The Decorator

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Journal of the
Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc.

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A society with affiliated chapters organized to carry on the work and honor the memory of Esther Stevens Brazer, pioneer in the perpetuation of Early American Decoration as an art; to promote continued research in that field; to record and preserve examples of Early American Decoration; to maintain such exhibits and publish such works on the subject of Early American Decoration and the history thereof as will further the appreciation of such art, the elevation of the standards of its reproduction and utilization. To assist in efforts public and private, in locating and preserving material pertinent to our work, and to cooperate with other societies in the accomplishment of purposes of mutual concern.

MISSION STATEMENT

Vision: HSEAD will be, and will become recognized, as a preeminent national authority on Early American Decoration.

Mission: HSEAD will maintain a core membership of practicing guild artists supported by active programs of education, research, and exhibitions to perpetuate and expand the unique skills and knowledge of Early American Decoration.

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Back Cover: *Portrait of a Boy,* attributed to Johann Crescenz Meyer.

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EDITORIAL

Those who were unable to attend the 32nd Annual Seminar on Glass, held in October 1992 at the *Corning Museum of Glass*, missed a superb lecture concerning reverse painting on glass. Fortunately for us Jane Bolster was there. She took extensive notes, she obtained a copy of the paper, she assembled the appropriate slides, and she can write. The result is an excellent overview of a mysterious subject enjoyed by many of us. Read, view and enjoy it in this issue.

Dorcus Layport takes us on a fascinating trip through the colonies, territories and states prior to and after our Revolution in her interesting article on Tinware—commencing on page 26. She even provides us with a road map for our intellectual journey.

You will find a distinctly oriental cast to the book reviews in this issue. This eastern flavor reminds us that early American decorating contains themes gathered from all regions of our planet just as do our people. This welcoming attitude has made our labors interesting and fun. Every project expands the breadth and depth of our general knowledge. No wonder our meticulous labors often culminate in a grand feeling of satisfaction.

This issue marks a major milestone. For the first time every page, every word, can be rendered in color. You will see more of it in future editions. We have paid a small price for this dramatic increase in capability. We have shifted to a "soft cover." This permits a major reduction in the cost per issue which goes a long way towards offsetting the additional investment in color production. We hope that you will like it.

— Mike and Peggy Rodgers

The author, Loa Winter, regrets that she copied verbatim without permission and without identifying the source a major portion of her article from a publication, "Silent Companions: Dummy Board Figures of the 17th through 19th Centuries," written by Helaine Fendelman on behalf of the Rye Historical Society, Rye, New York.

Ms. Winter has made a contribution to the Rye Historical Society for unauthorized use of the dummy board material.

TECHNIQUES OF REVERSE PAINTING ON GLASS: AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

by Frieder Ryser
Edited by Jane A. Bolster

Author's Note: The following is taken from a paper presented by Frieder Ryser and translated by Rudi Eswarin at the 32nd Annual Seminar on Glass held in October 1992 at the *Corning Museum of Glass*, Corning, New York. Permission has been kindly granted by Mr. Ryser and the Corning Museum of Glass to quote liberally from the presentation.

Since the slides shown in the lecture were not available to me, I have substituted photographs of pieces selected from Mr. Ryser's collection exhibited (1992) at the Corning Museum of Glass. I chose them on the basis of technique.

For the most part, I have deleted sections of Mr. Ryser's presentation that dealt specifically with gilded and painted hollowware (decorated glass encased in glass) as in "fondi d'oro" from the time of the Roman Empire. In some instances, I have substituted words which seem to me to be more understandable to us as painters.

A catalogue of this exhibit is available from the Corning Museum of Glass, Sales Department, One Museum Way, Corning, NY 14830-2253, *Reverse Painting on Glass: The Ryser Collection*. This catalogue was reviewed on pages 24-25 in the Fall/Winter 1992-1993 (Volume XLVII, No.1) issue of *THE DECORATOR*.

–Jane A. Bolster

The subject of this article is an investigation into how the reverse painters did their work. Consequently, it relates above all to the question of technique. Can this be justified within the framework of this seminar as presented by the Corning Museum of Glass? I think so. Reverse painting on glass, like engraving, is really a kind of glass decoration.

A second introductory remark might usefully relate to creative aspects of reverse painting; what it is and in what way it differs from oth-

er painted works of art. This will make it easier to understand what we are talking about. It is most important to position reverse painting as a decorative art in accordance with its merits. One must realize that it does not consist entirely of pleasant, but naive (and ultimately second rate) works of folk art, produced as souvenirs for pilgrims, and as decoration for cottages of peasants and mountain dwellers. It is not the winter employment of farmers who painted fences in the summertime, or the "folk song" of the fine art of painting, as Max Picard suggested in 1917.

Moreover, it must not be seen as a curious oddity of easel painting, but recognized as an independent art form with glass as the central feature. It is an art form which permits the artist to create special effects not possible with other methods of painting.

The technical characteristics of a reverse painting are the following. The support is transparent glass, and the picture is painted on the reverse, placing the image *behind* the glass, as far as the viewer is concerned. Yet it is not loose, like a watercolor or a gouache, but it adheres to the glass without any air space in between. Further, a reverse painting is made to be seen by reflected light, and does not require transmitted illumination as do church windows, the Kabinettscheiben or the transparent enamel paintings of a Samuel Mohn and Company.

