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The German Strain in Pennsylvania Pewter

AN EDITORIAL NOTE

THE student of American pewter may not hope to obtain an intelligent grasp of his subject until he has well acquainted himself with the manifestations of English design and craftsmanship in that metal. To a less but by no means negligible extent must his knowledge embrace the coeval European Continental wares. Fortunately, the publication of Mr. Cotterell's extraordinarily comprehensive volume *Old Pewter* has removed virtually all obstacles in the way of achieving the first desideratum. By means of a series of articles on European pewter which have appeared in these pages at irregular intervals during a long period of years, ANTIQUES has endeavored to open a practicable road toward the second goal. Nowhere else in any country or in any tongue has a comparably wide and authoritative undertaking in this difficult domain been attempted.

One important result of this Continental series has been a better comprehension of the part played by imported German pewter in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania German communities, and of the resultant influence upon at least one Pennsylvania pewterer of Teutonic lineage. The identity of this long-mysterious individual, who marked his works only with the initials *I.C.H.*, was fully revealed in ANTIQUES for September 1931. His name, as partly anglicized and liberally misspelled in the old records, was John Christoph Heyne. Born in Saxony in 1715, he died in or near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1781.

In 1766 Heyne was called upon to make two Communion flagons for Trinity Lutheran Church, Lancaster. If left to his own choice in this situation, he might have devised any one of several forms. But quite evidently he was not a free agent. The Church already possessed one flagon, made in the ancient town of Rothenburg on the Tauber in Bavaria at some time during the 1720's. Conservatism demanded that the new flagons match the old. The extent to which the ingenious Heyne, apparently unequipped with appropriate molds, managed to fulfill his commission was told in the issue of ANTIQUES already cited. He did, however, depart from copy in one significant particular by giving his flagons a

rounded English type of handle instead of the typical German strap form.

The result of Heyne's efforts must have created a favorable impression both within and without the Trinity congregation, for in 1771 we find him making yet another flagon of the same general type for St. Peter's Church in Mount Joy Township. In this, while still retaining the major Teutonic features of the original Bavarian piece, the pewterer moved one step nearer to English practice by double-doming the lid and substituting an erect thumbpiece for the previously employed German ball. All this is ancient history, but perhaps needful by way of résumé.

Now, however, thanks to investigations made by Guy F. Reinert of Boyertown, Pennsylvania, the list of Heyne flagons may be considerably extended. From Mr. Reinert's photographs ANTIQUES here pictures one of a fine pair of such vessels still in use by Emanuel Lutheran Church at Brickerville, Elizabeth Township, Pennsylvania. The numerals 1766, engraved on the bottom of the piece illustrated, indicate that the pair was made shortly after Heyne had completed his commission for Trinity Church. But even thus early we encounter the emphatically domical lid and erect thumbpiece that distinguish all the master's later flagons from the Trinity examples.

Even without the evidence of engraved date, we should place these Emanuel Church flagons early in the Heyne series, because of the position of the molded zone surrounding their bodies. Here, as in the Trinity flagons, this zone is placed almost midway

between base and lip, so that the terminal of the handle impinges directly upon it. This index of relative age in Heyne flagons is worth observing. Both of the Emanuel Church flagons are engraved on the front with two bold Roman initials beneath a crown. The initials appearing on the example illustrated are *W.H.*; those on its mate, *M.H.* Not improbably, they stand for the names of the donor and his wife.

Yet another marked Heyne flagon is cherished in the Zion Lutheran Church at Manheim, Pennsylvania. This piece is probably later than either the Emanuel



Fig. 1 — ONE OF A PAIR OF PENNSYLVANIA FLAGONS Marked *I.C.H.* (beneath a crown) Lancaster and dated 1766. These flagons mark the second stage in the development of the type evolved by John Christoph Heyne of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. From Emanuel Lutheran Church, Brickerville, Pennsylvania



