# The Decorator

Volume XVII, No. 1

Woodstock, Vermont

Fall, 1962



Journal of the

ESTHER STEVENS BRAZER GUILD

of the

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF

EARLY AMERICAN DECORATION, INC.



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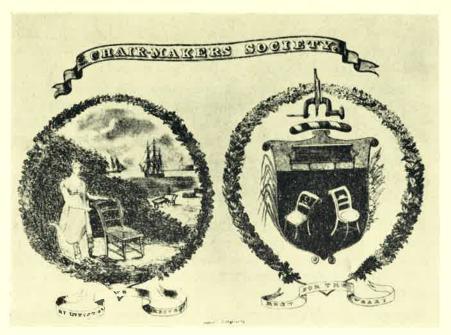
Cover Photograph A John White Chair, Courtesy of Mrs. N. Grier Parke

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Print of the Original Banner carried by Master Chair Makers

#### **EDITORIAL**

At the Woodstock Meeting one could not help but capture Mr. John Kenney's respect and admiration for Lambert Hitchcock, a 19th century chair and cabinet maker who possessed a 20th century business sense and a deep appreciation of fine craftsmanship.

Lambert Hitchcock, a native of Cheshire, Connecticut, was born on June 28, 1795. In 1818 he settled in Barkhamsted, Connecticut where he established a chair factory on the Farmington River. As this became the leading industry of the town, a small settlement grew up around the factory which became known as Hitchcockville.

For the first few years Lambert Hitchcock made only chair parts which he shipped in large quantities as far south as Charleston, South Carolina. By 1825 he devoted all his time to producing finished chairs, as many as fifty a day, in a variety of styles to suit the fancy of everyone. Writing for the Connecticut Tercentenary Commission in 1933, Mabel R. Moore wrote, "He was probably the originator of the sturdy, distinctive, type of chairs that bear his name."

Not only did he advertise in the newspapers of the time, but he signed his pieces during this period with a stencilled label on the narrow strip across the back of the seat which read, "L. Hitchcock, Hitch-

cockville, Conn. Warranted". Lambert was very particular about the condition of the wood and the workmanship, and to quote again from Mabel R. Moore, "The 'Warranted' implied that they were built on honor, as 100 (now 125) years of service have proven".

In 1826 Hitchcock built a large, three story, brick factory in which he employed one hundred men, women, and children. The women decorated all the furniture at a time when there was little that women could do outside their homes, and the children applied the first coat of deep red paint.

In 1828 Arba Alford, his production manager, became a partner in the business and the name was changed to "Hitchcock, Alford, and Co., Warranted". Business flourished until 1829 when "as a consequence of repeated losses and misfortunes", Hitchcock was forced into bankruptcy and the business was carried on under the management of Trustees with Lambert serving as business agent. In 1832 the claims of the creditors were satisfied and Lambert Hitchcock once more took over the business.

Meanwhile in 1830 Lambert married Eunice Alford, his partner's sister. Judging from correspondence and a poem written by Lambert in 1831, "The Choice of A Wife", they were a most devoted couple.

With his business partner he built a large house across from the factory which was most unusual in that a solid brick wall that ran from cellar to attic divided the two sides which had identical rooms. Arba Alford and his mother lived in the west side of the house which had no connecting doors to the Hitchcock home. Eunice died in 1835 and Lambert remarried in 1836. By this marriage to Mary Ann Preston he had three sons and one daughter



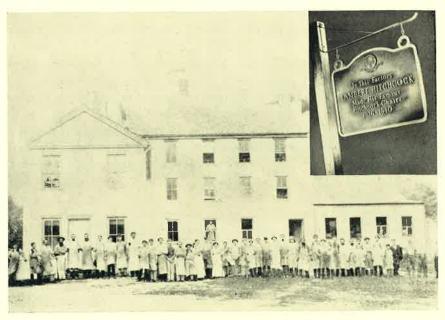
Advertisement, or "Broadside", one of the documents in the Hitchcock Library

In 1834 Hitchcock became a representative to the General Assembly from Barkhamsted, and in 1840 and 1841 he served as a senator from the 15th district. In the early '40s he left the Hitchcockville factory and moved to Unionville where he opened another factory and continued to make chairs of the same construction and decoration. These were labeled "Lambert Hitchcock, Unionville, Connecticut".

In the meantime Arba Alford took his brother Alfred into the business, and the Hitchcock factory continued under the name of "Alford and Company". During this period a general store was opened in one wing. Finally in 1864 the factory was sold to Leroy and Delos Stephens who manufactured pocket rulers for over forty years. In 1866 the name of the village was changed to Riverton because of the similarity of Hitchcockville and Hotchkissville.

Lambert Hitchcock died in 1852 after manufacturing chairs for a period of 43 years.

The old factory fell into a state of disrepair and was abandoned until Mr. John Kenny "caught the idea", while trout fishing in the Farmington River in August 1946, "that was transformed into the 20th century Hitchcock Chair Company."



Early photograph of the Old Hitchcock Chair Factory Riverton (Hitchcockville), Conn. Insert — State Landmark Sign Outside Factory

Two years later the first re-created Hitchcock chair was completed: the same Hitchcock chair made by electrical rather than water power; decorated with the same designs, now produced with airbrush rather than the finger; and signed with the same stencilled signature except for the reversed "Ns" to distinguish the re-created from the original.

With business details too demanding on his time to be able to contribute an article on Lambert Hitchcock for The Decorator, Mr. Kenny has most generously supplied the photographs and much of the material for this article for which we wish to express our appreciation.

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#### THE TINKER'S TIMEPIECE

by Silvio A. Bedini

(Taken from "Old Timers", a book about historical American timepieces, to be published in the near future.) Reprint from The Antiques Journal, March 1960.

The grandfather clock, that stately guardian of time that beats out the measured tread of the hours from its station in the hallway or on the stairs, has been made in various forms and encased in a variety of woods over the past several centuries of its evolution. Each period or locality might change the style of the dial or the proportion of the case, but the one characteristic that has never varied has been the wooden case. Always, that is, with the exception of a clock recently acquired by Mr. Edward S. Jones of Los Angeles. The case of this grandfather clock was made entirely of tin!

Mr. Jones first saw the clock in a small shop and purchased it. The unusual aspect of the case intrigued him, for not only was it constructed entirely from tin, but more than sixty separate pieces had been soldered or fitted together to form the case, which stands seven feet seven and a half inches in height.

