The Decorator

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The Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc.

The Decorator

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Contents

Front cover: Two passenger Portland style one horse sleigh painted yellow with black, red and pink stripes. The interior is painted light blue over an earlier light green. The rear panel is painted with a scene of a one story lean-to house with trees, and the date 1801 painted beneath it. 90" long, 42" wide, 47" high. Hampshire County; Town of Ware MA
Courtesy of Old Sturbridge Village

Back cover: Boston booby-hut. This was a large sleigh with a fully enclosed compartment for passengers; also called a Boston booby.. Leather covered, platform driver's seat. Punch decorated, sheet metal steps.
Courtesy of New York State Museum

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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 expaned 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

When we knew that the next convention of HSEAD was going to be held in Wakefield, MA and that we would be going to the Beauport Sleeper-McCann Museum to see the silhouette exhibit, we jumped at the chance to have an article written about the museum. We contacted the museum and Laura Johnson wrote to us and said she had written an article for another publication and that we could reprint her article. It is an informative article and one that will add to your knowledge and supplement our annual meeting.

In the next article, Parma Jewett has displayed one of her prized possessions. I would like to see more people show one of their original pieces. As Parma says, the study of originals is the best way to read how the early painters did their pieces. If there is anyone out there who has an original that is a little different that we could study, please contact me and allow us to use it in *The Decorator*. I'll be glad to research it and write up something about it.

Yvonne Jones finished up her article on A Boxed History, Part II, in this issue. There is a great deal more information on boxes and it would be worthwhile to refer back to Part I, in the Spring 2013 *Decorator,* to get a full record of the whole article.

Having always been interested in sleighs and carriages, I researched them and found museums that have some original sleighs and carriages. Upon mentioning to Helga Johnson that I was going to write an article on sleighs, she announced that she would send me a book on the making of sleighs and carriages. Helga wants me to donate this book to the HSEAD library, which I am going to do, so everyone can enjoy it. Some of my friends contributed with more catalogues and information and I was on my way. When you get started on one of these adventures, it always leads to more things that might lead to another article or two!

Lynne Richards,
Decorator Editor

Shades of Truth

by

Laura Johnson

In his *Natural History*, written around 70 A.D., Pliny the Elder recounted the story of the origin of painting – a Corinthian maid, wishing to preserve the likeness of her beloved, traced the shadow that a candle cast on the wall behind him. The legend was a popular subject during the neoclassical era; Josiah Wedgwood, whose jasperware imitated ancient relief carving, commissioned perhaps the most famous version of the tale from painter Joseph Wright. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the classical world inspired everything from couches and dresses to architecture and forms of government. Having one's portrait done in the style of an antique medallion soon became quite fashionable.

Like the image traced by the Corinthian maid, silhouette portraits, or shades, as they were then called, were made by tracing a sitter's shadow. They enjoyed widespread popularity from the late eighteenth century into the first four decades of the nineteenth century. They not only appealed to neoclassical taste but were relatively easy to produce, hence affordable. Some artists executed them freehand with paint or scissors; others used a mechanical device called a physiognotrace, which had been invented in France in the mid-1780s. The painter Charles Willson Peale owned a version of this machine and gave demonstrations of it at his museum in Philadelphia. As part of the attraction, Peale even allowed visitors to trace their own silhouettes with the device. The resulting portraits could be cut like paper dolls from folded sheets of paper to produce multiple originals.

Above: Jane Hill Rudlett and James Rudlett of Portsmouth, New Hampshire by William King

Before photography, silhouettes offered the chance to create, keep, and trade likenesses with friends and family. They could be tucked into albums, framed and displayed on walls, or mounted in gold lockets. One silhouettist, J. H. Gillespie, offered six different styles, including a simple black profile for twenty-five cents, one highlighted in gold for a dollar, and a painted version in watercolor that could run as much as four dollars. Boston artist William Massey Stroud Doyle offered cut silhouettes at the same rates, but charged up to fifty dollars for a finished portrait. Most artists offered a simple cut profile and would add painted details for a few cents more. As the cheapest option was the most popular, everyone from portrait painters to museum proprietors picked up the art of tracing a profile to earn a few pennies. Profile cutters traveled widely, setting up shop in hotel rooms and boarding houses, placing advertisements in local papers, and circulating handbills to generate customers. They also sold frames and would mount the image while the customer waited. These itinerants ranged from well-known portraitists like Raphaelle Peale to more obscure cutters such as James Holsey Whitcomb and William Chamberlain. Some, like Doyle and Henry Williams, even offered to make silhouettes of deceased loved ones.

The unusual silhouette of Anna Woodbury of Hooksett, New Hampshire, includes a lock of her hair.

Choosing a silhouette over a painted portrait was not always a matter of thrift. Physiognomy, the pseudoscience that argued that a person's essential nature was revealed by the shapes of the skull, nose, and chin, was popular in America during this period. Its followers believed that a silhouette, because it omitted extraneous information like color and dimension, revealed the true character of the sitter. That an image could be created by a machine, apparently without artistic intervention, actually heightened belief in its truthfulness. Furthermore, because a silhouette lacked status markers like the fine fabrics and jewels that feature prominently in painted portraits, it was considered

a quintessentially democratic form of representation, which appealed to many in the new United States.

One of the earliest silhouettes in Historic New England's collection is a painted image of Elizabeth Livermore Brown attributed to Doyle. The delicate rendering of hair and lace fichu is very much in the manner of John Miers and John Field, two of the best English silhouette painters at that time. Only a handful of known silhouette artists in America produced portraits in paint or ink, and of those only Doyle advertised that he offered silhouettes in the style of Miers. Doyle even replicated the swooping curve at the base of the silhouette that Miers preferred. (Scholars sometimes use the base line – or bust line as in a sculpted bust – as the trait that distinguishes the work of one artist from another's.) The silhouette is not signed, but it, and a very similar image of Elizabeth's father, are attributed to Doyle based on similar cut paper examples with signatures and a consistent style. In 1803 Doyle introduced a "profile machine" at his Columbian Museum in Boston, placing an advertisement in the local papers announcing its display and offering to cut profiles gratis for visitors.

Painted silhouette of Elizabeth Livermore Brown, daughter and sister of United States Senators, c. 1795, attributed to William Massey Stroud Doyle.

Doyle continued to cut and paint silhouettes as well as draw portraits in pastel until his death in 1828. In his last two decades, his daughter, Margaret Byron Doyle, joined him in the business. One of her few known works is a portrait of Mrs. Hiram Bingham, signed "MB Doyle" in a hand, very similar to her father's. Like her father, Margaret Doyle used ink and a fine brush to paint Mrs. Bingham's hair and frilled collar.

