

# The Decorator

Spring 2009 Vol. 63 No. 1



*Journal of*

**The Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc.**



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*Front cover: Smoke grained tin book box 2 1/4" x 4". Owned by Lynne Richards.*

*Back cover: Back of smoke grained tin book box.*

## 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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## Letter from the Editor

It is with great trepidation that I take on the job of Editor of *The Decorator*. I have always enjoyed reading *The Decorator* and when I first joined HSEAD, one of the first things on my agenda was to buy a full set of *The Decorator* journals.

Imagine my enjoyment when I began to read the articles to learn about all the history of HSEAD. What a treasure trove of writings about all of our disciplines! I was not the only one who felt that this publication was a real find. I remember when our Hudson Valley Chapter had the national meeting in Saratoga, in lieu of payment, our guest speaker requested a full set of *The Decorator* journals! Recently, a historical village requested any extra volumes that we might have because it felt that the articles were so informative.

As I enter into this new endeavor, I am following in the footsteps of some very talented people before me. Shirley Baer has done an excellent job for the past 13 years and Peg Rodgers before her. These will be big shoes to fill. I will have to rely on you, the members, to help me out and find interesting and new articles. It would seem that everything must have already been written about all our disciplines, but at the recent meeting in Killington, VT., I approached several members and found many who were willing to share their expertise with the rest of you, and write an article for *The Decorator*.

With this in mind, I take on this job and hope that I will continue to get your support. If you ever see or hear about any of our disciplines that you feel our members would like to know more about, please let me know and together we will pursue, substantiate and write about it in *The Decorator*. Thank you in advance for your support.

Lynne Richards

# Justus DaLee

October 1, 1793 - January 5, 1878

by

Lucinda Perrin

For over 150 years, little was known of the artist Justus DaLee, his brother Richard, and son Amon, other than their signatures on miniature portraits found throughout New York State and some neighboring states. Along came husband and wife researchers, Michael R. and Suzanne Rudnick Payne who turned their attention to trying to discover more. Through their extensive research, we now have much more of the background of the DaLee family.

Justus was the first of 13 children born into the family of James Waterman DaLee (1765-1840) and Antis DaLee (1775-1849). They



*Double Portrait: A father, and a mother holding an infant. Watercolor, pen and ink on paper. Painted in New England ca 1840; inscribed in pencil verso Cathrina A. Hichock; in the original gilt frame. 3" x 5". Courtesy of Sotheby's catalogue January 22, 2005 from the Folk Art Collection of Jon & Rebecca Zoler.*

*Young girl in red dress Justus DaLee ca: 1835-1840, 4 3/4" x 3". Owned by American Folk Art Museum. It was my discovery of this painting that started my interest in the artist.*

were Free Will Baptists whose families had left Providence, RI in 1783 to establish churches on the NY - VT border. They first settled in Pittstown, 20 miles northeast of Albany, NY. Over the years their family would move several times within this area, finally settling in Cambridge, NY in 1805.<sup>1</sup> Justus remained there, except for the traveling he did for portrait commissions, until he was 47. His brother Richard, whom we now know as an artist too, was born on October 18, 1809.

Justus, at age 20, enlisted in the Cambridge militia during the War of 1812. He served for 20 days as a musician, and was discharged on September 20, 1814.

In 1815, Justus was teaching at a Cambridge school when New York State was attempting to provide education to all children between the ages of five and fifteen. During the time that he was teaching, Justus wrote and had published several pamphlets. These were stern lectures to students to get a good education. He was apparently terminated for being overly strict, even though he was shown to be a highly educated schoolteacher. He lost his position as a schoolteacher when the state was in turmoil in the year 1810. He was rehired and spent most of the time in Cambridge, known as a well thought of educator. Later, he was appointed to the Office of Inspector in the Cambridge school district, in charge of determining teachers' qualifications.

On October 13, 1816, Justus married Mary M. Fowler (October 26, 1798 - September 1, 1852) in White Creek, NY. Mary was born in Cambridge<sup>2</sup> to a family that also migrated from Rhode Island with the Baptists. Their first child, Mary Ann, was born in 1817. All but



1. History of Washington County, NY (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1878)

2. Federal and New York State Census, 1820-1870



one of their 10 children were born in Cambridge. The first surviving son, Amon, (August 8, 1820-1879) was very close to his father, and since he also painted portraits in the same manner as his father, must have been taught by him.

In 1824, Justus' parents, and several brothers and sisters (including his brother Richard), moved to Portland, NY, near Lake Erie, Chautauqua County. Justus and his family remained in Cambridge on an 18 3/4 acre farm with one cow and two horses until 1840 when they moved to Rochester, NY.<sup>3</sup>

Justus showed artistic ability in his teaching years, when in 1826, he published a sketchbook, *Emblematical Figure, Representations & To Please the Eye*<sup>4</sup>. It contains watercolor and ink drawings and in it he refers to himself as a "professor of penmanship."

In 1827, the family traveled to Franklin, OH, where their sixth child, Harriet Lucinda (Hattie), was born on April 18, 1829. Apparently they traveled east again, and after a stay in Troy, NY, the family returned to Cambridge where a seventh child, William S. (Will), was born in 1830. At this time, Justus also became a guardian of two of his cousins, Caleb and Isaac Twiss, adding two more to the family of nine surviving children.

It was in the mid 1830's that Justus began his painting career. He had family records printed, then heavily embellished them with many



*Theodore and Eliza Hart, Canandaigua NY. Justus DaLee ca 1842 3" x 2 1/2".*

3. Ibid.

4. Collection of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore



*Frederick H. Waste DaLee family  
ca 1840 2" x1 5/8" Private Collection.  
These charming locket paintings are identified as by a DaLee hand. None have been found that were signed. It is not known yet who the "locket" painter was.*

decorative elements, such as figures and flowers. He was no longer farming or teaching, as he now was away searching for painting commissions. A family letter of the time states that painting has become "the family business."<sup>5</sup> Amon, who would have only been a lad of about 15, was apparently painting dresses on miniature portraits for his father. Richard was also



traveling with his brother, doing miniature portraits. At one point, Justus claims to have as many as 200 family records printed to paint on the details and embellish with flowers by hand. There are many signed records in New York State museums.

