

The
Decorator

*Journal of The Historical Society
of Early American Decoration*



Spring 2023 Vol. 78



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: Bronze powder stenciled tray with double border recorded by Master Craftsman, Polly Bartow from an original owned by her teacher and mentor, Lois Tucker.

Back Cover: Detail from a Free Hand Bronze Tray recorded by Master Craftsman, Polly Bartow.

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Spring 2023

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President's Message

So much was put on hold during the pandemic, not the least of which was the celebration of the Society's 75th or Diamond Anniversary, which should have taken place in 2021. Instead, we elected to celebrate it in April of this year in Southbury, Connecticut and dubbed it the 75th+2. I think that I can speak for all who attended the Meeting that it was a very successful celebration. Everyone seemed to have a wonderful time as friendships that were put into a state of suspended animation during the shutdowns were reactivated. It was good to be able to get together again.

We are continuing the effort to get all of HSEAD's records and images digitized. Having digital files of our documentation preserves our records for the future, and for the images, digital files allow those images to be accessible to anyone with an interest in viewing, studying, working from them, etc. One of HSEAD's contributions to the history of our art forms is our vast collection of images of the decorative arts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, images of original pieces, images of reproductions and images of patterns. Of course, there is no substitute for studying or working from an actual physical piece. However, the reality is that most folks don't have access to originals, or reproductions. Photographs expand the ability to share the images of the art form, but physical copies of photographs are also limited in their accessibility to be shared. Digital copies of the images can be shared widely. Keep in mind that every time you download an image from our website you are making another copy of that image that may find its way, well, who knows where, and thus, spreading the images more widely and helping to ensure their preservation.

We are at a point now where almost all of the Lending Library of Design, also known as the Pattern Library, is available for download on the website. In the near future, we will be adding patterns in the Women's Painted Furniture category, and the patterns which were previously available as Applicant Patterns will be available for download. The patterns in the Schnader Chair Pattern Collection will also be added to the website for download.

The digitizing effort is moving on to other images we have acquired over the years. We have received donations of patterns from members or from members' families. Many of those patterns will be digitized and added to our image collection. We are looking into ways,

to make these images available to members, that are not too cumbersome or too overwhelming.

We are working hard to keep the treasure trove of history, of which we are custodians, current and available to all.



Editor's Letter

There was pomp and ceremony as the Historical Society of Early American Decoration celebrated its 75th Anniversary. A glittery and silvery decor graced the occasion, and Exhibition displayed one of the grandest displays of Members' Juried Award Works in every category. As always, "In Our Own Time" showcased the range of the Society's members' talents, including needlework, china painting and the creative use of early American painting techniques in a variety of motifs.

Exhibition, as always, was a feast for the eyes, and flowers, nature's own as well as ornamented ones, filled the room. One of the highlights was the Master Craftsmanship Award Exhibit by Polly Bartow whose stunning work is displayed in this issue's Award Section. A Member's Choice Award was initiated this year, and among the many amazing choices, Kathy Hutcheson and Linda Sheldon won recognition for their creative ingenuity.

Valerie Oliver, the Society's Historian, displayed prominent memorabilia from HSEAD's earliest years, a proud history that began in 1946. Preserving the legacy of Esther Stevens Brazer, The Society continues to research and preserve authentic early American decoration. The exhibit exemplified HSEAD's outstanding history and mission over the years, promoted through its decorative brochures and folders and celebrated in its hand-painted name tags, bookmarks and posters, patterned fabric from its Royalty Program, designed scarves with early American decorative patterns, issues of *The Decorator*, videos, publications, from Esther Stevens Brazer's, *Early American Decoration* in 1940 to *American Painted Tinware, A Guide to Its Identification*, Vols. 1-4, by Gina Martin and Lois Tucker in 1997 and so much more. A proud history that began in 1946 will persevere through the efforts and support of the Society's members and those who appreciate early American decorative arts and crafts.

The Spring Issue of *The Decorator* is dedicated to bringing the Annual Membership Meeting's program to all our members. Illustrated presentations by esteemed devotees of decorative art and Members' Award Pieces will be shown in this issue. The May Issue of the Newsletter will capture and embellish this presentation with photographs and pictures that captured members' joy and esprit de corps.

