

The
Decorator

*Journal of The Historical Society
of Early American Decoration*



75th Anniversary Issue 1946-2021
Fall 2021 Vol. 76



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: Framed Charter of The Esther Stevens Brazer Guild of Early American Decoration signed by its founding members, 1946.

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The Decorator

Fall 2021

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Editor's Letter

Happy Anniversary HSEAD!

This year, The Historical Society of Early American Decoration (1946-2021) celebrates its 75th Anniversary, an impressive milestone for our non-profit Historical Society. The charm, simplicity and ingenuity of historically authentic early American decorative arts and crafts continue to mirror a potpourri of art and design from America's population with its diverse ethnicity and culture that still capture the eyes and hearts of many today.

Another year has passed without an Annual Membership and Exhibition Meeting. In this time of the Covid-19 virus and its variants, the Society's publications and Zoom have kept us in touch and offered us an opportunity to share our ongoing handcrafted and painted projects. It has been not only reassuring to see and share our artwork, but it has been a treat to see the variety of amazing American arts and crafts from all our talented members and read about the ongoing research in early American art. Until our national meetings resume, our paper and electronic communications will have to suffice as our connection with each other.

This issue of *The Decorator* will celebrate HSEAD's remarkable and inspiring beginnings. Members will be reminded of HSEAD's roots, Esther Stevens Brazer and her students whom she inspired and mentored and who would become the Society's founding Charter Members. This issue of *The Decorator* will celebrate the past 75 years by highlighting those areas vital to the Society's mission and many of those members who have brought us to this milestone. We miss gathering with our friends from all over the country and thank all of you for your support and contributions over the years, especially those of you who were so generous with your time and talents in our earlier years.

Jeffrey (Jeff) Sheldon became President of the Society in 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic. Implementing the advantages of technology, Jeff initiated Zoom Workshops throughout the pandemic; this kept us in touch as well as allowed members to participate in day classes, on-line, with some of our best teachers leading us in a project. This approach encouraged Chapters to follow a similar format, meeting safely on-line and painting "virtually" together. Jeff shares his introduction to HSEAD and his appreciation of the beauty and quality of members' hand-painted decorative pieces that he first saw in an Exhibition. Jeff explains how the further use of technology will give the Society's members, today and in the future, access to the best that HSEAD has to offer.

Valerie Oliver, the Society's Historian, highlights HSEAD's important accomplishments and milestones. Valerie's article takes us, decade by decade, through the Society's odyssey from 1946 to the present. Members will be reminded of those Charter Members, volunteers and students of Esther, who were motivated by their mentor; HSEAD exists because of Esther's relentless

dedication to research and teaching and the Charter Members' determination to continue her legacy. Valerie's review of the Society's odyssey is punctuated with Exhibitions, Collections, an HSEAD Museum, Publications, Research Centers and much more. Her article is an overview that shares the rich and important legacy of Brazer and her students' dedication and skills and the efforts of all its succeeding members who volunteered their time and talent to bring the Society to where it is today.

"My Story" by Esther Stevens Brazer, was first printed in *The Decorator*, Vol. 5, no. 2, Oct. 1951, and for the 50th Anniversary, Shirley Baer wrote "Esther Stevens the Woman," Vol. 50, no. 2. Both share some of the details of Esther's remarkable life. In this issue, I will focus on Esther Stevens Brazer, the avid researcher and prolific writer, by presenting an overview of the 27 articles she wrote for *The Magazine Antiques* from 1922 to 1945. Her research uniquely reveals, as she described them, "eureka moments!" Esther's research not only serves as a road map of a young woman's curiosity and determination that fueled her life-long studies, it is also testimony to her perseverance and accuracy that earned her a reputation for expertise in early American painted decoration.

This issue will also highlight the areas so vital to this organization's mission and success. Esther was an avid researcher who enjoyed the camaraderie, insight and sharing that her teaching and student painting classes offered. Her students, the Society's Charter Members, were dedicated to continuing her legacy and founded the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild of Early American Decoration in fond memory of their teacher. Many of the women and men became teachers and mentors, passing the torch of recording and promoting authentic early American decoration. In a tribute to teaching and our ongoing education, this issue will highlight a publication covering demonstrations compiled and printed entitled, *Demonstrations, Lectures and Notes from Annual Reports 1954-1983*. This publication covers demonstrations by our earliest teachers and mentors who shared their techniques, their experiences, tips and words of wisdom that continue to serve our mission today.

In the Spring of 1991, the HSEAD Museum in Albany closed and after much deliberation, The HSEAD Collection of Patterns, Research and Antiques (The HSEAD Collection) was given to the American Folk Art Museum (AFAM) in New York City. AFAM was chosen above other candidates because only AFAM agreed to accept the entire Collection and keep it intact. The Society was given the right of 1st refusal if a piece needed to be deaccessioned, and its members would have access to view and study the research, patterns and antiques. AFAM continues to honor this contract. Emelie Gevalt, Curator of Folk Art at AFAM since 2019, has written about the HSEAD Collection. Her article shares images of some of these handsome originals that were owned by Esther, her students and later members who were/are collectors of originals that were donated to the Society, especially during the 10 years of the HSEAD Museum

in Albany, N.Y. For some of us, this will be a fond reunion with these beautifully painted objects we viewed on visits many years ago; others will be seeing them for the first time. We appreciate Emelie's contribution to this issue of *The Decorator* and the AFAM's custodial care of the HSEAD Collection. Hopefully, you will be inspired to make an appointment to view the Collection at AFAM in the future.

Lois Tucker was a Specialist in Country Painting and the featured artist on the HSEAD Master Series Video, Country Painting. She was a teacher, researcher and contributor to the Society's Journal, *The Decorator*, and co-author with Gina Martin of *American Painted Tinware: A Guide to Its Identification*. Lois discovered and developed a fond appreciation of early country painted tinware in the late 1960s. Her obituary stated that "Her years in the antique business gave her access to large numbers of originals at auction, antique shows or through acquaintances with dealers specializing in decorated tin. [Lois] studied and recorded originals from museums and private collectors as well as the antique show circuit." An antique dealer for many years, her interest in country painted tinware and reproducing them began in 1973, and she became a member of HSEAD in 1976. Lois, herself a life-long researcher, artist and teacher, had agreed to write an article recognizing our dedicated member researchers who had contributed scholarly articles to advance the study of early American decorative art. Sadly, in the Spring, we lost Lois, beloved teacher and researcher. Lois left us a list of names she was considering for her article that was passed to Yvonne Jones, a friend and fellow researcher. We, at *The Decorator* and the Society, offer our condolences to Lois' family and friends. Lois will be sorely missed by all.

Yvonne Jones, member, researcher, contributing writer for *The Decorator* and author of *Japanned Papier Mache and Tinware 1740-1940*, pays tribute to member editors and authors, the Society's researchers, whose curiosity led them to discover the background, sources and influences of decorative arts and design. Yvonne focused on those who contributed their studies and research in numerous articles for *The Decorator* from 1946 to the present. A number of them had also published books on early American decoration. Yvonne, has always given us a thorough picture of the history, the artist's context and the process of producing these decorated objects in her articles and book, and she recognizes that the Society's prominent researchers and their contributions are vital to keeping these arts and techniques alive.

This issue's Book Shelf will celebrate Esther Stevens Brazer's most important contribution to the genre of early American decorative art, *Early American Decoration*, published in 1940. Subtitled "The Backstory," the article will highlight the efforts to publish her book and conclude with some of the praiseworthy reviews her book received at that time. Esther's book echoed and combined her life-long research, study on par with an academician, as well as her artistic skills, demonstrated in her restoration work and recordings. The

book's detailed text about materials and techniques are accompanied by illustrations, including her cut stencils and bronze powdered designs. Esther's book further explains and demonstrates her country painted brush strokes, the more complex techniques for reverse glass painting, the layered techniques for Victorian Flower Painting and Pontypool designs and laying of gold and silver leaf. Esther's book was considered unique; she was a pioneer in research and authentic reproduction in this genre, and her book is still considered one of the most important works on early American decoration.

America is a country of early indigenous natives and naturalized Americans offering a vast and unique aesthetic; their decorative arts carry stories through beautiful artifacts and designs that represent and celebrate an American heritage. The Society's name, vision and mission foretell an encouraging decorative art's landscape for our future.

Hopefully, our Annual Membership Meeting will resume in Spring 2022 and become a 'real' touchstone for many of our members and life-long friends after two years of separation and 'virtual' contacts. We look forward to a safe and healthy year in 2022 and to more frequent meetings, especially among our local chapters. On behalf of the staff of *The Decorator* and HSEAD, we thank our contributors and advertisers and wish you all a Holiday Season filled with health, 'real' hugs and happiness in the coming New Year.

Sandra Cohen



President's Message

It is with great pleasure that I write this in celebration of HSEAD's 75th Anniversary. It happens that it is also my 75th Anniversary. I was also born in 1946. According to the first issue of *The Decorator*, the first meeting of our Society took place on May 27, 1946. I was not quite two months old then (and nobody even invited me to the meeting!).

Because of the pandemic, this has been a difficult year for all of us. Our plans for a 75th Anniversary celebration have had to be changed several times. The celebration was originally planned for the spring of 2021, and it was then changed to the fall Workshop Meeting of 2021, but in both cases, we felt that the Covid situation was too risky and uncertain to keep to those plans. The plan, as of now, is to hold the celebration in the spring of 2023 as a 75th+2.

As part of an ongoing project to digitize the records of HSEAD, we have been photographing and scanning many of the early documents that are in storage in our Schenectady, New York facility. As any of you who have engaged in sorting old documents will know, there is a strong temptation to dive into the "rabbit hole" while doing this sort of work. You're happily sorting and scanning and photographing the documents and something catches your attention, and the next thing you know, you're reading the document, and then another, and another, and so on. It does slow down the process a bit, but in my case, it has led to better understanding the roots of HSEAD, the work of Esther Stevens Brazer and the dedication of her students toward preserving her work and studies. The commitment of the founders of the Society to the standards of excellence that Mrs. Brazer set for herself and for her students shows strongly in the early documentation that we have digitized (and got sidetracked reading).

I first became aware of HSEAD in the late 1980s. My mother-in-law, Eleanor Wooters, was a member and was attending an Exhibition Meeting in Ogunquit, Maine. She was staying at the hotel for the Meeting, and Linda and I met her there, and we toured the exhibition. I remember how "blown away" I was at the quality of the work I saw. It was hard to believe that a person could produce work of that quality. The standards set by Mrs. Brazer and the founding members of the Society showed in that work and have continued to this day.

To stay with the changing times, HSEAD needs to continuously update the methods by which it delivers its services. As I noted above, we are engaged in a project to digitize as much of HSEAD's materials as possible. By the time you read this, much of the Lending Library of Design and all of the Theorem Patterns will be available for members to download from the HSEAD website (hsead.org). The remainder of the Pattern Library will be made available as the digitizing progresses. These and other digitized materials are also being stored

in “The Cloud” to assure that they will be available for future generations.

We must assure that future generations have access to the work itself and with the methods of achieving excellence in the work so that the art forms will continue with the high standards that were set by the founders.

Jeff Sheldon

President, HSEAD



HSEAD's Major Accomplishments Over the Years

by Valerie Burnham Oliver

What follows is a brief review of the major accomplishments that the early Esther Stevens Brazer Guild and following HSEAD members have achieved in over 70 years. They demonstrate a devotion to a mission, begun by carrying on the work of Esther Stevens Brazer, promoting research, recording and preserving examples of early American painted decoration, mounting exhibits, establishing painting standards, teaching and promoting the appreciation of this early American decoration. Members continue to show determination to emphasize these goals while adapting to technological advancements that impact most aspects of the Society's operations.



HSEAD Charter Document

1946-1956

The first decade 1946-1956 began with the founding of the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild in May 1946 by her students wishing to continue and honor her



The Decorator v. 1, no. 1, Oct. 1946

work on discovering, preserving and continuing early American decorative styles and techniques. At this meeting Martha Muller was asked to "present a decorated parchment scroll to Mr. Brazer later to be signed by all former students of Mrs. Brazer." This decorated document is framed and hangs in the offices of HSEAD in Schenectady, NY. Only five months later the first issue of their journal *The Decorator* was published in October 1946. Wasting no time, the Guild immediately held exhibitions at its meetings under the leadership of Emilie Underhill and established both standards and judging requirements by 1947 as explained by Judging Chairman Violet M. Scott in *Decorator* v.2, no.1 November 1947. The first chapter was

also formed in 1947 by 23 Vermont members and was called the Connecticut River Valley Chapter.

In 1952 the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild was incorporated in the state of New York as the Historical Society of Early American Decoration and had grown from the initial 80 founders to now over 500 members. Standards for HSEAD teachers were also coming into place with the establishment of the Teacher Certification Program chaired by Virginia Martin and Margaret A. Blouin. The com-

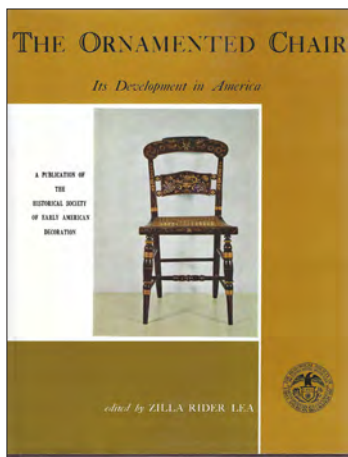


HSEAD Seal

petition for designing an official seal for HSEAD was held in 1953 with Lucile Schecter's winning design adopted and first used in *Decorator* v.8, no.2, 1954.

1957-1967

During the second decade the *Chapter Palette*, a newsletter to help communicate to the membership, was initiated in 1957, but the first major happening was the move in June 1958 of the Esther S. Brazer collections, patterns, research and artifacts, from her former home called Innerwick in Flushing, NY to the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown, NY, part of the New York State Historical Association (NYSHA). A Traveling Exhibition was launched as well as the creation by Maria Murray of two large scrapbooks containing meeting and other information about Society activities. The first book published by HSEAD and edited by Zilla Lea, *The Ornamented Chair, Its Development in America (1700-1890)*, appeared in 1960 with first edition sold out in just two years. Contributions of *Decorators* and books to the White House Library were recognized with thank you letters from First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy and the Dept. of the Interior and the National Park Service during 1962-3. In 1965 the first Society sponsored tour to England, Wales and Scotland was experienced by 20 members.



The Ornamented Chair
 Edited by Zilla Rider Lea
 HSEAD's 1st Book, 1960

1968-1978

Both the Distinguished Service and Career Awards were approved in May of 1969. Membership in HSEAD was not required for providing "exceptional service to the Society," but the Career Award was to be for members only who have "served in a position of service and trust for not less than five years." However, the most significant happening during this third decade was the establishment of the Endowment Fund. This major fund drive, described in Annual Report 1971-2, initially was for a two-year period. Eventually, it en-

exceeding the \$60,000 goal. With \$40,000 added from the General Fund the total was \$125,992.54. Members were thanked and were asked for their continued support by President Avis Heatherington.

Also, a third slide program featuring flower painting was announced, increasing this educational tool. Other happenings of note were: Chapter Banner Competition in 1983-4 / appointment of a Museum Asst. Director, Mr. William W. Jenny, in July 1984 / survey of tin at Old Sturbridge Village completed in 1985 and / the Lending Library of Design with 74 patterns and "new patterns are always appreciated" noted by Chairman Dolores Furnari. Also, a store at the HSEAD Museum was established in 1986 lasting about three and a half years.

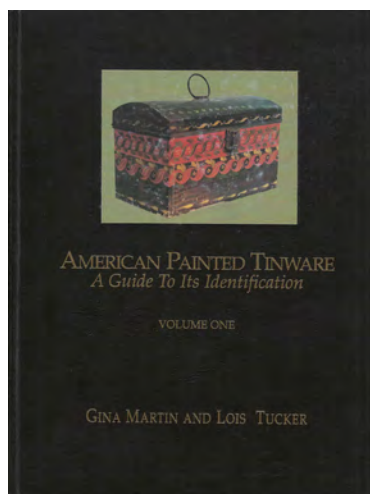
Virginia (Gina) Martin's collection of patterns, books, photos and stenciled and painted wall and floor patterns were donated in 1988. Additionally, HSEAD purchased her theorem pattern business in September of that year with Barbara Quirk taking responsibility.

A report from the NY State Council on the Arts and the Museum Report by Margaret Coffin, HSEAD Museum Director, 1988-89, foretold of the eventual demise of this heavy responsibility of trying to operate a properly functioning museum with less than full support by members. Mrs. Coffin asked in her report: "Do you know, or care, what resources are available here to you and others interested in the decorative arts?"

In July 1989 at the Albany, NY meeting theorems were approved as a new decorative category for judging.

1990-2000

Sponsorships required for associate memberships are lifted allowing interested people to join on their own. The HSEAD Museum in Albany, NY was closed on Dec. 1, 1990, and the opening of our collection of originals given to the Museum of American Folk Art (MAFA), New York City, occurred on June 20, 1991.



American Painted Tinware, Vol. 1 of 4
by Gina Martin and Lois Tucker

Two auctions were held: the first with Skinner auctioneers September 22, 1990 in Stamford, CT to sell items decorated and/or donated by members and the second April 29, 1991 in Albany, NY to sell items not transferred to MAFA. Dorothy Hamblett and Alice Smith were chairmen respectively.

First judging of theorems was in fall 1991, and by April 1992 the Theorem Business was fully paid for and owned by HSEAD. In April 1992 at Nashua, NH, the decorative category of clock dials was approved for judging but excluded from Mas-



*Canister, Artist unidentified 59.1.15
Probably Pennsylvania Early 1800s
Paint on tin 5 1/8 x 3 1/2 x 2 3/4 in.
Gift of the Historical Society of
Early American Decoration
Photo: Adam Cohen*

ter Craftsman requirements.

Most importantly, at the September 1992 Trustees' Meeting, representatives of most chapters now had representation on the Board of Trustees. Color was added to enhance the awarded pieces in *The Decorator* with v.47, no.2, 1993. The Schnader Chair Pattern Collection was introduced in April 1993 with Gerri Rossner to handle mail order sales. The first volume of *American Painted Tinware* was ready for publication in 1996.

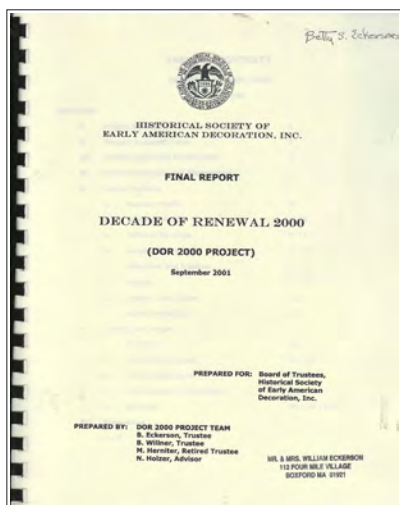
A special effort to promote educational activities is seen with the new Education Committee chaired by Jane Austin; she requested that a professionally made video of how our decorative techniques are painted be made. Alexandra Perrot took on the responsibility of creating this video.

Craftsmen award pins were presented to 14 living recipients of Master Craftsmen and Specialists' awards at the spring 1997 Ogunquit, ME Meeting. During 1997

Frank and Marti Tetler offered HSEAD space on their web page, and it was accepted.

The Decade of Renewal (DOR) Task Force was established with Betty Eckerson, Barbara Willner, Myrna Herniter and advisor Norman Holzer members. The last Hands-On-Classes (14 in number) were held at the Stamford, CT Meeting in April 2000. Alexandra Perrot reported in the fall of 2000 that the video "Gold Leaf Powder and Paint" running 14 minutes would be selling for \$19.95.

Retiring Education Chair Joan Austin brought the 19 slide carousels she had organized by decorative category and the scripts she had prepared to the fall 2000 trustee's Meeting for the HSEAD School.

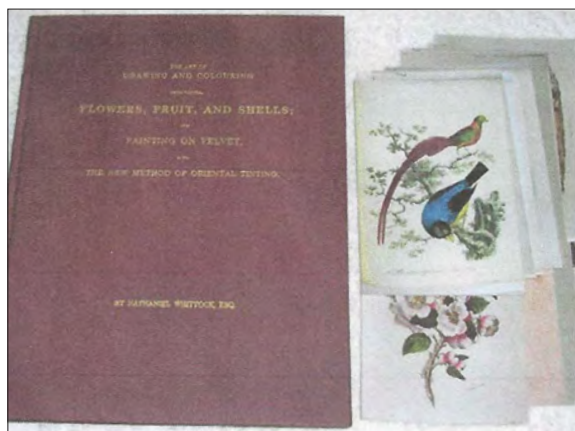


Decade of Renewal (DOR) Report 2001

2001-2011

The first annual Working Seminar (10 classes) was organized by Kathy Hutchinson and held in Chatham, MA September 2001.

A fundraising project idea by Trustee Betty Eckerson, the production of silk scarves with early American decoration themes, was approved at the spring 2001 meeting. Creation of laser cut theorem stencil kits were another project idea by Anne Grinley to introduce people to theorem work; six patterns were chosen for the project. Additionally, Lois Tucker took over the work involved in creating country painting and stencil pattern kits for members as well as the public.



*The Art of Drawing and Colouring from Nature
Flowers, Fruit and Shells, for Painting on Velvet also
The New Method of Oriental Tinting
by Nathaniel Whittock, ESQ*

The Lending Library of Design received 18 patterns, lost earlier from the Museum Acquisitions Portfolio, recreated by Deborah Lambeth and announced at the spring 2002 Danvers, MA Meeting. The new Chairman Parma Jewett began the remounting of the LLD patterns and also putting them on CDs.

