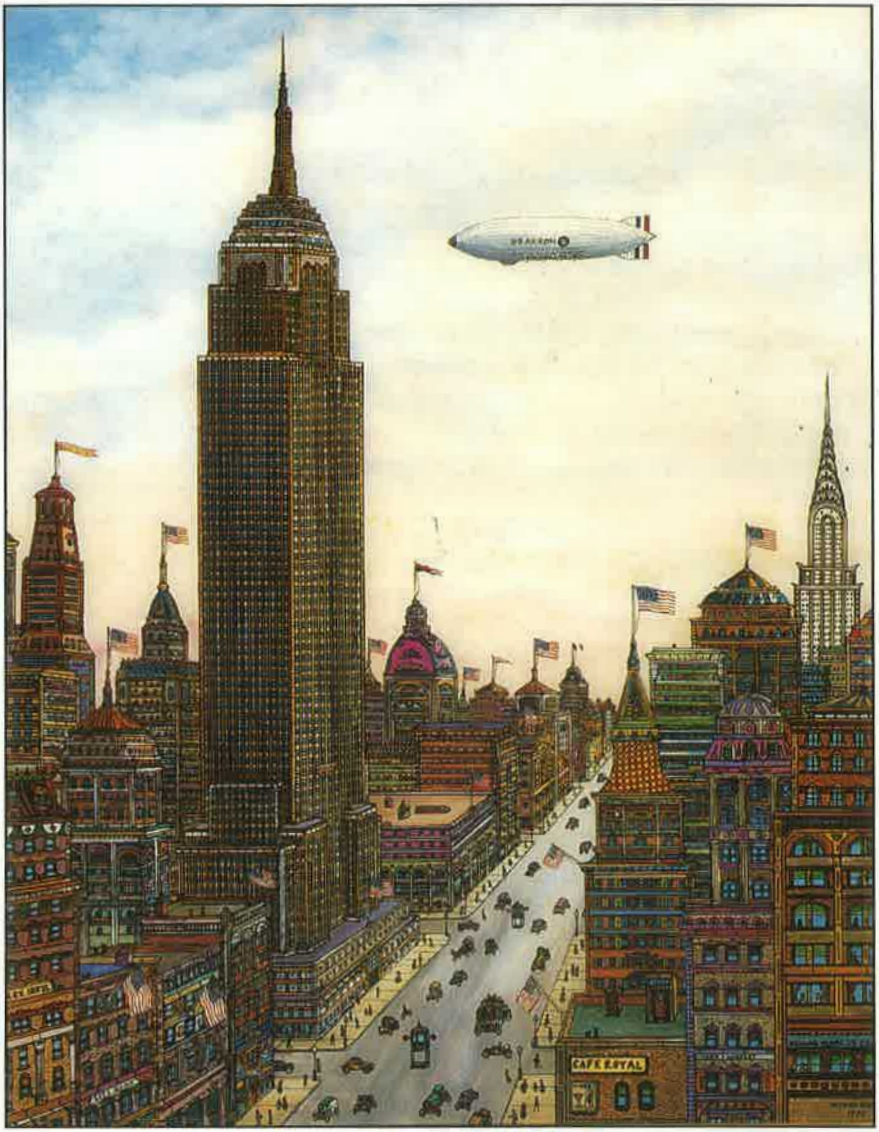
The Decorator

Volume XLIX No. 2 Charleston, SC Spring/Summer 1995



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

Journal of the
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF EARLY AMERICAN DECORATION, INC.

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.

If you are interested in joining our Guild, or would like further information, such as the address of local Chapters, please contact the Administrative Assistant listed on the bottom of the Table of Contents page.

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THE DECORATOR

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover: *"Empire State Building"*. Back Cover: *"Stratford Light 1886"*, both by Milton Bond

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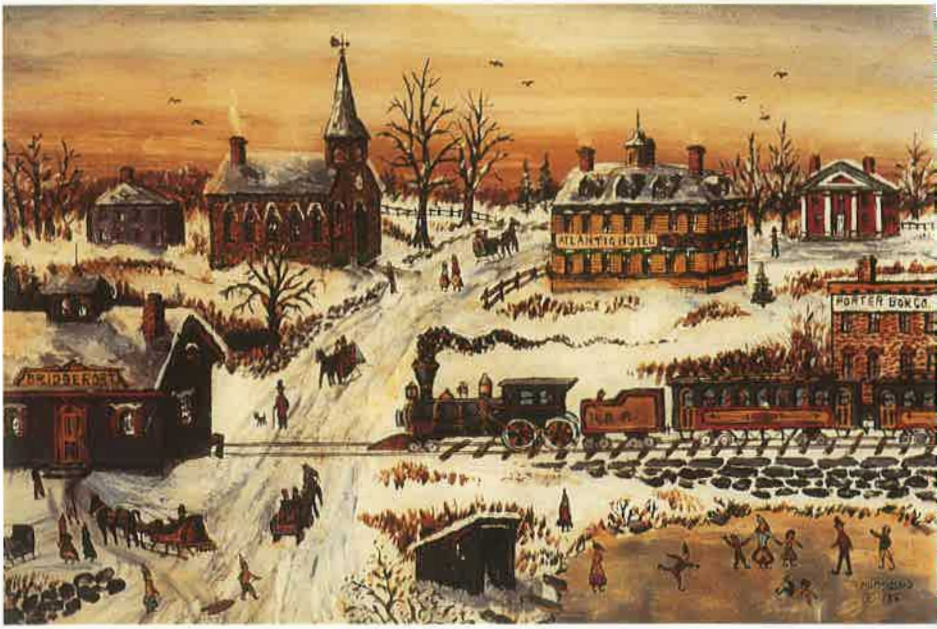


"Bridgeport, Connecticut" by Milton Bond

ERRATA: In the article *Trompe L'Oeil* by Dorothy Fillmore (Fall/Winter 1994–1995), there were several graphic misidentifications. Figure 2 should read–*Frescoed Ceiling in Esterhay Palace, Fertod, Hungary;* Figure 3 should read–*Balconies of People, The Great Hall, Gottweig Benedictine Abbey, Vachau, Austria;* The graphic on page 4–should read *Painted mural on exterior building, Newbury St. at Dartmouth St., Boston, MA.*

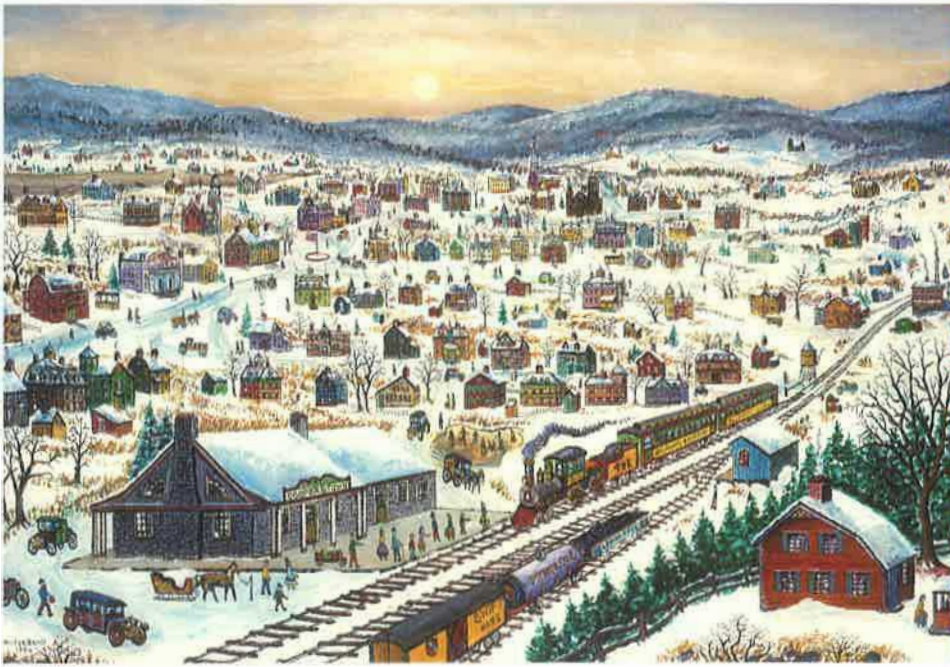
EDITORIAL

This issue of *The Decorator* contains a blend of the old and the new in several forms. For example, the two articles concerning stencilling on floors and floorcloths. As we know this is one of the earliest manifestations of our craft. Yet today, your editors have noticed more and more new houses being built with stenciling as part of the "classic decor" highlighted in the sales literature. Usually this is found around the walls, just below the molding. Some reflects an attempt to recreate authentic early American designs, some appear to be the product of a computer screen. The point is that stenciling as an active art form never died, remains with us, and is proliferating.

Another significant area of HSEAD skills is reverse painting on glass. In this issue you will find an interesting article by Shirley Baer on a modern artist working in this arcane area. The list of honors earned by Mr. Bond make it strikingly clear that work in this challenging domain continues today, and, most importantly, is highly appreciated by a broad, sophisticated, international audience.

Your two editors get to put their names on the masthead of each issue. However, your *Decorator* team consists of more than we two. The principal reason that you can receive these issues at a relatively low cost is due to the "subsidy" paid by the advertisers. All the hard work benefits us all in our Society. Please give Carol your thanks, and our advertisers your business. They both make much of what we do possible.

