

Vol. I. No. 2

May, 1947

# The Decorator

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Innerwick, 31-07 Union Street, Flushing, L. I

Journal of the  
Esther Stevens Brazer Guild  
and Historical Society  
of Early American Decoration

# The Decorator



Volume I.

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# Editorial Notes



Once again we are enjoying the feeling of another good meeting behind us and already, we are looking forward to the next one. Most members will agree that the last two meetings were really quite outstanding, because they provided us with the opportunity in October, to see the wonderful home and the exceptional collections of the Oldham family in Wellesley Hills and then, so recently, the Brazer home in Flushing and Mrs. Brazer's unusual collection of decorated pieces, her stencilled and painted walls and a few samples of her portfolio of patterns. For this opportunity, we are all grateful. These visits should have inspired us all to wield our paint brushes, scissors and velvet mitts with renewed vigor and care and to have given us a fervent desire to produce some really super jobs for the next exhibit. What a grand feeling to have a summer ahead with lots of decorating to be done. What fun! Let's be at it!

After much serious thought, it was decided to publish THE DECORATOR as soon after each meeting as possible, each issue containing an account of the previous meeting for those unable to attend in person. So, the reader will find accounts of the Wellesley Hills meeting in October and the recent New York meeting in this issue.

We hope you will be pleased to notice that we have started our Question Box and Swap Column page. All queries about same should be sent to the Editor of that department, Mrs. Andrew Underhill, Bellport, Long Island. We invite members to contribute further valuable suggestions to the answers given, and we solicit your needs for our Swap page. All material to appear in the October issue must be in the hands of the Editor by September first.

Our "Unusual Originals" department will make its first appearance in the next number. Members are invited to submit photographs and short histories of original decorated pieces which are unusual in some way. Other interesting features of the October issue will be:

Birds in Decoration ..... by Constance Klein  
Pennsylvania German Specialties ..... by Mrs. E. W. Seasongood

A complete up-to-date membership list will be printed.

We are indebted to Mr. Andrew Underhill of Bellport, Long Island and New York City for many of the cuts appearing in this issue.

In a reminiscent mood, the Editor submits "What are our Guild Standards and Why?" a parody in the style of "I paint what I see," by E. B. White.

"What do you do when you paint a tray?"

Said a brand new eager student.

"Do you just paint anything pretty and gay?"

"Should it be done on black or on gray?"

"Do you think I can finish it all in one day?"

"The rules are strict," said the judges.

"What are the colors to use when we paint?"

Said a brand new eager member.

"Can I use some red as bright as a saint?"

"Should the brush-strokes be heavy or very faint?"

"Must the surface be free of every taint?"

"Does it matter if there are specs or there ain't?"

"We will be stern," said the judges.

"Can I use a beautiful yellow shade?"

"Can my green be as bright as a new grass blade?"

"Can my roses be bright, I don't like them to fade?"

"Can my cherries and berries in bright hues be arrayed?"

"Can my gold be bright when I try this trade?"

"What tricks can I learn, to make the grade?"

"You must use umber," said the judges.

"Can I use the same thing on a Chipp or a lace?"

Said a brand new eager craftsman.

"Must a chair and chest be kept in place?"

"What goes for a bellows and for a clock face?"

"What goes for a box, to stay in the race?"

"How can I ever avoid disgrace?"

"Be authentic," said the judges.

"What must I do about the stripe?"

Timidly said the student.

"Must it always be stripe and then wipe?"

"Can I manage to do it without a gripe?"

"Or can I let my Teach just give it a stripe?"

"It's do or die," said the Judges.

## SOME DECORATED CHAIRS OF THE 1800's

by Florence E. Wright

"Fancy" chairs of the 1800's are once more receiving the attention and appreciation they deserve, as decorators of this century are discovering the charm and beauty of these century-plus pieces. The careful reproductions of the work of these early craftsmen that are being made by homemakers of today, will also be heir-looms for future generations. With this in mind, it is hoped that each piece is labeled with the decorator's name, address, and the date, so that in years to come something may be known of its history.

The development of the style of decoration on painted furniture is an interesting story, and one which follows quite logically the nature of man who is always looking for an easier, quicker, and less expensive way to do a task. Both the Oriental lacquered type of furniture and the French Louis XVI style with its gilded brass or copper "ormolu" mounts influenced the painted and decorated furniture of this country. Our American Sheraton "fancy" chairs, popular between the years 1800 and 1820, were named from the English designer Sheraton who was greatly influenced by the classical or Greek Revival style of Louis XVI. Figure 1 shows one of the more elegant Sheraton fancy chairs, 1815-1820. It is painted vermillion, and has both the brass mounts and gold-leaf decoration and striping. A yellow satin cushion was used with a similar chair shown at the Brooklyn Museum. Many of the more simple of the Sheraton fancy chairs were decorated with free-hand painted designs in color, as were many of the late Windsors of the same period.



Figure 1. Sheraton fancy chair.  
Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 2. Painted curly maple,  
Early Empire. Florence A.  
Wright, Ithaca, New York

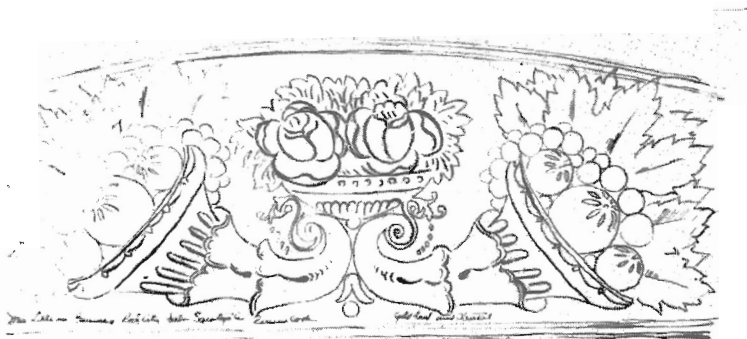


Figure 3. Ransom Cook design. Saratoga County



Figure 4. Yellow rocker. Mrs. Carl F. Gilbert, Ithaca, New York

Curly maple was a favorite wood of the Early Empire period, 1815-1830. The chair shown in figure 2 is painted to stimulate curly maple, and as a substitute for brass mounts the designs were made by laying gold leaf on a quick-drying sizing liquid, and by painting the shadows with burnt sienna color to give detail to the pattern.

In 1817, the first stencil-designs appeared, with each unit cut as a separate stencil and arranged to make the pattern. Applying bronze powder to a tacky surface through holes cut in paper was an easier and quicker way to obtain a decorative pattern than to lay gold leaf and then etch or paint the fine details that were desired. However, most of the early work, and that done for the best chairs of the early 1820's, included much of the gold-leaf decoration. For example, figure 3 shows the symmetrical arrangement used in early patterns with the bowl, the roses, and the cornucopias done in gold-leaf with the fine detail lines drawn in black and the fruit and leaves stencilled. The tracing was made from an original chair by Ransom Cook, who was one of New York State's most skillful stencillers. After nine years as a journeyman cabinetmaker he opened a shop in Saratoga Springs in 1822.

The yellow rocker of the same type, figure 4, shows freehand brush-stroke designs around the fruit and leaves and on the outside back spindles. This is one of the characteristics of the early

period of stencilling. The scrolls are also of gold leaf. The stencilled fruit and leaves are colored with transparent oil color, the whole making a striking effect on the soft yellow background. As factory methods increased quantity production, less work of this type was done by the artist craftsman.

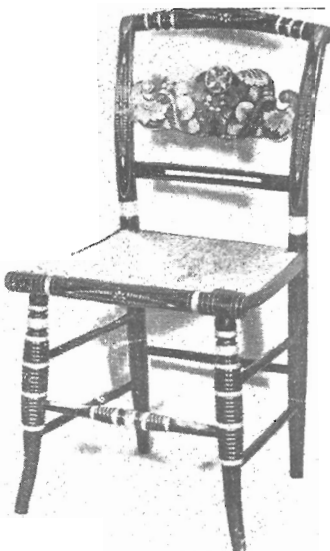


Figure 5. Cornucopia-back Hitchcock type. Mrs. Barbara K. Bird, Booneville, New York



Figure 6. Green turtle-back Hitchcock type. Mrs. C. E. Pearsall, Covert, New York



Figure 7. Child's chair, Hitchcock type. Florence E. Wright, Ithaca, New York.

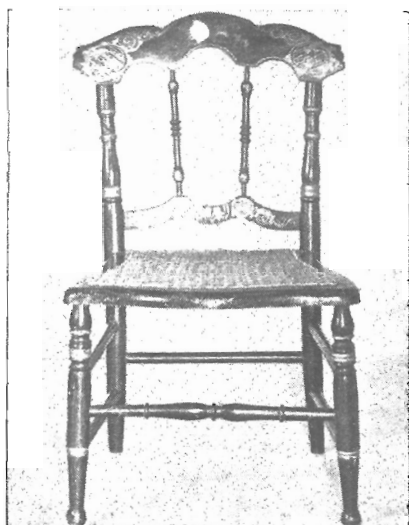


Figure 8. Child's chair, Victorian type. Miss Hattie Barnes, Ithaca, New York

The cornucopia Hitchcock type chair, figure 5, shows the next technique development in which even the cornucopias were done with stencils. Careful shading on the cornucopias and the veins of the leaves was done by rubbing the bronze powder against a curved edge of the stencil; this technique was also characteristic of early stencilled work.

