

The Decorator

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Stamford, CT

Spring 2000



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Front and back covers: McCallum & Hodson's "Royal Cabinet," made for and exhibited at the Great Exhibition held in London in 1851. Front cover, interior of cabinet; back cover, base showing its rich decoration and the recessed top on which the cabinet sits. See Yvonne Jones' article on page 4.

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A Present from Birmingham



A 'Royal Cabinet' made in papier mâché for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and acquired by Tsar Alexander II of Russia, has recently come to light in Germany.

by Yvonne Jones

Shortly after the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851, it was reported in *The Morning Chronicle* that among the articles displayed “. . . there are few which in their manufactured or finished state are more attractive to the sight or which have higher claims to the admiration of the visitor than those formed of the material known as papier mâché. Whether in the shape of domestic furniture, to which it has recently been applied, or in articles of general domestic utility, its beauty and agreeableness are equally striking.” The reporter added that by “Admitting as polish almost equal to that of glass itself, and receiving colors nearly as bright as those capable of being placed upon canvas

Above: Figure 1. McCallum & Hodson's "Royal Cabinet," made for and exhibited at the Great Exhibition held in London in 1851 (134 x 67 x 60).

(sic), it furnishes a most attractive surface alike to the industrial skill of the humble artisan and to the genius of the artist.” The reporter might have been writing exclusively about the cabinet exhibited by McCallum & Hodson¹ of Birmingham (Figure 1) which like so many of the papier mâché articles sent for exhibition, set out to demonstrate this combination of technical and artistic skills.

McCallum & Hodson is not a partnership which springs readily to mind when attributing unmarked pieces of papier mâché and yet, at the time, theirs was considered one of the leading papier mâché factories in Birmingham (Figures 5 & 6). They were first listed as japanners² in a Birmingham directory of 1835, and by 1841, described themselves as “Japanners and Manufacturers of Papier Mâché and Japanned Trays”. James McCallum, the senior partner, was the less artistic but more commercially astute of two brothers who had been apprenticed to Jennens & Bettridge. Edward Hodson was a businessman with the benefit of “outside experience”. Together they built up a successful factory which became well known for its extensive foreign and home trade, besides its supply of “blanks” or undecorated articles to other japanners.

They sent a range of typical Victorian papier mâché goods to the Great Exhibition (Figures 7 & 8) which included a Gothic worktable with a view of Kenilworth Abbey, a large loo table decorated with pearls and flowers, 48 inches in diameter, a shaped Gothic table, a flower stand which could be converted to a table, workboxes, jewel cases, inkstands, portfolios, trays, and “a beautiful little tea chest in the Alhambra style.”

But the centerpiece of their display must surely have been the “Royal Cabinet” shown here, which has recently come to light in Germany. It is true that in general, McCallum & Hodson tended to concentrate on less expensive goods than the better known firm of Jennens &



Right: Figure 11. Papier mâché panel made by Jennens & Bettridge, and painted with a portrait of Queen Victoria copied from the same source as that on McCallum & Hodson's cabinet (see Figure 1). By contrast, this panel shows why the artists at Jennens & Bettridge were so highly regarded within the industry; about 1850 (29.5 x 22) (Private Collection).



Right: Figure 2. The left side of the cabinet showing portraits of the Princess Royal and Princess Alice.

Bettridge (Figure 11), but it appears they were equally as ambitious producing “an immense variety of large pieces of householdfurniture, wardrobes, ...dressing glasses, sofas, etc., decorated to suit the taste or the want of taste of purchasers in the countries to which they are exported.”³ A more popular view was perhaps expressed by a visitor to their factory in 1850 who noted that in addition to a table which “looked more fit for a Queen than for any less distinguished person,” she saw a range of goods which surpassed anything she ever imagined as drawing room decoration.

Although like many pieces of papier mâché, the cabinet is not marked, it is indisputably the one made by McCallum &

Hodson and illustrated in the exhibition catalogue (Figure 8). Papier mâché manufacturers were erratic about marking their wares, and particularly so in the case of furniture, but as this cabinet testifies, the absence of a mark does not signify an inferior piece. Jennens & Bettridge were more assiduous than most about marking their products and because of this, their name is the best known today and one perhaps too readily associated with unmarked pieces.

The cabinet has a distinguished provenance. It was the gift of Tsar Alexander II to his wife's relatives in Hesse, probably at Sorrento in 1873 where he met his brother-in-law the Grand Duke Ludwig III of Hesse, and Princess Alice, the second daughter of Queen Victoria. Princess Alice, whose portrait as a young child is depicted on the cabinet (Figure 2), was by her marriage to Prince Louis of Hesse, niece of both the Tsarina and of Ludwig III. Although there is no evidence, we could presume that the Tsar had purchased the cabinet from the Great Exhibition.

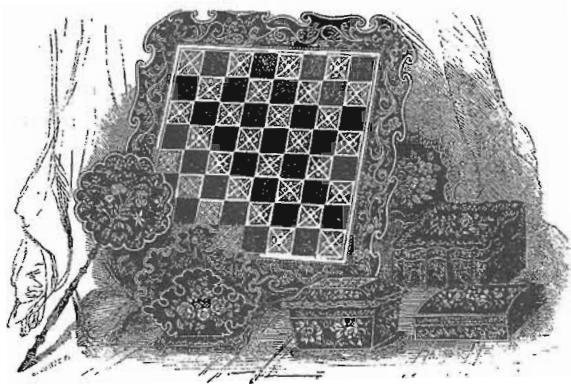
In spite of its obvious royal interest, it is no more likely that the cabinet was a specially commissioned piece than say, the Gothic table

painted with portraits of the English royal princesses or the dressing-case painted with a view of Windsor Castle which were also shown by McCallum & Hodson. Since it was well-known that Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, and their European relatives would be frequent visitors to the exhibition many exhibitors showed wares decorated with royal subjects, probably in the hope of attracting royal patronage. In fact manufacturers were so keen to sell to royalty and attach large “sold” labels to this effect, that, according to one newspaper, exhibition officials had to ask them to refrain.

