

*The*  
**PEWTER COLLECTORS' CLUB**  
*of AMERICA*

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OFFICERS, 1942

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FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT

Owing to the limitations imposed by the war, the Governing Board of the Pewter Collectors' Club have adopted the policy of having fewer meetings. This bulletin gives the details not only of these meetings but also of those of 1941, which year had not been covered in any previous issue.

Mrs. P. J. Franklin has described the June meeting of 1942 at the New York Historical Society on the subject of pewter army buttons, and has given us the benefit of her research in connection with the William Penn platter. We are deeply indebted to her for these reports.

May I thank the members for their continued interest in the club. It seems important that these cultural activities be kept alive as far as possible in this war emergency.

EDWARD INGRAHAM

THE NEW YORK MEETING

by Edna T. Franklin

When the Pewter Collectors' Club held a meeting in the auditorium of the New York Historical Society June 20, 1942, the occasion was one of the finest in the history of the Club. The contributions to pewter history in America were important. We are distinctly indebted to Mr. Alexander J. Wall, Director of the Society, for his talk, illustrated profusely with slides that pictured the work of the Society's Field Exploration Committee over a period of forty years and more. It is not generally known that one phase of Revolutionary history is revealed by the buttons on the uniforms of both armies, unearthed on

the camp sites and in the camp refuse heaps, most of them in and around New York City. While most of the finds are buttons, there are also children's toys, knives, forks, spoons, plates, one silver thimble, and so on. It is established from the finds that pewter objects were made in the camps by both armies, and it is known that over 4,000 children were supported by his Majesty's troops in what was then the small city of New York. For the special interest of the Pewter Club, all the objects from camp sites were arranged in an exhibit for the meeting. Members also inspected the pewter room, the permanent pewter exhibit, and the flag of The Pewterers' Society of New York, always to be seen in one of their rooms of early New York on the first floor.

The other feature of the meeting was "The William Penn Platter of the State in Schuylkill."

What follows concerning the buttons of both British and American Armies of the Revolution was taken from bulletins of the New York Historical Society, in which Mr. William L. Calver, chairman of the Field Exploration Committee, has written of their finds and locations. Mr. Wall was asked to write about this work for the club bulletin, but unfortunately could not comply because of press of work and ill health. I have tried to convey what might be called the gist of Mr. Calver's writings concerning the buttons found in dumps, camps and fort sites.

#### AMERICAN ARMY BUTTONS

As it was with nearly all forms of American eighteenth century pewter, buttons for the Revolutionary Army followed British tradition. Various army corps adopted numbered or inscribed buttons. Buttons were generally of pewter, with exceptions for some officers who had pewter buttons faced with silver, while others had solid silver buttons. It must be noted that the coin-like precision of the pewter buttons worn by the British soldiery is lacking on buttons worn on Continental uniforms. If the American private did not have pewter buttons he had lead, cast in moulds like bullets, with inevitable crudity. Pewter buttons worn by officers were of elegant design and workmanship, for the most part fabricated in France. As evidence—during the summer of 1778, Congress authorized Governor Henry of Virginia to purchase buttons and other articles from a French ship just arrived in Hampton Roads. Another even more certain indication of French origin is the wooden back to the pewter button, a method of fabrication then very generally in vogue in France. Most of the American uniform buttons found by the Field Exploration Committee are of the later years of the Revolution, when hut camps were occupied in and around West Point, and in the vicinity of New York City. The most common pewter button found, both large and small sizes, is inscribed "U. S. A." in monogram, some plain, some with beaded rim. They were unearthed at "Camp Robinson's Farm," "North" and "South" redoubts at Cold Spring opposite West Point; at "Camp Connecticut Village," Garrison; and the greater number came from Constitution Island and the old redoubts in the vicinity of West Point. Many, both British and American, were found in camp refuse heaps unearthed in New York City. From Constitution Island came the only officers' button of the U. S. A. type. (Several elegant specimens of this button were found in an old house in Dighton, Mass.) How early U. S. A. buttons were worn is not known definitely; they probably date from the Continental Line.