The majority of stencilled chairs was of the imitation rosewood type, that is, black paint over red, grained to look like rosewood; some were of a two-toned brown that gave the effect of walnut, made by using a light brown varnish over black graining; and some were painted in colors such as green or yellow. The turtle-back chair, figure 6, is painted green with only the center slat in black to give greater contrast and thus feature the main pattern. The patterns were arranged informally, a characteristic of the further development in style between 1825 and 1830. A new technique development was that of stencilling the veins of the leaves instead of using the slower process of shading against a curved edge.

Children's chairs apparently did not always have special small-sized patterns designed for them, at least in the earlier periods of stencilled furniture. Figure 7 is an example of the custom of using the same stencils as those used on large chairs but not including as much of the design. Figure 8, a chair of the 1845-1850 period shows the use of gold leaf and realistic roses in the Gothic or Chippendale revival type of design, as was used on trays of the same periods. Another type of pattern used a great deal at this time was the landscape which was popular in all forms of art.

When the carved rosewood furniture of the Victorian period came into fashion, stencilled furniture declined in popularity, although some stencilling lasted into the 1870's. These late patterns that are not illustrated are examples of the deterioration of the stencilling art and were usually cut in only one or two stencils. They became large and coarse, and much of the color was swished on in a careless fashion.

Again in the 1900's the art of furniture decoration has been revived. Any one who has restored an old chair has discovered a new field of interest, and is looking for authentic information



on the many types and variations of the decorated furniture that is to be found. It is important that students who undertake to restore the decoration on 19th century furniture in their homes study carefully the style of design originally used on furniture of that type. For help in learning to know changes in the style of chairs and patterns as the art grew, matured, and declined, one should study the articles by Esther Stevens Brazer to be found in bound volumes of Antiques magazines available in most libraries. Mrs. Brazer's "Early American Decoration," Janet Waring's "Early American Stencils on Walls and Furniture," and "The Rocking Chair, an American Institution," by Walter A. Dyer and Esther S. Fraser are extremely helpful. At the present time these three books are out of print but available in libraries.

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#### From a book on Japanning by John Stalker, in 1688

"A neglect to drie enough introduces the fault again. If negligent, nothing shall so infallibly attend you as Error and Disappointment, I prophesie. Now to distinguish the true exact time when the gold size is fit to be gilded, press your finger upon it somewhat hardly,—and if you percieve it is so drie that it will neither discolor or stick to your finger, but is in some measure clammy, tacky, and unwilling to part with it, conclude tis in good condition; should you attempt to gild before the size is drie enough, that moisture will drown and deprive your gold of that gloss and lustre which it would acquire if skilfully performed; on the contrary if over-drie, you are come too late, you have lost the opportunity, for it will not accept of the gold. On the least miscarriage, make a diligent review and doubt not but second thoughts will convince you of too slight observance."

Contributed by Mrs. Bertram Stevensen, Quaker Lake, Pauling, N. Y. and Buffalo, N. Y.



## BARGEES ART

by Shirley S. DeVoe

Two pieces of brightly painted tin stand on a shelf of my old pine cupboard. They have a gypsy look beside the early American decorated tin. They are of English origin, painted by the water gypsies who live on the canals.

A few years ago, I saw several similarly painted pieces at a British craft exhibit. I recognized the work of the Bargees and, since I did not own a piece at the time, I was very anxious to acquire one for my collection. Those on exhibit were not for sale but the secretary kindly gave me an address in England. This was the start of an interesting correspondence which, combined with two books and one or two scattered articles, taught me about the people who live on the canals.

It started 'way back in the early eighteenth century when travel in England was difficult and slow. The use of pack-horses to carry 280 lbs. of coal in panniers on their backs was an inefficient and an expensive means of transporting the valuable yield from the many mines.

Where there were rivers, boats were used, but unfortunately rivers were not always flowing where they were most needed. So it is perhaps natural that the Duke of Bridgewater wanted a canal between his coal pits at Worsley and the City of Manchester. For this first venture two acts of Parliament were obtained in 1759-60, and Bridgewater hired an engineer, James Brindley, to execute his idea.

From that first canal a network of 3,800 miles grew, connecting the middle counties of England by waterways. They still wind picturesquely thru some of the most beautiful of the Island's landscapes.

But even more interesting than the historical development of the canals, is the growth of the separate group of people that nursed the barges slowly along them. The water gypsies of England carried coal and merchandise from village to village. They lived among themselves, intermarried, and slowly built up a code of their own. Their standard of living and of beauty became different from those of the people in the villages.

The barges that are the very living of these people, are also their homes. The long narrow boats are painted brightly and they seem, like their tenants, to capture the gypsy spirit. Each one is painted in a style that has been handed down by endless generations. Roses, castles and hearts adorn the cabins inside and out. It is said that the castles stand for honor, the hearts for romance and the roses for beauty. The castles seem to be romantic stylized versions of actual English castles, and often the artist paints a tiny bridge over a narrow ribbon of water which must have flowed by some castle of the past. Perhaps some Bargee of long ago saw the same scene from his barge, remembered it and then painted it at the end of the day's travel. The liberal brush of the water gypsy seldom misses the tiller either. The latter very functional part of the barge may be trimmed for example, with broad diagonal stripes of many colors.

Inside, the cabins are panelled in grained wood that is decorated with the same symbols that one meets elsewhere around the barge surfaces. One panel conceals the bed, which opens for sleeping when the panel is let down. Polished brass knobs and fancy plates which are fixed on the wall supplement the painted decorations. Apparently these people, who are restlessly travelling, engender the same spirit in their busy creations.

Even the household equipment is painted lavishly. The decorated biscuit and water tins are of special interest to the tin painters. The insides of these cans are lined with clean white paint. The outside receives a coat of dark bottle green which is the background color. Then the design of roses, landscapes and castles is put on the background. The entire outside surface of the article seems always to be well covered with designs and stripes. The roses are achieved by a technique which requires first a round disc of black, brown or pink, then petals of brush strokes, and finally dots and fine lines to add form. White brush strokes are used on the pink disc, red ones on the black and yellow ones on the brown. The use of this sequence seems to be a rule that is

strictly adhered to. Daisies made with white petals on a blue disc and having red and yellow centers are used to trim the lids and top surfaces of the cans. The final result is a cheerful and informal pattern.

The decorated tins, the colorful barges, the specialists who paint the hardware, as they call the tin, the cottages by the canals, the convenient Pub in each village, and the people who are still jealously guarding their way of life; all these things are part of a culture nourished by the industrial revolution in England. Now the progress of that revolution threatens to engulf this life and it is being supplanted by a still more efficient, but probably less picturesque organization.

The monument to the passing Bargemen will be their painting and their epitaph is being painted not written. I am pleased to have two small bright monuments on the shelf of my old pine cupboard.

## WHAT IS TOLE?

by Helen Chivers

We hear the term toleware used quite frequently. We see advertisements of toleware. The attention of toleware decorators is called to tin reproductions placed on the market.

Perhaps all of us have a general idea of what toleware is or think we know what it is. I wonder how many of us really know. When I asked myself the question, I found I did not know. I then asked members of the craft and found that each had a different understanding of the term. Some believed it to mean painted tinware of the country tin type, not including trays. Others believed the term should be applied only to small octagonal trays, but not to deep octagonal, rectangular or Chippendale shapes. Some thought it applicable to painted tinware of the country tin order but very delicately and perfectly executed. No one really seemed to know.

I then turned to Mr. Brazer and I quote from his reply.

"The only little French-English dictionary which I have available, defines this French word as 'Tole, n.f. sheet iron'. All so-called tinware is sheet iron plated with tin. Hence, tole is not necessarily decorated although, in this country, it is generally understood to be. I never heard tole used in England or Wales, but many Americans have used the French word tole in referring to our decorated tinware which was made, usually, in Wales or England or America, where the English word tinware is germane. Properly used, tole applies to sheet iron from France and with that we have little connection. Esther Brazer abhorred the term 'tole' as a French affectation, not appropriate for English and American 'decorated tinware' where English is spoken."

A letter to the Queries Editor brought me the following reply.

"So far as I can discover, the name 'tole' or, as it probably should be used, 'tole peinte' ('tole painted') may properly be applied to any painted metal wares. Tole is defined in both Littré's and LaRousse's French dictionaries as sheet iron or steel. It is supposed to be derived from the Latin, 'tabula', sheet or plate, through the old French 'taule'. I found the subject discussed in an article by Lady Wolston in the *Connoisseur*, some years ago. Tracing the history of the name and the ware itself, she says that the first lacquered metal objects recorded in Europe were brought into England in the time of Charles II (1630-1685) and are thought to have been made of pewter. In 1622, a law was passed forbidding the painting or gilding of pewter. In 1660, Thomas Allgood in Pontypool, discovered a process for lacquering

or 'japanning' (as they called it then) iron plates. Later, pewter and Sheffield plate (silver plated over a copper body) were so decorated in England. In France, in the eighteenth century, the lacquering process discovered by Martin and known after him as 'verniss Martin' became a state monopoly in 1774. Various metals were decorated and, in the Paris Exposition of 1900, objects of 'tole lacquée' include articles in iron, copper, tin and pewter. Pewter and tin have been the metals most generally employed for painted and lacquered decoration. Tin is the material we find our own American toleware made of almost exclusively, so far as I know."

Much of historical interest regarding decorated metal ware is contained in the replies quoted above. All the evidence points to the fact that 'tole' is sheet iron or steel.

The question raised is: should we apply the term 'tole' to all decorated tinware? In answer, may I raise this question? Why should we in America, teaching and decorating in the 'Early American manner' not be satisfied with the term 'decorated tinware'?

