

*Neale & Co. and Wilson Figures:
A Photo Index*



Myrna Schkolne

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A. FEATURES

Time Line

This work is primarily a photographic record. The history of the Neale/Wilson manufactory is detailed in the first volume of my *Staffordshire Figures 1780-1840*. To put the figures shown herein into context, I have summarized relevant dates below:

1778. In March, the Staffordshire manufacturer Humphrey Palmer surrendered his substantial Church Works pot bank to his principal creditor, the London merchant James Neale. Neale probably came to Staffordshire, where he expanded the Church Works, which was managed by Robert Wilson. Perhaps as soon as **1781** he was back in London, leaving Wilson to operate the manufactory.

1783. Wilson became a partner in the Church Works, and an invoice dated 10 November attests to the joint ownership of "Neale & Wilson."

1789. In February, Neale sold the Church Works to "Robert Wilson, Potter."

1792. Neale and Wilson ended their business relationship. Until now, they had retained an association of sorts (perhaps to ensure Neale received payment), but a document of 24 April records that their "Copartnership" "expired" on that day. With that, Neale's direct involvement in the Church Works ended. He died in 1814.

1801. Robert Wilson died. His brother, David Wilson, who had been working with him for almost fifty years, acquired the Church Works.

1809. David Wilson's sons, John (Jack) and James, joined their father to form David Wilson and Sons.

1814. James Wilson died. The business was then renamed David Wilson and Son.

1816. David Wilson died.

1817. John Wilson was bankrupt. The Church Works was sold to satisfy creditors.

There is no indication that Humphrey Palmer manufactured enamel-painted figures. These were first made after Neale assumed ownership, i.e. after 1778, and may have continued being made until David Wilson's demise in 1816.

Characteristics

Neale figures are the finest the Potteries has ever produced. The modeling is consistently crisp, indicating that the molds were replaced before they were heavily worn. Most are pearlware but some are creamware. The glaze is not heavy and has a silky sheen. The enamels are exceptionally dainty and delicate. Applied with meticulous care, they rival those on the finest porcelain figures of the period. The author Reginald Haggard has suggested that Neale may have had his figures enameled in London, where he was an established merchant, and, as the quality of the enameling declined once ownership of the manufactory passed to the Wilson family, I think Haggard was right. Although Wilson managed operations for Neale, only Neale had the London connections that would have facilitated the superb decoration.

The seven marked Wilson figure models recorded are all small and very like their Neale counterparts. Six are models that Neale is known to have made too. It is not possible to draw valid conclusions from so small a sample, but the enamels, while not as delicate as those on Neale figures, range from very good to poor.

Many figures stand on square, stepped bases, banded with a pink or puce line that is sometimes painted at the top of the stepped area, at other times at the bottom. Figures with Wilson's mark may have a blue line. When the base is square, an earthenware pad atop it usually supports the figure. The pads for some small figures (Apollo, Ceres, the Seasons) customarily encompass rococo scrolls painted in shades of turquoise and puce. From beneath, bases are formed as shown below.



In enameling his figures, Neale had a fondness for a deep, bright blue enamel, a shade that other contemporary potters used less frequently, to highlight rims of hats, small decorative elements, and the like. Also, two patterns stand out on Neale garments. One comprises large dots, each rimmed in a contrasting color, and sometimes smaller dots are interspersed. The other uses loosely painted flowers. None of these decorative elements can alone support a Neale/Wilson attribution.

Marks

Some smaller figures have their titles impressed beneath. Makers marks, when present, are usually, but not always, beneath. On Neale figures, the mark is "NEALE & Co." This was probably used from around 1780 until 1789 or conceivably until as late as 1792. The period after "Co" is sometimes absent. More than one stamp was used, and perhaps the period was omitted or the impression was poor. In this work, I consistently refer to the mark as having a period.

On Wilson figures, the mark is an impressed "G" with an impressed crown above it. This mark could indicate any point in the Wilson period of 1789 (or conceivably 1792) until 1816. A poorly impressed "G" may appear as a "C."

