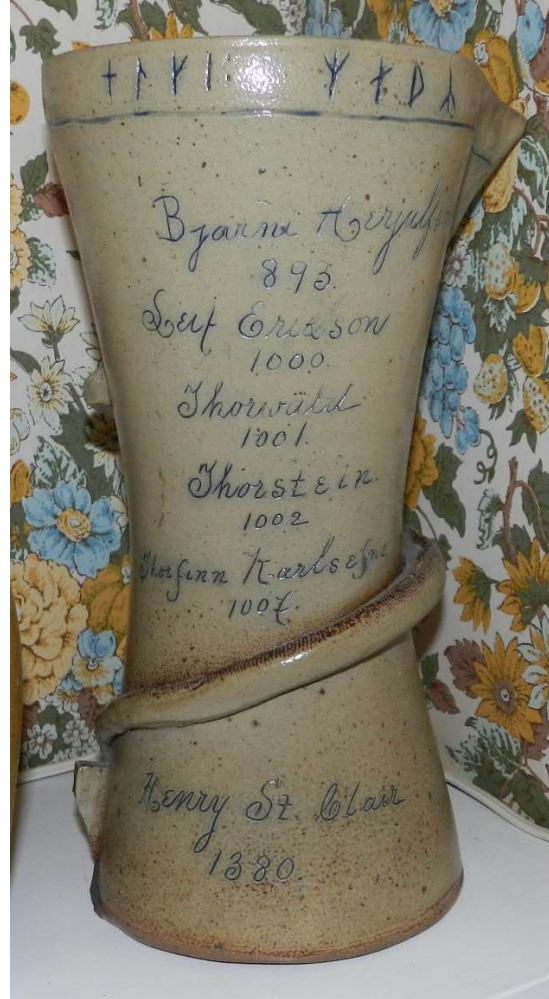


Susan Frackelton - The Viking Brotherhood Cup and her 1893 World's Fair Exhibit



Susan Frackelton presented an exhibit with twelve pieces of salt-glazed art pottery at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. Most of the pieces have applied embellishments and incising with cobalt incising. A centerpiece of the exhibit was a large drinking vessel she named *The Viking Brotherhood Cup*. A photo of the exhibit was published in the *Clay Worker* in an article about the exhibit by Susan's husband Richard Frackelton. The photo shows two nearly identical Viking Cups included in the exhibit, one missing its handle.

Designing the Cup

According to Richard Frackelton the design of the Viking Brotherhood Cup was inspired by a plate (photo) of a 1,000-year-old Viking drinking vessel called the "Rolla Cup of Normandy". The photo that he refers to has not yet been identified, Rollo of Normandy was a well-known Viking ruler. The whereabouts of the photo and the Rolla cup are

The Viking Cup was commissioned by the Sancto de Claro Society (St. Claire family) for a large family reunion that took place in Chicago at the time of the World's Fair. It was to be used at a banquet to celebrate the arrival in Chicago of a Norwegian ship.

It is a drinking vessel in the symbolic form of a ship with a pouring spout representing its prow, a rudder at the base and a serpent wrapped around and stretched outward to form a handle. To old Norsemen, the snake was a mythological symbol of eternity. Gallic characters are inscribed around the rim and on the back the names of ninth-century Norse heroes and explorers along with the years of their voyages:

[Bjarne Hierjulf](#)

1893

[Lief Erikson](#)

1000

Thorwald

1001

Thorstein

1002

[Thorfinn Karlsefne](#)

1007

[Henry St. Claire](#)

1380

The final name refers to a paternal ancestor of the St. Clair family. Henry St. Clair was appointed by the King of Norway to a Scottish earldom in 1380. The St. Clair family commissioned Frackelton to make this piece for their family reunion.

The inscription on the front is:

*Slaves cannot drink
From me
If once their lips
Receive my
Wine
That
Moment they are
Free
Drink God's bounty
And their shackles fall off*

In his article in *The Clay Worker*, Richard Frackelton explained the passage. In ancient pagan belief, a Viking slave partaking of the communion cup became free, and a stranger became a brother and became brave – one of the people.

Creating the Cup

Frackelton created *The Viking Brotherhood Cup* and other pieces included in the exhibit in the Louis Pierron Pottery in Milwaukee, formerly the Charles Hermann Pottery. Frackelton had some sort of arrangement with Pierron to use his facility and materials. She fired her art pottery together with Pierron's batches of common utilitarian wares.

