard Telephone Company had a small collection of folk pottery when in 1999, Standard Telephone, as part of a series of phone book covers on local natural attractions and artists, featured Lula folk potter Michael Crocker. The owners soon became very interested collectors and worked with Crocker to identify and acquire additional pieces that would complement the existing collection.

By 2000, the co-owners' collection grew to one hundred pieces. The couple started to consider ways in which they could share the collection and in turn give something back to the community that had supported Standard Telephone Company for so many years. That led them to Georgia folklorist John Burrison for advice.. Atlanta architect Robert M. Cain's design for the museum was inspired by the Meaders family's covered rectangular kiln outside Cleveland, Georgia. While a number of American museums have substantial collections of traditional pottery, The Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia is perhaps the only museum in the country actually devoted to the subject of folk pottery.



## **Rationale for the Study**

I wanted to investigate three folk potters in order to document techniques passed down for the last two centuries and used in the creation of traditional Georgia folk pottery and examine what sets this tradition apart from the folk pottery of the northern states. I was interested in conducting this research to record how the potters were taught to make the traditional wares and to record how the potters are currently teaching the next generation of potters. It was also my desire to determine what information gleaned from this study could be of interest for the public high school art curriculum.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Seventy-five years after the Eaton book (1937), thirty-four years after the Smithsonian documentary (Rinzler, 1981) and thirty years after John Burrison's ground-breaking book *Brothers in Clay* (1983), my desire was to examine the ideas that emerged to inform the 21st century traditional folk potter. Without the information provided by Dr. Burrison's research, my study would not be possible. Burrison's (1983) work is a compilation of the history of Georgia folk pottery, broad in scope, covering eight pottery dynasties with emphasis on the Meaders family. In his study, Burrison documented the earliest Southern potters of European and African heritage, beginning as early as the 1730s. Burrison introduced David Drake, an enslaved African American potter whose highly collectable work came from the Edgefield District of South Carolina. Burrison discussed individual potters and potteries according to the type of product they produced, their methods of production and identifiable styles.

My research was guided by the following questions: In what ways do the folk potters in this study describe their communities of practice?; How have the available natural resources affected clays, glazes, and methods of production for three 21st century folk potters that arose from North Georgia traditions?; How does each representative potter participant describe his or her unique quality or contribution to the aesthetics of the family's North Georgia folk pottery?; and How is the aesthetic genealogy of traditional North Georgia folk pottery traced in each participant's folk pottery?

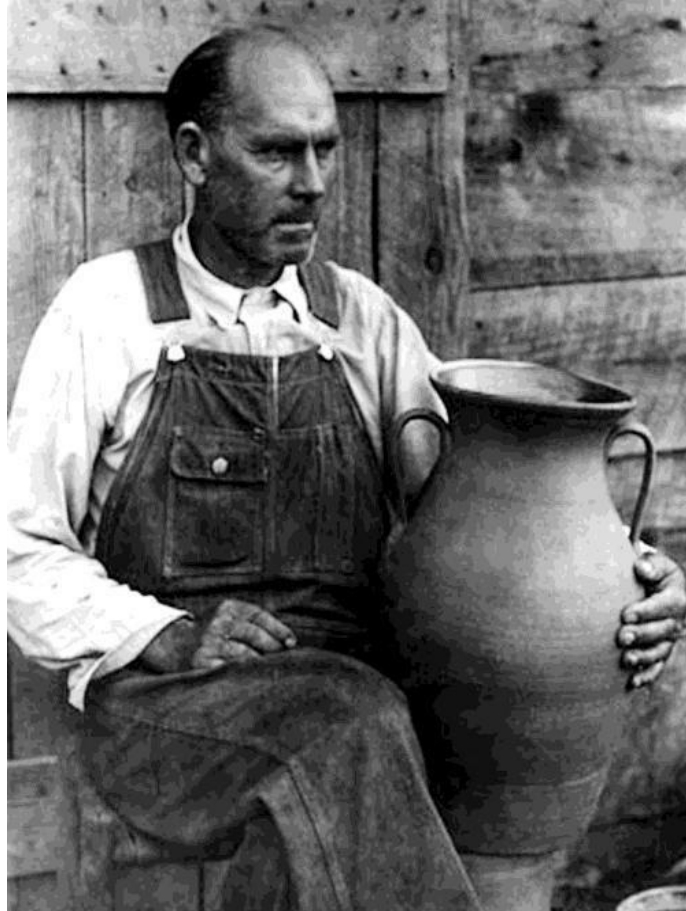
Situated learning and communities of practice in teaching were of interest for this study. I was interested in the variety of approaches when family members teach the methods in a non-formal setting. The decision to use videos, recordings, visual journal drawings, and still photography guided the planning from the beginning. I believe that this study is of interest to three groups: scholars such as ethnographers, educators, folklorists, anthropologists, and historians; craftspeople interested in the techniques and aesthetics of other craftspeople; and students of art, history, and culture.

### **Significance of the Study**

The aim of this study was to understand how the techniques of the northeast Georgia folk potters have been handed down with each generation and the implications for current practice and art education. The study was conducted with three folk potters from Lula, Gillsville and Clarkesville, Georgia. The first is a fourth generation potter who is training an apprentice, the second is a sixth generation potter who is training his daughter and grandchildren, and the third is the first generation potter who learned the

craft from apprenticeship. It is hoped that the teaching techniques discussed can be adapted for the high school art classroom.

In this dissertation, I began with the theoretical framework influences discussed in Chapter 2. Later in that chapter, I discuss the forces that have influenced Southern folk potters' wares including the agrarian society, the Arts and Crafts Movement, the Great Depression, and World War II. I then address the traditional wares. I follow with a discussion about the folk pottery museum and the folk potters trail and how I found the three potters for my study. I continue with a description of the interviews with the three potters and the details of interviews with emphasis on the wood-firing processes, using the selected research questions provided. I conclude with reflection of the study and implications for the high school ceramics classroom.



*Figure 3. Doris Ulmann. (1933). Cheever Meaders holding one of his wares.*

...A pottery vessel, unlike a painting or statue, is not intended to be insulated and untouchable but is meant to fulfill a purpose – if only symbolically. For it is held in the hand and drawn into the movement of practical life. Thus the vessel stands in two worlds at one and the same time. The handle marks the journey from one world to the other, it is the suspension bridge from the world of art to the world of use....

George Simmel,

"The Handle," 1911

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Theoretical Framework**

Each of the Northeast Georgia families, or pottery clans, taught through apprenticeship to one or more potters. This apprenticeship took place in what researchers Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) call communities of practice. Communities of practice were formed by people who "engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" (Wenger, 2006, p. 1). Another way to define communities of practice is as groups of people who "share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better through regular interaction" (Wenger, 2006, p. 1). Communities of practice produce identity defined by a shared domain of interest, and communities of practice value their collective competence.

The three scholars who have written the three most significant works on/around Southern folk pottery are Dr. John Burrison, Cinda Baldwin, and Terry Zug. Their research paralleled and pushed my topic forward. Burrison, Baldwin and Zug wrote pioneering books exploring the traditional folk pottery of Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. Although their works are exemplary, there was a need to add to the body of scholarship in this area, specifically on how folk potters are continuing the tradition, thirty-one years after Burrison's ground-breaking study on Georgia folk potters. I continue the work of the scholars who have contributed to the field before me by focusing on a unique region of northeast Georgia and researching the next

generation of folk potters. My study differs as I play the insider/outsider through my role as, teacher, potter, researcher, collector, gallery director and curator. Unlike Burrison, I am a native Georgian and descendent of Lyn Walker, the owner of a lime kiln in Habersham County, Georgia who supplied lime to the Northeast Georgia potters for their alkaline glazes featured in Burrison's book. I lived in Northeast Georgia for twenty years. I have known the Meaders family pottery for 35 years.



*Figure 4. Photographer unknown (ca. 1978). Lanier Meaders and John Burrison*

Retrieved from:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Meaders+family+pottery&espv=2&biw=746&bih=362&sour>

## **Geology**

Georgia is known for its clay resources. Concentrations of deposits of stoneware clay are found along middle Georgia's fall line from Augusta to Columbus and scattered above in the Piedmont geologic province. Folk pottery wares made of the mostly pure clay were tough enough to withstand rough usage on the farm. The

Piedmont geologic province forms the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains and is the source of Georgia's most important raw materials (Burrison, 2010).

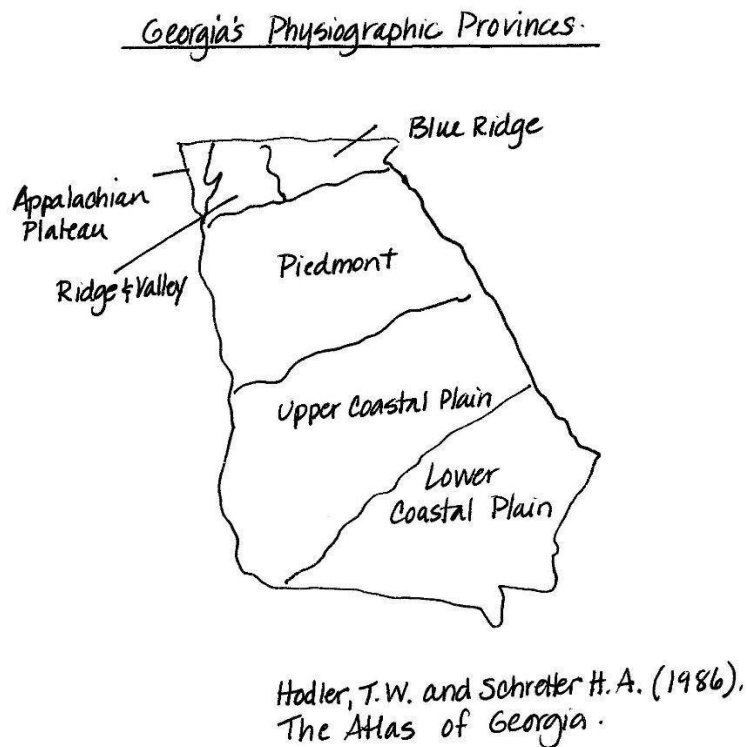


Figure 5. *Georgia's Physiographic Provinces. Hadler & Schretter, 1986.*

Folk pottery became very popular in the early 1800s, as Carolina potters introduced a regional stoneware tradition that became popular in Georgia. Northern potters used the European technique of throwing salt in the kiln to glaze their stoneware but, in Edgefield South Carolina located just across the river from Augusta, alkaline stoneware glazes were introduced. Edgefield potters prepared a glaze liquid

that depended on an alkaline substance- either wood ashes or lime—to help melt the other readily available ingredients: clay and an additional silica source such as sand.

According to Burrison (2010), it is believed that this alkaline technique was based on Chinese glaze techniques which were being published during that time. When heated the glaze turned either brown or green depending on the iron content and the reaction to the kiln atmosphere.

The pottery bowl in *Figure 14* was excavated in 1916 by the Smithsonian Institution and the Heye Foundation Museum of the American Indian from the Nacoochee Indian mound at the junction of Georgia highways 17 and 75, and around two miles from the Folk Pottery Museum. It is now housed in New York and Washington with the Smithsonian collections. The mound site at Nacoochee dates from the 1400s making the bowl more than 600 years old. At the time of the interviews with the three folk potters, it was on loan to the Folk Pottery Museum. The top of the bowl design was made with incised lines and the lower design pattern was pressed into wet clay with a carved wooden paddle.

John A. Burrison, a professor of English at Georgia State University wrote *Brothers in Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery* (1983). Burrison was not an art historian but rather a pottery collector who wrote his doctoral dissertation about the topic of Georgia Folk Pottery. *Brothers in Clay* was an inspiring and pioneering work, not only because it is focused on Southern pottery but also because it researched the lives, history, and culture of the potters in extreme detail. It was an exemplary study, which surveyed an important tradition and focused on the makers and their culture. The



late Lanier Meaders was the “star” and focus of the book. The descendants of the Meaders are a major part of my study following the legacy of Lanier, Cheever and Arie Meaders. A later book by Burrison entitled *From Mud to Jug-A Study of Georgia Folk Pottery* (2010) offered some additional information about additional Georgia folk potters.



*Figure 6. (1981). Lanier demonstrating for the author's high school students.*

Twenty years ago, Cinda K. Baldwin, registrar at the McKissick Museum, wrote *Great and Noble Jar: Traditional Stoneware of South Carolina* (1993), the first study of South Carolina stoneware. It was a pioneering study as well and researched the old legislative district of Edgefield as a place of origin for the non-toxic alkaline-glazing process that came to characterize pottery produced in the lower South. The alkaline method of glazing was brought into the northeast Georgia region and was used by folk potters for many years. In my research, I explain how the migration of this glazing method from South Carolina to Georgia most likely occurred. Baldwin examined the practices of plantation pottery operations of the Edgefield district as well as the

contributions of the many slaves and freed blacks who worked in the industry. African designs and techniques used by a slave potter named David Drake were the main focus of her study.

Dr. Charles G. Zug, III (Terry), professor of folklore and English at the University of North Carolina, was the author of *Turners and Burners: The Folk Potters of North Carolina* (1986), which included research on traditional North Carolina pottery, Catawba Valley, Seagrove, and Moravian potters. Zug provided the first comprehensive pottery history of North Carolina which researched generations of turners and burners. He researched the descendants of folk potters and conducted most of his research in the field with tape recordings.

Whereas Burrison's focus was on Georgia folk pottery, the focus of Zug's book was on the historic development of North Carolina pottery as a folk craft from Colonial era pioneers through the early 1980s. He included techniques, materials, and forms made by the potters. The practice of late Burlon Craig, who was considered the last folk potter in North Carolina, was explored. Zug's research reviewed glazes, kiln construction and functionality of different container designs as well as face jugs and whimsies. It was my hope to weave the work of these three pottery scholars into my own research to provide a broad introduction thirty years following the Burrison book and to focus on the life of three potters in the 21st century.



*Figure 7. Photographer unknown (ca. 1900). William F. Dorsey Home, Mossy Creek. Seated on right is John Milton Meaders who started Meaders Pottery in 1892. Courtesy of the White County Historical Society.*

Wilson (1997) states that he liked to think of research as re-search, to ‘search again’, to take a closer second look. He goes on to say that research implied searching for evidence about the “ways things were in the past, how they are presently and even about how they might be in the future”(p. 1). Research includes the construction of theories, the mounting of philosophical arguments and the making of critical interpretation and judgments (Wilson, 1997).

## **The Folk Pottery Tradition**

“These hobbyists who call themselves potters talk about ‘throwing’ pots. But real potters, the old time potters-‘turned’ ware (Burrison, 2010, p. 78). The term "folk" in anthropology is defined as the "inside point of view" of the people under study and "folk life" refers to the process by which traditions endure and the social context in which they are found (Bartis, 1980, p. 1)). A true traditional folk potter does not use ready-made glazes or clay but instead uses natural resources. A potter's responsibility for the whole process, which has an ethical as well as practical aspect, is idealistic but respectful to the truths of the pottery lines (Reigger, 1972).

Poulos (1998) states that “folk refers to a group of people who share certain experiences, values, goals, or interests, and through sharing the members generate and perpetuate forms of expression and behaviors within a community”. The members of the community share a set of traits: folklore is patterned or structured in form and has a distinctive aesthetic; it is generated and perpetuated in an informal setting, involving direct interaction among members of a community; and exhibits variation, for in the process of being made, “folklore is shaped to meet the needs of the maker and the situation...Folklore consists of the process, a product, and the product is inseparable from the group context” (Poulos, 1998, p. 2).

## **Cultural Influences on Georgia Folk Pottery**

The way in which we view Southern folk pottery and craft is based on our nation's response to the history of a craft revival throughout the last century including European settlements, the removal of the Cherokee, boarding schools for the

Cherokee, land grants, the discovery of gold in north Georgia, slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, the Industrial Revolution, the Manual Training Movement, the Arts and Crafts Movement, the Southern Highland Craft Guild, Prohibition in Georgia in 1909 and nationally in 1920, World War I, Settlement Schools, The Great Depression, the Arts and Crafts Revival, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Free Assistance Program (FAP) Settlement schools, World War II, and the Smithsonian's Folk Life program. This interest led to research and books published and, subsequently, exhibits and museums dedicated to craft and folk pottery.



