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AN AMERICAN SILVERSMITH AND HIS PEWTER

By JOHN W. POOLE

THE frequent practice of attributing unidentified initial touches on pewter to some American pewterer whose initials chance to coincide with those of the mark is quite unjustified. Nevertheless, those in the know have long conceded that certain TB touch must be that of some man working in or near Albany, whose pewtering activities lay within the first quarter of the nineteenth century. To make a long story short, there seems reason to believe that this TB touch, illustrated in Figure 3, could belong to no one other than the Albany silversmith Timothy Brigdon.

Peter Young and this TB are tied together at every conceivable point. Their wares are discovered in localities circumscribed by identical limits. Furthermore, these limits are such as would represent normal distribution from Albany as a centre. Young, we of course know, was an Albany pewterer. Frequently, his pieces and those of TB are found together. A communion set that I recently acquired consists of three pieces by TB and a fourth by Young (*Fig. 2*).

In another set, of which I was able to secure the chalices only, PY and TB are most astonishingly commingled. The bowl of one chalice bears the circular PY touch; on its base appears TB. The base of the second chalice is marked TB. Certain pairs suggest that the respective bowls and bases may at some time have been switched; but how, when, or why remains a mystery. Enquiry, however, has uncovered convincing evidence that, while in the present condition, the pair was used for communion services. In at least two other instances, TB pieces have been found in communion sets to which Spencer Stafford also contributed his wares. Since we know of many pieces which bear the marks of both Stafford and Young, the two sets cited fit neatly into the picture.

But it is in the character of their products that I find most conclusive evidence of some close relationship between Young and TB. All but one piece of twenty or so by TB exhibit features exactly duplicated in Young's work. Most of these items are chalices. The TB examples average slightly taller than Young's chalices; but except when placed side by side, the work of the two men appears to be identical. The cast bases *are* identical, and the differences in the bowls of the two men are no greater than those in different bowls by one man. The type of chalice referred to appears to have been made only by Young and by TB.

Besides chalices I have seen only three pieces by TB — two flagons and a teapot. Since I know of no teapots by either Young or his satellite, Stafford, TB's example does nothing for the argument either *pro* or *con*. On the other hand, comparing TB's flagons with one by Stafford yields evidence quite to the point. While I have not placed these pieces side by side, they appear to be much alike save in a few minor details. All their handles have the same peculiar wiggle (see illustration), which ensures a firm grasp. This handle — with its wiggle — is distinctive and has no counterpart within my ken. The bodies similarly correspond, and are noticeably more sharply tapered than any to be found in the most closely approximating piece by any English or American maker. They are more like certain Dutch designs. The cover of the Stafford flagon, being domed, differs from the TB covers, which are of "flat," or plateau form. On the other hand, the TB covers so resemble

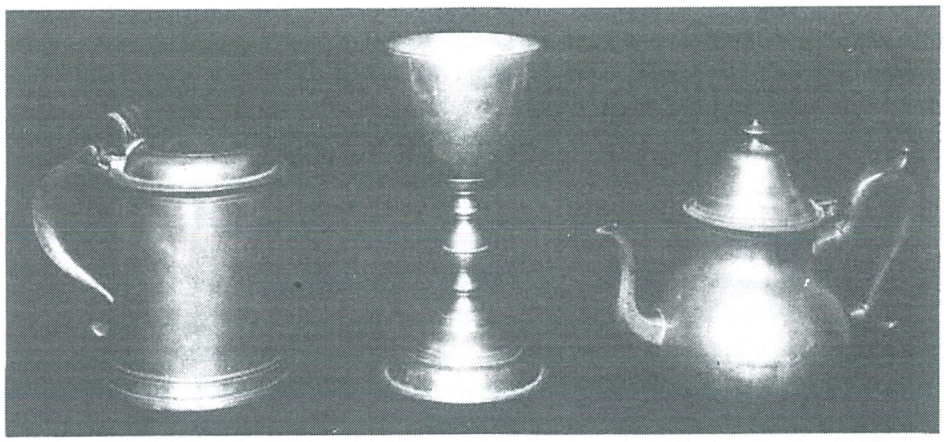


FIG. 1 — TANKARD AND CHALICE BY PETER YOUNG; TEAPOT ASCRIBED TO TIMOTHY BRIGDON

Beading around the chalice stem is unusual. This piece and its companion tankard are the work of an artisan living 1748-1815?

