#### The

# PEWTER COLLECTORS' CLUB of AMERICA

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Vol. 3—No. 8

#### Pewter Miniatures

An article based on a talk presented to the New York Regional Group of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America by their Chairman, Charles Edgecomb, at their recent (November 14th, 1956) dinner meeting at the Washington Square Inn, New York City.

The diminutive object has always exercised great fascination for many of us. The small replica in correct scale, whether it be a famous clipper ship, a flying plane model or the Queen's doll house has invariably attracted an enthusiastic audience wherever it is shown. This fact was brought home to me only recently when the Antiques section of the New York World Telegram and Sun carried the announcement that one of the attractions of the current special exhibit at the New York Historical Society is "Mrs. Tom Thumb's tiny corset". And pewter of deliberately diminished scale is no exception to the general rule.

Many forms and shapes of pewter have been dug up and even dredged up from river beds in England and the Continent. They date back all the way to the time of Roman Occupation. Among these articles there are many miniature objects. Some of them are definitely counterfeit representations of objects in daily use in their historical period. Some were undoubtedly "play things", while others quite probably were replicas of familiar utensils buried with the dead. Cotterell in Pewter Down the Ages comments in this fashion on the subject of pewter toys in general. "Children's moods were not forgotten. Nearly every type (of pewter object) was reproduced in this toy form, and a whole volume could be written on this subject alone."

We should of course come to a clear understanding as to what we mean by the term *miniature*. Webster defines it as: "a representation on a much reduced scale, a small copy."

For a point of reference, one photograph of miniatures in Pewter Down the Ages has a regular-sized pocket match box in one corner of it to use for comparison with the tiny items. Otherwise the forms pictured: platters, plates, candle sticks and drinking vessels, to mention a few, could not be distinguished from their normal-sized counterparts because of careful workmanship. In the published account of the Pewter Exhibit in the Boston Public Library November 18 to December 15, 1935 the tiny size of a group of miniatures is emphasized in the second picture of the exhibit by placing them just above a line of graduated-sized porringers running diagonally from the upper left to the lower right corner of the photograph.

I prefer not to be bound by a too rigid definition because, from my point of view at least, this is not a strict scientific investigation. It is rather an exploration into the joys of our ancestors in their childhoods, and quite likely into one of their hobbies as adults. I can easily imagine them collecting and treasuring miniature pewter objects which were not as commonplace as those utensils which were necessary to their very existence, and therefore taken for granted.

For this reason I am going to use the following limitations for the purposes of this article.

I shall treat as a miniature any pewter object of diminutive proportions and of proper scale, whether it is deliberately much reduced in size or is tiny by its very nature. Thus I shall include a host of toy objects, some of which I shall mention later, along with a number of articles which are of necessity little, such as buttons, communion tokens, Charles II farthings, buckles, invalid feeding cups, vessels for sacred oils, and chimney and mantle ornaments to suggest a partial list.

Toy pewter has been a thriving West European industry certainly since the beginning of the 16th Century, with the city of Nuremberg, Germany as one of its most successful centers. When the sources which I consulted were written, and most of them were produced in the 1930's, important exhibitions of this art were to be found in the Nuremberg Doll's House at South Kensington, London. This charming account under the heading *Peasant Pewter*, is to be found in Armenius Haeberle's book *Old Pewter* published by the Gorham Press in 1931. Mr. Haeberle was a United States Consular official at the time and he writes as follows:

"A few days later I met Professor Oscar Seyffert, director of the Oscar Sieffert Museum in Dresden.

"When the director led me to a long case filled with old pewter figures of diminutive size, I had no conception of the cultural importance of this form of pewter, and the fascinating study of gradual evolution, through hundreds of years, of the tiny pewter figures that depict not only military achievements but also many other phases of human activity.

"I was shown rows and rows of soldiers; regiments of infantry, cavalry and artillery. Having been properly arranged by a military expert, they represented more than merely a child's game.

"I was shown street fairs, booths and vendors of every description, acrobats, circus riders, rural scenes, farm life with domestic animals, and beasts and birds of the forest, all so small, yet so true to nature in design and coloring that I marveled at this height of artistry.

"'These,' said Proffessor Seyffert, 'are of great educational value. They were, and are still used to educate our children, and incidentally give mothers a chance to review their historical, mythological, religious and other subjects.'