The flamboyant style of the cabinet is matched by its opulent decoration. Not surprisingly, contemporary critics were divided over such exuberance among the papier mâché makers; for example, while one considered their products “opposed to all true principles of design”, the official exhibition catalogue said that McCallum & Hodson’s display in particular, was “characterized by excellent design and great richness in the variety of colors introduced.” Probably the cavalier approach of *The Morning Chronicle* better reflected popular taste and opinion: “Why talk severely of styles, or taste, or schools, in such a motley assemblage? What although a man combines arabesque with renaissance, and Byzantine with early Christian? Would you enlarge upon anatomy to a doll-maker, or upon comparative anatomy to a hobby-horse manufacturer?” Notwithstanding these considerations, it is perhaps more appropriate to look



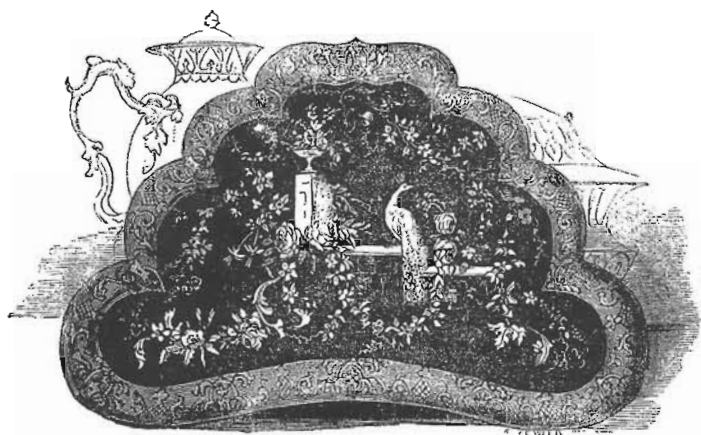
Figure 10. View of Osborne House painted on the top of the cabinet shown in Figure 1 and taken from a watercolor by Thomas Allom.



Left: Figure 5. "... a collection of small articles all within reach of the middle ranks..." made by McCallum & Hodson in about 1850.

upon this cabinet as a virtuoso performance of all that its makers were capable—this was after all, an international exhibition and McCallum & Hodson like every other exhibitor would have been anxious to stand up to comparison with their competitors. It demonstrates not only their expertise as makers of complex papier mâché objects but their familiarity with new technical developments like the recently perfected process of steam-moulding by which the rich acanthus leaf motifs were formed to decorate its cabriole legs. It shows too, virtually every surface decoration which was currently fashionable within the japanning industry.

The cabinet combines "among other articles for use, a work and chess table, backgammon and draft boards, a writing desk elegantly fitted up, drawers for jewelry, coins, writing materials, envelopes, deeds & c.; it is, in point of fact a complete realization of a *multum in parvo*."⁴ Its rectangular, gently serpentine front is fitted with two doors painted with portraits of Queen Victoria, after a painting by the American artist



Above: Figure 6. "The new-fashioned breakfast-tray", made by McCallum & Hodson in about 1850.



Figure 7. Pole screen/reading stand decorated with a view of the Crystal Palace in which the Great Exhibition was held - an engraved illustration from the *Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the exhibition*..

Thomas Sully⁵ and of Prince Albert⁶, the moving force behind the exhibition. The portraits on the sides of the cabinet showing Queen Victoria's eldest daughters, are taken from "The Four Princesses" painted by Winterhalter in 1849, (Royal Collection); those on the left are inscribed "The Princess Royal and The Princess Alice" and those on the right "The Princess Helena and The Princess Louisa." All the portraits are set within scrolling acanthus leaf borders in finely cut mother-of-pearl and, as if to demonstrate their range of patterns, three different acanthus borders have been used, each finely picked out in gold leaf—a favored device

among japanners to reduce the sometimes stark contrast of the pearl and the japan varnish. The cabinet is cornered by four barley twist papier mâché columns with gilded finials encrusted with imitation gems, and surmounted by a double cushioned top which incorporates two boxes, the lid of the uppermost box painted with a view of Osborne House (Figure 10), the Isle of Wight home of Victoria and Albert, after a watercolor by Thomas Allom. Although somewhat more restrained, the decoration on the back of the cabinet almost mirrors the stylistic form of that on the front.

The interior of the cabinet is equally as stunning as its exterior (front cover). It is fitted with silver-plated hinges and escutcheons and contains a number of shallow drawers each enriched with "scrap-pearl"⁷, surrounding a small door painted with a view of Windsor Castle (probably copied from a background detail of a larger painting). These in turn, are set above a drawer which converts to a writing slope or lap desk, and a red velvet and silk-lined needlework box.



Right: Figure 9. An engraving of a table "unique in its ornament" from the *Art Journal Illustrated catalogue*.

