

The Decorator

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Batavia, NY

Fall 1999



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Front and back covers: An exquisite card case with Victorian flower painting. Courtesy of Phyllis Sidorsky.

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Contents

Victorian Flower Painting Styles & Periods	4
<i>by Roberta Edrington</i>	
MJ's Notebook.....	11
<i>by Maryjane Clark</i>	
A Treasury of Old Stenciled Walls 1810-1840 (Part 5)	13
<i>by Jessica Bond</i>	
Letter from Birmingham	20
<i>by Yvonne Jones</i>	
Members' "A" Awards	22
Members' "B" Awards	23
Rufus Porter Murals in East Derry, NH, Part 2	26
<i>by Shirley S. Baer</i>	
The Bookshelf, <i>reviewed by Sandra Cohen</i>	29
The Continuing Saga of the Stevens Tavern	32
<i>by Lois Tucker</i>	
Future Meetings	33
Advertising	34

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Victorian Flower Painting Styles and Periods

by Roberta Edrington



So much has been written about the history of the manufacture of tin and papier mâché, the invention of varnishes for japanning, and the shops which produced the articles in England and America. But as Shirley DeVoe said in *The Decorator*, "Among the HSEAD membership there is always more interest in the decoration on japanned ware no matter the media..." Our interest in one aspect of decoration has led to the term Victorian flower painting to define the painting technique found on many articles manufactured in the Victorian period.

As with many artistic styles, the early work is usually more refined and realistic. Since some of the artists moved back and forth between the china painting shops and the japanning shops, the kind of flowers and the glazing methods used in ceramic work were similar to the effects used on the japanned ware using oil paints.

The styles of the various japanning shops differed. "Each maker had some two thousand distinct patterns," according to Henry Loveridge, writing in *The Industrial of Birmingham in 1866*. And each artist added his or her own rendition to the pattern.

Jennens and Bettridge was one of the largest and best known firms to produce japanned articles from 1818 to 1864. They trained their painters in order to maintain a high quality of work. As a result most of their wares from the opening of the business to its closing were expertly painted.

It is difficult to date many of the flower painted pieces because so few were signed. Only a small number of the shops imprinted or painted their names on the backs of the papier mâché articles. Henry Clay, Benjamin Walton, Spiers, and Mechi are among the few who signed their work. Even with a name of a well known firm on the back of a tray it is difficult to accurately date the painting. These shops went in and out of business frequently and when they did their blanks were

often auctioned. As a result, a tray made in the early 1800's could have been painted much later by another firm.

Studying originals, looking at early, middle and late styles of Victorian flower painting will help in understanding how and when these designs were painted.

We should not limit our study of Victorian flower painting to just the very early period because some of the middle to late work had expertly painted pieces. We should learn to recognize the styles and expertise of the painting no matter what the period.

The following photographs illustrate the progression of the artists' styles from the early to the late Victorian period. Not all early work was beautifully painted and conversely not all late work was poorly executed. However, most times as machines replaced hand work the results were flat and stiff. Each of the flower studies has a photograph of an actual flower followed by examples of early to late techniques and styles.



1. The passion flower- a favorite with the Victorian painters, and a wonderful example of the stylized method. The actual flower is a design miracle from the cartoon-like stamen to its fluttery petals and wonderful colors.



Above. 1a. This picture shows a beautifully painted thinly glazed flower on a gold powdered background. Notice how you can see through all the petals to the gold base.



1b. The third photo in the passion flower group shows how flat and poorly drawn the flower has become on a late oval tin tray.



Above #2. The back view of a rose.

Left: 2a. A very thinly glazed rose on a gold powdered base. The expert Victorian painters knew the structure of the particular flower and could abstract the design as they painted. Sometimes many steps were required to complete a certain flower while still giving an effortless effect.



Left: 2b. A beautifully painted rose but heavier in pigment because it is on a black background. Translucence can be accomplished in this kind of painting but a heavier base coat has to be used, otherwise the flower will look dull in color.



Left: 2c. Two roses that illustrate period and style. These two flowers are from a Henry Clay papier mâché tray. The imprint on the back of the piece with Clay's name would indicate an early period. The black background is used for the shadow effect and is known as "painting down to the black".



Above: 2c. A yellow rose.