*Figure 8. Photographer unknown (1966). Cheever Meaders*

The earliest potters settled in the small villages of the southern American colonies, where the king's governors imposed restrictions, which included pottery. "It was a crown policy that the development of the new colonies be fostered according to established empire patterns, wherein a colony supplied raw materials for industries in

the homeland and then purchased back the imported manufactured goods, including pots" (Sweezy, 1984, p.19). However, production of some utilitarian ware was permitted in America. Highly skilled potters in several colonies were producing both earthenware and stoneware. The majority of the potters that settled in the South were of English and German origins who traveled from northern colonies or directly from Europe (Sweezy, 1984).

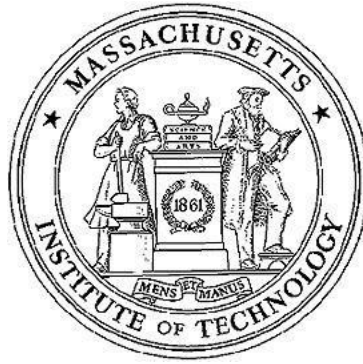


*Figure 9. Greear, David. (2012). Arie Meaders Pottery.*



## Manual Training Movement

Much craft instruction in this country can be traced back to the Manual Training Movement, first developed in the United States in 1825. It was popularized by mathematician Calvin Woodward. Critical of the traditional practice of teaching by memorization, Woodward built the nation's first manual training high school in 1880. He made two basic arguments for manual training: it prepared future workers for their jobs and to be more employable, which made parents and industrialists happy. For this reason, the Manual Training Movement enjoyed widespread popular and political support (Metcalf, 2007).



*Figure 10. Massachusetts Institute of Technology seal with image of craftsman and scholar. Retrieved from: <http://www.mensetmanus.net/mitmotto/motto.shtml>*

Because manual training was considered mental training, John Runkle, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and also a math teacher, suggested that manual training could be a regular part of general education. He established workshops at M.I.T. and began a manual training high school affiliated with the institute. Soon Calvin Woodward, President of Washington University, established a school of manual training there in 1880. Runkle and Woodward walked a

thin line between manual training as education for an industrial labor force and manual training as an integral part of schooling as cultural education. They believed that manual training was "educating the mind through the hand" (Efland, 1990, p. 166) thus it was liberal, intellectual training. Woodward also maintained that manual training taught the moral values of precision, logic, diligence, and economy (Efland, 1990). In its early phases the Manual Training Movement emphasized the virtues of craftsmanship.



*Figure 11. (2009). View from the author's Cherokee ancestors land in Hayesville, NC.*





*Figure 12. Alderman, Clint. (2013). Area where clay is found in Northeast Georgia.*

### **Cherokee Removal**

My Scotch Irish and Cherokee ancestors married and cared for their blended family around 1830s during the time of the Trail of Tears in Hayesville, North Carolina. The lighter-skinned people that could pass as white stayed in North Carolina. They hid in the mountains in the nearby communities of Tusquittee and Shooting Creek in Clay County, North Carolina. Fort Hembree served as a concentration camp for the captured Cherokee people located just ten miles from Tusquittee. My ancestors are buried high on a mountain. A few years ago I found their graves in Tusquittee in one of the oldest graveyards in the area. Pottery is one of the oldest of the Cherokee traditional crafts.



*Figure 13. Greear, David (2005). Cherokee Mound bowl ca. 1400s found near Sautee, Georgia.*

### **The Arts and Crafts Movement**

Because manufactured goods were scarce during the Civil War, potters were not required to serve but were required to supply army camps, hospitals, and soldiers with requisitioned vessels. Devastation and neglect of cropland was so great that recovery required a diversified use of the land and natural resources. After the Civil War, the Farm Allegiance Program (FAP) was set up in the 1870s to motivate people to continue farming and educate them in ways to use their farm for cash crops. Since cattle herds were destroyed during the war, eliminating the farmers' market from feed and corn, the government encouraged states to grow corn crops for whiskey making instead. Traditional potters in the South could not supply all of the whiskey jugs needed, so neighboring farmers set up shops to make jugs while others went into the

business of hauling jugs to distilleries and jars and churns to general stores located in the countryside. Whiskey for local purchase was kept in wood barrels in general stores and decanted into jugs as it was sold (Sweezy, 1984).

### **Index of American Design (1937-1942)**

The Federal government provided assistance to artists and small businesses during the Great Depression. The Federal Arts Project (FAP), a part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) funded a wide range of art initiatives whose purpose was to provide support to eligible artists based on financial need. The FAP funded the production of works of art and art education programs as well as art, architectural, and archeological research and documentation. Employment for artists was available through a variety of programs including the creation of the *Index of American Design 1937-1942*. Through the WPA, approximately 400 artists were hired to locate examples of three dimensional objects of American design for the Index of American Design. The WPA artists made renderings of the objects for the collection. The index, which can be accessed online through the National Gallery of Art or viewed on microfiche at Auburn University and Florida State, is an archive illustrating a portion of cultural heritage in the United States including approximately 18,000 watercolor renderings of Americana made by craftsmen between the early colonial settlements and 1900.

The *Index of American Design* is one of the most significant and enduring products of a search for national cultural identity that was conducted in this country during the 1920s and 1930s (Hornung, 1988). The monumental project was meant to

define the nation's aesthetic character and was created in response to a concern that the United States lacked a rich historical art foundation like that of Europe and as an exploration for evidence of a national creative style, focusing on our folk, popular, and decorative arts. Although New York and Pennsylvania were well represented in the survey, it is interesting to note that all major geographic sections of the country were not included. After examination of numerous plates in Hornung's 846-page book, the following states were omitted: Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, Oregon, South Dakota, North Dakota and Indiana. Among the seventeen ceramics works accessed online were works documented from New York, Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Virginia, and Texas.

## **The Great Depression and World War II**

The Great Depression and World War II introduced a decline of the small family farm. Although a number of returning war veterans attempted to resume farming in the mid-1940s, most failed within a year and decided to seek employment opportunities away from home such as in the automobile manufacturing centers of the North. Only part of this out-migration diminished as a result of the growth of local commerce after 1950. Commercial poultry and dairy farms sprang up along with cattle and hog ranches. New lumber mills appeared to exploit the region's timber resources. In addition, zipper and textile factories moved into the area between 1952 and 1954 (Rinzler & Sayers, 1980).

The Russell Sage Foundation (RSF), chartered by the New York legislature in 1907, was established by Olivia Sage to benefit social and living conditions in the

United States. The RSF was then one of only seven foundations in the United States and the only one devoted to the social sciences. The connection of art programs of the Southern Highlands with the RSF was an interesting one that can be traced directly to the work of three people, John Campbell, Olive Campbell, and Allen Eaton, and indirectly to one of the Foundation's trustees, Robert de Forest. De Forest was Olivia Sage's lawyer, but he was also the president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the American Federation of the Arts and worked to promote a general sensitivity to the relation between art and life (White, 2004).

Eleanor Roosevelt believed, and stated in her daily column, speeches, and radio addresses, that the arts provided economic and social benefits. She believed that if the arts flourished, ordinary people would learn more sophisticated art appreciation, use handicraft skills as a creative outlet, and enjoy a more creative worldview (Grieve, 2009). During her appointment to the United Nations, she chaired the committee that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that allows each person to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in its benefits (Grieve, 2009).



*Figure 14. Greear, David. (2012). Cheever Meaders Pottery.*

### **Utilitarian Pottery in an Agrarian Society**

Functional wares had little decoration since they were sold by volume for utilitarian purposes. Occasionally, an incised line would be applied or a piece of glass might be set on the rim of a slip glazed jug in the kiln. Traditional potteries displayed their wares on the ground. Pots were also sold by traveling waggoners. While Southern folk pottery has a local orientation, these sale expeditions made it more of an export industry than other folk crafts.

Prohibition in 1907 in Georgia, 1908 in North Carolina, and 1920 nationally marked the end of the demand for little brown jugs. By the late 1920s, surviving potteries were paying turners more for art vases than for churns or flowerpots. The depression caused a small retreat in this process because in hard times more people

preserved food at home. The remaining potteries shifted forms and gradually adopted mechanized wheels and new kilns and new fuels in which the temperature was easier to control. The biggest changes were keeping up with the tourists' demands for smaller and more carefully finished works. Bright color glazes began to appear in the late 1920s for a fancier effect to appeal to tourists (Rinzler, 1980).

### **Community Learning for the K-12 Classroom**

Folklorist Henry Glassie wrote "Traditions do not flow of their own momentum. They are picked up and carried on, constantly refigured in new acts by individuals answering the inner need to create " (as cited in Burrison, 2010, p. ix). As an art educator, I have always felt that the study of contemporary and traditional craft had an important place in the K-12 arts curriculum. Community learning, in which all students are actively engaged is a methodology used by the potters can have a positive impact on art students especially in the learning of craft. John Dewey (1938) advocated the everyday aesthetic, and learning through experience that became the curricular emphasis common to all of the craft schools. Metcalf (2007) believes that traditional craft skills applied to traditional craft forms are closely related to dance and musical performances. When making hand-blown glass in the studio, the community of workers is engaged in the dance for the creation of the art.

Educational experiences were, for John Dewey, life-affirming events that yielded mastery over future experiences (Barone, 1983). "Growth or growing as developing, not only physically but intellectually and morally, is one exemplification of the principle of continuity" (Dewey, 1938, p. 36). The student should be engaged at all times. "The two principles of continuity and interaction are not separate from each

other....observation alone is not enough. We have to understand the significance of what we see and touch"(Dewey, 1934, p.44).

The principle of continuity of experiences means that every experience takes something from those which have gone before and modifies the quality of those which come after. "For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience, and his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent"(Dewey, 1934 p. 54). Wenger (2009) states that we are all social beings and that communities of practice are central to learning. Knowing is a matter of participating, actively being engaged in the world. Meaning is our ability to "experience the world and our engagement with it is meaningful is ultimately what learning is to produce"(Wenger, 2009, p. 210).

### **Communities of Practice and Situated Learning Theory**

Each of the Northeast Georgia pottery clans or families discussed taught the new potter through apprenticeship to one or more potters. As discussed earlier, communities of practice produced identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain and a shared competence that distinguished members from other people. They valued their collective competence.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* defined situated learning as a function of an activity, context and culture in which it occurred. Situated learning involves social interaction as an important component where



the learner becomes involved in a community of practice that embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired. As the beginning potter moved from the periphery of this community to its center, he became more active and engaged within the culture and took on the role of expert or old-timer. Situated learning was usually unintentional, rather than deliberate. These ideas were described as the process of “legitimate peripheral participation” by Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 27).

Other researchers have further developed the theory of situated learning.

Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) emphasize the idea of “cognitive apprenticeship”:

Cognitive apprenticeship supports learning in a domain by enabling students to acquire, develop and use cognitive tools in authentic domain activity. Learning whether in school or outside advances through collaborative social interaction and the social construction of knowledge, (Brown et al. p. 19).

In the late Middle Ages, a form of vocational training emerged with the creation of apprenticeships. Young men from 12 to 25 years old left home to live with a master craftsman in order to achieve the level of master craftsman, organized and supervised by craft guilds. The process of learning in apprenticeships contained concepts that educational theorists repeatedly return to in order to plan to inspire and motivate students to become literate in multiple disciplines.

Lave and Wenger (1991) defined a community of practice as “a system of relationships between people, activities, and the world; developing with time, and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice, an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge (p. 98). Communities of practice exist in any

organization. “Because membership is based on participation rather than on official status, these communities are not bound by organizational affiliations; they span institutional structures and hierarchies” (p. 3). A key difference for the community is membership. Adult learning theory differs from children's learning theory in that adult learning is primarily voluntary, and children's learning can be guided by national standards and curriculum in public schools. As I will study adult folk potters, adult learning theory will suit my purpose.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Paradigm**

When I began the journey of investigating Georgia folk pottery methods, the constructivism paradigm appealed to me. Within the constructivist paradigm, community rapport, naturalistic approaches, and portraiture methods fit the study I planned to conduct about folk potters from Northeast Georgia. Within this paradigm, I believe that historical narrative also fit well into my research. Further reading has brought me to the concepts of situated learning and community of practice by researchers Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), and I adapted situated learning theory to make it applicable to the folk pottery.

The foundation of my research is the constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm fits well into this research as it supports researchers using observations, and there is a belief that research can only be conducted through interaction between and among investigator and respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

#### **Constructivist Paradigm**

Constructivism suggests that each individual mentally constructs the world of experience through cognitive processes (Young & Collin, 2004). Constructivism focuses on meaning making and the constructing of social and psychological worlds through individual, cognitive processes. Thus, meaning is constructed in a social, historical, and cultural context, through relationships and community (Young &

Collin, 2004). Within constructivist qualitative research, new meanings and insights are generated. These insights come about from the interactive process between the inquirer and the subject of the inquiry. The focus is on the values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of individuals (Creswell, 2005).

According to Magoon (1977),

The constructivist perspective holds as a chief assumption about much complex behavior that the 'subjects' being studied must at a minimum be considered knowing beings, and that this knowledge they possess has important consequences for how behavior or actions are interpreted. (p. 652)

The constructivist paradigm developed from the philosophy of Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and the study of interpretive understanding called hermeneutics (Eichelberger, 1989, as cited in Mertens, 2010). Mertens (2010) explained that the basic assumptions guiding the constructivist paradigm is that knowledge is socially constructed. Reality is considered to be socially constructed within the constructivist paradigm. Different societies formed various meanings, even within a given society, there was often a difference in meanings. Constructivism seeks to understand reality and its meanings as it is understood by the subjects of a study.

### **Methodology and Research Design**

According to LaPierre (LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1997), "The process of thinking through an activity, such as creating with one's hands, the flow of bodily movements, makes the arts unique" (p. xv). I have confidence that my experiences as an artist and art educator will enlighten my research as well as the questions that guide

my research. As According to Jeffers (1993), there is "a living relationship between 'research as art and art as research" (p.12). Strategies must be developed in order to find the perfect methodology that supports the artist and art educator and will fit the artist research design model. Choosing the research method for the study of Georgia folk potters led me to qualitative research. According to Creswell (2005),

Qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of the participants, by asking broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner. (p. 39)

Qualitative design permits “the evaluator to study selected issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 1990, p. 13). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research focuses on interpretation of natural phenomena in their natural settings. Qualitative research involves personal experiences, life stories, observations, historical data, and interactions, which were significant and meaningful (Denzin & Biklen, 1984). According to Patton (1990), “qualitative methods consist of three types of data collection: (1) indepth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents” (p. 10).

A major strength of qualitative research is in gathering layers of details that a simple survey method might not reveal. Qualitative research is more suited for my study and will allow for more open ended questions. The fieldwork provides a true picture of the lived experience of the subject without the use of an ethnographic study. My interest is learning

how three different folk potters were taught the distinctive pottery techniques and how they are continuing to pass them on to the next generation.

