Mrs. Nancy Lawson, 1843
William Matthew Prior
Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 25 in.
Shelburne Museum Collect.
Museum Purchase
Acquired from
Maxim Karolik. 1959-265.34.

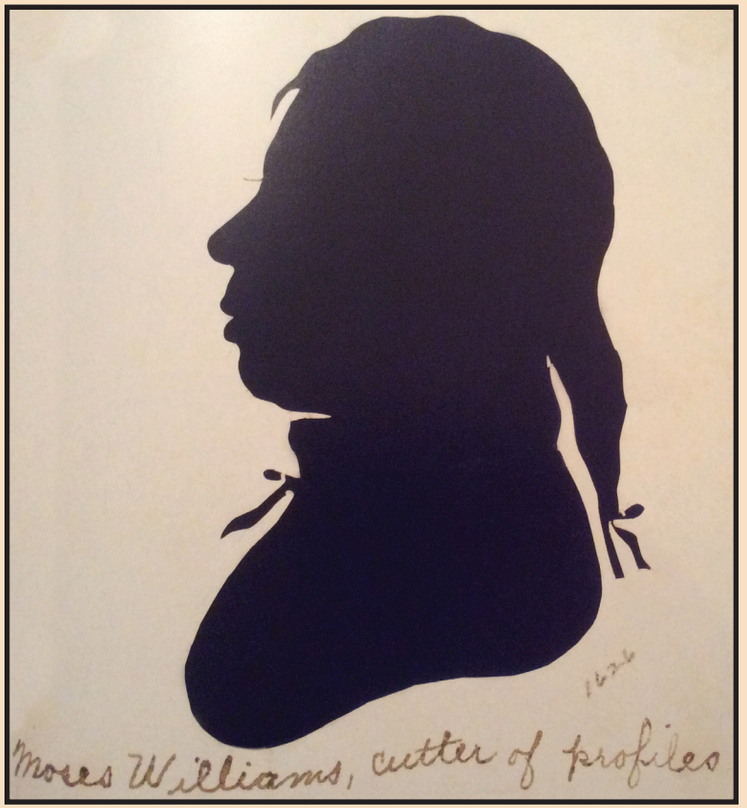
William Lawson, 1843
William Matthew Prior,
Oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 25 1/4 in.
Shelburne Museum Collect.
Museum Purchase
Acquired from
Maxim Karolik. 1959-265.35.

The Decorator Fall 2020 Vol. 75

The

Decorator

Journal of The Historical Society of Early American Decoration



Fall 2020 Vol. 75

The Historical Society of Early American Decoration

A Society with affiliated chapters was 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; promote continued research in that field; record and preserve examples of early American decoration; maintain exhibits and publish works on the subject of early American decoration and its history to further the appreciation of this art and the elevation of the standards of its reproduction and utilization; assist in public and private efforts in locating and preserving material pertinent to the Society's work and to cooperate with other societies in the accomplishment of purposes of mutual concern.

Vision: The Historical Society of Early American Decoration (HSEAD) perpetuates and expands the unique skills and knowledge of early American decoration.

Mission: HSEAD will develop new ways of growing and sharing its art and expertise, of expanding its membership and collaborative relationships and of awakening appreciation of early American decoration among new audiences.

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Cover: Moses Williams, cutter of profiles, ca. 1803, attributed to Raphaelle Peale [and Moses Williams] White Laid Paper on Black Stock, 4" x 5" Library Company of Philadelphia

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"The inspiring talk given by Mr. Donald Shelley at our second annual meeting in which he traced the sources of the patterns the early [D]ecorators used over and over, led me to ponder on what significance these symbols had, that their constant use created a tradition. It almost seemed that tangible motifs became intangible symbols and that they were used with a purpose, as an inspiration and a guide. So, I have written these little verses."

2nd Annual Meeting
West Hartford, Connecticut
May 13-14, 1948

Symbols to Live By

by Beatrice S. Bruce

As long as we live, we have something to do,
A goal to accomplish, a dream to make true.
With tools to guide our mind and hand,
We trace a pattern, fulfill a plan.

The Flower, the Leaf, the Heart and the Star
Symbols—a heritage richer by far
Than a purse of gold.
They pulse with life; they can never grow old.

THE FLOWER

To walk in beauty, so fresh, so free
Riches for all to enjoy, who will see.

THE LEAF

The Leaf, reaching out with open hand
To accept Life's challenge, be it lowly or grand.

THE HEART

The Heart to live Life, be it easy or hard
To do one's duty, to fear one's God.

THE STAR

The Star, twinkling, as much as to say
"I am your guide, be fearless, be gay."

(Excerpted from The Decorator, Vol. 2, No. 2, pg. 14, Summer 1948)

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Editor's Letter

To say that this year has been one of life-changing events would not be an understatement. It seems that each day, occurrences continue to test our character and patience. Some of us in the Society have been fortunate to fill our days with the joy of practicing our avocation, decorative painting, as well as many other early American arts and crafts. However, others have had to juggle the responsibilities of home-making, home schooling, and mastering the art of "zoom." To all of you and your loved ones and particularly those who have been designated as 'essential workers,' we on staff applaud you and send you our heartfelt gratitude and wish for you and your families to remain safe and healthy.

President Jeff Sheldon and the Trustees made a sad but wise decision to reschedule our 2020 meetings. Hopefully, the Spring of 2021 will accommodate Genesee Chapter and it's much anticipated program and theme, "Precious Paper, A Potpourri of Decoration." To whet our appetite, this issue of *The Decorator* presents an article by the Meeting's key speaker, Steven Galbraith, author of *Edges of Books*. Galbraith enlightens us on the history and beauty of a publication "before" we open it. He reminds us of something that we have, perhaps, taken for granted by offering us a new way of looking at books, i.e. their pages' ends or edges and the variety of decorative styles employed to achieve their aesthetic. Galbraith's perspective and illustrations will broaden our appreciation of every aspect of a publication; the book's spine facing us on the shelf as well as the stacked page-edges of a closed book all become a potential canvas for the decorative painter.

Yvonne Jones, a prolific writer and researcher on Victorian decorative painting, shares her current research on Pontypool painting. Objects, with exquisite patterns in the Pontypool style of painting, capture the refinement and delicacy of decorative arts from the Netherlands, England and Pontypool, Wales. They are reminiscent, as well, of the fine patterns on porcelain seen in exports from the China Trade. An art historian and writer, Yvonne is a thorough sleuth as she unfolds the history of what began as a cottage industry and style of painting on tinware.

Folk Art is a very popular and truly indigenous early American art form. To borrow a theme from one of the Society's annual meetings, "A Brush With History" takes form in Patricia Evans' painted box. Pat depicts the Demeritt Homestead's history and the role of her 6th great grandfather in

the American Revolution. Pat's project encourages us all to try a meaningful decorative painting project that, undoubtedly, would become a family treasure for generations.

Theorem Painting continues to be one of the Society's most popular and beautiful expressions of still life. Oil or water color painting on velvet or paper, the technique may seem simple with its use of stencils; yet to capture the soft, delicate and natural forms in your composition is a challenge which decorative artists strive to portray. As an historical organization, the Society is interested in authentic reproduction; thus, the genesis, evolution and mitigating factors that convey subtle nuances in similar Theorem compositions continue to prompt questions and study. Valerie Oliver, the Society's Historian, examines the Tipped Bowl Theorem and has documented the variety of renditions of this composition, some with distinct differences and others with more pronounced interpretation, perhaps reflecting the artist's personal preference.

Virginia O'Brien has been researching American limners for years, and her profile of William Matthew Prior introduces us to one of this country's most prominent and prolific portrait painters who captured on canvas members of various professions and social status in early 19th century society. America was a strong and loyal market for English goods and had an appreciation of European style and fashion; this is conveyed in the compositions and costumes of Prior's sitters, all accomplished Americans. Although Prior had no formal academic training, he seems to have benefited from opportunities to learn from skillful decorative painters such as Charles Codman, Gilbert Stuart, the Willard brothers and John Ritto Penniman. His style and subjects are a window into early American portraiture and society.

My piece on Moses Williams is one more in a short list of long overdue articles recognizing this skillful and prolific profile cutter who practiced his craft at the Peale Museum's Longroom at Independence Hall, Philadelphia. Research revealed how a slave, literally and figuratively, became the right-hand man of Charles Willson Peale, artist, naturalist, entrepreneur and the patriarch of a family dynasty of artists. Historian, Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw and others discovered, through careful scrutiny of the Peale family papers and Williams' hollow-cuts, his talent, skills, ethnicity and versatility; Moses Williams became essential to the mission and business of Peale's Museum both during his years as a slave and later as a free man.

The Decorator will not be celebrating our Members' Award pieces in this issue, due to the cancellation of our Spring Meeting. Instead, we will

be showcasing a variety of inspired decorative arts and crafts, executed by using the early American painting techniques that we have discovered through our study of early American decoration. Culture, family history and keepsakes, events and aesthetics continue to be among civilization's vital mainstays; some members were inspired by their personal and/or family history and experiences. Some of these works are commemorative while others celebrate the beauty of design expressed in every day accessories. The content of recorded milestones, memories and the celebration of beauty differ over time. However, by using available materials, traditional and new techniques to create, we continue to leave a legacy of our times and our lives for future generations. We hope you will enjoy and appreciate these creative samples.

On the eve of HSEAD's 75th Anniversary, I find myself saying the words, words with which all of you are familiar, "Where did the time go?" However, I encourage all of you to look around your homes and think of some of your happiest times spent with your dearest friends, many of whom you met through the Society. The answer is in front of you, sitting on your shelves, hanging on your walls and adorning your furnishings. Learning about early American decorative painting and developing our artistic skills have happily filled our hours, days and years; our artwork, books and articles we've written, workshops and seminars we've led to preserve and promote these historically authentic arts and crafts, are all testimony to how we've meaningfully spent our time.

We stand on the shoulders, of those who came before us, their foundation of research, writing and mastering the techniques of authentic Early American Decoration (EAD). Next year we will all celebrate 75 Years of time well spent toward HSEAD's commitment, to further study, teach, preserve and promote early American decorative arts and crafts. This is our ongoing legacy for the future, our most important 'UFO' (UnFinished Objective).

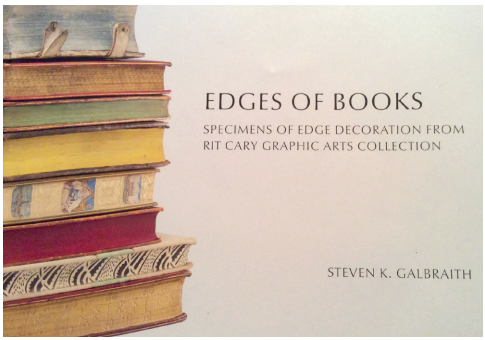
On behalf of the staff at *The Decorator* and HSEAD, we thank our members, contributors and advertisers for your support. We wish you a safe and healthy Holiday Season and look forward to seeing many of you in the Spring and especially at the Fall Meeting when we shall celebrate a memorable milestone, our 75th Anniversary.

Sandra Cohen

Beautifying the Book

Examples from The Cary Graphic Arts Collection at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)

by Steven K. Galbraith



It seems that books were never meant to be drab. Time after time, books have always expanded well beyond their roles as simple devices used to convey text and images to readers, transforming into extraordinary three-dimensional works of art.

At its core, the book is a simple invention. A book is essentially leaves of some materials that are stacked and/or nested together and then attached along an edge, so that readers may access any part of the text by simply turning its pages. To use such a device, all readers really need is light sufficient to illuminate the pages. The anatomy of a book is fairly simple as well. On the outside, there is usually a binding made of material such as leather or cloth that covers the spine, front and back boards made of materials such as wood or pasteboard. There is the text block within, i.e., the sheets of paper that compose the body of the book. When a book is closed, the text block of the book is visible along the fore-edge (the outer edge opposite the spine), and the head and tail edges. When a book is open, readers view one opening of two pages that can be turned either forward or backward. The pages provide space for handwritten or printed text and illustrations.

Books could have remained simply utilitarian devices with an emphasis placed only on their functions of protecting, storing, and presenting the information found within. Yet, from quite early on, the makers and owners of books sought to beautify them in a variety of ways that made use of every part of the book's anatomy. In the following essay, I will use historical examples from RIT's Cary Graphic Arts Collection to explore how all the major parts of a book can be decorated and sometimes even in the most surprising ways. Although examples shown date back as early as the 14th century, in the spirit of *The Decorator* and the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, most of the examples will be from the 18th and 19th centuries.

Fig. 1 *Torquato Tasso, La Gerusalemme liberata*
Parma: Bodoni, 1794 and
Teocrito, Mosco, Bione, Simmia greco-latini: con la Buccolica di Virgilio latino-greca volgarizzat
Parma: Dalla Stamperia reale, 1780
Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark

Colored Edges

One of the earliest ways of beautifying a book dates back as far as the 4th century (Mitchell 26, Etherington and Roberts). Colored edges are a simple but effective way to adorn the outside of a book, as well as to add a layer of protection to the edges. Dyes and pigments were applied to the head, tail and fore-edges, transforming the pale edges of books into vibrant bands of blue, red, green, yellow and other hues. **Fig. 1** shows vivid examples of colored edges from Italy in the late 18th century. All four volumes were printed by the Italian master type designer and printer, Giambattista Bodoni (1740-1813), printer to the Duke of Parma.

The two large quarto volumes on the bottom of the stack, with edges colored with a vibrant green, are a 1794 edition of Torquato Tasso's famous epic poem *La Gerusalemme liberata* (Jerusalem Delivered). The green edges complement a contemporary quarter leather, red goatskin binding that features a yellow marbled-paper covering. Paper marbling is accomplished by laying a sheet of paper on the surface of a marbling bath where colors float upon a mixture of water and size. Various tools and techniques are used to manipulate the floating colors into often complex patterns. Beginning circa 17th century, bookbinders commonly used marbled paper for the covering material of bookbinding, the endpapers of books (i.e., leaves found at the beginning and end of a book), and even the edges of books, as we will see later in this essay. (Mitchell p.38, Marks p.34).

Stacked above *La Gerusalemme liberata* are two volumes of ancient Greek and Roman pastoral poetry from authors such as Theocritus, Moschus, and Virgil. Printed by Bodoni in 1780 and bound during that same period, the book's red edges accent the paper board binding—a binding style that gives an appearance of sprinkled calfskin.

Although modern readers are used to viewing the spines of the book as they rest vertically on bookshelves, history tells us that books were not regularly stored that way until, roughly, the late 17th century (Galbraith p.3, Petroski p.150; Pollard pgs.92-93). Until then, books might simply lay horizontally with one of their parchment or paper edges facing out toward the reader. If shelved vertically, it was normally the fore-edge that faced outward, not the spine. Because of this, attention was given to edges of books. Indeed, the edges of early books were even sites for owners to write bibliographic information, such as the book's author and title.

Gilt and Marbled Edges

The most common way of beautifying a book's edges is the application of gold (Marks p.39). As early as the 15th century, gilt edges gave rectangular books an appearance akin to bars of gold. Being quite malleable, gold can be beaten into a thin airy leaf. It was traditionally applied to the book's edges using a size such as egg white and water. Once applied to the edges, the gold was then burnished (Marks 39). Not only do gilt edges beautify a book, but also the metal covering the edges of the text block also creates a protective layer that helps to keep out dust and moisture. Sometimes, not all the edges of a book might be in gilt. For example, it was not uncommon for books to have only their head edges and/or fore-edges gilt, while leaving the tail edge au naturel. This is, of course, due to the tail edge needing less protection, as it often rests against the shelf as the book stands vertically.

Fig. 2 *Plato, Platōnos hapanta ta sōzomena = Platonis opera quae extant. Geneva: Excudebat Henr. Stephanus, 1578*
Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark

One radiant example of gilt edges found in the Cary Collection is shown in **Fig. 2** These three large folio volumes compose the works of Plato, as printed by the French printer Henri Estienne in Geneva in 1578. Although the printing dates from the 16th century, the volumes' red goatskin bindings, with all edges in gilt, were added at a later date. This armorial binding features the coat of arms of Henri-Louis de Lomenie, comte de Brienne,

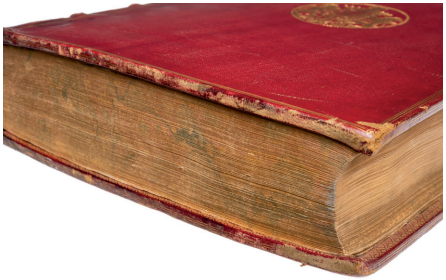


Fig. 3 *Detail from Plato Platōnos hapanta ta sōzomena. Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark*

who likely had the volumes bound in this manner in around the early 18th century. Gilt adorns all three edges of these volumes. Going deeper still, there is another layer to the beautification of these volumes. If you look closely at their edges, you will see colorful patterns beneath the gold. Prior to the applications of gold leaf, the edges of these books had been marbled. **Fig. 3** provides a detail that better reveals the marbled edge beneath. Marbling the edges of a book involves a process similar to the one described above of laying paper onto the surface of a marbling bath. In this case, however, the leaves of the book's text block are held tightly shut and each edge is dipped carefully, one at time (Mitchell p.38).