In fall 2002 the HSEAD reprint of the 1829 Nathaniel Whittock's *The Art of Drawing and Colouring from Nature, Flowers, Fruit, and Shells...for Painting on Velvet* was to be sold with a set of colored photographs of the pictures included.

The HSEAD office was opened during the spring of 2003, in the Bump Tavern at the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown, NY.

The first HSEAD Masters Series video on country painting with Lois Tucker is ready for sale at the Wilmington, DE Meeting in spring 2003. The others in this series are produced regularly with the 7th in 2013 on reverse glass painting with Anne Dimock.

Also, since the 1970s over 20 years ago, a new creative category exhibit of non-judged items was mounted for the Charlottesville, VA Exhibition Meeting in spring 2005, one of several to follow.

Procedures for proposing a new decorative category for judging were approved and added to the HSEAD Standards Manual in 2008. One membership fee for all types of memberships was approved as recommended by the DOR report. Other happenings at the end of this decade were: Paypal added

to the HSEAD web site options / better color photos to be made for the color Theorem Catalog being prepared by Parma Jewett that would also be available online / the Gold Leaf Masters Series with Carol Heinz produced and a slide conversion project initiated.

Penwork was accepted in 2009 as a new decorative category as presented by Nancy Corcoran. HSEAD received a large bequest from the Hilda Borscherding (Ellen Sabine's sister) estate as well as valuable pattern collections from Beth Martin and Ruth Szalasny.

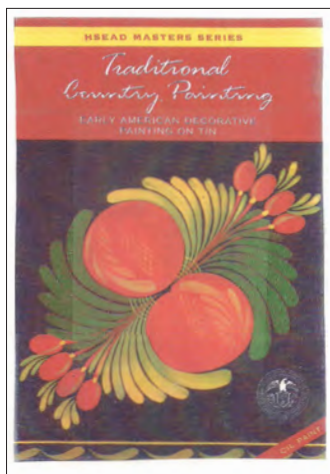
The decade concluded with the signing of a new contract with AFAM and the return of our research and patterns to their new location at the HSEAD Research Center in the David Wight House at Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, MA in the summer of 2010. This return was accomplished by President Sandra Cohen and assistance from the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts working with the Museum officials.

On October 14-16, 2011 the formal opening of the HSEAD Research Center was held with the "Celebrating Early American Decorative Arts" special weekend including an auction held on Saturday afternoon the 15th. The David Wight House interior had been decorated with wall stenciling, mural painting and by other means and donations under the leadership of Virginia O'Brien's Wrap the Wight House with Heart Team of some thirty or more members volunteering. Under the Research Center Chairmanship of Sandra Cohen, OSV cooperated with several members in selecting items from their collections to reproduce. The resulting side-by-side exhibition was also held at the OSV Visitor Center during this special weekend.

The HSEAD Standards & Judging Committee under Carolyn Hedge's leadership completed a new decorative category called the Expanded Class so that authentic old patterns, without all the required details for judging normally in what now would be called the Basic Class, could be reproduced by craftsmen, exhibited and judged.

2012-

In January the HSEAD Facebook page was launched by Joseph Rice. In March a meeting of interested members was held at the HSEAD Research Center in Sturbridge, MA to discuss our ideas for a decorative arts program at the American College of the Building Arts in Charleston, SC. HSEAD was asked by its liaison Mr. Robert O. Byrne if we could help them in designing this program. The report was completed and sent in May of 2012 entitled, "Recommendations Regarding the Establishment of a Decorative Arts Degree Program at



HSEAD Masters Series, 1st Video, Country Painting

the American College of the Building Arts, Charleston, SC.” HSEAD was invited to exhibit and/or demonstrate at their future fundraising events.

Programs at the HSEAD Research Center involved classes, exhibits at the Center’s David Wight House and also at the Old Sturbridge Village (OSV) Visitor Center as well as participation by our members in the OSV’s Music & Arts Weekend in June 2012 and their Friends’ Day Tours in September. Members from the Central New York Chapter traveled to provide demonstrations. Another museum has cooperated with us in promoting EAD. The Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, NY, who agreed to store our original theorem collection, established a special exhibit case with plaque noting HSEAD and has exhibited some of the antique theorems; Lois Tucker’s work and originals were exhibited there in 2013.

E-blasts became a fast way to communicate with the membership. In 2013 the Newsletter appeared with colorful photographs and design elements on a thicker white paper. Chapters were offered space on the web site also in 2013. The HSEAD Research Center continued with its classes and exhibits under the direction of Anne Dimock, and she also was able to arrange for a side-by-side project and exhibition in 2016.

HSEAD investment management was moved from Merrill Lynch to Boston Private Bank in 2013. The following year HSEAD received its first annual installment from the Arnold and Alice Carlson Charitable Fund. This substantial gift allowed the Society to contract in 2015 for professional web site design and management from LaBarge Media allowing us to sell items conveniently online.

Additionally, the collection of originals was started in 2014 so that members could



Penwork, New Category 2009



Wrap the Wight House with Heart Team Logo

record from them, an original goal when HSEAD was founded. The collection is called the Lending Library of Originals (LLO) first headed by Parma Jewett then Lois Tucker.

The red crooked neck coffee pot was replaced by a circular set of red brush strokes as a logo for the organization.



*Research Center, Main Room
Schenectady, New York*

The annual Carlson Trust Fund allotment, administered by the New York Community Trust, has allowed the Society to fund purchases for the LLO as well as fund other endeavors. Also, the “Website [has been] made possible by the New York Community Trust – Arnold W. & Alice R. Carlson Charitable Fund.”

In September 2016 the Board of Trustees met with strategic planners, Roberts Consulting, to set out a plan for the future of HSEAD. The resulting eight goals were described in the 2016 Annual Report and priorities will be set to begin determining budget implications and responsibilities for accomplishment.

President Rebecca Kidder led a search for a new office in 2017 as well as overseeing new by-laws written, updated standards published and new policies and procedures developed. She also expressed appreciation for learning how many members over time had continually contributed to the Endowment Fund providing HSEAD its financial security. Another side-by-side exhibit was mounted at the Portland, ME Meeting in the spring of 2017 led by a Side-by-Side Committee.

The purchase of a building in the Historic Stockade District of Schenectady, NY was a major accomplishment of 2018. 2019 saw the completion of the renovations for the Schenectady HSEAD headquarters allowing the move made in the spring of 2019, where the office, sale products, collections, research materials and historical archives could be located in one space. This period also saw the acceptance of a new decorative category for judging, Women’s Painted Furniture put forth by Betsy K. Salm and the planning for a new non-judged exhibit called Variations on Early American Decoration (EAD). Both these two endeavors were designed to help add excitement to our annual exhibitions.

In 2018 the photographing was completed of the HSEAD originals now located and owned by the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. Further the scanning / digitizing of research materials was initiated and/or continued.

2020 / Covid-19

Due to the pandemic, both exhibition and workshop meetings were cancelled for 2020. Trustees have held online virtual meetings to keep the Society going forward. Newsletter no. 125, Spring 2020 celebrated what members were doing “at home.” Editor Linda Sheldon produced a 32-page compendium of colored photographs with descriptions of members’ projects, a varied story showing time well spent.

An Education Fund was established to help recipient chapters, groups of chapters or individual members carry out educational projects; an application form has been designed.

The Decorator for 2020 would also be different. As there was no exhibition of awarded pieces, the Variations on EAD pieces on display in 2019 at the Amherst, MA Meeting were to be shown instead.



Valerie Burnham Oliver is a retired librarian from the University of Connecticut and serves as Historian for The Historical Society of Early American Decoration.

Roadmap of A Researcher

27 Articles for *The Magazine Antiques*

by Sandra Cohen

Esther Stevens (1898-1945) was a young, independent and artistically talented woman whose lineage included artists and craftsmen. Her father, Samuel Augustus Stevens, was a descendant of Zachariah Stevens, a Maine tinsmith, whose shop produced tinware with colorfully painted designs; Samuel's ancestry also included American patriot, Paul Revere, goldsmith and artisan. Samuel's sister, Elizabeth, had exhibited her paintings in the Paris Salon. Diana Fraser Seamans and Constance Fraser shared the following details about their mother in letters to Shirley Baer, author of "Esther Stevens Brazer, The Woman" (*The Decorator*, vol. 50, no. 2). Esther's



23-year-old Esther Stevens Fraser

mother, Harriet Bell Stevens, would be considered a 'modern woman,' having a life outside of her domestic role; she was a published author of two novels, a lecturer and a founder of Women's Clubs at a time when such pursuits were considered unladylike. Esther conveyed the following particulars in her brief personal profile, "My Story" (*The Decorator*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1951). From the age of 10, she was nurtured by her father's sisters. After her mother's tragic death, Esther's talented and independent aunts were keenly aware of their niece's artistic talent, academic potential and intense curiosity. A frequent visitor to the library, she said "I would read books that had lain on the shelves for years undusted. Books on archaeology, on the crafts of the American Indian, on Greek mythology..." Her father and aunts arranged for her early and college preparatory education that laid the foundation for Esther's promising future.

In commemoration of our 75th Anniversary, this article for *The Decorator* will focus on Esther Stevens Fraser Brazer, the researcher. This overview of her 27 articles that she wrote for *The Magazine Antiques*, reflects her scholarly approach and commitment to researching early American painted decoration. The inspiration of many of these articles originated from her love of history, from personal experiences and from her choice to live in historic

houses and restore their furnishings. Esther's research and writing convey that she lived in the present and used the context of her life to its fullest advantage.

In 1920 Esther married Cecil Fraser who was studying toward his MBA at Harvard. The following year, the couple, their newly arrived daughter, Diana, and their dog, Buddy, moved into the historic John Hicks House (1762) on Dunster St., Cambridge, Mass. Esther was determined to combine marriage, motherhood and her interest in the decorative arts. Her residence, by convenience and necessity, became her first major restoration project, launching her career in research of early American decoration, its preservation, restoration and authentic reproduction. She literally restored everything in her home reminiscent of the ingenuity and aesthetic of its original state, from floors, wall-

papers, furniture and painted furnishings. Authenticity and that which was appropriate to the period became her guiding principle.

Esther wrote, in her profile, that sometime between 1920 and 1922, while "cleaning off an old Hitchcock chair, a fascinating old bronzed stenciled design jumped into view." Esther's curiosity and



Historic John Hicks House (1762)

the suggestions of local antique dealers led her to George Lord on Munjoy Hill in Portland, Maine. Esther remembered this 87-year old man's steady hands and his precise skills that earned him his expertise in stenciling with bronze powders. After a short session of observing him work and asking questions, she would be able to practice and replicate this technique. Her research and notes would ultimately result in her first article entitled, "The Golden Age of Stenciling" that was published in the first issue, April 1922, of *Antiques*. Here she stated that she was hooked by "...the age of stenciling in gold!...not a thick heavy gold, but beautifully shaded...every bit of the design has an elusive way of disappearing into the background...that defies reproduction by any but the original method."

Esther, a true researcher, reviewed the history of stenciling, documented her findings and began to seek and collect stenciled furnishings, particularly chairs, (always looking for the quality she saw in Lord's work), and she began recording their patterns. She was particularly interested in early examples of the "Hitchcock" chair. She wrote in her article, "The Golden Age of Stenciling," that when she came across a chair marked "Hitchcockville, Conn." she wondered, "Why the name of 'Hitchcockville,' I am unable to say...[or] to locate such a community." The name of the village was Riverton, nicknamed "Hitchcockville" because of the large mill/factory there. Every early chair by Lambert

Hitchcock bore the stenciled emblem, “L.Hitchcock.Hitchcocks-ville.Conn. Warranted.” Esther must have been confident that her research contained enough information to publish her article. Her interest in antiques and a fortuitous meeting with another pioneer, one in the field of publishing, launched her career in writing and resulted in a nurturing professional relationship.

In 1922, Homer Eaton Keyes, a graduate of Dartmouth and Princeton, Assist. Editor and later Editor of the *Dartmouth Alumni Magazine*, became the founder of *Antiques*, (today titled *The Magazine Antiques*). A unique journal, *Antiques* was quickly recognized as America’s foremost publication on fine and decorative arts and interior design, including architecture and antiques. Esther became aware of this new publication with its specialties of particular interest to her. Esther Stevens Fraser and Homer Eaton Keyes would launch their careers simultaneously, she as a researcher/writer and he as a publisher of the arts and antiques. In April 1922, Esther’s first article, “The Golden Age of Stenciling,” was published in the first issue of *Antiques*. Eaton mentored Esther; She said that “[Keyes] encouraged me to pursue my studies...guided me constantly in my research...told me that I should start...collecting material toward a history of early American decorative design...”

Introducing her article on stenciling, she stated “NOTE: The illustrations accompanying this article were executed by me from stencils of my own cutting, based, however, in every instance, upon an original, or upon an authentic derivation.” She also acknowledged George Lord and Mr. Clarence Allen,



*Authentic Grape Stencil Design for A Hitchcock Chair
by Esther Fraser*

Portland, Maine stencilers, whose patterns she used to illustrate her article; Esther also requested readers of *Antiques* to allow her the courtesy “to study and to record for preservation, examples of furniture stenciling which they may have in their possession.”

While on the subject of Hitchcock stenciled chairs, Esther wrote another article (*Antiques*, Oct. 1929), “The Elimination of Hotchkiss, A Study in Negative Evidence,” that investigated a query in a letter *Antiques* received from a Danbury, Connecticut reader on Stenciling and the Hitchcock Chair. It stated, “wondering why I never hear or see any mention of a Hotchkiss Chair...would [someone] kindly tell me if there is such a thing...” Leaving no stone unturned, Esther was determined to explore the possibility, especially after discovering that the town of Hotchkiss still existed; “had there been some forgotten chair-maker?” Mrs. Hotchkiss, a 92-year-old descendant, set the record straight. “Not

Hotchkiss chairs, you mean Hitchcock chairs;" apparently, the Hotchkiss family produced woolens, not chairs; Mrs. Hotchkiss suggested that perhaps the marking was a promotional label. In any case, Esther had done her due diligence. Much later, Esther's August 1936 article in *Antiques*, "Random Notes on Hitchcock and His Competitors" detailed the life of Lambert Hitchcock's background and business with side-by-side samples of competitors Seymore Watrous whose chairs she thought had "...better proportions, better turnings and greater delicacy of detail..." and William Moore, Jr. whose nearly identical patterns indicated to her that Moore may have worked with Hitchcock. Mrs. Mable Roberts Moore, a biographer of Hitchcock, stated that she "...remembers seeing the name of William Moore, Jr. in a list of Hitchcock employees, ...[Hitchcock] built his large factory about 1826, [produced]...fully decorated Hitchcock Chairs...all carry the label L.Hitchcock, Hitchcocksville, Conn. Warranted." Esther wrote that "Hitchcock's early chairs' ...bronze stenciling is unsurpassed—well designed and superb in its brilliance...not apparent in Hitchcock's later products." Her thoroughness compelled her "to pay brief tribute" to another chairmaker and decorator, "Z. Willard Brooks...though surpassed by some...he was equaled by few."

Harvard University owned the historic John Hicks House and had agreed to repairs of the exterior while Cecil and Esther worked on the interior. Esther was moved by the house's history, the home of an American patriot, a participant in the Boston Tea Party. Hicks made the ultimate sacrifice on April 19, 1775 at the Battle of Lexington and Concord. For Esther, the challenge to authentically restore this home would be a labor of love and a test of her skills. She immediately noticed the numerous layers of peeling wallpaper, namely, two walls and the hall. She wondered, how many layers were there and what was their origin? It was known that wealthy colonists paid dearly for imported wallpaper and other costly items from Europe. However, many patriotic Colonists purchased items made domestically to avoid paying import taxes to Britain. What would the home's papered walls of John Hicks, father of 10 children, reveal? When was wallpaper first made in this country? Esther approached this project with the same verve and meticulous attention that would become her hallmark.



Side Chair, Lambert Hitchcock (1795–1829)

*Hitchcocksville, Connecticut,
United States 1826–1829*

*Paint, bronze powder stenciling,
and gold leaf on wood with cane seat
34 3/4 × 18 × 15" 58.29*

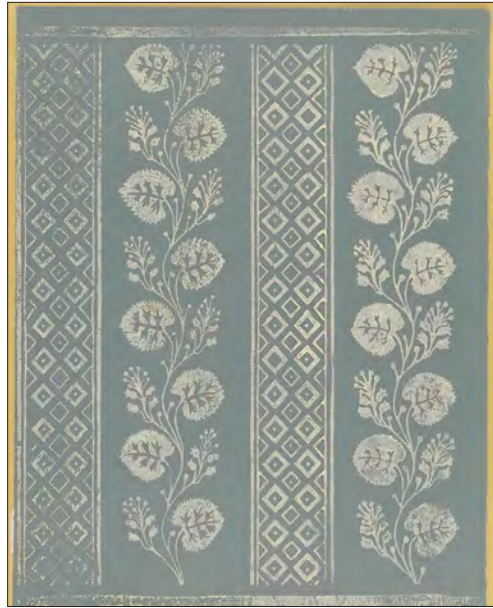
Photo by John Parnell

*Gift of the Historical Society of
Early American Decoration
American Folk Art Museum*

As Esther and Cecil carefully peeled away layer by layer of wallpaper, she researched the history of wallpapers from those used in this house over the years. She was able to approximate the date of each layer, using remnants that were in remarkable condition, each telling its own story. The occupants of the John Hicks House attracted the attention of the local Historical Society and newspaper reporters. On Saturday, June 9, 1923, *The Boston Traveler* headlined an article, "Romance in Wall Paper, 15 Layers of It, Found by Mrs. Fraser in Cambridge House." The article begins, "Many a story plot has been built around woman's curiosity." The resulting research and remnants provided material for her next article in the May 1923 issue of *Antiques* entitled,

"Excavating Old-Time Wall Papers." She found the oldest under all the layers, a fragment c.1750-1760. In the best bedroom, upstairs, all 15 layers were discovered. Peeling through layers, Esther wrote excitedly, "...It is quite the joy of my life... [to uncover] the first paper...to have been manufactured by the block printing process" around c.1790. Coming across another key to establishing when wallpaper was made domestically, she wrote that Homer Keyes suggested that she view "...the wallpaper lining of a miniature trunk which the firm of W.W.Winship of Boston stated was made by the founder of their business,... John Hicks' third son, Zechariah, sometime about 1770!" Further bolstering her premise, in 1789 *The Independence Chronicle*, in its coverage of a parade for the inauguration of Pres. Geo. Washington, wrote that "Every tradesman took part. Zechariah Hicks led the Saddlers division..." Among those parading in celebration were The Paper Makers and Strainers carrying their motto, "May the fair daughters of Columbia deck themselves and their walls with the products of our own manufacturies."

Esther Stevens Fraser was becoming a regular contributor to *Antiques*; Homer Keyes had taken her under his wing. Her interest in stenciling, initiated by the stenciling found on a Hitchcock chair, led her to the discovery of painted decoration on other chairs, particularly a variety of Sheraton Fancy Chairs



*Block Printed Paper c.1790, Reproduction 1923
(Reproduction by Esther Fraser)
Cut sample of reproduction diapered and vine stripe paper.
Grey-blue ground with pattern printing in white.
Straight repeat.
Historic New England GUSN - 178508
American Folk Art Museum*

(1790-1817). Her attraction to stenciled and painted furnishings grew as she and Cecil, leaving no stone unturned, searched for antique furniture appropriate for their historical home. In an article for *Country Life* in Dec. 1924, Esther described replacing interior architectural elements, particularly those from "...inconsiderate Victorian days...It gave the keepers of the wrecking yards quite a shock when I invaded old timers without breaking my pocketbook." However, her curiosity was still nudging her in the direction of decorated chairs, and she wrote the following series on "Painted Furniture in America" for *Antiques*: 1. "The Sheraton Fancy Chair (1790-1817); 2. "The Period of Stenciling (1817-1835); 3. "The Decadent Chair (1835-1845)." Twenty-six-year-old Esther, thinking of her Editor's words, was fulfilling her dream as a researcher and writer. In academia and in the financial world, Cecil, a Professor of Industrial Finance at Harvard, was also developing an expertise in business and banking.

June 1924, *Antiques* published Part 1, "The Sheraton Fancy Chair (1790-1817)" with 17 illustrations, including 4 from Cecil and Esther's growing collection. She observed the connections between their various styles and those of Hitchcock chairs. Sheraton decoration included the familiar use of gold leaf, stenciling with bronze powders, scrolls of acanthus leaves or conventional sprays of flowers. Hepplewhite and Sheraton were both inspired by Louis XVI. Windsor and Sheraton shared bamboo legs and stretchers as well as splayed legs. One only wished these plates were in color. Esther wrote, "...thousands of chairs exist bearing the unmistakable inheritance of Sheraton Design," but she carefully noted that "Painted furniture in America did not start with the Sheraton fancy chair." The "Empire style had a great influence on the American made fancy chair" and she excitedly described the one in her collection: "A very unusual cresting in vigorous Empire design. Reed turnings of legs and bottom feet seem to place this not long in advance of the subsequent Hitchcock type (c.1810-1815)." An advertisement in the June 18, 1789 *Independent Chronicle* ended with a comment on Windsor Green Chairs at William Blake's Shop in Boston stated "...painted as equally as those made in Philadelphia," a city that held the highest bar for quality by comparison with New York and Baltimore. Esther advised students of decorated furniture to study in detail Sheraton chair ornamentation.



