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Contents

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Front cover: Small chest attributed to Robert Crosman. On loan to the Old Colony Historical Society, Taunton, Massachusetts by descendants of Robert Crosman.

Back cover: Taunton dowry chest attributed to Robert Crosman. Courtesy of the Old Colony Historical Society, Taunton, Massachusetts

The Historical Society of Early American Decoration

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.

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

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

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Not a Bed of Roses!

Japanning Workshops, Factories and Labor

by

Yvonne Jones

A view of High Street, Birmingham, copied from an engraving by T. Hollins, published in 1812, and painted on a large tin tray (Private Collection)

While accounts of the practical processes involved in japanning exist from an early period, for example, Stalker & Parker's *Treatise of Japanning* (1688) and Robert Dossie's later well-known book *The Handmaid to the Arts* (1758), it was not until the 1830s that similarly detailed descriptions of the factories and workshops where these processes were carried out began to appear in newspapers and elsewhere. For earlier evidence, we are almost entirely dependent upon contemporary diaries and letters written in the second half of the 18th century by the rich and fashionable, for whom visiting the workshops of Birmingham and other emergent industrial cities had become a new craze.

It is from these often vivid records and from rare accounts left by some of the workmen themselves that a picture begins to emerge of what early large-scale factories were like. Likening Henry Clay's cabinet-working

shop to a "timber yard," for example, hints at stacks of pasteboard sheets and a touch of disarray. A description of the area outside Charles Mander's japan-and-varnish works in Wolverhampton, with its cherry trees and flowers, indicates the relatively informal, almost domestic mode in which some successful concerns were still operating in 1817. Scant though such records are, when matched with later more detailed accounts, it becomes clear that the organization of early workshops set the pattern for those that followed.

A contemporary engraving of a tin-plater at work, c.1810.

A contemporary view of Bond Street, Wolverhampton, close to the Old Hall Japan Works. A papier mâché panel, signed 'R.T.' (probably for Richard Tyrer, a japanner who operated in Bond Street), and dated 'March 26, 1811'. (Author's Collection)

What changed was the scale of operations: the shift from small workshop to factory, the replacement of people with machines, and the concomitant rise in industrial hazards. Factors which, together with successive legislation and increased production, resulted in larger workshops becoming rigidly departmentalized, with each section overseen by a foreman. In an article of this length, it is possible only to offer sidelights on the resulting social and industrial character of the 18th and 19th centuries' japanning industry of the English midlands.

The workshops of the earliest tin-plate workers and japanners were in or adjacent to their homes. If trade prospered, they might have built a further workshop at the back of the property and continued to expand in this way until they had a row of workshops or, as they were collectively known, "shopping," which almost filled their back yards*. For instance, when John Baskerville, one of Birmingham's most important early japanners, first began japanning in about 1740, he both lived and worked at the premises he rented. And when purpose-built factories were erected in the 1820s and 1830s, not only did the tradition of living "over the shop" remain, but so too did the ground plans. Dwellings for the japan masters, factory offices and showrooms fronted onto the road, but instead of one, there might have been two transverse blocks of workshops at the rear – one story high or

