

The
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of AMERICA

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More Light and Shadow
on John Skinner, Boston Pewterer

An American touchmark featuring a rose and crown together with the pseudonym SEMPER EADEM and the initials IS (John Skinner) is formally recorded for the first time in Carl Jacobs' recent book *Guide to American Pewter*. For several years, however, the mark has been known to a few individual collectors, Mr. Evans among them. Curiously, no mention of this very important discovery has appeared in the Bulletin up to the present moment. There has been no conspiracy of silence — it seems, merely, that each individual to whom this mark has been known has recognized its significance, drawn the logical conclusions and anticipated that the information would be made public from some other quarter. The following article was written by Mr. Evans well before the publication of the Jacobs book. Since that book is now in the hands of the public, Mr. Evans feels that his story may have lost a few degrees of timeliness. This view is not shared by the Publication Committee, however, which feels that the article will be of real interest to every reader of the Bulletin.

This is a report of the probable fulfillment of a long-held hope. The story can begin in the year 1924, the year that *American Pewter*, the first extensive study of this fascinating subject was published. Its author, J. B. Kerfoot, wrote that he missed "by an hour" acquiring a pewter plate made by John Skinner of Boston. So at that time, even the foremost student of American pewter, although knowing that a pewterer named Skinner had worked in Boston in the 18th Century, had never seen an example of his work.

A plate with this man's touch was first illustrated in the April 1925 issue of *Antiques*. The following year, Louis G. Myers, in his book, *Some Notes on American Pewterers*, in effect a supplement to Kerfoot's book, showed a Skinner plate with marginal reed on the underside of the brim and with hammered booge. He also reproduced the touchmark and hallmarks which duplicated those

previously appearing in *Antiques*. Recognizing this touch to be "so typically pre-Revolutionary", he felt Skinner's forebears must have been "Early Americans" and further research disclosed the fact that John's great-grandfather, James, who was born in 1635, had come to these shores and settled in Marblehead, Massachusetts. He died in 1701 and his tombstone may be seen in King's Chapel burying ground.

Through Ledlie I. Laughlin's later searches, we now know that James Skinner was a fisherman, that his son, Richard, became the wealthiest Marblehead merchant of his generation and that Richard had a son named Richard who was the father of pewterer, John, baptized May 6, 1733. John's life has become a fairly open book through the efforts of this same investigator.

In *Pewter in America* by Laughlin, published in 1940, John's story is told and in addition, an unrecorded Skinner touch is



Dish or Platter, diameter $16\frac{1}{16}$ inches, and "very neat Cann" made by John Skinner, Boston.

illustrated, together with those previously reproduced. The marks first appearing in *Antiques* consist of a marching lion in gateway with "John" arched above and "Skinner" below, accompanied by four small hallmarks. The first shield of the hallmarks encloses the initials "IS". The "new" touch, first shown by Laughlin, presents "I Skinner, Boston" in cartouche. Mr. Laughlin believes Skinner may have been engaged in pewtering twenty years prior to the Revolution and that, in all probability, he made little if any pewter after 1785, so he qualifies among this country's early makers.

Examples then known of his production include $8\frac{7}{8}$ and $9\frac{1}{4}$ inch smooth rim plates, $7\frac{3}{4}$ and 8 inch plates, dishes or platters measuring 12, $13\frac{1}{4}$ and $15\frac{1}{16}$ inches and basins of $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches and quart size.

Now for the wish which may at long last have been at least partially fulfilled. The

following excerpt is quoted from an advertisement of John Skinner, Pewterer, appearing in the July 7, 1763, issue of the *Boston News-Letter*, offering:

Plates of different sizes, hammer'd the same as London, *very neat Canns*, Quart and Pint Potts, Quart and Pint Basons, Poringers of five different sizes - pewter Beakers, &c. all warranted the best of fine Pewter; also Rum Measures, from Quart to Jill Potts, -

Mr. Laughlin deduces that since we know Skinner to be of the old pre-Revolutionary school and, therefore, having had many molds, "We dare hope that some of his unusual pieces will yet be found", and "who knows that some dusty attic may still conceal one of those 'very neat Canns' or perhaps a rum measure or two?"

Partial fulfillment of this long-cherished hope may have been realized in the finding



Unrecorded crowned rose-I-S-Semper Eadem touchmarks from obverse of 16 $\frac{11}{16}$ inch Skinner dish. A London touch has been struck centered below the pair of touches, of which the L is visible to the eye but not the camera.

of the handsome piece shown here in the first illustration. It is believed to be one of John Skinner's "very neat Canns" and an example of his long-missing hollow ware. Its identification awaited the finding, attribution and general acceptance of another "new" Skinner touchmark, previously unrecorded and perhaps his earliest. This more recently discovered combination of touches is shown in the second of the two illustrations.

The first time I saw this touch it was a single impression appearing on the back of a dish estimated to be about 12 inches in diameter. Unfortunately, there was no opportunity provided to obtain accurate measurements. Time and usage had rendered all but the center large rose with "I" to its left and "S" to its right illegible. The SEMPER and EADEM were not discernible and there was no visible accompanying LONDON stamp, which mark presumably was frequently added by some American pewterers to convey the impression or fact that the quality of the piece was equal to that of London manufacture. London quality was, of course, generally recognized to be of the highest.

Subsequently I acquired another and larger dish bearing the same touchmark. This dish is described below and appears in the accompanying photographs.

On the back of the dish, the crowned rose—IS — Semper Eadem touch has been struck twice together with a LONDON impression.

It is regrettable, but not the least surprising, that the wear and tear of almost two centuries should have obliterated portions of the marks. To have had more of the LONDON mark preserved so that it might have been compared with the die used in Figure 291 shown by Laughlin in *Pewter in America* would have been most interesting and perhaps revealing. Gone, too, are most of the word SEMPER and the first letter of the word EADEM. Enough remains, however, to have the touchmarks readily recognizable to the naked eye. Another noteworthy and unusual feature in the touchmarks is that the letters of the word EADEM are upside down, so to speak, when the mark is viewed in an upright position. The incorporation of SEMPER EADEM in his touch, together with his use of a London die, should interest greatly the students of American pewter.

