

The
PEWTER COLLECTORS' CLUB
of AMERICA

VOLUME 2. NUMBER 5.

OFFICERS, 1948-49

- President*, MR. HENRY B. REARDON, JR. Farmington, Connecticut
Vice-Presidents, MR. ERIC DE JONGE
ex-officio, for the New York Regional Group
MRS. HENRY W. BORNTAEGER
MR. FRANK C. DOBLE
MR. JOHN M. GRAHAM, 2d
Governing Board, MR. CHARLES F. MONTGOMERY
MR. BERTRAM K. LITTLE
DR. PERCY E. RAYMOND
Clerk and Corresponding Secretary, MRS. EATON H. PERKINS
86 Ardsmoor Road, Melrose, Mass.
Treasurer, MRS. WILLIAM V. WALLBURG
1 Meadowview Road, Melrose, Mass.
Program Committee, MRS. EATON H. PERKINS
MRS. JOHN H. MITCHELL
MR. OLIVER W. DEMING, *Chairman*
Membership Committee, MR. CHARLES F. MONTGOMERY
MRS. FRANK COGAN
Publication Committee, MR. AND MRS. EDWARD INGRAHAM
DR. PERCY E. RAYMOND, *Chairman*
NEW YORK REGIONAL GROUP
Chairman, MR. ERIC DE JONGE
1152 Avenue of the Americas, New York City, N. Y.
Vice-Chairmen, MR. ROBERT H. ELLENBERGER
MRS. PAUL J. FRANKLIN
MR. JOHN M. GRAHAM, 2d
MRS. PHILIP HUNTINGTON
Clerk and Corresponding Secretary, DR. KURT M. SEMON
19 West 44th Street, New York 18, N. Y.
Treasurer, MR. CHARLES F. EDGECOMB
35 Washington Square W, New York 11, N. Y.
Governing Board, MRS. JOHN H. BALLANTINE
MR. LEDLIE I. LAUGHLIN
MR. ALLAN REITER
MR. JOHN P. REMENSNYDER
Program Committee, MR. ARTHUR W. CLEMENT
MRS. KATHERINE P. MURPHY
MISS ELEANOR MITCHELL

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
TO EFFECT A CHANGE IN THE TIME OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
CONSTITUTION

Article IV. Second paragraph
to amend by striking out the words "January meeting" and inserting the words "May meeting" so that the paragraph shall read:
The Governing Board shall supervise the affairs of the club and shall be elected annually at the May meeting.

BY-LAWS

Article I. Section 4, second paragraph
to amend by striking out the words "the calendar year" and inserting the words "from May 1st to May 1st" so that the paragraph shall read:
The fiscal year shall be from May 1st to May 1st.

Article I. Section 4, first paragraph
to amend by striking out the words "second meeting of the year" and inserting the words "meeting which follows the annual meeting" so that the paragraph shall read:
The annual dues of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America shall be \$2.00 and shall be payable at the meeting which follows the annual meeting.

Article II. Section 1
to amend by striking out the phrase between the dashes "at the November meeting" and inserting the phrase "at the March or April meeting" so that the Section shall read:
Section 1. The President shall preside at all meetings of the club, and at all meetings of the Governing Board; and shall, following his election, appoint a Program Committee and—~~at the March or April meeting—~~an Auditing Committee.

Article IV. Section 4
to amend by striking out the word "November" and inserting the words "March or April" so that the Section shall read:
Section 4. A nominating committee of three members shall be elected by the club at the March or April meeting. Its report shall be sent to all club members with the notice of the annual meeting.

Article IV. Section 5
to amend by striking out the words "November" and "January" and inserting the words "March or April" and "May" so that the Section shall read:
Section 5. The auditing committee shall be appointed by the President at the March or April meeting and shall report at the annual meeting in May.

The above amendments were approved by the Governing Board at the meeting in Springfield, May 1. After due notice to the members, they were adopted at the meeting at Meriden, June 12, 1948.

Attest: ELISABETH PERKINS, *Clerk.*

ASHBIL GRISWOLD, PEWTERER

by GEORGE HOLMES EDWARDS
(delivered June 12, 1948)

It is particularly appropriate that this meeting of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America, centering around Ashbil Griswold, as it does, should be held in Meriden with the International Silver Company as host, and for two reasons.

First, much of the documentary evidence in this paper is from the files of our late member, William G. Snow, Director of Historical Research at the International Silver Company, and second, because Ashbil Griswold may well be considered as the source from which the hollow ware branch of this Company took its beginning.