* *"Yard" is used here in the English sense of an outside utility area.*

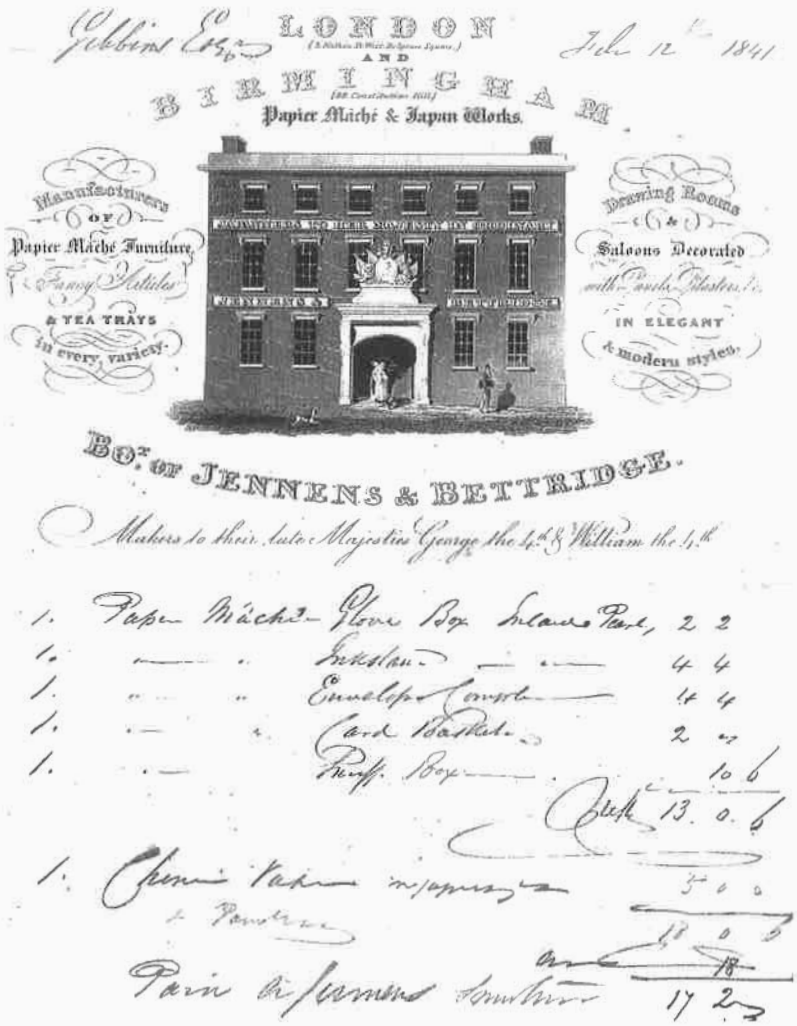
more – which, as trade increased, were often linked by further workshops to create a completely enclosed yard. With windows overlooking the yard on every floor, decorators had the advantage of natural light, and stovers were ensured some respite from their hot stoves. A wagon entrance for deliveries and dispatch connected the yard to the road outside. Jennens & Bettridge's factory in Birmingham, with its impressive early 19th century facade, was developed on this principle, although, like most major factory proprietors, as their business increased and profits grew, neither Mr. Jennens nor Mr. Bettridge continued to reside there.

Most workshops, however, were adapted from existing premises, and none more dramatically so than Ryton & Walton's Old Hall Works in Wolverhampton. An outwardly picturesque, moated Elizabethan manor house, the Old Hall still had a green paddock in 1839, and a "nicely kept garden laid out with flower beds, and fishponds filled with goldfish." But within:

> The grand oak staircase with its dark balustrades, instead of leading to the state ball-room, now led into warehouses where women and girls were employed wrapping up goods, and the bedrooms were used as storerooms ... The large open kitchen fireplace, instead of providing feasts for the great personages who resided at the Hall, was utilised for tinning the goods; vats of molten metal and grease stood under the great fireplace, and the kitchen floor was strewn all over with pans and dish covers in the process of tinning. All the other rooms ... were degraded to trade purposes of one sort or another.[1]

Not all japanners aspired to expansion on so a large scale. Even at the end of the 19th century, there were those who clung to 18th century practices, working alone in tiny premises adjacent to their dwelling or within the home itself, and supplying local markets for very meager returns. Using only the simplest hand-tools, they made everyday utilitarian wares such as tin oil cans, lamps and canisters, which they finished with a crude form of japanning, sometimes no more than a quickly applied thin coat of brown tar varnish.

The deprivation these men and women suffered can be gauged by the experience of Mary Smith, who, ironically, was considered comparatively better placed. In about 1850, Ms. Smith succeeded to her family's tray-making business situated in a workshop behind the "Japanners Arms" tavern in Bilston. This probably meant that she supplied trays – undecorated or japanned – to the bigger Birmingham and Wolverhampton firms, but still she was "very poor," and her life was described as "a pathetic struggle."[2] Her



A 'Jennens & Bettridge' bill-head, dated 1841, and showing the front of their factory at 99 Constitution Hill, Birmingham (Private Collection)

link with licensed victualling was not uncommon among japanners and tin-plate workers, especially in Bilston, where several small firms occupying the shopping at the rear of inns and taverns were run by the licensees themselves. As suppliers to prestigious japanners in Birmingham and Wolverhampton, their profits were comparatively low, and secondary occupations were necessary even among proprietors of the more successful of the small businesses.

Benjamin Mander continued as a baker and maltster for some years after setting up as a japanner in Wolverhampton in 1792. But generally, the incidence of japanners and tin-plate workers holding two jobs was

The 'shopping' behind a row of early 19th century terraced houses in Birmingham, prior to their demolition.

less prevalent in Wolverhampton, where there were larger firms to provide steady employment. And in Birmingham, where the focus was mainly upon japanned papier mâché for the fashionable market, workers were better-paid and less likely to need, or indeed have time for, other employment.

