



# More about "Love"

BY JOHN F. RUCKMAN

THERE HAVE BEEN two theories concerning the origin of pewter marked with the "Love-bird" touch. The first, advanced by Ledlie I. Laughlin in the *Bulletin* of the Pewter Collector's Club of America in June 1946, was that it was made by a man named Love located in or near Philadelphia, who had probably learned his trade from either William Will or Parks Boyd, and whose years of pewter-making might safely be bracketed by the dates 1780 and 1830. Mr. Laughlin pointed out that the unique Swedish-type banded tankards made by both Love and Boyd have lids unlike those of any British maker, or indeed of any other colonial pewterer, and he suggested that these tankards might have been inspired by a Scandinavian piece brought into the settlement at Chester (originally Upland), where the Swedes had established the first European settlement in Pennsylvania.

The other theory, put forward by Melville T. Nichols in *ANTIQUES* for June 1947, was that no pewterer named Love ever existed. Mr. Nichols pointed out that punning is common in English heraldry—and Philadelphia is the "City of Brotherly Love." He thought it likely that the Love-bird touch was a trade mark used by a merchant who bought unmarked wares from various pewterers, stamped the touch on them, and sold them throughout eastern Pennsylvania.

Neither of these theories has seemed wholly satisfactory. The small circular touch itself—two birds of indefinite species facing each other beneath a crown—is distinctly pre-Revolutionary in character. After the Revolution crowns were in disfavor in America, and pewterers whose touches had featured them changed over to eagles as fast as they could get new dies cut. Parks Boyd's touches all show eagles. It would seem logical that the pewterer who used the earlier type of touch, with the crown and non-political birds, originated the Swedish tankard design and that Boyd, a 100 per cent eagle man, copied it from him, or more likely came into possession of his molds.

The Queen Anne teapot illustrated seems to provide a sort of missing link in Love-bird pewter. It is the first teapot in this style marked with the Love-bird touch which

has come to light, and like tankards bearing the same mark it displays decided originality of design. Considerably more capacious than most teapots of the period, it is nearly an inch greater in all dimensions than similar teapots by William Will. The spout is somewhat shorter and more curving than the one used by Will, and consequently set higher. The handle is also set higher than usual, and the pewter sockets by which it is attached are shorter, a distinct improvement in design. The lid is a little lower and broader than is the case with Will examples.

A broad single reed, like the similar grouped reeds on Love tankards, encircles the body of the pot, while a row of the beading so lavishly used on the tankards appears on the shoulder in place of the molded band generally found in that position. The lid has a wide flat brim with a beaded edge exactly like the brim on Love tankard covers, and like the latter has the top of the dome slightly flattened.



"Love-bird" tankard in Swedish style.



Pewter teapot with "Love-bird" touch.  
Over-all height, 7 5/16 inches;  
over-all length, 9 3/4 inches.

The tall urn-shaped finial is identical to that on a round, straight-sided Love teapot of slightly later design in the Brooklyn Museum.

Here in one piece are combined mid-eighteenth-century form and several mannerisms of design which are found separately in other Love pieces, suggesting that Love was one man and that he at least started working before the Revolution.

Unlike the Love plates and basins, which were once fairly plentiful, Love hollow-ware has always been decidedly scarce, more so, perhaps, than comparable items by William Will. So far as I know only ten such pieces have survived—Mr. Laughlin's covered measure, Joseph France's crown-handled porringer, my identical porringer-less handle, Mr. Laughlin's tankard, Melville Nichols' tankard, Titus Geesey's tankard, the tankard in the Brooklyn Museum, my tankard shown here, my teapot, and the teapot in the Brooklyn Museum. With the exception of the last, all are forms that went out of style at about the time of the Revolution. None of them, except the four Swedish-style tankards resembling those made by Parks Boyd, is strikingly similar to the work of any other American pewterer.

Possibly this may have been a father-son combination. The father, working in pre-Revolutionary times, might have made the hollow-ware, while the son, succeeding

him and continuing to use the same touch, might have specialized in plates and basins, which in that period would seem to have been in greater demand.

I suggest that Love may have been one of the "Hasselberg group" of Swedish pewterers who worked in Philadelphia in the second half of the eighteenth century. The work of only one of these men, John Andrew Brunstrom, has been identified, though the names of two more—Abraham Hasselberg and Adam Kohler—are recorded. The known dates for these three, according to Loughlin's *Pewter in America*, run from 1762, when Hasselberg was married, to 1793, when Brunstrom died. Love was not necessarily one of the group whose name is known. As Mr. Nichols suggests, the term Love may well have had some connection with the "City of Brotherly Love," and it may have been substituted in the touch for an inconveniently long and difficult Swedish name. This would account for his Swedish-style tankards, of which the one shown here, with its groups of reeds, elaborate beading, and flattened dome, is typical. Since he seems to have been something of an innovator, it may be that it was he who introduced the use of "Philadelphia beading" on pewter. It would be interesting to know whether Swedish pewter of the period was lavishly beaded, and whether the Love-bird touch in any way resembles eighteenth-century Swedish touches.