While Ashbil Griswold may not be classed with the early Colonial Pewter makers, being born April 4, 1784, in that tense decade between the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the Constitution, he had the distinction of serving for five years as an apprentice in the shop of Thomas Danforth, 3rd, in Rocky Hill (at that time named Stepney) a hamlet outside of the ancient Town of Wethersfield. Than whom as a Pewter maker probably none excelled in quality of work and multiplicity of articles.

In Ledlie Laughlin's book, in the chapter on Pewterers of the Connecticut Valley, he states: "The story of the pewter makers of Connecticut is virtually the story of the Danforths, their partners and their apprentices." Ashbil Griswold, therefore, had his training under the best of masters. Nor were these men simply Pewter makers. In them burned the spark of Yankee ingenuity. They not only produced at an amazing rate, but they were traders by instinct, hard working craftsmen, and like the early silversmiths, often played an important and respected part in the community in which they lived. Such was Ashbil Griswold.

About the time that Thomas Danforth was transferring his activities from Wethersfield to Philadelphia, Ashbil Griswold came to Meriden, in the latter part of 1808, and set up his little shop in the northern part of town, on land purchased from Ira Yale, and began the manufacture of pewter and block tin. His first meal in Meriden, so the story goes, was at the home of James Frary. Whether or not it was a case of love at first sight, we do not know, but he later married Lucy, James Frary's daughter. After her death in 1835, Ashbil Griswold married Ann Lyman, the widow of Andrew Lyman, a brother of William W. Lyman. She died October 25, 1870.

Biography is always interesting and words can paint a striking character, but if we can compliment words with a picture we have added much to make the character live. In one early memorandum on Ashbil Griswold, Mr. Snow lamented that the only likeness of him was a rather crude wood cut which appeared in Dr. Daves' book, "History of Wallingford and Meriden," and after suggesting that possibly some descendant had a better likeness stored away, he concluded the memorandum with the words, "Who can locate this picture?"

He was soon rewarded. He learned that a fine oil painting of Ashbil Griswold hung in the home of a Mrs. Courtney C. Brown in Armonk, N. Y. Mr. Snow was at once on the trail, permission was obtained, and a color photograph was taken—a most interesting portrait. Knowing of Ashbil Griswold's keen business acumen, it was quite appropriate that he should hold, as he sat

for the portrait, a copy of a newspaper bearing a New York date line.

An unusual and authentic source of information on Griswold's early business activities was found in a number of leather bound account books written in longhand, which came to light some years ago in the attic of a home formerly occupied by William W. Lyman and his family at 155 Britannia Street, Meriden. Mr. Lyman was related by marriage, or in business, with Ashbil Griswold and his associates, and the books evidently came to him as a more or less direct successor of the business in which Griswold was engaged. These books were turned over to Mr. Snow about twelve years ago by Alfred P. Wheeler, a neighbor, they having been given to Mr. Wheeler some time earlier by Mrs. Courtney C. Brown, owner of the Griswold portrait, at the time the Lyman residence was sold. Mrs. Brown was a great great granddaughter of William W. Lyman. The books are now in possession of the Historical Department of the International Silver Company.

A hurried review of Mr. Snow's notes from a study of these records yields the following information:

While reports indicate that Griswold did not start his business in Meriden until 1808, he was evidently working somewhat independently prior to that date, as entries appear in 1807 of orders, all dated, and in some way delivered to Baltimore accounts. The prices and descriptions are identical with those charges in Meriden in 1808, namely:

Gallon Basins	\$.75
½ Gallon Basins	.50
Quart Basins	.25
Pint Basins	2.00 doz.
Dipper, Large	.69
Dipper, Small, Deep	.50
Dipper	.37 ½
Plates, Large	2.50 doz.
Plates, Small	2.00 doz.

Up to August, 1808, the above seems to have been his line. In August, however, appears a charge of spoons at 50c a dozen; pots at 50c each; large teapots at 87½c each. This is the first indication that Griswold was making spoons and pots.

Griswold's accounts, as would be expected, were figured in dollars and cents, but beginning September 1st and continuing twelve months to October, 1809, a most unusual and mystifying change occurs. All entries appear written in English pounds, shillings and pence. At the conclusion of the twelve months' period, the entries revert to the normal dollars and cents. The reason back of this strange procedure is still to be found. The answer would be interesting. One can fancy the investigation that this unusual practice in accounting would arouse had it fallen under the scrutiny of the Internal Revenue Department, or F. B. I., but in 1808 it was open season for business and enterprise was free.