Upper right: 2d. A wonderful stylized square petaled rose, with very thin glazes of paint to form the flower, and to give it shadow and shape. This design is from a papier mâché card tray and shows no evidence of any gold leaf. Note the very different treatment of the leaves, heavy in pigment and brush work.



Right: 2f. A yellow rose on a gold background from the same box as the thinly painted passion flower (1a). All flowers in nature are not the same thickness and neither are the painted versions. This rose is much heavier in pigment than the passion flower in the same design.



Left: 2G. A small, late Gothic shaped sharp edge tray. Note the difference in the treatment of the roses compared to the early Henry Clay example 2c. No attempt has been made at realism and the paint is flat and heavy.





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Right: 4b. Two morning glories on a black background. Painted with heavier pigment and abstracted in design.



Right: 4c. The Victorian painters used every angle of these flowers to great effect. This back view on a gold ground color is from a papier mâché portfolio cover. The dark blue against the light blue creates the fragile petals.



Above: 5. The Iris.



Above right: 5a. Another favorite flower of the Victorian painters. This example is painted in almost a thin watercolor or transparent manner on a gold background. The expert paintings were not evenly lighted, note the shadow on the lower petals.



Above: 5b. A more stylized version of the iris. The brightest area of the gold powdered base is behind the iris on this papier mâché hand screen. The placement of the gold highlight was an important part of the overall design.

Right: 5c. An iris painted on a blue background of a calling card case. The paint is heavier because of the blue color of the case. A later piece but still nicely painted. (Editor's note: the case appears green in the original photograph.)



Left: A beautifully decorated cigar case.



References:

Decorative Arts: 18th and 19th Century, Research and Writings of Shirley Spaulding DeVoe. Compiled and Edited by Shirley S. Baer and M. Jeanne Gearin.

Originals from the collections of Roberta Edrington and Cora Longobardo.



For many, the highlight of our meetings is seeing originals in exhibition. In Batavia there was a wonderful display of some unusual and beautiful country painted trunks. Here are a few of them.

The above piece is from an unknown shop, possibly central New York. A piece decorated by a master painter. The whole design is unusual with a large white urn of flowers and buds. The yellow border is wonderful. Courtesy of Ronna Jordan.



PA Filley shop, Philadelphia, PA. Large white flowers and buds with overpainting in red, yellow, green, and blue (all of which are fingered off), many fine black details, large green leaves with yellow veins and accents, much yellow finework and squiggles throughout the design. Courtesy of Mary Ricketts.



Unknown shop, possibly central New York. Another piece decorated by a master painter. The leaves are blended green and yellow; the buds on the left are blended blue and white. Border strokes are expertly done. Courtesy of Ann Rogers Lane.

Stephen North shop, Fly Creek, NY (Group III). Note central rose with upper extended petals, round and oval buds on the front, a swag-and-tassel border on lid front. The trunk end has a diagonal grouping of brushstrokes. Courtesy of Elizabeth Nibbelink.



Unknown tinshop, possibly central New York. This piece also demonstrates the work of a master painter. The shape of some of the "fruits" as well as the border designs suggest a Berlin trained painter; however, other features suggest the Augustus Filley shop at Lansingburg. So possibly this is a Berlin trained painter or an Augustus Filley trained painter. Either way the Berlin characteristics are seen. Courtesy of Marlea Crowther.



Upton shop, Marion, CT. Large white flowers with much red overpainting that has been fingered off, painted black details, bluish green transparent leaves, and an asphaltum background that is so darkened with age that the green and yellow brushwork can barely be seen. The white band with fruit and leaves painted across the lid face is rare. Courtesy of Virginia Bourke.



A Treasury of Old Stenciled Walls 1810-1840 (Part 5)

by Jessica Hill Bond

VERMONT (PART 1)

This will be a journey through Vermont and the map will be a guide to my zigzagging up the eastern side, crossing over to the Champlain valley and down the western side. It is by no means the way I went to find stenciled walls because it took me many years and a lot of retracing of steps to find them. Only one wall at a time would come to my attention with a lot of waiting in between. "The year of the leaking roofs" was a rewarding one. Leaks from melting snow and ice caused wallpaper to come loose from the plaster and reveal stenciling that the owners had

never suspected was there. A few stenciled floors were also found - very worn from being walked on unless they had protection under furniture or straw matting.