"The pewter figures are painted to show the costumes of a (particular) period. A great variety of such historical scenes of all parts of the globe, complete with wooden buildings and other accessories are available not only for our children, but also for older people.

"Subsequently I visited a toy store where I was overwhelmed with a mass of history of pewter toys, during the past three centuries. Each century since 1600 brought forth famous Nuremberg expert designers and engravers who, because of their consummate skill in making pewter toys, have acquired immortal fame in the annals of German pewterers."

Thus we get a glimpse of a few of the functions which miniature European pewter has served down through the centuries. It has done its bit toward preserving our knowledge of some of those customs and cultural influences which add up to that vague, almost indefinable something, referred to as the charm of almost forgotten eras. A replica can do more, oftentimes, to bring a period to life than many words.

Now let us turn away from the story of European craftsmanship and investigate the record of miniature pewter as related to our American creators of "the good grey metal". Almost immediately we learn that there was no industry here comparable to that of Nuremberg and certain centers of Saxony, France, Holland, and England where there were pewterers such as Robert Piercy of London (1722) who advertised, "Makes and sells all sorts of pewter toys". Probably our pewterers had little time for what may have been considered frivolities. They may have decided, too, that toy objects were so easily imported that they did not wish to compete in this field. I have seen lists of toys imported by the Boston firm of Gilbert and Lewis Deblois in the mid 18th century, and pewter items appeared in the invoices with considerable regularity. I did, however, find this group of late notices in our Bulletin Number 23, November, 1948. Mr. Rupert



A group of miniatures from the collection of Mr. Amory S. Skerry. A Gleason teapot, T.B.M. Co. lamp, Danforth mug, Hamlin basin and Lee porringer. The match is a contemporary reproduction and is placed in the group to indicate the scale of size.

W. Jaques submitted this information as the result of a search through the *Directories* of New York City:

1868-69, Freiderich Hagen, Manufacturer of Pewter Toys and Britannia Ware, 278 East Houston Street, N. Y. C. O. Tensi, Manufacturer and Wholesale Dealer in all kinds of Pewter Toys, 10 Macdougal Street, N. Y. C. And a third entry indicating that in 1872-73 Mr. Tensi had taken a partner, and had moved to 121 White Street.

In spite of this lack of a real American pewter toy industry, numerous miniature forms were made here. The Richard Lees, father and son, are famous for their tiny porringers and other reduced forms. Dr. Laughlin in *Pewter in America*, Vol. I, p. 123 says: "Most marked is the Lee flair for the diminutive. The Lee saucers (or butter plates) measure but  $5\frac{3}{8}$  inches in diameter.

"... The same fondness for smaller forms is evidenced in the spoons, ladles and porringers." Joseph Weekes, according to Dr. Laughlin, "did not make large hollow ware forms, but he was an able specialist in small articles, and his work is worthy of a place on the shelves of the most discriminating collector." Isaac C. Lewis has left us a few diminutive "tasters rather crudely made". Samuel Hamlin is well known for his doll-sized basins and small beakers.

While recently reexamining the photographs in *Pewter in America* I noted numerous miniature articles: a half-gill mug by Samuel Danforth, a 3½-inch high beaker with handle by Boardman and Hart, the famous 3½-inch japanned "Washington" beaker of George Coldwell as well as several other marked and unmarked objects.

I realize that this article is only pilot study on this delightful subject. Or should I turn the tables on myself and say I have written a "miniature"? May I paraphrase the great Cotterell and remind you that a book could be written about it.

Anyhow, when shopping for a gift to interest your favorite "small fry", remember not to ignore the possibility of pewter miniatures. Who knows, you may be starting him or her on the road to an interesting collection and a thrilling hobby.



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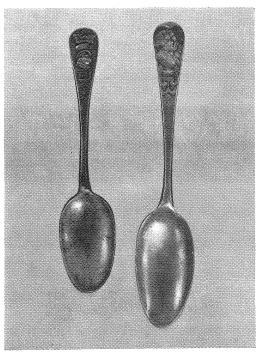
#### Royal Portrait Spoons

It occurred to me that the members might be interested to see an illustration (L) of the latest in the series of Royal portrait pewter spoons to come to light, chiefly because the monarch commemorated, George III, played no small part in creating the state of affairs which exists today on each side of the Atlantic.

It may be called a "caricature" spoon and the details are sufficiently clear for me to omit a written description of it.

