

*The*  
**PEWTER COLLECTORS CLUB**  
*of AMERICA INC.*

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BULLETIN NO. 90-91

MARCH - SEPTEMBER 1985

VOL. 9 NOS. 1 & 2

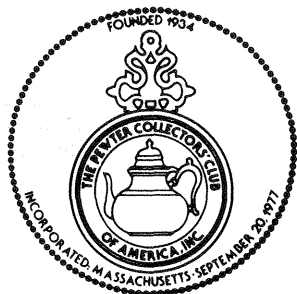
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A NEW WORLD AUCTION PRICE RECORD!



Sugar Bowl by Johann Christopher Heyne, see Article page 6.





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## *The President's Letter*

Two thoughts come to mind as I start to write my first President's Letter. The first, as we are all now aware, is the passing of Bill Blaney. The second concerns the lateness of this issue of the Bulletin. The two thoughts are significantly related. A quick scan of the Bulletin Author Index listings will clearly reveal the extent of Bill's contributions to the Bulletin over a period of many, many years and the date of publication of this Bulletin speaks for itself.

With an apology to those members who attended the National Meeting in Coopers-town and were treated to a preview, I would like to depart somewhat from tradition and use this forum to outline my principal concern at the beginning of my term of office. Over the years, we have all heard or read the lamentations of the Bulletin Editor about the lack of material for the next issue. In the past however, the situations never became so acute that issues were delayed to the extent that they have been recently. It seemed that one or two members always appeared in the nick of time to carry the Bulletin for a number of issues or for a few years. However, the lack of material today is sufficiently acute that publication of two issues each year may become practically non-attainable, and we have now lost another of our regular contributors. We cannot nor should not expect the present few members who contribute the bulk of the articles to continue to carry the issues, nor should we expect the Editor to compromise quality of content in order to meet an issue date.

What to do? I'd like to suggest that if only one member in ten wrote one, albeit short, article each year (hence about 60 articles), the scarcity of material would soon become an abundance. In my own case, I have written (sad to say) but one short article in the years of my membership and it was only after much encouragement that I finally agreed to do it, believing all the while that the content might be trivial. As it turns out, the porringer which I recorded almost 14 years ago is still unique and serves as an interesting and unsolved mystery, well worthwhile having been recorded.

I'm convinced that there are a goodly number of other pieces in collections that could be recorded in addition to new finds, marks, research, hypotheses, glossaries, etc., etc. and just plain stories that could make suitable subject matter.

Let's give it a try.

Jack H. Kolaian  
President



## *Necrology*

WILLIAM O. BLANEY

Members of the Pewter Collectors Club will be sad to learn of the death of William Osgood Blaney, aged 79, on Friday, June 14, 1985 at the Newton-Wellesley Hospital after a long illness.

Bill and his late wife, Rosamond, played a very active part in the affairs of the club for many years, he being president of the PCCA from 1967 to 1969, and will be greatly missed by his many friends in the organization. He was responsible for the well-organized celebration of the Fortieth Anniversary Annual Meeting of the society in Boston in 1974, as well as having had an important part in the success of the recent 50th Anniversary Meeting in Concord, Lexington and Waltham, Massachusetts in May of 1984.

Bill was a serious student of pewter, having done much research on the subject. He was particularly interested in mugs, a form of which he specialized in collecting. He devoted hours of research to cataloging pewter collections for many area historical societies and the Concord Antiquarian Society Museum. He was editor of the PCCA Bulletin for a number of years and contributed many informative articles to it over a long period of time.

A native of Waban, Massachusetts, Bill graduated from Williams College in 1928. An outstanding athlete, he was invited to the ice hockey trials for the 1932 Olympics, after which he joined the first U.S. hockey team to tour Europe. In an amateur golfing career that spanned six decades, Bill won many Massachusetts and New England titles. He was a member of the Brae Burn Country Club and was also secretary-treasurer of the New England Golf Association.

Bill was a member of the Boston firm of Brewer and Lord, where he sold personal and commercial insurance until his retirement in 1975, and he was a longtime resident of Wellesley where he lived at 15 Rockridge Road.

Widower of Rosamond Palmer Blaney, he is survived by two sons, Charles Crosby Blaney and William O. Blaney, Jr. and eight grandchildren.

I am sure all of us who knew Bill will greatly miss him and will be deeply saddened to learn he is no longer with us.

Charles V. Swain

## JOSEPH FRANCE

Joseph France, retired partner of a large Baltimore law firm, died on October 10, 1985 at Memorial Hospital in Easton, Maryland.

Mr. France, who was 92 and lived in Easton, retired in 1965 from active work at Venable, Baetjer and Howard. He was named partner emeritus in 1980.

A partner since 1930, he had been associated with the firm since he passed the bar examination in 1919.

Mr. France was an early and enthusiastic collector of pewter, his name appearing on the first published list of members of the Pewter Collectors Club in 1939. He was a generous public-spirited man as he gave a notable collection of pewter to the Metropolitan Museum of Art at some time before 1946. Joseph France gave the Pewter Collector's Club an album containing excellent photographs of his famous porringer collection which contained sixteen plates, with two or more porringers on each, showing the upper and lower surfaces of the handles. Most of them are shown as of natural size, and there are many rare ones. In 1965 Mr. France loaned the collection to the William Penn Memorial Museum at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania where it was on view for many years and was seen by members of the Pewter Club at a national meeting held there in May of 1966. Recently he gave the porringer collection to the Baltimore Museum of Art.

A native of Baltimore, Mr. France was a graduate of Boys' Latin School, Princeton University and Harvard Law School.

He served as an officer in a Navy mine squadron in the North Sea during World War I.

A horseman, he also operated Klarbrok Kennels in Upperco, Maryland, where he lived for many years, and bred, raised and handled German short-haired pointers. In 1974 one of his dogs won all the categories of competition for the breed.

Chairman of the North Charleston Land Corp., Mr. France was a member of the Yeamans Hall Club in Charleston, S.C., as well as the Elkridge Club in Baltimore.

He was married to the former Julia McHenry, who died in 1983.

Mr. France is survived by two daughters, Catherine H. Harrison of Baltimore, and Pembroke F. Noble of Easton; a brother, Dr. Richard France of Nashville, Tenn.; five

grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Charles V. Swain

## *A New Fuller and Smith Candlestick*

I recently obtained a form of 19th Century American candlestick with which I had not been previously familiar. Fig. 1 shows the new form of Fuller and Smith candlestick on the left compared with the usual Fuller and Smith candlestick on the right. The new candlestick is 4 3/8" wide at the base and 9 1/2" tall, the other candlestick being 4 5/8" wide at the base and 8 1/2" tall. While the new candlestick is not marked, there is certainly no question that the shaft is similar to the typical Fuller and Smith candlestick. The socket portion is also very typical, in that there is no shoulder at the top end of the socket, the elongated spool portion of the new stick being the only modified part of that shaft. The base is the major alteration, being tall and bell shaped, giving the candlestick a significantly different overall appearance.

I thought this new candlestick might be of interest to the membership and, while it is not marked, I feel confident that it can be attributed without reservation to Fuller and Smith. Any further information from the membership concerning this different form would be appreciated.

Melvyn D. Wolf, M.D.



Fig. 1 Fuller and Smith Candlesticks. New form left (unmarked) - usual form right.



# A Marked Philadelphia Sugar Bowl

By Donald M. Herr

Marked eighteenth century Philadelphia sugar bowls are virtually nonexistent. Several sugar bowl forms have been attributed to William Will and another to Parks Boyd because they contain parts found on other forms marked by these makers. To my knowledge, there are no sugar bowls by Will or Boyd that are actually marked.

The sugar bowl illustrated in Figure 1 is marked on the inside bottom of the body with the crowned X quality mark (Laughlin fig. 869). This mark was used by John A. Brunstrom who worked in Philadelphia from 1781-1793. Brunstrom's inventory lists brass moulds and includes "1 Sugar Box mould and cover" as well as the finished product.

The crowned X mark is commonly found with the "Love" touch (L. 868) which was used by a succession of Philadelphia pewterers. The crowned X mark has been found on an eight-inch plate with the marks of Thomas Byles who worked in Philadelphia from 1738-1771. Sugar basins with covers are listed in his



Fig. 1. Philadelphia sugar bowl with crowned X mark used by John A. Brunstrom, "Love" and others. Height with lid 4 3/4", Lid diameter 4 5/8", Bowl: Height 2 7/8", Top diameter 4 3/8", Bottom diameter 2 3/4". Herr collection.

inventory. The mark has also been found on a coffeepot by Palethorp and Connell who worked as late as 1841. The crowned X mark was clearly in use over a long period of time.

The lid, finial and foot of this sugar bowl are stylistically similar but not identical to bowls from Philadelphia attributed to Will and Boyd. A pleasing decorative raised band encircles its body (Figure 2). The hemispherical body of the bowl resembles those by D.S., an unidentified pewterer who very likely worked in Philadelphia (Figure 3).

Eighteenth century sugar bowls, marked or unmarked, are a most attractive form and their simple, pleasing lines are a delight to the eye.



Fig. 2 Note the wide decorative band near the top of the body.



Fig. 3 Similar body forms of Left-marked D.S. bowl and Right-marked crowned X bowl. Both have body top diameters of 4 3/8".





## New Auction Price Record

by John Carl Thomas

As reported in the Fall issue of the *PCCA Newsletter*, the record auction price for a single piece of pewter left the United States right behind the America's Cup. The \$42,240.00\* paid for a 28 3/16" broad rim charger at a London salesroom, in December 1984, more than doubled the previous record, and most pewter fanciers thought it would be many, many years before another record would be established...but...



Fig. 1

On August 23, 1985, the covered sugar bowl illustrated here in Figure 1 sold at a new record price during an auction held in a rural firehouse in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The sale had been well advertised and brought out many dealers, collectors, and museum buyers. As you might well imagine, the hall was very quiet as the bids on the sugar bowl climbed above \$20,000.00... then \$30,000.00... then \$40,000.00 and finally \$42,500.00!!!

The contest was won by a collector from Lancaster County, and the bowl will remain in the general area where it was made, and has been owned for about two centuries.

One of a very few extant bowls made by Johann Christopher Heyne working in Lancaster, PA., in the 1750's through about 1780, this fine example is well marked inside the cover, as shown in Figure 2.

We eagerly await the next challenge to the record...any guesses?

\*Conversion by R. Asher in the Newsletter -£32,000 plus 10%, at \$1.20 to the British Pound.



Fig. 2



# Almer Hall: Britannia Lamp and Candlestick Maker

by Richard L. Bowen, Jr.

Ami Argand, a Swiss chemist, invented the lamp with a circular wick which still bears his name; he patented it in England in 1784.<sup>1</sup> Three years later John Miles of Birmingham, England, patented the whale oil lamp. These two inventions suddenly moved lamp development out of the dark ages, and together they were possibly the greatest improvements ever made in lighting. The first *Birmingham Directory* after 1784 was published in 1791. In it are listed three "patent lamp" manufacturers; it is not apparent if two of these made Argand or Miles lamps (the "agitabile" lamps were Miles lamps):

Robert Brant, patent lamp maker, Great Charles Street

John Haywood, brass founder, and manufacturer of patent lamps, Whitall Street

John Miles, manufacturer of agitabile patent lamps, Edgbaston Street

Both Argand and Miles lamps were exported to America soon after their manufacture in England, and were copied by American makers (British patents did not provide protection in America). Argand lamps were made in Boston by Joseph Roby, tinsmith, in 1786, and by Joseph Howe, tinsmith, in 1787.<sup>2</sup> Imported "patent lamps" were advertised in the *Salem [Massachusetts] Gazette* in 1798. Miles lamps were specifically advertised in Boston in 1800 and in that same year, Joseph Howe, tinsmith, advertised "Agitabile Lamps ... made after the much improved ones called MILES Patent Lamps".<sup>3</sup>

The first patent lamps were made of "tin" (sheet iron or tinned sheet iron) or brass. The pewter whale oil lamp was a late entry into the lamp game and did not appear until the last of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Kerfoot commented that the working dates of the pewterers making lamps clearly indicated the late appearance of pewter lamps, since none of those making lamps began before 1828, while most lamp makers worked from the late 1830's to the 1850's.<sup>4</sup> There are no known English pewter whale oil lamps. This is graphically illustrated by the fact that catalogs

of Dixon & Smith (c. 1811-1822) do not show any pewter oil lamps. In a recent work on the britannia manufactured in Sheffield, not a single lamp is shown or mentioned.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the manufacture of lamps in pewter or britannia is purely an American innovation.

Kerfoot's date of 1828 for the introduction of the britannia oil lamp may be pushed back to almost 1820. George Richardson advertised "block tin lamps" in Boston in 1821;<sup>6</sup> no examples survive. Josiah Warren of Cincinnati, Ohio, patented a lamp for burning fat, etc., in 1821.<sup>7</sup> This lamp may have been made in britannia from 1821-1825 in Cincinnati by Warren and Daniel Stocking, and examples may bear the mark WARREN'S HARD METAL.<sup>8</sup> In 1822 Charles Plumly, pewterer, of Philadelphia assigned all of his real and personal property to Michael Baker in a bankruptcy arrangement.<sup>9</sup> Among a number of molds for making pewter objects in the inventory of assets was a lamp mold. Laughlin suggests that this mold was for making "betty lamps". However, it would seem that the mold was for whale oil lamps, of which no examples are known by Plumly. William Calder started making pewter about 1817. A Calder Ledger is preserved for the period 1823-1849 and lists the sale of 68 lamps in 1824.<sup>10</sup> The fact that no lamps are shown in the ledger in 1823 does not mean that none were sold, as the ledger shows only part of the sales listed in a day book (which is also preserved but does not start until 1826). Israel Trask started in 1814. While he made lamps, it is not known how early his lamp production started.

From these modest beginnings about 1820 the manufacture of britannia lamps skyrocketed in the 1830's. This is excellently illustrated by the succession of britannia manufacturers in Taunton, Massachusetts. Crossman, West & Leonard (1829-1830) sold 82 britannia oil lamps in 1829, but in 1830 they sold 2790, which amounted to 37% of the items sold.<sup>11</sup> Taunton Britannia Manufacturing Company (1830-1837) took over from



Crossman, West & Leonard, and in 1834 they sold 5722 lamps, which amounted to 73% of their total production (they sold only 787 teapots and 77 candlesticks).<sup>12</sup> However, on a dollar basis the lamps amounted to 38% of sales and tea and coffee ware to 52%. It has never been realized that so much of Taunton Britannia Manufacturing Company's production was in lamps. In 1837 Leonard, Reed & Barton took over the operations. Lamp sales had fallen drastically: in 1838 only 736 lamps were sold, amounting to about 6% of the total items.

The sharp decline in lamp sales by Leonard, Reed & Barton was precipitated by the entry of dozens of small lamp manufacturers in the late 1830's (when Kerfoot thought britannia lamp production really started). One of these small lamp manufacturers was Almer Hall of Wallingford, Connecticut, who has previously been known only as a britannia and German silver spoon manufacturer.

Almer Hall was born in 1793 (a seventh generation descendant of the first Hall immigrant), and spent his early boyhood on the family farm in Wallingford.<sup>13</sup> He left the farm to become a "Yankee peddler" selling tin ware and notions for a few years over the Allegheny Mountains, through Virginia, Tennessee, and other southern states for Charles Yale of Wallingford. He next opened a dry goods and grocery store in Wallingford. In 1827 he started the manufacture of britannia spoons but the business was not successful. In 1834 he formed a partnership for manufacturing wooden screws and this business also failed. In 1837 or 1838 Hall formed a copartnership with William Elton and others under the firm name of Hall, Elton & Company for the purpose of manufacturing German silver ware.<sup>14</sup> The firm is acknowledged as the first successful manufacturer of German (nickel) silver in America.<sup>15</sup>

A unique pewter lamp by Almer Hall has been known for over twenty years (Fig. 1).<sup>16</sup> In the illustration Hall's lamp is shown next to one by Roswell Gleason. Both have the same shaped stems with the characteristic central knob composed of an ovoid with a disk element on the top. In the excellent survey of lamps made by Melvyn D. Wolf, similar stems were illustrated on lamps by Calder, Crossman West & Leonard, Dunham, Gleason, Putnam, Taunton Britannia Manufac-

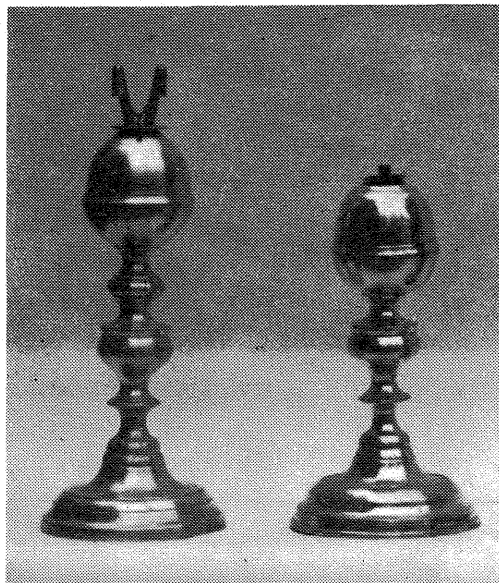


Fig. 1. Left: camphene lamp by Roswell Gleason. Right: whale oil lamp marked A. HALL. Both lamps have similar stems with a characteristic central knob composed of an ovoid with a disk element on top.

turing Company, and Israel Trask.<sup>17</sup> A Gleason lamp similar to the one in Fig. 1 is not shown by Wolf. A lamp very similar to Hall's is seen in one by Taunton Britannia Manufacturing.<sup>18</sup>

Many lamp makers also produced candlesticks, using the lamp bases and stems and replacing the lamp font with a candlestick socket. The figures for Taunton Britannia Manufacturing for 1834 show that candlesticks amounted to only 1.3% of the lamp production. Presumably candlestick production by other lamp makers was also slight in relation to the lamps made. If we have only a single surviving example of a lamp by an obscure maker, such as Almer Hall, we would hardly expect to find any candlesticks by the maker. However, an excellently preserved pair of candlesticks by A. Hall has recently been found (Fig. 2); they are marked A. HALL and are indeed a rare survival (Fig. 3). They have the same stem and base as the Hall lamp. Candlesticks with similar stems with the central ovoid and disk knob were also made by Dunham, J. B. Woodbury, Taunton Britannia Manufacturing, and Weeks.<sup>19</sup> Candlesticks with similar stems may also have been made







Fig. 2. Britannia candlesticks by Almer Hall (left) and James Weeks (right). The Hall candlestick is 7 1/4" high with a base diameter of 4 1/4", while the Weeks' is 7 3/8" x 4 1/4". The Hall candlestick has a removable bobech, while the flange of the Weeks is integral. (Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Webster Goodwin.)

