

CHAPTER TEN

ARTUS AND ANNE VAN BRIGGLE AND COLORADO COLLEGE¹

by R. Laurie and Thomas H. Simmons

Editor's Note: What a story we have to tell! It is a tale of: 1) A young man who goes on a quest to create a beautiful pottery glaze. 2) Star-crossed lovers who meet – where else? – in Paris. 3) A kindly college professor who uses his scientific knowledge to guide the young man, working in the basement of a historic college building, to the perfection of the pottery glaze. 4) A secret formula that is locked in a bank vault for ten years. 5) A young widow who rises above adversity to build an enduring memorial to her late husband.

Many people know the importance of Van Briggles pottery in the history of Colorado Springs, but very few know that Colorado College and a number of its people played a major role in that history. Here, excerpted from an application for designation of the Van Briggles Memorial Pottery Building as a national historic place, is the story.

The founder of one of the nation's longest-lived, most highly acclaimed art pottery companies, Artus Van Briggles, was born on March 21, 1869, in Felicity, Ohio. His family tree reportedly included Sixteenth Century Flemish painters Pieter and Jan Brughel.

The young Van Briggles displayed artistic talents at an early age. At seventeen, he moved to Cincinnati to work and study, finding a position painting faces on china dolls at the Arnold Fairyland Doll Store. On

¹ R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, "Van Briggles Pottery Company," submitted March 5, 2009, 13-20. Document available at Facilities Services Department, Colorado College, Colorado Springs.

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weekends and evenings, he attended classes at the Cincinnati Art School under the instruction of American master Frank Duvenek.

Following a brief stint as an apprentice at the Avon Pottery Company under founder Karl Langenbeck, in 1887 the young artist became a decorator at the prestigious Rookwood Pottery, where he showed promise in hand-painted design.

The American art pottery movement had originated in Cincinnati in the 1870s, when local women began painting flowers on factory-made china. It evolved into a national industry producing ceramics designed by professional artists. Rookwood, founded by Maria Longworth Storer, was one of the oldest and most respected of the art pottery companies. The studio employed highly skilled decorators and throwers, including many from the Cincinnati Art School.

As Van Briggles's wife later noted, Artus Van Briggles's "original ideas helped to tide Rookwood over a summer of financial crises." While in Cincinnati, he also finished a highly praised painting of his grandmother that was selected for exhibition at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and Columbian Exposition.²

Maria Longworth Storer recognized Van Briggles's exceptional ability and arranged for him to further his education in Paris at the Julian School of Art under Jean Paul Laurens and Benjamin Constant during 1893-96.³

² Scott H. Nelson, Lois K. Crouch, Euphemia B. Demmin, and Robert Wyman Newton, *A Collector's Guide to Van Briggles Pottery* (Indiana, Pa.: A. G. Halldin Publishing Co., 1986), 1-5; Roberta McIntyre, "100 Years of Van Briggles Pottery," *Kiva* 6(Spring 2002)2: 18; Richard Sasicki and Josie Fania, *The Collector's Encyclopedia of Van Briggles Art Pottery: An Identification and Value Guide* (Paducah, Kentucky: Collector Books, 1993), 8; David and Sharon Swint, *The Story Behind the Clay: A Comprehensive Guide to Commissioned Van Briggles Specialty Pieces* (Colorado Springs: Pikes Peak Publishing Co., 2005), 6; Paul S. Donhauser, *History of American Ceramics: The Studio Potter* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1978), 13,15, and 17; *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 7; Dorothy McGraw Bogue, *The Van Briggles Story* (Colorado Springs: Dentan-Berkeland Printing Co., 1968), 6.

³ Nelson, et al, *A Collector's Guide*, 5; Gilbert McClurg, "Brush and Pencil in Early Colorado Springs," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 7 December 1924.