This dish or platter measures 16 $\frac{11}{16}$ inches in diameter and represents a size previously unrecorded for this maker. As should be expected, its booge has been "hammer'd the same as London" and its brim is of unusual breadth. Pewter dishes of as much as 15 inches in diameter of American make are quite scarce, those of larger dimension, as this is, are correspondingly rarer. It is a most significant and interesting piece of American pewter. Incidentally, it should be added here for those who maintain lists of shapes and sizes of known examples that Skinner also made plates 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, one having come to

light recently with deep hammered booge and with the IS-Semper Eadem touch. This 9½ inch size has not appeared on earlier published lists.

Of even greater interest than the dish is the "very neat Cann" also shown in the first illustration. A single identifying, somewhat worn crowned rose-IS-Semper Eadem touch has been struck in the center of the inside bottom. Filled comfortably it holds a little more than a quart. The broken "C", solid, heavy strap handle with its double convolute terminal is unique. The well-proportioned drum sloping outward to its base with the single, decorative fillet placed pleasingly high, the attractive conformation of the base, together with the unusual handle, combine to justify its maker's ascription — a "very neat Cann."

But interest in this unusual piece does not end here. Laughlin illustrates in Figure 110 in *Pewter in America*, a can or pot which appears to be identical with the one pictured here, except for the touch. Instead of any known Skinner mark there is one resembling a horse with its foreleg raised — a mark which has also been found in a pint can or pot and a double-domed covered tankard. Is Skinner the pewterer who used this yet unidentified "horse" touchmark?

Thus light has been shed on one of John Skinner's mysteries, but in doing it we now find him associated with another, leaving plenty of opportunity for the curious to engage in the solution of this new, intriguing, unsolved historical secret.

JOHN J. EVANS, JR.



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That Versatile Vessel — the Porringer

By way of introduction Mr. Charles Edgecomb comments, "Over a considerable period of time the Bulletin has contained no article of length on the subject of porringers. Therefore I am offering this one which I prepared for a meeting of the New York Regional Group of the P.C.C.A. on January 26th at the New York Historical Society. The most I hope to accomplish here is to help the expert dust off — or should I say repolish? — a few dull memories and to stir up a livelier interest in porringers among those who may have been less than enthusiastic about them in the past. I hope also to draw a few valid if elementary conclusions from the existing facts".

One occasionally acquires information at most unexpected times and from most unexpected sources. On Sunday, January 27th (1957), at 4:00 P.M. I had a pleasant surprise while watching the television program called "Underseas Treasure Hunt". The program originated live from the deck of a salvage ship above a reef off Florida's Plantation Key. A professional treasure hunter, Arthur McKee by name, had located the wreck of a Spanish galleon. Through considerable detective work done by Robert I. Nesmith, Mr. McKee had learned that this ship was lost with its treasure during a hurricane on July 15, 1733. Two of the articles recovered from the sunken hull and which were shown to the television viewers made me really "open my eyes". They were a pewter dish, about 13 inches in diameter, and the major portion of a sizable porringer with its handle, the entire form being fairly well preserved after 220 years in the sea. What a tribute to the pewter porringer! (Editor's note: the dish sounds as though it might be of the type known as "Spanish trencher" — the type and name became fairly well known among English pewterers from the middle of the 16th century to the middle of the 18th century, this distinctive dish being a replica of several such recovered from the wreckage of the Spanish Armada.)

"That Versatile Vessel" — and I realize that I have to justify the use of the word "versatile" — first saw the light in that cradle of culture and comfort, that creator of styles, la belle France. This form was easier to manipulate when in use than a bowl or basin, because of its handle or handles, and conveniently and decoratively disposed of when not in use by the simple expedient of hanging it on a wall peg. The

artist added his contribution to the vessel by decorating the usually solid handles — sometimes on the back — so that the porringer would look attractive when out of use, resting in its accustomed place.

The French porringer was a basin with handles, rather than the form that we think of today with bulging sides and, more often than not, a large boss in the bottom of the bowl. It was made in many sizes, generally ranging from approximately two to six inches in diameter, and it fulfilled many functions. After plates and basins it was certainly the most important utensil associated with the serving of food. Dr. Laughlin indicates this fact in the arrangement of his topics in *Pewter in America*.

The French vessel was called a *potager*. When it crossed the English Channel its name changed because of a soup concocted from leeks which was called *porridge* rather than *potage* and in some way an *n* intruded itself into the spelling so that the vessel in which this concoction was served became not a *porridger* but a *porringer*. (Editor's note: the letter *n* crept into the word porringer in all probability because it was phonetically impossible to keep it out when the word was used in everyday speech. Precisely the same evolutionary result may be observed in the word messenger which is, of course, developed from the earlier and more strictly correct word messenger.)

The French improved the simple vessel. They put a lid on it, sometimes equipping the lid with legs so that the hot container could rest upon its own tripod when in use. Then, in the middle of the 18th century, they evolved it practically out of existence as a food utensil. They placed bails where the handles had been, enlarged it, gave it rococo

decorations and ended with the elegant soup tureen.

Just as in France, the popularity of the porringer declined in England shortly after 1760. We know that there were almost none made in Great Britain after that date except those made for export to America where this form continued to flourish for another seventy years. Nevertheless, it is recorded that porringers were much in evidence at the coronation feast of George III in 1760.

Ledlie I. Laughlin tells us, in *Pewter in America*, that if we find an unmarked specimen which is not obviously European, we are justified in assuming that it is American, and I add that with some patient detective work we can probably identify its American maker, with a few reservations involving transfers of molds, father and son puzzles, etc.

