

The Decorator

Spring 2011 Vol. 65 No. 1



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The Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc.

The Decorator

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Front cover: Bellows pattern painted by Walter Wright. Back cover: Detail of stencil pattern by Esther Stevens Brazer. Both patterns are in the HSEAD research collection at the David Wight House, Old Sturbridge Village.

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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

Our opening two stories are about the David Wight House, its history and how our society will benefit from its existence. HSEAD is very fortunate to have the David Wight House at Old Sturbridge Village as a research center and area for classes. There have been many people who have made this possible and we must thank them for this opportunity and for their hard work to make this happen. What a great place to exhibit and teach our techniques in the proper setting!

I love bellows and love their patterns, so in this issue I tried to show everyone just a few that I have come across. Some are my own bellows but I have added a few from other people, some from our photo files and some that I have found in the boxes of slides and photos that were given to me. I hope that you enjoy the many assorted patterns.

Everyone enjoys Suzanne Korn's articles on her serendipitous journeys to find new and unpublished stenciled patterns. Suzanne traveled to New Hampshire this time and has found a lovely Moses Eaton stenciled wall (or is Moses Eaton?). You will have to read the article to find out.

Our next article is about our newest master craftsman and her journey to achieve the coveted award. Sometimes it takes years and Carol tells us about her inspirations and how she was able to fulfill her dream of achieving her goal.

Sandra Cohen has provided a book review of *Silhouette, the Art of Shadow* by Emma Rutherford. It appears to be a wonderful book for those interested in silhouettes. Watch for an article on silhouettes from Historic New England's Beaport (Sleeper-McCann House) that will be coming up in *The Decorator*.

As always, if you find anything that you think would be of interest for an article for our publication, please let me know.

Our cover illustrations are taken from the HSEAD pattern collection at the David Wight House. The front cover pattern was recorded by Walter Wright from a bellows owned by Viola Burrows, Noroton, Connecticut. Margaret Watts, one of our Master Craftsmen, produced a replica of this for President Nixon in 1973!

Lynne Richards,
Decorator Editor



HSEAD's Archives at the David Wight House

by Lois Tucker

The David Wight House in Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts now houses a major HSEAD asset: patterns and paper materials which have been returned from the American Folk Art Museum, along with a plethora of other items of interest to our members. It is a massive undertaking to get all this material settled into the house, catalogued and ready for the membership to work with. A full extensive inventory of all the material is still ongoing, but the following gives a summary of the patterns and paperwork available, along with a brief accounting of the contributing craftsmen.

Esther Brazer material is available with many old photographs of Esther, her family and her home. Some of her painted patterns are stored along with



the various articles that she had written. Her correspondences, photographs, publication material such as written notes, typed drafts, and manuscripts of unpublished materials are also at Sturbridge. The accumulation of this material relating to Esther Brazer was the beginning of our Society's archival collection.

Gina Martin was a charter member of HSEAD. She served as a judge and later as that committee's chairman. She also served on

At top: A chair splat pattern by Dorcas Layport. Left: Esther Stevens Brazer, circa 1930.

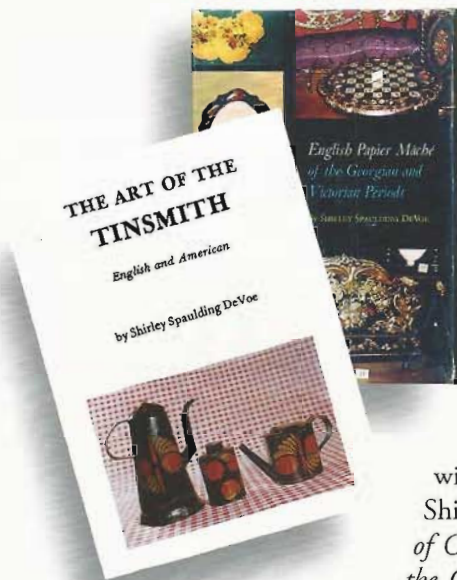
the Board of Trustees for several years. Gina was instrumental in developing the HSEAD School program as well as the Teacher Certification program. She was one of the first to receive the master craftsman award and later became a master teacher (being a certified teacher in all categories).

Gina spent 50 years studying country painted tinware for ways to positively identify the tinshop of origin by the characteristics of the painted design. Thousands of photographs of more than 2000 original pieces were taken through the years, along with their measurements and all vital information regarding the pieces. Patterns were also recorded from many of these originals. The collection now stored at the David Wight House has all of Gina's painted country patterns in the file case as it was taken from her studio when she retired. There are also notebooks holding theorem patterns, another area of interest for Gina's research, and there are notebooks containing a collection of materials on various subjects, including painted and stenciled walls, jappanning (Midlands), Wolverhampton, Bilston (Birmingham), Pontypool and Usk.