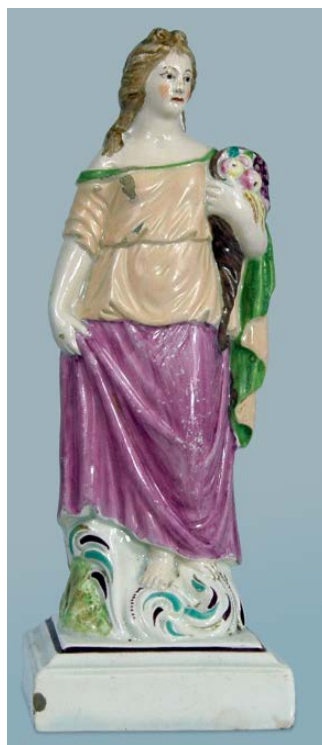
B. Neale & Co. & Wilson Models

Apollo and Ceres
 Bacchus, stirrup cup
 Cleopatra and Lucretia
 Children with Sheep, vase
 Dog recumbent
 Dog, stirrup cup
 Elements: Air, Fire, Earth
 Fox, stirrup cup
 Lafayette, bust
 Minerva
 Musicians, pair
 Necker, bust
 Neptune, stirrup cup
 Pomona and Actaeon
 Prudence
 Seasons: Winter, Summer, Spring, Autumn
 Shepherds, candlesticks
 Shepherdess, vase
 Sphinx, candlesticks
 Toby Jug
 Wesley, bust

Note: A figure of Hygeia on a square base, figure #437 in Earle, *The Earle Collection of Early Staffordshire Potter*, is described as a Neale figure. Also, Haggart, *Staffordshire Chimney Ornaments* mentions Neale's figure of Diana. I suspect that these are probably the authors' attributions rather than marked figures.

Apollo & Ceres

Ceres (left) and Apollo (right) were designed to pair. Both below are impressed with their names and "NEALE & Co." Apollo has a laurel wreath on his head, which here is painted as his hair.



Ceres and Apollo below have their names and the Wilson mark, "G" and a crown, impressed beneath. Images courtesy of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.



© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. UK

Black basalt figures below impressed “NEALE & Co.” Not from the same molds as the previous figures. Differences include a lion and cornucopia at Ceres’s feet and Apollo’s exposed hip. Image courtesy of Bonhams.



Black basalt figure of Ceres, unmarked but from the same molds as the marked Ceres above. Attributed to Neale. Images courtesy of Robert Carde.



Impressed names, no maker's mark. Attributed to Neale or Wilson.



Apollo, left, has his wreath painted to contrast, and the base has an angled interior. Attributed to Neale or Wilson. Images courtesy of Robert Carde.