The stand, which is largely of japanned wood, incorporates backgammon and chess boards and its top is richly decorated with flowers (back cover). Many of the flower painters at McCallum & Hodson were observed to “work by mere fancy, or . . . from knowledge acquired by previous study; but this is not the case with all, for I observed many with painted groups of flowers before them, from which they were copying.”⁸ It was also noticed that “The rich scarlet hue, often seen in papier mâché flowers is produced by painting with the ordinary color on a gold ground” - a practice which “gives the peculiar gorgeousness of tint which can be obtained by no other method.”⁹

Like most paintings on papier mâché, none of those on the cabinet are signed and thus cannot be reliably attributed. Nevertheless, it is known that among the artists employed by McCallum & Hodson were James Hinks who specialized in landscapes and copies of well known pictures, and a man called Berks, a figure and portrait painter who painted many royal portraits on papier mâché, “principally for loyal subjects abroad.” At McCallum & Hodson’s factory, as at several others, pictures in contrast to other types of painted decoration were not executed in the factory, but by “properly qualified artists” who worked at home. It was said in 1850, that many artists working for McCallum & Hodson “earn large sums weekly; and all have what may be considered excellent wages. One of their more skilled artists for example, was believed to have earned over a period of years, a minimum of £10 a week, and sometimes double that sum; but this was the exception, and not the rule.”¹⁰ If this was so, we must agree with another contemporary writer that “The price at which the japanners are able to produce really excellent paintings is surprising. At the Birmingham Exposition [1849] we noticed a table manufactured by Messrs McCallum & Hodson (sic) with a very fair copy of a Landseer (copied we fear, without leave) for the top, the price of which table and picture, was only nine pounds!”¹¹ Moreover, given that “Every article goes through at least twenty different hands before it is finished; it is really wonderful, therefore, not that this style of ornament is so dear, but that it is so cheap.” There is no record of the original cost of this McCallum & Hodson’s cabinet, but



Above: Figure 8. McCallum & Hodson's cabinet as illustrated in the Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition.

since it was a specimen upon which neither time nor expense was spared, it is safe to assume that with so much painted decoration, it was in excess of the 50gns charged by Jennens & Bettridge for a cabinet of similar form and size, but surmounted by a swing-mirror with only one painted view of Windsor Castle.

It is to be hoped that knowledge of this cabinet will finally bury the notion that all the finest pieces of unmarked Victorian papier mâché may be unquestioningly attributed to Jennens & Bettridge. Ironically, in 1866, McCallum & Hodson took over the firm which had succeeded Jennens & Bettridge two years earlier; in 1887, they also took over Alsager & Neville (another prestigious factory). Remaining in business until 1920, the firm of McCallum & Hodson was the last japanning factory to close in Birmingham, though very little business had been done for years. No one, it seems, was discharged on account of age or work, and thus a dignified exit was assured for everyone. The rediscovery of this important high-Victorian cabinet should establish McCallum & Hodson as not only one of the leading papier mâché manufacturers of the period, but given the extensive nature of their exports, also a neglected source for study of English nineteenth century decorative arts.

Notes:

1. Sometimes spelled M'Callum or McCullum and Hodgson
2. Japanning is the application of thick, usually black japan varnish to papier mâché, tinsplate, wood, etc. In this context, the term is used to distinguish japanned tinware from papier mâché.
3. Samuel Timmins (ed.) *Birmingham & Midlands Hardware District, 1866*, W. C. Aitken "Papier Mâché Manufacture".
4. *The Morning Chronicle*, 19th July, 1851.
5. Sully painted five versions of this portrait of Queen Victoria between 1838-9; McCallum & Hodson's copy is taken from *The Wallace Collection*, London, an engraving of which was published in 1840.
6. Although this portrait shares details with several paintings and prints of Prince Albert, its source remains elusive.
7. Tiny irregularly shaped scraps of pearl which are scattered randomly onto the varnish while it is still tacky.
- 8-10 *The Lady's Library, The Book of Papier Mâché*, London 1850.
11. *Journal of Design & Manufactures*, Vol 11, 1 849.

(I am doubly indebted to Otto v. Mitzlaff, Frankfurt, for kindly bringing this cabinet to my attention and for providing plates 1- 4 and 10 for this article. YJ)

This article was first published in *Collectors Guide*, August, 1998. Reprinted with permission.

A Treasury of Old Stenciled Walls 1810-1840 (Part 6)

by Jessica Hill Bond

Vermont (Part 2)

In Stockbridge there was said to be an abandoned house with a stenciled wall. Directions on how to get there were vague and it took my friend, Nancy, and me more than one trip and many wrong roads to find it but eventually there it was—majestic, forlorn and empty. We must have been a strange sight to the cows surrounding the house when we maneuvered the barbed wire fence with our baskets of supplies, cameras, tripod, ladder and lunch. We climbed through a window, crunched through broken glass and unidentifiable debris to look for stenciling. The staircase was held up by a plank but it seemed secure and one at a time we went up and found remains of stenciling in one room. The floor had gone but there was just enough left around the edges to hold a ladder so we traced and photographed. Figure 61 shows dimly what was left on one wall with dark blue-green and rare vermilion stenciling. Figure 62 is a facsimile.

