

The Decorator

Fall 2013 Vol. 67 No. 2



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The Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc.

The Decorator

Fall 2013 Vol. 67 No. 2

Contents

Letter from the Editor.....	5
Who Was Jenny Lind?.....	6
<i>by Lynne Richards</i>	
Members' "A" Awards, Albany, New York.....	14
New Members.....	24
Members' "B" Awards, Albany, New York.....	25
Gina Martin's Country Tin Patterns.....	28
(A David Wight House Legacy)	
<i>by Virginia O'Brien</i>	
Working from an Original.....	33
<i>by Carolyn Hedge</i>	
Book Review	36
The Art of the Painted Clock Dial - A Unique British Folk Art	
<i>by M. F. Tennant</i>	
<i>Reviewed by Sandra Cohen</i>	
Decorator Sponsors	43

Front cover: Original mirror courtesy of Jeanne Gearin

Back cover: Original mirror courtesy of Jinny O'Brien

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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.

HSEAD's Vision and Mission: HSEAD will be and will become recognized as a preeminent national authority on Early American Decoration. HSEAD will be a strong, growing organization committed to educating an increasingly diverse audience. Through the use of expanded marketing and educational outreach, HSEAD will promote the relevance of Early American Decoration's craftsmanship and design. HSEAD will provide an opportunity for future generations to gain new skills by seeing the beauty of the past through traditional and modern methods, as well as appreciating the values of preservation and authenticity.

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Letter from the Editor

Our first article, “*Who Was Jenny Lind*”, was suggested to me by Virginia O’Brien. Jinny has an original mirror from her family, and suddenly began thinking that she had never seen an article about the reverse painted glass that we describe as “Jenny Lind”. It was great fun researching this article and we came up with many patterns that our members have done!

In the Awards section, our members produced some really spectacular pieces! In addition to the wonderful *Basic Class* awards, several pieces were from *Expanded Class* and *Honors Class*. I love to see things from both of these classes because it gives us a greater diversity of patterns.

Gina Martin’s Country Tin Patterns was written by Virginia O’Brien. Jinny has helped with the decoration and upkeep of the David Wight House from its inception and helped catalogue the patterns. Gina Martin is one of several people that the research center has in their collection for us to draw from.

At the Albany meeting in May 2013, many of us saw the four beautiful snuffer trays that had been done by Carolyn Hedge. We were awed at the wonderful designs that she was able to pull out of the original pieces and then, of course, paint onto her snuffers. I asked Carolyn to write an article about how she goes about interpreting what she sees from originals. She very kindly obliged, and wrote an article so that we may follow her directions and reproduce some of our own trays from originals.

In this issue, Sandra Cohen reviews M. F. Tennant’s book on *The Art of the Painted Clock Dial, A Unique British Folk Art*. If you love clock dials like I do, this is a wonderful book with some fantastic examples of clock dials like I have never seen before. The scenes from some of the painters are beautiful as are the vignettes in the corners. It inspires me to start painting more clock dials!

Lynne Richards,
Decorator Editor

Who was Jenny Lind?

by
Lynne Richards

Where and when the *Jenny Lind* style of reverse paintings on glass became fashionable is still questionable, but it is reasonable to assume that these occurred at the same time that Jenny Lind was popular. The reverse paintings on glass which are shown here are many exam-



Original glass - courtesy of Peg Rodgers

ples that our members have painted, done in the *Jenny Lind* style. There are also a couple of original ones. The “style” includes Jenny Lind on stage with the curtains as a background.

Johanna Maria Lind, better known as Jenny Lind was born October 6, 1820, to a poor mother in Stockholm, Sweden.¹ Lind’s moth-

er, because of religious beliefs, would not marry again until her first adulterous husband had died. Lind’s mother and biological father were married when Lind was fourteen.²

Lind began singing at an early age and when she was nine was overheard by Mademoiselle Lundberg, the principal dancer at the Royal Swedish Opera.³ Lundberg managed to get Jenny Lind an audition to the acting school of the Royal Dramatic Theatre. There she studied with Karl Magnus Craelius, the singing master at the theatre.⁴ By ten she had started to sing on stage. Unfortunately, when she was twenty, because of not having been trained with a proper singing technique, she had to



Painted by the late Ann Baker



Painted by Mae Fisher

was singing at the Stockholm Opera. It was shortly after that, that she acquired the name of “The Swedish Nightingale”.⁶ In 1843, she toured Denmark, and it was there that Hans Christian Anderson met and fell in love with her. Unfortunately for him, the feeling was not reciprocal. He even came to her house on Christmas Eve to be with her, but she left to be with her friends. He asked her why she did not have feelings for him and she handed him a mirror.⁷ Lind is believed to have inspired three of Hans Christian Anderson’s fairy tales: “Beneath the Pillar”, “The Angel”, and “The Nightingale”.⁸ He wrote, “No book or personality whatever has exerted a more ennobling influence on me, as a poet, than Jenny Lind. For me she opened the sanctuary of art”.⁹ Hans Christian Anderson was not her only suitor. Felix Mendelssohn was another admirer and teacher. He wrote “Jenny Lind has fairly enchanted me; she is unique in her way, and her song with two concertante flutes is perhaps the most incredible feat in the way of bravura singing that can possibly be heard”.¹⁰



Painted by Dee Samsell

In 1847, Lind travelled to London to sing at Her Majesty’s Theatre where Queen Victoria was present. There was so much commotion

stop singing. A singing teacher from Paris, Manuel Garcia, told her not to sing for three months to allow her vocal cords to recover and “he gave her the best of instructions for the care and improvement of her voice”.⁵ Under his tutelage, she was able to slowly bring back her voice to its previous tone.