Rockingham. On a rise of land high above the Connecticut River this unspoiled house was once the Jehile Webb Tavern. Built in the late 18th century it has an aura of age both outside and inside. In an upstairs chamber is an excellent stenciled wall in original condition that has never been covered by wallpaper (Fig. 3). Except for the frieze border at the top, the wall is in the style of Moses Eaton and is in pleasing shades of green and red. The unusual frieze design that is not among Moses Eaton's known stencils has also been found on



another Eaton-type wall in Massachusetts and two other Vermont walls that are not Eaton type

Outside of **Chester** is an abandoned stagecoach stop where several rooms had once been stenciled. Just scraps of it are left now. Long benches line the walls of a large ballroom and ghosts of happier days are easy to imagine. The indistinct stenciling is attributed to Moses Eaton and some of the patterns can be made out to match his known stencils.

Another Chester house is a red saltbox built in 1796. Several rooms upstairs had once been stenciled and the small entry downstairs with all green stenciling has been identified as the work of Moses Eaton.

On the Green Mountain Turnpike in Chester is a large colonial house built in the late 1790's. This was also a stagecoach stop and locally it is called "the old Henry Place." Upstairs in a closet off the wide hall is again Moses Eaton's stenciling. He must have found ready customers in this area during the late 1820's and 30's when he came across the Connecticut river from his home state of New Hampshire. Untouched by paint or wallpaper, the patterns in the closet are still clear and bright and all but the frieze border match Eaton's stencils.

Another itinerant stenciler was attracted to this once popular stagecoach route. Among wall researchers he is referred to as the *Borderman* whose classical borders were, in my opinion, done earlier than the single motif repeat patterns. The Chester Historical Society kindly told me there used to be stenciling in a long building near Chester Depot. Help from the Police Department put me in touch with the owners who said there had been stenciling on the second floor but that the rooms and stairway were boarded up because of vandalism. Undaunted, I persuaded them to let my colleagues and me try to go in. Walking through waist high hay we came to an open door in the back and were relieved to see a small back stairway inside. We went up and found remains of border stenciling in two of the chambers. Tracing without a light was difficult but kneeling on the floor crunchy with broken glass in order to trace over the baseboard was even worse. A frieze on white painted bands with festoons in black and deep pink tied together by black tassels match *Borderman's* old stencils. Hardly visible over the baseboard is an unusual border that could be traced to make a facsimile. The second chamber with the "candle frieze" and the over baseboard border are also among *Borderman's* stencils but incomplete.

On the main street of Chester is a modest two story house with border designs in an upstairs chamber. Figure 17 shows the over the baseboard decoration of what must have been a very handsome room. The design on the white band of the frieze is in black and deep pink with white overlay stenciling on the stylized flowers. The urn border matches one in the Salmon Dutton House which came from nearby Cavendish and is now at the Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont.

Turning east from Chester toward Ludlow is a very large hip roof shingled house which sits on a rise of land as if to command the countryside. Built in the early 1800's the upstairs hallway, two bed chambers and a closet have faint stenciling in Borderman's style found when wallpaper was being removed.

Weston is a cozy village in the middle of the state. Not far from the Green is a brick house built in 1827 by Judge John Wilder. The front door is on the gable end facing the road and the date 1827 is under the point of the roof. The removal of a wide platform type of porch across the front adds greatly to the charm of the house. In an upstairs chamber stenciling was found in good condition under wallpaper. Some of the patterns match those of Moses Eaton but the oak leaf and acorn design repeated on the main wall are not among his known stencils. Predominantly soft green with a few touches of red, it makes a distinctive room (Fig. 24). The oak leaf and acorn design have also been seen in Grafton, Vermont on another Eaton-type wall.

Also in **Weston** was found what could be called a one of a kind wall. Naive in its design it is charming in its layout and very suitable for this rural community (Fig. 26). There is a slight resemblance in it to a wall in Marlboro, Vermont.

Ascutney. Near a busy intersection of Routes 5 and 131, almost within sight of the Connecticut River is tucked a house which nobody would guess has a very fine wall in a downstairs room (Figs. 27 & 29). A fire darkened the yellow walls but the stenciling was spared. The colors are dark green and brick red and the flower motif has pink petals. The unusual frieze border is the same (upside down) as found in Rockingham, Vermont, in Sutton, Massachusetts and in Marlboro, Vermont. But there is no relationship to the other patterns on these walls and the frieze border remains a mystery. Back to the Ascutney wall, the well designed upright border is new to me and is made with two stencils, red and green, joined to form a square. This was edged with delicate wavy lines and tiny leaves.