Most American silhouette artists produced cut profiles, either freehand with scissors or with a physiognotrace. Cut silhouettes were placed on contrasting backgrounds. When the artist cuts out the center of the paper and removes it, the negative space is called a hollow cut, while the removed section is known as a positive cut or blockhead. After mounting

the silhouette on contrasting silk or paper, the artist could embellish it with penciled or painted details.

Some of the most celebrated English cutters toured America in the nineteenth century, giving demonstrations of their art. The teenaged Master Hubard drew crowds of visitors to his exhibition of cut paper images, called *Papyrotamia*, when he visited America in 1825. A freehand genius with scissors, he could cut a full-length rendering in under a minute. Hubard was particularly proud of his animal portraits, like the ones in the silhouettes of a gentleman with his chubby spaniel and a lady training her cockatoo.

Positive cut with ink wash by Master Hubard depicting a lady with her cockatoo.

Traveling silhouette cutters frequently attracted crowds of onlookers to their exhibitions, but few artists could compete with Saunders Ken Grems Nellis. Born without arms, Nellis used his toes to cut silhouettes and paper pictures, play the cello, wind a watch, and even shoot with a bow and arrow. Nellis toured the world from the 1830s to the 1860s, but few of his works have survived.

Composite picture cut by S.K.G. Nellis.

As silhouettes rose in popularity, American artists developed exuberant free-form interpretations of this somewhat rigid art form. Cutters such as the Puffy Sleeve

Artist (so named for the distinctive, flat paintings of women wearing dresses with exaggerated sleeves), Everet Howard, Justin Salisbury, and James Holsey Whitcomb added color and personal verve to their work. Howard embellished his silhouette of sixteen-year-old Anna Woodbury (page 7) with distinctive cuts in the bust line that typify his style.

William Bache and William King, two skillful American profile cutters, spent time in northern New England. Bache, who stamped his works "Bache's Patent," visited Salem, Massachusetts, at least twice, where he made cuttings of Captain Stephen Phillips and two young children. He embellished both works with delicate details in China white, an opaque pigment that he occasionally used to enhance his silhouettes. William King, who traveled extensively in the region, boasted he had cut more than 20,000 silhouettes in less than two years. He set up shop in Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Portland, Maine, and other regional centers.

Hollow cut of Captain Stephen Phillips who made his fortune trading in Asia. by William Bache

Auguste Edouart, a French artist who traveled along America's eastern seaboard, produced thousands of silhouettes between 1839 and 1845. Credited with being the first to apply the term silhouette to this type of portraiture, Edouart specialized in family and conversational groupings. He usually cut full-length figures, unlike the bust-length silhouettes favored by most artists, often placing them against a lightly sketched interior or landscape rendered in three dimensions. Today Edouart's works are highly prized by scholars for the precise documentary evidence they contain about the sitter's home.

Group portrait of Boston merchant Samuel Appleton and his family by Auguste Edouart.

Edouart was not the only artist to produce full-length silhouettes set in customized backgrounds. Charleston-born William Brown produced an entire series of portrait profiles of famous Americans, including several

Margaret Byron Doyle's cut and painted portrait of Sybil Mosely Bingham, who traveled with her missionary husband and helped develop a written version of the Hawaiian language.

presidents and other political leaders. Brown's silhouetted figures, placed in appropriate settings, were reproduced lithographically by the firm of E. B. and E. C. Kellogg in Hartford, Connecticut, and published in 1846 in a volume entitled *Portrait Gallery of Distinguished American Citizens.* A fire destroyed most of the only printing, making the book one of the rarest groups of American silhouettes.

In the 1840s and '50s the emergence of daguerreotypes and other photographic processes effectively eclipsed silhouettes as a medium of inexpensive portraiture. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, interest revived, spurred by the Colonial Revival movement. Artist Sarah Wyman Whitman, best known for her stained glass and book cover designs, cut a life-size portrait of her friend, author Sarah Orne Jewett. Interest in all things early American drove a market in authentic pieces, whether American or English. Historic New England's founder, William Sumner Appleton, and interior designer Henry Davis Sleeper, were both enthusiastic collectors.

There was a market for high-quality replica silhouettes as well. Olive Percival used money she earned as a secretary to purchase silhouettes from local antique dealers. Among the most interesting pieces she collected were several copies executed in the late 1920s by Pasadena artist Carmen Edgar Denton of works by well-known cutters like Bache and the Revolutionary War hero (and amateur cutter) Colonel André. Denton even pasted advertising labels onto the backs of her pieces, a practice favored by some early nineteenth-century artists. Across the continent, Boston-based Foster Brothers offered mass-produced copies of works by Bache, Peale, and other silhouettists to feed a growing market in Americana.

Silhouettes have been with us for centuries, yet their spare, graphic strength makes them equally attractive to modern viewers. Sometimes dismissed as merely nostalgic, they nonetheless forge an intimate connection with the past that contributes to their popularity and esteem among scholars and collectors. In his 1814 advertisement, one profile

One Member's Original

by

Parma Jewett

There are many different shapes of painted tinware including trunks, bread pans, mugs, sugar bowls, tea canisters, coffee pots, one sheet waiters and two sheet waiters. Of all these different shapes my favorite is the two sheet waiter. I was very fortunate last fall to purchase at an auction, a two sheet waiter with a red background. Studying all of its characteristics I was able to identify that it came from Connecticut.

Filley Shop: Although this tray is badly worn in many areas there is still enough of the design to identify it's unique characteristics.

Background: Red background which was used in many of the Connecticut Filley shop painted tin pieces.

Border: The entire border consists of three yellow comma strokes which is very typical of Connecticut borders.

Band & Striping: An unusual feature of this two sheet waiter is the fact that it has a yellow band ***plus*** a yellow strip.

Leaves: The brushstroke leaves are done in a dark green with yellow accents along the outer edges. The larger leaves (below) are serrated with the ends being curved over. All of the leaves have a thin yellow stroke in the middle with a thin black stroke beside it.

Flowers: The major units of the tray are executed with blue pigment. The blue used against the red background results in a purplish hue. The overtone strokes are done with white mixed with the blue pigment which results in a grayish appearance.

Unique Feature:
At the bottom of the flower spray is a bow outlined with yellow.

This is one tray I intend to copy and submit for judging. As an EAD painter the ultimate high is studying and working from an original.