The close proximity of japan workshops to taverns was sometimes counter-productive. Daniel and Tom Caddick, for example, "learned too well the art of copious drinking"[3] at their father's bar in Bilston, and were said to have brought about the collapse of his business. Notwithstanding, there is no evidence that drinking was a greater problem for japanners and workers in the allied tinplate working and papier mâché trades than for those in other industries, though clearly it was a matter of concern to their masters. To some extent, the problem was job-related (see below), but it stemmed also from want of anything else to do outside work. The provision of theatrical entertainments and institutions offering evening classes to keep the workers away from the beer shops may have preoccupied some, but for others, an evening spent drinking with workmates was more tempting. Moreover, the camaraderie that developed among the drinkers bolstered a sense of much-needed solidarity, and served as a sort of unofficial union in the troubled years following the Napoleonic Wars. Yet it could also be a source of tension, as at the Old Hall where, in 1839, workers were said to have divided into two classes, the "sober God-fearing men" and the "free and easy sort."[4] The trickiness of the situation was summed up some years later by Henry Loveridge, who, observing a marked improvement, reflected that "Many of the men who were intemperate have become sober," and

"order reigns where brawls were frequent."[5] He gave no underlying reason, but enduring hardship engendered by the Corn Laws, the privations of the "Hungry Forties," and the temporary closure in 1848 of one of Wolverhampton's largest japan shops, B. Walton & Co., must all have played a sobering part. The setting up of a branch of the Tin-plate Workers Union in Wolverhampton in 1845 cannot have come too soon for these workers.

With few exceptions, women undertook most of the unskilled work in each of the three allied trades: tinplate-working, papier mâché manufacture and japanning. Decorating, which called for manual dexterity and training, was almost exclusively carried out by men, at least until the declining years of the industry. A newspaper report on female labor in Birmingham in 1850 shows this state of affairs was by no means peculiar to this particular industry:

> From the tender age of seven to sixty and upwards, females may be found in the larger or smaller workshops and factories engaged at work which is not always consistent with the notions elsewhere entertained of womanly strength, or even decency and propriety.[6]

The reason why this was so in the japanning industry was explained to a visitor to Jennens & Bettridge's factory in 1851:

> ... women do not learn the business and stick to it as men do. A boy serves an apprenticeship of seven years; and then regards the employment as the main employment of his life. Girls come for months, or years, as it may happen: and it never does happen that they look upon it as the one settled business of their lives. They marry, or they think of marrying. They are sooner or later, more or less unsettled; and it commonly happens that a home and baby call them from the manufactory, as soon as they have become thoroughly trained to their work.[7]

The introduction of machinery exacerbated their position by removing much of the need for manual work and reducing the number of female workers required. However, if the sisters, Emma and Rose, who worked as polishers in a japan factory in Worcester in the 1860s, were typical, then unskilled work had its advantages. As piece-workers, they could easily return home to tend their children between batches of work, and this, they thought, made for a "happy relaxed atmosphere in one's working life."[8] More generally, such choice was not available to women. The Committee of Birmingham School of Art, when asked in 1874 to consider evening

classes for females, surveyed the manufacturers most likely to be interested, and found there was insufficient demand, since:

> At present no such work is assigned to women; the operations in which they are chiefly employed being varnishing, polishing, handing, transferring, and such painting or simple operations in metal work as require manual dexterity only without the aid of any artistic education.[9]

