The Decorator

Spring 2010 Vol. 64 No. 1



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The Decorator

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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

F irst of all, we hope that you like the new look of our cover. As our long term readers know, we refresh our cover format occasionally to add more emphasis to our publication. With today's new color printing technology this has allowed us to expand into this field. I hope you like it.

Our first article came about because of the national meeting in Burlington. Shirley Baer brought several trays attributed to a Dutch artist and we had to find out more about him. One of the most frustrating aspects of our study of the decorative arts is how frequently we are not able to confirm the decorator or manufacturer of an object with utmost certainty. The most beautiful tray painting is usually unsigned; factories did not always feel it necessary to put their marks on their products. Through observation, research (and sometimes just luck) we can sometimes uncover possibilities of authorship.

Valerie Oliver Burnham, our Recording Secretary and President-elect gave us a great article about one of our members who has a different kind of business but still incorporates our techniques into it.

I have started a new practice of writing to many museums to find one item in their museum that is outstanding as far as our technique or interest for us. This issue features the Rufus Porter Museum in Bridgton, Maine. They have provided us with a great piece by intern Miranda Peters. If you know of any museums in your area, that might have a great piece that we could highlight, either contact them yourself or let me know and I will contact them for future issues. I feel that there may well be some smaller museums that might not have a whole collection to share with us but might have just one super piece!

After the last issue, when I put out a call for members' collections, I received a call from a local member who had a great collection that she wanted to share with us. I am still looking for more member collections.

Sandra Cohen has reviewed workbooks written by three of our esteemed members, teachers and artists in recognition of their effort to promote recording EAD. We hope that our members will find these workbooks helpful.

Joseph Rice has contributed to this issue with a wonderful stenciled box that has a different twist. Have you ever seen this type of stenciling?

Yvonne Jones has written in this issue about an interesting vase and its possible origin.

Last but not least is an article about one of our members who was honored last Christmas. Wait until you see where her painting is.

As always, if you have any article that you would like to share with our members let me know and together we will get it to everyone.

Lynne Richards, Decorator Editor



In Search of an Artist

by Lynne Richards

At the Burlington, Vermont meeting, Shirley Baer brought a wonderful set of trays for the exhibit that were attributed to Cornelis van Spaendonck (1756-1839-40). Parma Jewett also brought a tray that appeared to be by the same artist. The attribution came from *The Decorated Tray* by Zilla Lea (published by HSEAD). Several of Shirley's trays appeared in this book. This article is being written to further explore the accuracy of this attribution.

Cornelis van Spaendonck was born in the Dutch city of Tilburg, one of five children, and the younger brother of Gerard. They were the sons of Jan Anthony van Spaendonck and Maria Theresia (Couwenberg). Their father was the steward of the seignory of Tilburg, belonging to the Prince of Hesse-Kassel.

In 1773, at the age of seventeen, Cornelis followed his older brother, Gerard, to Paris. Like his older brother, who went on to become professor of flower painting at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris and who was a major contributor to the collection of botanical watercolors, Cornelis van Spaendonck continued on to a distinguished career in France. Between 1785 and 1800, Cornelis was director at the Sevres porcelain factory. Alas, he was not able to do as good a job at this directorship as he did painting, so lost his directorship but was kept on as a designer there until 1808. By 1779 he had successfully exhibited his paintings, and by 1789, was accepted as a member of the Academie des Beaux Arts. He continued to exhibit with the Salon until 1833. According



Gothic shape tray - Gold leaf scrolls on flange 8" x 9 34". Owned by Shirley Baer

to Arader Galleries web site. "Cornelis and his brother Gerard retained quite distinctive styles throughout their careers. Cornelis used a softer touch in his works, which tended to be more romantic and fanciful than those of his more literal-minded brother."1 He concentrated on oil and gouache rather than watercolor and was a successful artist at the height of his career. He is remembered for his lush still-lifes of flowers. Among his paintings were subjects such as De Fleurs et Fruits, Vase de

Fleurs, Bouquet de Different Fleurs, Fleurs du Jardin, Corbeille Fleurs, etc. At his death there were 29 paintings and several oils in his studio. These were auctioned off in February 1840.

Gerard van Spaendonck (1746-1822) studied with the painter Guillaume-Jacques Herreyns in Antwerp in the 1760s. The year 1769, when Gerard went to Paris, is an important date in the history of flower painting because for the first time, flower painting left its traditional center in the Low Countries. It was in Paris that he was appointed miniature painter by Louis XVI. According to Arader Galleries, which has some of his paintings for sale, "in 1774, he became a candidate for membership of the Academie Royale, making his Salon debut in 1777. In 1780, he succeeded Madeleine Basseporte as professor of

flower painting at the Jardin des Plantes, and the following year was elected a member of the Academie. It was at this time that he began contributing to the Velins du Roi, a series of botanical studies painted on vellum and one of the most important collections of botanical watercolors ever made. Gerard eventually contributed over fifty works to this collection. He exhibited two of these flower studies



Gothic shape tray 14" x 16". Owned by Shirley Baer

Left: Tin card tray 6¾"x 6¾" Below: King Gothic tin card tray 9"x 9". Both owned by Shirley Baer.



on vellum together with five oils at the Salon of 1783, and was highly praised by the critics. In 1788 Gerard was appointed adviser to the Academie, and in 1795, he became a founder-member of the Institut de France. From 1799-1801, the twenty-four

became a founder-member of the Institut de France. From 1799-1801, the twenty-four plates of his Fleurs Dessinees d'apres Nature (Flowers drawn from Life) were published, engravings of supreme quality destined to be a bible for would-be flower painters.

In 1804 he received the Legion d'honneur and the next year was ennobled by Napoleon." 2

Let's take these facts and see how we can apply them to our pieces.

First of all, although the attribution is for Cornelis, why couldn't his

brother have also been involved

in producing trays. Gerard also did as good or better a job on

flower painting. Although, in neither case did I find any indication that they had ever painted on trays. Perhaps their flowers were copied onto trays but just from the busyness of their



Tin Gothic shape tray 20" x 25". Owned by Parma Jewett







Gothic shape tin tea caddy Ttp and sides. 5" x 6", 21/4" high. Owned by Shirley Baer

lives I can not see that they would be interested in painting on trays.