—Margaret and Mike Rodgers



"Cooperstown, New York" by Milton Bond

MILTON BOND, FOLK ARTIST

by Shirley Baer

To many of us, the term "folk artist" refers to an untrained or self-taught artist working before 1900. While he missed the 19th century, Milton Bond has earned his reputation as a 20th century practitioner in that American folk tradition.

Best known for his reverse-glass paintings, Milton Bond is undoubtedly one of the most successful at his craft today. His work has been shown worldwide, in museums as prestigious as France's Palace of Versailles and New York's Museum of American Folk Art. In 1986, he was commissioned to paint the annual Easter Egg Roll on the White House Lawn for President Reagan. In 1989, he designed the official Christmas card for Lee Iacocca, then chairman of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Commission. He has just completed a commission for the U.S. Congress: a 16 x 20 inch reverse-glass painting of the Capitol building with a parade coming down Pennsylvania Avenue.

He is as respected by the critics as he is appreciated by the public. "[Bond's] masterly handling of landscape, his craftsmanship, is so superb," said James Ayres, director of England's John Judkyn Memorial American Museum, where Bond's works are among the permanent collection. "It's not often that craftsmen in this century can surpass those of the past... a consummate piece of skill."

Born in 1918 in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Milton Bond comes from a long line of seafaring oystermen and sailors. He traces his roots back to Sir William Bond, a British shipbuilder of the 1500's who built Great Harry, a 260-gun flagship, for Henry VIII. The close connection between the Bonds and the sea has continued through the centuries.

Milton's ancestors settled in the Stratford, Connecticut, area in 1639. From the late 1800's to about 1940, his grandfather, Captain Ashabel Bond, and his father, Wallace Bond, were oystermen. His father owned four commercial sailing and three steam vessels. Milton grew up helping his father on their sailing craft, and for a brief time he owned and sailed his own commercial oystering vessel.

Milton's love for art and for the sea began at an early age. When he was

SHIRLEY BAER PHOTO

Milton Bond

just five years old, in the first grade, one of his crayon drawings was selected and exhibited at the State Teachers' Convention in Hartford. He went on to take art classes in high school, but beyond that he received no formal training.

For a brief time after high school, Milton took over his father's business and sailed a commercial oyster sailing sloop. But the oyster business was dying, so Milton sought work at Remington Arms in nearby Bridgeport. He later turned to a career in real estate.

He says his late sister, Mildred, introduced him to reverse glass painting thirty years ago. She was a very artistic woman who enjoyed tinsel painting, theorems, porcelain and tray painting. Milton embraced reverse-glass painting, improving and developing the form as he went along. While still working in real estate, he sold one of his reverse paintings through the Stonington Gallery in New York. Although happy with real estate, he gradually began to paint full time.

Most of his paintings deal with maritime, architectural and New England themes, "...almost anything except portraits." He employs both acrylics and oils on glass, and often uses foil in the windows of houses and ships. He has his own formula, and a few tricks, which he says he will reveal someday. His works range from doll house-size to 30 by 46 inches. Large paintings take him approximately a month; smaller ones (approximately 9 by 12 inches), one or two days.

From his studio today, Milton looks out over the entrance to the Housatonic River and Long Island Sound. He is a quiet, unpretentious man with whom I'd like to have enjoyed more time. As revealed in the progression of his paintings, his love of art and the sea, and their rich combination in his work, has grown and deepened with the passing years. Milton Bond will be among those much admired and studied by future generations of HSEAD members.

CREDENTIALS

Awards:

Silver Medal: 1983 International Folk Art Exhibition, Morges, Switzerland. Bronze Medal: 1984 International Folk Art Exhibition, Morges, Switzerland, for best American entry.

Gold Medal: 1992 International Folk Art Exhibition, Morges, Switzerland. Special Invitation to Lifetime Membership in the Henri Rousseau Society.

First Prize: 1976 National Miniature Show.

MUSEUM PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:

John Judkyn Memorial American Museum, Bath, England.

The Grand Palais, Paris, France.

SPECIAL MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS:

Museum of American Folk Art, "American Festival Exhibit," Rockefeller Center, New York.

"Three Centuries of Connecticut Folk Art," Hartford Athenaeum, Museum of Art, Science, and Industry.

Lymen Allyn Museum

The New Haven Colony Historical Society

Westport Historical Society

The Squibb Gallery, "Folk Fantasy" Exhibit, Squibb Corp., Princeton, N.J.

Palace of Versailles

GALLERY SHOWS:

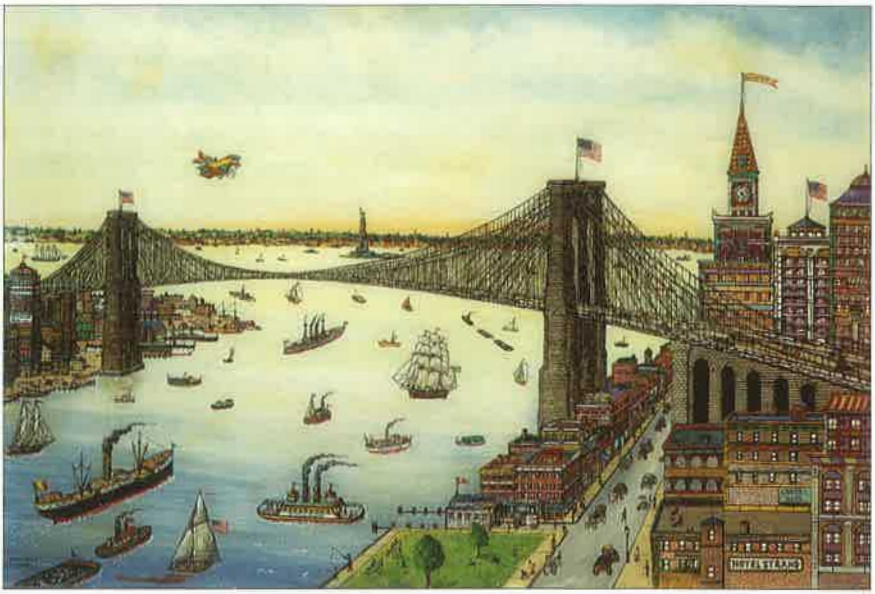
Jay Johnson America's Folk Heritage Gallery, New York.

Gallery Van Rooy, Florida.

Bloomingdale's Department Store, New York. "America the Beautiful" Exhibit.

Gallery Pro Art Kasper, Morges, Switzerland.

Galerie Zur Fazion, Altendorf, Switzerland.



"Brooklyn Bridge"

DOCUMENTATION:

Cover Feature, "Venture Bridgeport",
special supplement of the Bridgeport Post and New York Times,
with celebration poster featuring his painting "Early Bridgeport."

Gazette Galerie Pro Arte, Switzerland.

Brooklyn Museum of Art, catalogue "The Great East River Bridge 1883/1983"

All American Folk Arts and Crafts, by Wm. C. Ketchum,
(Rizzoli, New York —Publisher).

American Folk Art of the Twentieth Century, by Wm. C. Ketchum & Jay Johnson
(Rizzoli, New York - Publisher).

Museum of American Folk Art
Encyclopedia of Twentieth Century Folk Art and Artists,
by Chuck & Jan Rosenak.

SPECIAL COMMISSIONS:

Painting for the New 10th Congress, Washington, D.C.

Statue of Liberty 1994, Ellis Island Centennial, 1989.

Easter Egg Roll on the White House Lawn 1986.

SIX DECORATORS, THEIR SHOPS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR PAINTING

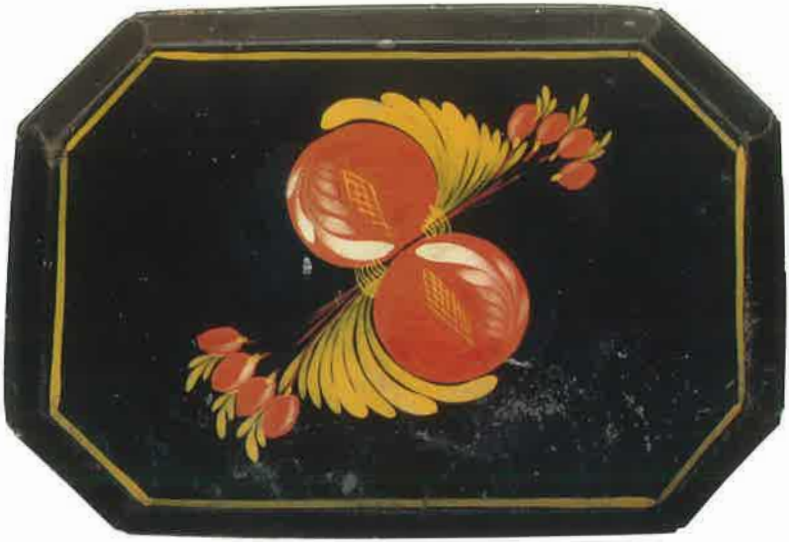
by Ann Baker

The tinware industry was started in this country before the American Revolution. Currently, we connect American Country Painting with eight known shops, and we refer to them by the name of the family who operated each particular shop. (When I first started painting, I assumed that when someone referred to a "Filley Piece," they were talking about an area, not a family. But much research and study have led to decorated tinware being identified by area and shop.) The eight shops are: Connecticut Filley (Bloomfield Connecticut); New York Filley (Lansingburg, New York); Pennsylvania Filley (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania); Butler (Greenville, New York); Cowles/Upsom (Marion, Connecticut); North (Fly Creek, New York); Buckley (Stevens Plains, Maine); and Stevens (Stevens Plains, Maine). There seems to be a connection from the Connecticut area to all eight Country Painting shops. Perhaps it is because Edward Pattison - who immigrated from Ireland to Boston in 1740, and settled in Berlin, Connecticut - was the pioneer of household tinware production in America. Pattison had many apprentices who taught their successors.