*Fancy Side Chair, Artist unidentified
Probably New York or Connecticut,
United States c.1830-1845
Paint, bronze powder stenciling, and
gold leaf on wood with painted rush seat
35 3/8 x 17 1/4 x 19" 82.19.1
Photographer unidentified
Gift of the Historical Society
of Early American Decoration
American Folk Art Museum*

Part 2, "The Period of Stenciling (1817-1835)" appeared in the Sept. 1924 issue of *Antiques* and was thoroughly illustrated with commentary on the quality of stenciling she observed on chairs and other furnishings. The 1820s was a factory era with more efficient time saving ways of production. Her examples of stenciled decoration indicated that in many, the quality and craftsmanship were compromised. Introducing her article was the fine shading and depth of a stenciled motif, (a very fine design from the earliest time, 1817-1820, from a cradle settee rocker), conveying a "...close similarity to those of Sheraton Models." This was evident, even in its photograph, especially when compared to those of less skillful execution. Esther visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC to see the best example of decorative bronze powder and gold leaf stenciling. She estimated that its stenciled piano by John Tallman, N.Y., was made c.1830. It is "...the very best of our Empire Period...the most perfect stenciling I have ever run across....indicative of the best...applied decoration which this period...has to offer." She advised students of these decorative arts to see and study this piano.

Part 3, published in Jan. 1925 is titled "The Decadent Period (1835-1845)" because according to Esther, "By 1935 painted furniture had been reduced to a degenerate type with decorations of a crude sort, sometimes stenciled, sometimes painted in muddy colors...This clumsy style lasted for about 10 years...then painted furniture recedes from sight as rose-carved rosewood and black walnut invaded every home." Only three pages covered Esther's least favorite period; however, there is a Cradle Rocker which she owned and described humorously: "the bowl is coarse...six identical melons more than tax its capacity...yellow striping which occupies every slat where striping could possibly be accommodated!" Yet, she said the piece had captured her heart, "even if it does belong to the decadent period." There are also two pieces, a chair and washstand, painted yellow with "purely painted decoration...a decadent form of floral spray executed in green." This late style yellow furniture may have inspired the designs executed by Raymond Schnader in 1940 and with whom Esther later corresponded. Letters from Esther to Raymond Schnader in 1938 on March 25th and 31, and April 21st, 23rd, indicate that he was



*Yellow Painted Dressing Table c.1825-1830
Skinner American Auction, Website*

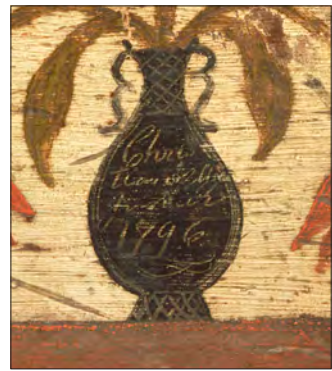
interested in some of her specific techniques. She responded by mentioning her classes, her upcoming book and offered him a three-hour demonstration. "I will do it for \$3.00, the equivalent of a lesson." His Schnader Chair Pattern Collection is owned by The Historical Society of Early American Decoration.

When the “Period of Stenciling (1817-1835)” was published in Sept. 1924, Esther was around six months pregnant, and in Jan. 1925, the Fraser family welcomed their second child, daughter, Constance. Although writing the articles didn’t necessarily occur at the time of the dates, the time, effort and research required to write them, photograph the objects, cut and stencil her own patterns, etc. and meeting a schedule of submission dates all indicate that her time was fully occupied in this endeavor. Around this time Esther wrote in “My Story” that she also “... had the rare good fortune of meeting [Clarence Brazer] an architect friend of [Homer Keyes], who joined Mr. Keyes in the scholarly education of my mind. Dr. Brazer taught me to know old houses, to read dates in mouldings and construction, to know the makers of fine Philadelphia furniture.”

Brazer was also a collector of decorated Penn. German chests, and several of the chests, illustrating her new articles on that subject, were owned by him. Her next submissions to *Antiques* included: “Pennsylvania Bride Boxes and Dower Chests,” Parts 1 & 2 in July and August 1925; “A Lancaster Pennsylvania Chest,” September 1926; “Pennsylvania German Dower Chests,” Parts 1,2 & 3, Feb., April and June 1927. As you read her articles, comprehensively detailed with folklore, symbolism of the designs and identified makers, you realize that she thoughtfully included descriptions that would satisfy and enable the decorative painter. You may also assume from her language that she examined some of these chests herself. Esther wrote that she “found this native peasant art...the most interesting of all.” She also corrected the misno-



Chest, Christian Seltzer, Jonestown, Pennsylvania, United States 1796,
Hard pine, white pine and tulip poplar, 1959.2803,
Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, Courtesy of Winterthur Museum

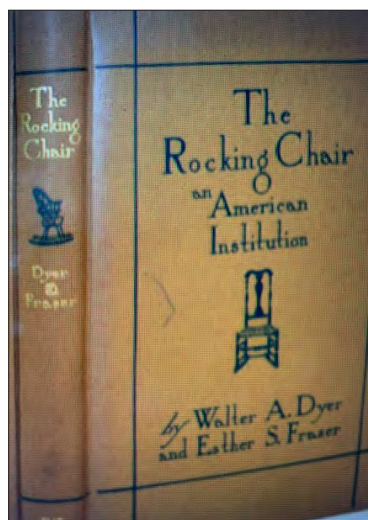


mer, Pennsylvania “Dutch” Art, and stated that “the ancestors of these Pennsylvanians came not from Holland, but from Germany...Deutsch, their proper designation was vulgarized to Dutch.” Her Note at the outset of her series, stated “...acknowledgement of heavy indebtedness should be made to Clarence W. Brazer...the work of direct investigation,..for the most part, has been his.” An important discovery and conclusion to her research was “A Christian Selzer chest so signed on the right hand side...I have identified Christian Selzer and his followers [Jonestown decorators]...I have seen one or two chests that

belong to the Jonestown School,...the significance of the Jonestown decorators is great...at last we may definitely prove that at least one large group of German-type dower chests were made in this country.” All six articles are meticulously researched. Her article includes the names, backgrounds and details of the Jonestown decorators including his son John Selzer; the entire Selzer family genealogy is included.

In 1927, Harvard University informed the Frasers that it would require the property upon which the John Hicks House stood, and their rental agreement would not be extended. With the aid of the Cambridge Historical Society and citizens of Cambridge, funds were raised and the 256-year-old house was moved to another site in Cambridge. In 1929, Cecil and Esther located Old Hall Tavern in Duxbury, Mass., but the owners required that the purchaser move the house to another location. Cecil Fraser purchased the house for Esther and moved it, piece by piece (35 truck loads) to Cambridge for the sub-

stantial price of \$23,350! Clarence Brazer, who was qualified in early American architecture and furniture assisted them in the deconstruction, reconstruction, restoration and furnishing of the house; in homage to authenticity, the original stone foundation was included in the move! Cecil, Esther, Diana and Constance moved into their new home, Hall Tavern, in Cambridge at 20 Grey Gardens West. Their new home, dubbed ‘Grey Gardens’ became their second major restoration project.



The American Rocking Chair
by Walter Dyer and Esther S. Fraser

Cecil and Esther were masters of multi-tasking! In Feb.1928, her research and article, “The American Rocking Chair” for *Antiques* resulted in a book, *The Rocking Chair: An American Institution* co-authored with Walter Dyer. Esther admitted

that rockers had been observed on cradles in Europe for centuries. However, she stated that “it remained for some ingenious American to think of applying them [rockers] to the lower extremities of a chair.” She quoted from Manasseh Cutler’s *Journal*, July 13, 1787, “...the pioneer’s visit to Franklin’s home ...and his great armed chair, with rockers, and a large fan placed over it.” Esther was overjoyed by this finding; she always took such pride and joy in being able to prove that a piece of furniture or painted decorated furnishings was American made. However, Mr. Eddy, a worthy expert in this area stated, “The absence of an account of the invention by Franklin of a rocking chair in his voluminous correspondence would indicate that he was not the inventor of the rocking chair.”



Chest of drawers, John Pimm, Boston, Massachusetts, United States, 1740-50, Soft maple, black walnut, white pine and mahogany, 1957.1084, Gift of Henry Francis du Pont, Courtesy of Winterthur Museum, Photo by Gavin Ashworth



A short article, "Some Decorated Woodenware of the 1830s" that appeared in the April 1928 issue of *Antiques*, illustrated an American lacquered highboy (c.1740) with an Asian design in gold. The depiction of this highboy led to the May 1929 article entitled, "A Pedigreed Lacquered Highboy." Esther's article stated "I found myself gazing upon the most magnificent "japanned" highboy that I have ever been privileged to see." When this highboy was initially featured in the April article, it had already received much attention and inquiries from collectors including Henry Francis duPont and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Esther later discovered that it was "...Made probably by John Pimm of Boston for Commodore Joshua Loring. Constructed of maple with lacquer and gold applied directly to the wood surface...only the cabinetwork is attributable to Pimm,..." Esther described in detail every flourish, from its bonnet top, carved shell, heavily gilded decoration and cabriole legs "...terminating in a dragon-like cross between a Spanish foot and a claw foot." Esther's examination of the drawers' bottom revealed the letters Pim "which meant little to me" at the time, but as always, would be another piece of information she tucked away in her memory bank.

Esther's article, like many, would include a history lesson. Her ongoing research further revealed an in depth listing of the piece's provenance; the original owner was Commodore Joshua Loring, born in 1716 to American parents who lived in Boston or Roxbury. He served in the King's Navy and after a serious injury, retired in Boston and with a King's pension, purchased 200 acres and built a Georgian mansion in Jamaica Plain. At the start of the Revolution,

Loring, in debt to the King for his livelihood, decided to side with the Crown; he and his wife remained exiles in England for the rest of their lives. However, before leaving their home, the highboy was given to Rev. Philip Curtis, his wife's brother. Esther's meticulous research ultimately revealed that the piece was willed to Helen Williams Gillman, mother of the present co-inheritors and possessors of the highboy. Also, while simultaneously researching Robert Crossman and the Pinneo family at the Mass. Historical Society, Esther came across a card file mentioning early Boston names and "as I turned over the cards, my eye was arrested by the words, Pim, John (Cabinetmaker) of Boston...Aug. 10, 1736." Digging further, a plethora of details arrived at a probable decorator, William Randle, "well established in 1715...by 1740 would have had long experience in the art of lacquering...could have produced such expert brush work as apparent in the delicate flowers and leafy trees displayed on the Pimm highboy." This was one of Esther's most important discoveries that also resulted in another rewarding meeting and a business relationship with Henry duPont who recognized and respected her expertise. Henry duPont purchased the example of early Americana, and Esther accepted an offer to exclusively represent him for this and other purchases of antiques for Winterthur.

The Fraser family was settling into Gray Gardens and was, again, ensconced in restoration. Her research for articles in the April 1930 and April 1931 issue of *Antiques*, "Pioneer Furniture from Hampton, N.H." and "Some Colonial and Early American Decorative Floors," respectively, prompted a trek across New England. Some of the stenciled floors in Deerfield and Wayside Inn in Mass. and a marbled painted floor in Mystic, Conn. are pictured in very good condition; Esther writes "It is my belief that all decorated floors were kept carefully protected by some such finish...a white shellac or varnish gives the surface a slightly yellowish tone...makes the effect more pleasing." Esther noted that the furniture in Hampton, N.H. reflected the simple lifestyle of village life. Pioneer furniture reflected a more utilitarian style rather than a sophisticated and fashionable form with artistic ornamentation, demonstrated by a painted pine chest signed Sam Lane dated 1719. After this article, in the Spring 1931 Esther took a brief break from submitting to *Antiques*.

While developing her expertise in early American painted antiques, Esther responded to requests to speak about American antiquity to historical societies and museums and continued developing professional relationships with antique dealers and collectors. Her reputation for restoring the John Hicks House and Hall Tavern prompted many to ask if she would teach them the techniques for early American ornamentation. Esther wrote in "My Story" that "It was Dr. Brazer who finally persuaded me that as a teacher I would learn far more from teaching my students, and incidentally, I would be doing antiques themselves a lot of good by spreading the gospel of how they ought to be painted." In 1931 Esther began teaching her techniques with classes in Chestnut Hill, Mass; in 1932 in Wellesley Hills; 1934 in Weston and at Gray Gardens

in Cambridge. Sharing their joy of antiquing, Esther and her students would discover and collect colorfully painted tinware, a reminder for her of the family's ancestor, Zachariah Stevens, founder of the tinware industry in Stevens Plains, Maine; this would soon be the subject for another article.

Meanwhile, another interest, tucked away for years, beckoned to her. "In the late winter, 1925," Esther attended an Exhibit at the Park Square Building in Boston. Here, she first saw "certain American decorated chests of a certain type previously ascribed to Connecticut, but henceforth, through my researches, to be known as *Taunton chests*, in deference to the Mass. town, where, without reasonable doubt, all of them were made." In April 1933, "my color sketches of these two chests [that] slumbered peacefully in my files" were revisited, researched and resulted in "The Tantalizing Chests of Taunton" and published in *Antiques*. The black and white pictures clearly depict her detailed descriptions of "a vine or tree-of-life scrollwork design, painted in white with touches of red and green, against a background of rusty black...Its more communicative back...revealed the tantalizing painted label," indicating "TaunTon/R.C./1729." Esther shared her odyssey through historical records of the Robert Crosman family of Taunton; the first Robert Crosman came from England, 1634, settled with wife and "probably a son, Robert" in Dedham, was documented as "one of the forty purchasers of land at Taunton." The History of Taunton indicated that the son "learned the trade of carpenter" and the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* referred to him as "drum maker of New England." Robert's tools and trade were passed to his son, Samuel, and to Samuel's son, Thomas; "Samuel and Thomas were great uncle and uncle, respectively, of the late Robert Crosman whom I suspected to have been the maker of the decorated Taunton chests."

Esther did not make a simple quantum leap; she revisited each chest, their dates and initials along with the decorative work. To her, the simplest designs implied a beginner experimenting with ornamentation. A later chest, the Taunton Blanket Chest (c.1726) that she owned, exhibited more sophisticated c-scrolls, "increasingly elaborate arboreal scrollwork, growing confidence and increased firmness of hand..." A lovely Miniature Taunton Chest (c.1729) in a



Probably Taunton Chest, Robert Crosman (18th century)
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo placed in Public Domain

private collection, which she calls “the touchstone of the group,” echoed a “Delicacy...assurance of touch...his scrolls ignore provisional boundaries ...ramble over the entire façade of the piece [and maintains] unity of composition in each individual space.” Her careful conclusion stated that Robert Crosman “*may* have been their maker.” However, she also clearly stated with conviction that her preference, “Robert Crosman, drum maker of New England, was the maker of these beautifully decorated chests.”

For three years, from the Spring 1933 to Spring 1936, Esther did not submit articles to *Antiques*. Diana and Constance were attending elementary school at the Buckingham School in Cambridge and Cecil, whose published works on finance had established his reputation in the business world, left Harvard in 1930 for a position in the private sector in banking and investment. Although Esther had taken a break from submitting articles regularly to *Antiques*, she was still completely focused on research, writing and teaching.



Trunk Zachariah Brackett Stevens (1778–1856)
Stevens Plains (now Westbrook), Maine, United Statesc. 1815–1835
Paint on tinplate 5 7/8 × 8 3/4 × 4 3/4” 86.6
Photo by Adam Cohen
Gift of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration,
courtesy Marion Poor
American Folk Art Museum

Fascinated with her family’s ancestry connecting her to Zachariah Brackett Stevens and Paul Revere, Esther’s interest was renewed as she discovered and collected the beautifully decorated utilitarian pieces she called country painted tinware. Her articles for *Antiques*, March 1936, “Zachariah Brackett Stevens” and February 1937, “Did Paul Revere Make Lace-Edge Trays?” reflected her personal interest in her family tree. HSEAD’s archives contain reams of research and letters to historical societies inquiring about descendants of the Revere and Stevens family. She referenced family records, “...tracking down pieces still owned by Zachariah Stevens’ descendants...and family members’ lineage through marriage, as well as guardianship.” A permanent link was forged by the marriage of Zachariah’s son, Samuel Butler Stevens, to Sarah Brisco Francis, Revere’s grandniece, who had been adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Brisco.” Esther described her daguerreotype of Zachariah (Uncle Zach), as “an extraordinary portrayal of a remarkable New England character...whose crooked smile seems to tell us that a huge joke has just occurred to him...”

Esther's delivery is personal and charming when she writes in the first person, as she does in many of her articles. For example, "My guess is that these pieces were fashioned as flower pots...the supposition is reinforced by my aunt's remembrance of her grandmother's making a similarly shaped flower pot." There are lovely pieces illustrated that are owned by Esther and some of her students. The inference that Revere made Lace-Edge Trays was a reach, but for Esther, quite plausible, although she admitted, "...no more than surmise." Perhaps some of the circumstantial connections, perhaps with time, evidence will "...achieve the complete pattern of proof."

In early 1937, Cecil and Esther were divorced and Cecil was granted custody of their daughters. On June 30, 1937, Clarence Brazer and Esther were married and purchased a home in Flushing, N.Y., to which they referred as "Innerwyck" as it was once owned by a Tory from Innerwyck, Scotland. For the next two years, Esther took another brief hiatus from *Antiques*, restoring and furnishing her new home. However, her decorative painting classes, speaking engagements, research, antiques and collecting continued. In Oct. 1938 Clarence and Esther's dear friend and colleague, Homer Keyes, passed away. Alice Winchester, a Smith graduate and secretary (not limited to the traditional role) to Keyes, was appointed Editor, and she and Esther would become friends and respected colleagues. Winchester would continue as Editor until 1972 and became a respected and influential figure in the antique world. At this time, Esther began thinking about publishing her comprehensive book on early America decoration.

In June and September, 1939 Esther submitted articles entitled "The Tinsmiths of Stevens Plains," Parts 1 and 2, returning to her interest in the tin making industry in Stevens Plains founded by her great-great grandfather, Zachariah Stevens, who "started working sheet tin there in 1798." The industry grew and by 1832 "there were eleven tinshops on the Plains manufacturing \$27,300 worth of tinware annually." Esther examined these shops and their designs that were painted by "several young ladies decorating the tin," and designated two categories of Stevens Plains Tinware: the first is "largely floral... though simply painted in country-tinsmith manner and second is "a large group....Connecticut fashion—chiefly conventional or geometrical in design, with simple brush strokes for...flower and leaf forms;" this second group is illustrated in Part 2. Most painted pieces were unsigned. Esther gleaned facts and information, made any suppositions clear and documented the succeeding tinsmiths and decorators including the Stevens, the Briscoes, (Thomas Briscoe marriage to Sally Rose) and their adoption of Mary (Rose) Francis' daughters (Hattie, Sally and Marie who painted tinware). They're all here; it's another history lesson.

While on the subject of painted tinware, Esther's August 1945 article, "Butler Tinware from Brandy Hill, Greenville, New York," is about Aaron Butler and his daughters, Ann, Minerva and Marilla. Ann's painted patterns included



Trinket Box and Initialed Signature

Aaron Butler Shop (act. 1824–c. 1855); paint decoration by Ann Butler (1813–1887)

Greenville, New York, United States c. 1830

Paint and asphaltum on tinplate 1 3/4 × 3 1/4 × 3 1/8" 53.2.5

*Gift of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration,
courtesy Esther Oldham and Anne Oldham Borntraeger*

Photographer unidentified

American Folk Art Museum

a flourish of floral strokes, tulips and hearts, “scarcely a square inch of under coated surface,” applied in a charming, whimsical manner with her scripted initials, *A B* centered in a heart, that capture the collector’s heart. Ann taught her sister, Minerva, whose work is signed, Minerva Butler but *M B* leaves Esther wondering if it’s Minerva or Marilla. Esther decided to designate the lot as Butler tinware.

Sadly, sometime between 1939 and 1940, Esther was diagnosed with cancer. However, her schedule of teaching, speaking engagements, research and writing indicated that she decided to continue her life’s work of research and writing on early American painted decoration. She was also determined to publish her book about authentic early American decorating techniques. The idea of becoming a pioneer in this area and publishing a book, first suggested by Homer Keyes, had become more plausible after restoring two historic homes, writing numerous articles for *Antiques* and developing a reputation for her expertise on this subject. Her projects, writing and teaching had always overlapped. Through her research, cut stencils and recorded patterns and her teaching experience, she had already developed the premise, chapters and most of the text for her book. Her time and energy would now be focused on her

book, *Early American Decoration*, published in January 1940 and acclaimed as an “extremely valuable book.”

Antiques, now titled *The Magazine Antiques*, May 1943, published “Antiques in American Homes” featuring the Long Island Home of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence W. Brazer. Photographs included her stenciled dining room and master bedroom walls, the 17th century kitchen, ‘the studio,’ with its great fireplace where Esther’s students enjoyed classes, their remarkable collection of American antiquity such as: a Taunton Blanket Chest c.1726; a painted fireplace screen by Brazer’s great grandmother, Sally Stevens, Paul Revere’s grand-niece; Pennsylvania Fraktur work; a Boston rocker and a Hepplewhite Chair with an urn splat, and more. The May 1943 issue also included Esther’s article titled, “The Early Boston Japanners,” an overview that reminds us that japanning was well established in England in 1688 according to Stalker and Parker; the art of lacquering was described later in *Handmade to The Arts* in 1758 as “the art of covering bodies by grounds of opaque colours in varnish which may be either afterwards decorated by paintings or gilding or left in a plain state.” After the Revolution, “it became a favorite finish for chairs [and for] tinware both in England and America” It seems that “Early Boston was a haven for japanners,..cities like Salem, Newport or New York might have one...Boston had nine or ten.” Esther listed few personal observations, but this article lacked her conversational style and simply focused on the names, dates and locations. She concludes that after the Revolution, these “arts came to an abrupt halt...never again did our local crafts men produce such masterpieces in gold, silver and varnish” like the John Pimm Pedigreed Lacquered Highboy.