Another reason that they may not have been the painters is because all of these trays seem to have been painted in the mid 1800's. Cornelis lived until 1839 and Gerard only to 1822. It would appear that those dates would be too early for either of them to have painted them.

Upon further investigation, I have found more trays owned by members that we can add to the mix of questions. Recently, I was given many boxes of slides and photographs to peruse at my discretion. Occasionally, I would open a box to see what treasures I could come up with. Just as I thought this article was finished, I opened up a box and the first photos

were labeled "English, Russian, Dutch?" Even then, we did not know the origin. I have included these to share with our members. They were from the 1970's.

If you will notice, all of these pieces for this article have a common theme. All have colorful birds and beautiful flowers. All have the lovely gold leaf designs around the flanges.

There were also two other photos from the National Museum of Wales. I was not able to get permission to print these photos so could not include them. One was a tea caddy similar to the one below but without a bird and instead a

flower and butterfly. It was labeled "mid 19th century". The second piece was labeled "archives National Museum of Wales, Cardiff". It was a cistern (or coffee pot) with a spigot. On it was painted a bird, a beautiful flower and fruit. Why were these in the National Museum of Wales? Were these painted in Wales where so many of the others trays were painted? Are they related to Pontypool, Wales? One more question, why were the photos labeled "English, Russian, Dutch"? I have also spoken to two knowledgeable



King Gothic shape tin card tray. 9" x 9" Owned by Shirley Baer

people who say that they may be from Germany. Also, in talking to Parma Jewett, she tells us that her tray came from Holland! If anyone out there can help solve these questions, we would love to hear from you to see if we can come up with the answers.

We may not have solved the mystery of who or what company painted these beautiful pieces but we now have at least brought questions to the forefront so perhaps we can generate some interest to find out more as we continue our research.

Endnotes:

- 1. Arader Galleries (www.aradergalleries.com)
- 2. Ibid.

A tape measure photographed with this tea caddy indicated that it was about approximately 6" long. Owned by Florence Zamulko





13" bread basket Owned by Esther Hoffman



Close up of bird on bread basket owned by Esther Hoffman



Similar decoration appears on this piece once owned by Inez Gornall.

Miniaturist in our Midst:

James Hastrich and His Paint-Decorated Furniture

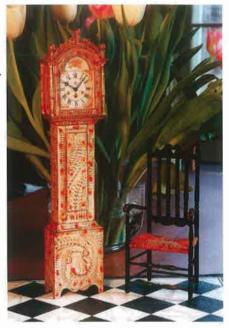
by Valerie Oliver Burnham



While the Historical Society of Early American Decoration endeavors to continue early American decorative traditions, employing country painting, stenciling, free hand bronze, reverse glass and other techniques, James Hastrich has been painstakingly recreating early American paint-decorated furniture in a small way utilizing original methods, patterns and techniques in both the construction and decoration. The products of his work are "to-scale" replicas of originals. While living in Alfred, Maine, in the early seventies, he constructed full size furniture and repaired antique furniture. When a friend showed him some small scale New England furniture, it sparked an interest that has become his life's work since that time. It has proved a perfect way for him to combine his knowledge of antique furniture construction and his period painting skills to produce simply fantastic pieces.

Creating and acquiring tiny objects has been of interest over the years. Ethel Everett's 1940 article, "Miniature Furniture" for *The Magazine Antiques* states that antique miniature furniture suitable for a collector was quite rare and that most were then held in private collections with very few pieces in museums. She gives several reasons for their production: for use in business, as playthings for children, or just because people like small things. In any case she considered all types rare in 1940. In 1981 Sarah Sherrill wrote about an exhibition in Boston at the 2nd Ellis Memorial Antiques Show, entitled

"Diminutive Designs in Decorative Arts before 1830." Craftsmen's models, salesmen's samples and furniture for children were shown. One of the speakers discussed the difficulties of documenting children's furniture2. Melinda Kaufman in 2003 speculates about whether a miniature chest was made by John Janvier Sr. circa 1770-1780. The author states that there is a lack of miniatures mentioned in inventories or other primary documents; but she continues that most were made for doll houses, to hold small things, and as toys for children and adults3. Although many small things are made for dollhouses and as toys today, the miniature in our midst creates his toscale pieces for serious collectors.



James' work requires keen observation, accurate measurements and research to determine exactly how the original was made and decorated. All of his work is devoted to reproducing American paint-decorated furniture originally made between 1680-1860, and he works in either one or two inch scale. His research has made him aware of regional differences in construction as well as style and decoration. His latest research project was the Johannes Spitler Tall Case Clock located at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. After careful examination, making measurements, and consultation with museum experts, he discovered Spitler's unique construction style. Even the color sequence was replicated exactly. Although he worked on other projects, the Spitler clock, with working movements, took over a year resulting in both one and two-inch scale replicas.

The Johannes Spitler Tall Case Clock, 1801, is fully described, with color photographs, by Donald R. Walters in his 1975 *Magazine Antiques* article and in *American Radiance, the Ralph Esmerian Gift to the American Folk Art Museum*, published in 2001. The clock is interesting in that Walters notes it illustrates the use of fraktur design elements coming not from Pennsylvania but from Shenandoah County, Virginia. The tulip and heart designs are accompanied by a quarter moon with visible face, a whimsical touch. Additionally the current paper dial of the clock was created in 1978 under Walters' supervision; the paper face was discovered after a "1940's overpainting of the dial" was removed⁴. Certainly all of the detail and stories made construction and decorating the miniatures even more exciting. The original clock is 85½" tall; thus the two miniatures measure 7½" and 14½" tall respectively.

Another research project of great interest was the replication of the HD (Hepzibah Dickinson)5 Hadley Chest owned by Historic Deerfield, Massachusetts. Hadley chests, made between 1675 and 17406 have been written about extensively, but to acquire one today would most likely be very costly. For the collector to own an exact to-scale replica would be an alternative way of owning an original. The chest illustrates the distinctive construction and design features of chests made in the Connecticut River Valley from Deerfield/Northampton, Massachusetts to Suffield/Enfield, Connecticut7. The chests exhibit wide boards with carved tulips, leaves, and abstract designs and were usually meant as hope chests. James and his wife, Linda





LaRoche, also a miniature furniture maker, worked together on this project. He did the construction and painting while she did the shallow relief carving. Historic Deerfield granted a licensing agreement for Hastrich and LaRoche to produce their scale replica. Fortunately formal inspection by Historic Deerfield Curator, Donald Friary, resulted in approval of the finished piece for sale.