On Tarbell Hill outside of **Cavendish** is a brick house built by Oliver Tarbell in the early 1820's. In the upstairs hall and stairway is Moses Eaton's familiar work and style of laying out a wall with upright borders dividing the wall into panels and alternating single motifs across and down the wall. His colors of green and red have changed over the years but are still clear. These designs match his stencils at SPNEA.

Pieces of plaster from the Salmon Dutton House that once stood in a prominent place in the town of Cavendish are now at the Shelburne Museum. Mr. Dutton came to Vermont in 1781 from Ashby, Massachusetts and his handsome saltbox house was built in 1782. He was a man of means and when the fashion of decorating walls with stencils became popular, his house was probably among the first in town to have it done.

The background of the old wall is yellow ochre with white painted bands and stenciled festoons in black relieved by red "roses" and overlay marks in white. This same design in other colors was used in Chester. Other walls in the Dutton House were reproduced by the late Duncan Munro when the house went to Shelburne Museum.

From the village of **Proctorsville** is the "20 Mile Stream Road" which leads to Meadow Brook Farm and the Spaulding House built in the first quarter of the 19th century. The Crown Point Road crosses the farm. The meadow nearby was the encampment site of the soldiers who had marched from Charlestown, New Hampshire on their way to Fort Crown Point, New York, during the French and Indian war. The Farm is in the township of Cavendish and the Spaulding house is where Sally Brown's diary started in 1832. I went there in 1965 knowing nothing of this and saw the stenciling. The style and the patterns are like those of Moses Eaton and only a few do not match his at SPNEA. The ochre color used in the patterns on the stairway wall was once green that could be seen in hidden places, and the red was still fairly clear. It is always a hope that someday it will be found out if Moses Eaton and Mr. Livingston ever worked together. It is sad to relate that the house burned down in the winter of 1982.

Moses Eaton made his way to a house in **Windsor** on the eastern side of Vermont near the Connecticut River. Here he put some of his popular patterns in a downstairs room. The untouched walls have been left in their original condition and show the inevitable signs of age. All but a few of the patterns in the room match Eaton's stencils at SPNEA. The colors are now dull green and a clear red on a thin pinkish background. In looking at the frieze at the top of the wall (Fig. 40), I noticed some horizontal striping showing under the background paint. Climbing a ladder for a closer look, I saw that the striping was part of another border underneath Eaton's! It was traceable because of the thin paint over it and it turned out to be part of a black frieze by Borderman. Another small border of his was also found in the room beside a window which was evidence that he stenciled the wall before Eaton did.

Quechee. At Marshland Farm was found stenciling clear enough to identify as Borderman's and a facsimile was made of the parlor wall. In the front hall the designs were clearer and another of Borderman's urn borders was used over the baseboard. There was no top border but the ceiling had been lowered which may have been the reason. Upstairs in a closet was another worn wall and the delicate designs show in the facsimile. Black and burnt orange up rights are interesting used with a black and red top border (Fig. 44). Two other designs like this have been found in Vermont, and black uprights were also used in Hinesburg and Shoreham.

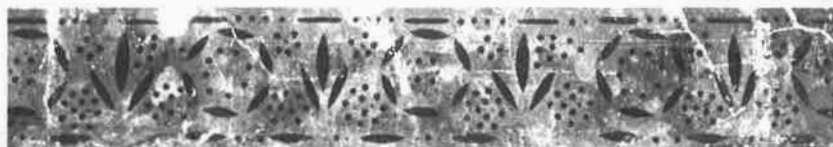
In **South Woodstock** is a charming old house in a picturesque setting on a hilly country road with a brook tearing along in back. Built by Noah Wood in the late 18th century, there is one downstairs room with faded green and a lot of clear red stenciling on a pale lemon yellow background (Fig. 46). The designs repeat horizontally across the wall but vertically they alternate and some are used in pairs close together that is unusual. The motifs look like a combination of Eaton's and other stencilers' and two motifs are in a class by themselves. As for the crowded decorations over the mantel it is tempting to think the lady of the house may have suggested it. The large wheel has appeared occasionally on other walls.