Room in “Innerwyck”
Home of Esther and Clarence Brazer

Esther’s research, teaching, antiquing and visiting historic homes would continue for as long as she was physically able. In September 1945, Esther submitted “Murals in Upper New York State,” a brief 2-page article with 5 illustrations prompted by the discovery, while previously antiquing in Chicago, of a fireboard that was taken from the Hibbard House in Ithica, N.Y. The fireboard depicted classical figures bordered by “dark green trees painted in the characteristically fuzzy manner of the sponge painting frescoers.” Her research revealed that this was the region in America where the first landscape frescoes in America were painted. The same issue also published “Signed and Dated, A Painted Wall in Connecticut,” another brief article, (1 page with 3 illustra-

tions), revealed the signature of wall painter, “Jared Jessup, 1809” and earned one of her last Eureka moment, “indicating that the blue wall in the Northford house...is the first authenticated example found!” Her last two articles probably prompted by notes on these discoveries, were brief but recorded salient pieces of information that she may not have had the energy to embellish. These were the last two articles by Esther that appeared in *The Magazine Antiques*.

On October 30, 1945, Esther died in Flushing, New York at the age of 47. In 1946, Esther’s students founded the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild of Early American Decoration, in loving memory of their teacher and friend. Today, the Historical Society of Early American Decoration is dedicated to continuing her legacy of research, preservation and recording historically authentic, early American decorative arts.

Sources:

1. *Antique Decoration, 27 Articles* by Esther Stevens [Fraser] Brazer. Editor, Zilla R. Lea. Reprinted with permission from *The Magazine Antiques*. Publisher, The Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc. (no date).
2. Brazer, Esther Stevens, “My Story.” *The Decorator*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1951, Publisher, The Historical Society of Early American Decoration.
3. Correspondence from Diana Fraser Seamans and Constance Fraser, daughters of Esther Stevens Fraser and Cecil Eaton Fraser.
4. Photographs of rooms at Innerwyck from *The Decorator*, Vol. 5, No. 2 and Vol. 50, No. 2.



Sandra Cohen is Editor of *The Decorator* and a Docent at the Worcester Art Museum.

Passing The Torch

HSEAD's Early Teachers and Mentors

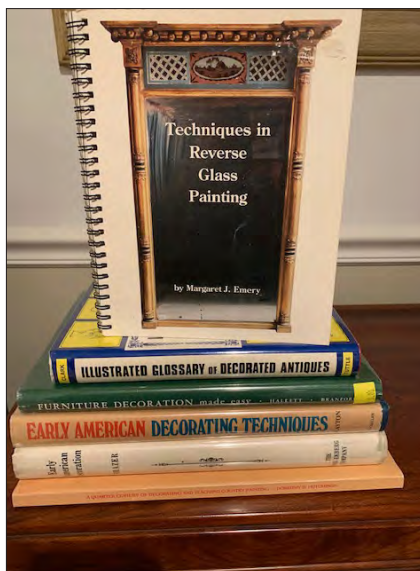
In Their Words...

Esther Stevens Brazer's decision to teach resulted in a cadre of women and men who studied with her and learned the techniques of reproducing and recording historically authentic early American decoration. Their respect and admiration for their teacher inspired them to establish an organization in her honor and to continue her legacy and emphasize the priority of research and teaching. These Charter Members founded the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild of Early American Decoration, today known as the Historical Society of Early American Decoration (HSEAD). Early Brazer Guild Members formed a Governing Body of Officers and Trustees and several Committees. A Teacher Certification Program

was started to initially set standards to facilitate the Society's recommendation of teachers to the public who were interested in learning the techniques for authentic reproduction. In October 1952, the Teacher Certification Committee Co-Chairmen, Virginia (Gina) Martin and Margaret A. Blouin, certified the first four members, Peg Watts, Bernice Drury, Maryjane Clark and Gina Martin in both Country Painting and Stenciling.

In 1960-61, the designation of a Master Teacher would be given to a member finishing certification in all the decorative classes, a major accomplishment, outlined in the Society's Standards Manual. The Society recognized Maryjane Clark, Peg Watts, Gina Martin, Dorothy Hutchings, Helen Gross and Astrid Donnellan who would become HSEAD's Master Teachers to date.

From 1954-1983, these Brazer Guild pioneers, many who were Brazer's students, offered demonstrations of their painting techniques, complimented with tips and advice at National Meetings. A collection of 94 loose leaf pages, literally tied together with a piece of yarn, was produced by HSEAD probably in 1983 or shortly thereafter. The *HSEAD Annual Report 1981-82*, page 18 indicates that Margaret Watts and Eleanor Cook were granted permission to



*Guide Books
by HSEAD Teachers*

prepare material for publication. The result revealed in its pages' reports many demonstrations presented by HSEAD teachers at meetings during these years.

When looking at teachers for this period, Maryjane Clark stands out as providing many demonstrations from 1956-1983; Dorothy Hutchings from 1964-1973; Dorothy Hamblett from 1971-1982 and Jane Bolster from 1974-1981. All provided meaningful demonstrations as did Walter Wright during 1954-1961. Expressed in their words, the following are just a few of the recorded tips by these teachers.

Maryjane (MJ) Clark's expertise covered her techniques for executing leaves in free hand bronze: start at the bottom of the leaf with gold powder, make half tones, then dip in fire red and start at the same base going out to the finish. If just stenciling a border on glass, use a piece of architect's linen to mask the center of the glass. If using a clear spray, spray four times in each direction; if using a brush, only a thin coat of varnish or quick size is needed. When painting a gold band on a tray, the tray must have a smooth, glossy, shiny finish; do not rub down. When executing a bronze background for Chippendale painting, she gives this advice. Mark the area for the cloud, varnish and dry to proper tack, then use an ear muff to start in center of tray and dust away from the center in half-tone. Using pale gold, start in center on top of what you just did and dust in patting motion out beyond the first dust. Repeat with orange gold and finally, use a small amount of fine fire bronze at the outer edge. In a demonstration with Astrid Thomas, they recommend, regarding country painting, to always take the white to the varnish, as the greatest mistake is too much white; tone down a white band on black with Paynes gray. [Maryjane Clark wrote, *Illustrated Glossary of Decorated Antiques*, 1972.]

Dorothy Hutchings emphasized that country painting requires constant practice with brushes. She uses her whole arm with her little finger as a pivot point; squash the brush down and pick up immediately (to make your stroke). If your paint is grainy, it is probably old. Cut out the old paint and keep tubes stored upside down. Constant careful wiping of brushes, before and after washing with turps, will keep them free of little hard particles of paint and varnish. Approximately 99% of our country tin background is asphaltum. In executing an asphaltum



Maryjane Clark
Master Teacher



Dorothy Hutchings
Master Teacher



*Country Coffee Pot
by Dorothy Hutchings.*

tum background, she uses 2T. asphaltum with 1T. varnish and 1T. turpentine; after coating the object, let it dry for two days. When dry, apply 2-3 coats of spar varnish, being sure all turpentine is removed from the brush first. Rub down with wet 600 sandpaper to complete. When applying a white band, it should be done as in original object; flow on the paint and stroke or whisk back into the finished area. Edges are easily cleaned up while paint is still wet. Do not work with gold leaf on a humid day. Have all your equipment lined-up in order of use. After laying leaf, allow to dry for 1-2 hours, and then dust-off loose gold leaf very lightly with soft cotton. Next, burnish with new pieces of cotton; a second or third layer

of leaf may be necessary to cover all spots. [Dorothy Hutchings wrote *A Quarter Century of Decorating and Teaching Country Painting*, 1975.]

Dorothy Hamblett focused on executing backgrounds in her demonstrations. Moisture, she stated, is the worst enemy; follow drying instructions carefully. If you are to paint wood, seal it first. She uses $\frac{1}{2}$ shellac to $\frac{1}{3}$ solvent (varnish is not a sealer). If you are to paint on tin, she uses a sanding primer (i.e. Rustoleum), and it must leave a smooth coat. Do not varnish on a humid day. She provided specific demonstrations for graining on wood with Pat Welch, smoke graining and rosewood graining.

Jane Bolster reminded attendees that a final result in stenciling can be no better than the original tracing. Think in terms of cutting away the ink lines when cutting the stencils. Shadows are deeper when stenciling on wood than on tin. Fading may be caused by varnish being too wet or not enough time was allowed for the varnish to dry/harden between coats. Any soap or detergent on unprotected bronzing powders will cause damage. When striping, try moving clockwise and counter clockwise to determine which is best for you. A mixture of Japan color and oil pigments are good for striping (just oil pigments can cause creeping, and it is never opaque). When doing free hand bronze, to emphasize the highlight area of a fruit, finally go over that part with velvet or suede to polish. She often uses a striping brush to achieve good transition to shadow and a brights brush to achieve a bolder and brighter edge to the highlight. In her notes, on copying an original, she stated that one



*Red Snuffer Tray
by Walter Wright
from Original Owned by Florence Wright.*

should trace the original design, and do not refine; if the original has a primitive quality so must your copy.

Walter Wright's expertise at lace edge painting was demonstrated during 1954-5 when he stated that he used a medium of oil and wax to hold crispness. The secret is sureness, and puttering is fatal. When demonstrating gold leaf on tin, he noted that he does not lay gold leaf on flat paint, but puts on two coats of varnish very well rubbed. His medium is $\frac{1}{2}$ yellow Plax, $\frac{1}{4}$ asphaltum and $\frac{1}{4}$ varnish. He waits about two hours before laying leaf. Regarding Victorian flower painting and their Chippendale scrolls, he uses a no.1 square tip quill for scroll forms. ("S" and "C" shapes). He dots in main stem form, then blocks in large basic scrolls and adds smaller scrolls later. Drips are done by painting into and around a straight line. Very fine scrolls in gold leaf are etched, and only on large areas is color used to break-up spaces and lend form. On lace edge, round pointed or full point brushes are best. Painting rose petals, start at back of rose working forward; do top petal last. For fine lines on a lace edge tray, use a little turp or varnish with the wax to make paint hold a firm line; he uses a square tip #2 quill held upright and flattened.

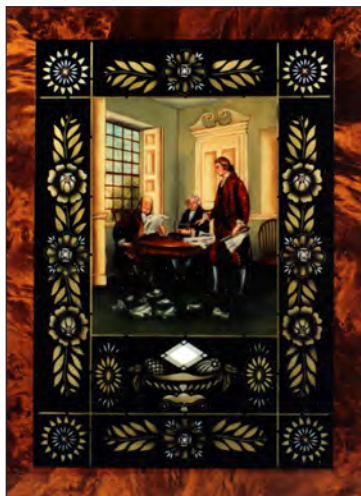
Other teachers participating in the 1950s were **Eleanor (Nory) Van Riper** who noted she striped on an unvarnished surface. When doing gold leaf work she chalks a rubbed down satin finish and then traces the design; she does fine lines first and applies a thin smooth foundation on larger units and waits for a slight tacky surface. She said keep eye on your work, not on the stripe itself; she uses a 2" long square tipped quill or a scroller and a #0 sword striper.

Irene Slater noted using lighter fluid for clean-up of gold leaf on glass as it leaves no film, and she uses asphaltum with a few drops of Japan drier for backing leaf. Laying a 2nd layer of leaf is more satisfactory than patching.

Margaret (Peg) Watts, who also demonstrated as others in later years, recommended dusting very lightly over a whole unit in stenciling, whether a flower, shell,



*Detail from a Free Hand Bronze Pattern
by Eleanor Van Riper.*



*Reverse Glass Painting in Grained Frame
by Margaret Watts*

fruit or leaf, and then mold it by polishing in the highlights. She used the finest lining powders. In Victorian flower painting she noted varnishing a very thin coat before veiling. Veiling is done to accentuate and should be done one petal at a time with Japan white and a varnish/medium.

Bernice Drury provided an in-depth demonstration of gold leaf on glass, stating that it is unnecessary to smooth out gold leaf; by the time it is dry, any wrinkles can be polished off with a piece of dry cotton. She backs etching with un-thinned asphaltum because if it is thinned it will lose the toughness. She lets asphaltum drop in puddle on glass and find its own level rather than trying to paint brush strokes.

During the 1960s and 1970s many different teachers joined in providing demonstrations. **Emilie Underhill** noted that there are no repairs on velvet theorem work so be very neat. Test the color on a separate piece of velvet before stenciling to make sure it is correct. She uses a separate piece of wool for each color.



Pontypool Tray
by Cornelia Keegan.

Cornelia (Phil) Keegan demonstrated free hand bronze explaining that in doing a peach, for example, start with the brightest powder, add fire powder near the edge of the peach, and the next day Alizerin will go over the fire, and it will be brighter. Generally, for FHB the tack should be drier than for stenciling (makes for a better gloss). A stump gives the

sharpest edge, the brush a bit softer and velvet the softest and more shaded edge. To add a second color powder, shade off first lightly, then start new color from the brightest area of the first going over the first color and shading off second color lightly. When cleaning off loose powder, too much loss means you did it too dry, and powder did not rub in – so do it over. Only varnish when completely dry to protect the work.

Margaret Willey, in talking about lace edge, noted one should not dress the brush. Work with the tip of brush only to secure good textures; if not satisfactory, remove and try again. In stenciling, she traces the motif on the dull side of linen. When cutting a stencil, use one hand to move the architect's linen while the other hand holds the cutting tool almost stationary.

Avis Heatherington noted that after applying gold background on a tray, when burnishing, there should be a sense of softness (not stickiness), as the gold is polished; if too wet, the gold will go into the medium and become dull, and you will feel a drag on the cotton.

Jane Kroger provided instruction in putty-vinegar graining that in-

cluded information on the differences in producing the “Hit and Miss” pattern versus the “Shell” pattern. The latter requires more control. A slender roll is used and controlled by both hands, holding in a curve while shifting and overlapping to create an overall shell design. She noted her advisor was Charles Hallett whose demonstration was reported in *Decorator* v.7, no.2. [Charles Hallett wrote *Furniture Decoration Made Easy*, 1952]

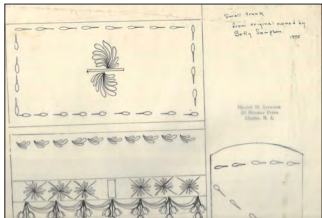
Doris Fry demonstrated stenciling advising that blooming in the corners of a tray should follow the shape of the design; for example, in tray corners it should be solid front top to bottom with shading at the sides.



Left: Margaret Emery
Above: Detail of Etched Gold Leaf on Reverse Glass
Very Fine Shadow Etching by Margaret Emery

When blending two shades of powder colors, shade out the first, and then, using second color, start at the brightest spot and work out; this makes a nice blending without a line between colors. Never remove stencil until design underneath is checked to see if it’s as it should be, keeping one hand on linen to keep from moving.

Margaret (Peg) Emery advised to never touch a raw stencil with a tack cloth and to never sand a final coat of background paint when working with wood surfaces. [Margaret Emery wrote *Techniques in Reverse Glass Painting*, 1981.]



Pattern and Tracing of
Country Painting for
Small Trunk
by Harriet Syversen
original owned
by Betty Sampson

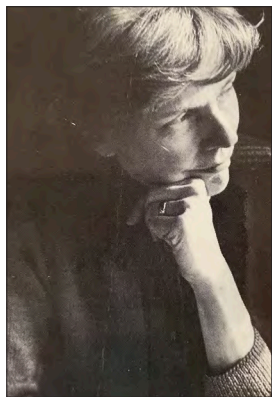
Helen Gross demonstrated Chippendale roses stating that a thin base coat of Japan white with medium makes a filmier flower. Modeling of the flower petals should be done with oil white and medium. Float color when this shaping is dry, the darkest color in the shadows. Avoid streaking. Veiling is done after 2-3 days; paint petals in white with side loaded brush following flower being copied.

Harriet Syversen, demonstrating lace edge, advised using varnish rather than wax as the medium when painting stems to get cleaner lines. Do not dress the brush, and keep pigment on the tip holding brush upright. Do not over-stroke as each stroke is important. Texture is all important. When veiling,

coat the rose, peach, etc. with thin coat of wax so that veiling does not crawl.

Mona Rowell, in her demonstration for backgrounds on pierced trays, noted they were usually black, tortoise-shell effect over silver leaf or tortoise-shell effect over a red foundation paint. Extra drying time allows for a harder sanding that does not remove paint. A complete rub down should be done before decorating. Study pattern to see where placement of silver leaf would be most effective. [Her demonstration of tortoise-shell effect over silver leaf is clear and not seen in other directions.]

Mariette Slayton began her demonstration by showing a sketch of



Left: Mariette Paine Slayton



Right: Step-by-Step Paintings of Three Types of Chippendale Roses by Mariette Slayton

brush stroke movements and demonstrated flower painting in six separate steps. She uses striping white thinly for her base coats for the rose and daisy and uses it heavily for the morning glory. Subsequent steps build and define the petals, float the color and define the details. [Mariette Slayton wrote *Early American Decorating Techniques*, 1972]

Marge Hennessey advised mastering the brush stroke. When applying a country painting band, it is not time to “poke around;” the more rapidly you can get your band on, the better. To float color, she loads one brush with color and another with clear varnish. She whisks a few strokes near the edge to have less shading before stroking the color on, one stroke after another, blending into the clear varnish.

Arkie Steel instructed that one should burnish the stenciled stripes well, and good stenciling is light to shadow not to a black hole.

Eugene Witten and Arlene Clinkman gave separate demonstrations on Water Gilding, a method of laying gold leaf on gilders clay over a smooth base of many coats of gesso. Both emphasized that the surface must be clean and sealed and, most important, later success or failure depends on the preparation of the gesso.

Jane Milner explained that metal leaf is imitation gold or silver leaf. When gilding a molded frame or object, do not try to cover deep curves or recesses with leaf; use a matching shade of bronze powders after leafing is done. Protect gilded surface with varnish or thinned white shellac.

Lynette Smith, a member of the Teacher Certification Comm. (TCC), said that it isn’t necessary to have notebooks crammed with history; but we do think it helps you, as well as your students, if some pertinent information



*Detail from Country Painting Pattern
by Sara Tiffany*

is jotted down on the backs of patterns. On the category of Stenciling, she includes extensive lists, including a Stenciling Reading List, a detailed 3-pages of Supplies and Sources with retailers and addresses as well as furniture companies that sell reproductions.

Toward the end of this 1954-1983 period **Sara Tiffany** demon-

strated laying gold leaf on glass saying she strained the distilled water and dissolved gelatin through a coffee filter or a white paper towel. She uses mainly a bamboo etcher, but for some areas, she uses a needle. After the one-shot black backup is dry, she removes excess leaf with surgical cotton dampened with ice water and whiting.

Marion Cooney gave a lengthy demonstration on Tinsel Painting, which dates to c.1850 and was originally known as Pearl Painting, Crystal Painting or Oriental Painting. Mica was used to create a crystalized or sparkling effect. After washing the glass with Bon Ami or another greaseless agent, she noted 3 different preparations for the glass: using a sizing or a mixture of $\frac{1}{2}$ capsule of gelatin to one cup of hot water or Carbona or other cleaning fluid (all to aid the flow of ink tracing). Start from heavier details at base and work to the finer details on top and have a small piece of glass to test pen. Backing the painting with "not too glittery" foil, crumpled slightly, is most important. She shared that gold ink tarnishes. Yellow Lake or gold leaf is better. Another trick, trace the design in ink, then paint on the opposite side and after careful inspection,...wash the ink lines off.

Debbie Lambeth with **Phyllis Sherman** noted that when cleaning off leaf on tin, change sterile cotton bit often as any bits in the cotton will scratch the gold leaf. They recommended to thoroughly dry before burnishing and to wash off with HOT



*Gold Leaf Tray
by Phyllis Sherman*



*Victorian Flower Painting on Gothic Tray
by Carolyn Hedge*

water. Ms. Lambeth, in another demonstration on Victorian flower painting, advised not to “play with steps” or the work will become muddy and messy. Confident and accurate strokes are the key to beautiful flower painting.

Carolyn Hedge, in her presentation on recording an original, advised to first take photographs. Study to learn how execution was done and then trace the entire pattern using clear acetate. Copy the design also on tracing paper to use for element placement. A piece of acetate can also be used to place over an element so color can be tried to match original exactly. She was told that Walter Wright said “Record what is there not what you think is there.” [Walter, a fine artist himself, paraphrased Monet, “Paint what you see, not what you think you see.”]

Linda Lefko’s extensive talk and demonstration on graining on wood included the fact that many grained pieces of furniture had most if not all of their original colorful finishes removed; consulting museum collections provides the best background and feeling for what is original. She explained the distinction between imaginative graining and graining that is imitative of wood grain itself. Glazing used for imaginative is 1.5-2 T. dry pigment powder and 1/3-1/2 c. white vinegar. Glaze used for imitative is ½ c. boiled linseed oil, 1.5 c. turpentine and 1.4 t, paint drier. She demonstrated the use of feather, putty, hand, textured cloth, sponge, newspaper and brush to accomplish the imaginative graining patterns. To imitate a wood-grain have a sample of wood from which to work.