ARTUS VAN BRIGGLE

A skilled art-pottery maker, Artus Van Briggles moved to Colorado Springs in hopes the high elevation would help cure his tuberculosis. Working with Colorado College Professor of Chemistry William Strieby, he perfected an exciting new matte glaze for his pottery. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)

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During this time, Artus Van Briggie became an officer of the American Art Association, received prizes and high honors for his drawings and portraits, and was introduced to new ideas and artistic movements.⁴

In Paris Van Briggie learned about Art Nouveau, a decorative style that strongly influenced European art and architecture during the period 1890-1914. Followers sought to raise the quality of decorative arts to the level of fine arts. The most important source of inspiration for Art Nouveau artists was nature, which they incorporated into products intended for ornament and for practical use. Flowing lines, abstract figures, and conventionalized natural forms characterized the style.⁵

Additional inspiration for the young artist came from displays at the Louvre and the Sevres factory, where he first encountered old Chinese and Japanese porcelain and pottery and became interested in recreating their purity of color and luminous matte glazes, whose formulas were believed to be lost.⁶

Returning to Paris after spending the summer of 1894 in Italy, Artus Van Briggie met Anne Lawrence Gregory, an accomplished student of painting at the Colarossi Academy of Art. Born in Plattsburgh, New York, on July 11, 1868, she had studied landscape painting in that state with Charles Melville Dewey. Anne also enrolled at the Victoria Lyceum in Berlin, where she specialized in oil and water colors and did clay modeling.

⁴ B.E. Sutton letter to Mr. and Mrs. A.S. Nelson, 1947, Lois Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 3, Starsmore Center for Local History, Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum [hereafter cited as Crouch Collection].

⁵ McClary and Rust, "Van Briggie in the World," 22.

⁶ *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Supplement I (New York: James T. White & Co., 1910), 242; "Van Briggie Pottery Company Incorporated," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 20 April 1902, 9; *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 7; Van Briggie Pottery Co., "Van Briggie Pottery," undated, Eckhardt Van Briggie Collection, George Eckhardt, Colorado Springs [hereafter cited as Eckhardt Collection]; Woman's Educational Society of Colorado College, "The Van Briggie Memorial Building," tour pamphlet, undated, Eckhardt Collection.



ANNE LAWRENCE GREGORY

This photograph of Anne Gregory was taken in 1900. On June 12, 1902, she and Artus Van Briggie were married in a ceremony on a mesa on Cheyenne Mountain near Colorado Springs. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)

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Contemporaries described her as a tall woman with light brown hair and gray eyes. She was very open-minded, had a good sense of humor, and disliked the restrictions of the Victorian age.⁷ In 1895, she and Van Briggles became engaged. In 1896, both returned to the United States, Anne to her aunt's home in Pennsylvania, where she taught high school French, German, and art to coal miners' children, and Artus to Ohio.⁸

As Anne later reported, [Artus] Van Briggles returned to Cincinnati "with a very much enlarged horizon and many ideas in regard to the artistic development of pottery in America."⁹ At Rookwood, where he worked several days a week, he advanced to a position as a leading decorator. During his free time, he developed a specialty in portrait painting, exhibiting in a number of large cities and becoming prominent in the local art scene.¹⁰

In addition, he began experimenting to recreate the matte glazes he had seen in Paris in his own studio, benefiting from the use of a small gas kiln provided by Maria Longworth Storer.¹¹ He adopted Art Nouveau themes in his own work, employing decorations with figural representations that flowed into the shapes of pottery.

By the spring of 1898 he succeeded in perfecting a good matte glaze employed on a piece crafted for his patroness that featured a flowing woman's figure ornamenting a vase. However, as Anne later recalled, the new glaze was "very coldly received by the Rookwood management, and

⁷ Lois Crouch, "Anne Gregory Notes," Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 7; Agnes Holmes, Interview by Lois Crouch, 20 May 1968, Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 12; Anne Lawrence Gregory, Passport Application, 7 June 1894, retrieved from Ancestry.com on 7 December 2008.

⁸ Florence N. Levy, ed., *American Art Annual*, 1905-06, vol. V (New York: American Art Annual, Inc., 1905), 432; Nelson, et al, *A Collector's Guide*, 30; Alice Shinn, "Anne Ritter: An Appreciation," Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 7 [hereafter cited as Shinn, "Anne Ritter"].

⁹ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 7.

¹⁰ *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, Supplement I, 242; McClurg, "Brush and Pencil," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 7 December 1924.

¹¹ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 7.