Janet Waring went to Plymouth, Vermont many years ago and told some fascinating stories of her experiences in her book, *Early American Stencils*. John Coolidge, Calvin Coolidge's great great grandfather gave each of his five children a farm or land. After his death in 1822 his son, Luther Coolidge, built a large house as an addition to his father's. Luther's daughter, Eliza Ann Coolidge, married Erastus Gates in the 1830's. Another daughter married Harmon McWain and the house became known as a McWain House. In 1970 I met a 100 year old lady, a descendant of the McWains. She remembered the stenciled walls because she had been told that her uncle, Erastus Gates, had done them. Pieces of plaster from this house were saved by one of the McWains. Erastus died in Ludlow in 1892 age 81, having spent most of his life there as a farmer.

In **Hartford**, Windsor County, is a white Colonial house built in the late 18th century, known as the "Freegrace Leavitt Tavern." Two stencils that make the frieze in black and rose are on white serrated bands and match Bordenman's stencils.

Among many fine houses in Norwich is the "Harriet Partridge House." Upstairs is unusual rather somber border stenciling in black on gray bands (Fig. 55). The frieze is like one of the sample borders in Marlboro, Vermont.

Far up in Windsor County is a well preserved wall inside a small closet that had once been part of a ballroom. Across the wall were spread eagles (Fig. 57). It was a surprise and a delight to see such a well designed wall with clear coloring. Similar eagles and a vertical border attributed to Erastus Gates can be seen in the Waring book, and the flower from a house in Plymouth, Vermont.



Above: Fig. 55. Norwich, VT. Gray band with black stenciling.



Fig. 3. Rockingham, VT. In an upstairs chamber is an original stenciled wall in untouched condition. In the style of Moses Eaton except for the frieze border.



Fig. 17. Chester, VT. The graceful dado matches one of Borderman's and has been found several times in VT.



Fig. 24. Weston, VT. Detail of top border, although faint, has a resemblance to one of Eaton's.



Fig. 26. Weston, VT. A wall in the Bryant House can be classified as one of a kind. It was traced from the original and reproduced by Kathleen Wright.



Above: Fig. 27. Ascutney, VT.

Left: Fig. 29. Ascutney, VT. A facsimile of the above wall pattern.



Fig. 40. Hartland Four Corners, VT. Detail of frieze show saint design underneath. A tracing of it revealed a design of Bordenman's had been put on before Eaton's!

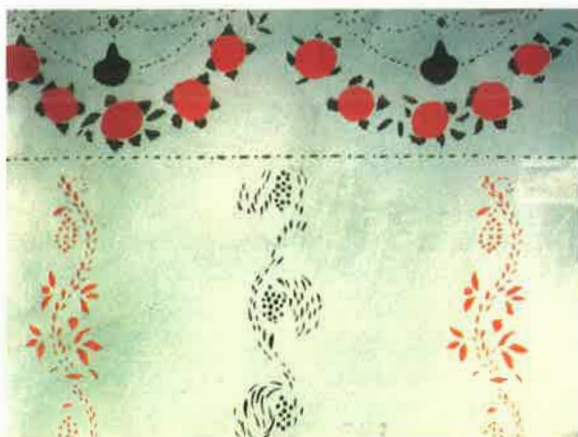
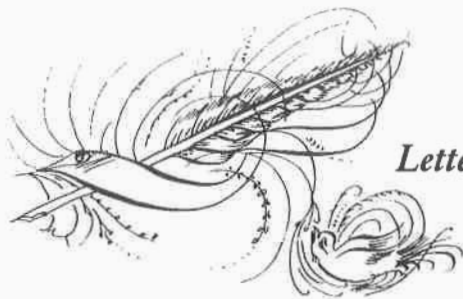


Fig. 44. Quechee, VT. A facsimile from a design in a closet. Black and burnt orange uprights.

Continued on page 30



Letter from Birmingham

by Yvonne Jones

Some Places to Shop for Papier Mâché in Victorian Times

Spiers of Oxford

In 1853, Edward Bradley, using the pseudonym of Cuthbert Bede, wrote a spoof account of life as an Oxford undergraduate which he entitled *The Adventures of Mr Verdant Green, an Oxford Freshman*. Under the guidance of Charles Larkyns, an undergraduate, Verdant Green, is "...put up to the ways of the place." He was taken to a shop called Spiers, where:

"...they stopped at the corner of Oriel Street, to look in at a spacious range of shop windows, that were crowded with a costly and glittering profusion of papier mâché articles, statuettes, bronzes, glass and every kind of "fancy goods" that could be classed as art-workmanship..."