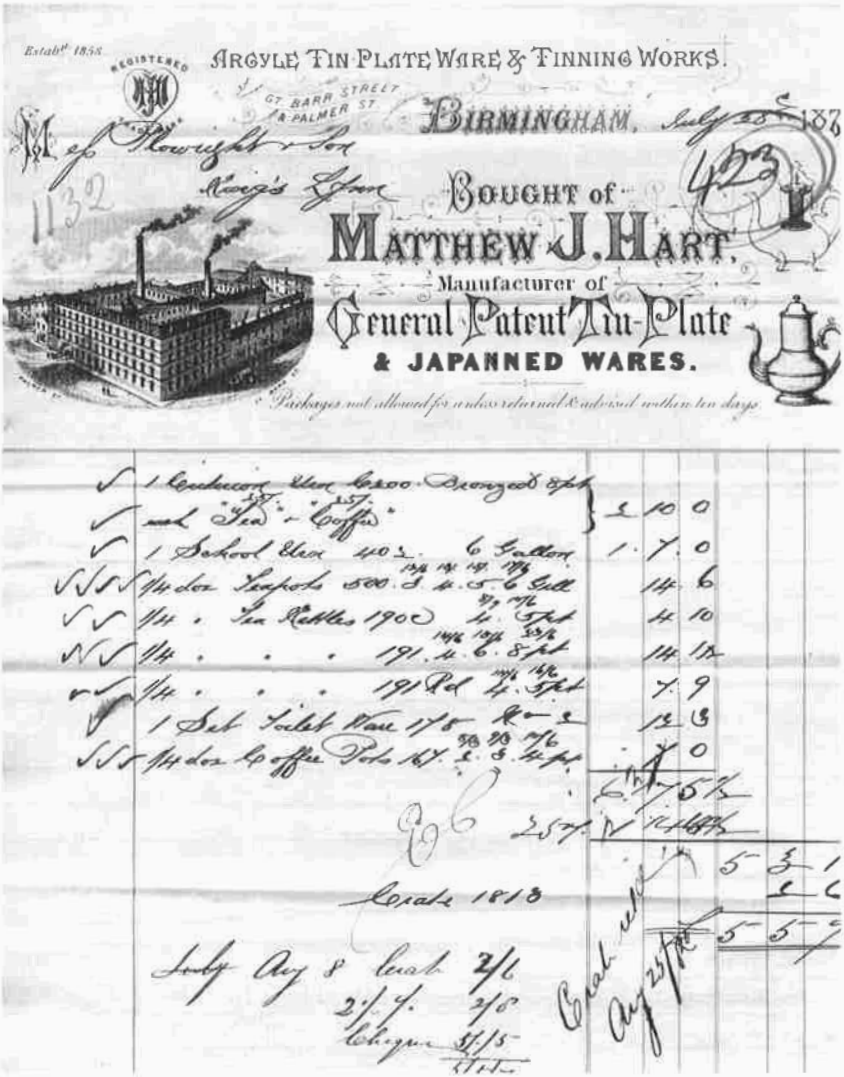
Until the passing of the first Education Act in 1870, children too were engaged as unskilled labor. The pitiful tale of Edward Jones illustrates their unhappy lot: In 1810, at age 10 or 11, he "could be seen a shoeless lad, trudging from 'Barber's Japan Factory' at Bilston, with bundles of cheap Japan Bread Baskets on his head"[10] to the Old Hall in Wolverhampton, a distance of about two miles. His situation improved slightly when he became an apprentice at the Old Hall, but his hours were very long: 7am to 8pm on weekdays, and longer on Saturdays. Moreover, to help his parents feed their large family, Edward took on extra work "painting Tin Toys, rising at 4 o'clock in the morning and working till 'the Old Hall Bell' summoned the people to labour at 7." To sustain him, his "good Mother," he said, "always placed a piece of bread on the table for me overnight, so I should not begin work fasting."[11]

The introduction of a factory inspectorate in 1833 brought with it much-needed regulation. A Government Report of 1864 was thus able to state that:

> In larger tin-plate and japan factories in Wolverhampton, the employers are opposed to all over-time, and it is scarcely ever resorted to. In some of the smaller factories at Bilston, over-time to 9 and even 11 p.m. is occasionally resorted to for one or two nights in the week, but generally speaking the hours of work in this trade are less than in other trades of the district.[12]

As both the century and the industry drew to a close, the working day steadily reduced so that by 1926, a japanner in Bilston, for example, worked a total of 49 hours per week, excluding breaks.

The wage differential between men, women and children was as marked as the contrast in the work available to them. Wages in Birmingham, where the focus was on papier mâché production, were generally higher than in Wolverhampton and Bilston, where the manufacture of less expensive japanned tin-plate goods was more prominent. In 1812, 'first class men' at the Old Hall, for example, received 24 shillings per week (£1.20),



The factory of Matthew J Hart, manufacturer of tin-plate and japanned wares, showing a birds-eye view of the layout typical of large factories. A bill-head, dated 1880 (Author's Collection)

and others 18-20 shillings (90p to £1.00); the weekly rate for apprentices was 4 shillings, rising to seven shillings and sixpence in their seventh and final years.[13] There is no record of how much Benjamin Walton paid unskilled females, but if wages in the Birmingham japanning trade in 1866, may serve as a guide, then it would have been less than half the amount paid to men. In Birmingham, in 1866, the weekly wage for male decorators was 30-50 shillings per week while women received 12-16 shillings as polishers, and 10-12 shillings as blackers; girls, regardless of job, were paid 6 shillings a week.[14]

In selecting where boys should be apprenticed, families remained loyal to specific firms, sending their sons to factories in which they or their siblings worked. Occasionally, lads were sent further afield, but this could prove expensive if the master demanded an apprentice's fee, since, on top of this, there would be costs for board and keep. Writing in 1837, and having assured his readers that apprentices were commonly received without a fee, N. Whittock nevertheless considered it necessary to prepare a price guide to the cost of apprenticeships across the various trades. He thought £40-£60 appropriate for apprentice japanners and varnishers, and £50-£70 for those seeking an apprenticeship at a "Japan and Tea-tray warehouse" – the difference, perhaps, being that the latter was concerned wholly with decorating. Fees for apprentice tinmen were pitched significantly lower at £20-£30, possibly reflecting the lower wages available to them at the end of their seven years.[15]