According to Eisner (1991), qualitative research is the search for qualities—the characteristics of our experience. This helped me to understand how we translate these qualities through our conceptual outlook. Six “features of qualitative study are that it is: 1) field focused, 2) constructed so that the researcher is an instrument, 3) interpretive in nature, 4) expressive in language, 5) highly detailed and 6) persuasive” (p. 34). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) explain,

Qualitative research is a situated learning activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world; they turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

The determination of an appropriate methodology can be described as “the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (Crotty, 2010, p.3). When methodologies were being explored for my research, Clifford Geertz (1973) was one of the scholars whose work with the constructivist paradigm

appealed to me. Geertz believed that culture is public because “meaning is public” (p.12) and systems of meanings are what produce culture, and they are the collective property of a particular people. . Ethnography to Geertz was a “thick description” (p.6). Geertz believed that culture was a total way of life of a people, a way of thinking, feeling, believing and that it is ultimately the social legacy that the individual acquires from his group. Geertz is best known for his attention to systems of meaning in anthropological analysis of culture, how cultures change, and the study of culture at large. Culture to Geertz is revealed in a person’s actions and by the interpretation of their meaning. Geertz explains:

Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is... There are a number of ways of escaping this—turning culture into folklore and collecting it, turning it into traits and counting it, turning it into institutions and classifying it, turning it into structures and toying with it. But they *are* escapes. The fact is that to commit oneself to a semiotic concept of culture and an interpretive approach to the study of it is to commit oneself to a view of ethnographic assertion as... ‘essentially contestable.’ Anthropology, or at least interpretive anthropology, is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of the consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other. (1973, p.29)

The phenomenon in this research study is the production of traditional pottery using traditional methods by pottery clans of the North Georgia area. This study is specific to the production of traditional pottery by Southern folk potters. This phenomenon is somewhat unique to the South that has seen continuous transition and

transformation from decade to decade. Many factors may influence “traditionalism” in pottery making, and it is the search for answers that generates interest in this inquiry. Other questions key to my research design have to do with why Southern folk potters are influenced to produce traditional work; how they feel about their work and other traditional craft from a cultural point of view; and the influence of commercialism in the production of traditional craft will be studied.

The goal of this research is to understand a human phenomenon and practitioners’ experiences of this phenomenon, and this goal fits with the philosophy, strategies, and intentions of the interpretive research paradigm. Sullivan (2005) says that the study of the studio/workshop setting as a place of inquiry and as a role for sustained research that has the potential to yield significant knowledge is not so apparent in our art educational literature. He writes,

This framework for theorizing visual arts practice incorporates several of the dimensions of inquiry covered in the art educational literature, especially debates about the importance of interpretation, the study of artworks, and the advocacy for visual culture.

The pottery shop where pots are turned, the field where clay is dug, the wood-firing kiln where clay is fired, should all be recognized as places of inquiry and as sites for sustained research that has the potential to yield significant knowledge for this collective portrait study (Sullivan, 2005, p. 81).

To study the three potters and their environments, qualitative and ethnographic methods will be utilized. As a search for qualities (Barone & Eisner, 1997), qualitative



methods are based on the quality or character of something that we translate throughout chosen forms of representation (LaPierre & Zimmerman, 1997). Qualitative research is a process of describing, analyzing and interpreting insights discovered in everyday living and begins with observation of a phenomenon and the characteristics of the particular phenomenon.

### **Portraiture**

The methodology best suited for this study of three folk potters is portraiture. While choosing to focus my research on three Northeast Georgia folk potters, I will emphasize depth of understanding over breadth in sampling. I will collectively weave the story of three individual potters from the region, I hope to be able to develop the big picture of the challenges and issues facing the 21<sup>st</sup> century generation of folk potters. In creating this collective portrait of three Northeast Georgia folk potters, I will draw upon the work and ideas of Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997, 1983).

The research technique called portraiture was pioneered by LawrenceLightfoot. Portraiture is based in the tradition of ethnography, but attempts to go beyond some of ethnography's stresses such as living with the subject over long periods of time in order to provide a fuller understanding of the research subject. Portraiture also has several distinct goals. Portraiture attempts to blend the rigor of traditional ethnographic inquiry with the artistic expression of a novelist. LawrenceLightfoot (1997) believes a research portrait should allow the reader to empathize with and understand the unknown worlds of the research subject just as a great story allows the reader to see aspects of him/her in unknown worlds.

The researcher has a major role in portraiture. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) believes portraiture is unique in that “the person of the researcher – even when vigorously controlled – is more evident and more visible than in any other research form” (p. 13). Because I would like for my voice to be part of the research as well as that of the researcher, I think Lawrence-Lightfoot’s process will be appropriate.

Portraiture highlights what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) calls “goodness” (p. 8) the opposite of what she views as critical studies or what may be wrong in research by social science researchers. A focus on goodness was developed in response to what Lawrence-Lightfoot sees as the tendency for social science researchers to focus on what is wrong in research. Lawrence-Lightfoot feels a focus on failure distorts our sense of the world, causing us not to see the positive aspects that are working well and which aspects have potential. The distorted world-view can lead to the development of cynicism and becomes a basis for a refusal to take action. She also feels that a focus on the negative “often bleeds into a blaming of the victim” (p. 9). Lawrence-Lightfoot says that “the focus on pathology seems to encourage facile inquiry” (p. 9) rather than in-depth understanding. By emphasizing promise and potential, Lawrence-Lightfoot seeks to address these imbalances.

The researcher has a major role in portraiture. Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) believes portraiture is unique in that “the person of the researcher – even when vigorously controlled – is more evident and more visible than in any other research form” (p. 13). Because I intend for my voice to be the structure part of the research as well as that of the researcher, I think Lawrence-Lightfoot’s process will be particularly helpful.

Portraiture emphasizes what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) calls “goodness” (p. 8). A focus on goodness was developed in response to what Lawrence-Lightfoot sees as the tendency for social science researchers to focus on what is wrong in research. She feels this focus on failure distorts our sense of the world, causing us not to see what is working well and what has potential. She believes that this distorted worldview leads to the development of cynicism and becomes a basis for a refusal to take action. She also feels that a focus on the negative “often bleeds into a blaming of the victim” (p. 9). Lawrence-Lightfoot says that “the focus on pathology seems to encourage facile inquiry” (p. 9) rather than in-depth understanding. By emphasizing promise and potential, Lawrence-Lightfoot pursues opportunities to address the discrepancies.

I believe portraiture is the perfect methodological technique for my work for several reasons. Lawrence-Lightfoot’s emphasis on the researcher’s voice was particularly interesting to me because my research question: “How have your life experiences affected your pottery?” examines my own experiences as well as those of the potters. The technique that I choose for my study should allow for the incorporation of views in common. Portraiture provides a way for the researcher’s voice to be an important part of the project, giving structure to what could be a confusing autobiographical route. Lawrence-Lightfoot instructs the researcher to follow six different aspects of voice.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) identifies the first type of voice to use as that of the witness. When acting as a witness, the researcher should carefully record what she sees and hears as the researcher is much like a journalist, reporting accurately for

the record. Next, the researcher acts as interpreter, asking “why” something happened combined with the view of “what” happened described in the first step. Lawrence-Lightfoot warns that “in making the interpretation, the portraitist must provide enough descriptive evidence in the text so that the reader might be able to offer an alternative hypothesis, a different interpretation of the data” (p. 91).

The next layer of voice introduced by Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) is the “voice as preoccupation” (p. 113) in which the researcher describes in detail the theoretical framework underlying the work. In my project, I will develop both my understanding of learning pottery traditions through a community of practice, and my research and interview questions will provide the data for this theoretical framework.

“Voice of autobiography” (p. 118) is the next layer of “voice” that is described by Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997). In this step, Lawrence-Lightfoot recommends sharing the aspects of the researcher’s story that have direct relevance to the research project. In this project, I will cover my own story in two ways. First, I plan to weave my story into the study rather than have a separate chapter of personal history that follows the chapter devoted to the potters. I will introduce the reader to me as a character in the narrative and provide a contrasting portrait to that of the members of the potters. Within the thematic chapters, I will weave my stories and reflections into those of the potters. I plan to have the potters’ stories lead the way with mine to follow, touching on the subjects brought out by interview and observation.

“Listening for a story”, “listening for voice”, and “voice in conversation” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997, p. 122) are the next components the researcher must address. The researcher should pay close attention not only to what the subject (the

“actor”) says with words, but also to what the actor conveys with body language and with silences. Changes in tone of speech, hesitations, body language, and silences reveal what Lawrence-Lightfoot calls “mixed feelings” (p. 122). Hesitations are important to developing a fully nuanced portrait and are particularly important when transcribing.

Portraiture also highlights context as well as voice in a way that I feel is critical to my research. The context in which I will work through complex issues that may emerge becomes especially important. For Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997), context involves not just the physical setting in which the action takes place, but also the historical, cultural and ideological setting. For my research, I have therefore considered not just the Northeast Georgia landscape but also the history and culture of the changing South—what the social culture is like. In addition, Lawrence-Lightfoot recommends examining the symbols and metaphors used in a particular setting.

Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) believes the final aspect of context involves reviewing the “actor’s role in shaping and defining context” (p.44). This step was is one of the most critical for my project because it uncovered a mechanism for looking at agency and resistance. As Lawrence-Lightfoot explains,

Sometimes we – who underscore the power and significance of context in our work – begin to overstate its shaping influence in the lives of actors, assuming that institutional structures and ecological domains are far more powerful than they are. But in developing portraits we must also observe and record the ways in which people compose their own settings – the ways they shape, disturb, and transform the environments in which they live and work. (p. 58)

In proposing portraiture as a research methodology, Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) took into consideration the different aspects of both voice and context. I found her emphasis on “goodness” and the idea of the mutual research relationship to be very powerful. Documentation is included on how to address the issues including the theoretical as well as the process of transcription. The collective portrait offers the best alternative for a project that seeks to connect the stories and experiences of three regional folk potters in all their complexity.

In order to capture the actual process that naturally occurs, the event and people must be studied in their natural surroundings. Studying the potters will result in capturing the events as they actually occur. I will seek to minimize my effect on the behavior of the people being studied by observing them in natural settings to help diminish the chances of influencing their behavior. Finally, naturalistic research dictates that the events be explained in terms of their relationship to the context in which they occur (Geertz, 1973) in familiar settings and within the culture of, in this case, the folk potter.



*Figure 15. (2005). Traditional folk potter Michael Crocker.*

The North Georgia folk potters have existed within clay clans for a long time and have developed shared values, beliefs, and language (Creswell, 2005). As the observer, I am interested in the interdependence of these group behaviors and interactions. One of the most important aspects of the portrait is location. My responsibility as a researcher lies in observing, interviewing, and collecting documents about the three subjects in order to gain an understanding of beliefs, behaviors, and language (Creswell, 2005). This requires extensive field observation in order to gather enough data to accurately explain the event or persons. As each potter lives approximately one and one half hours in distance from my home, I had the ability to commute to complete the study.

I will engage in this collective portrait of three Northeast Georgia folk potters aimed at examining and understanding, through their personal narratives, how they were taught to make folk pottery and how they are currently teaching the next generation of potters to be crafts persons, business owners, and folk potters. Aiming to

locate their life stories as they operate in particular social, historical, and institutional circumstances, my task with each participant in this study was to get as close as possible to understanding and rendering elements of their lives in context.

Utilizing narratives of three local folk potters, I sought to deepen my understanding, through the creation of written portraits, of how each participant embraces the identities of local legacies. For this research, I will outline the analysis of interviews, observations and artifacts using methods of portraiture. I turn my researcher gaze toward the folk potters known as local legacies through an exploration of the concept of kinship, brothers and sisters in clay. I seek to understand how folk potters continue the craft tradition in an era of technology and what legitimate discourses existed within the web of Georgia folk potters. I seek to explain how ideas change over time in the hands of the people who care about them. I seek to identify the emerging conditions for innovative and differing traditions of folk pottery.





*Figure 16. (2013). Author's great grandparents farm, Jackson County, Georgia*

### **Site and Participants**

The sites of this study are the workshops of the three folk potters where they make and fire their pots located in Lula, Gillsville and Clarkesville, Georgia. I was fortunate to have found three potters who are continuing the tradition in three different ways: apprenticeship and family. David Meaders has no children but is training an African American apprentice, Stanley Ferguson is teaching his daughter to take over the family business while teaching his grandchildren, and Clint Alderman who apprenticed with Edwin Meaders. I drove from Atlanta to each potter's workshop location. I realized that having access to each of these men was an honor and not to be taken lightly.

Once I began to focus on my research of Northeast Georgia folk pottery, I contacted Chris Brooks, Director of the new Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery Museum

in Sautee Nachoochee, Georgia. I asked him if he would assist me with a selection of three authentic folk potters for my study. I knew that I wanted to involve David Meaders and possibly Stanley Ferguson but wanted to make sure that the other potter fit with the purpose of my research. At his suggestion, I contacted Clint Alderman who he explained was a young man who was taking on the task of being a folk potter and who had apprenticed with Edwin Meaders, one of the living legacies.

I attempted to call each of the potters and discuss my research and to ask for their addresses in order to send the consent forms. In the beginning, I had difficulty contacting David Meaders as his number changed. His uncle Welchel Meaders referred me to another potter named Steve who gave me David's new telephone number. David and I talked about the study and he agreed to work with me as long as the other two potters were authentic folk potters, not studio potters. I told him about Stanley Ferguson and Clint Alderman and he seemed very pleased. I contacted Stanley and he was delighted to be involved and helpful as possible. I called Clint later that week, and he was equally interested in helping.

There were many wonderful potters to consider but these three were a perfect fit for my study of how the tradition will continue. I wanted to tell the story from three different authentic perspectives. One potter whom I had originally wanted to interview became disinterested when he discovered that he would not be paid for the interview. I was disappointed to lose this potter but had no choice. I was happy to work with the three potters that accepted my invitation. They recognized the importance of the study and wanted to contribute.

## **Data Collection Methods**

The researcher's responsibility is in observing, interviewing, creating recordings, still photos, drawings as well as collecting documents and artifacts about the subject in order to gain understanding of beliefs, behaviors and language (Creswell, 2005). According to Patton (1990), "qualitative methods consist of three types of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation: and (3) written documents" (p. 10). All of these sources can enhance the understanding of the subject being investigated.

**Interviews.** I used informal and semi-structured interviews using an interview guide (see Appendix E.) to interview the three participants. The semi-structured interviews allowed for a degree of interaction between the two parties. The interview format consisted of questions that encouraged participants to explore their experiences and opinions about their roles in the pottery history and education as well as in their community. In order to generate a collective portrait of the three folk potters my research strategy began with meeting each potter individually. I sent each potter a copy of my research proposal and followed up with phone calls to discuss the project and project dates for a chance to interview and observe them. I began the first interviews with two of the potters initially at local restaurants without distractions. I met with the third potter at his shop so that he could continue to work.

My research included four dimensions of data collecting: 1) Interviews: formal and informal with potters, family members, and apprentices; 2) Observation: I was an observer participant in the teaching of turning pottery and the wood-firing processes; and 3) Multimedia: I made numerous videos and still shots of the potters and their

operations. I came to see my role as a researcher to be a dual role of participant and observer, insider and outsider. As a participant observer, I took notes, made videos, still photographs, wrote reflections, and kept visual journals that documented my experience, and helped me to modify my questions; 4) In order to develop a deeper understanding I also engaged in Document Analysis: I collected photographs, promotional material and photographs of each potter.