- 1817 Griswold was making pots, spoons, etc., which he continued for nearly forty years, and selling as well as buying transactions are noted between Griswold and James Frary.
- 1826 Thomas Mix was working for Griswold making spoons.
- 1827 Darius Benham was a customer and at this time Griswold was selling

- Josiah Danforth trimmings and complete pots.
- 1828 Horace Pratt & Co. was furnishing Griswold with pot tops, combs made of horn, bone or ivory, which Griswold in turn passed over to the peddlers who were selling his goods. His records also show he was buying a considerable quantity of metals as shown by records of cartage from Middletown to Meriden of tin bought in New York and shipped eventually by boat up the Sound and river to Middletown.
- 1829 Griswold's books record a charge of \$536.00 to Ira Couch to pay Mathew Foster for land, and David Allen & Co. for lumber. About this time Luther Boardman is reported to have been with Griswold.
- 1830 Took Couch in as a partner, and was employing some dozen hands. Gross sales reported to be about \$2,500 per month. His power was furnished by a blind horse travelling around a beam which operated a lathe in the floor above.
- 1832 Lemuel Curtis' name came into the limelight for the first time and is charged with numerous small payments in cash.
- 1833 Entries point to a change in ownership of the business from Ashbil Griswold to Griswold & Couch. The name Couch and Frary is often mentioned, presumably Ira Couch and James A. Frary. That a change was in the air was evidenced by an entry in December, 1833, reading "Sundries furnished for my shop which is under supervision of Ira Couch and James A. Frary."
- 1834 I. C. Lewis is reported to have started in the Pewter business. He was connected with a firm which did business with Griswold. I. C. Lewis was later to become Superintendent of the Meriden Britannia Company.
- 1835 Cowles & Linsley was buying caster frames from Griswold, and Thomas Mix was making pewter tea spoons at 60c a gross. Charles Parker of Yalesville was furnishing merchandise to Griswold.
- 1839 Griswold & Couch was selling Lewis & Curtis Banka tin.
- 1843 It would appear that Griswold & Couch as a firm were preparing to go out of business.
- 1844 Frary & Couch were buying metal from Griswold.
- 1846 W. W. Lyman and James A. Frary frequently exchanged metal parts for pots, etc. At this time W. W. Lyman was furnishing Horace C. Wilcox with pots, according to charges recorded on Griswold's books.
- 1848 Frary was buying moulds at 12½c each, and 900 pot tops at 10c a hundred.
- 1851 Entry—W. W. Lyman, Debtor, cash, insurance on shop, \$6.25.
- 1852 William Lyman & Co. doing business instead of W. W. Lyman alone.

The more a person looks over the pages of Ashbil Griswold's account books, the more we realize the importance and wide scope of his business activities which started in the North end of town.

Not alone does it appear as if he were a successful maker of spoons and pots, marketing them through peddler salesmen, but he must have been a planner on general merchandising, when one learns of the hundred and one articles he received from his peddler salesmen and must have found a market either at home or abroad for this material.

Not alone did he furnish these peddlers with his own goods, but he financed them largely, sometimes giving them cash, and he bought products

made in this locality and turned over to them tinware which the accounts indicate was supplied at the cash price. Much of the merchandise these peddlers brought back was taken in payment for the load they started out with and was turned over to another peddler, likely covering another territory. The great variety of articles that came to Griswold from the peddler salesmen can only be appreciated by the lists turned into Griswold's headquarters. The records show that ready money was scarce and barter was very generally used.

Among the peddlers operating for Griswold appear the following:

Curtis & Upson—1822
Chester & Halsey Rice—1823-30
Curtis & Upson—1825-31
Benjamin Upson—1825
Asakel Curtis—1823

The above entries from the old account books cover the forty-four years since Griswold began his activities in Meriden back in 1808, and include the names of many of the early Britannia makers, whose efforts in later years were to make Meriden famous as the Silver City.

We have considered Ashbil Griswold and his commercial activities. As a man he was a conscientious, respected, and influential citizen taking an honorable place in the community.

He was a representative in the Connecticut Legislature 1820, 1826, 1831, and 1847. In 1833 the Meriden Bank was organized and Ashbil Griswold was elected the first President and continued as such for three years, and thereafter as a Trustee. A record from his books in connection with the Bank dated October 29, 1833, reads: "Meriden Bank, Debtor, postage 6c; junk bottle for ink 10c; postage 35c; $\frac{3}{4}$ cord of wood 35c; cartage on iron chest, doubtless the bank's vault, 37c." The first President could not have been accused of extravagance in bank equipment. The bank was first located in a brick block on the east side of Broad Street between Liberty and Main.

