

Montreal Pewter Spoons and Ladles

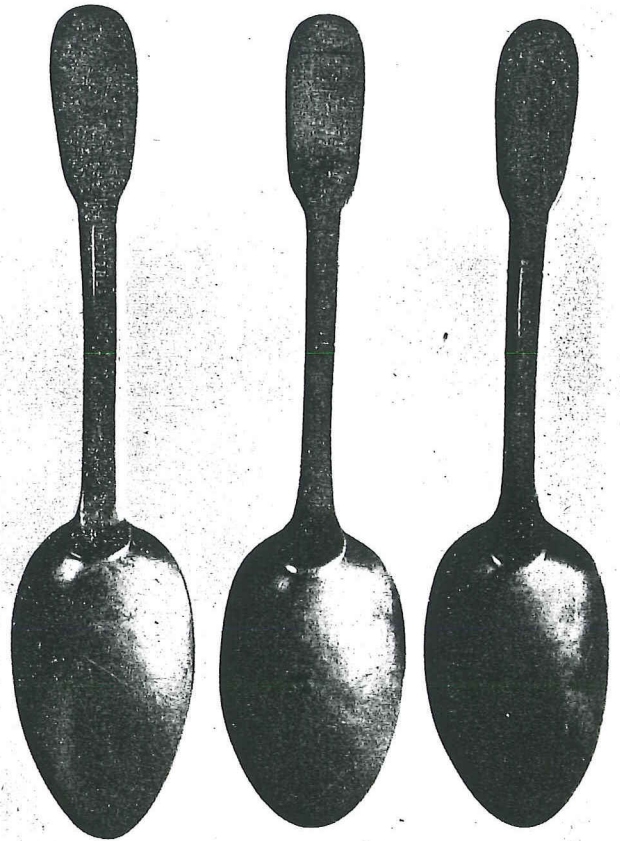
By Percy E. Raymond

Ex-President, Pewter Collectors Club of America

COLLECTORS, particularly those in the Boston area, have been long familiar with the Montreal pewter spoons, but for some reason these utensils have not been illustrated. Professor Ramsay Traquair of McGill University devotes a page to them in his *The Old Silver of Quebec*, but he was not able to identify the makers. The present writer has been no more successful. Montreal is an old city, and its archives are astonishingly incomplete. Its two spoon makers used their initials liberally but left no clue to their surname. One was I M; the other, T M. Were they father and son, or brothers? I M had an angel in his touch mark, and on ladles, struck two touches side by side (fig. 1). The angel motif appears so widely in the marks of German pewterers that one might infer from I M's use of it that he was German. But what was a German doing in Montreal? Perhaps he was a Frenchman from Alsace or elsewhere on the border. Angels are not unknown in French marks but they are more common to the eastward. T M was patriotic and included a beaver in his circular touch. Like I M, he struck two touches side by side on his ladles (fig. 2). Both makers put their initialed marks on the broad part of the upper side of the handle. T M added MONTREAL—intaglio, in a rectangle—on the back of the stem (fig. 4). I have not seen this touch on any of the I M product. I have a serving spoon and a ladle, both by T M, on which the MONTREAL was once impressed, then scraped off: a circumstance suggestive of something, I do not know what.

Both Montreal pewterers seem to have used a heavy lead-pewter mixture. Their designs are stodgy, uninspired. Their chief claim to interest lies in their beaver and angel touches. I encountered this problem more than 20 years ago and have spent many weary days consulting the records in the Chateau de Ramesay and the Montreal Public Library. Professor Traquair has doubtless been more searching in his inquiries yet the net result is—nothing. At times I have dallied with the idea that these articles were peddled to Montreal by Yankees. T M and a beaver definitely suggests Newport, Rhode Island. But who ever heard of an angel from Newport?

John Will of New York (1752-1763) is the only other American pewterer who used an angel. His angel, poorly impressed and known only from a single plate (Laughlin, pl. LXI, fig. 82), is not radically different from that of I M, unless the angel is actually wearing a skirt. Will's angel



3. The three types of table spoons known to have been made by T M. All have pointed bowls, thick stems and flattened upper ends.

touchmark is presumed to be one used by him in his early years as a pewterer in Germany. It is possible that the M's, like Will, emigrated from Germany and settled in Montreal instead of New York.

My experience has been that I M's product is much more rare than that of T M. Both worked in the "single drop" period. Professor Traquair states that the patterns are of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. There seem to be two reasons for thinking that the molds, and probably the spoons and ladles themselves, were made between 1760 and 1790. The first is that although the broad ends of the handles of most of the spoons are flat or turned slightly down, the tips of the handles of T M's ladles turn up, and his serving spoon not only shows this characteristic but also has a trace of a median ridge. Seemingly the molds were made in the transition period of 1760 to 1770. The second reason is that the Mon-



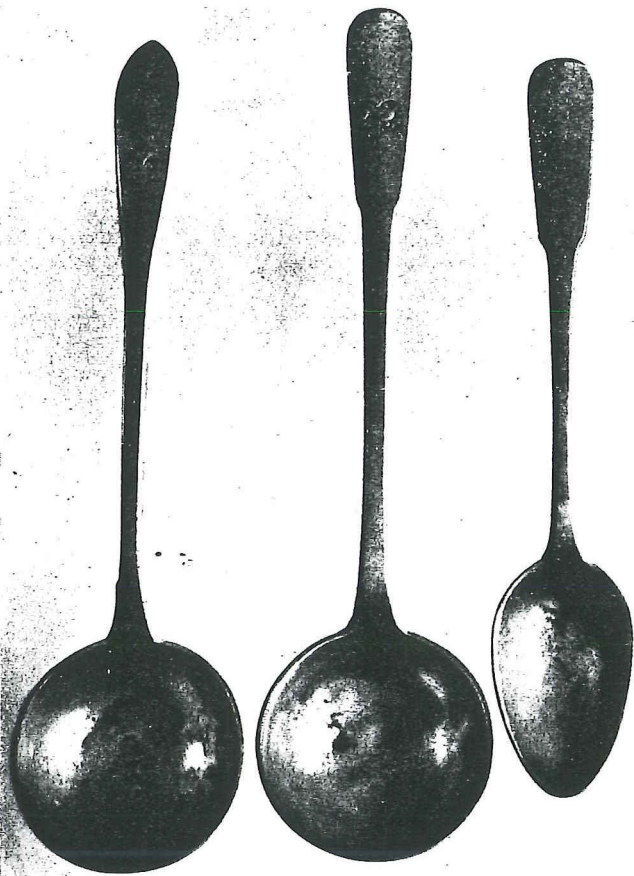
1. On the handles of his Montreal pewter ladles I M struck two angel-motif touches.



2. T M also struck two touches—a beaver in a circle—on the handles of his ladles.



4. On the back of spoon and ladle stems, T M added MONTREAL—intaglio, in a rectangle.



5. All that we know of these two Montreal pewterers are the spoons and ladles that bear their touchmarks. Left, a ladle by IM; center, a ladle by TM; right, a TM serving spoon.



6. Two table spoons by IM, whose work is scarcer than TM's. The author in his prolonged search has found only three examples by IM—these two spoons and the ladle in fig. 5 (left).

treale newspapers, files of which date from 1804, do not mention pewterers, nor does the oldest city Directory, that of 1819.

TM made table spoons in three molds. All have pointed bowls, thick stems and flattened upper ends. Type A (fig. 3, center) is 8 inches in length, has a large circular drop, and a relatively narrow bowl. The stem is flat above and below, beveled at the sides. Type B (fig. 3, left) is larger, a little more than 8½ inches long; the drop is smaller and the bowl wider than in type A. The stem, although it appears to be flat, really has six sides, thus remotely reminiscent of the ancient hexagonal form. Type C (fig. 3, right) is wide-bowled, a trifle less than 8½ inches long, and has a stem like that of type A. The drop is ovate, not circular.

The single serving spoon of TM's which I have found (fig. 5, right), is 12¼ inches long, has a pseudo-hexagonal stem like that of the type B table spoon, and a large, nearly circular drop which is modified by a thickening at the end away from the stem. This is not a real double-drop but I do not know any good name for it. Professor Traquair calls it, when it occurs in silver spoons, an "engraved drop," but that term seems hardly suitable for pewter.

TM's standard ladle (fig.

5, center) is about 14¼ inches long, with a bowl nearly 4 inches in diameter. Unlike the familiar britannia ladles made by Josiah Danforth and Lewis Kruger, the handle is not soldered to the bowl; instead, the whole was cast as one piece. The single drop is large, approximately circular; the stem strong, flattened above and below, but six-sided; and the distal end of the handle turns upward. The duplicated touch appears to be oval, rather than circular as it is on the spoons. Another ladle by the same maker, a specimen possibly unique, originally had a wooden handle, for the distal end of the short stem is threaded (fig. 7). The bowl is 3¾ inches in diameter, the single drop half-oval, the stem almost hexagonal. It bears the MONTREAL mark, and a trace of the TM touch, poorly impressed.

I have found only three pieces with the IM touch, two table spoons and a ladle. One of the spoons (fig. 6, left) has the oval drop shown by type C of TM, but is 8⅝ inches long. Moreover, it differs in being a better casting. The other (fig. 6, right) is from an entirely different mold, for the stem is half oval, only the lower side being flat, and it expands gradually from the bowl to the flattened distal portion, lacking the abrupt expan-



7. This ladle by TM—the stem almost hexagonal, the single drop half-oval—is possibly unique. Originally it had a wooden handle.

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BOOK REVIEWS

AMERICAN INTERIOR DESIGN. *The Traditions and Development of Domestic Design from Colonial Times to the Present*, by Meyric R. Rogers. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. \$20.

Reviewed by

MARIAN SADTLER CARSON

This is a broad study of American homes, furniture and interior decoration. It covers time and space from primitive settlements in New England and Virginia to the most modern desert house at Palm Springs or penthouse apartment in San Francisco. It commences with the "Governor's Fayre House," a reconstruction of a typical New England dwelling of 1630-1650, where crude stools and benches were used in conjunction with unfinished walls and open beam ceilings. The concluding chapter is a sharp contrast, entitled "The Age of Social Readjustment, 1920 to the Present," but it does illustrate the span of development through some 300 years. This chapter presents architectural designs by William Lescaze, Edward Stone and Frank Lloyd Wright, and household articles as mundane as a Pyrex double boiler and a chromium pretzel bowl.

Here in one book is a smooth combination of architectural frame of 300 years of American housing, mostly of the better class, and a study of the furnishings that were made for and used in the houses. Usually architects must go to furniture books to supplement their field while the collector applies himself to architectural monographs.

This review will be limited to the part of Mr. Rogers' book coinciding with the avowed interests of the readers of *THE AMERICAN COLLECTOR*, with accent on furniture and accessories rather than architecture. However, succeeding interesting illustration will be sure to lead one to turn the pages of the last two chapters—"The Age of Continental Expansion and Industrial Empire, 1850-1920," and "The Age of Social Readjustment, 1920 to the Present," which goes even beyond with a projection into the future!

The antiquarian will find much material in the first three chapters which are divided as follows: "The Age of Settlement, 1630-1730"; "The Age of Colonial Achievement, 1730-1790"; "The Age of Federal Adolescence, 1790-1850." Each epoch covers the locale and conditions as they existed and are graphically illustrated with plates of period rooms and individual articles that appropriately belonged in them. The colonial years are treated in the conventional way. Coinciding with the development of a national consciousness, the author employs the modern social approach to historical writing, as the following sub-headings indicate: "Conditions after the Revolution"; "Economic and Social Changes"; "Cultural Redirections."

This manner of writing antiquarian history is new but it also may be unnecessarily involved in currents that do not strictly affect the course of the topic. Alice Morse Earle of Worcester, Mass., was perhaps the first to take a broad view of everyday life as it was in early America and to treat the subject of antiques from the social as well as the aesthetic standpoint. The surge of modern events and focus on their interpretation has emphasized the fact that objects such as automobiles, radios, furniture or swimming pools are symbols of social experience. The true analyst is eclipsed by the popularity of placing his subject amidst a pattern of economic, social and cultural factors. Among these factors the source of the furniture designs often becomes a matter of research and not an artistic problem. For the present this method is in such vogue it must be accepted, though the factual historian may someday return.

A half of Mr. Rogers' book is devoted to pictures. These serve two purposes. They illustrate his text and they give a graphic understanding of the subject. Each has been selected for quality and interest. The pictures are of two sorts, "Illustrations," of which there are nearly 200, being cuts of separate units. A quarto book permits the reproductions to be large enough to show details to advantage. In a sense the most valuable difference between Mr. Rogers' book and previous general works lies in the inclusion of 43 examples or groups from the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago, whose holdings are less well known than the pieces in Eastern institutions. The author might have been repaid had he turned more to Kansas City, Minneapolis, St. Louis and other Western collections, both public and private, and shown less from New York, Brooklyn, and Boston.

The second part of the book is devoted to 39 plates, all but two of which are taken from models comprising the series of American Rooms in Miniature made by Mrs. James Ward Thorne of Chicago and given by her to the Art Institute of Chicago. This review is not intended as an evaluation of these rooms, but the reader would have greater reliance on pictures of actual rooms at Mount Vernon, the Philadelphia Museum

of Art, etc., than on these remarkable adaptations for, in some of them, literal truth has been sacrificed for artistry. As stated in the Introduction, these models "are translations of a four-walled actuality into the three-wall terms of the theatre." Opposite each page of plates, 20 of which are in color, is an historical and descriptive account of the room and of the house from which it was taken, and in most cases there is an exterior photograph of the dwelling. A Glossary, Biographical Notes, a Bibliography and an Index follow.

American Interior Design provides between the covers of one attractive book a rapid review of what we are prone to think of as "period rooms," but nevertheless are the furnished four-wall entity as lived in by Americans from Puritan to Penthouse over a period of 300 years.

DICTIONARY OF NUMISMATIC NAMES, by Albert R. Frey, with a Glossary of Numismatic Terms in English, French, German, Italian and Swedish, by Mark M. Salton. Barnes & Noble, Inc., New York, 1947. 405 pp. \$5.00.

This reprint is a most welcome addition to the library of any student and collector interested in numismatics. Frey's dictionary was originally published in 1917 by the American Numismatic Society and was soon out of print. As it was the only numismatic dictionary in the English language—and a marked improvement over its forerunner, Martinori's dictionary, published in 1914 in Italian—there has been a steady demand for it. To be sure, it is not as complete or as comprehensive as Schroetter's *Woerterbuch der Muenzkunde*, published in 1930, but Schroetter's dictionary is about three times the size of Frey's and is virtually unobtainable. Its price was from the beginning about five times as much as the present Frey reprint.

Therefore, for most coin collectors and students of numismatics, Frey's book always will prove to be very useful. The glossary in 5 languages now added by Mark M. Salton will be particularly welcome as it will enable anybody not familiar with French, Italian, Swedish or German to use the foreign catalogs.

When consulting this dictionary we should bear in mind that it is a reprint of the 1917 edition. We fully appreciate that a revised and more complete edition would have raised the price considerably, yet we would have welcomed it if the more important topics—such as "dollar," "ducat," "mark," etc.—could have been brought up to date. Nevertheless this dictionary should find a ready market as it answers a multitude of questions in a clear, uncomplicated way.

The late Albert R. Frey came to this country in 1871 when he was 13 years old. Of French-German parentage, he was talented in many ways, being a linguist, a good mathematician and interested in literature and in numismatics. For a short while he was a teacher; but his singular way of dealing with his pupils, concentrating only on the few gifted ones, soon made him give up this career. Later he was for many years employed by the Customs House where his specific talents were much appreciated. Part of his time was devoted to his various hobbies. He was co-founder and vice president of the American Shakespeare Society, and he joined the American Numismatic Association, of which he became president from 1904 to 1907. His character and his abilities are well illustrated by one of his many friends who said of him: "He knew everything about money except how to acquire it."

EDWARD GANS

Montreal Pewter Spoons and Ladles

(From page twenty-one)

sion of T M's spoons. The length is 8½ inches. The drop is relatively small, transversely oval rather than sub-circular.

The I M ladle is not quite 14 inches long, the bowl 4 inches in diameter. The drop is small, rounded, but neither circular nor ovate. The stem is four-sided, enlarges gradually away from the bowl, is pointed and turns sharply downward at the distal end. Like the T M standard ladle, it is cast in one piece.

Professor Traquair has found a teaspoon by T M, and has kindly sent me a photograph of it. It has the single drop, and a slender, gradually expanding stalk. It lacks the shoulders of the fiddle spoon, conforming entirely with the general type of the T M and I M product.

All specimens illustrated are in the collection of the author.