Also, the reverse painter covers the backside of a glass panel with a layer of paint which creates a mirror-like effect. The unusual appearance of a reverse painting is not caused by the image, but by the reflections in the glass supporting the painting. You can easily see this for yourself. Overlook the painted image and try to grasp the play of light in the glass. See how the reflections simulate a depth of field and gently soften the colors. You will notice a lack of reflection in areas where the pigment has separated from the base, resulting in a loss of the special appearance of a reverse painting. So much for the introduction; now to the methods of working.

Let us talk first about pictures executed with colored pigment. The difficulties the artist must overcome are easier to see if we compare his or her technique with that of the easel painter who has to prepare the supporting background. Canvas or wood must be primed to fill in the pores and smooth the surface. For that he or she will use gypsum or chalk powder, bound with glue dissolved in water. On top of this

Figure 1—The Tribute Money, attributed to Johann Crescenz Meyer (1735—1824)

opaque coating goes the second layer covering some areas with the body color of the objects to be painted. If the white background has to be eliminated, there is no choice but to use opaque colors for the purpose. The third layer of pigment is used for the modeling, and the fourth provides the white highlights and the details drawn in dark lines. Seen from the front, then, there are several layers of paint, the later applications covering completely, or partly, the earlier ones which no longer can be seen. This is a greatly simplified list of the bare essentials of the easel painter's techniques.

I did say in the beginning, that the characteristic feature of a reverse painting was the image placed behind the transparent support, firmly adhering to the glass. The casual observer will reason that, as a consequence, the reverse painter is forced to put down the fourth layer first, beginning with the highlights and the inner details, followed by the modeling and the body colors. In short, compared with the easel painter, he must work backwards. If he were to lay down the base color first, it would cover everything that follows, and the modeling, the highlights and the drawing of inner details would not be seen.

This common interpretation will be contradicted by following the sequence of moves which the reverse painter must make in his or her work. He or she must also begin with a basic coating, not to smooth the surface, but to insure better adherence of the subsequently applied paint. However, contrary to the easel painter, he or she will use trans-

parent, clear materials specially prepared with egg white, linseed oil, gum arabic, or turpentine. This done, the artist can decide, as opposed to the easel painter, how to proceed. This could be with opaque paint, covering other layers that may be applied later, or with transparent colors permitting all subsequent applications of pigment to show through unimpeded. If opaque is selected as a covering paint, the work must be accomplished in reverse. To work in this manner, the painter must carefully envisage and then follow the correct sequence of moves if he or she wishes to achieve a realistic rendering of the model in all details.

Figure 2—Portrait of a Boy, also attributed to Meyer

Should the reverse painter decide to work with very thinly applied transparent pigment, he or she may proceed like the easel painter by putting down the basic body colors first, applying the highlights and then the shadows and other details last. Some artists went to extremes by applying the transparent pigment only to parts that were to appear lighted, while the illusion of dimensional depth was created with the black backing. The painting is similar to colored chalk on a blackboard or a gouache on dark paper. Examples of this style can be seen in Figures 1 and 2. ***Figure 1*** depicts a scene from the *New Testament* of the Bible and is called *The Tribute Money.* It is attributed to Johann Crescenz Meyer (1735-1824) who resided at Grosswangen, a village near Sursee in the Swiss canton of Lucerne. ***Figure 2,*** *Portrait of a Boy,* is also attributed to Meyer. Colors are thinly applied in several layers. Shading is achieved by stippling through the body color so that the black backing shows through in a very subtle fashion. The painting is backed with black paper.

Figure 3—The Death of Adonis, workship of Neapolitan master, Luca Giordano

When this type of picture is viewed with its black backing, the illuminated parts appear light, while the ones in shadow look dark. Viewed without the black backing against a grey sky, the parts with heavier paint coverage look dark, others look light—exactly the opposite. One might believe they are viewing the negative of a photograph.

More artists worked in this technique than is generally realized. They created reverse paintings on glass which equaled the most choice miniatures or the most beautiful easel paintings in finesse and accuracy. Only in one aspect were they at a disadvantage. Each brush stroke had to hit the mark precisely since subsequent corrections by erasing or over-painting were not possible.

When painting with opaque pigment, it does not matter how the artist handles the brush. There is little choice but to use a pulling motion in the application of viscous, opaque paint. Thin, transparent pigment permits the artist to spread the color with a soft brush or, for a different effect, use a close-cropped brush in short vertical strokes. The latter technique removes the pigment on the surface in minute, closely spaced dots, allowing the overpainted color or the black background to be visible. The image looks softer and warmer than it would if painted in the usual way with repeated brush strokes. The different effect can be seen particularly in the flesh tones of these paintings. See ***Figure 3, The Death of Adonis*** from the workshop of the Neapolitan master, Luca Giordano. It was painted circa 1680-90.

Figure 4—Pastoral Landscape, probably from Beromunster by Cornelius Suter (1733-1818)

The possibility of achieving such effects using different brushes was discovered by Hans Jakob Sprungli about 1600. He writes in a tract, transmitted to us by Johannes Kunkel, "The brushes used in painting garments must be of soft hair. If one wishes to paint skin, the brushes must be made of goat's hair or the beard of a billy goat."

Some artists painted backwards with transparent colors and did not use the simpler method available to them because of the materials chosen. They even disregarded the show-through of the layers of paint added later. This can be clearly seen in ***Figure 4,*** *Pastoral Landscape*. It is probably from Beromunster about 1780 by Cornelius Suter (1733-1818). It is painted in a less translucent manner than observed in paintings by Meyer. Some areas were treated in a cursory manner, but not without verve. Notice how the blue shows through the white paint on the animals.