I, for one, would be happy to carry on the terms Chippendale, Pie-crust or Gothic, Gallery, Octagonals and Country Tin which include by far the greatest number of articles made by the country tinsmiths and decorated with brush-stroke designs.

## ARCHAEOLOGISTS

by Clarence W. Brazier, D.Sc.

Students of Early American decoration are archaeologists, in a very real sense. The art they study is over one hundred years old, hence antique. The Standard Dictionary defines archaeology as "The science or study of history from relics and remains of antiquity." History is defined as "Past events in general considered as material for record". Hence the recording of the works of antique decorators from the relics and remains of antiquity is archaeology.

Esther Brazier, from her early student days, admired and was always interested in the work and painstakingly accurate methods of archaeologists. When she began her own recordings of Early American decoration, she pursued the archaeological methods of research in the accurate recording of all worthy designs that became available. By studying them, she was able to analyze the various steps followed by the original artist and to separate each day's work. It was my similar archaeological interests in the architectural restoration of Early American buildings and their correct furnishings that brought us both to write for *Antiques Magazine*, which has recorded so much Early American archaeology. We were both convinced that the original decoration should be preserved and restored wherever possible. The very best practice an artist can have is to try to restore the admirable work of a master craftsman and to match it as nearly as possible. Consequently, we had many conferences as to whether there was enough good decoration left on a piece to make it worth while to restore the missing parts or whether to record what was left, clean the piece and restore the whole design on the original piece. Only when the condition of the remaining paint was too bad to save, was the design faithfully recorded and then removed. Of course, that decoration was designed for that particular piece and should only be used on pieces of the same period and style.

The slowly moving pendulum of style or fashion swings continuously through the scores of years, from delicate thru' medium to bold and from bold thru' medium to delicate, always gradually changing. Thus archaeology, or the recording of such changing events, leaves a trail of styles that may be dated by a student. He will know that an 1810 lace edge tray decoration is wholly wrong upon a 1760 Chippendale tray or even worse upon an 1840 rectangular tray and a coarse stencil design of 1840 is incongruous on an 1810 Sheraton fancy chair. There are of course, thousands of incongruities to be avoided, such as a Lancaster County sunken panel chest decoration on a Connecticut Valley chest. New 1947 ideas of combining different old period styles are entirely wrong in Early American decoration. The period style

and shape of the piece must always be the same as the period, style and shape of the decorations designed for it, in order to be authentic. For this reason, Esther Brazer took photographs of the pieces from which she recorded the decorations. To be authentic, know your styles and be as careful not to mix fashions as not to mix drinks.

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### Excerpts from letters, applying for Guild membership

Suggested motto "By their work shall ye know them." — Mrs. Alma Brockway, West Hartford.

"If the spirit of the Guild is that which made attending Mrs. Brazer's lessons such a joyous experience, I would feel honored to be allowed to join." — Mrs. Morton Kyle, Plymouth, Mass.

"All the Oldham's have been ardent admirers of Mrs. Brazer and her superb work." — Esther Oldham.

"I am not a young woman by any means but am interested in the tiny work — just to enjoy looking at it and doing an occasional small piece or copying and cutting out a few stencils." — Mrs. Hauser, L. I.

"I think plans for a Guild are excellent. Those of us who knew and loved her could pay no better tribute to her." — Mrs. Gambee, Lynbrook, L. I.

"The proposed Guild is one of the finest tributes to her wonderful work and one which was very dear to her heart. She often spoke of some such organization to standardize the work. I had ten years of happy work with her and shall ever be grateful to her for the pleasure and appreciation which she gave me. Good luck to you all, and many regrets that I cannot come." — Dorothy Stone, Wayland, Mass.

"I have had lots of hobbies, hunting, fishing, bee-keeping, etc., but this is the most fascinating of all." — Mr. Burgess, Supt. of Schools, Sturbridge, Mass.



**ARTICLES BY ESTHER STEVENS BRAZER**  
**in the magazine ANTIQUES**

- \* April '22, The Golden Age of Stenciling (p. 162)
- May '23, Excavating Old-Time Wall Papers (p. 216)
- June '24, The Sheraton Fancy Chair 1790-1817 (p. 302)
- \* September '24, The Period of Stenciling 1817-1835 (p. 141)
- \* January '25, The Decadent Period 1835-1845 (p. 15)
- \* July '25, Pennsylvania Bride Boxes and Dower Chests, Part I
- \* August '25, Same as above, Part II (p. 79)
- \* September '26, A Lancaster Pennsylvania Chest (p. 203)
- February '27, Pennsylvania German Dower Chests, Part I,  
 (p. 119)
- April '27, Same as above, Part II, (p. 280-2)
- June '27, Some Problems of the Chests, (p. 474)
- \* February '28, The American Rocking Chair (p. 115)
- April '28, Some Decorated Woodenware of the 1830's (p. 289)
- \* May '29, A Pedigreed Lacquered Highboy (p. 398)
- \* October '29, The Elimination of Hotchkiss (p. 303)
- April '30, Pioneer Furniture from Hampton, N. H. (p. 312)
- April '31, Some Colonial and Early American Decorative Floors  
 (p. 296)
- April '33, Tantalizing Chests of Taunton (p. 135)
- \* March '36, Zachariah Brackett Stevens (p. 98)
- August '36, Random Notes on Hitchcock and His Competitors  
 (p. 63)
- \* February '37, Did Paul Revere Make Lace-Edge Trays? (p. 76)
- June '39, Tinsmiths of Stevens Plains, Part I, (p. 294)
- September '39, Same as above, Part II, (p. 134)
- May '43, The Early Boston Japanners (p. 208)
- \* August '45, Butler Tinware from Brandy Hill, Greenville, N. Y.  
 (p. 84)
- September '45, Covers; also, Signed and dated, a painted wall  
 in Connecticut (p. 138) and Murals in Upper New York  
 State (p. 148)

\*—Indicates issue out of stock; others available at \$1.00.

## THE WELLESLEY HILLS MEETING

The second meeting of the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild was held at the Wellesley Hills Country Club on October 29th and 30th, 1946. About two hundred members attended. The program opened at 10:30 A. M. with round-table discussion groups on ethics, methods, materials and teaching problems. An open forum followed, conducted by Mrs. MacAuliffe, and the results of the discussion groups were summed up and analyzed. The morning session dispersed for lunch and to view the wonderful exhibits that were on display in the lobby of the Club. A second exhibit of articles submitted for judging was on view in the Club ballroom and the judges had spent a seriously busy morning going over these pieces and grading them.

The judges were:

Mrs. Edmund Byram  
Mrs. E. H. Christ  
Mrs. C. H. Drury  
Mrs. Alfred Ells  
Mrs. Arthur Holmes  
Mrs. Wm. D. Howe  
Mrs. Harry MacDuffie  
Mrs. Sydney Stone

It was the first one of these exhibits and it is hoped that much can be learned from them in furthering the high standards the Guild wants to set. A short director's meeting was held to discuss the possibility for the Spring meeting.

The afternoon session was opened at 2:30 P. M. by the President, Mrs. Emily Heath. She talked about the Guild's amazingly rapid growth in the short space of one half year and about further Guild plans.

The business meeting proceeded with the reading of the minutes of the Darien meeting, by Mrs. Ruth Selden, which were accepted as read. The Treasurer, Mrs. Chivers, read her report, stating a balance on hand of \$1,664.34 as of October 29, '46. Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Mrs. John MacAuliffe, discussed plans for fund raising and called for further suggestions from members. Mrs. Ells reported on the incorporation proceedings. Mrs. Muller, Chairman of the Publication Committee, announced the Guild journal, *THE DECORATOR*, would be distributed to members at the close of the meeting, that it would be published twice a year and that additional copies were available for 50c. The Chairman of the Judging Committee, Mrs. Scott, announced that results of the judging program would be mailed to exhibitors. Mrs. Devoe, Corresponding Secretary, read a wire from Mr.

Clarence Brazer, stating his inability to attend the meeting due to a flight cancellation. A letter was read from Miss Constance Fraser, one of Mrs. Brazer's daughters, wishing the Guild every success.

Mrs. Heath made an announcement that the Board of Directors had accepted an invitation of the Art Alliance of Philadelphia to hold an exhibit of decorated articles, to be shown for a month, starting February 3rd, 1947. Plans for the exhibit would be announced later. Mrs. Heath then told her audience that Miss Esther Oldham and Mrs. Anne Borntraeger, first to write to her concerning the Guild, now were the first to present a gift to the Guild, the valuable Ann Butler Tin Collection. A motion was made by Mrs. Andrew Underhill and seconded by Mrs. Link to accept this generous gift. Mrs. Heath called for a standing vote of thanks to the Oldhams both for the prized tin collection and for opening their house so graciously to the Guild. Mrs. Heath asked Miss Oldham to be trustee for one year of the Collection.

Mrs. Brazer's first class and how it came about was then described to the members by Mrs. Harry Gilman and Mrs. John Oldham. Miss Esther Oldham spoke on "Antiquing with Esther and Mother".

The President thanked the Committee of Arrangements for the able manner in which the meeting had been planned, saying that the Wellesley Hills Country Club had been such a perfect spot for it and that even the weather couldn't have been more beautifully chosen. The Arrangements Committee were:

Mrs. Gordon Scott, Chairman  
Mrs. Robert W. Dana  
Mrs. Wm. Edmunds  
Mrs. C. W. Leslie  
Mrs. John MacAuliffe  
Miss Virginia Warren

The meeting was adjourned until the following day.