The miniature HD Hadley chest is 7 ½" high by 7 5/8" wide by 3 5/16" deep, a two-inch scale replica. The 2002 Stimmel article, in *Early American Life*, includes colored photographs of the original and the Hastrich/LaRoche chest. The 1935 book by Clair F. Luther entitled *The Hadley Chest* describes 109 chests and analyzes them using genealogical records8. Articles and notices continued, especially in the *Magazine Antiques*, analyzing various chests with one article discussing the decoration specifically, "Fertility Symbols on the Hadley Chests". By the time of the 1933 Wadsworth Atheneum exhibition entitled, "Hadley Chests," 250 chests had been identified9. To date however, only one to-scale chest has been documented, the Hastrich/LaRoche miniature.

The tools used to construct the furniture range from conventional tools used by jewelers and model makers to a high quality small scale table saw, drill press and shaper. Hand tools are often used as well and, of course, tiny brushes for decorating. According to Hastrich the most challenging opera-

tions are reproducing exact joinery and achieving colors found on the originals. He finds the quiet work of hand cutting dovetails or mortise and tenon joints and the decorating relaxing and satisfying. This satisfaction is enhanced by entering his studio knowing he is to work on a specially chosen project. Often a good book on tape will heighten the experience. He considers his studio space as sacred.



Although unable to admit to a favorite piece, James did reveal that he hopes his favorite piece is the one he is currently working on. "If not, perhaps I should not be doing that piece." The excitement at the start of planning and executing a new piece is "the reason I chose to do the piece."

The marketing of his work has developed its own path. Through his travels to various antiques shows, shops and museums he has met and talked with dealers, collectors and curators. All have been valuable contacts not only to provide a way for him to study originals but also to connect with possible clients. Additionally he does some selective advertising. Photographs of pieces he plans to reproduce are sent to prospective clients. He usually makes only one or two copies of the original piece of furniture. His loyal and knowledgeable collectors keep him very busy; busy enough that developing a web site has not been a priority as yet.

James Hastrich's scale replicas have been exhibited at various shows primarily in New England. He recently exhibited as part of the "Creative Category," at the HSEAD Annual Meeting in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, May

9-11, 2008, entitled New England Painted Furniture: Plain & Fancy. His work is on permanent display at the Toy and Miniature Museum of Kansas City located on the University of Missouri campus in Kansas City, Missouri. A member of HSEAD since the early 1990s, James Hastrich appreciates the styles of decorating we reproduce. Even though his work does not fall within our practiced categories, it truly is in a big way a "miniature" reflection of ours.



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- 5. G. Stimmel. "Hadley Chests." Early American Life 33 (June 2002) 80.
- 6. "Another Hadley chest," Magazine Antiques 56 (August 1949) 125, 127.
- 7. A. E. Ledes. "Current and Coming." Magazine Antiques 143 (Feb. 1993) 240,242
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- 9. Ibid. 250-257
- 10. Ledes, 240.
- 11. Stimmel, 80.

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Rufus Porter - The Wandering Genius

by Miranda Peters

He walked. Past quaint New England towns, rolling fields, and bustling cities, Rufus Porter walked the land. He traveled from Maine to Virginia, leaving painting landscape murals, miniature portraits, or decorative objects in his wake. It is even purported that he boarded a merchant ship and made the long voyage around the coast of South America to the Sandwich Islands - present day Hawaii. Exotic or not, the terrain Porter explored certainly influenced his work. Idyllic 19th century farmsteads, rolling hillsides, and billowing sails of a clipper ship all graced his murals spread out along Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont. It was his time in Maine, however, that seems to have impacted his life and artwork the most. After all, it was here that he spent his adolescent years studying the mountains and lakes in Bridgton, received his short formal education in Fryeburg, and began his working career as a painter in the crowded streets of Portland. Maine was a fountainhead for the true itinerant genius and nowhere is he more celebrated than at the Rufus Porter Museum.

Rufus Porter was born on May 1, 1792, to an affluent farming family in West Boxford, Massachusetts. In 1801, Porter's family moved from Massachusetts to Flintstone, Maine (present day Sebago) and again in 1804 to

the smaller settlement of Pleasant Mountain Gore, now in Bridgton. These were the first of many moves over the course of his life. That same year Porter was sent to Fryeburg Academy where he spent six months at a total cost of \$3 - the extent of his formal education.

By 1806, Porter's family was afraid that he wouldn't have the discipline needed to pursue his own lucrative career while playing music and farming to bide his time,

ufus Porter,

Found in this desk, grain painted by Rufus Porter, was a signed note with the original price being \$3.00.

so they apprenticed him to his older brother in the cobbler's trade back in West Boxford. Porter's progressive mind was ill suited to shoe making and after a few months he left the shop and walked over 100 miles to start a career in Portland, Maine.

In Portland, Rufus learned the trade of decorative and house painting. Part

of his tutelage involved grinding and mixing paints from raw pigments and constructing brushes - a practice he would perfect and employ over the rest of his career. He used these tools to paint and decorate signs, sleighs, gunboats, woodwork and furniture. After a brief stint in three Portland Militia Companies as a private and musician during the War of 1812, he taught music and dance at schools in Waterford and Baldwin, Maine.

After a decade of working in and around Portland, Porter embarked on a nomadic lifestyle, but not before absorbing the landscape of the harbors, bays, and the newly erected Observatory on Munjoy Hill - an image that would appear frequently in scenes of his landscape murals.



A side view shows the "mahogany" grain painting.

In the mid-twentieth century, an elderly resident of West Boxford, Massachusetts recalled seeing letters written by Rufus Porter describing the native people of the Hawaiian Islands. Evidently, Porter boarded a merchant vessel bound for the Islands, most likely painting and doing other sundry tasks to pay his way. His time in the tropical locale was not wasted - beautiful landscape murals painted back in New England were occasionally dotted with smoking volcanoes looming in the distance.