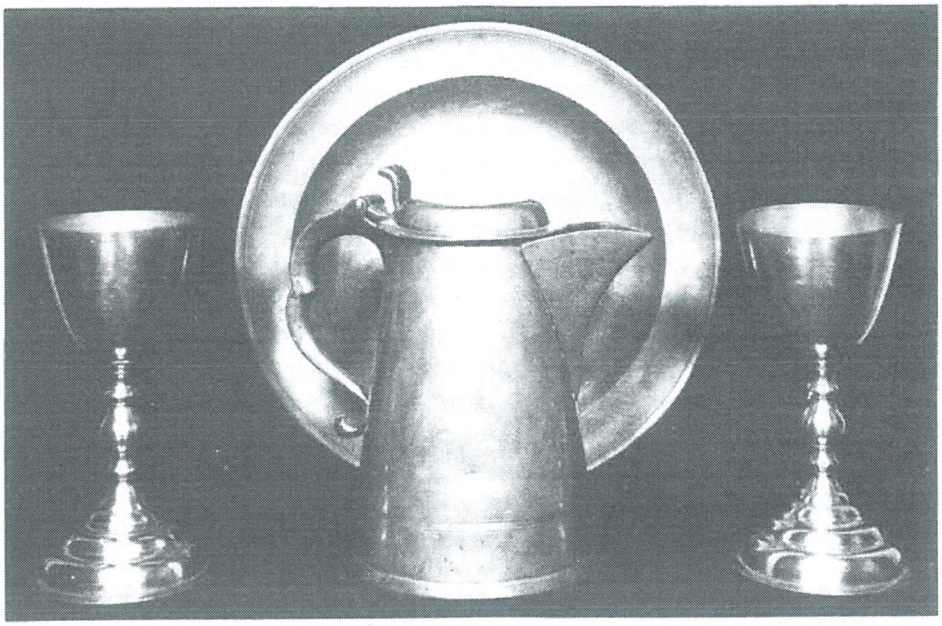


FIG. 2 — COMMUNION SET FROM MADISON, NEW YORK

The chalices and flagon carry the TB mark as illustrated. The 13-inch dish is by Young

the very distinctive lids on Peter Young's tankards that they might have come from the same mold.

The most striking thing about the similarity between Young's wares and those of TB is that they are so distinctly apart from the products of all other Anglo-Saxon makers. Whether or not the chalices by these men, like their flagons, are reminiscent of the Dutch manner, I am not qualified to judge.

In light of these considerations, plus the research of Ledlie Laughlin, who has found Brigdon listed for a few years as a pewterer, it seems beyond reasonable doubt that Timothy Brigdon and TB are one and the same person. Before Young's death, about 1815, Brigdon makes no claim to pewtering. But shortly thereafter he does appear in the pewterer's rôle and apparently sustains it for three or four years.

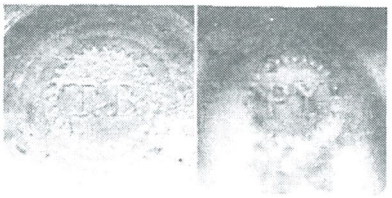


FIG. 3—MARKS OF "TB" AND OF PETER YOUNG

Both from chalices. The Young mark appears to be in a circle with serrated rim instead of with a beaded rim such as Myers illustrates. Both marks occur. The TB mark is likewise within a circle with serrated rim

The character of his pewter is fairly consistent with silversmithing. I have found no heavy pewter plates, basins, mugs, porringers, with the TB touch, although such forms were the principal reasons for a pewterer's existence. On the other hand, the chalices, flagons, and teapots made by Young and Brigdon are not very unlike equivalent items in silver. It may be fair to guess that Brigdon added a cheap line to his silverware, but limited it to such pieces as required some of the silversmith's skill. The *average* pewterer was probably more a metal dealer than anything else.