Martha Muller suggested adding a drop of linseed in floating the color for Chippendale flowers.

Roberta Edrington used a medium of one cap of varnish plus two drops of linseed oil for her Victorian flower painting. She uses a glass palette backed with black paper for Japan white, and she uses a white paper backed palette for colored oils.

Astrid (Thomas) Donnellan, demonstrating free hand bronze, noted a too wet surface will result in dull powders, and if too dry a surface, the powders will not hold. Before stylizing the design, she uses an egg shield that prevents traces of powders from sticking to the surface (1 eggwhite



*Free Hand Bronze Powder Scenic
from a George Morland Painting
by Roberta Edrington*



*Gold Leaf and Bronze Powders
by Astrid Donnellan*

mixed with 1/4 c. cold water). Apply to surface with hand and let drain and dry completely. After design is finished, wait 48 hours and then wash off the egg wash. This technique is also excellent for gold leaf work.

Repeated words of techniques, advice and problem solving were shared by many above and worth reiterating: **Jessica Bond, Emilie Underhill, Margaret Watts** recommended that members use Palladium, which does not tarnish, as a substitute for silver leaf. As well, they never used gelatin for laying wide bands. **Sara Tiffany** puts her tracing on with lithopone paper (never Saral). **Anne E. Avery** cautions: cleaning and improving the appearance of tinware... is a RISKY business...with NO guarantees attached...everything carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. There are many kinds of dirt...do NOT use soap... the diagnosis is more important than the solution [and] if you have a valuable tray...LEAVE IT ALONE. The so called Guild Cleaner...di-acetone alcohol should never be used above 20%...[it] is one of the most toxic solvents [that] evaporates slowly...[it] can go on working for long periods [and] if not removed with afterwash...it would be well to...try other methods.

Today, the Society and its teachers continue to focus on the importance of teaching painting techniques and providing classes and workshops for members; HSEAD replaced its Fall exhibition meeting with a Fall Working Seminar. Members and others came to a centrally located 4-day workshop from areas that did not have a chapter or teacher in their vicinity. The classes were primarily subsidized by HSEAD, and a reasonable fee allowed members to learn from prominent teachers. The Board also voted to help subsidize expenses for teachers who were willing to travel to various areas to offer classes. Today, the Society utilizes a number of venues to teach early American decorative techniques from demonstrations, workshops, books, videos and computer technology, i.e., Zoom and Facebook. Sumpter Priddy, antiquarian and author of *American Fancy* called HSEAD the organization that preserves and passes the torch of early American decoration.

Sources:

1. *Demonstration, Lectures and Notes from Annual Reports 1954-1983*. Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc. Archives.
2. Photographs were provided by Linda Sheldon, HSEAD's Archivist.
3. "Details," patterns and books provided from members' portfolios.



Material Legacy

HSEAD's Gift of Objects to The American Folk Art Museum

by Emelie Gevalt

Just over thirty years ago, in 1991, the Historical Society for Early American Decoration made a generous gift of decorative arts and archival materials to the American Folk Art Museum. Encompassing hundreds of objects, this collection speaks to the breadth of the interests and expertise of HSEAD's mentor, Esther Stevens Brazer, and her students. Some works were owned by Brazer herself, whereas others were collected by members, gifted to, or purchased by the Society at a later date, expanding upon its mentor's lifelong mission to foster understanding of early American decoration. These pages will look back at a series of objects from the HSEAD gift as a window onto the Society's pursuits, Brazer's personal story and the subjects of her pioneering work.



Steamboat Veto Box

Artist unidentified

Possibly New York, United States c. 1832

Paint, gold leaf, and bronze powder stenciling on wood

5 1/2 × 13 × 7 5/8"

Gift of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration

American Folk Art Museum 76.5.2

Photo by John Parnell

In keeping with Brazer's most intensive areas of research, the gift to AFAM includes an array of paint-decorated tinware of all shapes and sizes, dazzlingly embellished with brilliant colors. This was an especially meaningful category for Brazer not least because of her deep-felt connection to her ancestor Zachariah Brackett Stevens, himself, a tinsmith. Also, well-represented in the collection is Brazer's love of ornamented early American furniture, especially chairs, including a rush-seated example that she painted herself.

Less voluminous, but equally significant to Brazer's personal biography, are references to earlier practices relevant to the history of American decoration: a simply constructed but vibrantly ornamented blanket chest, made in early 18th century Connecticut, belongs to a tradition of similarly painted furniture and shares aesthetic connections with the work of Taunton's Robert Crosman, an early decorator of chests, whose history Brazer pursued doggedly

in her research. Japanning, another topic of importance to the scholar, is represented by later iterations of the 17th and 18th century decorating technique, in the form of a number of 19th century trays and other decorative objects bearing Chinoiserie motifs made with various methods and materials.

Through a selection of stencils and other tools employed by practitioners of early American decoration, the collections also reflect Brazer and her students' deep interest in understanding and applying historical processes of painted decoration. Many of these works are stored in AFAM's archives, providing a rich resource for researchers seeking information on decorating techniques, maker history and the scholarly findings of Brazer's own era during the Colonial Revival, now recognized as an important topic of research in its own right.



Document Box
Zachariah Brackett Stevens (1778–1856)
 1826 or 1829
Paint on tinplate
 5 3/8 x 9 1/8 x 4 7/8 in.
Gift of the Historical Society of
Early American Decoration, 58.13.20
Stevens Plains (now Westbrook), Maine, United States
Photo: Adam Cohen



Bread Tray
Zachariah Brackett Stevens (1778–1856)
 1798–1842
Paint on tin
 13 1/2 x 8 x 3 in.
Gift of the Historical Society of
Early American Decoration, 58.13.120
Stevens Plains (now Westbrook), Maine, United States
Photo: Adam Cohen

Country Tinware

Zachariah Brackett Stevens

In speaking about her family history, Esther Stevens Brazer found important meaning in tracing her roots back to Stevens Plains, Maine (now Westbrook) and the prolific tinsmith Zachariah Brackett Stevens. Reflecting on this progenitor, Brazer contemplated the idea of a hereditary source for her own artistic interests: “Perhaps this inheritance is responsible for the pride I take in matching the skill of old-time craftsmen.” She also musingly attributed her passions to more distant kinship connections with Paul Revere. Samuel Stevens, son of Zachariah, married a grandniece of Revere's, and Zachariah's business partner, Thomas Briscoe, intermarried with the prominent artisanal family as well.¹

Born in the late 18th century in nearby Falmouth, approximately 20 miles northeast of what was then Stevens Plains, Zachariah Brackett Stevens

trained as a blacksmith. After setting up shop in what was to become a new tinsmithing center, his business flourished in the early 1800s. Centered around a general store as well as a tin shop, Stevens' enterprise eventually incorporated a number of craftsmen to turn out his wares. Among the shop's decorators were the nieces of Thomas and Sarah Briscoe, including Sally Francis, who would marry Samuel Stevens.²

Though the shop was destroyed by fire in the 1840s, Stevens' merchandise survives as material documentation of this productive circle of makers. Given the importance of this shop to Brazer's own history and to the development of tin-painting in New England, it is fitting that the HSEAD gift includes some two-dozen objects attributed to Zachariah Stevens or his shop. The document box and bread tray represent two of the finest examples associated with Stevens in the collections of the American Folk Art Museum, deftly painted in characteristic yellows and reds and featuring fine subtleties of detail.³



Trunk

*Buckley Shop (act. 1807–c. 1840), possibly
Oliver Buckley (1781–1872)
Probably Stevens Plains (now Westbrook), Maine
c. 1815–1835
Paint on tinplate
5 3/8 x 8 1/2 x 4 1/4 in.
Gift of the Historical Society of Early
American Decoration, 58.13.124
Photo: John Parnell*



Teapot

*Buckley Shop (act. 1807–c. 1840), possibly
Oliver Buckley (1781–1872)
Probably Stevens Plains (now Westbrook),
Cumberland County, Maine, United States
c. 1815–1835
Paint on tinplate
5 3/8 x 5 x 3 1/2 in.
Gift of the Historical Society of Early
American Decoration, 58.13.30
Photo: John Parnell*

Oliver Buckley

Oliver Buckley trained in Berlin, Connecticut, a center for tinsmithing in the British American colonies since the mid-1700s, but in the early 19th century he, too, was drawn to Stevens Plains, and he founded his shop there in 1807. An appealing feature in the below examples is the crisp, highly stylized approach to floral geometry.⁴

Aaron and Ann Butler

Like Buckley, Aaron Butler also trained in Berlin, Connecticut, but set up shop in Greenville, New York, a rural area of the Hudson River Valley. Like



Tea Caddy

*Aaron Butler Shop (act. 1824–c. 1855);
paint decoration by Ann Butler (1813–1887)
Greenville, New York
c. 1830*

*Signed “Ann Butler Greenville” on the reverse
Paint and asphaltum on tinplate
5 1/4 x 5 x 3 5/8 in.*

*Gift of the Historical Society of Early American
Decoration, courtesy Esther Oldham and Anne
Oldham Borntraeger in memory of Mrs. Arthur
Oldham, friend and sponsor of Esther Brazer, 53.2.3
Photo: Adam Cohen*



Tea Caddy

*Aaron Butler Shop (act. 1824–c. 1855);
paint decoration by Ann Butler (1813–1887)
Greenville, New York, United States
1824–1859*

*Signed “Ann Butler” on the reverse
Paint and asphaltum on tinplate
8 1/8 x 4 1/4 in. diam.*

*Gift of the Historical Society of Early American
Decoration, courtesy Esther Oldham and
Anne Oldham Borntraeger, 53.2.4
Photo: Adam Cohen*

other craftsmen of the era, he pursued multiple trades, operating a cider mill, a hay press and a peddling business in addition to his tin shop. The fact that, like Zachariah Stevens, he also ran a general store is suggestive of his broad reach within his community: clients could come to him for a range of household goods.⁵

Butler had three daughters, including Ann, born in 1813, who has become a well-recognized name in the history of paint-decorated tin due to her unusual practice of signing her work. Lesser known are her sisters Minerva and Marilla. Each of the Butler children attended Greenville Academy, founded in 1816, where the girls may have been instructed in a variety of the ornamental techniques then considered fundamental to young women's education.⁶

Admiring Ann Butler's skill, Brazer commented that she “had her heart in her work.” She meant this literally as well as figuratively, since Butler is known to have inscribed her signature within a heart motif, as pictured in the “Roadmap of A Researcher” article in this issue. Each of the examples seen below were recently on view at AFAM in New York City and are currently included in a nationally traveling exhibition, *American Per-*



Canister

*Artist unidentified
Probably Pennsylvania*

*Early 1800s
Paint on tin
5 1/8 x 3 1/2 x 2 3/4 in.*

*Gift of the Historical Society of Early American
Decoration, 59.1.15
Photo: Adam Cohen*

spectives: *Stories from the American Folk Art Museum Collection.*⁷

Pennsylvania Makers

Though New England is at the core of the HSEAD tinware gift, this is not the only region represented in the collection: the handsome tea canister was likely made in Pennsylvania. These examples do not bear some of the most notable elements of Pennsylvania tinware, such as punched decoration or crystallization; however, the red background is characteristic of the area.⁸

Wares Inspired by Japanning

Though originally introduced to the Americas via global trade in the 16th and 17th centuries, the highly recognizable palette of japanned decoration, featuring shimmering gold on black, continued as a popular design aesthetic throughout the 19th century. New techniques included the gold leaf on papier-mâché produced in England by Henry Clay and the paint and bronze powder stenciling seen in two handsome boxes attributed to Ransom Cook of upstate New York. Another important component of the HSEAD collection comprises numerous examples of Pontypool painting Victorian flower painting and other wares made in the United Kingdom, selections of which are illustrated below.



*Japanned Tray
Henry Clay Shop (Active 1772–1812)
London, United Kingdom
1802–1812*

*Gold leaf and freehand bronze on papier-mâché
17 ¼ x 23 1/2 x 1 ½ in.*

*Gift of the Historical Society of Early American
Decoration, courtesy Mrs. Wright, 59.10.1*

Photo: Photographer unidentified

*Tray
Artist unidentified
Pontypool, Wales
1770–1775
Paint on sheet metal
24 1/4 x 24 1/4 x ½ in.
Gift of the Historical Society of
Early American Decoration, 64.10
Photo: Photographer unidentified*





Box

*Possibly Ransom Cook (1794–1881)
Probably Saratoga Springs, New York
c. 1825*

*Paint and bronze powder stenciling on wood
6 1/4 x 14 x 9 in.*

*Gift of the Historical Society of Early
American Decoration, courtesy the Long
Island Chapter, 65.6*

Photo: Photographer unidentified



Box

*Possibly Ransom Cook (1794–1881)
Probably Saratoga Springs, New York, United States
c. 1830–1840*

Initialed “R.A.C.”

*Paint & bronze powder stenciling on wood
with brass feet*

8 1/8 x 15 1/2 x 8 1/4 in.

*Gift of the Historical Society of Early American
Decoration, 88.19*

Photo: Photographer unidentified

Henry Clay enjoyed extraordinary success as a maker of japanned wares in Birmingham and London at the turn of the 19th century. At his death in 1812, his fortune amounted to some 80,000 pounds. Like Ransom Cook, Clay’s achievements were facilitated by his ingenuity: early in his career he patented a technique for “new Improved Paperware.” This tray represents just one form among many of his productions, including not only small decorative wares but also furniture and carriages. Among his clients were Horace Walpole, Queen Charlotte and King George III. This tray was kept in Esther Stevens Brazer’s library at Innerwyck.⁹

Born in Wallingford, Connecticut, Cook moved westward with his family to Saratoga County, New York as a young boy. He was working as a chairmaker before his twentieth birthday. The flourishing of Cook’s business owed much to his mechanical ingenuity, as he constructed various machines, including a steam engine, to facilitate his furniture shop’s production.¹⁰

In addition to his manufacturing concerns, Cook was a gifted inventor, and he patented such devices as a fan blower, an auger, an improved pair of scissors, and an electro-mag-



Tray

Jennens & Bettridge (1816–1864)

Birmingham, England

First half 19th century

Paint on papier-mâché

1 7/8 x 31 1/4 x 23 9/16 in.

*Gift of the Historical Society of Early
American Decoration, 73.8.1*

Photo: Andrew Gillis



Writing Box
Artist unidentified
England
1840–1870
Paint on papier-mâché
8 5/8 x 5 1/16 x 5 in.
Gift of the Historical Society of Early American
Decoration, 73.1.2
Photo Credit: Adam Cohen



Hand Screen
Artist unidentified
England
Early 19th Century
Paint on papier-mâché and wood
15 1/2 x 9 1/4 x 5/8 in.
Gift of the Historical Society of Early
American Decoration, 63.4.3
Photo: Adam Cohen

netic ore separator, this last “ingenious machine” made at the age of eighty. He was also briefly a prison warden, the first to oversee the newly-founded Clinton Prison in Dannemora, where Cook instituted a construction and iron mining program and espoused a liberal approach towards inmates.¹¹

If indeed executed in Cook’s shop, the carefully-decorated boxes in the AFAM collection represent just one of the man’s many talents. The first, of these two examples, was part of the seminal exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1975, *The Flowering of American Folk Art*.

Furniture

Featuring a lively stag leaping through tall grass, this chair represents some of Brazer’s own work. A nearly identical example, appearing in Zilla Rider Lee’s *The Ornamented Chair*, may represent the source of Brazer’s design. Similar decoration is also illustrated on a chair in *Early American Decoration*.¹²

Although she was a skilled painter, Brazer placed priority on the restoration of historical designs and abhorred the market’s practice of impulsive “refinishing,” which was counter to her sensibilities. As she wrote in 1924, “I like to think that the invisible spirit of the first purchaser hovers about old furniture. But I am afraid that a lot of great-grandmother spirits



Fancy Chair
Decorated by Esther Stevens
Fraser [Brazer]
Northeastern United States
Painted 1933
Signed and dated “Painted by
Esther Stevens Fraser March 1933”
Paint on wood with rush seat
33 3/4 x 18 1/2 x 17 1/2 in.
Gift of the Historical Society of
Early American Decoration, 84.15
Photo: Adam Reich

have sadly turned away and wanted to forsake some of their dear old chairs, because of the obliterating coats of paint which they had received.”¹³

This elaborately ornamented chest over drawer opens a window onto Brazer’s interests in early 18th-century decoration. Part of her personal collection, it once stood in the front hall of her house in Flushing, Queens, known as Innerwyck.

Connecticut chests painted in this style were once thought to be the hand of a single maker, Charles Guillam, who emigrated from the Isle of Jersey. The delicate scrolling vines and flowers show the influence of a cosmopolitan design vocabulary transmitted to the British American colonies by way of design books, imported objects, and immigrant craftsmen.¹⁴



Chest over Drawer
Artist unidentified
Guilford-Saybrook area, Connecticut
1690–1720
Paint on oak and pine
41 × 46 1/2 × 20 3/4”
Gift of the Historical Society of Early
American Decoration, 58.33
Photo: John Parnell



Stencils

In addition to the objects themselves, HSEAD’s gift to the American Folk Art Museum contains a wealth of archival material. Especially significant is a collection of stencils, including historical examples made by decorators such as William Page Eaton, and others made by Brazer herself. The intricate stencils below – some bearing Brazer’s stamp as well as her handwritten notes, represent just a small sampling of the hundreds cut by this seminal scholar, mentor, and decorator.

Footnotes:

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2. Yetter. p. 64-66.
3. Coffin, Margaret. *The History and Folklore of American Country Tinware 1700-1900*. Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1968. 91.

4. Hollander, Stacy C. *American Anthem; Masterworks from the American Folk Art Museum* New York: Harry N. Abrams in Association with the American Folk Art Museum, 2001. 317.
Coffin, p.106.
5. Martin, Virginia and Lois Tucker. *American Painted Tinware: A Guide to Its Identification*. New York, New York: Historical Society of Early American Decoration, 2000. 118.
Coffin, Margaret. "The Fabulous Butlers of Brandy Hill," *New York History*, v.34, no. 3, July 1, 1953: 351-354.
6. Coffin. "The Fabulous Butlers..." p.354.
7. Ibid. p.355
8. Coffin. *The History and Folklore....* p.159-161.
Hollander. p.318.
9. Clay, Henry. *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660-1840*. Ed. by Geoffrey Beard and Christopher Gilbert. Leeds: 1986. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/dict-english-furniture-makers/c> [accessed 16 September 2011]. HSEAD Accession Books, Box 21, The Historical Society of Early American Decoration Collection, American Folk Art Museum.
10. Ransome Cook Obituary. *Scientific American*, v.45, no.2, July 9, 1881: 25.
11. Lewis, W. David. *From Newgate to Dannemora: The Rise of The Penitentiary in New York, 1796-1848*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965. 260.
12. Lea, Zilla Rider, Ed., *The Ornamented Chair: Its Development in America (1700-1890)*. Rutland, Vermont: Charles R. Tuttle Co., 1962. 49.
Brazer, Esther Stevens. *Early American Decoration*. Memorial Edition. Springfield, Mass.: 1947. 130.
13. Fraser, Esther Stevens. "How to Restore Great Grandmother's Chairs," *Country Life*, September 1924: 41.
14. For more on Charles Guillam and the origins of this furniture group, see Robert A. Trent, et al. "A Channel Island Parallel for the Early 18th Century Connecticut Chests Attributed to Charles Guillam," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* v.2, no.1, Fall 1994: 78-91.



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The Decorator

75 Years of Probing, Prodding and Searching

This article is dedicated to the memory of Lois Tucker who was to have written it, but sadly, did not live to fulfil the commission.

by Yvonne Jones

Given Esther Stevens Brazer's research history and her more than twenty articles published in *Antiques* magazine between the years 1922 and 1945, it is hardly surprising that *The Decorator* was launched in Fall 1946, a mere five months after the inaugural Charter Meeting of the Esther Stevens Brazer Guild of Early American Decoration. Equally as unsurprising is that the first issue would pay tribute to Mrs. Brazer, herself, but as Martha Muller, its first Editor, explained, "Succeeding numbers will be largely what the members of the Guild will make of it [adding] It is stimulating to think of the heights to which our very young Journal may grow." (F46/3) Seventy-five years later, it is still growing!

With an eclectic mix of subjects from the start, *The Decorator* has reflected Mrs Brazer's interest in "all the decorative arts" of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Nevertheless, its main focus was upon

"Early American stencilling, country tin painting [and] the more intricate and elaborate free hand flower and bird designs," (F46/10) crafts which

Esther Stevens Brazer believed owed much to japan painting for "the English japanned wares are so much a part of the history of japanned tin plate in this country." (F58/25) To this day, these crafts continue as recurring themes in *The Decorator* alongside newer areas of interest like reverse glass and theorem painting. Mostly, they are approached from an historical perspective, for as Violet Milnes Scott observed in 1947, "much pleasure can be added to the mere collection of patterns, by a thorough examination into the history of each piece. There is always so much more to learn." (F46/14) Articles devoted to practical instruction are rarely found in *The Decorator*, probably because such information is best demonstrated in the excellent practical classes regularly offered by the Society.