Fig. 4 *Dramatic Works of Shakspeare London: W. Bulmer, and Co. Shakespeare Printing-Office, 1791 Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark*

Marbled edges can add vivid color to the outside of a book, as demonstrated in **Fig. 4** These volumes are from one of the most famous late-18th-century English publications—*The Dramatic Works of Shakspeare* published by John Boydell in 1791. Two years earlier, Boydell famously opened his Shakespeare Gallery in Pall Mall, London. The Gallery featured 167 commissioned paintings of Shakespearean scenes, which were later used as models for illustrations for his nine-volume edition of *The Dramatic Works of Shakspeare*. The copy preserved in the Cary Collection features a quarter green goatskin binding with corners, and a green-hued marbled paper. The head edges of each volume are marbled as well, but the fore-edges and tail edges are left plain.

Hidden Fore-edge Paintings

Marbled edges were not the only decorative feature that might be found hidden beneath gilt edges. The fore-edge of a book naturally offers a rectangular paper canvas, so it should come as no surprise that artists as early as the 16th century began painting figures and scenes on the edges of books (Weber pgs.221-222). Farther along, artists took painting on fore-edges to a new level. While a book is closed, the fore-edge is normally somewhat short in height. When the fore-edge is fanned, however, the size of the fore-edge expands. Therefore, an artist might fan the fore-edge of a book, hold it securely in a clamp, and then paint on it. Going one step further, the artist might then apply gilt edges over the painting (note: you can also paint on the edges of a book that already has gilt edges). The result is a fore-edge painting hidden beneath the gold, that is revealed only when the book's text block is fanned. As Jeff Weber notes in his *Annotated Dictionary of Fore-edge Painting Artists and Binders*, fore-edge paintings had a "Golden Age" of sorts from the mid-18th century through the early decades of the 19th century (Weber p.21). The greatest output of fore-edge painting, however, appears in the beginning of the 20th century.

Fig. 5 *Ravenscraig Castle*
Painted on the Fore-edge of C. C. Sturm,
Reflections On The Works Of God. London, 1838
Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark

The Cary Collection holds scores of examples of hidden fore-edge paintings. Shown in **Fig. 5** is a painting revealed when fanning the gilt fore-edge of volume three of C. C. Sturm's *Reflections On The Works Of God* (London, 1838). The dramatic painting depicts Ravenscraig Castle near Kirkcaldy, Scotland. If you look carefully below the right side of the castle, you can see a ship crashed into the rocks. At the bottom

of the painting, shipwreck survivors hang onto flotsam. This fore-edge painting is likely based on an engraving by Joseph Clayton Bentley after a work by Thomas Allom. Bentley's engraving can be found in William Beattie's *Scotland Illustrated* (London: G. Virtue, 1838).

Fig. 6 presents a second example of a hidden fore-edge painting. The book is Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* (London: Printed for J. Power, 1829). Appropriately, it is adorned with a fore-edge painting of College Street, Dublin. This painting appears to be based on an early 19th-century engraving by B. Winkles after a drawing by George Petrie.

Fig. 6 *College Street, Dublin*
Painted on The Fore-edge of Thomas Moore, Irish Melodies
London: Printed for J. Power, 1829
Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark

Gauffering

The application of gold to the edges of books could also be the first step toward another technique in the beautification of books. Dating back to the 15th century, gauffering is a process through which decorative patterns are added to gilt edges using bookbinders' finishing tools (Marks 40, Mitchel 74). These tools are usually heated and used to impress decorative elements into the leather of bookbinding. In this case of gauffering, bookbinders' tools are warmed and impressed into gold edges. Gauffered edges can also be created using a pointillé technique in which elaborate patterns are made from a series of individual dots.

Fig. 7 *The Book of Common Prayer*
Cambridge: John Baskerville, 1760
Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark

The gauffering

shown in **Fig. 7** beautifies an edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* printed by John Baskerville in 1760. Baskerville is best known today through versions of the famous transitional typeface that he designed in the mid-eighteenth century, which remains a popular font choice today.

Papier-mâché bookbinding

The bindings of books have long been sites for decoration. In the 19th century, bookbinders beautified the protective covering of books in a number of innovative ways. Evidence of one of the more creative Victorian Era bookbinding vogues can be spotted in the famous painting *The Awakening Conscience* by William Holman Hunt, 1853.

https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hunt-the-awakening-conscience-t02075

Depicted in the painting is a gentleman and his mistress in the midst of a rendezvous in a room awash in symbolic detail that suggests the nature of their relationship and the mistress's potentially unfortunate future. Yet, the mistress appears to be rising from the gentleman's lap as if having a sudden revelation and moving to escape.

Found among the details in the painting are two books resting on the small table to the man's right. The dark-colored book found closest to the man is bound in a style meant more for affectation than for protecting a book that was meant to be read. The book in the painting has been identified by scholars as Henry Noel Humphreys' *The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing*— first printed in London in 1853, the same year that Hunt completed the *The Awakening Conscience* (McLean 210, Nochlin, 66-8). While some art historians look for symbolic clues in the subject matter of the book, it might have been chosen for inclusion in the painting to say something about the status of gentleman who would own a book with such decorative binding.

Fig. 8 *Henry Noel Humphreys The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark*

The book features a binding constructed by fashioning papier-mâché overlaid with black plaster. The result was a three-dimensional binding with an appearance similar to that of carved wood (Maggs II, 188; McLean 99). Sometimes a wire frame was used to stabilize the fragile material. Indeed, I will never forget a bookbinding scholar examining papier-mache specimens in the Cary Collection running a magnet over the covers of each of the papier-mâché specimens held in our library!

Fig. 8 is a copy of the second edition of *The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing* printed in 1855. Helping to accent the intricate papier-mâché design is a red paper backing. Books with papier-mâché bindings are fragile and must be handled with care. They cannot be shelved alongside other books unless housed in a box or separated by something like a piece of foam core. The fragility of the binding speaks to how such a book was used in the 19th century—likely displayed as art, rather than read.

From 1847 to 1863, it appears that eight titles were published with papier-mâché bindings, some of which went into multiple editions (McLean 210). The Cary Collection holds nine examples of papier-mâché bindings. **Fig. 9 and 10** are the front and back boards of *Sentiments and Similes of W. Shakespeare* produced in 1863. Molded into the papier mâché bookbinding is the book's title, along with masks representing

Fig. 9 & 10 *Front Cover Back Cover*
Sentiments and Similies of William Shakespeare. London, 1863.
Photographs by Elizabeth Lamark

comedy and tragedy. At the center of the front board is a terracotta oval of Shakespeare's profile, while on the center of the back board is a terracotta oval with Shakespeare's intertwined initials, above which rests a wreath of laurel.

Fig. 11
Chromolithograph from The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing. London, 1855
Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark

The man responsible for both papier-mâché bound books and others was Henry Noel Humphreys, an author and artist involved with the Gothic Revival of the 19th century. Not only did Humphreys advance the art of the book both with the design of papier-mâché bindings that evoke medieval wood binding, he also used the contemporary technology of chromolithography to create printed illustrations that attempted to capture the characteristics of medieval illuminations. **Fig. 11**, for example, shows a chromolithograph from *The Origin and Progress of the Art of Writing* that recreates a portion of the incipit, or opening, to the Gospel of Luke from the famous Lindisfarne Gospels (c. 680 to 720). Now held in the British Library, the Lindisfarne original can be viewed here: https://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/lindisfarne/learningseminar4.html

Medieval Manuscript Illumination

The illustration style that Humphreys attempts to emulate takes us back to the European Middle Ages. Illuminated manuscripts from the Middle Ages or medieval period (roughly from the 5th to the 15th century) offer some of the most striking examples of the beautification

Fig. 12
Psalter [manuscript fragment] England, c.1300-25
Photograph by the Cary Graphic Arts Collection

of the book. The texts found in medieval manuscripts were written out by scribes using quill pens made from the feathers of birds such as geese and swans. Ink was fabricated from oak galls, growths on oak bark that are rich with tannins, copperas (ferrous sulphate), and gum arabic. As the scribe wrote out the text, he or she left space for decoration to be supplied by the illuminator.

The term illumination in its most precise usage means the application of gold or silver to the page. However, illumination has come to be used more generally for hand-decorating a book with gold and silver, as well a variety of colorful pigments, and the medieval illuminator had many pigments from which to choose. Some of the more common were ultramarine or lapis lazuli for blue, vermillion for red, verdigris for green, and white lead for white.

Fig. 12 shows a leaf from an illuminated psalter from early 14th-century England. Both silver and gold illumination adorn the pages, as well as blue and red pigments. White is used for accents throughout, perhaps most strikingly to color the face that appears at the top of the left-hand column of text. Visitors to the Cary Collection that view this leaf are always struck by this man's face, which appears to be attached to a bird-like body. He even appears to be wearing an acorn hat! **Fig. 13.**

A 19th Century "Altered Book"

Returning to the 19th century, this essay concludes with one of the most curious books found in the Cary Graphic Arts Collection. In the world of the book arts, an "altered book" is a book that is transformed

Fig. 13 *Detail from Psalter.*
Photograph by the Cary Graphic Arts Collection

by an artist into a new work of art. Altered books became popular in the late 20th century and continue to be an exciting genre. An unusual, mid-19th century American book from the Cary Collection suggests that even the most unlikely books could be altered and beautified.

This book is, or at least was, an account book. Judging from the goods listed and their costs, it might have been a family's account ledger or perhaps a store's account book from around 1849 (more research is needed). Whatever the book began as, it was later beautified by an artist who appears to be a young girl named Hattie E. Tucker, who signs her name a number of times in the book. At one point she even supplies her location, "Fayetteville, New York," a small town east of Syracuse, New York. Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) student, Adam Ranz, located a Hattie Tucker in Fayetteville, New York in the census of 1880. This Tucker was born in 1862, which, if the correct person, would likely place the date of her altering of the book to the early 1870s.

Fig. 14 *Account book*
Fayetteville, NY, c.1849
Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark

Using the ledger as if it were a blank book, Tucker creates scenes over the top of the daily entries of goods and prices. As **Fig. 14** demonstrates, she alters the book in ways that tell stories of her own creation. On the recto, or

right side of this opening, she has pasted in an illustration of a girl sleeping, while a woman appears to look over and care for her. Augmenting the scene, she adds fabric for curtains. She also hangs an illustration of a painting above the bed, as if it is hanging on a wall. On the verso or left side of the opening, she augments the bedroom scene with paintings of what appear to be a bedroom and living room. In the living room is a cut-out illustration of a sewing machine that she has embellished with paint.

In another opening, shown in **Fig. 15**, Tucker uses cut-out illustrations to create a narrative that she titles, "History of a Cat." In the center of the verso page, she pastes a large illustration of a cat's head, which she identifies as "Taby," perhaps for tabby cat. Pasted clockwise around Taby are several illustrations showing cats in action, whether caring for kittens or killing a rabbit. On the recto side is a large horizontal illustration turned vertically to fit the page. It depicts three children watching an insensitively depicted man about to behead a turkey. A cat creeps by in the snow.

Fig. 15 *Account book*
Fayetteville, NY, c.1849
Photograph by Elizabeth Lamark

In a way, by clipping illustrations out of books and other media, Tucker is engaging in a form of grangerizing, or extra-illustrating a book. Grangerizing is a term named after James Granger, who in 1769 published an unillustrated *Biographical History of England*. When readers started supplying the missing portraits from other printed publications, a new vogue for book owners was born. Of course, Tucker is also engaging in an early form of scrapbooking.

The Future of Beautiful Books

As these examples from the Cary Collection have shown, it appears that all parts of a book can be adorned—the spine, the covers, the edges of the text block and, of course, the pages within. The basic form of the book dates back about two millennia, and since the beginning, its makers sought to beautify the book in a great variety of ways. As book publication has become increasingly digital, the significance of the art of the book continues to increase in surprising ways. Artists have revived techniques such as letterpress printing, ensuring that the beautification of the book will live on. Indeed, the overwhelming presence of the digital world appears to have spurred an interest in physical objects, thus increasing the value placed on handicrafts. This is, perhaps, a future essay to be written. For now, of one thing we can be sure; books in all their forms will continue to be beautified in ways that make the ordinary extraordinary.

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PONTYPOOL: some further thoughts[1]

by Yvonne Jones

The study of Pontypool japan ware is a sobering exercise, not least because it was a victim of its own success! As the Rev. John Evans observed in 1810, it was 'every where seen, every where admired'[*sic*],[2] and during the course of its history, it was also widely copied. That it was copied so much makes it difficult and sometimes impossible to reliably distinguish the products of Pontypool from those made at its breakaway offshoot in Usk, in the English midlands or indeed, elsewhere in Europe. In short, and until any new documentary evidence comes to light, it has to be accepted that the term 'Pontypool japan ware' loosely describes a particular *type* of decorated tinware which *may* or *may not* have been made in Pontypool. **(Pl. 1)**

Pl. 1 *Counters Tray 11 x 14cm*
2nd half 18th century
Courtesy of Astrid Donnellan

In terms of irrefutable fact, very little is known about the history of Pontypool japanned ware which makes it all the more intriguing that we continue to use the term 'Pontypool' as shorthand for much eighteenth and nineteenth century tinware. That we do is surely testament to the quality of the articles which were produced in this small town with its one street 'and only one shop for the disposal of the imitative japan ware, which is the chief manufacture.'[3] An earlier article, "The Pontypool Question,"[4] drew attention to the confusion surrounding the history and development of these wares. Here, the focus, will be on objects which can be fairly safely attributed to Pontypool and to look at others about which there is less certainty.

However, first, a brief summary will be useful. Major John Hanbury had manufactured furnaces, pots, pans and other domestic utensils from rolled iron plate at his iron-works in Pontypool since at least 1697, but they were prone to rust. He looked to his works manager, Thomas Allgood (c.1640-1716) and his son Edward (1681-1763) to overcome the problem. Allgood senior died before a solution was found, but his son Edward, replacing him as manager, continued experimenting until, some time between 1720 and 1728; he achieved a satisfactory means

of tinplating iron that would protect it from rust. Notwithstanding, the entrepreneurial Hanbury sought an even more durable surface for his domestic tinplate wares and challenged Edward to find one. He devised the now famous japan varnish which not only met Hanbury's requirement, but kick-started a wholly new industry – the japanning of tinplate. It proved so successful that in about c. 1730, Edward, and his older brother, John (b. pre-1681) established their own business for the manufacture and japanning of tinplated articles.

Pl. 2 *Cottage in Trosnant believed to be the Allgoods first established workshop Signed and Dated W.H.Greene, 1871 Courtesy Torfaen Museum Trust*

Pl. 3 *Allgood's Japan storeroom, shop and home in Lower Crane St. sketchbook of W.H.Greene, 1871 Courtesy Torfaen Museum Trust*

There are conflicting views as to where the factory was situated. Some say it was located in a small cottage in Trosnant **(Pl. 2)**, and that it moved to premises in Lower Crane Street in about 1780, **(Pl. 3)**. However, writing in the the *Art Journal* in 1872, W. H. Greene said he had been assured by a niece of the Allgoods, that 'the Japan goods were manufactured from the commencement' in Lower Crane Street. Since she had been brought up in the cottage by her aunt, Mary Allgood, Greene was inclined to agree and thought the cottage in Trosnant was no more than a branch of the business. The articles, he said, were made and stoved in the building seen through the arch where, according to W. D. John, the Allgoods also lived;[5] fronting on to the street, was the shop (with four windows) where the finished goods were stored and sold. On the death of the then proprietor, William Allgood,[6] in 1810, his wife Mary continued to live there and, alongside selling japanned ware, she ran a post office and sold, for example, ironmongery and stationery. Wherever the manufactory was sited, it is clear from these pictures that the premises it occupied were small and incommensurate with the large quantity of japanned goods which are now attributed to the Pontypool factory – unless, of course, some of the work was undertaken by outworkers. If, as we are told, the

decorative patterns were either 'immersed … under translucent lacquer' or 'surfaced', that is 'painted above the lacquer, [and] either varnished or unvarnished', then there would have been no reason why the decoration, for example, could not have been out-sourced.[7]

The earliest known mention of Pontypool japanned ware is found in a letter from Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams[8] to his wife, in 1734, in which he praised the work of Tom Allgood[9] who, he said, 'has found a new way of japanning which I think so beautiful that I'll send you a couple of pieces of it.'[10] At this distance in time and with no known pieces of so early a date having survived, it is a tantalizingly ambiguous statement. While it implies that experiments had been ongoing for some time, it conveys no indication as to whether the japanned surface, that Sir Charles admired, was decorated nor of what objects he intended to send. Given the date, the ground colours were likely to have been black, brown, or crimson; only after c. 1740, did customers have tortoiseshell as an additional choice. To judge from accounts written by visitors to the japan works in the 1750s, the articles available were: trays, tobacco boxes, candlesticks, coffee pots etc., variously decorated in gilt with flower sprigs, Chinese figures and landscapes.

