

EEK

BY JOHN J. EVANS

Lovebirds and lions: a pewter mystery solved

IN SPITE OF THE EXTENSIVE and productive research which has been carried on through the years in the field of American pewter, tracking down the personal histories of the men engaged in pewtering in the Colonies and the young Republic and identifying their products, many mysteries remain to challenge today's students. One of these has been the identity of the maker or makers of the so-called Lovebird pewter.

The term Lovebird derives from a mark representing two birds bill to bill beneath the word LOVE, all enclosed in a circle, found on both flatware and hollow ware; sometimes alone, sometimes in company with the word LONDON in a serrated arc, sometimes with the "crowned X" mark, sometimes with both LONDON and the crowned X. All the pewter bearing the Lovebird touch is of excellent quality, and most of it is in amazingly fine condition. Pewter in this group comprises a much greater proportion of flatware than is known in the work of any other maker of both flat and hollow ware, but the list includes as well pint and quart mugs or pots, a covered measure, porringers, Queen Anne and straight-sided teapots, and tankards

in tulip shape, straight-sided "coin-top" models, and a unique modified hourglass form.

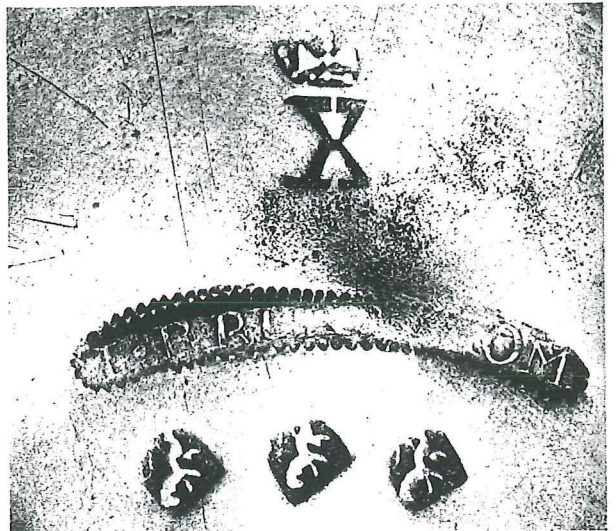
The large amount of surviving pewter bearing the Lovebird mark would lead one to believe that identifying its maker would be a relatively simple task, but that has not been the case. Early students of American pewter seem to have assumed that the LONDON mark which sometimes accompanies the Lovebirds indicated an English maker—this in spite of the fact that no such mark is known to have been registered or struck in England, nor have pieces so marked been found there. (More recently it has become apparent that some pewterers in America, and some on the Continent as well, used a LONDON touch to signify quality in material and workmanship.)

With the door thus open to those who believe the user of the Lovebird mark worked in America, a number of theories were advanced. Ledlie I. Laughlin, writing in the Pewter Collectors' Club of America *Bulletin* for June 1946, suggested that the pewterer was a man named Love who worked in or near Philadelphia between 1780 and 1830 and who had been apprenticed to either William Will (1742-1798) or Parks Boyd (1771/2-1819). Laughlin thought Philadelphia might be the place of origin of this pewter because most of it was found in eastern Philadelphia and Maryland and its forms suggest Philadelphia work, and he thought Will or Boyd might have trained this hypothetical Love because of resemblances between their work and his—particularly the Love teapots shaped like Will's, and the



Left: Tulip-form tankard with crowned X and four rampant lions in diamond touches on side, Lovebird touch on inside bottom. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Mallory III. Right: Coin-top tankard marked I. BRUNSTROM in serrated arc, with crowned X and three lions rampant in diamond touches. Wachovia Museum, Old Salem, Inc.

Marks on inside bottom of Brunstrom tankard: crowned X, I. BRUNSTROM in serrated arc, three lions rampant in diamond touches.



jan 64?

beaded rims so characteristic of both Will and Boyd found on Love hollow ware.

A second theory was advanced in *ANTIQUES* for June 1947 (p. 396) by Melville T. Nichols, who thought that the word Love might be merely a punning reference to Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, and that the mark might be that of a merchant who bought pewter wholesale from a number of makers, stamped it, and sold it at retail throughout the area where it was later to be found.