Artillery buttons were found at every redoubt explored. All have impressed on them a cohorn mortar, while the larger buttons have a cannon and

flag. On the flag is a remarkable detail—the British Union where now appear the stars of our Union. This design must therefore be attributed to the early years of the war. Specimens of the artillery button are mostly of the officer type, while a few are of the solid pewter variety. Two artillery buttons are of unique design—two cannon back to back in front of a trophy of flags. We conjecture they are American though they might just possibly be French. Artillery buttons are one and one-sixteenth inches, or one and five-sixteenths inches in diameter. The U. S. A. type, in most examples, is about three-quarters of an inch, or one and one-sixteenth inches in diameter.

From the Revolutionary dump heap of redoubts back of West Point came a rich find of buttons from uniforms of Massachusetts and Connecticut troops. A large button bearing a "C" within a circle formed by two dolphins, is held to have been worn by the Third Connecticut Regiment. (Danforths!) The dolphins are stated to have been adopted as a compliment to the French on the birth of the Dauphin in 1781. Buttons of nine Connecticut regiments were found in the West Point area, also the entire Massachusetts line from one to ten. No hard and fast regulations were enforced for designs, hence the variety of ornamentation:—a half wreath on Massachusetts first and seventh; war trophy of flags and a drum, etc., on third Massachusetts; the same with crossed swords on the sixth; skull and cross-bones on the eighth. Three small pewter buttons, inscribed with monogram "N. Y.," from Constitution Island, and one from Fort George, are the only identified buttons from New York State troops. Three Pennsylvania buttons were found at Ticonderoga; and on the same site two of New Jersey; another New Jersey at the British camp at 195th Street. These buttons are unique as the only ones with the state name spelled in full. A small pewter button bearing "M. B." indicates the Maryland Battalion. "R. I. R." stands for Rhode Island regiment. A Rhode Island regiment after serving at Yorktown moved to Hudson Highlands in 1782. At "Camp Robinson's" was found a button bearing a hand holding a naked sword, the whole surrounded with "Inimica Tyrannis," a forerunner of the cent of 1785. Along with Massachusetts buttons were found lead or pewter items with an heraldic eagle, apparently the inspiration for the cents of Massachusetts of 1785. A silver plated officer button bearing a bounding stag or buck has been attributed to the negro corps raised in New England dubbed "Bucks of America," and is now in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

A button with rolled edge, anchor enclosed, is the only known button of the American Navy of the Revolution, and it was discovered at West Point. Baron Cromot de Bourg, aide to Rochambeau, describing the American Army observed: "The regiments wear upon their buttons the name of the State to which they belong, and are distinguished as the first, second, third of each province, except the Partisan Corps, which wear the names of their chiefs."

### EAGLE BUTTONS

Whatever the Revolutionary soldiers huttet at West Point had to discard during the later years of the war was thrown down the bank, west of the present parade ground. Here were found the eagle pewter buttons. They were universally of the small size, and bear an heraldic eagle above a scroll encircling the word "Federal." This word establishes them as national. They may be attributed to the first corps of the National Army after the reduction of the patriotic force of the Revolution. A Vermont cent found at the barracks site

indicates the buildings were occupied after the war. The heraldic eagle is very like the emblem on the state coinage of Massachusetts. Both coins and buttons were cast from dies made by the same person, and most of the dies were made by Joseph Callender of Boston and Jacob Perkins of Newburyport.

### BRITISH ARMY BUTTONS

British army buttons were made from dies of perfect precision, their designs were heraldic, historic and patriotic, and altogether for workmanship, pattern and ornament are fine examples of eighteenth century decorative art. They are found generally at camp sites in greater New York, constituting a record of itineraries, or scenes of action of the regiments indicated by their numerals. The finds are more numerous than those of American buttons, 500 at Pinehurst Avenue and 83rd Street, 275 at another place. Numerical titles were allotted to British regiments in 1751; before that they took name from their colonel. Americans followed suit. The last royal warrant issued up to the Revolution directed: "The number of each regiment to be on the buttons of the uniforms of officers and men, except the regiments of dragoon guards. The initial letter of the title of those Corps to be on the buttons." While the Historical Society's Committee has secured buttons from practically every British regiment present on these shores, it is outstanding that no specimens whatever have been discovered from French uniforms. British officers' buttons were, as a rule, thin repousse silver filled with paste or cement; privates' buttons were of white metal or pewter and usually had iron wire shanks cast into a boss on the backs. Many silver buttons were found in refuse heaps, despite the first order to the Hessians on their arrival here, to remove all silver from their uniforms. This had already been done by the British, who feared the unerring aim of the American riflemen. At "Robinson's Camp" was found the original die of the officers' buttons of the 21st Regiment. Evidently the regimental tailor came completely equipped. This contribution to the history of the Revolution includes among its buttons, specimens from uniforms of the famous Cold Stream Guards, of the British Marines, the Royal Edinburgh Volunteers, Royal Highland Immigrants (Canadian), and Royal Irish Artillery. British buttons were found outside of New York City, at West Point, along the trail of Burgoyne's army, at Fort Erie (near Buffalo), at Fort Niagara, and at Somerville, Massachusetts, where the "Convention Troops" encamped before their jaunt to Virginia.