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Van Briggles was looking about for a way to carry out his ideas when he fell ill”¹²

Van Briggles’s declining health brought an abrupt end to his career in Cincinnati.¹³ He suffered from tuberculosis, and like thousands of other victims of the disease, received advice that Colorado’s dry and sunny climate might improve his lungs. The reputation of Colorado Springs as a receptive center of art and culture where some of his fellow Parisian students lived likely influenced Van Briggles’s decision to relocate there.

After arriving in the city with a few implements of his craft on March 21, 1899, the artist initially recuperated in the home of a friend’s family and then moved southeast of Colorado Springs to the Chico Basin Ranch.¹⁴ Members of the William Holmes family, who owned the ranch, recalled he played ragtime music on their old piano, always wore a hat, enjoyed practical jokes, and searched for suitable clay for his work.¹⁵

Colorado Springs friend B. E. Sutton described Van Briggles at that time as “a tall man, freckled, long arms and legs, red bristly hair, musical voice, soft eyes—everyone liked Van.”¹⁶ In Colorado Springs, his artistic talents, European education, and likable manner quickly led to friendships with members of the art community and the city’s social elite.

Returning to the city [from the Chico Basin Ranch] in the fall, Van Briggles sought a way to continue his experiments with local clays and matte glazes. Fortunately, his efforts captured the interest of Professor William Strieby, head of the Chemistry and Metallurgy Department at Colorado

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Alice Shinn noted “overwork” made him an invalid, while Manly and Eleanor Ormes attributed his contracting tuberculosis to overwork and bad living conditions in Paris. See Shinn, “Anne Ritter” and Manly D. and Eleanor R. Ormes, *The Book of Colorado Springs* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Dentan Printing Co., 1933), 345.

¹⁴ Lois Crouch, Artus Van Briggles, Chronology, Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 6; Woman’s Educational Society of Colorado College, “The Van Briggles Memorial Building.”

¹⁵ W. C. Holmes, Interview by Lois Crouch, January and February 1973, Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 12.

¹⁶ B. E. Sutton letter to Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Nelson, undated, Crouch Collection box 14, file folder 4.

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College and himself a student of ceramics.¹⁷ Strieby provided assistance in obtaining materials, offered professional advice, collaborated on ceramic tests, and allocated the artist laboratory space and an assayer's muffle in the basement laboratory of the College's first building [Cutler Hall].¹⁸

Together the two men spent endless hours perfecting the elements Van Briggles sought in pottery.¹⁹ Strieby's son, Maurice, recalled "seeing this kiln in action many times, with father peeking through the port holes at the temperature gauges. . . . This was where success was first achieved with the 'Matte' glaze, and with many of the colors. . . ." ²⁰

Colorado Springs historians Manly and Eleanor Ormes, who were friends of Van Briggles, indicated that the artist "produced his first beautiful piece," using the College facility. Local residents were described as justly proud: "Great was the elation and enthusiasm over that piece. The art lovers of Colorado Springs were excited."²¹

Van Briggles also had a strong connection to the Colorado College through its Art Department. He convinced noted Swiss artist and his friend in Paris, Louis J. Soutter (1871-1942), to come to the city to head the department, with Van Briggles serving as its art critic.²² In February 1900, an exhibition associated with the formal opening of the College's fine arts building, Perkins Hall, included the exhibit of Van Briggles' "My Grandmother" painting formerly displayed at the Columbian Exposition.²³

¹⁷ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 7.

¹⁸ McClurg, "Brush and Pencil," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 7 December 1924; Nelson, et al, *A Collector's Guide*, 11.

