

# Backstamps

Porcelain manufacturers and importers used a variety of symbols, letters or images to denote their products. Called backstamps, these markings may be found on the bottom of a vase, on the back of a plaque, or on the bottoms of utilitarian items such as bowls, plates, saucers or cups, etc.

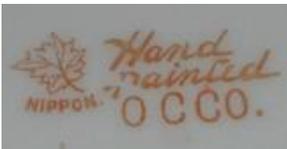
There are approximately 140 Nippon-era (1891-1921) porcelain back stamps known to date (note: this does not include a variety of backstamps on Nippon-era dinnerware or the hundreds of different backstamps used on Nippon-era dolls). The majority of these backstamps are documented in Joan Van Patten's *The Collector's Encyclopedia of Nippon* books. Go to [Nippon Publications](#) for a complete listing of books available.

The vast majority of porcelain produced during the Nippon era was manufactured by the company that would later become the modern-day Noritake Company. The Noritake Company, founded by Morimura Brothers in 1904, has documented all their marks in their booklet *Chronology of the Backstamps*. A reprint copy of this booklet is available to INCC members; contact us at [inccquestions@aol.com](mailto:inccquestions@aol.com) to order your copy.

The most common Nippon-era Noritake marks are:



Maple Leaf Nippon; found in green, blue & magenta. Mark was used by Morimura Brothers importing as early as 1891 and was used until 1911  
Note: this backstamp has been reproduced.



Maple Leaf Nippon, OCCO; a variation of the Maple Leaf backstamp with 'OCCO' under the 'Hand Painted.' Pieces with this backstamp are believed to have been produced for the Ohio China Company. Found in blue and red.



M-in-Wreath, hand-painted ("M" stands for importer, Morimura Bros.); found in green, blue, magenta & gold. Mark used 1911 – 1921. Note: this backstamp has been reproduced.



RC Nippon, in use since 1911; used primarily on utilitarian items. The RC stands for either Royal China or Royal Crockery. There are several different RC marks but the red and green RC backstamp is more commonly found. *The red and green version has been reproduced.*





Rising Sun Nippon. Used primarily on less-decorated utilitarian wares as well as children's or novelty items. Mark used since 1911. Note: this backstamp has been reproduced.



Spoke or Spider backstamp. Used primarily on less-decorated utilitarian wares. Mark used since 1911. Note: this backstamp has been reproduced



Printed in green or maroon; in use since 1912. Often used on dinnerware.



An early version of the spider or Komura backstamp; it was used on items exported to England and may have been in use as early as 1902.



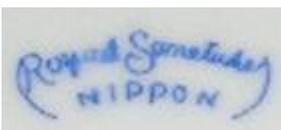
The spider or Komura backstamp, it was used on items being exported to England; in use since 1908. Printed in green, blue, or magenta. Quality is the same as those Noritake items with the M-in-Wreath backstamp.



This backstamp was used for undecorated blanks, sold for use by china painters and china painting studios. Printed in blue or magenta. Used since 1911.



Two examples of the Noritake/Nippon blank with the addition of Pickard backstamps. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Pickard was a major china decorating studio in Chicago, Illinois.



Royal Sometsuke is a line of blue and white dinnerware which was begun in the Nippon era and continued past it. According to *Noritake China Collectors Guide*, the backstamp was registered as early as 1906.

**A word of caution:** Several of the Noritake backstamps have been used on reproductions. You cannot tell if it's a fake by looking just at the back stamp. See REPRODUCTIONS for more information on how to identify a reproduction.

Many of the lesser-known back stamps (pictured below) were used by companies whose histories are unknown. While these Japanese companies often produced fine wares, it is generally felt that the best examples of Nippon-era hand painted porcelain will carry a back stamp used by the Noritake Company. There are exceptions to this including items carrying the Royal Kinran, Royal Hinode, and Royal Moriye backstamps as well as most coralene pieces which to the best of our knowledge was never produced by the Noritake Company. **Collectors should judge each piece not just on the backstamp, but also the quality of the porcelain and the quality of the design and decoration.**



Royal Kinran, used in the early 1900s, from 1905-1907. Found in blue. Many Royal Kinran items with this mark are heavily decorated in gold and enamel beading. INCC members can find an article in the Spring 2020 E-Journal with more information about this backstamp.



Royal Kinran, used in the early 1900s. Found in gold and used on decorative pieces (vases and ewers) with a brown finish on the bottom of the piece.



Imperial Kinran backstamp; to date, this has only been found on matt finish pieces with a fruit motif. Note that the backstamp does not include 'Nippon' but it's obviously from that era.



Royal Hinode, used in the 1904 time period. Royal Hinode pieces often have copious amounts of gold decoration. INCC members can find an article in Spring 2018 E-Journal with more information about this backstamp.



Found on items decorated with moriage (see TECHNIQUES). Likely in use in the early 1900s.



Manufacturer is unknown but there is some association with Morimura Brothers as many of the pieces with this backstamp have the same design decoration and blanks as Morimura Brothers pieces. Pieces with this backstamp date to the early 1900s and no later than 1911.



All four of these backstamps can be found on Coralene items (See TECHNIQUES); used in the 1909 – 1911 timeframe and imported by A.A. Vantine & Company. INCC members can find more information about these Coralene backstamps in the Fall 2020 E-Journal.



Royal Kinjo. Found on items with what collectors term a salt glaze, shark skin, orange peel, or sand finish (See TECHNIQUES). Probably produced for only a couple of years in the 1910-11 timeframe; rarely found.



Royal Kaga, primarily found on utilitarian wares with a Geisha girl or Japanese scenes.