It was in a dealer's shop in late September that I espied four of these spoons; I had no doubt as to their authenticity or nationality, and the type of hat worn by the effigy gave me the approximate period.

I thought, however, that the portrait might represent either George III in old age or George IV.



George III (in effigy as "Farmer George") to the left. The conventional and more flattering representation and his Queen to the right.

I bought the spoons and passed on some of them to my friend, Mr. Ronald F. Michaelis, honorary librarian to our Society, who contributed such an excellent article on Royal portrait spoons to "Apollo" in June, 1950. As I expected, he was able to

produce a convincing solution to the query of representation.

In his later years George III became interested in agriculture and wrote a good deal about it; he was said to have farmed profitably and he became a figure of satire and cariacature known as "Farmer George". Close inspection of the portrait shows an car of wheat protruding from the hatband in front, and this, coupled with the hat itself and the generally bucolic appearance of the figure provided the clue that these were caricature spoons, cast during the later years of the King's life.

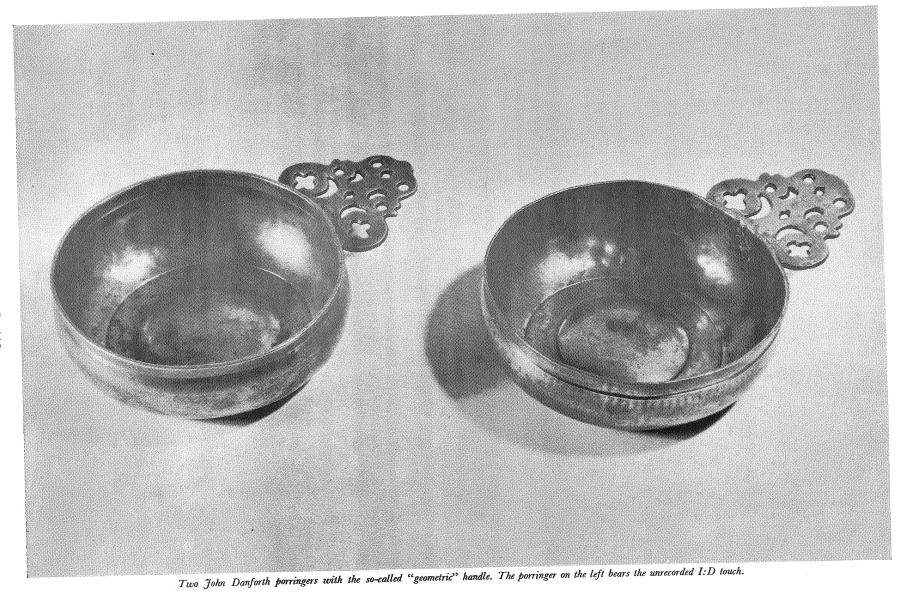
So far, so good, and we now have a record of George III and his Queen in their robes (R), and the King near the end of his reign. The type of spoon — the "Round end" succeeded the "Split end" or "Pied-de-biche", and with it interest here in pewter spoons may be said to end.

An old problem arises again in connection with this particular example, the meaning of the large initials I.H., or H.I. cast in relief; they could be read either way, for by reversing the stem, it will be apparent that as H.I. they are beneath a vase bearing a growing shrub.

Are these maker's or owner's initials? Mr. Michaelis went very thoroughly into the subject of cast initials in his article already referred to, but confessed that he could not, at that time, advance a satisfactory solution. The main points are:

- (1) That it is most unlikely that the necessary sinkings would be cut into an expensive mould in order to reproduce the initials of one customer only, who would probably not require more than 2 or 3 dozen spoons: and that, therefore, these are not owner's initials.
- (2) That similar cast initials appear on other spoons which show the pewterer's touch, containing different initials: and that, therefore, these are not maker's initials. It is also probable that customers would take a poor view of their table ware exhibiting such blatant advertising.

However, I possess a large Communion Flagon of c. 1660 of which the thumb purchase has the initials WP cast upon it, whilst the Touch, No. 74 on the first Touch



plate, does contain the same initials, and is possibly that of William Pettiver; but this is scarcely a fair comparison.

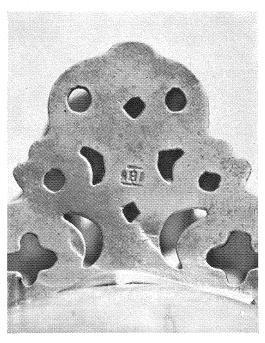
So I am left, like my friend, hoping that one day someone will be able to solve this puzzle.