*Figure 17. Greear, David (2006). Inside the Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery Museum.*

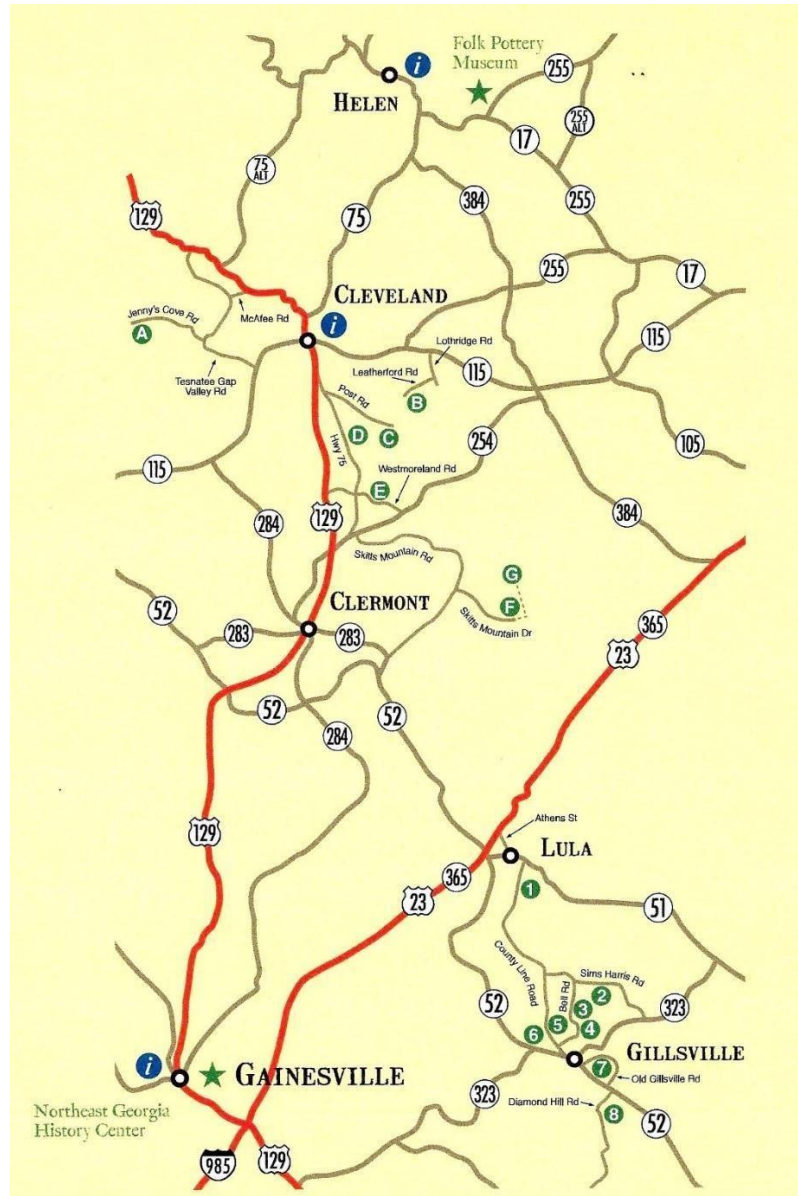


Figure 18. (2005) *Folk Potters Trail*. Courtesy, Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia .

The interviews varied in length with most lasting more than the intended 90 minutes each. The observer participant sessions which included long wood-firings using the tunnel kilns lasted up to ten hours each. I met with each potter twice, participated in the wood-firings of two of the potters and discussed details of processes

and techniques via telephone with each. I followed up with the potters to clarify my questions I had.

**Participant Observation.** An obvious and necessary strategy for understanding the folk potters of Northeast Georgia was observation. Participant observation, as a research strategy, offered the model of witnessing the events and exchanges that contributed to the dynamic of the organizational environment. Morris (1973) explains observation as a research strategy defining it as "the act of noting a phenomenon, often with instruments, and recording it for specific or other purposes" (p. 96). Over a period of four months, I interviewed and video recorded the folk potters as they demonstrated the process of making the traditional wares on three different occasions of 90 minutes, each. I also took notes during these demonstrations. Having the recordings allowed me to review and compare them to my notes. The video tapes also captured any nuances I overlooked.

**Multimedia.** During the months of August, September, October and November I filmed photographed and made drawings of the folk potters with the preparation of the clay and glazes as well as with the making of the pottery and firing the wares for a kiln opening. I recorded the days when demonstrations were made, as I was not able to take thorough notes. When the wood-firings were taking place, I became an active participant in the firing. At times I chose to let the video record the process and transcribe in my notebook at a later time while the events were still fresh in my memory.

**Document and artifact review.** I sought documents and artifacts that were relevant to the study. These included personal notes, fliers about exhibits, bills of sale, photographs, journals kept by the Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery Museum, geological

surveys, family trees, brochures, and books. Of particular interest was the promotional material for the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the Meaders family pottery business from 1992, family tree for both the Meaders and the Ferguson families, many great photos, glaze recipes and sketches made by Arie Meaders.

*Table 1: Research Questions & Data Collection Methods*

Research Questions	<u>Interviews</u>	Observations	Multimedia	Document/ Artifacts
1. In what ways do the folk potters in this study describe their communities of practice?	x	x	x	
2. How have the available natural resources affected clays, glazes, and methods of production for three 21st century folk potters that arose from North Georgia family traditions?	x	x	x	x
3. How does each representative potter participant describe his/her quality or contribution to the aesthetics to the family's North Georgia folk pottery?	x	x	x	x
4. How is the aesthetic genealogy of traditional North Georgia folk pottery traced in each participant's folk pottery?	x	x	x	x



## **Data Analysis**

I began analyzing the data first by transcribing the video and audio recordings as I made them while fresh on my mind. From the recordings I selected moments of specialness to transcribe and made notes and drawings and attempted to read the transcripts as soon as possible, writing notes on what I saw in my data (Bryman, 2008; Maxwell, 2005). I identified emerging themes (Maxwell, 2005) across all data sets, interview transcripts, demonstration observation notes, and field notes. I connected themes between the various data sources that allowed for triangulation (Creswell, 2009). These categories helped me sort the data for further analysis (Maxwell, 2005; Wolcott, 2008). After analyzing the data, I used member checks (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2010) making sure that I put details correctly in place within the demonstrations and interviews. The three folk potters had common themes that I was able to use such as learning by observing, including the need for individual identity as a potter while continue the tradition of the folk pottery way, and family/ friend support. The themes helped me organize the data for further analysis (Maxwell, 2005).

I shared the transcriptions of the wood firing with David Meaders as he taught his apprentice David McPheil nicknamed “Poke” to make sure that the essential information was recorded accurately. I later shared them with Stanley Ferguson and Clint Alderman and asked clarifying questions about certain areas of the recordings that were difficult to understand or hear. The context (Maxwell, 2005) and cultural setting was important to this study and I sought to describe aspects of the folk potters’ lives. I described how the aspects of their daily lives affected the making of pottery. I wrote notes and drawings to assist me in recalling all details.

I wanted to tell the story of the three Georgia folk potters being studied. I wanted to describe relevant aspects of the potters' lives. I described how these facts affect or interact with the work of the potters I studies. I wrote many notes and made drawings in my visual journals to assist me, as writing is also a form of analysis (Bryman, 2008). I made detailed, thick descriptions in my writing (Mertens, 2010; Wolcott, 2008) hopefully allowing the reader to smell the stoneware clay, feel the splash of clay slurry on the skin, and understand the way in which the folk potters have continued the traditions and in what context they have worked

### **Protection of Human Subjects (IRB)**

#### **Limitations and Advantages**

There was no risk to the three potters. I conducted myself in a professional manner and respected the needs of the three potters and their families during each visit. Participants stood to benefit from participating in this study by contributing to the knowledge of Northeast Georgia folk pottery. The interviews were conducted in local restaurants first, then in their workshops or at their wood firings. No interviews were conducted during the weekends at the request of the potters.

The interviews and observations were taped and access to the tapes was restricted to the researcher. The files of the video and audio recordings were stored in a secure location. The interviews took place at a convenient location and time for each party. I plan to keep the files indefinitely for future writing. The table below indicates the implementation of data collection techniques. The data was collected over a period of one year. The interviews were conducted over a period of four months, however, I continued to collect artifacts from the potters including but not limited to, photographs of new jugs and kilns being repaired.

Table 2: *Implementation of Data Collection Measures*

	August 2013	September 2013	October 2013	November 2013 October 2014
Interviews	x	x	x	
Participant Observations	x	x	x	x
Multimedia	x	x	x	x
Document and Artifact Review	x	x	x	x

### **Subjectivity Statement and Limitations**

I was interested in studying the folk potters of Georgia for many reasons. Georgia folk pottery has a strong connection to my own history and experiences in craft dating back to my great-great-grandfather who owned a lime kiln in Habersham County that served most of the pottery operations in Northern Georgia in the 1800s. I became interested in clay early in high school and studied ceramics in college. As a secondary art educator, I have had teaching experience with urban, suburban, and in underserved rural areas including Fannin County and northern Hall County.

While a student at the University of North Georgia, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work closely with Fine Arts Chair, Bob Owens on a number of occasions. Bob Owens, a potter, had a major impact on my artwork and my life. Bob served as leader of a variety of organizations including Georgia Craft: Appalachia

which was funded by the Georgia Council for the Arts and Humanities. The organization was interested in the identification and development of Appalachian craftspeople. I had the opportunity to accompany Mr. Owens to several craft organizational meetings and craft shows, assisted with grant writing sessions, and organized exhibitions for the college. During this time, I was introduced to famous potters including Lanier Meaders, Charles Counts, and Bill Gordy, writers such as the teacher and creator of the Foxfire books Elliott Wiggington, and Folklife historians including Ralph Rinzler co-founder of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Rinzler was a musician, festival administrator, and scholar who created the film about the Meaders family pottery for the Smithsonian. These experiences in craft were pivotal in my development as an art educator and as an artistic individual. I am sensitive to the needs of the potter in underserved areas of North Georgia.



*Figure 19. Greear, David. (2011). Snake Jug by Michael Crocker, Lula Georgia.*

My student teaching experience took place in rural Fannin County in 1979 with an art teacher/fiber artist who was writing a book about the history of the area. In 1979, the town of Blue Ridge was suffering financially from a recession and transition as many Vietnam veterans were attempting to rebuild their lives helping with family farms. The options for a graduating high school senior were bleak. Many students assisted with family farming or worked in the local Levi Straus textile mill. In the art room, teaching my students about works by contemporary artists such as Christo seemed far removed from life in the rural town. Many asked why Christo would wrap islands with fabric. “What was the purpose of it?” they asked. Several days after

introducing the concept of Christo the installation artist, I walked to the school parking lot one afternoon and found my car had been wrapped completely and perfectly with blue denim from the textile mill. At that moment I knew that I was getting through to my students. A student prank brought to the art room yards of denim which were used to make clay aprons and table cloths for art tables when wedging clay.

Working without an art budget brought about creative and innovative ideas such as face jugs made out of clay from a creek bed, corn shuck dolls and apple head dolls, woven belts with wool that had been dyed with pokeberries and walnut hulls and spun with drop spindles made from a stick in a potato, egg tempera paintings, homemade paint brushes with bamboo and squirrel hair. Much like neighbors depending on neighbors in the mountains, we depended on each other to dig the clay out of creek beds, to mix the clay and to recycle and wedge the clay when it dried out.

Through a variety of life experiences, I have known one of the three folk potters in the study for 20 years. I support these potters as they expose more people to the rich cultural history through craft. I believe that our educational community leaders should work to perpetuate the continuance of craft by keeping craft education in our state curriculum as well as developing a community of practice through classroom climate.

## CHAPTER 4

### HISTORY OF FOLK POTTERY

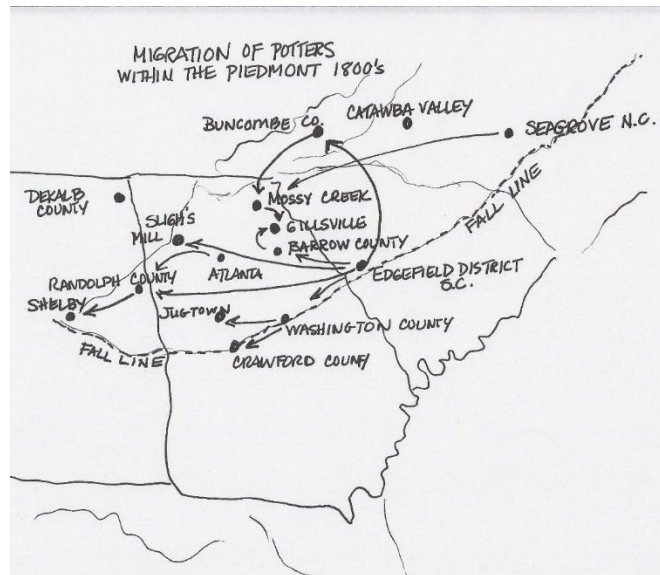
In order to understand the deep connection of the folk potter and his/her pottery, one must understand the depth and connections to traditions within the Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery culture. I will share an introduction to folk pottery history, culture and knowledge I gained by interacting with the potters and members of the folk pottery families that I had the pleasure of encountering during my study.

The folk potters of Northeast Georgia do not comply with a written manual on how to go about turning, glazing or firing pottery; instead, they rely on family members to pass on the knowledge. John Burrison, has written numerous books regarding the potters in Georgia. His 1983 book *Brothers in Clay* was widely regarded has one of the best historical documents of the folk potters. What could I possibly bring to the table 31 years after Dr. Burrison's powerful book *Brothers in Clay*?



*Figure 20. Greear, David. (2012). Barrow County Pottery.*

Table 3: Map of migration of potters in the 1800s.



In this dissertation, I introduce myself as having an insider/ outsider lens as a researcher, teacher, potter, former gallery director, curator, and collector. I am also the great, great granddaughter of Lyn Walker whose lime kiln in Habersham County, Georgia served many Northeast Georgia potters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as described in Burrison's *Brothers in Clay*:

A resident of Cleveland, writing to the editor of the magazine *Antiques* in the early 1930s described that variety of alkaline glaze..."The glaze is known as the Walker glaze, from the fact of its derivation from a deposit of impure lime near Clarkesville, Georgia known as the Walker lime. This lime mixed with a local pottery clay was ground by hand in a small stone mill and applied to the ware."(Burrison, 1983, pp.252-253)



Burrison provided further description of the Walker lime operation near Hollywood in eastern Habersham County, over twenty miles from Mossy Creek where the Dorsey and Meaders pottery dynasties were located.

The Walker lime kiln was owned by William Lyn Walker. The kilns were built on the side of a mountain with an open mouth to burn the wood. The lime rock was skidded into the kilns by men. I understood the top salary was twenty-five cents a day at the that time...they buried cordwood to heat the rock and after about eight days the rock began to disintegrate and the lime was separated from the “trash” and made into builders lime, which was used in a lot of the old courthouses in this section.” (Burrison, 1983, p.253)

### **Alkaline Glazes**

According to Cinda Baldwin (1993), the characteristic feature of the southern stoneware is the type of glaze that made it distinctive from other glazes in the United States. Alkaline glaze was the primary type of glaze in the South during the early 1800s. Although all of the alkaline glazes contain some lime, the use of slacked lime in place of wood ash creates a smoother surface and a light tan-green glaze color.

Many things contribute to the final appearance of an alkaline glaze. The types of ingredients in the glaze as well as the amounts, how they are prepared and the way the pots were fired such as the condition of the kiln all yielded different varieties of colors and textures. The temperature of a kiln and how wares are fired and if oxygen is

present or removed from the kiln during the process also changes colors and textures of glazes. The “lime glaze was used by potters in Washington, Crawford and White counties in Georgia which were important early centers of southern alkaline-glazed stoneware production wares” (Baldwin, 1993).



*Figure 21. Pottery by enslaved African American Potter David Drake, ca. 1859*

Retrieved from: <http://www.crockerfarm.com/stoneware-auction/2013-03-02/lot-373/ImportantFive-Gallon-Edgefield-SC-Stoneware-Jar-Signed-Dave-March-19-1857-Lm/>

### **Pottery Dynasties**

As with all traditional craft, folk pottery is learned by observation and practice in a family or apprenticeship setting. The techniques are handed-on traditions. According to Burrison (2010), in the early part of the nineteenth century, American folk potters shifted their production from soft and porous earthenware to stoneware, a tough ceramic product made of finely grained somewhat pure clay that fires to look tan or gray. As mentioned in

Chapter 2, Georgia's stoneware clay is concentrated along the fall line from Augusta to Columbus through the middle of the state called the Piedmont. This clay country also was some of the richest farmland attracting potters who also farmed to the area. The clay attracted many potters during this period and by the late nineteenth century there were nine pottery centers. Three of them were major centers in the Piedmont region of Northeast Georgia. My study will involve descendants from two of the major centers in the Piedmont region: the Meaders and Ferguson family potteries.

The wares were sold directly from family wagons. General stores and whiskey distillers were the most popular customers. Mossy Creek, White County, in the foothills below Cleveland is where Meaders Family Pottery began. The pioneer potters, including members of the Davidson, Craven, and Dorsey families all came from North Carolina. Ash and lime-based alkaline glazes have been used by the Meaders family although a lime substitute was used that was cheaper.