## THE FIRST CLASS

by Lucille Gilman

I have been asked to say a few words about the starting of our first class with Mrs. Brazer and of how it came about. One afternoon when calling upon an old friend of mine in Brookline, I spied a very attractively decorated box in her living room. I asked about it and she told me that a friend of hers, a Mrs. Roberts of Chestnut Hill, had painted it for her. As it was the kind of work I had always wanted to do myself, I immediately asked if I could get in touch with Mrs. Roberts to find out if, by chance, she was teaching herself, or working with someone. When I found that Mrs. Roberts knew of Mrs. Brazer who would consider taking a class, I telephoned Mrs. Oldham, Mrs. Blood, and Mrs. Leslie, all of whom I knew were interested in this kind of work. They were most enthusiastic and ready to start.

Mrs. Roberts invited us to paint in her kitchen. Our first lesson, when we discovered the wealth of design and information at our disposal, was almost too good to be true. If you could have seen us arriving for our lessons in cars fairly bursting with Hitchcock chairs, trays, boxes, etc., you would have wondered just what was going on.

We were all most enthusiastic, and as we progressed, we advanced from the kitchen to the hall — from the hall to the dining room — and from the dining room to the living room. So, you can imagine that there were days when the entire first floor was more than occupied, for doubtless, you all know how much space can be used in this work.

We started this first class in January 1931 and continued at Mrs. Roberts' house for two winters until she moved to Seattle. Then, Mrs. Oldham, who had a very nice roomy studio on her third floor, invited us to continue our work there. Little did we realize that we had the good fortune to study with one of the foremost experts of this country in the kind of work in which we were so interested, and now, I think that from this point Mrs. Oldham will also tell us a few interesting bits.

## THE FIRST CLASS

by Mrs. John Oldham

Mrs. Gilman has told you how she organized the first class and how enthusiastically we joined in.

I had been eager to do that kind of work for some years. In the late twenties we had a very energetic Chairman of the Arts and Crafts Committee of the Wellesley Hills Woman's Club, and there had been classes in everything from pottery to oil painting. I had tried them all, but was forced to the conclusion that I would never be a **real** artist but might be a good craftsman. I was much interested in the many articles by Esther Stevens Fraser in the magazine "Antiques" and in "Country Life" and so was my sister-in-law, Mrs. Arthur J. Oldham. We often went off "antiquing" together and found ourselves more and more collecting decorated tin-ware, trays and chairs. Then some Hitchcock chairs that had been in the family, came to my husband and I was interested to learn how to decorate them but no one seemed to know the right way to stencil, or to paint in the old manner. Mrs. Blood, Mrs. Gilman, Mrs. Leslie and I all felt alike about it, so when Mrs. Gilman heard of some one who would teach a class in that kind of work, at Mrs. Roberts' house in Chestnut Hill, we four joined in and hoped that, at last, we had found what we wanted.

I can remember the first lesson as though it were yesterday. The teacher was an attractive young woman who arrived with a basket-full of paints, etc., and a portfolio of designs and cut-out stencils. She asked us how we wanted her to start and we suggested that she let us take notes first, on how to prepare our chair or tray for the next lesson. I still have the notes I took on that first day. After she began to talk, I thought to myself "Well, she really knows what she is talking about"! Up to then I didn't know her name, or perhaps hadn't heard it distinctly, but Mrs. Gilman whispered to me it was Mrs. Fraser. Nothing clicked in my brain, for up to then Esther Stevens Fraser had been just a mythical older person who wrote expert articles for "Antiques" and probably lived in Philadelphia! However, a little later when it was possible, I sidled up to her, and timidly asked if she was by any chance, any relation to the Esther Stevens Fraser who wrote for "Antiques"? She turned to me with a quizzical expression on her face and said, "Well, **who** do you think I am?" Words can't express how I felt to have my dearest wish fulfilled!

We continued to meet at Mrs. Roberts' house about two winters, till she moved West, then after a few lessons at Mrs. Fraser's house in Cambridge, I decided I could have the class in my big

third-story room where our oil-painting class had been meeting. At first there were just the original four, now that Mrs. Roberts had moved away. Then, as one or another of the four dropped out for short periods of travel or illness, we took in an occasional substitute. Among those were Mrs. Gilbert N. Jones, Mrs. H. D. Wentworth, Mrs. Arthur C. Harvey, Mrs. Clarence Trevor, Mrs. Gordon Scott and Miss Adeline Joyce. During those later years another class was started in our town at Mrs. Barton's house, I believe, but that is not part of my story. Our original class kept on at least through the winter of 1937, seven years in all.

It has been quite an undertaking to find out the date of our beginning and how long we kept it up. I don't want you to think I am a salesman for the Phillips Brooks calendars, but if I hadn't kept them up faithfully for many years (and my check books) we would not have had accurate data. The first meeting of our class was Monday, January 12, 1931. So for at least seven years, we worked together.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Fraser had been coming often to Mrs. Arthur Oldham's house next door to me, to copy designs and to restore many of her lovely trays and pieces of furniture, and you will have the pleasure of seeing all of that wonderful work tomorrow.

A few other items may interest you. Esther Oldham came across this card that was sent out by her mother for a Loan Exhibition at her house, November 2, 1933.

Mrs. Arthur J. Oldham  
requests the pleasure of your company on  
Thursday, the second of November from one  
until five-thirty o'clock  
at a  
Loan Exhibition of Restored and Painted Chests,  
Chairs, Trays and Early Tin  
the work of Esther Stevens Fraser and some of  
her local pupils  
Mrs. Gilbert N. Jones                      Mrs. Ernest M. Skinner  
Mrs. Harry S. Gilman                      Mrs. John E. Oldham  
Mrs. Charles W. Leslie  
Tea from three until five-thirty o'clock  
24 Livermore Road, Wellesley Hills, Mass.

Then I found the date of an exhibition and sale in Worcester, May 22, 1934, at the studio of my cousin Homer Carr, an interior decorator. Mrs. Fraser, Mrs. Gilbert Jones and I took many pieces of our painted and stencilled work, and Mrs. Jones also showed some of her watercolors. It was quite a successful affair and I came home swelled with pride to think I had actually done something good enough to be purchased! Probably you all know that feeling!

I have had years of happiness and satisfaction from my work with Mrs. Brazer, and I owe a deep debt of gratitude to her and to Mrs. Gilman for organizing the class in the beginning.

## ANTIQUING WITH ESTHER AND MOTHER

by Esther Oldham

Esther Stevens Brazer represents to all of us, enthusiasm, love of the beautiful, and, above all generosity of spirit. With these three things in mind we, as a Guild, can not go wrong. Esther Brazer and Mother would have rejoiced at such a meeting, and it is here that I would like to say a few words about my mother, Mrs. Arthur J. Oldham, for those who did not know her. She was always very frail but full of enormous enthusiasm. She began collecting tinware and painted objects a long time ago, before in fact, they were so popular. Some of the pieces needed much restoration but she was intrigued with their designs and always hoped to find someone to restore them. It was not until about 1922 that she started collecting trays in more perfect condition, realizing that her eye-sight would not allow her to do the painting herself as she would loved to have done. She was always searching for someone to restore her ever increasing collection. There was a lady in Boston who did some of that work but it was not fully satisfactory. Then she learned of a dealer, an elderly lady in Waltham who did some painting. She tried her hand at one of Mother's pieces but the dealer, herself admitted it was not quite right, but she added that she had heard of a lady in Cambridge who was wonderful at restoring. Try as Mother would to locate the mysterious "lady from Cambridge", that is as far as she could get. She never even found out her name until several years later, as you can guess. When I was in Hawaii in 1931 there were letters from Mother full of a "most remarkable person with a charming personality and talent for painting, stencilling and restoring". I could hardly wait to get home to meet her, she sounded so interesting. I didn't realize until I came home that Mother had forgotten to write me her name. It was my aunt, Mrs. John E. Oldham, who brought Esther over to our home (my aunt lives next door) and that is how that fine friendship began. My aunt had already begun painting with the other members of the original class in her third story room. Esther came to our house regularly twice a week thereafter from 1931 until sometime in 1937, and you will notice tomorrow in the living-room the exquisitely decorated bellows with smoked background, signed with her name and dated 1937 which she gave to Mother before going to New York. My sister and I counted up the tinware collection including trays, various boxes, bread trays, etc., painted and stencilled chests, chairs and so forth and found they added up to more than 225 pieces. This number, however only includes one of the many sets of six and one piece only of the painted bedroom sets. Some of the pieces Esther decorated for my sister, Mrs. Borntraeger, for her Army home.

I have been asked to speak on "Antiquing with Esther and



Mother". That is not as easy as it sounds because there were many antiquing trips, tracking down stencilled floors, decorated walls, and just finding "things" and it is hard to pin ones-self down to any one journey as all were such fun. However, there was a trip to Lowell to get an old grandfather's clock. The clock was a mongrel, perhaps, but with lovely proportions and a quaint, crude house and bird design ornamenting its face, which by the way, needed restoring. All three of us drove up to this old gentleman's home. He was a fine man who had seen better days. It was hard to take the clock from his house because he loved it so and I was afraid it would have only unhappy memories but Esther changed all that. The clock travelled home on top of the car. A few days later Esther came out to restore the clock face. It had two great holes in it and was rather shabby looking. She painted it gray white. When it was done she looked at Mother uncertainly and said, "How do you like it?" Obviously neither one liked it. Then, Mother had an inspiration and said, "Couldn't you paint cracks across its face?" That was too much for Esther. You can imagine how she threw back her head and, bursting with laughter said, "Mrs. Oldham, people have asked many things of me, but never that. If you want cracks, cracks it shall be." I never see the clock without hearing Esther's ringing laughter. Tomorrow you will see the clock on the landing with the cracks painted on its face.