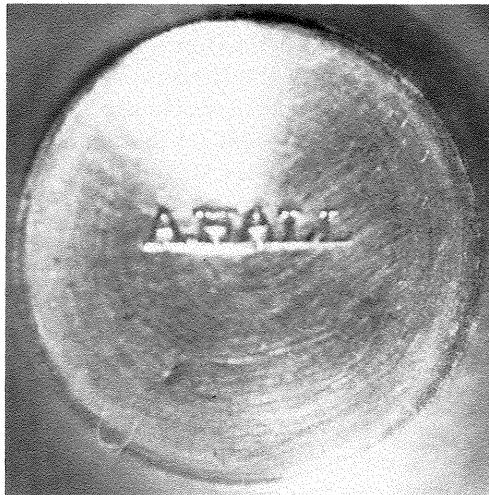


Fig. 3 The A. HALL mark on the bottom of the candlestick shown in Fig. 2. There is a period after the "A", but it is very close to the bottoms of both letters. The original mark is about 5/8" long, and the photograph shows it enlarged to about 180%.

by Calder, Crossman West & Leonard, Gleason, Putnam, and Trask to match their lamps. Perhaps they may turn up just as Hall's did. It was presumably during the period from 1827 to 1834 that Almer Hall made britannia lamps and candlesticks. So many manufacturers

joined the rush that there was little profit left for anyone and many went bankrupt.

Almer Hall died in 1865 at age 72, still in business at Hall, Elton & Company. He was one of the constituent members of the Baptist Church in Wallingford, organized in 1817. Shortly after 1817 he was chosen one of its deacons and was often called "Deacon Hall".<sup>20</sup> For many years he was the chief support of the church. He was confiding, unsuspecting, and trusting, so much that he suffered losses from some with whom he dealt in business. This possibly explains his early business losses. However, he made his mark with Hall, Elton & Company, and an excellent steel plate engraving of him is included in the *History of Wallingford* (Fig. 4), along with other Wallingford and Meriden greats of the period: Samuel Simpson, Isaac C. Lewis, Horace C. Wilcox, and Charles Parker. The lamp and candlesticks marked A. HALL are an interesting record of the man's early business endeavors.



Fig. 4. Almer Hall of Wallingford, Connecticut. In his early days he made britannia spoons, lamps, and candlesticks. Later in life he helped found Hall, Elton & Co., a concern credited with the first successful manufacture of German (nickel) silver in America. (After Davis, *History of Wallingford*. Photograph by the Rhode Island Historical Society.)



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## Pewter at Bayou Bend

Many pewter collectors are surprised to learn that a fine collection of American pewter, available to the public, is to be found in Houston, Texas. The Bayou Bend Collection, part of the Museum of Fine Arts of Houston, is located far from what most collectors would consider pewter territory or early American antique territory. The collection's existence is due to a remarkable woman, aptly called "The First Lady of Texas", Miss Ima Hogg.

Miss Hogg (1882-1975) was the daughter of the first native born governor of the state of Texas, James Stephen Hogg. After leaving office Governor Hogg purchased the Varner Plantation outside of West Columbia, close to what became the fabulous Spindletop oil field. With foresight he stipulated in his will that the plantation could not be sold for 15 years following his death. When oil was discovered on the property, the foundation for the family wealth was laid. Miss Hogg was as close to a Renaissance woman as could be imagined. An accomplished pianist, she was one of the founders of the Houston Symphony Society, founder of the Houston Child Guidance Center, member of the Houston School Board, jointly responsible for the creation of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and developer and donor of the Bayou Bend Collection.

Bayou Bend consists of 24 rooms and settings in the former home of Miss Hogg set on 14 acres of landscaped grounds along a bend of Buffalo Bayou. The collection includes antiques from the Pilgrim Era of the 17th century to the early Victorian Era of the mid-19th century. Embracing an exceptional collection of furniture, silver, paintings, ceramics, and other decorative arts, the collection was called by Charles Montgomery, "the largest, finest collection this side of Winterthur."

Although Miss Hogg purchased her first American antique in 1920, she only began to collect pewter in 1953. She decided at an early date that her collection would eventually be given as a public collection. As it grew in size, she recognized that no Texas museum was adequate to house it. It would appear that her decision to give her home as the site for the collection led her to make the collection more



comprehensive. The pewter collection, consisting of around 100 pieces, was intended to be representative of what was used in America of the period. It is comprised of a wide variety of forms: basins, candlesticks, mugs, pitchers, plates, porringers, spoons, tankards, teapots, flacons, beakers and miscellaneous items. Although the overwhelming number of pieces are American, the collection also includes some Dutch and English pieces. Ranging from 17th century Dutch candlesticks to Britannia ware of the mid-19th century, the collection includes such gems as a marked Francis Bassett flat-top tankard (Fig. 1) and a marked William Will teapot. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 1 Francis Bassett I or II - Tankard.



Fig. 2 William Will, Philadelphia. Teapot, c. 1785-1796.

Miss Hogg's first purchase of pewter was a set of six solid-handled Pennsylvania porringers reportedly made for a Quaker school. Apparently on the same trip she purchased an Israel Trask lighthouse coffeepot, a Boardman & Co. flagon and an Eben Smith coffeepot. Always a careful collector, she sought expert advice in all aspects of her collecting experience. Charles Montgomery and Miss Hogg had many years of contact as evidenced by the file of correspondence between them. In a letter dated July 27, 1960, Charles Montgomery wrote: "Today I am sending you Mr. Jacobs' book, *Guide to American Pewter*, which I think may be of use to you. In it I made several notations as to the pewterers that seem most important to me for your collection." On page 187 an arrow points to a chalice with the comment "wonderful form -which is American without European prototype." And again on page 194 "Young, Peter" is double-checked and at the bottom of the page is added "His chalices are 2nd only to Heynes as American pewter's finest form." In 1966 Miss Hogg purchased a pair of marked Peter Young chalices. (Fig. 3 - one of the pair)

Most of the pewter is on permanent display.



Fig. 3 Peter Young Chalice.





Fig. 4.

It is shown in five rooms with the greater part of the pewter shown in the Murphy Room, named after Miss Hogg's good friend Katharine Prentis Murphy. (Fig. 4) There it is displayed on appropriate furniture and in two

well lit alcoves.

If you are planning a trip to Houston, write for tour information and reservations to The Bayou Bend Collection, P.O. Box 13157, Houston, Texas 77219.

*Marked American Pewter in  
The Bayou Bend Collection  
All pieces were gifts of Miss Ima Hogg  
unless otherwise noted (\*)*

Nathaniel Austin, Charlestown, MA,  
1763-1807

Quart Mug, H. 5 7/8" (B.60.64)

Quart Mug, H. 5 7/8" (B.61.121)

Frederick Bassett, New York, NY 1761-1800  
Plate, D. 8 7/16" (B.60.72)

Quart Tankard, H. 7" (B.60.55)

Boardman & Company, New York, NY and  
Hartford, CT 1825-1827

Flagon, H. 12 1/2" (B.53.10)

Teapot, H. 8 1/2" (B.60.77)

Thomas Danforth Boardman & Sherman  
Boardman, Hartford, CT 1810-1860

Porringer (Crown Handle), D. 5 7/8"  
(B.56.186.1)

(Unmarked mate to above piece  
B.56.186.2)

Porringer (Flowered Handle), D. 5 1/4"  
(B.58.99)

Parks Boyd, Philadelphia, PA 1795-1819  
Basin, D. 6 1/2" (B.60.80)

Daniel Curtiss, Albany, NY 1822-1840  
Pitcher, H. 8 1/4" (B.59.42)

Edward Danforth, Hartford, CT 1786-1800  
Beaker, H. 5 1/8" (B.60.61)

John Danforth, Norwich, CT 1762-1793  
Plate, D. 12 1/4" (B.60.74)



- Joseph Danforth, Sr., Middletown, CT  
1779-1788  
Quart Mug, H. 5 3/4" (B.59.41.1)  
Quart Mug, H. 5 7/8" (B.59.41.2)  
Quart Mug, H. 5 7/8" (B.60.65)  
Pint Mug, H. 4 1/2" (B.60.66)  
Quart Mug, H. 5 7/8" (B.61.45)
- Samuel Danforth, Hartford, CT 1795-1816  
Porringer (Old English Handle), D. 4 7/8"  
(B.58.97)
- Thomas Danforth II, Middletown, CT  
1755-1782  
Dish, D. 12 3/8" (B.60.71)  
Quart Mug, H. 5 7/8" (B.64.26) (Same  
mold as B.64.27)  
Quart Mug, H. 6" (B.69.25) (Possibly  
Thomas Danforth III)
- Thomas Danforth III, Middletown and  
Rocky Hill, CT 1777-1820  
Plate, D. 6 1/8" (B.60.73)  
Plate, D. 6 1/8" (B.60.76)  
Beaker, H. 5 3/16" (B.60.62)
- Samuel Hamlin, Sr., Providence, RI 1773-  
1801 or Samuel E. Hamlin  
Basin, D. 7 7/8" (B.60.83)  
Pint Mug, H. 4 1/4" (B.61.46)
- Samuel E. Hamlin, Providence, RI 1801-1856  
Porringer (Flowered Handle), D. 5 3/8"  
(B.56.185)
- Porringer (Flowered Handle), D. 5 3/8"  
(B.58.98)
- "LOVE", Probably Philadelphia, PA  
1750-1800  
Tankard, H. 7 5/8" (B.61.44)  
Basin, D. 6 11/16" (B.60.81) (Attributed to  
John Andrew Brunstrom, 1783-1793)
- Allen, Porter, Westbrook, ME 1830-1838  
\*Teapot, H. 10 1/2" (B.71.96)
- Freeman Porter, Westbrook, ME 1835-1860  
Teapot, H. 6 3/4" (B.71.1)
- Reed & Barton, Taunton, MA 1840-1860  
\*Covered Pitcher, H. 9 1/2" (B.71.95)
- John Skinner, Boston, MA 1760-1790  
Plate, D. 9 1/8" (B.60.75)
- Eben Smith, Beverly, MA 1841-1856  
Coffeepot, H. 11 3/8" (B.53.15)
- Jacob Whitmore, Middletown, CT 1757-1790  
Pint Mug, H. 4 3/4" (B.60.78.1)  
Pint Mug, H. 4 3/4" (B.60.78.2)  
Quart Mug, H. 5 7/8" (B.64.27)
- William Will, Philadelphia, PA 1764-1798  
Teapot, H. 7" (B.61.27)
- Israel Trask, Beverly, MA 1813-1856  
Coffeepot, H. 12 3/4" (B.53.9)
- Peter Young, Albany, NY 1785-1795  
Chalice, H. 8 1/2" (B.66.9.1)  
Chalice, H. 8 9/16" (B.66.9.2)

\*Gift of Mrs. James Walker Cain

## *Joseph Randle: Providence's Earliest Pewterer*

by *Richard L. Bowen, Jr.*

Ledlie Laughlin discovered Joseph Randle in his search of the early Boston records and devoted a scant ten lines to him.<sup>1</sup> On August 8, 1738 Joseph Randle [sic] married Mary, only child of Samuel Plumer, cooper.<sup>2</sup> Less than a month later Joseph Randle, brazier, and his wife Mary sold property on Shrimpton's Lane.<sup>3</sup> And in the next year Joseph Randle, "puterer", and Mary disposed of the property on Royal Exchange Lane which she had inherited from her father.<sup>4</sup> The Boston vital records list two men who could have been this Joseph Randle. A Joseph, son of William, japanner, and Eliza (Hill) Randoll [sic], was born September 15, 1692.<sup>5</sup> Another Joseph, son of Robert and Eliza Randoll, was born May 4, 1712.<sup>6</sup>

In a search of early Providence records Joseph K. Ott found a receipt signed on October 27, 1744 in Providence by Joseph Randle, pewterer (Fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> At a meeting of the Rhode Island General Assembly in October 1744 "Joseph Randall, son of William" was admitted a freeman of the Colony.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of the "son of William" Laughlin suggested that this was the Joseph who was born in Boston on September 15, 1692. However, the matter is not quite that simple. Randall was a very common name in Rhode Island at this time and there were over a dozen fourth generation Randall males in Providence in 1744. Two of these were Josephs, sons of Williams. One was a Joseph<sup>(3)</sup> born in 1684 and the other was a Joseph<sup>(4)</sup> born c. 1700.<sup>9</sup> In





Providence Oct<sup>r</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> 1744

Rec<sup>d</sup> of M<sup>r</sup> John Thornton the sum of  
 Six pounds Eighteen Shillings and two  
 pence In full of all Account as Witness  
 my hand

6.18.9

Joseph Randle  
 Pewterer

Fig. 1. Facsimile of receipt from Joseph Randle, where he represents himself as a pewterer. The handwriting is accomplished for the period. The bottom 1¼" of the receipt has been deleted. (Natural size.)

1744 the first Joseph would have been 60 years old and the second 44. Both of these men would have been too old to be admitted as freemen if they had been "natives". Therefore, it does seem that Joseph Randle of Boston became a freemen of the Colony of Rhode Island in 1744 at age 52, and presumably had left Boston a few years before.

Laughlin observes that Joseph Randle, brazier, died in Providence on October 16, 1750, and he cites Arnold's *Vital Records of Rhode Island* as his source.<sup>10</sup> Arnold derived this information from the Providence probate records; unfortunately, a typographical error was introduced — Joseph Randle died in 1753, not 1750. This is clearly shown by the early records of the Providence Town Council and the Providence Probate Court on file in the Providence City Hall. These records paint a very clear and surprising picture of the settling of Joseph Randle's estate.

A meeting of the Providence Town Council held on October 27, 1753 was completely devoted to Joseph Randle's estate.<sup>11</sup> The entry will be quoted in full with the spelling corrected and commas and periods added at proper places.

Whereas Mary Randal, the widow of Joseph Randal [sic] late of Providence, 'peutrer', deceased, did not appear at the Council on the 26th instance and was not to be found, whereupon the Council adjourned to this present day and gave out a summons to convene before them the said Mary Randal. The Town Sheriff made return that he went to the dwelling house of the said widow and asked after her, and then went just out of the door, and the door was shut and locked immediately so that he could not find her. Upon hearing the

allegations and prayers of some of the creditors of the said deceased's estate it is voted and ordered that there be notification put up in some public places to give public notice to the said widow Mary Randal and the creditors and others whom it may concern that they appear before the Town Council on the second Saturday in November at 12 of the clock in order to take administration on said estate, there being no will yet appearing.

The next Town Council meeting was held on schedule on November 10, 1753.<sup>12</sup> Four items were on the agenda, all having to do with estates. It was voted by the Council that administration of the goods, chattels, and credits of Joseph Randal be granted to Mary Randal, who was the executrix of his will, who accepted that trust and proved the testator's will. The clerk was authorized to execute Letters of Administration and accept a bond from the Honourable Colonel Jabez Bowen and Mr. Paul Tue in the sum of £120.

The rest of the record is found in the Providence Probate Court where the original documents were copied into the *Book of Wills*.<sup>13</sup> The original bond is on file in Docket A630 (the only document in the file). The Probate Court had convened on the same day as the Town Council and some of the documents were recorded on November 10, 1753. In the Letters of Administration it was observed that Joseph Randle, brazier, who departed this life on October 16, 1753, did name his wife Mary Randle sole executrix of his will, and said Mary had proved the will, and given bond to the Town Council. The Town Council then ordered Mary Randle to take possession of the personal estate in order to pay the debts, carry out the will, and render a true



account of her administration if requested.

The will executed by Joseph Randle on May 3, 1746 was recorded on November 10th. In it Joseph Randle of Providence, brazier, left all of his estate to his "beloved wife, Mary", and he made her the sole executrix. This seems to indicate that Joseph Randle had no children; he had married Mary in 1738 at age 46, a very late marriage in those times when men traditionally married at age 21 after they had finished their apprenticeship. On November 24th a codicil to the will was recorded. In this document dated July 19, 1753, Joseph Randle, brazier, annexed his last will and testament as follows: "I do bequest to my beloved wife Mary my now dwelling house together with all my right and interest in the land whereon my said house is built by virtue of a lease from Capt. John Whipple".

In the bond, dated November 10, 1753, Mary Randal [sic], widow, Jabez Bowen, Esq., and Paul Tue, shopkeeper, bound themselves to the Town Council in the sum of £1200. This was to be paid only if Mary Randal, as executrix, did not exhibit within one month a true inventory of the personal estate of her husband Joseph Randal as far as she could determine. The document was signed with an "X" and "mark" over Mary Randle [sic] with the signature of Jabez Bowen and Paul Tue below.