No wood was used. Other than the three pieces of glass used in the door and side lights of the hood, the only other material employed was a strip of brass stamped out to form a gallery to decorate the top of the hood. The case was made in four separate units which fitted together like sections of stove-pipe. When assembled, these became sufficiently rigid to hold the clock safely, with tight and firm joints even though no other reinforcement was provided.

All joints were soldered together neatly and with considerable skill, unquestionably the work of a master tinsmith. The case was finished in oil paint and grained to resemble golden quarter sawed oak. So authentically was the painting done that the case would easily have passed for wood except upon the closest examination.

The clock movement and dial which were housed in this unique case were the work of an English 18th Century maker who inscribed his name on the dial: "Samuel Olive/Egham Hythe". Olive worked at Tonbridge from 1773 through 1794 and advertised that he "Makes clocks upon an invention of his own; they go 8 days and repeat and cost L-2.5s". The movement of the present clock is an eight-day handmade movement of brass, with an engraved brass dial plate, with a time and strike train, striking the hours and half-hours on a single bell. A 'Strike-Silent' indicator on the dial made it possible to silence the clock when desired. There is also a calendar attachment.

The unusual character of the case naturally aroused considerable speculation about its maker. Mr. Jones, a collector of antique clocks, set out to discover whatever he could. Although he obtained the name of the previous owner from the dealer, the address was unknown. After many months of sleuthing, he located and interviewed the last owner, Miss Mabel LeFevre of La Jolla, California.

The clock had been a family heirloom and she had been the fourth generation to own it. The LeFevre family tradition related that the clock case had been made by her great grandfather, a tinsmith named Guillaume or William LeFevre.

According to the story which Mr. Jones was able to piece together from family records and published accounts, the LeFevre family was of Huguenot origin. With the French persecution of the Huguenots in the 18th Century, William LeFevre fled with his family from France to England in 1765. They found their way to Canterbury, probably to join the large Walloon colony that had become established there. In Canterbury or its environs LeFevre spent his boyhood or young manhood and learned the trade of tinsmithing, for which this English locality was famous.

When the American Revolution ended, William LeFevre with other members of the family, including possibly a brother, emigrated to the United States. They probably formed part of a group of French refugees who came to establish new homes in the colonies. One member of the LeFevre family, possibly William's brother, settled in Virginia, while William LeFevre made his way to upper New York State. He had been married and had a growing family before he left England, because family records indicate that one of his sons, Thomas LeFevre, remained in Canterbury. Thomas eventually married and raised a family in Canterbury, where he practiced the trade of tinsmith like his father. Later he moved to Staines, a town about nineteen miles southwest of London and about two miles from Egham. LeFevre Cranston, the well known English painter, was a descendant of this family.

It was quite in the nature of things that William LeFevre made his way into the Mohawk Valley, where the fine farm lands were being settled and where agricultural communities were growing rapidly as new settlers were drawn into the area by the development of railroads and the opening of the Erie Canal. (1825) A tinsmith was a necessary and valuable member of any new community.

Little is known about William LeFevre's early years in the country of his adoption. Although family tradition states that he settled in or near Ithaca in Tompkins County, no records of vital statistics for his family could be found in that locality. Yet a son and namesake, William LeFevre 2nd, was born in Northville near Ithaca, date not known. Young William married an English girl named Rebecca Smith in the 1840s.

Once he had settled his family in a new home and had established a thriving business, LeFevre undoubtedly gave some thought to the provision of commodities and even some luxuries for his new home. A clock would have been almost a necessity.

Clocks were a rarity in the colonies during this period, particularly in rural communities. The types usually found were hang-up open movements, and tall case clocks were extremely expensive inasmuch as most of them were imported.

LeFevre apparently decided to overcome this difficulty by combining his personal skills with the materials that were readily available to him. According to the story handed down in the family, he wrote to relatives or friends in England and imported the movement to a tall case clock. This is borne out by the fact that the movement and dial he used in his tin case was marked Hythe, a village located about fifteen miles from Canterbury, from which LeFevre had emigrated and where his son continued to live.

After LeFevre had obtained his clock movement and dial from England, it was a relatively simple matter to construct a suitable case in which to house it. It's a matter of considerable interest to note how he combined the characteristics of the wooden clock cases of the period to the limitations of his metal. He may have been influenced by the memories of tall case clocks he remembered from his years at Canterbury in the design and construction of his own.

Since it was impracticable to produce ogee bracket feet in tin, he designed a full base which resulted in the same effect. The maker's fine taste is particularly exemplified in the appearance of joints immediately above and below the waist door. Since these joints could not have been avoided, they were finished to appear as half round molding which enhanced the appearance of the case instead of detracting from it. The heavy joint which is evident in the front door was necessary to provide sufficient rigidity. Unable to hide it, the maker went to great pains to keep it out of line with the joints on both sides of the door in the front of the case. However, those joints which could be concealed were disguised with such great cunning as to be scarcely noticeable.

The door of the hood is of the same general construction as the waist door, with the exception that it is glazed. Glazed side lights were provided at either side of the hood and a tin panel slides in place to form the back door of the hood, sliding in grooves formed from metal strips soldered at the top and one side. The panel is secured with a pin at the right side. Wire hooks fit into eyes on either side of the hood's base to hold it securely together.

The shelf on which the movement is seated is interesting, for it is constructed entirely of tin with tin bracket supports, the edges rolled around heavy wire to strengthen them.

\* Two sizes of imported tinplate were used in the construction of the case and they measured  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 16\frac{3}{4}$  inches and  $10 \times 13\frac{3}{4}$  inches. The latter size which came 225 sheets in a box, was used from the inception of the American industry in the 18th century through the 19th century. The larger sheets, 100 to a box, were available in 1817 and earlier but were used in much smaller quantity, judging by contemporary bills and other documents.

Every tinsmith needed wire for reinforcing and rounding the sharp edges of the articles he made. English-made wire, packed in kegs, arrived here with the boxes of tinplate and both were carried up the Hudson by packet ship for the tinsmiths of upper New York State.

Lacking more positive documentation it seems relatively safe to assume that the clock was produced by LeFevre between 1790 and 1810 based on the scanty family records that have survived. The graining was, no doubt, a later addition.\*

The clock passed into the possession of the maker's son, William LeFevre, 2nd. He moved with his English wife from Northville, New York, to Indianapolis, where one of their children, a son named Frederick Smith LeFevre, was born on December 2nd, 1853. Frederick married Martha Elizabeth Jones in 1880 and in due time the clock descended to their only child, Miss Mabel LeFevre, who sold it to the dealer from which Mr. Jones purchased it.