A framed single portrait was priced at \$3, a husband and wife together would be \$5. If he did an entire family, it was \$2.50 per person. In one home, he discovered that the wife was much more pleased with his miniature than with a full sized painting they had paid an artist \$30 for, as the likeness was considered to be much more accurate. He was very determined to do a fine job, so sometimes he held the person for one to two hours, taking the portrait home with him to accomplish the fine detail shown on his work. This probably accounts for the sitters' names often found in pencil, lightly written on the reverse, as well as his signature.

Between 1840 and 1842, Justus was still a resident of Cambridge, NY, but began to travel extensively, as did other members of the family. Portraits have been found in Pittsford, NY, where Richard was living, and also in Berea, OH, Cabotsville (Chicopee) MA, Trenton, NJ, and New York City. In 1843, a portrait was painted in Philadelphia and one is known to have been done in Rochester, NY, that same year.

5. Collection of the DaLee family letters given to the American Folk Art Museum by Skinner's

In 1845, Justus wrote to Richard that he was “one of the most celebrated Side portrait Painters in Western N. Yk.”<sup>6</sup> He had recently been to Geneva, 43 miles by train, and his son, Amon, was with him. They had been there 14 weeks and made \$110 cash, a new dress coat worth \$15, trade at a store \$15, and candy \$6. Even back then, this was not very profitable and he states, he can’t work at it as he used to, and that age is catching up with him fast.

Amon was married in Walworth, NY, near Rochester, in 1845, to Clarinda Findley. Later that year, he was in Ithaca with his father doing \$80 worth of portraits. Justus had paid up all his debts and had \$20 to the good. Amon had decided to give up doing “ports” as “he finds it doesn’t agree with him at all.... this portrait business is calculated to kill us all.”

At this point, opening a grocery business was discussed in family letters.<sup>7</sup> However, in 1846, Justus writes that he has twice been to Attica, NY, to do portraits. The two brothers, with Amon, had also discussed beginning a medicine business, which never seemed to have materialized. All three were in the vicinity of Rochester, NY, but the end of Justus’ painting career seems to have come while living in Buffalo, NY. He is listed in 1848 as a portrait painter, in an ad in a Buffalo newspaper,<sup>8</sup> as is Richard. Justus and Amon are also given a business listing in the



*Child in pink dress holding a rose. Justus DaLee ca 1843. In 2006, this portrait sold at Sotheby's auction for \$27,000. 5" x 3 1/2".*

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Commercial Advertiser Directory for the City of Buffalo (Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas and Co., 1847, 1848 and Buffalo City Directory (Buffalo: Thomas S. Cutting, 1848)

same paper as grocers. No member of the DaLee family is listed in the Buffalo City Directory as a portrait painter after 1848.

In 1850, Justus is found in Portland, NY, where his parents and several of his family members had settled more than 25 years before. It seems his life was not a great success at this juncture. His move to Buffalo in 1852 proved to be disastrous, as a cholera epidemic swept through the area killing his wife, Mary, his son Almanzon J. and his grandson William, in four days.

In 1856, at the age of 63, Justus is listed as being both blind and peniless<sup>9</sup>. He was able to apply for a federal land grant of 160 acres under the Bounty Land Act of 1855. This act had opened up land in the Midwest for homesteading if one could prove they were poor. He was also eligible for this because of his 20 days of military service in the War of 1812, the requirement being 15 days of service as a minimum. This land in Lawrence, KS, was later homesteaded by Amon.

By 1870, Justus is found in a census in Fond du Lac County, WI, as living with his daughter, Harriet. He is listed simply as blind. In 1871, he wrote a letter describing himself as blind and so deaf he couldn't hear conversation around him. He said that he only had two teeth left and one of them was loose. On January 5, 1878, at age 84, he died and was buried in Eden, WI.

Richard had moved to Harvard, IL, where he farmed, taught school and owned a store. He served as a postmaster there during the Civil War and died in 1868.

Amon farmed in Michigan in 1848 with Richard. He then moved to California where he mined, and then learned the daguerreotype business. After four years, he returned to Lawrence, KS, to farm his father's land and successfully run his daguerreotype business, until his death in 1879.

It seems ironic that the last of the family portrait painters should become a daguerreotypist. For years they had included spandrels around their miniature portraits to get the effect of a daguerreotype.

DaLee portraits have a distinction, making it somewhat easier to identify, not necessarily the exact hand that did them, as all three men's work look similar, but by examining the position of the sitter. All adults were painted in facial profile, the majority in body profile. Occasionally, you may find the head in profile but the body in full frontal view. It is thought that this was an earlier technique used and doesn't seem to show up in later portraits. Adults and children are usually 3" by 2 1/2", very often with black spandrels surrounding the work. It is thought that this is a concession to the popularity of daguerreotypes as they became increasingly popular around

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9. Federal and New York State Census, 1820 - 1870

1841. Young children were often posed standing in profile or facial profile with a full frontal body and in a larger size of up to 5" by 3 3/4". Many children were seated in decorated furniture with toys in hand.

There is only one Family Record known at this time, that was not done on a printed form with watercolor painted embellishments. Apparently, Justus painted his record about 1833 or 1834 without using one of his many printed forms. It can be dated by the children included. Ruth Anstis was portrayed. Her death in 1834 and the birth of son Albert Waterman in 1835 are not included on the record. An interesting thing about this record, is the fact that Justus' face was removed and replaced at some time. Could the artist not have been pleased with his depiction of his own face when he did such a splendid job on so many others?