There are variations and transitions between painting with opaque and transparent colors. When working with opaque paint, fine highlights can be realized by scratching lines in a dark color and subsequently covering them with light paint. By repeating this procedure several times, the most refined effects can be created. Conversely, fine shading can be realized by scratching lines in a light color, then cov-

ering them with a dark paint. See ***Figure 5***, which is a view of the Piazza di Spagna in Naples. Its provenance is Augsburg and it is signed Johann Wolfgang Baumgartner, 1734.

A totally different, and now totally forgotten technique for reverse painting polychrome pictures on glass is described by the Tuscan, Cennino Cennini, in his tract on painting written about 1400. According to Cennini, the black outline should be painted first on glass which was probably primed with egg white. Thereafter, the pane must be powdered with a flour of finely crushed white eggshells. On this layer paint can be applied as on a stucco background. Accordingly, this kind of reverse painting is very close to the procedures employed in painting murals "al secco." According to Cennini, this background can also be used as a support for gold leaf, which indicates how finely the eggshells must be crushed for the flour.

Let us now change from polychrome painting to work on gold leaf, silver leaf and stanniol. *(possibly an alloy of silver and lead—Editors)* For the application of gold leaf, instructions from the Middle Ages recommend the use of egg white. It should be whipped into a froth and left overnight to clear. This binder is well suited for use with gold leaf and stanniol. Silver leaf, however, is blackened by the sulphur in the egg white. Therefore, tin leaf or stanniol have often been used in pictures with a silvery appearance.

Figure 5—Piazza di Spagna, Naples, signed Johann Wolfgang Baumgartner, 1734

One way to enrich the decoration of a gilded or silvered glass pane is the scratching of ornaments or figures into the metallic foil. Because the artist uses a pointed needle of steel to do this, such work is called "reverse engraving on glass." As a result of this engraving, the larger area of plain metallic foil is now transformed into many small particles. Thus there is a great danger that in time some of these particles may fall off and thus render the picture unsightly. To avoid this, further protection is necessary and casing the foil with a thin layer of glass provides this. The surface gilding is transformed into a genuine reverse picture because the decoration is now behind glass without intervening space. Examples of such reverse glass pictures include the antique "fondi d'oro." *(Term unknown. Possibly "foundation of gold" or "melted gold" based on Latin roots. Input welcome.—Editors)* One example, made in Rome in the fourth century, is in the possession of the Corning Museum of Glass.

Casing a larger flat panel with a thin coat of glass is difficult. To achieve the same effect, early glass artisans invented a different kind of protection for their reverse engravings. Having covered the engraved metal completely with dark paint and a coat of gypsum, they turned the panel to be viewed from the other side and the decoration was now behind the glass.

Another way of creating softer looking golden pictures is to paint the glass with finely ground gold leaf using a brush. Such gold powder is known by the name "shell gold" because it was stored in clean seashells. Pointed brushes are used for the work, permitting single thin lines to be drawn, finely separated from one another. The spacing allows the black background to be seen and makes the whole look like a gold engraving.

A picture might employ both techniques. The gold leaf possesses an intense sheen, whereas the shell gold is duller because the gold particles are no longer aligned on one surface, but are oriented at multiple angles, reflecting the light differently.

Another shortcoming of the foregoing method, which includes covering the glass panel with gold leaf to be engraved, is the consequent loss of opportunity to enrich the image with colored pigment in front of the gold. The artist would have to put the paint down first, which would eliminate the opportunity of seeing through the applied gold leaf in order to place the scratches correctly. The old masters knew how

Figure 6—Allegory of Fall, Dutch about 1580

to overcome this handicap. They first painted the metallic foil from the front, similar to the manner in which artists created "fondi d'oro." However, instead of covering it with a thin layer of glass, they pasted it behind a panel with the painted side turned toward the glass. I call this kind of work "deceptive" because real reverse paintings are produced by "incorrect means." Granted, though, the matter is not quite as simple as described. The masters of "fondi d'oro" could paint their gold foil after it had been firmly affixed to the glass, which is not the case here.

It is hardly possible to paint on a gossamer-thin, feather-light floating leaf of gold and then paste it on the back of a glass panel. The artists looked for a firmer, pliable support and found it in stanniol. A tincture made of egg white, saffron, chelidonium (a weed related to the poppy), and other ingredients was used to gild the silvery metal. On this tinted foil they painted the decoration, in some cases only in black, in others also in color.

From this deceptive reverse painting it was only a short step to the real thing. The change was forced by the demand for pictures larger than the size of a single leaf of metallic foil. Several foil leaves would have to be placed adjoining one another and, after painting, pasted in the exact sequence on the pane of glass without overlapping or leaving empty spaces between them. It was simpler to paint directly on the panel, and to add the metallic foil afterwards.

Colored transparent lacquers were particularly suitable for the painting. This can be seen on the *Allegory of Fall* ***(Figure 6)***, painted by a Dutch artist about 1580. One can see the tonal richness of the palette the artist has at his disposal when employing this technique. Not only can he work the modeling by thicker or thinner application of color, but he can also scrape it away and thereby render the finest details. This technique permits the creation of pictures that seem to be copperplate engravings on a gold ground. A variant of this technique is to paint the glass panel over completely with dark lacquer, then scratch the drawing into the coating and then overlay the whole with gold leaf. Scratching in lacquer is easier for the artist than engraving in gold foil, as shown in ***Figure 7***, a pastoral scene by the Dutchman, Lendert Overbeck, circa 1775-1800.