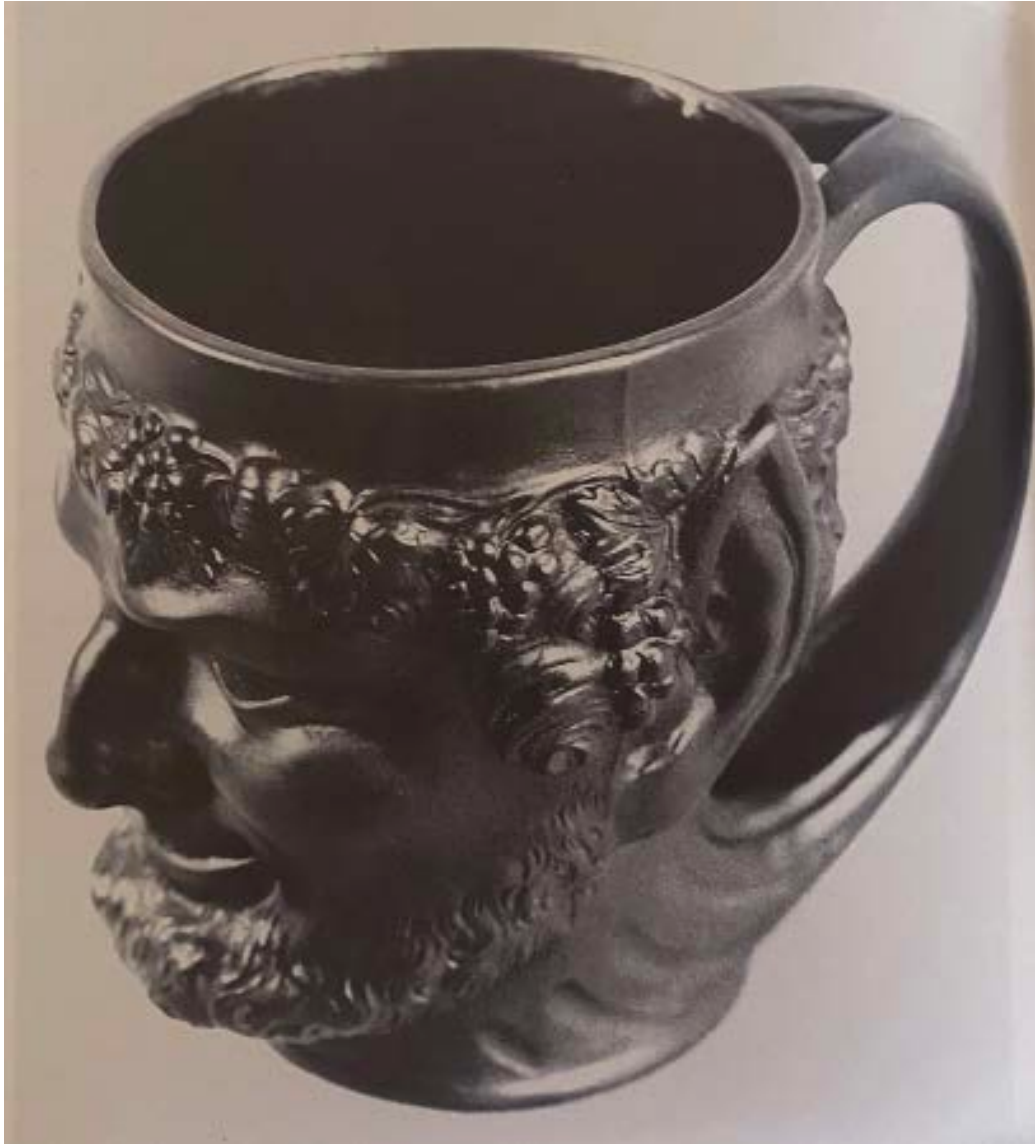


Unmarked figures attributed to Neale or Wilson. Ceres and Apollo, right, are as previously shown, but the two figures on the left utilize some different molds. Specifically, Ceres has a cornucopia at her feet and there are minor differences in her hairstyle, the cornucopia she holds, and the drape of her garment. Apollo has a different head, and his hip is exposed. Images courtesy of Malcolm Trundley.



Bacchus, Stirrup Cup

Basalt, impressed "NEALE & Co." Image courtesy of Edwards, *Neale Pottery and Porcelain*.



Children with Sheep, Vase

Enamel-painted vase of a form that other potters too made, impressed "NEALE & Co." Courtesy of Lewis, *A Collector's History of English Pottery*.



Cleopatra and Lucretia

Potters typically modelled Cleopatra to pair with Anthony, but Neale paired his Cleopatra with Lucretia, reclining in the same manner. The impressed Neale mark is on the basalt pair and the enameled Cleopatra below. Similar unmarked basalt figures, perhaps made by Neale or Wilson, are recorded. Images courtesy of Halfpenny, *English Earthenware Figures* (top), Skinner (below).



Dog

Creamware, impressed "NEALE & Co."



Dog, Stirrup Cup

Both impressed “NEALE & Co.” Apparently the same model, but the first dog has shorter ears. Images courtesy of Robert Carde (top), Freeman’s (below).



Elements

In recent years, three figure allegorical of Elements have been discovered. Each is impressed beneath with its title and also a crown and "G" (Wilson's mark). FIRE is glazed but uncolored, but EARTH and AIR are enameled. No other examples of are known.



Fox, stirrup cup

Caneware, impressed "NEALE & Co." Images courtesy of Robert Carde.



Lafayette, Bust

Stoneware, impressed "NEALE & Co." A companion to the bust of Necker. The black plinth is a display accessory. Image courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.



Minerva

Minerva, both impressed "NEALE & Co." The flowers on the skirt of the figure on the right are like those on the robe of Cleopatra illustrated herein, which suggests both may have been painted by the same hand. Images courtesy of the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery.



Musicians

The first female figure and both figures in the second pair are impressed "NEALE & Co." I have noted mismatched painting of the mounds and tree trunks of similar pairs.

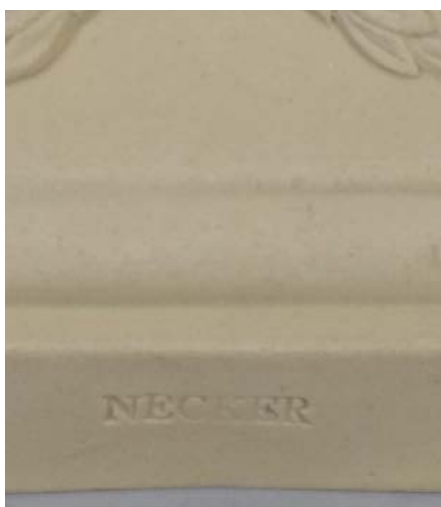


Jasper piper, impressed "NEALE & Co." Images courtesy of Robert Carde.



