

Jesse Bradford Long

Crawford County Hall of Fame Honoree

Of the twenty or so known Long Family potters, one of the earliest, Jesse Bradford Long (1808-1888), left one of the most memorable marks on Crawford County, Georgia, pottery—JBL. Jesse produced thousand of pieces of pottery ranging from small, straight-sided mugs to ten gallon storage jars. Despite his long life in a time when the average lifespan was less than fifty years, he left no photograph that the Crawford County Historical Society members can find. Yet his pottery is so distinctive that many pottery collectors can identify it before they see his mark.

If Jesse Bradford Long did not leave a photograph, he did leave his “mark,” the signature JBL impressed in many of the pieces he turned. His first known pottery mark, most likely made with a wire stamp, may be found either on a handle or on the side of his pieces. The wire stamp is a small, thin, almost wispy mark, generally only about an inch tall, and is almost invisible on the sides of his larger storage jars and jugs. (See the JBL wire stamp on the light green jug.)The wire stamp appears on many of the very early pieces, which tend to be a light to medium green or a thin, light, matte-brown.

Jesse Bradford Long's best-known stamp is his later one-- the bold, thick JBL easily seen on the handles of his pieces from several feet away. This stamp is the typical Crawford County stamp carved so that the initials stand out almost like a picture in a frame. (Most likely this stamp was made from a wood or metal template that was impressed in clay, and the clay stamp was used until it wore out.*) Scholars and collectors believe that potters marked their wares as a way to advertise, if they worked alone; or, if they worked with other potters, as a way to keep separate what each potter made—like getting paid by the piece in a sewing factory, except, in a sewing factory, the goods didn't blow up during the manufacturing process. Later pieces are generally a red-brown color, usually dark, and sometimes so highly fired and reflective the glaze is called a "mirror" glaze.

According to John Burrison, Jesse Bradford Long married Betsy Whittington in 1827 and bought land on Deep Creek in Crawford County in 1828, where he farmed, made pottery, and lived until 1882, when he left for Texas, where two of his children lived, and where he died in 1888. Dr. Burrison's book *BROTHERS IN CLAY* is a must-read for anyone interested in Georgia pottery and/or history. It details Jesse Bradford Long's life and that of his family as well as that of many of the other ninety or so known Crawford County potters.

OTHER LONG POTTERY

Other Long Family potters made sought-after pottery,, including Elijah Long, who died in 1841 and whose hand-inscribed, or script-signed, jugs are among the earliest, rarest Long pieces: only three have been recorded.

In addition to Elijah Long, other Long potters include Henry Newton Long (1858-1907), John Henry Long 1877-??), an LA stamp, possibly Alford Long (1817-1885), whose stamp may have been reversed, but who is not known to have made pottery.

There are pieces from two Jasper Newton Longs: the earliest, Jasper Newton Long (1834-1863), who stamped his pieces JNL, and Jasper Newton “Jack” Long (1880-1967). Jack, the last of the Long Family potters, made art pottery, much of it molded, and stamped his work on the bottom (Long’s Pottery, Byron, GA).

Some of the earliest Long pottery had a high kaolin content coupled with a lime glaze, resulting in a light green, almost white glaze. In contrast, later Long pieces contained less kaolin and a paintrock glaze. Henry Newton Long, the last Long potter known to work at the Long Pottery site, produced pottery that, at its best, looked as if it had been dipped in melted chocolate.