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Lesser Staffordshire Collectibles

FROM the owner of the fox plate, Bradford F. Swan of Providence, Rhode Island, comes a photograph of another Staffordshire plate (*Fig. 3*). The fanciful design, printed in a fine shade of deep blue, he has titled *Cupid Behind the Bars*. A teapot with the same decoration is in the museum of the Rhode Island School of Design. The plate bears the impressed mark *Wood*, with a *V* beneath it. Concerning this plate and the many other examples of Staffordshire that are decorated with scenes other than American-historical, Mr. Swan writes:

These "lesser" examples of the Staffordshire potters seem to me to be a sadly neglected field. . . . Why a piece of pottery should be of great value because it bears the picture of an atrociously-designed almshouse (in America) and another piece, by the same maker, with a far more artistic view and sometimes of far better color and workmanship, should be of almost no value, because it does not have an almshouse on it — all this is a mystery and an anachronism which is without basis in esthetics. . . . As nearly as I can figure it out, the Old Blue writers have been going over and over the same ground, ever since Barber, and not making appreciable headway. And a shame it is, too, because they deal with a field in which there is remarkably little faking but where the cloud of mystery hangs heavy.

You can't blink away the beauty of the non-American designs simply because they are not historical. The evidence points more and more toward the theory that all, or practically all, of this china was made for the American trade and the English ignored it. Why don't we get down to business and straighten this riddle out?

ANTIQUES has long maintained that for purely decorative value many of the nonhistorical designs on Staffordshire are superior to the American views. The reason for collecting the American views is, precisely, their historical interest. The details regarding dates and makers do not in themselves enhance the value of either the historical or the purely decorative items. They do add interest, however, and serve to place the ware in its proper relation to other English ceramics. Much information has been gleaned and published regarding the historical china. The other transfer-printed Staffordshire offers a wide field for the investigator.

Teapot by Will
Rarities in Pewter Communion ware by Young

IN 1927 ANTIQUES published a pewter teapot made by William Will of Philadelphia (1742-1798). The piece was an extraordinary find — the first pear-shaped eighteenth-century pewter teapot to be recorded. And withal it was in poor condition, minus wooden handle and pewter feet, though traces of both still remained. Over ten years later, in April 1938, ANTIQUES illustrated another teapot by William Will. This one retained its wooden handle and its three pewter feet, which were in claw-and-ball form. The piece, in unrestored condition, appeared to be complete, though slightly battered after a century and a half.

Now the Attic takes pleasure in presenting a third pewter teapot by William Will, quite the most perfect of its type that has thus far come to light. In style it closely approximates the previously illustrated examples. Its pear-shaped body bears a clearly defined horizontal molding just above its greatest protuberance. The domed lid is also banded with moldings and holds aloft a well-modeled finial. The spout has vigorous contours. The three applied legs with claw-and-ball feet may slouch a bit more than they originally did, but they are intact. And the handle is boldly turned, with a flourish above and a fillip below. Barring a few marks of age, the piece is in virtually proof condition. It is in the collection of Dean Irving H. Berg of New York University's College of Arts and Pure Science (*Fig. 4*).

Another recent accession to Doctor Berg's collection is even more unusual — is, in fact, unique. It is a communion service by Peter Young of Albany, consisting of a flat-topped tankard and two beakers. All three pieces bear the *P Y* mark, and the

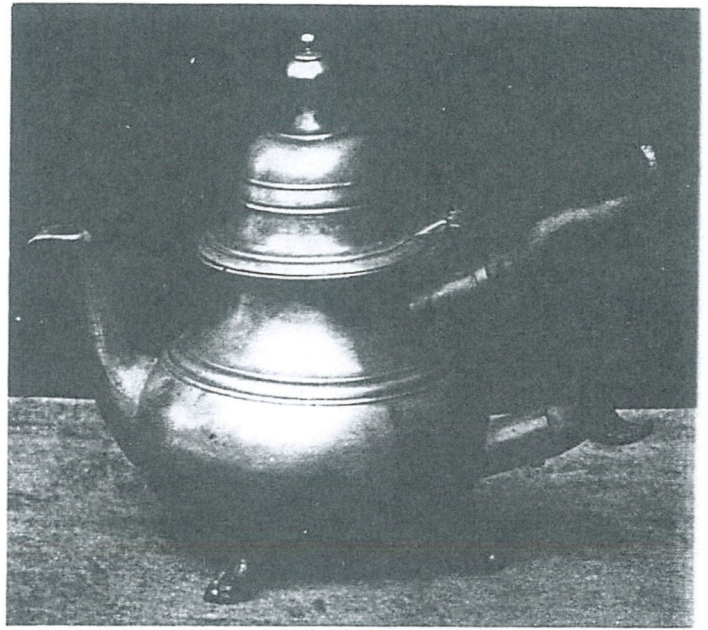


FIG. 4 — PEWTER TEAPOT BY WILLIAM WILL (c. 1780). In remarkably fine condition. From the collection of Doctor Irving H. Berg



FIG. 5 — COMMUNION SET BY PETER YOUNG (c. 1769). The beakers, with domed base and flaring rim, are unlike any known items of contemporary American pewter. The tankard conforms in style with other pieces by Young and with the work of Timothy Brigdon, with whom Young was apparently associated in Albany. From the collection of Doctor Irving H. Berg

tankard has in addition Young's hallmarks. These beakers, with their high molded bases, are something hitherto unknown in American pewter of the period. Instead of the customary simple cylindrical form, they have a distinction and elaboration all their own. Just where Young derived his inspiration for this unconventional but exceedingly satisfying form is a matter for speculation.

This communion set came from the Baptist Church in Cheshire, Massachusetts. According to Doctor Berg, the church was founded in 1768, and the set of pewter was purchased the following year. This falls early in the period of Peter Young's activity, for he was born in 1748. Later in life Young was associated with Spencer Stafford in Albany. That fact is interestingly linked with this communion set, for it appears that the Stafford family came from the town now known as Cheshire, formerly called Stafford Hills. There Spencer Stafford was born in 1770. Louis Guerineau Myers surmised that Stafford received his training at the hands of Peter Young. Possibly his first introduction to his master was the communion set in the church of his boyhood home (*Fig. 5*).

"Jesuit China"

IN the May issue of ANTIQUES, in the article on *The Art of the Ch'ing Dynasty* occurred the statement, "Jesuit china was made for Catholic converts." This is an error occasioned by too ready acceptance of the unsubstantiated opinions of "authorities." It