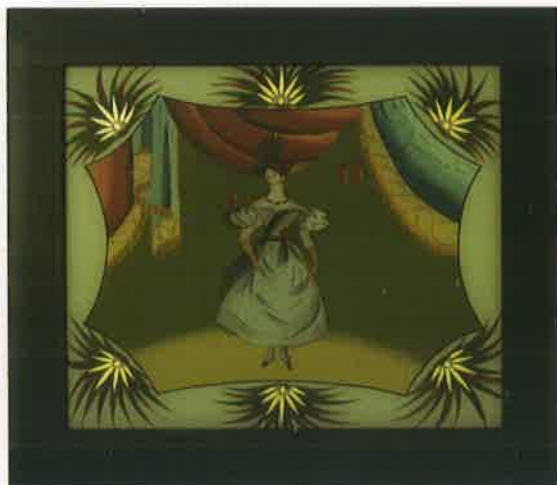
By the time she was 23, Lind’s voice had recovered and she



Original glass - owned by Anne Dimock

speculated, but not proven, that there may have been more than a business relationship. He wrote the beginnings of an opera, *Lorelei*, for her, based on the legend of the Lorelei Rhine maidens; he had not finished it when he died in November of 1847. In Leipzig, she was able with the help of several other people, to fund a scholarship in his name, "to receive pupils of all nations and promote their musical training".¹³

Lind performed many operas in Berlin, Vienna, Stockholm and other European cities. Some of the opera characters which she performed as were as Amena in *Sonnambula*, as Agatha in *Der Freyschutz*, and as Alice in *Robert le Diable*. In *Robert le Diable*, Lind replaced the lead singer as Alice when the crowds demanded to hear more of her. It was after a performance of *Robert le Diable* that Lind announced her permanent retirement from 'opera' on 10 May 1849.¹⁴



Anne Dimock's reproduction of original glass

One of the things that Lind enjoyed the most was to perform either without a fee or with a small fee and then give her proceeds to charities.

that "Hats disengaged from owners' heads, and flattened in an instant; coats were rent in the struggle to obtain entrance and ladies fainted".¹¹ Queen Victoria was so entranced that she tossed her own bouquet of flowers at the singer's feet.¹²

Mendelssohn worked closely with Lind to help with her success and it is

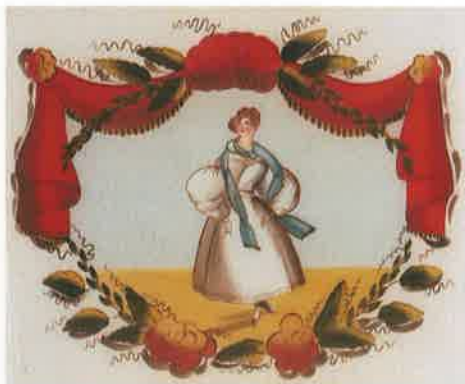


Painted by Diane Thompson

She did this so many times it became a key aspect of her performance.

Shortly after the announcement of her retirement, she was contacted by a representative of P. T. Barnum with a proposal to tour in the United States. Lind knew that this money would allow her the means to

set up a free school in Sweden, so she accepted and demanded that P. T. deposit the equivalent of \$187,000¹⁵ in a London bank as an advance payment before she would sail to America. She would get two servants, a musical director and a male singer to accompany her in duets. Barnum would also pay her hotel and travel expenses.¹⁶ Barnum borrowed money and mortgaged property and then arranged for her to come to New York for a concert tour.



Painted by Astrid Donnellan



To create a media frenzy, Barnum hired several reporters to write about Jenny in their newspapers. The stories focused on her personal and religious life.

5 x 7 painting at the HSEAD Research Center donated by the estate of Ellen Teuber.



Painted by Dorma West

They made her out to be “saintly”, “unselfish” and to have a “beautiful spirit”. Barnum said “She will be adored, even if she sings like a crow”.¹⁷ “Lind Mania” had begun!

When her boat, the steamship *Atlantic*, arrived in the New York harbor, signal flags let the crowd know that she was arriving. The New York police had to push back the

enormous crowds estimated at between 30,000 – 40,000 people. That night, there was a parade of New York firemen, carrying torches, and escorting a group of local musicians who played serenades to Jenny Lind as she sat in her hotel, the Irving House, on Broadway.¹⁸

After a tour of all the possible venues in New York City she could begin her concerts at, it was decided that the Castle Garden would best suit her. It was located at the tip of Manhattan Island and had originally been a fort which had been converted into an auditorium. As part of his advertising and publicity to create demand for tickets for her concert, (held September 11, 1850), P. T. Barnum decided to auction off the first ticket. It was bought by John Genin for \$225, which was a phenomenal amount in 1850 considering that regular tickets sold for \$6.¹⁹ Mr. Genin owned a hat shop in New York City and after he bought the first ticket, his hat shop became the most successful hat shop in the country.²⁰ Similar auctions were held in Boston, MA with the winning bid \$625 and in Providence, RI with a \$650 bid.²¹ From that first concert, Jenny Lind had wanted to donate \$10,000 to the firemen and orphanages in New York. According to the P. T. Barnum Museum, Jenny was short \$500 so P.T. Barnum made up the difference.²² All through these concerts Jenny continued to donate her first night profits to local charities.