Mr. Calver should be quoted to show the enthusiasm of chairman and members of the committee that accomplished this great work for American and British history: "For a period of over forty years the writer has made a study of the old British uniforms, and now, with ardor unabated after so long a quest, he believes that few lures have held their devotees in so enduring a thrall. While the interest in these mementoes is chiefly historical, there are interests heraldic, military and patriotic, and aside from these there is a sentimental interest—the charm and magic that go with objects which have spanned the centuries and have been associated with great deeds."

### WILLIAM PENN PLATTER

by Edna T. Franklin

There is no more historic item of pewter than the platter, once owned by William Penn and given by his son John to the Fort St. David's Fishing Company of the Schuylkill River, then by them presented to the Fishing Company

of the Colony of Schuylkill, after the Revolution known as The State in Schuylkill, the oldest social organization in this country in continuous existence, and formed in 1732. The platter is 48 inches long, 33½ inches wide, its rim 4¼ inches, the bouge about an inch in depth, and in shape a square oval. On the center of the rim at top is engraved the Penn coat of arms, with the motto "Dum Clavin Rectum Navimque Gubernam," "Whilst I hold the helm right and steer the ship." For both the origin of Fort St. David's and the provenance of the platter a phrase of Charles Lamb's is most descriptive: "The uncommunicating muteness of fishes." No one knows when the Fort St. David's Fishing Company was started. It is known that John Penn was a member, and that he gave the society five pewter dishes that had belonged to his father. John died about 1747, so he must have made his gift some time before. Sometime after the presentation, Fort St. David's members gave up their name and joined the State in Schuylkill, presenting the pewter along with other possessions. The platter in question was used annually when they paid their rent of three white perch to "Baron William Warner," on whose estate their fish house was located. In 1819 the "Castle" was invaded by thieves, the pewter and other treasures removed, and for fear of detection the pewter was thrown into the Schuylkill. Fortunately the great platter was recovered and hangs today in the Council room of the "State." Its home now is on the Delaware River, commerce having crowded the Schuylkillians away from the Schuylkill River. It is not too much to say that it is one of the most distinctly historic spots in the country, that it has represented the best of America in every generation, that its members have always served their day and generation, have served in every war, and that the younger men are now in services. They are best described in the words of Washington when he dismissed the Philadelphia Troop of Light Horse of which many Schuylkillians were members, and of which Samuel Morris, Jr., their second Governor, was Captain:

"I take this opportunity of returning my most sincere thanks to the Captain, and to the gentlemen who compose the troop, for the many essential services which they have rendered the country, and to me personally, during the course of this severe campaign. Though composed of gentlemen of fortune, they have shown a noble example of discipline and subordination, and in several actions, have shown a spirit and bravery, which will ever do honor to them, and will ever be gratefully remembered by me.

GEORGE WASHINGTON"

Head Quarters

Morris Town, January 23d, 1777

At every stated meeting the first toast is "Memory of Washington" and it is drunk standing. One of their present honorary members is General Pershing, revered and beloved.

Modern pewter platters are now used for serving fish at luncheons and dinners enjoyed with regularity during the entire year, in summer on the lawn under the quiet shade of great trees with the Delaware lapping against the sea wall. There are, however, several worthwhile items of old pewter in the State's possession, in addition to the great platter. There is a Townsend and Compton platter, 29 inches long, 22 inches wide, rim 2⅝ inches, like Mrs. FitzGerald's, and most interesting of all is a round dish 28½ inches in diameter with four handles on swivels. The handles are large and heavy and indented,

the bouge is about three-quarters of an inch deep and the rim about three inches. A Birch and Villers dish is about 14 inches in diameter.