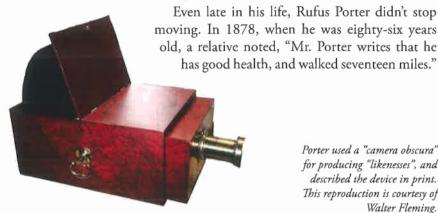
It was while traveling through Virginia in 1820, that Porter built his first camera obscura. This was a box with a pin-sized hole in one side in which light passes and strikes a surface where it is reproduced. Porter began using the device to speed up the production of portrait miniatures, claiming in newspapers that he could paint one's portrait in fifteen minutes and even advertised "No Likeness - No Pay." These portraits were exceedingly popular due to their low cost and accessibility. Porter likely did well over a thousand of

these images and popularized the use of the camera obscura by describing how to construct one in his 1825 book A Select Collection of Valuable and Curious Arts, and Interesting Experiments (Curious Arts).

Curious Arts was a revolutionary instructional book, detailing the secrets and techniques of decorative painting and other artistic activities intended for the average citizen. Over the four editions published between 1825 and 1826, Porter decried the archaic method of art instruction in which students copied European masterpieces and encouraged rather a uniquely American style of art. He urged the common farmer to pick up pen and brush and invited them to attempt painting the walls of their homes rather than purchase costly European wallpaper. This was the beginning of Porter's landscape mural career.

Rufus Porter is most celebrated for his murals. These bright scenes usually depict farmland with stippled crops of various colors, neat, stenciled houses in a row, and a harbor scene with free-handed ships disappearing in the distance things that are all strangely familiar to those who live in the Lakes Region and around Portland. But perhaps most identifiable are his trees, with the undulating branches playfully dancing on the wall. The dramatic use of foliage color, from golden hues to a burnt green, gives the illusion of depth and shadow, while the movement of the branches makes it appear almost surreal - and highly sought after. To attend to his multiple clients, Porter became a master of efficiency. He created dozens of homemade stencils, had a published system for completing murals, and frequently employed the help of assistants over the period of 1825-1845. Over 100 murals have been recorded and even today new ones are being discovered underneath layers of wallpaper in early homes.

While many of his nearly 100 patents were labor saving devices intended for farmers, others included a horse-powered boat, a life preserver, wind-grist mills and a fire alarm. He built several models of an aerial steam ship that gained substantial funding during the gold rush, but is most recognized for his idea of a revolving rifle that he sold to Col. Samuel Colt in 1844 for \$100 - an invention that led to the legendary Colt Revolver.



Porter used a "camera obscura" for producing "likenesses", and described the device in print. This reproduction is courtesy of Walter Fleming.

The Rufus Porter Museum and Cultural Heritage Center celebrates the contributions that Rufus Porter made during his lifetime. The Center preserves a home on 67 North High St. (Rte 302) in Bridgton, Maine, containing Porter murals painted in 1828, as well as an annex building that house the Westwood Murals. The Westwood Murals, painted in 1838, are the only known signed and dated example from Rufus Porter and are considered his most accomplished.

Notes:

Miranda Peters is an intern at the Rufus Porter Museum, Bridgton, Maine. This article was originally published in *Out of Towner Magazine*.

Visitors can also explore the museum's changing gallery, which houses a special exhibit each year.

Rufus Porter was, among many other things, a teacher of the arts. The Cultural Heritage Series continues this tradition by offering classes, lectures, and workshops each summer that explore the work of Porter, as well as early crafts. Information about tours, hours, and the Cultural Heritage Series may be obtained by visiting the museum's website: www.rufusportermuseum.org or by calling 207-647-2828.

Pencil Boxes

by Lynne Richards

When the call went out in the Spring 2009 issue of *The Decorator* for anyone with an interesting collection to contact me, my thoughts did not even take me to our next article. Peg O'Toole from Delmar, New York, called and told me that she had a collection of pencil boxes that she had acquired over a period of several years.

Pencils have been in existence at least since the 16th century when graphite was first discovered in the Seathwaite Valley in Borrowdale, near Keswick, England about 1564. According to the Early Office Museum web site (www. earlyofficemuseum.com), by 1662 most pencils were produced in Nuremberg, Germany. These were produced by "gluing sticks of graphite into cases assembled from two pieces of wood.!" The earliest known pencil that is still in existance was found in the roof of a 17th century German house and is now in the private collection of Faber-Castell in Germany.

The modern process for making lead pencils was taken from Jacques Conte who in 1795 developed a recipe of powdered graphite and clay, which was then formed into sticks and hardened in a furnace.

By 1812, lead pencils had found their way to Boston, and were being produced by William Munroe, although his method of producing the graphite paste produced an inferior product because they were not hardened in a furnace. Joseph Dixon was another Boston pencil maker who in 1847 set up a new factory just outside New York City. Germany still produced the best pencil leads using the Conte method, so most leads were still imported from there. Other pencil companies which produced their product in the US were Eberhard Faber and the Eagle Pencil Co., 1861 and 1862 respectively. After the Civil War, mass production of pencils occurred.

A. W. Faber introduced his pencils in 1837 and was one of the biggest manufacturers in the United States. Faber boxes had gold paper as a decoration on the papier mâché. The box below was made in Hallowell, Maine.



The inside of the Faber's box lists all the hardness' of the pencils, in both English and French. BB is soft and very black, B is soft and black, F is less soft and black, HB is middling and H is hard.

Some of the earliest pencil boxes were made from papier mâché in India. They had



learned from the Persians by way of Italy and then the Orient. According to Shirley Devoe's book *English Papier Mâché*, some of the Indian boxes had "designs made up of small flowers and foliage, and on some examples, the flowers are so thickly painted with egg tempera that they appear slightly raised.²"



Pencil Boxes made in India. From Shirley, Devoe's book English Papier Mâché

Some boxes were made by hand and were made with cheaper woods but many could be made with cherry or walnut.



Walnut pencil box with carved lines.

Others made from papier mâché could have a lithograph, Chinese motif or perhaps mother of pearl inlay. The boxes that had better wood might be decorated by carving designs into the wood.



