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Commemorative churn honors historical society anniversary

A limited edition miniature butter churn has been created by the Red Wing Pottery to commemorate the 140th anniversary of the Goodhue County Historical Society.

By: [Ruth Nerhaugen](#), The Republican Eagle



Museum director Char Henn holds the No. 1 commemorative churn and Scott Gillmer of Red Wing Pottery holds another that is decorated with a different traditional design. Only 140 small churns were made in honor of the Goodhue County Historical Society's 140th anniversary.

A limited edition miniature butter churn has been created by the Red Wing Pottery to commemorate the 140th anniversary of the Goodhue County Historical Society.

Only 140 of the 2-quart churns were made by the company's resident potters, Mark Connolly, Scott Keith and Alex Wilson. Each is back-stamped with a special 140th anniversary stamp.

The churns are salt-glazed pottery pieces, the type that first were made by skilled German craftsmen in the late 1800s.

"This small beginning gave rise to the largest pottery company in the United States," said Scott Gillmer of Red Wing Pottery Sales. "Following the long tradition of pottery making, today's expert craftsmen produced these pieces by hand."

Connolly also made one 2-gallon churn, signed "Mark the Potter," which will be auctioned at the historical society's anniversary gala on Sept. 26.

The small churns are bottom-numbered 1 to 140. The No. 1 churn also will be auctioned on Sept. 26, and the No. 140 churn will become part of the permanent collection at the History Center.

Nos. 2 through 139 will go on sale at 8 a.m. Sept. 19 at the Red Wing Pottery Sales, 1920 Old W. Main St. Cost is \$75, with half the proceeds donated to the historical society.

Sales will be first come, first served, with no pre-orders or online sales; each customer may purchase only one churn.

The churn was chosen for the commemorative piece because of its historical significance. Each piece was hand-decorated with a traditional decoration used by earlier Red Wing potters.

"The Red Wing Pottery is excited about using its skill in offering increasingly valuable commemorative pieces to help support the mission of the Goodhue County Historical Society," Gillmer said. He represents the third generation of the Gillmer family to run the local pottery business.

"Because organized pottery's history goes back almost to the founding of the county - and indeed, pottery was made by the Native Americans living here long before the area was settled by white people - pottery has touched many aspects of county history," he added.

"Partnering with the Goodhue County Historical Society is an obvious way to support and promote the history of the county and the traditions that Red Wing Pottery carries on."

The large churn and the No. 1 commemorative will be available only to people attending The Age of Style Gala, which will be from 5 to 11 p.m. Sept. 26 at the Treasure Island Event Center. The reservation deadline has been extended to Sept. 15.

The Goodhue County piece is the third bottom-numbered commemorative produced by the pottery in as many years. Previous pieces honored the city's sesquicentennial and the state's sesquicentennial.

It is highly collectible, officials said. The earlier pieces sold out within an hour, and the value of the pieces immediately swelled to several times the retail value.

For gala reservations call (651) 388-6024; for more about the historical society, go online to www.goodhuehistory.mus.mn.us