### Author's Note

I originally became interested in Justus DaLee when in 2006, I received a note with a delightful little girl in a red dress on the stationary. It was described as a watercolor portrait by Justus DaLee. This started me on a quest to find out much more about the artist who worked in watercolor and detailed his work in pencil.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered that though he was from Rhode Island originally, he and other members of his family worked extensively in my 'neck of the woods', the western part of New York State. When doing further research, I found my Ontario County Historical Society in Canandaigua had a family of three painted by him. Many of the towns and villages in our Finger Lakes area were visited by Justus, his brother Richard, and his son, Amon, all exceptional artists. A further connection showed up when I discovered his daughter Harriett (Hattie) was given the middle name of Lucinda. It has been delightful finding these tiny portraits and learning more about this talented untrained artist and now



*Mary Peck Seavey Victor, NY Justus DaLee ca 1845 3" x 2 1/2".*

*One of a family of three Seaveys owned by the Ontario County Historical Society, Canandaigua, NY, that I was allowed to photograph and paint.*



find out how many thousands they are considered to be worth in the antique market.

## Acknowledgement:

The body of this biography was obtained from the research done by Susan and Michael Payne for their article in Folk Art, with some travel to historical societies, museums etc. done by me. Unless otherwise noted, all of these portraits were painted by me after carefully examining and photographing them.

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Northeast Auction's Newsletter Nov. 2007 Article: *Modest Folk: Watercolor Portraits on Paper*, in which it is revealed that two of DaLee's children's portraits were sold in 2006 for \$13,920 and \$27,000.

Family Records by DaLee are known to be in The Rensselaer County Historical Society, Troy NY, the New York State Museum, Albany, NY and the Munson-Williams Proctor Institute, Utica, NY.

# Folk Art on the Walls: Contemporary Tales of New England's Timeless Decoration

by

Suzanne Korn

I have a fondness for old things. My favorite purchase in the last year is a vintage 1800's cupboard door that now leans against the mantelpiece in my living room. I adore it for its simplicity, its great yellow ochre color, and the feelings it evokes in me about life in New England during days of old. Likewise, the endearing folk art designs that at one time filled the country homes in 19<sup>th</sup> century New England bring the same kind of joy to me. I love these designs and patterns for their sweet simplicity, their wonderful color, and the spirit of New England heritage and tradition that surrounds them.

Years ago, I remember reading the accounts by Janet Waring and other early American stenciling researchers that described their journeys to document these folk art designs and patterns. In the 1920's they began entering abandoned 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century homes throughout New England, in various stages of misuse, and ruin, in order to view the legacy left on the walls by the itinerant stencilers. Many of the homes had no roofs, and others had been reduced to cellar holes, leaving only single walls still standing proud. I read accounts of these research pioneers crawling across broken floor boards or walking knee deep through debris and broken plaster in order to reach rooms that were still awash in the brilliant colors of the stenciled folk art designs.

A few years back, I had the opportunity to study one of the most comprehensive bodies of work done to date on early stenciled walls in New England. This research, completed almost 30 years ago, and housed at the New Hampshire Historical Society's Tuck Library in Concord, provides a survey of 460 homes, inns, and taverns throughout New England. The researchers, Margaret and Edward Fabian of Lebanon, New Hampshire, documented and photographed hundreds of original early stenciled walls. From their study, I was able to produce *A Sketchbook of Historic New England Walls*. In the sketchbook, I detail approximately 40 wall designs, including the exact layout and placement of the folk art patterns and motifs. Using the templates in my sketchbook, I am able to re-create these historic compositions.



## In Search of Moses Eaton Jr.

The artistic legacy of Moses Eaton and his father, reaches far and wide across New England. You may be acquainted with their wonderful folk art style of wall stenciling. The weeping willow (colonial symbol of long life) and the pineapple (colonial symbol of hospitality) are a couple of their well known motifs. However, these familiar motifs are but two of the many designs that we know to have been painted by the Eatons. The beauty of nature was surely their inspiration. Walls attributed to Moses Eaton Jr. are stenciled with colorful sprays of flowers, pine boughs, flowing vines, oak leaf clusters, flower baskets and more. He added hearts to certain designs to honor the love of a new bride and groom. His designs and motifs were big, bold, and bright. They were lively and daring. At the same time, they were lighthearted, imbuing a certain sweetness and charm. His red and green motifs made a unique statement on walls of buff or those washed with raspberry, yellow or soft gray. This simple farmer with a flair for design and color left a lasting impression not only on the lives of the families whose homes he stenciled, but also on the history of decorative arts in New England.

Having read about the abundance of early American stenciling found along the coast of Maine...from Portland to Blue Hill and points in between, I decided to seek out some of these walls. Many of the walls are attributed to Moses Eaton, Jr. as many of the designs and motifs can be matched to the patterns found in Moses Eaton's stencil kit. However, how odd is it that not one piece of documentation has ever been found that would, without a doubt, confirm the true identity of this down east artisan who was so skilled with stencil and brush.

In 1980, the Fabians visited an establishment known as the Old Falmouth Tavern, in Falmouth, Maine. Here again, they documented extant stenciling in the tradition of Moses Eaton, Jr. I dropped a note to the Falmouth Library, seeking information on this tavern. A kind librarian replied to me, indicating that she thought the tavern I was referring to was now called the Quaker Tavern Inn. Imagine my delight, when I went to the Quaker Tavern Inn website, and was immediately greeted with a picture of one of the inn rooms, whose gray plastered walls were covered with wonderful red and green pineapples! I contacted the innkeeper, and in no time, had myself a date with history!

On a cold and blustery October day in the year 2003, my husband and I headed for Maine in search of Moses Eaton! Our first stop was the Blue Skye Farm, located in Waldoboro, Maine. Waldoboro was delightful...a quintessential New England coastal town. Its quaint

streets were lined with 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century homes, and stately trees that glowed with the bounty of autumn. Wending our way towards the outskirts of town on a hilly country road, we promptly arrived at our destination. The Blue Skye Farm was a big white federal, perched atop a windy hill and surrounded by rolling fields and woods. What an idyllic setting for my first glimpse of a Moses Eaton wall!