Another house in **Stockbridge** was abandoned as a stagecoach inn, but was used for storing machinery in 1974. The owner of the building lead me to an upstairs chamber and pointed to where she had removed wallpaper from one panel and showed a charming wall in excellent condition (Figure 63). I mentioned that there would normally have been a frieze design at the top, and without hesitation she obligingly found a crowbar, ripped off some molding in another part of the room, dug out some insulation and there was the frieze (Figure 64). The colors are the same as in the other Stockbridge house, but not the designs or the layout. There is a hint of Erastus Gates about this wall (Figures 63-64), and in *Waring's Early American*



Figure 62. Stockbridge, Vermont. A facsimile of some of "A—"

Stencils on Walls and Furniture,” are photographs of walls attributed to him (Figures 80, 82-83).

On the main street of **Randolph Center** is a fine brick house built c. 1825-30 for Vermont's Lt. Gov. Lebbeus Egerton. Attached at the rear is a story-and-a-half house built in 1801 where some interesting stenciling is in the attic. Bands of "Joe Pyeweed" color outline the window and the slant of the wall with attractive borders in black. A clever way to join two different borders is seen in Figure 67. The wider border is similar to one used by Borderman but attribution to him will wait.



Figure 71. Brookfield, VT. A downstairs chamber with some of the same patterns as in Braintree Center.

Braintree Center is near the town of Randolph. A kind friend told me of a wall there or I would not have found it. I went up a hill outside the village. An appointment had been made with the lady who lived there; she was out in her garden and held up her hand in welcome. The hip roof house with many chimneys had seen better days but the lines of a good house built during the first part of the 19th century were not disguised by shabbiness. The stenciling was in a back room and was one of the most interesting walls I had seen (Figures 69- 70). The colors had aged to soft shades of greens and reds with a hidden border in yellow ochre beside a door. The geometric frieze border complemented by the graceful floral uprights show a craftsman of unusual artistic ability.

Brookfield is slightly northeast of Braintree and is famous for its floating bridge (over one hundred years old and more than four hundred feet long). A story-and-a-half house has a stenciled wall similar to the one in Braintree and undoubtedly done by the same artisan (Figure 71). The curved squares of the geometric upright are a modification of the Braintree frieze and three of the other borders were also used in Braintree.

In the late 18th century Samuel Rich came from Massachusetts to settle in the thriving area around North Montpelier and became prosperous from the early industries along the branches of the Winooski River. To accommodate travelers he built a large tavern in 1805, one of the handsomest early Georgian houses in Vermont, complete with a ball-room and bar room. The interior boasts eight working fireplaces, some having tile hearths. The fragile walls have some of Borderman's most intricate stenciling and the large square rooms with high ceilings carry it well. The stenciling is on white painted bands and on close inspection some of the bands have scalloped edges rather than straight (Figure 73).



Above: Figure 61. Stockbridge, Vermont. The upper part of an almost obliterated wall. Unusual stenciling in dark blue-green and rare vermillion.



Right: Figure 63. Stockbridge. A well-designed wall in same colors as in the abandoned house.



Left: Figure 64. Stockbridge. The top border found intact under the insulation.

Right: Figure 67. Randolph. In an older part of the house is an upstairs chamber with stenciled borders in black on faded brick red bands. A clever way to join two borders!



Right: Figure 69. Braintree Center, Vermont. Detail of the unusual frieze.



Left: Figure 70. Braintree Center. One of several "panels" with single motifs.

Right: Figure 73. No. Montpelier, Vermont. An ornate frieze on a white scalloped band against a pinkish-ochre background.



Left: Figure 80. Jericho, Vermont. The top of a chamber wall shows a common problem—where to put the frieze.

Over the dado are the already familiar urns. Smaller urns were added, along with another swag to connect them, as well as many dots to tie it all together. This same border and others from this house were found by local residents on the walls of Watkins Tavern in Walpole, New Hampshire.

Jericho. In the Chapin House, built in the 1790s, there are traces of Borderman's stenciling in three of the upstairs chambers and the hallway. Some retouching was done on the upper and lower borders for clearer photographs. Another chamber has the delightful bow-knot frieze in black without the criss-crossing in red as seen in Castleton, Vermont. This Jericho room (Figure 80) shows the rather common use in Vermont of wide painted boards high up on the walls, perhaps for clothes pegs. Many of these designs are seen among photographs of Borderman's stencils.

Another house in Jericho is quite different from the Chapin House in architecture and in the simple stenciling that suits it well. It is a story-and-a-half house built c. 1820 and once known as the Whitmarsh House. Figure 82 shows the all green patterns below the slant of the wall above. The patterns have a strong suggestion of the Berkshires, of New York, and Erastus Gates of the Plymouth, Vermont area all rolled into one.

Nathan Leavenworth came from Connecticut to **Hinesburg** in 1791 and built an impressive colonial house. Nothing was spared to make this a fine home with large square rooms and superior woodwork throughout. Stenciling was found in an upstairs chamber, and with the aid of an electric steamer, the frieze design appeared unharmed in black and red on a yellow ochre background (Figure 83). A facsimile of the rest of that wall is shown in Figure 84. Variations of the frieze are found elsewhere in Vermont and in other states. In adding base-board heat to the downstairs hallway, unsuspected stenciling was found on the dado. It could be seen at once that this work was far from commonplace. In black, red and white on a yellow ochre background the design bedazzles the imagi-