A Boxed History

English Japanned Tin and Papier Mâché Boxes

Part II

by

Yvonne Jones

Part one of this survey of japanned boxes (*The Decorator* vol. 67, no.1) ended in the 1820s, and focused as much upon tin as upon papier mâché. Here, in Part II, the emphasis is on papier mâché which, in the early years of the ninteenth century began to outstrip japanned tinware in terms of development and innovation. But why was this so?

One reason, of course, was that papier mâché had advantages over tin which besides being susceptible to dents and rust, was somewhat noisier and thus less pleasing to use. Tin boxes became associated with utilitarian wares like spice boxes, canisters and travelling trunks, while boxes made from papier mâché became ever more decorative and available in many new styles and shapes to appeal to the rapidly growing middle-classes.

Before looking to these new styles, it may be useful to consider first a type of box which spanned the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, namely the painted circular papier mâché snuffboxes with lift-off lids. Mostly they were made in Germany or Russia where the leading manufacturers were Stobwasser and Stockmann in Berlin; and Lukutin and Vishniakov in Fedoskino. Others were made in Birmingham, in the English midlands, though these were rarely marked by their maker. At their best, these circular boxes exhibit some of the finest painting found on japanned ware, but because the majority are unmarked, they can be a source of much confusion. It is often difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish their country of origin. For example, boxes painted with obviously English subject matter might well have been made in Germany or Russia. Nevertheless, the two boxes shown here are irrefutably English (Plates 1 & 2).

The first is, indeed, a curiosity. Made in about 1820, it was painted by Samuel Raven (1775-1847), the most distinguished decorator of English papier mâché snuffboxes, whose signature, in white script, is just visible beside the sitter's left shoulder. The subject is wholly at odds with Raven's more familiar genre scenes, or his more complimentary portraits of contemporary actors, politicians, noblemen and royalty. Who does

Plate 1: Snuffbox, papier mâché, painted with an unidentified caricature portrait by Samuel Raven, Birmingham, c1820. Dia: 10cm Private collection

this cruel caricature depict, and what had he done to deserve such mockery? With a sea battle raging in the distance, it is possible that the intertwined naked bodies which form his hair, represent corpses taken in battle as in a similar caricature of Napoleon, entitled *Triumph of the Year 1813*;[1] but in Raven's caricature, the arching female form which constitutes the face, suggests the attack was double-edged and that Raven was mocking both the private and public life of his subject. Interestingly, the inside lid is not lettered with the usual inscription found on boxes painted by this artist – "S. Raven pnx[t]. *Patronised by H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex & Prince Leopold*" – which raises the possibility that this was, in effect, a "rogue" box, painted by Raven for his own malicious amusement.

The second snuffbox, made sometime between 1820 and 1830, is marked for Jennens & Bettridge, of Birmingham, the best-known of English nineteenth century papier mâché manufacturers. Although this firm frequently advertised as makers of snuffboxes, this is the only such box known to have been marked with their name. A later invoice issued by the firm in 1841, records the sale of a paper snuff box for which the purchaser paid ten-shillings and sixpence,

Plate 2: Snuffbox, papier mâché, painted with St. George Slaying the Dragon, *for William Pickin, licensee of the George Hotel, Stafford; impressed Jennens & Bettridge. Dia: 15 cm Collection of Jürgen Glanz, Hamburg*

– almost certainly less than was paid for the box painted with *St. George Slaying the Dragon,* which is shown here. It was made for William Pickin, licensee of the "George Hotel" in Stafford, a town about 15 miles north of Birmingham. Sadly, there is no record of who painted the box, nor has it been possible to source the original print from which it was surely copied; although several prints show a similar composition, not one precisely matches this image.

In spite of knowing these boxes to be English, it is still not possible to establish a rule against which to distinguish English from Continental examples. Their gently-waisted sides, and their plain black japanned interiors, are also characteristics of German and Russian boxes, as indeed is the slightly domed top of the one, and the raised rim encircling the flat top of the other. The one defining feature that can be relied upon is that English boxes do not share the high polish often found on German snuffboxes.

The japanned tin pocket-snuffbox illustrated here, was produced for a more popular market than those described above (Plate 3). It is decorated in imitation of tortoiseshell, an effect which Midlands japanners achieved by applying a thin coat of black japan varnish over a red japanned ground, and while still wet, wiping away small patches to reveal the colour beneath.[2] It was made in about 1830, and very unusually for so modest a tin box, it is stamped inside its lid, with the name of its manufacturers: Evans & Cartwright, who operated at the Whistle Hall works, in Wolverhampton, from about 1810 until the 1870s or 1880s. Evans and Cartwright were best known for making japanned tin dolls-house furniture and they were probably the Wolverhampton makers of such goods, to whom Charles Dickens referred in his story *The Christmas Tree*, published in 1850. However, as this box reminds us, they also made snuffboxes though in what quantity we cannot now be sure.

Plate 3: Tin snuffbox decorated with a cat motif on white metal against a tortoiseshell ground; stamped with the rare mark of Evans & Cartwright, Wolverhampton. 6.5 cm Private collection

In order to meet a growing demand for papier mâché goods, manufacturers introduced quick and ingenious production methods; few methods were simpler than the one devised for making visiting-card cases of the type seen here (Plate 4). A sheet of pasted, specially-produced "making paper" was firmly wound round a length of oiled wood the cross-section of which exactly matched the interior size of the intended box or case, carefully leaving both ends of the wood exposed. After this had been stove-dried, the wood was carefully withdrawn – hence the need to leave the ends uncovered – and the resulting flat tube was sawn into alternating lengths of case, lid, case lid, and so on, thus ensuring a perfectly fitting lid for each. Papier mâché strips were then fixed at top and base, and the body of the box was complete. Once decorated, the lid and box were edged with ivory, the hinge and snap-fastener were fitted and, in this instance, both parts were lined with oyster coloured paper embossed in imitation of watered silk.

Plate 4: Papier mâché card case, decorated with free-hand gilt and bronze motifs L: 7.2 cm Private collection

The Birmingham firm of Jennens & Bettridge was the leading maker of papier mâché in the nineteenth century, and successfully applied for more patents than any of their rivals. Not surprisingly, therefore, several of the boxes described below, were the products of that enterprising partnership.

Plate 5: Tea caddy, papier mâché, decorated with bronze landscapes; impressed mark of Jennens & Bettridge, c1845. 20.5 x 33.5 x 20 cm Private collection

The shape of the tea-caddy seen in Plate 5, appears to have been exclusive to Jennens & Bettridge. It would have been an expensive caddy when first purchased, not only because of the richness of its decoration, but because of its deep ogée form. To create such curves, a very thick sheet of pasteboard was required, made from many sheets of

"making paper". Since the layers were added a few at a time, and stove-dried before further sheets were added, such a panel or sheet would have taken many days to prepare. The four sides of the box were cut from the panel, mitred and glued together, as in standard cabinet-work, and the assembled box was turned on a lathe to produce the required outline. The depth of pasteboard required for such a box would have been equal to the distance between its inner wall (just visible in the illustration) at its opened edge, and the widest part of its curved side. Once the shaping was done, the top of the box was sliced off to form the sides of its lid, and the two parts were finished and joined in the same manner as the card-case described on the previous page.