Innkeeper, Jan Davis, kindly welcomed my husband and me inside the home, whereupon we found ourselves in the same hallway once photographed and documented by the Fabians in the late 1970's. The walls complete with Moses Eaton Jr.'s Maine-style pineapples and oak leaf clusters greeted us just as they had greeted so many other visitors over the last 180 years.



*Author Suzanne Korn at Blue Skye Farm*

The frieze design of “three big oak leaves” was one of Eaton’s favorites. The oak leaves were stenciled with bright red and green, and the design circled the entrance-way and continued up the stairs to the second floor landing. The walls were divided into panels by red “turned

bud” verticals. The baseboard design was the same as a design found at the Richardson House (now the Parsonage) at Old Sturbridge Village. It was comprised of scalloped edged leaves and berries. Within the panels created by the turned bud verticals, were “Maine” pine-



*Quaker Tavern Inn*

apples (smooth leaves at the crown instead of pointed, serrated foliage), oak leaf clusters, and interesting red medallions comprised of four “fan” flowers. Many of the motifs were quite a bit brighter than some of the others. The innkeeper stated that around 1900, some of the patterns had been ‘touched up’.

From Blue Skye Farm, our next stop was the Quaker Tavern Inn located in Falmouth, Maine. The inn was a pleasantly weathered colonial, forever framed in my mind by giant maple trees with brilliant yellow autumn foliage. The owner of the Quaker Tavern, Donna Little, greeted us warmly with a hammer in hand! Always a project to be attending to when you live in a 200 year old home!

The Quaker Tavern Inn (formerly the Old Falmouth Tavern) was built in 1780 by a family of Quakers and it is registered as a National Historic Landmark. Donna has been the faithful keeper and protector of this wonderful home and the cherished stenciling, for over 30 years. Here she raised a family, and now runs the home as a bed and breakfast. Donna Little welcomed the Fabians into her home over 26 years ago, when they too arrived to see the stenciled walls. She explained that several rooms in this home had originally been stenciled, but that only the stenciling in one small bedchamber remains intact and original. We eventually made our way upstairs to the room I had been very eager to see. Upon entering the small bedchamber, we were greeted by the simple beauty of the stenciling on plain plastered walls.

The stenciling on three of the walls was very traditional Moses Eaton. Like the Blue Skye Farm, here we found some of Moses Eaton Jr.’s favorite patterns arranged on the walls with red and green symmetry. The designs and motifs in the little inn room at the Quaker Tavern included the “three big oak leaves” frieze, a chair rail stencil of small green marching





*Stenciled Birds and Prancing Horses*

leaves, diamond and petal verticals, Maine pineapples and oak leaf clusters. However, the stenciling found on the overmantle was quite unusual. Although the “three big oak leaves” frieze was carried completely around the room, and the stencil of small leaves marched along the top of the mantle, the design found over the mantelpiece included hand-drawn trees

with sponge-work foliage, small stenciled birds, and prancing horses. These horses are similar to those found in the Hall Tavern Ballroom, Historic Deerfield, and at the Mather house in Marlboro, VT. So, who is responsible for this unique overmantle with prancing horses and free-hand trees, so unlike the traditional stenciling done by Moses Eaton, Jr?

As we wrapped up our visit at the Quaker Tavern Inn, and drove away towards home, I thought about how the passage of time had been kind to the stenciling in the little bedchamber; the red and green patterns still so alive and bright. I thought about the little room and its peaceful spirit. Today, it is fitting that this room, with its symbolic pineapples, is still welcoming the tired and the weary who seek no more than a restful night of sleep.

## A Tale of Two Tulips

Around 1820, Lydia Eldredge Williams, of Ashfield Massachusetts, stenciled several rooms in her home with a beautiful tulip design. The tulips she stenciled were not unlike a tulip design found on the floor of a small room at Howe's Tavern (now known as Longfellow's Wayside Inn) in Sudbury, Massachusetts. In her book *Early American Stencils on Walls and Furniture* published in 1937, Janet Waring mused, “...what was the connection between the stenciled tulip she used and an identical pattern still dimly seen on the floor of a small bedroom adjoining the Lafayette room at the Wayside Inn, Sudbury? Over the stenciled pattern in the tavern I placed a tracing taken directly from the walls done by Lydia Williams, and in scale and design they were practically alike. Did she, on some momentous visit to Sudbury, copy it (the distance was a drive of eighty miles), did she merely spend

*a night at the inn on her way to Boston with Abel, or was the drawing brought to her by some 'traveled friend,' who knew her fondness for ornament? Perhaps the pattern came to Ashfield by the medium of an itinerant peddler; if this were the case, the floor at Sudbury and the walls at Ashfield could easily be contemporary."*

Interested to see this historic tulip stenciling, I contacted the Wayside Inn. Mr. Leblanc, the head of History and Preservation at the inn, informed me that the tulip stenciling found today at the inn is not original. A fire at the inn in 1955 had all but destroyed the little bedchamber where the tulip stenciling graced the floor. Luckily, a portion of the stenciled flooring survived the fire. From that piece of flooring, the tulip design was copied and reproduced in the same little room. Mr. Leblanc kindly offered to show me the piece of original flooring with the tulip design, and I quickly took him up on his offer.

On February 9, 2005, I was greeted at the front desk of the Wayside Inn by Mr. Leblanc. This was my first trip to the inn. It was just beautiful. From 1716-1861, it was operated as a tavern by several generations of the Howe family. It was renamed the Wayside Inn in 1897. Several of the fictitious characters in the well known "Tales of a Wayside Inn" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow were based on Longfellow's real-life interactions with the folks that frequented the tavern.