A probate court is responsible for seeing that all outstanding debts are paid and for making sure that the provisions of the will are carried out. The first step in this process is to take an inventory of the assets of the deceased. On November 26th the inventory of the personal estate of Joseph Randle taken five days earlier was recorded. It will be useful to list the inventory in full as few pewterers' inventories exist from such an early period.

Wearing apparel	£ 75
1 Looking glass	25
1 Oval table	16
1 Dressing ditto	20
1 Square ditto	2
1 Tea ditto	7
10 Small & 1 large chair	12
1 High case drawers	30
1 Desk	26
4 Pictures	1:10
1 "Joynt" stool	0:12
A parcel of pewter	16

A parcel of tinware	2
A parcel of ironware	5
1 Brass kettle	10
1 Tea kettle	2:10
1 Brass skillet	1
1 Pr andirons	1:15
1 Iron pot	1:10
1 Pr bellows	1:5
1 China bowl & a parcel cups & saucers	10
1 Glass decanteur etc	1:10
1 Hour glass	0:5
1 Case with 14 bottles	6
2 Old chests & 1 old box	5
1 Old bedstead	2
1 Pr old brass candlesticks	1:15
1 Parcel old stuff & lumber in the cellar	3
	<u>£285:12</u>

(At an exchange of 6 shillings per dollar this was \$952.00.)

The inventory is noticeable in the lack of any tools or work in process for the profession of a brazier and pewterer. (The "parcel of pewter" was probably for domestic use.) This could mean that Joseph Randle worked for someone else as a journeyman. However, there is another possibility. He made his will in 1746, and in July 1753 he added a codicil to include the house he had built on leased land between 1746 and 1753. It is reasonable to assume that he had become very ill and made the codicil in anticipation of death. He died less than three months later. Presumably he had disposed of his shop equipment and supplies before this.

From the furnishings shown in Joseph Randle's inventory we may reconstruct his house. It was small with one story: probably a parlor or keeping room with a fireplace, a bedroom, and a shop. The property John Whipple owned in 1759 was located on the east of North Main Street.<sup>14</sup> The Index of Providence Deeds lists only two deeds under Joseph Randall, grantee. One is from Daniel Abbott in 1741 and the other is from Joseph Whipple in 1739.<sup>15</sup> Both are to Joseph Randall, calker (one who calks boats), who was born in 1684 and died in 1760. The lease from Capt. John Whipple was not recorded nor was a sale or a disposition by Mary Randle of the house Joseph Randle built.



Mary Randle's actions can probably be explained. Her husband died and she had no children to support her. Debts were owed by Joseph Randle and certain creditors must have demanded settlement. They voiced their concern to the Providence Town Council and presumably to the widow Randle. In response to this she had withdrawn into the security of her house. This forced the Town Council to issue a public summons for her appearance. Mary Randle obtained advice from some quarter on how to straighten the matter out. She received the assistance of Jabez Bowen, one of the most influential men in Providence, and Paul Tue, prominent merchant, both of whom co-signed the bond with her. The minutes of the Council meeting state that the bond was in the amount of £120. This was an oversight, as the bond was actually for £1200, a considerable amount (almost five times the value of the inventory), and shows the Town Council's concern with the matter of the debts.

Most men have debts due from their estate when they die. The majority of these are obligations acquired in the normal course of daily life and business; they are current bills which have not been paid. There are other debts such as long term loans or mortgages which may also be due. The ability to pay off the debts depends upon the liquidity of the estate. If there are quick assets such as cash, notes due, or accounts due, these may often be used to pay off the debts. If these do not satisfy the debts, then personal property must be sold to liquidate them. Otherwise real estate must be sold. In the case of Joseph Randle's estate no accounting was filed with the Probate Court so the amount of the debts is not known.

There is no record that Mary Randle sold the house at this time. As there is no further evidence in the Probate Court records, it appears that Mary Randle satisfied the creditors. Mary Randle may have married again, as there are no probate records for a Mary Randle. A Mary Randall married Thomas Ree in November 1764. However, this may well have been the Mary Randall born in Providence in 1745, or one of the other Providence Mary Randalls. It is evident that Joseph Randle was not a wealthy man when he died — nor could he be considered poor. He lived in a small house built on leased land; the house was modestly furnished. It does not appear that the estate was insolvent.

In addition to the two Joseph Randals (sons of Williams) mentioned above, there was also a Joseph<sup>(4)</sup>, son of Joseph<sup>(3)</sup>, and a Joseph<sup>(4)</sup>, son of Jonathan<sup>(3)</sup>. Because of the obvious potential confusion with four or five other Josephs, the brazier carefully spelled his name "Randle". He had spelled it in this same manner in some of the Boston records. Interestingly, in the three pages of records entered in the *Book of Wills* the "le" of Randle is superimposed over an erased "al". In the Providence records the name is generally spelled Randall, Randoll, or Randal. The only spelling of Randle is in reference to the pewterer, but at times some of the other spellings are also used for him.

Joseph Randle has the distinction of being the first known pewterer in Providence; he receipted a bill in 1744 as a pewterer. But when he made his will in 1746 and a codicil in 1753 he called himself a brazier. Ten days after Joseph Randle died the Providence Town Council became concerned because Mary Randle has not filed a will and no administration had been taken on the estate of her husband. At this time the Council called him a pewterer, which possibly indicated that he was better known as a pewterer than a brazier. However, while he may have been the first pewterer, it is difficult to believe that there was not an earlier brazier in Providence in the period after the town was settled in 1636. Not all braziers also made pewter, although some did.

It would be two decades before Providence had another pewterer. In 1773, at age 27, Samuel Hamlin moved from Middletown, Connecticut, to Providence to open a shop.<sup>16</sup> Then in 1774 he formed a partnership with his brother-in-law, Gershom Jones, age 23, who had married Hamlin's wife's sister and also moved in from Connecticut.<sup>17</sup> This probably means that Providence just did not have the population to support a brazier-pewterer before 1773. It must be remembered that Newport was the capital of the Colony of Rhode Island and until the Revolution had a population at least two times that of Providence. In 1774 the population of Newport was 9,208, while that of Providence was only 4,321.<sup>18</sup>

Newport had a continuous succession of pewterers from before 1730 with Lawrence Langworthy, Benjamin Day, John Fryers, Joseph Belcher, and the Melvilles. Newport



was only 25 miles south of Providence, while Boston was 40 miles to the north, and Norwich, Connecticut 40 miles to the southwest. Joseph Belcher advertised in the *Newport Mercury*, but he also advertised in the Providence papers. In 1769 he advertised in the *Providence Gazette* that he "Makes and Sells Pewter-Ware, Wholesale and Retail, as cheap as can be bought in Boston or elsewhere."<sup>19</sup> This was probably directed more at the Providence merchants for wholesale sales than the individual retail buyer, as few people traveled to Newport just to "shop". However, the Providence merchants undoubtedly sold someone's pewter ware, and Belcher may have determined that it was coming from Boston (as well as England).

Joseph Randle probably worked as a brazier and pewterer for almost 30 years in Boston and for over 10 years in Providence. There is no pewter which may be attributed to him. As a pewterer he certainly made plates, dishes, and basins. He may have made porringers and possibly mugs. This is the same range of forms made by the later Providence brazier-pewterers in the last of the eighteenth and the first of the nineteenth century — Samuel Hamlin, Gershom Jones, William Billings, and Josiah Keene. Still later, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, William Calder and George Richardson worked in the teapot era making only britannia in the wide range of forms popular during that period. The forms made by Samuel Ely Hamlin bridge the two groups.

#### REFERENCES

The superscript numerals referring to the successive generations from the first immigrant in American are shown in parenthesis, such as Joseph<sup>(3)</sup>, and should not be confused with the reference numerals.

1. L. I. Laughlin, *Pewter in America* (Barre Publishers, 1969), vol. I, p. 67.
2. *Report of the Record Commissioners of Boston*, vol. 28, p. 208.
3. *Suffolk County Deeds*, vol. 56, p. 237.
4. *Ibid.*, vol. 58, p. 68.
5. *Report of the Record Commissioners of Boston*, vol. 9, p. 202. The date is not December 10, 1691 as Laughlin has it. This latter date is the date William Randoll married Eliza Hill (not Elizabeth Hall) as shown *Ibid.*, p. 199.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 24, p. 85.
7. J. K. Ott, "Joseph Randle: A New Maker", *PCCA Bulletin*, 6 (Dec. 1969), p. 42; L. I. Laughlin, *Pewter in America* (Barre Publishers, 1971), vol. 3, p. 55; Paine-Thornton-Waterman Papers, Miscel. Ms. p. 161, Rhode Island Historical Society.
8. J. R. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island* (Providence, 1860), vol. 5.
9. J. O. Austin, *Genealogical Dictionary of Rhode Island* (Albany, 1887), p. 158.
10. Laughlin, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 55; J. N. Arnold, *Vital Records of Rhode Island*, vol. 2, p. 273.
11. *Town Council Records*, vol 4, p. 109.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
13. *Book of Wills*, vol. 4, pp. 338-340.
14. H. R. Chace, *Owners and Occupants in Providence in 1798* (Providence, 1914), p. 28.
15. *Providence Deeds*, vol. 10B, pp. 239-241.
16. Laughlin, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 56.
17. C. A. Calder, *Rhode Island Pewterers* (Providence, 1924), pp. 12-16.
18. *1774 Census of the Colony of Rhode Island* (Providence, 1858), p. 239.
19. Calder, *op. cit.*, p. 6



# *A Talk to the British Pewter Society*

*by Richard Munday*

On October 6th, 1984, the Autumn Meeting of the Pewter Society was held at the Regent Hotel, Leamington, Warwickshire, attended by full members and corresponding members, including the very welcome presence of two members of the Pewter Collectors Club of America, Mr. Robert E. Asher, Governor at Large, and Mr. William C. Moyer of Texas.

I was privileged to address the meeting on three subjects, English pewter tobacco jars, inkstands, and baluster candlesticks. I prefaced the talk on tobacco jars with remarks on tobacco without which the jars would have been nonexistent.

A common belief is that Sir Walter Raleigh first introduced tobacco into England. Actually the brilliant Naval Commander Sir John Hawkins in 1565 was the first. It took several years before the public was fully aware of tobacco. Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh were responsible for its eventual popularity and by 1585 tobacco was in common use by the many able to afford the luxury. Sir Walter Raleigh facing a troubled period smoked constantly and became an addict. When finally imprisoned in the Tower of London his last act was to smoke a pipe-full prior to his execution in 1618.

Jean Nicot in 1559 bought tobacco seeds and sent them to France to be planted. Later the word "Nicotine" was coined.

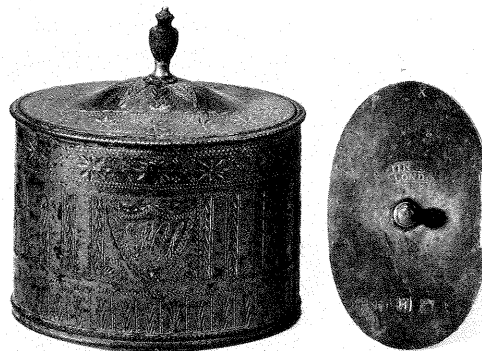
James the First disliked tobacco. Soon after his Coronation in 1603, to discourage its use, he increased the import duty from two pence a pound to six shillings and ten pence a pound, a horrific rise. When the Commonwealth was formed in 1649, Cromwell the Austere, who believed that growing tobacco was bad and a misuse of the soil, ordered troops to trample down tobacco crops wherever found and banned them from smoking. In 1558 Cromwell died. His funeral was a joyous affair. Soldiers and the people celebrated their recovered freedom by merrily singing, dancing, smoking and drinking in public.

Charles the Second, after his Restoration to the throne in 1660, confirmed the suppression of tobacco culture under threat of confiscation and fines. It created an increase in demand for tobacco, the consumption of which

could never be completely ended. Tobacco was considered a cure for nervous complaints and also helpful for its disinfectant properties. When the terrible Great Plague of 1665 spread death throughout London, many thought tobacco brought immunity from it.

In the earliest days, long before magnificently carved pipes were created, plain long clay pipes were used for smoking. Tobacco was processed into plugs for those who preferred chewing to smoking it. Leaves were rolled together, the forerunner to the modern cigar. Finally snuff, tobacco's near relation was evolved. Snuff was destined to become the vogue and used by Royalty and the Nobility in palaces and salons in the 18th Century. Logically snuff-boxes and tobacco jars must be co-joined for discussion for there is a great variety and abundance of both available. The haunting question is what were they like in the late 16th and in the 17th Century? We are concerned with pewter here, and sadly not a solitary pewter specimen of those early periods seems to exist. Possibly one day an authentic 17th Century pewter jar will be discovered, until that happens we must rely on the early 18th Century onwards for examples.

No. 1 exhibit is an oval tobacco jar with a hinged lid topped by an urn-shaped knop. The body and cover are completely covered with bright-cut engraving. There are traces of blue enamelling. Beneath is a very worn hallmark. The oval damper or presser is extremely interesting. It has a cut-out to avoid



No. 1. Tobacco jar & presser by Edmund Harvey, Wigan. c.1700-1750. (O.P.2185).





a small lock attached to the inside, and has a very clear maker's Touch and Hallmark. The maker is Edmund Harvey, of Wigan. Cotterell dates him (O.P.2185) c.1700-1750. To confuse the issue, the late Roland Shelley, in his "Brief Notes on Wigan Pewterers" writes, "Edmund Harvey is mentioned in 1653 and 1655". He was Master in 1676 and died 1685. If the Edmund Harvey who made this oval tobacco jar and the one mentioned by Rowland Shelley are one and the same, then this jar is the very earliest known. There is a problem. I cannot reconcile this jar as 17th century, particularly as in "O.P." Cotterell illustrates on plate LXXV fig. 2, a very similar oval bright-cut tobacco jar by Richard Pitt c.1780! Could Richard Pitt have copied this Edmund Harvey tobacco jar which is definitely some fifty to eighty years older? I suspend judgement!

No. 2 is another octagonal tobacco jar. It has its original damper. On the lid is a knob in the form of a finely sculptured lion passant. The long front and back panels are decorated each with the same cameo scene cast in relief. It purports Sir Walter Raleigh blowing clouds of smoke from a long clay pipe. A servant thinking he is on fire has a pail of water ready to douse him with it. On the right of Raleigh is a table on which is a lidless flagon and a footed goblet. The smaller panels also are decorated with patterns in relief. Underneath is stamped "LONDON" in an oblong, and a "Stag in a small circle". There is a problem here. For many years the 19th to 20th century firm of pewterers, Gaskell & Chambers, produced a number of identical tobacco jars. Several years ago they sold out to a similar firm of pewter manufacturers now also extinct. A little prior to the firm folding, the Master of the Pewterers Company, the Wardens, the



No. 2. "Raleigh" tobacco jar, Lion on cover.

company's curator, and I, went to Birmingham to observe their manufacturing methods. It was most impressive seeing well trained professional pewterers at work, casting, soldering, spinning round discs of pewter into tankard bodies with little apparent effort. We were shown a remarkably well made hinged mould for casting the body of the octagonal "Raleigh" tobacco jar. However, one of the small side panels was defective, definitely noticeable when pointed out. Consequently every "Raleigh" tobacco jar made by Gaskell and Chambers had one defective panel. The one shown here is perfect without a defect. We must arrive at the conclusion that "G.&C." copied the original, the date of which is c.1780-1800.

No. 3, an oval tobacco jar. The plain body is engraved with a Crest. Length  $4 \frac{3}{4}$ "; height  $3 \frac{1}{4}$ ". The lid has a baluster knob. Marked beneath, made by Pitt and Dadley c.1780. This type was also made by Spackman, Chamberlain, Duncombe, Richard Pitt, Compton, Watts and Harton and other pewterers c.1780 to c.1835.

No. 4 is a handsome remarkably well made "Punch, Judy, & Toby the Dog" tobacco jar also made by Gaskell and Chambers late 19th century. The solid cylindrical body is 6" overall, the cover with an acorn knob. The figures are sharply cast and stand out in relief. Punch is blowing clouds of smoke and Judy is standing ready with a pail of water to douse him, and Toby the little dog laughs. The late Kendal Graves, a past Master and liveryman of the Pewterers' Company, and one of the few working pewterers in the company, submitted a "Punch & Judy" jar as a show piece when striking his Touch on the original London Touch Plate, one of the last to do so. The Touch was a play on his name "Two Tombstones with initials 'K.G.'" The earliest of these jars are almost a hundred years old and not antique by our standards, but certainly antiques of the future.

No. 5 is a cylindrical tobacco jar, a type seen in great numbers, large, and small, with lids varying from flat, slightly convex, shallow domed, or with a high double-dome. This specimen had two bands of cylindrical lines, the lid high double-domed with a baluster knob. Made by Yates, Birch and Spooner, Birmingham, c.1800. This popular type was made by many late 18th and early 19th century pewterers.





No. 6. An oblong box with a hinged lid. Completely decorated with foliage in relief. There is a small lock inside, the keyhole is visible outside. This comes into the category of Britannia Metal the maker using a good heavy gauge. The decoration is now engraved, it is a process of stamping by heavy pressure. Used for tobacco or possibly as a caddy. Length 5 1/4"; width 3 3/4"; height 4". Made by Dixon and Smith, Sheffield c.1804-1829.

No. 7. A "Mandarin" tobacco jar. A charming rarity. Cylindrical drum slanting downwards, the base and top outcurving.



