

# Innovative Iowans: Coil Pots

**Activity Overview:** Did you know that stoneware (pottery) studios and factories were once a common sight in small Iowa towns? This Innovative Iowans activity highlights Iowa's past with pottery, and provides instructions on how to create your very own coil pot using Model Magic.

## Connection to Iowa History

Pottery has been used by people who have called Iowa home for many years. Pottery became more widely used as groups began to permanently settle, and pots could be created by coiling, paddling, and shaping. Early pottery was mainly used for cooking, serving, and storing food.

Moving forward in time to the late 1800s, many towns across Iowa had brick and stoneware plants to mass produce goods as well as local potteries which created smaller quantities of ceramics. These businesses created a wide variety of goods for many different purposes. Bricks were used in constructing buildings and laid down to create city streets. Potteries also created pieces for the home including bowls and butter churns.

## Instructions

- 1 Open.** Remove the Model Magic from the packaging. Model Magic air dries, so open the package when you are ready to create your coil pot.
- 2 Roll.** Take a golf ball sized piece of Model Magic - about 1/4 of the clay. Roll into a ball with your hands and lay the piece on a flat surface.
- 3 Press.** With a clean hand, gently press your hand evenly and firmly in the center of the Model Magic into a flat circular shape. This will form the base of your pot.
- 4 Separate.** Separate the remaining Model Magic into four equal sections. This will become the coils used to create the sides of the pot.
- 5 Roll.** Using your hands, roll the smaller sections between your palms to warm up the Model Magic. Then lay the piece on a flat surface. Use your palms and fingers to roll the piece into a long log - like a snake. Repeat this process for each remaining coil.
- 6 First Row.** Lay the first coil around the outside perimeter of the flat base created in the second step. If the coil does not go all the way around the outside of the base, cut sections from the other coils to fill and complete the row.
- 7 Build Up.** Continue laying the coils on top of each other until no coils of Model Magic remain.

## Materials

- Model Magic
- Colored Markers

*Instructions continued on next page*

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## Instructions Continued

- 8 **Decorate.** Decorate your pot with some color. Colored markers work best and be creative!
- 9 **Dry.** Wait 24 hours for the Model Magic to dry. Once dry, display or give it as a gift.
- 10 **Share!** If you would like to share your creation with the State Historical Museum of Iowa, please email your work to [museum.education@iowa.gov](mailto:museum.education@iowa.gov). We want to share your ideas with other young historians!
- 11 **Questions to Spark Learning**
  - Why do you think pottery became popular when groups permanently settled in areas?
  - What other uses can you think of for pottery?
  - Why do you think pottery studios and factories were common in Iowa towns in the past?
- 12 **Additional Resources**
  - The Office of the State Archaeologist - *Prehistoric Pottery*
  - Iowa State University - *The Stoneware Industry at Moingona, Iowa: an archaeological and historical study of Moingona Pottery Works.*
  - Historic Bonaparte Pottery Website