Here are six decorative painters whose work has helped us with our identifications.

OLIVER FILLEY, a tinware dealer, was born in 1784 in Windsor, Connecticut. He set up a successful businesses in Bloomfield and later Simsbury. Branches were established in New Jersey in 1810, in Lansingburg, New York in 1811, in Pennsylvania in 1816, and in St Louis in 1830. Military duty during the war of 1812 caused Oliver to leave the New Jersey tinshop, but the shop continued operating under Filley supervision until 1815. The Lansingburg shop was managed by Oliver's cousin and brother-in-law. It was shut down in its first year for lack of business but reopened shortly after when the business climate improved.

EDWARD FRANCIS worked in all the Filley Shops—for Oliver in Connecticut, for Harvey (Oliver's younger brother), in Philadelphia, and



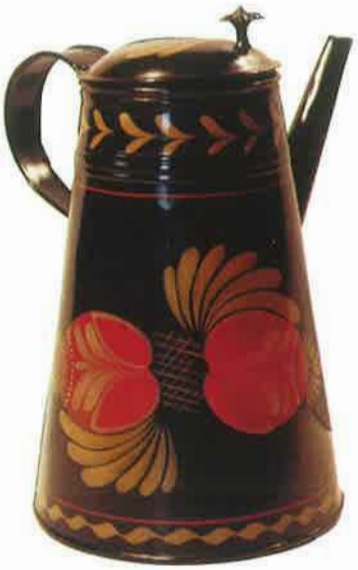
BERNADETTE THOMPSON PHOTO

Edward Francis tray

for Agustus Filley in Lansingburg. Edward was an accomplished japanner[1] and varnish maker and also peddled tinware. His partner in the tin peddling business was Edward Metcalf. Edward Francis decorated one sheet-waiters, bread trays, trunks, and coffee pots—both straight spout and goose neck. A one-sheet waiter *(The Ornamented Tray, p. 229, fig. 42)* now owned by the Clairmont Historical Society, Clairmont, New Hampshire, has his name scratched on the back. This tray is the key to our interpretation of his style of decorative painting. This tray has a black background. The green appears dark and the yellow is of medium hue. There are two large red flowers with overtones of alizarin and white brush strokes painted in opposing directions. Yellow crosshatching appears in the middle. Four red buds appear as to be shooting out on each side of the main flowers with the same alizarin and white overtones in opposing directions, an important identifying characteristic.

Other characteristics of Edward Francis' painting are asphaltum backgrounds, sometimes mottled, and yellow brush strokes packed tightly painted around one side of a red ball flower and conforming to the shape of the flower. His leaves do not have a definite form but are clusters of brush strokes. Striping is yellow. Francis painted peach shaped flowers. These flowers have diagonally shaped crescent overtones which may have a yellow line painted between them. Red swags, scallops and bands

with alizarin and white overtones creating a candy cane appearance are other distinguishing features of the work of Edward Francis.



Ann Baker, William Eno style

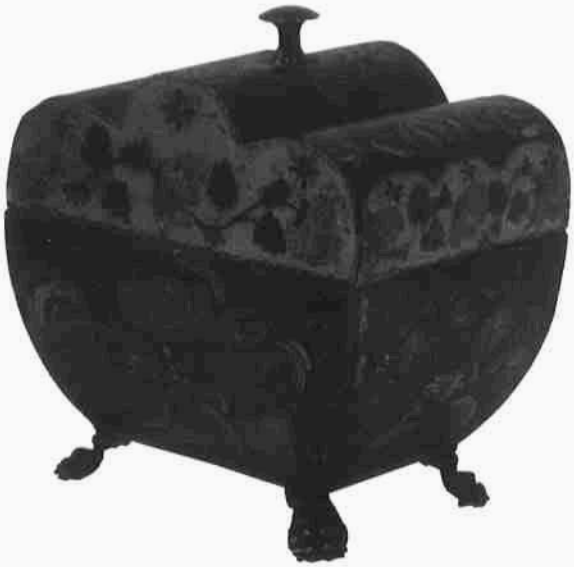
WILLIAM ENO, from Simsbury, Connecticut, also worked for the Connecticut Filley shop. He painted two-sheet waiters, trunks, goose neck and straight spout coffee pots, side pourers and cone top pots. A goose neck coffee pot with "William Eno of Simsbury, Connecticut" signed on the bottom is owned by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Thus, we have a registered piece which helps us identify characteristics of his work. *(The History and Folklore of American Country Tinware 1700–1900,* p.190).

This particular coffee pot has a large red ball flower with red and yellow brush strokes conforming to the shape of the flower, possibly denoting leaves. When definite leaf forms are found on Eno pieces (which is a rarity), they are lily pod-shaped with yellow veining. The red flowers have alizarin and white overtones and the alizarin forms two tulip petal shapes at the base of the flower. There are rows of yellow and white dots at the top of the flower and green is occasionally used for dots.

William Eno also painted round red flowers with overtones forming a pinwheel. A group of four balls positioned North, South, East and West are another characteristic. Double line crosshatching usually appears in the center of these four balls. Candy stripe red bands and/or swags, red or yellow stems, and mostly the color red on the top of trunks and red or yellow stripes in other areas can be attributed to Eno decoration. Trunk ends were decorated with rick rack. Upper sections of trunk ends were either rick rack or braid which continued across the front. Brush stroke borders were done in red, yellow or both.

ANN BUTLER AND MINERVA BUTLER

Abel Butler, his wife and seven children moved from Connecticut to East Greenville, New York in 1799. Aaron, one of their sons, went back to Connecticut where he trained as a tinsmith. Upon his return, he married



Ann Butler Tea Caddy, Museum of American Folk Art

Sarah Cornel and they settled in Greenville, which was nicknamed Brandy Hill. Aaron and Sarah had eleven children. Aaron opened a tinshop in 1824, but, due to ill health, it was closed by 1859.

When Ann (b.1813), the eldest child of Sarah and Aaron, was growing up, she became fascinated with the tinshop and managed it for her father. We assume he taught her to handle the tools of decorative painting—the brushes, paints, etc. Relatives of hers have passed on the fact that she also taught her younger sisters, Marilla (b.1820) and Minerva (b.1821) to decorate tinware.

Ann Butler signed her pieces with her full name and some with the initials "AB" surrounded by dots or brush strokes forming the shape of a heart. Minerva signed a few pieces in full, but two pieces were signed "MB"–this could also have been Marilla. Minerva, the youngest of the three girls, was almost as good a painter as her sister Ann. This may perhaps be a way to identify which MB did the decorating. An autograph album was found containing patterns used by the Butler girls.

When I think of Butler painting, I picture the beautiful empire type tea caddy Ann painted and signed. (This is pictured in *27 Articles by Esther Stevens Brazer*, p. 108.) It is very different from the other country-painted

tinware we've seen. Ann covered every inch of her tinware with painted decoration, dot flowers and tiny borders.

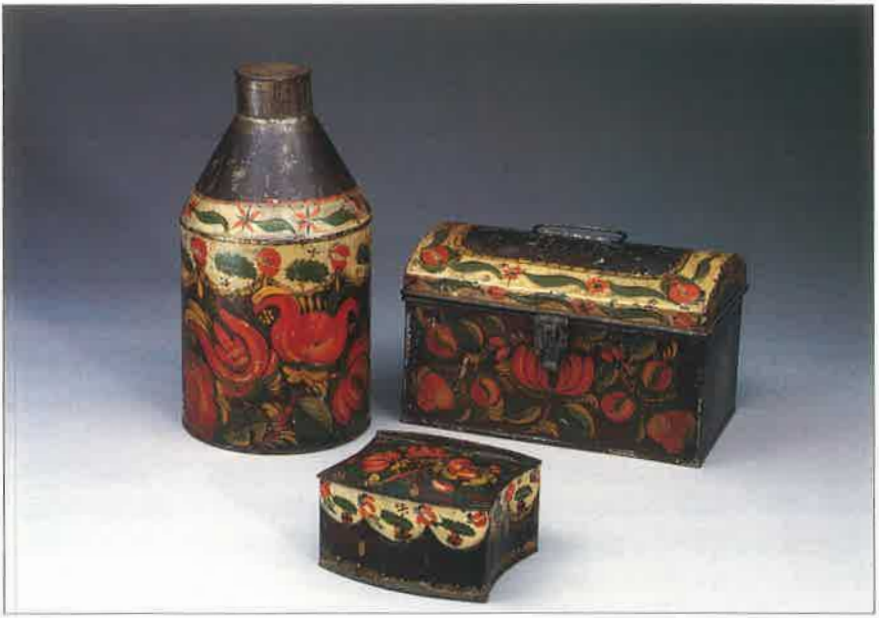
Ann Butler married Eli Scutt in 1835 and her painting ceased. She only painted a few framed pieces of tinware patterns which hung like oil paintings on the walls of her home.

To identify Butler tinware, look for the dot flowers and beautiful white bands, scalloped and straight. Star flowers were used on the bands, painted in two or three colors. Baskets were painted as were crab, tulip and strawberry shaped flowers, as well as roses and buds. Rose buds often have tendrils that cross over the bud. These tendrils were painted in yellow or green. Blue was used as a major flower color on the white band. Blue was also used on stems and leaves. Leaves are oval shaped and veining is black or yellow extending beyond the shape of the leaf. Open cable borders were used with dot flowers in the openings. There is some Butler tinware in the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., but more pieces can be found at *The Museum of American Folk Art*, New York, NY.