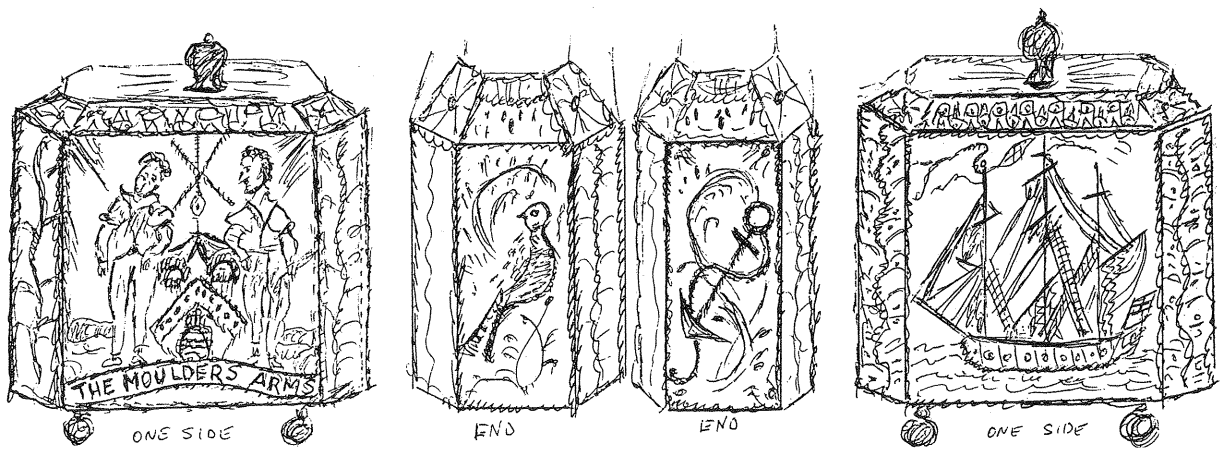
No. 7. Rare 18th Century pewter tobacco jar with MANDARIN knob, c.1770.

Height to lip 3 1/4", diameter of top 3 3/4", at base 3 1/4". Unmarked. English, c.1770.

No. 8. Here is a drawing made by me of a most unusual and rare 18th century octagonal tobacco jar. The body and lid are iron with a covering of pewter. One of the two large panels is engraved with a ship in full sail, the other panel with a Coat of Arms flanked by two men as Supporters. One end is engraved with a bird, another end with an anchor. Deeply stamped beneath is "E.&T.C. CLARK No.1." A unique specimen. English, c.1760-70.

There are other types of tobacco jars that can be described but not shown. There are the "Black Boy" jars, plain squat drums, circular with reinforced band at the top and above the base. The covers with a "Black-boy" head. English, c.1760-90. Then there is the earlier type, identical except for a band of gadrooning at the top, and above the base of the squat round drum. The lid has a narrower gadrooned band. This earlier type of "Black Boy" jars dates from c.1710-1740. There are a number of excellent Britannia Metal tobacco jars, attractive and well over a hundred years old made by good pewterers, Vickers, early Dixon, Parkin, Shaw & Fisher, Broadhead & Atkin, John Sturges, all first half of the 19th century. A good collection can be made very reasonably at present.





No. 8. Pewter covered iron octagonal tobacco jar. Two large and two small panels engraved, c. 1760-70.



No. 9. Rare 18th Century pewter snuff box in form of a pug dog with curly tail. English, c.1770.

### SNUFF BOXES

No. 9. My personal favourite, a Pug Dog with a curly tail. Extremely rare. The hinged lid is the base. English, c.1770.

No. 10/11. Two flint-lock double-barrelled pistol snuff boxes, 4 1/4". Extremely rare. George the Third, c.1780-90.

No. 12/13. Two shoes, one made by R. Webster, "O.P." No. 5020, c.1800. The other unmarked. Shoes are fascinating, they come in many different sizes, and styles. Few are marked: All are George the 3rd.



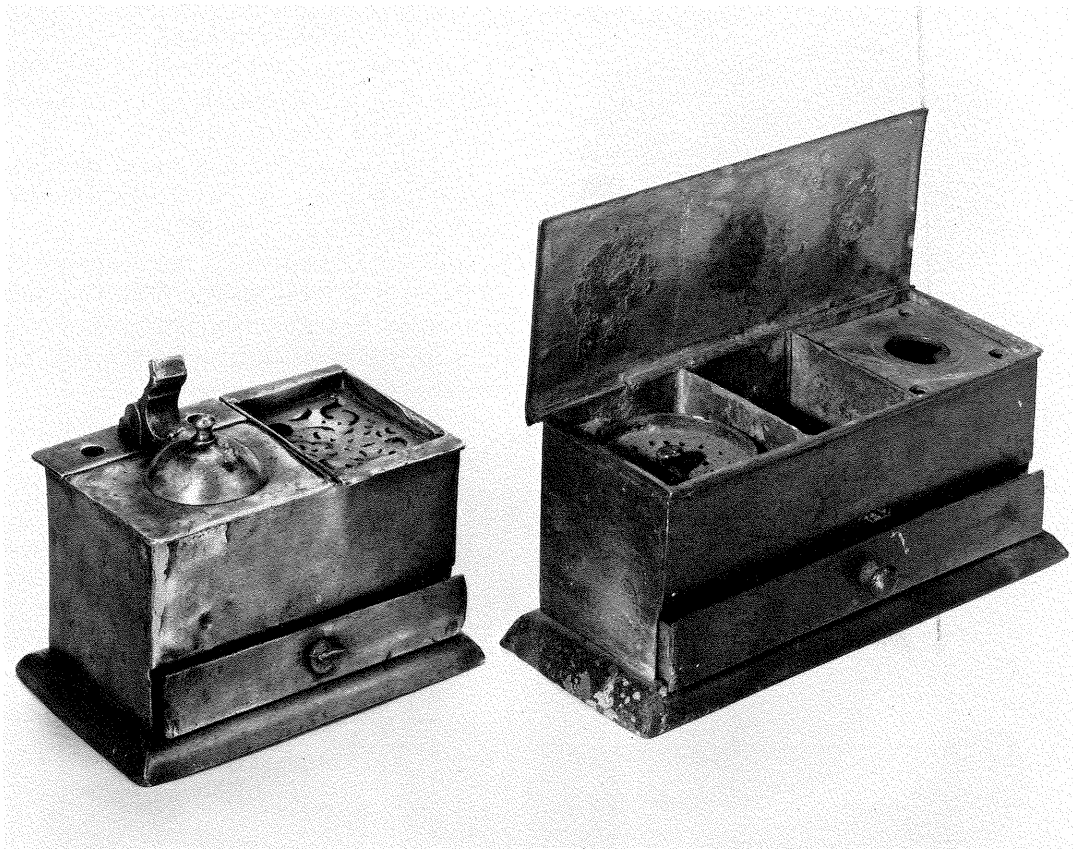
No. 10 & 11. Flint-lock, double-barrelled pistol snuff boxes, c. 1790. No. 12 & 13. Two shoe snuff boxes, c. 1800. 14 to 16, three oblong boxes, c. 1800. On top "A Wee Drappie"; Apothecary measure @ Gill.



No. 14/16. Three oblong snuff boxes, decorated or engraved with hunting scenes, c.1800. Snuff boxes come in a variety of shapes and many with interesting decoration. There is the "Before and After marriage"; before, happy and jolly; after, miserable! There are many Scottish snuffmulls. The all pewter mull is extremely rare. Made by Constantin or Durie, c.1790-1800. The majority of mulls from Scotland are stag's horn with pewter mounts. A splendid collection of English and Scottish snuff boxes can be made at a comparatively moderate cost.



Mark of George Smith, dated 1714 under the bust of Queen Anne.



No. 17. Oblong drawer ink by George Smith, London, c.1714.

No. 17a. Dutch pewter oblong box ink with drawer, pounce pot, etc. c.1750-70.

#### PEWTER INKSTANDS

I was told of a 16th century inkstand in a Vestry. It was never confirmed. The earliest known pewter inkstand is illustrated in "Antique Pewter of the British Isles" by Ronald

Michaelis, fig. 72a. It is square with a hinged lid covering the interior in two parts. The front has three sections, one for ink, one for sand, one for wax. A long back compartment for quills. Engraved "THE GUIFTE OF MR.



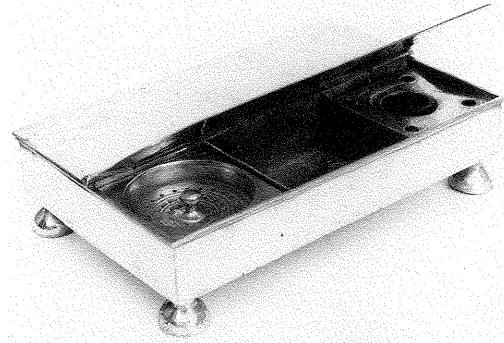
MARTIN BONNDE, 1619". Also engraved is the donor's Arms. We do not know of any other authenticated 17th century inkstand in pewter.

No. 17. An oblong inkstand, at base 7 1/2"; width at base 3"; height 3". A flat hinged lid covers three sections, one for ink; one for sand; one empty for wax. There is a drawer the full length for quills, etc. Made by George Smith, London, with date 1714 below the Queen Anne bust. Very early in pewter.

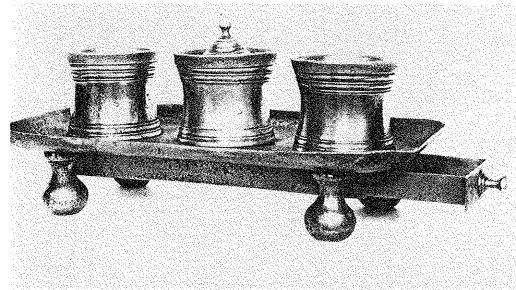
No. 17a is alongside the ink by George Smith; maker unknown. It has a drawer, a pounce pot on the right, and a covered inkwell. Made in Holland, c.1750-70.

No. 18. An oblong standish ink on four inverted cup feet. Length 8". Two lids the whole length are operated by a common central hinge. In the front are three sections, left for sand, centre for wax, right for ink, a cover has holes for quills. English, c.1770. "Pewter Sown the Ages" by Cotterell illustrates, fig. 133, a portrait by John Singleton Copley of Robert Chamblett Hooper at a desk on which is a standish ink in use in 1767.

No. 19. The picture shows two "vestry" tray inkstands on four feet, identical except for one with scroll and the other with baluster feet. On top are three containers, one for ink, one for wax, the third for sand. English, c.1780-90.



No. 18. Double-flap standish ink on inverted cup feet. English, c.1770.



No. 19a. Pewter tray ink on baluster feet. Long drawer for quills. Three containers, English, c.1790.



No. 19. Vestry tray ink on scroll feet. c.1790.

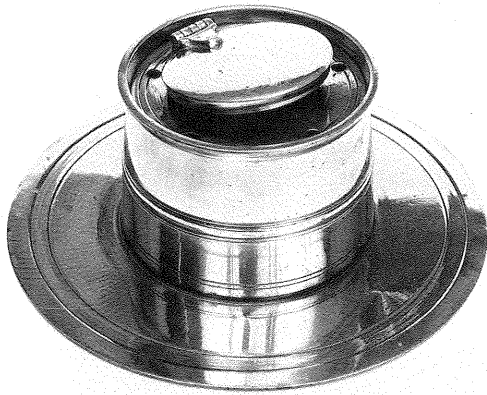
No. 19. Another vestry tray ink on baluster feet. Three containers, ink, wax & sand. English, c.1790.





No. 19a. An identical Vestry inkstand with a drawer for quills the whole length of the tray. c.1780-90.

No. 20. A loggerhead ink on a broad base, diameter 9". The hinged lid covers the ink container. There are holes for quills. c. 1800-1850.



No. 20. Pewter Loggerhead Inkstand on broad base. Flat hinged cover. Holes for quills. English, c.1800-1850.

Most loggerheads are similar to the one just described but minus the broad base. Others are lidless. Used in post offices, banking houses and trading houses, and government departments. Few are known to be 18th century, most are 19th century.

It is most interesting that in Pewterers Hall, when it was in Lime Street, in 1772 held a General Court Meeting to "Regulate Weights and Sizes of Several Wares, Vessels and Utensils of Pewter". It was "in order to prevent His Majesty's Subjects from being imposed upon in the goodness, size, and weight of Pewter". Amongst the items specifically discussed were standish inks and loggerheads. We all know that standish Inks can be 1770 and earlier and this meeting confirms it. But the majority of pewter collectors look down on loggerheads as mid 19th century or later. That they were well known and produced in regulated sizes and weights in the reign of George the Third, c.1772 or earlier comes as a surprise.

## CANDLESTICKS

When I was asked to talk on baluster shaped pewter candlesticks, a vision of 19th century unglamorous specimens entered my mind. Then I realized that some of the earliest and rarest known were baluster shaped.

No. 21 is the bell-based pure baluster type made in the late 16th century to the early 17th c.1550 to 1620. Several collectors have a single candlestick, and pairs are unknown. Some are known to have been rescued from wrecks, but their nationality has always been controversial. But their date and charm can never be doubted.



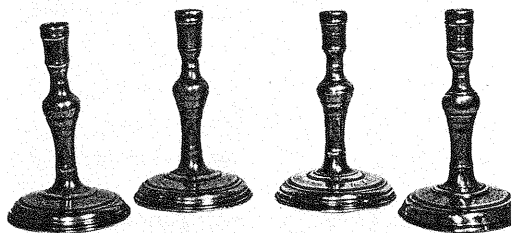
No. 21. 16th Century pewter bell-bottom candlestick. English, c.1550-1600.



No. 22. Is another early candlestick with a ball knob either midway down the stem or resting on the round base. Height 8 1/2", English c.1680-90. English pewter candlesticks dating between 1700 and 1740 are rarely seen. A set of four by Lowes of Newcastle c.1730 are known, and just one or two here and there in collections, but a real dearth. Between 1740 and c.1800 is almost a vacuum in pewter. Few or no pewter candlesticks were made. It was probably due to competition from brass, glass, possibly cheap pottery or sheffield plated candlesticks, and later electro plate. There was a revival at the end of the 18th century, sustained into the 19th century. Around 1800 pewter candlesticks mainly baluster shaped appeared in quantities. They were made by casting the many different small baluster shaped sections for the stems, and a

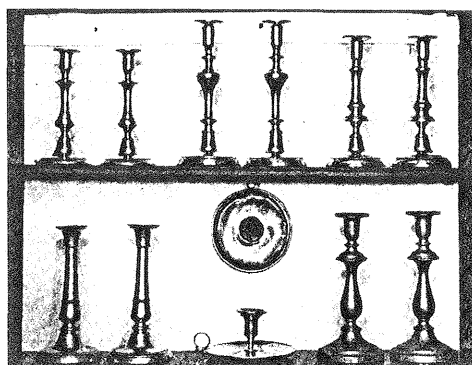


No. 22. 17th Century pewter candlestick with knopped stem on round base. English, c.1680-90.



No. 23. Two almost identical pairs of baluster candlesticks; one pair with the marks of George Lowes, Newcastle; the other with marks of 'R.E.' (location unknown). Height of candlesticks 6 1/2" c.1730. (Mr. C.A. Peal)

variety of round bases with gadrooned or beaded or plain edges. The permutation possibilities were endless. A large number of different designs were produced by moving the sections and bases around when joining them together. Inside the stem of each candlestick is an iron rod which can be pushed up to act as a candle-stub ejector, a necessity, for if the candle is allowed to burn too low a pool of boiling grease forms, hot enough to melt the nozzle if not extinguished quickly. It is important to remember that all candlesticks of this "revival" period are unmarked. Any seen with a hallmark or a maker's Touch must be looked at with suspicion as either a fake or a reproduction.



No. 24. A group of baluster column candlesticks of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, showing the great variety still available in both pairs and singles. Practically all of this type have a 'push-rod' candle ejector inside the stem. Heights range from about 8" to 11". On the lower shelf a pair of chamber candlesticks; these, too, may be found in great variety, some with separate, and removable conical-shaped 'douser'. (Mr. Richard Munday, London)

Pewter chamber candlesticks were also produced at this time. They have baluster nozzles and low stems and sit in a saucer-shaped base with a handle which frequently holds a cone-shaped wick extinguisher. I have here a picture for you to examine of a group of late candlesticks which illustrates the permutation possibilities. Many examples of each of the three subjects perforce could not be mentioned here. Perhaps another time.

Thank you for listening and a special thanks to our American pewter enthusiasts for joining us here so far from home. I hope you all derived as much pleasure from this talk as it gave me to address you.



# *William Billings: Providence Pewterer and Brass Founder*

by Richard L. Bowen, Jr.

The name of William Billings of Providence, Rhode Island, was included in the earliest lists of American pewterers. Kerfoot noted that a date of 1791 had been assigned to Billings but wondered on what authority.<sup>1</sup> The basis of the date was the following advertisement which Billings first ran in the November 5, 1791 *Providence Gazette*.<sup>2</sup> He subsequently ran it in the November 12th and 19th issues.

**WILLIAM BILLINGS,**  
**PEWTERER, COPPERSMITH, and BRAZIER,**  
In the Main Street, PROVIDENCE,  
Near Messiers Joseph and William Russel's Store,  
and directly opposite Col. Knight Dexter's,  
MAKES and sells all Kinds of PEWTER WARE,  
warranted good as any made in this Town, or  
State. — Also, all Sorts of BRAZIERY, viz. —  
Brass Kettles, Coffee Pots, Saucepans, Skillets,  
Skimmers, Ladles, Warming Pans, Stew Pans, &c.  
&c. &c. — He makes Stills and Worms of all Sizes,  
and on the newest and most approved Construction;  
Dyers' Copper Kettles, Sugar-House Ladles  
and Skimmers; all Kinds of Ship Work, such as  
leading Hawse-Holes, Scuppers, &c., in the neatest  
Manner, and with Dispatch. — He also makes  
Lead Weights, from 1 oz. to 14 lbs. or larger, if  
wanted.