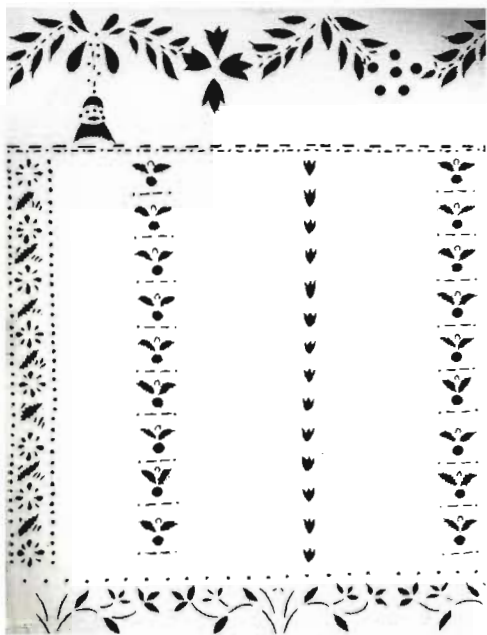


Figure 84. Hinesburg, Vermont. A facsimile of the wall over the mantel. Black and red designs.

nation (Figure 85). The lower part of the design has a border of black octagonals that match those in the Pond House in Shoreham (Figure 90). A closet in the upstairs hallway showed faint stenciling in the top part. Figure 86 is a facsimile of the designs that were used in the upper and lower hallways, above the dadoses.

In a section of Shoreham called Shacksbury was an abandoned house said to have decorated walls. A member of the Shoreham Historical Society offered to lead Nancy and me to it and when we stopped we saw a building that looked more like a barn than a house because it was bulging with hay. After wading through burdock three feet tall with our gear we crawled through a window and found baled hay piled to the ceiling. The kind man who lead us there had driven away and it took us over an hour to move bales away from the staircase where we could see daylight upstairs. However, we were able to go up and trace the designs that were the delicate borders of Borderman! Over a window was the name "J Pond 1806" in black on a buff color background much cleaner than the rest of the wall, as though it had been covered by a picture (Figure 89).

The house was once the home of Col. Josiah Pond, an important early citizen in Shoreham and a Colonel in the 1st Regiment of Militia in Addison County during the Revolutionary War. He was born in Branford, Connecticut in 1756 and died in 1842 in Shoreham. My gratitude to Sanford Witherell and Susan H. MacIntire for information about Col. Pond and his historically important house.



Figure 86. Hinesburg, Vermont. Facsimile of pattern found in hall upstairs as well as down stairs above chair rail. Same as Quebec.

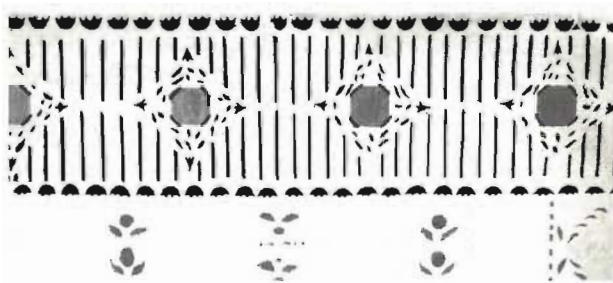


Figure 90. Shoreham, Vermont. A facsimile of stencil used on upper part of wall.

Right: Figure 82. Jericho, Vermont. Very simple stenciling in a bed chamber.



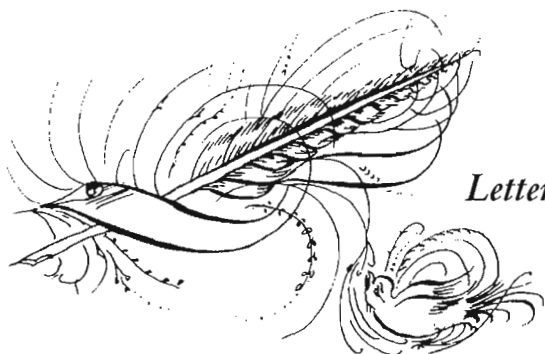
Below: Figure 83. Hinesburg, Vermont. After removing some wallpaper, this frieze design appeared in remarkable condition.



Right: Figure 85. Hinesburg, Vermont. Part of the dado in the front hall downstairs—a different urn from that usually seen.



Left: Figure 89. Shoreham, Vermont. "J Pond 1806" stenciled over a window.



Letter from Birmingham

by Yvonne Jones

Report on the Papier Mâché shown at the Great Exhibition, London, 1851

Amusing though the following account is, there lurk within it some interesting comments about contemporary style and form:

"A tolerably extensive, and certainly very pretty, portion of the Exhibition in this department is supplied by the papier maché articles. They are shams—we know that. They wriggle themselves into society under false pretensions. They pretend to be mosaic or marqueterie or arabesque. They give themselves out for cut granite and carved stone and, like men, they are "deceivers ever". But, after all, they are graceful rogues. They have a skin-deep beauty. The eye looks complacently on them, if the judgement repudiates them. Mark that museum of minute articles of household luxury and household splendour! What an infinity of prettinesses - of pretty card-tables, pretty work-tables, pretty chess-tables, pretty screens, pretty cupboards, pretty frames, pretty nick-nackeries, enough to store the households of all the fairies, and all the peris, and all the elves and sprites on earth, or under it! Why talk severely of styles, or taste, or schools, in such a motley assemblage? What although a man combines arabesque with renaissance, and Byzantine with early Christian? Would you enlarge upon anatomy to a dollmaker, or upon comparative anatomy to a hobby-horse manufacturer? The things are wonderfully pretty-sparkling, glittering,

glancing. They seem admirably adapted to their purpose of filling and gratifying the casual glance. They are most ingenious in their various adaptations to different tastes, different necessities and different styles of ornament - and the neat-handedness of the workmanship is unrivalled. Cradles seem to be popular articles with the papier mâché manufacturers, and we have them of every shape and variety of make. A shell style of fashioning seems to be predominant - a form which when brought out with mother-of-pearl devices and ornaments, furnishes forth cots which might have rocked the infancy of all the river gods and goddesses. In the furniture department in general we remarked only two articles which struck us as novelties. Both were round tables; one of them contrived so as to expand its hospitable proportions as need might be, without the clumsy contrivance of leaves; the other was so managed as to have its central portion up to within about a foot of the edge, made rotatory. And this is the advantage derivable therefrom - the glasses will stand on the immovable ledge, the bottles on the rotatory platform - and the host, instead of troubling his guest to pass the decanter, will merely give a push to his hospitable board and circulate the table.

