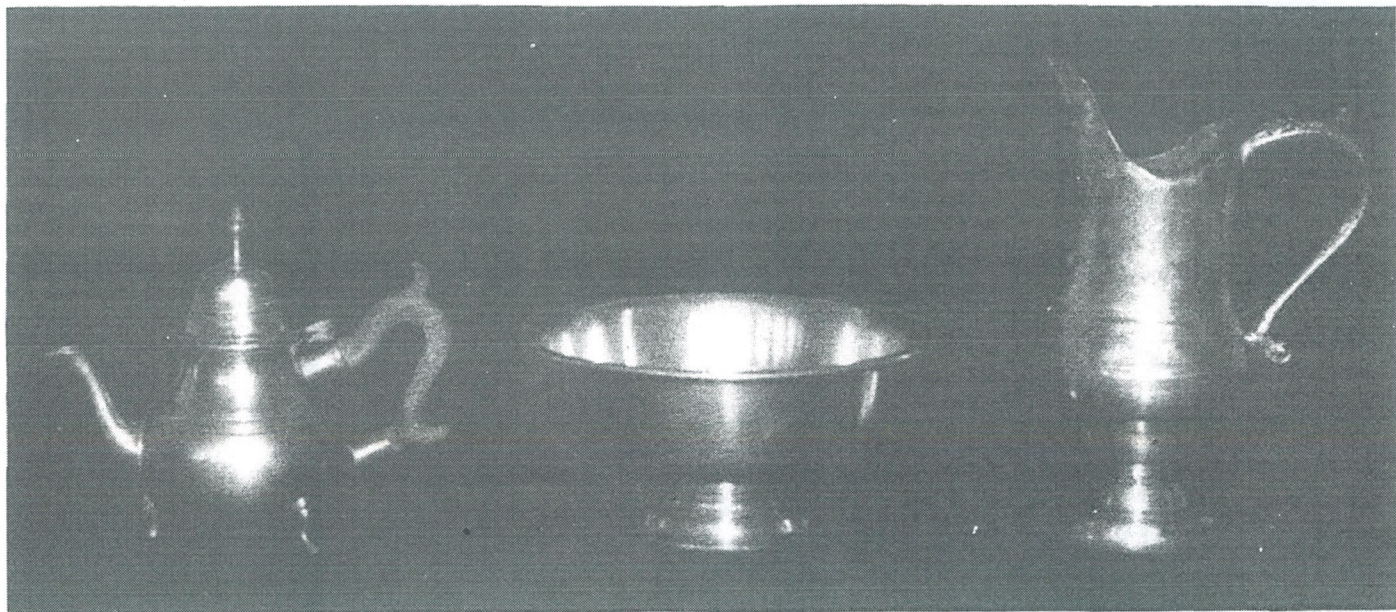


6969

p. 170-173



Three Pieces by William Will of Philadelphia (1742-1798). The pitcher or ewer and the bowl are without counterpart in American pewter. The footed Queen Anne teapot is both fine and a rarity. Illustrations from the Hershey Museum, Hershey, Pennsylvania

Some Pewter by William Will

BY JOHN J. EVANS, JR.

IT WAS EARLY Saturday afternoon and I was faced with the problem of entertaining an almost teen-age boy. In search of diversion, we drove to Hershey, Pennsylvania, famous among other things for its recreational facilities. It turned out to be an "off-day;" nothing seemed to be open for business. We were about to give up when we came upon a sign to the Hershey Museum, of which I had not previously known. It offered a ray of hope and we grabbed it.

The Museum had its beginning with the acquisition in 1936 of the George H. Danner collection, which two years later was placed on exhibition. Mr. Danner, a resident of the little town of Manheim, Pennsylvania—home of Baron Stiegel, glassmaker—was among the earliest in this area to collect on a large scale the his-

torical items which many of his contemporaries rated as second-hand stuff. He was collecting Stiegel glass well before the turn of the century.

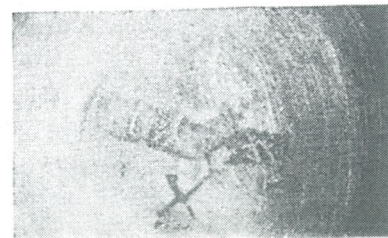
The purpose of the Museum is to preserve for posterity those things which are known to have played an important part in the everyday lives of Americans more than a hundred years ago, with particular emphasis on the so-called Pennsylvania Dutch country. A series of rooms is furnished as one would have found them in the home of an Amish, Mennonite, or "Plain" family of the eighteenth century; the family itself is present in wax, even to the family dog. Other exhibits include an array of Pennsylvania rifles, a magnificent display of Stiegel glass, and a large collection of Indian artifacts.