Although apprentice indentures represented a two-way contract, the scheme was open to considerable abuse by employers who saw the young lads, only two or more years into their apprenticeships, as both cheap labor and a means of not having to pay qualified men at the full rate. In addition, apprentices in all trades were "often subjected to rough and cruel treatment."[16] With this in mind, the following advertisement in *The Birmingham Gazette* in 1759 is more interesting for what it implied than what it said:

> Parents and parish officers who have healthy boys not under the age of 11, to place out apprentice, may hear of proper masters ... as will treat their apprentices with humanity and instruct them thoroughly.[17]

Any boy who neglected his duties might be "dragged before the magistrate, and as a matter of course, sent to prison for a month."[18] A former apprentice japanner himself, William Jones observed that "many well-meaning boys, for a slip of this sort, were degraded as common criminals."[19]

The apprentices worked alongside experienced men, and were thus taught by example. After seven years, they might emerge as experienced workmen, but their futures were far from secure. In times of poor trade, there was not necessarily a job awaiting them, as Jones, a skilled and competent decorator, found when he received his indentures from the Old Hall in 1851. With little or no formal education, it is all the more remarkable that he, and others like him, decided to set up as a japanner in his own right. Mindful of his weakness in arithmetic, he resolved that during the temporary lull which would follow the opening of his workshop in 1853, he would learn the multiplication table, "so I paced up and down doing mental arithmetic for I knew I should not have a moment to spare after I began

work.'[20] How any business could prosper with such limited knowledge seems incredible to us today, and yet as "Jones Brothers," this firm flourished into the 20th century.

Not all such ventures were as successful. Jones' father, Edward, despite his considerable experience as superintendent of the japanning department at the Old Hall, underestimated the amount of capital involved when he attempted to branch out on his own, and within two years he had to return to his former employer.

It is difficult to quantify the cost of setting up a japanning factory. Apart from securing premises and having sufficient funds to pay suppliers and allow credit to customers, it appears that the greatest outlay was for the provision of stoves. William Barrow drew attention to their cost in his offer to set up a japan factory for the pioneering Birmingham manufacturer Matthew Boulton in 1794, suggesting that "about £150 will be sufficient to Build the Stoves etc."[21] and, significantly, this was his only reference to cash requirements. Most japanners appear to have managed with far less. Some years later in 1837, for example, Whittock estimated that a small-scale japanner or varnisher required only £50 to £100 to set himself up in business. By this reckoning, William Jones did very well, having rented "an old Japan Factory" in 1854 for £20 a year, and paying just £20 for the japan stove and some old work-benches.[22]

The earliest ovens or stoves were like large sheet-metal boxes fitted with wire shelves and hooks from which to hang some of the articles. By the 19th century, the stoves used by the larger firms were brick built and about 10 feet square, with large iron doors through which the stovers pushed trucks heavily laden with articles to be dried. Because they were heated by underground fires and stoked from the outside, they were warmest near their outer wall where stoking was easier, and this was where chairs and other large objects were dried. The smaller goods were stacked on tiered shelves of transverse horizontal iron bars, which reminded one 1850 visitor to McCallum & Hodson's factory of "the dens of the lions and tigers at the Zoological Gardens."[23] Gas-fired ovens, introduced in the mid-19th century, greatly improved conditions for those factories that could afford to convert, for they were cleaner, easier to regulate, and created less dust – necessary requirements for quality japanning. In smaller workshops, however, stoves continued to be fueled by coal and to demand constant attention. It was uneconomical to allow the ovens to cool completely, and one man, writing about a Bilston factory as it was in about 1915, recalled that each Sunday morning – supposedly a day of rest – he and his father walked to the factory to stoke the fire in readiness for work on Monday morning.

Charles Thackrah wrote in 1832 that japanning was a relatively healthy occupation. "Japanners," he said, "have varied and moderate exertion, in

Jennens & Bettridge's factory as it is today

rooms not overcrowded, and generally well ventilated."[24] Even so, conditions were far from pleasant. Visitors to such factories frequently complained that the heat from the stoves was overbearing, and records show that they did not exaggerate. Thackrah himself noted temperatures ranging between 100F to 110F *outside* the stoves, and Harriet Martineau, after visiting Jennens & Bettridge's factory in 1851, observed that stoving "must be unwholesome work."[25]