The Morning Chronicle, 14th May, 1851



The top of a papier mâché portfolio decorated with mother of pearl showing visitors outside the Crystal Palace (a name given to the building complex housing the Great Exhibition of 1851). Courtesy of Maryjane Clark.

Members' "A" Awards

Carol Buonato

Clock Dials



Dolores Furnari

Glass with Border

Roberta Edrington- *Victorian Flower Painting*



Members' "A" Awards



Dorothy Fillmore

Stenciling on Wood

Carol Buonato

Clock Dials



(Copies of award pieces may be ordered from the photography chairman, Martha MacFarland)

Awards

Distinguished Service

Norman Holzer

President's Award Box

Joseph Rice

Frank Tetler

Specialist in Victorian Flower Painting

Roberta Edrington

(Display will be at Woodcliff, NJ meeting)

Members' "B" Awards

Elaine Dalzell

Metal Leaf Painting



Florence Lundquist

Country Painting

Parma Jewett

Glass with Border



Members' "B" Awards



Maureen Morrison

Freehand Bronze Painting

Dorothy Fillmore

Stenciling on Wood



Applicants Accepted as Guild Members

Georgiana S. Coles

Franklin Garlic

Michael Makowiecki

Sharon Fiske

Susan A. Laime

Kathleen P. Talbot

The Joshua Eaton House (Part 1: The Parlor with Murals Attributed to Rufus Porter)

by Shirley S. Baer



East wall of the parlor.

Two young men are recorded as having painted the murals (frescos) and stenciling in the Joshua Eaton House in Bradford, New Hampshire. Both Janet Waring and Jean Lipman attribute the work to Rufus Porter and Moses Eaton. Today there remains a parlor and a bedroom with murals, and a second bedroom with an overall stenciled design. In this article, we will deal only with the murals in the parlor.

The artists who decorated the parlor must have loved their work, for they seem to have “strutted their stuff” by using every technique in their repertoire. Each baseboard shows a different type of graining, and each cupboard shelf edge is grained in a different pattern. The murals on all the walls are “tied together” with a running border at the top of the wall. The border is like a vine growing from the trunk of the tree and appears to be an outgrowth of the tree in each corner. The finishing touch seems to be the delicately painted oval medallions on the mantel. It is a room to be studied and admired.

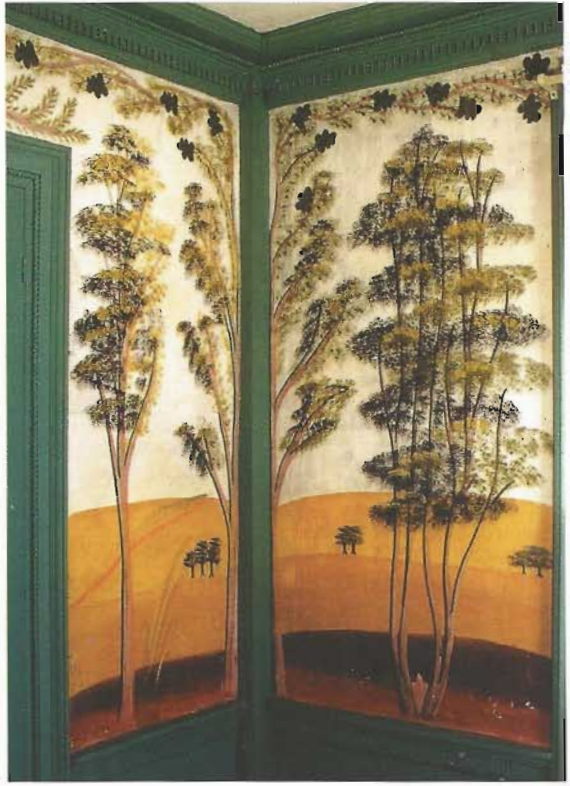
The pristine condition of the murals was a surprise. Like the walls in the Adams Female Academy in Derry, New Hampshire, they are brilliant and beautifully executed. One assumes the colors have remained so vivid because the blinds have been used to protect them from the sun.



Above left: Design between two windows(south wall). Above right and below (same corner, different views): Note the corner treatment with half a tree on each panel, and the connecting border at the top.



The corner beam doesn't interfere with the half tree on each panel. Note the beautiful molding around the ceiling.