#### SOCIETY OF PEWTER COLLECTORS

Mr. C. S. Murray, one of the Honorary Secretaries of our sister Society in England, has sent us a copy of the annual letter now being sent out in lieu of meetings. It contains a sketch of the activities of Mr. Henry Justus Eck, whose death on May 21, 1941, has already been mentioned in the Bulletin, and also the following distressing paragraph:

"Members will regret to learn that our President's [Mr. R. J. A. Shelley] house has suffered so severely in recent raids [1941] that it has become necessary for him to look for a new home; this at a time when serious illness had overtaken one of the members of his family; moreover, part of his collection of Pewter, which was on loan at a museum, was lost in the destruction of that building; some 40 pieces have been salvaged, all of which are more or less damaged."

I am sure that we join our English friends in expressions of sympathy to Mr. Shelley.

The letter also acknowledges the gift from Mr. Ledlie I. Laughlin of a copy of "Pewter in America," remarking in part:

"It must suffice to say here that the Author has done for American Pewter what our late member Howard Cotterell did for British Pewter; he has, indeed, gone further by including an illustrated chapter on the, to us, delicate question of 'fakes'!

"Such a gift would, in normal circumstances, have been the subject of a formal vote of thanks at a General Meeting, and such a vote would have been carried with acclamation. As such action is impossible, we have in the name of the Society, conveyed our warmest thanks to Mr. Laughlin for his great generosity, which will strengthen the ties which unite us to our sister Society across the ocean."

#### MEETINGS SINCE THE LAST SUMMARY REPORT, 1941

January 29, 1941. The Annual Meeting and dinner was held at the University Club, Boston. The following officers were elected: President, Mr. Paul J. Franklin; Vice Presidents, Mrs. Eaton H. Perkins, Mrs. Paul J. Franklin, Mr. J. P. Remensnyder; Clerk, Mrs. Clinton Dorr; Corresponding Secretary, Miss Ruth Elspeth Raymond; Treasurer, Mrs. John B. Jameson; Governing Board, Mrs. Philip Huntington, Mr. Lewis N. Wiggins, Mr. Rupert Jaques.

The retiring President, Mrs. Eaton H. Perkins, as Master of Ceremonies, conducted an "Information Please" quiz, which was very entertaining to all except the unfortunate "Experts."

March 22, 1941. Meeting at the Old State House, Boston. Professor Raymond spoke about some of the pieces which had been imported from England during the previous two years, pointing out the unusual opportunity to see seventeenth century pewter.

April 28, 1941. The Birthday dinner was held at the College Club in Boston. Master-members' badges were awarded to those eligible.

Mr. Ledlie I. Laughlin, under the title of "The Trials of Writing a Book," related some of his experiences in obtaining material for his splendid volumes "Pewter in America." He reported that although it had involved a tremendous amount of labor and some disappointments, he received so much cordial cooperation from collectors that the pleasures more than balanced the pains.

May 21, 1941. The members were the guests of Mrs. Joseph W. Ross and Mrs. George S. Stevens at the home of the former on Meeting House Green, Ipswich, Mass. Mrs. Ross exhibited and explained her interesting collection, after which the members were taken to visit the old houses now under the custody of the Ipswich Historical Society.

June 6, 1941. The Club met at the Little Theatre on the estate of Mrs. Stephen S. FitzGerald. The speaker was Professor John Marshall Phillips of Yale University, who gave a lecture on "Design in Silver and Pewter from 1630 to 1850," illustrated with lantern slides. He stressed the good and simple designs of the early Boston silversmiths as compared with the somewhat more ornate Dutch-influenced New York work.

July 10, 1941. The members were again the guests of Mrs. Stephen S. FitzGerald, this time at the opening of her new Pewter room, where her splendid collection is systematically arranged and accessible for study. Dr. Madeline R. Brown was the first speaker, calling attention to the Rhode Island pieces, particularly those unique or rare. Mrs. Paul J. Franklin followed with a discussion of the Danforths, and the representatives of their work in the collection. Mr. Charles F. Montgomery took for his subject the other Connecticut pieces, and the numerous New York items. Professor Raymond closed the symposium by speaking briefly of the Boston pewter and several important English specimens.