When the Brotherhood Cup was fired, there was a rare kiln disaster that Pierron had not experienced in years. When the batch cooled and kiln was opened, they found that two-thirds of Pierron's crocks, jugs, churns, and other wares lay broken, but in the center was an intact stack of pottery topped by the Viking Brotherhood Cup in perfect condition. Another curious event occurred during the firing of the batch. A darker brown glaze had precipitated onto horizontal surfaces creating a brown mottled coloration on the back of the snake "coloring it more perfectly than if done by intention". Potters cannot create this effect

intentionally, although it was not an uncommon occurrence at the Pierron Pottery.

The Banquet

To celebrate the arrival in Chicago of a Norwegian ship commanded by captain Andersen, the St. Clair family held a banquet. During the banquet the cup was to be presented to him. It is unclear why this voyage was cause for celebration. Perhaps some of the St. Clair family members were passengers or chartered the ship to attend the St. Clair family reunion.

According to an 1894 article in *The Art Interchange* "This cup was so passed at the banquet; and though the intention was to preserve it, and good care was taken, the gods willed otherwise, and the old tradition was fulfilled—not to utter destruction, but just enough to make the poetry of its mission complete." Apparently, the damage mentioned was the breaking of the delicate snake handle. The damaged cup appears in the photo of the exhibit along with the intact version. Figure

The Exhibit

Besides the two Viking Brotherhood Cups, other important pieces in the exhibit included a jar named *The Frackelton Jar* - a large olive jar on a stand. *Figure 4* It was awarded a gold medal as "the best art salt-glaze produced to date in this country." It is now in the collection of The

Philadelphia Museum of Art. *Figure A* magnificent punch bowl with applied grapes and vines was commissioned by "the Spaniards" according to Richard Frackelton. *Figure 5* Susan Frackelton also made two of these bowls, one of which is now in the collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society. Another piece she named the "The Luck Jug" with four-leaf clovers and inscriptions. She made it in 1881 and it sat green (unfired) for twelve years until she scratched and fired it in 1893 for the exhibit. Its current whereabouts is unknown. There was also a pitcher in the exhibit with inscriptions like those on the Viking Cup *Figure 6*. Two other pieces known to have survived are and a Vase *Figure 7*, and a Jar *Figure 8*. It is not known how many of these other pieces survived.

Susan Frackelton's exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair earned eight medals and helped solidify her position at the forefront of American female art pottery artists. Apart from the Fitzpatrick brothers of the Anna Pottery in Illinois, very few American artists chose the salt-glazed medium for art pottery.

Figure 1 The Viking Brotherhood Cup symbolizes a Viking ship with the prow as the spout and a rudder at the base, with an applied serpent and incised script highlighted with cobalt. Like other pieces in the exhibit, it has a salt-glazed exterior with Albany slip on the interior. It stands 18" tall. From the collection of the authors.

Figure 2 The snake shows signs of an old repair, probably to reattach the original snake handle which is now lost. Note the attractive brown mottling on the back of the snake. It "sometimes occurs in salt-glaze kilns and cannot be produced at will."



Figure 1 Frackelton 1893 World's Fair Exhibit. This photo of the Susan Frackelton stoneware art pottery exhibit at the 1893 Columbian Exposition shows twelve pieces including two almost identical Viking Brotherhood Cups. The one on the right with the missing snake handle is the subject of this article. At least four other pieces from this exhibit are known to have survived (Figure 3).



Figure 2 The Frackelton Jar. A large olive jar with lid and four-legged stand, 25" tall. It is now in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. It was awarded a gold medal as "the best art salt-glaze produced to date in this country." It apparently was displayed separately from the other pieces since it does not appear in the group photo.



Figure 3 Frackelton Punch Bowl. This bowl has applied grape vines, leaves and bunch of grapes decorated with cobalt. Frackelton made two of these bowls. This one is almost identical to the one in the exhibit photo. It is now in the collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society. The location of the other is unknown.