Another trip comes to mind that we took out to the western part of the state. West Cummington was the name of the town. We started off about six in the morning on one of the coldest January days with the thermometer hovering around six below zero. We were so eager to get out there to see a set of signed Hitchcock chairs that we had heard about that we forgot all about practical things such as overshoes to help us keep warm in an unheated car. It was a memorable day and we three were in high spirits in spite of the intense cold. We had luncheon at the Wiggin Tavern in Northampton and the warm fires burning in all the fire-places were hard to leave, but we were anxious to get started again as we had a long way to go. We had gone about three miles out into the country, when there was a shout from the back seat "There's an Antique Shop." Needless to say, I forgot everything, even that the roads were a sheet of ice. Instantly and instinctively I stepped on the brake quickly. You can well believe what happened. We went sliding down the embankment into a side road with no way of getting out of drifts many feet high. I can hear both of them on the back seat saying, "Now what are you going to do?" I remember replying that I was going up onto the main road to get help, and telling them not to worry. I stepped out into the drifts in my pumps hoping and praying something would happen to help us out of this plight. Just as I got up the slope, I saw coming down the road, one of the

largest type of oil trucks. The friendly driver leaned out and asked me what was the matter. He had two huge shovels and in five minutes we were up on the main road again. It just couldn't happen as wonderfully as that, but this was our lucky day. Then it occurred to us all this had happened on account of an antique shop and we hadn't gone into it. Undaunted we three got out of the car and slid down the icy walk to the shop. On the door a sign said "Will return at five o'clock." It was then two. We continued on our way. We reached West Cummington at last. The Hitchcock chairs proved to be all we hoped they would be and the set was soon loaded into our Nash coupe. We usually travelled with furniture on top of us. Before we left West Cummington, the shadows were getting deeper and the whole atmosphere was filled with frost. A lady near by saw us packing the chairs into the car and saw how cold we were. She asked us in for tea. We accepted with pleasure and were revived and ready for the long trip home. That should have been enough for one day, but — on the outskirts of West Cummington we saw a barn with an "Antiques" sign out. We felt we must stop because if we didn't we might miss something. It was here we found proof of something which had puzzled Esther and Mother for a long time and which was to settle their friendly arguments for all time on the question of the date of some of the trays with a plain cut edge. Mother had felt that perhaps some of those trays (not the ones with their crude block print type designs on the edge) might be a little earlier than Esther thought they were. Here we found two trays exactly alike with the cut edge. The trays were daubed over with black paint covering all traces of a design. Mother bought them. We had an uneventful trip home. The next time Esther came out to work she started taking the paint off the two trays. Lo and behold, there emerged from beneath the paint an exquisite early border design on a silver leaf band. Tomorrow in the third story room you will see that tray. On the back of it is written in Esther's handwriting "Tulip pattern on silver leaf found under black paint on this tray. Date 1770-1780." In her book on "Early American Decoration" it is pictured and dated as being about 1800. Both trays had the identical designs on them. Needless to say, Mother was delighted to give one of them to Esther as a souvenir of a wonderful day.

My last story is about a trip to the old Sandwich Glass Factory site in Sandwich, Mass. Esther, Mrs. John Oldham, Mrs. Gilbert Jones, Mother, Connie (Esther's younger daughter) and I set forth one day to dig for glass scraps in the vast dump which surrounds the factory ruins extending about one quarter of a mile. We were dressed like beggars, wearing the worst clothes we owned because we had been warned it was hard work. We were armed with pitch forks, pick-axes and shovels. We unearthed quantities of scraps in every color imaginable, even heads

of little black glass bears and parts of candlesticks. It was a real experience. In case this may all sound a bit childish I would like to say that the great stained-glass window artist, the late Mr. Charles Connick of Boston had carloads of these fragments shipped away from the "dump", then had them melted down, and re-used the beautiful colored glass in his famous stained-glass windows in St. John The Divine in New York. If anyone would like a piece of glass as a souvenir of Esther's and Mother's digging, tomorrow you will find a basket on the trestle table in the dining room, and anyone interested may help themselves.

Tomorrow, Mrs. Heath, your president, my aunt, Mrs. John Oldham, Mrs. Borntraeger and I, will welcome you with great pleasure. We have only one wish to make. We hope you will come early and stay late.

## RESOLUTION

Mrs. C. W. Leslie, chairman of the Resolutions Committee, read the following resolution:

WHEREAS, we who studied with Esther Stevens Brazer often heard her pay affectionate tribute to the now late Mrs. Arthur J. Oldham for her interest and helpfulness when Esther Stevens Brazer was pioneering in the field of Early American Decoration; and

WHEREAS, Miss Esther Oldham and Mrs. Anne Oldham Borntraeger have generously given to the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild seven pieces of Ann Butler tinware, originally from Greenville, N. Y., as a memorial to their mother; and

WHEREAS, this tinware is especially appropriate as the first gift toward the permanent collection of authentic Early American Decoration which this Guild intends to create in memory of Mrs. Brazer; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild hereby accepts this gift in the spirit in which it has been given; and that we will take whatever steps are possible toward providing a museum or other Guild Home where this and other gifts or acquisitions can be kept on view for the benefit of those who are interested in our work and its subject matter; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this Guild hereby expresses its grateful appreciation, both of the gift and of the thoughtfulness and generosity that inspired it; and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of these Resolutions be spread upon the minutes of this meeting and that copies be sent to Miss Esther Oldham and Mrs. Anne Oldham Borntraeger.

Signed:

RESOLUTIONS COMMITTEE

## THE OLDHAM HOME

On the morning of October 30, Guild members gathered at the home of Dr. Arthur Oldham in Wellesley Hills. They were graciously received by Miss Esther Oldham, Mrs. Ann Oldham Borntraeger and Mrs. John Oldham.

Starting on the first floor we saw interesting collections of old pewter, Pennsylvania German clay, rare blown Sandwich glass, and the fine miniature reproductions of furniture made by Dr. Oldham. Many of the decorated trays were in excellent original condition, and included elaborate scenic designs obviously the work of trained artists; also lace-edge and Chippendale trays, as well as stencilled rectangulars. There were bellows, boxes, trays and chests; also chairs — Bostons, Hitchcocks, Windsors and Sheratons — which had been restored and redecorated by Esther Brazier.

Going up the staircase we saw the clock face with the cracks finely painted on. On the second floor were fine pieces of early furniture, an outstanding fan collection, clocks, mirrors, trays and painted and stencilled chests and stands.

All of these are not merely display pieces. They are furnishings so expertly arranged that the visitor felt the livable, comfortable atmosphere of a gracious home.

Collector's Heaven on the third floor, had a large collection of beautiful colored glass baskets and vases, trays, small pieces of decorated tinware and toys; and more chairs and chests. Several pieces of decorated bedroom furniture were displayed.

We all felt warmly grateful to the Oldhams for giving us this opportunity to see their beautiful things, and came away full of ideas and enthusiasm.



Collector's Heaven, third floor of the Oldham home.

## THE NEW YORK MEETING

The first annual meeting of the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild was held in New York City at the Barbizon on Friday, May 2nd, 1947, with about 125 members present. Saturday almost 300 persons visited the Brazer home, Innerwick, at Flushing, Long Island.

The morning meeting was given over to an open forum on "What are our Guild standards and why?" led by Mrs. Martha Muller. Much useful information was brought out.

Mrs. Chivers stressed proper and painstaking recording of designs in the first place. Mrs. Devoe stated that, careful tracing, precise cutting, utmost attention to the proper tackiness of the surface to be stencilled, and finally good placing of stencils were essentials in stencilling. Mrs. Doble emphasized practice in brush strokes for country tin work. Mrs. Underhill and Mrs. Alexander spoke on painting, stressing smooth foundations, clear floating color and veiling and the necessity of using the proper varnish. Mrs. Prescott and Mrs. Burrows described different striping methods and brushes. Mrs. Wood, Mr. Dudley, Mrs. McAuliffe and Mrs. Hughes brought out points on finishing, such as proper room ventilation, covering of articles to be varnished with shallow boxes to prevent dust settling, the use of quick-drying varnishes and — most important — clean brushes. Mrs. Scott told how she felt the judging program would help to raise Guild standards, and Mrs. Drury spoke on the need for authenticity.

Mrs. Heath thanked the committee in charge of arrangements, and introduced Mrs. Andrew Underhill, its chairman, who extended greetings to the members and told of the plans for visiting Innerwick next day. Members of the Committee were:

Mrs. Andrew Underhill, Chairman

Mrs. Sidney Alden, Registration Chairman

Mrs. Lally Alexander  
Mrs. Philip Broughton  
Mrs. Walter Burrows  
Mrs. Irving Cabot  
Mrs. R. S. Christie  
Mrs. George DeVoe  
Mrs. Charles Fiske  
Mrs. J. H. Gordon

Mrs. Courtland Hastings  
Mrs. S. B. Heath  
Mrs. John Klein  
Mrs. Theresa Kenton  
Mrs. T. L. MacBean  
Mrs. Max Muller  
Mrs. Julie Sawdon  
Mrs. F. R. Stanforth

Luncheon was served in a private dining room.

At the opening of the afternoon session Mrs. Heath introduced the guest speaker, Mr. Charles Messer Stowe, Antiques Editor

of the New York "Sun." Most of the members have followed his column for years.

Mr. Stowe said that judging from our exhibit, (which was entirely of country tin and stencilled articles), our patron saint must be Ann Butler.