Pl. 4 *A Snuffbox commemorates Capel Hanbury's election as M.P. in 1741. Dia: n/k Present whereabouts unknown*

Of greater interest for the present purpose is the commemorative snuff-box seen here in **(Pl. 4)**, for it is probably the earliest known object that can reliably be attributed to the Pontypool workshops. It shows a portrait of Capel Hanbury (1707-1765), son of Major John Hanbury (see above); evidently it once belonged to their family[11] although that, in itself, does not necessarily mean it was made specifically for them. It is painted on a deep crimson japanned ground and lettered along the lower edge *Vertue rewarded Or Leominster's Glory* — a reference to Capel Hanbury's election as Member of Parliament for Leominster, in Herefordshire, in 1741. Above him a winged cherub supports a banner on which is inscribed *Gorges[…] Liberty* — a possible reference to Sir Arthur Gorges' translation (1614) of *Pharsalia*, a poem in which its Roman author,

Lucan, exerted pro-Republican ideas.[12] The whole is surmounted by a sunburst and stars.

Apart from its commemorative significance, this box is interesting on other counts. First, its charming but naïvely executed decoration is unlikely to have been the type that Sir Charles thought 'so beautiful' which *may* suggest that, even in the 1740s, the factory produced goods for distinctly different markets. And second, W. D. John tells us that Hanbury is shown wearing a blue jacket, information which *appears* to refute Bishop Pococke's assertion in 1756 that, unlike those in Birmingham, Pontypool japanners, did not use 'colouring.' But, on re-reading Pococke's account of his visit to the Pontypool Japan Works, an alternative interpretation emerges. Writing of 'salvers and candlesticks, and many other things,' Pococke reported having been informed that their 'light parts … in imitation of tortoiseshell [are] done with silver leaf' and that 'They adorn them with Chinese landscapes and figures in gold only, and not with colouring, as in Birmingham … .'[13] Was he saying, in fact, it was *only* the tortoiseshell and gilt ornamented wares, so characteristic of early Pontypool, that were given no further embellishment? This box **(Pl. 4)** with its coloured decoration, certainly indicates that this was so.

By contrast, with the box described on the right, a snuffbox lettered for James Curtice and dated 1749 within a 'yellow' tortoiseshell ground **(Pl. 5)** is more typical of early Pontypool decoration. Yellow tortoiseshell grounds proved very popular and were continued until the 1780s when the Pontypool japanners began to adopt the redder, and less expensively produced, tortoiseshell effects of their rivals in the Midlands. Sometimes round, but mostly oval, snuffboxes generally had lift-off lids like those shown here **(Pls. 6 – 9)**. Their decoration was as varied as their shapes were standard. They were made for a popular market and the legends on their lids reflect this. Some were straightforwardly factual, others humorous and, very rarely, some were daringly suggestive; only when the box seen in

Pl. 5 *Oval Snuffbox with tortoiseshell ground is lettered in gilt for James Curtice of Wells, Somerset. Dated 1749 W: n/k*
© National Museum of Wales

Pl. 6 *Oval Snuffbox is lettered for Thomas Hooper of Cakebold, in Worcestershire, 1787. W: 10cm Private Collection*

Pl. 7 *Small Snuffbox with gilt decoration on black ground Late 18th /Early 19th century, W: 6cm Private Collection*

Pl. 9 is turned over and reveals a risqué scene painted on its underside, does the word 'Fair' in the verse on its lid, take on another meaning.

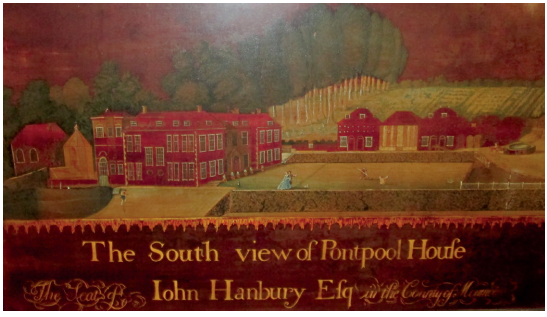
Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), the well-known portrait painter, was in the habit of carrying two snuffboxes, one of gold and one of tin. When the diarist, Fanny Burney (1752-1840), asked 'why he made use of such a vile and shabby tin one', he jovially replied 'because I naturally love a little of the blackguard.'[14] — a telling comment on the social status of tin boxes. Snuffboxes were made by many japanners until well into the nineteenth century and although frequently attributed to Pontypool, they were as much a mainstay of the Midlands japanning industry as they were of the Welsh, and it is now difficult to tell them apart. Notwithstanding, it is possible that the risqué box described above, was made in England since contemporary enamel snuff-boxes, made in Birmingham and Bilston, sometimes concealed similarly clumsily-executed erotic paintings.

Pl. 8 *Tobacco Box with inset magnifying glass, lettered "Bright fol* thro This your Pipe will Light & help old Age to read and Write."*
**fol = sun W: 11cm*
Courtesy of Ewbank Auctions, Guildford

In 1763, following the death of Edward Allgood, a disagreement among his survivors caused his sons, Thomas and Edward, to set up a rival factory in nearby Usk. It is said they took with them some of Pon-

Pl. 9 *Oval Tobacco Box: Its disarmingly simple decoration belies the risqué scene painted on its base. late 18th century W: 12.3cm Courtesy of Woolley & Wallis, Salisbury*

typool's best decorators and such was the climate of competition, the products of two factories were largely indistinguishable. It was around this time that the names of individual decorators began to appear. Among them was Benjamin Barker (1720-1793) who, from 1759 to 1782, was Allgood's foreman decorator. His is the name most frequently associated with the decoration of Pontypool japanned ware; he had no formal artistic training but was said to have specialised in painting landscapes, animals and armorial bearings. It has been said that the japanned panel showing 'The South view of Pontpool [*sic*] House' is painted in Barker's style **(Pl. 10)**.[15]



Pl. 10 *Panel painted to commemorate John Hanbury's coming of age and succession to Pont[y]pool House. c.1765 46 x 65cms Private Collection*

The panel was made for presentation to John Hanbury (1744-1784), most probably to mark both his coming of age and his succeeding to the ownership of Pontypool House on the death of his father, Capel Hanbury in 1765. This assumption is lent credence by the fact that Hanbury was elected Member of Parliament for Monmouthshire in 1766, after which the initials 'MP' would, surely, have followed his name. It is painted in polychrome colours on a crimson ground and was executed shortly after the gardens and outbuildings were completed; the Squire and his sister are shown strolling on the lawn in front of the house. The dovecote and family chapel seen at left of the painting, were replaced by a stable block in the 1820s which is now home to the Torfaen Museum Trust and its holdings of Pontypool japanned ware. The panel is wholly different in

Pl. 11 *Pierced Straight-Edge Tray decorated in gilt "View of the old Hall at Kelmarsh in NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, the seat of the late Thomas Hanbury Esq." c.1760-1765. 38 x 52cm*
© National Museum of Wales

style from a tray of a similar date, decorated with a view of another Hanbury home, Kelmarsh Hall in Northamptonshire **(Pl. 11)**.

In line with Barker's reputation for painting coats of arms, an entry in the Pontypool Parish Register for 1774 reads 'Paid Benjamin Barker £6.6.0d for Drawing His Majesty is [*sic*] Coat of armes.' A number of pierced-edge trays, finely painted with armorial bearings, have survived to the present day **(Pl. 12)**; some of these were almost certainly painted by Barker but, sadly, there is now no way of telling which they were. He grew disenchanted with his work at Pontypool and in c. 1782, moved with his family to Bath where his son, Thomas Barker (1769-1847), became a well known easel painter. Robert Stephen, an early chronicler of Pontypool japanned ware, believed it safe to conclude that young Thomas may have worked alongside his father painting small boxes and trays at Pontypool. This is a reasonable assumption given the age at which young boys were employed as jobbing-painters in the eighteenth century, but like so much else in the history of Pontypool japanned ware, there is, as yet, no evidence that he did.

Pl. 12 *Tray with Flaring Pierced Edge unidentified coat of arms; c.1770 Approx. 41 x 56cm Private Collection, on Loan to Torfaen Museum Trust*

Soon after Barker's departure from Pontypool, William, or as he was better known, Ned Pemberton, 'a skilled workman from Birmingham,'[16] arrived in the district working first at Usk and then moving to Pontypool. He is often cited as a decorator. Nevertheless, as Robert Stephen wrote in 1949: 'a good deal of mystery' surrounds him. 'During the last 50 years of historical accounts,' Stephen noted Pemberton's rise

from 'Tin-plate worker, iron-worker, a mechanic, a skilled worker, a decorator, the best decorator in the Midlands, and … finally …' the distinction of being 'an artist who painted decorative trays in the style of Morland and Wheatley.'[17] Pemberton returned to Birmingham in 1795. There may be good reason why his name has endured but since more recent research has shed no further light on him he must, for the time being, remain an enigma.

Pl. 13 *Table-Top with Flaring Pierced Edge impressed 'BEDFORD' and 'B'HAM' for Stephen Bedford of Birmingham Wooden Battens to the reverse show it was part of a tip-top table, hence the orientation of the decoration. c.1765. 76 x 56cm © National Museum of Wales*

Members of the Stockham family were said to have been 'among the cleverest painters' at both Pontypool and Usk, although none of their work has been identified.[18] However, they were evidently highly respected because, in 1872, the land on which their ruined cottage stood in Pontypool, was named 'Stockham's Garden.'[19]

However, listing the names of decorators is of little practical help without any known examples of their work. Given the rapid development of japanning in the Midlands, many of the so-called Pontypool wares cannot, today, be reliably attributed to Wales as distinct from Birmingham, Wolverhampton or Bilston, let alone to any one decorator; included among these are the flower-painted wares which are so admired by HSEAD members. For proof, we need look no further than the table-top which is clearly marked for Stephen Bedford of Birmingham, and is now in the National Museum of Wales **(Pl. 13)**. The fine tea chest seen here **(Pls. 14 & 15)**, containing three canisters painted to match its exterior, is of a type previously discussed in *The Decorator*.[20] The roses,

Pl. 14 *Tea Chest Containing Three Canisters is painted with flowers on a very dark tortoiseshell ground. c.1765. H: 16cm W: 30cm De: 13cm Private Collection*

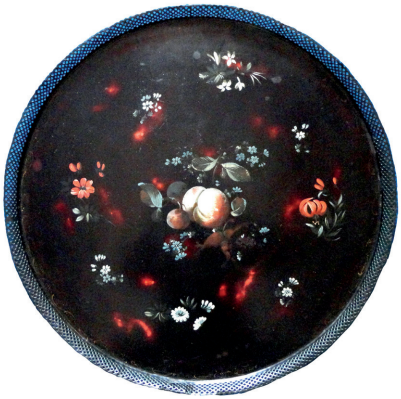
Pl. 15 *Detail from the back of the tea chest shown in Pl. 14*

honeysuckle, anemones etc., with which it is painted, feature also on the armorial panel shown above, but this is not to imply that they are by the same hand. Rather, it is to demonstrate that decorators across the japanning, enamels, ceramic and calico-printing industries, for example, frequently drew on the same design sources. They looked to books like *The Ladies Amusement*, published by Robert Sayer in 1758, containing over 1500 designs by Pillement, Fenn and 'other Masters,' examples from which

Pls. 16 & 17 *Pages from The Ladies Amusement or the Whole Art of Japanning Made Easy, London, Robert Sayer, 1758*

are shown here **(Pls. 16 & 17)**. Decorators freely copied from such books, 'cutting and pasting' a sprig from one engraving, a bird and butterfly from another and figures from elsewhere, often combining them at whim.

Round, oval and rectangular trays with pierced or lace-edged galleries, delicately painted with flowers, fruit and birds are popularly associated with



Pl. 18 *Round Tray with Flaring Pierced Edge. Note the redness of its tortoiseshell ground. 1770-1780s Dia: 36cm Private Collection*

Pl. 19 *Oval Tray with Flaring Pierced Edge*
c. 1770-1780s. 56 x 72cm
Courtesy of Debbie Lambeth

Pl. 20 *Rectangular Tray with Flaring Pierced Edge*
c. 1770-1780s. 36 x 51cm
Courtesy of Shirley Baer

both the Pontypool and Usk workshops, and indeed, were mainstays of both factories in the second half of the eighteenth century **(Pls. 18-20)**. However, like the tea chest above, they are of a type which, in the middle of the eighteenth century, were made also in Birmingham until the 1770s when their production appears to have ceased there. It is unlikely that it will ever be possible to disentangle the products of one manufacturing centre from another but, maybe, closer study of differences in their construction and styles of decoration will allow these trays to be grouped according to type and, perhaps lead to a greater understanding of the number of workshops involved.

Pl. 21 *Small Waiter with Bronze Powder Border Early 19th century. Dia: 26.5cm*
Courtesy of Bonhams, London

The small waiter, shown in **(Pl. 21)**, is unusual in that its floral border incorporates leaves that are executed in bronze powders, not a technique which is generally associated with lace-edged trays and waiters.

Finally, the three vessels illustrated here **(Pls. 22, 25 & 27)**, are especially interesting insofar as each bears an impressed mark. The hinged lids of the two coffee pots are stamped 'II' (or possibly 'IT') and 'KK'

Pl. 22 *Copper and Tin Coffee Pot is painted with flowers on a red tortoiseshell ground. Hinged lid stamped 'II' or 'IT.' Late 18th century H: 25cm. Courtesy of Bonhams, London*

Pl. 23 *Impressed Mark on Coffee Pot Lid, Pl. 22*

respectively **(Pls. 23 & 26)**, while the base of the hot-water jug is stamped with an 'H.' These are likely to be the marks of individual tinplate workers who, working piecemeal, needed to identify the items they had made in order for their weekly wages to be calculated; certainly, tinplate workers at Henry Loveridge's japan factory in Wolverhampton followed this practice in the late nineteenth century. However, more interestingly here, these marks, together with the close similarity of the rustic gilt landscapes on two of the pieces, might suggest that all three examples are from the same workshop.

Intriguingly, the paintings on the front and back of the flower-decorated coffee pot are markedly different in style and appear to be from the hands of two distinct painters, the one being so much freer and more 'painterly' than the other **(Pl. 24)**. It would be interesting to discover how frequently such disparity occurs on individual pieces.

Pl. 24 *Detail from Back of Coffee Pot Pl. 22*

In addition to the letters impressed on their lids, the decoration of the two pots decorated with rustic scenes is enhanced with pigment colours, and their finer details picked out with what appear to be thin washes of japan varnish **(Pls. 25 &27)**.

Pl. 25 *Copper and Tin Coffee Pot with rustic decoration in gilt on tortoiseshell ground. Hinged lid stamped 'KK.'*
Late 18th century H: 26.5cm
Courtesy of Bonhams, London

Pl. 26 *Impressed Mark on Coffee Pot Lid Pl.25*

Although not present on either of these objects, it is not uncommon to find similar decoration in which the figures and buildings look more European than British. In particular, the cottages have the steeply-pitched thatched roofs that are found in regions of heavy snowfall. Since William Allgood, or 'Billy the Bagman' as he was popularly known, extended the market for his japanned ware to include the Netherlands and France, it is conceivable that goods decorated in this way were intended for those markets. Or, given that late eighteenth century japanners in the Netherlands took inspiration from 'English'[21] japanned wares in terms of both their form and decoration, even going so far as to advertise themselves as makers of 'English Lacquerware,' could it be that these objects are Dutch? This, of course, is purely speculative but it is a possibility which re-

Pl. 27 *Hot-Water Jug Impressed 'H' on its underside, decorated in gilt on a tortoiseshell ground*
Late 18th century H: 24cm
Courtesy of Cleveland Auctions

quires further investigation.

Do matters of attribution really matter? Probably not; we can continue to appreciate the intrinsic value of an object wherever it was made and by whomsoever it was decorated. However, it would be good to pursue more *facts* about the history of japanning in Pontypool, not least because of its significant influence on the wider japanning industry both at home and overseas. As Thomas Thomas observed of local japanners in his *Ode to Pontypool* – an allegory on 'the Rise and Progress of the Iron Works in that Town: '… worth superior yet belongs to you; Tis *yours*, to LEAD, 'tis theirs to pursue.'

