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RHODE ISLAND PEWTER

1711-1856



46. Teapot

from the collections of
DR. MADELAINE R. BROWN and MR. J. K. OTT

John Brown House
THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
52 POWER STREET, PROVIDENCE 6, RHODE ISLAND

July 1 — October 30, 1959

MAKERS WHOSE WORKS ARE ON EXHIBITION

Dates are those during which the makers were working as pewterers.

Thomas Byles, Newport, 1711-1712.
Benjamin Day, Newport, *ca.* 1744-1757.
John Fryers, Newport, *ca.* 1749-1776.
Lawrence Langworthy, Newport, 1730-1739.
Samuel Hamlin, Providence, 1767-1801.
Joseph Belcher, Newport, 1769-1784.
David Melville, Newport, *ca.* 1770-1793.
Gershom Jones, Providence, 1774-1809.
William Billings, Providence, 1791-1806.
Thomas Melville, Newport, 1793-1796.
Samuel and Thomas Melville, Newport, 1793-1800.
S. Stedman, *ca.* 1800.
Samuel E. Hamlin, Providence, 1801-1856.
Josiah Keene, Providence, 1801-1817.
William Calder, Providence, 1817-1856.
George Richardson, Cranston, 1828-1845.
Cahill & Co., *ca.* 1830.

DEFINITIONS

Plates refer to flatware 10 inches or less in diameter.

Dishes refer to flatware over 10 inches in diameter.

Trenchers and *chargers* are not usually applied to American flatware; they are terms commonly used in England however.

Hollow ware refers to pieces (commonly with hollow handles) such as mugs, tankards, teapots, pitchers, flacons, baluster measures, etc. (*Baluster* – shaped similar to the pomegranate flower.)

Dies are used to make (or strike) the mark (or touch) that identifies the maker of the piece.

Mark L refers to touch no. in *Pewter in America*, by Ledlie I. Laughlin, 1940.

Tinker's Dam refers to the use of a dam or piece of coarse cloth which the pewterer used to protect his thumb from the heat of the soft metal in joining handles to porringer bodies. The bowl of a porringer was cast first; then the handle. The handle was then heated to the point of softness and then pressed against the body. The pewterer held his thumb against the bowl for support at that point where the handle was to be attached. The imprint of the cloth can still be seen on many porringers.

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From the collection of DR. MADELAINE R. BROWN

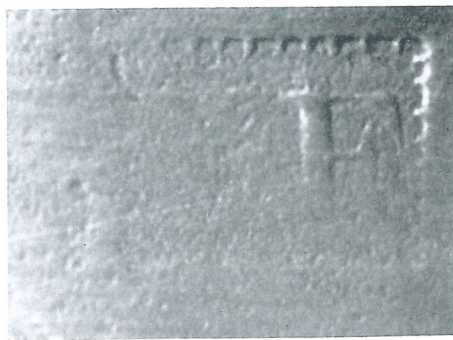
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1. Crown-handle porringer, diameter 4½ inches. David Melville. The crown-handle is often found in England, but seldom in America and is rare in Rhode Island. This one, with a spline support under the handle, is unique. Mark L323.
2. Solid-handle porringer, diameter 5 inches. Samuel Melville. Initials cast in handle. Note reverse S and crossed M, usually found on Samuel Melville's pewter. Mark J217.
3. Plate, diameter 6 inches. David Melville. Rare. Mark L324.
4. Flower-handle porringer, diameter 4¾ inches. David Melville. Rare. Mark L324.
5. Basin, diameter 6 inches. Samuel Hamlin. Mark L330.
6. Basin, diameter 8 inches. Eagle mark attributed to Gershom Jones. Mark J178.
7. Pint mug. Gershom Jones. Rare. Mark L341.
8. Quart mug. Attributed to Benjamin Day. The measurements are the same as mugs with Benjamin Day's mark. This piece is rare and extremely handsome in style.
9. Quart mug. Gershom Jones. Unique. Mark L342.
10. Quart mug. Samuel Hamlin. Early rose touch, mark L332. The handle is a solid cast one. It resembles some of Gershom Jones's. Unique.
11. Pint mug. George Richardson. Rare. This shows the late form of handle and body. Mugs and tankards of this period are scarce, hollow ware being mostly tea and coffeepots and pitchers. Mark L, v. 2, p. 111.
12. Plate, diameter 9 inches. Thomas Byles. Rare. Mark L586.
13. Plate, diameter 8 inches. William Calder. Mark L351.