We made our way to a lovely old room with an ancient fireplace, long wooden tables, and black Windsor chairs. Winter sunlight, reflecting off the snow outside, streamed through the old windows. I sat down, and Mr. Leblanc went to retrieve the historic piece of pine board flooring, that dated back to the 1790's. Soon he returned with the treasure. The ancient board with the tulip stenciling was an amazing sight, and I was astonished at the timeless beauty of the stenciling. The delicate and highly-artistic tulips were a pretty shade of gray, and the design was still well-defined against the aged board. I can only imagine how pleasant the little inn room must have originally looked with this design, so graceful and decorative, circling the perimeter.

Next, we made our way to the fabled room where the tulip stenciling, albeit reproduction, is found. First, we stepped into a beautiful sitting room directly adjacent to the small bedchamber with the tulip stenciling. In the past, this sitting room had been called the Lafayette room, although there is no proof that General Lafayette ever stayed in this room. According to Mr. Leblanc, General Lafayette did travel the old Post Road, passing the Howe Tavern on his tour of the United States, but his personal papers do not mention a stop. The story is that years ago a hostess at the inn, who used to give folks the "10-cent tour," would say that Lafayette and his valet stayed in the room at the top of the stairs, because it displayed a framed portrait of the General!

I was surprised to see that the restored tulip stenciling around the perimeter of the small bedchamber was very difficult to see against a very dark floor. Its condition was disappointing, especially after seeing the well preserved tulips on the 200 year old salvaged board. Mr. Leblanc told me that it is hard to say how the stenciling originally looked after the restoration in the 1950's, but certainly a "bad" polyurethane job done on the floor a few years ago had not helped the appearance of it.

As we chatted in the "Lafayette" room, I told Mr. Leblanc about Lydia Eldredge Williams and how around 1820 she had stenciled several rooms in her Ashfield, Massachusetts home with a tulip pattern, known to be identical to the pattern found at the inn. I told him that it has always been a mystery how it came to be that the tulips she stenciled on her walls...out on the western frontiers of Massachusetts...were so similar to the tulips stenciled at his inn, 80 miles away. Alas, we will probably never know the exact relationship between the tulips stenciled in Sudbury at Longfellow's Wayside Inn, and the tulips stenciled by Lydia Eldredge Williams in her Ashfield home. However, I had one more stop to make before putting "The End" on the "Tale of Two Tulips".

On a cold, gray, and windy day in February of 2005, my husband, and I, along with our canine companion Lucy, sped along snowy roads in western Massachusetts. Our destination was Ashfield, the 19<sup>th</sup> century home of Lydia Eldredge Williams. Ashfield greeted us like a postcard. It was a classic New England village. Traditional white-washed homes lined snowy Main Street. Small churches, with steeples white, dotted the landscape, and completed the picture of this rural New England town that is nestled in the shadow of the Berkshires.

My journey to Ashfield actually started a month earlier. I had contacted the Ashfield Historical Society to inquire on the status of the Ephraim Williams house. In my note, I provided a brief synopsis of the history around the Ephraim Williams house and the stenciling done by Lydia, as detailed by Janet Waring in her book *Early American Stencils on Walls and Furniture*. Was the house still standing? Did the historic stenciling still exist? Dr. Norman Pike, of the Ashfield Historical Society kindly responded to my inquiry. Yes, the house was, indeed, still standing, and yes, the original stenciling still existed in the house! Dr. Pike talked to the current owner of the house and provided an "introduction" for me. I placed a call to the owner, and he graciously offered to give my husband and me a tour of the home and the stenciled rooms.

Fast forward a few weeks later, and we find ourselves pulling up to the Ephraim Williams house in Ashfield, Massachusetts. The house was just stunning. Built in 1797, the big, white federal had huge twelve over twelve windows, and an ancient center chimney.



We pulled into the driveway and parked in front of an old barn. Our host immediately came out into the cold and extended his hand in greeting. I commented on the beauty of the snowy field stretching out behind the house, and the owner stated that on a clear day you can see clear over to Haystack Mountain in Vermont. As he was welcoming us into his home, Dr. Pike from the Ashfield Historical Society pulled down the driveway. He too wanted to see the historic stenciling. So, this was an exciting day for not only me, but also for Dr. Pike, who with camera in hand, would be adding to the town's historical record.



*Lydia Eldredge Williams Tulip Stenciling*



*Wayside Inn Stenciling*

A roaring fire greeted us as we entered the living room, so inviting on this bitter cold day. Our host regaled us with interesting stories about the history of the home and past occupants, as we started our "tour." He had some very colorful and entertaining stories, indeed.

Lydia stenciled two rooms in the home with the famed tulip design. The first room was found on the second floor, adjacent to the master bedroom. A picture of the tulip stenciling in this room is

shown as the top picture in Figure 26 of Janet Waring's, *Early American Stencils on Walls and Furniture*. At some point, between the time that Janet Waring photographed the room (in the 1920's) and the 1960's when the present owner moved in, the walls had been spackled and covered with wallpaper. The tulip design under the wallpaper eventually revealed itself to the new owners, and the walls were stripped free of the paper. It was exciting to finally be able to see the "famous" tulip stenciling done by Lydia. I marveled at her work, and felt privileged to be standing there in the presence of so much history. Along with the wonderful tulip design, I saw the interesting free hand border design and the mysterious little stacks of wood with red flames rising from them that Waring documented in her book. The significance of the little stacks of wood that dot the walls all around the tulips is unknown. However, thinking back to the moment we entered the Ephraim Williams home, and thinking about how great it felt to come in from the cold and be greeted by a warm fire, perhaps the flaming logs reveal Lydia's personal symbol of "welcome" and "hospitality." In this room, I spent quite some time taking pictures of the tulip design. Later, at home, I was able to closely inspect Lydia's tulip pattern, and the one found at the Wayside Inn. My inspection revealed that the two patterns are indeed very similar, but yet decidedly different. I was a little surprised. My expectation was that the patterns would be identical. However, after carefully re-reading Waring's description of the tulip stenciling in Sudbury and that in the Ephraim Williams house, she does in fact state: "In scale and design they were 'practically' alike."