Mr Verdant Green was soon deeply engaged in an inspection of those papier mâché "remembrances of Oxford" for which the Messrs. Spiers are so justly famed; but after turning over tables, trays, screens, desks, albums, portfolios, and other things, all of which displayed views of Oxford from every variety of aspect, and were executed with such truth and perception of the higher qualities of art, that they formed in themselves quite a small but gratuitous Academy exhibition, our hero became so confused among the bewildering allurements around him, as to feel quite an *embarras de richesses*, and to be in a state of mind in which he was nearly giving Mr Spiers the most extensive (and expensive) order which probably that gentleman had ever received from an undergraduate...Mr Larkyns proposed to Verdant that he should astonish and delight his governor by having the Green arms emblazoned on a fire-screen, and taking it home with him as a gift. "Or else," he said, "order one with the garden-view of Brazenface*", and then they'll have more satisfaction in looking at that than at one of those offensive cockatoos, in an arabesque landscape, under a bronze sky, which usually sprawls over everything that is papier mâché. Finally Mr. Verdant Green ordered

a fire-screen to be prepared with the family-arms, as a present for his father; a ditto, with a view of his college, for his mother; a writing-case, with the High Street view, for his aunt; a netting-box, card-case, and a model of the Martyrs' Memorial, for his three sisters..."

* A thinly disguised name for Brasenose College, Oxford

The Pantheon Bazaar

"So into the Pantheon, turning and turning about in that Hampton-Court-like maze of stalls, laden with pretty gimcracks, toys, and papier mâché trifles for the table, dolls and children's dresses, wax flowers and Berlin and crotchet (sic) work, prints and polkas and women's ware of all sorts."

From: Twice Round the Clock, Augustus Sala, 1858



Papier mâché lap desk with "A View of High Street." On the bottom of the box is written "High Street" and "Spiers & Son, Oxford." Courtesy of Astrid Donnellan.

*There were no Guild Members accepted or Special Awards presented
at the fall meeting in Batavia.*

Members' "A" Awards



Roberta Edrington

Victorian Flower Painting

Tamara Lindsey

Theorem



Ann Baker

Country Painting



Alexandra Perrot

Theorem

Members' "B" Awards

Laura Bullitt

Theorem



Elizabeth Taylor

Stenciling on Tin



Inez Gornall

Theorem

Marie Vigeant

Country Painting



Members' "B" Awards



Amy Finley

Theorem



Dortia Davis

Freehand Bronze



Susan Redfield

Theorem

Elizabeth Nibbelink

Theorem



Members' "B" Awards

Patricia Smith

Victorian Flower Painting



Karen Graves

Theorem



Martha Kinney

Theorem



Roberta Edrington

Victorian Flower Painting



Above and below: Details of mural panel showing houses.

Rufus Porter Murals in East Derry, NH Part 2

by Shirley S. Baer

In the journal he founded, *Scientific American*, Rufus Porter gives some tips on painting a wall mural: "In painting the pictures of steamboats, ships, and other vessels, it is convenient to have a variety of outline drawings of vessels of various kinds, sizes, and positions, on paper; the back sides of these papers are to be brushed over with dry venetian red; then by placing one of the papers against the wall, and tracing the outlines with a pointed piece of iron, bone, or wood, a copy thereof is transferred to the wall ready for coloring. The painting of houses, arbors, villages, etc., is greatly facilitated by means of stencils." (*Scientific American*, April 9, 1846).

Of the thirteen remaining mural panels in the former Adams Female Academy, houses are found on just one panel. It is interesting to note that some of the trees around the houses are painted in what we consider the Rufus Porter style, that is, a light color on one half of the tree with a darker color on the other half. The same type of tree appears in several panels, but not very often. Most of the trees are more realistic, and beautifully executed.



A close-up of the large red house in the mural.

One panel includes three boats, and a single boat appears on another. When we commented that we were hoping to find a steamboat, the owner, Scott Richardson, showed us a photograph of a panel (current whereabouts unknown), and a copy of a newspaper article about that panel.