MERCY NORTH

The North family originated in Berlin, Connecticut. It was a large family and most were involved in some type of metal manufacturing including tinsmithing. A large group of North Family members moved to an area near Cooperstown around 1790. Stephen North (b.1767), the son of Jedediah North, married Susannah Savage in 1788 and moved to Fly Creek, New York between 1790 and 1800. Stephen and Susannah had nine

Mercy North bread tray original 'Mottled'



Tea canister, trunk, trinket box. Singed "Ann Butler."
Museum of American Folk Art; HSEAD Collection

children. Mercy was born in 1798. It is said that Susannah, who might have learned to paint in Berlin, Connecticut, possibly taught her daughters how to paint and decorate tinware. An English bread tray was found with Mercy North's signature on the floor of the tray. This led back to the discovery of the North Family Tinsmiths. (See *The History and Folklore of American Country Tinware 1700–1900*, by Margaret Coffin, p.138.)

This particular tray is mottled, a type of graining characteristic of the North shop. The background is asphaltum and there is a seam in the middle of each side. A one inch white band surrounds the top. Yellow ladle type strokes with small yellow dotted flowers are below the band. Every inch is covered with some type of decoration—an example of the North decorator's mastery of brush control (they loved to execute the brushstroke!) — yet this bread tray is not quite as busy as most North pieces. (As a rule, their work was much busier than that of the other shops.)

On this particular piece, there are red crab type flowers with alizarin overtones and red stems on the band. The leaves on the band are a medium to thin blue green with black and yellow veining. The floor has white crab like flowers with red overtones and red stems. The leaves on the floor are individual separated brush strokes with yellow highlighting.

Four yellow dots appear in the center of all the flowers with yellow squiggles painted on the floor. It is a beautiful piece!

Other characteristics on the North Shop are the use of red, green or blue bands. The band continues to the ends of the trunks and the design flows from the back around the corner to the hasp. Each side of the painting on the band is a mirror image of the other. Brush stroke borders are done in several colors below the band and sometimes across the bottom of the trunks. The North Shop used wide rick rack with dots on their pieces. The signed Mercy North Bread Tray is owned by the New York State Historical Association.

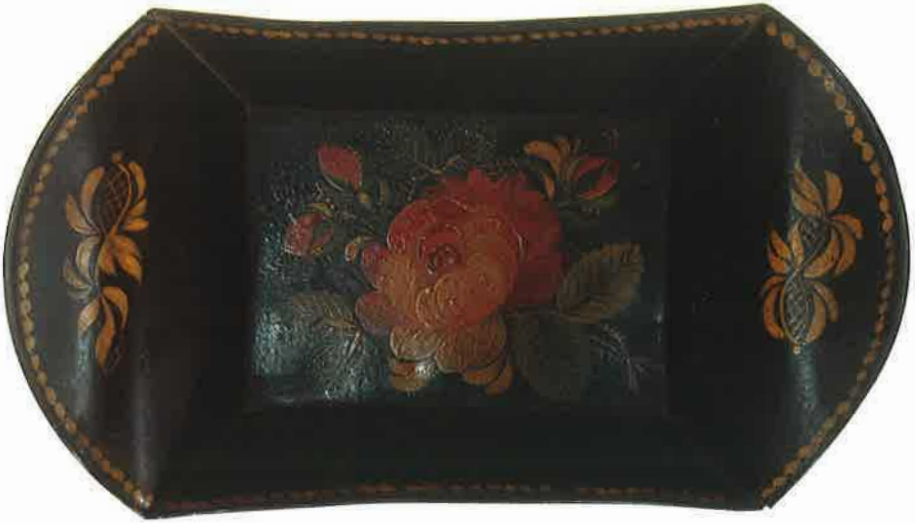
SALLY FRANCIS (BRISCOE)

The Stevenses and Briscoes were the pioneers of tinsmithing in Stevens Plains, Maine. The inspiration for our Society, Esther Stevens Brazer, was the great, great granddaughter of Zacharia Brackett Stevens. Much of the Stevens family history has been passed from her to us.

Zacharia was born in 1778 to Isaac Stevens and Sarah Brackett. He started a tinshop in Stevens Plains, Maine, near Portland, in 1798. The same year, he married Miriam Berry and eventually had four children, two sons and two daughters. In 1830 Zacharia sold his tin business to his sons, Samuel Butler Stevens (b.1799) and Alfred Stevens (b.1801). This shop was destroyed by fire in 1842.

Samuel Butler Stevens married Sally Francis in 1820. She was one of five adopted daughters of an English tinsmith, Thomas Briscoe. Thomas Briscoe arrived in this country in 1803, settled in Boston and married Sarah (Sally) Rose who was the niece of Paul Revere. After their marriage, they resided in Maine. Sally Rose had a sister, Mary Rose, who died after childbirth leaving five daughters, Mary (15), Hattie (11), Isabel (7), Sally (5), and Maria (one month old). Thomas Briscoe and Sally Rose adopted all five of these girls. Sally, Hattie, and Maria painted and decorated tinware.

Sally Francis painted roses and flowers. She left a large album of floral bouquets painted in bright colors. Sally painted roses on everything—trays, furniture, and door panels. She loved painting roses, perhaps because of her mother's family name "Rose". Sally was a highly skilled painter who painted all of her life. Her pieces were feminine and very pleasing to the eye. Esther Stevens Brazer named one of Sally's bread trays "Grandmother's Rose." (This is pictured in *The Ornamental Tray*, edited by Zilla Rider Lea, p. 223, Fig. 19.)



"Grandmother's Rose." Sally Francis (Briscoe)

I am fortunate to own another bread tray *(The Ornamental Tray*, p. 224, fig. 21) which was probably also painted by Sally Francis. This particular piece has beautiful colors, with a large red rose in the middle. Wet-on-dry and wet-in-wet methods were used in the painting.

Small white flowers with pale blue overtones appear on the floor and the same shape flower is used for a border design, painted in yellow.

The Stevens Shop made rectangular flat top and dome top trunks, also oval flat top trunks. Flat top pieces were a characteristic of the Maine shops. Tea caddys, teapots, coffee pots with flared spouts, one and two-sheet waiters and bread trays were also manufactured by the Stevens' shop. Their flower decoration was realistic. Other characteristics are the use of shell and cornucopias, and the double cherries. Background colors were black, yellow, red and white. The white pieces were usually given as gifts. Pigments used were thin and leaves lacked veining. A great deal of wet-on-dry and wet-in-wet technique was used.

NOTE

[1]Japanning of tinware became prominent in America by 1810. The use of black varnish for the background coat and clear varnish for a painting medium for the design and finish coat were introduced. This was a substitute for the finest of lacquer, Japanese.

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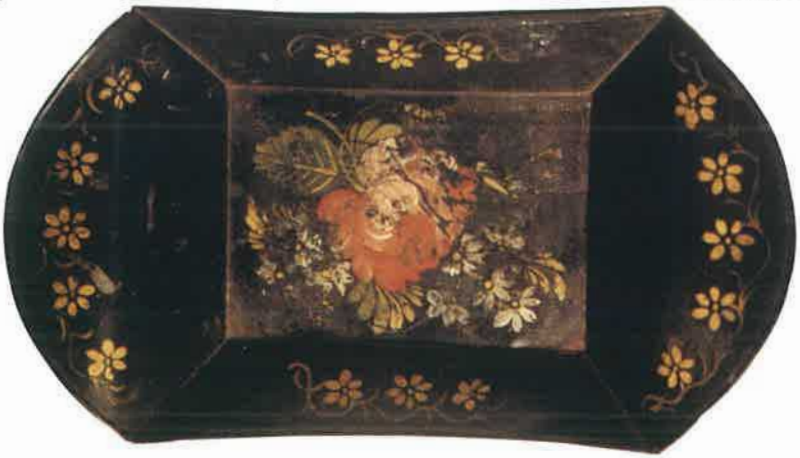
The Tinsmiths of Connecticut, by Shirley Spaulding DeVoe, Connecticut Historical Society (Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut), 1968. Chapter 1, "The Connecticut Tinsmiths & Their Shops," pp. 3-6, 15.

Antique Decoration 27 Articles, by Esther Stevens Brazer, reprinted from The Magazine Antiques for HSEAD, Inc. (Taft Printing Co., Uxbridge, MA). "Butler Tinware," pp. 108-111; "Zachariah Brackett Stevens," pp. 83-87, "The Tinsmiths of Stevens Plains," Part I," pp. 95-97, "The Tinsmiths of Stevens Plains," Part II," pp. 98-100.

The History & Folklore of American Country Tinware 1700-1900, by Margaret Coffin (Galahad Books, a division of A & W Promotional Book Corporation, 95 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016, by arrangement with Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1968.) "Apprentices, Toolmakers, Decorators & Peddlers in Connecticut," pp. 56-61, 66-67, "The Stevenses of Stevens Plains, Maine, Other Maine Smiths & Peddlers," pp. 89-106, "Spread of the Tin Industry to New York and Vermont," pp. 107-146.

The Ornamental Tray: Two Centuries of Ornamental Trays 1720-1920, edited by Zilla Rider Lea (a publication of HSEAD, Inc., based on Esther Stevens Brazer's Photographic Collection, Charles Tuttle Co. publishers, Rutland, Vermont), 1971 p. 223 fig 18, fig. 19, p. 224 Fig.21.