Young in Life, and having a Desire to be employed  
as well as to please, he flatters himself that those  
Gentlemen, who wish to promote and encourage  
Industry, and the young Beginner, will honour him  
with their Commands, which shall be gratefully  
acknowledged, and attended to with Dispatch and  
Fidelity.

N. B. Said BILLINGS wants a smart active LAD,  
as an Apprentice in Said Business.

CASH, and the highest Price, given for old  
PEWTER, COPPER, BRASS and LEAD.  
*Providence, Nov. 4, 1791*

Charles A. Calder published this notice in a condensed and emasculated form in his pioneering article on Rhode Island pewterers.<sup>3</sup> Laughlin reprinted it verbatim from Calder in his short account of Billings.<sup>4</sup> Calder deleted all of the products listed after pewter ware, listing only "Pewter Ware warranted good as any made in town or country". Actually the original has "good as any made in this Town, or State". This has specific reference to Samuel Hamlin and Gershom Jones in Providence and the Melvilles in Newport. By eliminating the vast range of products made of brass, copper, and lead, Calder's condensation gives the impression that Billings worked predom-

inantly in pewter. The list of products gives a remarkable picture, of the skill of a man of age 23 who had just started, and it gives evidence of the thoroughness with which the master (probably Gershom Jones) trained his apprentice. Calder also eliminated the last two paragraphs. One of these indicates that Billings had already reached the point where he was looking for an apprentice.

Billings' plea to "those Gentlemen, who wish to promote and encourage Industry, and the young Beginner" to honor him with their business has been called both ingenious<sup>5</sup> and naively delightful.<sup>6</sup> However, his plea to "those Gentlemen" was not original; it had an historic basis which had been missed. On February 27, 1789 the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers was founded for the "promotion of home manufactures, the cementing of mechanic interest, and for raising a fund to support the distressed".<sup>7</sup> William Billings became a member on February 15, 1790. On August 3, 1790 a committee was appointed to report on the situation of the manufactures of Providence and its vicinity along with the probable value of these manufactures. The report made on January 10, 1791 detailed the quantity of many articles manufactured, but added that "the manufacture of cordage, copper and brass, brass-foundry work, mathematical instruments, cabinet work and chairs, tin, stone and earthen wares, and bellows, we have not been able to ascertain to any exactness".<sup>8</sup>

On June 22, 1791 Alexander Hamilton, Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, wrote a letter calling on individuals and associations in the various states to provide information to enable him to formulate "a plan for promoting manufactures", which had been requested by the House of Representatives. On July 19, 1791 the Providence Association chose a committee of 26 consisting of one member from each manufacturing branch "to procure an accurate statement of the situation of manufactures in this town". William Billings was on the committee, and presumably he was responsible for the pewterers, coppersmiths, braziers and brass founders.<sup>9</sup>

In the September 14, 1791 issue of the *U. S. Chronicle* the Providence Association of Me-



chanics and Manufacturers reported to the public that they were attempting to obtain information on the manufactures of the town and that their committee members would be seeking information on the first Monday in October. They closed with: "As the Congress of the United States are desirous to promote and encourage the Manufactures of our Country — and as they have directed the Secretary of the Treasury to report a Plan for that purpose, at their next Session, we have not a Doubt but that every Well-wisher to their Country will cheerfully assist on this Occasion".

The committee made its report on October 10, 1791 by an "Exhibit of the Products of Industry in Providence from January 1, 1790 to October 10, 1791". Much of this was probably taken from the January 10, 1791 report. It contains: "*Brass Founders' Work*, of all sorts, made in this town to a large amount yearly; but by reason of the great variety of articles, the prices cannot be ascertained. But the makers say, 'as cheap, if not cheaper — and as good, if not better, than any imported from Europe'."<sup>10</sup> At the end there is a disclaimer similar to the one in the first report: "There are, also, large quantities of cabinet work and chair work, cordage, coppersmiths', braziers' and pewterers' work made in this town, of which we have not been able to obtain any regular statement; but the manufacturers of pewter complain that they labor under great discouragements, by being obliged to work large quantities of old pewter, which being of a base quality, imported from Bristol, and sold here for London-made, they cannot, by reason of the scarcity of block tin, make it equal to the London standard, and at the same time work all the old pewter in the country."<sup>11</sup>

This last paragraph shows that eight years after a peace treaty was signed with England in 1783, the British were still restricting the export of the major raw material for pewter manufacture — block tin. This was part of the former policy to force the Colonists to purchase manufactured products from England rather than allow their manufacture in America. After the war the Americans tried to reverse this. In the period 1790-91 the American duty on finished pewter and tin ware was 7½% *ad valorem*, while "tin in pigs" was "free".<sup>12</sup> This would hinder the export of finished pewter from England, but there was

little the Americans could do to make the British release the raw tin.

Williams Billings was probably responsible for determining the volume of business generated by the pewterers, coppersmiths, braziers, and brass founders. His sole contribution on the "situation" was the comment on the scarcity of block tin for pewter manufacture. The only men who fit into the pewterer/coppersmith/brazier category were Samuel Hamlin and Gershom Jones who worked in copper and brass as well as pewter. They obviously refused to give Billings any information as did many other manufacturers. This may have stemmed from two factors. First, Billings was only 22 in 1790 and certainly his peers were not about to give him their product breakdown. Further, he had probably only finished his apprenticeship with Jones a short time before and may have been working for him at the time. If so, he was in no position to ask Jones any detailed information. Jones had been engaged in a law suit against Hamlin only a short time before. So if Billings were Jones' man, then Hamlin certainly would not have given him any information. Further, Rhode Island had only just joined the Union, being the last state to ratify the Constitution on May 29, 1790, showing Rhode Island's individualism. Certainly some of the older men could see this survey of the value of manufactured products as a means for some future taxation by the Federal government. Actually such a Federal tax did come in 1798 in the U.S. Direct Tax on the real estate of all individuals.

Billings' advertisement announcing the opening of a shop was not until November 1791. When he joined the Providence Association in February 1790 he was probably working as a journeyman, possibly for Gershom Jones. He must have decided to go out on his own while he was working on the manufacturing report, and saw a chance to start. In his second paragraph he has taken the words of Alexander Hamilton and challenged "those Gentlemen, who wish to promote and encourage Industry and the young Beginner" to honor him with their orders. He also echoed the first tenet of the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers — to promote new manufacturing. Rather than being "ingenious", young Billings showed an awakening faith in the progress and growth of the "united" States.



William Billings' next advertisement is found over five years later in the March 11 (and 18), 1797 *Providence Gazette*.

### WILLIAM BILLINGS

Pewterer, Coppersmith and Brazier, in the Main Street, Providence, directly opposite Mr. Nathan Angell's, and two Doors South of that noted Inn formerly kept by Col. Knight Dexter, and now by Mr. Joseph Holmes,

MAKES and sells all Kinds of PEWTER WARE, warranted genuine and good, at Wholesale or Retail; also all Sorts of BRAZIERY, viz. Brass Kettles, Coffee-Pots, Sauce-Pans, Skillets, Skimmers, Ladles, Copper Measures, &c. &c. He makes Stills and Worms of all Sizes, and on the newest and most approved Constructions; Dyers' and Hatters' Copper Kettles; all kinds of SHIP WORK, such as leading Hawseholes, Scuppers, Tafferels [taffrails], &c. in the neatest Manner, and with Dispatch. He also makes Brass Handirons [andirons], and now has a few Pairs on Hand. He returns Thanks to his former Customers, and solicits a Continuance of their Favors, the smallest of which he begs leave to assure them will be gratefully acknowledged.

CASH and the highest Price given for old Brass, Copper, Pewter and Lead. A smart active LAD, 14 or 15 Years of Age, desirous of learning the above Business, will find Encouragement by applying as above.

*Providence, March 11, 1797.*

This is basically the same advertisement as the first. Warming pans, stew pans, and lead weights have been discontinued, but copper measures, hatters' copper kettles, taffrail ship work, and brass andirons were added. This last item indicates that Billings had expanded his facilities to include a brass foundry. Prior to this all of the coppersmith's and brazier's products were made from sheet copper and brass. Now he was casting brass in sand molds. And he was looking for another apprentice. Calder printed a condensation of this advertisement only mentioning pewter.

A year and half later Billings ran another advertisement in the August 4 (and 18), 1798 *Providence Gazette*.

### WILLIAM BILLINGS,

Pewterer, Coppersmith and Brazier, RESPECTFULLY informs his Customers and the Public in general, that he carries on the said Business, in all its various Branches, at his Shop, directly opposite Mr. Nathan Angell's, and a few Doors North of the Baptist Meeting-House, where may be had, at the shortest Notice any Articles in his Line of Business. He also makes and sells Brass Andirons in the newest Fashions; he has a few Sets on Hand, which he will sell very reasonably. The smallest Favors thankfully acknowledged.

Said Billings has an elegant new fall-back CHAISE, which he will exchange for Lumber and Carpenter's Work, if applied for soon.

Wanted, at the above Business, one or two smart active Lads as Apprentices, to whom good Encouragement will be given.

*Providence, August 4, 1798.*

For the first time pewter is not specifically mentioned, although he still listed himself as a pewterer. The only product mentioned was brass andirons "in the newest Fashions"; he was obviously promoting brass andirons. The fall-back chaise he was trying to sell is an interesting example of the barter system that was then prevalent. He probably took the chaise from some chaise manufacturer in payment for his products. He was specifically trying to trade it to a carpenter for lumber and labor for work on his shop or a house. Calder did not publish this advertisement.

The *Providence Gazette* of September 27, 1798 contained a six-line advertisement:

*For SALE,*

A Copper KETTLE, that will contain about two Barrels and a Half, available for boiling Cider. Enquire of

WILLIAM BILLINGS

*Providence, Sept. 21.*

For some reason he was anxious to move one specific item.

Less than two months later the *Providence Gazette* of November 10 (and 17 and 24), 1798 announced that:

### WILLIAM BILLINGS and JOB DANFORTH, jun.

PEWTERERS, COPPERSMITHS  
and FOUNDERS,

INFORM the Public that they have entered into Partnership, under the Firm of BILLINGS and DANFORTH, for the Purpose of carrying on the above Branches of Business. — They manufacture all kinds of Ship-Work in the above Branches, at their Shop, a few Doors North of the Baptist Meeting-House, as well as all other kinds of Pewter, Copper and Brass Wares. — They have now on Hand, and offer for Sale, one new Still, which will contain about 95 Gallons, and a Worm; also one second hand Still, that will contain about 75 Gallons, and a Worm; together with a handsome Assortment of Pewter, Copper and Brass Wares, among which are an elegant Assortment of Brass Handirons, made after the newest Fashions.

*Providence, Nov. 10, 1798.*

The products are basically the same as previously listed. They had two stills in stock and also a "handsome assortment" of pewter,





copper and brass ware — probably pots, pans, kettles, skimmers, etc. Brass andirons are still extolled: they had an “elegant assortment” of the “newest fashions”. One important change in the advertisement is the replacement of “Brazier” with “Founders” in the heading. Calder printed this advertisement in full, but in the last line, instead of “made after the newest fashion”, he had “and Fire-Hooks”. The partnership of Danforth and Billings ended less than three years after it was announced with the untimely death of Job Danforth on September 5, 1801 at age 27.

An account book for the years 1788-1818 for Job Danforth, Sr. is preserved in the Rhode Island Historical Society. He was a prominent joiner and cabinetmaker in Providence. Miraculously, accounts are preserved for William Billings from March 4, 1791 to March 22, 1805, and for Billings and Danforth from August 23, 1798 to August 13, 1801. These are reproduced in full. The first, for William Billings, is found on pages 55 and 56.

William Billings		Dr				
1791			[	£	sh	d]
March 4	to fixing a tower, hors [horse?], vise, Bench & Counter to your shop		1	4	0	
	to 11 feet of bords		0	0	7½	
17	to a stool		0	2	0	
June 17	to altering a beed stead		0	7	6	
Aug 18	to a teapot handal		0	1	0	
1793						
Jan 17	to 2 prep boards		0	1	0	
Dec 7	to a brad [bread] peel		0	2	6	
16	to 2 flask boards		0	5	6	
1794						
Aug 13	to sawing a mold		0	0	8	
Sept 29	to a larg flask		0	8	0	
1795						
Jan 23	to a saw handal to a saw		0	2	0	
Aug 22	to a coffin mad of cheretre [cherry tree] for child		1	1	0	
Dec 24	to a large flask		0	13	6	
1797						
Dec 6	to a piece of pine plank		0	2	0	
			4	11	3½	
			[ \$15.22 ]			
1801						
March 12	Cr by his Bill rendered in and a due Bill wich made up to this date Setled		4	11	3½	

An account of Billings and Danforth is found on pages 203 and 204.

Billings & Danforth		Dr			
1798					
Aug. 23	To Making a pattern for Hand Iron [andiron]		3	0	
	To a flask		9	0	
Sept. 18th	To Georges Work for you & Mold for a pump		5	6	
Oct. 15th	To a flask & Mold 7/6 & Two Board to cast by 1/6		9	0	
24th	To two patterns		3	0	
Nov. 14th	To 3½ feet of Maple Joyce [joist] & Georges Work		1	3	
Dec. 6	To Mending flasks 15/ to a Sand Box 3/		18	0	
7	To a flask Board & Mending a flask		2	6	
25th	To Flasks		18	0	
1799					
Jan. 25	To Mending Box		1	4	
March 30	to a pateran [pattern]		1	2½	
April 26	to manding Spade handal		1	0	
Aug. 29	to torning [turning] 52 pins for beed steed		2	3	
Nov. 6	to giting out 3 patrand [pattern]		3	0	
1800					
March 2	to a Board for a mold		1	2	
25	To Repairing your Bellows		4	3	
Oct. 10	To a pattern for pump		1	8	
4	To 4½ pare of flask Omitted at 10/6		2	11	6
1801					
March 14	To a pattern for handirons		1	2	
Aug. 1	To repairing 4 flasks		2	6	
13	To a laythe [lathe] to turn coars [cores] & clamps		3	0	
			7	3	3½
			[ \$23.88 ]		
<b>Contra</b>		<b>Cr</b>			
By their account			4	3	3½
By balance due carried to a new account and charged to William Billings			3	0	0
			7	3	3½



On page 253 a new account dated April 6, 1802 was opened for Billings where he was charged "To balance due on settlement of Billings & Danforth account" for £3. This may be taken as the date that Billings settled the Billings & Danforth account. On page 261 another account was opened for Billings.

William Billings		Dr	
May 28, 1803	To 2 Stools		5/6
March 22, 1805	To Whetting a Saw		1/8

There is no indication that either of these accounts was ever settled.

The Rhode Island Historical Society also has an account book of William Proud, a Providence wood turner and chair maker, covering the period from 1773 to 1833. William Billings opened an account with Proud in 1793. Above Billings' name is found "Putterer" to differentiate him from the other William Billings who was a cooper, with whom Proud also dealt. The account is found on page 55 recto.

William Billings		Dr.	
<i>Putterer</i>			
1793			
April 26	To 6 mallets and Mold		0/8/8½
1794			
June 28	To sawing 16 Blocks		
	@ 4		0/5/4
Dec 2	To 12 handels @ 2		0/2/0
1795			
Jan 7	To 7 mallets @ 14½		0/8/5
1798			
Jan 4	To 7 mallets @ 1/6		0/10/6
			1/14/11½
1801			
May 28	Cr For Your bill		0/17/8½
	For Billings and		
	Danforth		0/14/9
	For a Due Bill in		
	Bal		0/2/6
			1/14/11½

The account was settled on May 28, 1801, eight years after it was opened. This was three months before Job Danforth's death. There were no other transactions with Proud.

These accounts are illustrative of the credit practices observed in those times when cash was scarce and many transactions were resolved via the barter system.<sup>13</sup> Most accounts were allowed to run several years before settlement, and some ran up to eight or ten years. Billings' account with Danforth is an excellent

example; it ran exactly ten years before it was settled and was inactive for the last three years. It was settled by a bill rendered by Billings for unspecified merchandise, and by a "due bill", which was a promissory note. The Billings & Danforth account, which was almost four years old, was partially settled by a cash (presumably) payment of a little more than half. The balance of the account was charged to Billings as the surviving partner.

The accounting practices of the period provide a valuable insight on how a young man starting in business at age 21 could acquire his equipment. He was given open credit and allowed a great number of years to pay the account. If he spread his purchases around among a number of craftsmen he could keep the amount owed to each reasonable.

Neither Billings' nor Billings & Danforth's account was very large, but the items included are very important. The first item in Billings' account is an entry on March 4, 1791 for "fixing" (presumably setting up) a tower, vise, bench and counter in his shop for £1/4/0. This is the same amount Danforth charged for a maple four post high bedstead, to put the work in perspective. The entry puts a precise date on the opening of Billings' shop, which is eight months before he ran the advertisement in the *Providence Gazette* first announcing he was in business.

There is other shop equipment listed in Billings' account. The large flasks and the flask boards were for casting brass. The item for "Sawing a mold" was probably for a lead or pewter product. The "teapot handal" was possibly for a pewter teapot, but not one Billings made — probably one he repaired. The tower was for the wheel which could be used for turning pewter or small brass products. The brass or bronze molds for casting pewter were probably purchased from either Samuel Hamlin or Gershom Jones, although Billings may have been capable of making his own molds as Hamlin was. Billings' master may have been responsible for furnishing a few of the molds for casting pewter. The stool and the saw handle were probably for the shop.

There are some personal items in Billings' account. The first is for altering a bedstead. This was probably for his family, although it could have been for an apprentice. Then there is a bread peel. And finally, on August 22, 1795 there is a charge for a cherry coffin for a child. This is the only record of the birth of a



child to William Billings and his wife during this period. With the absence of income taxes and with no stockholders to account to, there was no reason for separating personal expenses from business expenses. However, with a partnership, personal expenses were generally kept out of the account. Such is seen in the account of Billings & Danforth. After Billings & Danforth was started, a personal account was opened for Job Danforth, Jr. in his father's account book, but there is no separate account for Billings during this period (from 1798 to 1801).

