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PHOTO BY DANA B. MERRILL

IN selecting the above title, we are guided by the fact that this old-time metal is knowing a renaissance in the fullest sense rather than a passing vogue. That it is not a sporadic revival, such as any one of the several abortive attempts to bring pewter into fashion during the past century, may be concluded from the numerous articles for everyday use made by present pewterers; whereas previous efforts have been directed to utilizing it only as a medium for decorative objects, overlooking that the nature of the material itself is opposed to any other than

Pewter used on the set table, the sideboard and on the large cupboard gives unusual interest to this room. Courtesy Queen Anne Studios.

the most severe ornamentation. Not that it is unsuitable for certain articles which assist in the decoration of an interior, for there are pieces of furniture formerly made specifically for the old pewter-ware, albeit these were then intended for use in the kitchen, if now often accorded the dignity of the breakfast or dining-room. Such furniture therefore conforms equally to the modern reproductions of the original pewter which like our own American silver is the more beautiful by reason of its simplicity.

At the outset, it may be well to touch upon the composition of pewter at the present time as compared with that of long ago. In the first place it is not a natural metal despite the explanation given by one clerk in a New

Pewter in reproduction of a 1700 English service lends charm to this modern tea table. Courtesy Reed & Barton

York shop that it "came from the mines of Westphalia". The actual components vary, but broadly speaking it is composed of tin, lead, copper, zinc, and bismuth. In ancient times, it was more often tin with a small proportion of lead, the latter not infrequently being omitted entirely. The copper was added to harden the composite metal while it has been known to contain a small proportion of silver. Where

however, it has usually been introduced accidentally and then never in any appreciable quantity. When pewter began to enjoy a renewed popularity with us moderns, the factories who became interested in reproducing the

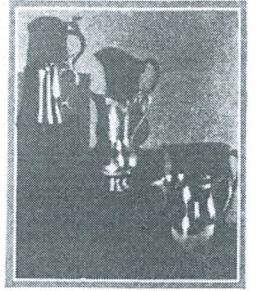
Pewter-Ware Has Its Renaissance

Tea-Sets, Dinner Services and Other Articles in Daily Use Made of Pewter From Old Models Are Now Again in Vogue

By EDWARD WENHAM

early styles concerned themselves really seriously with the actual metal they would use. They had in view the unavoidable acidity of certain foods and it was therefore decided to produce a pewter of much harder and more resistant character than that of which the old vessels were made. For while our ancestors ate and drank from pewter and no harm seems to have resulted to them, we are today so excessively careful of our personal welfare that

silver has become part of the various metals, however, it has usually been introduced accidentally and then never in any appreciable quantity. When pewter began to enjoy a renewed popularity with us moderns, the factories who became interested in reproducing the



Plaintankard with the traditional glass bottom, pitcher inspired by the old Scotch measures and one copied from that designed by Paul Revere. Courtesy Mary's



we often guard against an ill which does not and can not endanger us. Hence the modern composite metal is considerably harder and has a much finer texture than the platters, mugs and tankards of our forebears.

How greatly we have reverted to and how faithful the modern craftsmen are in reproducing the earlier styles of all that makes for the furnishings and decoration of any household is nowhere more conclusively proved than by the modern pewter-ware. Like those of by-gone generations, the shapes follow those of the old silver and incidentally the modern metal will permit a soft lustrous polish not unlike that of silver itself. But as pewter-ware is always associated with the soft satin-like grey-blue sheen peculiar to itself, the tendency still remains to prefer the duller finish.

It is not difficult to trace the reason for the reappearance of the many household objects made of this metal in the past few years. We need look no farther than to the numerous homes where the dining rooms reconstruct the traditions of the English Oak period. Nor is it easy to find a setting more redolent of informal pleasure yet reminiscent of all that we now seek from the manners of other days, than a long refectory table sans table-cloth and laid with china of long-ago pattern, fine glass and various pewter vessels. Those pewter pieces might well be candlesticks, salt-cellars, sever-

An interesting group of old pewter arranged in an old Dutch colony corner cupboard. Courtesy Lord & Taylor

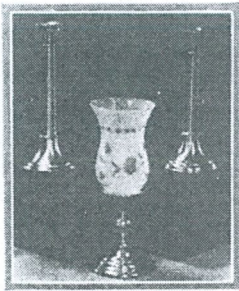


al large bowls containing flowers, placed at intervals along the length of the table, water jugs and possibly, if the beverage for the evening is appropriate there might even be beakers, mugs, and tankards.