A special thank you to Jane Fire for allowing access to photograph the Tea Caddy, page 14



Ann Baker's Tray

PAINTED FLOORCLOTHS: AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

by Jeanne Gearin

(Editor's Note. This is an edited excerpt from Jeanne Gearin's booklet "Historical Floorcloths: A Brief History with Instructions."

Painted Floorcloths

Floorcloths are part of our American heritage. They are also called floor cloth carpets, painted canvas, oil cloths (oyle cloths), floor canvases, checquered canvas, grease cloths, crumbcloths (crumcloths) or druggets. The word "floorcloth" is often printed as one word, two words or hyphenated.

At least three of our presidents had floorcloths. George Washington purchased them for Mt. Vernon. When John Adams left the White House, there was a floorcloth listed in the inventory. Thomas Jefferson had at least two floorcloths in the Presidential Mansion -- one in the small dining room "to secure a very handsome floor from grease and the scouring which that necessitates" and one in the great hall. These floorcloths were probably painted plain green according to the inventory. He also had painted canvases at Monticello.

Floorcloths were rather expensive. George Washington's purchase of one in January 1796 cost $14.28. Because Thomas Jefferson considered the English floorcloths to be of better quality, he reluctantly paid about $3 a square yard for the above mentioned cloths. A 1746 inventory valued a painted floorcloth at 10 pounds and in 1827 Samuel Perkins and Son of Boston, Massachusetts, advertised "for sale a large and elegant assortment of painted floorcloths, without seams, some in imitation of Brussels carpet, from $1.37 1/2 to $2.25 per square yard."

Because of their value, early household inventories often document canvases. In addition, advertisements indicate that floorcloths were widely used. Discounts of 10% were offered to merchants and builders purchasing in quantity. Advertisements in the 18th century also offer custom shapes, sizes, decor and colors.

William Burnet was governor of New York, New Jersey, and then of Massachusetts. The inventory at his death in 1729 reported "two old checquered canvases to lay under a table" and a "large painted canvas square as the room. " In the South, the posthumous inventory of the effects of Robert "King"Carter, the Virginia landowner, listed "one large oyle cloth to lay under a Table" and "one large floor oyle in the "Dining Room Clossett". Peter Faneuil, the wealthy Boston merchant, also owned floorcloths. Because they were so valued they were included in estate inventories and were also painted in the backgrounds of portraits done in the 18th century. Public auctions of household goods also often listed floorcloths.

Originally floorcloths were imported from England. The factory of Smith and Baber of South Kensington, London, produced painted floor canvases prior to 1754. Nathan Smith, the founder of the above firm, first produced block printed cloths in 1754. His early cloths probably consisted of only one color, but by the 19th century as many as five colors was not unusual. Probably they were adapted from the 14th century French wall and table coverings which were made in a similar manner.

Early cloths were produced by a method of stenciling similar to wall stenciling. As their popularity increased coach, sign, house painters and itinerant artists were designing and selling their wares.

An advertisement in the *Maryland Gazette* of June 26, 1760, refers to a runaway indentured servant who could "paint Floor cloths as neat as any imported from Britain." Apprentices to ornamental painters were often family members. In Boston, John Johnson and Daniel Rea, Jr. advertised until 1789 that they did floorcloths "in cubes, yellow and black diamonds, and turkey Fatchion." Thomas Johnson, John's father and Daniel's father-in-law, was a well known ornamental painter working in Boston in the first half of the 18th century. According to their account books, they painted one-color cloths and fancy cloths with borders and even one "cloath with a Poosey-Cat and a Leetel Spannil."

Many home artists took up the practice of making floorcloths. Some did so without adequate knowledge of the process and produced disasters. From various early accounts we find that craftsmen often ran into chemistry problems similar to those we experience today. Compatibility of materials, inadequate drying times, and improper bonding of paints regularly caused cracking. Even the imported English floorcloths, which were considered better than domestic ones, often arrived damaged due to shipping mishaps or inadequate drying.

In 1807 John Dorsey of Philadelphia had two looms on which he made carpets and floorcloths. He referred to his products as "floor covering" and they were similar to those made in England. Other manufacturers and importers of floorcloths or oil cloths were listed in American directories in the 18th and 19th centuries, but there is little known about their methods or production. However, in 1811 J. Harmer advertised in the *New York Directory* that his cloths were "wove in the same manner and of the same quality as it is at English Factories." In 1817 New York Pattern Floor-Cloth Manufactory, 35 Rivington Street, advertised in *The New York Annual Advertiser* "the greatest variety of the most approved patterns...of any size or form and *less liable to crack* than Floor-cloths imported from England." They also advertised "Old Floor-Cloths *reornamented* in the best manner, on reasonable terms." The illustration on this advertisement shows a large roll with a Greek key border and a small overall starred pattern, probably an imitation of a "Turkey carpet." Terms are given for one, two, three, four or more colors.

The following historical method of making canvases was contained in *The Illustrated Exhibitor and Art Magazine*, published in 1852. The material used was made in Dundee, Scotland, of flax and hemp. They were woven on large looms which were constructed to accommodate the rolls which ran approximately 113 yards by 8 yards. This length (longer than a football field), was necessary to keep them from having to be seamed. Narrower widths for stairways and halls were cut from these rolls. After being folded into 3 foot square bales, weighing about 500 pounds, they were shipped to London.

The canvas was then stretched on large frames. These frames were in a room with 30 foot ceilings and over 90 feet in length called a "straining room." Scaffolds were erected between the frames with just enough room for a man to stand and paint first the front of one canvas and turn around and paint the back of another. The canvas was first sized and sanded with pumice to a smooth surface. Extra heavy paint was troweled on, allowed to dry, pumiced again and built up to three coats. Drying time took two to three months. No dryers were used as they would cause the paint to crack. This large, cumbersome, heavily painted canvas was then rolled onto wooden rollers to prevent damage. It was then pulled into the printing room to be decorated. The rollers were fitted into iron sockets similar to a roller shade and gradually rolled out on the tables to be decorated.

An article in *The Golden Cabinet* in 1793 in Philadelphia describes a

process similar to the English method. However, the addition of white lead to the paint is recommended to enhance drying.

The earliest cloth decorations imitated fine wood, marble, tile and fashionable Turkey carpets. In the 18th century geometrics were both plain and marbled. They were stenciled, painted freehand, and block-printed. For authentic patterns refer to"Various Kinds of Floor Decorations Represented in Both Plato and Perspective," the 1739 publication by John Carwitham of London.

Colors used were chromes, Prussian blue, azure blue, black, vermilion, malachite green and others. Yellow ochre was the most popular background color. The paints were mixed with linseed oil and no dryer was used as it would cause the surface to crack. Oil cloths received their name from the heavy amounts of linseed oil used in the color.

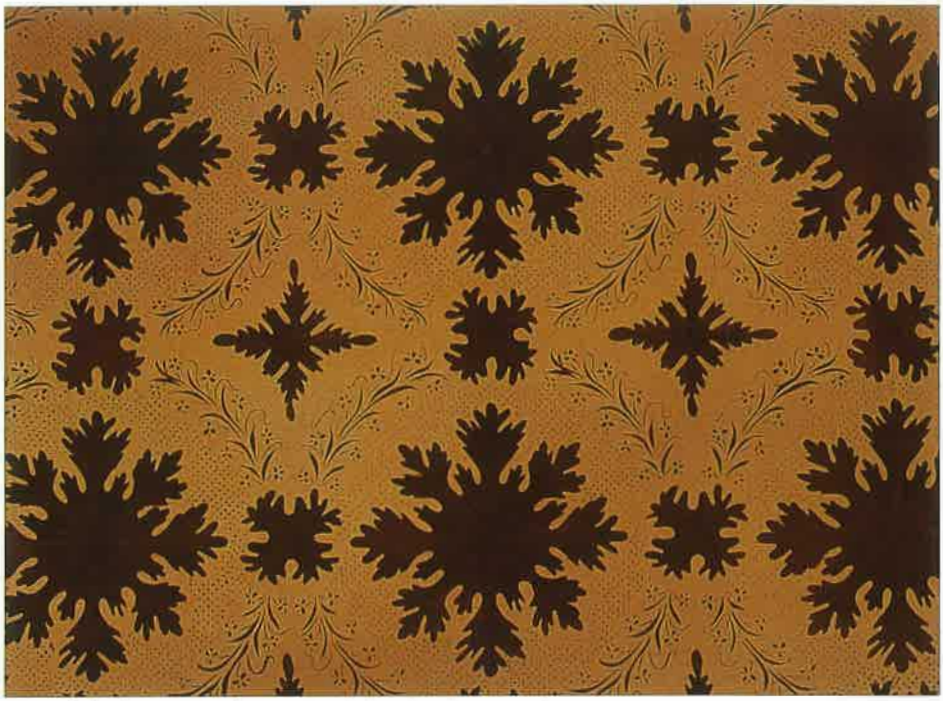
In the 19th century quilt patterns became popular. As styles changed the English designer, Charles Eastlake, recommended simple geometric patterns in two colors or shades and definitely not imitations of marble or anything else which could be considered pretentious. His book printed in England and reprinted in 1872 in the United States, signaled a return to simplicity.

Floorcloths were used in summer when wool carpets were removed and as protective material under tables or in hallways. They were used also as insulation under carpets during cold weather. They waned in popularity in the 1850's, and were relegated to the kitchen or hallways and were last referred to as oil cloths in the 1870's.