Ashbil Griswold was active in the affairs of St. Andrew's Church, being a vestryman or clerk from 1822 to 1838, and when the new church was erected in 1847 he was a member of the Building Committee.

On July 12, 1851, when the Meriden Savings Bank was formed, Ashbil Griswold was made a Trustee and later served as Vice-President.

While he gave up active participation in the manufacture of Pewter and Britannia about 1840, he materially helped in financing some of the smaller industries.

Just one year before Ashbil Griswold died he saw the culmination of the industry he had started, a grouping together under the leadership of Horace C. Wilcox of the little Britannia shops to organize the Meriden Britannia Company in 1852. These early Pewter and Britannia makers, either directly or indirectly, took their cue from Ashbil Griswold, and while Griswold in no direct way was associated with the Meriden Britannia Company, his little shop in 1808 was the inspiration that started the Britannia makers, which became the Meriden Britannia Company in 1852, and still later the International Silver Company in 1898.

Ashbil Griswold died March 30, 1853, of palsy and was buried in East Cemetery, Meriden, a true pioneer and a Christian gentleman.

COLLECTION OF GRISWOLD PEWTER

The Company's collection of Griswold Pewter is on display and for your inspection in the exhibition room, (Sales Institute, International Silver Company), together with a display of the early coin silver made by the Rogers Brothers and dating back to 1820.

The Griswold Collection consists of some forty pieces, each clearly identified by a Griswold touch.

7½-inch, 8-inch, 9-inch and 9½-inch teapots

Sugar bowls

10-inch, 11-inch, and 12-inch large pots

Deep basins

5 small beakers

24 plates ranging in size from 8-inch, 8½-inch, 9-inch, 11-inch, and 13-inch

Small hinge-covered soap dish

Other known pieces which we have hopes of acquiring are a porringer and ink stand.

Griswold used four different touches. The initials A. G. in a small rectangle appears on the four-inch beakers. Laughlin dates this back to 1820-30. The other three touches incorporate in different poses the spread eagle clutching the barbed arrows in its right talon and the olive branch in the left.

In the largest touch which appears on the inside of the bottom of the deep basin above the eagle and following the circular outline is the name ASHBIL, and below, the name GRISWOLD. Laughlin dates this touch 1807-15. The smaller plates and on the inside of the bottom of the teapots appear an eagle with head stretching to the left, above which is the name A. GRISWOLD (dated by Laughlin 1820-30).

The large plates carry an eagle with head turned to the right, a bold shield covering the body between the wings, and, following the circular outline, and at the bottom, the name of A. GRISWOLD. This touch is given by Laughlin as prior to 1820.

I should like to state that many of the pieces in the collection came to our attention through Mr. Charles Montgomery, and we are grateful for his cooperation.

SOCIETY OF PEWTER COLLECTORS

The Society held its Annual Winter Meeting at Grosvenor House, Park Lane, London, on January 15th, 1949. The printed report of their proceedings has not yet arrived, but two Americans have been notified of their election to Honorary Membership. Mr. Ledlie I. Laughlin was honored for his contributions to knowledge of pewter, Mr. Percy E. Raymond because of his interest in the subject. Mrs. Paul J. Franklin has long been an Honorary Member.

A letter from Mr. Ronald F. Michaelis, Honorary Librarian of the Society, contains several items of general interest.

“London, 3rd January, 1949

“My dear Prof. Raymond,

“I am writing to thank you for the copy of 'Antiques' containing your article 'Some Pewter of Little Importance' which I found of interest. It is a

fact that many of these late and comparatively unimportant pieces can give much thought for study, and are, in themselves, intriguing for their associations.

"Thanks also for the copy of your Club Bulletin for November, 1948. In relation to the item 'My Daughter's Cousin the Pewterer,' I am pleased to say I can add some fragments of information on this pewterer, who was, undoubtedly, the man shown under Cotterell's No. 4907a.

"Benjamin Walker was the son of Marmion Walker, of Aldgate, in the Borough of Stepney, Shipwright. He (Benjamin) was, on the 2nd. April, 1664, apprenticed to Humphrey Cock (Cott. 998) for 7 years, and in due course, obtained his Freedom in the London Pewterers' Company on 25th. May, 1671. He opened in business on his own account on 22nd. May, 1672, and on the same day took as apprentice to him one John (or Jonathan) Hardy (Cott. 2136a) who, in turn became 'Free' on 17th June, 1680.