A. V. S. G.

(Editor's Note: The above initials are those of Captain A. V. Sutherland-Graeme, one of our honorary members and a former President of the Society of Pewter Collectors in England: Captain Sutherland-Graeme is an internationally recognized authority and has contributed many articles on pewter to periodicals and books. We are deeply grateful for the stimulating article above).

#### The Skerry Porringer

(Editor's Note: Many of us are familiar with the item known as The Skerry Paten; we are about to become acquainted with The Skerry Porringer and the present Amory S. Skerry of Barrington, R. I. is, in addition, a lineal descendent of the much earlier Skerry of Salem, Mass. Mr. Skerry's fine and distinctive collection of pewter indicates a penchant for porringers, and on a recent visit to his home I counted no fewer than fifty-two of them. One of his latest acquisitions in this category is a true "stunner" and Mr. Skerry here tells the story of it with a characteristic and highly becoming modesty. Had he chosen to strut a bit he would be richly entitled to do so for this piece is, quite likely, as important as any American porringer in existence).



The unrecorded I. D. touch of John Danforth, Norwich, Connecticut

Some years ago, while driving across the Berkshire hills, I stopped at a small antique shop well up in the mountains. Among other pieces of pewter, I found there a badly abused porringer. While it was unmarked and in bad shape, the handle excited me, for I recognized it as being identical with that shown by Ledlie Laughlin, Plate XII, No. 57. This porringer appears on the right side of the photograph. I was informed that the piece had been obtained locally, not too far from the Connecticut line, so that it was not difficult to associate it with John Danforth of Norwich.

I am sure that pewter lovers can imagine my delight when a well-known dealer showed me, in November of this year (1956) a duplicate of my porringer. This one, however, was in good condition and bore an unrecorded John Danforth touch on the back of the handle. And they do make an interesting pair!

AMORY S. SKERRY.

#### The Annual Meeting

On Saturday afternoon, October 27th, the P.C.C.A. held its annual meeting at the Institute of History and Art at Albany, N. Y., to which the club had been invited by Miss Janet R. MacFarlane, Director of the Institute. This meeting had been postponed from a date in May, due to the fact that a meeting place had not been designated for the earlier date in sufficient time for the proper notification of club members. The meeting was preceded by libation and luncheon at the University Club, only a few steps away from the Institute of History and Art.

There is no need to dwell at any length upon the business aspect of the occasion. That the meeting was sketchy and amorphous in character may be shown by stating that the only two offices being vacated were refilled from the floor by naming the incumbents and that, in the absence of a Treasurer's report, the club was assumed to be solvent by unanimous vote. It should be added, of course, that the postponement of some five

months unavoidably gave this meeting the character of an interim affair held in large measure for the sake of fulfilling the constitutional mandate.

Steps were taken in one direction, however, which may have large portents for the future. A committee of three, Dr. W. A. Monkhouse, Mr. Amory Skerry and Mr. Walton Deckelman representing, respectively, the areas of southern Maine, Rhode Island and central Connecticut was appointed to make the inaugural moves looking toward the formation of a New England Regional Group. This followed a plea from the floor for more frequent meetings of the club, such as were held in its earlier years when it was in itself more or less a regional organization. With the membership of the P.C.C.A. now in excess of two hundred and fifty and scattered all over the United States, it was realized that frequent meetings of the national body in various areas could have little more than local significance and that the answer to the question of more frequent get-togethers lies in the formation of regional organizations in those areas where a sufficient concentration of club membership exists. Several such are envisioned.

The warm hospitality of the Albany Institute of History and Art, handsomely dispensed by Miss MacFarlane, Director, and Mr. Rice, Curator, will be long remembered, as will the fine display of pewter from the collection amassed by the Institute and available for examination on several long tables in the foreground of the auditorium in which the meeting was held. This collection, as seems most fitting, is made up in large part of pieces by Albany pewterers and those of the Hudson Valley region. There were seven or eight of the magnificent chalices, made both by Peter Young and Timothy Brigden, which are completely American in style and surpassingly handsome. Henry Will, Daniel Curtiss, Spencer Stafford and others were represented by examples of their finest work. In addition, the dominant interest in pewter unites everyone at these affairs and generates an excitement of its own. The entire occasion may be summed up in the words of a member who, writing subsequently on another matter, began his letter by saying, "Grand party at Albany".

