



History of Wedgwood

Early Wedgwood: Josiah Wedgwood I (1730–1795)

The Wedgwood Company was founded in the eighteenth century by the youngest child in the fourth generation of a family of potters. Josiah Wedgwood was the son of Thomas Wedgwood, a potter who operated the Churchyard Works in Burslem, Staffordshire, England. Josiah apprenticed in the family pottery works with his eldest brother, Thomas. An attack of smallpox in 1745–46, which left his right knee weakened and his health compromised, may have delayed his apprenticeship, but he completed it in 1749. Following a brief partnership with John Harrison and Thomas Alders at Cliff Bank, Stoke, from 1752 to 1754, Josiah was taken on as a partner by Thomas Whieldon, one of the most respected potters in the Staffordshire region.

The 1750s were challenging times for potters in Staffordshire. A number of porcelain factories had begun operations in England. Their products competed with porcelain imports from France, Germany, and China for the favour of fashionable consumers. Traditional English earthenwares, tin-glaze, and stoneware needed technological and design revision. While working with Whieldon, young Josiah discovered ways to make these improvements.

In 1759 Josiah decided to become an independent potter and leased the Ivy House Works from his uncles Thomas and John Wedgwood. One of his cousins, Thomas Wedgwood, began working