This papier mâché box above has lovely mother of pearl decoration.

The average size of the boxes we photograhed were 21/4"-21/2 deep, 81/4"-91/4" long, and 11/2" high.



Other than the traditional opening of the cover with the hinge made from tin or brass, some boxes had a sliding piece of wood which pushed back off the top and slid away. The box above has a hand painted flower. It is a one tier box, and the inside has been routed out to form the compartments.



Little Red Riding Hood Pencil Box - Owned by Ann VanderVort

Some of the boxes were made of papier maché and had colorful lithographed paper on the top, many depicting children's nursery rhymes such as "Old Mother Hubbard", "Little Red Riding Hood" or "Snow White."

According to Wikipedia, the earliest known printed version of Little Red Riding Hood was known as Le Petit Chaperon Rouge and had its origins in 17th century French folklore. Charles Perrault in 1697 made her cloak red.

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The Grimm brothers in the 19th century also wrote a similar tale.

Many boxes were made in Germany, The one below was made of a hardwood with a transfer print with the words "pencil box" with the birds also transferred on top of the writing. "Made in Germany" appears at bottom right.





Children lithograph on papier mache pencil box



Snow White and the seven dwarfs pencil box



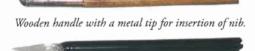
This detail of a lithographed paper box cover shows a rather ferocious wolf, in contrast to the children at play.

Some boxes were grain painted as we would do to a Hitchcock-type chair. The box below must have been a rather expensive one because of the grain painting and the tin emblem. It also has a glass inkwell inside.





Glass Inkwell ¾" x ¾"



All glass pen - the end seems to have been pulled out to a point. The glass pen is believed to have been developed by a wind bell maker, Sadajiro Sasaki in 1902. Sometimes only the nib is glass, with a handle of other materials. Although effective, they did not become widely used, probably due their fragile nature.

The Scholar's Companion pencil box was made of tin and covered with a blue wash. Some books refer to this as blueware. This may have been done in the late 1800's and has been redecorated with the original design.



Shown below is an unusual box with two holes in the end. Perhaps this could be so that the student could more easily get the pencils back in without pushing off the top. In one book, the reference was made that the bottom usually had erasers attached to it. Perhaps the holes were where the erasers were.



This rough pine box features the alphabet on the slide off lid. Marked "Oak Lane, Philadelphia", it also has "Old English" stamped at end of lid.





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box, and the inside has been routed out to form

the compartments.

This was the most unusual box with the top sliding down and under the compartment (akin to the tambour doors on furniture). It is labeled "Pencil Box Express".





The Jackie Coogan box was made of tin and of course is of a different era from the one we study, but had to be included because of its interest. Jackie Coogan according to his obituary of Friday, March 2, 1984 from the United Press International, was at one time married to Betty Grable. By age 10 he had made millions but saw it all slip away by the time he was 21, due to unwise investments by his mother and stepfather. In 1923, he was the No. 1 box-office star, leading Rudolph Valentino and Douglas Fairbanks.

When Jackie was 4, Charlie Chaplin made a deal to star him in "The Kid". He became an overnight sensation and Hollywood's first child star.



Gold chinoiserie pencil box

Editor's Note

Peg O'Toole has been a member of HSEAD since 1977 and is presently an honorary member of the Hudson Valley Chapter of HSEAD.

She served as advertising Chairman for *The Decorator* for seven years procuring ads from suppliers and collecting payments, which was documented and given to the Treasurer "BC" - before computers.

When the Museum was located in Albany, NY she became the "Carol Burnett" bringing in her pail, cleaning supplies and cleaning cloths, etc. She also had to wear white gloves to be able to move and dust objects on display.

All boxes, unless noted, belong to Peg O'Toole.

Endnotes:

- 1. Early Office Museum (www.officemuseum.com)
- 2. Devoe, Shirley English Papier Mâché p.10.

Bibliography and Sources:

Patroski, Henry The Pencil, A History of Design and Circumstance

Hotham, Lar Antiques & Collecting Magazine "Collectors make their mark with Vintage Pencil Boxes" March 1, 2001.

Early Office Museum (www.officemuseum.com)

Devoe, Shirley Spaulding, English Papier Mache of the Georgian and Victorian Periods Figure 6 Page 10 Published 1971



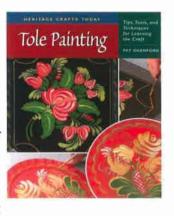
Book Review

Tole Painting by Pat Oxenford, Theorem Painting by Linda Brubaker, Reverse Glass Painting by Anne Dimock

Stackpole Publishers, Mechanicsburg, PA 2008, 2009 and 2010 respectively, Hardcover with inside spiral binding, (Reverse Glass is a quality paperback), all illustrations in color with $B \not \hookrightarrow W$ tracings, 168 pgs. 191 pgs. and 160 pgs. respectively.

Reviewed by Sandra Cohen

Stackpole Publishers has established a consistent and commendable format for its workbooks. From History, to Tools and Materials, to Basic Skills and Basic Painting Exercises, the chapters unfold logically giving one the experience of taking a workshop. The close-up pictures are accompanied with text and complement the instruction covered in HSEAD's Master Series of Instructional Videos. The books are filled with colorful projects, as well as the artists' renditions, and illustrate everything from preparation procedures to mixing colors and the actual painting



process. Indicative of good teachers, these artists make no assumptions about their audience's knowledge of these disciplines and explicitly describe each step.

Tips and techniques abound throughout the books. Every thought went into making this a positive experience for the ingénue or practiced craftsmen honing their skills. These tips, special techniques and directions are often a color highlight, focusing your attention and emphasizing their importance.

Tole Painting and Theorem Painting each conclude with a stunning Gallery Chapter featuring originals and examples of the author's work as well as works by fellow painters. Each page in these books is generously and colorfully illustrated. Last, but not least, a list of supplies and resources, a bibliography and list of organizations (including HSEAD) are included to facilitate your advancement in this art form.

Tole Painting by Pat Oxenford begins by explaining that the title is a mis-

nomer for this style of painting. "Tole is French for sheet iron" referring to the earlier painted trays in France. American decorative pieces were produced and painted by tinsmiths who often embellished their wares with decorated patterns. Painted tinware is distinguished by various styles from a number of shops operated by tinsmiths from the East and North to the Plains states.