Mr. Stowe's topic was "Backgrounds of History." Modern times, he said, actually began with invention of the timepiece toward the end of the 16th century. Taste and styles began to change when man started to count seconds, minutes and hours. Watching time pass had affected art, architecture, drama, music and literature. He traced through different periods showing how motion developed a freer pattern in every phase of activity. Though 1830 legally divides antique from modern for the benefit of customs duties, he felt that our day had begun much earlier. He told us that Mrs. Brazer had thrown us a torch which we must pick up and carry on from where she left off.

Mrs. Heath expressed the Guild's thanks to Mr. Stowe.

At the business session Mrs. Muller reported that, including the fifty cents allotted from each member's dues, the first Decorator had paid for itself. Mrs. Christie, Membership Chairman, reported 344 members and 40 applications pending. In the absence of Mrs. Burrows, Chairman of the Committee on Chapters, Mrs. Chivers read a petition from a group of 25 members from New Hampshire and Vermont wishing to form a Connecticut River Valley Chapter. It was voted unanimously to grant this petition. Other groups of members wishing to form Chapters of the Guild may write to Mrs. Burrows, 500 Post Road, Noroton, Conn., for information.

Mrs. Heath announced that the Directors had voted to incorporate under the laws of the state of New York as the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc. She introduced Mr. Brazer, who invited members and friends to Innerwick the following day. He said that as soon as incorporation is completed, he would have a deed of gift of Esther Brazer's patterns, lantern slides, manuscript notes and photographs drawn up for presentation to the Guild, with the understanding that fireproof storage shall be provided for them, and he asked that they remain at Innerwick during his lifetime. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Guild, Mrs. Heath thanked Mr. Brazer for his generosity and cooperation, and said that appropriate steps would be taken to protect the collection. Mrs. McAuliffe, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, also thanked Mr. Brazer and called for suggestions for raising funds.

Mrs. Chivers read the proposed amendment to the Constitution reopening the charter until September 1, 1947, for persons who studied under Esther Brazier. It was adopted unanimously.

Former students of Mrs. Brazier who wish to apply for charter membership should write at once to Mrs. R. S. Christie, 460 West 24th St., New York 11, N. Y. No application received after September 1 can be considered. Charter membership is \$10 the first year, thereafter \$3, the same as regular membership.

Mrs. N. Williams, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, presented the names of Mrs. DeVoe, New Milford, Conn., Mrs. Plimpton, Springfield, Mass., and Mrs. Underhill, New York City, to serve as Directors for three years. They were elected unanimously.

Meanwhile the judges had been working all day, grading each exhibit carefully according to specifications. Guild members are grateful to them for sacrificing the entire meeting in order to sort out the A's from the B's and the C's. It is hoped that at another time they may be provided with soft music and occasional refreshment to make their lot easier. When the door opened to the exhibit room, members streamed in to view, at last, the fine decorated country tin boxes, trays, pitchers, etc.; and the stencilled tables, boxes, trays and other articles.

Mrs. Gordon Scott was in charge of the judging program. The judges were:

Mrs. E. A. Bond  
Mrs. Philip Broughton  
Mrs. Walter Burrows  
Mrs. C. H. Drury  
Mrs. Alfred Ells  
Mrs. Avery Gordon

Mrs. Elisabeth Gordon  
Mrs. Charles Johnson  
Mrs. Robert Keegan  
Mrs. Ludwig Link  
Mrs. Harry MacDuffie  
Mrs. E. W. Seasongood

Miss Florence Wright



The Directors met immediately after the Guild meeting. Mrs. C. H. Drury of Springfield, Vt., was appointed to fill out the unexpired term of Mr. William Hilton. The following officers were elected:

Mrs. S. Burton Heath, President  
Mrs. John McAuliffe, 1st Vice President  
Mrs. Andrew Underhill, 2nd Vice President  
Mrs. Carroll Drury, Recording Secretary  
Mrs. George DeVoe, Corresponding Secretary  
Mrs. Arthur Chivers, Treasurer

Mrs. Gordon Scott was reappointed as Chairman of the Committee on Judging and Standards, and Mrs. Max Muller as Editor of THE DECORATOR.

## INNERWICK

On Saturday, May 3rd, 1947, members of the Guild and friends attended open house at the Brazers' home, Innerwick, in Flushing, Long Island.

It is a beautiful home, dear to the hearts of the many who went there to study and paint with Esther Brazer. We are deeply grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Brazer for making this visit possible and for their gracious hospitality.

Mr. Brazer personally conducted groups through the house and explained the many noteworthy features. Mrs. Wyld and Mrs. Alexander, both of Garden City, furnished the beautiful floral arrangements.

The following description of the house is from an article by Mrs. Ruth Howe Wood printed in the Springfield (Mass.) Sunday Union and Republican November 9, 1941. Some things about the house have been slightly changed — and much has been added — since then, including the beautiful hand-painted wall in the master bedroom and the stencilled guest room wall, but the main features are the same.



**Mrs. Brazer in her studio  
at Innerwick**

## INNERWICK

by Ruth Howe Wood

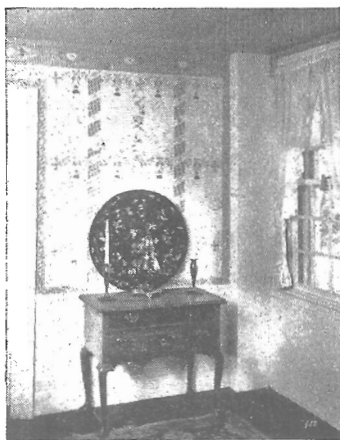
You are never conscious at "Innerwick" of any restoration or that the refurnishings are collections. Each article has a reason for being where it is and they all help create a mellow atmosphere, achieved only when restoration is expertly done. It is a home as easy to live in today as when it was built in 1670, and no longer do the Dutch doors have to be closed in the lower sections to keep out wandering cows.

The first owner of whom there is a record was one Col. Archibald Hamilton, British officer, who termed himself a gentleman. He was a kin of Capt. Napier, commander of one of the finest British regiments. Long Island was largely Tory at the time of the Revolution and Col. Hamilton was one of the Tories concerned in a plot to assassinate Washington in his camp in Brooklyn. As there were 500 other Tories included in the plot the news leaked out and nothing came of it. Col. Hamilton was seized by order of the Continental Congress and sent to New London but owing to the fact that he was no great prize and that his wife was the granddaughter of Cadwallader Colden, governor of the province of New York, he was released. Ill luck followed him from then on.

Stories still cling that the townspeople came on Christmas Eve, 1779, and burned the house to drive out Hessian soldiers who were quartered here. Bullets and military equipment were stored in the attic. A newspaper account the following January says, "Last Christmas Eve the home of Col. Hamilton at Flushing,



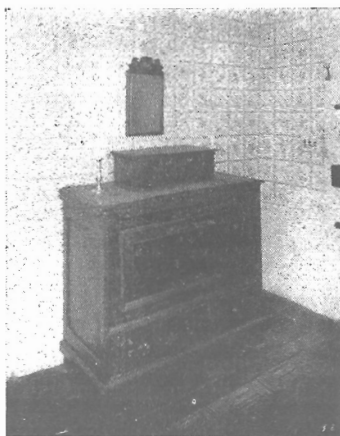
Studio at Innerwick



**Dining room, Innerwick**

Long Island, suddenly caught fire and was burned to the ground, consuming great quantities of elegant furniture, a fine flock of provisions and large quantities of various sorts of wines intended for the regale of his numerous friends, the military and other gentlemen of that neighborhood at this convivial season."

Mr. Brazer does not believe that the ell of the house burned, merely the main part. The chimnies and timbers in the ell, indicate that the construction is older than 1780. This was probably the original house. The little lean-to was added in 1700 and the main



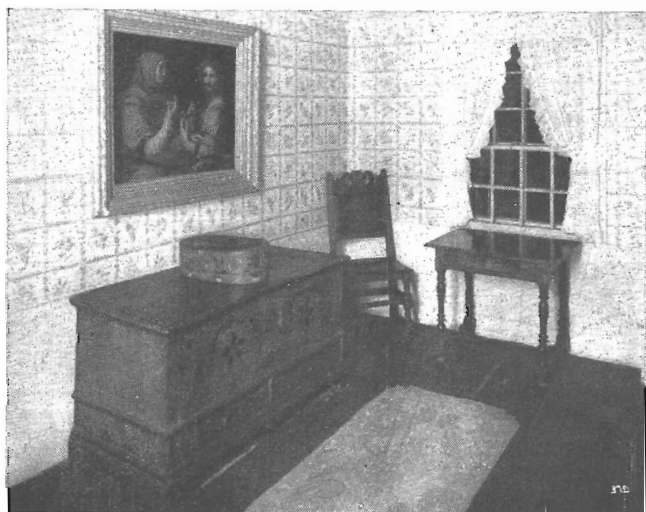
**Connecticut chest in front hall,  
Innerwick**

part rebuilt in 1790. Also, the Brazers think the house burned from overheated chimnies, rather than having been set on fire.

"Innerwick" has had surprisingly few owners. After Col. Hamilton fled to London, the year after the fire, it was seized for debt by Henry Mitchell and was kept in the Mitchell family until bought by Marsden Perry, brother of the Perry of the firm Perry, Shaw & Hepburn who restored Williamsburg. The Perrys lived there for a number of years and then it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Brazer.