September 27, 1941. The Club met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William V. Wallburg in Melrose, Mass. Mrs. P. J. Franklin read a memorial of Mr. Justus Eck, former Master of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers in London, and an honorary member and benefactor of our Club. Professor Raymond spoke on Scottish pewter, calling attention to its individuality, despite strong French and English influences.

November 12, 1941. The meeting, held in Taunton, Mass., was in two parts. First Mr. Lester H. Vaughan, the well-known maker of modern pewter, entertained us at his shop, where he demonstrated the spinning of britannia ware by making pieces on the lathe. He also showed a large collection of the tools employed in pewter craft, and explained their uses. After this, we went to the home of the Rev. and Mrs. John P. Garfield, where our host and hostess gave papers on the pewter and britannia makers of Taunton. These were published in Bulletin No. 10, January, 1942.

## 1942

January 30, 1942. The Annual Meeting and dinner were held at the Hotel Miles Standish, Boston. In the absence of the President and all the Vice Presidents, Mrs. John B. Jameson presided. The following officers were elected: President, Mr. Edward Ingraham; Vice Presidents, Mrs. Eaton H. Perkins, Mr. John P. Remensnyder, Mr. Melville T. Nichols; Treasurer, Dr. Madeline R. Brown; Clerk and Corresponding Secretary, Percy E. Raymond; Governing Board, Mrs. Philip Huntington, Mrs. Edward Ingraham, Mr. Charles E. Ayers.

April 18, 1942. At the invitation of the Trustees of the Albany Institute of Science and Art, an open meeting was held at their building in Albany, N. Y. The occasion was the opening of an exhibition of pewter made in Albany and vicinity. Mr. J. D. Hatch, Jr., Director, spoke about the numerous excellent pieces shown, and Mr. Stanley Paddock read a paper on the local pewterers. After a luncheon at the University Club, with Mr. Hatch and Mr. Ledyard Cogswell as hosts, Professor Raymond spoke on the Dutch, German, and English influences on New York pewter, and called attention to the pewter articles occasionally found in Indian graves.

May 13, 1942. The members were the guests of President and Mrs. Edward Ingraham at their home in Cambridge, Mass. The subject was "Pewter Scrapbooks." Mrs. Eaton H. Perkins exhibited a splendid one, containing photographs of many of her rare pieces and photographic enlargements of their touches.

June 20, 1942. The Club met at the Museum of the New York Historical Society in New York City. Mr. Alexander J. Wall, the Director, spoke on the finds of pewter buttons and toys during the excavations which have been made on the Revolutionary camp sites in New York. He illustrated his remarks with lantern slides, and then guided the company through the exhibits.

Mrs. Paul J. Franklin gave an account of the State in Schuylkill, and its pewter.

October 25, 1942. The members were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Melville T. Nichols at the opening of the attractive new American pewter room at their home in Medford, Mass. Mr. Nichols spoke of "Trade Marks in Pewter," presenting a new interpretation of the significance of locality touches on American pewter. It is understood that his ingenious and well-based theories will soon be published.