John F. Ruckman (*ANTIQUES*, May 1954, p. 388) felt that neither of these theories was completely satisfactory. He thought the Lovebird pewter showed distinct signs of Swedish influence, and suggested that Love had been a member of the "Hasselberg group." Laughlin had applied this term (*Pewter in America*, Vol. II, p. 55) to three Swedish pewterers, named Hasselberg, Kehler, and Brunstrom, who worked in Philadelphia in the second half of the eighteenth century. Abraham (?) Hasselberg came to Philadelphia in 1749; in 1779 his estate was administered, and a year later his widow married Adam Kehler (or Koehler); her daughter (Kehler's stepdaughter) married John Andrew Brunstrom in 1783; and the history of the group ends with Brunstrom's death in 1793. Ruckman suggested that the Lovebird touch had been used by one or all of the known members of this group, or by an unrecorded member—a theory that seemed the more reasonable because, although the three known members are identified as pewterers in contemporary documents, and they were apparently men of some substance, there seemed to be no clearly identified surviving examples of their work.

This is where the matter stood when, quite recently, a tankard bearing the name mark I. BRUNSTROM was presented to the Wachovia Museum in Old Salem at Winston-Salem, North Carolina (*ANTIQUES*, July 1958, p. 66). In addition to the name touch in a serrated arc reminiscent of the LONDON die on Lovebird pewter, the tankard carries the crowned X quality mark in a form apparently identical to that found with the Lovebird touch, and a never-before-seen group of three lions rampant in diamonds. The form of the tankard, too, is significant. It is of the type known as coin-top because it is shaped like Continental steins and

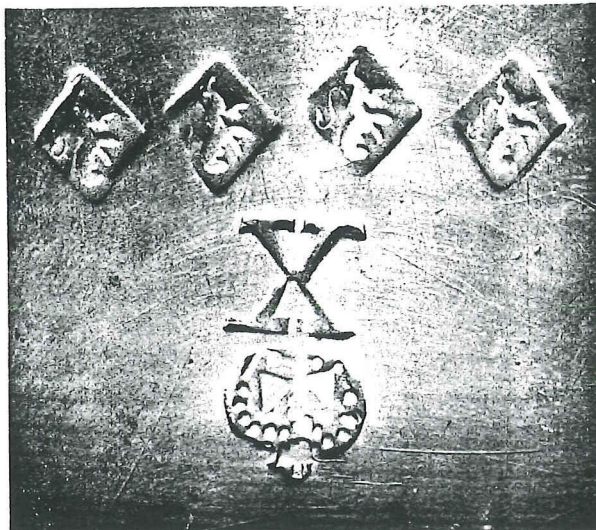
tankards in the lids of which actual coins are embedded—and the only known American makers of coin-top tankards are Parks Boyd, John Brunstrom, and the user of the Lovebird touch. Boyd, a fine and prolific Philadelphia pewterer, started his working career some two years after Brunstrom's death. He apparently always marked his product with his own named touchmarks, so it was not thought likely that he was our mystery maker. However, he might have acquired tools and molds from Brunstrom's estate. If he did, and if he occasionally used the Lovebird touch he might have so acquired, this would account not only for the coin-top tankards but also for the extraordinarily wide style range in Lovebird pewter which led Laughlin to put its terminal date at 1830. Incidentally, Carl Jacobs (*Guide to American Pewter*, p. 44) reports a Boyd tankard with light ribbing made from the same mold as Lovebird examples.

Another recent discovery is an inventory of Brunstrom's equipment which indicates that he had a greater quantity of tools and molds than is listed for any other American pewterer, and so must have been able to produce the wide variety of forms that has puzzled students of Lovebird pewter.

But it was at the meeting of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America in Williamsburg in March of this year that it was finally and conclusively established that Brunstrom was at least one of the users of the Lovebird touch. Through the generosity of the Wachovia Museum, the Brunstrom tankard was on hand for club members to examine. Also present, in response to a request to members to bring their Lovebird hollow ware to the meeting, was a tulip-form tankard from the collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Mallory III. And clearly to be seen on the side of the Mallory tankard, which bears the Lovebird touch on the inside bottom, are four lions rampant in diamond touches—a mark until then noted only on the Wachovia Museum's Brunstrom tankard.

Brunstrom has been unmasked and must now receive the credit he deserves. Whether his countrymen Hasselberg and Kehler also used the Lovebird dies is a question still to be answered.

Marks on side of Mallory tulip-form tankard: crowned X, four lions rampant in diamonds.



Lovebird touch, with crowned X and LONDON in serrated arc; on a deep dish in the Mallory collection.