Perhaps here we should consider the many uses of porringers together with several reasons for their decline in popularity. The larger ones were employed in the home as containers of many kinds of food at the table; the tiny ones functioned as tasters and sippers. "Have a taste" and "try a sip" are expressions almost too venerable to track down. Dr. Raymond suggests that the large number of small ($2\frac{1}{2}$ inch) porringers leads one to conjecture that they may have served some purpose in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

In the taverns porringers were much in evidence. It is probable that they were used not only by the management but that habits of the pubs often brought their own wine pints or beer pints in one of their voluminous pockets to be sure of receiving all they paid for. (Remember those Scottish thistle measures!)

Hospitals employed porringers for the usual tasks for which they were used in homes, and they also served for bleeding bowls and in numerous other capacities. Some porringers are found with incised horizontal lines on the inside of the bowl, indicating that they were used for liquid measurement. Some imaginative people believe that this very wide employment in the sick room may have given porringers unfortunate associations in the public mind and thus may have discouraged their home use.

Then too, pottery and porcelain were "coming into their own" in the 1760's. As a matter of fact, in 1762 Josiah Wedgwood dedicated his cream-colored pottery to George III's Queen Charlotte, after which time it became forever Queen's Ware. I think we can assume that, had there been no other reason, the new decorative tablewares and china seemed much more desirable than commonplace run-of-the-mold pewter which had been around for hundreds of years. In America, however, pewter ware and porringers in particular had suffered no such fall from favor as they had in Europe. On the contrary, they were at the height of their popularity.

The American porringer provides a challenging study all by itself. Its interest lies particularly in the variety of handles of which nearly two dozen types have been recorded. Mr. Carl Jacobs tells us, in *Guide to American Pewter*, that "there are almost no distinctively American porringer handles. There are English and Continental prototypes for most".

These handles can be divided into two main and several sub-classes. The two principal groups are: (1) the pierced or openwork handles and (2) the "tab" or solid ears. These latter tell you with nearly perfect accuracy from what vicinity they came. In general, the new settlers in America continued to prefer and to fabricate the forms which had been familiar to them in their homelands.

Continental Europeans were accustomed to solid-handled porringer basins. Therefore in Pennsylvania, where Germans and Swiss settled, the tab-handled porringer basin developed. Two representative makers are Elisha Kirk and John Andrew Brunstrom. The solid pear-shaped handles of Newport, Rhode Island, are explained by the cosmopolitan character of that town in colonial times. Newport equalled New York in importance and, of course, attracted many continental Europeans.

The truly English type of porringer had an openwork handle which was inevitably an invitation to originality and inventiveness. The notable point is that there wasn't *more* variety — although the natural conservatism of the customers plus the cost and consequent scarcity of molds served as restrain-

ing influences. One point upon which all makers agreed was that porringers, when not in use, were to be hung up and therefore required a hole of some sort at the apex of the handle. From there on, agreement was not so general. However, nearly all pierced types have some kind of central shield where we usually find the maker's mark.

Dr. Raymond made three general classifications of pierced handles. Because Mr. Laughlin tells us that it was the most common one, I begin with the handle labeled "Old English", since it closely resembles its typical English prototype. Its general outline approximates roughly the conventionalized honeysuckle leaf with three pairs of irregular openings at the sides of the shield and with a heart cutout below the hanging-hole. The marked specimens of these vessels were made either in the Connecticut Valley, Rhode Island or New York. Rather curiously, the only known Pennsylvania example of the Old English handle was fashioned by a transplanted German pewterer, Johann Christopher Heyne. It is interesting to note that the Old English handled porringers are of rather small capacity, the largest holding 12 fluid ounces — a "wine pint".

It is futile to try to place the Richard Lees in any set classification for they were experimenters and innovators. Since they produced an exceptional variety of handle designs and were chronically in an impecunious state it is highly logical to suspect, as Mr. Jacobs does, that their handle molds were of something other than expensive brass, quite likely of soapstone, and that they made these molds themselves, discarding them frequently. One handle made by them I would call the "Valentine" handle — three hearts around a central axis above which is a crescent-shaped cutout for hanging purposes. This is sometimes called the "heart and crescent" handle.

The "crown handle" seems to have originated in the Bristol area of England. Whereas most pewter porringer handles are twin brothers or near cousins to those made by silversmiths in the more precious metal, the crown handle is uniquely a pewter form. Dr. Raymond subdivides crown handles into four groups based upon the details of their

central shields. If one is interested in minute details I refer him enthusiastically to the Raymond article about them in the *American Collector* of April, 1946. (Editor's note: this article will be reprinted in the next issue of the Bulletin and the remaining two articles on porringers by Dr. Raymond will follow in subsequent issues.) The crown-handled porringers were made in New York, Rhode Island, the Connecticut Valley and the Boston area.

The noblest porringer handle — to my taste, at least — is the "flowered" type. It is large, it is graceful, it is altogether pleasing to the eye. Ideally it has six pairs of irregular openings on either side of a shield suspended between two medial spindles. Its hanging-hole, too, has several forms, the quatrefoil being the most picturesque. It seems to have been indigenous to Rhode Island and Connecticut. Samuel Hamlin and David Melville are two of its most worthy creators. Dr. Madelaine Brown in her Rhode Island Historical Society Bulletin article of January 1938 (page 4) writes, "Half of the American porringers in existence bear the name of Hamlin". The article by Dr. Raymond in the *American Collector* of November 1947, goes into much detail about flowered handles.

Now a word about the bracket supports found on the backs of American and many English handles at the point where the handle meets the bowl (barring American tab handles). They are the wedge, the block, the triangular and the linguiform, to sum up the subject briefly. They assist one in placing the maker because each fabricator had his favorites. Nor have I mentioned bowl sizes of the American product. In general, these ranged from 5½ inches down to slightly over 2 inches.