#### NOTES

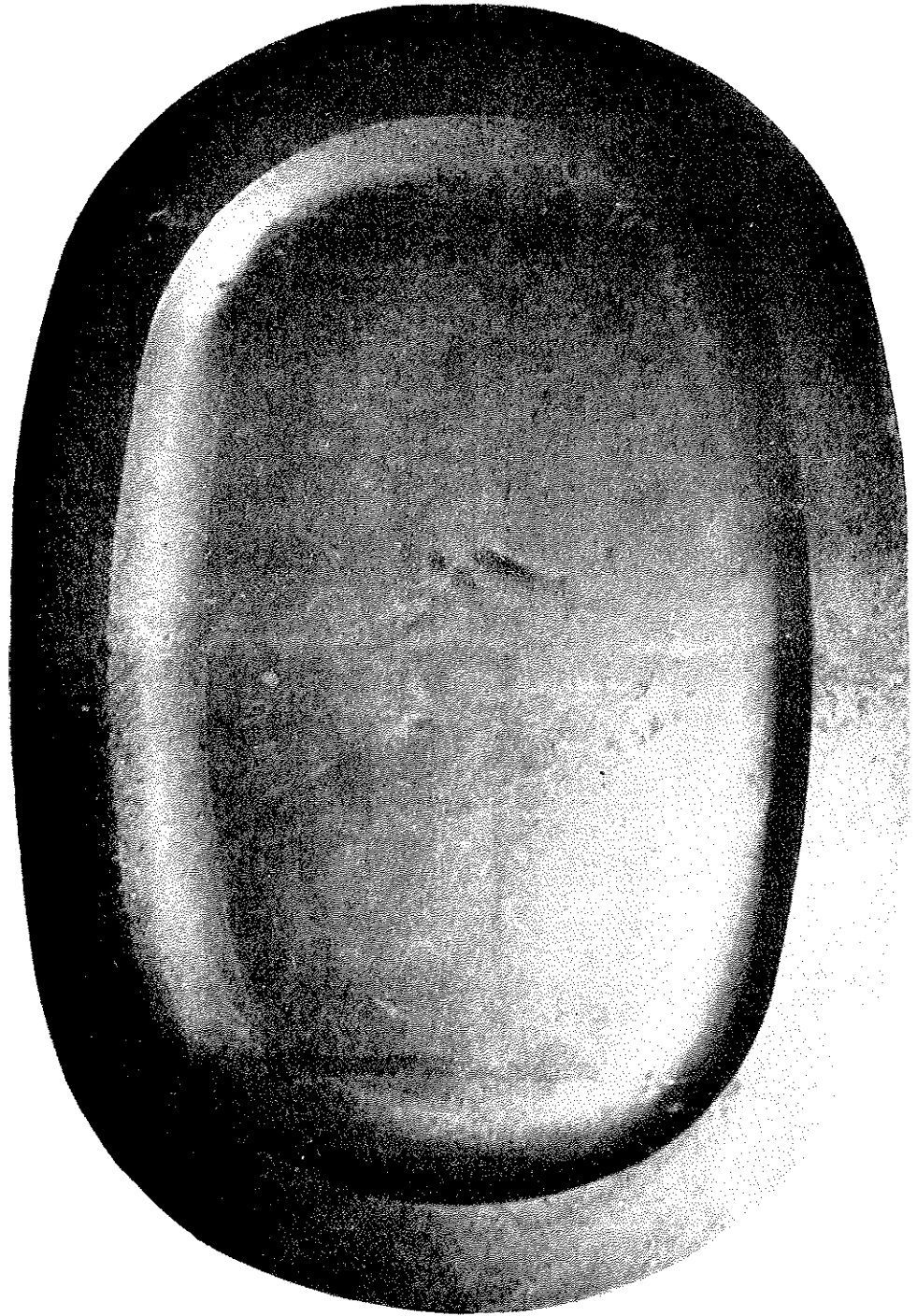
Mrs. Edna T. Franklin has been made an honorary member of the Society of Pewter Collectors.

"Pewter Chargers of the Restoration," by Captain A. V. Sutherland-Graeme, appeared in *The Connoisseur*, for June, 1942.

#### SOUTHERN PEWTERERS

In a recent book, "The Old South," published by Scribners, 1942, the author, Professor Thomas Jefferson Wertenbacher of Princeton, devotes two pages to pewter. He comments on the lack of knowledge concerning local pewterers, due largely to their failure to advertise in the gazettes of the day. He points out that the plantation owners may have had worn out utensils recast on the premises, for William Smith and brother, of Stafford County, Virginia, are known to have made "all sorts of moulds for casting pewter" in 1774. The author mentions three Maryland pewterers: Mungo Campbell of Annapolis, David Evans of Baltimore, and William Willett of Upper Marlborough. Also three from Charleston, South Carolina: William Linthwaite, Anthony Corne, and Claudius Compare. Mr. Laughlin mentions Campbell and Willett of Maryland, and Corne of Charleston. The others seem to be recent discoveries. Does anyone know anything further about them?





THE WILLIAM PENN PLATTER  
*Photograph by Mr. Paul J. Franklin*

