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Myrtle Meritt French

A graduate of Alfred who taught at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, French is also known as the director of the Hull-House pottery.

About 1923, French presented a paper before the American Ceramic Society on her development of turquoise glaze. She doubted that the exacting process could be commercially successful, although she thought the color made it all worthwhile. She was one of the first women active in ACS, not only presenting papers but also writing for the society's journal and bulletin. A few years later, industrial lead-poisoning studies by Hull-House resident Alice Hamilton made French concerned about children in ceramics classes using lead glazes. By 1930 she was experimenting with lead-free colemanite, and in 1931 she published a paper on it, one of the earliest studies on lead-free glazes.¹ Among her peers at the ACS she promoted Modernism in design as a way of competing with European imports.

She later received one of Alfred's first master's degrees in applied art, in 1932.