Friday evening's dinner was followed by an inspiring talk and

slide show by Erica Lome, Associate Curator of Collections at Historic New England. Many of us will remember its former name, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA). Erica specializes in American decorative arts and material culture with a focus on “things made, owned and used in New England and the contributions of immigrant craftspeople to that body of work.” Erica said “I nurtured my interests in material culture and the public humanities in school, and by the time I began my doctoral program...I knew I wanted to apply my academic training towards humanizing and making accessible the individuals and subjects that, for many, reside in a remote past.” Erica became interested in learning the stories that are an important aspect of the country’s material culture.

Saturday was filled with alternating morning and afternoon workshops, (offering a taste of something new) and a visit to the Berlin Historical Society. Sallie Caliandri, President, invited members to tour the museum and learn about the illustrious history of Berlin and its role in tin-making and tin-peddling that included William and Edward Pattison, founders of the tin industry in the United States and who became the first Yankee tin peddlers. Completely staffed by volunteers, its Museum houses a collection of original painted tinware, including an original donated by Lois Tucker. After Sallie’s introductory lecture and slides, members walked through the museum, many clustering around the decorated tin and photographing the painted decoration.

Saturday evening’s festivities included the traditional raffle and awards. Members lifted their champagne glasses to Pres. Sheldon’s toast, “To the next 75 years” and enjoyed a chocolatey slice of Happy 75th Anniversary Cake!

Sunday morning’s brunch featured Dr. Richard Benfield, a retired Professor of Geography at Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Connecticut where he taught courses in Human Geography, Plants, Predators and Parks. Benfield, a scholar on Garden Tourism and author of *New Directions in Garden Tourism*, injected his personal anecdotes, experience and sense of humor as he annotated his slides of visits to gardens all over the world. His presentation and illustrations will tempt many to join the thousands of visitors who flock to these gardens each year.

Congratulations and appreciation are extended to Charter Oak Chapter and HSEAD who together sponsored a thoroughly engaging 75th Anniversary Celebration. Those of you who were unable to attend

were missed and remembered. Hopefully, bringing the Annual Membership Meeting to you in the Spring Issue will share and renew the joy of membership and camaraderie. Every effort was made by the Chapter's members and the Society to make this Anniversary Meeting memorable and promising for the Society's future.

Sandra Cohen



A Precious Inheritance

Reflecting on the Past, Present, and Future of Early American Decoration

Erica Lome, PhD

*This article has been adapted from a presentation given at the
75th Anniversary Meeting for the Historical Society of
Early American Decoration on April 21, 2023*

I want to thank the Historical Society of Early American Decoration for inviting me to speak at this special 75th Anniversary Meeting and Celebration. In my current role as Associate Curator at Historic New England, I engage with a wonderful collection of decorative arts and decorated surfaces, from which I plan to share many interesting highlights. In preparing for this talk, I read back issues of *The Decorator* and a selection of articles and books authored by previous HSEAD members, including Esther Stevens Brazer's *Early American Decoration: A Comprehensive Treatise*, published in 1940. I had access to Nina Fletcher Little's personal copy of the book, accompanied by an envelope filled with stencils cut by Mrs. Brazer. It was from this volume that I found the title for tonight's talk. In the chapter on "Searching for an Old Design Beneath Outer Paints," Mrs. Brazer described the "exciting archaeological adventure" of excavating original paint colors: "Sometimes these adventures would pan out, and you'd discover a beautiful design underneath successive layers of paint; on the opposite end of the spectrum, you might make the disappointing discovery that some decorator before you had scraped away all original paint. In between these two extremes are the average cases of finding traces of a damaged pattern, or proof that the article was originally very plainly finished with little more than a band or stripe. Still, search we must, for within our grasp we may hold a precious inheritance which demands our recording."

I love the phrase "a precious inheritance," and consider it a great way to frame the way we approach the history of early American decoration. What is this precious inheritance, exactly? What are we inheriting when we study the material past, when we encounter objects made centuries before us? These are questions members of HSEAD

have been answering for over seventy-five years, and which Esther Stevens Brazer and her contemporaries made the focus of their life's work as collectors, historians, and practitioners of early American decorative techniques. Tonight, I plan to share some of our own "precious inheritances" at Historic New England and explore the contributions of Esther Stevens Brazer and other HSEAD members, past and present, to Historic New England's collections.