The binders in which Gina stored her country painting photographs and the notes on each original piece were also donated to HSEAD and these are now at my house. I added to Gina's notebooks another 1000 or so pictures of originals along with notations that I had gathered over 25 years. These photos and the details on antique pieces



At right: Painted patterns, such as these recorded by Gina Martin, are the working tools for EAD artisans.



were the basis for the pictures, listed characteristics and the drawings in the *American Painted Tinware* volumes. There are now about fifty 3-ring binders in total and these will soon be going to Sturbidge for others to study.

Shirley Devoe had been one of Esther Brazer's students and she became a charter member of the Society. She was an avid researcher of early American decoration and traveled far and wide gathering material on the subject.

Shirley was the author of *The Tinsmiths of Connecticut*, *English Papier Mâché of the Georgian and Victorian Periods*, *The Art of the Tinsmith – English and American*,

as well as numerous articles for journals and various publications. The volumes of Shirley's research material are at the David Wight House.

Walter Wright was an accomplished painter who began his career in designing and decorating at Stoware Studio in Stowe, Vermont. He taught early American decorative techniques in his barn studio in Vermont and traveled to teach in other states. He painted items to sell and usually set up a sale table at the HSEAD national meetings. Walter was president of our Society in the early 1960s. His complete portfolio is at the David Wight House – a flat

file with large free-hand bronze, gold leaf and Victorian designs and a large 3-drawer file containing smaller sized patterns.

Cornelia (Phil) Keegan of Hudson, Ohio was an HSEAD master craftsman. She served the Society as chairman of the Teacher Certification Commit-



Top left: Books authored by Shirley DeVoe. Below left: detail from a hand-painted tracing on the back of a Victorian flower painting pattern by Walter Wright.

Top right: Chair crest decorated by Cornelia Keegan. Bottom: Gold leaf tray by Ellen Sabine.



tee for many years, and also was a Board member. The Society purchased her patterns and the best of these are now part of the Lending Library portfolio. At Sturbridge there is a set of Hitchcock chairs and a Boston rocker that were decorated by Phil and given to us by her daughter.

Ellen Sabine received her art training at Pratt Institute and the New York School of Fine Arts. She worked for 25 years as a free-lance artist in New York and London, working for magazine and newspapers, illustrating books and book jackets, and designing textiles. Ellen researched American antique decorations and taught these techniques at the YWCA in New York City. She was a member of HSEAD and the author of *Early American Decorative Patterns*, *American Antique Decoration* and *American Folk Art*. Many of Ellen's patterns in various folk art techniques, her books, and some pieces decorated by her - velvets, wood, fractur and tin (including an A-award metal leaf tray) are now stored at The David Wight House.

Beth Martin was a longtime HSEAD member and teacher whose special interest was in reverse glass painting. She served the Society in many capacities – Board member, 1st Vice-President and then President; chaired the Endowment Fund Committee and the Royalty Program; served on the Teacher



On this page: Two reverse glass paintings by Beth Martin.

Certification Committee and the Theorem Judging Committee. Beth's daughter gave the entire contents of Beth's studio to the Society. The majority of her patterns are now in the Lending Library portfolio and the David Wight House holds about fifteen binders of Beth's research material and collected articles.

Dorcas Layport was an HSEAD certified teacher and the David Wight House holds some of her patterns, teaching aids and books.

A great deal of reading material will be found at Sturbridge. All issues of *The Decorator*, booklets, indexes, annual reports, and in general, all the publications of the Society are there. Copies of all the books written on the subject of early American decoration will be found there, including the newest publications written by HSEAD members – Martin & Tucker, Salm, Lefko & Knickerbocker, Emery, Dimock and Brown. There are also many slide col-



lections in a variety of disciplines that are available for study. We should be grateful for the generosity of our members, both past and present, for all that has been given to HSEAD for continued education of its members and for preservation. If you plan to go to the David Wight House to work with any of this material, you will find it to be a very rewarding trip.



Above: Trunk pattern by Gina Martin. Below: Tea set decorated by Walter Wright.
 Above: Trunk pattern by Gina Martin. Below: Tea set decorated by Walter Wright.
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David Wight House

Home of the HSEAD Research Center

by Sandra Cohen

The year was 1774, just before America declared its independence from Great Britain, when David Wight, Sr. and his wife Catherine Morse moved from Medway, Massachusetts with their four sons, David Jr., Oliver, Festus and Alpheus, settling on land now known as Old Sturbridge Village. David Wight Jr. later states in his papers that they settled on the banks of the Quinebaug River “on a tract of desolate wilderness.”

In 1792 David Jr. was given fifty-eight acres, and two years later in 1794 he had cleared the site and acquired an additional one hundred-thirty acres from his brother Oliver who was heavily in debt and needed the funds to continue work on building his mansion. From all accounts, David Jr. seems to have had the soundest entrepreneurial sense. He erected two barns, several sheds and a sawmill, drawing waterpower from the Quinebaug River. While David Jr. prospered, his father, who had purchased all the land prior to the American Revolution, was still in debt. However, lady luck came to the rescue. David Jr. was going to Boston on business, and his father lent him \$5.00 (a large sum of money at that time) to purchase a ticket in the Harvard Lottery that won them \$5,000! In return for more land, David Jr. gave his father \$2,000, enabling him to retire his debt and used the remaining \$3,000 to build one of the finest homes in central Massachusetts for his family.