#### New York Regional Group Activities

The New York Regional Group held its fall meeting on the evening of November 14th at the Washington Square Inn, University Place, New York City. Pewter Miniatures was the topic of the meeting which was preceded by an excellent dinner. The attendance was small, possibly due to the fact that it was a mid-week affair and, as so frequently happens in such a situation, the meeting was stimulating and interesting in a proportion equal to the inversion of the attendance figures.

Mr. Charles Edgecomb, Chairman of the New York Regional Group, read a paper which he had prepared on the subject of Pewter Miniatures. The substance of his remarks is used as the opening article in this issue of the Bulletin. Many miniature objects of pewter were brought to the meeting and displayed on a table at the far end of the room. Standing on the table with the miniatures and setting off admirably the diminutive character of the latter was a full-sized five-quart lidded pitcher by Roswell Gleason which had been brought to the meeting, presumably in the spirit of fun, by one of the members.

In addition, Mr. Edgecomb had a number of beautifully formed miniature objects of pewter before him as he spoke and which were passed around the company during his talk. Mr. Edgecomb was even able to produce on this occasion a "double miniature" — a tiny portrait painted on pewter which, naturally, qualified as a miniature in both the fields of painting and pewter.

The winter meeting of the New York Regional Group is scheduled for January 26th (a Saturday) at two o'clock in the Board Room of the New York Historical Society, 170 Central Park West, New York City. The topic for this meeting will be "That Versatile Vessel — the Porringer".

#### Patriot and Pewteress (?)

On June 30, 1761, Roger Sherman, the great Connecticut statesman and patriot-to-be, came to New Haven from New Milford, keeping a store on Chapel Street, across from what is now "the old campus". On the next day he started a ledger which is now in the library of the New Haven Colony Historical Society. Ralph Thomas, Curator and Librarian of the Society, has pointed out a most interesting page in this ledger showing the accounts of Sherman with Elizabeth Mary Bassett of New York between 1761 and 1765.

Elizabeth Mary was the widow of the first Francis Bassett, who died in 1758. While apparently there were no children born to this segment of the Bassett tribe, there was a younger relative named in honor of Francis. It is assumed by Laughlin that this second Francis took over the tools and touches of the first named.

Returning to the page from the Sherman ledger, in the five-year period from 1761 through 1765, there are twenty-six entries to the account. Mrs. Bassett bought over a quarter of a ton of old pewter from Sherman. Since it was shipped to New York by boat, she also owed money for the transportation costs. To offset these costs, Sherman purchased many items from Mrs. Bassett, many of them grouped together under "pewter" or "sundries". On three occasions, the pewter she sold him was itemized:

Nov. 2, 1762	2 Doz. Quart pots		4	10	0
Dec. 1763.	1 Doz. Tankards	63/	3	3	-0
	6 Ditto	5/	1	10	0
	2 Doz. Quart pots	45/	4	10	0
	2 Doz. Pint Do.	5/	2	14	0
	6 Chamber pots	5/	1	10	0
Oct. 4, 1764	Chamber pots	J	5	Ω	5
	l Quart measure	ſ	.,	O	9

While these entries are fascinating, they pose more questions than they answer. Was Elizabeth Mary wielding the hammer and turning the lathe herself, or was she a merchantress selling the wares of the second Francis — or even the young Frederick? Finally, if we assume the wares she sold were produced by some member of her family, we delight in adding a quart measure to the known forms produced by the group. Also, let us not forget — especially in view of the above — that every well-rounded collection should now contain chamber pots of two sizes.

Dean A. Fales, Jr.

#### Random Jottings

A New England Regional Group, the birth of which was foreshadowed at the annual meeting in Albany last October, will come into being at a meeting in Cambridge, Mass., on February 9th. A call to this meeting has been issued to all members of the P.C.C.A. residing in New England. Meanwhile rumors continue to float about in connection with a potential Regional Group in California. Your editor hopes to verify these during an impending visit to the west coast.

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In response to numerous requests, we are including in this issue an up-to-date (we hope) list of members of the P.C.C.A. together with mailing addresses. This will greatly facilitate the exchange of information between members and will make it easy for members to ascertain the names of other members in their general area.

