

EP2

A CHALLENGE IN PEWTER

Antiques (U.S.A.)
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SANDWICHED between advertisements for Ink Powder and Dry Codfish, in the *Connecticut Gazette* of September 28, 1787, published in New London, we find this announcement: "The partnership between Greene and Belcher, pewterers, was dissolved the 15th day of August last."

When a copy of this paper was handed me by one of my pewter-collecting friends with the remark, "Here is a chance to find another pewterer," I little thought that he was right. But by accepting the challenge I was led to the large but mysterious Green family of Boston, the wandering ne'er-do-well son of Joseph Belcher of Newport, and the probable recognition of a pewterer's touch which so far has baffled attempts at identification.

The Greens of Boston, through nearly a century of operations, including three generations and seven separate pewterers, have left to us only a few pieces of the work of one man, Samuel Green. Ledlie I. Laughlin in his *Pewter in*

is reasonable to assume that the New London Green followed the same custom and made his touch with the letters *IG*.

A tankard in my collection bearing Richard Austin's *lamb-and-dove* touch, the only one by this pewterer reported, has the same characteristics as the one bearing the *IG* mark, including the barrel-shaped handle terminal (Fig. 2). This type may have been passed by John Green to Samuel of the next generation and through Samuel to Richard Austin when Samuel Green and Austin were in partnership. The type is also represented in a double-domed tankard with finial, by Benjamin Day (1744-1757) of Newport, shown in Laughlin's *Pewter in America* (Pl. XVI, No. 91). The same plate illustrates another tankard (No. 93) bearing a touch on the handle given as *IG*; this may be a misreading or a typographical error for *IG*, and this piece, similar except for having a finial to the *IG* tankard which I have, may possibly be another piece by John Green.

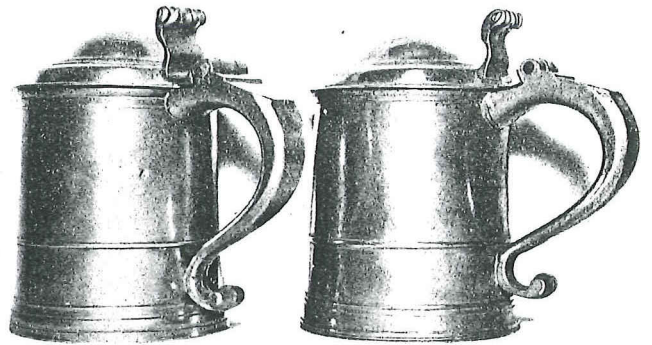
Copper-plate Copies
Pocket-Books
Walkden's best British Ink-Powder, per dozen
or single
Holman's do. per do.
Best English Cake-Ink per do.
Dutch Quills
Writing-Paper by the ream
Cartridge-Paper, Bonnet-Paper
Account Books, Writing-Books, &c.
Record-Books, fitted to the different uses of
towns, societies, &c. may be had on the shortest
notice.
N. B. Old and new Books neatly bound.

THE partnership between GREENE and
BELCHER, pewterers, was dissolved the
15th day of August last. September 17, 1787.

Dry Codfish, Salmon, Mackarel
and Liver-Oil, to be sold for any kind of Grain,
on board the Schooner Friendship, lying at Nor-
wich-Landing.—N. B. Cash given for Grain,
on board said Schooner. SNOW PARKER.
September 18, 1787.

FIG. 1 — EXCERPT
FROM THE "CON-
NECTICUT GAZETTE."
For September 28,
1787, published in
New London. The no-
tice of Greene and
Belcher, pewterers, is
the basis for the au-
thor's deduction re-
garding *IG*.

FIG. 2 — PEWTER
TANKARDS. Left, by
Richard Austin, car-
ries the *lamb-and-
dove* touch. Right,
marked *IG*, attrib-
uted to John Green.
Illustrations from the
collection of the au-
thor.



America tells of the New London interlude in the life of some of these Greens. He mentions John Green, son of the printer Timothy (born in New London in 1719), but offers no further information about him.

In my collection is a tankard bearing on its handle the touch *IG* in relief. I submit that this is the mark of John Green; that this unknown member of a pewtering family remained in New London and established himself there as a pewterer when his brother Thomas moved to Boston; and that it was he, John, who was in partnership with Joseph Belcher Jr. after the latter left Newport about 1784 to escape family difficulties.

What proof have we to support this hypothesis? None more direct than that previously adduced in identification of the work of Benjamin Day and Samuel Green, but to me, quite as convincing. The mark ascribed to Day consists only of the initials *BD*, and the ascription, which is considered by pewter students to be justified, was necessarily made on the basis of circumstantial evidence. So also with Samuel Green, whose mark consists only of the initials *SG* with the word *Boston*. Richard Austin, too, used the same type of mark, supposedly during the period of his partnership with Samuel Green. It

Finally, this theory seems to satisfy the desire expressed by Mr. Laughlin to associate the Greens of Boston with the New London family and to establish one of them as a pewterer there; besides, it helps confirm his location of Joseph Belcher Jr. in New London and accounts for the *New London* touch.

An objection to my theory may be based on the fact that the *Greene* in the advertisement is spelled with an *e*, whereas the recorded Greens of Boston and New London are without the final *e*. Orthography in early printed matter is notably erratic, but I must confess that the *Connecticut Gazette* was *Printed by Timothy Green*, and that another advertisement it contains is for *Books & Stationary* to be sold by *Thomas G. Green*. These two men, incidentally, must have been related to the pewtering Greens: these given names recur in successive generations of that family, and the first two Greens in New London—Samuel and his son Timothy, father of John—were printers. The printer of this newspaper would probably not have used a different spelling for the name Green without good reason.

So I have laid myself open to attacks of future explorers in the pewter field, but in doing so, I hope to have identified one more touch mark and located a worthy pewterer.