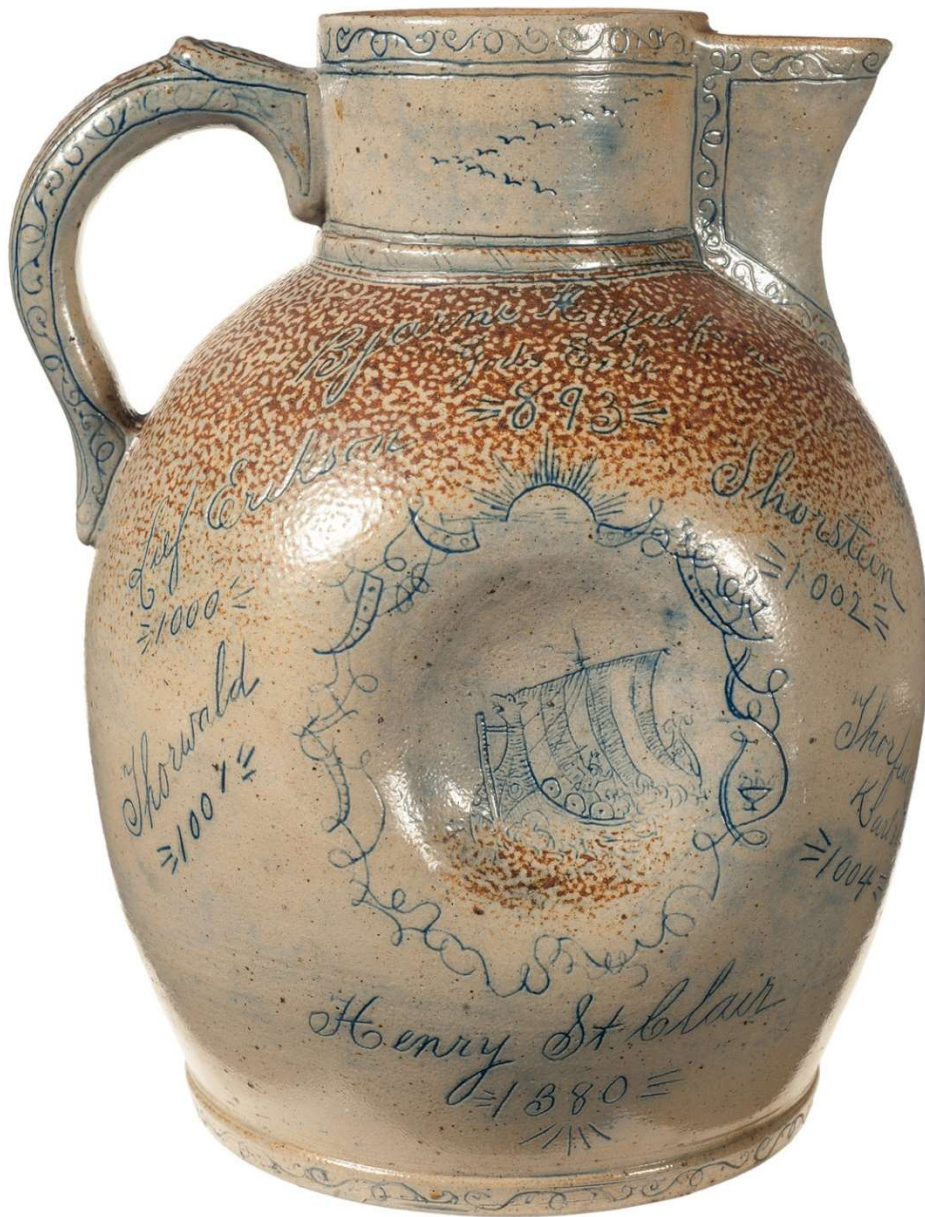


Figure 4 Frackelton Stoneware Handled Pitcher. Globular form with concave sides, handle and pouring spout. It is

Figure 5 Frackelton Vase Stoneware vase with applied garland and incised flowers. It sold in a Rago Arts and Auction Center auction in 2014.



Figure 6 Frackelton Art Pottery Jar. “This stoneware jar has a globular form with a straight neck. It is grey with a salt glaze, and the interior and upper body are dark brown. The neck and upper body are decorated with incised or stamped quatrefoils and dots. An applied festoon surrounds the center of the body, painted blue. A makers mark, “SF”, and date 1893, are incised on the underside.” This description and photo are from the collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society. **Figure 8** – Frackelton Art Pottery Jar. “This stoneware jar has a globular form with a straight neck. It is grey with a salt glaze, and the interior and upper body are dark brown. The neck and upper body are decorated with incised or stamped quatrefoils and dots. An applied festoon surrounds the center of the body, painted blue. A makers mark, “SF”, and date 1893, are incised on the underside.” This description and photo are from the collection of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Notes

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From the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art

<https://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/127226.html>

The Washington times. (Washington, D.C.) 1894-1895, May 06, 1894, Page 5, Image 5

Snell, Melissa. "Rollo of Normandy." ThoughtCo, Feb. 6, 2019, [thoughtco.com/rollo-of-normandy-1789387](https://www.thoughtco.com/rollo-of-normandy-1789387).

Wikipedia – see the embedded hyperlinks in this article for links to specific pages.

Rago Arts and Auction Center auction catalog from 2014

The Clay Record: A Journal Devoted to the Dissemination of all Matters Pertaining to the Clay Industry, Volume 6, No.1, January 14, 1895, p436 to 438 written by Richard Frackelton, husband of Susan Frackelton.

Milwaukee County Historical Society artifact collection item M1943.126.005