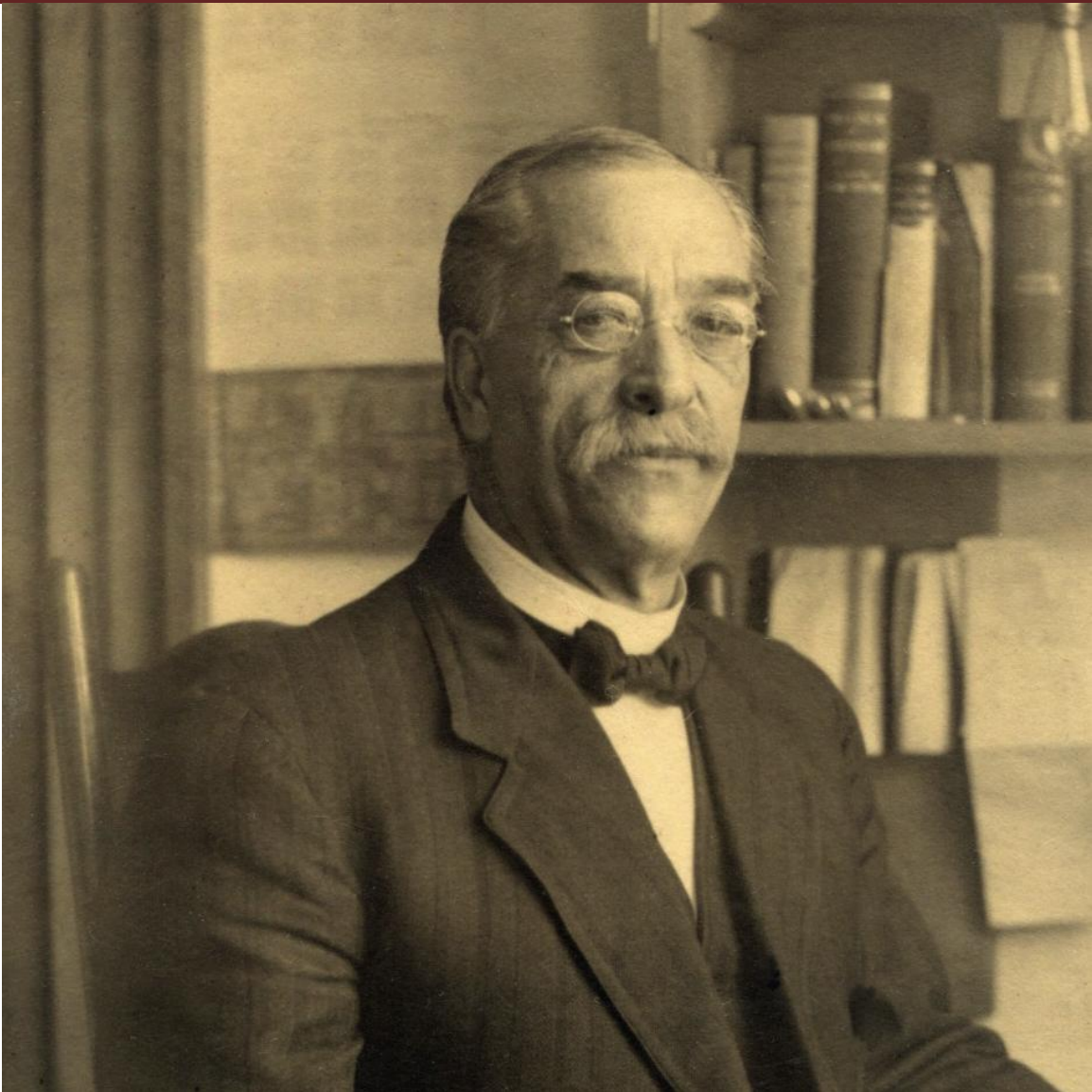
¹⁹ *Editor's Note*: Artus Van Briggles perfected his first matte glaze piece, a small version of the Lorelei in a dark green color, in Cincinnati in 1898. He brought the vase with him to Colorado Springs. Then he worked with Professor Strieby in developing additional colors in matte glazes using Colorado mineral resources. There is a replica of the 1898 small dark green Lorelei vase, made in Cincinnati, in an office display case at the Facilities Services Department at Colorado College.

²⁰ McIntyre, "100 Years," 19.

²¹ Ormes and Ormes, *Book of Colorado Springs*, 345.

²² *Colorado College Nugget*, 1904, Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.

²³ *Colorado Springs Gazette-Telegraph*, 7 December 1924.



