

The Deco Collector: The Mosaic Tile Company

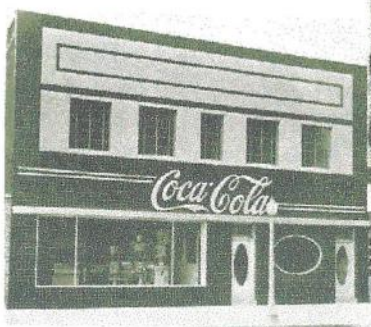
The Mosaic Tile Company of Zanesville, Ohio, was established by Karl Langerbeck and Herman Mueller in 1894. Prior to incorporating the Mosaic Tile Company, both Langerbeck and Mueller were associated with the American Encaustic Tiling Company, also of Zanesville.

The company started with 30 employees, initially beginning production of flooring tiles. Langerbeck and Mueller chose the name "mosaic" for the new company, however, because they planned to produce "inlaid" mural tile. An early example of the company's work in developing mosaic panels is the St. Nicholas church in Zanesville.

By the 1920s, the Mosaic Tile Company had become one of the largest producers of ceramic tiles in the country, having acquired one of its competitors—Atlantic Tile Manufacturing Company of Matawan, New Jersey—in 1920. The company's initial employment of 30 grew to 1,250 in 1925. Another milestone in the company's development was the 1922 introduction of pastel wall tile in a matt finish. The term "faience" refers to the plastic process used to apply the glaze to ceramic tile.

The 1938 Mosaic Tile Company catalog illustrates both interior and exterior installations of the company's products.

Views from the 1938 Mosaic Tile Co. catalog. Right: Hi-Speed Service Station, Flint, Michigan. Below: Elwood, Indiana Coca-Cola Bottling Co.



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A wide range of hand-decorated faience inserts and strips were produced, many with Art Deco designs. Some of the most spectacular installations shown in the catalog are the bathrooms. Interior installations in bars and restaurants are also illustrated in the 1938 catalog.



Views from the 1938 Mosaic Tile Co. Catalog.



The company continued to expand in the 1930s, acquiring the Carlyle Tile Company of Ironton, Ohio in 1935 and the General Tile Company of El Segundo, California in 1937. By 1944, The Mosaic Tile Company was being called the largest U.S. tile producer, with plants in Zanesville, MATAWAN, New Jersey (formerly Atlantic Tile), and Ironton, Ohio (quarry tile).

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One of the best known installations of Mosaic Tile Company Faience tiles are the two early 1940s murals for the Will Rogers Memorial in Fort Worth, Texas. The massive murals, 120 feet long and 7-1/2 feet tall, depict the development of Texas.



Top: Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum and Auditorium, Fort Worth, Texas. Middle: Hand-decorated faience frieze on exterior of the Coliseum portion. Right: A portion of the Auditorium frieze.



In addition to a vast array of plain and ornamental tiles, the Mosaic Tile Company produced a wide array of ceramic giftware including ashtrays, figurines, busts, and bookends. The company also produced faience fountain bowls and outlets in both traditional and Art Deco designs. Although a number of trademarks were used, most products are marked with an entwined MTC monogram within a circle.

Unable to compete with Japanese and other foreign imports, the company stopped making faience tile in the late 1950s, and stopped producing its other range of pottery products during the 1960s, finally closing its doors in 1967.