Royal Satsuma (cross within a ring, Crest House of Satsuma) primarily found on utilitarian wares with Japanese scenes or designs. Might have been produced for the Japanese domestic market.



Meito China or Crown mark, produced after 1908 by Nagoya Seito Sho Ltd which was founded by Koteru Asukai, a former Noritake employee. Nippon items with these backstamps tend to be less decorative than their Noritake counterparts.



1919



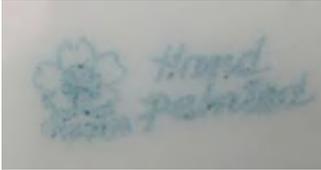
**The Nagoya Seitoshu, Ltd.,**  
NAGOYA, JAPAN.  
... Manufacturers and Importers of ...  
**High-Grade Dinnerware and Fancy China**  
For Wholesale and Jobbing Trade.  
NEW YORK OFFICE:  
Room 512, Fifth Avenue Building, 200 Fifth Ave.



The IEC & Co. appears to be been used for the Australian market. Found in green and blue. INCC members can find an article about this backstamp in the Winter 2020 E-Journal. Likely produced in the early 1900s until about 1917.

An article about this mark is available at:

<http://www.noritakecollectorsguild.info/researchers/johnhenley/IEC.pdf>



Cherry or Plum Blossom Nippon Found in blue, green and magenta. Should not be confused with the Maple Leaf backstamp used by Morimura Brothers (Noritake).



A backstamp that might have been used for items made for Liberty & Co. of London; can be found in green and blue. Date of manufacture unknown but items are usually of good quality and might have been produced by Morimura/Noritake Co. The second back pictured shows both the L & Co. and Noritake Maruki backstamp on the same piece.



Possibly another backstamp used for items made for Liberty & Co., manufacturer unknown but not Morimura/Noritake.



Shofu Ceramics Co.; founded in early 1900s by Shofu Kajo or Shofu Katei. SNB stands for Shofu Nagoya Branch.



Royal Nishiki Nippon. Found on decorative items (vases primarily) made of a soft paste or pottery made by the Kinkozan Pottery. Date of manufacture not known but Japanese registration number 36163 on some pieces indicate that this backstamp was registered in 1909.



Imperial Nippon, manufacturer and date of manufacture unknown.



Possibly the backstamp used by the Jewel Tea Company for their premiums; items with this backstamp are often utilitarian and are not of a fine quality which you might expect since they were give-aways. Items date to the 1915-1920 timeframe.



Backstamp used by Saji & Kaiya Company, an importer/exporter located in Los Angeles, CA. They were exporting Nippon porcelain out of Yokohama and were still in business at the end of the Nippon era (1921).



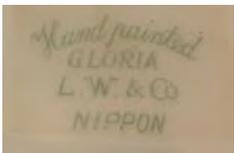
Backstamps that might also be from Saji & Kaiya Company.



According to the *Old Noritake Collectors Guide*, this is the backstamp of Imoto Shoten; in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Shoten established the Nippon Trading Company in San Francisco. Most pieces with this backstamp are utilitarian ware.



Backstamp used on items imported by Louis Wolf & Co., an American import company specializing in toys, dolls, and in ten and twenty-five cent assortments (lesser quality) of Nippon porcelain. They primarily sold Nippon porcelain in the World War I timeframe. The 'Gloria' and 'Noara' refer to pattern names.

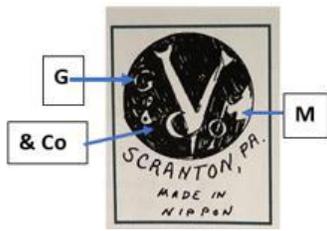


The Yamato was a large Japanese 'bazaar' operating in Los Angeles from about 1908 - 1917. They were obviously importing pieces with their own backstamp so the manufacturer(s) is unknown. Pieces with this backstamp are normally utilitarian ware and of a lesser quality.



Backstamp used by the John Breuner Stores of California. It appears that they sold Nippon starting about 1909 and continued through the end of the Nippon era. Not all of the backstamps have 'John Breuner Co.' as part of the backstamp so it's not clear that all of these were sold exclusively by the John Breuner Stores.





Backstamp used by the George V. Millar (or Miller) Co. of Scranton, PA. George V. Millar ran a business called 'China Hall' where he sold European and Japanese china, glassware, silver, and bric-a-brac. It appears that he was both a retailer and wholesaler.



Items with this backstamp are done in blue and white (to mimic Delft) usually with a sailboat scene; manufacturer unknown; likely dates to the 1911-1921

The following three backstamps are importer marks, where companies contracted with Japanese firms to produce procelain/pottery items with a backstamp that identified the company.



The C. E. Wheelock Company of Peoria, Illinois, was an import company that had its beginning in the late 1880s. They contracted with companies in Europe and Japan for pieces with the Wheelock backstamp.



Jonroth Studios, located in Peoria, Illinois, was an import company that was founded in 1909 by John H. Roth (a former employee of the C. E. Wheelock Co.). They contracted with companies in Europe and Japan for pieces with the Jonroth Studio backstamp.



The backstamp of an English giftware company that imported pottery from Japan; they appear to be in business from the late teens to the early 1920s. Items with this backstamp are considered art pottery.



Mark used on undecorated blanks by a china painting studio.

Various backstamps found on a variety of decorative and utilitarian Nippon items. Some of backstamps represent the pottery, some may represent the importer, and some represent the retail/wholesale company selling the item.



Have questions about a particular backstamp? Contact us at [inccquestions@aol.com](mailto:inccquestions@aol.com)

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