William Jones, recalling his apprenticeship in the 1840s, wrote of "foul-smelling whale-oil" burning in tin oil lamps during winter months, and of the "dense clouds of black smoke" that issued from them.[26] The introduction of gas lighting in most large factories in the mid-19th century went some way toward remedying these problems, but it still created a smoky atmosphere, and hardly provided adequate light for intricate decorative work. In addition, the heat, the ceaseless noise of hammering and stamping, the constant risk of fire posed by the many flammable substances stored on the premises, together with the "disagreeable" smell of the varnishes, the long hours, and the health risks attendant upon specific processes, all endorse George Dickinson's view that being apprenticed to the japan trade was "not a bed of roses."[27]

Nevertheless, conditions in "the dark japanning shops"[28] were no worse, and the hazards a good deal fewer than those in other industries. In general, the industry offered relatively secure employment, and decorators in particular were highly esteemed both within the factory and beyond.

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Robert Crosman, the Taunton Chests and our Family Connection

by

Martha Wilbur

Recently an auction report in *Maine Antiques Digest* described the sale of a Taunton chest which interested me.

The chest (shown on this page and the next) was first pictured in an article written in 1933 by Esther Stevens Fraser* which appeared in the *Magazine Antiques*. Mrs. Fraser's research was so extensively done that few new facts have been added to her findings and conclusions. *Antique Decoration: 27 Articles* by Esther Stevens Brazer was reprinted by H.S.E.A.D., and the "Tantalizing Chests of Taunton" is in this publication.

**Esther Stevens Fraser later married Clarence Brazer.*

Front of the only known Crosman chest with ball feet. H. 22 3/4, W. 22 3/8, D. 12 1/2 inches. Photo courtesy of © Christie's Images Limited (2006).

This chest referred to by Wilbur, and the one that Esther Stevens Fraser researched in 1933, sold at a Christie's auction for over $2.9 million in January 2006.

Photographs courtesy of ©Christie's Images Limited (2006).

In the last few years new chests have come on the market and have been pictured. Some of Mrs. Brazer's discoveries have changed hands and many are now in museums. Taunton chests may be found in the following museums; The Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, Winterthur, Colonial Williamsburg, Nina Fletcher Little's Cogswell Grant, Brooklyn Museum, Detroit Institute, Bayou Bend near Houston, Brooklyn Carrier, and the Old Colony Historical Society in Taunton, Massachusetts. During a trip to England in the 1970's, my husband and I, much to our surprise, discovered that the American Museum at Cloverton Manor, Bath, England was showing a Taunton chest. We inquired about it, and our guide told us it was on loan from the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Just one chest is signed "TaunTon/ R.C.", dated 1729. The R. C. stands for Robert Crosman. Family records show he was born in 1709, married three times and had a large family. In later years the second S was added to the last name. Crosman painted simple initials on the front of some of the chests, and it is presumed they were made as marriage chests for some of his daughters and nieces.

*Editor's note: *There is a very interesting and informative article by Gerard Ward about this chest online:* **http://www.antiquesandfineart.com/articles/article.cfm?request=776**

Taunton dowry chest made for Abigail Woodward in 1729. The pine blanket chest with hand painted decoration is attributed to Robert Crosman. Courtesy of the Old Colony Historical Society, Taunton, Massachusetts. Photo by Shirley S. Baer

The size of the chests varies from miniature to full size made with the top to lift for storage of blankets, quilts, and linen. Some of the full size chests have a pair of small drawers over three long drawers. Some are outlined to look like real drawers and others have a long drawer at the bottom. The ends of the chest have a cut out to make the legs, called boot-jack ends. The one recently sold has the only example of ball feet that has appeared so far.

The chests are painted a blackish brown. The early chests were decorated with fancy trees on white mounds with touches of color. Later on Crosman added vine-like white scrolls, some continuing over the drawer divisions. Later birds were added. The recently sold chest is the only one with a bird in flight on the ends. There is an indication that Crosman used a compass to make the large circular branches.

Robert Crosman was also a drum maker. There are only two or three known, and one is in the Old Colony Historical Museum in Taunton. In the large beautiful book titled *Expressions of Innocence and Eloquence: Selections from the Jane Katcher Collection* published in 2006 by Marquand Books, (page 173, shown below) is a full page picture of a Taunton chest labeled 1731. There is also a detail of a part of the decoration showing the dots of red color in the scrolls and also showing how the vine continues over the drawer divides.

Chest attributed to Robert Crosman. Photo from the book Expressions of Innocence and Eloquence, Selections from the Jane Katcher Collection of Americana *(reviewed in The Decorator, Fall 2007).*

Robert Crosman died in 1799 at the advanced age of 90.

The Robert Crosman chests have been of interest to our family as my husband Robert's mother was Kate Crossman, a direct descendant and a Taunton native. Robert Crosman's genes were passed on to our son Frederick Crossman. He is a wood carver by profession. However, and unfortunately, there are no chests in our family.

