

Billy Bryant

2017 Hall of Fame inductee

Billy Bryant was the Crawford County Historical Society's pick for the 2017 Hall of Fame inductee. Billy worked in the pottery business alongside of William Dennis "Billy" Merritt. There is evidence in the waster dumps of 2 of the Merritt pottery sites of jug handles



stamped "BB." There is a jug in the exhibit that has a unique handle stamp. The stamp is believed to be a very early "BB" stamp, it is a single B stamp that was impressed twice to leave the final "BB" mark.

The work of Billy Merritt and Billy Bryant was almost identical. From the style it is obvious that one learned from the other. It is also believed that a helper, either a wife or daughter, applied the handles to the jugs and wares of both potters, as the finger impressions are the same in jugs of both Billy Merritt and Billy Bryant.

In earlier years the BB stamp was thought to be Benjamin Becham. Some years back there was a lady named Mary that knew of "Old Man Bryant" and told a few stories of his working with Billy Merritt making pottery. This was further evidence that Billy Bryant existed.

There are several William Bryants in the census and we could not determine which one was the potter. We could not identify his family or any living relatives.

This is the perfect example of how information is lost to future generations. I am sure somewhere, there is a person that knows all about Billy Bryant. I just couldn't find him or her and want to bring to point that if information is not written down and shared it is lost forever.

By: Russell Jones