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Masterpieces of American Pewter in Private Collections

THREE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY TANKARDS

The example at the upper right is one of the most important pieces of American pewter thus far discovered — the only known lidded tankard by a Rhode Island pewterer. Its maker was Benjamin Day of Newport (1690-1757), one of the earliest of Rhode Island craftsmen in the metal. Only two other pieces of his work are known. One, a porringer illustrated in *ANTIQUES* for May 1930, is there described by Ledlie Laughlin, well-known authority on American pewter, as follows: "probably unique; possibly earliest form of American solid handle. No known counterpart in English or Continental pewter." The other Day example, a fine lidless tankard illustrated in this issue, has the same squat proportions. Its barrel was undoubtedly cast in the same mold, but, as in this piece, is unhammered. The finial of the domed cover of this tankard is characteristic of the work of Rhode Island silversmiths. *From the collection of Edward E. Minor.* The two lower tankards are New York pieces. That at the left, of two-quart size, is by Frederick Bassett (*New York, 1740-1800*). The huge but well-proportioned pieces of this type made by John Bassett and his son Frederick are the largest of American tankards. *From the collection of John Paul Remensnyder.* The third tankard, of quart size, is by William Kirby (*New York, 1740-1804*). It is of a fine early form, combining the flat top with the fishtail handle terminal characteristic of early New York examples. *From the collection of Mrs. J. Insley Blair.* Fashions in pewter forms in general followed those in silver, but cannot always be classified in such neat chronological sequences. In silver tankards the flat lid is considered an earlier form than the domed lid; the domed lid with finial is a more sophisticated — hence, theoretically, later — development than the uncrowned dome. Yet this Day tankard with domed lid and finial was made probably half a century earlier than the flat-lidded

Kirby item, which in turn is probably contemporaneous with the domed Bassett piece. These three fine examples were shown in the Metropolitan Museum's recent exhibition of early American pewter. Other outstanding pieces from the exhibition are illustrated and discussed in this issue of the Magazine