Painted by the late Elaine Dalzell



Painted by Joyce Holzer

until May of 1852, but without P.T. Barnum's advance publicity she did not get the crowds that she had had before. These concerts included many cities on the East and West Coasts, and Canada. For the concerts she did complete with P. T. Barnum, she earned about \$350,000; P. T. Barnum earned \$700,000.²⁵

While in the U.S. giving tours, she had to replace her pianist and conductor. She hired a man by the name of Otto Goldschmidt and towards the end of her tour they married on February 5, 1852. They returned to Europe in May of that year, first living in Germany, and in 1855 returning to England where they remained for the rest of their lives. They had three children: Otto, born September 1853 in Germany, Jenny, born in March 1857 in England, and Ernest, born January 1861 in England.²⁶



Painted by Judy Thornton

After she returned from the U.S. she refused requests to sing in operas although she did choose to participate in an oratorio composed by her husband. She retired from singing in 1883 and died at Wynd's Point on November 2, 1887 at the age of 67. She left much of her wealth to poor Protestant students in Sweden to help them receive an education.

The wit and advertising prowess of P. T. Barnum certainly propelled Jenny Lind's career to much greater proportions than she herself could ever



Painted by Jinny O'Brien

have imagined. Many items bear her name including the *Jenny Lind Polka*, *Jenny Lind Island* (in Canada), the *Jenny Lind Locomotive* and a clipper ship, the *USS Nightingale*. An Australian Schooner named *Jenny Lind* in her honor in 1857 was wrecked in a creek on the Queensland coast and the creek was appropriately named *Jenny Lind Creek*.²⁷

In the U.S., there are street names in Fort Smith, Arkansas; McKeesport, Pennsylvania; North Easton, Massachusetts; and Stanhope, New Jersey. She has also been honored since 1948 by the Barnum festival, which takes place each June and July in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Other things named for Jenny Lind are beds, dishes, trivets, bonnets, and opera glasses (to be used by any lady attending a Jenny Lind concert), shawls, cigars, poker chips, paper dolls, chewing gum and sewing machines.²⁸ Few women have ever been so honored.

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*Courtesy of Dennis Holzman Antiques
Cohoes NY*

Members' "A" Awards
2013 Annual Meeting, Albany, New York



Roberta Edrington

Victorian

**Flower Painting
(Expanded Class)**

*The originals do not have
a border scroll or the fine
brushwork that is required for
judging.*



**Lucia
Murphy**

**Stenciling
on Tin
(Expanded
Class)**

*The original has a
minimum of unit
behind unit for
judging.*

Polly Bartow
Country Painting
(Expanded Class)

The original does not have the stripes required for judging.



Polly Bartow
Country Painting
(Expanded Class)

The original does not have the stripes required for judging.