Fig. 2 — FRONT VIEW OF FLAGON SHOWN IN FIGURE 1 The initials *W.H.* engraved on the front may be those of the donor. The companion flagon carries the initials *M.H.* similarly engraved though with a slightly smaller crown, and perhaps signifying the donor's wife. Note low placing of the moldings

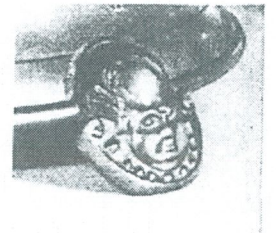
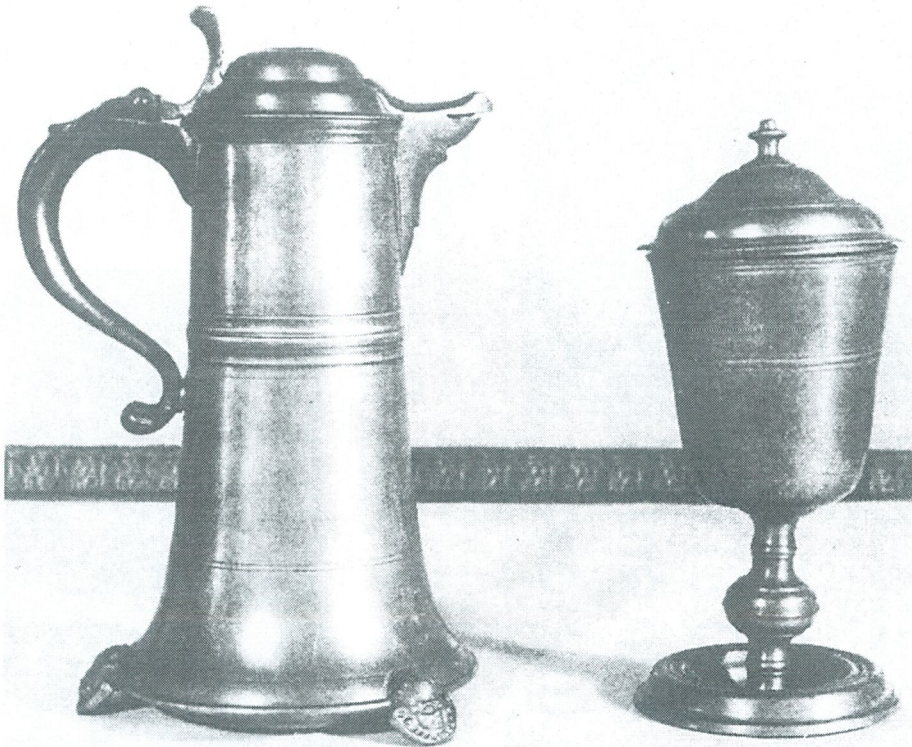
4. 3 — PENNSYLVANIA
FLAGON AND CHALICE
(after 1771)

The last known stage in a series of successive refinements in Heyne's flagon design, and differing in several details from its predecessors. Marked in the usual I.C.H. manner. The chalice, unmarked, is identified as Heyne's on the basis of its resemblance to a marked piece of the same type.

From Zion Lutheran Church, Manheim, Pennsylvania



TAIL OF CHERUB-HEAD
SUPPORT FROM FLAGON
SHOWN IN FIGURE 1



DETAIL OF CHERUB-HEAD
SUPPORT FROM FLAGON
SHOWN IN FIGURE 3

5. 4 — GERMAN FLAGON AND CHALICE (eighteenth century)