The first item on Billings & Danforth's account is a pattern for an andiron, which sets the trend for the next few years. There is another andiron pattern in 1801, and there are six unspecified patterns, some of which could be for andirons. There is a pump mold and a pump pattern. The flasks and flask boards were for casting the patterns in brass in sand molds. A domestic item is seen in the pins for a bedstead (to hold the ropes for supporting the mattress); it may have been for an apprentice.

In his work on the American brass founder, Kauffman reasoned that the eighteenth century founder must also have been a pattern maker as no such single trade has been found in the records of the period.<sup>14</sup> The earliest directories of Philadelphia, New York and Boston (dating from 1785 to 1789) do not list any pattern makers. Job Danforth's account book shows the reason. Patterns for brass (and iron) casting were made by the joiners and cabinetmakers. The demand for wooden patterns was not great enough for there to have been a separate trade. However, such a trade did arise in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

The impetus for the development of pattern makers as a separate trade was the rapid industrialization of certain areas along the Atlantic seaboard early in the nineteenth century. In Rhode Island the great stimulus was the successful erection in 1790 of the first cotton mill in America by Samuel Slater at the great falls on the Blackstone River in Pawtucket (then a village in the Township of North Providence). Here the spinning of cotton yarn was taken out of the home and produced by water power. Cotton mills needed vast numbers of machines with a diversity of metal parts.

The first *Providence Directory* was pub-

lished in 1824. The listings show a different world from that existing in 1800. There are 13 machine makers; these were backed up by five iron molder/founders and three brass founders. The foundries were now operating as separate trades to supply iron or brass castings to the machine makers. Prior to 1800 many trades were vertically integrated with founders like Billings and Danforth casting their own brass and finishing it.

There were 37 cabinetmakers in the 1824 *Providence Directory*, but no pattern makers. However, many of the cabinetmakers must have made patterns. In the 1838 *Directory* there were 34 cabinetmakers and now five pattern makers. Four of the five were in the *Directory* for the first time. One was listed in the prior *Directory* (1836) as a pattern maker. (The 1836 *Directory* was not checked for other pattern makers.) However, in the two earlier *Directories* (1830 and 1832) he was listed as a "housewright". One of the pattern makers listed for the first time in the 1838 *Directory* was William Bradford Bowen (b. 1808, d. 1880), the author's great-grandfather.

Pattern making thus emerged as a separate trade in Providence about 1835. The pattern makers produced patterns for machine frames, gears, pulleys and other parts for the machine makers who gave them to the foundries for casting. The explosive industrialization led to increasing specialization and spelled the doom of multicrafted men such as Billings and Danforth. Before 1800 craftsmen in provincial areas like Providence had to have more than one craft to keep busy. After 1825 there was more work in one craft than a single man could handle.

In his work on the American pewterer, Kauffman wondered who designed and made the brass or bronze molds used for casting pewter utensils, and who made the patterns for casting the molds.<sup>15</sup> The answer to the second question is the joiner or cabinetmaker, while the answer to the first is either the pewterer or a brass founder. If the pewterer were also a brass founder he could fabricate the molds himself. This is shown by the case of pewterer Samuel Hamlin, who advertised in the *Connecticut Courant* of November 23, 1773 that he had nearly completed a set of molds in the newest and neatest fashions. If the pewterer were not a brass founder he had to buy the molds from a brass founder. Brass founders Hedderly and Riland advertised in



the 1819 *Philadelphia Directory* that they made pewterers' molds on the shortest notice. In either case wooden patterns were needed for each part of the mold.

This may be the explanation of the "molds" listed in both the Danforth and Proud accounts. Technically a mold is used for casting a part by pouring molten metal into it. Wooden molds could conceivably be used for crude items such as weights, but their life would be short and the surface of the part would be rough as it mirrored the charred surface of the wood. More likely the "molds" were patterns for molds, a pattern being used to make one brass or bronze casting which was finished for the actual mold part. Proud sold one "mold" to Billings, but the other items were tools: blocks and wooden mallets for tamping sand in the flasks or for other uses.

The *Providence Gazette* of September 5, 1801 announced the death of Job Danforth, Jr. Pursuant to this the following notice was run in the October 31 and November 7, 1801 *Providence Gazette*.

**The Copartnership of BILLINGS and DANFORTH** being dissolved by the Death of the late Mr. JOB DANFORTH, the Subscriber solicits all Persons who have Demands against said Firm, to exhibit them for Settlement as soon as may be: And all who are indebted to said Firm was requested to make immediate Payment to

**WILLIAM BILLINGS**  
surviving Partner.

N. B. Said BILLINGS continues to carry [on] the Coppersmith's, Pewterer and Brazier's Business, as usual, and has on Hand an elegant Assortment of Brass Hand Irons, and other articles in the above Line, which he will sell cheap. He pays Cash for old Brass, Copper, Lead and Pewter.

*Providence, October 30, 1801.*

In addition to soliciting the demands against the firm and requesting that amounts due the firm be paid, Billings advised that he still carried on the business, and again promotes his "elegant" brass andirons.

Job Danforth's inventory was taken on October 21, 1801 by Gershom Jones, J. W. Coy and Peter Grimmell. At the end of the personal inventory was an item for one half of the amount of the inventory of Billings and Danforth for \$498.73½.<sup>16</sup> Billings' notice of October 31, 1801 was a request for bills to offset this amount. In the final accounting of May 2, 1803 William Billings paid Job Danforth's estate \$94.30,<sup>17</sup> which means that the firm had debts of \$808.87 (half being applied

to Danforth's half of the inventory). This indicates that the firm was solvent, with a surplus of \$188.60. Job Danforth, Jr. was also personally solvent when he died, contrary to what has been stated.<sup>18</sup>

In a notice in the April 12, 1806 *Providence Gazette* William Billings offered his house with shop for sale.

**THE Subscriber offers for Sale his Shop**, standing on leased Land, directly opposite Mr. Nathan Angell's, the lower Part being calculated for most Kinds of Businesses, and the Chambers, with a little Expencc, may be made very convenient for a Family. Terms of Payment will be made easy. For further Particulars enquire of

**WILLIAM BILLINGS.**

*April 12, 1806*

A detailed description of William Billings' shop and house is available as a result of the 1798 Federal property evaluation. The wooden structure was 23 feet wide as it faced west on Main Street and extended back 30 feet on land belonging to Jacob Whitman, Jr.<sup>19</sup> The upper story had five windows with 24 panes of glass and three windows with 16 panes, all of the panes measuring 8 x 6 inches. Presumably the bottom story also had approximately the same number of windows. The tax assessor had problems with structures used as combination dwelling houses/shops as the Federal law specified that the "dwelling houses" were to be evaluated separately. The shop part of Billings' structure was apparently not picked up in the other part of the evaluation. The value of Billings' "dwelling house" was set at \$300.00, so the total value of the structure was possibly twice this. The important point is that Billings' shop was only 23 x 30 feet in area. In comparison Gershom Jones' shop, store and stable was a three story structure 22 x 49 feet with a floor space almost five times Billings' shop.

The *Providence Gazette* announced that William Billings died suddenly in Pawtucket on June 19, 1813 at age 45. In 1813 Pawtucket was a village in the Township of North Providence, which extended north of Providence. In 1874 the village of Pawtucket with surrounding territory was taken from North Providence and incorporated as the City of Pawtucket. The North Providence probate and land records, as well as the Town Council records, from 1756 to 1874 are today located in the Pawtucket City Hall.



On July 3, 1813 the North Providence Court of Probate met and considered an application requesting that an administrator be appointed to the personal estate of William Billings, late of North Providence, who died intestate.<sup>20</sup> It was voted that Mrs. Amey Billings, widow of William Billings, be appointed administrator of his personal estate upon procuring bonds for the administration as the law required. It was also voted that Samuel Thayer, James Mason and Barney Merry be appointed to appraise and make an inventory of the personal estate of William Billings to be presented to the Court in three months. Also at this meeting the Probate Court issued Letters of Administration to Amey Billings, advising her to gather all the assets of the personal estate, to pay the debts, to make a true and perfect inventory within three months, and to prepare a just and true account of her administration within twelve months.<sup>21</sup>

The original bond of Amey Billings, principle, of North Providence, and Ezekiel Burr and Abel Allen, both of Providence, dated July 3, 1813, to the members of the Probate Court in the sum of \$500.00 is still on file with the list of claims and the account.<sup>22</sup> It is signed by Amey Billings, Burr and Allen. Ezekiel Burr was Amey's brother and a well known Providence gold and silversmith.<sup>23</sup> He acted as her agent in the proceedings.

At a meeting of the Court of Probate on August 28, 1813 Mrs. Amey Billings presented an inventory of the personal estate of William Billings in the amount of \$117.83.<sup>24</sup> The inventory was read and duly considered, and it was voted that it be recorded as a good and lawful inventory. It was recorded in the probate record as follows.<sup>25</sup>

**Inventory of the Personal Estate of  
William Billings**

1	Broad Cloath Coat	\$7.00
1	Old Black Do	2.00
1	Pr old Carzemer Over-alls	1.00
1	Pr Do Do	1.00
1	Broad Cloath Vest	2.00
1	Pr [nothing listed]	3.00
1	Old Cotton Coat	0.75
2	Pr of old Pantiloons	0.50
3	Under Vests & 1 pr Draws	1.25
2	Cotton Shirts	2.00
6	Pair of Stockins	2.00
1	Hat	4.00
1	Pr Boots	4.00
1	Old Table	2.00

1	Chest	1.00
1	Old Candle Stand	0.25
1	Tea Tray	0.30
3	Chairs	0.60
1	Pr Flat Irons	0.50
1	Pr Iron Dogs & Shovel & Tongs	0.75
2	Pr Candle Sticks	0.75
1	Pr Bellows	0.30
	Block Tin Teapots, Crockery &c in the Closet	4.50
	China & Crockery Ware in the Southeast Closet	6.00
8	Wine Glasses	0.75
2	Decanters	0.75
4	Waters [waiters?] & one Bread Tray	0.75
1	Part of a Case of Drawers	1.75
1	Flock Bed & Bedstead and Under Bed	4.00
3	Pair Sheets & 1 old Blanket	3.00
1	Bread Trough	0.75
1	Old Brass Kettle	2.50
1	Keg	0.50
	Boards on the Wood House	2.50
[1]	Old Hogshed & 1 Cyder Barril	0.25
[1]	Wash Tub	2.00
[1]	Cloath [Horse?]	0.50
	[ _____ ]	0.50
	[Total of page 551]	[\$67.95]

(Page 552: Right side of page with prices missing):

	Vegetables in the Garden	[1.00]
9	Knives & 9 Forks	[0.50]
3	Small Table Cloaths	[1.50]
1	Large Do Do	[1.00]
11	Books	[2.20]
1	Box of old Patterns, Founders Tools & [_____]	[35.13]
11	Skimmer Handles	[1.80]
2	Pr of unfinished Shovel & Tongs	[0.50]
1	Pr Shears	[2.00]
1	Pr of old Scales	[0.75]
1	Old Box of Screw Taps	[0.50]
1	Scale Beam	[1.00]
1	Bundle of old Wire	[0.25]
1	Old Hand-Saw & old Black Lea [ther Trunk?]	[1.00]
1	Pr Blacksmith Tongs & Desk	[0.50]
1	Ink Stand	[0.25]
	[Total of page 552]	[\$117.83]



Amey Billings took an oath that this was a true and perfect inventory of all the personal estate that had come to hand, and if more were found she would give the Court a record of it.

The second page (p. 552) of the inventory has the right side of the page with the prices missing. Values for all of these items, except the "Box of old Patterns, Founders Tools & [\_\_\_\_\_]" were taken from Gershom Jones' inventory taken in 1809.<sup>26</sup> The total of \$14.75 for these items added to the total of page 551 of \$67.95 gives \$82.70, which leaves \$35.13 for the patterns, founders tools, etc.

The inventory may be summarized as follows:

Clothes (first 13 items)	\$ 30.50
Household goods (next 30 items)	43.65
Shop equipment, including desk & inkstand (last 11 items)	43.68
	<u>\$117.83</u>

At the August 28, 1813 sitting of the Court Mrs. Amey Billings represented the estate of William Billings as insolvent.<sup>27</sup> The Court appointed James Mason and Samuel Thayer as commissioners to receive and examine the claims against the estate, allowing six months for the claims to be filed. On January 21, 1815 Ezekiel Burr, attorney for Amey Billings, exhibited to the Court a list of claims amounting to \$296.90.<sup>28</sup> The list was received and accepted by the Court, but only the total amount was entered into the record. Fortunately the original list is preserved in the file of the case along with the bond and the accounting. The first item was the balance of an account due to Abraham, Isaac and David Wilkinson for \$189.20. The remainder of \$107.70 was owed to thirteen individuals. Credited to the total of \$296.90 was the value of \$117.83 for the inventory, leaving \$179.07 that the estate was deficient at this point.

The last business of the Court was the final accounting. The administrator's original account is preserved in the file; it was also copied into the Town Council Records.<sup>29</sup> This may be summarized as follows.

**The Estate of William Billings, deceased, in a/c with Amey Billings.**

<b>Dr</b>	
To the List of Claims allowed by Probate Court	\$296.90
To Sundry articles of Household furniture set off to the Widow as	

necessary for the upholding of life	29.95
To Horse & Chaise five times to North Providence	5.00
To Administrator's Agents' Account for their time & trouble in Settling said Estate as allowed	10.00
To assistance in adjusting the account & drawing Petition to the Honbl Supreme Court for Sale of Lot	2.00
To Honbl Probate Court and Clerk's Fees in Settling sd Estate	6.00
	<u>\$349.85</u>

**Cr**

By Ozias Danforth's* account — Sales of all the Personal Estate, exclusive of what was set off to the Widow & excluding the commission on the sale	\$77.49
By balance due the Estate from Messrs Wilkinson & Howe as exhibited	48.39
By Balance of which said Estate stands deficient	<u>223.97</u>
	<u>\$349.85</u>

\*Ozias Danforth (b. 1772) was Job Danforth, Jr.'s brother.

Ezekiel Burr as agent for Amey Billings, administratrix, swore to the truth of the account. Neither the original document, nor the entry in the Council book is dated. However, in the book it follows a June 5, 1815 entry on page 259 and page 260 starts with a December 25, 1815 entry, so the estate was closed before the end of 1815.

The sundry articles of household furniture set off to the widow as "necessary for the upholding of life" had a legal basis. This was the result of a 1798 Rhode Island law relating to intestate estates, which stated:

And if the personal estate shall be insufficient to pay the debts and the funeral charges of the deceased, the widow shall nevertheless be entitled to her apparel, and such bedding and other household goods as the Court of Probate shall determine necessary, according to her situation and the circumstances of the estate; and such part of the personal estate as the Court of Probate may allow the widow, shall not be assets in the hands of the executor or administrator.<sup>30</sup>

The widow received about 70% of the items falling under "household goods". There was probably a vote by the Probate Court approving this which may be in the record, or





possibly the clerk did not copy it into the books. There were no funeral expenses in the account. Probably Amey's brother, Ezekiel Burr, goldsmith, paid these. The amount set off to the widow of \$29.95 left a residue of \$87.88 in the inventory. This was sold and after commissions netted \$77.49. The account appears to be incorrect in that amount set off to the widow should appear as a credit (Cr) and reduce the balance by which the estate stood deficient to \$194.02. The final accounting brought out an amount due the estate of \$48.39 from Wilkinson & Howe. Assuming that the estate expenses (\$23.00) were paid "off the top", the creditors received 35¢ on the dollar.

In the list of claims it was revealed that William Billings owed Abraham, Isaac, and David Wilkinson \$189.20 as the balance of an account. These three men sold Billings the lot of land he lived on for \$160.00. They were sons of Oziel Wilkinson, manufacturer of steel and iron products (anchors, shovels, spades, etc.) at the Pawtucket Falls, and one of the wealthiest men in Rhode Island.<sup>31</sup> His sons carried on an extensive iron business; they may have supplied Billings with steel for his andiron billet bars and the steel shovels and tongs to which he added the brass finials. Wilkinson and Howe may have distributed Billings' andirons, shovels and tongs. There is a note in the final accounting for a fee for drawing up a petition to the Supreme Court for the sale of the lot, but no further details are given, and the sale of the lot does not appear in the accounting.

\* \* \* \* \*

William Billings was involved in an exceptional number of real estate transactions, both as grantee and grantor, if it is assumed that most people acquired a piece of property, built a house and lived there until death. Many of these deeds provide information not found elsewhere. The earliest transactions Billings was involved in were releases of the rights his wives held in property belonging to their parents and grandparents. These deeds and the related wills clearly define the genealogy of his wives' family (he married sisters).

In the first deed, dated March 29, 1792, Sarah Jenkins, widow, Amey Whipple, single woman, Ezekiel Burr [Jr.], gentleman, Lydia Burr, his wife, William Billings, pewterer, Alice [Burr] Billings, his wife, William Burr, goldsmith, and Amey Burr, tailor, all of

Providence, conveyed to George Weeden for \$660.00 a lot of land with a dwelling house and other buildings on Stamper's Hill in Providence.<sup>32</sup> This was originally purchased by William Whipple (died in 1785) and passed to his widow, Sarah Whipple, and daughters Sarah Jenkins, Amey Whipple, and Alice Burr (wife of Ezekiel, Sr.).<sup>33</sup> The grantors were the heirs (and their spouses) under the will of William Whipple. Sarah (Whipple) Jenkins and Amey Whipple were daughters. Ezekiel Burr, Jr., Alice (Burr) Billings, William Burr and Amey Burr were grandchildren, children of Ezekiel Burr, Sr. and Whipple's daughter Alice Whipple, both deceased.