Pat's instruction emphasizes brush strokes, the basis for traditional

country painting and for most decorative painting categories.

Tracings act as a guideline for this free-hand painting, and the flow and rhythm of the pattern become evident when the artist has mastered these various brush strokes and executes them with confidence.

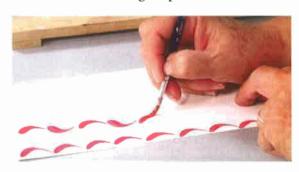
The importance of preparation and

the quality of ones' supplies is the repetitive mantra of each of these artists. Together with Pat's instructions and tips, success and satisfaction in executing these projects are virtually assured.

An interesting diversion from the traditional approach is Pat's use of acrylic instead of oil paint. She says that it may be easier to use acrylic, and it may also be a necessary health choice for some decorative painters who cannot use oil paint and its mediums. However, Pat provides information for both acrylic and oil.

Tole Painting is filled with close-up shots of Pat with brush-in-hand forming a stroke. Featuring the artist's technique and the array of strokes illustrated in several pages are helpful to the beginner. The Society's video, *Traditional Country Painting*, featuring Lois Tucker, Country Painting Specialist, delivers the perspective of actually seeing the strokes painted. Both Pat's book and the video do justice to giving the viewer and reader a thorough workshop experience. Pat's chapter on Basic Skills is accompanied with text to explain the stroke, and these exercises are reinforced in the following chapters on Basic Folk Art

Flowers. Practice makes perfect, and Pat recommends practicing the various strokes "to loosen up" before beginning your project. This is emphasized because there are no demonstrations of correcting





mistakes, whereas this process is demonstrated in the video.

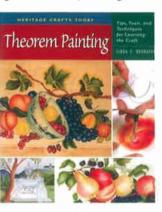
The workbook offers seven projects that proceed from simple to more complex patterns, and the project designs are painted on appropriately selected traditional tin pieces such as projects on the one and two-sheet waiter trays and the wall match safe. The artist also shares her tips and techniques as she paints, and continually encourages

you "not to be intimidated by the details, but relax as you work through the design."

Tole Painting offers two Gallery Chapters; the first features reproduction painted tinware, and the second is a bonus for those who love antiques; this Gallery of Early Painted Tinware is a charming and generous array of originals.

Theorem Painting by Linda Brubaker begins with a brief history of this "early schoolgirl" art and an introduction to the artist. HSEAD member and "A" Award theorem artist, Linda Brubaker, shares her techniques and tips in this thorough step-by-step workbook on the art of theorem painting.

Each author emphasizes what every artist knows, i.e., that one must recognize the value of quality materials and being meticulous in the preparation and initial steps of creating this art form. This is especially important in theorem



painting because the natural forms and their adjacent elements in the composition depend on the exactness of the tracing and cutting of the stencil.

Every measured step is supported by a reason. Linda chooses her tools and materials carefully, explains her choices and describes the consequences of cutting corners. However, some mistakes may happen, and where correc-



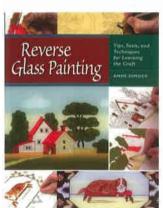


tions are possible, Linda shares her "Quick-Fix" tips, assuring us that all is not lost.

The chapter on framing is especially important because the proper frame becomes a decorative contrasting border for your artwork, enhancing the composition. An aesthetic sense and an attempt to closely resemble the traditional framing found on theorems are combined to offer some handsome choices.



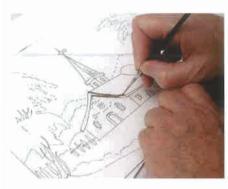
Linda's book generously offers us nine projects with step-by-step directions for each project. The design tracings are numbered, and there is a layout of the elements for each project. This is especially helpful for the beginnner. Linda also gives us instruction for initiating our own designs. Her lessons are designed to insure that our experience painting these theorem projects is enjoyable and successful. It is also a good accompaniment to HSEAD's video, *Theorem Painting*, featuring members and experts of this technique, Dolores Furnari, Inez Gornall Cloward and Alice Smith.



Reverse Glass Painting by Anne Dimock illustrates her brief history of this artform with examples of historically authentic reproductions followed by several pages of materials and products necessary to paint in this manner. The aesthetic appeal of reverse glass painting is understandable. The depth and luminosity that comes from reflected light and glass create a striking composition, and even more so if gold leaf is included in the design.

Anne walks us slowly through each step and the many oversized still shots along with her

detailed annotations convince us that we can do this. The challenge of this technique is obvious; for most still life and landscape painting, we would begin with the background, addressing the foreground last. Now put that thinking process in reverse! Anne wisely chooses to begin with patterns that slowly and comfortably immerse us in this mind-set. Many of her patterns are historically authentic recordings of American reverse glass painting. The variety of fourteen projects which include some of Anne's compositions will appeal to a larger audience. Projects include Primitive Houses with Trees, The Three-Masted Schooner, two gold leaf patterns, The Ocean Cottage and the American Eagle (etching on gold technique illustrated here) as well as the popu-







lar traditional compositions such as Fruit Basket with Red Drapes and The Dance. Anne includes two tinsel paintings, one that she has adapted from a theorem painting, and another, a Bowl of Christmas Ornaments. The design is traced, painted with transparent glazes and the elements are backed with foil that creates an iridescent effect.

Frames for Anne's projects are painted or grained, but some of them also include a reverse painted border, complementing the window of her composition. Sailing Home has an elaborate colorful reverse border that Anne creates by using stencils. Another advanced project, The Old Mill, is taken from an antique design and has a delicate gold leaf border.

This workbook does not have a Gallery Chapter as other Stackpole editions in this series. However, the book is filled with fourteen progressively challenging projects and has plenty of images of originals to whet your appetite for this style of painting.