Incorporated in the lid of this writing box (Plate 6), made by Jennens & Bettridge, is a panel of so-called *Patent Inlaid Gems* – a style of decoration patented by one of the firm's proprietors, Theodore Hyla Jennens, in 1847 (#11,670). The patent described how imitation "gems" could be set or inlaid in prepared hollows, crevices, or bezels, or alternatively, how they could be attached to the underside of glass, as in this writing box. The effect was achieved by working on the reverse side of the glass, first applying the gold leaf motifs, then thinly coating the entire surface with copal varnish. The "gems" were gently pressed onto the sticky varnish and the glass panel was stoved for 6-7 hours at 120°F – anything higher would have discoloured the varnish. Lastly, the background colours, or so they would appear in the finished panel – were painted in, and the panel was returned to the stove. As may be imagined, it was a vulnerable style of decoration, and few examples have survived in as good condition as this writing box. Notwithstanding, this did not get in the way of ambition – Jennens & Bettridge employed this style of ornament on all manner of boxes, from small visiting card-cases to much larger objects and even used it for the decoration of chair-backs.

Plate 6: Writing box, papier mâché, inset with a panel of Patent Inlaid Gems, *impressed mark of Jennens & Bettridge, c1850. W: 34.5 cm*
Wolverhampton Arts & Museums Service, "http://www.blackcountryhistory.org"

Decorators of japanned ware were not allowed to sign their

work, not least because the work may not have been theirs to sign – it may have been copied from a contemporary print, or from a specimen prepared for the purpose, by a master-painter. Therefore the presence of a signature on this handsome toilet box makes it an important documentary piece (Plate 7). Indeed, the box holds several layers of interesting information. First, the base is stamped for the makers, Jennens & Bettridge; second, the painted view on its lid is clearly identified as Warwick Castle at lower right, and third and most significant, it is signed at lower left with the name *J Bettridge*, painted in white script. Whether the signature is that of John Bettridge senior (b1790) – a founding partner of the firm, or of his son, also named John (b1818), who later took control of the firm, we cannot now be sure, but whomsoever painted this box was evidently an accomplished decorator. Finally, the box retains its original silver mounted bottles and boxes which, being hall-marked for the Birmingham silversmith Henry Manton, and date-marked 1845 and 1846, allow it to be fairly precisely dated. Seldom does a piece of papier mâché divulge so much information.

Plate 7: Toilet box, papier mâché painted by J Bettridge with a view of Warwick Castle; signed and impressed for Jennens & Bettridge, 1845-1846. 14 x 28 x 21 cm
Collection of David and Rosemary Temperley

Fine boxes were not, of course, made only by Jennens & Bettridge. For example, this ladies cabinet was made by Frederick Walton & Co., at the Old Hall in Wolverhampton (Plate 8). In effect, it comprises several boxes, two of which are lined with purple velvet and cotton-sateen, and fitted to hold jewellery, and needlework tools respectively, and six of which, having no fittings, could be pressed into service for a multitude of uses. The lowest drawer is a stationery box which opens out to form a writing slope. In spite of its skilled workmanship, the cabinet does not bear a maker's mark, but it does have a reliable provenance. It was bequeathed to Wolverhampton Museums & Art Galleries by the daughter of Joseph Jones, who had been apprenticed to Walton & Co., at the Old Hall, as had his brothers, William, Harry and Benjamin, who would later set up a japanning factory in their own right. It is perhaps,

Plate 8: Ladies' cabinet, papier mâché, believed to have been decorated for the stand of Frederick Walton & Co., at the Great Exhibition, London, 1851. 34 x 40 x 39 cm
©Wolverhampton Arts and Heritage (Bantock House Museum)

the cabinet, decorated by one of the Jones', and exhibited by Walton at the Great Exhibition of 1851, which contained "a writing desk and drawers, also a series of hollow drawers [which] was undoubtedly the bijou of [Walton's] exhibition."[3] The quality of its decoration certainly suggests that it could have been destined for so prestigious an exhibition.

The cabinet is an excellent example of the pearl-cutters skill, and demonstrates, unequivocably, that pearl shell was *applied* to the surface prior to decoration, and not as popularly believed *inlaid*. To have cut so many small crevices into the japan varnish would have been unthinkable. It was a method which ensured the indiscernible junction between pearl and varnish, that was so necessary on the best objects. Nevertheless, this cannot be taken as a measure of quality today, for over the years, and even on some of the best pieces, oils in the varnish may have dried out and caused the japanned surface to shrink from the pearl.

Japanners were ever resourceful in making optimum use of their products by sometimes incorporating boxes into more complex objects. This is shown to good effect on an extraordinarily elaborate cabinet made in Birmingham by McCallum & Hodson, for display at the Great Exhibition (see *The Decorator*, Spring 2000). Individual boxes can be found, identical in shape and size as the one on top of this cabinet, which are similarly painted with a view of Osborne House – Queen Victoria's Italiante home on the Isle of Wight.

No survey of japanned boxes would be complete without reference to the wide range of receptacles made to hold coal, and variously described as scoops, or as vases (Plate 9), purdonium, chests or boxes. By the mid-nineteenth century, and for the remainder of the industry, they were an important and lucrative line for all japanners who went to great lengths to disguise their distinctly functional purpose in order to make them

Plate 9: Coal vase, iron, stamped: Registered by Benjamin Walton & Co. No.862 Wolverhampton 7th October 1841. H: 61 cm W: 56 cm Courtesy of Apter Fredericks, London

acceptable accoutrements in any room in which visitors were received.