Necker, Bust

Stoneware, impressed "NECKER" on the reverse and "NEALE & Co" beneath. A companion to the bust of Lafayette. Images courtesy of Robert Carde.

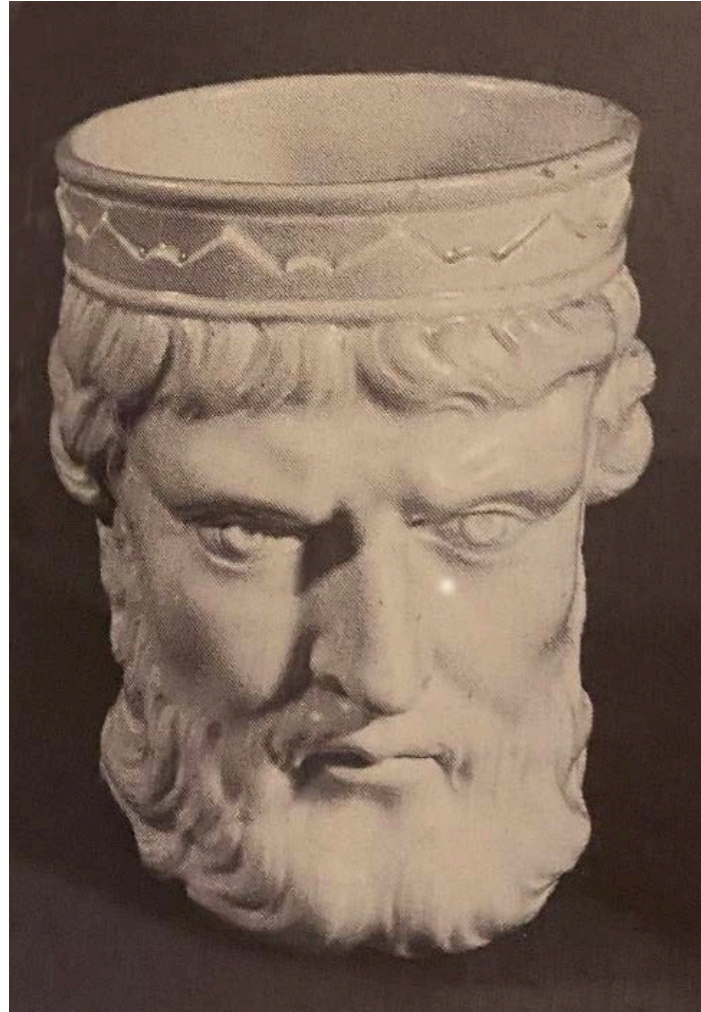


Neale probably made the unmarked basalt bust below, which is shown alongside the marked stoneware bust previously illustrated. It is from the same molds, and "NECKER" was impressed with the same stamp. It differs only in that it has a plain socle and a more modest bow on the queue. Images courtesy of Robert Carde.



Neptune, Stirrup Cup

Undecorated creamware, impressed "NEALE & Co." The handle is fish-scaled. Image courtesy of Edwards, *Neale Pottery and Porcelain*.



Pomona and Actaeon

Pomona and Actaeon, her male companion, are Neale's smallest figures, measuring less than five inches in height. All below are all impressed "NEALE & Co." Images courtesy of Dreweatts (bottom left), Edwards, *Neale Pottery and Porcelain* (bottom center), Martel Maides Auctions (bottom right).



Both these jasper figures atop plinths are impressed "NEALE & Co." Images courtesy of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.



Prudence

Prudence, both impressed “NEALE & Co.” I have seen examples of Prudence with her outstretched hand incorrectly restored, resulting in her being misidentified. Images courtesy of Robert Carde (below).



Seasons

A fine unmarked set attributed to Neale. Titles impressed beneath. From left, Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. Note the black spot on the Summer's hat, as is seen frequently on Neale figures of Summer. Images courtesy of Nick Burton.



Marked Neale Seasons. From left, Winter, Spring, Summer. I am not able to verify a marked Autumn. Image of Summer courtesy of the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery.



A set of Season from the same molds, each figure impressed with its title and "G" with a crown, Wilson's mark. The enamels, while excellent by Staffordshire standards, are not as refined as those on the Neale figures.



Autumn, Spring, attributed to Neale or Wilson. Apparently, this manufactory also made a set of Seasons in this classical style, but I have recorded only unmarked models of Autumn (left) and Spring (right) that I attribute to that source. Images courtesy of Andrew Dando.