14. Plate, diameter 8 inches. Josiah Keene. Unique. The mold for this plate was evidently acquired by Calder as Plate no. 13 came from the same mold. Mark L348.
15. Quart lidded baluster measure with bud thumbpiece. Attributed to Lawrence Langworthy. Unique. Unrecorded touch.
16. Two-quart lidded baluster measure with double volute thumbpiece. This large size is very rare in American pewter. Attributed to John Fryers. Unique. Unrecorded touch.
17. Plate, diameter 8 inches. Samuel Hamlin. It is possible that Hamlin made this in Connecticut before he came to Providence. Unique. Unrecorded mark and L331.
18. Plate, diameter 8 inches. Jacob Whitmore. Mark L383.
19. Castor with original bottles. William Calder. Mark L350.



46. Samuel E. Hamlin



16. John Fryers



15. L. Langworthy

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Langworthy

From the collection of MR. J. K. OTT

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20. Flower-handle porringer, diameter $3\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Attributed to Billings. Smallest size found in Rhode Island.
21. Flower-handle porringer, diameter $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches. William Billings. Mark L346. Rare.
22. Flower-handle porringer, diameter $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Samuel Hamlin. Typical post-Revolutionary mark. Mark L334.
23. Flower-handle porringer, diameter $4\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Gershom Jones. Typical pre-Revolutionary mark. Mark L341.
24. Solid-handle porringer, diameter $5\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Thomas Melville. This type solid handle is used only in Rhode Island. Mark L324 (David Melville, father or uncle to Thomas) and L325, cast on handle support. Rare.
25. Flower-handle porringer, diameter $5\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Samuel E. Hamlin. Mark L338, latest eagle. Rare.
26. Flower-handle porringer, diameter $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches. David Melville. Mark L324. Rare.
27. Smooth rim plate, diameter $8\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Thomas Byles. Mark L586. Rare. Smooth rim plates are scarce in American pewter, although not unusual in English ware. When they are found in our country, they are usually by Massachusetts or New York makers. In addition to those on exhibit, Rhode Island smooth rim plates exist by David Melville and Joseph Belcher.
28. Smooth rim plate, diameter $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Samuel Hamlin. Rare suspended lamb "hard mettal" touch. Marks L330 and 333.
29. Smooth rim plate, diameter $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Samuel Hamlin. Marks L330 and 331.
30. Smooth rim plate, diameter $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches. Gershom Jones. Typical post-Revolutionary marks. Marks L342, 343 and 344. Rare.
31. Reeded rim dish, diameter $11\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Samuel Hamlin. Marks L330 and 331.
32. Reeded rim dish, diameter 13 inches. Joseph Belcher. Mark L314. Rare.
33. Reeded rim dish, diameter 14 inches. David Melville. This size dish is found only in Rhode Island. Marks L318 and 322.

- 34. Reeded rim dish, diameter 14½ inches. William Billings. Mark L347.
- 35. Reeded rim dish, diameter 15 inches. Gershom Jones. Typical pre-Revolutionary mark. Marks L339 and 340.
- 36. Reeded rim plate, diameter 7¼ inches. Samuel and Thomas Melville, nephews of David Melville. Rare. Mark L327.
- 37. Basin, diameter 3¾ inches. David Melville. Mark L319 (faint). Rare.
- 38. Basin, diameter 6 inches. Samuel Hamlin. Mark L330.
- 39. Basin, diameter 8 inches. Samuel Hamlin. Marks L330 and 333. Rare suspended lamb touch, unique on a basin.



45. Thomas Melville



17. Samuel Hamlin



48. G. Richardson

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Three lidded baluster measures

40. Basin, diameter 9 inches. Gershom Jones. Marks L339 and 340. Unique.

41. Quart mug. Samuel Hamlin. Marks L330 and 331.

42. Pint Mug. Samuel Hamlin. Mark L330.

43. Quart Tankard. Attributed to Benjamin Day. Rare.

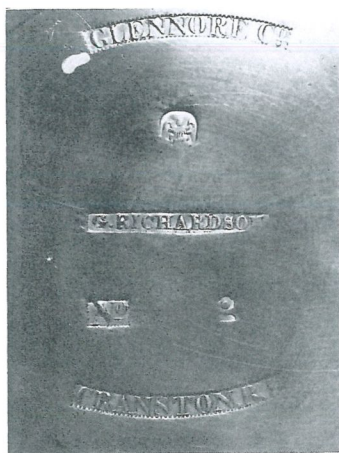
44. Water pitcher. George Richardson. Mark L, v. 2, p. 111. This has the late form of handle and shows the trend to over-all elaboration of simple forms that occurred in the 19th century.