Footnotes:

1. This article complements that published in *The Decorator*, Spring 2017, 'The Pontypool Question', p.21ff. NB. To avoid repetition, some historical details will be omitted from the current article.

2. Evans, Rev. John, *The Juvenile Tourist*, 1810, p.274.

3. Anon., *A Pocket Vade Mecum Through Monmouthshire*, by a Gentleman, 1785, pp.69-70.

4. *The Decorator*, op cit.

5. John, W.D., *Pontypool and Usk Japanned Wares*, Newport, 1966, p.41.

6. Great-grandson of Thomas Allgood.

7. Thomas, T.H., *Transactions, Cardiff Naturalists Society*: 'Pontypool Japan Ware', vol. XXXVIII, Cardiff, 1905, p.87.

8. Younger brother of Capel Hanbury (see Pl.4) and British Ambassador to the Courts of France and Catherine the Great of Russia.

9. Probably Thomas Allgood c.1707-1770, son of Edward Allgood.

10. Davies, L.Twiston, *Men of Monmouthshire*, Cardiff, 1933, p.72.

11. John, op cit., p.65.

12. A later translation by Nicholas Rowe in 1718, was much praised by Samuel Johnson and may account for its renewed topicality.

13. Pococke, Dr Richard, *Travels through England*, 1756, Camden Society re-print, 1888-9 Vol. ii, p.210.

14. *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay* {Fanny Burney], ed. by her niece, London 1842, Vol. ii, 1781-1786, 28 Dec., 1782, p.218.

15. Babbidge, Adrian, *Everywhere Seen, Everywhere Admired*, Torfaen Museum Trust, 1984, p.18.

16. John., *op cit*. p.38.

17. Stephen, Robert, *Apollo*, November, 1949, p.123.

18. Thomas, T.H., op cit, p.85.

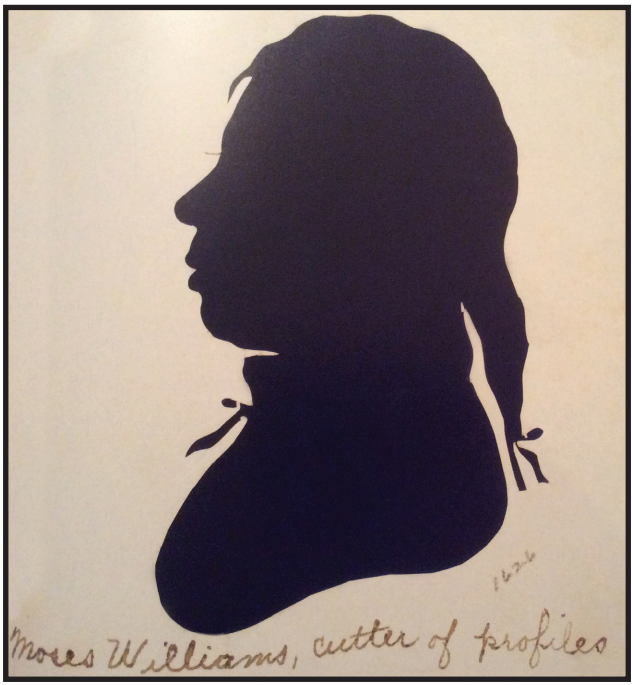
19. Green, W.H., *The Art Journal*, 1872, 'An Extinct Manufacture. The Old Pontypool Japan Ware', p .24, c.3.

20. *The Decorator*, op. cit., p.30, Fig. 8.

21. For which read also 'Welsh'; Monmouthshire was then an English county.

Yvonne Jones is the author of *Japanned Papier Mache and Tinware*, *1740-1940*. Her association with HSEAD began in the early 1970s when, as Keeper of Applied Art and subsequently as Head of Arts & Museums in Wolverhampton, she liaised regularly with members about the important Collection of Japanned Ware held by the Museum. She was guest speaker at our 50th, 60th and 70th Anniversary Celebrations and was made an Honorary Member of the Society in 2012.

Moses Williams
Cutter of Profiles



Pl. 8a *Moses Williams, cutter of profiles, ca. 1803*
attributed to Raphaelle Peale [and Moses Williams]
White Laid Paper on Black Stock, 4" x 5"
Library Company of Philadelphia

by Sandra Cohen

A serendipitous odyssey brought me to the discovery of Moses Williams, an African American slave, owned by18th century artist, scientist and naturalist, Charles Willson Peale, founder of one of the first museums of natural history in America.

Like many of us, I subscribed for years to *The Magazine Antiques* and, having acquired and saved hundreds in my basement, I decided to drastically "reduce the litter." I came across the May 1935 cover; it featured a silhouette of three gentlemen in18th century attire. Unfortunately, the reference and article were missing!

Next, I went to my books on "profile" artists to find this particular composition. Going to your books always results in a number of seg-

ues, so thus began my review of the history of silhouettes. The name "silhouette" came into use in the mid 18th century; the etymology is rather demeaning. France's Finance Minister, Etienne de Silhouette, in need of funds for the costly Seven Years War, levied heavy costs on the people, particularly the affluent, taxing any and every accessory. Due to his excessive penny-pinching (pinching all their pennies) tactics, his name was used to describe the simple and inexpensive "profile" portrait of a person's likeness. There are other renditions of this derivation, all fairly similar in essence. My digression deepened as I began to read more about the art of "profiling."

"Shadow painting" dates to early Classical Greek black-figure vases and later, the Chinese art of Paper-cutting. Charming renditions in silhouette of both prominent and ordinary people, alone, in groupings and/or engaged in a particular activity, were quite ubiquitous in the 18th and early 19th centuries. They were inexpensive, and they seemed to have been in great demand by everyone. The sitters could be accurately individualized, often by the slightest nuance, drawn after the cutting on the hollow-cut's background paper.

Pl. 1 *A "Physiognotrace" Machine Similar to Device at Peale's Museum*

Facilitating this craft, (this was not considered a fine art) was the use of the "physiognotrace," a mechanical aid invented by Gilles-Louis Chretien **(Pl. 1)**. For example, the subject would sit behind a screen, backlit by a candle. Through connected rods, the artist's hand-held stylus would be accurately guided as he traced the subject's profile that was projected on the paper. As simple as it sounds, hollow-cuts were not equal in precision and quality. The results varied depending on the eye and dexterity of the artist while executing the final step, the cutting. In 1802 John Isaac Hawkins, a British inventor living in Philadelphia, together with Charles Wilson Peale made changes to the device that allowed one

to make smaller (@2 inches) profiles.

My curiosity further led me to Emma Rutherford's book, *The Art of The Shadow* (reviewed in *The Decorator* Spring 2011). I came across a striking, full-page enlargement (10 1/2" x 11 1/2") of a silhouette identified as, "Moses Williams (1777- c.1825) attributed to Raphael Peale" (1774-1825). The words, "Moses Williams, cutter of profiles," were hand written on the bottom of the profile. Who was Moses Williams? Rutherford's rather brief description was based on the very little information that's been documented about him; my curiosity would be temporarily diverted as a new inquiry began! **(Pl. 8a)**

Pl. 2 *Charles Willson Peale, The Artist in His Museum, 1822. (self-portrait) Oil on Canvas, 103.5" x 80" Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia*

My first road block was Covid 19. Access to libraries as well as the American Antiquarian Society in nearby Worcester, Massachusetts for information, would, under normal circumstances, have been possible. However, now I was limited to my books and the internet. Therefore, some of the sources for information in my article are from the internet and, in particular, articles on JSTOR by Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw when she was Assist. Prof. of History of Art and Architecture and of African and African American Studies at Harvard University.[1]

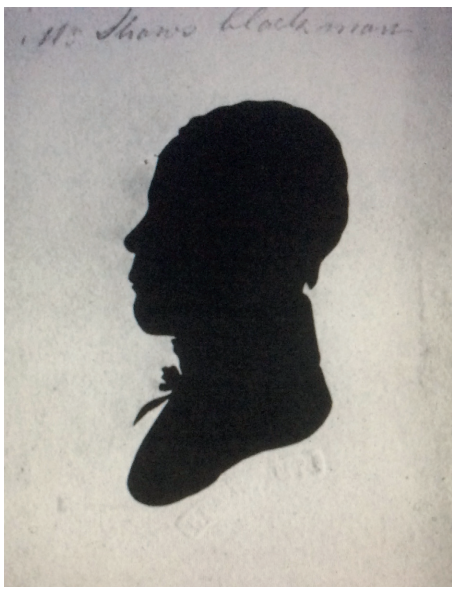
According to Emma Rutherford and other researchers, the story of Moses Williams is intimately connected with distinguished artist, scientist, naturalist and entrepreneur, Charles Wilson Peale (1741-1827). According to Peale's diary, letters and newspaper articles at the time, Williams was the son of Scarborough and Lucy, slaves it's believed, whom Peale acquired as payment for a portrait he painted for a plantation owner in Annapolis, Maryland. When Peale moved his family to Philadelphia, he freed the couple in 1786, required by a Pennsylvania law, for which he lobbied and supported, a law that prescribed that slaves over the age of twenty-eight

be set free. However, Peale kept the couple's (Lucy and Scarborough) eleven-year-old child, Moses, (1777-c.1825) and raised him along with his own seventeen children.

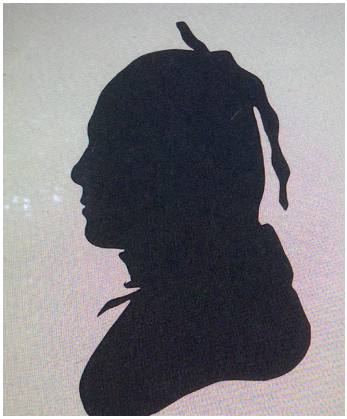
In 1786, Peale opened the Peale Museum in Philadelphia, one of the first Museums of fine art and natural history in the United States **(Pl.2)**. A major undertaking, the Museum not only exhibited fine art, including his paintings and portraits, but also catered to Peale's avocation as a naturalist and scientist, displaying a vast collection of specimens from the natural world, from birds to the bones of a mastodon offered to Peale for exhibition by Dr. John Morgan; the Museum also exhibited fossils from Thomas Jefferson's Collection. Peale meticulously categorized examples from nature according to the Linnean taxonomy of classes, orders, genera and species. Peale's Museum had become the first Museum of Natural History in this country.

Moses Williams, along with the other Peale children, particularly Raphaelle and Rembrandt, (all three were close in age), were "instructed in taxidermy, animal husbandry, object display and eventually the use of a silhouette-making machine, the physiognotrace." [2] However, Peale would not include Moses in the "higher art" or fine art lessons for his children. Shaw observes that Moses' education was limited to the skills that he would need to perform the duties required of him, no more, no less.

There were a number of artists producing hollow-cuts between 1810 - 1820s on the eastern seaboard; all together, they produced tens of thousands of small cuttings! Profiles were often made of slaves to facilitate identifying them. Because owners could transfer their proprietary rights, the written identification indicated the owner's name rather than that of the slave **(Pl. 3)**. Interestingly, there is very little in the profile itself to indicate that this is a black



Pl. 3 *Mr. Shaw's blackman, after 1802.*
Attributed to Moses Williams
White laid paper on black stock, 4" x 5"
Library Company of Philadelphia



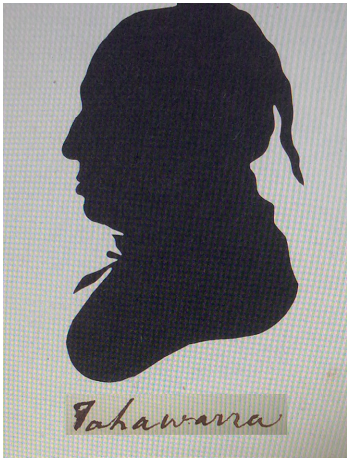
Pl. 4 *Wasconsca 1806*
Attributed to Moses Williams or Charles Willson Peale
National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

man; it's the title that indicates the sitter's status.[3]

The opportunity to have your profile cut became one of the primary attractions to the Peale Museum; during the first year, nearly 80% of attendees had their profile drawn. In a letter in 1805 to Hawkins, Peale's partner in England, Peale wrote,

"…..profiles are seen in nearly every house in the United States of America…..It would be too great a task for Mosis [sic] to write the name on each…..However, he shall give such names as he may think worthy of being known and remembered."[4]

It seems that Williams was doing most, if not all, of the cuttings. According to Charles H. Elam, author of *The Peale Family: Three Generations of American Artists*, Peale owned several physiognotrace machines. The one located in the Longroom of Independence Hall was operated by Moses Williams who cut approximately 8000 hollow-cuts, charging eight cents a-piece.[5] There are three stamps on hollow-cuts that connect them to the Peale Museum. The most common is "Museum." The second, "Peale Museum," appears in a smaller type with an embossed eagle above the name. The third, those with just the name of "Peale," are rare and unusual and thought to have been cut by Raphaelle Peale.[6] However, most hollow-cuts stamped "Museum" and maybe some of those stamped "Peale Museum" were more than likely cut by Moses Williams.



Pl. 5 *Tahawarra 1806*
Moses Williams or Charles Willson Peale
National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

A Roundtable discussion was led by Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw on June 26, 2018 on "A Cutter of Profiles, Moses Williams, who captured history with his silhouettes." Shaw notes that after the Lewis and Clark

expeditions, Pres. Thomas Jefferson welcomed many native Americans **(Pls. 4 & 5)** to meet with him and his political colleagues in Washington, D.C. These same native Americans from west of the Mississippi (known as Sioux territory, now known as Wyoming and the Dakotas) also visited the Peale Museum where they sat for their profiles. In a letter from Peale to Jefferson accompanying the profiles, Peale states that he hopes that the hollow-cuts are "acceptable." Peale also points-out that the handwritten names on the bottom of the profiles "may not be correctly spelt." Shaw asserts that the names written on them in an "unidentified hand…. may be that of Moses Williams."

Pl. 6 *Man in a Feathered Helmet, ca. 1805-1813 by Rembrandt Peale Oil on canvas, 30.24" x 25.25" Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu*

Scholarly research on Moses Williams is fairly current; Ellen Fernandez Sacco, PhD. Art History, is a Visiting Scholar, Office for the History of Science and Technology, UC Berkeley. She reveals some of Williams' duties in Peale's Museum: "Williams's presence in the museum, as silhouette cutter or as sent out by Peale [was] dressed as an Indian to pass out handbills for the exhibit of the mastodon in 1802…" and Sacco continues with an assertion that it also sets-up Williams "…for the same scrutiny as the displays, because it featured his subordinated status within a practice of visual order."

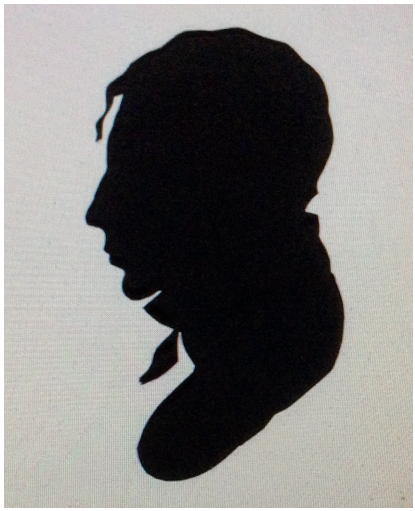
For example, Shaw referencing Sacco, suggests that Rembrandt Peale used Williams, the "light mulatto," as the model for the Hawaiian Chief, "cast as the noble savage and masqueraded against an ethnographic black background." **(Pl. 6)** Sacco bases her premise on a number of observable likenesses in Williams' profile, and here, "the young man portrayed in the painting shows the same full mouth and the broader jawline."[7]

Shaw's presentation further states that both Sacco and David Brigham provide the infrastructure and evaluation of Moses Williams' life and role in the Peale household. The commentary is a reasonable speculation, as well as believable, given the times. She reminds us that

the silhouette titled, "Moses Williams, cutter of profiles" had been in the Library Company of Philadelphia Collection since 1850, but it was "rediscovered" around the year, 2000. Papers from the Peale family members, i.e., Charles, Rembrandt and Raphaelle, reveal disconcerting family relationships. A stinging comment from Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860) reveals his unsympathetic attitude toward Moses.