The last room on our tour of the Ephraim Williams house was found in the attic, at the top of a steep set of stairs. This attic room was the same bedroom as seen in Janet Waring's *Early American Stencils on Walls and Furniture*. I stood in the middle of the cold little room and marveled at the well preserved condition of the walls. The walls appeared not to have changed a bit since Waring photographed them in the 1920's. Our host explained that this little room had the good fortune of never seeing wallpaper. Like the room downstairs, here too we see the graceful black tulips, dividing the walls into well-spaced panels. In addition to the tulips, we also find a maypole-like freehand design and the familiar stacks of firewood, with flames, although much tinier than those found in the room downstairs.

It was really a treat to see first hand the creativity of Lydia Eldredge Williams, 19<sup>th</sup> century wall stenciler. It was also interesting to learn that for the last 40 years, the present owner has sought to preserve and protect the historical stenciling in his home. In the Ephraim Williams home, our host and his wife raised 7 children. Throughout the 40 years that they have lived there, the family has been keenly respectful of the

historic stenciling. To this day, the walls provide a wonderful reminder of the talented and industrious artist who made this place her home almost two hundred years ago. It really was a thrill researching this "Tale of Two Tulips". Being able to compare the two tulips side by side,

*Ephraim Williams House Attic Stenciling.*



and provide a small footnote to the research done by Janet Waring 85 years ago, was rewarding. It is also good to know that the historic contributions made by Lydia in her home, and by an anonymous stenciler at Longfellow's Wayside Inn, have not been erased by the passage of time.

With sincere thanks, we bid our host a fond farewell. After a stop at the Ashfield Historical Society Museum, where Dr. Pike gave us a quick tour, we started our journey home. It was now time to close the book on this Tale of Two Tulips. As a cold wind swirled around our car, we were warmed with memories of the little stacks of firewood that danced across the walls of the Ephraim Williams house.

# Miniature Tin Book Boxes

by

Lynne Richards

Boxes have long held an important role in everyday life. For the collector, boxes can be as varied as there are areas of interest. In almost any collection, there may be boxes that can still be put to their original use. Many boxes retain their original wonderful decoration and for our organization, this is where our interest lies.

Several years ago, at one of my many trips to Brimfield, MA. I spotted a box that had a wonderful painting. I had just joined HSEAD and was looking for anything that seemed to have an interesting decoration and was rather unique. I bought this box, and of course, I became a collector! That evening, I was reading *English Papier Mache of the Georgian and Victorian Periods* by Shirley Spaulding Devoe and on page 74 there was a picture of my box decoration listed under travellers' samples. Shirley writes: "Once a year the japan master or his partner travelled by horseback with panniers or saddle bags filled with patterns and samples of japanned goods. For safekeeping, and in order to save space, the flat patterns were packed in shallow boxes of japanned tin."

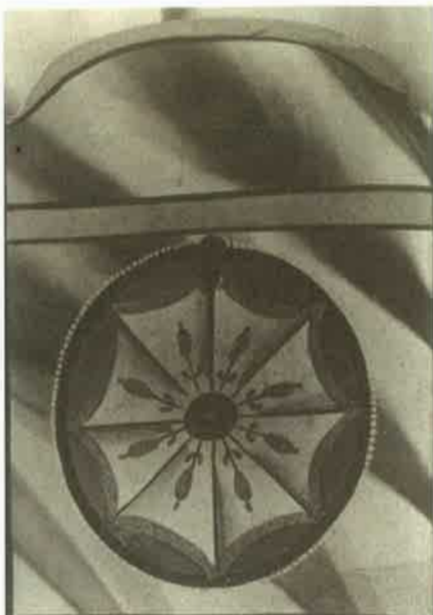


*Painted Book Box owned by Lynne Richards*



Picture in Shirley Spaulding Devoc's  
*English Papier Mache of the Georgian and  
Victorian Period.*

There is some speculation  
as to what these boxes were  
used for. In Mary Jane Clark's  
*Illustrated Glossary of Deco-  
rated Antiques*, she writes that  
they are called "prayer book"  
or "book" boxes. (see page 34,  
figures 39a and 39b). Upon  
talking to several tinsmiths,  
they had never heard of them  
for prayer books but only  
thought of them as "notion"  
boxes. They all appear to be  
well worn, so must have had a  
busy life.



*Original Oliver Buckley box owned by Kathy Hutchinson*



*Oliver Buckley Tinshop Book Box  
American Painted Tinware Volume II  
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*Oliver Buckley Book Box 3 1/4"  
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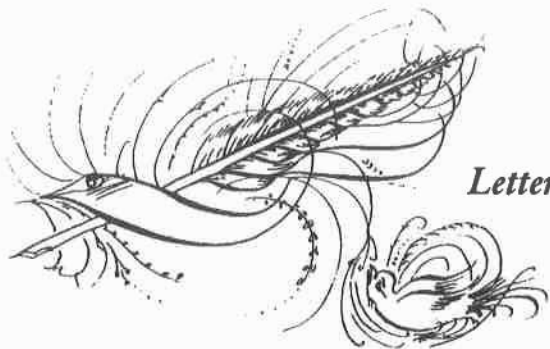


*Front of Oliver  
Buckley book box  
owned by Lynne  
Richards*

*Below: Back of  
book box with  
letter G*

*Lois Tucker writes  
in *American  
Painted Tinware  
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published by  
HSEAD that  
several different  
initials have been  
found and were  
probably for the  
owner's name.*





## *Letter from Birmingham*

*by Yvonne Jones*

### Union, Combination and Club Fine Trays

Collectors often ask about the significance of the terms “Union”, “Combination” or “Club Fine”, which are sometimes found on the undersides of japanned trays made in the 1860’s and 1870’s. To shed some light on the matter, here are my findings so far:

**Union Trays:** The recent discovery of a contemporary red paper label on the underside of a late, and large, oval black tray with a transferred gold border, explains that union trays were a combination of iron and papier mache. The label read:

The Union Trays combine the best qualities of both Paper and Iron Trays; they are produced by coating the front and back with the same description of Paper as used in the manufacture of real Papier Mache Trays, and hence possessing a better surface, they are more pleasant to handle and are quite free from rusting - they have all the stiffness and lightness of Iron Trays, and are sold at a very moderate price.