The LeFevre clock appears to be unique and without counterpart because of the unusual character of its case. Even in its own time it must have been a conversation piece to excite local contemporary interest. Thus the tinsmith not only had a timepiece that was the equal of the grand tallcase clocks that he admired, and which performed the necessary function of telling and striking the hour, but he had a display piece which served as an invaluable advertisement of his own skill at his trade — truly a tinker's timepiece.

\* The section of the article dealing with the history of tinplate was summarized by Shirley Spaulding DeVoe.

#### THE BRICK STENCILS

by Eleanor Jones

A miscellaneous collection of material pertaining to the craft of Early American decoration was kept in the old Brick Journal, which was found just a few years ago in a "settin' hen house" on a farm just outside of Gardner, Massachusetts. It had been on a shelf undisturbed for an unknown number of years and was bulging with a variety of interesting things.

The owner was told of the value he might receive for it through advertising but set his own price at "a swap for a bottle of good whiskey and be glad to be rid of it!" Needless to say the terms were quickly and gladly accepted.

The contents of the Journal were almost unbelievable and a true treasure for anyone interested in old stencils. They range from some of the first drawings through the complete setups. One amusing set of drawings is of swans. All seemed to go well until the artist got to the tail; the more feathers he added, the less it seemed to please him.



Some of the original brick stencils

It must have been in desperation that he gave up on the feathers and finished the swans with satisfying scrolls. This must have solved several of his problems for in his varied swan stencils, both for chair backs and seat fronts, the tails are well disguised.

The scroll borders to frame the center design of Boston rockers and other scrolls were first painted in a continuous pattern, then broken apart to make stencils possible. Many types and weights of paper were used for the stencils and in two cases where a curve did not satisfy the stencil cutter, the paper was neatly tied with cat gut to its original position, then carefully recut.

A few small drawings are pin pricked. These could have been used as a guide for painting or free hand bronze.

The Journal also contained numerous pieces for side posts, seat fronts, pillow or hand grips, fancy backed chairs, Boston rockers and side pieces to fit different sized and shaped backs, a stencilled glass setup, a stencil for a saddle and harness shop sign, several large stencilled designs, probably for walls, and a book of gold leaf, very webby and beautifully colored.

The ladies of the famliy were represented by block and applique quilt patterns and childish drawings of cats signed "Ella".

No amount of questioning among the living brought forth any information about the Brick family. However, from an old "History of Gardner, Massachusetts" by Louis Glazier published in 1860, the following was found.

"Sometime about the year of 1805, Mr. James Comee began the making of wooden and flag seated chairs . . . . He employed several young men as apprentices among whom were . . . Enoch and Elijah Brick . . . ."

Elijah married Mr. Comee's daughter Sarah. Then about 1827, Elijah "built for himself a shop". He must have prospered for he was listed as one of the citizens who paid taxes of more than \$20.00 a year at the time the history was written.

An older brother Asahel was among those who made higher priced chairs and "increased the amount of their business" by decorating their chairs. He employed "fifteen hands and finishes about 50,000 chairs a year."

Still another brother Jonas "began the manufacturing of chairs . . The date at which the chair business was commenced, in this place, cannot be definitely recalled."

By 1859, the amount of chair business in Gardner was \$618,000.00. The number of men employed was 447; number of chairs made, 626,000; amount paid for seating, \$56,000, "which last was done by women and children."

To date there is no way of knowing which of the Brick brothers or if all of them used the stencils, but it is known that at that time "shops" other than Asahel Brick's did decorate their chairs.

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Jardiniere Courtesy of the National Museum of Wales

#### MY TRIP TO WALES

by Catherine Hutter

The idea of my going to see Mr. John in Newport, Wales, was born when he mentioned in one of his letters to Zilla Lea (Photograph Chairman) that there was going to be a Special Exhibit of Pontypool and Usk work at the National Museum in Cardiff. Also, negotiations were going on for the incorporation of a chapter on our Society, with sixty illustrations of "A" award trays by members, in the book Mr. John was planning to publish — and is going to publish — on trays. Zilla had already sent to Mr. John, Violet Scott's article, which is Chapter VII in our book, "The Ornamented Chair," and assembled sixty photographs, and captioned them, and sent them off to him. His book is going to be about all sorts of trays - metal, wood, glass, trays owned by famous people, trays with strange and interesting histories, and our contribution. The Trustees feel that it will do a great deal toward making the work of the Society known in England. Zilla therefore decided that if I could find time when I was in Europe - in the summer of 1961 - for a detour to Wales, it would be a good thing. I could check with Mr. John on the receipt of pictures and make sure

that he was doing the right thing by them — which he is — and I could see the Special Exhibit in Cardiff at the same time.

I traveled to Newport from London by bus, an enchanting trip through the Cottswold hills with their grey stone villages, and when I got to Newport, began to look for a room to spend the night. I'd had a vague idea that this being summer, and Newport an industrial town, it would be fairly empty and a room quite easy to get — and couldn't have been more wrong! After about six tries, I decided to throw myself at the mercy of Mr. John — who was expecting me for tea — surely he'd be able to find me a place to lay my weary head that night. So I hopped into a Welsh taxi, and the Ceramic Book Co., which is Mr. John's firm, turned out to be a charming Georgian house in a beautiful garden. Mr. John was sitting outside with his niece, the prettiest girl you ever saw — dark, curly hair, bright black eyes, gorgeous complexion, rosy cheeks — the Welsh are a small but handsome race.

I was received like a guest of honor, taken upstairs to remove my hat and brush up if I wanted to, so of course felt impelled to do so—there was altogether an atmosphere of being received at court that made even me want to behave like a lady! I was then conducted into the parlor, or I should say the drawing room, and was dumbfounded. All thoughts of Early American Decoration were wiped from my mind. I was in a large room, cream walls, white woodwork, all windows on one side and all glass cases on the other three, and these glass cases were full of a collection of porcelain the like of which I have never seen anywhere. Mr. John seemed pleased at my speechlessness, and he didn't even know how rarely I am struck dumb.

He proceeded to explain that this was porcelain manufactured in Nantgarw, Wales, for only a few years, around 1813 to 1820. Swansea porcelain, which is also Welsh, is more renowned, but Nantgarw is even more exquisite, and rarer. This was my first contact with the intricacies of Welsh spelling, and the trickiness of their phonetics. Nantgarw is pronounced Nantgarvay.