PROFESSOR WILLIAM STRIEBY

Professor Strieby taught Mineralogy and Metallurgy at Colorado College. Strieby befriended Artus Van Briggle, shared his interest in ceramics, and gave him laboratory space in the basement of Cutler Hall at Colorado College. It was in the basement of Cutler Hall, with the aid of Strieby, that Artus Van Briggle perfected the fine matte glaze for his pottery. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)

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After Soutter's sudden departure due to illness in February 1903, Artus became head of the Art Department at Colorado College. However, he was not well and soon gave up his classes to devote all the attention that his health would allow to his pottery.²⁴

Van Briggles health remained precarious. Returning to recuperate at the Chico Basin Ranch in the summer of 1900, he worked on new designs.²⁵ A photograph by Agnes Holmes records him crafting a chalice ("Toast Cup") outdoors at the ranch.²⁶

During that summer, Anne Gregory moved to Colorado Springs to join Artus and serve as Supervisor of Art at Colorado Springs High School, where her friend, Alice Shinn, taught drawing. Shinn later commented, "I am sure no art teaching in a high school ever equaled the two years she gave her pupils. The results showed it, and they adored her."²⁷

When not in the classroom, Anne devoted herself to becoming an active partner in her fiancée's experiments, pottery design, and business affairs.²⁸ Together, the couple created the well-known logo consisting of a conjoined AA within a square that continues to identify Van Briggles pottery. In the same year, Maria Storer informed Van Briggles that examples of his pottery included in Rookwood's exhibit at the Paris Salon received much praise.²⁹

Maria Longworth Storer continued to play an important role, second only to Anne, in encouraging and supporting the artist's work.³⁰ In 1901, Van Briggles produced a few pieces of pottery using local clays and the new glazes on his small kiln shipped from Cincinnati.³¹ Storer was pleased with

²⁴ Ormes and Ormes, *Book of Colorado Springs*, 338-39; *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 6 February 1903, 3.

²⁵ Sasicki and Fania, *The Collector's Encyclopedia*, 9.

²⁶ The Van Briggles pottery works produced the Toast Cup into the 1920s. Nelson, et al, *A Collector's Guide*, 95; Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, "100 Years of Van Briggles Pottery from the Colorado Springs Museum," Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs.

²⁷ Shinn, "Anne Ritter."

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Sasicki and Fania, *The Collector's Encyclopedia*, 9.

³⁰ Nelson, et al, *A Collector's Guide*, 45.

³¹ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 7.

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the results and advanced funds to enable him to establish a small-scale pottery with workrooms and a showroom at 617 North Nevada Avenue.³²

Assisted by former Rookwood employee Harry Bangs and a young apprentice, as well as Anne in her spare time, Van Briggles began to produce his first pieces for market. He combined the native clays with Art Nouveau shapes to create works in colors inspired by those found in Colorado's landscape and sky and finished with his distinctive matte glaze. In August, Van Briggles invited friends to the workshop, where they impressed their initials into small pieces that were fired and returned as gifts.³³

In October 1901, before any pieces were available for sale, one of the country's respected art journals, *Brush and Pencil*, contained a long illustrated article about the pottery. The writer, George D. Galloway, observed, "The finished Van Briggles vase, graceful in shape, fascinating in decoration, and lovely in finish, stands by itself without even an imitation in the world of pottery."³⁴

Such journals played an important role in evaluating and publicizing arts and crafts at the time. As Richard Mohr observes, "The attention that the inauguration of the vases garnered is perhaps unparalleled in the history of American ceramics, stupendous."³⁵

Long hours of effort and the addition of a new kiln resulted in the production of three hundred pieces displayed for the Christmas market on December 6 and 7, 1901. Local citizens, supporters, friends, and artists enthusiastically viewed the work, which marked the first public exhibition of Van Briggles pottery in Colorado Springs. The *Colorado Springs Gazette* noted that the potter planned to send pieces for display in Paris, Madrid, and

³² B. E. Sutton indicated that William Jackson Palmer also signed the note making it possible for Van Briggles to acquire the property. B. E. Sutton letter to Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Nelson, 1947, Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 3; *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 7; McClurg, "Brush and Pencil," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 7 December 1924; Ormes and Ormes, *Book of Colorado Springs*, 345.

³³ Sasicki and Fania, *The Collector's Encyclopedia*, 10; Swint and Swint, *The Story*, 11.

³⁴ The article is reproduced in Nelson, et al, *A Collector's Guide*, 133-141; *Brush and Pencil*, 9(October 1901)1.

³⁵ Mohr, "Van Briggles Tiles: Part II," 8.