This leads us to the reverse print on glass. The method is the manual or mechanical transfer of printer's ink onto the back of glass. This can happen in three ways—the first two being very similar. A graphic print is well soaked in water and laid flat onto a glass panel coated with linseed oil, the print side toward the glass. As soon as it has properly set, the print is dampened again and the paper part is lightly rubbed off with the fingers in such a manner as to leave only the ink adhering to the glass. The subject can then be painted with colored pigment. Probably the oldest account of this method can be found in an Italian manuscript of 1580. It is generally accepted that all reverse paintings of this kind, with subjects similar to the engravings by Italian graphic artists of the time, must be reverse prints. But three elements call this into question. The first is represented by the black drawings.

Figure 7—pastoral scene by Dutchman, Lendert Overbeck, circa 1775-1800

They look like woodcuts but are supposed to be transfers of engravings. Secondly, the careful rubbing of the paper is very tedious, and under no circumstances must too much be taken off or the outline is lost and the trouble taken for nothing. On some pictures the third indication can be seen in rows of fine dark dots along the black outlines and also in the white sky. The individual dots, perhaps thirty to the centimeter, are barely visible to the naked eye. They prove that the painter neither transferred nor copied his reference. He pin-pricked the graphic print with a sharp point. Thereafter, the perforated paper was laid on a coated pane of glass and dusted with coal powder. In the important parts of the image he followed the pattern closely; in the background the handling was much more free.

Another way of producing a reverse print also requires a graphic sheet adhering to a pane of glass. In this case the paper is not rubbed off. Instead, the color is applied so thickly that the paper becomes thoroughly saturated. This method was once popular in England especially during the 18th century. This method of reverse painting on glass requires that the print be mechanically applied as in the production of faience dishes.

It is incorrect to assume that the techniques of reverse painting on glass were always straight and true. The painters often employed several methods in a single picture to achieve special effects. Finally, let us examine why analysis of the manner of painting is important, and what purpose it serves.

Generally, technique is a very valuable indicator for the assessment of provenance. In order to establish the origin and age of an unsigned, undated painting—and we are dealing with paintings here—a primarily stylistic analysis is applied. An attempt is made to discern the style in which the work was created, and to compare it with signed and dated specimens. In reverse painting this can lead to wrong conclusions. Often the stylistic analysis can help only to determine the earliest period when the picture could have been made.

This means that a panel painted in the style of high baroque cannot belong to the time of Dürer. The reverse, however, could be possible. A painting rendered in the 17th century after a 16th century engraving by Dürer might suggest that it was rendered as early as Dürer's time. Thus, a study of the techniques of glass painting and their development, can assist greatly in the determination of provenance.

THE BOOKSHELF

Lacquer; an International History and Collector's Guide
by Jonathan Bourne, Anthony Christie, Craig Clunas, Carolyn Eardley, Geza Fehervari, Julia Hutt, Oliver Impey, Melanie Kenton, Patricia Lyons, Teresa Sackville-West and Rosemary Scott.
Bracken Books, London–published in association with Phoebe Phillips Editions by The Crowood Press, Wiltshire, England. 1984. 256pp. Black and white photos, color plates. $9.99 at The Christmas Tree Shop. Index, Bibliography.

What a stroke of good luck! As you can see in the foregoing, the price of this book is one of the better deals I have come across in a long, long time. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time. *Lacquer...* was published in England and is a real gem even if all you do is thumb through the superb illustrations. The excellent accompanying text was written by many well-known authorities in their fields. I found this diamond in the rough at a Christmas Tree Shop. It will take some searching to locate this volume. Perhaps your local library has access to it. If so, check it out.

The authors begin with a chapter providing a thorough explanation of the term "lacquer." Did you know that there are three definitions of the term — the first is "true" lacquer which comes from the sap of a tree, the second "lac" or resin which comes from various insects who feed on tree sap, and the third defines various finishes and procedures which were and are used as substitutes for lacquer. A good example is japanning. The first two forms are associated with the Orient and the third is a common European way of mimicking the style of finish. Once again, as in the Chinoiserie book reviewed next, an oriental theme became a popular fashion in Europe and then in her colonies. The authors thoroughly explain the intricate lacquer process, including

a full two-page colored illustration of the thirty-five stages in the making of a lacquer saki cup.

The succeeding chapters were written by the several different authorities listed above. Countries and regions such as Korea, China, Japan, the Ryukyu Islands, Southeast Asia, and the Near East, Middle East and India were carefully researched. The lacquer tree is indigenous to China, so that, quite naturally, is where the book begins to spin the tale of this type of finish. The process began in the third century B.C. Consequently some of us are heirs to a very long tradition of working with lacquer. The history is further subdivided into dynasties and the pieces produced within the periods of the various emperors. It is no wonder that this Chinese chapter is the longest. As you progress through the following chapters it is easy to appreciate the individualistic styles used by each country involved in the process of decorating with lacquer.

Perhaps the most interesting chapters for the members of our Society begin with Chapter Seven entitled Europe and Russia. Here we jump to the 17th century and, as with Chinoiserie, there were not enough pieces imported to satisfy the expanding demand of the Europeans. Thus they "invented" various finishes to imitate the desired effect. One section teaches you how to tell the difference. All sorts of furniture were decorated. Clocks, desks, walls, ceilings, boxes, trays, portable desks and work boxes, pianos and chairs, all came under the influence of the fashionable desire for lacquer products. In fact this decorative work continues today in studios and workshops, and is exhibited in fine furniture stores and art galleries worldwide.