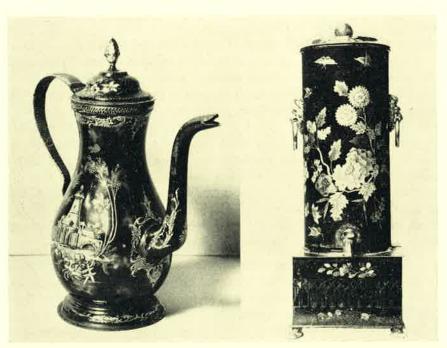
It seems that the people who produced this porcelain, in imitation of the French, couldn't make it pay, and the factory had to close down, and that is why Nantgarw porcelain — and Swansea, which suffered a similar fate — are so rare. You can of course see beautiful examples of Swansea porcelain at the Clark Museum in Williamstown, Mass.

The painting on Nantgarw porcelain is exquisite and was done by masters. I was especially fascinated by the similarity of motifs to the Lace Edge painting done in Pontypool and Usk — you find the passion flower, tulip, and rose — and I wondered if in some cases the same

painter didn't do the work. Of course we know that skilled craftsmen did some of the designs, and I don't think there can be any doubt that Lace Edge and Chippendale painting were influenced by what was being done on porcelain at the same time.

We finally got around to chatting about our section of Mr. John's tray book. Our photographs had apparently created a sensation. He had rushed right over to Cardiff to show them to Mr. Charles, who is the curator of the National Museum there — it's only eleven miles from Newport — and both men had been speechless (I am not exaggerating—that's what he said) at what the Society was doing. They had no idea that anyone living on today's earth would have the patience to practice such an art. (He didn't call it a craft.) After explaining that I was not one of the craftsmen, I agreed with him! But it is strange—and it was one of the things I wanted to find out — that no one in England has dreamed of reviving the fine old techniques, and I suppose, if it hadn't been for Mrs. Brazer, no one here would either.

After an extremely elegant tea, Mr. John showed me his collection of authentic Pontypool and Usk ware, most of his best pieces, however,



Coffee Pot Tea or Coffee Urn Courtesy of the National Museum of Wales

were in Cardiff, at the Special Exhibit, which I was to see next day. But I learned from him quite a bit about the history of this type of work. It was Richard Hanbury who founded the Pontypool ironworks in 1588; and in 1660, Thomas Allgood came to Pontypool with his much envied "secret," which was a process for lacquering iron plate. The earliest specimen of Pontypool and Usk ware are all lacquered and decorated ironplate, that's why they are so heavy; but the process of tin plating was not in operation in Wales until 1703. Pontypool produced japanned ironplate and tinplate before Usk, then for a while both factories were working together, under the ownership of members of the same family — the places are very near each other — but by 1860, both factories had stopped producing. Wolverhampton was turning out tin and papier-mâché trays more cheaply in every respect, and decorating them more mechanically. The old insiduous deterioration via the commercialization of a product had set in, and we can witness the same thing today with various types of Early American Decoration.

Finally Mr. John escorted me across the garden to a little house discreetly hidden by shrubbery, and there was the Ceramic Publishing Co.'s display room — a place to spend at least a week, browsing around among the highly specialized art books, every one of them simply beautiful. Unfortunately I didn't have a week to give to it. Mr. John got me a room in Cardiff, and had me chauffeured to that city in style, in a limousine that was always at his disposal, after a fond farewell on my part and promises to return one day with the entire Society, which seemed to please him. Next day I was given the same red velvet carpet treatment at the National Museum, where I had an appointment with Mr. Charles at ten a.m. With profound apologies he explained that the Special Exhibit had been taken down the day before but all the pieces were in one of the reference rooms for me to look at - did I mind seeing them under less favorable conditions? I assured him that the conditions were even more favorable that way, than if the pieces had been set up and untouchable. This way I could pick them up and take them over to the light, just as if I'd been judging them! And that was when I really missed my fellow members.

There was every imaginable example of Pontypool and Usk ware in the exhibit — urns, coffee pots, tea caddies, bread trays, with the usual exquisite Chinese designs in gold leaf, there were lace edge trays and highly original items, such as primitive paintings on copper and tin. I saw a few trays set aside in a corner, but when I wanted to look at them, Mr. Charles said, "Oh, they're no good. They're Wolverhampton." After he left me, I had the room and all those treasures to myself, and

could have spent the day there! If I'd had tracing paper with me, I might still be there! I had a look at the spurned trays — I've seen worse — but the real old heavy iron and tin plate Pontypool and Usk pieces are the museum items, no doubt about that, and Mr. John said rather wistfully, "You Americans have just about bought them all!" Jessica Bond brought two examples of Pontypool ware to the Woodstock meeting, which were about as beautiful as any I have ever seen, two Monteiths or wine glass coolers.

The pieces owned by the National Museum were just as fascinating as those in the Special Exhibit. There was a stencilled octagonal tray which I believe is a rarity, and of course many other magnificent pieces which are on regular exhibit there. I didn't go to Pontypool because Mr. John said there was nothing left to see there. It's a nylon manufacturing town now. At Usk you can see the ruins of the factory. I didn't go to Wolverhampton because I didn't have the time, besides, I'd had enough of being the lonely participator in all this treasure. But Mr. John told me that in Wolverhampton Museum there was a pattern book with 600 patterns in color of designs used by the Wolverhampton factories. I would like to go on record for the Society sponsorship of a trip to Wales on chartered plane or planes. I'm sure it's feasible at a fare of about \$250. At the other end we rent cars, and off we go! And living is cheaper over there. I therefore suggest a Spring or Fall Meeting in the near future in Cardiff, Wales, with an outing to Wolverhampton.



Pontypool Round Tray

#### RILEY WHITING — CLOCKMAKER

by Madeline Hampton

Some years ago, I was invited by a friend, to visit his elderly father, whose "mainspring" in life was collecting and repairing old clocks. It was a fascinating evening, for he had nearly 200 old clocks ticking and striking in the cellar. There was only one major difficulty, he talked about "wagon springs" and "escapements" and "virges," and all I could see were painted dials, stenciled cases, and decorated glass panels. We were in two different worlds, as he thought of his collection of clocks from inside out, and I, from outside in! However, it was on this evening that I first came upon the name "Riley Whiting, Winchester."