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New York. Manly and Eleanor Ormes reported William Jackson Palmer, [a leading benefactor of Colorado College,] and others in Colorado Springs used their influence to acquire recognition for Van Briggles.³⁶

On April 20, 1902, the *Colorado Springs Gazette* announced the formation of “the most important corporation organized in this city for many years.” With capitalization of \$50,000, Van Briggles Pottery Company was “backed by the largest capitalists in Colorado Springs and will occupy not only an important place in the art and industrial aspect of this city’s growth, but it will give to this city a standing which the famous Rookwood potteries have given to Cincinnati the world over.”

All of the shares of stock in the company were given to Artus Van Briggles in exchange for his contribution of all the machinery and supplies at the 617 North Nevada Avenue plant, as well as “his secrets, formulas, etc., which enables him to produce his ware.” Van Briggles wrote the secrets down and they were deposited at the First National Bank [of Colorado Springs] and held in escrow for ten years, following which they reverted to the company.

He also agreed to transfer 250 shares of stock to the company for treasury purposes. Large investors in the business included William Jackson Palmer, Winfield Scott Stratton, Maria Longworth Storer, T. J. Fisher, Clarence P. Dodge, C. Sharpless Pastorius, [Colorado College] Professor William Strieby, and Asaheal Sutton.³⁷

Maria Longworth Storer received commendation as one of Van Briggles’s strongest supporters: “Her patronage will go a long way toward establishing the world-wide reputation for the Van Briggles ware which is already enjoyed by that which she discovered [her Rookwood pottery].”³⁸

Subscribers to the stock received assurances that the company would remain in Colorado Springs. The five directors of the corporation included: Artus Van Briggles, president; Thomas J. Fisher, vice president; Asaheal Sutton, treasurer; Henry Russell Wray, secretary; and Clarence P. Dodge. The *Gazette* proclaimed incorporation of the company would allow production on a much larger scale and would “make Colorado Springs the

³⁶ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 7 December 1901; McIntyre, “100 Years,” 33; Ormes and Ormes, *Book of Colorado Springs*, 345.

³⁷ McIntyre, “100 Years,” 33.

³⁸ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 20 April 1902.

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home of one of the most distinctive art works in the world.” Artus Van Briggles was described as “one of America’s finest modelers in clay.”³⁹

The year also marked an important turning point in the personal lives of Artus and Anne. Just before sunset on June 12, 1902, the couple married in an area Helen Hunt Jackson designated “My Garden,” on the mesa of Cheyenne Mountain. The small wedding party included several prominent Colorado Springs people who were friends of the Van Briggles and investors in the pottery company.⁴⁰

In describing the ceremony, the *Gazette* referred to the marriage of “two well-known artists,” and remarked that “Mr. Van Briggles manufactures a rare pottery that promises to bring him fame as the ware is already becoming known in Europe as well as this country.”⁴¹ After the wedding, the couple traveled to Denver, where Artus spent a month in the Oakes Sanitarium seeking better health.⁴² In future years, the couple spent time in Tucson for this reason during the winter months.

As Artus was ill much of the time during their marriage, Anne assumed steadily increasing responsibility for their business and took over much of the designing.⁴³ A relative lived with the Van Briggles to assist in their home, and all of Anne’s “time was given to her husband and his work.”⁴⁴

Alice Shinn recalled the widely held hopes that art and health would prevail: “What visions we all had for the artistic future of Colorado Springs. Not only for the success of the Pottery but as a place where many arts and crafts would flourish, the workers to be found among the many semi-invalids. We pictured an Art Colony working out of doors.”⁴⁵

³⁹ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 20 April 1902.

⁴⁰ Manley D. Ormes officiated at the ceremony. *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 13 June 1902; Nelson, et al, *A Collector’s Guide*, 31.

⁴¹ *Denver Republican*, 15 June 1902; Nelson, et al, *A Collector’s Guide*, 31-32.

⁴² *Colorado Springs Evening Telegraph*, 16 July 1902.

⁴³ Ormes and Ormes, *Book of Colorado Springs*, 345; McIntyre, “100 Years,” 34.

⁴⁴ J. Emma McCormick Obituary, *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 24 September 1982; Shinn, “Anne Ritter.”

⁴⁵ Shinn, “Anne Ritter.”