"Benjamin Walker would have been present at the Hall upon his apprentice receiving his freedom and, thus, was obviously in England at that time. I had no previous knowledge that he ever emigrated, or traveled, to Boston, Mass., but it may well have been c. 1680, for no further mention of him can be found in the Company records.

"A further matter upon which I can throw a little light is the reference, in your article [in *Antiques*], to those essentially utilitarian articles, to wit, Bedpans.

"Kerfoot, in his *American Pewter*, shows in Figs. 25 and 80, a so-called pewter Warming pan. So far as one can see from the illustrations, this piece would have started life as a common or garden bedpan, to which has been attached a normal plate for a cover; the reverse of the plate embellished by some clever engraving. The handle would seem to have been added and affixed by unsoldering the cap of the handle.

"It may well be that the possibility I have laid bare above has already been examined and discarded and, if this is so, I crave your indulgence.

"With reference to the Spinner's damper shown in Fig. 4, you may be interested to know that the late Charles G. J. Port showed a good example in pewter in an article entitled 'Some Uncommon Pieces of Pewter, Part V.' (Fig. 22, on page 154) of the 'Connoisseur' for March, 1925. The specimen referred to is described as 'spinning wheel ring cup, continental, Eighteenth Century,' and would appear to have been about 4 ins. in diameter.

"Yours very sincerely,

RONALD F. MICHAELIS."

Mr. Michaelis caught me fairly on William Wills' glorified bedpan bed-warmer. I had known about it at some time, but had forgotten. I am glad that he has called attention to the origin of this unique implement. A pewter warming pan seems to be an absurdity, but although impractical, it could have been used by loading it with hot sand or pebbles, rather than glowing embers. I can remember getting comfort from a stout sack of hot sand in the days before my parents installed central heating. However, a soapstone was cleaner.

Mr. Michaelis is finishing a detailed and much needed study of English pewter porringers. His results will appear in a series of articles in the magazine *Apollo* during this summer and autumn. The office of *Apollo Magazine*,

Ltd., is 10 Vigo St., Regent St., London, W 1. The subscription price for the United States is \$9.00 per year, or 85 cents the single copy.

P. E. R.

FORUM ON ANTIQUES AND DECORATIONS

Friday was metals day each week at Williamsburg, Virginia, at the sessions held there from January 24 through February 4, 1949. The Magazine Antiques joined with Colonial Williamsburg in something new, a national, rather than a local discussion group. The 561 members who attended represented 36 states and the District of Columbia. On the list, we note the names of the following members of the Pewter Club:

Mrs. Birther Holmes, Mr. Bertram K. Little, Mrs. Albert M. Lyon, Mrs. John H. Mitchell, and Mr. Lewis N. Wiggins, all of Massachusetts. Mrs. Charles D. Cook, Rhode Island. Mrs. Frank Cogan, Mr. and Mrs. R. Gardiner, and Mrs. Charles F. Montgomery, of Connecticut. Mrs. R. B. Post, New York, and Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Sittig, of Pennsylvania.

Four of the sixteen speakers are members of the Club. Our honorary member, Mr. Charles Messer Stow, of the New York Sun, gave the Tuesday evening address both weeks on "Antiques and the American Spirit." Miss Alice Winchester, Editor of Antiques, was General Organizer, General Hostess, and General Indispensable. To her the success of the two weeks was largely due. In addition to the general responsibility she found time to make the addresses of welcome and farewell, and talk on "The Enjoyment of Antiques" each Friday evening. Mr. Charles F. Montgomery discussed the "English Influence on American Pewter" at the first session, and your reporter tried to cover the same topic at the second one. Related to the Pewter Club by marriage is another speaker, Nina Fletcher Little (Mrs. B. K. Little), who talked (at both sessions) on "English Pottery and Porcelain in Colonial America." It was all extremely enjoyable, with a unique setting, every minute occupied in seeing the restored Williamsburg, but still with plenty of time for formal and informal discussions. Members of the Club would do well to plan to attend during one of next year's weeks.

The Magazine Antiques began the printing of the essays in the April number and will continue them. It is expected that the articles on silver and pewter will appear in August.

PERCY E. RAYMOND.