It was a tall case clock, with a plain case, but I was intrigued with the decorated face which was in good condition, with a gold eagle in the top arch. It was somewhat crudely done, and gesso had been used, somewhat like slipware, to outline the spandrels and parts of the eagle. Here at last we had some sort of meeting ground, for he explained to me that Riley Whiting, as far as he knew, was the only American clockmaker who, not only made clock works, but decorated all of the faces and made the cases, too.

Last summer, having had occasion to go through an old Dutch Colonial house which was soon to be sold, I came upon another of Mr. Whiting's products in the upstairs hall. Not only was this one very elegant, but it was for sale! Needless to say, I lost no time in rushing my ever-patient Helpmate over to see it. He looked it over carefully, allowed that it was a fine clock and probably a good buy at the price, but I would someday have the family one, and with a daughter in college, etc. . . . .

I dismissed the subject for two whole days and tried again. At this point I received the "go-ahead" and called immediately. To my dismay, I was informed that the clock had been sold. I had to console myself that, at least, I knew a bargain when I saw one since someone else had been so quick to recognize it too!

One day at the end of August an old friend drove into the yard in her station wagon, and I was surprised to find my daughter and husband in the car, but even more surprised to find a fourth occupant, the Riley Whiting clock!

Since then, I have read every book I could find on clocks and their makers, and consulted various members of The National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, and have found very little mention of Riley Whiting, and nowhere have I found any printed word that he

made either his own faces or cases — or that he didn't. The most I have found out about him is quoted from Wallace Nutting, "In 1807, Samuel and Luther Hoadley with Riley Whiting opened works at Winsted (town of Winchester), Conn., for making wood clocks. Luther died in 1813, Samuel entered the army, retiring from the business. Mr. Whiting continued the business, and died in 1835. 'The machinery (of these wood clocks) was carried by a tin wheel on an upright iron shaft. The cog-wheels were of cherry, the pinion was of ivy, or calmia (mountain laurel), and the face of whitewood — all home products. These, with a little wire, a very little, steel, brass, tin and cordage made up the staples of the material of the old one-day shelf clocks which they produced and scattered all over the United States and Canada.'"

This would sound as though he made a very inferior shelf clock, but I have seen only grandfather clocks. The cases have differed, but there is no question in my mind, that the faces have all been done by

the same person.

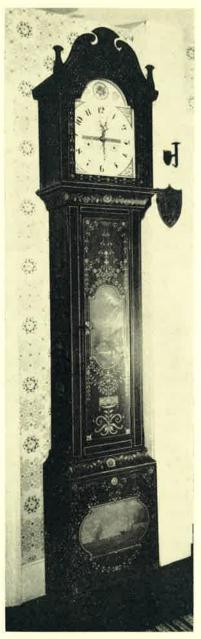
On my clock, the little handles on the doors are of pewter, and in order to open the main panel it is necessary to reach down under the clock and push a wooden lever over to the right, which in turn, releases the door catch. Was this intended as a "hidey-hole," for valuables? The weights are the so-called "tin-can weights". These are actually sheet-iron cans filled with stones, to serve as weights. Shipping Conn. clocks any great distance, added considerable weight to a load with weights in the clocks; hence tin cans, shipped in the clocks empty, were used instead of solid weights, and the buyer filled the cans with stones.

The panels are painted right on the wood, and the top one seems to be an imaginative scene, with a bridge of some sort. The bottom one, however, is more interesting, as it depicts a full rigged sailing vessel on the left, and on the right, another, complete with both sails and steam stack. This I have done some research on too, and with better results. Again I'll quote, this time from Van Loon's book on SHIPS; "Between the glorious and popular exploits of the clippers and the inglorious experiences of the earliest steamers, we hardly know which was the first vessel to cross the ocean under her own steam. Until recently, the honors went usually to the Savannah, a sailing packet that had been equipped with an auxiliary engine. In May of 1818 she sailed from Savannah, Georgia. She spent quite a long time crossing the ocean, being under sail almost all the way, and used her engines only for some 80 hours of the entire voyage. Nevertheless, when the Savannah reached Ireland, her entire supply of coal was gone, showing how difficult it was to keep these early engines going. The Savannah thereupon visited

the Baltic and Russia and was shown everywhere as a curiosity. But the claim of her owners that this had been the first steamer to cross the ocean was hardly true, for steam had played only a very small role in her progress." From other sources, I find. that another steamboat, not owned by the U. S., actually has the credit for the first Atlantic crossing, but it was the Savannah, that finally captured the interest and imagination of the American people. This boat was lost off of Fire Island, about 1832, and several years ago was searched for and found by divers hired by the U. S. government, in the hopes that something could be salvaged to be incorporated into the new nuclear "Savannah," which was recently launched. These dates, 1818-1832 tie in very nicely with the years that Whiting was working.

The balance of the decoration on the case is done apparently free-hand in a gold other than leaf, although it is nicely done with shading, and can barely be distinguished from inlay. The crest at the top center is a double fluted shell, one set slightly lower than the other.

Did he or didn't he, do his cases and faces? It is tantalizing not to know! We do know that Elijah Darrow, who had been an art instructor, hired his former pupils, young girls and maried women, to paint clock dials and tablets from 1805 to 1855. Maybe Riley Whiting had some sort of arrangement working for him.



Tall Case Clock — Riley Whiting Woodenworks — Original Decoration



Original — Theorem Painting on Velvet Courtesy of Mrs. E. A. Jareski

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Fall meeting was held September 24, 25, 26th in Woodstock, Vermont. We were fortunate in the weather and in seeing the first turning of color in the foliage. The Exhibition and Standards Committees had arrived on the preceding Thursday to set up the original pieces and to judge the members' and applicants' work. The Society owes so much to these workers for their untiring efforts to arrange and make our exhibitions a stimulating experience not only for our members but for the public which is always invited to share them with us.

Sunday night brought some members from distant points who had travelled all day. Most everyone had arrived in time for the delightful tea which was held on Monday in the Lobby of the Inn before a cheerful fire. Old friends greeted each other and new friends were made. That evening Mrs. Bond brought added interest to the exhibition with a gallery talk. She was assisted by Mrs. Drury.

The next morning Mrs. Cobb, Chairman for the meeting and Mrs. Van Riper, Program Chairman greeted us in the large assembly hall, after which Mr. Curtis P. Fields, President of the Woodstock Historical Society was introduced and welcomed us to Woodstock. His history

of the settlement of the town was filled with interesting anecdotes. He described many of the old buildings, some of which had been moved to their present sites. It made the tour planned for the afternoon that much more profitable for all. This cordial welcome was followed by a demonstration of chair striping by Mrs. Eugene Bond. She is one of our first mastercraftsmen and a most able projector of her knowledge. She gave us her formulas for the mixtures used for executing both the painted as well as the bronze variety of stripes. She spiced her running comments with amusing quips as she proceeded to stripe a chair.