This book also contains a detailed glossary of many of the terms used. Rather than employing solely a textual explanation, there are many photos, colored and black and white, to further illustrate the definition. The author of one chapter explains how to restore injured lacquer. There is a useful list of suppliers of the materials needed to lacquer as well as a roll of the workshops where one might learn the trade.

This book was a wonderful, unexpected bargain for this reviewer. May you find one too. As for me, I am going to buy a ticket in the Massachusetts lottery.

—Margaret K. Rodgers

Chinoiserie, The Impact of Oriental Styles on Western Art and Decoration

by Oliver Impey

Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. 1977.
$14.95. 308 pp, 16 pp in color, B&W photos. Index.

For those of you who attended the Chinoiserie class conducted by Astrid Donnellen at the April 1994 HSEAD Meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, this book is an excellent tool to support your newly acquired knowledge of this delightful type of decoration.

Part I takes the reader back into the annals of history providing a brief history of the early voyages of exploration to the fabled East. These were commercial ventures launched with the mercantile goal of end-running the caravans thus avoiding the land-based middlemen and their profits. The author traces the routes that trade, information, and decoration traveled from East to West. Within the pages are numerous excellent photos of various items brought from China and other areas of the Orient to the cities of Europe. All things oriental were prized and, as most originals were very costly, the artisans and decorators of Europe did their best to mimic the Chinese designs. In most cases this amounted to an European's concept of what oriental things were like. Quite often this meant European forms decorated with a composite of fancy, but not always accurate, details gleaned from all areas of the orient without regard for specific source. The definition of "orient" was a bit loose too, often including anything east of the Mediterranean as well as work heavily influenced by Islam, which extended across North Africa and into Spain.

Part II delves into Chinoiserie executed on various materials. Examples of silks, carpets, textiles, paintings and drawings, ceramics, furniture, gardens, architecture, interior design, metalwork and the modern adaptations of this style are included in these ten chapters.

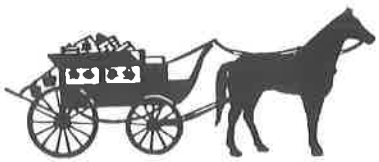
For many of us Chinoiserie carries a very narrow definition that applies to lacquered wooden items with raised forms done in gesso, or perhaps some forms of metalwork done on plates. However, this book expands the term to include everything oriental in the generic sense. This reviewer was reminded of the Gothic papier mâché trays with the pagodas, bridges, oriental figures, and impossibly fine gold leaf work made by Henry Clay. These are indeed a part of the overall concept of

Chinoiserie. But the term as employed here covers much, much, more.

Furniture created by Thomas Chippendale in the 18th century exhibited an oriental ambience. Buildings were designed to mimic their designer's personal concept of how Chinese tea rooms or pagodas might appear. Gardens were formalized with fountains and intricate patterns and many "Chinese" buildings. These structures really didn't bear much resemblance to anything found in China, but the fashions of Europe dictated some stretches of the imagination. Tea and the Tea Ceremony rapidly spread throughout Europe. Nowhere was it more the rage than in England where tea time continues to be observed. The "China" and other implements required to properly serve this exotic new beverage had to be appropriate. What better design motifs could be found than all things oriental—or—Chinoiserie?

The author undertook a major challenge to explain and clarify this significant subject in the world of the Decorative Arts. Mr. Impey succeeded very nicely. The text was written in an easy style which gently leads the reader through the various phases without bogging down in too many dates, facts, and figures. It is a most enlightening book covering not only the art form but placing it in the context of the times during which it spread far from its origins. If you can find the book (it was published in 1977), you will enjoy an addition to your bookshelves which will entertain as well as inform.

—Margaret K. Rodgers



MEMBERS "A" AWARDS

Danvers Massachusetts
April, 1994

Ann Baker
COUNTRY PAINTING

Roberta Edrington
VICTORIAN FLOWER PAINTING

Patricia Smith

GLASS STENCILLED BORDER

Nancy E. Corcoran

STENCILLED TIN

Jane Giallonardo
COUNTRY PAINTING

Phyllis Sherman
SPECIAL CLASS

Ann Baker
COUNTRY PAINTING

AWARDS

Danvers, Massachusetts—April 1994

PRESIDENT'S AWARD BOX
Astrid Donnellan • Helen Gross • Helga Johnson
Louise Jones • Norma Stark

CAREER AWARD
Dolores Furnari • Barbara Quirk • Mayette Slayton

APPLICANTS ACCEPTED AS NEW MEMBERS
Pamela J. Benoit • May Bernard • Susan L. Burke
Sandra Cohen • Barbara A. King • Barbara Klimavich
Anita M. Martinelli • Margaret McWade • Patricia M. Stano
Betty B. Taylor

MEMBERS "B" AWARDS

COUNTRY PAINTING
Gladys B. Sowers

STENCILING ON WOOD
Jean Andrews

STENCILING ON TIN
Joan Austin (2 pieces)

GLASS GOLD LEAF PANEL
Mae Fisher • Dorma West

VICTORIAN FLOWER PAINTING
Patricia Smith

SPECIALIST AWARD

The society will grant the Specialist Award to those craftsmen who exhibit their expertise in the painting techniques and in their knowledge of the history of any category of early American decoration recognized in the Standards Manual, with the exception of theorem painting.