In addition, boxes were included among the so-called *common goods* – the everyday utilitarian objects which were the mainstays of almost every japanner's product range. Such boxes changed little during the course of the nineteenth century as may be seen from this detail from the catalogue of Taylor, Law, & Co., of Birmingham, issued in about 1900 (Plate 10). However, by this time, newer materials like vitreous enamel and aluminium had already begun to replace japanned objects at this level of the japanners market, and the industry was in decline. Experienced decorators of japanned ware, and especially the so-called stripers, liners or fileters[4],

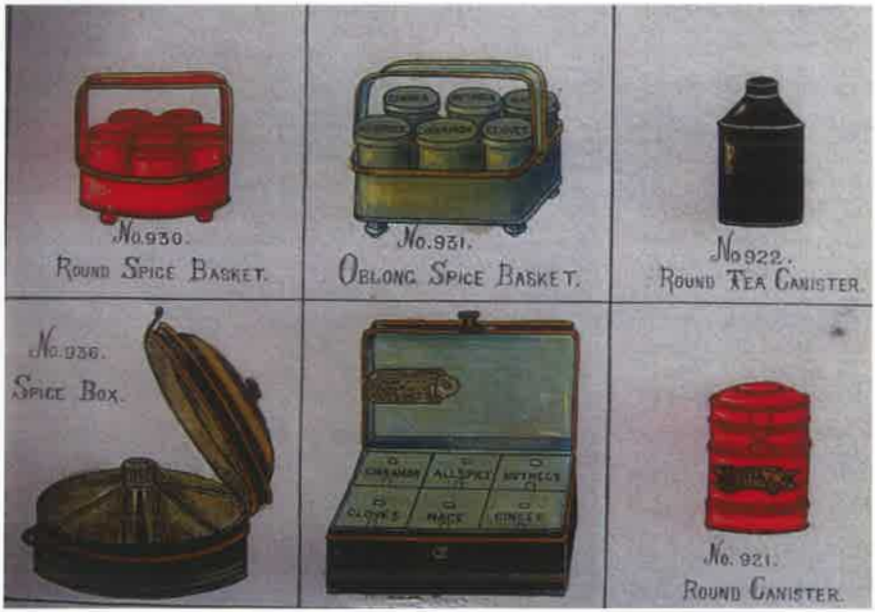


Plate 10: Detail from a page of a catalogue issued by Taylor, Law & Co., of Birmingham; c1900. Collection of David and Rosemary Temperley

Plate 11: "Ladies' Safe", iron with painted and gilt decoration; maker unknown (possibly American), late nineteenth century.
Collection of the late Martha Wilbur

who had not already turned their skills to the bicycle and newly emergent motor car industries, were by then very elderly. The japan industry had *almost* run its full course.

Also included in the catalogue of Taylor, Law & Co., was a "Registered Money Box Safe"– an undecorated version of the decorative "Ladies Safe" which was in the collection of the late Martha Wilbur (Plate 11). According to the inscription inside its door, the latter box was a gift to "Libbe Joy from her Friend Thomas Shriver"– names which, having an American ring to them, suggest the box may have been made in that country. If this were so, could the strongbox – a detail of which is shown here – also be American (Plate 12)? It was recently exhibited at an antiques fair in the UK, where it caused quite a stir – such rich decoration on so utilitarian an object was surely a rarity! They are not, of course, rarities but they nevertheless raise several interesting questions about their origin, and for that they merit further investigation

Plate 12: Strong box, japanned iron with painted decoration; English or American, late nineteenth century. W: approx. 45 cm
Private collection

In summary, by focusing on boxes, it becomes apparent that their function and size alter the terminology used to describe them. So, for example we talk about a tin, but at

other times a canister, a chest or maybe a box, not to mention cases, caddies and caskets, and much else besides. *Chambers Dictionary* tells us that a box is a case or receptacle for holding anything, and that it usually has four sides and a lid. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* says much the same but allows for a box to be cylindrical as well as rectangular. Here, the term has been used in its widest sense to include all these and more. Whether a simple box such as that made for Sarah Wood (see *The Decorator*, op cit., p 26), or a prestigious example like the toilet box discussed above, each box reveals, to a greater or lesser extent, contemporary social nuances, and when it retains its original fittings, it can tell much about the interconnectedness of Midlands industries. Hinges, locks, keys, and decorative brass and silver mounts, were all made locally; glass fittings would have been readily available from nearby Stourbridge – an important glass-making centre; and the decorative, printed papers with which many papier mâché boxes were lined, or the transfers required for their decoration, could be purchased locally from specialist suppliers.

Indeed, it would be possible to chart the entire history of the papier mâché industry by a study of boxes alone.

1. Published in Berlin by the Henschel Brothers
2. In contrast, tortoiseshell effects on early Pontypool tinware were achieved by applying a golden varnish over silver leaf
3. William Highfield Jones, *Story of the Japan, Tin-plate Working ... Trades in Wolverhampton,* London, 1900, p 56
4. The terms used to describe those decorators who painted the fine lines which edged many japanned objects

Portland Sleigh

Sleighs and Carriages

by

Lynne Richards

Albany Sleigh

In a 1913 trade catalog from Prouty & Glass Carriage Co. in Wayne Michigan, "wholesale manufacturers of Fine Vehicles, Cutters and Sleighs", we read that they are the "oldest and largest manufacturers of sleighs in this country." When considering sleighs, wagons, carriages, and sleds, we find that companies usually produced them all, as the manufacturing, painting and finishing were all similarly done. This article will concentrate more on sleighs or sleds than wagons or carriages, but keep in mind that they all were made by the same methods.

Quoting further from the Prouty catalog, we get an idea of what stock they used to produce the sleighs. "We take the timber from the stump, building our own bodies and making our own bent work. We use veneered stock in all our panels, dash (dashboard) three ply. The runners are made from Grey Elm, and the beam Hickory Elm. The knees are made of choice Hickory."[1]

Children's Sleigh - Courtesy of the Ward O'Hara Agricultural Museum, Auburn NY.

There were basically two main types of sleighs produced: the Albany sleigh (or cutter as it is sometimes called) and the Portland cutter. James Goold, originally from New England, opened a coach factory in Albany, NY in 1813. He also designed the original model of the Albany cutter in the 1820s. His design was innovative as it was so different from the box sleighs which were more common. It had "swell-like" sides and had the characteristic of more decoration; many times with two eagle heads done in iron at the top of the runner, one on each side of the upper section of the dash. The body and runners were built as a singular unit which meant that the runners had to match the curvature of the carriage. This was done by steaming its wood components. If you look carefully in the

nineteenth century depictions of Santa Clause, he almost always has been arriving or departing in an Albany sleigh.

Charles Porter Kimball of Portland, Maine, developed the Portland cutter which was probably the most popular one horse open sleigh in the mid 1800s. The Portland cutter featured straighter lines and was characterized by a sharp angle in the back from the runner up to the wooden sleigh.

The sleigh on the right is a "small one horse Portland style sleigh with one seat plus a removable jump seat. It would accommodate a maximum of four people. The sides, back and dasher were panelled. The body and seats were painted a dark green with yellow and red trim. The front of the dasher is a plum color with black striping. Much of the hardware is hand forged. The bottom of the floorboards are cross-sawn, and the bottom of the seat is hand planed.