Old photographs and the layout of the David Wight mansion (dubbed Wightmere) illustrate its strong resemblance to Salem Towne's House, a Federal style home, built by Samuel Stetson.

Stetson, 1754-1800, apprenticed as a builder in the Scituate, Massachusetts and Connecticut River Valley areas when the Georgian style (name derived from the succession of English King Georges) was in vogue. Georgian architecture was inspired by an appreciation of the Renaissance and its classical Greek and Roman architectural details. Stetson worked in the area and built a number of these Georgian mansions that conveyed the prosperity and status of successful sea merchants, traders and the wealthy gentry.

However, after the American Revolution, and in commemoration of the birth of a new republic, American taste shifted toward a more reserved architectural style. The ornate embellishments were simplified or eliminated and the new style preserved and retained the overall classical elements of symmetry and traditional elegance. Stetson's houses reflect an appreciation of this new aesthetic design now referred to as the Federal style.

Stetson also built a number of homes in central Massachusetts including the Oliver Wight House that still stands on its original site in Sturbridge.

When the Wight family first moved to Sturbridge, David Sr. built a "low house," their initial family dwelling, a modest one-and-a-half story home that resembled the ubiquitous style "common houses" in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Later on, after David Wight, Jr. had established his business, he and his wife built their mansion. Preferring the more desirable site occupied by the "low house" which overlooked the river, they had the low house moved 75



The Salem Towne House, Old Sturbridge Village.



yards away. Unfortunately, in 1929 (a disastrous year for many) the David Wight, Jr. mansion was destroyed by fire. Soon after that, a decision was made to return the “low house,” built in 1793, to its original footprint. The David Wight House is a rare surviving example of the prolific style of homes in Worcester County during the late 18th century.

The Society celebrates its partnership with yet another living history museum. It seems so fitting that this rare gem, the historical David Wight House, will now be the HSEAD Research Center, home to another major asset of the Society, the patterns and research from the HSEAD collection.”

Source of information is *Looking Back at the David Wight Farm* by Ed Hood, Research Historian and Vice President of Old Sturbridge Village.

Bellows

by Lynne Richards

Bellows have been in existence since metal smelting (bronze) became possible as early as 3000BC. Bellows helped stoke kindling much quicker and made a much hotter fire which was needed for blacksmithing and smelting.

Dorothy Stone, in the Spring 1953 *Decorator*, described bellows as instruments by which through alternate expansion and contraction draw air in through an inward opening and expel it through a nozzle.

“They consist of 2 boards, usually pear shaped, connected around the edges by a band of leather so as to include an air chamber which can be increased or diminished in volume by separating the boards or bringing them nearer together. The leather is kept from collapsing by wires or reeds, which act like ribs of animals. The lower board has a hole in the center covered inside with a leather flap or valve, which only opens inward. There is also a smaller open outlet in the form of a nozzle. When the upper board is raised, air rushes into the cavity through the valve to fill the partial vacuum produced. On again depressing the upper board, the valve is closed by the air seeking outlet, and this air is discharged through the open nozzle with a velocity depending on the pressure exerted. The air produced comes in a series of puffs, thus stoking the fire.”

Many, of course, were made in beautiful woods with no decoration, but as we can see our early ancestors also wanted them to be functional and pretty. As early American decoration continued throughout the 19th century, we can see the progress of all of our disciplines.



Paint and stencil decorated bellows. Photo courtesy Joseph Rice

Note: Photographs in this article not explicitly attributed are from the HSEAD photo collection.



When the early painters were painting trays, they were also decorating bellows. The first of our group of bellows are examples of country painting. Notice the turtle-back curvature on some of the bellows.

The second group of bellows have early stenciling with beautiful unit behind unit stenciling, progressing into the sim-



Bold and colorful, the painted decoration on these bellows relates to that found on tinware. Some designs used stenciling as an accent, but not as the primary technique.

pler single more abbreviated and quicker to do stencil probably around 1850. During this same time period, others were using the same methods, only adding free hand bronze and gold leaf.

As Victorian Flower Painting evolved so did bellows. Last, but not least, we show a papier mâché bellows with mother-of-pearl decoration.



At first glance this is a typical stenciled cornucopia design, but is actually painted, rather than stenciled. Photo courtesy Kenneth Grimes



Photo courtesy of Janice Kaltaler.



Photo courtesy of Janice Kaltaler.



Photo courtesy of Janice Kaltaler.



Photo courtesy of Jane Domenico





"Smoking" was popular on bellows, and created swirling backgrounds for additional decoration. The back of this bellows clearly shows this technique.
Photos courtesy Lynne Richards.



This "fruit basket" design combines stenciling with lively brush work. Photos courtesy Lynne Richards.

