

ONONDAGA POTTERY CO.'S CHINA USED THROUGHOUT U.S.

ZEAL AND SKILL OF JAMES PASS GAVE BIG IMPETUS TO PLANT

(This is the ninth of a series of articles which will appear weekly in the Saturday edition of The Syracuse Journal, to permit Syracusans to become familiar with the inside story of the great industrial and commercial enterprises which have played important parts in the development of the city.)

By RICHARD E. WELCH

When thousands of American families, and many in foreign lands, sit down to their meals, whether they eat in their homes, clubs, restaurants or hotels, they eat their food from tableware manufactured in Syracuse by the Onondaga Pottery Company.

From its two plants, the original pottery at 1858 W. Fayette st. and the newer addition at 2900 Court st., the Onondaga Pottery has been supplying tableware and crockery to the United States for the last 63 years, carrying the name of Syracuse to every community in the Nation by calling its product "Syracuse China."

Fayette st. was known as Furnace st., and the section was the independent town of Geddes when W. H. Farrah, about 1855, conceived the idea of founding a pottery. He purchased a small building on the corner of Furnace and School sts. and, gathering together a few workmen, started the manufacture of bean pots, pie plates, mixing bowls, teapots, clay dogs, cats, frogs and lions.

The first products were Rockingham ware, but a few years later, when William and Charles Coykendall and H. M. Case joined the company, then known as the Empire Pottery, manufacture of "White ware" was started.

The company struggled along but never made any great progress until after its reorganization in 1871. On the evening of July 8, 1871, 13 men, who certainly were not superstitious, met in Geddes and organized the Onondaga Pottery Company, taking over the plant of the Empire Pottery and giving it a new set of officers. N. Stanton Gere was the first president, with Cyrus D. Avery as vice president and Mills P. Pharis as secretary-treasurer. Members of the board of trustees included also E. B. Van Deusen, R. Nelson Gere, Charles E. Hubbell, Adam C. Morey, George W. Draper and Charles Mitchell.

The first years of the Onondaga Pottery were hardly more productive than those of the Empire Pottery, as there was lack of capital and the earthenware product was of low grade. But the leaders persisted and in 1873 started to manufacture white granite ware.

By 1877 the company started to show a profit and the company records of that time indicate the enthusiasm shown by the board of directors when a profit of \$3,220.27 was shown for the year. As a testimonial the directors voted to present the president and general manager with a set of the white granite ware.

George W. Oliver was then general manager, and under him the white granite and also the cream-colored ware, known as "C.C.", was developed to the point where orders necessitated erection of a new plant in 1880.