THE ALLOYS CALLED PEWTER

by PERCY E. RAYMOND

Pewter is not the name of one, but of a group of alloys, or, as Ephraim Chambers said in his Cyclopaedia of 1728, "factitious metals," all composed chiefly of tin. The term pewter cannot, therefore, be applied to any one alloy of definite chemical composition. As a matter of fact, makers of pewterware, ever since the 14th century, have considered their craft as a "Mysterie." The exact proportions of the various metals they used were trade secrets. The various Guilds in England and on the Continent had power to keep the makers within prescribed limits. The proportion of tin must not fall below a certain

standard, and lead was not allowed in the best pewter. But there was no oversight of the nature or exact proportions of the other ingredients. Lead, copper, bismuth, and antimony have been the metals commonly combined with the essential tin. Zinc has been added in some cases, and, within the last decade, aluminum. "Silver pewter" is a trade and, lately, a dealer's term, but whatever silver there may be in pewter came accidentally, along with the arsenic and other impurities of tin or lead ores. The golden coating of some pewter vessels is an oxidation product, and contains no precious metal.

It is unfortunate that so many people think of lead when pewter is mentioned. A chapter in an otherwise excellent book starts with the statement, "Pewter is an alloy of lead." It is not, and never was. It is an alloy of tin. Lead, when used at all, was a subordinate ingredient. There is, however, considerable excuse for the mental association of lead with pewter. Analyses of Roman vessels, made in the fourth century, show tin and lead as the only components. The earliest known English ordinances (1348) permit a similar mixture, but they state that the "crafte of pewtereres is founded uppon certeine maters & metals as of brasse tyn & lede in pte of the wheche iij metals they make vessel" with "kunnyng in the craft."

More specifically, the ordinances go on to state that dishes, saucers, platters, chargers, pots, square cruets, and any other vessels which are made square, must be made of fine pewter, consisting of tin and brass only. At that time, brass was composed of copper and tin, not copper and zinc as it later came to be made. Hence fine pewter consisted of tin and copper only, as early as 1348. But makers of "pottes rounde" might use "tyn with an alay of lede to a reasonable mesure." This is the origin of the term ley—or lay—metal, often mentioned in later years.

It is not known when bismuth was first added to the alloy, but the records show that by 1561 its use was looked upon as a regular practice. This metal lowered the fusing point, and added hardness, although it made pewter more brittle. Bismuth was known as "tin-glass" or "temper," and its use became compulsory in all alloys. Antimony, a metal with similar properties, was eventually substituted for it, but here again the date of first usage is not known. Such evidence as can be gathered seems to indicate that it was first used in France, and that knowledge of it was brought to England during the second half of the 17th century. It was a component of "Hard metal," first advertised in England by William Sandys, who struck his touch in 1692. Mr. Sandys did not "advertise" in the modern sense, for such a practice was strictly forbidden by the rules of his Guild, but he did circulate a trade card on which he notified the public that he had "Wrought w'th Mr. James Taudin deceas'd" and that he now made that "Fine hard Mettal called French Pewter. He having exactly the same Art of Refining, Tempering, Casting and Working it up as Mr. Taudin had in his Life time."

Jacques Taudin, who became James on being naturalized in England, was admitted as a freeman and liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Pewterers in London in 1658. It is obvious that he had something new in the pewter line, for the records show that his contemporaries were jealous of him. Samuel Pepys, on March 13, 1668, got Mrs. Turner to go with him "to the French pewterer's and there did buy some new pewter against tomorrow." Surely

Pepys would have gone only to the most fashionable place.

The evidence is only circumstantial, but it seems probable that Taudin brought the practice of substituting antimony for bismuth from France. In any event "hard metal" became popular at the turn of the century, and throughout the seventeenth hundreds. The statutes of the Parisian pewterers, as quoted by Massé, show that as early as 1613, the French were combining antimony with tin. Apparently, however, it was not used in the best quality of metal, for fine resonant pewter was to be composed of tin, copper and bismuth. The "étain sonnante" which Taudin appears to have brought to England, may have been an improvement on what had previously been made in France. Massé gives the composition of the best Plate pewter as containing both antimony and bismuth.

Although there are no definite analyses, hard metal appears to have contained about 90½% tin, 7½% antimony, and nearly 2% copper. It required only a slight change from this to produce britannia metal, which seems to have a little less tin and copper, and a little more antimony. But slight as was the change, it took many years to learn the proper proportions of the ingredients. The real difference between pewter and britannia reside in the physical properties. Pewter is brittle, easily cracked when beaten, only moderately malleable. Britannia is highly ductile, flowing readily under pressure. Comparison might be made with cast iron, which shatters at a blow, and wrought iron, easily shaped. Pewter had to be cast in molds. More malleable than cast iron, the castings could be shaped and modified to a certain extent. But britannia flows almost like clay. It is true that it requires more force than can be supplied by the unaided fingers, but, with the proper tools, and skill, a flat sheet can be brought to any desired shape.