There is one real pewter puzzle in the field of porringers, a regular "whodunit". It concerns the makers of the several handles (most of them of the crown type) with cast-in-the-mold initials. These sets of initials are EC, CP, WN, SG (with the *S* reversed), IG and RG. This mystery has never been resolved to the complete satisfaction of pewter connoisseurs, although theories about it are presented from time to time. Some day someone will probably unearth the key bit

or bits of evidence which will unlock this puzzle. Until then let us all be on the alert for clues.

As a fitting end to this study I am going to name the real glamour porringers with which I have come in contact as the result of my research for this article. Number one is the Scottish quaigh, an austere shape rarely seen in pewter. Number two is the Herrick porringer, a highly decorated commemorative vessel with raised medallions on boss and cover, dedicated to the English sovereigns William and Mary and now residing in the Essex Institute at Salem, Massachusetts. Dr. Raymond wrote interestingly about it in Bulletin No. 14 after M. Adolph Riff, curator of the Museum of Strasbourg, France, had published an illustrated article about it in *Antiques*, October 1927. A porringer of unmistakable similarity is pictured in *Antiques* of February 1957 (page 144). It is part of a new "Hall of Everyday Life in Early America" exhibit at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington. Number three is the Ninigret dolphin-handled porringer touchingly associated with an Indian princess who died about 1690. It may now be seen at the Museum of the Rhode Island Historical Society in Providence. Number four — the beauty queen of them all — is a unique double crown-handled vessel in mint condition made by TD and SB (Thomas and Sherman Boardman). There is a handsome picture of it in Louis G. Meyers' book *Some Notes on American Pewterers*. It was undoubtedly a commemorative piece made for a christening or some occasion of equal importance. Number five — any one of David Melville's charming flowered-handle creations. Number six, and last — that heroic fragment exhibited at Plantation Key, Florida after resisting the destructive forces of the sea for 220 years.

I hope I have now justified the "versatile" in my title. In any event I have had a most interesting time making the attempt. The following sources of information were consulted and are here listed as a bibliography: BOOKS — *American Pewter* (Kerfoot); *Pewter in America* (Laughlin); *Rhode Island Pewterers* (Calder); *Guide to American Pewter* (Jacobs); *Some Notes on American Pewterers* (Meyers); *Chats on Old Pewter* (Masse); *Old*

Pewter, its Makers and Marks (Cotterell); *Pewter Down the Ages* (Cotterell); *Antique Pewter of the British Isles* (Michaelis); *Pewter Marks on Old Pewter Ware* (Markham). PUBLICATIONS — *Antiques*, October 1927 and February 1957; *American Collector*, April 1946, May 1947 and November 1947; *Rhode Island Historical Society Bulletin*, January 1938 and *Bulletins of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America*, nos. 14, 16, 19 and 31. C. E.

The Annual Meeting

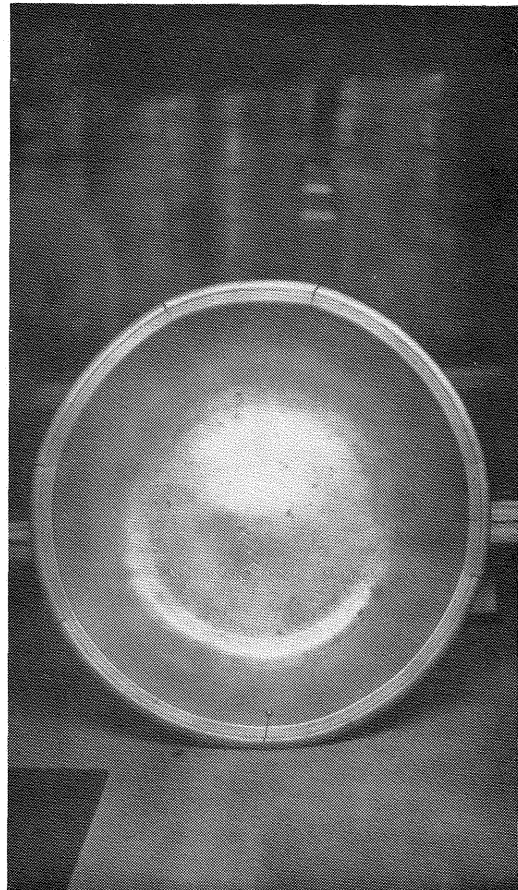
The twenty-third annual meeting of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America was held in the Nassau Tavern Inn at Princeton, New Jersey, on Saturday afternoon, May 18th, 1957. The meeting was preceded by cocktails and luncheon at the Inn and was followed by an open-house reception for P.C.C.A. members at the beautiful and secluded estate-home of Mr. and Mrs. Ledlie I. Laughlin which is located in Princeton, some four miles or so beyond the center of this attractive and historical town — or, more correctly perhaps, borough. The weather man cooperated handsomely so that, both at the Inn and at the Laughlin home, the club members were able to add to the indoor enjoyments those of the open air.

Mr. Stanley Paddock, of East Greenbush, New York, became the newly-elected President of the P.C.C.A. at the meeting. He succeeds Dr. Robert Mallory III in accordance with the principle of rotation which, in connection with this office, is mandatory. Elected to one of the two Vice Presidential offices was Mr. John P. Remensnyder. Mr. J. K. Ott was elected to the office of Corresponding Secretary and Mr. Oliver Deming to the office of Treasurer, as both Mrs. Eaton H. Perkins and Mr. Thomas E. Kneeland, the previous incumbents, had requested termination of their tenures. The remaining offices were filled by re-election save for the one post on the Board of Governors, which is automatically vacated each year. Here Dr. Mallory succeeded Mr. Eric deJonge. About seventy-five members of the P.C.C.A. were present to conduct the business of the meeting.