The official presentation of this award will take place at the HSEAD convention immediately following the satisfactory completion of all the requirements outlined. The petitioner will be requested to bring to that convention all the "A" Awards received in completing the requirements for the Specialist Award, and these will be placed on display in the Exhibition Room. In the event that an award piece is no longer available, a photograph of it from the HSEAD files will be used in its stead.

PREREQUISITES FOR THE SPECIALIST AWARD

1. An article published in *THE DECORATOR* or other publication pertaining to the chosen category.
2. Five patterns in the chosen category to be donated to the HSEAD lending library portfolio. These must be recorded from the original and be accompanied by one or more color photographs that will be mounted with the pattern.
3. Be a teacher certified by HSEAD in the chosen category.

The petitioner need choose only TWO of the above three prerequisites

4. Presentation of a lecture and/or demonstration in the chosen category at an HSEAD convention or the HSEAD school program.
5. Satisfactory completion of the HSEAD school course in your specialist category.
6. Membership in HSEAD in good standing for five years prior to the application for this award.

LOIS TUCKER: COUNTRY TIN SPECIALIST

Lois began painting country tin in 1973 and became a member of the society in 1976. She was first introduced to country painting as an antique dealer. Her years in the antique business provided access to large numbers of originals at auctions, antique shows and through her association with dealers specializing in decorated tin. She studied and recorded originals from museums and private collectors as well as the show circuit. In 1985 she received Teachers Certification in Country Painting and in 1987 in Stenciling. She currently serves on the judging panel and teaches the country painting course for the HSEAD school. She is a charter member of Stevens Plains Chapter and has served in several offices. In 1993 she received the Presidents Award. Lois was meeting chairman for the society meetings in Portland, ME and Nashua, NH. In the fall of 1993 she completed the requirements for Specialist Award in Country Painting and the award was presented to her at the Spring 1994 meeting. She teaches workshops at her studio in Maine and also frequently conducts seminars for groups in other states.

All Work by Lois Tucker

TINWARE, The "Family Tree"

by Dorcas M. Layport
Source: Astrid Donnellan

I hope that the following "Tinware Family Tree," supported by the accompanying chart (page 30), will provide you with some background on the expansion of the tinware industry in America. Perhaps you will acquire a new appreciation of Country Tin. This Family Tree will enable you to relate to some of the known tinsmiths and decorators as they spread from Connecticut to, first the East, and then other parts of the new United States. I would like you to realize there is more to country tin painting than just *"THOSE BRUSH STROKES!"*

It is my position that some of the first entrepreneurs in this country were in the tinware industry. In order for everyone to be able to obtain these utilitarian pieces, tin peddlers were sent out to the far reaches of the countryside to sell their wares. I like to think of them as our first door-to-door travelling salesmen. Tin pieces were susceptible to damage so the tinsmiths opened repair shops and the peddlers became the servicemen, or repairmen, along their routes.

Since there was a shortage of cash in the early days of our republic, bartering became the norm. When the peddlers returned to their home-base tinshops, their wagons were not empty but loaded down with the wares received in trade. Rags went to paper mills, hides to tanneries, tallow to candle makers, etc. As the need for storage space grew, warehouses were built. What to do with all those stored, bartered wares which didn't directly feed local industry? Why, of course, open a general store!

Tinware was found in every household because of its many utilitarian uses. However, decorated tinware was too expensive for the average household. It was mainly purchased by the moderately affluent and the well-to-do. Each decorator employed their own colors and styles. Because of these signature characteristics, most designs can be identified as the product of a specific shop and, sometimes, of an individual decorator. For example, the female handwork of Mercy North and Ann Butler was very delicate and individually distinctive.

By comparing the numbers of each of the following paragraphs

with the chart of the Tinware "Family Tree" accompanying this article, you can follow the progress of the spreading of the American tinware industry. You can also make up your own copy to keep handy for future reference and Country Tin study.

