

Property of
The Pewter Collectors' Club of America

THE PEWTER COLLECTORS' CLUB,
OF AMERICA

Albany Pewter
and
Its Makers

ALBANY INSTITUTE of HISTORY and ART

APRIL 1942

ALBANY and HUDSON RIVER CRAFTSMEN SERIES No. 2

FOREWORD

Many of the early crafts were practiced in the home as part of the household duties. Certain of these required more equipment than the average home could have, and were too difficult to practice with reasonable success without special training. Hence there arose the early group of craftsmen in silver, glassware, pottery, pewter and painting, and later in weaving, iron work, and other products which today we place under the heading of the minor crafts.

Each of these became in time a special skill, employing the full time of the craftsmen who practiced them. A successful artisan to earn a living required many customers, and so we find these early workmen concentrated in centers of population. There also arose the group of journeymen workers who made their products in their own farm or shops and peddled them themselves, or through agents, to farms and scattered communities in a larger area. With the perfection of transportation facilities, shops making these products became more and more concentrated. Improved transportation paved the way for the machine age which followed. The industrial revolution in our country, as abroad, completely replaced the products of the early craftsmen with machine made articles. The year 1850 can be taken as the approximate end of the handicraft era in the United States.

We know too little about the earlier artisans, though in the last few decades there has been an awakened interest in them. As every Colonial center had its active group of artisans, Albany from its earliest days was one of the major craft centers of the country.

The Albany Institute is collecting records and, where possible, the outstanding products of the craftsmen of its area. It is our planned purpose to have a series of exhibits over a period of time to try to put in more orderly pattern the extant knowledge of these workers in old Albany County,

and the Upper Hudson. The present exhibit of Albany Pewter-smiths follows the exploratory show of Albany silver held last year.

In our study we were greatly assisted by Ledlie I. Laughlin's two volume work on "Pewter in America", and we have drawn freely from his knowledge in editing this outline. We are also indebted to the large number of collectors and museums who have lent the pieces, thereby making this comparative pewter study, and its resulting booklet, possible.

J. D. HATCH, JR.

April 18th, 1942

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What Pewter Is

Pewter is made chiefly of tin. Tin itself, however, is too soft and must be mixed with other alloys as copper, lead, antimony, or bismuth to be durable. Any of these might be used, but the cheapness of lead made it the most generally employed of alloys. A small quantity of bismuth which gives pewter a hardness in time became the accepted alloy. Copper and antimony were widely used in earlier times. Finest of pewter contains no lead, but the poorest pewter may have up to 40% of it. The problem of the European pewter trade guilds was to see that their members and others maintained quality standards and that the use of lead was curtailed.

Pewter pieces in general use lasted eight to ten years at most, and then they were apt to be melted up and traded in for new ware — much as we trade in our automobiles today.

Marks and Touches

Hall marks common in England were used by American makers first around ~~1850~~¹⁷⁵⁰, but had little meaning as we had no organized trade guilds in this country.

Marks generally designate the location at which a piece is made, its metallic content, the guild to which its maker belonged and often the year the piece was made as well as the maker's own registered mark, or "touch" as they are called in pewter.

Marks were popular in America to the 1780s, but declined afterwards and were replaced entirely by simple initials or names of the craftsmen, and occasionally the location where the piece was made. An unmarked piece, it should be noted, does not necessarily mean a piece of American origin.

History

The beginnings of Pewter are not known. The Egyptians, Chaldeans, Romans, and Chinese are said to have used it. We know the craft was expertly practiced in China in the Han dynasty 206 BC to 220 AD. Until the 16th Century it remained a luxury in Europe, enjoyed only by the church and nobility. Wooden dishes of the peasants and tradesmen began to be replaced in general household use by pewter, however, after the 16th Century.

Pewter in turn was superseded by china in the late 18th Century. Pewtersmiths at this time perfecting a new system for making pewter hollowware dishes and cups called the new product "Britania Ware" probably to enlist popular support to offset the growing popular use of china dishes. Britania Ware, essentially the same as pewter, was made of high tin content and moulded from flat thin sheets pressed against revolving shaped blocks.