First, a bit of background about Historic New England: founded in 1910 by William Sumner Appleton as the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, today our organization manages a collection of over 125,000 objects and 1.5 million archival materials. Roughly half of the object collection is housed in Haverhill, Massachusetts, at our Historic New England Center for Preservation and Collections. The other half is split among our 38 historic properties, which range from seventeenth century stone-enders and include the following: river front homes belonging to New England's merchant princes; a modernist masterpiece from the founder of the Bauhaus Movement; working farms on farmlands that have been in agricultural use for centuries; and even a largely untouched eighteenth-century meeting-house with its original paint scheme intact. Within those houses are numerous examples of Early American decoration, some the products of small shops and large factories, others the work of itinerant artists, academy-trained professionals and skilled amateurs. Since its founding, Historic New England collected these artifacts along with family narratives, related photographs, and histories of use. Thanks to this rich documentation, these materials resonate with meaning, providing evidence of the way the objects with which we surround ourselves reflect both who we are and where we are from.

Some of the most important painted surfaces at Historic New England can be found at Cogswell's Grant, the 1728 farmhouse in Essex, Massachusetts purchased by Nina Fletcher Little and Bertram K. Little to use as their summer home in 1937. The Littles were collectors and writers on American decorative arts and folk art. They were especially drawn to furniture and related objects with highly colored and boldly patterned surfaces. As Nina Fletcher Little put it in the forward to Dean A. Fales' book, *American Painted Furniture, 1660-1880*, "In our day of machine production, hand craftsmanship of any kind is becoming increasingly rare. I find my satisfaction in the warmth and subtlety of the old hand-mixed pigments does not diminish, nor does my

conviction that in saving the old finishes, and recording them in print, we are preserving for the future a few significant scraps of America's fast-vanishing heritage of painted decoration.” When the Littles began collecting in the 1920s, the practice of preserving the paint from old furniture was not common. Instead, dealers and connoisseurs scraped off layers of paint to reveal the natural wood finish – this was considered the “Early American” look of antiques.

In an interview conducted by Richard C. Nylander in 1976, Nina Fletcher Little recalled an early incident whereby she stripped the red paint from a chair only to find that it had been pieced together from many different types of wood. The maker never intended the woods to be seen, much less enjoyed. By the time they moved into Cogswell's Grant in 1938, they decided “we would buy things, if possible, with the old finish, the old paint, and not do any restoration or refinishing that was not necessary, which meant that we have not even done some things that are perhaps necessary!” As they collected late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century furniture, this philosophy evolved and became more nuanced. One seventeenth-century chest was acquired in 1928 with most of its applied decoration missing and only one drawer, and they decided to keep it in “as found” condition. Ten years later, they found another chest of drawers which had its front feet replaced and its original painted touched up; but despite these shortcomings, the Littles found strong appeal in the color and appreciated that it would be a sturdier addition to their family home at Cogswell's Grant.

A dressing table acquired by the Littles in the 1930s reinforced their commitment to retaining an early finish, even if it was not the original coat of paint. Made in southern New Hampshire around the mid-eighteenth century, the dressing table was updated in the 1830s with the addition of black and red graining (in imitation of rosewood) accented with yellow striping outlining the shape of the drawers and skirt. It was this later painted decoration that appealed to the Littles, who viewed it as “evidence of the changing tastes of progressive generations.” When questioned why they didn't remove the paint, Nina Fletcher Little replied, “we never even considered this because this finish has now been on there probably one hundred and thirty or forty years, and we like it; we think it's interesting to see how the piece developed.” In their eyes, the painted decoration contributed to the story of the object, which the Littles prioritized in their collecting. Nina Fletcher Little even used a set of questions to determine her interest in

a piece of furniture: had it been previously touched up or drastically overcleaned? Was it pleasing to the senses and/or exciting to the eye? Was the painted surface the first finish or a later addition? Was there a documented history of ownership? These questions not only guided her and her husbands' decision to buy a piece, but they also related to a broader interest in the power of objects to spark a connection to the past.



*High Chest, Maine, 1740-1765.
Gift of Bertram K. and Nina Fletcher Little, Historic New England*

One of the best-preserved pieces at Cogswell's Grant was a high chest produced in Maine around 1740-1760. At first glance, a visitor might guess that the painted surface of the maple wood was a later nineteenth-century addition; in fact, it was original to the piece. The unknown maker attempted to elevate an ordinary piece of furniture by adding black and ochre pigments to the tightly grained maple. Their intention was to suggest more stylish and expensive burl walnut veneer. Nina Fletcher Little deduced the rural origins of the high chest from the poor construction and "slightly awkward" curve of the apron. While the painted decoration would have looked out of place in a more affluent household, Mrs. Little praised the imagination of the maker, calling the piece "vigorous and provocative, stimulating to the mind

and appealing to the eye.” It was appealing precisely because it was so different: it was the work of someone with imagination, even if he lacked the refined skills of his urban contemporaries.