Left: This small chest is featured in Brazer's 27 Articles *and is currently on loan to the Old Colony Historical Society from descendants of Robert Crosman.*

Photo by Shirley S. Baer

Robert Crosman was also known as a drum maker in the Taunton region. This drum with the maker's label inside dated 1739 is one of only 3 by Crosman that are known to have survived. The light blue drum is decorated with a flag of seven white and red stripes inside a wreath of green brush stoke leaves and red buds.

Courtesy of the Old Colony Historical Society, Taunton, Massachusetts.

Photo by Shirley S. Baer.

Editor's note:

My thanks to the Old Colony Historical Society in Taunton for giving us permission to photograph their three Crosman pieces ... and a special thank you to the Society's director, Jane Hennedy, and their curator, Kristen Costa.

Letter from Birmingham

by Yvonne Jones

English or Welsh?

This small tea canister, recently purchased in Birmingham, is more interesting than it first appears. Its shape, together with its simply folded seams and crystallised finish, suggest an earlier date than its transfer printed design allows, while its style of decoration is similar to trays made in Birmingham, in the 1880s, by firms like Griffiths & Browett. However, the lower edge of the canister is printed for the Tinplate Decorating Co., Neath, and for J Bartlett & Son, Bristol.

The Tinplate Decorating Company, established in Neath, in South Wales, in1910, made a variety of small boxes from utilitarian boot-polish tins to more decorative articles like the one shown here. J Bartlett & Son, Ltd, of Bristol were designers and manufacturers of shop fronts, fittings and fixtures, who in 1906, described themselves also as japanners. This begs an interesting question. Did most early 20th century japanners obtain their crystallised blanks from this large factory in Neath? It is unlikely that we shall ever know the answer, but the canister serves as a reminder that the distinction between the tin-plate goods of England and Wales is far from clear.

The Bookshelf

Furniture Restoration, Step-by-step Tips and Techniques for Professional Results

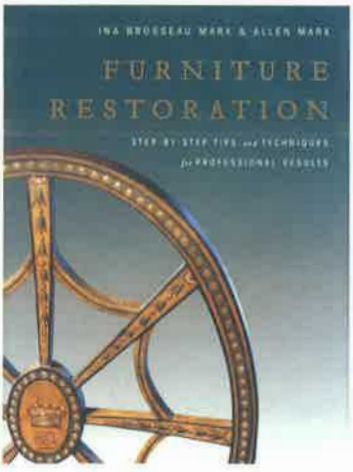
by

Ina Brosseau Marx & Allen Marx

Heavily illustrated in color, published by Watson-Guptill, NY,
Hard Cover, 272 pages. Copyright 2007

Reviewed by Sandra Cohen

Furniture Restoration, Step-by-step Tips and Techniques for Professional Results by Ina Brosseau Marx and Allen Marx has just joined the ranks of books that one must own if you are interested in honing your skills in the process that will yield the best results. The hallmark of successful how-to books is the ability of the author(s) to explicitly explain the techniques and logically lead you through each project. Their instructions take you confidently from the first step to the last and do not raise "what if" or "why" queries that stymie you along the way. Ina and her husband Allen are professional restorers and teachers, and their approach is informative and helpful to the professional and the student. Hundreds of colorful and annotated pictures record their projects, demonstrate a time honored approach and compliment a thorough text.



Furniture Restoration takes its time. Their first chapter, "Before You Restore" is an important and thoughtful preface, and it exemplifies what is so unique about the authors' approach. They assume nothing, take you on an odyssey of thoughtful in-

Above: Some of the steps shown in the restoration of a damaged design of an early 19th century English Regency armchair.

quiry and analysis about the piece of furniture and its problems, offer solutions and proceed with remedies and recipes.

Some basic maxims, a project may take longer than expected, and expect the unexpected, will sound familiar. The authors talk about materials, tools and techniques in great detail, and one doesn't need to consult other books to fill any gaps in their projects. Each chapter, "Wood and Its Problems;" "Repairing Structure;" "Restoring Surfaces;" "Making Molds and Casts;" "Restoring Color;" "Graining for Restoration;" "Restoring Veneers and Finishes;" "Restoring Gilding;" and "Reconstructing Surface Design," covers a comprehensive menu of restoration issues.

The authors speak as professionals in a vernacular specific to their craft. Tools and techniques have names and learning the accurate vocabulary of the professional allows us to have a clear understanding and ability to communicate and share what we have learned. This book highlights the authors' experience on several different restoration projects and the range of issues they encounter at each step. Their guiding principle is "whatever two hands have put together, your two hands can try to fix."