SPREAD OF TINWARE INDUSTRY

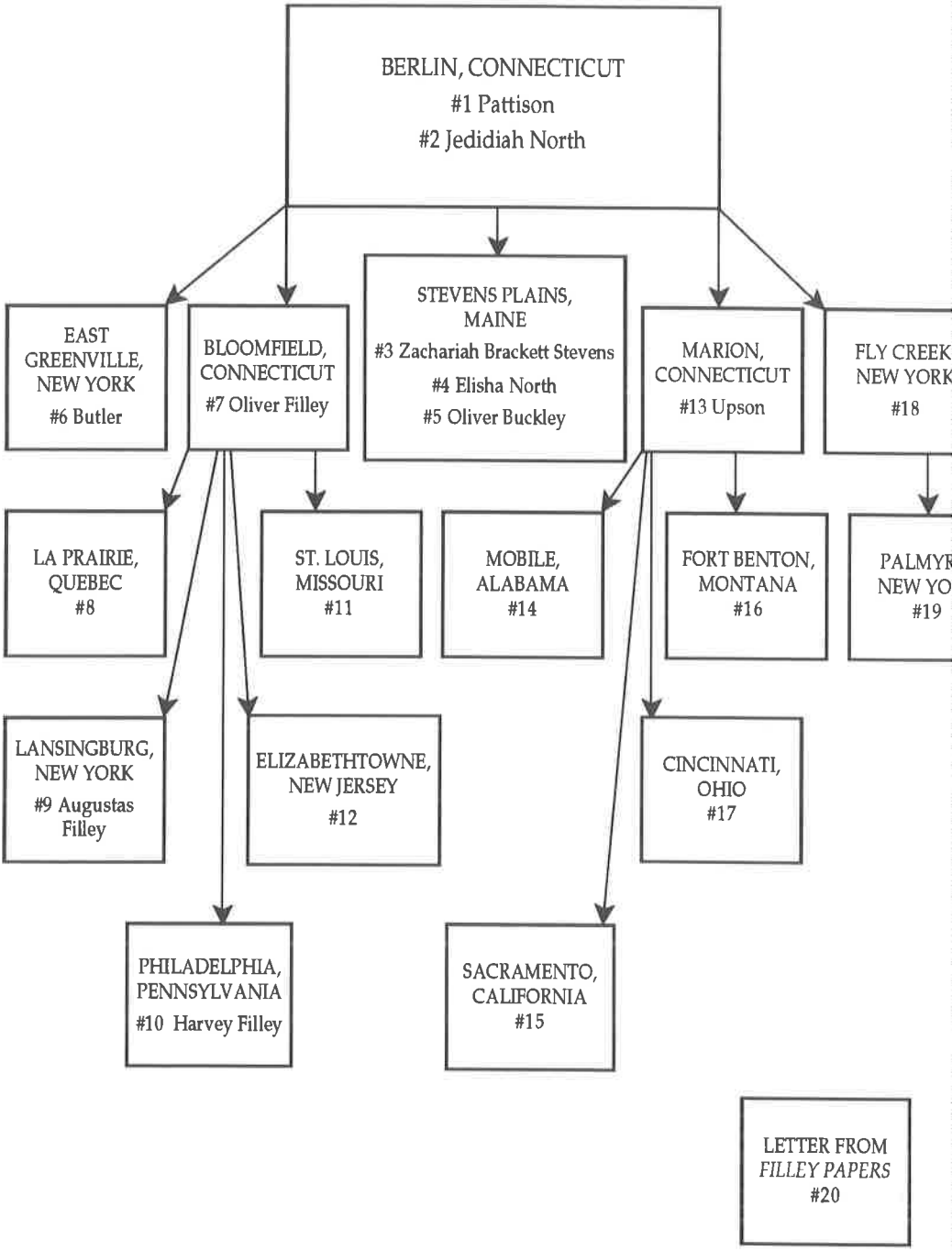
There were several families who figured prominently in the early tinware industry that developed around Hartford, Connecticut. In order to expand their marketsfor tinware, and avoid out of state licensing fees for their peddlers, Connecticut tinsmiths established branch shops in several of the new states. Others moved from Connecticut to areas with less competition.

#1. BERLIN, CONNECTICUT. Edward Pattison, a Scot, immigrated from Ireland to Berlin, Connecticut and started the first tinsmith shop in the American Colonies in 1750. Later, joined by his brother William, they trained many apprentices who went on to fully develop the Connecticut tinware industry. Edward's sons carried on the tinware business in Berlin. There are no known extant decorated pieces produced in the original Pattison tin shop.

#2. JEDEDIAH NORTH. In the late 18th to early 19th century, Jedediah North and, later J. & E. North were toolmakers who produced tinsmithing tools. Other members of the family became tinsmiths. They all left Berlin to settle in other states.

#3. ZACHARIAH BRACKETT STEVENS. Zachariah was a blacksmith who gave up the forge to establish a successful tinware business (c.1798-1842) in Stevens Plains (now known as Westbrook), Maine.

THE SPREAD OF TINWARE



Hence the Stevens Plains Chapter of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration (HSEAD). Many Connecticut-trained tinsmiths were employed here. At its height there were twelve tinware shops in Stevens Plains.

Sarah, Hattie, and Marie Francis were Maine decorators known to have decorated some of Zachariah's pieces. These three girls, along with their siblings, lost their parents. They were adopted and raised by their Aunt Sarah ("Sally") and her husband, Thomas Briscoe. Thomas Briscoe was the owner of a shop in Stevens Plains.

Aunt Sally (Sarah Rose Briscoe) was the niece of Paul Revere and the sister of Philip Rose, an English-trained, well-known Boston portraitist. Aunt Sally taught her nieces to decorate tin, which is possibly why Maine tin is distinguished by its blending, transparency of colors, and its use of opaqueness. (English-trained artists with a Pontypool influence?)

Niece Sarah ("Sally") Frances is known for her Maine "Briscoe Roses." HSEAD owns two breadbaskets on which the "Briscoe Roses" appear. She married Samuel B. Stevens, the youngest son of Zachariah, and was the Grandmother of HSEAD founder, Esther Stevens Brazer.

#4. ELIJAH AND ELISHA NORTH. These were brothers trained as tinsmiths in Berlin, Connecticut. In 1807 they joined the growing tinware center in Stevens Plains, Maine that was attracting many Connecticut tinsmiths and tradesmen.

#5. OLIVER BUCKLEY. Mr. Buckley (b.1781-d.1872), trained in Berlin, Connecticut, also chose to join the thriving Maine tinware industry. He trained both of his daughters to be decorators.

#6. EAST GREENVILLE, NEW YORK. Aaron Butler, after settling in New York with his parents, later returned to Connecticut where he served as a tinsmith's apprentice. He returned to East Greenville and established a successful combination tin shop, decorating shop, general store and peddling business during the period 1824-1859. His sons worked as tinsmiths and his daughters learned to decorate. Even though there are many original pieces in existence from the Butler shop, only a few are signed by daughters Anne, Minerva and possibly Marilla.