In America

Early Pewterers had none of the necessary tin at hand and its shipment from the rich tin mines in Wales was costly. The British government, too, contrived by taxes and imports on *raw* materials to discourage the growth and development of industries in her colonies. She allowed finished products made in England, however, free entry to her provinces.

Most early American pewter was, therefore, imported from England with a few firms enjoying most of the trade. John Townsend of London, his partners and successors, for example, made over 50% of the marked English antique pewter now found in this country.

EARLIEST ALBANY PEWTER

Pewter was unboubtedly made in Albany as early as the 17th Century — even as was silver. Unfortunately, no actual records of the makers of these early pieces exist. There are

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BANY PEWTER

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also no known records of makers during the English Colonial period in the 18th Century.

Earliest recorded Albany maker was:

HENRY WILL

Born, ca: 1735, of Dutch parents in New York City, he first worked there, but joined the 10th Militia of Albany in 1775. He had two daughters probably born in Albany before he returned to New York in 1783. With his brother John Will (also of New York City) he was one of our most gifted and versatile American Pewtersmiths.

His Marks: Henry Will used a variety of touches. His name is written "Henry Will, New York" in three forms (Laughlin 486, 487 & 489) and his initials "HW" were used in a square alone (L 490) and in a row with three other hall marks (L 491) and in upper border surrounding a rose (L 492). A rose mark (L 488) he also used in Albany, but probably not afterwards. (An identical mark used by S. Stafford in his early work was probably this touch of Henry Will's.)

PETER YOUNG

Advertised in New York City in 1775, and may possibly have come to Albany with *Henry Will* (above), or shortly thereafter. He bought property at 36 Columbia Street, Albany in 1792 and his house and barn were lost in the Albany Fire of August 4, 1797. He may possibly have retired from business at that time. We find him listed in the 1813 Albany Directory as a pewtersmith, however. He died September 26, 1813 and was buried in the Dutch Reformed Burial ground—Albany.

A maker of taste and ability, he was a worker with considerable originality. His chalices are among the few pewter pieces made in America without a European counterpart. All his work had quality and finish. He was one of the real masters of American pewterers and ranks with Albany's great

artisans; Philip Hooker, Ezra Ames, and Isaac Hutton, all of whom were his younger contemporaries.

Marks: Peter Young's marks include his initials "PY" in a small rectangle (Laughlin 518), in a circle with a beaded edge (L 514) and in a circle with serrated edge (L 515). His initials also appear on either side at bottom of a rose (L 512) and in a square with three other square hall marks (L 513). His rarest and most famous "eagle touch" had his name over a spread eagle (L 516) in a verticle oval shape.

SPENCER STAFFORD

Born in Cheshire, Massachusetts in 1772, Stafford came to Albany with his family in 1783. While still apprenticed to his brother-in-law, Thomas Spencer, a merchant, he married Dorothea Hallenbeck, Albany belle of her day. After her death he married (2) Harriet Romeyn. He set up business first in tin plate, sheet iron, copper and brass manufacture, on the site of the present Albany Post Office — in 1794. Two years later he had a shop at 45 Court Street with a branch in Schenectady, and in 1820 we find him also manufacturing stoves on Washington and Central Avenues.

Stafford was probably a broker rather than being himself a craftsman, for he had many partnerships and probably hired both Peter Young (above) and Timothy Brigden (below) and other anonymous craftsmen, to make pewter pieces for him. He retired in 1827 and died in 1841. He was head of each of the following business combinations:

STAFFORDS, ROGERS & Co.	1814-1815
STAFFORD, SPENCER & Co.	1815-1817
S. STAFFORD & Co.	1817-1824
STAFFORD, BENEDICT & Co.	1824

The following names are connected with him in his business enterprises, though we have no knowledge that any of them were actual workers in pewter.