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The editor's plea, in the last issue, for greater support from the membership in submitting material for the Bulletin has produced blossoms and some fruit as well. An extremely interesting communication which resulted from this was a letter from a new member who, considering himself a member of the neophyte group, disclaimed the knowledge to write on pewter matters authoritatively. He produced, however, no less than eight ideas for the enlargement of the Bulletin's services to the club membership. Possibly the most striking of these ideas was the suggestion that the Bulletin list, in a series of articles, the pewter featured in various museums and restoration projects throughout the land. This is a large order indeed, but a start will be made in the next Bulletin on this project. The Bulletin hopes also to reprint in future issues the three very comprehensive studies on porringer handles by the late Dr. Percy Raymond — as true a Moses as any club is ever likely to have. These articles appeared in the now discontinued American Collector about ten years ago.

#### Last Minute Special

For a variety of reasons, all of them excellent or at least defensible, this issue of the Bulletin is going to press considerably later than intended. This circumstance, however, makes it possible to include at the very last moment the particulars of the meeting at Cambridge, Mass., on February 9th on which occasion the New England Regional Group was organized.

The meeting was held in the Hotel Continental and was preceded by a luncheon. Between twenty-five and thirty members of the P.C.C.A. attended and it was more than gratifying to greet on this occasion so many of those members who have actually created the history and traditions of this club; members whose efforts and whose counsels have enabled it to survive the perils of infancy and adolescence. Included in this group of the illustrious were three former presidents of the P.C.C.A.

Elected to office were Mr. Amory S. Skerry, president; Dr. W. A. Monkhouse, vice-president; Mr. Oliver Deming, treasurer; Mr. J. K. Ott, secretary and Mr. Walton Deckelman, program chairman. Annual dues of one dollar were established in order to defray the costs of printing and postage which will occur and recur as future meetings are held. Membership in the New England Regional Group is open to all members of the P.C.C.A. whether they reside in the New England area or not for it is anticipated that many future meetings will be held in spots easily reached from neighboring states outside New England. P.C.C.A. members wishing to join the New England Regional Group are invited to address themselves to any of the above named officers although, naturally,

a fiscal relationship should be established immediately and for this the proper officer is Mr. Oliver Deming, treasurer. His address is 38 Mill Street, Westfield, Mass. Notification of future meetings will be sent to all members whose dues in the New England Regional Group have been paid.

The program committee expects to plan an entire season of activity far enough in advance to permit the complete schedule to be announced in the early fall, this announcement to be followed by reminders or acceptance cards as each individual meeting impends. Two meetings are tentatively scheduled before summer although the exact dates have not yet been determined. One meeting is proposed for the month of March in New Haven where there will be the opportunity of viewing the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection at the Gallery of Fine Arts, Yale University. This will be a joint meeting with the New York Regional Group. A second meeting is planned for late in May at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Amory S. Skerry in Barrington, Rhode Island. In addition, several members of the new group have graciously offered their homes for future meetings which will, of course, simplify greatly the work of the program committee.

Not only was the representation at the Cambridge meeting an excellent and enthusiastic one but many letters were received from club members who were unable to attend this meeting yet anxious to record their active interest in the new organization. The future of the New England Regional Group appears to be a very promising one. Come in, Pittsburgh.

#### Roster of Club Members 1956-1957

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- Mr. and Mrs. John H. Ballantine Yardley Parva Greens Farms, Conn.
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- Mr. Preston R. Bassett 84 High Ridge Ridgefield, Conn.
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- Mrs. R. W. Beebe 56 Union Street Guilford, Conn.
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- Mrs. Henry Borntraeger 24 Livermore Road Wellesley Hills 82, Mass.
- Mrs. Charles I. Boynton 310 West Emerson Street Melrose 76, Mass.
- Mr. Willard O. Brewer 1364 Marlborough Avenue Plainfield, N. J.
- Mrs. Francis D. Brinton Oermead Farm, Route 1 West Chester, Pa.
- Brooklyn Inst. of Arts and Sciences (Mr. Marvin D. Schwartz) 188 Eastern Parkway Brooklyn 38, N. Y.
- Mrs. R. A. Brooks 240 Maplewood Road Riverside, Ill.

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- Mrs. Florence Folger 201 Washington Street Marblehead, Mass.
- The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village Dearborn, Mich.
- Mr. Joseph France 1409 Mercantile Trust Bldg. Baltimore 2, Maryland

- Mrs. Paul Franklin 225 N. Matlack Street West Chester, Pa.
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