*Document Box
Possibly Zachariah Stevens 1798-1830
American Folk Art Museum
1st Decorator issue cover
Pictured on 1st Decorator Issue Cover*

Mindful of the important part, it was hoped members would play in writing for *The Decorator*, the President, H. Louise McAuliff, observed in a letter in 1947, "We are rich in the heritage of the research work of the late Esther Stevens Brazer. May we not individually ... be alert to uncover further sources of early decorations and thereby carry on the heritage?" (S48/31) Or, as Emilie Underhill reminded members:

"*The Decorator* is our receptacle for information. Research should be our prime object ... We know so little to date of our own artisans, their names, their work and when and where they worked. This is our heritage. We must probe, prod and search through old directories and records to uncover information. Anything pertaining to early decorative art in this country is vitally important! Let us share our discoveries by keeping a steady flow of articles coming to your Editor." (F66/2)

Of course, as incoming Editor in 1966, Mrs Underhill had a vested interest in making such a plea. Nevertheless, it is exploring, highlighting and documenting local arts and crafts that have been the guiding principle and prime strength of *The Decorator* and, indeed, of the Society itself. "Regional decoration helps fill in the larger pattern. Research goes on outside the area where I live; please be my eyes and ears in your communities." (F83/3) The need to remind members of their 'responsibility' was clearly a pressing and continuing one, even while it was recognised that "Most members ... are busy people: some of us work full or part-time; others have heavy family responsibilities, [but] ... Think what we could accomplish if each chapter undertook a research project concerned with the decorative arts in its own locale. ... Of course [readers were assured] *THE DECORATOR* will be interested in the research you do." (F84/3)

A quick search through the contents' page will show that such appeals paid off.

Browsing all editions of *The Decorator* is a sobering experience; the impressive breadth of subjects covered is overwhelming and leaves the reader in no doubt of the Journal's wider significance. This is due, in no small part, to its editors. As recently as Spring 1971, Avis Heatherington, the Editor, could write "There is no other organization devoting itself to this field." (S71/3)

Since its first publication, *The Decorator* has had 14 editors, two of whom held the office twice: Margaret Coffin and, more recently, Shirley Baer. Each Editor has made her/his own mark in some way, and several have been among the most prolific of contributors, a remarkable statistic given the exacting and time-consuming role of an Editor. It seems appropriate therefore, to look at each editorial period in turn, and to see how *The Decorator* and members' interests, have evolved.

The first to hold the important office of editing *The Decorator*, was Martha Muller who was simultaneously tasked with cataloguing and filing the contents of Esther Stevens Brazer's pattern portfolios at Innerwick. A Charter

Member of the Society, she edited five issues of the journal, from 1946 until Fall 1948, before having to stand down in favor of her work on the 1200-plus patterns and hundreds of fragments, tracings, photos and other items that the portfolios contained; this work led to her becoming Curator of the HSEAD's Collections. During her time as Editor, Mrs Muller contributed two articles to *The Decorator*: the first on Esther Stevens Brazer's Pattern Collection and the second, "Varnishing Vagaries," was an amusing but, nevertheless, wise account of the perils of working with varnish. During twenty-five years of writing for *The Decorator*, she authored a further six articles. These included a perceptive piece on so-called "Chippendale Flower Painting" and updates on the HSEAD Museum Collection. (S66 and 71) A report by Maryjane Clark of a demonstration given by Martha Muller, "Painting a Lace-Edge Tray," (F52/23), shows Mrs Muller to have been a talented painter. Her editorship embraced articles on a variety of topics that have remained core interests to the present day: Pennsylvania 'Dutch', Hitchcock chairs, country tin, early floor decoration and much more. It was under her editorship that the first of Shirley DeVoe's many articles appeared: "Barg-ee Art" (S47/9) and Virginia Wheelock's regular short pieces, "Unusual Originals," were introduced.



"Unusual Original" Dolphin Chair
Possibly American Sheraton 1830
Photo Courtesy from Mary Ensinger
and Shirley deVoe

On resigning as Editor, Martha Muller wrote that *The Decorator* seems "to be flourishing: requests for it are increasing in numbers, advertisers report very good results; and best of all, I begin to hear persons frequently quoting from its pages. That to me means that it is being accepted as an authoritative source of information about old decorated pieces and problems of decorating in the Early American manner, and this, of course, is the main reason for the journals existence." [Or, as one member commented] "It's worth belonging to the Guild if only to receive *THE DECORATOR*." (F48/36)

The Journal was here to stay!

Emilie Dodge Heath became Editor in Summer 1949. She oversaw the publication of six issues during a significant period when the Guild was granted its Charter and given the official name the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Incorporated (HSEAD), a time when policies were set out, education programs were devised "and the Museum became a reality." (F81/4)

Emily Heath had been the Society's first President from 1946-48, an office which she held again between 1951 and 1952. Her writings for the Journal were few and based on organizational matters, but under her wing, glass painting, wall-painting and wall-stenciling began to appear in the contents' pages. There was room, too, for humor, as in Martha Muller's musings on varnish with its accompanying cartoon drawn by Emilie Underhill, later to become an Editor. (F47/15) Such humour leaves readers in no doubt about the happy working atmosphere of Mrs Brazer's classes. The introduction of regular short pieces, varyingly entitled "Unusual Originals," or "Originals" by Virginia Milnes

Wheelock which ran from 1947 until 1958 were useful on two counts: they provided valuable snippets and at the same time filled those awkward spaces which inevitably occur at the end of longer articles. Also, Shirley DeVoe, who is so much a part of the history of HSEAD, began to write more regularly for *The Decorator*. April 1951, saw the introduction of The Bookshelf, a column which continues to the present day. Emilie Heath was named an Honorable Trustee in 1981 and accepted a Distinguished Service Award, the highest accolade given by the Society, and a plaque listing her many outstanding contributions.

The four issues between Fall 1952 and Winter 1954 were edited by Margaret (Peg) Watts, a talented practitioner of country painting, stenciling and Victorian flower painting. Both a Master Craftsman and Master Teacher, Margaret Watts held several key roles in HSEAD: a Trustee until 1954, member of both the Teacher Certification and Standards and Judging Committees and Chairman of the Fairchester Chapter. As Editor of *The Decorator*, she appears to have been the first to include a short article on clocks, which as every member knows, are an important interest among members today. Indeed, because of Margaret Watts' own skill in reverse-glass painting and in painting fine clock-dials, she is widely respected by clock-dealers and collectors alike. (N42/2) She received the Distinguished Service Award in 1994.

In Autumn 1954, Margaret (Marg) Coffin became Editor and oversaw the next ten issues,



*The Pantry at Innerwick
Esther Stevens Brazer's Collection
of Country-Painted Tin*



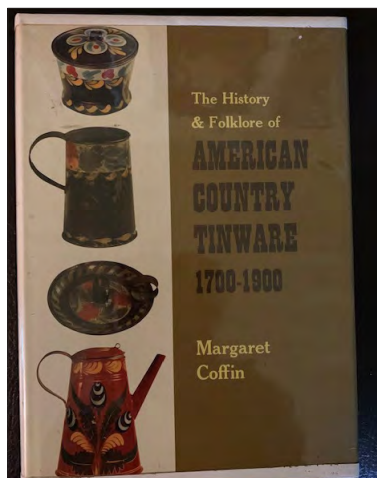
Margaret Coffin

making her one of the longest serving editors. In the same year, she had authored a charming short piece about the daughter of a tinsmith, Aaron Miller. Entitled “Minerva Miller and Her Autograph Album,” (Winter 54/17) it is an example of those serendipitous discoveries with which *The Decorator* is peppered, and which add so much to its vitality. The energetic Margaret Coffin established seven clear goals in her first Editorial before concluding:

“Our magazine is unique because it is the important link which holds [together] many who cannot often attend Guild meetings... because often non-members judge the Guild by the *DECORATOR*, the magazine must be as perfect as we can make it. It should be a handsome, well organised, easy-to-read magazine, chock-full of reliable historic facts, decorating tips, clear photographs, Guild business matters – a tribute to Esther Stevens Brazer and those who follow in her footsteps.” (S54/3)

These were high ideals which she achieved if we may judge from the subjects and authors included in the journals she edited. Emilie Underhill, Anne Eschelman, Anne Avery, Muriel Baker, Shirley DeVoe, Maryjane Clark, Maria D. Murray, Isabel MacDuffie and Margaret Coffin, herself, each of whom are among the Society’s most prolific authors, all contributed during this period. Outwardly, *The Decorator* had a make-over in Spring 1955 with its first colored cover.

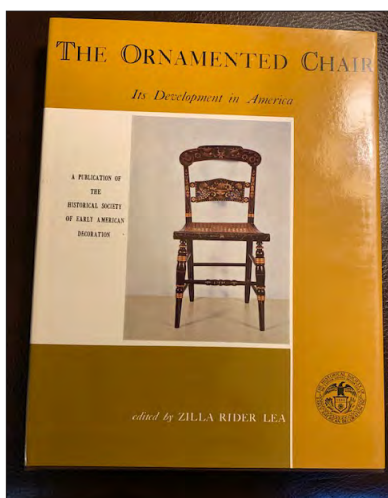
Alongside her editorship, Margaret Coffin was a high-school English teacher which, perhaps, explains her liking for literary references. In one Editorial, for example, she quoted the poet, Robert Browning, whose belief that “A man’s reach should exceed his grasp” would, surely, have chimed with the thinking of many of her readers. (F56/4) In addition, she was researching the first of her books, *The History and Folklore of American Country Tinware 1700-1900* (1968), which led to her stepping down as Editor in 1959. Her successor, Violet Milnes Scott, paid tribute to Margaret Coffin’s “fine Editorials and her articles on New York State tinsmiths and decorators [which] have added a great deal to the research” done by the Society. (S60/3) Her written contributions to *The Decorator* spanned an impressive thirty-six years towards the end of which, in 1988, she was appointed Director of the HSEAD Museum in Albany, a post she held until its closure in 1990. Margaret Coffin died in 2008. In a tribute, Deborah Lambeth described her as “expert in the field of country painting,” and noted that her personal collection



*The History & Folklore
of American Country Tinware
by Margaret Coffin, (1968)*

of tinware is now in the Smithsonian Institution. (N82/5)

Violet Milnes Scott is another whose name crops up regularly in the annals of the HSEAD. She was an HSEAD Trustee for eleven years, a first Vice-President for four years and President from 1953-1957. From 1955 she worked as Assistant Editor of *The Decorator*, before taking on its editorship in 1960 and playing an active part in the publication of *The Ornamented Chair, Its Development in America 1700-1890* (1962) published by The Esther Stevens Brazer Guild of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration, Inc. In addition, Mrs Scott was the first Chairman of the Judging and Standards Committee and was instrumental in drawing up the Standards Booklet.



*The Ornamented Chair
Its Development in America
Edited by Zilla Rider Lea, (1960)*

Between 1946 and Spring 1948, Violet Milnes Scott wrote four articles for *The Decorator*, the first of which was a “Beginner’s Guide to Early American Decoration.” (F46/14) During her editorship, the Contents’ pages covered a broad range of subjects from oriental lacquer to art in the cinema, and Emilie Underhill introduced the subject of theorems. Like Margaret Coffin before her, she aimed for *The Decorator* to be “a scholarly, dignified magazine.” (S62/3) Violet Milnes Scott died in 1962 and her Obituary appeared in the last journal upon which she worked. (S62/3) The Society owes her much, not least for organising the competition for the design of its official seal.

The next Editor, Mona D. Rowell, was also one of the more prolific authors, contributing seven articles and a tribute to a former Editor, Emilie Dodge Heath, between the years 1964 and 1981. (F81/4) Though her editorship was short, Fall 1962 until Spring 1966, it covered an eventful period which included publication of the 20th Anniversary edition of *The Decorator* in which she noted “That our members have caught that spirit (*i.e.* of Esther Stevens Brazer) is attested to by their many contributions to this publication.” (S66/3) A complimentary copy of the first edition of *The Ornamented Chair, Its Development in America (1700-1890)* was sent to the then First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy, who requested *The Decorator* be sent on a regular basis. She was presented with a full run, in five leather-bound volumes, in appreciation of her work in restoring and collecting original furnishings for the White House. Natalie Allen Ramsey’s selection of articles, *The Decorator Digest*, was published in 1965 and Maryjane Clark led preparations for the publication of *Illustrated Glossary of Decorated Antiques*, 1972 while Maria D. Murray, author of *The Art of Tray Painting*,

Decorating Trays and Accessories, (1954) having completed two editions of her hand-illuminated scrapbooks, (S58/9) was working on the third. Mona D. Rowell led workshops in reverse glass painting and clock dials and, in 1983, succeeded Avis Heatherington as Director of the HSEAD School. Later, in 1997, and together with Avis Heatherington, Mona Rowell would assist Gina Martin in work on her forthcoming book, *American Painted Tinware*.



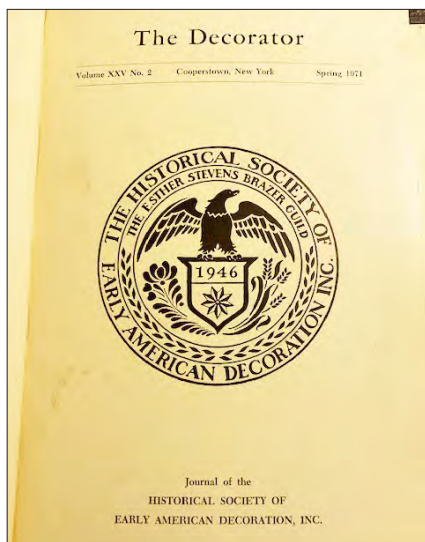
Member Publications

Maryjane Clark, Margaret Coffin, Shirley DeVoe,
Zilla Rider Lea, Maria Murray, Gina Martin and Lois Tucker

Another member whose name remains familiar today is Emily Underhill, Editor during the four years between Fall 1966 and Fall 1970, but whose nine written contributions spanned thirty-one years. It was under her editorship that Members' Collections was introduced in 1968 as a regular feature, and whose "dream [it had been] ever since taking over the responsibility of the *DECORATOR* to offer a number on Clock Dials, Painted Glass Clock and Mirror panels and Gold Leaf Mirror panels." As she observed, there had previously been little information available on these topics: "At last [she wrote] this number has for the most part materialized." (F70/3) Her earliest involvement with the Society was in Spring 1947 when she introduced the Question Box, a column which she oversaw until becoming Editor; it seems never to have been revived. A new column, Members Collections, was inaugurated in Spring 1968, to which Emilie Underhill contributed its second installment, but it too lasted only a few issues. Clearly, regular features that depended upon submissions from the wider membership were not very popular.

In the first issue of the Society's 25th anniversary year, and her last as Editor, Emilie Underhill was able to assure readers "Ours is no longer a hobby, ... Our Society is now a recognized authority and is universally respected... your *DECORATOR*, has been developing into a magazine that has found its way into Museums, Historical Societies, Libraries and Universities, to say nothing of the Fine Arts Library of the White House." (F70/4) Her stencil collection was gifted to the Page Farm and Home Museum in Orono, Maine, in 1996.

The second celebratory issue during HSEAD's 25th anniversary was published under *The Decorator's* next Editor, Avis Heatherington. In an historical review of the Society, compiled by the Programme Committee, it was rightly observed of *The Decorator* that "members who own all issues can see how steadily and admirably this publication has developed as the Society has grown." (S71/17) Today, of course, *everyone*, member or not, has easy access



*The Society's Official Seal
25th Anniversary, Spring 1971*

to the *entire* run of *The Decorator* online, and those who visit the site, will be well rewarded.

Soon after becoming Editor, Avis Heatherington began writing for the Journal and, over an eight-year period, became one of its more regular contributors, covering an eclectic mix of subjects. Her first article, for example, "The American Piano 1800-1840, A Reflection of Taste and Style," was a wide-ranging study of stenciled pianos. (S73/3) She continued to write under the editorship of her successor, Virginia M. Wheelock, and her well-researched article on chairs and chair-makers, "Re-Ornamented in the Latest Fashion" (S79/11), is as fascinating as

her first. Mrs Heatherington did not shy away from large subjects, and her last article for *The Decorator* was no exception: "The Ornamental Painter, 1639-1860, Neglected But Not Forgotten," (F81/11) is a remarkably detailed survey of America's decorative artists with many contemporary references. Avis Heatherington was one of the longest-serving editors, producing thirteen issues. On stepping down as Editor, she served as President between 1977-81, during which time she started the HSEAD School. A direct descendant of early 17th Century immigrants, Avis Heatherington died in 2001.

Virginia M. Wheelock, whose mother, Violet Scott, was a good friend of Esther Stevens Brazier and a former HSEAD President, was next to take on the challenging demands of editorship. She was another of the longer-serving editors, producing twelve issues between Fall 1977 and Spring 1983. In her first editorial, she expressed gratitude for having "members and friends who contribute scholarly and well-researched articles in the field of the decorative arts." (F77/2) She felt there was much still to be researched and reminded readers that "although a topic may have been discussed



Virginia Wheelock

in the magazine, additional evidence may now be available, or the subject may be approached from another aspect.” (F77/2) The introduction of a new column, Corner of Facts was reminiscent of her earlier features, Unusual Originals and Originals, which ran in *The Decorator* during the forties and fifties. She saw it as an opportunity for members “to exchange information, add new discoveries and add to research. Like the earlier columns, it usefully provided her with a supply of ‘snippets’ with which to fill the gaps that are left at the foot of some longer articles and thus minimise wasted space. The first, by Shirley DeVoe, drew attention to 16th Century German tin lanterns, and though it is unattributed, she probably provided copy for the next since the current author remembered a correspondence with Shirley DeVoe about its subject: the J. H. Hopkins Stamp.

With reference to her own article, “Spanish Reverse Painting on Glass,” Virginia Wheelock commented in her Editorial that “Although our focus is on Early American Decoration, we can appreciate similar elements which have been expressed in many cultures.” (S79/3) Mindful, perhaps, of the influence of Germany on Pennsylvanian folk arts, this cultural inclusiveness has developed as one of the strengths of *The Decorator* throughout its history. Having begun writing for *The Decorator* in 1947, Wheelock became one of its most prolific authors over a period of 32 years.

Virginia Wheelock died in 2008. In an Obituary, in the Fall 2008 *Newsletter*, the Old Colony and Nashoba Chapters noted her “accomplishments that were responsible for the progression of HSEAD dating back to the establishment of the Guild in 1946.” It was an impressive list of the offices Virginia Wheelock had held: Charter Member, President from 1969-1973, a Trustee, Printing Chairman and member of the Judging Committee.

Margaret Coffin returned as Editor between Fall 1983 and Spring 1986, and was succeeded by Jane Bolster, who would become another long-serving Editor producing twelve magazines from Fall 1986 to Spring 1992. However, it was under Jane Bolster’s watch that *The Decorator* took on a new guise: gone were its off-white pages, to be replaced by ‘snowy white.’ Unusual among the more recent editors, she wrote only two articles for the magazine: “Angelica Kauffman, Antonio Zucci and the Philadelphia Connection” (S88/13) and “Pennsylvania Arts and



Jane Bolster



Margaret Rodgers demonstrates
clock dial painting
at Old Sturbridge Village.

Crafts in Pennsburg,” (F90/4) an intriguing account of the holdings of the Schwenkfelder Museum and Library. A Life Member of HSEAD, and a Certified teacher of Country Painting, Stenciling and Free-hand Bronze decoration, Jane Bolster taught for almost 50-years and was in such demand that she held classes three days a week. In addition, she was much respected by antique dealers as a restorer of reverse glass painting. With so busy a schedule, it is small wonder that she wrote so little.

From Fall 1992 until Fall 1995, under the joint editorship of Margaret and Mike Rodgers, *The Decorator* underwent several significant changes to

both its appearance and content. Already, in 1992, they had sought members suggestions about the format of *The Decorator*, about possibly including short biographies of ‘noted members’ and about the Book Review: “Should there be more or less?” Like others before them, they reminded members that they, as Editors, can publish only “what you submit.” (N38/2) The first of their changes came in Spring 1993, when members saw their ‘A’ Awards gloriously printed in full-colour on high quality paper, a small additional cost that was offset by

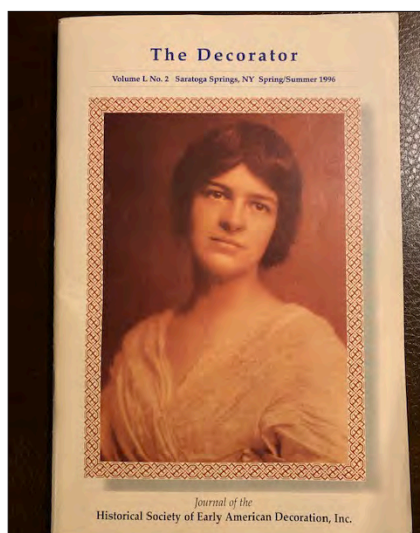
giving *The Decorator* a soft cover. The HSEAD Museum in Albany had closed and, until such time as a new home could be found, the Editors plausibly defended their introduction of colour, for “Only in these pages will the continuum of our labors be available for the enlightenment of future members, scholars and friends.”(S93/3) Their next major change came with the shift of “lists of Trustees, Committee Chairmen, Chapters, Officers and Standards Changes” to the *Membership Directory*, thereby freeing space for five, instead of two articles. (F94/5)



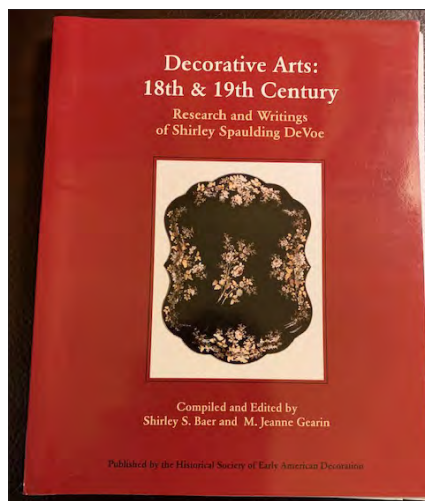
Astrid Donnellan
Birthday Celebration

The Rodgers' introduced what they hoped would become a regular feature. Entitled "The Treasures Around Us," it was to introduce members to examples of Early American Decoration of which they might otherwise be unaware, after all, "Not every town has a Wintherthur." (F94/5) Sadly, like previous attempts to induce the wider membership to submit written pieces, it was a short-lived venture. Similarly, while their bid to offer advice 'from above' to new members got off to a good start with articles by Astrid Donellan, (F94/16 & 18) it was not to become a 'series' as they hoped. Nevertheless, under their watchful eyes, the Rodgers' legacy as Editors is a hugely professional-looking journal of which the Society can be proud.