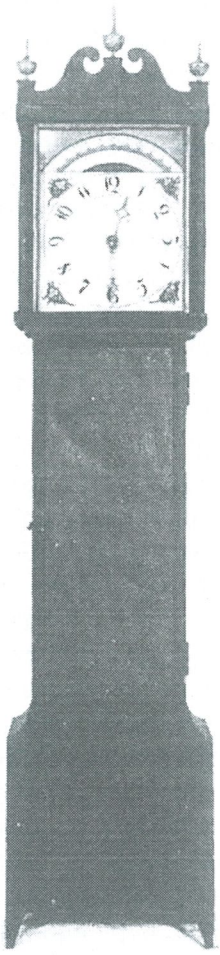
In so far as I can determine, a rather notable fraction of the more or less liquid assets of colonial America consisted of pewter as metal. To maintain the value of this asset it was essential only to keep it in usable condition. Since junk pewter could not supply the entire demand and some metal had to b imported, no necessity existed for many pew terers of the calibre of the Wills and Bassett The economic demand could be satisfied b the exercise of skill no greater than that re quired to produce plates, basins, mugs, an the like. This meant merely casting, finishin on a lathe, and a little soldering or weldin In a week one man could turn out hundred or even thousands of pounds of finished ware For such pieces the metal represented muc greater value than did the labor and profit.

The silversmith, on the other hand, sold h *craftsmanship*. Frequently he had no cash i vestment in his product. Possibly Brigdon toc over some of the more refined angles of pewtering just to kee himself occupied. It would be safe to say that the cost of the ma terials in a pair of his pewter chalices was much less than th charge for his professional services. Brigdon's pewter added t Stafford's output seems just about to duplicate Young's lin What more logical than to believe that the two men portione Young's molds and his artisan-metal business to give Brigdon th artisan part and Stafford the metal part?

In any event, it seems safe to say that our fine TB pieces repre sent the one *proved* instance in which an American silversmit "made pewter." Incidentally, it is of interest to note that the fla topped TB flagons are probably the earliest in type, although no in date, of all known American flagons. They are also significan as affording another example of Continental European influenc on American styles. Many TB pieces, especially the flagons, ar quite Dutch in appearance.

A GRANDMOTHER CLOCK WITH WOODEN WORKS

By ROBERT S. DODGE



THE very simple but quite daintily proportioned clock here illustrated is the work of a maker hitherto unknown to fame, one Jonathan Winslow, who, besides building clocks, followed the jeweler's trade, and became the inventor of the silver pen.

Of Winslow's history only the barest outline is available. He was born at Hardwick, Massachusetts, August 15, 1765, the son of a country doctor. As a youth he journeyed on horseback from his home to East Hartford (now Manchester), Connecticut, in order to apprentice himself to the Cheneys, Benjamin and Timothy, American pioneers in the devising of wooden clockworks.

When or where he established his own business may not be learned from available records. He is, however, reputed to have lived in Warren, New Salem, Worcester, and Springfield, Massachusetts. After twenty-five years of residence in the last-named community, he died there, July 20, 1847.

Clocks by Jonathan Winslow are rare, and in so far as my experience goes, are confined to the grandmother type. He appears to have been the only clockmaker to adapt wooden movements to these diminutive timepieces. It is, of course, quite possible that his output included some tall clocks; bu I have found no examples in evidence. Indeed, am inclined to believe that, quite early in h career, he abandoned, or at least reduced, h clockmaking activities in favor of the more lucra tive occupation of jeweler.

The Winslow grandmother clock here picture stands fifty-one inches high, and is cased in pine grained to simulate mahogany. It retains its orig nal finish, and apart from the ornaments surmount ing the hood, is in pristine condition. It was prob ably built in the first or second decade of 1800.

The plates and cogwheels of the movement ar of cherry, the pinions of calmia or maple. Th bridge, at each end of which the imprint of th maker occurs, is of pine. The clock records the tim and strikes the hours, but has no alarm or secon hand. Its running period is thirty hours. Th weights are suspended from wooden pulleys, thu compensating for the short distance between th movement and the bottom of the case. The pendu lum wire is about thirty-four inches in length, an the bob swings very low in the case.

The dial, a distinguishing feature of Winslo clocks, is painted on the back of a glass panel. Th brass hands are exposed without any transparen protection. A narrow quarter-round molding gilded, surrounds the dial and is backed with half-inch pine board. The entire unit is secured t the movement by cleats and dowels. In size th movement corresponds to that of the brass move ments common to grandmother clocks, and th quality of the workmanship throughout testifies t the maker's ability and thoroughness.