

The History of Campo Del Mar Pottery

Campo Del Mar was a porcelain manufacturing business founded in Capitola in August 1945 and owned by Waldemar F. Dietrich. Originally from Oregon, Dietrich was a mining engineer and metallurgist who once taught at Stanford University. He worked as a caster and mold maker since the age of nine, continuing in the line of work of his father and grandfather. Dietrich's wife Grace coined the company name, which she said meant "site by the sea", after perusing a Spanish dictionary at the Santa Cruz Public Library.

The California Avenue factory employed about sixteen women to cast high-grade porcelain after-dinner coffee sets, vases, flower arrangement bowls, ash trays, etc. The clay was imported from the eastern U.S. (Georgia, Kentucky, and Florida) and Ontario, Canada. In a 1946 *Santa Cruz Sentinel* interview, Dietrich stressed that his high-grade, translucent porcelain

... products are not for mass production, and practically every piece of work is turned out in octagonal or rectangular shape so it cannot be duplicated by mass production by anyone else after he has spent time and money designing it.

Campo Del Mar was one of the few firms in the U.S. devoted to making high-grade porcelains glazed in color. Most other pottery firms turned out white or ivory porcelain, which was a much easier process. After Dietrich molded an item into shape, it was fired to vitrification, which developed it to a white translucent body. Then he finished with various colors and re-fired. He used a gas heated kiln at a temperature of about 1200 degrees for vitrification and about 1950 degrees for the gloss fire.

Though Dietrich originally experimented with about 30 colors, he eventually decided to limit production to a select twelve shades. Dietrich noted that one of his most popular products was the

... after-dinner demi tasse assembly sets in three color combinations. The assembly ... consists of a cup, saucer, serving plate, cordial glass, individual ash tray, one-package cigarette box, match holder, and snack dish. This assembly is made in chartreuse, green, black and grey, mauve and dusty pink.

Interestingly the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* reported in 1946 that there were only two retail outlets for Campo Del Mar pottery in Santa Cruz County: Irvin M. Smith in Santa Cruz and Ford's Department Store in Watsonville. The porcelain was also available at several "swank" shops in San Francisco, Carmel, and New York. Dietrich was not anxious to increase his retail output because the demand for his product was already strong and he felt there were "... not enough persons interested in such high-grade, non-mass-produced ware to warrant letting any more contracts in this vicinity."

At the Capitola factory Mrs. Evor E. Shaver served as supervisor of glazing and Mrs. Luise Mable Beha oversaw casting and finishing. Other employees were listed as Mrs. Frances June Howes, Peggie S. McCabe, Mary Lynne Godfrey, Dama Beatrice Haskett, Dorothy Vogt, Jessie G. Rehdorf, Blanche Allison Williams, Verna Ella Lane, Mary A. Mastel, Mrs. Dora Matoush and Midred Lorayne Cash. Mr. & Mrs.

Dietrich sold the business in 1952 after he was appointed to a position with the U.S. Bureau of Mines in Washington D.C.