45. Half-pint lidded baluster measure with bud thumbpiece. Attributed to Thomas Melville. Unrecorded touch. Unique. American measures are rare and only a handful of lidded ones are known. This is the smallest yet found.



Richardson

46. Teapot. Samuel E. Hamlin. Unrecorded eagle and anchor touch. Unique.
47. Tea or coffeepot of the so-called *lighthouse* shape. George Richardson. Mark L310.
48. Teapot. George Richardson. Mark J248 and *Warranted*.
49. Sugar bowl. George Richardson. Mark L, v. 2, p. 111.
50. Ladle with birch handle. S. Stedman. Mark L, v. 2, p. 114. Rare.
51. Skillet made of bell metal. Lawrence Langworthy. The date and name of the maker is cast in the handle. Rare.
52. Cuspidor. Cahill & Co. Mark J p. 52.
53. Pint mug. Jacob Whitmore. Rare. Mark L382.



49. G. Richardson



12. Thomas Byles



30. Gershom Jones

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MANUFACTURING and MARKING PEWTER

Molds and dies

As the material used to make molds was costly and the fabrication of the molds themselves (as well as makers' dies) was a difficult and expensive process, molds and sometimes dies were often handed down from father to son. This is seen in the Thomas Melville porringer, no. 24, where the father's mark was struck on the face of the handle and the son's mark on the handle base. A more normal practice was to purchase his molds and dies either when a pewterer died or went out of business. The beginning pewterer, thereby, would not have so large an investment when he opened his shop.

Change in ownership of dies and molds is shown by examining the teapot, no. 48, by George Richardson. It is marked *London* and *Warranted*. A *London* mark was used by some colonial pewterers to give the impression that their wares were made in England. More frequently, however, the word *London* was added as a mark of quality; that is, the piece so marked was equal in quality to those made in England. The *London* scroll here is identical with that used by John Skinner, a Boston maker who worked from 1760 to 1790. The *Warranted* mark employed was used only by Richardson, a Rhode Islander who worked here from 1828 to 1845. Further, there is a record of a George Richardson who worked in Boston from 1818 to 1828. Thus we see that Richardson used a die once belonging to Skinner and worked in Boston in his early years before moving to Cranston, Rhode Island. That the Boston and Cranston men are one and the same is proved by examining the sugar bowl and the marks on the back. The measurements of the body of the teapot, no. 48, and the sugar bowl, no. 49, are identical. The teapot is merely the basic sugar bowl form put edge to edge and joined; the same molds were used. The sugar bowl, being definitely a Rhode Island piece, proves the point.

This process of passing on molds is further shown by examining the Samuel E. Hamlin teapot, no. 46, a form by this maker heretofore unknown. This is late in form, but cast (a practice that followed the early pewterers' methods) rather than spun. Hamlin, though working from 1801 to 1856, adhered to old-time methods and was probably well-trained by his father, perhaps our best-known Rhode Island pewterer. A close look at this teapot shows that it, too, was made from Richardson's mold, and it is probable that Hamlin the younger purchased the mold from Richardson.



30. Gershom Jones

Teapots by Rhode Island makers of the early years are rare. A form sometimes used is that of the lighthouse teapot, no. 47, made by George Richardson, 1828 to 1845.

Marks

The development of marks is interesting in pewter collecting. Prior to the Revolution, when our sympathies were with the mother country, marks tended to rampant lions as shown in the Gershom Jones fifteen-inch dish, no. 35, and the porringer, no. 23; suspended lambs (traditional English tinsmiths' and pewterers' symbols used sparingly in America) as shown by the Samuel Hamlin smooth rim plate, no. 28; rose and crown marks, as seen in the Thomas Byles's plate, no. 12, and the like. However, during and after the Revolution, when ties with England had been broken, makers' marks changed abruptly. Gershom Jones adopted those such as seen in plate no. 30: eagles, anchors, and stars. Hamlin also changed to those such as seen in porringer no. 22: an eagle clutching lightning bolts with stars overhead. His son used anchors as well. This kind of change was common with pewterers all through the colonies. It is also interesting to note that shortly after the Revolution a few makers went back to modified English-type marks, but this was not widespread.