Dr. Mallory, the outgoing President, gave a valedictory address during which he reviewed his two-year term of office together with its disappointments and its rewards, and peered hopefully into the future. He indicated that a new Regional Group in the Pittsburgh area is near the point of crystallization and visualized the possibility that future annual meetings of the P.C.C.A. might "visit" in turn this and other areas where local interest has assumed a concrete form. Dr. Mallory also called for a vigorous approach to the Pewter Institute ideal to which ex-President deJonge is both father and nurse. In conclusion, Dr. Mallory turned his attention to the Bulletin, suggesting a fixed tri-annual schedule of publication, the addition of a question and answer forum (Editor's note: any questions?) and calling for greater cooperation on the part of the club membership in submitting material for publication. (Editor's note: upon perusing the contents of the July 1957 issue of *Antiques*, the Bulletin editor raises a quizzical although uncritical eyebrow. He wishes respectfully to ask — oh well, never mind.)

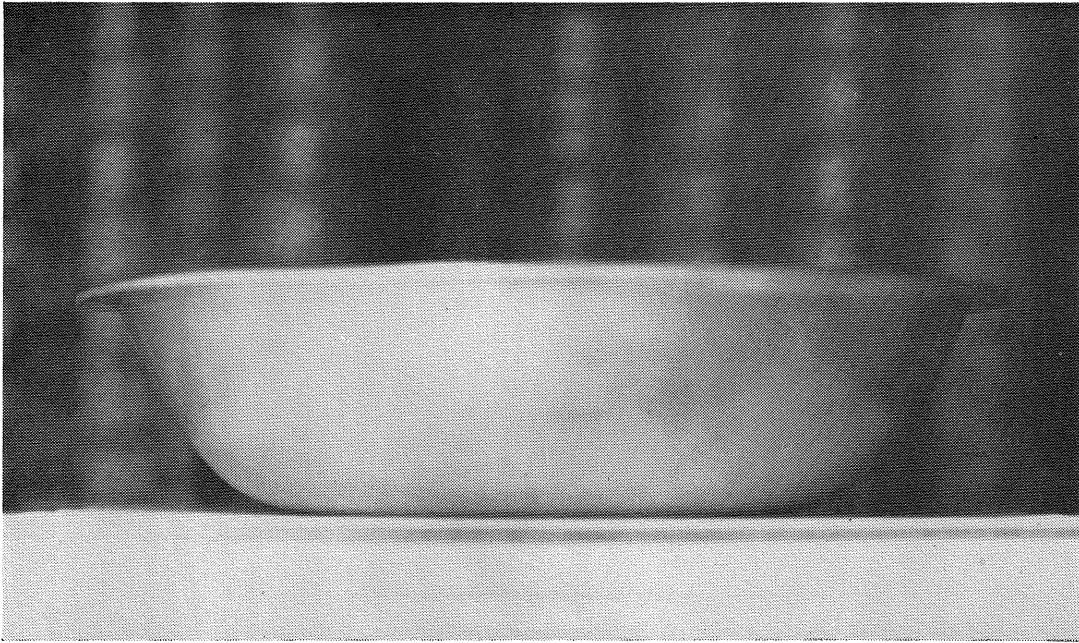
The climax of the day's events was reached in the visit to the Laughlin home and a more fitting climax simply cannot be imagined. The club members were greeted by their gracious host and hostess with every conceivable gesture of welcome and were privileged to wander about the house and premises to their heart's content. Although distractions were to be found on every hand, interest was centered, naturally, in the pewter room where we were able to see "in the flesh" and examine in our hands many of those pewter objects which have become so familiar to us through the study and restudy of Mr. Laughlin's monumental work on American pewter. If, as the Bible tells us, there is no distinction between sinning in thought and sinning in deed, we were all, to the last member, covered with larcenous guilt — may God forgive us. Mr. Laughlin seemed to be surrounded at every moment by a knot of people whose questions he answered with inexhaustible patience, here and there, as the occasion demanded, expanding a reply into a small impromptu discourse on the point at hand. The planning of this day was truly inspired.

A Gershom Jones Basin and a "Whodunit"



Gershom Jones Basin

It may interest the readers of the Bulletin to be informed about a recent acquisition of mine which is, very likely, the first clearly authenticated basin made by Gershom Jones, early Rhode Island pewterer. (Editor's note: previous basins accredited to Jones have been invariably marked with a no-name eagle touch, No. 1 of Kerfoot's "unidentified eagle" touches, I believe, although the reference book is not at hand. This touch is now assigned to Jones.) The diameter, edge to edge, is $9\frac{1}{8}$ inches; the width of the rim is $\frac{7}{16}$ inch and the height of the basin to the top of the rim is $2\frac{13}{16}$ inches. The basin is unusual in that: (1) it is considerably heavier than other American basins of similar size; (2) it is somewhat more shallow than other Rhode



Gershom Jones Basin (side view)

Island basins of corresponding diameter; (3) the sides are more sloping than is usually the case which is, of course, closely linked to the previous point; (4) it is marked on the bottom rather than in the well — this is not unique but uncommon; (5) where, in

a normal basin, the rim joins the body at a sharp angle, in this basin there is a slight transitional angle — not a smooth curve, however — before the rim flares out. The marks, L 339 and 340, are clearly shown in the accompanying photograph.



Gershom Jones Basin marks (L339 and L340)

The basin is, on the whole, in excellent condition and there appears to be no doubt as to its origin or its genuineness. We know from the inventory of his estate, and from other sources of information, that Jones made basins and I trust that the foregoing will aid others who may have similar, possibly unmarked, pieces to identify them more clearly. This basin does not, of course, rule out the possibility that Jones made basins of other types with other touches, perhaps later in his career. The basin described above is a little like some baptismal bowls and may, perhaps, be a special form.

I am also taking the liberty of submitting, because of its unusually fine detail, a photograph of a well-known touch of Gershom Jones which appears on a porringer handle. The extreme craftsmanship of those men who made the dies for pewterers is apparent.