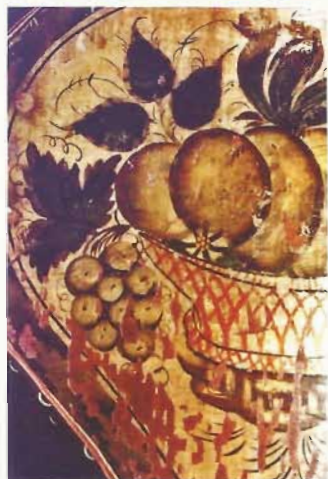


Photo courtesy of Janice Kaltaler.



Photo courtesy Lynne Richards.

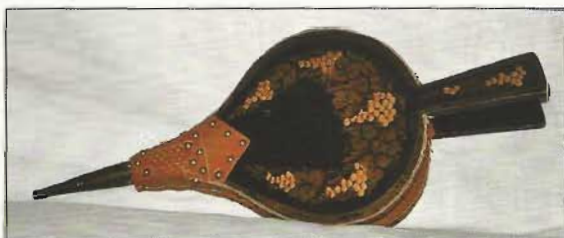


Photo courtesy Kenneth Grimes.

Mr. Grimes makes reproduction bellows, re-leathers and repairs antique bellows, and is an HSEAD vendor and Decorator Sponsor.



A Serendipitous Journey to the Stenciled Bridal Chamber in Northwood, New Hampshire

by Suzanne Korn

On a splendid spring day in April, my destination was the c1786 Nealley House located in the town of Northwood, New Hampshire. The Portsmouth-to-Northwood road I travelled on was the first turnpike built in New Hampshire. Back in the Federal period, there used to be many inns and taverns along this road. These establishments offered fresh horses for the next stage of the journey, as well as food, warmth, and rest to weary wayfarers!

Thousands of miles of new and improved roads were created after the end of the Revolutionary War - roads like this major east-west route that I now found myself on. Once the roads were improved, itinerant artisans, peddlers, professionals, and other individuals selling goods and services were able to gain quicker and easier access to the once isolated villages and farming communities throughout New England. The roads in those days were full of interesting folks - some riding horses, some pushing carts, but most walking. As I drove along this historic road towards Northwood, I could picture the Yankee peddlers selling every sort of useful item, like buttons, books, clocks, and brooms. I could also see the singing and dance instructors and the traveling troupes of entertainers. Further in the distance, I could see the doctors, lawyers, and the

preachers with their worn Bibles tucked under their arms. Sharing the roads with this cast of characters were the itinerant artisans. Some of these artisans were portrait painters, some cut silhouettes, and others stenciled walls with folk art designs inspired by the colorful bounty of nature. I could almost see Moses Eaton, Jr. trudging along with his brushes, pigments, and patterns. Soon he would be knocking on a door, offering his unique ability to forever enhance the living spaces of rural New Englanders.

My first stop in Northwood was at the venerable Chesley Library. Here I was meeting Joann Bailey, Northwood Town Historian. Joann contacted me after her cousin, Pat Ley of Warren, Rhode Island, loaned her a copy of the Spring 2009 *Decorator*. In the *Decorator*, Joann saw my article about early American stenciling. You see, Joann is also an early American stenciling enthusiast. Ever since she wrote about the stenciled bridal chamber at the Nealley House in her book *A Guide to the History and Old Dwelling Places of Northwood*, she had been curious about the origins of the stenciled walls found in this “old dwelling”. Since documenting these historic walls in her 1973 book, she had been wondering if it might have been itinerant stenciler Moses Eaton, Jr. (1796-1886) who made his way down the old stagecoach route, arriving at the Nealley House with stencil kit in hand. It was such a pleasant surprise to receive Joann’s letter introducing me to the stenciled bridal chamber, and inviting me to journey to Northwood to take a look! Always at the ready to take a jaunt back in time to view early stenciled walls and always happy to offer my “professional” opinion, I quickly accepted Joann’s invitation!



Little did I know that a delightful mystery awaited me at the bridal chamber in Northwood!

In 1786, Major John Nealley, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, built a small half-cape home on the eastern slope of Northwood Ridge. The house was soon upgraded to a full two-and-a-half story center chimney house, with the logs that Major Nealley cut and hauled himself. The descendants of Major Nealley lived in the home up until the 1960s. In 1969, the current owners purchased the Nealley House, and began an odyssey of restoration. They breathed new life into this wonderful homestead. The restoration was done with careful attention to the home's historic "bones". Today, the period features and details of the home have been restored to their former glory. The work they did provides a fitting backdrop to the amazing piece of decorative history that fills the room of a second floor bedchamber.

Turning my car into the driveway of the Nealley House, I gazed beyond an ancient fence. Milling around in the springtime mud were half a dozen Black Angus cows. More cows could be seen moseying around in the field beyond. Newborn calves kicked up their heels alongside their mothers, surely celebrating this brisk spring morning. The presence of these great animals provides a truly peaceful feel of yesteryear here at the Nealley House. Approaching the side porch, complete with a vintage boot scraper and Windsor bench, I felt like I was walking back in time... to a simpler, less-hurried time...to a time when the independent spirit of New Englanders was undeniable, and the folk



art decoration on their walls was lively and bright! When Joann and I were graciously greeted by the owners, I was more than eager to see the stenciled walls that Joann described in her book, so many years ago.