Linda Brubaker
Oil Theorem
Pattern # 101





*Linda
Brubaker
Pontypool*



*Linda Brubaker
Oil Theorem
Pattern #50*



*Linda Mason
Reverse Painting
on Glass*

Polly Bartow

Penwork

Top

*There are more views of
this piece on hsead.org*



Front



Mary Avery

Oil Theorem

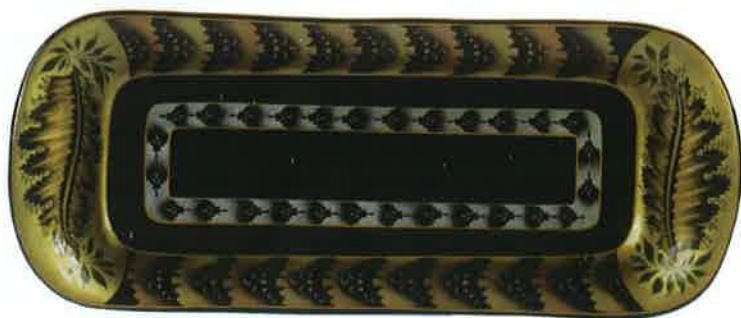
Pattern #159



Joan Dobert
Watercolor Theorem
Pattern #125

Polly Bartow
Penwork





Carolyn Hedge
Honors Class



Anne Dimock
Honors Class
Reverse Painting
on Glass



Anne Dimock
Reverse Painting
on Glass



Alexandra Perrot
Watercolor Theorem
Pattern #25

Nancy Corcoran
Penwork

*There are more views of this
piece on hsead.org*



Linda Brubaker
**Reverse Painting
on Glass**

Pat Evans
Oil Theorem
Pattern #46





Dolores Furnari

Oil Theorem

Pattern #87

Joanne Balfour

Oil Theorem

Pattern #41

submitted as a pair



Joanne Balfour

Oil Theorem

Pattern #40

submitted as a pair

Betty Eckerson

Penwork

*There are more views of
this piece on hsead.org*



Dolores Furnari

Watercolor Theorem

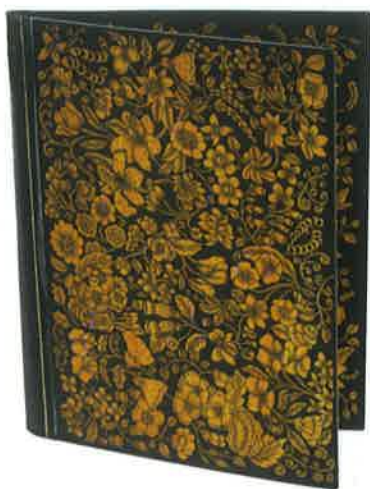
Pattern #132

Robert Flachbarth

Oil Theorem

Pattern #159





Lois Tucker

Penwork

*There are more views of this piece on
hsead.org*



Susan

Naddeo

**Stenciling
on Tin**



Welcome to New Members

Shirley Hanley; Doris Houghton; Linda Sheldon

"B" Awards



Mary Avery
Watercolor Theorem
Pattern #128

Debra Fitts
Country Painting



Lois Tucker
**Freehand
Bronze**

Anne Dimock
**Gold Leaf
on Glass**





*Alexandra
Perrot
Freehand
Bronze*

*Debra Fitts
Country Painting*



*Diane Tanerillo
Oil Theorem
Pattern #29*



***Roberta
Edrington***
Honors Class
Freehand
Bronze

Polly Bartow
Country Painting
(Expanded Class)

*The original lacks overtones that are
required for judging.*



Lois Tucker
Freehand
Bronze

Gina Martin's Country Tin Patterns (A Legacy at the David Wight House)

by
Virginia S. O'Brien

In 1950, Virginia Martin, Wapping CT, was a wife with a busy home and social life, mother of two daughters, a number one sports car driver in CT and New England and a Master Craftsman and teacher in HSEAD. She was also determined to write a book on country tin. She had accumulated a personal collection of patterns of country tin, many with tracings and photos. Generated by her interest in the characteristics of decorating in the operating tin-shops, this became the inspiration for the four volume series *American Painted Tinware* by Gina, and Lois Tucker (with the help of Mona Rowell). This industrious and persistent woman's personal patterns are now a part of the collection at the HSEAD Research Center at OSV. Gina studied with Esther Stevens Brazier, a pioneer in Early American Decoration (EAD). She exhibited her work throughout New England and was a charter member, trustee, and chairman of the judging committee of HSEAD. She was also a member of the Society for Connecticut Craftsmen and the Art League of South Windsor.

When her family and friends heard of the plan to write a book they brought old family pieces and patterns to be researched, photographed and recorded. Gina's hand-written notes mention originals owned by Nora Van Riper, Molly Porter, Bernice Drury, Ceil Tanner, Dr. Stannard, Margaret Willey, Marion Mathews, Peg Coffin and a host of others too numerous to list here. Many people from several states shared their objects and information in the interest of documenting examples of EAD. Gina also recorded the names of people

who helped her in the actual recording of patterns which number in the hundreds; years of work for Gina, and many, many donated hours by the "Who's Who" in the Guild, painters and collectors. There is even a pattern from an original owned by "Grandma Moses", patterns attributed to family members



*Copied from an original negative
Owned by the late Florence Wright*

of the various tin-shop owners and a few with the decorator or owner's names and dates scratched on the back. The characteristics of the decoration might be considered "signatures" in themselves as they relate to specific tin-shops and are quite easily recognizable with some study.

The patterns are tabulated, numbered, filed under the name of the state, name of the tin-shop and in some cases, by a specific characteristic of the decoration. i.e. blue flowers, yellow flowers, etc. They also are marked with individual identification, code numbers and the identification numbers of the negatives for reference photos if they exist or are included with the painted pattern. There is also an inventory of the country tin patterns prepared by Gina.



*Original owned by Don Kellogg
From the late Marion Poor*

There are patterns for deed boxes and trunks of many sizes, a variety of large and small tin boxes including tiny shoe blacking boxes, molasses mugs, other drinking vessels, pitchers, bowls, cut corner trays, and canisters in various sizes, match holders, bread and apple trays, tea caddies, pots, coffee pots, sconces, round and oval sugar bowls. If you have something made of tin, there's an appropriate pattern for it in the collection.



Can you imagine decorating tin in a tin-shop or in your home (cottage industry) day-in and day-out with paint that you had to make along with some purchased paint that had to be mixed to get the desired color? Perhaps the brushes had to be made as well. Family members and appren-

Crystallized floor and sides with asphaltum on the outside; black on the bottom. Inset of original.

tices in the tin-shops decorated copious amounts of tin for a few cents a day that peddlers then sold to early settlers to brighten their homes. The decorators were imaginative and spontaneous in the execution of singular and groups of strokes; fat strokes, thin strokes, upright and upside-down strokes, vertical



*Copied from an original English Tea Caddy
at Sturbridge Village*

and horizontal strokes...strokes of many kinds and shapes! Miles of pin-strikes, thin stripes, thick stripes, single stripes and multiple stripes decorated the tops, fronts and sides of the objects!