And now, to try still further the patience of the Bulletin readers, I would very much enjoy receiving comments, opinions and corrections in connection with the origin and later life of the plate described below. I purchased it from a dealer some forty miles north of Boston who declared that it had come from a family which had always lived in the Boston area. Though mostly interested in Rhode Island pewter, I thought it might have some possibilities.

The plate is $8\frac{13}{16}$ inches in diameter; width of rim is $1\frac{13}{16}$ inches and the depth is about $\frac{1}{16}$ inch. The rim with hallmarks is shown in one photograph and the additional marks, found on the bottom, in another. There is a slight bulge on the underside of the rim-edge, much in the manner of Hamlin smooth-brim plates although not as pronounced. The plate which, on the whole, is in excellent condition, is not hammered; the booge may be, but this is not apparent.

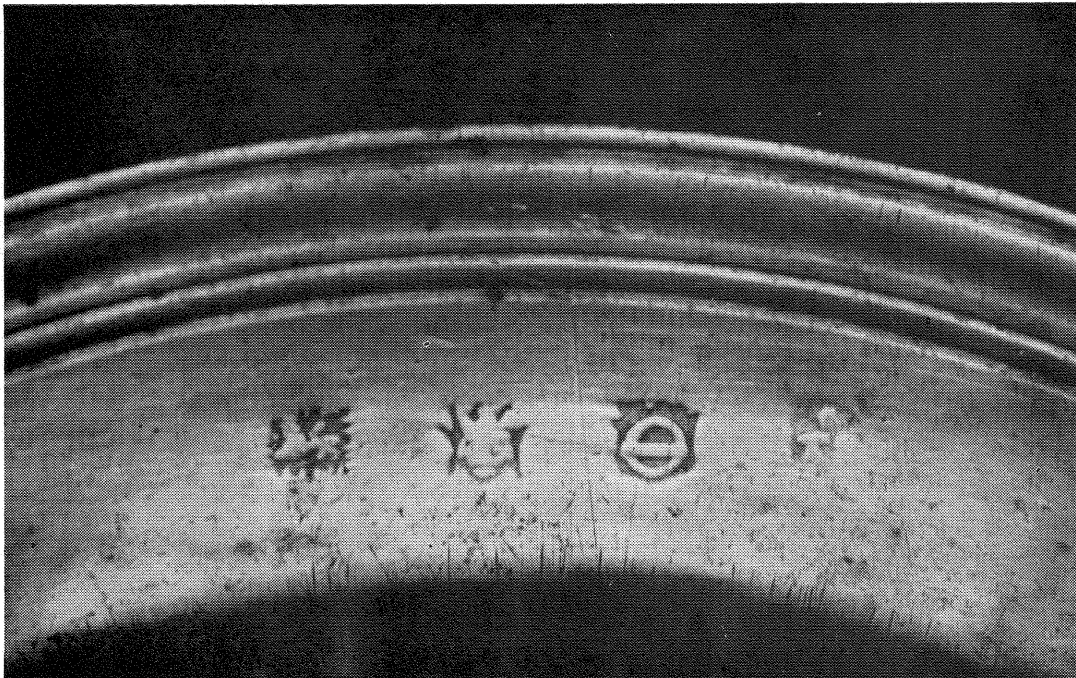
Though the English provenance of the plate will be immediately apparent to many, it has been interesting for me to speculate, on the basis of the limited knowledge here revealed, that the plate may be one imported from England by Thomas Smith, or possibly taken in trade by him, and sold after he had placed his mark upon it. This was a common practice, I believe. The multiple reeding dates the plate roughly between 1660 and 1705 which would correspond to the work-



Gershom Jones Initial touch (L341)

ing dates of Smith, who was born in 1668 and began to work in Boston about 1700. The main argument in favor of a Smith attribution seems to me to be the condition of the touches.

Hallmarks are usually struck quite deeply and well and those in this case, on the rim, are so struck. However, most of the detail has been worn off so that only the outline and high spots remain. On the underside of the plate the coronet and crossed plumes touch appears to have been well struck too, but considerably worn. On the other hand, the rose and crown touch seems almost fresh and little worn. It is also struck, apparently, with the die at an angle, an American habit — touches were seldom struck as squarely or as accurately here as in England and on the continent. The “T” is quite sharp; the “S” is more apparent to the eye than the photograph indicates.



Hallmarks on multiple reeded rim plate, 8 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches

From these observations it is possible to infer that the rose and crown touch with initials was struck well after the hallmarks and coronet touch were applied. One would expect all the marks to show a similar degree of wear if they were struck at the same time. And if, perhaps, the plate had been taken in by one of the many Thomas Smiths of London who placed his rose and crown touch upon it before reselling it (I assume this practice was also followed in England), how did such a second-hand item ever find its way to Boston without more wear on the rose and crown?

As yet there has been no touch of Boston's Thomas Smith found, and Ledlie I. Laughlin, who has seen the photographs shown here, is convinced that there is still no known touch of this pewterer. Mr. Laughlin compares the hallmarks, coronet and rose and crown with various marks of known English pewterers shown in Cotterell, and especially notes similarities between Cotterell No. 5882 and No. 5965 (except for the initials) and the TS rose and crown touch. Mr. Laughlin also feels that the maker of this plate was a provincial pewterer and not a Londoner as, primarily, the marks are not carefully placed in relation to one another. It is also his opinion that the marks are



*(left) Rose and Crown touch with initials "TS"
(right and lower) Continental crown touch*

contemporaneous and that the known history of the Boston Smith does not include a London apprenticeship which might account for a style of touch so like that of the English.

Though the coronet and hallmarks are clearly English, the rose and crown are not unlike those found on some pieces of known American origin ("Semper Eadem", the Bassetts, Henry Will), and the condition of the marks is intriguing. Any further comments on this will be very much appreciated.