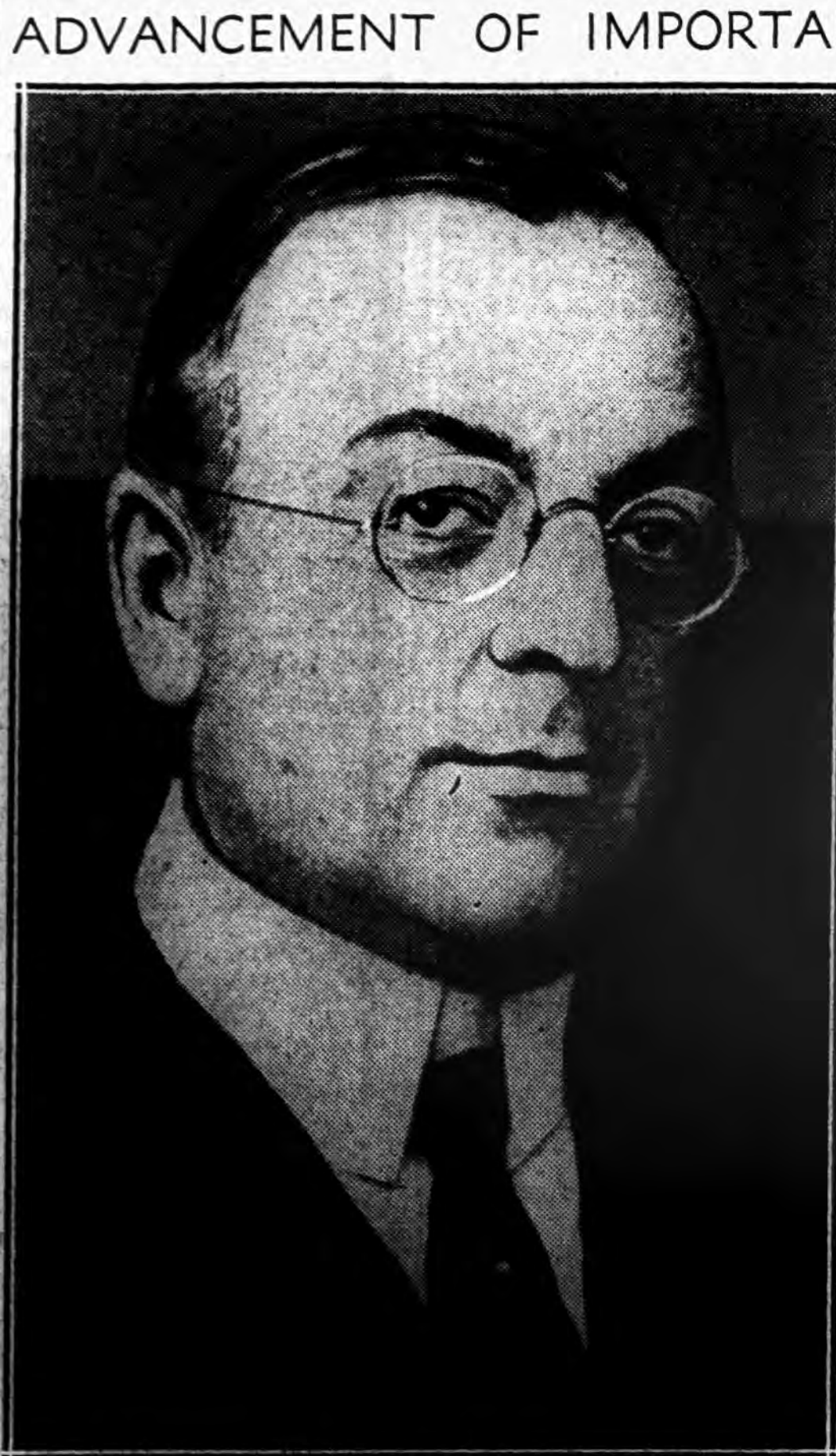
In 1881 James Pass, who came from a family of English potters, entered the employ of the Onondaga Pottery Company, coming here with his father, Richard Pass, who was engaged as superintendent of the pottery. Richard Pass was superintendent until 1884, when he died.

James Pass was a student in chemistry and was fired with the idea of producing an American chinaware which would rival the products of the French and English potteries. Thus for years Mr. Pass experimented with various grades of clay and various methods until he had developed the product now known as Syracuse China.

The new chinaware was such a success that in 1892 the board of directors made Mr. Pass general manager. It was not long before the American trade showed its appreciation of Syracuse china, and the Onondaga Pottery discontinued manufacture of its other products and concentrated on this new ware.

Samples of Syracuse china were exhibited at the world's fair in 1894 and won a grand prize medal and diploma for translucent china. A new unit was added to the plant in 1900 to double its capacity, and the force of salesmen under W. L. Huber kept the pottery on the jump to fill the orders which came pouring into Syracuse from nearly every state in the Union.

A third unit was erected in 1907, which added a third to



BERT E. SALISBURY

Chief executive of the Onondaga Pottery Company, which manufactures china tableware for thousands of American homes, is Bert E. Salisbury, who has been president of the company since 1913. The company carries the name of Syracuse into every state in the Union and into many foreign lands.

the former capacity. Then in 1910, E. B. Judson, who had served the pottery as vice president and president, died. Mr. Pass was elected to succeed him and continued in that capacity until his death in 1913.

Bert E. Salisbury was elected president to succeed Mr. Pass and still serves in that capacity. He is assisted by Edward L. Torbert, first vice president, Richard H. Pass, second vice president, and M. Crouse Klock, secretary.

A four-kiln unit to the original plant was built in 1914 and in 1921, the year the pottery was celebrating its golden anniversary, ground was broken for the plant on the 300-acre site in Court st.

The Onondaga Pottery is proud of the long list of employees who have grown old in its service. From the early days it has followed the practice of encouraging young men who lived near the pottery to enter the employ of the company and learn the trade from the experts, many of whom were brought here from other countries.