The *Derry News*, August 7, 1925 stated that during renovation at the Adams school, "...the west wall was found to have a mural painting covering the entire wall. This painting was on the original plaster and it is supposed to have been placed here when the building was erected in 1822...The painting represents a river, with a steamboat similar to the *Robert Fulton*, flying the American flag at the stern, with overhanging trees and waterfalls and is really a work of art. The painting is to be preserved so far as possible for historical and sentimental reasons."

The Adams Female Academy opened in 1823. According to Jean Lipman (*Rufus Porter, Yankee Pioneer*), Rufus Porter started painting wall murals c.1824. Between c.1824-1825, he painted murals in nearby towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The earliest date we could find with a student name was 1828.

The colors in the murals are brilliant. In Part 1 we attributed this to the fact that the murals had been covered with a second wall. However, the walls in the parlor of the Joshua Eaton house in Bradford, New Hampshire are equally bright.



The panel featuring the six houses.



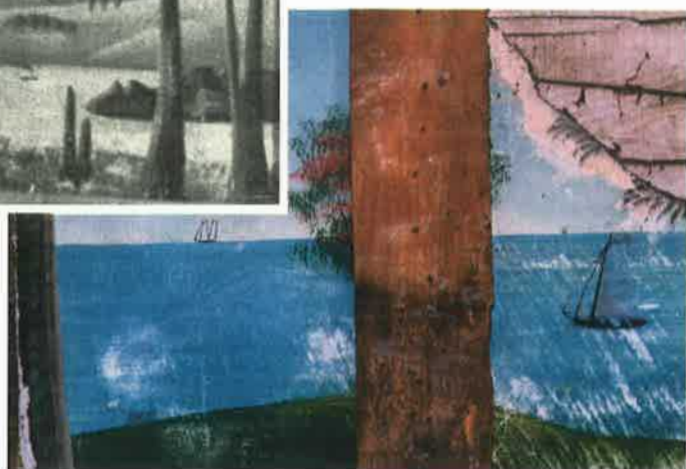
Above: A close-up of one of the sailboats. Note the student's writing to the right with the dates of 1828 and 1829.

The Adams Female Academy.



Left: According to the present owner, Scott Richardson, this panel was in another school room on the first floor. It has since disappeared. In the middle of the lake, there is a small steamboat. Photograph from the book: "Houses of the Double Range and East Derry, NH," by Harriet Chase Newell.

Below: The full wall panel showing three boats.



Photos by Shirley S. Baer



The Bookshelf

"Martin Johnson Heade, 1819-1904"

by Theodore E. Stebbins Jr. with others

*Museum of Fine Arts Boston / Yale University Press 1999,
197 pgs., 112 color plates, 30 illust., hard cover, \$50, soft cover, 24.95.*

Occasionally, an opportunity arises to view original masterpieces painted in the precise brushwork technique of the Dutch Masters, but with a uniquely American content and in the original style of the artist. For those of us living in the Boston area, the Museum of Fine Arts is presenting an exhibition of paintings by Martin Johnson Heade scheduled through January 17, 2000. Heade, a naturalist, gardener and sportsman who also raised hummingbirds, was one of the most prolific artists of the nineteenth century. The range of his work has left us a legacy of landscapes, seascapes and still lifes that cover American coastal areas to the lush tropical bounty of Central and South America including an array of exquisite hummingbirds, orchids and passion flowers.

However, if Boston's MFA is not accessible, Theodore Stebbins, former Curator and Acting Chair of the Art of the Americas at the MFA, Boston, has compiled a catalogue of the show. Whether you're refreshing your memory of Heade's work or seeing them for the first time, looking at the color plates in this book is the next best thing to viewing his originals. Having just visited this show, I can honestly say that the plates in this catalogue are as true in color and clarity as they can be. The prose and pictures truly do justice to Heade's life and work.

Martin Johnson Heade's life was as interesting and full of beauty as his work. It's difficult to believe that he did not achieve recognition and success in his lifetime. Although he was born in rural Bucks County, PA, it was not farming that appealed to him, but rather the work of his neighbor, artist Edward Hicks. After apprenticing with Hicks, Heade

Continued on page 31

Continued from page 19

Fig. 46. South Woodstock, VT. A lot of red was used on this interesting wall and the patterns are grouped together in pairs.