There were no other marks or labels on this tray from which to identify its maker, and neither was there any indication that its method of construction was protected by patent. It is likely, therefore, that the manufacture of union trays was not confined to one maker.

**Combination Trays:** On the evidence of trays which have this printed on their undersides, “Combination Trays”, were exclusive to Henry Loveridge & Co., of Wolverhampton. Their rectangular bases with rounded corners, were cut from sheets of paste board and mounted or ‘combined’, with decorative, pierced, and vertical galleries which had handles at each end. They were contemporary with Loveridge’s ‘Club Fine’ range of trays.



Example of Combination Tray and its Mark



**Club Fine:** This is the only one of the three types of tray under discussion, about which questions remain. The term was exclusive to Loveridge's and is found only on moulded paper trays with rounded corners. These trays, introduced in the 1860's, were made in various sizes and were generally decorated to a very high standard. Thus, while the name "Club Fine" can be reliably linked with a specific type of Loveridge tray, we have no knowledge at present of whether it reflects to the style of tray, or to a specific method of manufacture.

Example of Club Fine Tray and its Mark





## The Bookshelf

### Folk Art in Maine: Uncommon Treasures 1750 - 1925

edited by Kevin Murphy  
Published by Down East Publications  
Camden, Maine

143 pages, 150 color illustrations

Reviewed by Sandra Cohen

Known for its many hiking trails, the state of Maine was host to a trail of a slightly different nature. Throughout the spring, summer and fall of 2008, visitors could travel the Folk Art Trail and view some of Maine's man made treasures, works of art and artifacts by early America naive artists and craftsmen.

Key venues along this Trail included Bates College Museum of Art, Colby College Museum of Art, Farnsworth Art Museum, Maine Historical Society, Maine Maritime Museum, Maine State Museum, Museum of Old York, Penobscot Marine Museum, Rufus Porter Museum, Saco Museum and Sabbathday Lake Shaker Museum all of whom collaborated and orchestrated a unique exhibition, Folk Art in Maine. By exhibiting their collections simultaneously, visitors to these museums had a rare opportunity to view hundreds of diverse works, representing the best of Maine's folk art heritage. The Folk Art Trail website along with the one hundred-fifty colorful illustrations in this catalogue were enough to entice many to travel this Trail and experience these exhibitions first hand.

However, for anyone who missed this opportunity, *Folk Art in Maine: Uncommon Treasures 1750-1925* offers us an opportunity to view and study these prominent works of art. More than one hundred works of art ranging from portraits to pottery, furnishings and furniture, painted boxes, samplers and scrimshaw, landscapes and seascapes and more, convey stories of Maine, its inhabitants and their lifestyle in the 18th, 19th, and early 20th Century. Stacey Hollander, Senior



Curator, of the American Folk Art Museum, initiates their narrative in the book's introduction. Hollander's context enriches our appreciation by delving into some of the characteristic nuances of Folk Art and its deliberate stylized techniques. One appeal of naive art is the personal nuance of each self-trained artist, its inherent indigenous nature and its ability to pluck a nostalgic chord. Many of these objects served a need and reflected a culture, its customs and commerce. Moreover, they mirror the imagination and ingenuity of the maker.

The True Lover's Knot is a romantic memento with a lover's message meandering on a path of watercolor design on paper, 1725. The author and recipient of this sweet missive are unknown to us. Its unusual complexity and style echoes a European rather than a colonial American tradition and suggests a high level of skill and sophistication. The handheld fire screen and the cornucopia painting, two watercolor Theorems on paper, 1832, give us a glimpse into the education of daughters of affluent families. These examples of early schoolgirl art are beautifully executed by Persis Sibley in her teens at Miss Murray's School for Young Ladies in Hallowell, ME. A Family Record, like that of Simeon Burnham-Lucy Smith, a framed 1830 watercolor and ink on paper is embellished with geometric patterns, flora and fruit transforming this historical document into a framed work of art.



*True Lover's Knot, watercolor on paper*

The naive artists' vision mirrors their cultural background as well as social and economic influences. Maine's commercial endeavors and aesthetics owe much of its motivation and inspiration to the sea, and its artifacts and art illustrate its participation in the maritime trade scene in the 1800's. Accurately detailed models of ships such as the Brig Micmac of Yarmouth and the T. J. Southard convey first-hand knowledge of sailing vessels, riggings and crew. Drawings and the fine scrimshaw etchings on sperm whale teeth, an oil painting on a canvas, the J. A. Thomson Wheel Cover, and Maine's participation in the maritime scene are all testimony of a seafaring brotherhood recording its adventures and life on the sea.



*Hand Held Firescreen and Cornucopia watercolor theorems on paper 1832.*

Once referred to as the “Yankee DaVinci,” Rufus Porter epitomizes the American adventurer, inventor, entrepreneur, patriot and artist. The Rufus Porter Museum in Bridgeton, ME exhibits his wall paintings and celebrates his legacy as one of America’s first landscape mural artist. Encompassing rooms and stairwells, he painted his signature, stylized trees in the foreground. Expanses of precisely organized tracts of farmlands and snug harbor scenes are framed by shorelines, mountains and water punctuated by islands and sailboats. His renditions express the charm and wit



*Rufus Porter Hilltop*



of the folk art tradition while foretelling the maverick style of the modern expressive painter. This founder and editor of *Scientific American*, paints perspective and symmetry; color and mass poetically define his composition.