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In August 1902, the company began shipping its pieces to large cities and items were sold at several Colorado locations.⁴⁶ The pottery offered visitors tours of the operation with explanations of how art pottery was produced.⁴⁷

Van Briggles vases received extensive recognition and wide acclaim during 1902 and 1903 as a result of displays at exhibitions, mentions in books, and articles printed in popular magazines and art journals. William Percival Jervis's 1902 *Encyclopedia of Ceramics* noted "a small pottery" at Colorado Springs, where Artus Van Briggles "produces works with a beautiful dead glaze and with ornament in low relief modeled directly on the 'green' clay, and the glaze or glazes then blended on."⁴⁸ *Der moderne Stil*, a Stuttgart decorative arts journal, published a description of the company's work with illustrations in 1902.⁴⁹

In 1903 and 1904, Van Briggles sent some of its best work to the Paris Salon, considered the most exclusive exhibition in the world, where it won two gold, one silver, and twelve bronze medals and received substantial praise for surpassing the work of European manufacturers.⁵⁰ As Paul S. Donhauser observed in his *History of American Ceramics*, "Van Briggles became nationally and internationally recognized as one of America's outstanding studio-potters for his distinctive Art Nouveau designs and use of soft, velvety glazes that were a closely guarded secret for several decades."⁵¹

Among his most famous creations were a "Loreli" vase that included the sculpture of a woman blended around the top and "Despondency," a vase with a male figure along the rim.⁵²

By 1903, the pottery employed twelve workers and its machinery included a three-foot gas-fired kiln and a ten-foot coal-fired kiln at the

⁴⁶ Nelson, et al, *A Collector's Guide*, 17.

⁴⁷ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 22 December 1902.

⁴⁸ William Percival Jervis, comp., *The Encyclopedia of Ceramics* (New York, NY: N.p., 1902), 579.

⁴⁹ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 8 August 1902.

⁵⁰ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 3 December 1908, 7; McIntyre, "100 Years," 33; Swint and Swint, *The Story*, 16; Bogue, *Van Briggles Story*, 24.

⁵¹ Donhauser, *History of American Ceramics*, 39.

⁵² Nelson, et al, *A Collector's Guide*, 95 and 97.

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expanded North Nevada Avenue plant.⁵³ The company defended its production of limited edition pieces rather than individual specimens: “We believe it better art to bring out a limited edition of a beautiful and carefully thought out design, varying in each piece the color and glaze effect, than to seek and execute hastily a new design for each piece.”⁵⁴

Although some criticized limited-edition products as lacking unique design, it appeared to be the only financially viable way to increase quantities while maintaining standards. As Ormes and Ormes observed, “Pieces of the utmost perfection of finish only were allowed to exist. Every other was broken and thrown on the dump.”⁵⁵

The Craftsman, one of the leading journals promoting the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States, applauded Van Briggles’ achievements in an article about the company in September 1903.⁵⁶ A critic writing about American art pottery for *Keramic Studio* enthused, “The Van Briggles Pottery is perhaps the most important of the new work. . . . The pottery has been running for a little over two years, and already has gained quite a reputation among lovers of ceramic art.”⁵⁷

Popular magazines devoted to home design and furnishings also praised the company. In October 1903, *House and Garden* contained an article with photographs of the couple and their art pottery.

Alice Shinn summarized the difficulties the Van Briggles confronted establishing the pottery company and those Anne faced as her husband’s health deteriorated:

The history of the founding of the Van Briggles Pottery against the odds of poor health, insufficient money, and untrained helpers is well known, but only a few intimate friends knew

⁵³ McIntyre, “100 Years,” 33.

⁵⁴ Van Briggles Pottery Co., Brochure, c. 1903, Van Briggles Collection, Ephemera folder, Starsmore Center for Local History, Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, Colorado Springs, Colorado [hereafter cited as Starsmore Center].

⁵⁵ Ormes and Ormes, *Book of Colorado Springs*, 345.

⁵⁶ *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 25 December 1903; Mohr, “Van Briggles Tile, Part II,” 8-9.

⁵⁷ *Keramic Studio*, 5(June 1903): 36.

