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Red Wing Dinnerware & The Village Green Line

PART 2 OF 2

The information presented here has been gleaned from vintage Red Wing brochures, catalogs, price lists and internal documents as well as trade journals and magazines. In this discussion, a "pattern" is a dinnerware set in a particular shape with a unique handpainted design or color scheme. A "line" is a group of patterns that share the same shapes but have different handpainted designs or colors. Some of the introduction and exit dates presented have not been verified because of gaps in available documentation. When uncertain, an estimated date is provided. The end point of a pattern can be difficult to ascertain. In the 1940s and 1950s a discontinued pattern no longer appeared on price lists; in the 1960s patterns that were no longer in production remained on price lists as "limited stock" with only a few pieces listed. Here a pattern is considered to be discontinued when a full range of items was no longer available and orders were limited to remaining stock.

Each pattern has been assigned an Availability rating and a Collector Interest rating as described below. Availability represents an average for the pattern in question, however the scarcity of certain pieces within the pattern may differ. Collector Interest refers to the pattern in general, but there may be specific pieces in any pattern that are of greater interest to specialty collectors (teapots, pitchers, salt & peppers, etc). Please keep in mind these ratings are the authors' observations; your experience may vary.

Availability

- 1 – Rare
- 2 – Very scarce
- 3 – Hard to find
- 4 – Average
- 5 – Readily available

Collector Interest

- 1 – Highly sought, demand exceeds supply
- 2 – Primarily of interest to specialty collectors
- 3 – Above average
- 4 – Average
- 5 – Below average

The name "Village Green" referred to both a line and a pattern. The Village Green pattern was introduced in 1952; other patterns using the same shapes were added in subsequent years. Thus, Village Green also became the name for a line of dinnerware patterns.

Provincial Dinnerware **Availability: 2** **Interest: 4** **Years: 1964? - 1965**
Provincial Bakeware **Availability: 4** **Interest: 5** **Years: 1963 - 1967**

Provincial was an attempt to blend Village Green-shaped dinnerware with the revival of a 1940s cookware set. Provincial dinnerware consisted of 15 Village Green pieces glazed in a rich rust color. A brochure named this color "bittersweet red". The cover for the sugar bowl and the tops of the salt & pepper shakers were beige. Interestingly, this brochure promoted a 10-inch casserole stand as a handled dinner plate, which was not seen with other Village Green line patterns. Provincial Bakeware was an update of Provincial Cooking Ware from the early 1940s. It consisted of casseroles, pots and baking dishes. Exteriors of the Bakeware had a beige glaze while the interiors and the covers were bittersweet red to match the dinnerware. The rust colored dinnerware was made for only a year or two and is difficult to find today; the bakeware sold better but doesn't attract much interest from collectors.



Above: Provincial dinnerware plate and syrup jug
Below: Provincial bakeware bean pot and casserole

Village Brown **Availability: 2** **Interest: 4** **Years: 1964 - 1965**



Village Brown was not a full dinnerware pattern. It was a color option that replaced the solid green pieces of Village Green with solid brown pieces. Village Brown was included on the 1965 price list and a 1964 Village Green brochure. The brochure stated the following all-brown Village Brown pieces were available: 6-, 8- and 10-inch plates, saucer, four bowls (vegetable serving dish, rim soup, cereal, sauce/fruit), and 13- and 15-inch platters. Village Brown may have been established as a means to sell finished pieces remaining after the relationship with Ernest Sohn ended (see next page).

At left: Village Brown plate and bowls

Village Wheat **Availability: 1** **Interest: 2** **Years: Unknown. Mid 1960s?**

Village Wheat was similar to Village Brown in that it was not a full dinnerware pattern, but rather a color option. In this case, the standard Rustic Brown was replaced by a tan or wheat color. Thus Village Wheat pieces were a combination of green and tan. No documentation is known and the official name is uncertain. An interview with a Potteries employee published in the *RWCS Newsletter* stated that only a few sets of Village Wheat were made, including 4 or 5 water coolers. The idea was dropped and never put into full production due to lack of interest. Known pieces include 4- and 10-cup pitchers, teapot, salt & pepper shakers, 6-inch salad bowl, beverage mug, handled marmite, casseroles, rim soup, creamer & sugar, large salad bowl, divided vegetable dish, covered coffee pot and large warmer (water cooler stand).



Above: Village Wheat salt shaker and teapot



Matte Green and Matte Pink Casseroles

No documentation has been found to explain the existence of Matte Green and Matte Pink 2 quart casseroles in the Village Green shape. The entire casserole, including the cover and the interior, was glazed in solid green or pink. Enough examples have been found to be convinced these were made by Red Wing Potteries rather than by a hobby shop using an old Red Wing mold. Most likely these were made for a custom order, but who placed the order? Some speculate the pink casseroles were made for Mary Kay Cosmetics to be used as a reward or sales incentive for their sales staff. But no documentation to support that theory has been seen.

Ernest Sohn

Ernest Sohn was a well-known designer who contracted with various businesses to make products for his sales company. His dealings with Red Wing were not well documented, but at least two lines of dinnerware items were produced for Sohn. "Butter Mold" is the better known of the two. It consisted of serving pieces such as pitchers, teapots,



casseroles, bowls, platters, etc. The pieces had a ribbed effect in the glaze, similar to Village Green. Most Butter Mold pieces were dark brown, dark green, or yellow (uncommon). Each piece was marked with a design taken from a vintage butter mold. The design featured a fern and leaves enclosed by five rings, and included the letters "E.S. USA". Production years are uncertain, but most likely fall between the late 1950s and early 1960s. An ad for Sohn's Butter Mold line appeared in a February 1961 magazine.

Sohn Butter Mold coffee server & Lazy Susan.

Red Wing also produced all-brown pieces in Village Green shapes for Sohn. Sohn's brown glaze tended to be darker than Village Green's Rustic Brown. All-brown Village Green-shaped pitchers, coffee servers, beverage servers, syrup jugs, beverage mugs, salt & peppers, sugar bowls, and Village Brown dinner plates with Sohn features have been found. These Sohn features included the all-brown glaze, handles wrapped with rattan, a triangular silver label that stated "Oven Proof China Designed by Ernest Sohn", non-Village Green covers, and unusual bottom markings. Sohn's covered pieces did not use standard Village Green covers. Two different covers were made; one was brown-glazed pottery with a large round knob, the other was a copper metal cover with a large round wood knob. On some bottom-marked Sohn pieces the Red Wing name had been scratched out, leaving only "USA". Molds for other pieces were made to imprint only "USA", which may indicate the "USA" molds were made specifically for Sohn. Production years again are uncertain. But an internal company document dated June 1962 titled "Discontinued Glaze Inventory" includes Sohn Green and Sohn Brown with the word "dump" written after the glaze name. This would imply the relationship with Sohn likely ended sometime after the February 1961 Butter Mold ad but before June 1962.



Sohn coffee server & foil label.



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