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by:

Diogo M. Costa

<dmcosta@ufpa.br>

Federal University of Pará, Brazil

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ABSTRACT: An illustrated guide to manufacturer's marks from the mid-19th century to early 20th century ceramics in the western United States.

The first words to say about Erica Gibson's work is that it is a didactic handbook, covering the researcher in the present to the original manufacturer. With more than fifteen years of laboratory experience, the author has a great deal of experience with archaeology, and this book delivers all of her knowledge in the study of material culture.

The guide is a very well illustrated collection of

ceramic maker's marks found in archaeological contexts from the middle of the nineteenth century until the early twentieth century on archaeological sites in California. She draws on over two hundred and fifty archaeological collections exhumed by the Anthropological Studies Center at Sonoma State University over a period of thirty years.

The primary goal of the book is to serve as a visual tool for ceramic identification and characterization in archaeological contexts; however, as Gibson states on page twelve, her audience can easily include a much larger range of amateur and veteran students of material culture.

The guide identifies 112 manufacturers, with primacy to British, followed by French, German, and a few US firms. In a scant 147 pages, a total of 343 marks are presented, for which 257 are photographed or illustrated, but unfortunately without scale.

The marks are organized alphabetically by manufacturer, which provides a fast way to find the maker, but unluckily only when you have a complete mark. The information includes the place of origin, dates of operation, former and subsequent firm names, pottery types produced, and some additional notes including any changes in fonts over time.

The marks are described in all their elements, which is very helpful when you need to identify a small fragment. The guide also provides the dates for each mark's use (which is probably a combination from the different fonts), and in some cases, a pertinent additional comment about the context of other marks also found in the same sites.

The guide ends with a bibliography and a tiny but useful index organized by location, element, type, word, and maker.

More than a catalog for collectors or initiates, the guide is a motivating book for many archaeologists, providing all the temporal and spatial contexts that these artifacts need to be understood. It is also a welcome update to the historical archaeological study of ceramic maker's marks in the last twenty

years. Gibson achieves her goal, with a guide that can easily be used by beginners and specialists, not only in the US but around the world.

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