Jug Factory in Barrow County is where Charles Ferguson was trained in alkaline glazed stoneware methods of Edgefield, South Carolina. According to Burrison (2010) Charles moved about fifteen years before the Civil War and set up what was known as Jug Factory. He began a sixty-potter dynasty that by marriage later included the DeLay, Archer, Robertson and Hewell families. Ash plates and cups were made during the Civil War for soldiers to have food storage as the factory-made ware was unavailable due to being blocked by the Union Blockade. Following ash glaze the ware was salt-glazed over Albany slip. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the Barrow County shops were closed.

### **Migration of Meaders and Ferguson Families**

Gillsville is a small town near Gainesville near the Jackson County and Banks County Georgia lines. Burrison (2010) states that in the late nineteenth century, it began to grow due to migrant workers from Mossy Creek located north of Gillsville and Jug Factory located south of Gillsville. The first known potter in the area was named Clemonds Chandler of White County in 1860. Others set up shops several years later including William Addington of Barrow County, and John Robert Holcomb from White County. A Holcomb grandson maintained a shop there until World War II. The Gillsville potters were known for their Albany slip glaze which was a very dark chocolate brown. Later unglazed pottery was created for garden ware by the Hewells, Cravens, Sims, and Wilson families. It is not known how the alkaline ash glaze was discovered. The earliest known use of the technique was in 1820 by stoneware manufacturer Abner Landrum in Edgefield County, South Carolina and slave owner to David Drake. According to Burrison (2010) Landrum may have read published descriptions of Chinese firings that were being experimented in Europe.

In the late nineteenth century, Barrow County potters began to use Albany slip instead of the ash glaze process. Albany slip was a natural clay glaze that was imported from New York. Burrison (2010) states that the Barrow County potters began a double glazing method by throwing salt on top of the Albany slip in the kiln to add a mustard yellow color or green color where the sodium vapor concentrated. This could have been influenced by the salt-glazes stoneware of Britain and Germany and seen in the Index of American Design portfolio collection mentioned in Chapter 2. Eight or nine pioneer potters all migrated from North Carolina to Mossy Creek moving through South Carolina into Northeast Georgia, see *Table 3*.

Craftsmanship was very important in the pottery operation of the early clay dynasty days of the nineteenth century. Folk pottery was utilitarian due to the agrarian society therefore form always followed function in the design of a jug. Craftsmanship is often seen in the way the clay and glazes were mixed. Pots which were not properly fired would crack and break and if clay is not properly mixed holes will appear in the jug where twigs or rocks were once embedded in the clay and burned out in the kiln firing. Handles and spouts are very important to the jug and will break off in the firing if not properly made. The making of handles and spouts were also artistic and functional. If a pot was not glazed inside as well as outside, it would not be food-safe for the home.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **MEETING WITH THE POTTERS**

Only the Southern folk pottery heritage of this country has been able to maintain an uninterrupted presence (Mack, 2006). The three potters with whom I spoke in the fall of 2013, David Meaders, Stanley Ferguson and Clint Alderman, are playing a pivotal role in keeping their traditional American art form alive.

#### **David Meaders, Hall County, Lula**

David is the fourth generation potter in his family. In early August 2013, I drove to Commerce, Georgia to meet David at a local restaurant. It had been several years since David and I sat down to talk. In 1995, was named the Youth Art Month Honorary Artist by the Georgia Art Education Association, and I photographed him for the poster later used for the GAEA Fall Conference. The photo was made the morning after an important firing at Lanier's old kiln. He was happy.

It took about an hour to make the drive from the school where I taught art in Alpharetta. I invited David to have dinner with me and discuss my research project. He still had not signed the consent form and told me he had not gone to mailbox that week and that he had been busy. I explained to him that I would need his signature. He wanted to know how the information would be used. I asked the restaurant hostess if I could be seated in a quiet table in the back where we could talk. I was seated at a comfortable large booth that could hold six people with plenty of room. This wonderful booth I later found was directly under the speaker for the juke box.

David entered like a rock star complete with his long white hair, black leather jacket, black cowboy hat and boots, and he rode in on a Harley Davidson motorcycle. At 62 years old, he is one of three living legacy potters from Northeast Georgia. Everyone in the restaurant thought he might be somebody famous and watched him as he walked back to the table. It had been a while since I had talked with him about my research. His telephone wasn't working so we messaged through Facebook. In addition to my field notebook, I brought along a flip camera as well as my iPhone to record.

He invited me to one of his wood firings later in the month. He said he would give me a day or two of notice. It would be on a Wednesday or a Thursday all day. I changed my plans from the weekend to the weekday. David and the other potters work during the weekdays and like to have their weekends off so if I wanted to see the firing and film the process, I would need to take a personal day from teaching in order to attend. David lives off the beaten path and assured me that a GPS would not work and to follow his personal directions to his place at Skitts Mountain. He lives just below Mossy Creek at the end of the Skitts Mountain Drive just across the White County line in Hall County. I agreed and took a personal leave day from work.

David told me that he had enough clay dug from a friend's property to last a life time. He likes for this clay to be firm. He told me that sometimes life gets to be challenging and that he could work all month and not get a dime. It takes six weeks to prepare for a firing and that doesn't include getting the wood cut and together (four to five cords). If one thing goes wrong, he could lose the whole kiln and not get paid. He

tells me that a potter needs to save their money in order to pay all their bills for three months. I began to understand the driving force behind David and his energy.

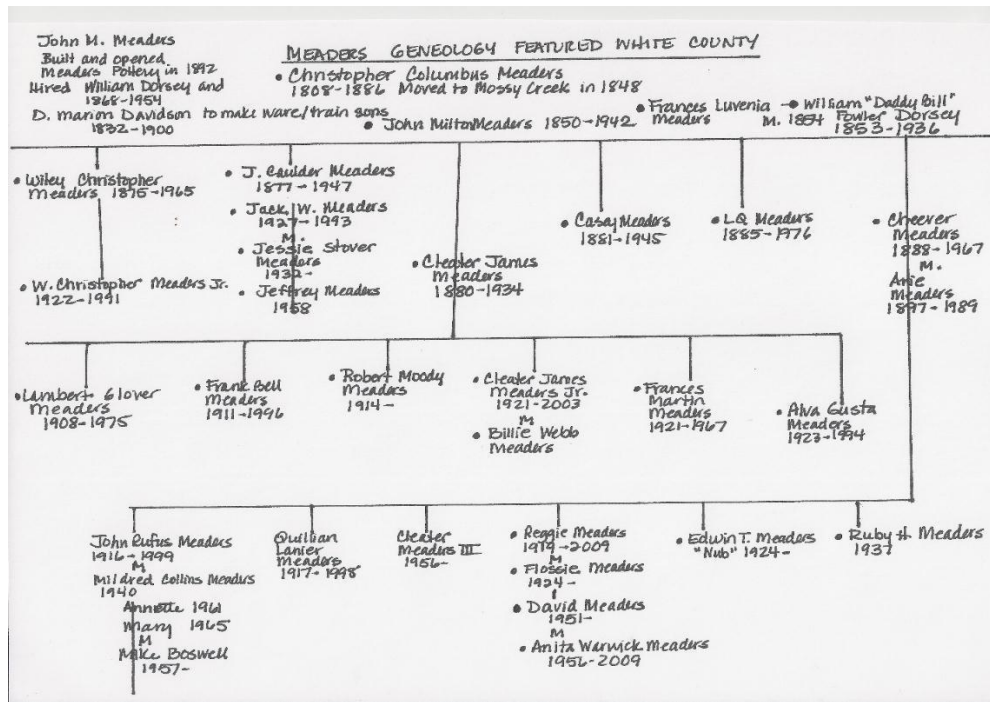
David doesn't go to the doctor regularly and has no health insurance. I asked him how he was able to withstand his recent health problem and near death experience due to problems with his liver. He told me he owes a lot of money to people. At once time he was on a list for a liver transplant. "You don't know what good health is until you don't have it", he tells me. A few years ago his doctors told him that he would die within a few months and there was no hope for his condition. He decided to make amends with everyone and wait for his own death. It took him three months to get in Emory University Hospital. He told me he was given 1500 pills a month, some to take in order to kill the side effects for various other medicines he was given. He miraculously recovered and lives every week to its fullest. He is grateful for this second chance and seems to savor every minute of life.

The Meaders Pottery of Mossy Creek, Georgia was opened ca. 1892 by John Milton Meaders. His sister Fannie married a potter shop owner neighbor "Daddy Bill" Dorsey around 1872 and with all of the clay found naturally in the area, John Milton Meaders thought it would be a good way to make a living with his six sons. He hired Marion Davidon and William Dorsey who were more experienced to help train the six sons. The sons all opened their own pottery businesses. Cheever took over the original pottery ca. 1920 and in the 1950s his wife Arie began making decorative ware including brightly colored chickens and birds. It was a combination of Cheever's old fashioned way of making pottery and Arie's artistic vision that set the stage for Lanier



to become successful with face jugs. When Cheever died in 1967, Lanier took over the shop.

Table 4: Meaders Genealogy White County



David is the fourth generation of Meaders potters. His great-grandfather John Milton Meaders started it, then his grandfather Cheever took over the shop then Reggie, Lanier, John and Edwin "Nub". David is the nephew of Lanier and Nub and grandson of Arie Meaders. He lives on the property once owned by his parents Reggie and Flossie Meaders. David gives credit to his grandfather Cheever for holding the business together during the Great Depression selling churns for several cents. The same churns are selling for thousands of dollars at auction and antique stores. He explained that none of the family members would be working today in clay if it had not been for Cheever.

David is a widower, his wife Anita, also a potter, died on July 21, 2009. He told me that she kept him from dying while waiting for a liver transplant. They met while she was a senior in high school and he was a little older. They grew up in the same area. Her great grandfather-William Asberry Warwick was one of the pottery pioneers in the area in 1850s and discussed in the *Brothers in Clay* book.

David moved the topic back to clay and glazes. Regarding the use of lime in the glaze used by his ancestors, David explains that the Meaders may have tried lime in their glaze, but transportation was a huge obstacle for the Meaders as it was a twenty mile distance to travel by wagon for the lime from White County to Habersham County. Instead of the lime, his grandfather used what was available and used innovative methods to mix the glaze. He told me “Granddaddy had something on the farm called “Settlins” a real fine clay found on the bottoms of ponds that sinks to the bottom that would be used to make a glaze instead of lime” David explained. The Meaders potters in White county use the alkaline glaze made of clay, sand, ash, silica, and settlins; some of the Northeast Georgia traditional folk potters use lime in place of ash for effect.

Chinese potters developed downdraft kilns earlier than anyone else. The kilns were able to hold more heat produced by the fire and allowed the potter to fire with higher temperatures. The kiln designs also brought about the discovery that when wood ash is heated very high that it melts into a glaze. During the Shang period of 1751-1111 BC potters began mixing ash with lime or with earth to produce glazes (Burrison 2010). The glazes were usually greenish yellow with spots of deeper green. Around the mid nineteenth century potters in Edgefield, South Carolina were using this technique. One of the largest plantation owners in Edgefield had a tremendous kiln

operation and used what was called the Shanghi glaze for the pottery operation. Using earth rather than lime provided a cheaper alternative to mixing with ash. Each batch of ash will have its own characteristic formula even though you use the same type of tree from the same forest. All glaze depends on the soil conditions and the way the ashes are burned in the kiln and how much they were washed.

David Meaders explained some of the aesthetics differences of family clans Meaders and Fergusons: something that stands out shape of jug, eyes of the face jug, handles, and lips. The potters try to make the handles alike. Identifying factors exist with the way the handles are applied, glaze colors, marks or symbols that are made but there are rarely signatures of the potters.

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David feels that the Folk Pottery Museum has an accurate representation of the folk potters from the area. Modernizations took place through the years and folk pottery has a different purpose that it did when David's grandfather was turning pots. David explains that he is making pottery for the collector now.

David Meaders is training an apprentice named David McPhail, nicknamed "Poke". David and Poke used to ride motorcycles together, and now Poke wants to learn how to make folk pottery. David and Anita did not have any children, and David

Meaders realizes that he has to teach the old style of throwing and firing to keep the fire going with another generation.

When asked for the definition of a folk potter, David replied “Walk in my shoes for five years.” He still fires in a wood kiln built by his father, the late folk potter, Reggie Meaders. David lives on the family place with several large mastiff dogs. He tells me there is a sign on a large fence surrounding the house that says “Stop-Do you think you can run faster than they can?” David says he is not afraid to live by himself, but there are a lot of strange people in the world these days.

The subject comes up about the folk pottery museum. There is a concern that more studio potters are coming into the area making what they call folk pottery. It concerns the folk potters that academically trained potters are pretending to be folk potters. David continued, “Studio potters can make folk pottery, but they will never be folk potters”. David finished his dinner and told me that he was glad that I was doing this with the three potters. I asked if he would let me participate in the firing. He told me that it would be less than a week to fire, and he warned me that he might only give me a day or two of notice but it would be soon. He was getting ready for a major folk pottery show, and he wanted to have his pots fired a day before the weekend show. Then he hugged me, thanked me and he drove off on his Harley Davidson motorcycle.

Firing the kiln at David's.

The drive to Skitts Mountain in Lula was around 70 miles from my home in Atlanta. David suggested that I not use the GPS because I would get lost and to follow his detailed directions. The road was open and peaceful. It took about 1 ½ hours

because I missed the morning rush hour. I arrived about 9:00, but the kiln had been warming up for three hours. The kiln was a large wood kiln made of brick, tunnel style with a shed over it. Beside the kiln were four cords of wood. I brought food for David and his helpers. David liked kale and home-cooked vegetables. The weather was dry and hot. It was going to get very hot. In a few minutes, men on Harley Davidson motorcycles came up the road where we were.

It was so hot that I was worried that my tripod and flip camera would melt. David was not kidding around; he was very different from the man that I had interviewed a few weeks ago. He described in detail every step he was taking. As the firewood was loaded into the firebox of the tunnel kiln, it was explained to me that if the wood misses the firebox and hits the pottery there would be lots of damage to the pottery. If the firewood was not evenly distributed the interior of the kiln would not fire properly and the pots would be damaged. Poke began to sing while gathering the wood to be stoked in the kiln. The kiln door was a piece of stainless steel that was opened every ten minutes or so in order to stoke the fire gently. I asked David what would happen if something exploded, and the metal door blew off. He told me not to worry because if that happened we would be dead. Poke continued to sing while David stared at the fire with eagle eyes making sure that everything was going as planned and that the temperature was monitored. After a while, we all walked around the corner of the shed to observe dark smoke coming from the chimney of the kiln. I was told that it was carbon being emitted, an important stage in the wood firing process. The color of the smoke indicates an important stage of the firing process and lets the potter know that the temperature has changed. The firing of a kiln is much like

the dance of glass blowing. Everyone has a job and moves accordingly. The atmosphere is tense until the temperature is hot enough inside the kiln. An under-fired kiln will not produce pots that will be food-safe or attractive as the glaze will not melt. The group helping David is his community of practice.

I asked him about the recent TV interview on the Discovery Channel program *Dirty Jobs* with Mike Rowe which aired a segment with him. He said there was no greater marketing as a result and that business had been picking up for him. As I talked with David, I thought about how my questions might be modified.



*Figure 22. (1994). David Meaders holding one of his face jugs at Mossy Creek.*

### **Stanley Ferguson, Hall County, Gillsville**

Stanley is the sixth generation folk potter and is the son of Mary and the late Bobby Ferguson. When I visited with Stanley, I brought an old large bee hive shaped jug from my great grandmother that was identified by John Burrison to have been made in the 1850s by the Fergusons at Jugtown from Barrow County. I was eager to share this piece with the family. Stanley pointed out that his daddy always identified

his pots with three ridges made by using wood chips to make the markings. When Stanley asked his father why he marked them in that way, he was told because his daddy did it that way.



*Figure 23. (2013). Stanley Ferguson holding one of his Rebecca jugs in his shop.*

Stanley's mother Mary Catherine Holland Ferguson is now 80 years old and is still very active in the shop making artistic wares. Her late husband Bobby owned a trucking business and turned pottery on the side. In the early 1970s, Bobby and his son Danny Ferguson (1958-1998) built another shop in his backyard to make garden ware. In the early 1990s, the Fergusons met Lin Craven (1946-2010) who worked with Bobby and Mary for a period of time before continuing pottery on her own. In 1994 the garden ware was discontinued and only glazed folk pottery was made such as face jugs, roosters and Bobby's famous Rebecca jugs. Around this time another son of

Bobby's, Stanley James Ferguson, started to find more interest in the pottery business.



*Figure 24. (1994). David and Anita Meaders unloading the kiln.*

The sixth generation consists of Danny Ferguson (1958-1998), Stanley and Savannah Ferguson. Danny helped Bobby side by side for many years. He would always keep clay balls for his dad to turn yet still had time to learn the world of folk pottery. Danny could grind clay, turn pottery and fire the pottery on his own. Danny continued making pottery until his untimely death in 1998. Stanley began spending more time at the shop around 1996. He caught on quick and worked full time for his parents until Bobby's death in 2005. Stanley continues this tradition still with his mom, daughter and other family members. Savannah is a daughter to Bobby and Mary Ferguson. At 15, she is currently turning bowls. The seventh generation consists of four of Bobby's grandchildren: Chris "Buck" Ferguson, Benji Ferguson (1980-1993),



Jamie Ferguson, and Katie Tate. Benji, Buck's younger brother was making pottery by hand and turning before his early death in 1993.



*Figure 25. Ferguson, Jamie. (2009). Stanley's devil face jug/*

Jamie, Stanley's daughter started by just playing in the clay. By 10 years old, she was making pottery by hand to be sold. By the time she graduated from high school, she was turning and doing well on her own. She gives all of the credit to her father for showing her tips along the way. Katie is Bobby's granddaughter by his daughter Darlene and has had her hands in the clay since birth. Chris Holly, a United States veteran married into the family and quickly picked up turning in 1999 after watching Bobby for several weeks. Chris continues to turn military-like face jugs.



*Figure 26. (2009). Private collection of Lanier Meaders face jugs.*

Stanley tells me that he and other potters have been taking turns demonstrating pottery on the wheel for the local public schools in art class. Stanley has been working with the Banks County and Lula schools in an effort to keep the tradition alive by helping with donating items to the schools. He was very proud of the way the art class turned out. The potters were seeking donations in order to buy the school art equipment, and Stanley's friend Bob who made kilns for a living donated both a kiln and a wheel to the school. Stanley is very pleased with the White County school set up for their art classes and would like more of the students to have a chance to work on the potter's wheel at the school.

After observing this family of four generations work together and to keep the pottery business going I am confident Ferguson Pottery will be around for a very long time.



*Figure 27. (2013). Clint Alderman and David Meaders at David's house.*

### **Clint Alderman, Habersham County, Clarkesville, GA**

Clint is the youngest of the folk potters that I interviewed. He got his start in the 1990s when he was still in high school and apprenticed with Edwin Meaders. Now in his early 30s, Clint is very successful and wants to keep the folk pottery going. “I make pottery but I do it in the old way as a preservationist and study certain forms and research the process from a historical aspect.” Normally he keeps a distance from the academic world. Clint thinks that the McKissick Museum in South Carolina has excellent education materials explaining the traditional process that were important from a historical standpoint.



*Figure 28. Alderman, Clint (2014). Large jug with tobacco spit glaze.*

Clint fires a wood kiln but bisque-fires his important detailed pots in an electric kiln to prevent cracking and breaking in the wood fired kiln. He likes the community feeling of the area and is interested in sharing the historical aspects of folk pottery.

He explained that there seems to be a longer learning period for the educated buyer for the traditional. He goes to great lengths to explain the process even suggesting books to understand the process. He invites them to a wood firing to explain further. He says that he is interested in the experience that the collector has with the maker when purchasing the pot. He likes to share books and offers the Smithsonian documentary film *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters* to understand the traditional process that he uses.





*Figure 29. Photographer unknown (1918). Casey Meaders Shop, White County, GA.*

Clint uses traditional methods just as the Meaders family did in the 1960s. The technology thing comes and goes he says. When I attended his kiln firing on a cold night in November, he had many family and friends on hand to help. A cozy campfire warmed us all as we moved from photographing and helping. He explains that most of his customers are working class, regular people where the academic community that claims to know more than you. They have the studio aspect in their minds. It has been his experience. He doesn't like for the academic folks to view him as an uneducated starving artist because he did not go to college. Clint knows that there is very little to Google out there about traditional pottery so he has posted a short video of one of his wood-firings and also posts photos of gigantic jugs and other backbreaking tasks for the skeptic. Clint digs his own clay from a field in the area near his house. He mixes

his own glazes and built his own tunnel kiln. He mentioned that Edwin Meaders helped him with his first firing.



*Figure 30. (2014). Traditional folk potters Edwin Meaders and Clint Alderman in Edwin's shop.*

### **Asking the Relevant Questions**

*How have the available natural resources affected clays, glazes, and methods of production for three 21 Century folk potters that arose from North Georgia traditions?*

David and Clint use wood-firing methods including a tunnel kiln and alkaline glazes made from natural resources. Stanley uses oxidation methods provided by using an electric kiln and prepared glazes. Stanley's father Bobby Ferguson made alkaline glazes and traditional forms but Stanley is branching out into more creative forms.

*In what ways do the folk potters in this study describe their community of practice?*

All of the participants see each other through folk festivals, exhibits and special events at the Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery Museum. The families, the friends, the grandchildren, the church, and the school are supportive of these potters. Clint is

actively involved in educating the consumer and posts photos of his work on Facebook and emails invitations to his quarterly kiln openings. He still keeps up with 93 year-old Edwin “Nub” Meaders and discusses his work with Nub and other traditional folk potters. He calls on David Meaders for help on occasion with an upcoming woodfiring or advice on glazes and ingredients. He admits that the number of traditional potters is decreasing and the number of studio potters getting into making folk pottery is increasing. Stanley Ferguson holds an annual October Festival on his family land each year and enjoys sharing ideas with the others. His mother, daughter and grandchildren are closest to him and will continue the tradition of folk pottery without the wood-firing tunnel kiln.

*How does each representative potter participant describe his or her unique quality or contribution to the aesthetics of the family's North Georgia folk pottery?*

David Meaders and Stanley Ferguson both have unique pottery designs that they create in addition to the traditional folk pottery made by the generations of family potters who came before them. Both of the potters make face jugs, David makes politician jugs with two faces and Stanley makes devil jugs that are popular. They are both proud of the way the work has evolved in order to contribute to the family tradition. Clint's work has the traditional form with more contemporary drawings and incised lines for decoration.

*How is the aesthetic genealogy of traditional North Georgia folk pottery traced in each participant's folk pottery?*

This question is very similar to the previous question therefore these two research questions were merged together. It was determined that the traditional North Georgia

folk pottery designs were handed on through kinship and/or apprenticeship but each potter had his/her own unique voice and ideas for pottery. All of the participants borrowed aspects of design from family members or mentor potters and modified them to create something unique and new that connects them to the piece.



*Figure 31. Greear, David (2006). Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia exhibit.*





*Figure 32. Greear, David (2006). Folk potter's wheel exhibit at the Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia.*

David continues making the Meaders family traditional shapes and is experimenting with his own type of face jugs and mugs. Stanley enjoys making unique wares such as devil face jugs and his 80 year-old mother is making whimsical forms that she calls “chicken women” in contrast to the traditional forms that his father and grandfather made. Stanley’s grandchildren are creating their own bowls and figures as they learn. Clint describes three different types of potters: traditional, transitional and studio. The traditional potter uses the traditional methods, equipment, kilns, as potters did over 100 years ago. Transitional potters are using electric kilns, prepared glazes but are turning traditional forms. Studio potters have been academically trained in ceramics. Studio potters call throwing rather than turning on the wheel. Clint is a traditional potter using the old style forms but adding his unique surface designs. All agree that they are making wares for the collector.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE MARK OF A POTTER

*"Made by hand, the craft object bears the fingerprints, real or metaphorical, of the person who fashioned it. These fingerprints are not the equivalent of the artist's signature, for they are not a name. Nor are they a mark or a brand. They are a sign: the almost invisible scar commemorating our original brotherhood or sisterhood. Made by hand, the craft object is made for hands.*  
Octavio Paz, 1986, p. 59

There is no doubt that the folk potters have left a mark on this researcher after the many experiences with the potters in fall of 2013. The mark is an imprint that I can see, feel, and hear. I can still feel the extreme heat watching the kiln with David and Poke on that very hot August day and hear the crackling of the fire on the recordings as four cords of wood are stoked in the kiln for fourteen hours I can feel the extreme cold on a November night watching the fire at Clint's kiln site shivering around a camp fire listening to instructions, sitting by a campfire during that cold evening and not wanting to miss a thing.

I can hear the voice of the late Arie Meaders from Charles Mack's recordings in *Talking to the Turners* and see the late Cheever and Lanier Meaders turning in the Smithsonian documentary film *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters*. I can smell the clay and feel the clay slip spatter my face and the sound of the metal rib rubbing the wheel head. I can still hear the rhythm of the treadle wheel, and I feel the

strong family connection at Stanley's place. This mark will stay with me as I learned much more about the recyclable material. Although, the main focus was learning about the creation of pottery, it became so much more. As an artist and art educator, I need to feed the artist within by making more pottery. I intended to learn how the folk pottery techniques were being taught from generation to generation and if the teaching methods utilized could be applied to a public school setting. So I will begin by explaining the methods that I witnessed during my journey with the three potters.



*Figure 33. Photographer unknown (2009). Three generations of Ferguson potters.*

### **Learning by Observing, Practicing and Accompanying**

When I began to transcribe my interviews with David, Stanley and Clint, a common theme emerged with all three folk potters. The potters learned by watching other potters. This seems to be the way that it was always done even as far back as John Milton Meaders in the late 1890s. David Meaders began learning pottery techniques from his Uncle Edwin (Nub) in the late 1980s. At that time David was a

young man. He and his wife Anita built a kiln in White County. He was just a little boy when his Uncle Lanier would let him in the shop and then they'd go fishing together. When asked if there was a moment in time that he learned, he explained that all the kids liked to hang around the shop but not all were chosen to turn. Clint Alderman was also taught by Edwin Meaders in terms of an informal apprenticeship.



*Figure 34. (2013). Clint's November firing of his wood-fired tunnel kiln.*

Although these were not formal lessons, these experiences fall into the pedagogical skill that Eisner (2002) refers to as “modeling skills” (p. 54). David told me that he learned the basics of turning when he was small but he developed a deep understanding while working with his uncle Edwin “Nub” Meaders many years later. He learned by watching him. Edwin is 92 years old now and fires with an electric kiln. Edwin visits David on occasion and assists with the wood firings. On the recordings, I

am struck by how much Edwin and Lanier sound alike. Both are soft-spoken and gentle with lots of dry humor and wit.

### **David's Teaching Style**

David does not teach specific lessons to his apprentice in folk pottery. He allows the learner to observe and learn by watching. David's style is very informal until he has a kiln full of wares. It seemed that he changed his style of teaching when I wanted to learn how to fire the wood kiln. During the firing he taught me in a very formal way, making sure that I was recording the various steps. He was keenly aware that the camera and tripod were immediately behind his head as he directed. David has a great sense of humor, but during the firing it was all business. He was quite serious and a very generous teacher. After he demonstrated, he then let me try to stoke the fire. The heat was unbearable. The temperature outside was 95 and inside the kiln was near 2000 degrees. He kept his eyes on every piece of wood that was put in the firebox of the kiln. If the wood is incorrectly placed it must be corrected so that there is an even heating.

### **The Danger of Losing the Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery Tradition**

The Northeast Georgia overlay designs have been transmitted mainly by observation on the part of the learner. This may or may not be working. There has been a significant decline in the number of folk potters. The Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia is bringing awareness to the history and bringing in more potters from Alabama, North and South Carolina to become a part of the experience. The

potters learn new techniques, and they are exposed to new visitors, historians, and students.



*Figure 35. Clint Alderman (2013). Clint made this large traditional form.*

David Meaders apprentice, Poke, used to wake David up every morning at 8:30 then David suggested that he set up a kiln at his own house so he could throw at any hour of the day and David could sleep. Poke is learning how to use a treadle wheel. Poke has been suggesting that David get more modern conveniences. David's idea of modern is having electricity and a chainsaw. I heard from him many times that it is back-breaking work to be a folk potter.

There are a few folk potters that are continuing the craft; however many of the youths are not taking up the trade. It is back-breaking work and, according to Lanier David's uncle, it take about five years of apprenticing with someone to where you can make a living at pottery. Many young people are leaving the area for higher-paying jobs. It takes three days to cut the wood for the firing.



Success of the folk art shows depend on the weather that day or if their customers want to collect. Poke is African American and in his early 30s. Many of the white collectors are not buying his pots labeled “Poke’s Pots” when he exhibits with David. Poke tells me what the folks say when they see his work and find out that he is black. “Your work is getting so much better than last year” He calls it ‘tire kickin’. He knows that the visitors are really there to see David Meaders with the Meaders name. Poke describes himself as an outsider. He says that he understands. He tells me that he doesn’t see many young people making folk pottery. We need to work on that he says, but as with most youth, they don’t see the big picture. Stanley Ferguson is training his daughter to take over the business and he has also taught his grandchildren.



*Figure 36. Alderman, Clint (2013). Clint rebuilding the kiln chimney.*

### **Roots of Tradition and Craft in America**

David has been working folk pottery shows for years. He has a reputation for the family tradition although he has his own identity for his own work. This also became true with Stanley and Clint. They all honor the tradition but are exploring how

their legacy might survive. In 2005, Carol Sauvion created a PBS television series called *Craft in America*. Each week she introduced the viewer audience to a series of craftspeople based on various themes. The series was a major step in introducing students to the world of craft. In addition, she created a website for anyone wanting to see more info about the craftspeople with a special section for educators.

In 2007 the series was given the prestigious Peabody Award for outstanding television programming. In 2009, I asked Carol Sauvion to come to Georgia to speak to the Georgia Art Education Association group for the 2009 fall conference at Young Harris College in North Georgia. In exchange for a speaker's fee, I took her to various parts of the state to introduce her to artists and craftspeople for a future placement in *Craft in America*.



*Figure 37. (2009). Craft Symposium, GAEA conference, Young Harris College.*

One of the highlights of the conference was a Craft Symposium featuring leaders in craft education from all over the country. The craft leaders were asked



questions about how their organizations plan to continue the study of craft in order to keep it alive. Thanks to the Wilson Art and Humanities grant I was able to document the entire symposium to use for my research. Each organization gave information on how their organization is working with the community outreach, scholarships to attend workshops, lessons for teachers, state curriculum meetings, and public television in order to keep craft alive and in the schools.



*Figure 38. (2009). Carol Savion producer of the PBS TV Series 'Craft in America'.*

Each of the distinguished panelists for the Craft Symposium: Arrowmont School of Crafts, Executive Director David Willard; Craft in America, Executive Director of Craft in America and Executive Producer, PBS TV series *Craft in America* Carol Sauvion; Folk Pottery Museum of Northeast Georgia, Curator and Folk Potter Michael Crocker; John C. Campbell Folk School, Executive Director Dr. Jan Davidson; North Georgia College and State University, Chair, Division of Visual Arts Dr. Pamela Sachant; Penland School of Crafts, Teaching Artist Initiative

Program Manager Wendy Gratz; School for American Crafts, Rochester Institute of Technology, Professor of Ceramics, Rick Hirsch; Southern Highland Craft Guild, Board Member, Professor Emerita, North Georgia College & State University and Fiber Artist, Tommye Scanlin; University of Georgia, Lamar Dodd School of Art, Graduate Coordinator, and Co-Chair of the Art Education Area, Dr. Carole Henry; Western Carolina University, Craft Revival Project, Research Professor and Project Director, Anna Fariello; World Craft Council, President and Robert C. Williams Paper Museum at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Director, Cindy Bowden.

That week I introduced Carol Sauvion to folk potter and collector Michael Crocker and northeast Georgia folk pottery. Carole and I traveled many miles that week and as I remember we visited Crocker Pottery in Lula, Georgia at eleven o'clock in the evening. She told me that she was fascinated and plans to use folk pottery soon in her series.

One of my research questions was: How can the teaching methods utilized by this group of folk potters inform a ceramics curriculum in a public high school setting? I believe that the knowledge gained in this study shows that the methods that have been used for generations within this region of North Georgia may not necessarily work for a high school setting. In the public school setting there are usually a large number of students, sometimes as many as 40 per hour. We cannot work on our own art work and tell the students to observe and learn.

# CRAFT IN AMERICA

a journey to the artists, origins and work of American craft



Dona Look, Basket #2004-2 and Basket #2004-5, 2004. Photographs by Susan Einstein.

People have long recognized our deep connection to the natural world. We often respond to nature with reverence, staring in awe at its majesty as we see it from a distance; marveling at its elegance as we ponder its details up close. Most people are appreciative of the bounties nature affords us, while others seem determined to destroy what we have. For many people, including craft artists, nature is a source of inspiration. Craft artists may be inspired by nature and borrow its motifs, patterns, and forms. For countless craft artists, the process of extracting beauty from nature's raw materials—fiber, wood, and stone—marks their close relationship with the natural world.

Dona Look and Ken Loeber, craft artists and life partners who share 120 acres of northern Wisconsin woodland on the shores of Lake

Michigan, are caretakers of the lush surroundings that provide both raw materials and inspiration for their respective art forms. Dona is a fiber artist who creates baskets from the bark of white birch, basswood, and cedar trees. Each year, she accompanies loggers into thick forests where they identify trees that will be cut

**"In weaving and sewing white birch bark, I am reminded of the material's preciousness, our interdependence, and the pattern and harmony in the web of our relationships with nature."**

—Dona Look

for the paper industry. Working only with these identified trees, she peels the bark and catalogues it for later use. Using the buttonhole stitch learned in her youth, Look uses silk thread to sew bark sections together, creating forms with classic symmetry and timeless beauty.

Ken Loeber has long been a custodian of the land, managing the couple's acreage as a natural wildlife refuge and caring for the family garden. His travels to the Galapagos Islands, the Great Barrier Reef, and other natural sites have inspired his work and provided him with coral and other organic materials for his

jewelry creations. Like Dona, he has always been careful not to disturb the ecology, collecting only what has washed up on shore. At home in the north woods, in addition to his one-of-a-kind brooches and other forms, he collaborates with

Look on production pieces, many named with ecology in mind—necklaces named *Seed*, *Wave*, and *Leaf*, for example. Although Ken suffered a stroke and lost the use of his arm, he has learned to work with one hand and continues to create imaginative and beautifully crafted wearable objects.

Figure 39. School Arts Magazine featuring Craft in America lesson plans.

## Lighting a Fire in the Classroom

In the public school setting, art teachers are discouraged by administrators from making their own artwork with the students during class. I would challenge this practice by donating the items that I create to raise money for the school art program. Art teachers are expected to be actively monitoring, differentiating student progress

and motivating the students with product-oriented lessons. However I believe it is possible to teach in this method while still motivating and monitoring. It's all in the delivery of the lesson. I believe that students need to see their teacher creating works of art. To demonstrate is modeling while still monitoring and differentiating. I would like to introduce the idea of learning while observing and classroom communities of practice.



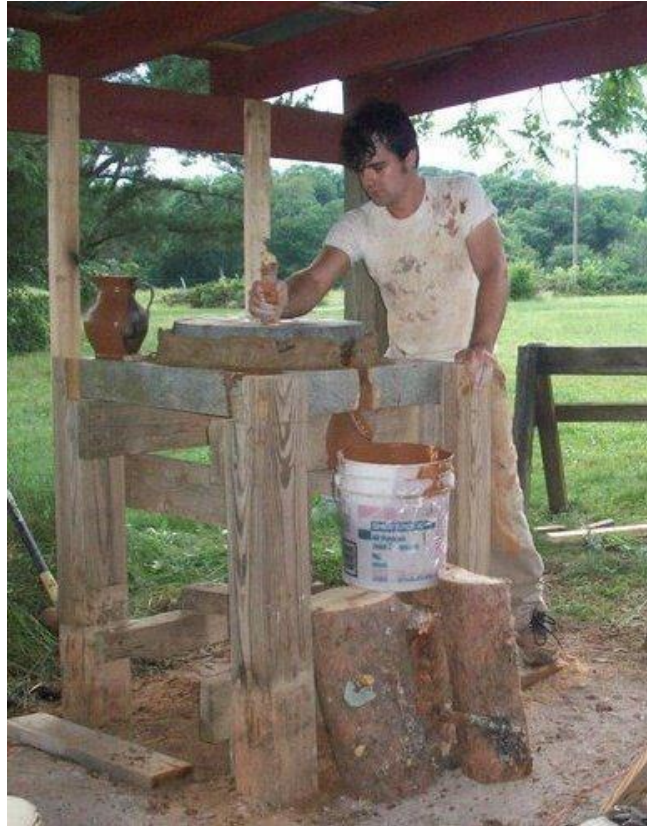
*Figure 40. Alderman, Clint (2014). Incised jug made by Clint Alderman.*

The primary lesson I learned from my experiences with the folk potters is that of survival, innovation, adaptation, self-reliance, and family. We no longer live in an agrarian society therefore the pots that the folk potters create today are being created for collectors and not for utilitarian use. The potters are adapting to the changing society by making traditional vessels as well as pots that reflect their own unique creative voice. All three folk potters I studied use technology available to them such as Facebook as a way of communicating. All three bisque fire their wares in an electric kiln to help prevent breakage in the glaze firing. Invitations to their kiln openings and

shows are sent out through email, but there are collectors so familiar with the rhythm of the maker that they will show up during the first weekend of March, July, September or November because it is the tradition that started many years earlier.

My high school classroom has changed a lot due to state mandates and rapidly changing technology. Students are constantly used to being engaged with computer screens and electronic devices and are giving less time to make things with their hands. I observe a disconnect with the ability of students to use simple rulers, the ability to tell time using an analog clock and the ability to draw something on paper that will later be made in a three dimensional material such as clay. Students have less patience to stick with something from design to completion because of the immediate gratification normally experienced with technology. Fewer and fewer students experience making unless they take an art class. It's all about the virtual experience.





*Figure 41. Alderman, Clint (2014). Mixing glazes with mill stones.*

There is an inability to see substance with technology. I recently received a document camera to use in my classroom in order that all 38-40 students are able to see details of demonstrations up close. Demonstrating in person in lieu of showing a *You Tube* video for students makes an important connection and gives students opportunities to see unedited problem-solving techniques. Based on my experiences, I am of the belief that when possible the teacher should demonstrate. Stockrocki (states that participant observation is a process of describing, analyzing and interpreting activity to understand it more clearly. Participation implies that the researcher is learning from people and not just studying them.



*Figure 42. Alderman, Clint. (2014). Glazing the ware.*

The curriculum for my school district is filled with an overwhelming amount of material to teach. I am working with my administration to change the way the curriculum is taught in order to make the curriculum more meaningful for my students so that I might teach things such as creativity, empathy and use more modeling. I am demonstrating more and more and finding that the students are improving their skills more quickly. The act of the art teacher demonstrating for longer periods of time improved the relationships within the classroom as there is a sense of trust that the art teacher is an artist and can do what is asked of them. I think sometimes we assume that the students know that art teachers are artists, but I have found that many do not know. I know now, that this is really important to the classroom environment. Learning by observing is important to skill and being part of our art room community is important to young artists.

The Northeast Georgia folk potters were loyal to their traditions. Many people are unaware that the folk potters still work in the old style. As David Meaders pointed out, if he did not use a few modern conveniences, the labor-intensive process would cause the pottery to be too expensive. As educators, we must try to keep craft in the curriculum. Traditional crafts play an important part in learning about other cultures.



*Figure 43. Greear, David (2005). Edwin Meaders with his folk pottery.*

### **Conclusion**

When I began this study, I attempted to learn about the teaching methods of the Georgia folk potters in order to record how the information has been passed down from potter to potter and generation to generation. During the course of study I discovered that the folk pottery craft is slowly disappearing as less young people want



to take on this field. There are no other potters in the White County area making folk pottery. I want to create a method of teaching for our future generations. I have learned that by demonstrating in order for the students to observe I am strengthening my own practice of making pottery. The potters left their mark on me. Along the way I was affected as a teacher and as an artist. Potters whose ancestors were creating pottery for an agrarian society are now creating for a collecting society. The art educator as artist, the visceral process of working with clay reminded me what got me excited about teaching in the first place. As an artist I look forward to teaching with my community of practice.

I am proud of the research that we generated for this study. Just over ten years ago I recovered from cancer ready to take on new challenges, make my mark, do great things, and give back to my community. I have always enjoyed working with clay and collecting pottery, so it seemed such an organic move to write about these wonderful potters and at the same time try to keep craft in the curriculum at school. There is a wonderful folk pottery museum for which we are grateful to share with others outside the community but I can't help but wonder if this art form will be around in twenty years. These potters are your small business owners, home grown, handed down. It is a very hard way to make a living.

A month ago David told me that due to a family disagreement he will lose his land if he doesn't raise enough money to settle the arrangement with his sister. His kiln and shop are on the property that he has to leave. He was born in the house on the property. His community of practice has set up an online GOFUNDME account so that individuals can give to the land recovery. It is my plan to contact the National Endowment for the Arts, the Smithsonian, and Georgia Folklife Program to ask for

special federal and state grants that could rebuild David's kiln and shop as well as Lanier's shop to its original condition. There is very little physical presence of the old shop. The kiln has fallen in at Mossy Creek and the Meaders old home place at has been torn down. There is very little physical presence of the old shop. It is my hope to keep the Meaders Family Pottery continuing for as long as possible with financial assistance. The Meaders are a living legacy. I feel that it is my calling to help the folk potters of Northeast Georgia continue this great American tradition.

In my role as a teacher I have tried to encourage my students to give back to the community. I am a strong supporter of community service-learning. Each year since 1997 my students and I have participated in the Empty Bowl Dinner. In the past, our art honor society has partnered with the Jewish Family and Community Service (JFCS) to put on the wonderful event that funds organizations that help the homeless break the cycle of hunger and homelessness. Students, parents, teachers, college students and other volunteers have created pottery bowls that are given as a keep sake at the annual fundraiser. Participants from the community pay for tickets at the door and are welcomed to a mock soup kitchen dinner with simple food such as soup and bread donated by area restaurants.

The dinner has been held for the last ten years at the First Presbyterian Church on Peachtree Street next to the High Museum of Art. Each community participant can pick any pottery bowl as their keep sake for helping the homeless. The Atlanta Food Bank and the JFCS organizations speak to our students at the school about giving back to the community and helping our homeless citizens. Many are surprised to hear that

the average age of the homeless person in Georgia is nine years old. Many of the students also participate in the making of the glazes in preparation for the event.

The event has been a huge community effort to take care of our unfortunate citizens and each year additional funds are raised. The FFCS helps provide clothes to wear to job interviews, provides babysitting services, and even Marta Breeze cards for transportation. The event helps our students understand community. It is my sincere hope that my community will support the folk potters of Northeast Georgia by continuing to recognize their work as an American art form that is worthy of our attention and assist me in advocating to keep craft education in the school curriculum.



*Figure 44. (2009). Author's students making pottery for the Empty Bowl Dinner*

Folklorist Henry Glassie wrote:

If tradition is a people's creation out of their own past, its character is not stasis but continuity. Acting traditionally, they use their own resources their own tradition, one might say-to create their own future, to do what they will themselves to do. They make their own pots (Glassie, 1995, p. 396).



*Figure 45. (2013). Afterglow of firing the kiln which lasted 14 hours.*

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## Appendix A. Glossary

**Alkaline-** glaze made of local materials including wood ash, silica, glass, and shavings

**Apprentice-** someone who works with a master craftsman in order to learn a trade

**Ball Clay-** secondary clay often mixed with other clays and minerals, organic matter are frequently present. Ball clays commonly exhibit high plasticity and high dry strength.

**Bisque Ware-** clay that has been fired once. Clay is very porous in this state. **Crawling-** parting and contraction of the glaze on the surface of the ware during drying or firing, resulting in unglazed areas bordered by coalesced glaze.

**Crazing-** cracking of fired glazes due to high tensile stresses.

**Crocks-** another name for jugs and jars made of clay

**Dipping-** glazing pottery by immersing in a glaze that has been thoroughly mixed **Fire the kiln-** to heat the kiln via wood, gas or electricity.

**Folk Potter-** potter who makes pottery using the old traditional way and who does not have academic training

**Glaze-** coating that has been matured to the glassy state on bisque ware.

**Glaze firing-** firing to the temperature at which the glaze materials will melt to form a glasslike surface coating.

**Green Ware-** clay that is dry and ready to be fired. Clay is fragile in this state.

**Iron Oxide-** common oxide in glazes and some clays that generally gives a red color.

**Kaolin-**known as china clay, white or off-white when fired.

**Kiln-** furnace used for firing pottery

**Leather Hard-** clay that is losing moisture and becoming stiff, perfect condition for carving.

**Maturing temperature-**temperature at which a glaze exhibits its best qualities

**Pug Mill-** a machine that mixes clay and water in order to blend or knead to a consistency

**Scoring-** to make the surface of the clay rough when applying two pieces of clay together

**Settlings-**fine clay located at the bottom of ponds used in glaze

**Shanghai Glaze-**ash glaze of iron-bearing pond-clay settlings, wood ash (preferably oak) and powdered glass, ground together wet between flat hand-turned glazing rocks.

Silica and alumina are obtained from feldspar and calcium from whiting. Glass is made of silica, alumina, and other minerals, frequently calcium.

**Slip-** a mixture of clay and water used like glue to when joining two pieces of clay together. It is used in combination with scoring the clay.

**Soaking-**a period during a firing cycle when a constant temperature is maintained.

**Stoneware Clay-**a vitreous or semi-vitreous clay material desired for pottery making due to its plasticity. Can withstand long firing range.

**Treadle wheel-** a potter's wheel used by most traditional potters in the South

**Tunnel Kiln** or Railroad Kiln used by the Meaders family. Contains a small firebox in front used for burning wood in front in order to maintain a constant heat temperature to prevent cracking, the firebox is gradually heated to 1260 degrees

**Turning-**making pottery on the potter's wheel.

**Vitrification-** the process which clay materials bond to become dense, nonabsorbent, and glassified after firing.

**Ware-** pottery made by the folk potter.

**Wedge-** to knead the clay or push on it repeatedly in order to remove air pockets and moisture

## **Appendix B. Interview Protocol**

You have agreed to participate in a research project through the University of Georgia. The reason for the research is to investigate the practices, resources and communities of three families of North Georgia folk in the tradition of folk pottery as a means of understanding the importance of craft learning in contemporary art education and to learn how the traditions will be taught to the next generations of potters.

The results from this participation will be confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without the prior consent from you. The interviews will be videotaped and be transcribed, and your words may be quoted. For this interview, you will participate in interviews on your own experience of learning traditional pottery techniques, each will last approximately 90 minutes.

You are free to stop the interview and withdraw your participation at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to share your experiences and viewpoints with me.

Do you have any questions?

Do you agree to participate in this study?

May I begin recording?



### Appendix C. Interview Participant Consent Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in a research study titled

***"FIRE IN THE FOOTHILLS: A COLLECTIVE PORTRAIT OF THREE***

***NORTHEAST GEORGIA FOLK POTTERS "*** conducted by Kathy Jackson from the Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia (XXX-XXX-XXXX) under the direction of Dr. Carole Henry, Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia (706)-542-1631 . I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to assess why folk potters continue the tradition of folk pottery in an era of technology. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1) Participate in up to three one-on-one video/ audio-recorded interviews with the researcher aimed at gathering information about my life as a folk potter.
- 2) The information about my folk pottery will be kept indefinitely.
- 3) Observations of the potters will occur over the course of the year and the researcher will make field notes during interviews.