It is unfortunate that britannia, the best of the pewter alloys, did not come into common use until the beginning of the machine age. Compared with the older metal, it had wonderful possibilities. Those who used it were not restrained by the constant reproduction of the same form in the same mold. Even though they shaped this metal on a predesigned wooden chuck, they had the opportunity to modify the proportions of a piece during the process. If permitted, they could easily change the shape of the model. But, alas, the days of hurry, of uniformity, of cheapness of production, had arrived. Britannia, best of the alloys of tin, was put to the worst uses. Pewter didn't die. It was encased in silver, when, in the 1840's, the electro-plating process was perfected.

According to Mr. Alfred Bounin, in his most informative *Tutenag and Paktong*, the first commercial production of vessels made of britannia was by the firm of Hancock and Jessop in Sheffield, England, in 1770. The material was called White Metal until 1797, when the term Britannia was applied to it. But it was the firm of James Dixon and Son, also of Sheffield, which made the ware famous. The hard, thin sheets could be used as a silversmith would employ his metal, and were much cheaper. Teapots were much in demand, and, after 1804, the Dixons flooded the market with them. Agencies were established in New York and Philadelphia, and the ware soon became tremendously popular. The vessels looked like silver, they were light in weight, easily kept polished, and, compared with silver, cheap in price. The Dixons did not confine their output to teapots, but made various hollowware, and a lesser amount

of sadware. The firm is still in existence, but only objects made by them before 1830 are classed as antiques. An abundance of these are still in the hands of descendants of the original owners, collectors, and dealers.

A most amusing quibble is over the question as to whether the Dixons ever made pewter. Of course they did, for britannia is a kind of pewter. So a new definition has been made. Britannia is an alloy of composition similar to that of pewter, but capable of being worked into shape by pressure. The various alloys still to be called pewter are those which must be cast in molds. A member of the Dixon firm wrote to the late H. H. Cotterell in 1921 that the Dixons did not, and never had, made pewter. Yet I have a hot water plate, the basin of which was cast in a mold, the upper plate was cast in a mold, and the parts of the handles were cast in molds. Yet it is marked on the bottom, James Dixon and Son! Nineteenth century "pewter" lamps are put together of parts, some of them spun, others cast. Probably it is time to stop quibbling, and merely admit that britannia is good pewter made at the wrong time.

The Dixons made the new alloy so popular in this country that Americans had to learn its secret. Some took the easy way. True britannia had at first been called "white metal." Vickers, Ashbury and probably others in England had produced white malleable alloys by adding zinc to the tin and antimony. A Capt. Bowditch of Salem used the same method in 1814 in making what he called "Britannia." George Richardson, later a famous britannia maker, was using "block tin" in Boston in 1818. No one seems to know just what was meant by the term block tin as used by the pewterers, but it was probably tin stiffened with antimony, for it is relatively hard. Hiram Yale, of Wallingford, Conn., had another bright thought. About 1825 he imported from England men who knew how to make and spin the same alloy that the Dixons were using. But Isaac Babbitt of Taunton, Mass., went at it the hard way. After years of experimental work he solved the problem and in 1824 began the work which was carried on so successfully later by the Taunton Britannia Manufacturing Company. However, in the early days, the method used at Taunton was to press the metal between wooden forms, so it may be that the first actual spinning in this country was done at Wallingford.

So far, only the finer grades of pewter have been discussed. They were used for plates, platters, and the like; for chalices and patens; tankards and flagons; the better grades of porringers and bowls and various other articles. But for measures, most basins, salts, candlesticks, bottles, and such, common pewter or lay metal was considered good enough. In most cases this contained some lead; as much as 40% or 50% if it were used for candle molds or organ pipes; as little as 4% for the better grades, especially on the Continent. Continental pewter tends to be "leady," an obvious explanation as to why English pewter won the reputation for being the best in the world. The stamps "Englische Zinn" and "étain d'angleterre" do not mean that the tin was bought in England, but that the metal "was just as good as" English pewter.