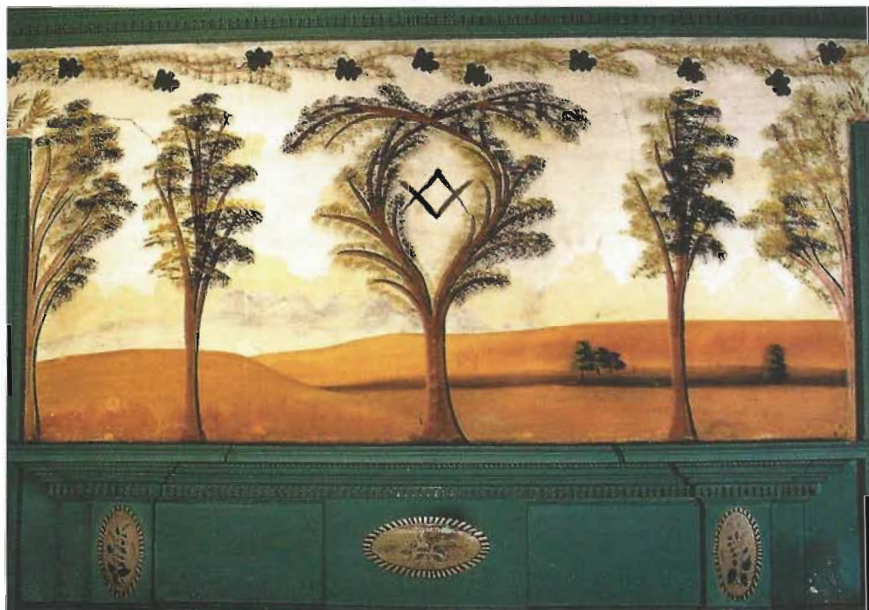
Below: Northwest corner showing more of the west wall and the fireplace. Note how the large tree is painted. Black paint has been sponged over one half of the tree, as on many of the other trees.



Two of the three freehand painted medallions on the mantel.



The overmantel decoration includes the Masonic emblem and since the emblem is part of the original decoration, it helps dates the mural. A Masonic Lodge was formed in Bradford in 1818. Meetings were occasionally held in the Joshua Eaton home.



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The Bookshelf

“Russian Hand-Painted Trays ”

by Irina Krapivina

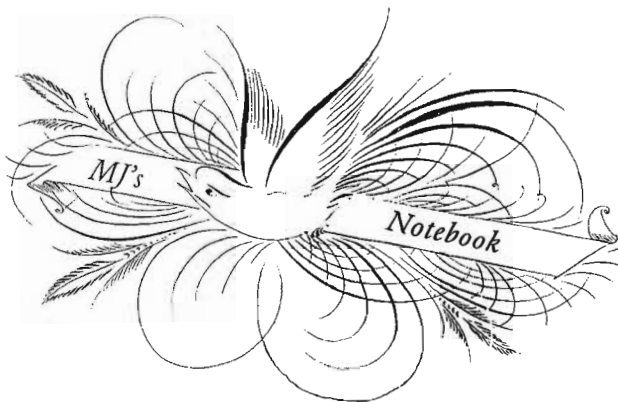
Aurora Art Pub., Leningrad, 1986, hard cover, 156 pages. Out of Print.

Reviewed by Sandra Cohen

Russian lacquered trays were first found in the Urals in the early 18th century and later in St. Petersburg. However, after 1750, Zhostovo, a village near Moscow, led in the production of Russian painted trays and lacquered miniatures. This exquisite form of japanning, which probably originated in China, appears in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. Workshops began to develop in the neighborhood of factories that produced sheet metal. Records show that “not only trays were painted...but...occasional tables, chests, caskets, pails, plates, ...trays...oblong, round, oval, octagonal or fancy-shaped were the main articles to be embellished in this manner.” Sound familiar? History seems to demonstrate that there were many parallel developments and cultural exchanges, as well as adopted and adapted artistic designs and motifs.

The tin shops in the United States seem to have had their parallels in Russia as well. All have their notably distinct patterns, but the materials and techniques overlap. According to the *Industry Archives*, Moscow, apprentices learned to paint with “oils, silver, gold and metal dust.” Serf artists were sent by their owners to study art in St. Petersburg or abroad. Artists would often borrow designs from Western European engravings and would adapt the color scheme and composition to reflect their own artistic visions and cultural and historical perspectives.

Continued on page 32



There is no substitute for studying originals. To examine the piece in person is the ideal method. However, with photographs one can frequently see things that were overlooked or not obvious upon examination. For those who were unable to attend the meeting in Stamford or for those who would like to examine the objects a little more, we offer a few treasures from the Natalie Ramsey Collection and our members' own originals at our Stamford meeting.



Victorian wooden glove box. Note the beautifully painted roses and tulip. Purchased in Paris, France in 1995. Courtesy of Helen Spear.



From the Ramsey Collection: a lovely Gothic shaped bowl with Victorian flower painting.



A Stevens Plains tin trunk. Beautiful flowers. Courtesy of Helga Johnson.



A wonderful Butler piece! Courtesy of Helen Spear, whose daughter purchased the trunk and was told that it had been painted by Aaron Butler or his daughter.

Krapivina gives a brief background to landscape, floral, and fruit and landscape trays. Most of the trays depicted display floral designs that fill the ground of the trays with gorgeous sprays of leaves, vines, buds and blooms. Wisps of delicate strokes, tendrils and stripes, used to border most of the trays, beautifully accentuate the central design. There is a lovely "Landscape" by Mikita Kliodov, 1920s, that is reminiscent of a reverse glass scene with little houses, fenced rolling lawn, trees, clouds and a lake with rowers in a boat. A blow-up of this scene offers an excellent format for reproduction. There is also a round tray, "Basket of Flowers and Bird" by Alexei Leznov, 1930, that reminds me of some of our theorem patterns.

