Tycer Pottery Company

By James L. Murphy

Warren Ivy Tycer (1885-1968) derived from an old Louisiana family, the grandson of William R. Tycer, whose father was a boatman before securing land near Amite, Tangipahoa Parish. Warren was born there in 1885, the son of Thomas B. and Minerva Tycer. After working as a farm laborer, "Ivy", as he was then known, married Corinne Ricks. By 1910 he was working as a hardware salesman in Austin, Texas, and in 1917 he was a commercial traveler for J. L. Wright of Columbus Ohio. In 1920 Tycer was listed as a "broker" for an unnamed pottery, working on his "own account," which sounds like a traveling salesman. Matters soon changed, however, and by 1930, although still living in a Columbus hotel, Tycer was listed in the federal census as a pottery owner, the result of having purchased in 1921 the Roseville pottery formerly operated by Fred(eric S.) Lowry (1868-1916). Tycer's experience as a commercial traveler undoubtedly encouraged him to apply the same methods in selling his wares. As early as September, 1930, he was publishing a "warning" in the Albuquerque Journal that a man named Donald Bishop was posing as an agent of the pottery and soliciting $1.00 down payments on Tycer's Cook-Rite, Ideal, and Japanese cooking utensils. (Despite a detailed description, including the fact that Bishop had an upper right gold tooth, there is no indication that he was ever apprehended.) A rare 1933 Tycer Pottery broadside, complete with the NRA Eagle symbol, touts its Neu-Deel Cookin-Ware, "the latest and most scientific cooking utensils yet produced. For cleanliness, durability and general usefulness it has no equal." $6.75 for the four-piece set. The broadside noted that

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"The demonstrator will cheerfully explain the advantages" and begged, "Please give him a moment of your time." By 1952 Tycer Pottery would have eleven distributors in nine states.

Tycer had an inventive streak and held at least four patents. The earliest (filed 1928) was for a new technique for manufacturing cookingware, characterized mainly by the addition of manganese to the clay body and directly applying a slip of Michigan and Albany clays. In 1929 he registered both his Cook-Rite and Japaneseo cooking utensils and in 1933 he applied for a design patent, D91,285, featuring embossed fruits and vegetables on the side of his cooking vessels. This design was used on his Neu-Deel cookware and on his Cook-Rite Cookin-Ware for many years. Presumably production of Japaneseo and Neu-Deel wares ended before World War II, although the Cook-Rite and Japaneseo registrations were both renewed in 1957, shortly before the Tycer Pottery closed.

Warren and Corinne Tycer lived in Columbus for some twenty years, but had moved to Zanesville by 1942 when he applied for a patent on his design for a swinging teapot. This was used for large-capacity, restaurant-sized dispensers. Some of these swinging teapots turn up in auctions today.

In 1947, Joel O. Ricks (1877-1986), Tycer's brother-in-law, who had been in partnership with Tycer and vice-president and plant manager since the beginning, sold his interest to Tycer and moved to North Baltimore, Ohio. A daughter, Lura Ricks Sconberg (1923-2000) later taught school in Roseville before moving to Bowling Green, Ohio, and then later to Florida.

As late as 1948 Mrs. Tycer was giving garden club talks titled "Down South in the Land of Cotton," and the couple maintained close ties with their Louisiana roots, retiring there shortly after the Tycer Pottery was sold. In its later years the company featured "barbecue" ware with a longhorn motif and mugs with popular "Hands of Sport" motifs; however, in late August 1957 Tycer Pottery announced a three day "going out of business" liquidation sale, with prices reduced up to 60 per cent, advertising the sale in the Zanesville, Coshocton, and Newark newspapers.

Warren I. Tycer died of a heart attack at the age of 83 at his home in Amite, Louisiana, September 29, 1968 (Zanesville Times Signal). Mrs Tycer had died in 1958, shortly after they moved back to Amite, and there were no children.