After a brief tour of the home, we climbed a steep and narrow set of stairs to the bedchamber with the stenciled walls. Crossing the threshold into the bedchamber, the deep rose hue of the 200 year old walls was quite amazing. The vibrant red and green patterns and motifs seemed perfectly preserved, even after all of these years. Joann tells us that at some point in the history of the home, the room was closed off and shuttered, perhaps for up to 60 years. In addition, wallpaper was never applied to these walls, thus providing to us a simply brilliant example of extant early American stenciling. Looking around the room, I could see quintessential Moses Eaton, Jr. patterns and motifs. Surely it must have been Eaton himself who applied his creativity and eye for design to these ancient walls? ...Or was it?

Eaton's interesting "pine tree and crossed boughs" frieze circles the room at the top of the walls. The border design found along the baseboard is the quaint and eclectic "arch and candle" pattern. The walls are divided into panels with the "lighted candle" vertical stencil. Two flower motifs, frequently seen on walls stenciled by Moses Eaton, Jr., alternate within the panels. Recognizing these well-known designs and patterns gives me a good feeling as to the identity of the artisan who visited this home. But then my eyes fell on the overmantel, where I saw a completely unlikely composition! Surprisingly enough, a small section of Eaton's traditional frieze design, known as "bell and swag", sits directly above the mantel! This design, symbolic of liberty and the pursuit of happiness, would typically be stenciled as the border along the top of the walls! However, in the bridal chamber at the Nealley house, it claims a wonderfully uncommon position! Completing the unusual overmantel arrangement, a pair of weeping willow trees stand sentinel above the bell and swag pattern. The weeping willow motif was a very familiar Eaton design, symbolic of everlasting life. Gazing in wonderment at the overmantel, I now understood Joann's very apt description of this marvelous rose colored wall! In her book she writes:

"In the west bedroom the background color – a soft, deep rose – and the patterns have been remarkably preserved because this room is said to have been closed and shuttered for over sixty years. A pair of willow trees above a swag, bell and heart border decorate the space over the mantel in the rose room. Traditionally, hearts were used only in rooms being prepared for a bride. We may wonder which Nealley treated his intended to such a charmingly decorated bridal chamber."

When I originally read Joann's description of the overmantel, I thought there was something not quite right about it. A pair of willow trees above a swag, bell and heart border decorate the space over the mantel?? Standing in the

little bridal chamber, I could now see that there was something extraordinarily unique and thoroughly charming about the patterns and their placement on this rose colored wall!

Studying the wall further, I saw some other interesting things about the use of the bell and swag pattern on the overmantel. This pattern is typically completed with the use of two stencils; one stencil for the green components and another for the red. On the overmantel at the Nealley House, the color chosen for the first stencil of the bell and swag pattern is green. However, the color usually used for the first stencil in this pattern is red. The colors are flipped from what we typically see. In addition, the second color (in this case red) that fills in such things as the top of the bell, middle piece of the swag, and portions of the bell itself was never applied! How could Moses Eaton, Jr. have forgotten to apply the second color to the pattern?

To “redden up” a bedchamber in preparation for the arrival of a new bride, Eaton would add sweet little hearts to his well known designs. At the Nealley House, he incorporated hearts into his bell and swag overmantel. But again, we have an interesting twist. When hearts are incorporated into this pattern, they are usually found below the bell, serving as the “clapper”. But in this case, the hearts occupy the space below the gathering of the swags. In addition, I could see what appeared to be ad hoc embellishments within the bell and swag design. The bell clapper and little flower designs appear to have been created with the red petal stencil from the larger flower motif. Why would Eaton borrow designs from other patterns in order to complete certain portions of the bell and swag overmantel? Was the second stencil of “bell and swag” missing from Eaton’s stencil kit when he was hired by the Nealley family? What was the circumstance that brought about these charming improvisations?

And as if that were not enough, there are additional curious pattern placements on the overmantel. Flanking each end of “bell and swag”, there is a little red “candle”...a design borrowed from the arch and candle baseboard. Like the bell and swag pattern previously discussed, the arch and candle pattern also seems to be missing its second color! Both the little flower designs as well as the “candles” are missing their red components. However, the red components of the candle were stenciled as standalone designs in two uncusomary spots on the overmantel.

As you can imagine, these puzzling yet completely delightful idiosyncrasies made my trip to the bridal chamber in Northwood a memorable one! Other than these thought provoking quirks, the room is quintessential Moses Eaton! Moses Eaton, Jr. was not unfamiliar to this area of New Hampshire, as he made at least three stops in Deerfield, the town just south of Northwood. The Mack Tavern, the Tuttle House and the Andrew Freese House were all visited by Eaton in the early 1800’s. At these locations he left a colorful trail of his endearing folk art motifs. The similarities of the bridal chamber at the

Nealley House to one of the rooms at the Andrew Freese House in Deerfield are striking. Except for the unique attributes described above, a room found in this home had the same walls of rose, the same frieze of pine tree and crossed boughs, and the same arch and candle baseboard.