Shepherds, Candlesticks

Left, unpainted creamware, impressed "NEALE & Co." Right, unmarked enameled, probably made by Neale. Note the vivid shade of blue associated with marked Neale figures. Also the flowers on her dress are similar to those on the garments of Cleopatra and Minerva illustrated herein. Images courtesy of Edwards, *Neale Pottery and Porcelain* (left), Potteries Museum & Art Gallery (right).



The unmarked creamware candlesticks alongside are similar to no. 487 in Walton, *Creamware and other English Pottery at Temple Newsam House, Leeds*. The latter pair has been attributed to Leeds Pottery solely on a facial similarity to marked Leeds busts. However, the Leeds resemblance (which may be largely in the eye of the beholder) does not preclude Neale manufacture. Several Neale figures were made from molds other potters too used.

The relief motif on the bases of the unmarked pair is not characteristic of Leeds, but it is similar to that on some Neale vases, urns, etc. See Section C for a pair of figures of Venus and Neptune, possibly Neale, with similar design on their bases.

Shepherdess, Vase

Both figural vases are impressed "NEALE & Co." The second, its vase perhaps partially lost, is color-glazed. I know of no other Neale figure model decorated thus. Image courtesy of the British Museum (last vase).



Sphinx, Candlesticks

Unpainted creamware, impressed "NEALE & Co." Image courtesy of *Ars Ceramica*.



Toby Jug

Impressed "NEALE & Co." The jug on the right is also incised "96." Images courtesy of Bonham (left), NestEgg Antiques (right).



Impressed with a crown and "G," Wilson's mark. Images courtesy of NestEgg Antiques.



Venus and Bacchus

Venus and Bacchus, modeled by Ralph Wood, all impressed "NEALE & Co." On the enameled pair, the marks are impressed on the tops of the bases. Also, Venus's hand has been restored to hold grapes rather than a dove. The other pair is undecorated creamware. Images courtesy of Robert Carde (top), Edwards, *Neale Pottery and Porcelain* (bottom).



Whitefield, Bust

Impressed "NEALE & Co." Modeled by Enoch Wood. Wood was apprenticed to Humphrey Palmer until 1783, by which date Neale had acquired Palmer's works.



Neale/Wilson or Not?

For a long time, figures that have no Neale/Wilson attributes have been generously attributed to that source. The prime criterion for attribution has been the use of the color turquoise, often with a little puce thrown in. The flaw in this reasoning is rather obvious.



These unmarked busts have been attributed to Neale/Wilson, but the Leeds Pottery made marked examples and probably made these too.



This pair is often attributed to Neale/Wilson, but their bases and bocages point to an Enoch Wood source.



These figures are routinely attributed to Neale/Wilson, but another potter of the period very probably made them.

A few small figure models stand on scrolled mounds atop square bases that are evocative of Neale bases and mounds. No marked examples are recorded. None is of the quality of marked Neale figures. Nonetheless, these have become a shoo-in for a Neale attribution, more so when turquoise and puce enamels are evident. However, the best that can be said is that they are in the style and colors that were in vogue in the late eighteenth century,



Neale's models of Ceres and Apollo lived on in the hands of other potters for many years, and, while the Wilson family may have made some of them, most were probably fashioned by other unidentified potters. Some are enameled, others are decorated with underglaze colors or with colored glazes. Some, although apparently from identical or very closely similar molds, are significantly smaller. This suggests that a subsequent potter took molds directly from a Neale/Wilson figure, with consequent shrinkage in firing.

The two figures of Ceres in the center below are the unmarked Neale/Wilson figures previously shown. Each of the smaller unmarked figures flanking them has apparently been derived from the Neale/Wilson model beside it. Image courtesy of Malcolm Trundley.



The same can be said for unmarked figures of Apollo of the same form as the Neale/Wilson model. Images courtesy of Lewis, *Pratt Ware* (left), Elinor Penna (second from left), John Howard (last image).



Similarly, small figures of the Seasons after Neale/Wilson models cannot be attributed to any particular potter. Images courtesy of Elinor Penna (first six images), Bonhams (seventh image) Jeffrey Evans (eighth image).



I suspect that Neale made the figures of Neptune and Venus below. She is impressed "VENUS" behind. The glazes and enamels meet Neale's high standards. The touches of vivid deep blue enamel is as on other Neale figures, as previously noted. The dotted pattern on her garment is one Neale used repeatedly. The relief design on both plinths is a feature I cannot recall seeing on figures other than the creamware shepherds candlesticks in Section B. Neale used a range of similar motifs on vases, urns, and the like, and, although I have not been able to match this design to that on any marked piece, I suggest that it is another small element suggesting a Neale attribution.