> "It is a curious fact that until the age of 27, Moses was entirely worthless; but on the invention of the Physiognotrace, he took a fancy to amuse himself in cutting out the rejected profiles made by the machine, and soon acquired such dexterity and accuracy, that the machine was confided to his custody with the privilege of retaining the fee for drawing and cutting. This soon became so profitable that my father insisted upon giving him his freedom one-year in advance. In a few years he amassed a fund sufficient to buy a two-story brick house and actually married my father's white cook……"[8]

It is believed that Raphaelle **(Pl. 7)**, who preferred to paint "still life" and painting in watercolor, (disparaged by his father for these preferences) worked in the Museum with Moses on the taxidermy process that involved the use of arsenic, exposing both of them to its poisonous fumes. Other references and biographies about the Peale family siblings, Raphaelle and Rembrandt, tell a less than complimentary story of a family dynamic fostered by the patriarch, Charles Willson Peale. Many historians agree that Raphaelle probably died from arsenic poisoning, which was probably disguised and exacerbated by his drinking, but he continued to work on these projects to please his father.[9]



Pl. 7 *Raphaelle Peale 1802*
Moses Williams
Album of Peale Museum Silhouettes

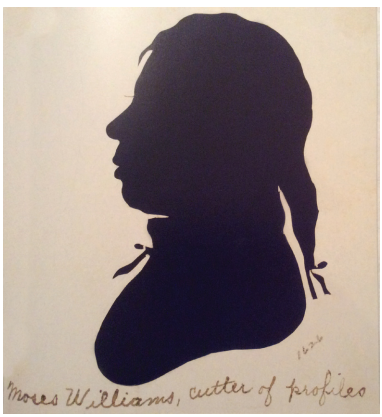
Moses Williams married the Peales' white Irish cook, Maria; they had a daughter, but there is no further record of her whereabouts or life. Conjecture is that she probably

disappeared into society, passing for white.[10] There is also no record of Williams' death; however, city directories listed him as a profile cutter until 1833.[11]

Looking back, there is evidence of the quality of Moses Williams' cutting. In an 1803 letter to his son Raphaelle, Charles Willson Peale boasts to his son,

> "I have just spoken to a Gentleman who says he was at your Room in Norfolk which was so crowded that he could not get his profiles. Moses has made him a good one, being from Carolina, he did not at first relish having it done by a Mulatto, however, I convinced him that Moses could do it much better than I could." [12]

In 1786, when Charles freed his two slaves, Scarborough and Lucy, Scarborough, now a free man, changed his last name to Williams. When Moses was freed in 1802, he assumed the name of his father and became Moses Williams. Williams was given the concession of the physiognotrace in the Longroom of Independence Hall and allowed to retain the fee for his hollow-cuts. According to researchers/authors Shaw, Brigham, Elam and Rutherford, Williams cut approximately 8000 hollow-cuts in one year! Again, they would have been stamped "Museum" or "Peale Museum." Both Shaw and Sacco have made observations and connections that are compelling for identifying a number of other hollow cuts as having probably been executed by Moses Williams. It's a matter of time, further research and a comparative study of available hollow-cuts before more of these profiles will be justly attributed to him.



Pl. 8b *Moses Williams, cutter of profiles, ca. 1803 Attributed to Raphaelle Peale [and Moses Williams]*

In 1996, the hollow-cut of Moses Williams was attributed to Raphaelle Peale by curators at the Library Company of Philadelphia. **(Pl. 8b)** However, this profile was executed sometime after 1802 when Williams was working the physiognotrace as a free man. Shaw notes that the wording on the front of the profile, "Moses Williams,

cutter of profiles," is repeated on the reverse side. The next piece of information from Shaw is most astounding. The wording on the back includes the word,"**the**," in front of "cutter," i.e., "Moses Williams, **the cutter of profiles**." This not only recognizes Moses Williams as a profile cutter, giving him status in a larger context and a vocation in a social context, but further, it may indicate that he is the one who cuts most of the profiles in the Museum. Shaw further asserts that this "re-inscription on the back may also function as a signature."[13] Shaw continued her study of hollow-cuts issued from the Peale Museum and has recognized and recommended that a number of hollow-cuts be attributed to Moses Williams, at the very least, that his name be added to the attribution.

My hope is that further research on Moses Williams will reveal more facts, confidently restate attributions, erase doubts and answer questions about the life and work of Moses Williams. A fuller picture of the times and a greater respect for research and due diligence, for the 'pursuit' in discovering the provenance of artworks, particularly those that do not bear signatures, are important and essential to giving credit justly owed.

Research often uncovers disconcerting pieces of information, but truth always outweighs any resulting embarrassment. The legacy of Charles Willson Peale, who referred to Williams as "my Mulatto man Moses,"[14] will also note that he offered Moses an education, (although limited) and opportunities that allowed Moses independence in his later life. The Peale Family will continue to be appreciated and celebrated in America's lexicon of artists as it deserves to be. However, we should also add another name to that distinguished listing, a prolific early American artist, who, from @1803 to 1833, cut tens of thousands of hollow-cuts; Moses Williams, The Cutter of Profiles in the Longroom of Independence Hall, Peale Museum, Philadelphia also belongs in that lexicon and is worthy and deserving of long overdue recognition.

Footnotes:

1. Shaw, Gwendolyn DuBois. "Moses Williams, Cutter of Profiles: Silhouettes and African American Identity in the Early Republic." *Proceedings of The American Philosophical Society*, 149, no.1 (March 2005) 22-39.

2. Ibid. p.25.

3. Ibid. p.33.

4. Charles Willson Peale to John Isaac Hawkins. Letters dated 17, 22, 25 December 1805 in Peale Papers, 916, p.70.

5. Brigham, David R. *Public Culture in the Early Republic: Peale's Museum and its Audience*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1944.

6. Carrick, Alice Van Leer. *A History of American Silhouettes: A Collector's Guide - 1790-1840*. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1968.

7. Sacco, Ellen Fernandez. "Racial Theory, Museum Practice: The Colored World of Charles Willson Peale." *Museum Anthropology*, 20, no. 2 (1997) 28.

8. Peale, Rembrandt. "The Physiognotrace." *The Crayon 4* (1857) 307-308.

9. Lloyd, Phoebe. "Arsenic, An Old Case: The Chronic Heavy Metal Poisoning of Raphaelle." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, Summer (1994) 660.

10. Charles Willson Peale to Rembrandt Peale. Letters dated 11, 18 September 1808.

11. Jones, Stephen. "A Keen Sense of the Artistic: African American Material Culture in the 19th Century." *International Review of African American Art*, 12, no.1 (1995) 6.

12. Charles William Peale to Raphaelle Peale. Letter dated 18 July 1803 in: *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family* by Lillian B. Miller, Editor, Sidney Hart, Assistant Editor and Toby A. Appel, Research Historian. Published for the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983. p.542.

13. Op. Cit. Shaw p.29-30

14. Charles Willson Peale, Diary 17, Cape May, New Jersey, 30 May to 12 June 1799. In 1799, an entry in Peale's diary, indicates that he referred to Moses as "My Mulatto Man Moses."

Sources:

Carrick, Alice Van Leer. *A History of American Silhouettes: A Collector's Guide - 1790-1840*. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1968.

Lyons, Mary, *The Poison Place*. New York, New York. Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1997, 165 pgs.

Rutherford, Emma, *Silhouette: The Art of the Shadow*. New York, New York. Rizzoli International Publications, 2009, 253 pgs.

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The Demeritt Homestead
A Legacy Portrayed in Folk Art

by Patricia Evans

The Backstory

On May 29th, 1728, my 6th great-grandfather, John Demeritt, was born in Madbury, New Hampshire in the house his father built in 1724. **(Pl. 1)** The Durham Militia, of which John was a member, attacked Fort William and Mary in New Castle on Dec. 14,1774, removed the military stores and 98 barrels of gunpowder from the British Fort and hid them in the area's churches and meeting houses. However, 13 of these barrels,

Pl. 1 *John Demeritt Homestead*

buried under the floor of John's barn, would ultimately be delivered by him to Col. John Stark and his Third New Hampshire Militia. John Demeritt, who risked being hung if caught, bravely trekked 60 miles to deliver gunpowder, concealed under firewood, in his oxcart. The additional ammunition enabled Stark and his men to hold back the British at Bunker Hill, saving many American lives and earning John Demeritt the moniker, "Powder Demeritt."

Major John Demeritt died at age 98 in 1826, passing the Demeritt property to Hopley Demerit, his grandson, and wife Abigail Snell,

> "A woman of character and enterprise, she cared for "Powder" Major in his last years, and through her came many anecdotes and facts

of early days, including the battle at Fort William and Mary, heard from the man who participated."

After Hopley's death, Dec. 24, 1834, Abigail continued to live there, raising their 3 daughters (a son, John, had died at 2 yrs. of age.) "Inventories and household weavings testify to her energy and capability."

Pl. 2 *Believed (unsigned) to be a Self-Portrait of Young Abbie Jane Portrait is resting on a trunk also believed to have been decorated by her*

Pl. 3 *Portrait of a woman, Abbie Jane Unsigned*

Two of the girls married; Louisa Marie, lived just down the road and the youngest, Abbie Jane, never married and remained home helping her mother. Abbie Jane painted lovely watercolors, oil paintings and school girl art. Louisa Marie's daughter, Jennie Mabelle, often walked down the lane to visit her grandmother, Abigail, and her aunt, Abbie Jane. "The young granddaughter delighted to listen to stories and explore the old house with its chests, looms, spinning wheels, diaries, account books and military records." **(Pls. 2, 3, 4)**

Abigail died in 1885, and Abbie Jane remained in the house until her death in 1904. Her other sister, Elizabeth Ann Hanson, the last Demeritt to live in the house, died in 1911, and the Demeritt Homestead was left to Jennie Maybelle and her brother John. Although they never lived in the home, they took care of it and visited often. Through Jennie's friendship with Winifred Goss, DAR member and Honorable Regent, the granite boulder and plaque designated the Demeritt House an historical site in 1928. **(Pl. 5)** In 1930, Goss purchased the property with Jennie's stipulation: "Don't

Pl. 4 *Louisa Marie's daughter, Jennie Mabelle*

Pl. 5 *Dedication of Demeritt Homestead 1928*

change it; don't sell anything. Leave everything as I have so fondly remembered it!" Jennie Maybelle made her last visit to the house on July 29, 1936, and fittingly, there she passed away.

Winifred's son, C. Lane Goss, spent weekends modernizing the home, and it was used as a place for family gatherings and local fundraisers. Upon his retirement, Lane and his wife Connie moved into the Demeritt Homestead year round. Electricity and plumbing were installed; one room was paneled, and nothing was sold! Dishes, cooking utensils, rugs, quilts, samplers, artwork by Abbie Jane as well as antique furnishings remain, particularly three pieces made by the patriarch, John Demeritt, himself. It seems as though "Powder Demeritt" was also a fine craftsman, an attribution verified by the salmon colored cupboard, the formal secretary with drop leaf desk and its detailed enclosed case on top and also the tall case clock with pinched waist and brass finials. It is all still there from nearly 300 years ago. **(Pls. 6, 7a & b, 8, 9)**

Pl. 6 *Salmon Kitchen Cupboard*

C. Lane Goss's two children, Georgia and Lane Woodworth "Woody," inherited the home and surrounding farm fields. Woody's wife Nancy, realizing the value of Abbie Jane's artwork, doc-

Pl. 7a *Floral Pen Drawing and Pinhole Still Life signed Abbie Jane*

Pl. 7b *Pencil Drawing of View of Mount Vesuvius signed Abbie Jane*

Pl. 8 *Drop Leaf Desk with Finely Carved Doors on Top Case*

umented what she discovered. The home is now owned by their son, Charles Lane Goss and his wife Beth who continue to preserve this historical site and its story. One change is that they have made accommodations in the 1805 barn so that it could be used as an Event Center.

They have welcomed my family, my cousins and me several times for visits and to see the house. I am always in awe as I step inside and see the old dishes in the salmon colored cupboard my 6th great-grandfather, "Powder" Major John Demeritt built and the fireplace tools on the hearth, the comfortable Federal wing chair, the rooms where so many of my early relatives were born, lived and died. If only grandfather could walk into his house today, he would know he was home.

Pl. 9 *Tall Case Clock with Pinched Waist and Brass Finials*

Creating A Family Heirloom

The Daughters of The American Revolution (DAR) host an annual American Heritage Art Contest for members. The theme for 2019 was "Honoring Our Patriots While Preserving Our Family Stories." I had often thought of painting a box showing my 6th great-grandfather's participation in the American Revolutionary War, and this would be a perfect fit for "Powder" Major John Demeritt's story. **(Pls. 10-18)** Using Jo Sonja's acrylic paint, I applied the same color sky on all 5 sides with warm white and with just a touch of naphthol red light on the horizon. Also, all greens are the same, black and yellow oxide. I

Pl. 10 *Reproduction of Demeritt Homestead*

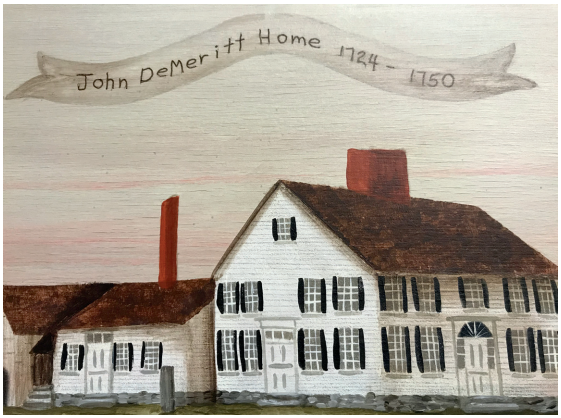
made a tracing for the top using the earliest photos I had of the house. Stencils (using Mylar) were cut for the house, barns, windows and chimneys. I used a grey water color pencil (Derwent Watercolors) to define the clapboards on the house.

A Shader #6 brush gave me texture for the shakes on the roof. From reading the old wills, I learned they had an orchard; one left a portion of it to his surviving wife. I was told they raised sheep and hay. There are stone walls all around the property. The rocks are a random mix of white, raw umber, raw sienna, burnt umber and nimbus grey that I "squished-on," using different sized filbert brushes. The outside scene captures grazing sheep, hay and stone walls.

Pl. 11 *Outside scene captures grazing sheep, hay and stone walls.*

Wanting to identify the home and town, I looked through books of paintings from that time and found several with a banner across the top. A side-load of burnt umber did a better job for the banner than a solid color. Lettering was done with a Sharpie ultra fine point.

The left side of the box shows Fort William and Mary. Originally built



Pl. 12 *Banners were used in paintings to identify homesteads*

in 1632, it was built three times. The 1803 Fort is the one you can see still standing today. Fortunately, I did find a one-line description of how it looked in 1774: "A stone wall about seven feet high…" Right or wrong, I put in the iron gate that is there today, and of course, a British flag, and since it is on the ocean, sea gulls are depicted.

The walk to Boston on the front made good use of an Early American Life article on oxen. I used it for close-up pictures of the animals and cart. A "mile marker" would work to show where he was going. John Demeritt traveled this road in late spring, and lots of daisies and ragged robin were surely blooming along the sides of the road.

Pl. 13 *Fort William and Mary*

Colonel John Stark's men took a position on a hill just up from the Mystic River. They hid behind a stone wall and a rail fence that they stuffed with hay for cover from the British who could not see them until they all stood up and fired at once at close range. I combined several pictures of early battle scenes to put this side together. After painting the scene, I gave it a light spray of Krylon and then added the gray and Kleister for the gun

Pl. 14 *Major Demeritt delivering gunpowder to Col. John Stark*

Pl. 15 *Col. Stark and his 3rd New Hampshire Militia*

powder smoke.

For the back, I traced a photo I have of the granite boulder in front of the house. It was placed there by the DAR in 1928. I wanted all to be able to read the brass plaque, so I just enlarged it. Again, the lettering was done with a Sharpie pen.

I tried to find something appropriate to line my box. The inside lid has a map of Madbury, N.H. showing the Demeritt House. The lower part is lined with a copy of a 1772 newspaper ad looking for "some able volunteers" to garrison Fort William and Mary.

Pl. 16 *Dedication Site with Enlarged Marker*

Not wanting the box to look new, I wore the corners and edges just a little. It then got 2 coats of Krylon Matte Spray, followed by a light coat of Micro-Crystalline Brown Wax. Perfect, No Shine!

Honoring my 6th great-grandfather, his bravery and patriotism through this project has been a labor of love. Perhaps this project will inspire you to celebrate and memorialize a family heritage in a similar project. My friends in the DAR have been very enthusiastic about the early American decorative art work I have shown them. I'd like to encourage fellow DAR members as well as members of other art organizations to encourage and develop meaningful contests that offer us an opportunity to use our decorative art skills. We want to reach out to others with the work we do, and these contests are really a made-to-order connection. I think HSEAD is a great match with the DAR! We all share a love of our country's history and a desire to commemorate it in our artwork.

Pl. 17 *Box interior is lined with map of Madbury and an ad for "Volunteers."*

Pl. 18 *Finished Demerrit Family Keepsake*

Sources:

Demeritt, Jennie M., *The Story of The Old House,* 1920.

Garvin, D.B. and J.T. *The New Hampshire Gazette*, Portsmouth, N.H. 1972, "On The Road North of Boston," New Hampshire Historical Society Collections.

Patricia Evans is a member of The Historical Society of Early American Decoration and the Daughters of The American Revolution (DAR).

Correction: In the 2019 issue of *The Decorator*, "Riley, Whiting, Wag-on-the-Wall Clock" by Patricia Evans, the date in the captions on page 56 page 58, should read 1833, not 1883. After Whiting died in 1835, his widow and son continued his business until 1841 when they sold their business to William Gilbert, one of the foremost clockmakers in Connecticut in the 19th century.

The Tilted Bowl

by Valerie B. Oliver

Pl. 1 *The Tilted Bowl by Matilda A. Haviland, ca.1840*
14 7/16" x 17 7/16" [c. 1825 in 1957 AARFAC Cat.]
Courtesy, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Gift of the Museum of Modern Art
formerly in the Collection of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

The "Tilted Bowl" theorem, owned by the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center **(Pl. 1)** (AARFAC 32-403.1), also known as the Bowl with Fruit, Tipped Bowl, Chinese Bowl, Still Life with Chinoiserie Bowl, was a popular theorem design during the second quarter of the 19th Century according to several sources including *The Abbey Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection*, its catalog by Nina Fletcher Little published by Little Brown in 1957. In this publication "The Tilted Bowl" is dated c.1825; it is described as a velvet painting, 15" x 18 1/8" with signature in ink in lower right. The butterfly is also completed in ink and paint. Here, on page 248, the bowl was described as a "tilted Chinese porcelain bowl." As a popular design the catalog stated that no original source had been identified. In the 1987/1988 publication of the Collection titled *American Folk Paintings, Painting and Drawings other than Portraits from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center* edited by Beatrix T. Rumsford,

"The Tilted Bowl" on page 161 is dated ca. 1840, 14 7/16" x 17 7/16", "paint on velvet"… where "Defying the force of gravity, Haviland's bowl and fruit appear to float above the base." Although estimated dates and measurements are slightly different, the two volumes are describing the same original Haviland theorem.

Pl. 2 *Theorem on Velvet, by Valerie B. Oliver, 1970s*

I wondered what the different versions looked like as I had stenciled this theorem using a pattern from my teacher, Florence Rainville of Uncasville, Connecticut back in the 1970s. The pattern I reproduced was the same as the original signed by Matilda A. Haviland, but it had no butterfly in the upper left. **(Pl. 2)**

Haviland's signed work, labeled "Bowl with Fruit," was pictured in *The Fine Arts,* "The Still-Life in American 'Primitive' Art" by Aaron Marc Stein, page 15, June 1932. His subtitle is "Perhaps Better Termed 'Provincial,' the Anonymous but Highly Decorative Fruit and Flower Pieces of Early Native Artists Are Receiving Increasing Attention from Connoisseurs." In his text, Stein states that even the Whitney Museum for its recent exhibition catalog referred to this type of painting as "provincial" rather than "primitive." The photograph credit read "Collection of Mrs. Elie Nadelman, New York: courtesy of the Newark Museum." An analysis on page 43 states:

> **"**The extraordinary bowl of fruit signed by Matilda A. Haviland shows a more uniform confidence and control. The courage of the technique, in fact, amounts almost to temerity when it is transferred to an attitude toward design. Matilda's bowl bears only a decorative relation to the fruit. Possibly she sought to represent it from its most descriptive angle, reinforcing to this purpose the probabilities of gravitation. How admirably she compensated for her bold disregard of literal, representational fact by her solid anchorage of the dynamically poised form in the decorative thrust and counterthrust

of the opposed elements of her pattern."

This theorem, originally owned by Mrs. Elie Nadelman of New York, was eventually acquired by the Folk Art Center for its collection. In the *Newark Museum Quarterly* of Summer/Fall 1967, the introduction by Elinor Robinson Bradshaw, reviewing American folk art in its collection, notes on page 6 that the "pioneer" collection "was that of Mrs. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, started around 1932…" It is interesting that the article by Stein picturing this Haviland theorem was published during the same year.

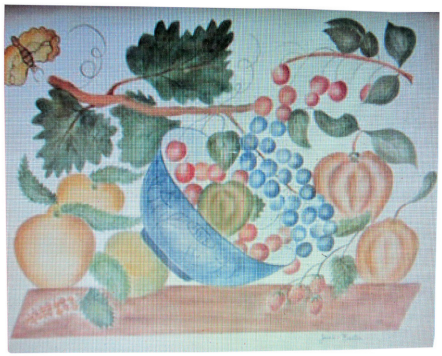
Pl. 3 *Tipped Bowl Velvet Painting, Anon, ca. 1840*
Courtesy, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller

Another type of velvet painting in the Folk Art Center's Collection is entitled "The Tipped Bowl" (AARFAC 32-403.10). Here the artist is unknown, and although the painting is very similar to the Haviland design, it appears a bit crude by comparison. There is much more detail on the larger white bowl, and there appear to be two green pears on the right and four rather regimented strawberries under the bowl. The painting obviously delivers a very different feeling than one generated using stencils where clear lines and spaces can be seen rather than shading by a brush. **(Pl. 3)**

The AARFAC catalogs list other similar designs, both sighed and unsigned, that have come to their attention. Some of these can be seen in books or journal articles

Pl. 4 *Theorem Pattern by Ellen Sabine*
HSEAD Pattern Archive

Pl. 5 *Theorem on Velvet by Pat Olson, 1965*



Pl. 6 *Theorem Esty-276jpg Internet 2/25/20*

while others were noted as being in museums, private collections or auction catalogs. For example, in the 1987/1988 catalog, *American Folk Paintings,* edited by Rumsford, on page 162*,* HSEAD's Virginia (Gina) Martin is cited as providing the Folk Art Center, April 24, 1975, with documentation about a "Tilted Bowl" theorem signed by Mary Jane Gilbert of Norwich, Connecticut.

Pl. 7 *Still Life with Fruit, by E.T. Firmin 400-324jpg, ebay.com Internet 3/27/20*

As this design spread and was reproduced, we naturally see minor differences, usually in colors used and of the ways that fruits were shaded or painted. No reproductions are exact copies. From the HSEAD Pattern Archive Collection no. J5-46, signed by Ellen Sabine and matted in red, we see the bowl stenciled in grey, a few additional tendrils, bowl does not include the inscription "R.A.G" and the butterfly shows more color. Other subtle differences can be seen too. **(Pl. 4)**

Pat Olson, HSEAD member's 1965 reproduction and another signed as seen on the internet in **(Pls. 5 & 6)**, are true to the Haviland design with only slight differences.

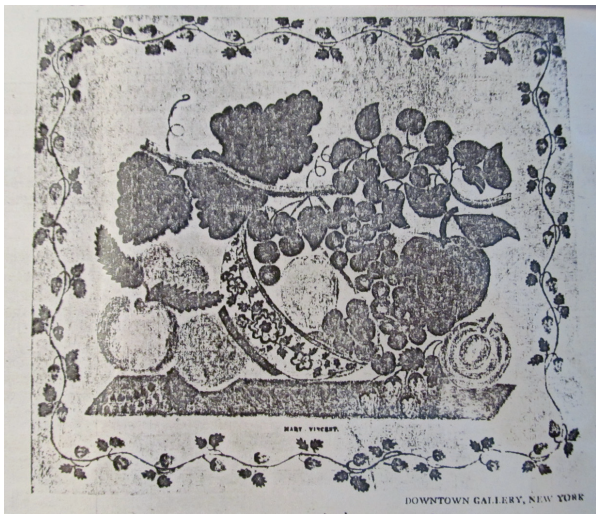
E. T. Firmin's rendition shows a red apple as the larger upper right fruit,

Pl. 8 *Theorem by Mary Peasant*
238-182jpg Internet 2/24/20

a butterfly designed differently and a purple plum in the bowl. **(Pl. 7)**

In Mary Peasant's collection the version matted in green appears to include more grapes flowing into the lower bowl, no butterfly and a lighter colored supporting board. **(Pl. 8)**

This pattern was also painted on velvet by Mary Vincent ca. 1830 and pictured as fig. 49 in Wolfgang Born's *Still- Life Painting in America***.** NY: Oxford Univ. Pr. published in 1947. Here we can see that she duplicated the basic design but decided to add a garland of leaves around the edge; she also removed the Asian designs on the bowl and replaced them with flowers and leaves making it to please her sensibilities. Mr. Born in his chapter three, "Primitives and Amateurs," stated on page [20] that "European Baroque motifs reappeared in a simplified form, among them the overturned bowl, which was popular with the late Dutch still-life painters," and that "The American velvet painters—mostly girls… took such motifs for granted and used them naively." **(Pl. 9)**



Pl. 9 *Tipped Bowl Velvet Painting by Mary Vincent*
ca. 1830, 23" x 18 1/2"
Wolfgang Born. Still-Life Painting in America
NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1947

Differences with the Haviland can be seen clearly in an unsigned theorem, dated c.1825, but larger and showing a table or shelf extending completely across the width of the piece; it is titled "Still Life with Chinoiserie Bowl." The bowl shows a more detailed landscape design with build-

ings, boats, hills and trees, not just symbols as in the Haviland. Here also there are two large clusters of grapes beneath and to the left of the bowl and four strawberries beneath the right bowl edge. The pattern was executed with water color and stencils. The anonymous piece is pictured in the *National Gallery of Art 101, American Primitive Watercolors and Pastels from the Collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch*.Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1966, fig. 63, on page 78. According to this source it measures 25 3/8" x 17 7/8." **(Pl. 10)** is a similar rendition from the Internet.

Pl. 10 *Similar Still Life with Chinoiserie Bowl Pinterest Internet 2/7/2020*

Pl. 11 *Theorem Award by Shirley Berman The Decorator Fall/Winter 1993-4, p.19*

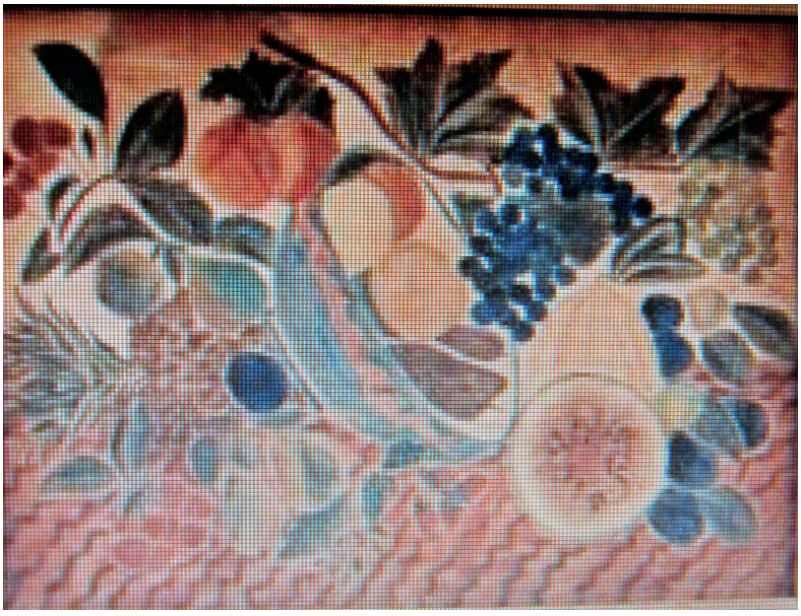
Another large design was noted in the M. & M. Karolik Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. This one is titled "Tipped Bowl" and is also watercolor on velvet with stencils. This is illustrated in John and Katherine Ebert's 1975 publication, *American Folk Painters*, chapter six, "Amateur--Painting and Calligraphy,"

Pl. 12 *Theorem Award by Mary Avery*
The Decorator Fall 2015, p.23

on page 149. Here we do not see the four strawberries together in a line beneath the bowl nor do we see two large grape clusters on the lower left. Instead, there is one narrow grouping of grapes overlapping the table or shelf's edge. The bowl has a simpler Chinese design with a stylized pagoda or two. Three large leaves at the top of the still life are quite elaborate when compared with the Haviland design. This theorem is also pictured in the Exhibition Catalog, *M.& M. Karolik Collection of American Watercolors and Drawings, 1800-1875* written by

Pl. 13 *Theorem, Adaptaion by Rossier*
Internet 8/30/2018

Martin and Martha Catherine Codman Karolik and the Museum of Fine Arts, published by the Museum in Boston in 1962 in two volumes. Here in volume 2 on page 251 the theorem is described as a "Tipped Chinese bowl filled with lemon and cherries on table or shelf surrounded by portion of vine, grapes and other fruit."



Pl. 14 *Theorem Painting*
Internet 2/2020

Once theorems were submitted for judging by HSEAD in the early 1990s, three renditions similar to this one have been seen in *The Decorator:* in 1992-3 by Bea Cunningham, (not pictured here), in 1993-4 by Shirley Berman and in 2015 by Mary Avery. Adaptations of this design can be seen on the internet too. **(Pls. 11, 12, 13)**

As seen today, theorem artists are adapting old patterns to their tastes just as artists did in the past. One such example illustrates how the pattern has been expanded with more fruit and leaves to fill up a rectangular space with a differently decorated bowl and addition of a large cut open melon or squash in the lower right, a pineapple on the lower left and a wavy striped base; its design moves further and further away from the simple idea by Haviland. The illustration shows this design. **(Pl. 14)**

Undoubtedly there are more tilted or tipped bowls out there. **(Pl. 15)**

Pl. 15 *Theorem Stencil*, Anon., *ca. 1850*
Courtesy of The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, NewYork

The pattern below was found with no photo or color notes; it is from HSEAD member Thelma Riga's Collection once owned by the Fletcher Farm Craft School in Ludlow, Vermont. She originally gave her collection to the HSEAD Charter Oak Chapter back in 1966. Others noted on the pattern were: M. Wiley, M. Poor and H.B. Frost. **(Pl. 16)**

Pl. 16 *Theorem on Velvet by Valerie B. Oliver, 2019*

Designs can be found not only in books and museums as noted above but on the internet. These observations demonstrate that certain design ideas were attractive to artists then and now. The differences are mainly due to skill at painting on velvet or paper, different methods of execution, colors and inclusion of design elements. Of course, "beauty [as we know] is in the eye of the beholder."

Sources:

The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Collection: a Descriptive Catalogue by Nina Fletcher Little. Colonial Williamsburg. Distributed by Little, Brown & Co., Boston, Toronto, 1957. 1st ed.

American Folk Painters. John and Katherine Ebert. NY: Scribners, 1975.

American Folk Paintings, Paintings and Drawings other than Portraits from the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1987. A New York Graphic Society Book, published in association with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Copyright 1988 by Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

"Introduction" by Elinor Robinson Bradshaw. *Newark Museum Quarterly,* p.4-7, Summer/Fall 1967.

M. & M. Karolik Collection of American Watercolors and Drawings, 1800-1875. Martin Karolik, Martha Catherine Codman Karolik and the Museum of Fine Arts. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1962.

National Gallery of Art 101. American Primitive Watercolors and Pastels from the Collection of Edgar William and Bernice Chrysler Garbisch. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1966.

"Still-Life in American Primitive Art," Aaron Marc Stein. *The Fine Arts* XIX, p.14-16, 42-3, June 1932.

Still-Life Painting in America. Wolfgang Born. NY: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1947.

Valerie B. Oliver is a retired librarian and serves as Historian for The Historical Society of Early American Decoration.

Limners, Early American Portrait Painters
William Matthew Prior

by Virginia O'Brien

Most artists, classified as "limners" in the early 1880's, were untrained, minimally trained or self-trained, and they were often employed in art related fields such as gilders, glaziers and sign painters in their daily workplaces.

Academically trained artists, believed that limners, also referred to as craftsmen or journeymen, were naíve in handling perspective, compositional balance, proportion, foreshadowing, modeling, etc. compared to formally trained artists. Their work was viewed as inferior and, therefore, of less monetary value than art produced by academically trained artists.

Pl. 1 *Artist as a Young Man: Self Portrait, 1825,*
William Matthew Prior
oil on canvas, H: 31.13 x W: 26.94 in.
Courtesy of the Fenimore Art Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y.
Museum Purchase N0008.2010.
Photograph by Richard Walker

However, In the "New World" there were no studios for training artists in the formal academic traditions, and those with a natural ability and inclination found a niche in a rising middle class. Portraiture was the most ubiquitous art form in the colonies in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. Early middle-class people who came to America had a desire to validate their families, their genealogy and business developments within their respective financial situations. Prominent members of society and those with established businesses de-

Pl. 2 *Two Girls of the Morse Family and Their Dogs*
Attributed to William Mathew Prior, ca.1845
On dog's collar: "Minny Morse"
Probably Boston, Massachusetts
Oil on canvas, 28 x 32 in.
Collection of Old Sturbridge Village

sired to record their family's entrepreneurial success and social status by commissioning a reputable limner to portray them and their families for posterity. **(Pls. 2 & 3)**

They would also attempt to capture family members posthumously (from corpses) to document their images for sentimental reasons as well as for future family records. As recent immigrants, they emulated the latest in European styles and accessories available to them from printed imports. In the early 1800's mortality rates were high, particularly among children, and life expectancy was low. It was important for people to pass-on written information, descriptions and pictures within families, for the American public and for people in the countries from which they came.