A wide range of fanciful designs combine strokes, flowers, fruits, leaves, slash marks, dots and geometrics, (particularly circles and ovals on a variety of asphaltum or painted backgrounds). Vermilion, alizarin crimson, white, black, dark green, olive green, blue-green, yellow ochre, chrome yellow, burnt sienna, and burnt umber, were some of the more popular colors. Blue, salmon, and yellow appeared in some specific shops. Designs were painted on "dirty-white", cream colored

and white bands of all sizes, scalloped bands, bands of half circles, etc. as well as directly upon the painted backgrounds of black, red, white, and chrome yellow. Strokes of all kinds and sizes followed the stripes and bands in countless combinations as well as standing along in decorative motifs. Variations on basic fruit, flowers, and stroke design themes were adapted again and again on item after item. The decorators seemed never to run out of fresh approaches with basic country forms. The designs with a multitude of variations are there to be studied in Gina's personal collection and in the books authored by Gina, and Lois Tucker.

The patterns are in good physical condition given the age of the collection and materials available to mount and cover painted patterns in the time-frame of Gina's work. They require care in handling and storage equal to that of any well-kept personal collection and in keeping with the policies of the HSEAD Research Center. Gina and her friends were recording patterns as close to the originals as possible. Her hand-written notes describe colors



Copied from the original trunk owned by the late Molly Porter - Asphaltum background

9 11/16 x 7 1/16 x 5 3/4

that are out of the ordinary or questionable for some reason and recommend alternative solutions where necessary. She was collecting a massive amount of documentation for EAD on tin as well as other types of EAD disciplines. The patterns were meant for her personal use and the use of others with the information to be communicated through her research and Lois' writing. The bulk of the patterns were not painted for the judging process that she helped to establish in the Guild, though some of them might have been practice work for the process. The collection is a "working collection". The amount and scope of the work that she accomplished and encouraged others to contribute to, is more than commendable for the purpose of documenting the history of EAD in the areas that she researched and left for future painters to learn from.

Gina's collections in the HSEAD Research Center which includes her collection of country tin, is an amazing and invaluable "hands-on" working tool for students of EAD to be respected and preserved as part of the history of EAD in America. To top it off, the collection is augmented by Lois Tucker's scholarly, well-organized and presented research on the subject of country tin which is also available for study at the HSEAD Research Center!



Copied from an original tea caddy owned by the late Mary Jane Clark Black background

Come see for yourself. Browse, study and work with the archives that former members, family and friends recognized as the documentation of the development of a major cultural period in America. The pattern collection, now back from the Museum of American Folk Art, numbers over 2500. Past members, officers of HSEAD, artists and their families knew this to be an important asset. They dedicated much time and effort to assemble and secure an appropriate place for it 19 years ago when it was in jeopardy. For the student of EAD, it is an historical "story book". You will know or have heard of many of the people cited on the patterns, recognize the works and gain much knowledge to enhance your painting experience. HSEAD is fortunate to have the opportunity once again to steward, grow and preserve the collection which was assembled for you by people who cared very much about the cultural enlightenment of future generations and spent countless hours documenting EAD in America.

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4. Phone conversation - Lois Tucker, co-author "*American Painted Tinware*" series, HSEAD.



Copied from an original trunk from North Coventry CT. The original was on an asphaltum background.

Working from an Original

by

Carolyn Hedge

An original, defined for the purposes of HSEAD, is when the decoration is original to the antique article. These articles can be composed of tin, rolled sheet iron, papier-mache, wood or glass. These pieces were made and decorated in England, Europe, Asia, and America from around 1750 through 1860. Pieces before 1750 are rare, but they do exist, and there are many pieces after 1860, but they were usually quickly done. This applies to the categories of Country Painting, Stenciling on Wood, Stenciling on Tin, Freehand Bronze, Metal Leaf, Pontypool Painting, Victorian Flower Painting, Reverse Glass Painting with a Border, Gilding on a Glass Panel, and Clock Dials.

If you love to paint, work on puzzles, or read a mystery novel, then working from originals is definitely for you. If you're interested, here are the basic procedures that I follow when working from an original, hopefully they will be helpful to you.

If you have never worked from an original before, it would be best to start with an original that has its' design intact, then all you need to focus on is recording the design as accurately as you can.

1. **STUDY THE ORIGINAL:** Look at it in bright sunlight, the brightest indoor light you have, also outside on a bright sunny day in a slightly shady spot; this is my favorite, where you can see very well without eye strain. I also use a magnifier to study the piece.

What to look for. Take the design apart in your mind. Look at each unit and think how you would reproduce it. Really break it down, instead of putting the puzzle together, you are taking it apart.

2. **PHOTOGRAPH THE ORIGINAL:** Get an overall view of the entire antique article. Take a shot of the overall design. Break the design down, and get a close up of each unit (a flower, a leaf, or one piece of the design). It is helpful to also get a shot of a unit including the units that surround it so you can study their relationship to each other. Make sure you get a shot of every unit on the entire original. Many times the camera lens will capture things more clearly than the human eye. Use this to your advantage. This is still part of taking the puzzle apart.

3. **TRACE THE DESIGN:** I use clear acetate and a Micron .005 pen. For gold leaf I trace with a brush and various colors of One Shot. I like acetate because it has enough static cling to hold the acetate in place with the help

of magnets, so I can get a very accurate tracing. If you are recording a design on papier-mâché, put one magnet on top of the acetate, and one magnet on the underside of the piece, the two magnets will cling to each other and hold the tracing very securely. This also works on wood.