For those who may be interested, the photographs shown here were taken by the writer with a $2\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ Speed Graphic, Tri-X film, normal lens of 101 mm., light from a desk lamp and developed in Microdol.

J. K. OTT.

The New England Regional Group

This organization came into being on February 9, 1957 at Cambridge, Massachusetts, as was reported in the last issue of the Bulletin. Its complement of officers appears on the masthead page. Mr. Amory Skerry, President-elect of the group, suggested a pattern of activities which would consist of frequent meetings at the homes of various members and at other locations where significant stands of pewter may be found. This would enable members to examine a varied assortment of pewter and to discuss a wide variety of pewter topics. Many of the members of this new group graciously offered their homes for future meetings.

The first regular meeting was held on April 6th at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Skerry in Barrington, Rhode Island. Members brought box lunches with coffee, tea and dessert served by their hosts. Following an enthusiastic and spirited business meeting, Mr. Skerry gave an informal dissertation

upon porringer forms and handles, illustrating his remarks with examples from his own extensive and mouth-watering collection of porringers, some of them unique in certain aspects, others in the exceedingly rare category and still others, naturally, in more familiar classifications. A few additional pieces of interest were brought to the meeting by various members and this is a practice which is encouraged. While porringers form the keystone of Mr. Skerry's collection other areas of interest are very well represented and, following the adjournment of the meeting, the members were privileged to visit Mr. Skerry's pewter room and inspect the collection in its entirety.

A second meeting was held on June 22nd at "Roseneath", the home of Miss Julia Wolcott and her sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, in Litchfield, Connecticut. This was also a box lunch affair at which the hostesses served dessert, tea and coffee. The day was excellent and the report states that the hostesses "outdid themselves". Those present were able to examine the various pieces of a striking collection of pewter. Among these, to mention but a few of the prominent pieces, were Henry and William Will tankards, pint and quart tankards by Cornelius Bradford, a finely-marked Samuel Danforth quart tankard, a William Will ladle, a unique Lee $4\frac{1}{2}$ inch geometric handle porringer and a shell handle porringer by Ellsworth. Mr. deJonge called attention to odd forms in the collection, forms such as silhouette frames, cribbage boards and miniatures. Though not necessarily of great age, they are scarce and worthy of the collectors' interest in that they depict quite vividly the broad field of use which was developed by American pewter craftsmen.

Another meeting will be held on July 20th at the home of Mr. J. K. Ott in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and additional meetings are scheduled for September 28th at the home of Dr. and Mrs. W. A. Monkhouse in Portland, Maine, and for October 26th at the home of Mrs. Wilson F. Payne in Needham, Massachusetts. Additional meetings beyond this date are being planned for the winter and spring months.

The New York Regional Group

During the past season the New York Regional Group held meetings on November 14, 1956 at the Washington Square Inn, New York City; on January 26, 1957 at the New York Historical Society and on May 10, 1957 at the Nassau Tavern Inn, Princeton, New Jersey. The first of these meetings was noted in Bulletin 37.

The meeting of January 26th was held on a Saturday afternoon and featured a discussion of the porringer form. Mr. Charles Edgecomb, the indefatigable president of the group, prepared and presented a paper in which he surveyed the broader aspects of the subject, considering it from historical, functional and stylistic viewpoints. This paper is presented to the club at large in the present issue of the Bulletin and is a most welcome companion piece to the article on Pewter Miniatures which appeared from the same source in the last issue of the Bulletin. An unanticipated and delightful conclusion to this meeting was provided by Mrs. Katherine Prentis Murphy who invited the group to her charming apartment for a cocktail hour.

The meeting of May 18th, planned originally for Silvermine, Connecticut, was held instead at Princeton in conjunction with the annual meeting of the P.C.C.A. as the dates for the two meetings were found to coincide. Although the annual meeting of the P.C.C.A. offered a full program for the day and was, in addition, a festive occasion, the New York Regional Group managed to hold a brief meeting as a unit, electing the same officers for another year and transacting its own annual business.

A Definition of the Regional Groups

The New York Regional Group is in the second decade of its existence and the New England Regional Group, although still in its first year, gives every indication of maintaining the sturdiness which has characterized it from the start. Persistent rumors encourage the belief that one or more additional Regional Groups which now exist in fancy will soon exist in fact. The moment is well suited to an examination of the workings of these groups in order to stimulate the formation of new groups and to dispel any misconceptions which may exist.

The primary purpose of the Regional Groups is communicative and this is also true of the national organization. Both bodies seek to make common property of the experiences, findings, thoughts and conjectures of the individual. The Regional Groups employ the instrument of frequent personal contact whereas the national organization, due to the fact that its membership extends from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, must rely largely upon the printed word (the Bulletin). The P.C.C.A. meets as a national body once each year and these meetings have, up to the present time, been held in the New England or Middle Atlantic areas since much the largest concentration of membership exists in these sections of the country. It is by no means impossible to visualize future annual meetings in other areas of the country as the P.C.C.A. expands. In addition, the national organization appears to be establishing the habit of celebrating each of its anniversaries which represents a multiple of five in a convention-like meeting with a two or three day program. The twentieth anniversary brought the memorable meeting at Winterthur, Delaware, which was attended by members from points as far removed as Texas — well worth it, too. The twenty-fifth anniversary, which will occur in 1959, is already planned as a week-end gala at Williamsburg, Virginia, and a pilgrimage

from whatever distance to this place — by far the most significant of the Colonial restorations in this country — should be amply rewarded.

The Regional Groups, on the other hand, serve a purpose which cannot be realized on a national scale. They enable the members of the P.C.C.A. to share a local interest in addition to the national one; to meet frequently within their geographical areas for the purpose of discussion and study and, let us not overlook this important point, frankly to enjoy the sociability which a common interest invariably generates whether it be nuclear physics, ski-jumping or, as in the present instance, the collecting of pewter. The New York Regional Group holds three meetings each year — fall, winter and spring. The New England Regional Group has embarked upon a program which forecasts six or more meetings each year.