Date Range: 1830-1850 Materials: wood, iron, paint (not original)
Dimensions: LOA (length overall) 68 1/2" W: 42" H: 44" shafts 91" long
Region: Northeast Sub-Region: New England State: MA
County: Franklin Town/City: Buckland
Artifact History: The Buckland Wilders who sold us the sleigh were related to the New Ipswich and Keene, NH Wilders, the latter of whom made sleighs between 1800 and 1830.
Courtesy: Old Sturbridge Village

When decorating sleighs, manufacturers offered many colors with many styles which ran from simple striping to stenciling or many times to more elaborate hand painting. Some of the colors they used were: white lead, dry or in oil, ultramarine blue, (made by grinding up lapis lazuli), Dutch pink, Munich lake, chrome yellow, lemon yellow, orange chrome, yellow ochre, raw sienna, milori green (a close color would be adding Prussian blue to chrome green), chrome green, yellow lake, whiting, lamp black, patent black (sold in small lumps or cakes, nearly as large as a hen's egg, and in the shape of an acorn), burnt sienna, raw umber, burnt umber, indian red, Venetian red, (a natural red ochre brought from Venice), Prussian blue, ivory black, carmine #40, English vermillion (light and dark), and American vermillion.[2] The addition of urine was thought to help improve the color of the vermillion.[3] The vehicles used to make these paints were turpentine, brown japan and raw linseed oil.[4]

If these paints were dry pigments, they would be mixed to a mush-like consistency with brown japan. "Work it well over with a palette knife and then put it in the mill to grind. After the paint is ground out, add one tablespoonful of raw linseed oil to a pint of paint."[5] Other oils that could be used were nut oils (walnuts, hazelnuts or beechnuts) and also oil from the seeds of the white poppy.[6] After the oil had been added and it was thoroughly mixed, a little was spread on a thumb nail and then blown on to dry and in a few seconds it would have the same appearance it would have when dried. If it appeared "dead" or "flat" a little more oil was added; if glossy, a little more turpentine so that it finally dried with an egg-shell gloss.[7] It was not possible to be more specific as to the amounts of turpentine and linseed oil to add, as Schriber states, that lamp black was greasy so required less oil to form an egg-shell gloss while umber was naturally dry and would require more linseed oil than any other paint.[8]

"Lamp black was originally made from the decomposition of oil in lamps but has since been produced from the thick smoke exhaled by 'resinous bodies' in a state of combustion. The best lamp black is manufactured in Troy and Waterford, in Rensselaer County, NY."[9] The same lamp black was also used to make the printing ink for our money.

Back of a sleigh and close up of the stencil and striping. There is no information on the history of this sleigh but it is signed A. A. Piper under the seat. Notice the iron scrollwork on the bottom of the back and the flowers in the middle of the back. Courtesy of Old Sturbridge Village

Vermillion was best mixed with a quick drying varnish in place of japan, and no oil whatsoever could be added to it, as it made it darker.[10] Some of the recipes for colors that would have been made using the base colors are rather interesting. For instance, to make olive Schriber suggests using yellow, blue, black and vermillion. For bottle green, he used Dutch pink and Prussian blue for the ground with a glaze of yellow lake over it. Oddly, to get gold, he said to mix white and orange chrome, tinted with

red and blue. Brown was 3 parts red, 2 black and 1 yellow; while tea green, which made a rich panel color, was made by mixing raw umber, blue and chrome green. Vermillion and black would make a very nice brown, but Schriber feels that all browns become richer with the addition of yellow.

Glazing is the term given to a transparent coating put over a similar colored ground such as carmine over reds. It is simply dry pigment ground with rubbing varnish. No oil, turpentine or japan was added. Unfortunately, Schriber states that many painters would refuse to add any *lake pigments* because of their tendency to flake and fade. Yellow lake and Dutch pink were generally used as glazing colors over green or yellow grounds.[11]

Light English vermillion had the greatest body covering power and was used for striping and lettering while deep English vermillion was better suited for panels.[12] These would be put over a ground of American vermillion and white lead.

Various processes were used to obtain white lead (carbonate of lead). "The process of P. F. Tingry is the best. Sheets of lead, about two feet long, five inches broad, and a quarter of an inch thick are rolled up in loose coils and placed in earthen pots, each capable of holding 6 pints of fluid. In each pot, place so much vinegar as will rise so high as not to touch the lead, which rests on a ledge halfway down. The pots are then buried in fresh stable litter, where they remain for 6 months, during which time the vapors of the vinegar elevated by the heat of the dung, oxidizes the surface of the lead, and the oxide combines with the carbonic gas evolved from the fermenting materials of the bed. The carbonate appears as a white scaly brittle matter on the surface of the lead, and is separated by spreading the coils upon a perforated wooden floor, covered with water. The coils are then drawn to and fro by rakes, which process detaches the white lead and causes it to sink through the water and the holes of the floor to the bottom of a vessel placed below. It is afterwards ground in mills with water, and then dried in earthen pans placed in stoves."[13] It was formerly ground dry, but they found that this method was deliterious to the health of the men.

The priming coat of paint for sleighs and carriages would be mixed with linseed oil or at best a small addition of spirits of turpentine, then only if it were to be given a coat of varnish. If the sleigh or carriage were to be a dark color, such as chocolate, green, or umber, it would need 2 - 3 coats of primer made to form a slate color. If the sleigh or carriage were to be a light color, such as flesh, cream or straw, it would

need red added to the primer, and it would need 4 - 6 coats of primer.

The first layer of paint was made of "Rough-Stuff." Schriber says that "Grafton paint, Ohio paint, fire proof paint and English filling are all names for the initial product."[14] He states that it was "all Grafton paint exported to England, there colored, and returned to this country as 'English filling' and the price quadrupled."[15] After procuring this product, one would add equal amounts, by weight, of keg lead, brown japan and rubbing varnish. "Run it through the mill with turpentine. No better "Rough-Stuff" can be found."[16] The purpose of "Rough-Stuff" is to produce a surface having sufficient grit to cause it to level down nicely when rubbed with lump pumice stone. For carriage work, as many as five coats were applied. It would then need 24 – 48 hours to dry before any other coat was applied.