The Roman "alay" of the 3d and 4th centuries was merely tin with 20% to 50% lead. But, as early as 1593, the ordinances in England required the addition of bismuth. Hardly any good pewter can be made with more than 20% of lead. Most of it, even in the lower grades, had less. Throughout the centuries, producers have been of two classes: those who sought to build up

a reputation for fair dealing, and those who trimmed to the line and went over on the wrong side when they thought that they could get away with it. And so one will occasionally encounter a poor, soft piece, even among the English products.

The foregoing is a chapter from a projected book on Pewter. Copyright, May, 1949, by Percy E. Raymond.

JOHN HANCOCK PREFERRED PEWTER

John Hancock was one of the wealthiest men of his day, but he didn't like the clatter of China, and habitually ate from pewter sadware. Moreover, food was less apt to slip off the plate, when he tussled with the tougher bits. Another possible consideration, not mentioned by Abram E. Brown, in his "John Hancock, His Book," published in 1898, is that though they could be dented, they were not easily broken. When his famous gallon silver tankard, y-clept Solomon Townsend, was being circulated, filled with hot punch, there must have been many times when it came in contact with other tableware.

In 1783 Hancock had occasion to replenish his table supply, and wrote to his agents in England to order for him a set of the best pewter. There were to be six dozen of the very best plates with their proportion of proper sizes. Oval or long dishes for Saturday's salt fish must not be forgotten. Salt fish dinners were served Saturdays, at least during Lent, to all who cared to come to the Hancock mansion and partake.

Mr. Hancock specified that if Mr. Ellis were still alive, he was to make the pewter. Each dish and plate was to be engraved with the family crest.

The pewter arrived in due time, and was much to his liking. He saw to it that it was kept at the highest point of brightness, and used every day.

The Mr. Ellis mentioned was probably Samuel, Jr., who took the livery in 1754. Cotterell does not show his touch, unless it is the same as the one used by his father. Thomas Swanson, as successor to Samuel Ellis, Sr., was allowed to strike the touch with the familiar device of the suspended sheep. However, he replaced the Samuel Ellis name with his own. See Cotterell, Nos. 1547, 4593. Probably some of the plates with the Hancock crest are still preserved in or near Boston.

WARNING: MORE FAKES

A member who lives in the mid-west has notified us that there has been a large influx of English pewter in that area within the last two years. Some of it may be old, some new, some Continental in origin. It is all in splendid condition, too highly burnished to be collectible.

Unless you are sure that you can distinguish the genuine from the spurious, avoid these pieces.

PERCY E. RAYMOND.

TAPPIT-HEN PIE

Mr. Edward Wenham in his News from England in the New York Sun, January 14, 1949, commented on the ridiculously low prices good tappit-hens brought at a recent sale in London. A 11½-inch, uncrested, the largest size,

brought only \$28.00. Two of the 10½-inch size went with six plates for \$72.00. This is about one-third the price asked in Edinburgh in 1932.

But even at the prices quoted, they are rather too expensive to be used as food. Sophia, a character in a recent novel, *Red Plush*, written by Guy McCrone, is asked by her hostess in Glasgow whether she prefers tappit hen or steak pie. If she chose the former, I presume she washed it down with copious drafts from a scone!

It reminds me of a story about Russia. The hero rushed out of the door, jumped into his isvoschick (coachman) and drove furiously away.

P. E. R.

MEMBERSHIP

Some may be interested in the geographic distribution of the members of the Club. At the time Bulletin 23 was mailed, it was as follows: Maine, 2; New Hampshire, 12; Vermont, 2; Massachusetts, 62; Rhode Island, 4; Connecticut, 31; New York, 33; New Jersey, 8; Pennsylvania, 10; Delaware, 3; Maryland, 1; Florida, 1; Ohio, 6; Indiana, 1; Illinois, 10; Michigan, 2; Wisconsin, 1; Iowa, 1; Louisiana, 1; Texas, 1; Washington, 1; California, 3; District of Columbia, 1. Honorary Members: England, 2; Rhode Island, 1; Connecticut, 1; New York, 1.

WAS-TO-HEH-NO!

"Colonel Johnson had repeated conferences with the Indians and endeavored to influence them to take up the hatchet. In order to gain this cooperation, he invited them to feast on a Bostonian, and to drink his blood."

"It may be noted that Was-to-heh-no is still the Onondaga name for the people of the United States, being the nearest approach they could make to pronouncing Bostonian a century ago."

Wm. M. Beauchamp, Bull. 55, N. Y. State Museum, Albany, 1902.

"Gouge, to squeeze out a man's eye with the thumb, a cruel practice used by the Bostonians in America."

Francis Gose, A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue.