

ETQ



A desirable collection of American pewter is within reach of the collector of limited means, providing he accepts two conditions: 1. It will take time to assemble it, so that patience will be needed. 2. He must be willing to limit himself to certain forms and sometimes to certain periods because the cost of a piece is based directly on its rarity and date.

Most American 18th century pewter by great makers is rare and expensive. This is especially true of their hollow ware, such as tankards, mugs and teapots. However, the collector who must consider cost will find that these makers' flatware, including plates, dishes and basins, is much less expensive. As an example, plates by Frederick Bassett, one of New York City's foremost 18th century pewterers, are still modestly priced.

A Pewter

Another encouraging fact for the budget collector is that fine early 19th century pear-shaped teapots by Thomas D. Boardman of Hartford, and his brother Sherman, cost only a fraction of those made a little earlier by William Kirby of New York City and William Will of Philadelphia. Tall flagons by the Boardmans are among the most beautiful forms made in this country and they, too, are inexpensive.

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Mid-18th century Hudson Valley corner cupboard filled with American pewter and a few English pieces.



Communion service by Thomas D. and Sherman Boardman, Hartford, Conn., c. 1815, consisting of two 5½-inch beakers and a quart flagon.

Collector's Guide

by Thomas D. Williams

Two 18th century pear shape teapots by Colonel William Will of Philadelphia, c. 1770. This form is extremely rare and eagerly sought by collectors of American pewter.



Many other pieces made soon after 1800 are lovely in shape and within reach of the modest budget. Among such pieces that can be found fairly frequently are water pitchers, candlesticks, measures, syrup jugs, chalices and beakers. The list also includes lamps, sugar bowls, creamers and, tea and coffee pots.

If the budget collector wishes to limit himself to New York State pieces, which many experts consider the most interesting, he will find, in addition to 18th century flatware, many later pieces worthy of his attention. These include pewter made by James Weeks, Endicott & Sumner, Henry Hopper, Capen & Molineux, Daniel Curtess, Ostrander & Norris, Sheldon & Feltman and Thomas Wildes.

Needless to say, knowledge of his subject is the prime asset of any collector. Fortunately, more information is available about pewter than any other American art or craft. The authoritative book on the subject is Ledlie I. Laughlin's "Pewter In America, Its Makers and Their Marks." Other valuable works are "American Pewter," by J. B. Kerfoot, "Some Notes on American Pewterers" by Louis G. Myers, and "American Pewter," a bulletin by John M. Graham 2nd, which can be purchased at the Brooklyn Museum.



Covered quart water or cider pitcher by T. D. and S. Boardman, Hartford, Conn., c. 1825. This is one of the most desirable forms made in the 19th century.

Pear shape teapot by T. D. and S. Boardman, Hartford, Conn., c. 1815. This splendid example is a carry-over from the 18th century form.



Examining fine public collections of American pewter is an invaluable means of becoming familiar with makers' forms and marks. The Brooklyn Museum and the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art have distinguished collections. Others may be seen in Philipsburg Manor, Tarrytown, New York, the Van Cortlandt Manor House restoration, Croton, New York, the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware, and the New Haven Colony Historical Society, New Haven, Conn. Permission usually can be obtained to examine individual pieces in these collections.

The Pewter Collectors Club of America, founded 35 years ago, is made up of students of American pewter who do their own research. Their findings, together with new developments in pewter collecting, are published in the club's Bulletin. Membership information is available from Mr. Farney F. Eilers, Jr., North Pease Road, Woodridge, Conn., who is president.

The collector of American pewter has a wide choice to satisfy his personal taste. The search for examples for his collection will bring him many fascinating experiences. His chosen specimens will represent an American craft that was most important in the early life of his country.