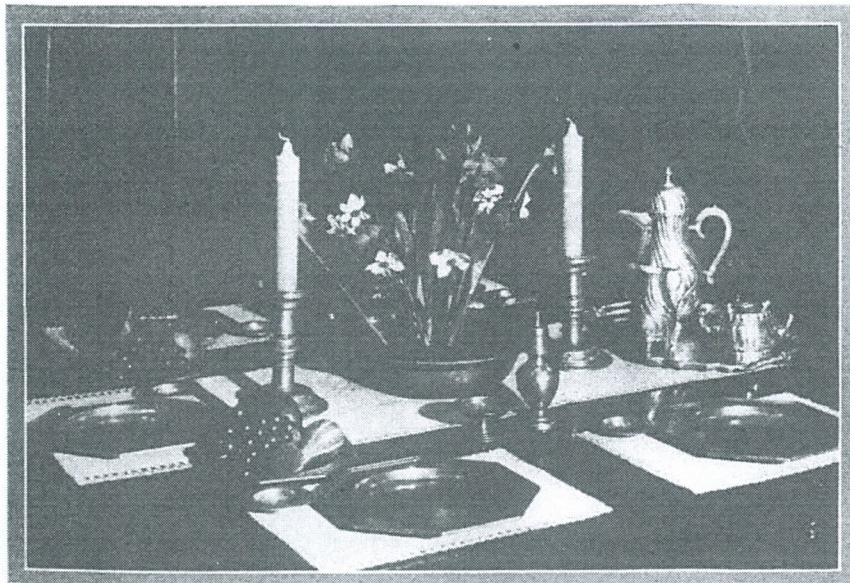
In mentioning pewter bowls as suitable for table flowers, this advisedly, because the decorative value of these is not fully acknowledged. But those who have "experimented" along these lines will admit that whether on a dining table or on any piece of furniture, the dull bluish tone of the metal is brought out in striking relief by the vivid hues of the various blossoms. We can recall a quite deep pewter bowl of fair capacity filled with crimson roses in an oak library we once knew, nor shall forget. Admittedly, that particular bowl was of another day, but the same colorful effect will as readily result

from roses when they are placed in a similar bowl made by a modern pewterer. Nor is it without interest to recall that the bowl we knew was in a land where roses do not have the long stems found in America, so that the floral part of the decoration always consisted only of crimson and green with no appearance of spindling stems. Yet it was beautiful indeed.

Early American candlesticks copied from an old pair, and an interesting lamp with glass shade. Courtesy Macy's



A luncheon table set in antique pewter in charming contrast with fruit and flowers. Courtesy Mrs. Ehrlich Co. Linen by Italian Needlework Guild



That oak library was part of a home that had heard the sigh of the summer breezes and the howl of the winter storms for more than one century. In the cupboards of the pantry were innumerable pewter vessels, discarded and forgotten and more still rested in their wonted place along the shelves of the great kitchen. Dinner plates, plates with hot water bases, large dishes and chargers ranged in order and displaying their beautiful patina, but no longer of use; for as pewter had in its day supplanted the crude wooden drinking bowls and trenchers, so in time it had itself been relegated and replaced by more aristocratic silver.

Then came the day when the great oak paneled rooms, yes and possibly some of those old timbered kitchens found their way to the land to which more than one kinsman of the former owners had gone, before the

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Coffee sets and syrup jug by Dowd-Rogers Co. showing adaptations of the old pyriform shape. By courtesy of George C. Gebelein

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days of George Washington. And with the woodwork came the increasing use of pewter. In this "migration" of the old English homes to the New World is the nucleus marking the revival of the earlier styles of interiors and the establishing of those schools of modern craftsmen who are following the lines of design laid down hundreds of years ago, which are used as models yet today.