I should also note that a stairwell, hallway, and an additional bedroom in the Nealley House were also stenciled with familiar Moses Eaton patterns. One small section of original stenciling remains barely visible in the upstairs stairwell. Here again, Eaton used the pine tree and crossed boughs frieze, along with his often-seen diamond and petal verticals and his motifs of oak leaf cluster and four fan flowers. The owner showed me an old picture of the faint stenciling in the other bedroom before it was painted over. Barely visible in the picture is Eaton's wide frieze of "dainty flowers," a frieze design he also used in homes located in Peterborough, Center Alstead, and Amherst, New Hampshire.

Well, what a terrific mystery surrounds the stenciling in the beautiful bridal chamber at the Nealley House! What was the mysterious circumstance that placed the traditional frieze design of bell and swag on the overmantel? ... And why was it missing its second color, thereby leaving the pattern in effect unfinished? And what accounts for the quirky placement of the red "candles" and hearts? It is certainly fun to muse on what took place! After Moses Eaton, Jr. had already stenciled the frieze with his pine tree and crossed boughs pattern, did someone in the Nealley family spy the quaint bell and swag pattern in his stencil kit...and insist that he work it into the design somehow? Or was Moses Eaton, Jr. travelling with an apprentice.... who was left on his own to design and stencil the overmantel? Or as Joann muses...did a young girl creep into the room and try her



*Author Suzanne Korn
(left) with Joann Bailey,
Northwood Town Historian.*

hand at placement and design after Eaton had retired for the evening? The possibilities are surely endless!

What do I think? I think there was a helper from the Nealley family ...a young boy or girl... who asked the master stenciler for an opportunity to try his or her hand at beautifying the walls in the bridal chamber. With child-like innocence and lack of inhibition, the youngster used Eaton's stencils in new and creative ways. Little did the young stenciler know that he or she would be leaving a truly unique mark on the walls of the bedchamber...a mark that this researcher now ponders 200 years later!

Alas, we will never be certain of the events that led up to the stenciling of this special overmantel. However, one thing we can be certain of...it is a one-of-a-kind! The whimsical arrangement of folk art designs found on this overmantel makes it a lovely and unique treasure to behold. I feel quite fortunate to have had the opportunity to both view and write about this virtually unknown gem of early American stenciling. The remarkable wall stenciling at the Nealley House provides an exciting new chapter in the history of decorative arts in America. Oh, to have been a fly on the wall when the overmantel was stenciled! If only the rose colored walls in the bridal chamber at the Nealley House could speak...imagine the fascinating tale they could tell!





The Making of a Master Craftsman

by Lynne Richards

At the Auburn meeting in the spring of 2010, Carol Heinz was awarded Master Craftsman. This is the highest award for craftsmanship given by the Society to its Brazer Guild members. To achieve Master Craftsman, a member must have received ten "A" awards as follows: Two in Country Painting; one each in Stenciling on Wood, Stenciling on Tin, Freehand Bronze, Metal Leaf, Pontypool Painting and Victorian Flower Painting. In addition, two categories must be represented from the following three: Painting on Glass with a Border, Gilding on Glass and Painted Dials for Tall Case Clocks.

Carol began her journey in 1988 by getting an "A" in Country Painting. As many of us have experienced, at the time we might have felt that that would be all that we might be interested in doing. When you are first starting out, some of the other disciplines seem too fancy or too hard.

In the Spring of 1990, Carol got her second "A" in Country Painting and she was on her way. Spring and Fall of 1991 produced "A"'s in Stenciling on Wood and Stenciling on Tin.



In the Fall of 1993, Carol got her "A" in Pontypool and then her Glass

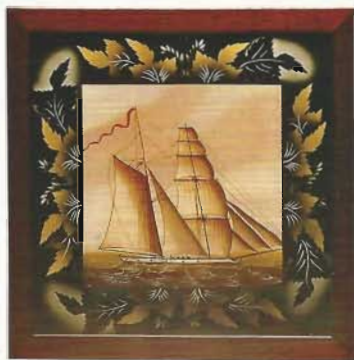
*Top: Carol's 2010 "A" award for Victorian Flower Painting;
Bottom: gold leaf panel, 1995.*

Gold Leaf Panel in 1995. In the Spring of 1996 she produced her Glass with Border, and in 1999 her first Clock Dial. In 2000, she completed a second Clock Dial (which was not required) and she was on to Freehand Bronze Painting for the Spring of 2001. In 2005 she did a second Glass with Border (not a requirement) and in 2007 she completed a Metal Leaf tray. For 2010 she completed her beautiful “A” award Victorian Flower Painting.

Carol stated that Victorian Flower Painting was the most challenging as it incorporated most of the other techniques she had received an “A” award in, plus a technique she was learning. We should note that part of Carol’s whole learning experience was receiving a couple of “B” awards too.