Membership in the Regional Groups is limited to those who are members in good standing of the national organization, the P.C.C.A. This is the only qualification for membership and it means, therefore, that all members of the P.C.C.A. are automatically members of all Regional Groups and welcome, even urged, to attend any meeting of a Regional Group. Notices of Regional Group meetings are mailed several weeks in advance of each meeting but these notices are addressed only to those who have indicated by the payment of purely nominal, regional dues that they actually desire such notification. These dues are intended to cover the expenses of printing and mailing only and no Regional Group proposes to acquire a treasury surplus beyond the absolute minimum necessary to enable the treasurer to escape the fate of Old Mother Hubbard.

The dues for the New York Regional Group are fixed at two dollars a year and the New England Regional Group is experimenting to see what can be accomplished with a one dollar annual fee. Several points should be emphasized here. One — and this seems to be a misunderstood point, no member of a Regional Group acquires the privileges of membership in the national organization without the payment of national dues. Two, the payment of dues to a Regional Group

secures for the member the right to be notified and invited individually to each meeting well in advance of the meeting — the privilege of attending these meetings is not dependent upon the payment of dues at all but is inherent to all members of the P.C.C.A. It is assumed, although declared neither categorically nor dogmatically (to introduce several members of the animal kingdom into this discussion), that the election of officers and other business of a parliamentary nature will be conducted largely (although not necessarily exclusively) by dues-paying members of the Regional Group. Members will sometimes find it advantageous to “join” several Regional Groups as is indicated by the existence of duplicate names on the rosters of both the New York and New England Groups. The Regional Groups actually serve to strengthen the national organization rather than to weaken it.

One cannot dismiss this topic without a grateful bow in the direction of those individuals who have contributed time, thought, energy and personal funds to the organization and continued well-being of the Regional Groups. The list is a long one and an illustrious one. Without doubt the juiciest single fruit of Regional Group activity, from the national point of view, was the splendid tenth anniversary meeting of the New York Regional Group at the Brooklyn Museum. All members of the P.C.C.A. were individually invited to this affair by the host group and those who came, many they were, will long remember the fine program of cocktails, dinner, distinguished speakers and the viewing of the superlative collection of pewter which is housed in the Brooklyn Museum.

We hope to hear of new Regional Groups in due course. The names and addresses of the treasurers of the already existing Regional Groups will be found on the masthead page of each Bulletin — this for the benefit of those who wish, by the payment of annual dues, to “join” one or both of the two Regional Groups now functioning (the word join is placed in quotes since it is applicable only in a rough sense — one’s membership in a Regional Group is not initiated by the payment of dues; it is confirmed!).

A Book Reviewed

The appearance of a new book on the subject of pewter invariably brings a chorus of huzzas from the stannophiles. The most recent occasion for rejoicing is the publication of Carl Jacob's *Guide to American Pewter*. Mr. Jacobs approaches his subject as an appraiser and makes as his main object the listing of all known forms by all known American pewterers in terms of their dollar values. I think it will be conceded unanimously that no one is better qualified for this task since Mr. Jacobs has specialized for years in the handling of pewter, particularly American pewter, and during his years of activity in this field has been, more than anyone else, responsible for "making the market" and bringing about some sort of standardization of the price-line.

The evaluation of American pewter, which is the dominant theme of this book, produces a most rewarding corollary in that it provides the student of American pewter with a complete and up-to-date check list of makers, touches, forms, dates and locales. Between the covers of this book may be found, quite literally, hundreds of bits of information, some of it scrap-like in nature and some of it of considerable importance, which have never been recorded elsewhere. All information previously unrecorded is indicated as such by Mr. Jacobs.

All known touches are effectively illustrated in line drawings by Marion B. Wilson, save for the characterless name touches used by workers of the later britannia period which are self-identifying. There are, in addition, fifty excellent photographs of rare pieces, touches and striking groupings of pewter objects. There are also short dissertations on the subject of collecting and on the multiplex family of Danforth. In the form of an appendix, the book contains drawings of twenty-five porringer handles and fourteen tea and coffee pot shapes together with the names of the workmen who are associated with each.

It is not necessary to agree with Mr. Jacobs in his pricing of American pewter in order to recognize the usefulness and value

of his book. The subject of pewter prices is loaded with personal angles and factors which cannot be reconciled in a hundred books by a hundred different authorities. It is sufficient to say that this book is a faithful reflection of prices which have been realized and which have been determined not by the whim of Mr. Jacobs but by the inexorable law of supply and demand. Mr. Jacobs has emphasized that his quoted prices represent top retail figures for pieces in prime condition and this is a point which is quite likely to be overlooked by captious critics. No one is likely to disagree extensively with the relative values here catalogued and the wide awake prospector will discover many a bargain with the aid of Mr. Jacobs. In his introduction, Mr. Jacobs speaks of the many thousands of pieces of American pewter which have been bought and sold during the past thirty-five years and adds, "It seems worthwhile to establish stabilized market prices for the bulk of this pewter". The word to be emphasized here is the word *bulk*. If interpreted correctly, this means that Mr. Jacobs well realizes the fact that unique pieces and top rarities will always seek their own level price-wise and the opinion is here ventured that Mr. Jacobs' book will find one of its greatest avenues of usefulness in correcting the tendency, currently prevalent, toward the *overpricing* of items of middling or minor importance.

In considering American pewter largely from a mercantile aspect, Mr. Jacobs has produced a book which in no way paraphrases the splendid works of Kerfoot and Myers or the magnificent work of Ledlie I. Laughlin; it rather supplements and complements these earlier *opera*. Finally, while conceding the impossibility of eliminating error entirely from a work of this nature, it must be confessed that Mr. Jacobs' book contains rather more than the hoped-for minimum due, in some measure surely, to the many revisions to which the text was subject before it was finally submitted for publication.

W. D.

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