At eleven the Teacher Certification Committee conducted a forum on chair decoration, illustrated by slides from the collection of the late Mr. Grier Parke loaned by Mrs. Parke and by examples of members' patterns demonstrating different methods of mounting and recording historical data. Those participating were Mrs. Harry M. Norman, Mrs. Paul Gross, Mrs. Carroll Drury, and Mrs. Raymond Ramsey. It was both interesting and instructive.

The afternoon was given over to the members to do with as they wished. The Woodstock Garden Club had arranged "open house" for us in many of the beautiful old homes in and near the town. For those inveterate collectors and shoppers, a list had been compiled of Craft and Antique Shops, among them that of Irene Slater, a member, who has an extensive collection of original reverse paintings on glass. Maps of the territory identifying the houses, shops and other points of interest had been prepared and were made available to each member at the Registration Desk. The pity of it all was that time limited just how much we could do, but at least the choice was left up to us.

Lambert Hitchcock was the subject of the lecture that evening. Mr. John Kenney who bought the old Hitchcock Chair Factory at what is now Riverton, Conn., was the speaker. He was assisted by Mr. Melvin Morgan, Art Director of the Hitchcock Factory. Mr. Kenney's enthusiasm added to a spontaneous sense of humor made the evening a rare treat as he traced the life and character of Lambert Hitchcock and described his own purchase and restoration of the old factory. A movie was introduced showing the constructing and decorating of a chair from the fashioning and assembling the parts to the finished product. Mr. Kenney described the various procedures in his inimitable entertaining manner. Interlaced with the technicalities of the actual manufacture of furniture were scenes of the roadside leading into Riverton and of a big fishing jamboree sponsored by the Company which lent a friendly and informal atmosphere to the evening. Digression such as this makes learning and research so much more vivid and permanent in the mind.

I am sorry that you all could not have been in Woodstock to hear Mrs. Catherine Hutter the next morning. She is one of our Associate Members but is more active than the most active member we have. She is always ready to help anywhere she can except with a paint brush. Those of you who went to Harwich Port saw the pictures of the Pontypool and Usk wares that she saw while visiting Wales a year ago. This time she brought colored slides. She kept us entranced not only with her descriptions of these but of her visit to Mr. John of the Ceramic Book Company of Newport, England. Her sparkling humor and hilarious wit made this a never to be forgotten experience.

Four new appointments were made:

Editor of the Decorator: Mrs. Edwin Rowell, Whitman, Mass. to fill the vacancy left by Mrs. Gordon Scott.

Printing Chairman: Mrs. Philip Wheelock, Uxbridge, Mass. to fill the vacancy left by Mrs. Gordon Scott.

Advanced Planning Chairman: Mrs. Lyman Mears, Harwich Port, Mass

to fill the vacancy left by Mrs. Edwin Rowell.

Chapters Chairman: Mrs. Kenneth Hampton, Teaneck, New Jersey

to fill the vacancy left by Mrs. Alexander McCaw.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the many people who were so generous with their time. Thanks to Mrs. Cobb and Mrs. Orr for arranging everything for our pleasure and comfort in the charming old Woodstock Inn, for the tea, the social hour and the many kindnesses, to Mrs. Irene Slater for her time, labor, and love in designing and executing ALL the covered bridge tags and tinsel painted place cards, to all those who took part in the program, to the members of the Woodstock Garden Club for their hospitality in arranging the "open house" tour, and last, but not least, to Mrs. Van Riper who never spares herself in arranging interesting programs for us. This time her choice in speakers — Mr. Fields, Mr. Kenney and Mrs. Hutter, each with his own type of humor, made this not only an informative but an exhilerating meeting.

The next meeting is planned for Corning, New York, on May 15, 16, 17, 1963. The visit to the Corning Museum will be well worth making plans ahead to take advantage of this unusual opportunity. I look forward to seeing you there.

EMILIE UNDERHILL, President

# REPORT OF THE THIRTY-FOURTH EXHIBITION Woodstock, Vermont

SEPTEMBER 24, 25, and 26, 1962

Nestled in the small town of Woodstock, Vermont, is the lovely old-fashioned Woodstock Inn. Facing a small tree-lined common, the Inn opened its doors in true New England Hospitality — to our Thirty-Fourth Exhibition of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc.

Our Exhibition opened Monday evening in the Music Room of the Inn with an informative gallery talk by Mrs. Eugene Bond assisted by Mrs. Carroll Drury.

We were privileged to have a collection of eighty-five choice originals loaned to us for discussion and study, and we are grateful to our many friends, members, and the several antique dealers who furnished us with these exquisite items.

Thirty-five ornamented chairs were on display including a representative collection of the John White Chairs, loaned to us by members of the N. Grier Parke family in Woodstock. Mr. Parke was for many



Left: Original — Courtesy of Bernice Drury Right: Original — Courtesy of Madeline Hampton

years a discriminating collector of John White chairs. It was interesting to note Mr. White was born in Vermont in 1803 and opened his own chair shop in Woodstock in 1838. He made the delicately constructed Windsor chairs with slender spindles, splayed legs, semi-circular seat, and no two were alike. A great many chairs ornamented in a very individual style with great ease and abandon were most effective in their simplicity. The chairs were quite often painted a "rose pink", charcoal brown, or "Dutch Pink" which was in reality not pink at all but a shade of green. Black was very seldom used. The "lantern flower", a running leaf design with red flowers, referred to by Mr. Parke as the "Christmas Design" and a shell design with sweeping grasses to fill in the spaces were typical of his decorations.

An unusual chair was a step down Windsor side chair originally painted a "rose pink" with the top slat decorated with leaf sprays of very dark green and white. A white brush stroke design was decorated on the posts and curved up on to the top slat. Although Mr. Parke's article in *The Decorator*, (Vol. VI, No. 1) mentions that he had not seen a signed chair at that time, Mrs. Carroll Drury tells us that there is a signed bench, presently in the Woodstock Courthouse.

A comb back rocker was decorated with a shell design, and a graceful and unusual bench with a step down slat was decorated in white with shading in red, yellow ochre, and green and also striped in white. This bench is illustrated on Page 69 in "The Ornamented Chair" book published by the Historical Society of Early American Decoration in 1960.