There were villages outside of Moscow where workshops flourished after many shops in St. Petersburg closed. In Fedoskino, the Korobov and Lukutin merchant families produced snuffboxes, cigarette cases, jewel chests and oval or round trays of japanned papier mâché embellished with a decorative gold border. However, trays, waiters, coasters, pans and bread and cake baskets from Zhostovo increased during the latter half of the nineteenth century making it a leading center of this craft.

Patterns gradually became more elaborate, and in addition to the japanned ground, craftsmen used imitation gold foil (*potol* or Dutch metal) which were "ultra thin strips of a copper-zinc alloy beaten into thin leaves...Another type of background was the so-called tortoise-shell field, which was achieved by having the light-toned surface of the tray smoked while still wet." Description of various techniques are interesting, and in many cases, familiar, with slight variations. I think you will find the text, although brief, easy and interesting to read.

Zhostovo ware from the 1860s, and early 1870s, still reflect the rococo style from St. Petersburg. "Fanciful asymmetry disappeared and the flowers became more precisely traced." Zhostovo was well on its way to developing its own style. Patterns of flowers and plants were more natural, soft and rounded. Bouquets replace garlands and more of the smooth, glossy background becomes visible. Surrounding the central motif is a delicate gold border reminiscent of nineteenth-century still life. Craftsmen from this village have earned a reputation for their fine work. The stylized impressions of nature's blooms, a vibrant and balanced palette of reds, blues, yellows and greens, and a glossy japanned background are hallmarks of Zhostovo painting. Landscapes are usually "naive representations of romantic scenes, with exotic castles and ruins set on the shores of lakes and with quaint cliffs steeped in the scarlet glow of sunset." Some of the large reverse glass paintings come to mind. Russian folk life provides the material for the narrative scenes, and "Chinaman Ringing A Bell" is a small example of exotic chinoiserie.

According to Zhostovo residents, a craftsman worked between fourteen and sometimes twenty hours a day during the holiday season. The workplace was much the same everywhere: little ventilation, toxic fumes and materials. In 1917, after the October Revolution, many of the cooperative production groups reformed their own workshops to improve working conditions. In 1929 they were organized into the Metallopodnos (Metal Tray) Cooperative and renamed in 1960 the Zhostov Workshop of Decorative Painting. Craftsmen, themselves, now earned recognition that had formerly been bestowed on their employers. The individual master craftsmen, whose work represents a variety of styles, are listed in "Zhostovo's Golden Treasury." Many of them and their trays are pictured and discussed. The 136 plates are all in color. Krapavina also gives us more details about many of the decorators and their work represented in this book.

It always pleases us to know that this form of decorative painting is so universal and still desirable. However, this book was last published in 1986. New publications on early decorative painting and the techniques that focus on preserving and producing authentic patterns and maintaining quality are desperately needed. One new book is *Zostovo Painting* by Heather Redick. It's an excellent how-to companion to this beautiful little book, which offers instructions in colorful graphic details.

Editor's Note: Our Bookshelf Editor, Sandra Cohen, owns and operates Legacy Books.



"Basket of Flowers and Bird" by Alexei Leznov, 1930.

continued from page 28

Closeups of the east wall showing three boats.



Jean Lipman wrote that "the motif of a stenciled sailboat with a man at the tiller" is another Porter signature (Rufus Porter, Yankee Pioneer, page 132). Is that what we see here? Note the curly-cue smoke from the chimney—very different from the smoke seen coming from the houses in the Derry, New Hampshire mural.



The third boat.



Note: Jean Lipman's Rufus Porter, Yankee Pioneer, and Janet Waring's Early American Stencils on Walls and Furniture are excellent sources for more information on Rufus Porter, Moses Eaton, and the Joshua Eaton House.

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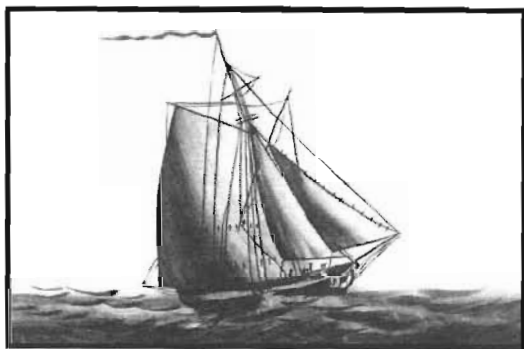
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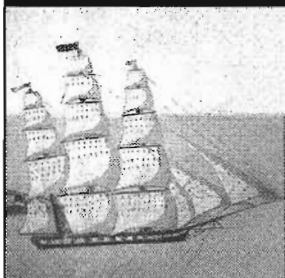
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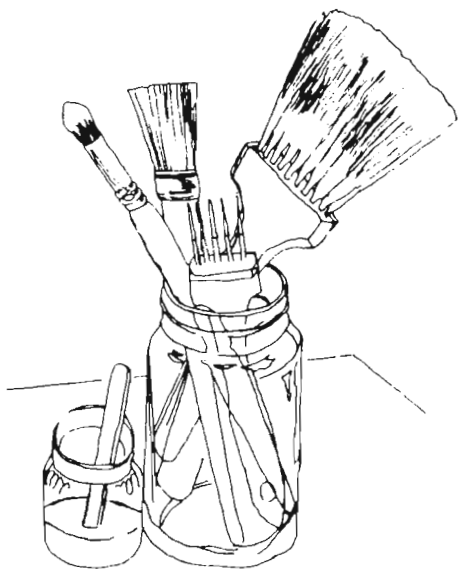
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