Carol states that doing this was a great “ego booster” and that it gave her a “great sense of accomplishment”. She credits her success to the wonderful teachers she had and the many people who encouraged her along the way.

We hope that there are others out there that are striving for this goal and that they realize that it may not have to



Below: Glass with border, 1996; At right: Glass with border 2005; clock dials from 1999 and 2000.



be accomplished in a short amount of time.

Other Master Craftsmen in our guild are: Carolyn Hedge, Deborah Lambeth, Astrid Donnellan (also a Master Teacher), Roberta Edrington, and Phyllis Sherman.



Above: Country Painting 1990; at left, Country Painting 1988.



Stenciling on wood, 1991



Metal Leaf, 2007



Free-hand Bronze, 2001



Stenciling on tin, 1991



Pontypool, 1993



Book Review

Silhouette: The Art of the Shadow

by Emma Rutherford

Rizzoli International Publications, 2009, 253 pgs.,
oversized (11" x 12"), approximately 300 illustrations.

Review by Sandra Cohen

From ancient Chinese shadow puppetry and Greek Etruscan black figure pottery, the art of the shadow, (shade or silhouetted figures) captivates us with its use of black, its revealing nuanced profiles and dramatic scenarios and staged settings. These dark portrayals and likenesses have an uncanny ability to convey subtle characteristics that not only define what we are witnessing or who the sitter is, they convey both real and ethereal attributes about the character and nature of the people and scenes, a true illustration of 'less is more.'

Rutherford's handsome, oversized volume celebrates these shadowy portraits from cover to cover. Silhouette crafters of the 18th and 19th centuries had keen observation skills and an ability to accurately trace and cut the image, capabilities essential to producing these keepsakes. A candle, scissors, pen, ink and paper were your basic art supplies. The subject would sit before a candle and the reflected image would appear on white paper affixed to the wall. Initially, these likenesses were traced and inked. Scherenschnitte, the art of paper cutting, was already popular in Europe, and soon these two techniques were combined. The forerunner of photography, the silhouette (name derived from Etienne de Silhouette, referencing his frugality) was a fast, thrifty and easy form of portraiture. A handbill stated, "I promise to cut with common scissors! In a few seconds, a striking likeness in profile," *Seville and Son, 1818-1845*.

Ingenuity, imagination and fashion led to its popularity and soon the silhouette became one of the most ubiquitous ways to reproduce one's likeness for personal use or posterity. According to Sir David Piper, author of *The English Face*, "the silhouette is the actual shadow, not just a portrait of the shadow.....the most exact method of recording the outline of a profile.....a historical record of faces."

Rutherford writes that the "silhouette is both something and nothing, a negative and a positive." Artists throughout the centuries have played with the contrast between light and dark. Many of the early silhouettes appear

singularly as one-dimensional black inked or hollow cut images. Later on, backgrounds and details are sketched or painted, yet the silhouette remains clearly in the foreground and these background elements are often there to add interest to the subject rather than depth.

Rutherford's book is one of the most graphic anthologies of silhouette art. Chapter 1, *Science and Fascination*, gives a historical account of this artform. Not surprisingly, there's a rather remarkable reference to Dibutade, an ancient Greek, who traces "her lover's profile cast by candlelight on a wall before he left on a journey." Text and pictures take us on a tour of historical depictions highlighting faces, fashion, mythology and prominent figures. Details, materials and techniques are emphasized in full-page illustrations. Hollow-cuts, paint on card stock, white plaster on slate, painted in pine soot and beer on plaster slab and *scherschnitte* are some of the many ways used to execute this artform.

Dubbed the "Black Knight" by King Charles X, Augustin Edouart (1789-1861) a Frenchman with a preference for the French term, *silhouette*, popularized this art and was its most prolific practitioner (more than 100,000 works) in the 19th century as well as the premiere silhouette artist of his time. His success and the revival and popularity of the silhouette (even after the advent of photography) are a tribute to his artistic skills. Several examples of his works are descriptive portrayals of young adults in animated conversation and children at play. Edouart's "shadows" stand accessible in the foreground with distinctive profiles, coiffed hair and fashionable dress. Attention is paid to bonnets, bows, puffy sleeves and fancy gowns with bustles or casually draping smocks and pantaloons. Gentlemen don high, stiff collars and ribbon ties, top hats and tails, gloves, riding boots and spurs. Stories, status and situations are all cast in silhouette. During his ten years in America (1840's), his profiles were a veritable 'Who's Who' of prominent statesmen.