**The benefits for this may include bringing attention to the importance of the inherited tradition of Northeast Georgia folk pottery identified as a local legacy and assisting to bring about an awareness of the importance of craft to the general public. Additionally, the data collected in this study will contribute to the field of art education by helping perpetuate the continuance of craft education in the state school curriculum.**

**No risks to me are anticipated. Results of analysis will be made available to me upon request.**

**No individually identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission unless required by law. Data will include interview responses, video-taped interviews, field notes, written reflections and visual art responses. All interview tapes will be kept in a locked file cabinet that only the researcher will have access to. These recordings will be retained indefinitely and will not be publicly disseminated without permission from the potters. The results of the research study may be published in an article or possibly a book and my name will be used with my permission only.**

**The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now and during the course of the project.**

**I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.**

**Kathy Jackson**

Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX**

**Email: [kjacks@uga.edu](mailto:kjacks@uga.edu)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

**Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.**

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; Email Address IRB@uga.edu

### **Appendix D. Timeline**

June 2013	Meet with the folk potters and their families
Late June 2013	Update and re-file my IRB
August-November 2013	Interview folk potters (Meaders, Ferguson and Alderman)
	Observe potters working
	Multimedia to include filming, photography, drawing
	Transcribe interviews and observations
	Member checking
Nov. 2013 – Oct. 2014	Finish data analysis and complete dissertation

#### *Implementation of Data Collection Measures*

	August 2013	September 2013	October 2013	November 2013
Interviews	X	X	X	X
Observations	X	X	X	X
Multimedia	X	X	X	X
Document/ Artifact Review	X	X	X	X

## **Appendix E. Interview Questions and Building Rapport:**

I appreciate your help with this interview. During this interview, I may ask questions about techniques with which I am familiar. However, please be as detailed as possible as if I was unaware of the methods you are describing.

### **Primary Questions**

1. How did you first learn to make pottery?
2. How does life experience influence your work?
3. How does your work include techniques you were taught?
4. How is your teaching similar to the way in which you were taught?

### **Recommended Format for Probing questions**

1. You mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. Tell me more about that.
2. You mentioned \_\_\_\_\_. What was that like for you?
3. You mentioned that you \_\_\_\_\_. Walk me through what that was like for you.

### **Interview Questions**

As you know, I am interested about your life as a folk potter. I would like to know what it is like to be a folk potter and why you continue the tradition.

I will use this guide as a kind of check-sheet, so I may, near the close of the interview, turn to some questions we have not talked about as yet.

I'd like you to begin wherever you would like to tell me about being a folk potter and we'll just go from there. I want to know about your experiences.

- A. General background  
How long have you been working in clay? How did you begin this line of work?  
How did you learn to turn? Did you grow up in this area of Northeast Georgia?  
What kinds of wares do you make?
- B. Evolution of own work  
How has your pottery changed over the years?  
What things led them to change?  
How are you making a living during these tough economic times?
- C. Differences in folk and studio potters  
How would you describe the difference in a folk potter and a studio potter?  
Have you seen an increase/decrease in the number of folk potters in the area? Has the Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery Museum increased interest in your work?
- D. Mixing clay and glazes from scratch  
Do you dig your own clay? If so where in this area do you find the best clay?  
Do you mix alkaline glazes? What ingredients go into the glaze?  
Where do you sell your wares? What works most reflect your unique style?
- E. Use of Technology  
How are you adapting to the rapidly changing world that emphasizes a faster paced, mechanical reality? How does this affect your work? How do you use technology in your business?
- F. Why do you continue this inherited craft tradition?
- G. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

May I call you again if I need to? Please don't hesitate contacting me.

Thank you very much.

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F. Invitational Letter to Participants

Dear

I am seeking participants for a dissertation study about Georgia Folk Potters living in the Northeast Georgia region who are continuing the inherited tradition of folk pottery. The study is entitled *Fire in the Foothills: A Collective Portrait of Three Northeast Georgia Folk Potters*.

My research focuses on why folk potters continue the inherited tradition and the importance of traditional crafts, particularly traditional folk pottery to the school curriculum. There is much talk today about educational reform and I would like to do my part in representing the interests of craftspeople in these conversations.

Therefore with this letter, I am asking for participants to volunteer to participate in my dissertation study. The interview process will take place two-three times over the course of 12 months, scheduled at your convenience. The interview will be approximately 90 minutes (with 3 breaks scheduled every 30 minutes or as needed) and during this time I will ask a series of questions aimed at learning about your life story and about how and where you learned how to make a living in folk pottery. For example, the questions would include: How did you learn how to turn on the wheel? How do folk potters learn the craft? What makes the folk potter different from the studio potter? What challenges do you face by working in a traditional craft in the era of technology? Do you think that your work has changed during the course of your life? Did particular life experiences influence your work? If so how? The information collected will be utilized to learn more about how to perpetuate the continuance of craft and why folk potters continue the tradition.

I have enclosed the consent form. If you are interested in volunteering for participation, please return the signed form to me at

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

(404) XXXXXXXX

kjacks@uga.edu or If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me, Kathy Jackson/ or my advisor Dr. Carole Henry (706) 542-1631 or send an e-mail to ckhenry@uga.edu.

Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board, 612 Boyd GSRC, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address [irb@uga.edu](mailto:irb@uga.edu).

Thank you for your consideration! I will send you a copy of your returned letter for your records.

Sincerely,  
Kathy Jackson



## Appendix G. IRB Approval

IRB Approval - Henry/Jackson

Page 1 of 1

### IRB Approval - Henry/Jackson

Kate Pavich

**Sent:** Thursday, July 19, 2012 1:21 PM

**To:** Carole K Henry; KATHLEEN GILLESPIE JACKSON

PROJECT NUMBER: 2013-10004-0

TITLE OF STUDY: Fire in the Foothills: A Qualitative Study of Three Northeast Georgia Folk Potters

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Carole K. Henry

Dear Dr. Henry and Ms. Jackson,

The University of Georgia Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your above-titled proposal through the exempt (administrative) review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless (i) the information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (ii) any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please remember that any changes to this research proposal can only be initiated after review and approval by the IRB (except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research participant). Any adverse events or unanticipated problems must be reported to the IRB immediately. The principal investigator is also responsible for maintaining all applicable protocol records (regardless of media type) for at least three (3) years after completion of the study (i.e., copy of approved protocol, raw data, amendments, correspondence, and other pertinent documents). You are requested to notify the Human Subjects Office if your study is completed or terminated.

Good luck with your study, and please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. Please use the IRB number and title in all communications regarding this study.

Regards,  
Kate

--

Kate Pavich  
Human Subjects Office  
627A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center  
University of Georgia  
Athens, GA 30602-7411  
[kpavich@uga.edu](mailto:kpavich@uga.edu)  
Phone: 706-542-5972  
Fax: 706-542-3360  
<http://www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso/>

<https://ch1prd0210.outlook.com/owa/?ae=Item&t=IPM.Note&id=RgAAAA...> 7/19/2012

## Appendix H.

David McPheil, David Meaders' apprentice and his work



## Appendix I.

### Stanley Ferguson Family Pottery









Appendix J.

David Meaders





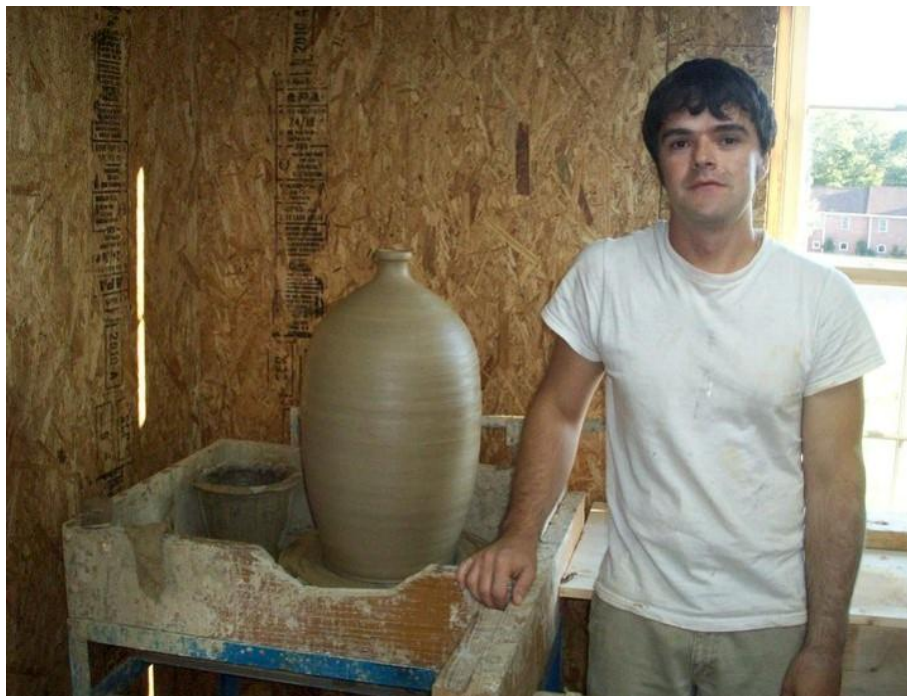


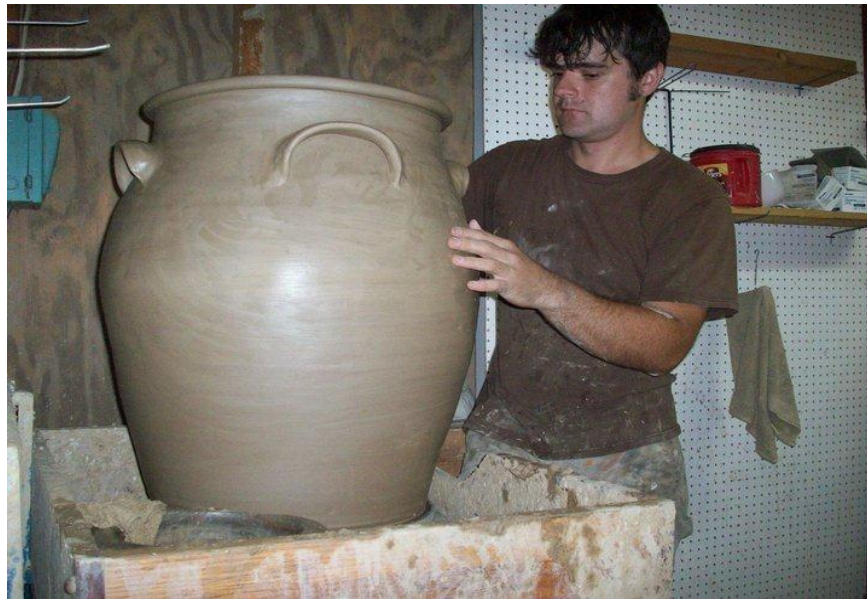




## Appendix K.

### Clint Alderman Pottery









Clint's "Wedding Jug"





## Appendix L.

Digging the clay and mixing pug mill at Clint Alderman's.



## Appendix M.

The late Bob Owens, author's pottery teacher at North Georgia College.



## Appendix N.

### Meaders Family Pottery

Edwin Meaders is 93 years old and works every day on his pottery





Appendix O.

The late Lanier Meaders.







ATLANTA JOURNAL  
9/14/93

# Lanier Meaders:

## *The face behind the jugs*

Georgia folk potter who saved family tradition from extinction is to be honored by the governor

By Eileen M. Drennen  
STAFF WRITER

**M**ossy Creek, Ga. — Folk potter Lanier Meaders, the man who made face jugs famous, is battling a bone cancer he thought he'd licked. At 76, the man who saved the state's distinctive glazed stoneware tradition hadn't been able to craft a face jug on the family's old-fashioned wheel in two years. Too weak to work the foot-pedal, he had settled for turning out candleholders on a small electric wheel.

"I worked with pottery all my life," he said in a hoarse whisper one recent day. "Now it's time for me to quit."

But later that day — as he talked about tonight's party in his honor at the Governor's Mansion, where he will be cited for "making significant contributions to the arts in America," and mused on how strange it is that people have gone so nuts for face jugs ("I don't understand it, unless they're just crazy to start with") — he found the strength to power his old

wheel.

He turned out a pot — a pitcher, to be precise, that he found lacking in grace. But it was a Lanier Meaders pitcher all the same.

Family members were stunned by the sight of him at the wheel — his foot, which had been trailing behind a cane moments earlier, pumped the treadle with vigor; his hands, which had been unsteady with a pen that morning, shaped the clay with sureness.

It was a vintage Meaders moment — full of drama, contradiction and glory — and it showed both the man and his family that his career is not over yet.

The man who was named a National Heritage Fellow in 1983 by the National Endowment for the Arts — and ran by the CB handle "Jughead" in the '60s — was born Quillian Lanier Meaders in Mossy Creek, just outside Cleveland, Ga., in 1917. At one time, this crook of Georgia had been one of the most concentrated pottery centers in the state, with 70-odd artisans turning out

Please see **MEADERS, B7** ▶

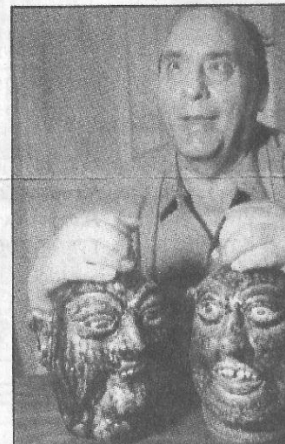


Photographs by WILLIAM B

Unable to use the pottery wheel for two years, Lanier Meaders surprised family members recently by turning a pot the hard

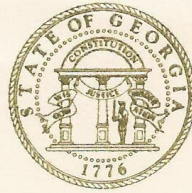


**A maker of face jugs** that resemble people more than pottery, Lanier Meaders mugs for a photo, mocking the gaze on his creations.



▶ The Meaders family will celebrate 101 years of pottery-making Satu





## DINNER AT THE MANSION

A SERIES

*In honor of*  
*Lanier Meaders*

*Mr. Meaders was named a National Heritage  
Fellow in 1983 by the Folk Arts Program  
of the National Endowment for the Arts for his  
achievement as a traditional potter.*

### *Menu*

*Mixed Green Salad with Hearts of Palm*

*Poached Salmon with Dill Sauce*

*Squash Medley*

*Buttered New Potatoes*

*Pink Grapefruit Sorbet*

*with Sugar Cookies*

*September 14, 1993*

MRS. OLIVE S. BRIGGS  
OWNER

SAN-OLIVE STUDIO

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Rt 3 Box 189 Glen Springs Rd

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

Aug. 29, 1961

Dear Mrs. Meadows:

Isabel Barrett requested I send you the formula for Black Glaze which I am herein enclosing.

I have one of your lovely bowls and a pot and am very happy with them.

To whatever Base Glaze you are now using for your wares add the following for Black

Manganese Carbonate 20

Copper Oxide 5

Cobalt Oxide 9

If You would like a base glaze formula for firing at cone 6

Transparent Glaze as follows:

→ Whiting	35	9
→ Feldspar	60	15
Clay	22	5 1/4
→ Flint	47	11

this will have a shine if you want to make an opaque glaze out of this same formula add Tin Oxide 30%

The above formulas are worked out in Grams

Hoping this will be of some help to you and that some day in the future I may have an opportunity to meet you as Mrs. Barrett speaks of you so often and with such glowing admiring words

I am  
Most Sincerely,

*Johnnie Briggs*

IF I Should Live To A Ripe old  
Age  
May I possess Some Bit of  
Individulity, Charm And  
Wit,  
That I May Not be Discarded  
When I Am withered,  
Worn And Weak,  
But Sought After and  
Cherished like A  
FINE ANTIQUE.

(Janier Meaders)



## Appendix P

Folk pottery from author's collection





## Appendix Q

Folk Art Exhibit curated by author for Governor Miller 1991, State Capitol.



John Burrison and Michael Crocker met for the first time at the 1991 exhibit. They are now Co-Curators of the Northeast Georgia Folk Pottery Museum



Appendix R.

Holcomb Pottery, *Brothers in Clay* (ca. 1935), Gillsville, Georgia



## Appendix S.

Author's sketches of David Meaders and Stanley Ferguson's treadle wheel.



