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A Check List of Early St. Louis Silversmiths

By Camilla Draper

ST. LOUIS was settled in 1764; by 1767 it was a log-cabin village of 500 inhabitants. During the first thirty years of its existence it was under the rule of France; thereafter of Spain, and ultimately of the United States. In 1821, a gentleman from Philadelphia undertook a census of St. Louis and published a directory. Writing at that time he says, "St. Louis is now ornamented with a great number of brick buildings, and both scholar and courtier could move in a circle suiting to their choice and taste." The trading village had grown to a town of 5,500 inhabitants, with many churches, schools, merchants, and artisans. The 1821 directory lists five jewelers, silversmiths, and watchmakers.

Few examples of work by these earliest silversmiths are now known. Much of what they did was undoubtedly scattered throughout the Mississippi valley and farther west; and much has been lost or destroyed. Such pieces as are known show good design and craftsmanship. The engraving is skilful. The name punches suggest that the silversmith was also his own die sinker.

More silversmiths are listed in the succeeding city directories of 1838, 1847, and 1854. Those whose names are here listed are known to have been actual craftsmen. Others may have bought their silver in the East to sell in St. Louis. One, Edward Mead, imported his silverware from Sheffield, England.

The first silversmith of whom we have record was Antoine Dangen (son of Charles D'Engin). Born in Marseilles, he came to St. Louis about 1805. The name was also spelled Dongan and Dongen in the *Missouri Gazette* of 1811 and in the 1821 directory. In 1818 he "established a Ferry to Cahokia, below Judge Bent's farm." So far, no examples of his silver have come to light.

Joseph Bouju arrived in St. Louis in the spring of 1812. Two tablespoons, two dessert spoons, and three teaspoons by him are known at present. The punch mark is J. BOUJU, slightly crude but clear Roman capitals in rectangle.

Charles F. Billon, a native of Switzerland, moved in 1818 from Philadelphia to St. Louis, where he died in 1822. A spoon in the Missouri Historical Society is marked C. BILLON in rectangle.

Daggett and Blair is a firm listed in the 1821 directory as clock- and watchmakers, silversmiths, and jewelers; however, none of their work is now known to exist.

The following silversmiths worked from about 1825 to 1855 or later. Many examples of their work are extant, chiefly flatware and a few cups and larger pieces.

Reno Beauvais. Mark, R. BEAUVAIS, in shaped rectangle.

John P. Capelle. Mark, CAPELLE, and ST. LOUIS in rectangle. A very fine soup ladle by Capelle is known.

Ben F. Crane. Mark, CRANE & CO., Roman letters in rectangle.

Isaac D. Custer. Mark, I. D. CUSTER and ST. LOUIS. M., Roman capitals in rectangles.

Jaccard and Company, also Louis Jaccard and Company and Eugene Jaccard and Company. Many pieces, variously marked, survive.

A. H. Menkens and Brothers. Mark, MENKENS, in rectangle.

John Shaw. Mark, J. SHAW, Roman capitals in rectangle.

Cornelius D. Sullivan. Mark, C. D. SULLIVAN & CO., Roman capitals in rectangle.

W. P. Woodbridge. Mark, W. P. WOODBRIDGE ST. LOUIS, found on a cup, circa 1850, by Stephen Ensko.

A great deal of silver is to be found carrying the mark E. MEAD ST. LOUIS. Edward Mead, however, was not a silversmith, though listed as such in the old directories. Instead, he was a merchant who in 1837 came to St. Louis from Ithaca, New York. He dealt in jewelry, silverware, pistols, guns, ammunition, and plates used in making daguerreotypes. He purchased most of his silver in England, and had his name stamped on it.

The list thus offered makes no pretense of being all-inclusive. Nevertheless, it is the outcome of search among the St. Louis city directories published between 1821 and 1854; *Annals of St. Louis, 1804 to 1821*, by Frederick Billon (*published 1886–1888*); files of the *Missouri Gazette* (1810–1820); documents in the Missouri Historical Society; not to mention enquiry by personal correspondence. Obviously, no attempt has been made to pursue investigation beyond the year 1850 — a quite sufficiently late dead line. Additional information will be most welcome.

More Pots by A. Porter, Pewterer

RESPONDING to the portrayal of an A. Porter pewter teapot in Antiques for February 1937 (*p. 63*), Miss Blanche Garten of Lincoln, Nebraska, has forwarded a photograph of yet another, though similar, teapot and an accompanying coffeepot, both stamped with the *A. Porter* mark. These items are here pictured. As pointed out in the note previously referred to, their mark indicates a date of making between the years 1830 and 1835. Accordingly it permits drawing some conclusions — rather vague ones — regarding the pewter shapes of the period. The contour of Porter's teapot of the early 1830's differs materially from the more nearly globular form apparently favored by Richardson of Boston about 1821 (Antiques for April 1937, *p. 195*). Richardson's pot, it may be observed, is a late and somewhat enfeebled derivative of the silver forms current in the mid-1700's. Porter's design, on the other hand, is not many removes from the squat silver shapes of the early 1800's. Oddly enough, on the contrary, the Porter coffeepot seems faintly reminiscent of silver styles in vogue about 1760. And yet not one of the pieces cited could ever be mistaken for eighteenth-century creations. They lack the excellence of proportion, the strong yet pure outline, and the satisfyingly appropriate association of parts that characterize the craftsmanship of the 1700's and have since been irretrievably lost. The nineteenth-century craftsman could not equal his predecessors.

Pewter Teapot and Coffeepot by A. Porter (*1830–1835*)