The Prouty and Glass Carrriage Company used the "Lead, Oil and Rough Stuff process." The colors that they used were: "brewster green, red and wine on the gear; bodies black, with panels between moldings in color."[17] The trimmings on Portland sleighs were made "removable, sides of seats trimmed. If plush or other trimmings are wanted, they can be furnished at extra cost. In trimming in Plush or Velvet Plush (Velour) we put in plain trimmings (not pleated) with divided back and cushion. If pleating is wanted, we make additional charge for same."[18]

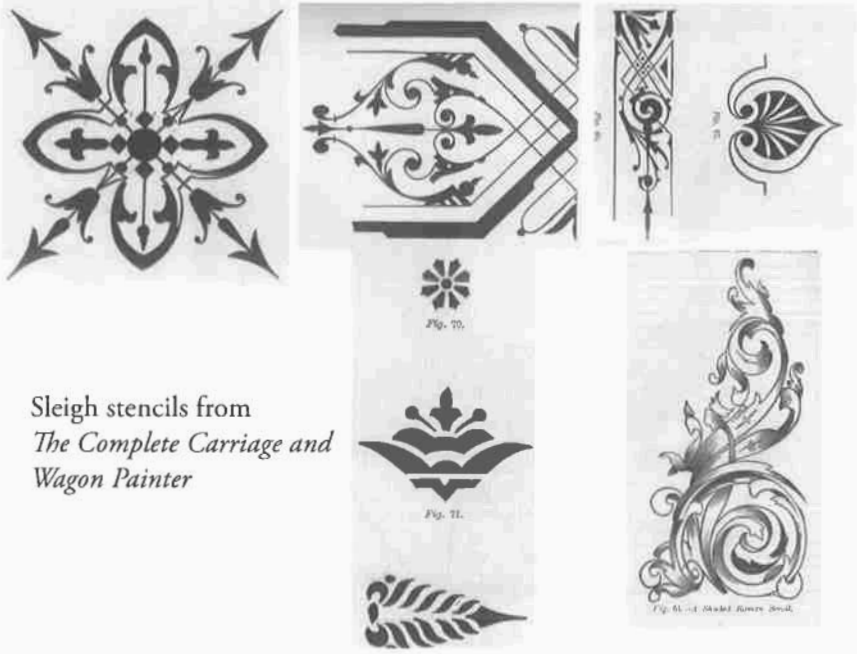
Once all the initial coats were dry, pumice stone or English soapstone was used to rub down the surface. Schriber says "A new product from Germany, called Schumachersche Fabrik (which may have been used as a whetstone for shoemakers) had started being used by first-class builders. Using a sponge, the stone should be set nicely to the surface and moved in circles as in polishing, or lengthwise of the panel, pressing firmly upon it, but not so hard as to tear up the paint. Plenty of water must be used as well."[19] Some painters applied a "guide coat" made up of dry pigment, japan and turpentine, put on very thin, so that when rubbing down you could see where you had been.

After the application of the color, the panels had to have a good "mossing off." This was done by rubbing over the surface of the paint with a bunch of moss or curled hair. With this done, the same color mixed with rubbing varnish was again brushed on to preserve the "freshness" of the color. Each area with a different color received this step. The varnish was then polished with buckskin dipped in tripoli or rottenstone, then wet with water to make a fine paste. A thin coat of olive oil was then rubbed on by hand and then removed with flour or bran. A silk handkerchief was rubbed over

it to remove the last of the oil and any remaining flour.

According to Orson Campbell, in 1841, after he prepared his carriages and they were thoroughly dry, he used #12 or #14 pulverized pumice and worked over it with thickened folded rub-rags, made of wool or buckskin, dipped in water and then pumice. The pumice was not to be allowed to dry on the panel and had to be washed off immediately. Once an area was smooth, the panel was washed and dried with a chamois.[20] They proceeded in this manner until it all had an egg-shell finish.

One of the first brushes to be used for painting would include a round paint brush (0000). If the bristles were too long it could be "bridled", which was done by adding extra binding, either with leather stitched tightly, or wrapping a piece of muslin or enameled cloth around the bristles, then tying a cord around it. The advantage of this was that when the bristles got too short, the extra binding could be removed and you immediately had a longer brush to work with. The second brush was the sash brush used for "clean up" around moldings and for painting small panels. The camel's hair brush or blender was the third brush – this was used for laying colors and had to be riveted and fastened by cement (glue) to last. The badger hair brush was used for laying color, plus it could be used for varnish. The oval brush was used for varnishing the body and was made up of French white bristles entirely.[21]



Sleigh stencils from
The Complete Carriage and Wagon Painter

Nicely made Albany style sleigh (right) with graceful lines and "swell-body" styling, painted yellow with black striping. The body is slung on leather thoroughbraces attached to a bar in the front and a cross bar at the rear; essentially a chaise body mounted on sleigh runners. The original folding leather top is missing, as is the seat cushion. The back of the seat is upholstered in black cloth and is in poor condition. The date "1820" and an image of a woman are painted on the curved rear panel. There is a leather covered iron-framed dashboard, and a curved wooden foredash, the side rails of which terminate in carved and painted eagles' heads. The bracing on the runners is round iron stock. Carpet tacks on the edges of the floor suggest it was once carpeted.

Probable Date: c 1820
Date Range: 1820-1840
Materials: wood, iron, leather, paint, fabric
Dimensions: LOA: 88" exclusive of shafts W:48"; H:50"
Courtesy: Old Sturbridge Village

Probable Date: c 1820-1850
Dimensions: LOA: 74" W: 40"; H: 48 1/2"
Material: wood, iron
Region: Probably Northeast
Sub Region: Probably New England
State: MA Possibly
County: Middlesex Possibly
Courtesy: Old Sturbridge Village

Above: Notice the four-lobed line decoration on the front panel. Information for all sleds from Old Sturbridge Village was provided by Old Sturbridge Village with some additons by the author.

This small 2 passenger horse-drawn sleigh of so-called "Portland" style has straight body lines; the back and sides are flat without a"swell-bodied" effect. It has a double dasher, i.e., an extra panel ahead of the front panel to prevent snow and debris from being thrown onto the occupants. The forward panel is curved with an articulated top edge and the seat back slants backward at about a 70 degree angle. The front leans slightly forward. Both panels have an arched top with the side panels being vertical. The top edge is scooped in a gentle curve from back to front. The exterior surfaces of the rear and front panels are divided into two recessed fields framed by a central vertical stile, outboard vertical stiles, and the arched top rail.The seat board has a storage compartment beneath. The wooden runners have iron shoes bolted in place. It is painted gray with a black stenciled border and line decoration.The back of the rear panel is decorated at the top with a stencilled band of cabbage roses and leaves. The front panel is adorned with a four-lobed line decoration, apparently an old, if not original, finish.