The author's chapter entitled *Soot and Beer* addresses the innovative approaches to silhouette making where varied techniques and materials resulted in works attempting to approach refined artistic likenesses. While the pantograph enlarged the shadow, its successor, the *physionotrace*, reduced the image, which was then engraved, some in black and others in color. These devices, forerunners to equip-



*Lady feeding a caged bird; Frances Torond
(c.1743-1812), painted on card.*



From Top: Peninnah Herdsfield, Walter Jorden (fl. 1776-86), reverse painted on glass; John Miers, Lady Mary, Daughter of Henry Scott, 3rd Duke of Buccleuch 1746-1812, painted on plaster; An Unknown Lady, John Field, painted on plaster.

ment used in photography were criticized for producing “soulless profiles.” Light, i.e., sunlight, candle light, moonlight, various shades of tinted papers, as well as knives and scissors (hand made or machine made), and painted backgrounds aided in producing competitively attractive choices. Francis Torand’s painted silhouettes in India ink are highly valued elegant depictions of 18th century family life. Silhouettes painted on reverse glass were particularly charming, especially when held in the light, causing their reflection to cast a “shadow” on the card backing. An oval glass silhouette by Walter Jorden features additional line work depicting delicate ribbon and lace around the head of the sitter. Synonymous with painting on ivory, jewelry, and plaster are the names John Miers and John Field who painted silhouettes in pine soot and beer and bronzed their figures on plaster slabs.

Rutherford’s third chapter depicts and illustrates Social Life in Great Britain. Although many professional entrepreneurial opportunities were not encouraged or available for women at this time, some of those fortunate enough to attend academies and art schools for young ladies made their way into the arts and crafts of the times. In 1759, a Parisian newspaper wrote “Our ladies are all drawing the portraits of their friends on black paper, cutting them out, and even giving away their own portraits without this being ill thought of.” Silhouettes of William and Mary have been ‘attributed’ (anonymous was usually a woman) to Mr. Elizabeth Pyburg.

Family life was a readily available context for women whose descriptive cuttings give us a picture of everyday occurrences in the home. Mrs. Mary Wray profiled prominent social and distinguished figures including the poet Thomas Gray and scientist, Sir Joseph Banks. Barbara Anne Townshend published



Top: Early nineteenth-century firescreen, painted on card.
Bottom: An Unknown Family Group, Laura Jemima Muir Mackenzie 1790-1828).

an instruction book, *Introduction to the Art of Cutting Groups of Figures, Flowers, Birds in Black Paper*.

In Profiles of the New World, the author introduces us to the American silhouette where ingenuity combines the best of the old and new. *The Artists' Assistant*, a handbook of techniques published in 1794, encouraged many to try this craft. Boston, the financial center of America through the mid 19th century, became a center for the proliferation of silhouette art. These early itinerant artists traveled all over the country, advertising their skills and availability in advertisements and handbills, carrying the few implements of their trade,

boasting innovative techniques and offering other services. Cottu's, ad stated that he "teaches the French language and Drawing and that his schools for that purpose are open for two days alternately for each of these branches every week." Two prominent artists, William Massey Stroud Doyle and his partner, Daniel Bowen, opened a five-story studio on Tremont St., Boston. Inspired by entrepreneur and artist, Charles Wilson Peale, Doyle and Bowen established a museum/studio where they produced hand and machine cut silhouettes, oil portraits, miniatures and wax profiles. President John Adams, among other prominent people, was a client.

The American silhouette scene is also filled with fascinating and inspiring stories of life in this new frontier. Charles Wilson Peale, an inventor, soldier, artist, legislator and lecturer, had a museum in Philadelphia that included a profile gallery. Moses Williams was the son of a mixed race couple who were given to Peale as payment for a portrait. Moses operated Peale's silhouette-cutting machine, earned enough money to buy his freedom and married Maria, Peale's white cook. Rutherford's bibliography offers further reading about Peale and Williams.



The art of the silhouette continues to intrigue contemporary artists. Kara Walker placed cut paper and adhesive on walls, *Cut* 1998 is 88 by 42 inches. This moving scene reveals an African American girl, cutting her wrists, yet clicking her heels in ecstasy at being liberated. The Whitney Museum in New York held an exhibit of her work in 2007. These large silhouettes, in various sizes mimic shadows cast on a wall. These life size 'shadows' create dramatic illustrations, draw the viewer into the scene and "cast shadows on conventional thinking" as they convey stories of the African American experience.

Rutherford's book unfolds a pictorial presentation of silhouettes unlike any other book on this subject. It's primarily a prolific annotated album of this artform with limited text. Yet, the text provides a sufficient historical context that more than adequately complements the numerous illustrations. The 264 illustrations are also listed, along with a comprehensive two-page bibliography that probably includes everything ever written on this subject. Emma Rutherford's book is an historical tour of this artform and a handsome reference for those who admire, collect and practice the art of shadow profiles.



Above (Left to Right): An Unknown Lady (attributed to William Doyle (1769-1828), painted on laid paper. Anne Birch, self portrait with her youngest daughter, Harriet, 1784. Benjamin Vanderford (1788-1842); hollow-cut on paper and set in shellwork shadowbox.

Right: Cut, Kara Walker, 1998, cut paper and adhesive on walls (88" by 42").

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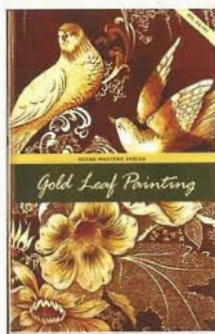
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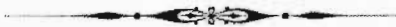
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