

Crafts

Do traditional glazing technique on greenware



Some of Barbara's other sgraffito ware which is on display in Taylor Mansion Pottery is shown here.

Visitors are welcome to see her crafts "by chance or by appointment."



Barbara illustrates the proper way to hold a plate while applying a sgraffito design.

designs familiar to the Pennsylvania Germans.

Barbara and her husband Lester who produces the slip ware displayed in a small gift shop in the Breining home, work on their crafts in a separate building which originally served as the creamery where the furnace workers came daily for their milk. There, after gathering raw clay from meadows and streambeds the way the old Pennsylvania pottery makers did, the Breiningers fashion the pottery items they then design.

"Sgraffito," Barbara points out, is an Italian word which does not actually name a "craft" but rather a "technique" of decorating which is produced by scratching through a surface layer of glazing to reveal a different colored ground. The effect is a recessed design as opposed to the flat or raised, painted-on design commonly seen on ceramic items.

By JUDY MITCHELL
Berks Co. Reporter
ROBESONIA - Barbara Breining lives in a magnificent Victorian house on the outskirts of Robesonia, and her craft is as traditional as her home. Built in 1882 to house the superintendent of an iron ore furnace around which the settlement grew, Taylor Mansion provides a fitting display place for Barbara's Sgraffito ware, a revival folk pottery which reflects the traditional forms and

Although she concentrates on Pennsylvania tradition in practicing her art, Barbara emphasizes that "sgraffito is as versatile as you are." The redware she works on and the designs she creates are essential to the reproduction of the traditional red and yellow Pennsylvania folk pottery, but greenware (unfired pottery) purchased from any ceramic shop may be substituted for the hand-made pottery she uses, and her decorating technique can be adapted to any contemporary design.

Equipment

Having selected a suitable redware or greenware container (she recommends a plate for beginners because of ease in handling), you will need a tool for scratching your design. Sgraffito tools may be purchased in most craft shops, but if you do ceramic work, your cleaning tool will do the job.

The engobe (also called underglaze) needed is also available in craft or ceramic shops, and the colors selected will depend on personal preference and on the type of material you choose to work with. Bar-

bara uses a yellow engobe as her primary base with small amounts of green for added highlight when designing her red clay items in the Pennsylvania German tradition. If you are working on greenware from a ceramic shop you can select any two colors you like, or even two shades of one color, but Barbara does recommend that medium to dark colors be used on greenware, which will turn white after firing. (A note for anyone not familiar with working with ceramics, the color of the raw greenware you buy and the glaze as it appears when

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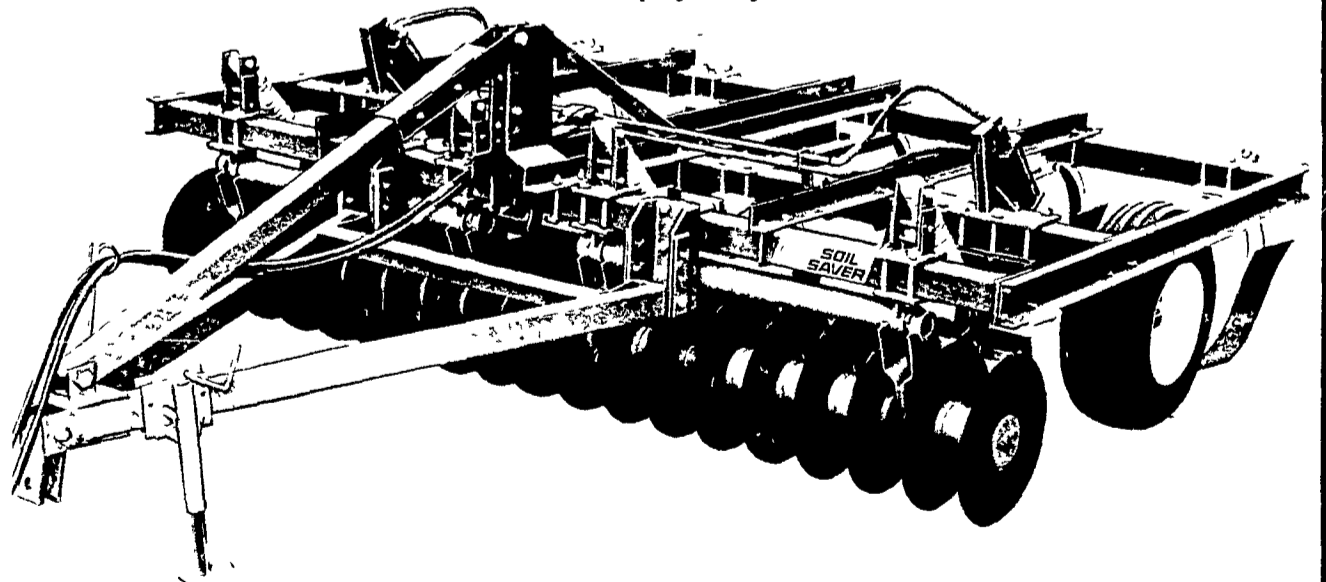
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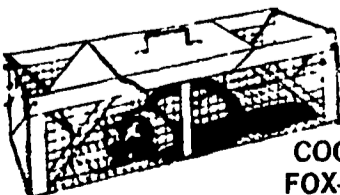
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