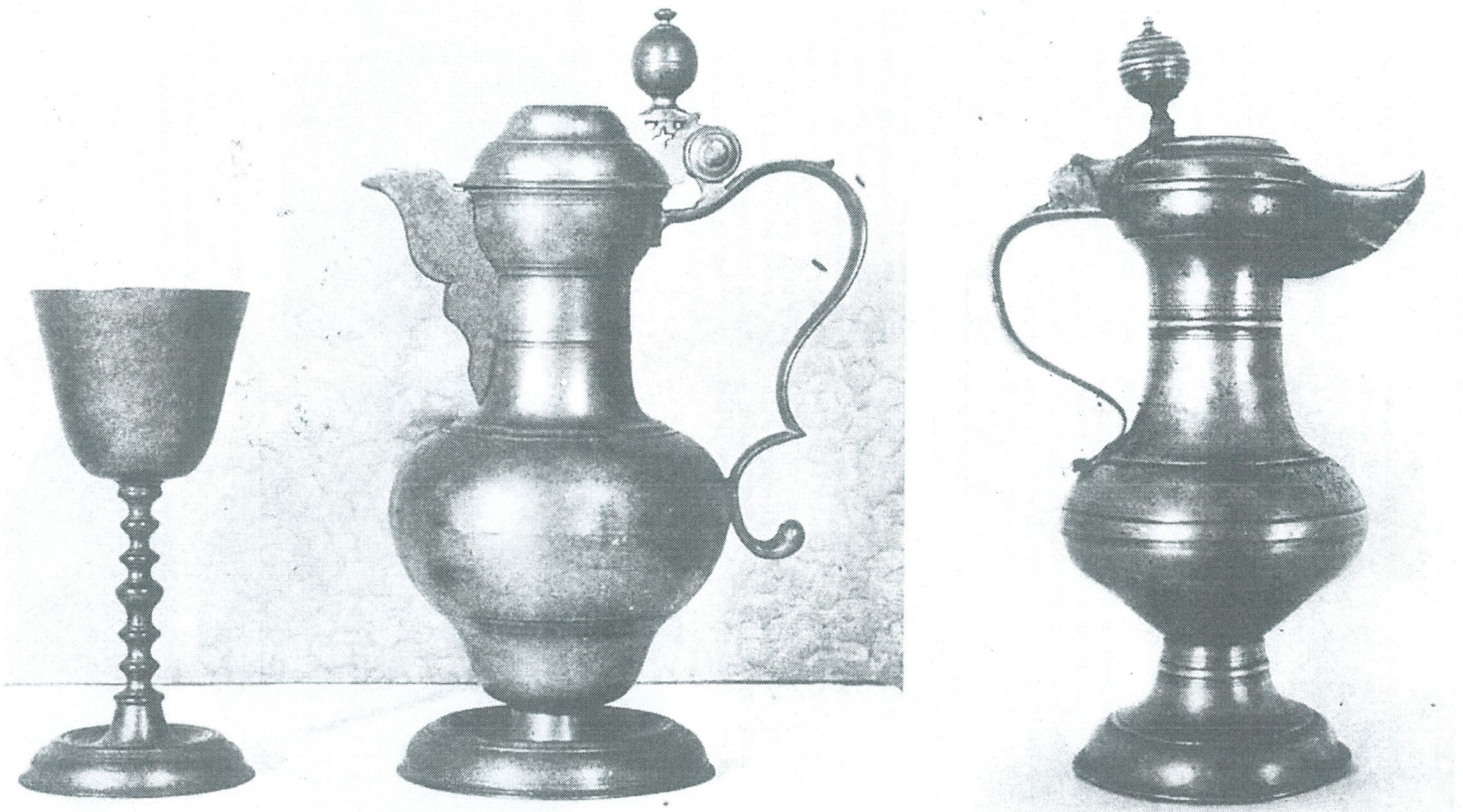
Mark on flagon undecipherable. Chalice unmarked. The flagon appears to be of Rhenish origin, though the careful modeling and neat termination of what in German work is usually a rather summary strap handle are, like the exaggeration of the spout, quite puzzling features. The position of the thumbpiece and the method of attaching it are also apart from normal German practice. Compare the Rhenish flagon of Figure 5.

From Augustus Lutheran Church, Trappe, Pennsylvania

Fig. 5 — RHENISH FLAGON (eighteenth century)

An eighteenth-century German flagon from the Rhine country. In some respects resembling the flagon illustrated at the left in Figure 4, but with a standard German strap handle and a more characteristic spout. Accepting this flagon as typical, we may be forced to consider to what extent the example in the Augustus Church has been subjected to alterations by a Pennsylvania craftsman.