Pl. 3 *Lucy Hartshorn*
William Matthew Prior, 1836
On verso: "Mrs. Hartshorn Painted from Nature by Wm. M. Prior. Portland Feby 24, 1836"
Portland, Maine
Oil on cardboard 24 7/16 x 20 7/16
Collection of Old Sturbridge Village
Photograph by Henry Peach

Pl. 4 *Landscape, 1850-1860, William Matthew Prior*
oil on canvas, H: 20.25 x W: 25.75 in.
Courtesy of the Fenimore Art Museum
Cooperstown, New York
Gift of Mr. Stephen C. Clark. N0412.1961
Photograph by Richard Walker.

Local scenics **(Pl. 4)** and decorated furnishings were often an aesthetic hybrid reflecting their new world and past traditions. Limner art graced the walls of homes in portraiture as well as business and tavern signs and painted furnishings. Limners painted on paper, glass, wood and ivory producing lasting miniatures, prints, profiles, front and partial views of people including mourning pictures and promotional drawings from many business and art related projects.

Because of their lack of academic training, limners were often categorized as "folk artists;" thus they embraced the challenge of having "folk art" recognized and accepted as an art form by successfully improving their skills in many ways to compete with the academic contingent as well as with increasing competition during the advent of photography. However, the naive style of limners seemed conducive to the pioneer character of the New World, and many began to establish themselves and "folk art" as a viable way to meet the needs of the new middle class in America. "Folk Art," an art form about early Americans, their styles and status, their lives and livelihoods, by artists (many self-taught), became recognized and continues to hold a place on the decorative and historical art continuum because of their talent, self-made ingenuity and efforts.

Most museums in New England, New York and Pennsylvania exhibit Folk Art Collections which include portraiture by limners and welcome new additions that become available to them after years of ownership by private families and/or collectors. Those of us who live in the East are within easy access to see the incredible and ubiquitous paintings by limners from the 1800 and 1900's in both small and large collections, in large and small museums. They include small community museums that are preserving the history of their heritage, including the area's early family settlers and landmarks. These museums are eager and willing to share their personal stories about the early works in their Collections.

Pl. 5 *James and Sarah Tuttle, 1836*
Joseph H. Davis (active c.1832-c.1838)
Reproduction by Virginia O'Brien
Watercolor, pencil and ink on paper
(Painting depicts furnishings and decorative objects in Folk Art style.)
Original in The New York Historical Society

My study of Limners focused on the distinctive work of a few early limners who differ from one another in style, but who have contributed significant techniques and approaches to the field of limner paintings and who were among those most exhibited. **(Pls. 5 & 6)**

This article highlights a well-known and prolific limner, William Matthew Prior (1806-1873), born in Bath, Maine. **(Pl. 1)** He was the

Pl. 6 *Mrs. Joseph Gardner and Her Daughter, 1814*
Jacob Maentel (1763?-1863)
Reproduction by Virginia O'Brien
Watercolor and ink on paper
(Painting depicts landscape background in Folk Art Style)
Original in Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Collection

4th son of Captain Matthew (1774-1815) and Esther Bryant Prior (1781-1842). Prior was a successful seaman who was lost on a ship in 1815 on a trip to England. However, Esther was able to provide her children with an education and a moderate life style with the help of a marine organization that aided widows and children of sailors who were lost at sea.

In 1824 William Matthew Prior went to work for a master house painter, Almery Hamblin (1776-1830) (Almery's daughter, Rosamond, later marries Prior, and Almery's son, Sturtevant, had a successful partnership with Prior in his portrait studio.). Prior may have learned the rudiments of decorative painting from the Hamblins. However, he was intrigued by higher levels of painting and studied for a while under Charles Codman (1800-1842), the city's first professional ornamental and decorative painter. Prior may have learned to paint clock faces, landscapes on wood, glass and canvas in oil colors at that time. He met four accomplished artists there, Simon and Aaron Willard, John Ritto Penniman and Gilbert Stewart; it is a distinct possibility that he also learned from them and advanced to portraits in oil as early as 1824.

In 1825 Prior's self-portrait **(Pl. 1)** shows his skills to be greatly improved. In 1827 he was listed as a portrait painter at Haymaker Row, Quincy Lane; this listing appears to be the first professional written indication of his career. At age 21 he returned to Bath and officially went into business offering ornamental painting (Japanning) on trays, bronzing, gilding, etc. The following year he advertised portraits at reasonable

and reduced prices.

In 1828 Prior married Rosamond Hamblin; in 1829 their daughter, Rosamond, was born and later, in 1831, a son, Gilbert. In 1840 he moved his family to Boston where he would attract more commissions. The Hamblin's, Nathaniel, Joseph and Sturtevant went with him to the area near the Boston State House and the Athenaeum, America's oldest library that attracted members of Boston's literary society. In 1841 the Boston Arts Association was founded and exhibited the country's professional fine artists. For ten years it attracted artists to meet, study, share information and teach classes. Prior, feeling the competition of the academically trained artists, made the decision to move to East Boston where the population was more middle working class and more suited to his commercial approach and naive painting style.

Pl. 7 *William Miller (possibly) Attributed to William Matthew Prior*
1849
Oil on canvas, 31" x 26.25"
Courtesy of the Fenimore Art Museum
Cooperstown, N.Y.
Museum Purchase N0033.1960
Photograph by Richard Walker

In the 1840's Prior became heavily involved with a religious group, led by William Miller (1782-1849), **(Pl. 7)** promoting Adventism which was predicting the end of the earth in 1843-44. Prior met Joshua Himes (1805-1895), a publisher and Christian, who became involved in Miller's movement and who was writing a book to promote Miller's theories; Prior was asked to paint a portrait of Miller for the book; he not only painted four portraits of Miller, from1841 to 1843, he also created art for the "Millerites" and crusaded for the cause. It may have been that during this detour from portrait painting, Prior taught Sturtevant Hamblin to paint and take care of his business while he worked with the Millerites.

In 1868 Prior wrote a book, *The Empyrean Canopy of 1868* under the direction of Miller which included a chronological chart of the Advent movement, a lithograph on linen with ink and water color. The book, which was circulated in the Millerite community, represented a new kind of art for Prior.

In 1843, Prior, an abolitionist, exhibited a new kind of boldness by

Pl. 8 *Mrs. Nancy Lawson, 1843*
William Matthew Prior
Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 25 in.
Collection of Shelburne Museum
museum purchase acquired from
Maxim Karolik. 1959-265.34.

Pl. 9 *William Lawson, 1843*
William Matthew Prior,
Oil on canvas, 30 1/4 x 25 1/4 in.
Collection of Shelburne Museum
museum purchase acquired from
Maxim Karolik. 1959-265.35.

painting William and Nancy Lawson, **(Pls. 8 & 9)** well-know Millerite activists and among the first African Americans to be painted. This painting commission was undertaken with great risk to Prior as well as William and Nancy Lawson. The couple are painted as prominent citizens; Nancy was painted in a green and white dress in front of a window showing a landscape done by Prior in the 1830's. William was shown as a successful clothing dealer holding a lighted cigar. In Boston, the epicenter of abolitionism in New England, racism still existed at all levels of society. The paintings of the Lawsons are masterpieces, and they are considered very courageous undertakings for both Prior and the Lawsons.

Miller's failed "end of the world" theory caused many of his followers to call him a fraud and leave his company. Himes redirected his energies toward abolitionism. In 1843, the less busy Prior turned more seriously to expanding his painting business. He bought a property in East Boston and built a three-story building, the "painting garret." His sign painting business and his portraits of children increased significantly. Painting in 1848-1849, the advent of daguerreotype, which was yet another competitive product on the market, Prior was motivated to produce some of his best and most profitable portraits of young children who were often painted with their pets and favorite toys. **(Pl.10)**

In 1849 Rosamond Prior died as did their four-year old son, Joseph,

Pl. 10 *Child in Blue with Dog, 1848*
William Matthew Prior,
oil on canvas, H: 35.63 x W: 29 in.
Courtesy of the Fenimore Art Museum
Cooperstown, N.Y.
Gift of Stephen C. Clark. N0254.1961.
Photograph by Richard Walker.

leaving William a widower with four young children which included an infant. He quickly married Hannah Walworth 1828-1919. The family census in Boston in 1850 listed Prior as a portrait painter. Walworth was a clairvoyant, and she and Prior shared an interest in the afterlife which moved Prior to another type of painting, "spirit effect" portraits. It may have been a suspicious type of business directly aimed at bereaved families to whom he claimed that he could see visions of dead loved ones and paint them on canvas.

During the 1840's Prior added another dimension to his business, landscapes and fanciful scenes available from prints and from his imagination. He borrowed motifs from prints and mixed them with other subjects such as wind mills, bridges, buildings, foliage and backgrounds from a variety of sources. He also used a grisaille palette which looked like charcoal on marble, "dust pictures," which were popular at the time.

He painted quickly, with large strokes, "sponged" pictures of Mt. Vernon, Washington's Tomb and fancy pieces like "Darby and Joan." **(Pl. 11)** He left his wife and family at home to paint in Baltimore and Maryland in an area inhabited by tradesmen, shoemakers, hatters, carpenters, etc., much like the neighborhood he left in

Pl. 11 *Darby and Joan*
Attributed to William Matthew Prior, ca. 1850s
On front, "WMP."
Probably East Boston, Massachusetts
Oil on cardboard, 19 1/2 x 24
Collection of Old Sturbridge Village
Photograph by Henry Peach

East Boston.

In spite of the fact that landscape and fancy art were doing well, he was listed only as a portrait painter in the East Boston business directories for 1856-1864 and in the 1860 Census. Fewer portraits are available from the 1860's, but he remained listed in the 1860 East Boston Directory. His last documented portrait of Mrs. Hannah Wheeler in 1872 and exhibited in the Fruitlands Museum is painted in his "middling style," a style that is less naíve and tends toward a more sophisticated and finer portrayal of his subjects. In 1873 Prior died of typhoid fever in East Boston at age 66. He was buried with his first wife in Everett, MA. An artist's palette and brushes, carved on his gravestone, are an image reminiscent of his chosen accessory in his early self-portrait. The obituary in the *Bath Daily Times* was a very modest notice for a man who helped to make American painting public and accessible.

His wife, Hannah, who petitioned the court to be the executor of his estate, returned to Boston to work as a clairvoyant to support her two sons. In 1874 she married Thomas Blackburn (1834-1900), a coach maker. They moved to Chicago in 1880; she was widowed again in 1900 and relocated to Los Angeles. William Walworth Jr., her son, became an artist for *The Chicago Tribune.*

Source:

Dubois Shaw, Jacquelyn and Gwendolyn. *Artist and Visionary: William Matthew Prior Revealed*. Cooperstown, New York: Fenimore Art Museum, 2012.

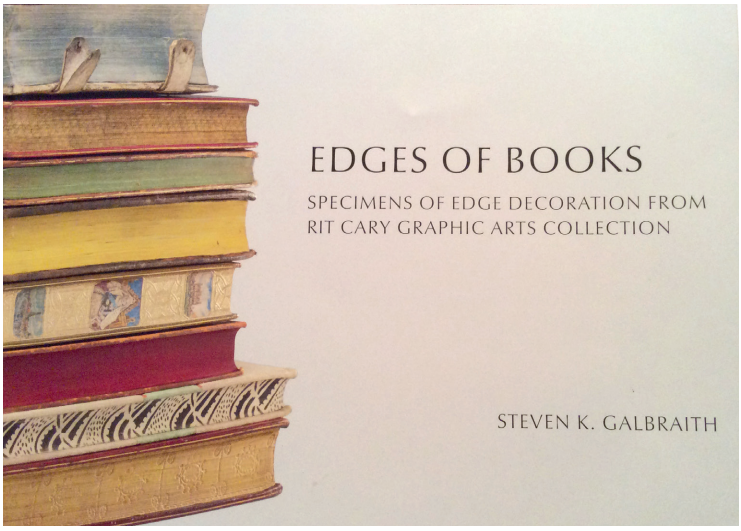
Virginia O'Brien is an artist and teacher of early American arts and crafts and a researcher who specializes in American limners.

Book Shelf

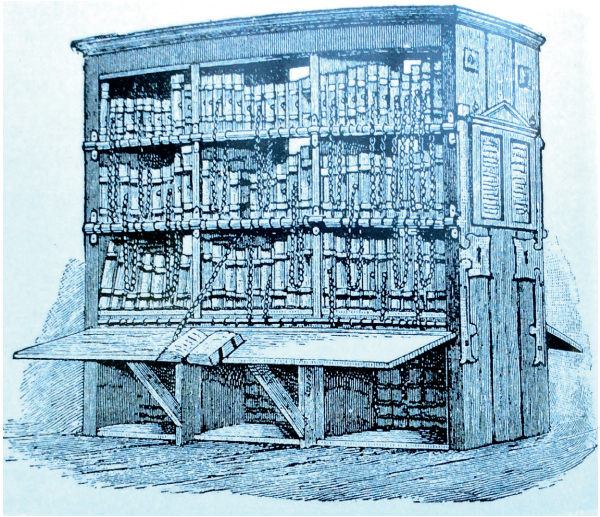
Edges of Books

Specimens of Edge Decoration from
The RIT Carry Graphic Arts Collection
By Steven K. Galbraith.
Published by RIT Cary Graphic Arts Press, Rochester, New York, 2012. Softcover, 66 pages.

Reviewed by Sandra Cohen



Edges of Books is sixty pages of concise information featuring amazing artwork, especially considering the nature of its 'canvas.' In a most unusual location, a feast for the eyes is literally painted on the edges of a book's pages. Samples of this rare painting technique are found in the Cary Graphic Arts Collection at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT); Steven Galbraith, Curator of the Collection and author, introduces us to this amazing and sophisticated artform beautifully demonstrated on books in the Cary Collection and generously shared and illustrated in his book. These rare books are usually not on public display for lengthy periods of time due to their vulnerability to light and temperature and are often only accessible for public viewing when displayed in special exhibits. Permission to see these rare books may also be



Pl. 1 *A drawing of a bookshelf of chained books in Hereford Cathedral Library.*

granted to those studying this area of artwork; such a study resulted in Galbraith's book. For those of you becoming aware and viewing these 'painted edges' for the first time, understand that the amazement never ceases to delight and impress.

Galbraith begins with a brief history in his "Edges-Out," section. He informs us that a common position for arranging books was to horizontally stack them with their fore-edges facing us or perhaps to lay them on their backs; their front covers, not spines would be immediately visible. Often, books were stored in ways to facilitate securing them to prevent pilferage. Fortunately, today, valuable books are kept in secure areas rather than physically chained to the premises as many were then, and public and private viewings may take place in atmospherically conducive and guarded conditions. **(Pl. 1)** Researchers are often able to base many of their descriptions about rooms and furnishings, including how books were kept, on early prints and engravings that give us a picture into past lives and lifestyles; we've learned about people's costuming and furnishings, about the objects they valued and placed throughout their homes and studios.

Galbraith chooses an engraving by Albrecht Durer of *St. Jerome in His Study, 1514*, that features Jerome, (patron saint of librarians) a prolific writer, surrounded by symbols associated with him as well as the accessories of an archivist; his library is assembled with book edges visible. **(Pl. 2)** This engraving and others in Galbraith's book attest to the transition in the way books were shelved, edges facing out and visible in Jerome's study; later, Comenius, Johann Amos, *The Visible World in Pictures.* London: printed for and sold by John Sprint, 1705 shows a wall of shelved books, standing vertically, edges still facing

Pl. 2 *Durer, Albrecht. St. Jerome in His Study. 1524, facsimile. Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, c. 1900.*

outward, some with clasps. The author reminds us that the obvious and practical choice when you had many books was to store them vertically and place information on the edges of paper, rather than on the leather covers or vellum spines. An interesting example of later reprints, one from 1777 printed for S. Leacroft, of *The Visible World in Pictures* shows an even further evolution of shelving books, here seen with their spines facing out **(**as seen in **Pl. 1)**. We realize that information, like so much we learn about the past, has often been deduced from prints as well as paintings.

Book art and print making have a long and attractive history. The mid to late 15th century saw a proliferation of books with the invention of Gutenberg's printing press and the popularity of print making; book interiors were enhanced with paintings and prints. Covers with embossed leather, elaborate metal clasps, decorative gold lettering, designs and other artistic embellishments decorated the exteriors. It was only a matter of time that an artist would claim a book's edges as another potential canvas. The challenge of painting on the edges of books succeeded in becoming an effective, practical at times and an awe-inspiring introduction to whatever lay within its pages; sometimes the artwork is arbitrary, unrelated, but still, it delights the eye and compliments the book, the publication itself becoming an object d'art.