On October 15, 1795 William Billings and his wife Alice Burr conveyed to Amey Whipple for \$90.00 their right in a lot of land and house.<sup>34</sup> The land had been purchased by Alse [sic] Burr on January 27, 1783 for \$150.00.<sup>35</sup> The deed indicates that the property was the lot on which Alice Whipple Burr's shop stood. This means that the shop was built on leased land, and Alice had finally purchased the land so that now she truly owned her shop. In her will of December 16, 1783 she left the property to her three daughters, Sarah, Alice and Amey, and she gave her sister Amey Whipple equal rights to the use of the property.<sup>36</sup> Alice Whipple Burr died in February 1784. After her daughter Alice married William Billings she sold out her right in the property in 1795 to Amey Whipple, who now owned two thirds of the property with her niece Amey Burr.

On March 31, 1796 Amey Whipple and Amey Burr sold the property for \$150.00 to Nehemiah Sweet, Blacksmith.<sup>37</sup> On the same day Ezekiel Burr, silversmith, sold to Amey Whipple and Amey Burr for \$160.00 a lot bordering on the north side of the lot Whipple and Burr had sold to Sweet.<sup>38</sup> This property is listed in the 1798 Federal Evaluation under Amey Whipple as a 27 x 16 foot one story wooden dwelling house on a 40 x 50 foot lot.<sup>39</sup> On April 9, 1802 William Billings and wife Amey Burr released their right in the same property to Amey Whipple for \$125.00.<sup>40</sup> Amey Whipple was now the sole owner of the property after almost 20 years.

On July 22, 1797 William Billings of Providence, brass founder, purchased from John Mathewson, esq. for \$370.00 a 72 ft. x 82 ft. lot of land on the west side of the river in Providence at the corner of Union and Washington Streets.<sup>41</sup> On June 21, 1806 Billings mortgaged



the property to George Smith of Smithfield, Rhode Island, yeoman, for \$2500.00.<sup>42</sup> Billings gave Smith two negotiable promissory notes, one for \$1000.00 due in one year with lawful interest, the other for \$1500.00 due in two years with interest. On November 6, 1807 George Smith sold to William Billings, brass founder, "lately residing in Providence, but now of Uxbridge, Massachusetts" for \$1500.00 a 42 ft. x 82 ft. lot with a dwelling house, this being the northerly part of the 72 ft. x 82 ft. lot.<sup>43</sup> This transaction was apparently devised to set out this portion of the property before the main mortgage was discharged. On November 7, 1807 William Billings, brass founder of Uxbridge, sold the 42 x 82 lot with dwelling house to Stephen Jackson, yeoman, for \$2250.00. In an endorsement on the back of the mortgage deed dated December 7, 1807 Smith discharged the mortgage with the payment of \$220.00. This is presumably the interest on the \$1500.00 for about a year and a half, which figures to around 10%. On December 9, 1807 Billings sold the remaining 28 ft. x 82 ft. lot with buildings to Thomas Clark, mariner, for \$900.00.<sup>44</sup> The lots had fronts on Union Street of 42 ft. and 28 ft.

Billings bought his 72 ft. x 82 ft. lot in the newly developing west side of Providence in July 1797 for \$370.00. In his August 4, 1798 advertisement he specifically offered to exchange his merchandise for "lumber and carpenter's work". He divided the lot, put up two houses, and sold the two dwellings in 1807 for a total of \$3150.00.

There is no reason the houses could not have been completed by 1799. Presumably they were rented or leased until they were sold in 1807. He advertised his house and shop built on leased land for sale on April 12, 1806. Two months later he mortgaged his Union Street property for \$2500.00. All of these moves appear to have been in preparation of relocating in Uxbridge, Massachusetts. In the mortgage of June 21, 1806 Billings was still "of Providence"; but in the deeds of November 6 and 7, 1807 he is listed as a resident of Uxbridge. He must have realized around \$4000.00 for the sale of his Providence properties, a rather substantial sum at that time. Presumably this was used for the purchase of the property in Uxbridge.

Pardon Mason received a judgment against Joseph Masury as a result of a suit for a debt. Alpheus Billings, Deputy Sheriff of Provi-

dence, in an execution against Masury levied a lot of land belonging to Masury to Mason. The lot was on the west side of the river in Providence and was 102.5 ft. x 60 ft. x 102 ft. x 50 ft. The Deputy Sheriff sold the lot at public auction on April 20, 1801 for \$41.00 to the highest bidder, who was William Billings.<sup>45</sup> Three days later, William Billings, pewterer and coppersmith, transferred the lot to Alpheus Billings for \$50.00.<sup>46</sup> Alpheus held the lot for 17 months, then sold it to John M. Potter on September 24, 1802 for \$140.00.<sup>47</sup> Alpheus was William Billings younger brother. William made \$9.00 in the deal while Alpheus made \$90.00. The lot had originally been purchased by Masury in 1789 for £21 (about \$100.00).<sup>48</sup> This is possibly an early example of a conflict of interest not in the best interests of the debtor, or the creditor if his claim were more than realized.

Such kangaroo auctions were not uncommon at the time. Unpaid debts were taken very seriously; a debtor with no assets could be sent to jail. If he had assets they were often auctioned off, many times under extremely adverse conditions. Richard Lee, the vagabond pewterer, told of such an event in his autobiography.<sup>49</sup> He was living in Lanesboro, Massachusetts (five miles north of Pittsfield and 15 miles south of the Vermont border) in rented space. His own account follows.

I set out with my two sons on a long journey, to collect debts, and sell wild land, and make payment as fast as possible. We proposed to return in two months; but I met with a hurt in one of my eyes, and outstayed the time: and here advantage was taken by three men. The first two proceeded in a legal way, and took \$22.50. I object not, but to the needless cost; but the other, a Mr. Hoyt, I had settled to a trifle, before I went from home. . . . He laid violent hands on my tools and clothes, and household furniture (my property being in value near \$200.00), and sold them, as I was informed, in the day time, in a dark room, by candle light. A quart bason mould was sold for \$2.25; which to buy new would cost me \$30.00. Two other molds were sold for two shillings and six pence [42¢], which cost me \$5.00 each; and other things in a like manner [at the rate indicated the \$200.00 netted about \$15.00]. He turned my family out of doors in the winter [November or December 1800] stripped to distress. My wife had to flee 140 miles to her father's house for shelter [probably to Gloucester, Rhode Island]. . . . Now I was poorer than before I set out on my journey. I must begin to obtain my tools again, *the Lord knows how*.

His wife became sick after the journey and died a year and a half later. Such was the swift hand of "justice" against debtors at the turn of



the century.

On May 15, 1804 William Billings of Providence, coppersmith, purchased from Giles Cone, stone cutter for \$225.00 a 50 ft. x 119 ft. lot and buildings on the west side of the river in Providence.<sup>50</sup> Cone had purchased the property on July 20, 1803 for \$225.00 from Joseph Bagley, administrator of the estate of Asa Fox.<sup>51</sup> Fox had initially purchased the property from John Mathewson on February 15, 1798 for \$300.50.<sup>52</sup> On July 20, 1804 Billings sold the property to Asa Chace, housewright, for \$820.00.<sup>53</sup> The deed noted that there was an outstanding mortgage to John Mathewson in the amount of \$417.69 which Chace would have to take over. It is not apparent how Billings could have improved the property so that he made almost \$600.00 on a \$225.00 investment.

On March 10, 1806 William Billings, coppersmith of Uxbridge, Massachusetts, purchased for \$1,800.00 from Moses Smith of Uxbridge and Grovsnor Taft of Providence, merchants, one undivided half part (moiety) of a 90 acre farm in Uxbridge, together with a distillery containing three large copper stills and pewter worms newly set and fit for use, underground cisterns, tubs and related apparatus, along with a grist mill, malt house, dwelling house, barn, corn barn, stable, chaise house, wood house and other buildings.<sup>54</sup> Uxbridge was 20 miles northwest of Providence on the road between Providence and Worcester, Massachusetts, a little more than half way between the two towns. On June 21, 1806 William Billings of Providence, founder, purchased the other half of the property from George Smith of Smithfield, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, for \$2,500.00.<sup>55</sup> Billings mortgaged the property to Smith on the same date with \$1,000.00 payable in one year and \$1,500.00 in two years.<sup>56</sup> The property was encumbered with a mortgage for \$1,500.00 payable to the Union Trust of Boston, which the grantee agreed to take over. Billings thus paid \$1,800.00 in cash, and took on mortgages of \$4,000.00, for a total cost of \$5,800.00.

The date of June 21, 1806 for the mortgage purchase of half of the Uxbridge property from George Smith for \$2,500.00 is the same date that Billings mortgaged his Providence property with two houses to Smith for \$2,500.00. These two transactions were related in some manner not apparent. Billings was able to pay back both Uxbridge mortgages,

basically with the sale of all of his Providence real estate holdings.

Billings stayed in Uxbridge for at least two years for on December 20, 1808 William Billings, yeoman of Uxbridge, mortgaged the property to his brother Alpheus for \$2,500.00 with the full amount payable in three months. There are no further references in the Massachusetts land records — no sales by either William or Alpheus Billings — so it is not apparent what happened to the property.

William Billings may have decided to leave the pewtering/brass founding business and become a distiller. The notice of the sale of his shop in Providence in 1806 could be taken as an indication that he was terminating his former occupation. The Uxbridge property had been owned by Daniel and Silvanus Tillinghast, distillers, and possibly Billings had sold them the stills and worms. In 1791 a Daniel Tillinghast advertised a distillery in Providence manufacturing gin.<sup>57</sup> It may have been one of these cases where the grass looked greener on the other side of the fence, and Billings thought that more money could be made using the stills than making them. The report for the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers on which Billings worked in 1791 indicated that 100,000 gallons of gin alone was imported annually into Rhode Island from Europe and the West Indies.<sup>58</sup>

When Billings purchased the Uxbridge property in 1806 he was called a (brass) founder in one deed and a coppersmith in another. When he mortgaged the property in 1808 he was called a yeoman. This may be a confirmation that he had abandoned the pewter/brazier's trade and become a farmer and distiller. "Yeoman" was an alternate term for "farmer". The term was also used for a large land owner who had voting rights, but was below the status of a gentleman or esquire. Billings did own a 90 acre farm (with a distillery on it), and very possibly grain and corn were being grown for the distillery. The property contained a malt house and a corn barn. On the other hand, he could have brought some of his tools with him and still carried on the brass foundry business. Possibly the brass could have been melted in the still furnaces. There was a grist mill which would have furnished power for his wheel (lathe).

William Billings could have run the distillery until 1812. He had moved back to Rhode Island at least by 1812, for on April 6 of that



year Abraham, Isaac and David Wilkinson of North Providence sold to William Billings, brass founder of North Providence, for \$160.00 a lot of land 46.67 ft. x 70 ft. on the old road leading from Pawtucket to Providence.<sup>59</sup> He died about a year later. His inventory indicated that he was back in the brass founders business in a small way, as he had "founders' tools". He had old patterns (which may have been some of the andiron patterns purchased from Job Danforth) and there were unfinished shovels and tongs to which he added brass finials. Possibly it turned out that the grass was not greener on the other side of the fence, or he may never have left the foundry business, carrying it on in Uxbridge in a small way. A lot of facts are now available, but in some cases they raise more questions than they answer.

A summary of the occupations listed for William Billings in the various deeds he executed shows an apparent change in emphasis from a pewterer in the early years to a brass founder in his later years.

**Providence Deeds**

March 1792	Pewterer
July 1797	Brass Founder
April 1801	Pewterer & Coppersmith
May 1804	Coppersmith
June 1806	Brass Founder
November 1807	Brass Founder
December 1807	Brass Founder

**Uxbridge Deeds**

March 1806	Coppersmith
June 1806	Founder
December 1808	Yeoman

**North Providence Deed**

April 1812	Brass Founder
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The date of 1797 coincides with the first advertisement where Billings advertised brass andirons. In his 1798 advertisement he changed "brazier" to "founder".

\* \* \* \* \*

The 1790 *Rhode Island Census* listed two William Billings in Providence. One was born in 1744 and the other in 1768. Calder correctly determined that the younger man was the pewterer;<sup>60</sup> the older man was a cooper. However, the ancestry of the pewterer has not been clear; Laughlin suggested that he was born in Newport.<sup>61</sup> This was probably based on the fact that the 1774 *Rhode Island Census* listed three Billings families in Newport; however, it also listed Ichabod Billings in Provi-

dence. It turns out that Ichabod was the pewterer's father.

In a genealogy on Roger Billings a note is added where William Billings, the Providence cooper, is shown as the father of the pewterer.<sup>62</sup> This error was not corrected for over 25 years when C. W. Farnham showed that Ichabod was the father of the pewterer.<sup>63</sup> To summarize the proof, the Providence deeds clearly show that William Billings, pewterer and brass founder, had a first wife Alice and a second wife Amey.

Further, there are two white marble grave-stones in Swan Point Cemetery in Providence which identify both the pewterer and his wives. The first, which is 20 inches wide and 38 inches above ground, reads:

**WILLIAM BILLINGS**

Born Nov. 1768

Died June 1812

**ALICE BURR**

His wife

Born Aug. 1, 1770

Died June 5, 1799

Their two children

**WILLIAM**

Aged 1 year

**AMEY**

Aged 1 year

The other, which is also 20 inches wide but 33 inches above the ground, reads:

**In Memory of  
AMEY BILLINGS**

Wife of

William Billings

Daughter of

Ezekiel & Alice Burr

Born May 21, 1776

Died March 16, 1856

(Plus a 10 line epitaph)

The date of William Billings' death is wrong; the newspaper account of his death and the probate proceedings clearly indicate that the date should be 1813. Burials were not made in Swan Point until 1847. The Billings are buried in the First Unitarian Society Grounds. Many of the dates of death in this area are prior to 1847; the bodies were moved from another cemetery in the older part of Providence several miles away. The graves of Job Danforth, Jr. and his father are not far from Billings. The stones for William Billings



and Amey Billings are not identical: Amey's has a curved top while the other is flat. But they are both typical of 1850 stones. Whoever was responsible for William Billings stone did not bother to determine the day he was born or died. None of the other dates on the stones (except Amey's death) is preserved anywhere in the record. Nor is the birth of the two children recorded. To these dates may be added the date of the marriage of William and Amey: November 28, 1799.<sup>64</sup> The marriage was also announced in the *U. S. Chronical* of November 29, 1799 and the *Providence Gazette* of December 7, 1799. They were married only five months after the death of Amey's sister Alice.

While the gravestones clearly identify the pewterer and his wives, his ancestry is proved by a guardianship hearing held by the Providence Town Council on December 1, 1783.<sup>65</sup> The record reads:

William Billings being now in the Sixteenth year of his age, son of Mr. Ichabod Billings who has been absent from this Town upwards of ten years — most of the Time unheard of, appeared before this Council and Declared that he did freely and voluntarily Elect and Choose his mother, Mrs. Mercy Billings to be the Guardian of his Person and Estate during the Minority and this Council Approving his said Choice — Voted that Letters of Guardianship be granted her on her giving Bond in the Sum of Ten Pounds Lawful Silver Money.

Shortly after this (or possibly before) William Billings was probably bound in an apprenticeship agreement to Gershom Jones. This is implied by an entry in Job Danforth's account book under Gershom Jones. There is a notation for September 11, 1793 (p. 68) charging Jones: "to Boarding, finding wood & washing for William Billings in the Hospital" for £2/7/5. This seems to imply that a master was responsible for the care of an apprentice even after he had finished his apprenticeship. This is equally strange inasmuch as Billings had announced that he had opened his own shop in 1791, was married to Alice Burr by 1792 (from deed), and had a mother still living. Billings was 21 in 1789 and would have been ready to start his apprenticeship in 1782.

Ichabod Billings was born in Stonington, Connecticut, on June 15, 1721.<sup>66</sup> He moved to Rhode Island and was a sea captain in Newport and Providence.<sup>67</sup> It is not evident whether he was lost at sea or deserted his family. His older brother, Benajah, born in 1711, also came to Providence and was a shop

keeper. In 1761 he sold his shop in Providence for £500 old tenor.<sup>68</sup> Ichabod (William<sup>(3)</sup>, Ebenezer<sup>(2)</sup>, William<sup>(1)</sup>) was the fourth generation descendant of the William Billings born in Taunton, Somersetshire, England about 1629 and died in Stonington in 1712/13.

Captain Ichabod married Marcy or (Mercy) Rhodes, daughter of Capt. Anthony Rhodes (John<sup>(3)</sup>, John<sup>(2)</sup>, Zachariah<sup>(1)</sup>), and his wife Elizabeth Cranston, who was a granddaughter of Governor Samuel Cranston and a great-granddaughter of Governor John Cranston of Newport. Besides William, Ichabod and Marcy also had a son Alpheus. The *Providence Gazette* and the *Providence Phenix* both noted the death of Marcy Billings, widow of Capt. Ichabod, in her 75th year, on November 21, 1816. She is buried in a mausoleum in Swan Point Cemetery with her son Alpheus and his family.

Alpheus Billings was born in Providence on March 31, 1772. His career is traced in a *Biographical Cyclopedia*, where a portrait is included.<sup>69</sup> He learned the trade of hatter at an early age. When he sold the lot of land to his brother William in the execution of an 1801 judgment as a Deputy Sheriff he was 29. In 1808 he was appointed the High Sheriff of Providence, a position he served until 1811 when he engaged in the grocery business. He was a candidate for mayor of Providence in 1832, and for several years was a Rhode Island Senator. He died on January 8, 1851 at age 78.

