

FIRST EDITION — AUGUST 17, 2026

The Boys at Globe Pottery, 1908

River Hills Kilns Mills Institute | T.P. Calhoun, August 17, 2026



Four East Liverpool boys are sitting together during a smoke break from work at the Globe Pottery on River Road on a nearby rough hillside, riverbank, or railroad-edge hillside: Homer “Virgil” Chambers, Joseph Edward Slavin, Frank Baxter Lawton, and John T. McNamee, in that order from left to right. Joseph, second from the left, is the one holding the pipe. Frank, beside him, is the young man who looks remarkably like Sylvester Stallone. We have gone from four unidentified faces to four recognizable lives.

The photographer caught them before war service, marriages, children, career changes, migration, financial reversals, and old age divided their paths. In 1908 they were still simply four young workingmen—pottery boys together on a hillside, enjoying a few minutes outside the factory world that had brought them together.

Globe Pottery stood along Pennsylvania Avenue—River Road—in the narrow industrial strip between the Ohio River, the railroad, and the steep hillside. It was beside Colonial Pottery and operated during precisely this period. It was at, and I think these guys were sitting near, the downstream end of Babb's Island near where the shallowest ford-like area crossed the river over the tip of Babb's and the middle of Line Island.

Virgil Chambers, first on the left, probably lived with his family along Pennsylvania Avenue. By 1912 he was listed at 1235 Pennsylvania Avenue and working as a handle maker. That was not manufacturing handles separately; it was the pottery occupation also called cup handling—attaching clay handles to cups before they were fired. Virgil later worked as a mechanic, foreman, and salesman. Eventually he joined the stream of East Liverpool people who went to Southern California. By 1950 he was living in Glendale and working as a restaurant captain of waiters. He died in Los Angeles in 1960.

to Sebring, and spent much of his working life in its pottery industry, including Royal China. Of the four, his pottery career appears to have been the most continuous.

Frank Baxter Lawton, third from the left, was boarding at 1071 Avondale Avenue by 1910. His occupation was “batter out,” a pottery job involving the preparation or shaping of clay ware. Frank eventually left direct pottery production and became an electrician associated with the railroad. His path reminds us that these were not men frozen permanently in the occupations they held as boys. Industrial workers moved between trades as opportunities appeared.

John T. McNamee, fourth on the right, was living at 954 Ambrose Avenue by 1910 and was also a batter-out. Within two years, however, East Liverpool directories were identifying him as a musician. He married Pansy McKay in Cleveland in 1919, returned for a time to East Liverpool, and later lived in Cleveland. Pottery may have been how he made his early living, but music became the defining thread of his adult working life.

They did not all live in the same immediate neighborhood. Joseph was west of the central business district; Frank lived uphill around Avondale; Virgil was out Pennsylvania Avenue toward East End; and John was on Ambrose Avenue. Globe may have been what brought them together. They could reach the River Road industrial district on foot or by the street railway that followed the river corridor.

In 1908 they were still simply four young workingmen—pottery boys together on a hillside, enjoying a few minutes outside the factory world that had brought them together. I will be sharing more of their stories. They make a good contrast to the Class of 1911 stories.

First edition, August 17, 2026. Research continues, and later editions will incorporate additional evidence as it is found.