A Ransom Cooke decorated rocker, (C. 1827) created much interest; also two Victorian painted chairs, similar in design, one signed William Eaton rocker (C. 1850-1860) with no arms, elaborately stencilled and decorated with free hand roses. The other was a child's rocker with an interesting stencilled slat and a center motif of delicately painted pink roses, very similar to the William Eaton chair design found in Janet Waring's book. The word "Gift" was stencilled on the seat and was embellished with fine stencilled scrolls

A pair of transitional type chairs, (C. 1750), were probably the earliest type chair exhibited. They were constructed with a Queen Ann top and "Chippendale" legs, japanned and ornamented with elaborate wood carving. According to Mr. Frank Holmes of the Woodstock Inn, the chairs were bought in England and sent to Japan to be ornamented and are now owned by the Holmes family in Woodstock.

A Hitchcock-Sheraton fancy chair was decorated with a small classical urn in gold leaf with "tiger maple graining" on the seat.

A straight top button back Hitchcock chair was decorated with fine early stencilling and a Baltimore type chair was ornamented in free hand bronze with a painted black seat (C. 1825).

A child's Hitchcock armchair ornamented in gold leaf and stencilled on a grained background was in unusually well preserved condition.

An interesting Bannister back chair with a plank seat with "putty graining", was stencilled on a highly grained background and decorated with wide green bands.

A sturdy Balloon back chair, (C. 1845-1850) of the Pennsylvania type, was decorated with transparent wash over stencilling while a



Left: Original — Child's Rocker, "Eaton" Decoration Courtesy of Irene Slater Right: Original — Child's Stencilled Armchair Courtesy of Madeline Hampton similar Balloon type rocker was stencilled with colored wash for shading.

A lady's Boston rocker showed the late stencilling and interesting graining.

Two unusual square platform top tin trunks were displayed, both decorated with country painting and a large document box with typical "New York" country painting.

A heavy painted pewter charger was decorated with a primitive farm scene.

An unusual child's tin rattle was decorated with colored stripes and blue beads with a little whistle on the end. Usually these rattles made of sterling silver were believed to have been of Dutch origin.

It was most interesting to observe the beautifully cut stencilling exemplified on a rectangular tray with "Berlin" type stencil cut in one large pattern.

A round tilt top table with beautiful ornamentation of flowers in the center and another table with pearl inlay were well preserved and mellowed by time.

A large rectangular tray was decorated with a wide stencilled border of flower groupings with gold leaf roses in each center.

A fascinating chippendale tray was ornamented with gold leaf, roses and exquisite vermillion nasturtiums on a green background.

Several theorem paintings were displayed and found most interesting.

A papier mâché lap desk was decorated with gold leaf border on a sea green background panel and ornamented with shells and coral. The ornamentation appears to have been done over a mother of pearl background.

The pièce de résistance, a pair of oval Pontypool Verrieres (or wine coolers) with tortoise shell background were decorated on both sides with "lace edge" painting of fruit and flowers (C. 1785)

Forty-four applicants' articles and twenty-four members' articles were registered and displayed in a special category. There were eight "A" awards and fourteen "B" awards.

Nineteen applicants were cordially welcomed as members.

Nathalie Robinson and Madeline Hampton, Co-Chairmen

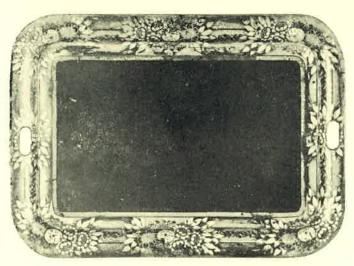
Catherine Hutter

Mona Rowell

Catharine Halls

Marie Washer

Madge Watt



Original - Deep Border Stencilled Tray Courtesy of Marie Washer

# APPLICANTS ACCEPTED AS MEMBERS Woodstock, Vermont — September, 1962

Church, Mrs. Hollis F., Jr. Farrell, Mrs. Edward Friedmann, Mrs. Karl R. Frost, Mrs. Floyd D. Gallop, Mrs. Myron Hagedorn, Mrs. Dietrich E. Maffin, Mrs. Clyde Maley, Mrs. Alexander B. Morrison, Mrs. Keene H. Oglesby, Mrs. Louise Payne, Mrs. Robert Sampson, Mrs. William Sprague, Mrs. Stanley R. Steele, Mrs. Donald Swanson, Mrs. Myron G. Wall, Mrs. Charles Walter, Mrs. John Watters, Mrs. Frank Weaver, Mrs. H. Robert

47 Cider Brook Road, Avon, Conn. Trumansburg, N. Y. Girard College, Philadelphia 21, Pa. Mead St., Waccabuc, N. Y. Back Kingdom Road, Mexico, Maine Todd Road, R.F.D. #1, Katonah, N. Y. 187 Briston St., Canandaigua, N. Y. 200 E. Pearson St., Chicago 11, Ill. Orchard Farm, Wilton, Maine 181 Pinewoods Ave., Troy, N. Y. Box 492, Sandwich, Mass. 2148 Gamble Road, Westwood, N. J. Route 3, Hooksette, N. H. 23 Rolling Hill Drive, Chatham, N. J. 7 Marshall St., Hartford, Conn. 5 Hall St., Plymouth, Mass. 17 Edgemont Road, Glen Rock, N. J. 57 Wooding St., Briston, Conn. Sutton Road, Trucksville, Pa.

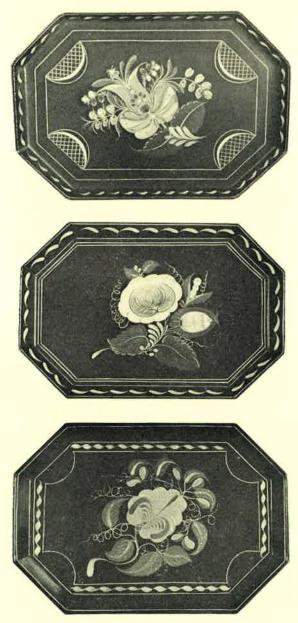
#### MEMBER'S "A" AWARDS Woodstock, Vermont — September, 1962





"A" Award - Stencilling on Wood - Yvette Childs

<sup>&</sup>quot;A" Award - Stencilling on Tin - Catharine Halls



"A" Award — Country Painting — Forrest Cookenback
"A" Award — Country Painting — Elizabeth Mitchell
"A" Award — Country Painting — Ruth Lane





"A" Award — Country Painting — Yvette Childs
"A" Award — Country Painting — Olive Sawyer
"A" Award — Lace Edge — Zilla Lea



#### BOOKSHELF

by Natalie Ramsey

The Fraktur - Writings or Illuminated Manuscripts of the Pennsylvania Germans, by Donald A. Shelley, Executive Director, Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. \$15.00 — Pennsylvania German Folklore Society, 128-130 Law Street, Allentown, Pa.