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how almost overwhelming the struggle. The Van Briggles were working day and often half the night and the kilns were turning out beautiful pottery. To make it in quantity to pay expenses, that was the problem. Two years of strenuous work and anxiety about money and we all saw Mr. Van Briggles' health was failing. Mrs. Van Briggles then assumed the burden of the whole responsibility of running the Pottery.⁵⁸

Artus and Anne Van Briggles gathered examples of their "best and most innovative" works in preparation for exhibition at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair and Louisiana Purchase Exposition. El Paso County Commissioners asked Colorado Springs citizens to provide funds for the cost of shipping the products, and local residents also paid for an exhibit pergola.⁵⁹ At the fair, Van Briggles pottery received two gold, one silver, and two bronze medals; as the company was a first time exhibitor it could not compete for the grand prize.⁶⁰ The American public first became generally aware of the Colorado Springs pottery company at the St. Louis event.⁶¹

During the winter of 1903-04, the couple again spent months in Tucson hoping to improve Artus's health. Instead, his condition rapidly deteriorated, and they returned to Colorado Springs in March of 1904.⁶² Artus Van Briggles' battle with tuberculosis ended with his death there on July 4, 1904, at the age of thirty-five.

His wife [Anne Van Briggles], Harry Bangs, and employee Frank Riddle created a death mask of the artist the night he died, and a private funeral took place at the couple's home.⁶³ At the St. Louis Exposition, the

⁵⁸ Shinn, "Anne Ritter."

⁵⁹ Swint and Swint, *The Story*, 17; "World's Fair Van Briggles Vase Returns to Museum," Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College, Colorado Springs.

⁶⁰ Lois Crouch notes, Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 5; McIntyre, "100 Years," 34.

⁶¹ Van Briggles Art Pottery Co., Brochure, undated, Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 9.

⁶² B. E. Sutton letter to Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Nelson, 1947, Crouch Collection, box 14, file folder 3.

⁶³ Swint and Swint, *The Story*, 18.

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large cabinet displaying Van Briggle pottery was draped in black. When the collection returned to Colorado, the El Paso County Commissioners acquired and donated unsold pieces to the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, which still maintains the largest public collection of Van Briggle pottery in the world, with more than six hundred items.⁶⁴

Editor's Note: Following her husband's death, Anne Van Briggle continued to operate the pottery company. Because the firm had outgrown its small factory and showrooms at 617 North Nevada Avenue, Anne began to plan the construction of a new and larger facility that would provide for future expansion. She also wanted the new building to serve as a memorial to her late husband.

William Jackson Palmer, the founder of Colorado Springs and the leading financial benefactor of Colorado College, donated a site for the new factory and showrooms at the edge of a new park he was developing for the city. The site of the new pottery was one block north of the Colorado College campus on the west side of Monument Creek.

The new park was named Monument Valley Park. The new pottery works opened for business in September of 1908. William Jackson Palmer was given the finest piece manufactured in the first firing of the new pottery kilns.

In July of 1908, Anne Van Briggle married Etienne Ritter, a Swiss mining engineer who was well-known in Colorado. She withdrew from the Van Briggle pottery company in 1912, but she remained in Colorado Springs and in 1916 taught art classes at Colorado College. In 1923, she moved to Denver with her husband when he relocated his business interests there. She died in 1929 at the age of 61.

In 1955, the Van Briggle pottery works moved to a site in an old railroad locomotive roundhouse at the corner of the Midland Expressway and 21st Street in Colorado Springs. In 1968, the old pottery works in Monument Valley Park was sold to Colorado College, which used it as the headquarters of its Facilities Services Department. The College carefully preserved the original appearance of the building, particularly the distinctive chimneys above the pottery kilns.

⁶⁴Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum, "100 Years of Van Briggle Pottery."



**VAN BRIGGLE ART POTTERY BUILDING
NEAR MONUMENT VALLEY PARK**

Artus Van Briggles passed away from tuberculosis in 1904. His widow, Anne Gregory Van Briggles, constructed this new building to house the pottery works as a memorial to her late husband. It was built on land donated by General William Jackson Palmer, the founder of Colorado Springs, and opened for business in 1908. In 1968, after Van Briggles Pottery had moved to another location, the property was purchased by Colorado College and used for its Facilities Services Department. (Photograph from Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College.)

ARTUS AND ANNE VAN BRIGGLE AND COLORADO COLLEGE

The Van Briggie Memorial Pottery Building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Colorado State Register of Historic Properties on April 29, 2009.