Anne, Linda and Pat are Brazer Guild Members, and their books are helpful supplements to The Master Series of Instructional Videos published

by the Society on Traditional Country Painting, Theorem Painting and (soon to be released) Reverse Glass Painting. These workbooks, as well as others in the Heritage Crafts series by Stackpole (*Papercutting* and *Fraktur*), are welcome additions to a rather lean library on authentic early American decorative (EAD) arts. Linda Brubaker, Anne Dimock and Pat Oxenford have made a valuable contribution to preserving and promoting EAD by sharing their expertise and skills in recording historically authentic patterns and by creating their own renditions of these early American arts and crafts.

These books are available in bookstores, through Amazon or from Stackpole Publishers, (800) 732-3669; www.stackpolebooks.com.

"Double-Struck" Stenciling

by Joseph Rice

When I came across this box in the sale of Dorcas Layport's studio effects, I wasn't sure if I was having vision problems or if it was defective stenciling, but closer examination showed it was deliberately "double-struck" when stenciled. The one-piece stencil was first used with one shade of bronze powder, then shifted slightly and stenciled again with a different shade. This technique is an attempt to provide a "3-D" effect.

It is an interesting variation, and it might be fun to try this when stenciling. This is something that I had never seen before, so I wonder if it just wasn't popular, or if the makers decided that the extra steps in production were not cost efficient.

This box retained an exhibit tag indicating that it was displayed with other originals at an HSEAD meeting, however, there was no date provided.







Left: Box open showing asphaltum interior. Above: Detail of the stenciling, showing the 3-D effect. Box size: 6¼" x 9¼" x 3¼" high.

Fishing for Clues

An Important Early Papier Mâché Vase

by Yvonne Jones

This very fine, and important, papier mâché vase and cover was, until recently, part of a small collection of japanned papier mâché and tinware begun by Obadiah Ryton (c1771-1818) and/or his brother, William Lott Ryton (1773-1847), second generation proprietors of the Old Hall Japan Works, in Wolverhampton, from c1790-1818/20. The collection was added to during the next partnership of Ryton & Walton (c1820-1842), but after William Ryton's retirement in c1841, it passed by descent within the Ryton family, until its recent dispersal.

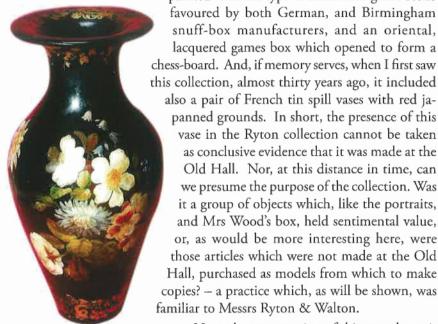
Sufficient evidence, one might think, for presuming that the vase was made at the Old Hall. However, by trailing the clues, so tantalisingly provided by its provenance, construction, and decoration, it soon becomes apparent that this would be too hasty a conclusion.

Consider first, the provenance of the vase. By the 20th century, the Ryton collection included several objects which may safely be assumed to have been made at the Old Hall Works. Among these was

Papier mache vase and cover; H: 31.5 cm (12"). Courtesy of Avon Antiques and Bonhams of London

a japanned portrait, painted on tin, of John Ryton (b1736) who, in partner-ship with Joseph Barney, was proprietor of the Old Hall Japan Works from c1761 until his death in 1788, a similar, contemporary portrait of his daughter Sarah (sister of Obadiah and William), and a red japanned tin box lettered in her married name of 'Sarah Wood'. There were besides, a pair of japanned tin letter-racks painted with a male and female figure, respectively, seated within a church, and two later papier mâché snuffers trays of types wholly consistent with those made at the Old Hall manufactory: one, a gothic-shaped tray of the 1830s, and the other, an elongated dish-shaped tray of c1850.

In addition, however, there were objects that were clearly japanned elsewhere: an ovoid tin teapot, striped in red on a black ground which was most likely made at the Pontypool Japan Works, a round papier mâché snuff box



An unmarked but comparable baluster vase of c1840. Private Collection

painted with the type of humorous genre scene favoured by both German, and Birmingham snuff-box manufacturers, and an oriental, lacquered games box which opened to form a chess-board. And, if memory serves, when I first saw

also a pair of French tin spill vases with red japanned grounds. In short, the presence of this vase in the Ryton collection cannot be taken as conclusive evidence that it was made at the Old Hall. Nor, at this distance in time, can we presume the purpose of the collection. Was it a group of objects which, like the portraits, and Mrs Wood's box, held sentimental value, or, as would be more interesting here, were those articles which were not made at the Old Hall, purchased as models from which to make

Next, the construction of this vase shows it to be an early precursor of a well-known type of papier mâché baluster-vase made in the 1840s by Jennens & Bettridge. For, although made in exactly the same way, with sheets of pasted paper layered onto a wooden mould of the required

shape, the body of this vase, made some twenty years earlier, is extremely thin, being only about 2.5mm (1/10") thick; so thin, in fact, that one handles it as gently as one would handle eggshells. In consequence, it is incredibly light in weight and would be very unstable without its large square-stepped foot. Later manufacturers overcame the problem of instability by using not only much thicker papier mâché to create a heavier vessel, but by concealing a lead weight in the base of each vase. It is conceivable, then, that this vase was made by Jennens & Bettridge, and that it is an early example of, if not a prototype for, a product which they were to perfect by the 1840s. But, regrettably, apart from being a neat argument, there is not, as yet, a shred of evidence in support of such a conclusion.

In terms of its approximate date of manufacture, there is no reason why this vase could not have been made at the Old Hall since papier mâché was certainly produced there by 1820, if not earlier. For example, high quality papier mâché trays, of every description, were made in Wolverhampton by Thomas Illidge & Co., at least as early as 1811, and so it is not unreasonable to suppose that, the Rytons, as proprietors of the larger, and more important of the two firms, were similarly engaged at an earlier date. Generally, however, it was their successors, Ryton & Walton (1820-1842), who developed papier mâché production at the Old Hall.