LEWIS BENEDICT (son-in-law)	1815-1824
JAMES MENZE	1794-1796
GEORGE B. SPENCER	1815-1817

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THOMAS SPENCER (brother-in-law) 1815
HALLENBAKE STAFFORD (son) 1815-1824
JOAB STAFFORD (son) 1824
JOHN STAFFORD (brother) 1796-1815
SPENCER STAFFORD JR. (son) 1817-1824
SEBASTIAN TYMIESEN 1815-1817

The Stafford mark has been found on 7.14 and 8.14
plates, 13.8 deep dishes, 6.10", 8", and 10.11" basins, quart
tankards and communion flagons.

Marks: The name of "S. Stafford" (Laughlin 517) often
appears with marks of Brigden (L 519) or Peter Young
(L 512) or with the rose mark of Henry Will (L 488) and
also with "Albany" added (L 520). His last mark was "S.
Stafford & Co., Albany" (L 521).

LATER PEWTERSMITHS

TIMOTHY BRIGDEN

Timothy Brigden was born August 14, 1774 in Middleburg,
Connecticut and probably apprenticed to a silversmith. He
is listed in 1815-15 Albany directories as a "silversmith" at
106 Beaver Street, but in 1816-18 is listed at the same address
as a "pewterer". In 1819 *Widow* Brigden is listed.

There are extant today few known pieces by Brigden.

The only mark we have of Brigden is that of the initials
in a serrated circle (L 519).

DANIEL CURTISS

Son of a Connecticut pewterer Joseph Curtiss (?), he first
appears in the 1822 Directory as a "Fancy Pewterer" at 566
South Market Street, and from 1832 to 1872 he was located
at 23 Church Street. His work is distinguished by a sense of
line and proportion lacking in other later pewterers and it
always had the finest grade and finish.

As pewter manufactured by cheaper mass production
was in his day replacing hand made work, Curtiss sought a
more profitable use for his talents. In 1845, therefore, we

first find him listed as a "pewterer and bell founder", and after 1850 exclusively as a bell founder.

Marks: Daniel Curtiss had two marks, Earliest was in the form of a one inch circle with "D Curtiss" over a two handled urn (L 522). His later mark was "D Curtiss" in a recurving horizontal "S" (L 523).

For further information on pewter read:

PEWTER IN AMERICA
by Ledlie I. Laughlin — 2 Vols (1941)

AMERICAN PEWTER
by J. B. Kerfort (1924)

SOME NOTES ON AMERICAN PEWTERERS
by Louis G. Myers (1926)

For European Marks:

THE NEW PEWTER MARKS & OLD PEWTER WARE
by Major C. F. Markham FSA 2nd Ed (1928)

OLD PEWTER, ITS MAKERS & ITS MARKS
by Howard H. Cothrell, FRS (1929)

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marks, Earliest was in
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ter read:

Vols (1941)

PEWTERERS

OLD PEWTER WARE
FSA 2nd Ed (1928)

ITS MARKS
RS (1929)

RECORDED PEWTERMAKERS IN UPPER NEW YORK STATE

ALBANY

Henry Will	1775-1783
Peter Young	1780-1813
James Menze	1794-1796
Spencer Stafford	1794-1827
Shubel Cottam	1815
Daniel Curtiss	1833-1850
Joseph Curtiss, Jr. . . .	1832-1859
J. C. Feltman	1847-1848
George H. Smith (?)	1849-1856
Smith Sheldon (?)	1847-1848

AUBURN

Cornelius B. de Riemer & Co. . . .	1833
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POUGHKEEPSIE

J. Weekes & Co.	1833-1835
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SCHENECTADY

James Menze	1794-1796?
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TROY

Joseph Curtiss, Jr.	1827-1832
Willis Huniston	After 1830
George Hunter	1831
John H. Whitlock	1836-1844
Townsend M. Buckley	1854-1857

WILLIAMSBURGH

William Bartholdt	1850-1854
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