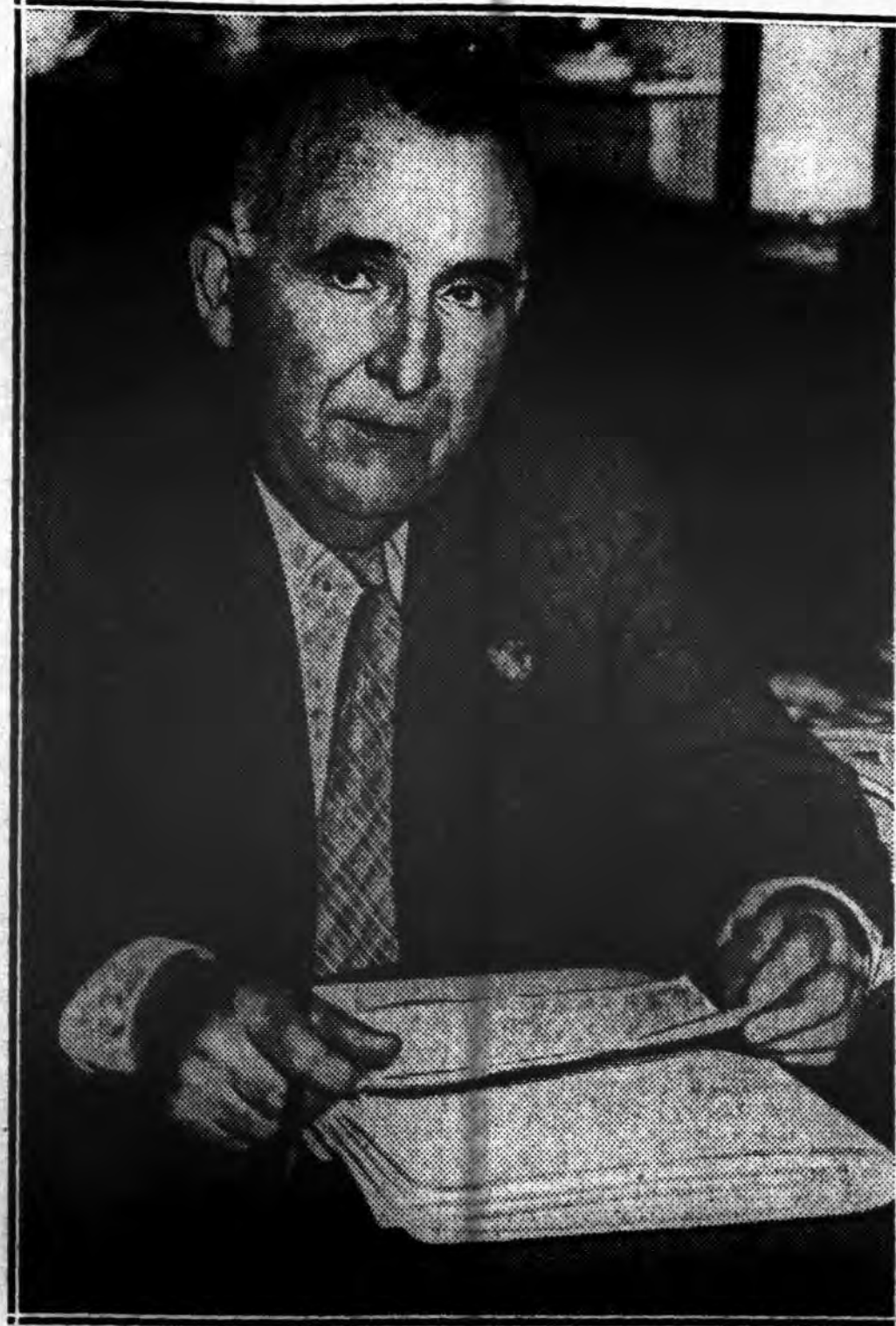
One such is John Malloy, who has been working for the pottery since 1886.

Mr. Malloy said of his record:

"I worked for all presidents of the company from Mr. Hubbell to Mr. Salisbury. In the early days we came out by horse car to Geddes to work and we worked from 7 a. m. to 6 p. m. There were four kilns, two biscuit and two glost, and as there were no elevators, we carried all ware up and down stairs.

"When orders came in the shipper selected his order from the stock, and one of my jobs was to select all stock from main floor to garret and also look over all ware as it came from the kilns. In those days we made C. C. white, granite and porcelain, but after Mr. Pass had succeeded in the manufacture of china we shipped all this old ware by canal boat to Buffalo and made nothing but china."

Mr. Malloy heads the list of old employees with his 48 years.



EDWARD L. TORBERT

Edward L. Torbert is first vice president of the Onondaga Pottery, but he had no idea he would ever hold such a position when he first went to work distributing circulars for a china store in his home town of Davenport, Ia.