In purchasing this book, small in size, heavy, printed on fine paper, and bound in natural colored linen, you will have on the jacket cover a resume of Mr. Shelley's educational background and his contribution to the field of Fine Arts.

The following quote from the Jacket succinctly expresses the value of owning this book.

"Because of the wealth of information and sound scholarship which Dr. Shelley has put into this book over the past 20 years, it will be the hand-book in this field for decades to come. Here, at last, is a comprehensive and accurate account of the history and development of the Pennsylvania German style of Fraktur illumination, written from the point of view of an art historian. Both for the student of American art and the collector of Folk Art, this volume will prove an invaluable guide."

The first chapter, "Introduction to Folk Art" very properly stimulates our interest in what proves to be a most enjoyable and rewarding reading experience.

Dr. Shelley has a very fluent style of writing and his foot-notes, picture plates and rich bibliography are presented with clarity and accuracy. This is a book for our serious Guild students to own and treasure. The author's research has been most authentic and covers the legendary backgrounds, history, artists, techniques, materials and extant forms of this work. No review could do justice to this fabulous piece of work, which, I think, can be thought of as an encyclopedia or

Fraktur Writings. In your library this book will give you many hours of reading pleasure.

Do buy the August, 1962, issue of "ANTIQUES" magazine and enjoy a surprising number of fine articles. These are interesting not only to the discriminating collector, but of especial interest to us should be the articles on Monteiths, Lace Fans, Silhouettes and Portuguese Hepplewhite and Sheraton Chairs.

At our Woodstock, Vermont, meeting we were fortunate in having exhibited a very beautiful pair of Tole Monteiths, probably Pontypool. Thus this article comes at an opportune time for us to bone up on the history of Monteiths.

Jessie McNab, Curatorial Assistant at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, covers the field very well. In her descriptive text many conflicting ideas and opinions regarding places, names, uses and designs are cleared up, or at least explained. The seventeen very beautiful picture plates that accompany the article clearly show us the handsome shapes and decorations that made these a joy to own.

As an added treat, this issue again gives us a fine article on Lace Fans. This, as we might expect, is written by Esther Oldham, and as always, is well done and authentic. The several picture plates are lovely.

The splendid article on Portuguese Hepplewhite and Sheraton chairs — by Robert C. Smith of the University of Pennsylvania and Winterthur Museum is one that we might like to read, and then cut out and add to our own beautiful book, The Ornamented Chair.

Monthly issues of "Antiques" magazine are \$1.00 each, and I only hope there will be enough copies of this issue to meet your demand.



#### Notices from the Trustees

ANNUAL MEETING May 15, 16, 17, 1963 Corning, New York

The By-Laws of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc., as revised July 19, 1961, provided in ARTICLE VI, Section 5, as follows:

"Any member having voting privileges may vote in person or by absentee ballot filed with the secretary before the opening of such meeting but such absentee ballot shall only be allowable upon the election of trustees. The nominating committee shall file with the secretary at least 60 days before the annual meeting its report on nominations for trustees, which report shall be open to examination by any member prior to such annual meeting. Additional nominations for elections of trustees may be made in writing by the petition of any member with voting privilege signed by 20 or more other members with similar privileges and filed with the secretary at least 35 days before such annual meeting. No person shall be eligible for election as a trustee unless so nominated by said committee or by petition as above set forth. The secretary shall provide absentee ballots to any members applying for same."

#### POLICY

"All Chippendale Trays and Special Class pieces to be judged should be registered with the Exhibition Chairman well in advance of the meeting. They are to be opened and entered by the Exhibition Chairman ONLY and brought to the Head Tallier who will be the only other person to know the identity of the persons submitting them. The Exhibition Chairman will be in custody of these pieces."

#### MEMBERSHIP DUES

Payable July 1, 1963 to Historical Sc	ociety of Early American Decora-
tion, Inc.	
1070	Associate \$ 10.00
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Benefactor	.,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,

Mail to Mrs. Willis Howard, 78 Bank Street, Lebanon, N. H.

Motion: Carried January 18, 1957. "After dues are in arrears for one year, membership chairman will notify such members that their names will be taken from mailing list and no further notices or copies of the **Decorator** will be sent" until dues are paid.

#### CERTIFIED TEACHERS

Members who have been certified as teachers by the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, and who can be recommended by the Society:

- Mrs. Chester Armstrong, Ithaca, N. Y.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, glass painting.
- Mrs. John Burke, Melbourne Beach, Florida—Certified in: stencilling, country painting.
- Mrs. Walter Burrows, 2591 Post Road, Noroton, Conn.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting.
- Mrs. John Clark, Norwell, Mass.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, lace edge painting, glass painting, Chippendale.
- Mrs. Charles Coffin, Ballston Spa, N. Y.—Certified in: country painting.
- Mrs. Carroll Drury, Springfield, Vt.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, lace edge painting.
- Mrs. Robert Hutchings, 122 Andrews Rd., DeWitt, N. Y.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, lace edge painting, glass painting.
- Mrs. Robert Keegan, Hudson, Ohio—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, lace edge painting.
- Mrs. Adrian Lea, Glens Falls, N. Y.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting.
- Mrs. Sherwood Martin, Wapping, Conn.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, lace edge painting, glass painting.
- Mrs. William N. Martin, Oak Park, Ill.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze.
- Mrs. Sylvester Poor, Augusta, Me.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting.
- Mrs. Raymond Ramsey, Orwell, Vt.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf and freehand bronze.
- Mrs. Edwin W. Rowell, 102 Park Ave., Whitman, Mass.—Certified in: stencilling.
- Mrs. Andrew M. Underhill, 37 Bellport Lane, Bellport, L. I., N. Y.— Certified in: stencilling, country painting.

- Mrs. Joseph Watts, R.F.D. 1, Westwood, N. J.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, lace edge painting, glass painting.
- Mrs. Herbert Willey, Norwich, Conn.—Certified in: stencilling, country painting.
- Mrs. Harold White, Delmar, N. Y.—Certified in: country painting, freehand bronze, lace edge.

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