When you are tracing the design, this is a great opportunity to really study the design line by line and brushstroke by brushstroke. This is still part of taking the puzzle apart.

4. **WORK UP INDIVIDUAL UNITS:** This is done before you make a pattern of the design. This gives you the opportunity to get the color just right, determine how the brushstrokes were formed, and what order they were laid. Do this step in every HSEAD category. This is part of solving the puzzle.
5. **MYSTERY AREAS:** The areas that you do not know how they were done; for example, how do you achieve the beautiful mahogany background on the gold leaf snuffer tray?

FOLLOW THE CUES:

- The small sprig of leaves unit behind the gold leaf design was definitely stenciled because the tracing of the sprig of leaves was exactly the same on all the repeats.
- If it were stenciled then it must be done in bronze powder?
- The background of the tray was not even in color, it went from black with a soft transition to a deep red mahogany color. Out in the bright sunlight these deep red mahogany areas had some reflection of light. Could this be bronzing powder?
- My guess is that the stenciling was done over a black background, because of the deep dark black areas, but what was done first, the sprig of leaves or the dusted background? Looking at the original, the stenciling did not have hard edges, so my guess is that the stenciling was done first, and then the background around the stenciling was dusted into the same stenciling varnish, thus softening the edges of the leaves.
- What color of bronzing powder to use? What color and pigment to use over the stenciling? My guess is that I would need a transparent color wash over the powders to get the reflection of light that was still coming through on the original after all these years.
- Armed with these guesses, I proceeded to experiment with colors of powders and color washes until the results compared to the original. A mixture of fire and rich gold got the right contrast. The color wash was a mixture of Alizarin Crimson Golden, Grumbacher + Asphaltum and Rembrandt + Greenish Umber. The Grumbacher was mixed with varnish on a large palette and applied with a bob. It took two applications to get the right depth of color. That mystery was solved. I consider a mystery solved when I can duplicate the “look” of the original. The background on this snuffer tray is very simple and does not have the great depth of the background that

Astrid Donnellan wrote about in *The Decorator*, Fall 2012, Vol. 66 No.2, Page 16.

6. **MISSING OR DAMAGED:** Areas in a design that has repeated design motifs can usually be figured out. A good example is the original stenciled snuffer tray, even though it is in very poor condition, enough design can be found that the complete design can be reconstructed. It just takes a lot of detective work. This mystery is solved.

However, the gold leaf design on the original snuffer tray with the mahogany background has very worn ends with many parts missing in the design. There are no repeat motifs on this original. Make a very close study of a piece like this: record everything that can be seen. You will be surprised by how much information you can get. Make a tracing of this information, and then fill in the blanks, keeping in mind the design of the rest of the piece. You would be surprised how little I had to add. When you make a pattern of a piece like this, always make a note on your tracing and on your pattern where you added to the missing design. You should always include good photographs, because someone may see something you have missed. This has happened to me! This mystery isn't really solved until someone comes across another snuffer tray with the same design with the missing parts intact!

7. You are now ready to put the puzzle back together by painting a pattern and, hopefully, a piece for judging.

I wish you great success with your puzzles and mysteries and loads of fun painting.



The Art of the Painted Clock Dial A Unique British Folk Art

by
M.F. Tennant

*Mayfield Books, Derbyshire, England, 2009; Hardcover, 351 pgs.,
730 illustrations and more than 500 in color.*

Reviewed by Sandra Cohen

Curiosity and fascination about tracking time can be traced to ancient history; Egyptian shadow casting obelisks and sundials (3,500-1,500 B.C.) and the sophisticated setting of Stonehenge, (2,000 -3,000 B.C.), a time keeper for “solar and lunar events.... set on the axis of the midwinter and midsummer solstices” were just the beginning of man-made devices to mark and predict, with a consistency, the passage of time.

Five thousand years later, the date and time of day is at arm's length, on wrist-watches and cell phones, on wall and steeple clocks, on almost any electronic device in any location; in this 21st century, time can now be measured to the millisecond! Gauging the passage of time has been accomplished and numerous devices for displaying this information are not only ubiquitous, but also as varied in artistic expression as any work of adornment. It is no surprise that the faces of time, from the small wristwatch, to medium size mantel clocks, to longcase (grandfather) clocks would wear their own decorative façades.

The Art of the Painted Clock Dial, A Unique British Folk Art by M.F. Tennant is another in a line (becoming longer) of books dedicated to the ornamentation of clock dials. Born in New York City, Mary Francis Tennant's university work concentrated on British medieval illuminated manuscripts, and later at the Parsons School of Design, her studies included costume design, fine art and graphics. A specialist in restoring clock dials, Tennant resides in Wales, and her book is a celebration of the more than 2,000 clock dials that she has restored, photographed and featured in her book.