Above is a one horse, 2-person sleigh. The body has a high back and lower dashboard, both of which are arched and curved. The paneled sides are flat and the rail curves from the top of the seat back to the low point at middle of floor and recurves upward to top of dash. The vertical stiles on the sides are curved to echo curve of body. The body is supported by light running gear. The longitudinal rails that join the runners at the front, rest on three transverse struts which are supported by three pairs of upright posts that are tenoned into the runners. The runners curve upwards at front and are shod with irons that are extended at the front and are decoratively scrolled. The brackets are welded to runners and screwed to the tops of the rails for reinforcement. Iron forks for the attachment of shafts are bolted to the runners and to the forward transverse rail; this may not be the original arrangement as the holes through runners and iron braces suggest different original

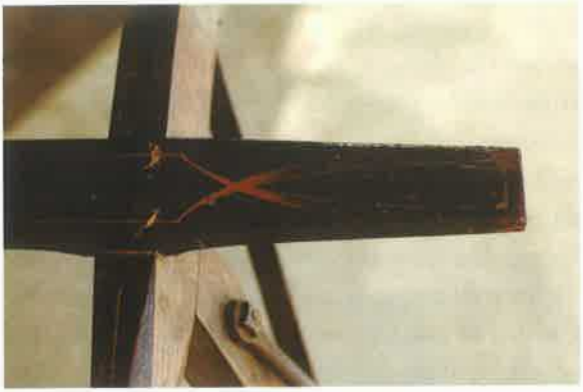
Front of the sleigh and close-up of the stencil. The yellow semi-circle can be seen.

This article can not end without a reference to the bobsled or bobsleigh manufactured by the Jung Carriage Company, founded by Jacob Jung Sr. It was in business from 1855 - 1917 in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. This bobsled, below, is from 1870 and is the oldest full-size vehicle in the collection at the Jung Carriage Museum. It is the only one in the collection built by Jacob Jung Sr. The sled retains its original finish, lettering and striping, showing the artistry of decorating even utilitarian vehicles. Its light construction and narrow lazy backs are typical of the prevailing styles of the early to mid-1870s. The curved wooden dash shows the wood-bending skills of carriage and sleigh makers of the time.

"Jacob Jung Mkr. Sheboygan, Wis." stamped on sleigh Photos and script Courtesy: *Jung Carriage Museum at Wade House Historic Site.*

This is a small two horse Portland style four-passenger sleigh with a cloth top. It is painted yellow with red and black trim and black interior. The sides scoop down from the back and rise slightly to join the front panel. The back and front panels are arched at the top. The side, front and rear panels are flat and are vertically divided into two sections by a central stile with stiles at all four corners.The body is screwed to running gear and is comprised of three transverse struts that support longitudinal rails to which the body is attached with the side rails joined to the ends of the struts. Three short posts on each side join the struts to the runners which curve up at the front to meet the inboard rails. The runners are shod with flat iron straps that return at the front to reinforce the juncture of inboard rails and runners. There is a hinged wooden seat for two people and a jump seat bench fits in front of this seat for two more people (especially children). A cloth top, with a small rectangular glass window, is stretched over fixed wooden bows to cover the rear 1/3 of the sleigh and is tacked to the sides and back of sleigh body.

Date Range: 1810-1860 Probable Date: 1850
Maker: Painted by H.G. or J. Pease, Somers, CT
Materials : Wood (oak?),iron, cloth, paint, leather, glass
Dimensions: Body L: 87 1/2", W: 49"
Shafts L: 136", W: 73 1/2"
Origin Notes: Hampden, MA/Somers, CT area
Courtesy: Old Sturbridge Village



Above:
Iron adornment coming off the curved sleigh front. Many of these were in the shape of an eagle's face.

Above and right:
Original decoration

Lovely dragon/ gryphon under the outside curve of the front of the bobsled. It was just discovered when taking photos for this article.

This sled was named after Wesley W. Jung's Aunt Edna. It has the original striping and embellishment.
c 1900

All photos courtesy of the *Wesley W. Jung Carriage Museum at Wade House Historic Site.*

"Bobs" at the front and the back instead of long runners. The front bobs pivot, making it easy to turn and prevent the sled from tipping over.

Decorative scrollwork on Edna's "bob". Top, right, and below.

Otto Jung's coasting "bob" made for Wesley Jung's Uncle Otto. In original condition. c1900. Notice the wide yellow stripe and the smaller yellow stripe on the inside of the larger one. Also, the black striping around the bobs and sled top.

Courtesy: *Wesley W. Jung Carriage Museum at Wade House Historic Site.*

Unfortunately, by 1910, sleds and carriages had seen their day and were being replaced by a new form of transportation, the automobile!

Endnotes

1. *Sleighs,* Prouty & Glass Carriage Co. Number 36 1912-1913 catalog p. 3.

2. *The Complete Carriage & Wagon Painter,* Fritz Schriber M.T. Richardson Co., Publisher New York 1905 p.17.

3. *Treatise on Carriage, Sign and Ornamental Painting,* Orson Campbell p. 6.

4. *The Complete Carriage & Wagon Painter,* Fritz Schriber M.T. Richardson Co., Publisher New York 1905 p.1.

5. Ibid. p.19.

6. *Treatise on Carriage, Sign and Ornamental Painting,* Orson Campbell p. 15.

7. *The Complete Carriage & Wagon Painter,* Fritz Schriber M.T. Richardson Co., Publisher New York 1905 p.1.

8. Ibid. p.19.

9. *Treatise on Carriage, Sign and Ornamental Painting,* Orson Campbell p. 4.

10. *The Complete Carriage & Wagon Painter,* Fritz Schriber M.T. Richardson Co., Publisher New York 1905 p. 20.

11. Ibid. p. 30.

12. *The Complete Carriage & Wagon Painter,* Fritz Schriber M.T. Richardson Co., Publisher New York 1905 p. 20.

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14. *The Complete Carriage & Wagon Painter,* Fritz Schriber M.T. Richardson Co., Publisher New York 1905 p. 30.

15. Ibid. p.30.

16. Ibid. p.30.

17. *Sleighs,* Prouty & Glass Carriage Co. Number 36 1912-1913 catalog p.30

18. Ibid. p.30

19. *The Complete Carriage & Wagon Painter,* Fritz Schriber M.T. Richardson Co., Publisher New York 1905 p. 20.

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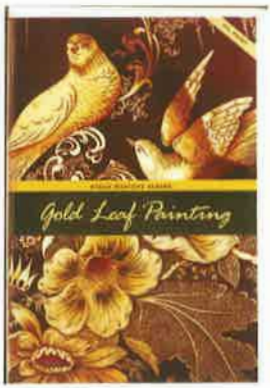

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