The longest-standing of all the editors, is Shirley Baer who twice held the office. Whether by coincidence or design, several anniversary issues of *The Decorator* have marked the tenure of a new editor and Shirley Baer's, in Spring '96, the Society's 50th anniversary, was no exception. This, her first stint as editor, after having served the Society in so many other roles, continued until Fall 2008 and her second, between Fall 2015 and Spring 2017, in total covering almost thirty issues. In addition, she has contributed 5 articles, two 2-part articles, co-authored three with Joseph Rice and another with Denise Habib; she oversaw the publication of two further anniversary issues, the 60th and 70th. Her written submissions span 27 years. A remarkable achievement by any standard, but in addition she, together with M. Jeanne Gearin, compiled and edited the book, *Decorative Arts: 18th & 19th Century, Research and Writings of Shirley Spaulding DeVoe*, published by HSEAD in 1999. Writing of *The Decorator* under Shirley Baer's editorship, Sandra Cohen



Esther Stevens Brazer
50th Anniversary *Decorator* Cover (1999)



Decorative Arts: 18th & 19th Century
Collected Articles by Shirley DeVoe
Compiled by Shirley Baer and Jeanne Gearin
(1999)



Shirley Baer accepts the
Lifetime Achievement Award.

remarked upon how it had ‘flourished as a beautiful journal, showcasing the best of EAD from the Society’s membership and publishing important research in this genre. (N80/8)

On stepping down, Shirley Baer noted her pride in “the fact that since becoming editor, “Bs” and theorems are now being photographed.” This was no personal drum-beating but pleasure on behalf of those who may have missed the higher grade by the skin of their teeth! Since Fall 2002, both ‘A’ and ‘B’ awards, have been regularly featured in the Fall editions of the magazine, unsurprisingly, its delivery

to members’ homes is an eagerly awaited event! Writing more generally of her experience as Editor, she observed that “perhaps most rewarding has been the opportunity to research, to see and do new things, and to share those findings with you.” (F08/5) Her commitment to the Society earned her The Lifetime Achievement Award, in 2019. (N122/6)

Taking up her new role as Editor and Chair of Photography in Spring 2009, Lynne Richards wrote of *The Decorator* “What a treasure trove of writings about all of our disciplines!” (S09/5) Like Avis Heatherington in the 70s, Lynne Richards edited 13 issues of *The Decorator*, more than any other editor besides Shirley Baer. In addition, she was one of its most prolific contributors, submitting 20 pieces on a wide-range of topics until shortly before her



Lynne Richards

death, late in 2016, a remarkable feat given the demands of the office. While calling upon input from members, she wrote, “As editor ... I am always coming up with new ideas ...” (N98/2) Perhaps the most significant of these was her article, “Illuminated Historical Scrapbooks of HSEAD,” which drew attention to the fascinating albums begun by the Society’s historian, Maria Murray, in the 1950s. (F12/12) Lynne Richards articles mirror her natural inquisitiveness about decorative objects, ranging from “Pennsylvania Chairs and the ‘Schnader’ Patterns” (S12/6)

to “Sewing through the Ages.” (S15/24) She worked until the end, leading one to suspect that had she lived, she would have gone on to produce many further issues. As Shirley Baer observed, she “was a tireless, dedicated worker for HSEAD and her community.” (S17/5)

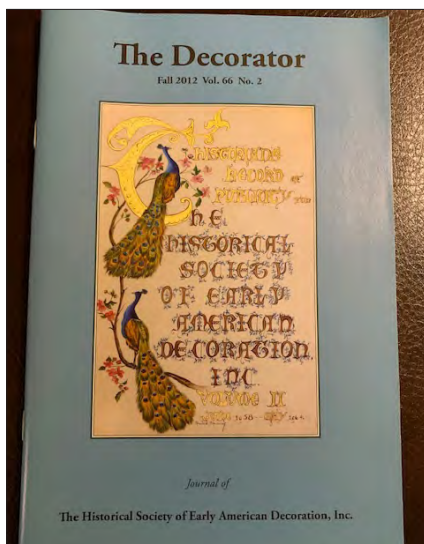
The editorial role passed again to Shirley Baer until Spring 2017, when the baton was taken up by the current editor, Sandra Cohen. In her first Editorial, Sandra Cohen wrote of the ‘high bar’ set by previous Editorial Staff members and of her endeavour “to maintain our scholarly standard.” (F17/4) With four issues to her credit so far, there is no doubt that she is living up to her aim. HSEAD President

between 2007 - 2010, Sandra Cohen has a long association with the Society and has written four articles for *The Decorator*, the first “The Legacy of Walter Wright,” in Spring 2012, and the others during her editorship, which commenced in Fall 2017. A recent article, “Moses Williams, Cutter of Profiles,” introduced a new and early “cutter of silhouettes” to *The Decorator*. Setting out to give Moses Williams, a former slave, the “long overdue recognition” that he deserves, Sandra Cohen follows the path laid by HSEAD’s founders: namely to ensure that every aspect of early American decoration, is researched and fully understood.

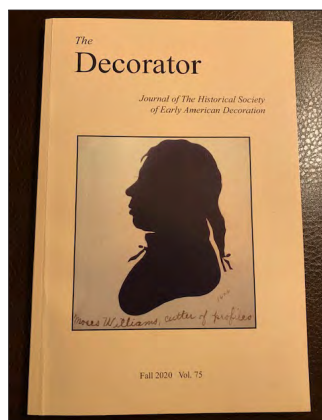
Alongside her editorial role, Sandra Cohen continues as *The Decorator*’s book reviewer. All in all, quite an achievement given that she has also led the production of this, the 75th Anniversary edition of *The Decorator*.

Each editor would be quick to acknowledge their dependence upon their contributors. To judge from regular pleas to keep the articles coming, the editor’s role is sometimes fraught. Nevertheless, over the years, there has been a steady flow of articles on an extraordinary range of subjects – ‘a treasure trove’, as Lynne Richards rightly observed.

Alongside articles, The Bookshelf, introduced in April, 1951, has be-



HSEAD Illustrated Scrapbooks (initial pg. Vol.2)
by Maria D. Murray



*Moses Williams, African American
“cutter of profiles,”
Silhouette is attributed to Raphael
Peale and Moses Williams, c.1803”*

come an important feature of the Journal. Starting out by recommending random books which the reviewer had found useful or interesting, some of them already out of print and never to be reprinted, it has grown into a highly professional review-column of newly published or re-published books on topics both directly and indirectly relevant to members' interests. There have been



*American Painted Tinware
A Guide to Its Identification
by Gina Martin and Lois Tucker*

nine *main* reviewers since the column's inception, but for much of the 1980s, reviewing was shared among members of the Shenandoah Chapter. Paying tribute to Margaret Rodgers, the outgoing book-reviewer, Sandra Cohen, her successor wrote "Like all of us who love books, especially those filled with beautiful pictures of decorative and fine art, we imagine this job to be a

labor of love. However, it also takes time and effort, and for that and more, Peg, we all thank you." (F98/4) Shirley Baer agreed, adding that it '... requires dedication, good taste, and a knowledge of the book market.' (F98/4) Sandra Cohen, having worked as an Editorial Assistant and who formerly owned and operated 'Legacy Books,' certainly possessed these qualities when she took up the role in Fall 1998.

With well over 200 individual contributors since *The Decorator's* inception it is not possible here, to pay them anything more than a passing tribute. The vast majority may have had only one article published, but amongst them are some choice and unexpected nuggets. Who, for example, would have expected to find among its pages, articles on varnishing a violin (S64/16), portrait medallions of Imperial Rome (F67/5), Rosemaling of Norway (F69/10), the fore-edge painting of books (S15/6), or printers 'tailpieces' (F18/23), but such is the natural curiosity of Society members about every decorated surface, regardless of origin. Long may your curiosity continue for it is these 'digressions' and serendipitous discoveries that add to *The Decorator's* charm and make browsing its pages so enjoyable.

Inevitably, it is the more prolific authors, those who have contributed in excess of 10 articles or 'notes,' whose names stand out; some, as already seen, served also as editors. In the true spirit of the Society, authors who had their own specialist interests, were equally as likely to write about other decorative topics which had caught their attention. During the early days, there were Shirley DeVoe, Virginia Wheelock, Jessica Bond, Maria D. Murray, Maryjane

Clark, and Martha Wilbur, names that remain 'common currency' within the Society today. Taking them in turn:*

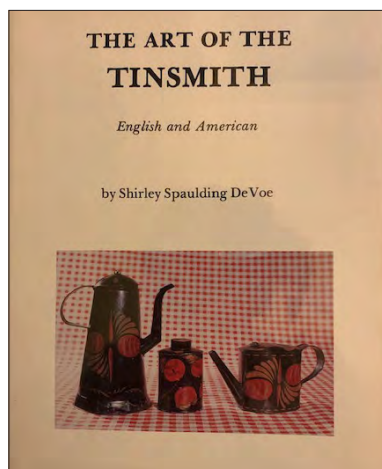
Shirley DeVoe, after her first article on English canal boat painting, (S47/9) wrote also on painted cornices, Hitchcock chairs and wall-stenciling before focusing almost entirely on japanned tin and papier mâché. Regretting that members were more interested in the decoration of japanned ware than in its underlying construction, she believed that "to be really knowledgeable about the products of the japanning industry one should know something of the construction and form of all the types made." (F85/25) In addition to writing for *The Decorator*, she wrote for *The Magazine*



Shirley Spaulding DeVoe

Antiques and was author of three books: *The Tinsmiths of Connecticut* (1968), *English Papier Mâché of the Georgian & Victorian Periods* (1971) and *The Art of the Tinsmith, English and American* (1982).

Virginia Milnes Wheelock's written contributions to *The Decorator* began in Fall 1947 with six short pieces, "Unusual Originals," followed by nine similarly short pieces, "Originals," from 1953. She later turned to writing longer articles on various topics: for example, the chair-maker Jerry Wheelock, with whom there was a family connection, (S63/15) and the decoration of japanned ware in "Some Fashions of English Bronze Work." (F75/4) Her last two contributions: "A Pictorial Study – Gold Leaf Designs" (F77/11) and "A Spanish Reverse Painting on Glass", (S79/21) were published in the middle period of her editorship.



*The Art of the Tinsmith,
English and American
By Shirley DeVoe (1981)*

Jessica Bond, a master craftsman in every HSEAD discipline, had her first article, "How to Make Friends with Gold Leaf," published in *The Decorator* in Fall 1948. Drawing upon her particular interest in stenciling, she wrote first about the finely crafted stenciled walls newly discovered in "The Little House." (F80/11) This was the first in a series of eight articles, "A Treasury of Old Stenciled Walls 1810-1840," an ambitious series with which she ended her writing

for *The Decorator*. (S02/5) “Without her tireless pursuit to investigate and document every decorated wall that she found, many of the patterns of those early stencilers would have been lost.” (S02/4) Jessica Bond died in 2001.

Maria D. Murray began writing for *The Decorator* in the Spring issue of 1952 when her article “Oriental Lacquer Work” was published, to be followed later by “Japanese Techniques of the Aristocratic Kimono” (S60/7) and “Temples and Shrines of Japan.” (S69/4) Besides her Oriental interests, Murray wrote also on the history of decorated glass.

Maryjane Clark was a larger-than-life personality whose name resonates as powerfully among members today as that of Shirley DeVoe. Her articles drew upon the subjects she taught in her studio at Norwell, Mass. First was the article, “The Allgoods of Pontypool and Usk” (S57/12), which reflected her love for the japanned products of the Welsh factories. She also wrote about country painted tin, stenciling and the decoration of English papier mâché, all with a keen eye for detail. When later she submitted an article about the English painter George Morland, Shirley Baer, Editor, was unsure of its relevance to members: “Why he was a great teacher! ... he was the kind of teacher we should all have.” What an appropriate response in relation to *The Decorator*! (S04/4)

Martha Wilbur’s first article for *The Decorator* was published in Spring 1969. Entitled “Old Salem Restoration and Tinsmiths of North Carolina,” it reflected her interest in tinware and was followed by others about the decoration of japanned tin and papier mache. Already, by 1978, she had developed an interest in penwork and, typically, researched her subject thoroughly before submitting her article “Penwork.” (S78/4) It was reprinted in *The Decorator* with an introduction by Nancy Corcoran who wrote

“Once again we should be very proud of our Society for being on the “cutting edge” ... In all my reading and research on penwork, I still find Martha’s article to be one of the best ever written, and just as relevant today as it was when first printed.” (F09/6)



Maryjane Clark

More recently, the late Lynne Richards and late Lois Tucker had both written frequently for *The Decorator*. A perusal of the Content's page of each issue that Lynne Richards edited, shows her catholic interests; take for example the articles she wrote for the Spring issue in 2012: "Bel-lows; The Making of a Master" (a profile of HSEAD Master Craftsman, Carol Heinz); "Papier Mâché Cases for Cards and Daguerrotypes," and "Overmantels and Fireboards at Old Sturbridge Village."

Conversely, Lois Tucker confined herself largely to writing about American painted tinware. While she doesn't quite make the 10 published articles required for inclusion here, she cannot be omitted on account of her pioneering research on the subject. *American Painted Tinware*, vols I-IV, co-authored by Gina Martin and Lois Tucker, will, surely, be the standard works on the subject for many years to come.

Today, it is Shirley Baer and Astrid Donnellan with whom members are familiar, and myself, Yvonne Jones, who are the most frequent contributors to *The Decorator*. Shirley Baer's, first piece, "Christmas Tree Ornaments" was about the decorations made by the Society and donated to the Museum of American Folk Art for its Christmas tree. (F94/38) Thereafter, she focused mostly on wall paintings, writing short introductory notes to the many illustrations that followed, and perhaps most importantly, co-edited the book of the writings of Shirley DeVoe.

Astrid Donnellan, a Master Teacher, began writing for *The Decorator* in 1989; it was, she later wrote "something I used to think that I could never do." (F94/17) Save for a study of the curious reverse glass paintings of Andrea T. Gavell (S04/22), her articles cover the subjects for which she is best-known as a practitioner. Like Shirley DeVoe, she is as curious about how the painting was done as she is about the end result. The first, "Painted Decora-



(L to R) Constance Fraser, Yvonne Jones, Martha Wilbur, Diana Fraser Seamans
(Esther's daughters, Connie and Diana at the Society's 50th Anniversary Celebration)



Lois Tucker

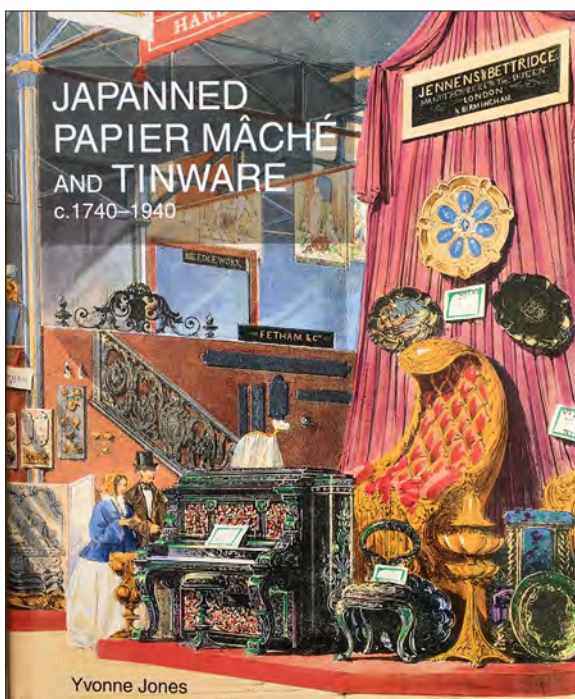
tion on English Japanned Clock Dials" (S89/14) approaches the subject with the keen eye of a decorator/restorer as do her sumptuously illustrated articles on Victorian flower painting, "The Flower Painting Connection" (F00/4) and "George Neville and His Influence on Flower Painting." (S03/12) Teaching, her other great concern, was the subject of two articles in Fall, 1994. (p.16 & p.18)

Yvonne Jones, more than any other of the frequent contributors, focuses *entirely* on the manufacture and decoration of English, Welsh and European japanned wares of the 18th and 19th centuries and on their social and economic impact. Based in the English midlands, a leading centre of the japanning industry, she is well-placed to research the subject. After long correspondence with Shirley DeVoe, Gina Martin and Martha Wilbur following their visits to the UK, she began writing for *The Decorator* in 1989. Her book *Japanned Papier Mâché and Tinware c.1740-1940*, was published in 2012. She had the pleasure of receiving Honorary Membership of HSEAD in 2001.

When Martha Muller wrote in 1946 that *The Decorator* would "be largely what the members will make of it," she could never have envisaged

that it would become the highly professional, authoritative and much-respected publication that it is today. It is a valuable source of information not only for members but for non-members too. A recent guest speaker to the Society, requested a full set of *The Decorator* in lieu of payment, and similarly, a historical village requested "any extra volumes ... because ... the articles were so informative." (S09/5)

The full run is now available for research online. Having browsed all copies for the purposes of this article, the author urges you to make full use of this encyclopedic resource, but not without



The cover of Yvonne Jones' book, Japanned Papier Mache and Tinware, 1740-1940 shows the stand of Jennens & Bettridge at the Great Exhibition held in London in 1882. (2012)

a warning! Browsing the pages is addictive; one discovery leads to another and another... For those with an interest in decorated surfaces, it is as much a

page-turner as any best-seller! But, as Virginia M. Wheelock reminded readers, “It is important to bear in mind that the last word has not been written and that continued questioning and delving will eventually bring forth new facts and ideas.” (S80/3)

Sandra Cohen, the current Editor, proposes that with this in mind and with HSEAD’s more inclusive mission to preserve also “the diverse decorative arts ... of our country’s early immigrant settlers, [then the future of *The Decorator* looks good for it will offer] a meaningful and relevant profile of America’s aesthetically diverse culture and history.” (F18/4)

*If names of prominent members, past or present, are not included above, it is because, they focused upon teaching, rather than writing for *The Decorator*.

Source Notation:

Decorator, Spring, Fall year / page: F66/5 / S15/30

Newsletter, number / page: N42/2



Yvonne Jones is the author of *Japanned Papier Mache and Tinware, 1740-1840*. 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 2001.

Book Shelf

Early American Decoration by Esther Stevens Brazer. The Pond-Ekberg Company, Springfield, Mass., 1940. 200 illustrations, 34 color plates, 265 pgs.

The Backstory

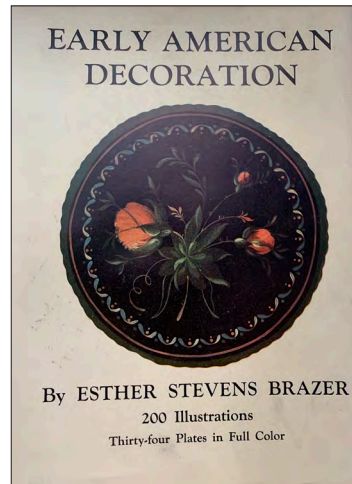
by Sandra Cohen

A brief Book Review by Jessica Bond of *Early American Decoration* first appeared in the April 1951 issue of *The Decorator*, Vol. 5, no.2. Esther Stevens Brazer's book was hailed on its title page as "An invaluable reference book and a complete course of instruction for the student of early design and restoration." In celebration of HSEAD's 75 Anniversary, this overview will cover the events that led to Brazer's crowning achievement.

In 1922 Esther was 24 years-old, newly married and mother of baby daughter, Diana. The "backstory" begins with the intersection of two lives, a young researcher/artist and the editor/founder of a premier magazine in the field of American antiquity. Both were dedicated pioneers and shared a life-long working relationship. Esther's life of perpetual curiosity, fulfilled by research into historically authentic early American decorative art, culminates with the publication of her major book followed by the public's reception (ultimately 4 printings, 1940, 1947, 1950, 1961) and substantive, high-praise by reviewers. Among the many opportune circumstances and events in Esther's life, meeting the Editor of a new magazine, earning his mentorship and her continual odyssey of research and writing formed the foundation for her important work on authentic decoration.

Homer Eaton Keyes (1875-1938) was a graduate of Dartmouth and later Princeton where he earned an M.A. He worked his way from positions at Dartmouth of Assist. Prof. of Modern Art, several years as Dartmouth's Business Director and later, Assoc. Editor of *The Dartmouth Alumni Magazine* in 1907 and finally, its Editor from 1911 to 1920. His career and ambition prepared him for his most successful venture, the founder and Editor of *Antiques* (1922), the magazine today known as *The Magazine Antiques*.