Next comes Sid Lodder of the clay shop, with 47 years; William Dailey of the kiln department, 44 years; W. L. Huber of the sales department, 43 years.

Then there are Walter Smith, 42 years; Albert Hannam, 41 years; Sid Hall, Mike Kindler, Arthur La Rue and Agnes McDonald, each 38 years; John Dwyer and Jake Himpler each have 37 years to their credit; Dan Conway, John Miller, Mary Moran, Warren More and George Schultz, 36 years; Nellie Bennett, Frank Funda, Arthur Newton, William Smiedy Jr. and E. L. Torbert, 35 years; Flower Albino, Emmett Carroll, John Conway, William Cooper, Frank Dunham, Edward Irving, Anna Lowery, John McCarthy, John Reith and Leroy Taylor, 34 years; Lena Gibbs, Ella Gleason, Anna Lynch and E. J. MacMillan, 33 years.

Realizing at an early date the importance of keeping its employees happy, healthy and working together in close cooperation, the board of trustees of the pottery in 1903 appointed a committee to formulate plans and "a place and facilities for athletic exercises and a general meeting place for employees of the company."

This resolution was the founding of the Potters' Club and its excellent clubhouse near the pottery. Quarters were secured in the Pharis block and the company paid the cost of remodeling, installing three bowling alleys, two pool tables and a piano. The clubhouse was opened June 30, 1904. Mark Haley was first president, with Barney Sisson, vice president; Solon Lane, secretary, and George Putnam, treasurer.

In addition, the employees in 1888 organized a Sick and Death Benefit Association, which organization is still in existence and assists its members in times of misfortune. Thomas Herron was first president of the association; T. Delos Sweeting was vice president; Solon H. Lane, secretary, and James Pass, treasurer.

Although it required the work of many hands and many brains to develop Syracuse china and set up the organization to manufacture it and distribute it throughout the Nation, full credit for this product must be given to James Pass.

Mr. Pass knew every step in the process and kept his hand in by making frequent trips through the pottery. It was his boast that he could do and had done everything in a pottery from a bit of modeling to carrying a sagger.

Mr. Pass was always abreast of developments in the manu-



JAMES PASS

Much of the credit for development of Syracuse china goes to the late James Pass, who came from a family of English potters and who entered the employ of the Onondaga Pottery as a youth. His experiments developed the local product until it became known throughout the Nation as the best American china.

facture of pottery. The company started decoration of its own pottery in 1886, when all work was done by hand. Then the Decalcomania process was developed in Europe and Mr. Pass took a trip abroad just to learn all he could about it.

The result was that the first ceramic decalcomania plant in America was established at the Onondaga Pottery. Then came rolled edge dishes. The trade, especially hotels, rebelled against this type, and it was necessary to give away 200 dozen samples before they became convinced.

The Onondaga Pottery was the first in the world to decorate china by the underglaze decalcomania process. It was this enterprise and American genius which enabled the Onondaga Pottery to compete in the American market with high-grade pottery made in the European potteries and to slowly win its way to the position it now holds well up in the front ranks of the world's potteries.