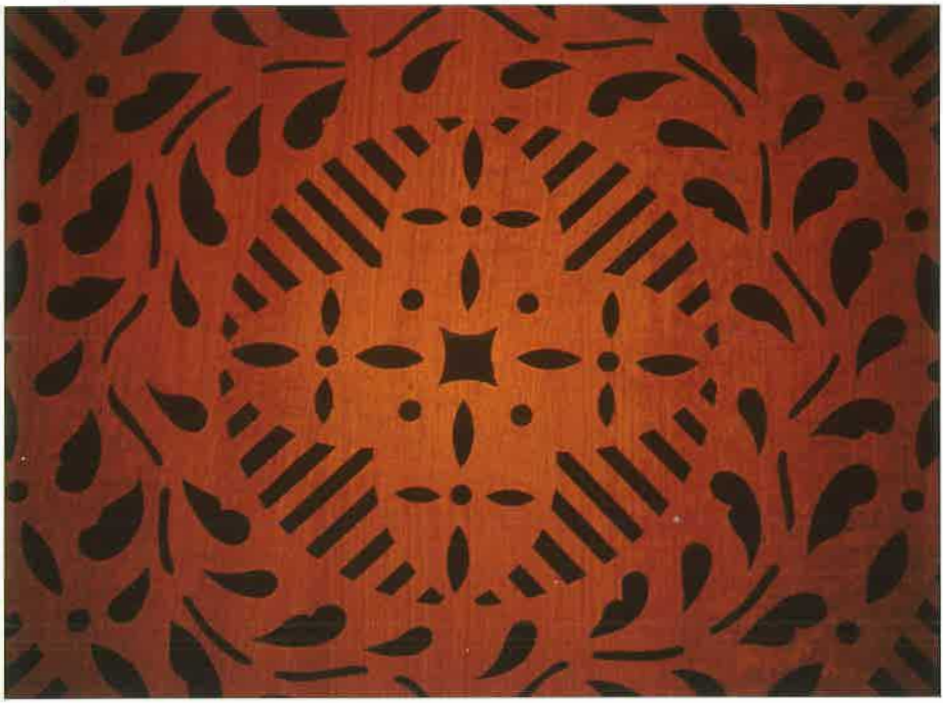
Linoleum (originally a trademark) was invented in England in 1863 and subsequently manufactured in the United States. It became the floor covering of choice. An advertisement from a Sears Roebuck catalog recommends it as being "like oil cloth, but heavier, more durable and softer to walk on."

In the middle of the 20th century, with the renewed interest of decorators in historic restoration, floorcloths became popular again. Articles have appeared in many home decoration and antique magazines concerning their history and traditional construction as well as modern methods of making them employing silk screens and water-based paints.

POLLY FORCIER PHOTOS



Humphries house Dorchester, MA (above), Close-up Edw Durant house Newton, MA (below)



FLOOR STENCILING CIRCA 1740–1840

by Polly Forcier

Editor's Note. The following is an excerpt from page 1 of Catalogue No. 3 "Floor Stencils of New England Circa 1740-1840: Illustrations of 29 Authentic Floors," MB Historic Decor, P.O. Box 880, Norwich, VT 05055. Telephone: 802-649-1790. $4.00.)

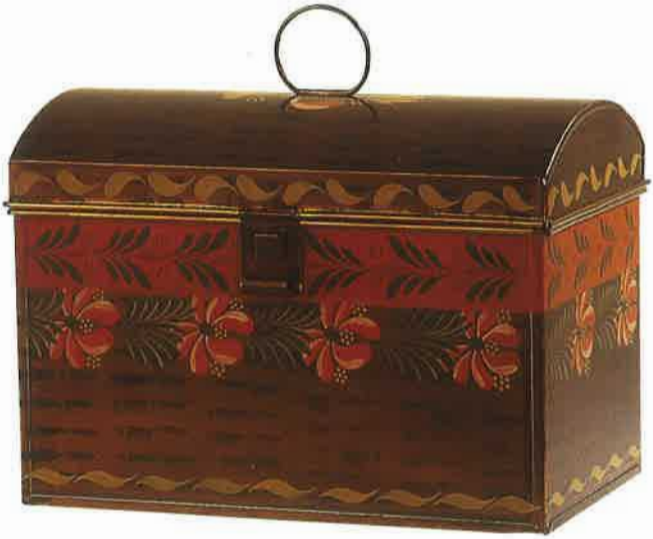
Floors predated walls as the first surface in a house to be decorated. The practice is thought to have been widespread but subsequently lost through wear, repainting and fire. In the earliest years they were hand painted.

Over the span of 100 years, this fashion, which began in only the most affluent of seaport mansions and inns, spread into surrounding rural homes.

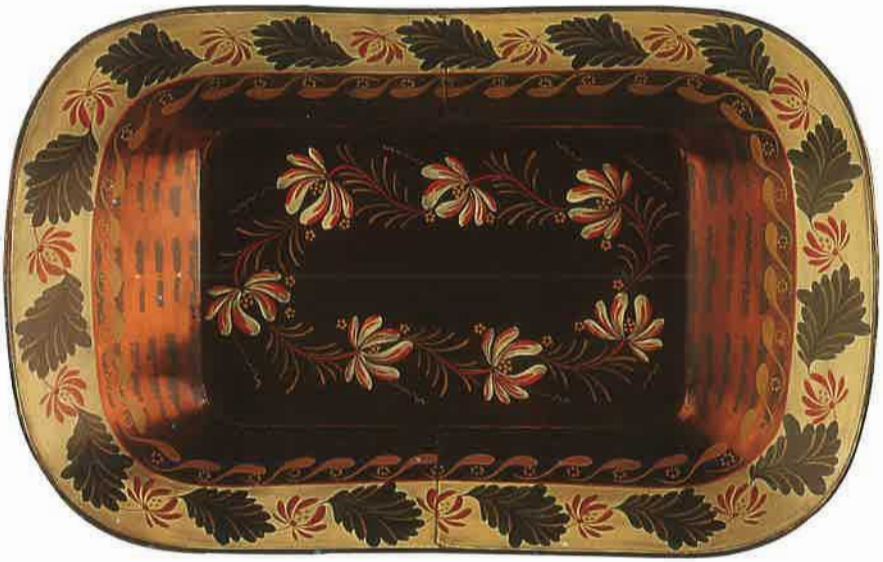
Colonists suffering their daily hardships, remembered fondly the beauty and comforts of their European homelands and were well aware of fashions abroad. A 1739 booklet published in England exhibited geometric and floral floor patterns popular there at that time. Enterprising young artisans were prepared to embellish many grand homes in the New World by this means. They also grained and sponged, painted overmantels, fireboards, tavern signs and walls.

Stenciling of floors was a way to simulate woven carpet, floorcloths and parquet floors without that expense. The whole was protected with varnish which, over time, mellowed to a rich yellow/brown causing the black, red, green and white paints to appear as the finest inlay of variegated woods set in background colors of yellow ochre, gray, "Indian red", and green. The combination most often used, and no doubt most economical, was black on pumpkin pine, either natural or painted yellow ochre. During the Clipper Ship era, circa 1810-1870, the canvases from ripped sails were stenciled and used on floors for ornamentation, warmth and cleanliness.

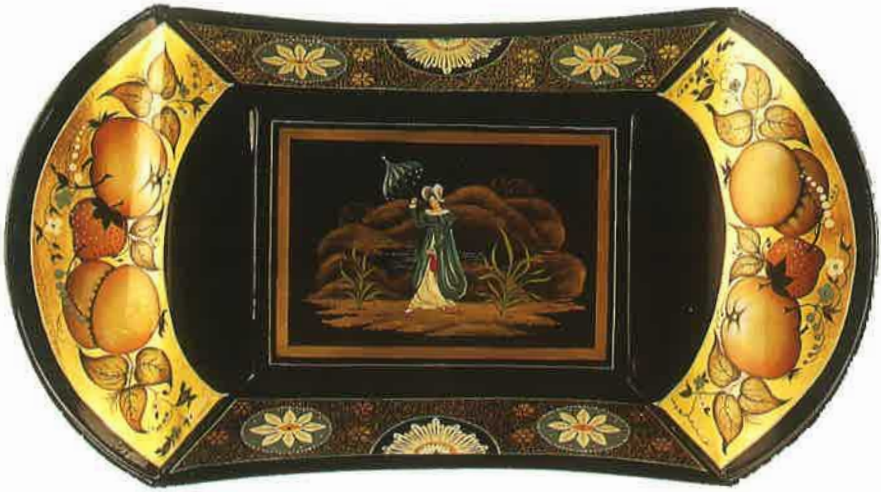
MEMBERS "A" AWARDS
Charleston, South Carolina
April, 1995