Chapters contain hours of seminar and workshop material. "Repairing Structure" includes illustrating and explaining the sixteen (16) steps to create a "tourniquet" for applying pressure to secure a glue bond. "Restoring Surfaces" includes the challenge of repairing 'tent cleavage' which occurs

when wood dries, shrinks and causes the paint to lift. This problem is addressed on some Asian lacquer surfaces. "Making Molds and Casts" features frames, the feet on footed objects and replacing decorative elements on furniture. "Restoring Color" offers color charts and begins with understanding the basis of color and is a virtual course in the nature of color. The following chapter "Graining for Restoration" continues the lesson on color with a discussion of grains, grain direction, base coats, hues and recipes as well as creating faux graining and architectural features; "Restoring Veneers and Finishes" continues the focus on surfaces and includes eight (8) steps for staining, seven (7) steps for an oil-resin finish, and shellac, oil, wax and various varnishes. "Restoring Gilding" is one of the more visually beautiful and instructive lessons, and will be especially useful to early American decorative painters using this medium. The authors' proceed like detectives, uncovering, discovering, analyzing and diagnosing, and the quality of their professional prescriptions are tried and true.

Every chapter applies a thorough formula of numerous explicit illustrations and annotations. The authors said that their mantra "Photograph! Photograph! Photograph (your work to document it!)" made this book possible, and of course, they recommend this approach when undertaking your own project. Tools of the trade are laid out, preparation and steps are specific, situations are anticipated and addressed. This offers restorers a strategy for approaching their restoration project with a confidence that can only be acquired through knowledge and first hand experience.

Furniture Restoration by Ina and Allen Marx is a valuable resource for honing our skills in furniture restoration and reproduction. Their perspectives and strategies reveal their appreciation for quality and craftsmanship at every stage of restoration. Numerous books have been written on the subject of repairing and restoring furniture. Two other books worth considering and probably already on your shelves are *Restoration Recipes* by de Bierre and Smith and *The Complete Guide to Repairing and Restoring Furniture* by Cook. Ina and Allen Marx have provided another valuable treatise for serious craftsmen in the field of restoration.

Future Meetings

Spring 2008	Sturbridge, MA	May 9-11 (FSS)
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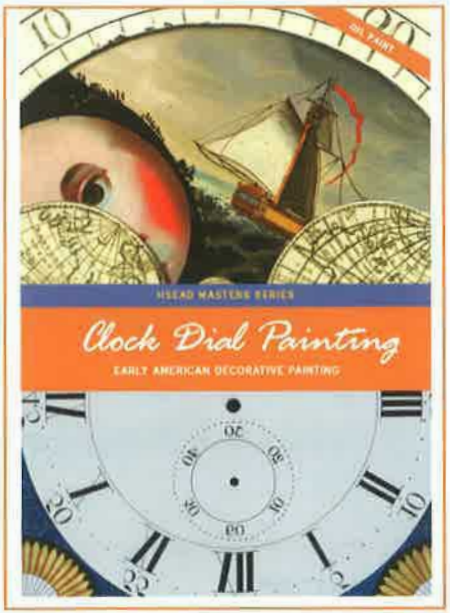

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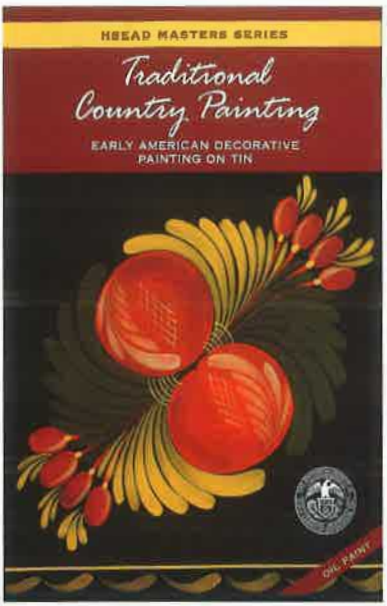

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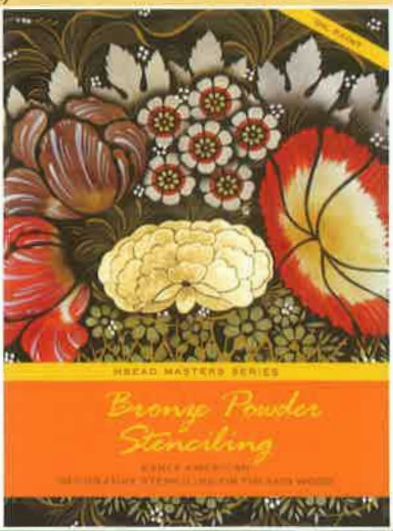

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