

Willow by Paden City Pottery Company

By Jeff Siptak

Back in my early days of collecting, I remember finding a plate with an unusual impressed willow pattern. It was a solid blue color and unlike anything I had seen before. I thought it was quite different and it was marked Paden City Pottery. I found the mark in Connie Rogers' self-published notebook, "Willow Ware Made in the U.S.A" and read that the Paden City Pottery Company was based in Paden City, West Virginia.

According to an article written by Lucille T. Cox in the 1930s, it was in 1901 that a group of business men from Pittsburgh were hunting for a town site. The Ohio river valley was a right industrial center and they planned to form a land company, lay out a town, invite industries to locate and reap profits from their investments.

They found the perfect site with three farms bordering the Ohio river and owned by a man named Paden. The company purchased the land, plotted the town and named it Paden City in honor of the original owner.

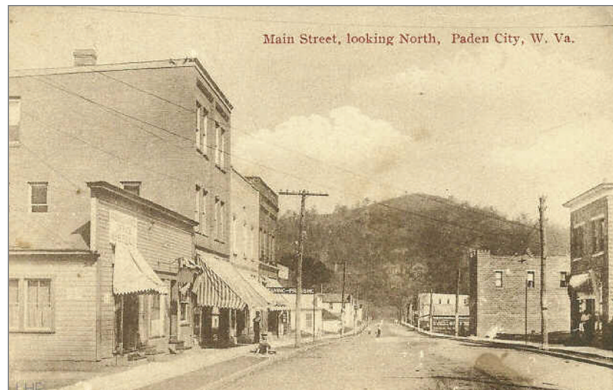
By 1914, the town's first industry was formed, The Paden City Pottery Company, led by a Pittsburgh attorney, George R. Wallace.

Cox notes, "[Paden City Pottery] was the first semi-porcelain plant to install and use sand-blast scouring for bisque. They were also the first semi-porcelain plant to use their spraying apparatus for the application of colored glazes. One of the interesting pieces of machinery in the Paden City Pottery Company is the spraying machine. It applies the glaze so evenly it would be almost impossible to duplicate the work by hand application. Another feature of this particular machine is that there is absolutely no waste in glaze, thereby giving a better product at a low cost."

I guess that is what made their willow, as well as other solid colored ware, so beautiful. Paden City Pottery would go on to create a long list of shapes and patterns throughout its years of production, 1914-1963.

I would not say these willow dishes are rare or valuable, but you don't see them very often. Actually, they are usually fairly affordable. Over the years, I have picked up pieces here and there and eventually bought a complete set.

The Willow Pattern made by Paden City Pottery features the Traditional Willow Pattern in its center with a Two Temples II border, all impressed into the ware and then covered with a solid blue glaze. The company made dinner plates, salad plates, cups and saucers, lug soup/cereal bowls, oval platters and large round vegetable bowls. As far as I know, these are the only pieces they made in this pattern and they would date from the 1930s-40s. See Photos 1- 3, for examples. (Cont'd)



Paden City, c. 1915



Photo 1: Dinner plate



Photo 2: Cereal bowl, cup and saucer



Photo 3: Platter and round vegetable bowl





Photo 4: Rio Theatre flyer announcing the “lovely, romantic Blue Willow by Paden” as free giveaways to the ladies.. The reverse side had the Willow Legend. c. 1930s, Reading, PA.

Paden City willow dishes were actually produced as inexpensive promotional giveaways. Photo 4 shows a flyer from Rio Theatre advertising the dishes as giveaways.

But there can be some confusion about what willow ware is actually Paden City. Most of the time, you will see the Paden City mark, although that is not always the case. The easiest way to remember is that Paden City willow has the pattern design impressed into the ware. See a close-up of pattern in Photo 5.

Other examples of willow that have sometimes confused collectors are shown here. Photo 6 features a Japanese batter/syrup jug and tray set, and Photo 7 shows a biscuit barrel, where the Willow Pattern is a high relief or raised embossed feature, standing out from the surface. Photo 8 shows a Japan teapot in the same style.



Photo 5: Close-up view of Paden City plate

Photo 9 shows another teapot with a raised embossed pattern, made by Lingard Webster in England.

All these examples were made from a mold where the pattern is part of the shape. They are not Paden City Pottery willow, although they could easily complement each other in any collection.

One final note. Up until a few years ago, we had only seen Paden City Willow in blue. But at the 2013 IWC Convention a green plate appeared at Show & Tell, seen in Photo 10. It's is not solid color green, though, like its blue “cousin.” Perhaps a test color plate? A very unusual find!



Photo 6: Syrup and batter jugs, plus tray



Photo 7: Large biscuit barrel



Photo 8: Teapot made in Japan



Photo 9: English teapot



Photo 10: Green Paden City plate