Nearing the end of our tour, my friend and I came

William Will's earliest touch, impressed in the well of the bowl, is believed to be pre-Revolutionary.



Will's Touch—WM WILL in serrated rectangle—in the inside bottom of the pitcher



a display of pewter pieces in a glass case. They were unidentified and so placed that the makers' marks were concealed. Inquiry disclosed that the attendant on duty had no knowledge of their identity and the display case could only be opened by the curator who at that time was serving with the U. S. Navy.

Conforming to the proverbial practice of "home-owners" who travel great distances to visit points of interest and overlook those right around the corner—she is a thirty-mile drive over excellent highway from my front door—I did not make a return trip for six years. When I did, Mr. Richard Light, curator, opened the long-closed display case, and I found that during that time a discovery of real importance in the field of American pewter had been waiting to be made.

The first piece in the case to catch the eye is the Queen Anne teapot standing on three feet, a little gem in excellent condition. It is a product of William Will's shop in Philadelphia, identified by his name touch on the side bottom of the teapot. In size (height, 7 inches) and appearance, it matches the teapot by the same maker illustrated by Laughlin in *Pewter in America* (Fig. 190). The sole difference seems to be the use on this piece of the more slender finial shown on Will's footless teapot (Laughlin, Fig. 189).

Directly below this teapot stands a handsome footed baptismal (?) bowl—unique in American pewter. In size and form it is more nearly comparable to the modern water and silver "Revere" bowls than to the product of an eighteenth-century American pewterer. Perhaps this bowl served as part of a baptismal service, together with the third piece illustrated here. The height of the bowl is $4\frac{1}{8}$ inches; its diameter, $8\frac{3}{4}$ inches, including the lip which extends approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch; the base is one inch high. The piece is solid, heavy, and in mint condition, and stamped boldly on the inside bottom a clear impression of Colonel Will's early lamb-and-vee touch (Laughlin, Figs. 534, 535a).

The next item is a pewter pitcher or ewer and is, like the other two pieces described, was made by William Will. I have never seen anything of similar sign or "feel" previously illustrated as the work of Will or any other American pewterer. The overall height of the piece is $9\frac{7}{8}$ inches. The base, $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches height, was cast from one mold. The section above to the middle of the bowl, resembles closely the body of the sugar bowl illustrated in Laughlin's Figure 3. The height of that section is $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches and quite probably the same mold was used to produce the section above it, bringing the height of the piece to $4\frac{7}{8}$ inches



Heyne's framed *ICH* touch as it appears on the under side of lid of the marked covered chalice.

before the top section, including the neck of the vessel, was placed. The handle differs in contour from that of the ewer in the Aaronsburg communion service (ANTIQUES, April 1950) or that of the Will quart pot (Laughlin, Fig. 127), and its acanthus-leaf decoration is somewhat more pronounced and ornate. The mark, although a bit smeared, appears quite legibly on the inside bottom of the pitcher—*WM WILL* in rectangle with serrated edge, as shown in Laughlin, Figure 539.

Other rare pieces in the collection include two covered chalices. One of these, though unmarked, appears identical with the one by Johann C. Heyne of Lancaster, Pennsylvania (Laughlin, Fig. 239), and matches a lidless unmarked one in my collection which was acquired with a marked Heyne flagon. The second bears Heyne's *ICH* stamp inside the lid (Laughlin, Fig. 533). There are slight but important differences between the two chalices, in size, contour, finials, and decoration. The marked example is approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch shorter, simpler, and without banding on the cup. Engraved on the upper surface of the base are a date and two sets of initials, presumably those of donor and recipient, *R K-1753- J E M*.

Completing the list of American pewter pieces in the display are a creamer, apparently a duplicate of that shown in Laughlin, Figure 210; three basins in prime condition by B. Barnes ($7\frac{7}{8}$ inches), Harbeson (8 inches), and "Love" (10 inches); a late six-piece tea set by Reed and Barton; and a covered sugar bowl by Smith and Feltman of Albany. The collection, though heterogeneous, includes rarities of interest to any collector of American pewter.



Two rare covered chalices by Johann Christoph Heyne of Lancaster (1715-1781). The one on the left bears his touch, and an inscription on the base indicating its purchase in 1753. Chalice at right is unmarked but is almost a duplicate of an existing marked specimen.