Below: Fig. 57. Windsor County, Vermont. It was a delightful surprise to find expert stenciling in an upstairs closet that was once part of a ballroom. Spread eagles with 26 stars above their heads were placed across the upper wall. The feathers on the green eagles were overlaid with red feathers and a red striped shield on the breasts.



To be continued

traveled across America and to Europe where he spent most of a year in Rome, painting portraits, genre scenes and copying the famous masterpieces that were in demand. However, in 1858, he moved to the famous Tenth Street Studio Building in NYC, site for many of the Hudson River School artists. He met and became very close friends with Frederic Edwin Church, and it's at this point that Heade began to define his individual style and produce his best paintings. The Hudson River School's focus on the uniqueness of the American landscape impressed Heade. However, unlike the Hudson River School painters, whose landscapes reflect a romantic iconography and moral allegory, Heade's paintings reflect the careful, serious scrutiny of a naturalist. Instead of grandiose mountains spilling veils of waterfalls, he surveys the gentle curves of flowing rivers through quiet marshlands.

Some of his favorite seascapes are the salt marshes of the Atlantic Coast. These are painted in the luminist style where the focus is on the effect of color and light. Some sections are bathed in vibrant light, while others are shadowed in a dramatic stillness. His serene and spacious landscapes and seascapes capture the quiet before the storm and the underlying volatility of nature's power. Witness the scene and experience the mood in *Sudden Shower, Newbury Marshes* and *Thunder Storm on Narragansett Bay*.

Heade also painted bouquets of flowers in plain and decorated vases. *Still Life with Apple Blossom in a Nautilus Shell* is a mix of decorative and natural elements while *Red Flower in a Vase* is startling in its simple elegance. I wish we could print *Vase of Mixed Flowers* along with this review as testimony to his skill as a still life artist. This picturesque arrangement of carnations, orange blossoms, azaleas and roses in a delicate silver and gold vase, on an exquisitely patterned silk brocade fabric demonstrates his ability to portray these fine floral and domestic details. His series of magnolias, sensuously reclining on red or green velvet beds, is daringly intimate, and boldly beautiful. Equally stunning is his series of hummingbirds hovering over orchids and passion flowers.

Heade, who was probably inspired by Church's South American landscapes, made three trips to Central and South America. His interest in hummingbirds led him to Brazil where, in his own words, "a person interested in ornithology, entomology, botany, mineralogy or beautiful scenery could find so much to keep him entertained." Veiled in misty heat, the lush flora and colorful hummingbirds in his paintings are given equal attention. In his unique style, he enlarges the exotic orchids and passion flowers, and creates an overall dramatic effect, as well as an excellent study. His attention to detail, an acquired skill from his training as an engraver, his eye as a naturalist, and his hand as an artist are all quite evident.

Theodore Stebbins has given us another treasure for our library in his catalogue of this exhibition. There are 112 color plates and 30 illustrations. The high quality of the plates is the same in both the hard and soft cover. The book is well worth the investment.



The Continuing Saga of the Stevens Tavern

by Lois Tucker

The investigation into the suspicious nature of the Stevens Tavern fire has finally concluded. Philip Beaumier, the owner who had given the tavern its Fort Apache appearance, set fire to the tavern in August 1998 because he thought he'd been cheated when he sold it. Beaumier had sold to Oren Ahlquist for \$48,000, and Ahlquist sold the property to the city of Portland for \$80,000.

Beaumier mistakenly thought that Ahlquist had made his deal with the city before purchasing the tavern, and also mistakenly thought Ahlquist still was the owner when he set the fire. The investigators assumed the fire was Beaumier's misguided attempt at revenge.

Beaumier was found guilty of arson and could have faced up to 40 years in prison for a Class A offense. The sentence imposed, however, was for an eight-year prison term with all but 60 days suspended. Beaumier will also be on probation for six years, and is required to pay the city's fire fighting cost of \$4,328. The judge called the sentence a "bit unconventional," and the District Attorney who had recommended the sentence said the crime was "very bizarre."

Beaumier is 71 years old, has been a Portland resident most of his life, and served as a Marine in Korea, an experience that left him with psychological problems. Also the fact that the city had planned to demolish the Tavern anyway was taken into consideration.

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