#7. BLOOMFIELD, CONNECTICUT. Oliver Filley trained in Berlin (now Southington), Connecticut. He became one of the most successful Connecticut tinware dealers (c.1806-1846), by making quality tinware in several locations. Polly Parson, a known decorator, worked in the Bloomfield shop. Oliver Brunson worked for Oliver Filley and was known for his creation of the "Crooked Spout Coffee Pot."

#8. LA PRAIRIE, QUEBEC. Asa French was sent in 1817 by Oliver Filley (#7) to Quebec with instructions to make, japan and decorate tinware, in order to avoid expensive license fees charged foreign peddlers who brought their wares into Canada. John Mills, working in Philadelphia, drew up the payment contract between French and Filley. French later peddled tin.

#9. LANSINGBURGH, NEW YORK. Augustus Filley was the brother-in-law and cousin of Oliver Filley (#7). He was sent to Lansingburgh (now Troy) to open a branch shop (c.1815-1845). Augustus was supplied with tin and varnishes by Oliver Filley. Augustus' wife, Amelia, probably decorated some of his tinware.

#10. PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA. Harvey Filley, a younger brother of Oliver Filley (#7 & #9), learned tinsmithing from Oliver in Bloomfield, Connecticut. He was then sent to Philadelphia to open a branch shop (c.1816-1850). Oliver financed Harvey's efforts and supplied him with tin and varnishes from his Connecticut shop. Harvey and Sons later became retail dealers of Britannia and silver plated wares, which replaced tinware in popularity.

#11. ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI. Oliver Dwight Filley, a son of Oliver Filley (#7), operated a branch shop in St. Louis from approximately 1830-1850.

#12. ELIZABETHTOWNE, NEW JERSEY. Oliver Filley (#7) went to Elizabethtowne to set up his first branch shop (1810-1816). During his absence his wife, Annis Humphrey Filley, continued to manage the Bloomfield shop. The New Jersey shop was not successful.

#13. MARION, CONNECTICUT. This town is now known as Meriden. James Upson and his two sons Salmon, and Asahel, were all active in tinware during the period 1773-1837. James learned tinsmithing at

the Pattison (#2) shop in Berlin, Connecticut. His sons continued the business. Asahel's nine sons later promoted sales of tinware in emerging states and territories.

Salmon's second wife, Sarah, decorated tin and signed some of her pieces with a small black circle around a single, or double, black dot. She was also a known decorator of clock faces, some of which are displayed in Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts.

#14. MOBILE, ALABAMA. James Robert Upson, a son of Asahel Upson (#13), opened a hardware store in Mobile (c.1840) and sold Connecticut tinware.

#15. SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA. James Robert Upson (#14), left Alabama (c.1849) for California where he sold tin pans made in Upson shops to prospectors panning for gold during the great Gold Rush which started in 1848 at Sutter's Mill near Sacramento.

#16. FORT BENTON, MONTANA. Major Gad Ely Upson, serving as an Indian agent, ordered supplies and goods (c.1850) from the East which included tinware from the Upson shops.

#17. CINCINNATI, OHIO. Asahel Augustus Upson, another son of Asahel Upson (#13 & #14), built a large factory in Cincinnati in which Connecticut tinware was japanned and decorated (c.1830-1850).

#18. FLY CREEK, NEW YORK. Stephen North, son of Jedediah North (#2), learned the tinsmith trade from the Pattisons (#3) prior to moving his family to Fly Creek, near Cooperstown, New York. His son Albert and grandson Ceylon continued the family business he started there (active 1790-1841). Stephen's daughter Mercy distinguished herself with her skilled "flowering."

#19. PALMYRA, NEW YORK. Linus North, Stephen North's (#18) second oldest son, started out to become a preacher. Ill health deterred him. He became a tinsmith in Palmyra (c.1825-1846), because it promised "...a good support from the business." Many souls went unsaved but myriads of kettles had pots to call them black.

#20. Letter from the *Oliver Filley Papers* of the Connecticut Historical Society:

January, 9, 1818

Sir, Mr. Oliver Filley,

Since I purchased a load of tin from you I have traveled through the state of Ohio and Kentucky and I find tinware to sell verry well in this Country. I have now Commenced business with S. & Z. Levenworth Merchants in Jeffersonville, Indiana. Formerly from Northington, Connecticut, S. & Z. Levenworth own one store in Jeffersonville...one I tend in Corrydon... I now forward a Bill by Levenworth and My request to you for One thousand dollars worth of tinware to be shipped at Hartford to New Orleans to the care of Talcott and Bowers to Forward to S. & Z. Levenworth, Jeffersonville, Ind.

We think we can sell that Amount In a short time or more...I have recommended your tinware to Levenworth and I shall expect to find it as Good as Usul....

/s/Julius Woodford

The foregoing letter is quoted as an example of how far and fast the reputation of the early Hartford, Connecticut tinware manufacturers had spread. Note the roundabout manner in which the goods were forwarded to Jeffersonville via New Orleans. At this time in our early history, there were no national highways, canals, or railroads to provide a more direct route. The fastest way, by sea and river, was the longest way!

REFERENCES

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Written with the gracious help of Lois Tucker, Country Painting Specialist and Historian.

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September 29—October 1, 1995
Friday, Saturday, Sunday

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Site andDates to be determined

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