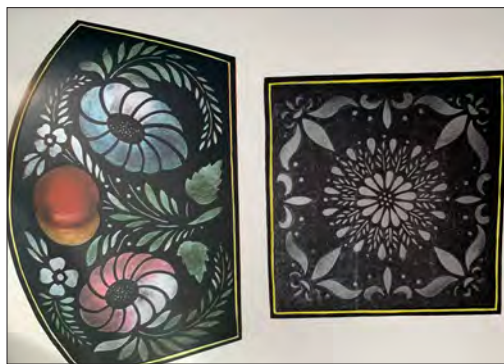
In 1921, Esther and Cecil Fraser were planning their move into the



historic John Hicks House in Cambridge, Mass. Esther, with a keen interest in American history and an artist by nature and nurture, was drawn to the home of an American patriot and excited by the opportunity to restore it. According to Esther's words in "My Story," her brief biographical profile (*The Decorator*, Vol.V, no.2), she came across an old Hitchcock Chair and was fascinated by its stenciled design, having never seen this type of painting. Following the recommendation of antique dealers, she visited George Lord in Portland, Maine, recognized for the quality of his stenciling. His training and career began early as an apprentice to Francis Holland in the Lambert Hitchcock Chair Factory. Lord demonstrated his skill and showed Esther his bronze powders and cut stencils. Intrigued and impressed by the stunning results and his designs, Esther not only researched bronze powder stenciling and its use, she also practiced this technique, collected antique stenciled furnishings and wrote studiously about her findings.

Esther's contacts in the antiques business, those same acquaintances who led her to George Lord, may have heard about a 'new' publication on antiques. It's reasonable to speculate that anticipation and rumors about *Antiques* reached Esther, and she may have approached its new Editor, Homer Keyes, with her article. It's also likely that he would have been intrigued by both the bronze powder stenciling technique and the stenciled antiques that she had researched, recorded, photographed and collected. For both Esther and Homer, this was not only the beginning of a new undertaking, it would become a life-long professional collaboration for both. According to Esther's words in "My Story," "...[Homer Keyes] told me that I should start the lifelong task of collecting material toward a history of early American decorative design, a task that seemed utterly beyond my abilities when he first proposed it." Her research and writing skills resulted in her first article, "The Golden Age of Stenciling" that appeared in the premier issue (1922) of *Antiques*.

In 1922, at the age of 24, Esther's life-long pursuit of researching, recording and collecting early American painted designs began non-stop. Between 1922-1939, Esther had restored her three historic homes and researched and written 22 articles for *The Magazine Antiques*. She had established a body of research that earned her reputation as an expert in the field of American painted antiques; she was sought by Museums, Historical Societies, Collector Clubs and Colleges as a lecturer.

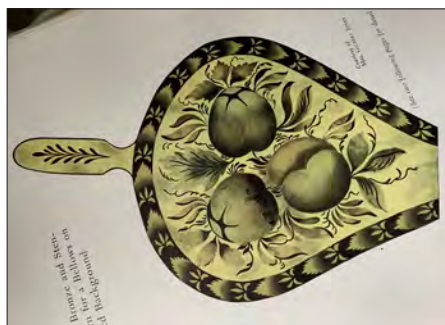


*Stencil for Four-Sided Apple Tray
with Floating Color*

In "My Story" she said "It was Dr. Brazer who finally persuaded me that as a teacher I would learn far more from teaching my students, and incidentally, I would be doing antiques themselves a lot of good by spreading the gospel of how they ought to be painted." The groundwork had been laid for her unique and important monograph, *Early American Decoration*, "A Comprehensive Treatise," that provided decorators with an authentic historic background, techniques and directions necessary for painting and recording early American painted designs.

On June 15, 1939, a letter from John Pond, Pres. of The Pond-Ekberg Co. in Springfield, Mass. began with an apology for being remiss in replying to Esther's inquiries to publish her manuscript. The Brazer's and Mr. and Mrs. Pond had previously met socially; "Mrs. Pond and I are still harking back to the enjoyable night spent at Innerwyck." After conveying that he is impressed with Esther's manuscript, Pond explains that he and his engraver "know of no like stunt having been attempted heretofore." They need to experiment with making "creditable color reproductions...from your stencil patterns...This experiment will give me a fair basis...to estimate the cost of producing the book...I have chosen to experiment with the bellows with a smoked background."

In 1939, publishing the book became Esther's priority, and she took a hiatus from writing for *Antiques* until 1943. On Oct. 5, 1939 Pond provided an estimate for 1,200 copies to be sold for \$15 each. However, the letter also mentions that the color plates in Esther's book, a challenge from the start, increased the cost; "The problems we were up against in the printing of the color plates had never before been attempted by any printer...Every one of them was an experiment..." Esther was firm about Pond adhering to the contract. However, not willing to jeopardize their friendship, both sides made concessions, and ultimately, the price of the book was increased from \$15 to \$16.50. Her correspondence to Pond also indicated that she had initially agreed to give a set of hand-cut stencils with the purchase of the book, a strenuous commitment. However, she kept her word for those who ordered and purchased pre-publication copies. From the frontispiece (Hitchcock Chair) to her color plates il-



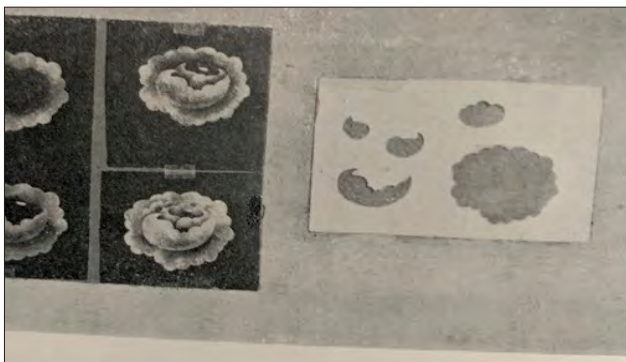
Freehand Bronze and Stencil Pattern
for a Bellows on a Smoked Background
Courtesy of Mrs. Gilbert Jones

lustrating bronze powder stenciling, metal leaf, the smoked bellows, floating color, country strokes and more, the book conveyed the techniques and effects beautifully and to everyone's satisfaction, signaling a decision to publish. Sadly, the timing of her major accomplishment would be marred with her diagnosis of cancer. The unpredictability of her diagnosis, treatment and outcome seemed to strengthen her resolve to promote

her book and to continue with her research and writing.

John Pond and Esther were eager to promote the book; Pond scheduled events with department stores (eg. Snellenburg in Phil., Jordan Marsh, Boston and at Steiger's in Springfield) and other venues to feature the book along with demonstrations of painting techniques by Esther and her students. However, Esther's illness began to take its toll. On Oct. 1, 1940, a letter from Karl Hammond at Pond Pub. to Esther expressed concern: "I am terribly distressed that you have to take it easy, and I hope you won't feel that I want to push your schedule. On Oct. 4, 1940 Mr. Hammond sent a letter to Mr. Lawrence at the Jordan Marsh Co. about scheduling demonstrations and stated that Esther "is under doctor's orders to be careful about too strenuous a schedule..." However, Esther continued to travel by train from Flushing, N.Y. to her classes in Wellesley and the Boston area. In a letter on Oct. 28, 1941, John Pond stated that he "was sorry to hear the unpleasant news of your illness. I sincerely hope that the aftermath of your hospital experience will prove that the ordeal was well worthwhile." Again, on Dec. 24, 1941, Pond said "I certainly regret to know of your illness, but I trust that you will be able to get enjoyment out of Christmas day." Esther's passion for her work had always given her the physical and psychological stamina required; she had made difficult and painful decisions and sacrifices in her personal life and now seemed more committed to pursuing her professional interests. Now, particularly when faced with unfinished projects and imposed deadlines by her health on her personal and professional life, she totally immersed her available energy in her teaching and writing. Esther's book was published in January 1940 and dedicated "To My Husband, by whose faith, inspiration and guidance this book has been moulded."

Esther continued to teach, and when she was unable to travel, her students, many her close friends, came to her home, Innerwyck, for lessons. She also continued to write for *Antiques* and sub-



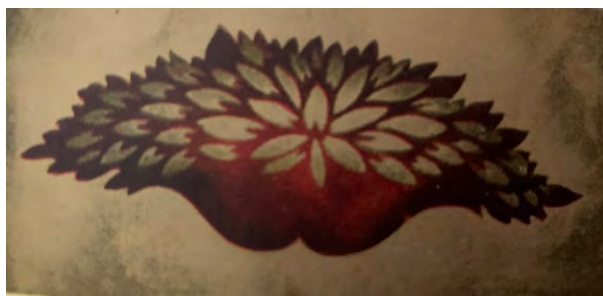
*Stencil, Pattern and
Stenciled
Gold Bronze Rose*



mitted five more articles: two in May 1943, one in August 1945 and two in Sept. 1945. Sadly, Esther died in Flushing, New York on Oct. 30, 1945. The second edition, published in 1947, highlighted on the dedication page “In Memorium,” and stated “This book is her monument.” After Esther’s book was published in 1940, it was met with rave reviews. Excerpts from reviews of *Early American Decoration* follow:

Antiques Magazine review on the inside cover of *Early American Decoration*, 1st printing, 1940...

“It is more than purely antiquarian interest, for it is a practical guide to the technique of restoring or reproducing early American decoration on



furniture, tinware, walls, floors, and so forth... The book is lavish with color plates which miraculously reproduce the colors and metallic bronze, silver and gold of the originals. They presented a tremendous task to the engravers and

printers, who, with the author, are to be heartily congratulated on the results.”

Carl W. Drepperd, renowned antiquarian, author and historian wrote the following on the inside cover of *Early American Decoration*, 1st printing, 1940...

“Esther Stevens Brazer, in her magnificent and important book, *Early American Decoration*, reveals exactly what you will want to know. The entire story is told, step by step...make no mistake. Decorating in the early American manner is not a lost art. It may once have been lost, but Mrs. Brazer has recreated it. Her book is literally a history and textbook rolled into one...It is so well illustrated in full color, and even with bronze inks, that one is tempted at once to try this fascinating decorating as an avocation.”

***The Boston Evening Transcript*, Jan 11, 1940.**
“Stencils, Handsome Volume on Freehand Art”
by Katherine Morrow Ford:

“A scholarly and enlivened account of an art, the practice of which is fast becoming extinct, is authoritatively presented by Mrs. Brazer. Stenciled and free hand decoration of furniture, tinware, and even walls and floors by craftsmen flourished in this country more than



a century ago. Many of the examples which survive have been tracked down and studied with meticulous care and skill by the author over a period of 20 years. The result of so thorough a research is appropriately treated in a beautifully made book with lavish illustrations, many in remarkable color reproductions of a variety of objects decorated in this manner.

Rare Treasure: The book is more than a pictorial story of the antique pieces so painstakingly unearthed. It is a comprehensive treatment of the development of the arts exemplified in brush-stroke painting, gold

leaf work, japanning, freehand bronze painting, stenciling and floating color work. The largest portion of the volume is given to the techniques employed in a start-to-finish demonstration. Because of its exceptional clarity in the explanation of the processes necessary in decorating furniture and tinware, this book will serve as a guide to persons wishing to duplicate or restore old designs with these media. The author's wish to facilitate, for today's craftsmen, the restoration of old designs and the execution of new decoration, prompted her to devote a major section to the discussion of principles, materials, tools and methods.

The Addenda include a "Cabinetmaker's Dictionary—Notes from a Treatise On Painting by Thomas Sheraton." This volume is excellent as a reference but will become as well a rare treasure for the collector."

***The New York Sun*, Sept.7, 1940, "Speaking Decoratively" by Charles Messer Stow:**

"I have known Mrs. Esther Brazer for many years...I marveled that she could carry in her head so many dates, styles and correlated facts...Mrs. Brazer gives directions for reproducing...in authentic manner. I cannot talk about this book at the length to which its value demands...One of the things that makes it valuable...is the complete set of directions for doing both stencil and free hand decorations on furniture."

***Yankee Magazine*, Oct. 1940:**



“There is an unusual balance to *Early American Decoration* in that the second section is the picturing of the story and the lessons of the first section. There are 150 black and white pictures; and forty multicolored illustrations have been produced by plate maker and printer with the most detailed sincerity of line and color. It is a book of motion; we read the text about the gradual development of the designs—in our mind’s eye watching them grow in color and beauty—then almost with a start, we see the finished work before us. After an historical sketch, the artist is told of the exact tools to use, each described in detail. The methods are then disclosed; stenciling, brush-stroke painting, free hand bronze painting, gold leaf application, floating color work and jappanning. Finally, it is shown how these methods are employed in decorating the various articles to be restored or repainted...Her book will preserve for all time the old arts of these fine craftsmen and their contemporaries.”

New York Herald Tribune, Books, Dec. 22, 1940, “The Old-Time Decorator” by Walter Prichard Eaton claimed...

[Brazier’s book is] “distinctly a craftsman’s, not a collector’s volume. It is not a study of the many varieties of painted decoration...but chiefly a description of when and how they were applied. [She] gives the long list of materials and tools required, a description of their nature and functions and full directions for their use...She also tells how to remove old paint and how to antique the newly applied design...admits no modern short cuts in the way of quick-drying materials; she gives you authentic old methods...in full detail and with admirable clarity. This is an extremely valuable book.”

Sources:

1. *The Decorator*, Vol.5, no.2.
2. HSEAD Archives. Letters between Esther Stevens Brazier and John D. Pond, President, Pond-Ekberg Publishing, Springfield, Mass.; representatives, Karl R. Hammond who arranged demonstrations with Dept. Stores and E.B. Lawrence, Sales Promotion Dept.





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 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
Martin, Virginia (Gina) 1952
Underhill, Emilie 1952
Watts, Margaret 1952
Clark, Maryjane 1955
Hague, Helen 1957
Drury, Bernice 1960
Murray, Maria 1960
Gross, Helen 1962
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 1995-96
Edrington, Roberta / 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; Chair, Specialist Awards



HSEAD's Lending Library of Originals

The Lending Library of Originals is available to members of HSEAD who wish to replicate an authentic design directly from an original decorated antique. These are some of the painted tinware, reverse glass and boxes from the Society's Library of Originals.

Clock Dials



LLO-CD-001



LLO-CD-002

Country Painting



LLO-CP-002



LLO-CP-008



LLO-CP-009

Country Painting



LLO-CP-010

Free Hand Bronze



LLO-FHB-001



LLO-FHB-002

Free Hand Bronze



LLO-FHB-003



LLO-FHB-004



LLO-FHB-005

Free Hand Bronze



LLO-FHB-006



LLO-FHB-007

Metal Leaf



LLO-ML-001

Metal Leaf



LLO-ML-002



LLO-ML-003



LLO-ML-004

Metal Leaf



LLO-ML-005

Pontypool



LLO-PP-002



LLO-PP-003

Pontypool



LLO-PP-004

Reverse Glass

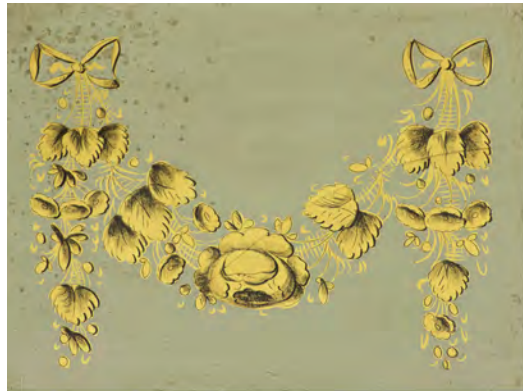


LLO-RG-001

Reverse Glass



LLO-RG-003



LLO-RG-004

Stenciling on Tin



LLO-ST-001

Stenciling on Tin



LLO-ST-002



LLO-ST-003



LLO-ST-004

Stenciling on Tin



LLO-ST-005

Stenciling on Wood



LLO-STW-001



LLO-STW-002

Theorem



LLO-TH-001



LLO-TH-002



LLO-TH-003

Theorem



LLO-TH-006



LLO-TH-005

Victorian Flower Painting



LLO-VFP-001

Victorian Flower Painting



LLO-VFP-002



LLO-VFP-003



LLO-VFP-004



HSEAD Research Center



HSEAD Research Center, Historic Stockade District, Schenectady, N.Y.

The Historical Society of Early American Decoration (HSEAD) maintains its Archival Collections and Library at its facility in Schenectady, New York. Located in the Historic Stockade District at 26 N. College Street, the center also houses the research papers of several prominent experts and teachers of early American decoration. Visits are available by appointment.

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Future Meetings

Annual Membership Meeting

Hyatt Hotel
Rochester, New York
April 29 – May 1, 2022

Working Seminar Meeting

Wyndham Southbury
Southbury, Connecticut
Sept. 29 – Oct. 1, 2022

Annual Member Membership Meeting

75+2 Anniversary Celebration

Wyndham Hotel
Wyndham, Connecticut
April 21 – April 23, 2023



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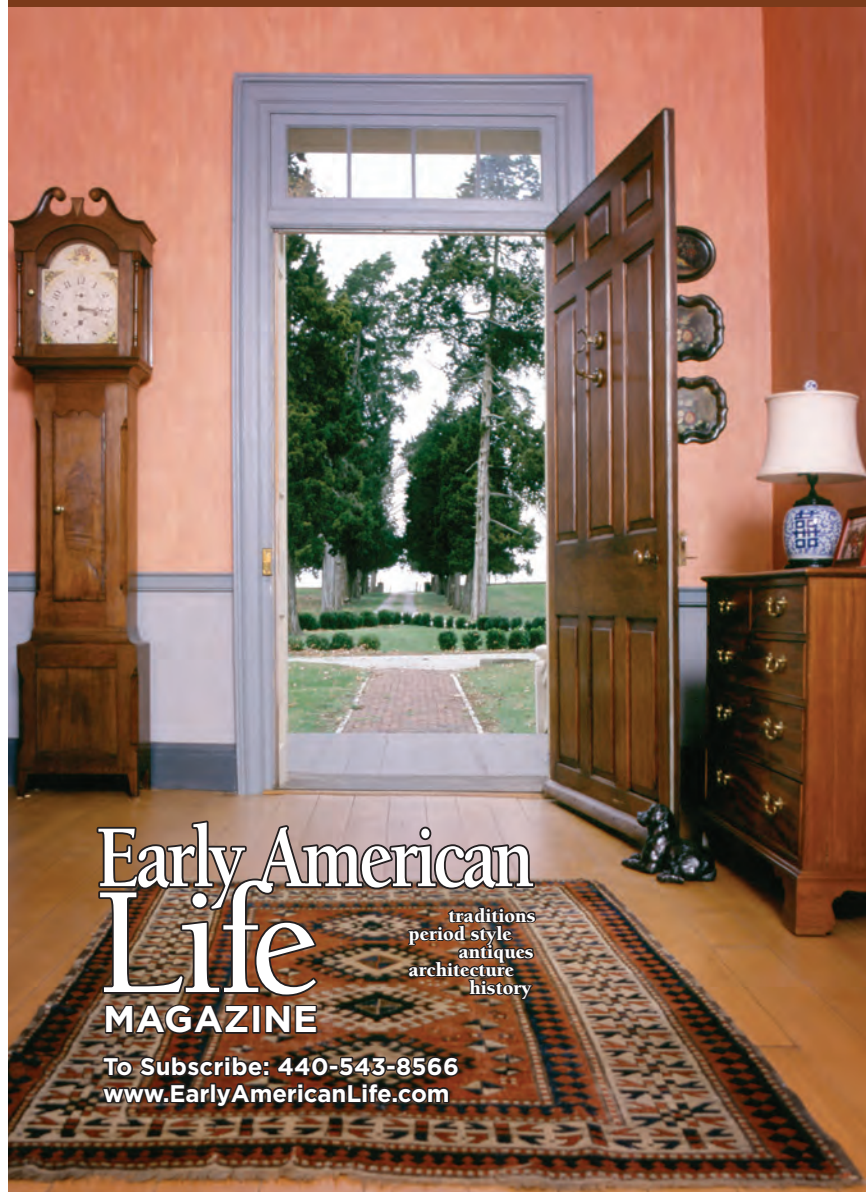
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Publications

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

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Vol. 59 - present issue

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Lending Library of Design

Patterns are available to members only as downloads from the HSEAD website.



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

Country Painting on Tinware
Stenciling on Tinware

Theorem Patterns: Includes tracing, color picture and instructions.

Schnader Chair Patterns

Freehand Bronze & Painted Chair Patterns
Each pattern includes tracing and 8" x 12" digital color photo.



Lending Library of Design:

Patterns include tracings and high-resolution photograph.

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Editorial Notes

Decorators are busy people. To become one, definitely means to end all leisure moments. We book ourselves months in advance, with trays to paint, chairs to scrape and patterns to finish. But, the rewarding thing is that, gone too, are all the dull moments. Every second is precious as never before. So, when it becomes necessary for a decorator to write about being one, or worse still, to try to edit a Journal of interest to fellow decorators, trouble to find the time has indeed begun. So, with apologies for the things that did not get done on time, your editor finally presents the first issue of the Journal.

This first issue, we felt, should be one in which we pay homage to Esther Brazer. Succeeding numbers will be largely what the members of the Guild will make of it. It is our hope that discoveries of interesting old pieces will be photographed, written-up, sent in and discussed. New methods discovered by our ardent co-workers, all over the country, should be aired. We invite suggestions and criticisms. So far, we are unafraid. We hope to have a question-box, in which submitted questions may be answered by those who have met and conquered the same problems. Perhaps a column to air our desires to buy, sell or trade anything pertinent to this field, may develop. We hope to reprint some of Mrs. Brazer's articles and speeches and see some of her many photographs. It is stimulating to think of the heights to which our very young Journal may grow.

Martha Muller, Editor

The Decorator, October 1946 Vol. 1, No. 1





Esther Stevens Brazer
Researcher, Restorer, Author, Teacher
April 17, 1898 – October 30, 1945