As a student of fine art, it is no wonder that the author begins her treatise with the question, “What is Art?” That art should “delight, inform, amuse... amaze the viewer...cause reflection, consternation and even anger...” is illustrated in the numerous illustrations of decorated clock dials (more than 750) documented in her anthology. Brass dials “with painted moon faces and starry skies” were produced from 1725 to the 1800s. In the mid 1800s, landscapes appeared on each side of the moon dial as well as a separate painted



Brass dials "with painted moon faces and starry skies" were painted from 1725 to the 1800's.

scene in the arch. Tennant tells us that the skilled craftsmen and the materials needed for the production of the painted clock dial were concentrated in Birmingham. The author focuses on major Birmingham clockmakers and their painted dials, highlighting the variety of artistic designs as well as decorated dials in Manchester, Halifax and Scotland. Unfortunately, many of the craftsmen remain anonymous, but their styles often enable the researcher to both associate them with the manufactory and facilitate placing the work within a certain time period.

Interest in the natural world, reflected in much of the fine art at this time and echoed in the designs seen on porcelain and fabrics also inspires artists of painted clock dials. An advertisement by 19-year old Thomas Osborne and 17-year-old James Wilson in September 1772 provides the "earliest record for painted clock dials for longcase clocks." Osborne came from a family of clockmakers (grandfather, Humphrey III) and was himself apprenticed to miniature painter, John Barnes. Osborne's artistic skills are so remarkable that they are a key to identifying his unsigned dials. Floral motifs, landscapes (from pastoral settings to ancient ruins), seascapes that include sailing galleons and battle scenes, as well as historical, mythological and biblical events are all artistic subject matter for decorated clock faces. Horizontal ovals provide a perfect canvas framed by a gold leaf gesso border. Geometric and scrolled designs are sometimes used on the spandrels to complement



Country or agricultural scenes were popular from the early 1820's. This sort of dial often had shepherds, shepherdesses or reapers as a central figure.

the pattern in the arch. In 1777, after 5 years, Osborne and Wilson ended their partnership, and Thomas Osborne died shortly after that (1778-79) at the young age of twenty-six.

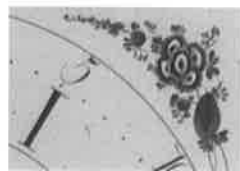


This landscape was painted by George Walker in 1811. The scene is reminiscent of many fine British paintings of the period. Notice the many very fine lines and a twisting movement in the motifs.

(now on display at the American Clock and Watch Museum, Bristol, CT) and in Massachusetts. The Willard House Museum in Grafton, MA has eight longcase clocks with Osborne dials on exhibit. The author states that the Osborne manufactory's shipments of clock dials to the USA influenced the development of the painted clock dials in America.

The author discusses a variety of arched dials such as the "low oval" and "tall oval," neither prolific but each uniquely conducive to landscape and single-figure painting respectively. Moon dials and dials with "automata" (moving parts that were articulated, such as rocking ships that were prone to damage and loss) were the most expensive. Seeing the phases of the moon was useful knowledge; moonlight facilitated longer visibility in the evening enabling work and travel; dials intended for a

seacoast residence included tidal indications. The square dial (sans arch) was the most affordable. One of the many featured is one easily identified as an Osborne dial by the 'Auricula flowers' in the corners. Tennant writes, "in order to paint this flower convincingly, several layers of paint have to be used." Often, older dials can be identified as Osborne because it is only this particular decoration on the corners that survives in recognizable form.



Auricula flower on corners can identify clocks by Thomas Osborne.

James Wilson continued his work at 11 Great Charles Street, Birmingham (after the partnership dissolved) where he becomes the most prolific painted clock dial maker in the latter part of the 18th and early 19th century. His mark (Wilson, Wilson, Birm or J), a 'white paint sploge' and the Wilson paper 'job tickets' bearing names and other information are inconsistent and often difficult to read. Unlike Osborne, who painted most of his dials, a number of different artisans were involved in painting Wilson's clock dials. However, Tennant observes that the flower work, gesso, gold leaf and numbering are the



A different style of decoration on an arched dial made for Charles Morris of Hull just before Wilson died in 1809. There are round multicolored vignettes in the corners with gray acanthus leaves. The arch has an oval classical style vignette with acanthus leaves and also some gesso work. There are Arabic hour numerals, but the minutes have the later development of being only numbered on the quarters.

work of different craftsmen, and the variety of decoration on Wilson's dial is remarkable and stunning. Dials with the expensive gesso with gold leaf as the sole decoration were soon deleted from his repertoire.

The range and sophistication of subject matter and design elements suggest the brush of a fine artist and are beautifully depicted, for the most part in color, and

enhanced by the quality of the paper and photography in Tennant's book. The use of transfers (applying prints instead of hand painting) could somewhat lower the price of the dial depending, of course, on the type of other decorative elements. For example, small oval vignettes with miniature landscapes dressed each corner as well as the center of the arch along with some gesso work and were surrounded by transfer prints. Note Arabic hour numerals and only quarter-hour markings. Wilson moved from the Roman numerals to the more modern Arabic numbers around 1800 along with some classical geometrical patterns in the corners, and he experimented with more elaborate painting and design elements such as roundels and a rare applied cast-brass corner decoration on a red lacquered metal base. Representing the Four Seasons in each corner was expensive



The four corners represent the Four Seasons and was a more expensive alternative. A Wilson dial made for William Waight 1 of Birmingham.