Samuel Hamlin

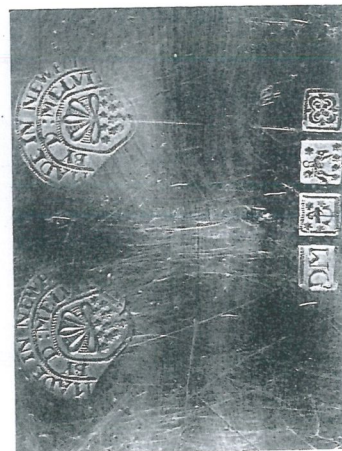
Samuel Hamlin, born in Middletown, Connecticut, September 9, 1746, was descended from Giles Hamlin, one of the town's first set-



22. Samuel Hamlin



23. Gershom Jones



33. David Melville

know why it is so hard to find mugs and tankards of Rhode Island and Massachusetts manufacture. Teapots, pitchers, and other late forms by New York makers of the nineteenth century are still scarce items. Baluster measures, used for three hundred years in England and in this country, ranging in size from a half gill to a half gallon, have been sadly neglected by pewter collectors. American measures we know were once common articles; yet where are they now?

There are also many unsolved riddles in makers' marks. From various records we know that certain men made pewter in volume, but it has remained impossible to locate pieces that are definitely of their make.

To illustrate this: we know that Lawrence Langworthy was a working pewterer in Exeter, England, as early as 1719. Plates exist bearing his English touch. He migrated to Rhode Island and appears on records as early as May, 1731. He is listed as a pewterer, brazier, and iron founder. He married in 1734 and had one son, Southcote, about whom nothing is known. Langworthy died in 1739, and his gravestone can still be seen with its coat of arms. We know that he made pewter in Rhode Island, for the account book of Godfrey Malbone, on exhibit here, shows that he supplied dishes to this Newport merchant. For several reasons we can be moderately certain of attributing the measure on display, no. 15, to Langworthy. It is the first piece of his pewter found that was made on this continent. Prior to this time the only definite pieces of Langworthy manufacture here were bell metal skillets, shown by no. 51, marked 1730 L. LANGWORTHY. Of the few in existence this is the largest and best marked type. The piece was found recently holding geraniums on a front lawn on an island near Newport. Its former owners had discovered it under the floor boards of an old barn, about to collapse, on their property. Absolute attribution of Langworthy pewter, however, will still have to wait until his name or initials combined with Newport or some such identifying proof can be found. As yet this pewter is still undiscovered. Perhaps you can find one and thus solve beyond all doubt another pewter problem.

J. K. OTT

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33. David Melville

blers. He was trained in the shop of Thomas Danforth, 2d., of Middletown, and was also greatly influenced by Jacob Whitmore, who owned molds jointly with Danforth.

The connection of these two well-known Connecticut pewterers, Danforth and Whitmore, with Hamlin is shown by an examination of the touches on no. 53, a rare pint pot by Whitmore, and on no. 17, a Hamlin plate with a previously unrecorded rose and crown mark. The style of the roses, with the accompanying dots around them, show a marked similarity. There is a rare Hamlin rose mark (not on exhibition) that is also similar to Whitmore's. In addition this Hamlin rose and crown mark is very much like, in dotted outline, the marks of Thomas Danforth, 2d., and of other Danforths with similar training, as well as the Whitmore touch shown on plate no. 18. Thus we see the type of mark used by the master pewterer being imitated by the apprentice. Because of these similarities there is good reason to think that the Hamlin rose and crown mark shown here may be a mark struck while Hamlin worked in Connecticut on his own. Hamlin is also listed as having a partner named Henshaw for a time in that state, but no pewter showing their combined names has yet been found. If this is a Connecticut mark, it is probably the first mark used by Hamlin. His hallmarks, which are also shown, were used from the first in the English manner, along with name touches. There are other similarities in marks used by Hamlin, the Danforths, and Whitmore, but space does not permit a full comparison.

Hamlin married Thankful Ely in 1771 and shortly afterwards moved to Providence. With him he brought some of the Danforth molds (evidently borrowed) and the design for a new type of porringer handle. Jacob Whitmore had made a flower-handle porringer (copied from a style that had been popular in England) in Connecticut, but apparently it had not caught on in that state. Hamlin, however, used the design in Providence with great success, and other pewterers here used it as well. So popular was this type that today it is generally known as the Rhode Island flower-handle type.

There had been porringers made earlier in Rhode Island, but with different shaped handles. In fact the earliest marked American porringer is probably one with a geometric handle made around 1711 in Newport by Thomas Byles.

Lawrence Langworthy

Despite the abundance of certain forms of American pewter and a wealth of research material, certain mysteries still exist. We do not