We experience no difficulty today in reproducing a dining "hall" of the days of the

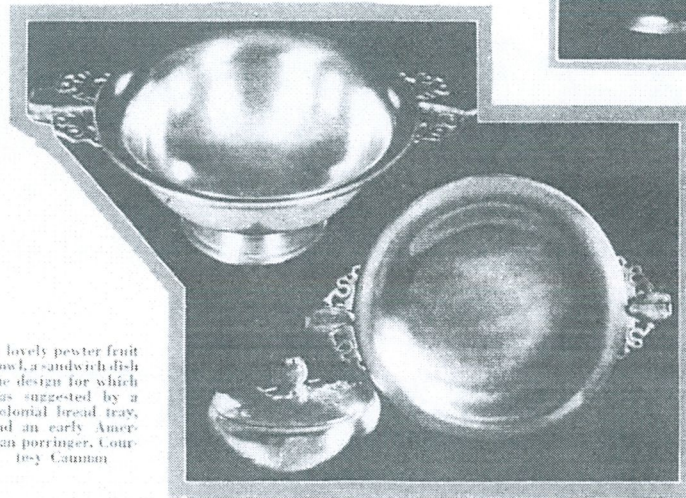
entrance hall, lower staircase, library and a commodious living room were paneled in linen-fold. When the house was finished and the family moved in, the members of the household were delighted with all the rooms except the library and living rooms. The decorator, who we have to admit had yet to cross the Atlantic, endeavored to introduce a home-like effect into the

duced the architecture from an original so would he have the house entirely finished with reproductions.

With the library, a few carefully selected pieces of pewter were all that was necessary, for the book-bindings are in themselves the source from which such a room derives its charm. But the old-time atmosphere was enhanced markedly by the use of a pewter ink-stand with the holes for holding the quills and a pewter sand-baker and a bull's-eye lamp, such as was used in Colonial times, placed on the desk. A pewter tobacco jar and a small porringer to serve as an ash tray on one smoking stand and one or two extra porringers in different parts of the room: a fairly large charger, which was the dish used to hold the huge joints of meat or the boar's head in olden days, and a pair of tall candlesticks on the wide mantel shelf; then the room recalled that in the English home



The left hand jug is the original early American example made by Gleason, Denham & Potter, the other being the copy by modern pewterers. Courtesy George C. Gebelein



A lovely pewter fruit bowl, a sandwich dish the design for which was suggested by a Colonial bread tray, and an early American porringer. Courtesy Cauffman

allows a more extensive use of pewter as there is naturally a greater expanse of unoccupied wall space. Where a court cupboard is used there is apt to be an observable abruptness with the top and an appearance of vacatness, this especially where the top of the cupboard is at eye level.

Special interest attaches to the dinnerware as it is so typical of all the simplicity of design that distinguishes the work of the old pewterers and of the lack of ornamentation so marked with all our early American metalcraft. There are several important firms in this country, today, who have successfully sought to restore the old designs and each is watchful that no one of their craftsmen departs from the originals.

Most of the "sad ware", to use the original (Continued on page 84)

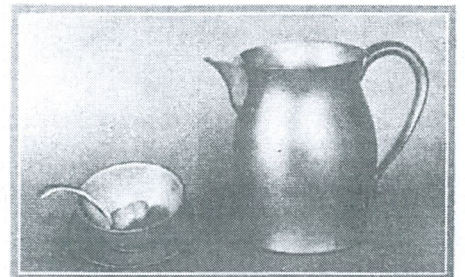
Stuarts nor a paneled library nor a living room that recalls the English homes. And it is the introduction of these earlier styles of architectural woodwork that has been largely instrumental in bringing the honored craft of the pewterers into prominence. Such rooms demand and insist upon traditional decorative treatment to insure the atmosphere we associate with the original settings. Assuredly, like any other interior, they call for color, but at no time must this be too conspicuous and it is here that mediums such as pewter are advantageously employed, the while conforming to the arrangement contemporary with the style of the room.

To quote a concrete instance of this. One of our friends had become enamoured of an old English timbered house while on a visit to the land where these originated. He obtained the necessary measurements of the several rooms and some photographs, later building a similar home in America. The

paneled interiors by using ornaments entirely at variance to what the rooms called for. Our friend bowing to the superior knowledge of the professional decorator was nevertheless unhappy with the result which he achieved.

Yet both rooms were eventually made as delightful as he had previously visualized them by removing the very glaringly lacquered brassware and garishly decorated pottery and replacing them with pewter, and modern pewter at that, for the owner had insisted that as he had repro-

Plain bowl and stand adapted as a mayonnaise set and a graceful water pitcher inspired by a design by Paul Revere made by the early American Pewter Co. Courtesy George C. Gebelein



ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Donato, Raphael's teacher; Cellini, the designer of gold and silver, were largely responsible for the Renaissance in Italy, extending from 1400 to 1600 AD.

The foundation for this technique—scrolls, masks, birds and flowers—came from ancient Persia and the classic motifs of Greece and early Rome.