While the greater part of Ryton & Walton's trade remained in making functional, domestic japanned objects, it is for their high quality, decorative papier mâché goods that they are remembered today - a legacy of their determination to employ the best available artists. In 1835, for example, Joseph Booth, (fl. 1820+), a decorator widely admired throughout the trade for his fine pencilling skills, and Chinese and Japanese styles of decoration, sought work at the Old Hall. Booth had spent the previous fourteen years working for Jennens & Bettridge, in nearby Birmingham where, in 1824, he had the honour of decorating a tray, in chinoiserie style, for King George IV. He was credited with having popularised formal oriental styles of decoration on papier mâché, and is understood to have given Western features to the 'oriental' figures in his work. The formality of his early designs, carried out in gold leaf, and bronzed gold, and often incorporating so-called 'raised work', later gave way to a greater freedom - a departure which accords with the playful chinoiseries and fine gilt-pencilling found on this vase.

The vase is decorated in the manner of Jean-Baptiste Pillement (1728-1808), some of whose rococo designs are to be found in Robert Sayer's *Ladies Amusement* (1758). It was self-evidently painted by a very skilled, and experienced decorator who left no detail to chance. Nothing could be more charming than the faces of the boys, especially those of the eager little fishermen in their finely striped breeches, nor the lively way they are seen playing with bubbles.



Detail of Plate 52 from Robert Sayer' Ladies Amusement, or whole art of japanning made easy', showing a chinoiserie design by Jean-Baptiste pillement, 1758

With painting of this quality, and knowledge of Booth's earlier employment with Jennens & Bettridge, it would be easy to conjecture that he, perhaps, was the decorator, and they the makers, of this vase. But as George Dickinson observed, this style of ornament became so popular that 'There was probably no shop of importance engaged in decorating japan and papiermâché ware, that did not copy Booth's Chinese patterns with variations of their own.12 And



Detail showing children fishing

we know, from an incident related elsewhere by Dickinson, that the Old Hall did, indeed, copy Booth's work2. Booth offered to sell Ryton & Walton a tray, possibly for use as a future pattern, but believing it to be far too expensive, they suggested he leave it with them while they considered the matter. They gave him a small sum of money 'to relieve his immediate appetite for beer' and as soon as Booth left, had one of their workmen copy it. The original, decorated with a chinoiserie scene entitled The Rushcutters, was returned to Booth on the grounds that it was too expensive and the copy was hung in Ryton & Walton's warehouse as an example of their fine workmanship. A sobering reminder that this may have been how this vase came to be in the Ryton collection?

Thus, without a mark, and in spite of its intriguing provenance, both

the maker, and decorator, of this exquisite object remain, sadly, anonymous – at least, for the time being.

Notes:

- Dickinson, George, English Papier Mâché, Leamington Spa, 1925
- Dickinson, George, Papier Mâché Tea Trays, The Connoisseur, vol.84, pp221-229
- © Yvonne Jones, 2010



Detail of boys blowing bubbles

Member Honored

Primitive Portrait for Renwick Gallery Christmas Tree

One of our members, Dolores Furnari, was chosen to do an ornament for the 2009 christmas tree at the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery in Washington, DC. Her inspiration was one of the paintings in the Renwick Permanent Collection. Dolores has been a member of HSEAD for many years and a member of the Society of Decorative Painters for over 35 years.

Dolores chose to reproduce an 1843 oil on canvas painting by the Italian artist Daniel Huntington. She recreated the painting on a small 3" x 5" piece of wood and painted it all in oils. Hers was one of 500 ornaments chosen for the tree.

The Renwick Gallery is located a short distance from the White House in the heart of historic federal Washington at 17th Street and Pennsylvania Ave, N.W. The Smithsonian American Art Museum's craft and decorative arts program is also located there.



Daniel Huntington Italy, 1843 Oil on canvas Smithsonian American Art Museum, Museum Purchase



Christmas Tree at the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery in Washington D.C. The painting is located on the right wall.

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381 Park Ave South Suite #1301, New York, NY 10016 extensive selection of quality metal leaf and gilding supplies www.seppleaf.com, 800-971-7377

Stackpole Books

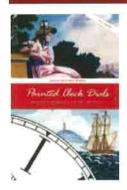
5067 Ritter Road, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 publishers of *Heritage Crafts Today* series – tips, tools and techniques www.stackpolebooks.com, 717-796-0411

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Historical Society of Early American Decoration

Products and Publications





Instructional Videos:

Videos include pattern(s), materials/supply list, color data and instructions by "Masters" of the craft. Like having a teacher at your side, these videos allow you to learn or refresh your EAD skills.

Country Painting (VHS tape)	\$60
Bronze Powder Stenciling (DVD)	\$60
Freehand Bronze (DVD)	\$60
Clock Dials (DVD	\$60
Theorems (DVD)	\$60
Gold Leaf (New!)	\$60

Coming soon: Reverse Glass Painting

Books

American Painted Tinware: A Guide to Its Identification (Vol. I, II, III, IV), hard cover

This handsome, hard cover, four volume set is the only authoritative and compre-

hensive source on American painted tinware. A rich historical text, along with hundreds of full color photographs of original pieces and line illustrations of motifs and patterns will allow you to visually identify the products of these regional tin shops.

\$55 each volume (plus S&H)
A list of HSEAD publications and supplies is available on the website or from the office in Cooperstown.



866 -304-7323 • info@hsead.org • www.hsead.org



Patterns and Supplies

Six stenciling and six painting patterns are available, and are appropriate for applicants. See images on HSEAD.org.

> Country Painting on Tinware \$25 Stenciling on Tinware \$25

Theorem Kit: Includes tracing, laser cuts, color picture and instructions. Contact Office for price and information

Schnader Chair Patterns

(Available to HSEAD members only)
Freehand Bronze & Painted Chair Patterns: (Include 8" X 12" digital color photo & tracing) \$12; Color Catalog of patterns: \$25



Trays:

Steel, 13.5" X 18.25" (Appropriate size for Applicant stenciled patterns) **\$12** (plus shipping and handling)

Gifts and Accessories

Scarves:

36" square silk twill

Theorem Pattern Scarf \$50
Tray Pattern Scarf \$55

HSEAD Charms

(Available to HSEAD members only)

Gold Plated: \$50 Gold Filled: \$70 Sterling Silver: \$55 Rhodium: \$50

14 K Gold: Price Available Upon Request



Visit the HSEAD Store on www.HSEAD.org



For additional information and catalogue contact:

HSEAD at the Farmers' Museum PO Box 30, Cooperstown NY 13326

www.hsead.org

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