From the collection of Robert M. Vetter



fused association of handle and zone, but achieved a considerable improvement in proportions.

His ingenious employment of six-inch plates to bottom his flagons has previously been mentioned. This device recurs in the Zion Church piece, but with a significant difference in the manner of its application. In Heyne's earlier flagons the plate is set *within* the flaring cylinder of the vessel. In the flagon under discussion the cylinder rests *upon* the plate, whose exposed rim thus constitutes a well-marked base molding from which rises the tapering body. A tooled line just above the cherub-head supports adds a new and effective touch of emphasis. (Compare details shown at right and left of Figure 3.)

All in all, this latest of the known Heyne flagons is the handsomest of the series. It is, furthermore, important in that it supplies the final bit of evidence necessary to place its maker in the front rank of American pewterers. If, having once produced an acceptable Communion flagon, Heyne had exactly duplicated his initial performance, he would doubtless have satisfied his patrons. The successive refinements that he introduced into his subsequent works were without doubt adopted solely to satisfy himself. Hence he must be recognized not only as a skilled craftsman but as very truly an artist.

To Mr. Reinert's industry ANTIQUES is further indebted for revealing another Heyne item — a covered chalice, which accompanies the Zion Church flagon. This chalice (Fig. 3), whose stem has been crushed into the foot so that the latter's once bold convexity has been transformed into a deep concavity, is not marked; but since its original form was identical with that of a marked chalice now owned by Ledlie I. Laughlin of Princeton, New Jersey, there can be no question as to its authorship.

Perhaps most interesting of the European German Communion pieces surviving today in old Pennsylvania churches are a flagon and a chalice long used by the Augustus Lutheran Church at Trappe. The former, whose mark is illegible, appears to be of Rhenish origin, and may be assigned to the eighteenth century. Its family relationship to the Rhenish flagon



Fig. 6 — GERMAN FLAGON (eighteenth century)
Of the so-called Cologne type. For other examples, see ANTIQUES for November 1928, page 429.
The chalice pictured is not so easily identified.
From Augustus Lutheran Church, Trappe, Pennsylvania

from Mr. Vetter's collection shown in Figure 5 is fairly evident. The sunken foot is a distortion for which time and handling are responsible, for the pristine aspect of the piece must have been vigorously upstanding. The accompanying chalice with its elaborately turned baluster stem, though unmarked, may safely be identified as German. Its foot matches that of the flagon and is similarly, though less excessively collapsed.

Another flagon in the Augustus Church at Trappe is a typical eighteenth-century product from the region of Cologne (Fig. 6). The awkward chalice shown beside it is hard to place. Something in the aspect of the stem sug-

gests that the piece may have suffered from unskilful repairs. An extraordinary pewter item in Emanuel Lutheran Church at Brickerville is a tankard, without touch mark, whose front is adorned with a medallion displaying two profile heads beneath a crown and surrounded by the legend *Long Live Prince and Princess of Orange*. It would be natural to assume that this tankard was made to commemorate William, Prince of Orange and King of England, and Mary, his Queen. Unfortunately, however, the reign of those monarchs terminated in 1702, some thirteen years prior to the advent of tankards in the style of the Emanuel Church example.

H. H. Cotterell, in *Old Pewter*, illustrates in Plate XLId a tankard of the same shape bearing the engraved date 1734. Oddly enough that is the very year in which a late Prince of Orange was wedded to the Princess Anne of England. This second couple, therefore, must be the subject of the medallion in question. Not impossible the tankard itself is of American origin but the source of the medallion must remain something of a mystery.



Fig. 7 — PEWTER TANKARD (c. 1734)
Unmarked; or else, marks obliterated. Style too late for an item celebrating the marriage of William III and Mary of England (see text). The piece is probably of English origin though the possibility that a foreign medallion has been applied to an item otherwise of American make is not to be denied. Compare the curious porringers discussed in ANTIQUES for October 1927 (p. 294), July 1928 (p. 25 and p. 39). From Emanuel Lutheran Church, Brickerville, Pennsylvania