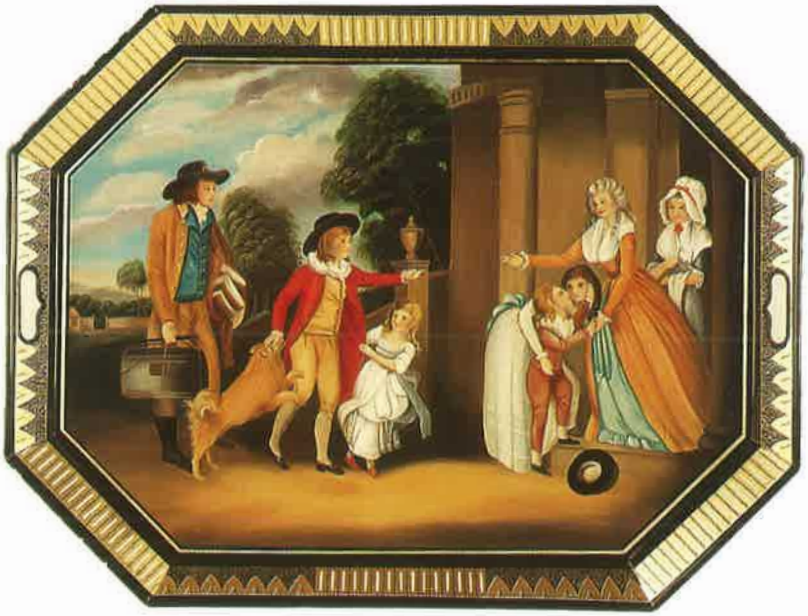
Ann Baker
COUNTRY PAINTING



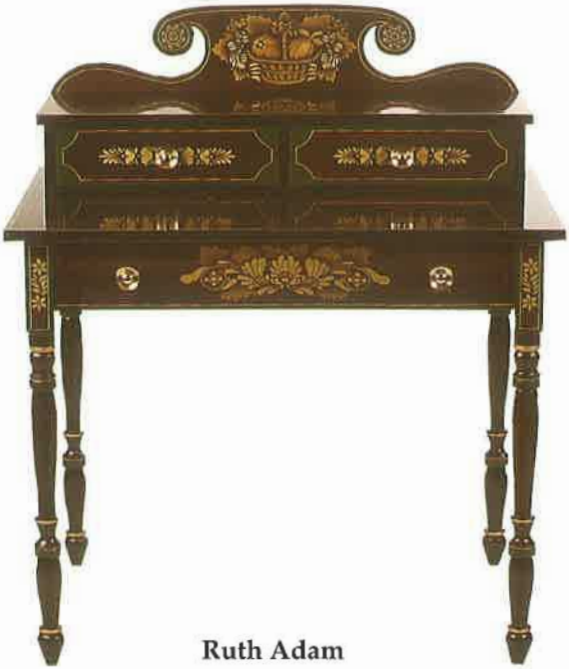
Ann Baker
COUNTRY PAINTING



Roberta Edrington
FREEHAND BRONZE



Astrid Donnellan
SPECIAL CLASS



Ruth Adam
STENCILING ON WOOD

Part of the exhibit of originals–Charleston, Spring 1995

AWARDS

Charleston, South Carolina–April, 1995

PRESIDENT'S AWARD BOX

Grace Bremer • Dorothy Fillmore
Jeanne Gearin • Joyce Holtzer • Helen Spear

CAREER AWARD

Linda Lefko • Martha Wilbur

APPLICANTS ACCEPTED AS NEW MEMBERS

Charleston, South Carolina

Jane E. Beach • Virginia R. Clark
Cynthia Rubicam • Barbara Willner

MEMBER'S "B" AWARDS

Charleston, South Carolina

CLOCK DIALS
Joan Austin • Linda Lefko

COUNTRY PAINTING
Gladys Sowers (2 pieces)

FREEHAND BRONZE
Arminda Tavares • Sara Tiffany

METAL LEAF
Judy Neumeyer

STENCILING ON TIN
Trudy Valentine

SKIP MEACHEN PHOTOS

Walter Wright Exhibit–Charleston, Spring 1995

OUR MEMBER IN THE SPOTLIGHT– MARTHA WILBUR

by Carol Heinz

What kindles an interest in decorative painting? For one young post-World War II Pittsburg mother the spark was a 1947 *Woman's Day* magazine article about decorated tin. That article inspired a fifty year journey for Martha Wilbur, a medical technician by profession with a minor in art, into the realms of painting, collecting, teaching and research. Lucky for us that she picked up that journal.

Several teachers of decorative painting influenced Martha's journey. A family move to Burlington, Vermont, in 1949 put Martha in contact with Edith Hall, a teacher in decorative painting. Three years later, following a move to Schenectady, New York, Martha was enrolled in a class taught by Margaret Coffin and joined the Guild. Immediately, she became an actively involved member, assisting Margaret Coffin, editor of *The Decorator*, and helping charter the Hudson Valley Chapter of HSEAD.

Subsequent moves with husband Bob's jobs, produced new challenges. One was the opportunity to teach a University of Virginia extension course in decorative painting. Her painting friends from New York shared their patterns with Martha for her portfolio and as examples of original decorated items. Working closely with her students gave Martha's collecting passion a new purpose. Martha says collecting is in her genes,

CAROL HEINZ PHOTO

Martha Wilbur

inherited from her father who was an irrepressible gatherer of treasures.

While living in Connecticut in 1969, Martha again became a student taking classes from Gina Martin and Ruth Swenson. Her past experience with *The Decorator* came into play when Guild president, Walter Wright, asked her to compile a cross reference index of past Decorator articles. Does this begin to sound like the birth of a researcher? The truth is, she always was a researcher, studying each collected piece and each new pattern. However, this was an opportunity to use her skills to provide research information for other members.

Retirement for Bob, took the couple back to Virginia and the home they had built earlier in Waynesboro. By 1977 she and the members in and around Washington, D.C. had formed the Shenandoah Chapter. Martha became an international traveler. England and Wales, the countries of the origin of much of the Society's decorative painting, were invaded on a HSEAD tour led by Mona Rowell with Shirley DeVoe, Ginny Wheelock, Maryjane Clark, and other Guild members. Once there, the intrepid travelers initiated an international network exchanging craft information that still exists.

Martha's particular favorite styles of painting are Victorian Flower Painting and Pontypool. She says, as one might expect, "research and collecting go hand in hand" and that is what takes her back to the roots of decorative painting.

Martha and Bob have received well-deserved recognition for their important contributions to the Society. Martha has been a trustee, assistant *Decorator* editor, teacher, lecturer, international ambassador, bibliographer, writer with six articles published in *The Decorator,* meeting registration chairman, exhibition committee consultant, chapter chairman, restorer, bookshelf reviewer and mentor. For all of these accomplishments she has received several awards including, the President's Box, The Career Award, a Research Award, and the heartfelt appreciation of all the membership. Bob has devoted considerable effort to the business of the Society and together they have been awarded the Distinguished Service Award.

Martha's latest interest is in dolls. Besides collecting them, she makes dolls from the molding process to completion, dressed in appropriate clothing. As you might expect, she researches the history of each doll which comes to live with her and can relate the complete story from conception to adoption.

The Society is invaluable to Martha. She continues to call each of the members to a higher task — to become involved with museums and libraries, to carry the professionalism of decorative painting forward for future generations and to just love the business and the people. We are all very fortunate for the lifetime of dedication and friendship we enjoy with this consummate craftsman and teacher.

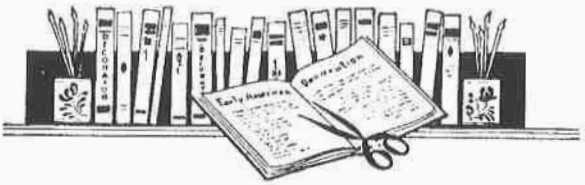
"SOME INTERESTING FACTS"

The following article was submitted by Maryjane Clark. member HSEAD. It was taken from the magazine Artist and Amateurs–*London 1843.*

THE VAN EYCK MEDIUM FOR PAINTING

Oil Painting is said to have been invented in 1410, and John Van Eyck is said to have been its author. All the authorities who lived at the time and upon the spot, both historians and annalists, are entirely silent upon the fact. The tombstone of Van Eyck sets forth his virtues, and his talents are said to eclipse those of Phidias or Apelles; yet not a word is mentioned of his having made the important discovery of oil painting. Vasari, who lived and wrote 150 years after the event, gives Van Eyck the credit of the invention, and tells how it took place. Van Menden followed and repeated just what Vasari has said, without adding any new fact of circumstance; and upon these authorities rest the claims of Van Eyck!

A lady of the name of Saunders, having devoted some attention to the inquiry, and made some experiments, was anxious to obtain the opinion of some artists, to whom she wished to communicate the result.A meeting, therefore, took place, at which Mrs. Saunders produced the medium, which was submitted to some tests, together with certain accounts, which appear to favor the notion that it was this identical vehicle which was used by Van Eyck, and which probably continued to be used, for an indefinite time afterwards. The gentleman, to whose inspection it was submitted, were so favorably impressed, that they resolved to give it a fair trial of some months, and then to make the result of such trial known, in some way yet to be determined upon. It is but justice to Mrs. Saunders to say, that the passage in Vasari is exceedingly obscure and unmeaning, unless read in the same sense and with the understanding which her supposition gives to it. Much credit is due to this lady for her exertions, and it is to be hoped, if the secret be really of value, that a more substantial remuneration will attend her.



THE BOOKSHELF

Folk Finishes: What They Are and How to Create Them,
by Rubens Teles and James Adams.
Viking Studio Books, Penguin Books USA Inc., 375 Hudson St., New York, NY. 1994 $19.95 Quality paperback. 88 pages, All Color Photos.

One of the first things I do with any new book is to quickly leaf through it from back to front to sample the flavor of it via the pictures and photos. *Folk Finishes* immediately overwhelmed me with a broad array of color with the final chapter, entitled "A Gallery of Antique Painted Decoration." This chapter alone consists of twenty-three pages filled with wonderful paint-decorated pieces ranging from chairs to chests, and from tables to walls; even the exterior of a huge cube of an outdoor squash court. These many beautifully reproduced photos made this a delightfully interesting book for me prior to reading a single word.