William Billings had strong ties with the Burr family, marrying two Burr sisters within less than ten years. Alice was born in 1770 and probably married William at age 21 after he had opened his shop in 1791. Alice and Amey Burr were children of Ezekiel Burr and Alice Whipple. They also had a sister Sarah and three brothers — Ezekiel, Christopher and William. The Burr genealogy only lists the three sons.<sup>70</sup> The compiler, C. B. Todd, failed to consult the Providence probate records and deeds where the three daughters are clearly defined. The wills of both Ezekiel and Alice Whipple Burr mention their three daughters.

A consideration of the Burr family is justified inasmuch as Ezekiel<sup>(6)</sup> and William<sup>(6)</sup> were gold and silversmiths and contemporary brothers-in-law of William Billings working only a few doors from his shop. Alice and Amey's father, Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup>, was born in 1739 in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, son of David<sup>(4)</sup>,



who was born in 1703 in Hingham, Massachusetts. David's father Simon<sup>(3)</sup>, born in Hingham in 1655, was a "set work cooper", and moved to Rehoboth about 1708. His father Simon<sup>(2)</sup> was born in England, son of the original emigrant Rev. Johnathan Burr<sup>(1)</sup>, who was born in Redgrave, Suffolk, England about 1604.

Todd reasoned that Simon<sup>(3)</sup>, who was a set work cooper, moved to Rehoboth because of the abundance of red cedar in the area.<sup>71</sup> Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup> was also a set work cooper, and his inventory contained "a number of set work cooper's tools".<sup>72</sup> It seems likely that his father David<sup>(4)</sup> was also a cooper, and at least three generations followed the same trade, father teaching son as an apprentice. Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup> moved to Providence, probably after he completed his apprenticeship in 1760. Providence was only across the Seekonk River from Rehoboth. The chain of coopers was broken by his untimely death in 1777 at age 37; his oldest son was only 14.

Soon after moving to Providence Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup> married Alice Whipple, daughter of William and Sarah Whipple. This may have been the William Whipple born on November 1, 1719 in Smithfield, Rhode Island.<sup>73</sup> William and Sarah Whipple had four children: Ezra, Sarah, Amey and Alice. In his will in 1779 William left Ezra 5 shillings (83¢) because he had been "gone for a great number of years and was now living with the enemies of this country". William died in 1785; Amey never married. Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup> and Alice Burr had seven children.

[Ezekiel b. 1761? - probably died young]

Christopher b. 1763?

Ezekiel b. April 14, 1765

Sarah b. 1767 or 1768

Alice b. August 1, 1770

William b. 1772 or 1773

Amey b. May 21, 1776

The Burr genealogy has as children of Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup> only Ezekiel, Christopher and William, in that order.<sup>74</sup> The will of Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup> made on March 22, 1777 indicates that while Ezekiel<sup>(6)</sup> is treated as the oldest son, Christopher is actually the oldest.<sup>75</sup> This implies the birth of an older Ezekiel who died young. Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup> left one of his lots with buildings (including his dwelling house) to his namesake Ezekiel<sup>(6)</sup>, along with his best beaver hat, writing desk, watch, silver shoe buckles, silver neck buckle, and wearing apparel. He left William his other lot of land with a barn, and

he left Christopher \$250.00 and his regimental clothes and warlike accoutrements. He left his three daughters \$30.00 each.

Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup> died at age 37 on May 30, 1777 only two months after making his will. In his will he stated that he was "in a weakly and sickly state of body". His wife Alice was left with five children ranging from one to 14 years old. While he left his son Ezekiel his land and dwelling house, he left his wife the profits and income from them until his son became 21. She may have moved back with her mother and father who now only had Amey Whipple living with them. In this way she could have rented her house and barn to support the children. Christopher was about 14 and could have been placed in an apprenticeship. Ezekiel would have been 14 in 1779 and he could have also been bound in an apprenticeship. This would make two masters responsible for the room and board for the two older boys for seven years.

Alice may have sent Ezekiel to Newport to be an apprentice under some gold and silversmith. This suggestion is based on the fact that on July 9, 1786 he married Lydia (b. May 6, 1768),<sup>76</sup> daughter of Samuel Yates of Newport. The British occupied Newport on December 8, 1776 and almost half of the population left. When they withdrew their forces on October 25, 1779 many of the former inhabitants of the town gradually came back and started to operate again. Ezekiel Burr was probably one of those coming into the town. Ezekiel was 21 when he was married and had a son, Christopher, on May 18, 1787. Christopher was apprenticed to his father and also became a gold and silversmith; he died in Providence in 1884 at age 96. Ezekiel's brother William was about eight years younger, and also became a gold and silversmith, probably training under Ezekiel.

By 1780 Alice Burr still had four children at home, a boy seven and three girls ranging from four to 12 years. The land records imply that she leased a lot of land and had a house built on it. Because of the fact that her maiden sister, Amey Whipple, is involved in this property, it would appear that Alice Whipple Burr and her sister Amey Whipple brought up the four children. On January 27, 1783 Alice Burr bought the land on which her "shop" stood. It was undoubtedly a combination house and shop. Alice Whipple Burr made her will on December 16, 1783, "having for some





time been in a weak state of body".<sup>77</sup> She left the property she purchased in 1783, which she referred to as the "lot of land whereon I now live", to her daughters Sarah, Alice and Amey, to be shared equally with her beloved sister, Amey Whipple, until the daughters became of age or married. She noted that she had not given anything to her sons as they were better provided for by their father's will and could "better provide for themselves in this world than helpless orphan daughters". Alice Burr may have purchased the land her house/shop stood on for the security of her daughters. She made her will only a year later and may have been apprehensive about dying.

Alice Burr died in February 1784 only two months after making her will. She was probably only a few years over 40. Now Amey Whipple had the responsibility of the four Burr children, ranging from eight to 16. William was still only eleven and it would be three years before he was taken into an apprenticeship. At a guardianship hearing before the Providence Town Council on April 5, 1784 Ezekiel<sup>(6)</sup>, son of the late Ezekiel Burr, stated that he voluntarily chose his uncle Mr. Levi Burr to be his guardian until he arrived at the age of 21 years.<sup>78</sup> At this time Ezekiel was nine days short of being 19.

On August 11, 1784 Ezekiel Burr, goldsmith, exchanged with neighbor Samuel Dunn small pieces of adjoining property.<sup>79</sup> Levi Burr endorsed Ezekiel's deed saying that Ezekiel's estate was improved by being made more commodious. Dunn signed his deed on the condition that Ezekiel, "being now not quite 21 years of age", confirm the deed "after his arrival at age 21." On August 11, 1786 Ezekiel confirmed the deed, "having now arrived at that age".<sup>80</sup> It is important to note that in both of the 1784 deeds Ezekiel was called a goldsmith. This means that his master had released him from his apprenticeship by age 19. Possibly this was because his mother had just died and he was now "head of the household".

On March 7, 1785 Sarah Burr, "now in the 18th year of her age", appeared before the Providence Town Council and chose Col. Simeon Thayer to be her guardian.<sup>81</sup> This indicates that she was born in either 1767 or 1768, and is the only evidence of her date of birth. On April 4, 1791 William Burr, son of the late Ezekiel<sup>(5)</sup>, "about 18 years of age" appeared before the Town Council and chose John Dorrance, Esq. as his guardian.<sup>82</sup> This

indicates that he was born about 1773. This is confirmed by the November 24, 1810 *Providence Gazette* which reported the death of William Burr, Esq. in his 38th year. This shows that he was born in 1772 or 1773.

After William Burr left Amey Whipple's care in 1787 to serve an apprenticeship Amey was left with the three girls. Sarah would have been 21 about 1788 or 1789. Nothing is found of her in the record after her guardianship hearing. Alice Burr married William Billings, probably in 1791 at age 21 when Billings opened his shop. Amey Burr married Billings in 1799 at age 23. In the deed of March 29, 1792 where the heirs of William Whipple sold his land and dwelling house Amey Burr, one of the grantees, was only 15, and she is listed as a "taylor" (in early directories tailoress). In view of this it appears that the "shop" of Alice Whipple Burr was a tailor shop, probably for making women's outer garments, and the five women were working at this task. Levi Burr, tailor, was Alice's brother-in-law and may have helped her with the "art and mysteries" of tailoring.

In the March 29, 1792 deed William Burr was about 19 and he was listed as a goldsmith. His brother Ezekiel was then 27 and had been working as a gold and silversmith for about eight years. Shortly after this Ezekiel and William entered into a partnership. The December 13, 1792 *United States Chronicle* carried the following advertisement.

### *Ezekiel and William Burr*

Beg Leave to inform the Public, that they  
carry on the Business of

### Gold and Silver-Smiths,

in its various Branches, a few Doors South of the Baptist Meeting-House, and directly opposite Capt. Richard Jackson's:

Where they have for sale,  
Silver Spoons of different Kinds and Sizes,  
Gold Necklaces, and a Variety of plated  
Buckles; all which they will sell at as low  
Prices as any in this Town. The Favors of the  
Public will be gratefully acknowledged.

N. B. They pay Cash, and the highest Price,  
for old GOLD and SILVER.

*Providence, Dec. 12, 1792.*

The majority of the gold and silversmiths' advertisements were run in the *United States Chronicle* while the pewterer/braziers' were in the *Providence Gazette*. This might indicate that the *Chronicle* was the "gentleman's" paper while the *Gazette* was the "yeoman's".

The only products the Burrs listed are silver



spoons, gold necklaces and plated buckles. The Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturer's report of 1791 indeed substantiates this limitation in silver products:<sup>83</sup>

"Silver and Plated Work made in 1790

[in Providence]:

100 prs Silver buckles

1400 prs Plated buckles

80 dozen silver spoons, diferent sizes."

Many of the provincial gold and silversmiths did not make much more than silver spoons and gold jewelry.

William Billings' first shop in 1791 was on the west side of Main Street, a little north of the Baptist Meeting House, and probably rented. Later he moved across the street to a shop and house he built on Jacob Whitman's leased land, "a few doors north of the Baptist Meeting House". Billings' shop was therefore just two blocks north of the Burr's on the same side of Main Street. Billings was three years younger than Ezekiel Burr and five years older than William Burr.

In the first *Providence Directory*, that of 1824, Mrs. Amey Billings is listed at 260 North Main Street. North Main was the contemporary designation of the original Main Street area where William Billings had his shop for about 15 years. Amey Billings was listed at various North Main Street addresses over the years. From 1826 to 1830 she was at No. 250, while from 1832 to 1841 she was at No. 262. In 1844 she was at No. 257 and from 1850 to 1855 at 281. While some of these changes may have been due to a renumbering of the streets, it must be assumed that she did move a few times. She probably worked as a tailor or a seamstress much of this time.

Amey Billings died on March 16, 1856 at age 79. She outlived her husband William by 43 years. She also outlived all of her close relatives. Her brother, William Burr, had died a long time before in 1810 at age 47, and his wife Anna died in 1843 at age 68. Her brother Ezekiel died in 1846 at age 81, and his wife Lydia died in 1852 at age 86. Her husband's brother Alpheus died in 1851 at age 78.

Amey made a will just a month before she died.<sup>84</sup> She left all of her possessions to the children of her brother William Burr and her brother-in-law Alpheus Billings. To her nephews Stephen, William and Aaron (sons of William) she left \$200.00 each and canceled the promissory notes they owed her totaling over \$1,200.00. To Louisa S. Burr (daughter

of William), Mary C. Billings (daughter of Alpheus) and Mary Ann Billings (granddaughter of Alpheus) she left \$125.00 and all her household furnishings and wearing apparel.

Amey Billings was the end of an era. She was born in 1776, a few months before the Declaration of Independence. She witnessed the struggling years of the Union after the Peace Treaty was signed in 1783. She lived through the explosive development of Providence, where the population of 4,310 in 1782 grew to 11,767 in 1820, 23,172 in 1840 and 45,513 in 1850.<sup>85</sup> She lived to within a decade of the Civil War. She walked a long road, and much of the time it was probably far from easy.

\* \* \* \* \*

To summarize, Williams Billings, the pewterer, was born in November 1768, the son of Ichabod and Mercy Billings. His father was a sea captain, and was either lost at sea or deserted his family; his mother was appointed his guardian when he was 15. He probably served his apprenticeship with Gershom Jones, and would have completed it in 1789 at age 21. He may have worked as a journeyman for Jones for a couple of years. He joined the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers in February 1790, and represented the pewterers, braziers, coppersmiths and founders in the Association's report in 1791 on the nature and volume of products manufactured in Providence.

On November 4, 1791 he announced the opening of a shop rented on the west side of Main Street in Providence for the manufacture of pewter, brass and copper wares. Some time later he leased land on the east side of Main Street and built a two story shop and house. Billings ran long advertisements in the 1797 and 1798 Providence newspapers at his new shop; on November 10, 1798 a partnership with Job Danforth, Jr. was announced. The partnership ended in less than three years with the death of Job Danforth on September 5, 1801. Billings continued alone after this. From 1797 to 1801 he advertised brass and irons, and it would appear that they were a major product in his line.

William Billings was involved in a number of land and property transactions involving land development and speculation. In 1797 he purchased a lot of land on the west side of Providence for \$370.00. He divided the lot



and built two houses. In a 1798 advertisement he offered to exchange his merchandise for "lumber and carpenter's work". He sold the two lots with dwelling houses in 1807 for \$3,150.00. In 1804 Billings purchased a lot with buildings in Providence for \$225.00 and sold it two months later for \$820.00.

In 1806 Billings advertised his shop and house for sale. In the same year he purchased a 90 acre farm complete with three large copper stills and numerous buildings in Uxbridge, Massachusetts, for \$5,800.00. He may have given up the pewterer/brazier/founder's business to become a farmer and distiller. He could have worked at this until 1812, for in that year he was back in Rhode Island where he purchased a lot in North Providence. In the deed he was called a brass founder. He died insolvent in 1813 at age 45; his inventory contained some patterns, founder's tools, and unfinished shovels and tongs. He apparently ended his career making brass andirons, shovels and tongs.

Billings' working range for pewter products must be conservatively taken as 1791-1806 (the date he sold his shop in Providence), not 1791-1813 as Calder originally suggested.<sup>86</sup> To this may be added the working dates for his brass andiron production: from 1797-1813 (with a possible gap while he was in Uxbridge). He made these long enough so that some certainly still survive; possibly he marked some of them.

William Billings had two touch dies with which he marked his pewter. One was a small circular touch with the initials W B on either side of a plain anchor. This was used on porringers and possibly mugs. The other consisted of a scroll containing W + BILLINGS. Calder illustrated good examples of both of these in 1924.<sup>87</sup> A check list of Billings pewter is essentially the same as listed in Jacobs,<sup>88</sup> nothing new having surfaced in the last 30 years.

#### BILLINGS PEWTER (Diameters in inches)

Plates: 7-7/8, 8-1/4, 9  
Dishes: 12, 13-1/4, 14-1/4, 15  
Basins: 8, 11-5/8, 11-3/4  
Porringers (all flowered handles):  
3-1/4, 4, 4-1/2, 5, 5-1/2  
Mugs: Quart  
Tablespoons

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21. *Ibid.*, p. 550.
22. Pawtucket Probate Court, North Providence File No. 103.
23. S. G. C. Ensko, *American Silversmiths and Their Marks* (Dover: New York, 1983), p. 33.
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26. Providence Probate Court, *Book of Wills*, vol. 10, pp. 406-413.
27. North Providence *Town Council Records and Wills*, vol. C 2, p. 275
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29. *Ibid.*, p. 259; File No. 103.
30. *Rhode Island Laws* (1798), p. 289.
31. *Biographical Cyclopedia of Representative Men of Rhode Island* (Providence, 1881), p. 58.
32. *Providence Deeds*, Book 21, p. 717.
33. Providence Probate, *Book of Wills*, vol. 6, pp. 464-465.
34. *Providence Deeds*, Book 25, p. 89A.
35. *Ibid.*, Book 20, p. 710.
36. Providence Probate, *Book of Wills*, vol. 6, p. 415.
37. *Providence Deeds*, Book 24, p. 237.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 213. The lot had been purchased in 1794 for \$160.00 (*Ibid.*, p. 3).
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41. *Ibid.*, Book 24, p. 406.
42. *Ibid.*, Book 31, p. 203.
43. *Ibid.*, Book 30, p. 346.
44. *Ibid.*, Book 32, p. 122.
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47. *Ibid.*, p. 405.
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50. *Providence Deeds*, Book 28, p. 487.
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52. *Ibid.*, Book 25, p. 450.
53. *Ibid.*, Book 32, p. 26.
54. *Worcester County Deeds*, Book 161, p. 616.
55. *Ibid.*, Book 164, p. 241.
56. *Ibid.*, Book 162, p. 298.
57. Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
58. *Ibid.*
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79. *Providence Deeds*, Book 21, pp. 127, 138.
80. *Ibid.*, Book 22, p. 92.
81. *Providence Town Council Records*, vol. 5, p. 302.
82. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 153.
83. Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
84. Providence Probate, *Book of Wills*, vol. 17, p. 512.
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## William Will — Again

by Jack W. Levy

The unmarked William Will coffeepot shown in Figure 1, (after expert restoration to the base), was discovered during the summer of 1985 in the immediate suburbs of Philadelphia, again proving that desirable pieces are still waiting to be found and can be with a bit of luck and persistence.

The body and lid of this pot are identical to the Will pots in the Winterthur Collections (shown in Montgomery "A History of American Pewter" pages 180-181 and "Pewter in American Life" page 53). The spout and handle are variations. The lid decoration consists of two rows of the usual beading separated by one row of "rope banding". The body and base have three more rows of this rope banding as decoration which Will appears to have used to a greater degree on this piece.