Our modern designers have recreated the beautiful outline and decorations of the old masters as evidenced by the Sterling Silver After-Dinner Coffee Service, Water Pitcher and Entree Dish as illustrated. In the same beautiful pattern may be had Tea Service, Dinner and Dessert Ware.



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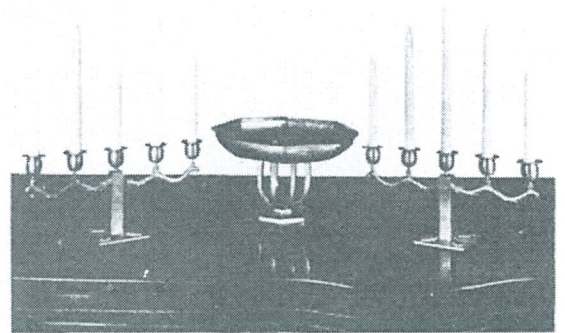
New Pewter-Ware

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name for plates, dishes, chargers and the like, is quite plain, either with turned edges or with the larger oval piece reinforced underneath. Others are slightly ornamented with delicate moldings, which like the shapes are similar to the early silver. Plainness is equally the keynote of the "hollow ware" as such pieces as bowls, tea-pots, sugars, creamers were called.

Our recent revival of the afternoon-tea custom in America has naturally led to an increased demand for tea-sets. Large numbers of these made by the Georgian silversmiths have

primarily due to the craftsmen selecting their prototypes from the earlier 18th Century, this explaining why the predominant shape with the tea-sets is the pyriform. At times he adapts the more pronounced curves allowed by concave and convex ribbing popular in the early part of the last century, but mainly he is guided by the simpler plain pear-shape. This also applied to the coffee-sets, the shapes of which follow those of the early Georgian period, before the Rococo ornamentation had become popular. There is one other point we would



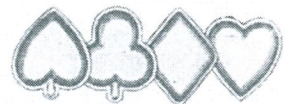
Modern Swedish pewter candelabra grouped with an octagonal shaped fruit bowl on stand, Courtesy B. Altman & Co.

been and still are being brought here from England; the modern American silversmiths are continually engaged in reproducing the Georgian English and American designs and their fellow-craftsmen, the pewterers, are diligently copying those same tea-sets in the metal which, as far as general use was concerned, antedated silver.

Consequently, the beauty that is so outstanding with modern pewter is

observe; unconnected with pewter from its artistic aspect admittedly, but of moment in that it affects its artistic potentialities. That is the matter of caring for articles made of this metal. We can do no better than quote the recommendations of a prominent firm of modern pewterers who advise that pieces having the dull bluish finish should be cleaned by hot soapy water, then rinsed and

dried and afterwards polished with a soft cloth. No powder nor other cleaning preparation should be used.



Set of four pewter bridge table ash trays, Courtesy Poole Silver Co.

Spanish Architecture

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ration is the small semicircular balcony with wrought iron rail which opens to the room from the main stair landing. Bookshelves built in high arches in the walls give a touch of color and warmth.

In contrast with the Spanish feeling of the decoration in the living rooms, one of the bedrooms in this home reflects the gaiety and charm of the French 18th Century. The walls are painted a soft green and glazed, to form an effective background for fabrics which range in color from soft peach to rose. A panel of antique brocade above the fireplace repeats the color scheme. The fireplace itself, a marble mantel surmounted by exquisite fabric, with harmonious metal lighting fixtures and French prints at either side, forms a particularly pleasing motif. A French chaise longue finished in antique gold is drawn up on one side, a deep armchair on the other, to complete the inviting aspect of this end of the room. Some of the furniture is painted. Other pieces are of satinwood and several pieces are in an-

tique gold. In decoration as in architecture this home follows the traditions of Spain, but Spanish ideals have been delightfully adapted to a Westchester setting. There is, for instance, a grateful warmth in the floors of quartered oak, the beamed oak ceiling in the living room, the colorings of rugs and fabrics. This is a quality which can take much from the drabness of a northern winter. In practical details as well as in decorative effects the climate has been considered, and cold days are provided for with the "return vapor" system of heating, which gives a warm even temperature throughout the house in any kind of weather. The first floor has no exposed radiators but is fitted with a device to give indirect heat together with fresh circulating air to the various rooms. Other details of practical construction include brass plumbing and fixtures with chromium fittings, except in the principal bathroom which has fittings of brass. Electric lighting fixtures were made in conformity with those in a typical Spanish dwelling.