However, when I began to read from the beginning, I was even more pleasantly surprised. Chapter I. starts appropriately enough with "Before We Begin to Paint — These Are the Basics to be Learned." Tools and materials which are needed are explained in detail as well as where to obtain them, including glazes, Polyurethane finishes, Badgers, natural sponges, candles, combs,and Karo syrup (light or dark). Chapter II. addresses "Graining," taking the reader through the process of priming, underpainting, and preparing the glaze. Each step of the graining process is accompanied with a photo to clearly illustrate how to achieve the desired effect. A series of photos at the end of each chapter shows the reader both old and new renditions of the technique on a wide variety of applications. Chapter III. does the same for "Marbleizing." Chapter IV. is devoted to a fascinating variety of "Fantasy Finishes." Chapter V. explains "Other Decorative Techniques" such as smoke graining and sponging. Chapter VI. takes a look at "Scene Painting" which might be

found on walls and some items of furniture. Chapter VII. leads the reader through "Antiquing" the finished product. This "aging" is accomplished by removing some of the paint and then employing shoe polish to soften the "aged" places. The authors are much too sensitive to use the old "beat it with a chain" method of distressing a poor inoffensive piece of furniture.

This book is a superb alchemist's manual in the art of transmuting base pine and maple into the gold of mahogany, rosewood and marble. Because of this magic, those of modest means in our new republic could enjoy furniture and interiors equal in effect to that found in the finest of homes in distant cities.

This is a book which should give confidence to almost any amateur finisher. The definitions and methods employed are so well described, plus the photos are so well reproduced (in a large 8.5" by 11" format), that I am sure any of our membership would find it hard to resist being lured into an attempt at expanding their repertoire of finishes. This book is worth the price just to look at the photographed originals for their beauty and as study aids. By all means give the excellent text your attention too. The overall impression I received was "I know that I could do that!" I feel very confident that I could.

–Margaret K. Rodgers

Lacquer Work: A Practical Exposition of the Art of Lacquering Together with Valuable Notes for the Collector,

by G. Koizumi, with foreword by Lt.-Col. E.F. Strange, C.B.E., of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., Parker Street, Kingsway, W.C.2, London. 1923. 88 pp. Index, black and white photos.

This long out of print but interesting book was sent to your editors by Willie Mae McLean for review. Accompanying the book was the following excerpted and edited from her letter:

Quote:

> Now at last, you have my copy of ***"Lacquer Work"*** by G.Koizumi (1923). Do you have G. Dickenson's ***"English Papier Mache book"*** (1923), and by chance, the National Museum of Wales' ***"Guide to the Collection of Pontypool and Usk Japan"*** (1923)?
>
> These three books, above, define terms, methods, products etc. which truly broaden our knowledge about original antique objects.
>
> I'm sure there are many Guild members who really interest themselves only in emulating designs found in their teacher's and friend's collections. I know, for I was one of those, who way back in the late 40's and 50's challenged myself the same way. But, as time moved on, I

learned that the pleasure of emulating was of short duration. I wanted to seek the historical facts attached to antique items and objects of art which these designs were created on. I have over the many years since gathered many interesting facts which have given me long lasting pleasures, which I'm thankful to say are deeply stamped in my memory, even now that I'm in my 83rd year.

I wonder how many Guild members know the difference between English lacquer and Oriental lacquer? Would they know the difference between papier mâché and paper-ware? There is a difference. Would they spot a tray that was japaned in among a group of trays made by other methods and with different materials?

We can not hope that everyone would be so deeply interested. But in the long run, like the tumbleweed rolling about as the winds blow it on, it gathers bits and pieces here and there into interesting forms.

These are some of my thoughts on the subject that surely have broadened my horizon for lo these many years.

Until then, Cheerio,
/s/Willie Mae McLean (Mrs. Walter A.)
2143 Third Street
Bay City, Michigan 48708

Unquote.

This book is not so old when one considers that an office of "Chief of Imperial Lacquer Department" was established in Japan in 3,992 B.C. The author provides a well-written and researched appreciation of lacquerware, its history, various forms, production, and the techniques employed.

Willie Mae has made several excellent points which are valid and applicable to all areas of our society. Whether or not lacquer is your favorite area, you might write to Willie Mae and exchange some thoughts on her thoughtful letter. And, if lacquer is your interest, you just might be lucky enough to run across this excellent book in some delightful used bookstore.

–Margaret K. Rodgers

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COUNSEL: Peter Rupert, Esq.

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FALL MEETING 1995

Host Hotel, Lancaster, PA

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

SPRING MEETING 1996

Gideon Putnam Hotel, Saratoga Springs, NY
April 19—21, 1996 (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

FALL MEETING 1996

Marriott Hotel, Providence, RI
October 4—6, 1997 (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

SCHEDULE OF HSEAD, INC.
MEMBERSHIP DUES
Effective July 1, 1990

Charter and Guild Members	$35.00
Family Members (Spouses)	$10.00
Associate Members	$50.00
Business Associate Members	$75.00
Benefactors	$3,000.00

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MARGARET WATTS, Toms River, NJ

SPECIALIST AWARD

LOIS TUCKER, North Berwick, ME
COUNTRY PAINTING

ACTIVE CERTIFIED TEACHERS

JANICE ALDRICH, Keene, NH.....country painting, stenciling.
SHIRLEY BERMAN, Carmel, NY.....Pontypool.
JANE BOLSTER, Berwyn, PA.....country painting, stenciling, glass painting, freehand bronze.
DORTIA DAVIS, Perkinsville, VT.....stenciling.
ASTRID DONNELLAN, Hingham, MA.....country painting, stenciling, Pontypool, glass painting, freehand bronze, metal leaf, Victorian flower painting.

SHERRY DOTTER, Lebanon, NJ.....country painting.

MARGARET EMERY, Averill Park, NY.....country painting, glass painting.

DOLORES FURNARI, Brandon, VT.....stenciling, country painting.

DOROTHY HALLETT, Bourne, MA.....country painting.

BARBARA HOOD, Hammondsport, NY.....country painting.

HARRIETTE HOOLAN, Oyster Bay, NY.....country painting, stenciling.

HELGA JOHNSON, New City, NY.....country painting.

CORNELIA KEEGAN, Hudson, OH.....country painting, stenciling, metal leaf, freehand bronze, Pontypool, glass painting.

DORCAS LAYPORT, Mattapoisett, MA.....country painting.

BETH MARTIN, Charlotte, NC.....country painting, glass painting.

LUCINDA PERRIN, Canandaigua, NY.....country painting.

MARION POOR, Augusta, ME.....country painting, stenciling.

CAROLYN REID, Averill Park, NY.....country painting.

MONA ROWELL, Pepperell, MA.....stenciling, country painting, Pontypool.

DOLORES SAMSELL, Warren, NJ.....country painting.

NORMA STARK, Glens Falls, NY.....country painting.

SARA TIFFANY, Hilton Head, SC.....country painting.

LOIS TUCKER, North Berwick, ME.....country painting, stenciling.

ALICE WALL, Plymouth, MA.....country painting, stenciling.

MARGARET WATTS, Toms River, NJ.....stenciling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, glass painting, Pontypool, Victorian flower painting.

Retired Certified Teachers who are willing to serve as Consultants:

ELIZABETH BACH, Glens Falls, NY.....country painting, stenciling, and freehand bronze.

MARYJANE CLARK, Norwell, MA.....stenciling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, Pontypool, glass painting, Victorian flower painting.

HELEN GROSS, Vero Beach, FL.....country painting, stenciling, Pontypool, glass painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, Victorian flower painting.

GINA MARTIN, Vernon, CT.....stenciling, country painting, metal leaf, freehand bronze, glass painting, Pontypool, Victorian flower painting.

HARRIET SYVERSEN, Closter, NJ.....stenciling, country painting, Pontypool.

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Include a brief biography of your principal interest or skill.
What can you offer the S.O.G.? Any general thoughts or comments?

Send to: Society of Gliders, c/o Grace Baggot, 430 Broome St. NY, NY 10013
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Send $5.50 per pattern to:

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Chapters and members are encouraged to sponsor, co-sponsor or participate in exhibitions and/or demonstrations to heighten public knowledge of and interest in early American decoration and the HSEAD. The use of the HSEAD name and seal at such functions is approved. The Chapter's Trustee must be aware of the function, including its purpose, timing and location, if the HSEAD name and/or seal is to be displayed, announced, or used in advertising the event. Copies of publicity generated by each event must be forwarded to the Society Treasurer and Historian, if HSEAD, Inc. is mentioned in the publicity.

DISCUSSION

1. It is anticipated that such exhibitions and demonstrations will often be held in cooperation with historical societies, museums, historical buildings or sites, early American decoration magazines, historic celebrations or festivals, libraries, etc.

2. If the HSEAD name is used, the function should be in good taste, with respect for authenticity and the high quality standards of HSEAD, although not necessarily confined to HSEAD's 10 areas of work. Wall and floor stenciling, penwork, faux painting, quilting, early furniture making, etc. might be quite appropriate.

3. If originals and members' work are to be displayed unlabeled or unattended (by HSEAD members), the use of "A" and "B" Award items is recommended. Partially completed items might also be ideal if they illustrate a progression of work, perhaps accompanied by the tools and materials involved in their creation.

4. Sales of members' work is acceptable as long as this is not the primary purpose of the Chapter's participation in the function.