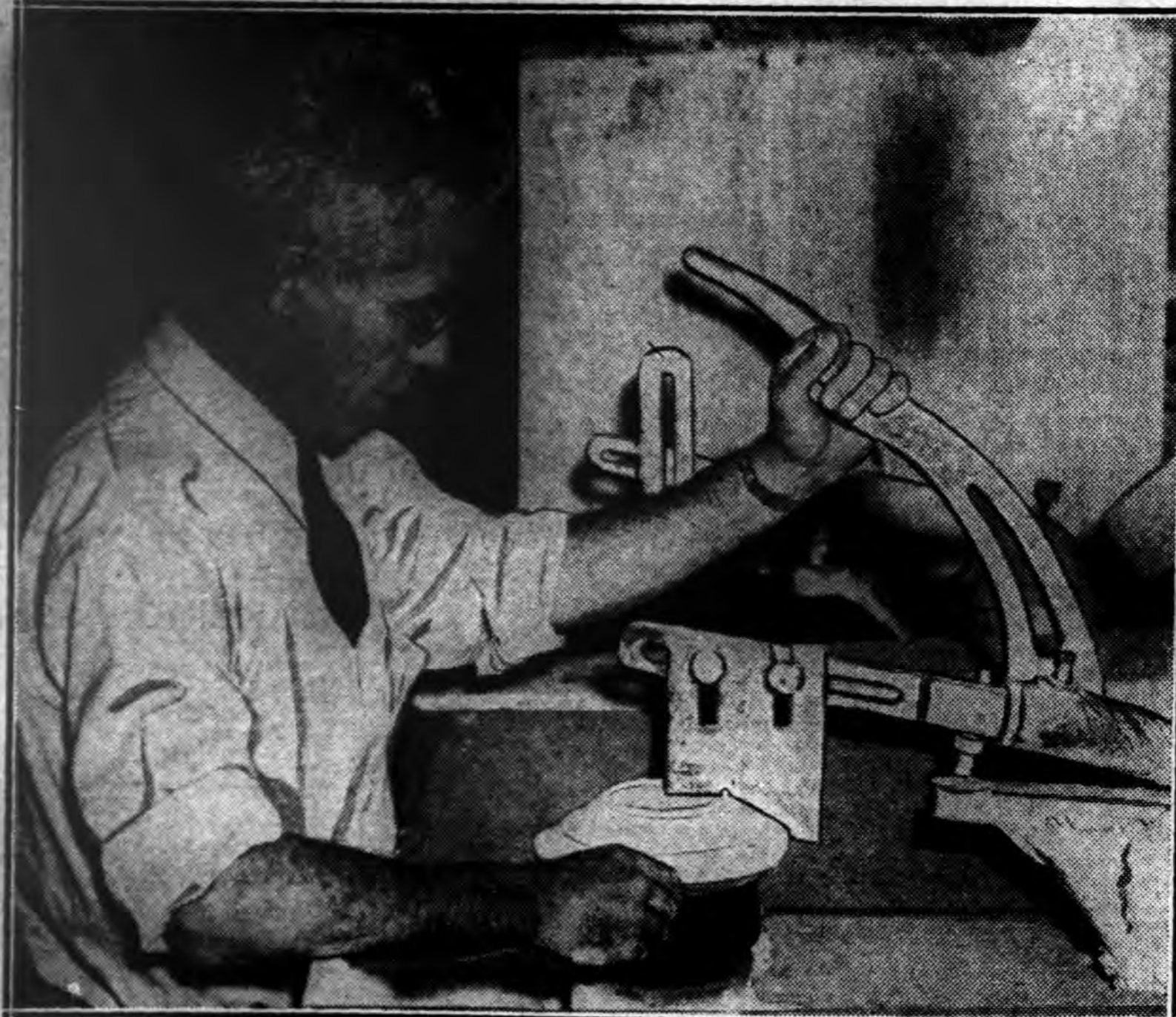
The present president of the Onondaga Pottery, Mr. Salisbury, was a boy playing around his yard in the town of Geddes, just a few blocks from the present plant, when the company was organized. He had no interest in the pottery until many years had passed, but when he was called to become one of its officers and then its chief executive, he took up the duties as he has done everything in his life, with his whole strength.

Mr. Torbert's first acquaintance with Syracuse china was when he was a boy in high school at Davenport, Ia., and secured vacation employment distributing circulars for a china store. These circulars listed various grades as "good, better and best", and under the "best" classification was Syracuse china.

Later Mr. Torbert went to work for the china store in his home town, and the way opened for his coming to Syracuse. He held various offices in the company from 1900 to 1919, when he was elected first vice president and treasurer. Later he became vice president, which position he now holds.

Richard H. Pass, now serving as second vice president, is the son of James Pass.

HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS, TALENTED IN EARTHENWARE ARTS, POSSESS RECORD OF LONG YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE



EMMETT CARROLL

Under the guidance of experts brought from foreign lands, many Syracuse youths have become talented potters. Emmett Carroll, now in charge of the clay department of the pottery, is one of these. Mr. Carroll is shown at one of the potter's wheels turning out a saucer, which is then passed on through the various stages until it becomes part of a set of china, decorated, finished and ready for sale.



MISS NELLIE BENNETT

For 35 years Miss Nellie Bennett has been a faithful employee of the Onondaga Pottery, and now she is in charge of the underglaze decalcomania department of the decorating division. She is shown watching Miss Pauline Guinto preparing a plate for decoration.



JOHN R. MALLOY

Oldest in service with the pottery is John R. Malloy, who went to work in the plant in 1886, in the days when horse cars brought the men from Syracuse to the plant, then in Geddes. Mr. Malloy is shown at a selector's bench in the final inspection department. Mr. Malloy is proud of his record of 48 years' service with the pottery and hopes to make it 50.—Pictures by Journal staff photographer.