



*Antiques (U.S.A.)  
January, 1956*

## Collector's notes

### That Love-bird pewter

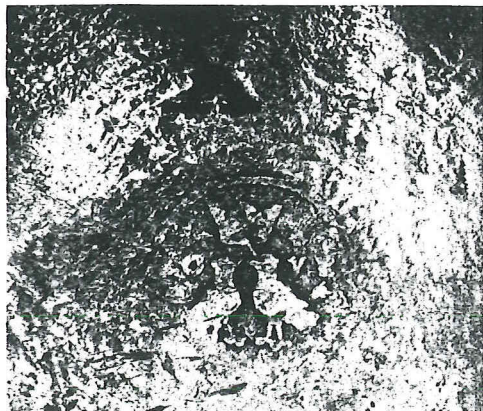
PEWTER MARKED WITH THE "LOVE-BIRD" TOUCH continues to interest our readers and contributors.

Robert M. Vetter, expert on Continental pewter, whose "The 'Jan Steen flagon' and related Continental pewter" appeared in this magazine in February 1955, takes issue with John F. Ruckman's suggestion (*ANTIQUES*, May 1954) that pewter with the Love-bird mark shows Swedish influence. Mr. Vetter writes: "The tankard shown cannot be described as in 'Swedish style' because its shape and most of its details are derived from British tankards in vogue from about 1680 to 1750. . . . Characteristic of this English style are the handle of half-round section and tapering thickness, the finial, and the position of the hinge at the top of the upper curve of the handle. . . . Swedish pewter styles are exhaustively described and profusely illustrated by Albert Lofgren in his *Det Svenska Tenngjutarehandverkets Historia*, but I have not been able to find there one piece showing bands encircling the body, or beading, as in the tankard illustrated in Mr. Ruckman's article. Swedish pewterers derived the shapes they used from Germany, or even Russia; the Swedish style is very vigorous, with careful attention to detail. There may have been some English influence, because great quantities of London pewter were at all times exported to Sweden; but I believe the type shown in Mr. Ruckman's article is definitely not Swedish."

Commander Roger G. Gerry of the United States Navy has sent us a photograph of a Love-bird teapot in his

collection very like the one owned by Mr. Ruckman. Commander Gerry, too, doubts that this pewter shows Swedish influence. "Mrs. Gerry and I have recently returned from Sweden. During our visit there we saw the collection of Swedish pewter in the Nordiska Museum, as well as other Swedish, Danish, and German pewter of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in other museums in Sweden and Denmark; and while we did not have time to examine these pieces carefully, we both feel strongly that no single example of Swedish pewter which we saw could possibly be confused with its American equivalent. French influence was strong in Sweden during most of the eighteenth century but earlier pewter and furniture, especially in rural areas, was much influenced by the German taste. Beading is seen on Swedish silver, as it is in all European countries where classical motifs were used. There are no marks similar to Love's in Lofgren's monumental work. In fact, birds do not seem to have been much used in Swedish decoration; they are not encountered there as often as in Germany or Pennsylvania, occurring but rarely in the numerous painted wall and ceiling decorations and only once or twice in the very large collection of *Kistor* (chests) catalogued by the Nordiska Museum. They are also absent from the decorative motifs used in Swedish glass." Commander Gerry adds: "The opinions contained herein are those of the writer, alone, and do not necessarily reflect the attitude of the United States Navy Department."

Teapot similar to one from the collection of John F. Ruckman shown in *ANTIQUES* for May 1954 (p. 389). The handle is somewhat more fully developed and the spout is placed lower, resembling those used by Dutch silversmiths and pewterers. Approximately 7¼ inches in height. Collection of Commander and Mrs. Roger G. Gerry; photographs by Morton S. Russin.



Touch on the Gerry teapot.



Dr. Robert Mallory III, whose outstanding pewter collection includes twenty-five pieces with the Love touch, is inclined to agree with the suggestion of Melville T. Nichols (*ANTIQUES*, June 1947) that the Love-bird dies were the trade-mark of a punning Philadelphia ("city of brotherly love") merchant who used them on a stock of unmarked pewter.

"No one has yet been able to locate a maker by the name of Love, or one who used the Love-bird touch, either in America or in England. However, it is now accepted that the user of the touch was American, since nearly all known examples have been found in eastern

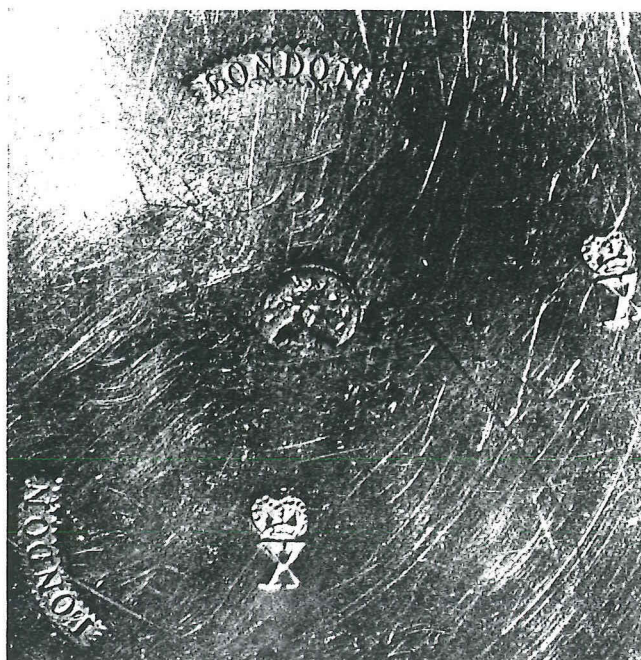
Pennsylvania and none in England, despite the LONDON touch. He apparently used three dies, in the following combinations: two birds with the word LOVE; LONDON; and the crown and x. On his hollow-ware the Love-birds alone have been found. On his plates they have been grouped as: all three; LONDON and birds; and two LONDON's, one bird, and two crowns (illustrated).

"Among the pewter with the Love mark collected in recent years by my wife and myself there are many forms and sizes: basins measuring eight inches, ten inches, eleven and a quarter inches, and twelve and three-quarters inches; plates measuring six inches, seven and three-quarters inches, and eight and a half inches (the last two sizes with both flat rims and beaded rims); deep dishes eight and three-quarters and eleven inches in diameter; dishes twelve inches and thirteen and a half inches in diameter (with rims both flat and beaded); and a tulip-shape tankard (illustrated). This makes a total of fifteen or—supposing the flat- and reeded-rim items to have been cast in the same mold—twelve forms in our collection alone. There are also the well-authenticated teapots of Mr. Gerry, Mr. Ruckman, and Mr. Clement, the straight-dome tankard of Titus Geesey, and probably others as well.

"If Love was a pewterer he was the only one of his day to leave behind so many varied forms without a clue as to who he was or where and when he worked. All the others who produced any such variety have long since been well documented, but extensive search by Ledlie I. Laughlin, John P. Remensnyder, and others has failed to identify this maker. Therefore it seems likely that he was a pewter merchant who used the lovebirds as a trade-mark and included the LONDON mark and the crown and x to indicate, at a time when the best pewter was supposed to come from London, that his was of the highest possible quality. Unless and until new material on this question becomes available, I believe the theory that Love was a pewter merchant who stamped his mark on the wares of others best fits the known facts."



Tulip-shape tankard with Love-bird touch.  
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Mallory III;  
photographs by the author.



Most elaborate combination of the Love touches  
in the Mallory collection.