A hallway runs from end to end of the main part of the house. The large iron keys to the huge Dutch doors hang on the wall and the original strap hinges are still in place. Wide floorboards are painted dark brown and scattered with hooked rugs. The woodwork is white in the halls, but in other rooms harmonizes with the walls. It is only in New England that we think Colonial woodwork must be white. Mrs. Brazer painted it in an oil glaze, the colors being mixed with linseed oil. She used no varnish and consequently after the antiquing process the wood has the lovely soft tones that only time can produce.

In the lower hall stands the most valuable piece in the house, the Guilford chest (1695). Mrs. Brazer, who restored furniture for the Metropolitan Museum and the Pennsylvania Museum of Arts, uncovered two coats of paint so successfully that the colors are as clear as when they were put on. The design is scratched on with a sharp tool and the colors filled in. The decorator knew



Upper hall, Innerwick

something of heraldry from the way the pattern is divided. In the middle the little King Charles II figure on the draw, shows the design springing from the man's hands. It was a kitchen-living room piece without doubt, as inside it has a rail for salt and pepper, as well as two tills.

In the living room are some interesting and rare cornices, which came from Guilford, Conn. They are glass with the design done in gold leaf, backed with a soft green. There were but two cornices, so Mrs. Brazer reproduced one for the third window and it would be difficult to tell it from the originals. Over the fireplace in this room, is an interesting painting done on sheet iron, a contemporaneous copy of one by Benjamin West. It shows the death of Gen. Wolfe. This was the first time that soldiers had been painted in the uniforms they wore in place of classic costumes such as togas. Sir Joshua Reynolds said that it couldn't be done without losing dignity, but this did not prove to be true.

The living room also contains the signed Hitchcock chair and the Washington tray shown in Mrs. Brazer's book. The tray is a gallery type, painted with a scene of a soldier of the Connecticut guard standing at the tomb of Washington. A fireback in this room was probably from the shop of Paul Revere and it shows crossed cannons, 13 stripes on the flag, the date 1788, and the lettering "G. Washington."

The dining room walls show the first wall stencilling that Mrs. Brazer did in her new home. They are done in soft blues and rose with enough accent of black to give character to the pattern. There is a central design over the fireplace and then the stencilling follows the construction of the room, with a frieze baseboard design and vertical panels. It is a perfect background for the choice early trays that are scattered on the walls.

In one corner is a large round papier maché tray, the design painted by an Italian decorator who did Queen Charlotte's coach. In another corner are two oblong trays, one white, and the other a red Pontypool tray.

In the dining room is a portrait of Washington, painted on glass. When Gilbert Stuart did his portrait of Washington it was copied many times. An enterprising sea captain from Philadelphia took a print to China and had copies painted on glass. When Stuart saw his Washington done in reverse and with oriental features, even to slant eyes, he had all of the paintings broken that he could get hold of. One at least escaped and is at "Innerwick."

One of the most interesting places in the house is the tinroom as Mrs. Brazer called it. She utilized the old buttery or milk room

with its rows of shelves to display the gaily painted tin trunks, trays, boxes, cannisters, teapots and even a napkin ring. A closet in the corner contains miniature tinware, tiny lace edge trays, coffin trays and toys.

The tin room is a Stevens museum, for here are the daguerreotypes of the Stevens family with the work they did many years ago. Mrs. Brazer had been painting a number of years before she discovered that her great-grandfather, Zachariah Stevens, was the founder of the tinware industry of Maine at Stevens Plains, near Portland. He finished his apprenticeship, she believed, in 1779 in the shop of Paul Revere. As Revere had no sons of his own to carry on his shop, he imported a decorator from England to train his nephews as well as other young men. Lace edge trays have been attributed to Paul Revere. Zachariah's son, Samuel, also a tinsmith, married a painter of tinware, Sarah Francis, whose grandmother was Paul Revere's sister.

In time Stevens Plains became a crafts center and painters came from other places. Tin peddlers carried the wares as far as Canada. Mrs. Brazer specialized in collecting Zachariah Stevens pieces. She also discovered that he stencilled walls and she located old houses where the painting was as bright as it was when he put it on.

The old kitchen in the ell was the room Mrs. Brazer used for a studio. The woodwork is a soft bluish green, and on the boxed stairway is a peep-hole which centers on the fireplace. In the night a person could keep watch of the fire without having to go downstairs.

Pennsylvania bride's boxes, fractures, and chests are seen throughout the house. The famous unicorn dower chest is upstairs, likewise the McIntyre bed, with its carving done in low relief.

"Innerwick" has many rare and interesting pieces. Each thing has a reason for being in place, and it makes a charming and interesting home.

## FALL MEETING AT HANOVER

The Guild will hold its fall meeting at Hanover, N. H., October 3 and 4. The Connecticut River Valley Chapter, of which Mrs. Carroll Drury of Springfield, Vermont, is President, is in charge of arrangements.

The tentative program:

Friday, October 3

9-10 A. M.—Registration (Fee \$1) Parish House of the Church of Christ.

10-11:30 A. M.—Business meeting followed by discussion groups or open forum.

12 M.—Luncheon, Hanover Inn.

1:30 P. M.—Demonstrations, perhaps furniture stencilling and striping. Talks and discussion on subject to be chosen. Display of original pieces.

Saturday, October 4

No scheduled program, leaving the day free to enjoy Hanover, visit Dartmouth college buildings, inspect the Guild exhibit at the Carpenter Galleries, and probably visit a few private collections of antiques.

The "Ski Hut" across the gardens from the Inn, is being reserved as a rendezvous for members, in which we can lounge, talk shop and make ourselves at home.

### Reservations

Room reservations may be made at the Hanover Inn; at Norwich Inn, Norwich, Vt., two miles across the river; or at Alden Tavern, Lyme, N. H., ten miles up the river. There may be a few rooms available in private homes, for which the Hanover Chamber of Commerce should be contacted not later than September 15.

The Hanover Inn is setting aside fifty rooms for us. Reservations for these can be made at any time BEFORE September 1. To make these rooms go as far as possible it is hoped that members will double up; those willing to do so should name their room-mate when making the reservation. The rate will be three-fifty to four dollars a person per night.

If Guild members eat together the Inn will offer a special rate lower than the regular a la carte charge. Whether or not you intend to stay at the Inn, you may check the meals you wish to eat there with the group and send it to the Inn. Meal tickets will be ready when you arrive.

October is a popular month in New England and the week end of our meeting immediately precedes the opening of college. Therefore it is important that reservations be made well in advance. If cancellation should be necessary it should be done as early as possible.



## GUILD EXHIBITION AT CARPENTER ART GALLERIES

Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H.

Open to the public October 3 to 15.

We are grateful to Dartmouth College for making their Art Gallery available to us for this occasion. In order that our exhibition may be both instructive and interesting, the following groups will be shown:

1. **Original Old Decorated Pieces** — furniture is wanted, as well as other decorative objects — unusual and in good condition.

2. **Interesting Pieces** — work of members, for exhibit or for sale; any articles, particularly lace-edge, gallery or Chippendale trays, chairs, boxes, bellows, mirrors, clocks, etc. All work must show a high grade of craftsmanship, and the committee reserves the right to reject any article for lack of space or because it does not meet Guild Standards of good workmanship. However these will not be judged.

3. **Work by Guild Members**, entered for judging by those wishing to become approved as "Master Craftsmen"; particularly helpful for those seeking to improve their work and desiring constructive comments.

The Classes to be judged at this time will be:

a. Country tin, b. Stencilling, c. Gold Leaf and/or Freehand Bronze.

They will be judged by the following classifications:

Class A. Excellent — in design, color, and form. Superior craftsmanship. 100-90

Class B. Good in design, form and craftsmanship. 89-80

Class C. Below our standard of good craftsmanship or technique. Accepted because of qualities which give promise of ability to improve. 79-70

All three classes may be entered, and the "A" awards will apply toward the "Master Craftsman."

**The judging of work** by Guild members will take place on October 1 and 2. All articles for judging or exhibition must be sent prepaid and insured to Miss Mildred Morse, Carpenter Hall, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H., care of Esther Stevens Brazer

Guild. They should be sent to arrive by September 27. Articles will be returned after October 15, express collect and insured. Blanket insurance will be carried by the Guild while the articles are in Hanover.

ENTRY CARDS must be sent with each article. Write to Mrs. Gordon Scott for your cards BEFORE September 1, giving a brief description of your intended entries, as well as any interesting information about the history of your article; include any information about the pattern which might be helpful to the judges: reproduction of an original, adaptation, or note anything unusual.

Further instructions about the entry card, and a guidance sheet which will contain the points to be considered in the judging, will be mailed to each person registering her intention to enter articles to be judged.

## EXCERPTS

For the benefit of those who have no access to Esther Stevens Brazer's "Early American Decoration," or to Janet Waring's "Early American Stencils on Walls and Floors," the following quotations have been selected:

### STRIPING

"On old furniture and trays we seldom find a fine hairline stripe in bronze, probably because the mixture of varnish with powder is apt to thicken quickly so that an even flow from the brush is next to impossible. Fine stripes of yellow paint are most customary."<sup>1</sup> Paint should be mixed with varnish.<sup>2</sup>

"Broad stripes, which we will call bands, to distinguish them from the fine hairline stripe — are done by several different methods. They may be laid on with a thick striping brush, but are apt to be unsatisfactory because one side of the line or the other usually spreads out of the desired bounds. Our preference is the double hairline stripe which is filled in by a long sweep of a broad three-quarters inch hair show card brush. A beautifully smooth band in bronze results from rubbing on dry bronze powder with a velvet-wrapped finger, just before the striping sets. But, we must first be certain that there is nothing else sticky in the vicinity which can receive this powder accidentally."<sup>3</sup>

"Place broad band on floor of the tray about  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches from the bend where the edge begins. Mix this paint with varnish and brown gold bronze or green bronze powder and apply with fine striping brush in two parallel lines, filling in with larger show card brush. Add a fine yellow stripe just within the bronze band and at either edge of the border. Make this yellow of varnish, mixed with chrome yellow light and yellow ochre to the desired shade. When these stripes have set, take flat black paint and trim off all undesired marks and unnecessary bronze powder, particularly around the silhouettes in the border."<sup>1</sup>

1. Brazer, Esther Stevens, *Early American Decoration*, Pond-Ekberg Co., Springfield, Mass. 1940 p. 64.
2. *Ibid* p. 218.
3. *Ibid* p. 63.