Madison Tuck's painted Sheraton-style Dressing Table, 1830-1840 and Elias Morse's grained and stenciled Blanket Chest, 1825-1840, demonstrate the fine craftsmanship of furniture making. Painted document boxes, carved weather vanes, eagle wall hangings, painted ship figureheads and decoys, tavern signs, salt boxes and sea chests, rugs and quilts are too often attributed to "maker unknown." These craftsmen express a personal aesthetic in everything they do. Utilitarian objects serve their purpose while pleasing the eye. Fortunately, families had the wisdom and a Yankee frugality to value these keepsakes and records of American ingenuity.



*Madison Tuck's painted  
Sheraton-style Dressing Table.*

The realistic though naively rendered portraits are layered with visual details that tell us about the subjects, their lives, roles and values. John Brewster, Jr. portrays the austere couple, Eunice Pearson Deane and Rev. Samuel Deane. Brewster's contrasts of black and white, emphasizing their penetrating gaze, sturdy stock and strong hands may also be a metaphor for his profession as a minister. A Shute portrait of "A Woman in Black with a Brown Ribbon" captures a fashionably attired lady, hair combs and bobbles, and like "Jane Gibbs" by Royal Brewster Smith, she sits with book in hand, seated in the ubiquitous stenciled chair. A child, "Adelaide Smith," posing on a decorative floor covering, carries her basket of flowers and fruit, speaking to her feminine and fruitful future.



*"Adelaide Smith"*

Textile art, scrimshawed whale teeth, painted boxes, paper-cuts and more fill the pages of this catalogue. Viewing works first hand is certainly the gold standard for appreciating art. However, *Folk Art in Maine, Uncommon Treasures 1750-1925* features more than one hundred-thirty colored plates of some of Maine's best folk art. For those of us who were unable to travel Maine's Folk Art Trail, this quality hard cover is a satisfying and informative keepsake.



*Watercolor Theorem on paper 1832*

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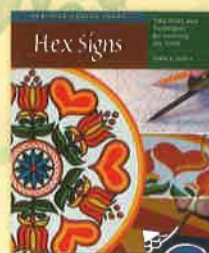
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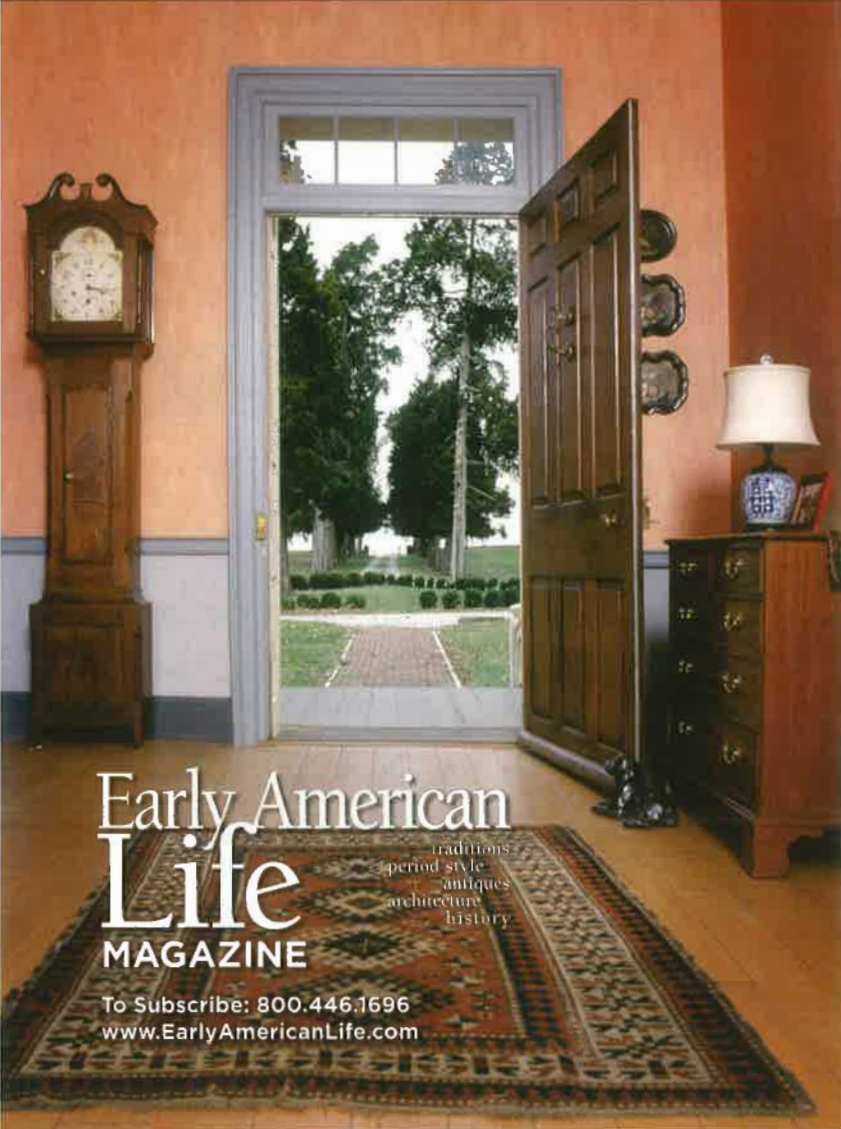
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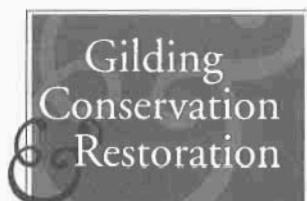


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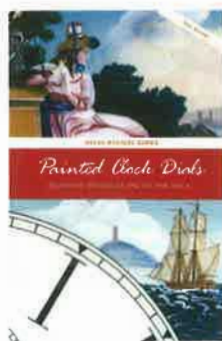


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