Galbraith introduces us to several new terms to describe the decoration on the pages' edges, beginning with the fore-edge, the side that you could call the fourth edge; after the top, the bottom and spine, it's the remaining surface with which the readers have a tactile experience as they fan through the book. Fore-edge decoration seems to completely encompass one of the last remaining surfaces of a book available for adornment.

A practical example of using the fore-edge for information contin-

ues and is seen on today's dictionaries; 'thumb indexes,' are those indentations, sometimes printed with a letter or subject as a 'navigational tool' to facilitate the reader's access to a section of the book. Another familiar example is the use of 'tabs' that provide an immediate visual reference to parts of a manual that Galbraith's book illustrates; tabs date "back to medieval manuscript books when leather tabs were applied to the edges of leaves."

One of the most ubiquitous and oldest form of decorated edges is gold leaf; not only richly attractive, it also protects the edges from dust and moisture. Actually, using a color on pages' edges predated gold leaf; both are still used today. 'Gauffering' carried this decorative technique a step further by using "heated binder's finishing tools," to emboss a pattern into the gold. **(Pl. 3)** In the 'pointille style' (similar to pointillism in painting), the artist uses a series of dots to create a design and or lettering. The 'Deckle Edge' is a charming and traditional (natural) uneven edge; we may have seen and some of us may own an early publication with a 'deckle edge.' Another type, the 'Yapp' Binding (named for 19th century bookbinder, William Yapp) overlaps the ends of the covers, providing some protection for the edges.

Pl. 3 *The Book of the Poets. Illustrated with Forty-five Elegant Engravings on Stee. London, Darton & Co., [1848].Striking fore-edge includes text announcing, "The Poets." Hidden underneath is a gilt fore-edge painting oif a fan shown in Pl. 3.*

However, Fore-Edge Painting is one of the most amazing renderings of a book's exterior artwork. The subjects include landscapes, historic landmarks and events, biblical references, portraits and many other topics conveyed through art. Galbraith cites an example from Italy's

Pillone Library by Cesare Vecellio that dates as far back as the early 16th century. Galbraith's focus is on works in the Cary Collection, a number of which have not been exhibited; the oldest is a 1745 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* with edges that illustrate a floral garland flanked with ribbons.

'Hidden Fore-Edge Painting' is an ingenious technique where the painting is not immediately visible until you fan the pages. Briefly, the pages are first fanned and fixed in position with a clamp. After the image has been painted and has dried, the clamp is released and the pages returned to their closed position. The pages are clamped again, and a layer of gold leaf is applied to the edges (the painting will not visible when the book is closed). At first glance, one only sees the gilded edges, but when fanned, the painting reveals itself! **(Pl. 4)** I imagine that some of our members will be tempted to try this. For that reason, Galbraith

Pl. 4 *Hidden Fore-edge Painting, a fan painted in the style of the French painter, Antoine Watteau (1684-1721)*

thoughtfully introduces us to an artist who perpetuates this technique, Martin Frost, and gives us his website: *foredgefrost.co.uk/*).

Steven Galbraith has given us a sumptuous sampling of the Cary Collection. Every aspect, every surface of these publications, reflect ingenuity, purpose and talent from the simplest to the most ornate books, a stunning showcase of book edges painting. His book left me wanting to see more. While reading his book and examining works from the Cary Collection, you will have a better understanding, appreciation and certainly discover another fascinating dimension of decorative art. A little research has led me to discover that the Boston Public Library has one of the most exciting collections of 'fore-edge' and 'hidden fore-edge'

painting, and as soon as libraries are open to the public, I hope it will be possible to plan a special viewing. I encourage you to explore your possible museum access as well.

Steven Galbraith's book measures 10"x7," a rectangular shape that lends itself to his detailed illustrations, beautifully photographed by Elizabeth Lamark. His book is available on Amazon, although he may bring some to our meeting in the Spring. He has also given us a generous bibliography. His thoughtful reference to Martin Frost and Frost's numerous u-tube videos on technique will be a treat for the Society's decorative and adventurous artists. *Edges of Books* will whet your appetite and inspire you to further research this historical and spectacular technique of book decoration.

Pl. 5 *The famous Fazakerley Bindery in Liverpool (1835-1914) produced this superb binding and fore-edge painting. The Fazakerley's often combined triptych paintings with detailed gauffered designs. From the head to the tail are depicted: Victoria Hospital, Blackkpool (based on a photograph found on the title page of several of the annual reports), a portrait of Queen Victoria, and Blackpool Beach. Annual Reports from the Victoria Hospital, Blackpool, England. [Blackpool: s.n.], 1894-1900.*

Standards for Excellence

"The Historical Society of Early American Decoration grants "A" and "B" and Reproduction Awards for those entries that show excellence in craftsmanship and meet the Society's Standards" as outlined in more specific detail in The Standards' Manual. The tradition of research and encouraging excellence through evaluation of members' work began at the Fall Meeting at the Wellesley Hills Country Club, Wellesley, Mass. in 1947 (recorded in Vol. 1, No.2 of *The Decorator*).

The following excerpted overview offers a perspective of the guidelines (reviewed and revised with respect to ongoing research over the years) for recreating historically authentic reproductions submitted for Judging.

"The design of the article submitted must be authentic and appropriate for the piece in size, period and type of decoration. The work must demonstrate techniques that meet the requirements of the category.

The design must include adequate work to demonstrate the craftsman's ability and to afford the judges enough painting to enable them to make their assessment.

The design and work must meet all General Requirements as well as the Category Requirements. If the design includes other techniques in addition to those of the category, each technique will be judged according to the requirements of that specific category."

Congratulations and appreciation to all who choose to undergo this process.

Historical Society of Early American Decoration
Master Teachers, Master Craftsmen and Specialists

HSEAD Master Teachers

Clark, Maryjane 1962
Watts, Margaret 1965
Martin, Gina 1968
Hutchings, Dorothy 1969
Gross, Helen 1972
Donnellan, Astrid 1994

HSEAD Master Craftsmen

Bond, Jessica H. 1952
Underhill, Emilie 1952
Watts, Margaret 1952
Martin, Virginia (Gina) 1952
Clark, Maryjane 1955
Hague, Helen 1957
Drury, Bernice 1960
Murray, Maria 1960
Gross, Helen 1961
Cruze, Annetta 1964
Burns, Florence 1967
Hutchings, Dorothy 1967
Keegan, Cornelia (Phil) 1969
Wallace, Louise 1970
Lambeth, Deborah 1979
Donnellan, Astrid 1981
Sherman, Phyllis 1981
Edrington, Roberta 1983
Hedge, Carolyn 1989
Heinz, Carol 2010
Davis, Dortia 2012
Brubaker, Linda 2017

HSEAD Specialists

Tucker, Lois / Country Painting 1993
Baker, Ann / Country Painting 1995
Roberta Edrington / Free Hand Bronze 1997
Victorian Flower Painting 2000
Buonato, Carol / Clock Dials 2004
Dimock, Anne / Reverse Glass 2012
Jewett, Parma / Country Painting 2016

Sources: *The Decorator*
Chair, The Standards and Judging Committee
Chair, Specialist Awards

Variations on Early American Decoration
Amherst, Mass. Exhibition, 2019

The "Variations Display" exhibits members' creatively painted projects that reflect a variety of inspired and whimsical expressions using early American decorative techniques. These works do not qualify for judging (criteria for this category). Unfortunately, due to time constraints, we regret that not all of the pieces that were submitted were photographed. We hope you will enjoy these samples and be motivated to create your own unique object d'art.

Joanne Balfour
Bird, Blossoms and Butterfly
Theorem on Small Box
Oil on Velvet

Glenda Barcklow
Reproduction of an 1800s Tavern Sign
Acrylic on Canvas

Martha Barclay
Handmade Bandboxes
Hand Stitched & Covered wit
Hand Printed Wallpapers
Painted Designs on Bandbox Tops

Pauline Bartow
Tinsel Painting
of Rainbow Trout
Backed with
Fine Shimmery Pape

Marisa Blais
Small Floral
Board Flowers in
Basket Acrylic on
Wood

Linda Brubaker
Theorem Pillow with Doily Tray Design
Colored Silk Fabrics Complement the Painting
Plastic Button on Back Gilded in 23 K

Roberta Edrington
Penwork Ark on Plywood Base
Upper Part Copied from An Original

Ursula Erb
Reverse Glass Painting
of the Erb Family Farm

Patricia Evans
Decorated Commemorative Box
Scenes Depicting My 6th Great
Grandfather's Participation in The
Revolutionary War
Acrylic on Wood

Debra Fitts
Black Silk Scarf with
Theorem Stencil of Pine Cone

Donna Hartz
Tinsel Painting
Holly Berry Wreath on Glass

Kay Hogan
Round Papier Mache Plaque
Mother of Pearl, Oil Paint
and Bronze Powder Decoration

Paula Humber
Male Ruddy Duck
Made of Tupelo Wood Using High Speed Drill
Painted in Acrylics, Using Artists' Brushes,
Air Brushing and Stencils

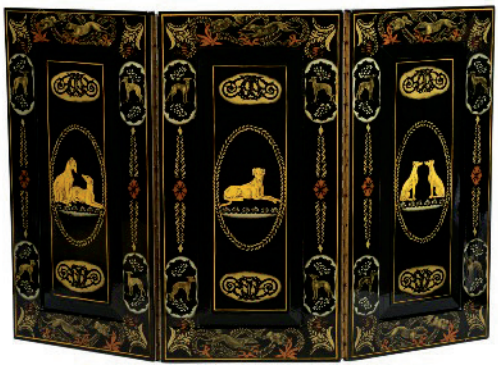
Rebecca Kidder
Wooden Egg in Penwork
Traditional Motif

Pat Kimber

Oval Box Painted in Rufus Porter Style Revolutionary War Soldiers I Depicted My Grandson As A Bugler & Created It for Him on His 14th Birthday. It Holds Copies of Revolutionary War and Genealogy Records. (His direct ancestor was injured at The Battle of Bunker Hill at the age of 14.) My Grandson's Initials are on Top.
Acrylic on Wood

Eve Marschark

Three High Gloss, Hinged, Wooden Panels
Bronze Powder, Stencils, Freehand Bronze and gold leaf
Border of Running Dogs, Birds, Snakes, Rabbits and Plants
Grace's (Italian Greyhound, 12 lbs,) Privacy Panels for Indoor Potty Area



Dennis Lambert

Religious Verse Fraktur
Psalm 5, Herr (Lord)
Attributed to Christian Strenge
Lancaster County
Active 1787-1820

Helen Meitzler

Chinese Style Reverse Glass Paintin
Floral Design of Roses and Leaves
*Copy of Photo in The Magazine **Antiques***

Valerie Oliver
Bronze Powder Stenciled Oval Tray
View of my Brother John Burnham's Home
Alderson, West Virginia
(Years ago, I drew this view and designed the stencils, especially for the goldenrods on the lower edge by a stream.)

Patricia Oxenford
Adaptation of An
Ompir Style Motif
Whimsical Golfers: He, with surprised look (Will he miss the golf ball?) She, in her golfing finery (She's confident she will hit the ball!)
Painted in acrylic on
Old "Beer" Trays

Luke Randall
Gilding on Glass
1 Gold Tone and
1 White Metal

Sandra Strong
"Lovebird" Fraktur
Very Fine Cutwork in Red & Black Ink
on Paper
Hand Grained Frame
Valentine Attributed to
William Johnson, 19th Century

Nancy Toombs
Swiss Decorated Box
Painted in Bauernmalerei Style
Acrylic on Wood

Lois Tucker
Scallop-Shaped Metal Fire Screen with Shells
Each Blade Demonstrates a Different Technique.
(Country Painting, Free Hand Bronze and Stenciling)

Debra Fitts
This Needlepoint Pillow was stitched in Memory of Elizabeth "Betsy" Johnson (deceased 2009), my dear friend, who introduced me to HSEAD. (Adapted from the Country Painting Pattern on Betsy's Applicant Piece

Rebecca Kidder
Wooden Egg with Country Painted Motif
Acrylic on Wood

Linda Brubaker
Wooden Decorated Chest
Country Painting Pattern
Embellished with Wild Life.
Oil on Wood.

Ursula Erb
Russian Icon
Gold Leaf and Oil on Wood

Kay Hogan
Celestial Objects ll
Metal Leaf, Bronze Powders and
Oil on Canvas

Anne Dimock
Floor Cloth (5 ft. round)
Animals from the
Empire State Carousel
Cooperstown, New York
Acrylic on Canvas

Patricia Oxenford
Lehnware Style Tall Footed Thread
Holder Shaped Like a Saffron Cup
Turned by Ray Oxenford
Typical Blue, Green and Red Bands
with Pale Pink/Salmon Mid-Section
Primitive Strawberry with
Pussy Willow Design
Acrylic on Wood

Dennis Lambert
Fraktur depicts birth and baptismal certificate for Anna Maria Oberlein.
Attributed to
Johannes Ernst Spangenburg
active 1774-1812
Springfield, Durham and Nockamixon Townships in Penn.

Pat Kimber
Dome Topped Trunk
Painted in the Style of
The Compass Artist
Lancaster County, Penn.
Acrylic on Wood.

Marisa Blais
Bird Fraktur
Watercolor and Ink on Paper

Anne Dimock
Grained Jewelry Box
Painted Reverse Glass Scenic with
Bronze Stenciled Border
Box Made by Charles Gruman
Box Lined with Marble Paper with
Mirror on Lid

Sandra Strong
Swiss/German box
Original Privately Owned
"Makes Me Happy!"

Charles P. Gruman
"Bobbers" Floor Cloth
Depicting Items from His Collection
Acrylic on Canvas

Charles Gruman
Floor Cloth
"Native American Blanket"
Circa 1900-1910
from An Astounding
Pictorial Series
Featured in
Chasing Rainbows
by Barry Friedman
Acrylic on Canvas

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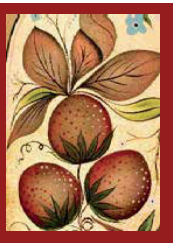

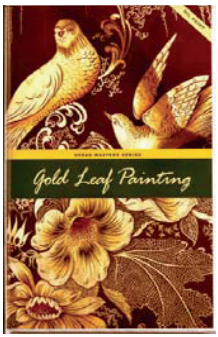

Instructional Videos

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

Country Painting (VHS tape)	**$25**
Bronze Powder Stenciling (DVD)	**$40**
Freehand Bronze (DVD)	**$40**
Clock Dials (DVD)	**$40**
Theorem (DVD)	**$40**
Gold Leaf (DVD)	**$40**
Reverse Glass Painting (DVD)	**$40**

Publications

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

This handsome, hard cover, four volume set is the only authoritative and comprehensive source on American painted tinware. A rich historical text, along with hundreds of full color photographs of original pieces and line illustrations of motifs and patterns, will allow you to visually identify the products of these regional tin shops.

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

The Decorator (prices per available issue)

Vol. 1 - 46 ..... $7.50
Vol. 47 - 58 ..... $9.00
Vol. 59 - present issue $20.00
The Decorator is included in the Membership Fee of $40.00.

(518) 372-2220 • info@hsead.org • www.hsead.org

Patterns and Supplies

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

Country Painting on Tinware	$25
Stenciling on Tinware	$25

Theorem Kits: Includes tracing, color picture and instructions. Contact Office for price and information. (Prices vary.)

Schnader Chair Patterns
Freehand Bronze & Painted Chair Patterns
Each pattern includes tracing and 8" x 12" digital color photo.
Cost: $12 each

Gifts and Accessories

Scarves
36" square silk twill

Theorem Pattern Scarf	$50
Tray Pattern Scarf	$55

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Research Center's Grand Opening

Historic Stockade District of Schenectady has a new neighbor!

The Historic Stockade District of Schenectady has a new neighbor!

The Historical Society of Early American Decoration (HSEAD) is pleased and proud to announce ownership of its new Research Center located at 26 North College St. in the Historic Stockade District of Schenectady, New York.

The Research Center is home to all of the Society's Archival Collections as well as its ongoing research, educational products and materials, the Lending Library of Design and Originals as well as displays of historically authentic early American decoration.

Preparations for our Grand Opening are underway. HSEAD will soon welcome its members, association friends and the public to visit and learn more about the legacy of early American decorative art and its history.

For more information about the HSEAD Research Center, please visit our website.

www.hsead.org or call (518) 372-2220

2021 Meetings

Annual Membership Meeting
Hyatt Hotel
Rochester, New York
June 15-17, 2021

75th Anniversary Celebration
Wyndham Southbury
Southbury, Connecticut
September 16-19, 2021

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