Note pictures of trays in Mrs. Brazer's book following page 148, and the colored plate of the "Swing Tray" opposite page 207.

(Note also in Miss Waring's book the striping of the stencilled trays, opposite pages 90, 91 and 193.)

## FREE HAND BRONZE PAINTING 1750-1820

1. Lay pattern on perfectly dry flat background.

Various colors are used inlaying freehand bronze powders.

- a. lamp black in japan with varnish, or lamp black in oil with gold size.
- b. burnt umber in oil with gold size or varnish.
- c. dull green leaf color with gold size or varnish.

Varnish is better for larger units — allowing more time for drying. For speed however, sizing may be used for the smaller areas.<sup>4</sup>

2. Apply bronze powders with velvet and shade as in stencilling. Use brush wet with water (saliva) or charcoal drawing stump for veins and highlights. Allow 24 hours for drying before applying color over fruits or flowers.<sup>5</sup> For painted veins, and scrolling tendrils, apply chrome yellow and concord yellow in Japan mixed with japan gold size.<sup>6</sup>

3. "If two bronze shaded sections of a pattern come directly against each other, they must be executed one at a time."<sup>3</sup>

Note page 216 in Mrs. Brazer's book for illustration of—

1. Rose pattern in steps opp. P. 72
2. Stencil and freehand bronze pattern on a green background.
3. Bellows P. 211-213.

4. Brazer p. 70.

5. Ibid p. 70

6. Ibid p. 70.

## THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

During the first year of the Guild we have completed much of our organizational detail, and may now expect to give more attention to the objectives which are our reason for existence.

By the time this reaches you, we may already be incorporated in New York as the "Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc." This was voted by the Directors May 1, to facilitate acceptance of gifts and maintenance of a museum.

I like the chosen name because it is a reminder of one of our objectives. History, the dictionary says, is "the branch of knowledge that records and explains past events."

There could be no more apt description of what Esther Stevens Brazer was always trying to do in the field of Early American Decoration.

She did not seek to create a new craft, but to revive and preserve an historical one. In doing so, she did what history does — she took a true cross-section of what she found.

In her studio she gathered examples that covered a very wide range. There is the round lace-edge tin tray decorated by Italian artists Pergolesi and Ciprani who were brought to England by the Adams brothers to work under Angelica Kaufman; and the free-hand bronze on papier mache, both so beautifully executed that it would be presumptuous for one to try to reproduce them without years of apprenticeship.

There are the articles decorated by stencilling which was introduced as an ingenious short cut — reproductions of walls stencilled and painted to bring color into modest early American homes — and on down the line to homely tin ware, bright with color while serving its utilitarian purposes.

Our Guild's use of Esther Stevens Brazer's name expresses our intention of carrying on her work.

We may try to emulate Angelica Kaufman — or some unknown craftsman. We may work with chairs designed by Sheraton himself, — or by some anonymous cabinet maker. Our tray may have been fashioned by Paul Revere — or by a later tinsmith who sent it out to be peddled on commission from a roving cart, along with tin shaving mugs, spice boxes and what-have-you.

Whatever it is that we are trying to copy from the early American period, let us restore and preserve what comes our way in the spirit in which it originally was done.

Some may wish to improve on the original, to make an adaptation that is more beautiful, more artistic, more skillfully executed. We have purposely created classes for such work, which is distinct from the recapture and reproduction of the original as it actually was done.

Much has been said about high standards as applied to technique, and to authenticity. Those Guild members who have exhibited have shown that they are alert and eager to improve their work. No official policy on standards has been adopted, but the two exhibits held thus far have brought up many points for consideration. I believe that they have helped to clarify the question "What are our Guild standards?" and that the directors will be able to define and recommend a policy for your consideration at the Hanover meeting.

The following were contributing members for the year 1946-47: Miss Esther Oldham, Mrs. Andrew Underhill, Miss Constance Fraser, Mrs. Gordon Scott, Mrs. Albert Johnston, Miss Katherine Curtis and Mrs. W. S. Leffler. Contributions were also made to the Museum Fund by the following: Mesdames W. A. Bone, A. H. Chivers, Fernley Fuller, Lewis H. Gordon, Charles T. Howard, Orlo Richardson, H. M. Walker, Marion Dodge, John Rochester, Ruth Foote; also by Miss Lois Melendy and Miss Esther Nicholson.

It has been decided that the DECORATOR, which will be published twice yearly, would be most helpful coming out following our meetings. Since our fiscal year ends June 30, and dues are now payable for the year 1947-48 (send your check to Helen W. Chivers, Treas.) we will publish a complete list of members in the next issue of the Decorator. In sending your check to Helen Chivers, please bear in mind that we need a large number of contributing members. We appreciate the fact that many of you have added amounts to your checks.

As soon as our incorporation is completed and we are able to accept Mr. Brazer's gift of Esther Brazer's patterns, photographs, manuscript notes, etc., it is important that we take immediate steps to provide fireproof storage for them. I should like to be able to tell you at Hanover that we have already done so.

And now I must turn to my brush strokes and striping. For days and NIGHTS after the New York meeting I saw brush strokes everywhere, always tapering at the end into a fine nothing. It may mean a busy summer, to prepare three exhibits for Hanover, but I shall try. And I'll be thinking of you too, for I know many of you are already doing the same thing.

## QUESTION BOX

conducted by Emilie Underhill

Address all questions to Mrs. Andrew Underhill, Bellport, Long Island.

Question—What kind of a stencil pattern may I use on a Chippendale tray?

Answer —Never use a stencil pattern on Chippendale, Queen Anne or lace-edge trays. There have been exceptions to this rule, but they are few.

Question—Can you use radiator paint for gold work?

Answer —No! That's for radiators. Use gold powder rubbed into tacky size or servicersal.

Question—What makes the background black so streaked?

Answer —The flat black is probably too thick. Thin it with turps. It is better to have more thin black coats than two thick streaky ones.

Question—Is there anything I can do to prevent varnish from becoming bubbled?

Answer —Never stir varnish—unless it is the dull finish variety. Never stroke brush on lip of can when using. Use a clean brush and light sweeping strokes. Do not bear down too hard.

Question—How can I keep varnish coat free of dust specks?

Answer —This problem is the exasperation of all decorators. There are many theories on the subject. One method is to let varnished article dry underneath the protection of an overturned box cover.

Question—I want to stencil a box. Should I treat the whole front as a unit or do the edge of the cover separately?

Answer —The edge of the lid of a box which extends over the front section usually has a separate border design or just a stripe all around.

Question—How does one restore old gold leaf in a two tone border to simulate the definite color used in original design where one is dark?

Answer —Procure the gold leaf nearest in shade to the design. There are three or four shades manufactured. A whole unit may be completely regilded or a small area filled in and then toned down to match in the varnish process — while the varnish is still very wet add small amount of tinting as in floating color to make new gold leaf tone into original work.

Question—What medium is recommended now for applying the fine lines in gold leaf work? Can we make it or buy it somewhere?

Answer —Black serviceseal will flow from a crowquill pen This may be purchased in paint stores. Or to quote from Mrs. Brazer's book "a solution of gum arabic, sugar and water with a little wine, just thin enough to flow from a pen" may be mixed at home.

Question for the experts: Is asphaltum ever used for antiquing? Your answers to the above are solicited for the next issue.

Now ask me another!

## Swap Column

Advertise your wants, etc.

I want to trade a brand new fluorescent desk lamp good to cut stencils by, for a 32 inch, or larger rectangular tray. — M. Muller.

Will do almost anything for a Baby Hitchcock chair with or without original decoration. — Emily Heath.

I'm in the market for a lace edge tray, any size or shape. — Emilie Underhill.

Me, too. — Jane MacBean

Would like to buy patterns — is anyone willing to do some for me? — "Cal" c/o Decorator.

Advertise your wants — one dollar for four lines or less, twenty-five cents each additional line.



## ESTHER STEVENS BRAZER GUILD MEETING

October 3-4, 1947

Hanover Inn,  
Hanover, N. H.

Please make the following room reservation for me:

..... Thursday night, October 2.

..... Friday night, October 3.

..... Saturday night, October 4.

I plan to eat with the Guild group:

..... Thursday night, Dinner.

..... Friday, GUILD LUNCHEON.

..... Friday night, Dinner.

..... Saturday, Lunch.

..... Saturday night, Dinner.

I shall room with .....

Signed: Name .....

Address .....

(Check proper lines and mail to Hanover Inn, not later than Sept. 1.)

## GUILD EXHIBITION

Mrs. Gordon Scott,  
Uxbridge, Mass.

Please send me entry cards for the following articles:

- (1) Original Old Decorated .....
- (2) Article decorated by me, for exhibit only .....
- (3) To be Judged (may include 3), country tin, stencilling,  
Gold Leaf and/or Free hand bronze (or both included  
in one) .....

Signed: Name .....

Address .....