Sometimes a Wilson arch has a roundel with either an urn or bird painted on a coloured background. The side decoration in the arch is the same style as the corners. In this case there is a green background which tended to be used about 1795-1800. The round motif usually has a pale yellow ground. This dial was made for Benjamin Cope of Bewdley about 1798.



Gold leaf roses were used in the corners and low-key paintings of swans decorate the dial centre. Wilson's moons often had more colorful faces than earlier. This dial was made about 1806 for Henry Wardlow of Liverpool. Note the curved Arabic numerals.

and desirable, and although many were produced, these dials were not exported. More popular were the modest renditions of birds, fruits and flowers with the centers left undecorated to allow the clock makers abroad the discretion to use their own artists and designs.

Wilson's dials mirrored the fashionable trends and burst with color, variety and innovative compositions. His dials mixed painting, gold leaf on gesso scrolls, urns

and flowers, curved or flared tumbling Arabic numerals, transfer prints and painted elements on the inner dial. The artistry echoes designs from painted ceramic and china, and these artists' skills are masterfully showcased on the faces of a long case clock. The numerous color illustrations of painted dials, their manufactories and their variety and innovations over time are comprehensively presented. Included in her treatise is the partnership of Samuel Wilkes and Samuel Baker, 1815-1820.



The dial on the left was made by Wilkes for Thomas Taylor of Manchester in the 1840s. The two dials have similar hemispheres and makes the author wonder if there is a cartel at work.

The Wilkes/Baker partnership (their manufactory was located near Ann and James Osborne on Whittall Street) was short lived with Wilkes and Son issuing a price catalogue of *Japanned Clock Dials* in 1820. Very few dials from the brief Wilkes/Baker collaboration are found. Also, the author remarks that the timeline of a number of Birmingham dial makers indicates that many shared an affiliation with the various Wilkes firms. A striking example of a Wilkes dial, 1840's, features a painted blue chapter ring with gold numerals. The bright blue chapter ring has gold numerals with black shadows conveying a three-dimensional effect. Sea and landside hemispheres about the base of the housed landscape arch. The Four Continent's define the decorated corners. The Baker and Son line of dials are quite similar leading the author to wonder if they were truly in competition or "do the identical specifications and prices indicate a cartel at work." The Baker dial, 1840's, is similar with hemispheres rendering ladies seated under a tree.



The dramatic arched dial made by Owen for James Calhoun & Son of Londonderry about 1820. A battling Cossack attacking General LeFevre.

Chapters 9 and 10 cover a variety of other painted clock dial manufactories in Birmingham. The firm of Edward Owen, 1803-1820 was known for a variety of styles and quality work in his "clock dials, landscape time piece maker, and japanner." Dramatic scenes are featured in a dial made for James Calhoun and Son of Londonderry 1820. One such scene depicts a battling Cossack attacking General LeFevre, while the Four Nations of Great Britain are featured in the corners. The center features a painted vignette of Britannia and a Castle as well as portraits of Lord Nelson and Collingwood.



Another spectacular dial (1850) painted by an anonymous decorator features a variety of contrasting themes; bronze powders are used in the backgrounds. In the arch is a huntsman riding over a fence (saddle and fence in gold leaf), windmills and thatched

Bronze powder backgrounds continued to be used in the very late periods. Gold leaf was used for the saddle, fences, and for some of the buildings. Silver or tin leaf was used for the huntsman's coat. This was done in the 1850's for Robert Marshall near Shotley Bridge.

abodes dress the corners. Filling the dial's center is a fanciful landscape (a church, fisherman with his dog, estuary and ships) with a radiant sky reflected in the river.



This dial features "just about everything a clock dial can do."

the background. A miniaturized reproduction of Benjamin West's artwork, *The Death of General Wolfe at the Siege of Quebec*, is painted in the dial's center.

Tennant's book features specific clock dials of Great Britain, that she has researched and restored, and she shares each layer and every detail that unfold before her in the process. Something had to be sacrificed in a book featuring so many examples of antique clock dials, and here it is the crafted accoutrement of the case, housing these dials, that we miss seeing. The architectural craftsmanship of carved bonnets, bevels and footings of the longcase itself will hopefully be the subject of another treatise. Tennant also gives us a list of clock dial decorators, manufactories and brief biographies. She offers a generous Bibliography that includes Brian Loomes', *Painted Clock Dials (1770-1870)*, again, the focus is on British clock dials. I suggest the following additional books that cover some American painted clock dials and may be of further interest to you. *American Wall and Shelf Clocks, A Pictorial History for Collectors* by Robert W.D. Ball; *The History of Clocks and Watches* by Eric Burton; *Horology Americana* by Lester Dworetzky and Robert Dickstein; *Willard's Patent Time Pieces, A History of the Weight Driven Banjo Clock, 1800-1900* by Paul J. Foley.

Tennant's keen eye and her ability to discern and follow pieces of evidentiary clues that lead to the artists and manufactories (when possible) as well as a generous offering of color photographs make her chronicle of English painted clock dials an important addition to your library of this genre.

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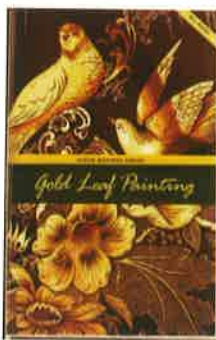
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