Nina Fletcher Little credited Esther Stevens Brazer with fanning the flames of her interest of early American decoration. In a touching tribute to Brazer written for *The Decorator* in 1949, Mrs. Little recalled how they became warm and enthusiastic friends after Brazer consulted on the stenciled decoration found in two of the rooms in their Cambridge farmhouse. In 1939, after they had purchased Cogswell’s Grant, Nina and Bert Little invited Esther Brazer to Essex to excavate the original painted finish on the walls of several of the rooms. Mrs. Brazer spent two weeks at Cogswell’s Grant scraping back layers of paint. While the Littles hoped she would find an over-mantel picture (she did not), Brazer instead recovered the original eighteenth-century color and matched it with new paint. A similar scenario played out in the bedroom, as Brazer scraped away paint from the wooden paneling around the fireplace and discovered a green marble-like finish and raised panels with red cedar graining. The Littles once again engaged Brazer to recreate the original paint color on the walls, which remains intact to this day.

During the weeks Esther Stevens Brazer spent at Cogswell’s Grant, she and the Littles discussed mutual interests, including their fascination with an identifiable group of eighteenth-century decorated chests attributed to Robert Crosman (1707–1779), a drum-maker hailing from a family of craftsmen working in Taunton, Massachusetts from approximately 1727 to 1742. Brazer (then Esther Stevens Frazer) had previously identified Crosman as the maker of more than a dozen surviving chests in an article for *Antiques* magazine titled “The Tantalizing Chests of Taunton,” and her scholarship remains the definitive source on the subject. The Littles later acquired what is thought to be an early example of Crosman’s work, a beautiful single-drawer document box painted red-brown and decorated with a fruit tree over two spread-wing birds in white, red, and brown. They installed it in the guest bedroom at Cogswell’s Grant.



*Box, attributed to Robert Crosman (1709-1799),
Taunton, Massachusetts, 1725-1750.
Gift of Bertram K. and Nina Fletcher Little, Historic New England*

Nina and Bert Little found in Esther Stevens Brazer a kindred spirit; someone who shared their passion for understanding the versatility of the decorative painter. This is reflected in their study of nineteenth-century painted weathervanes, clock dials, boxes, and overmantels, among other objects. For example, Nina Fletcher Little collected pictures in their original frames, documenting the decorative techniques like ones she had observed in furniture decoration and architectural paintings. It was through this close study that Mrs. Little recovered the name and story of Anson Clark (b.1783), an artisan from West Stockbridge, Massachusetts, who worked as a stone cutter, musical instrument maker, daguerreotypist, and inventor. Sometime in the 1830s he decorated a series of picture frames using a limited number of stencils to create a variety of bronze-powdered effects. “To document the makers of ornamental frames is not an easy task,” commented Nina Fletcher Little in *Country Arts in Early American Homes*, acknowledging that while some painted frames were made to order for the trade, others were decorated by professionals for private commissions or made by amateurs for personal use. Anson Clark belonged to the latter category, as his frames remained in his family.

While the works of itinerant and professional male artisans are well-represented in the collection at Cogswell’s Grant, the Littles also acquired wonderful examples by women. Around 1837, Almira Edson (1803-1886) painted a large and colorful family register for Israel Woodward and his two wives, Betsey Winslow and Persis Martindale.

Almira Edson created at least six registers between 1835 and 1847 in and around Halifax, Vermont. Nina Fletcher Little investigated these registers with the help of fellow collectors Arthur and Sybil Kern, who had acquired an almost identical register in the early 1980s. Together, they tracked down a signed example at the New-York Historical Society and worked together to recover Almira Edson's story. Born in Halifax, Vermont, Edson worked for several decades as a school-teacher before joining the newly founded Perfectionist Community in Putney, Vermont.

As a member of this utopian religious community, Almira Edson was prohibited from engaging in romantic or sexual relationships with other followers; yet, in 1842 she eloped with John Lyvere and incurred the wrath of the commune's leader John Humphrey Noyes, who expelled the couple. This period overlapped with the dates inscribed on the family registers, which Edson would have executed during and after her stint in the Perfectionist Community. It is certainly possible that she continued to offer her services once the Lyveres moved to Vernon, Connecticut in 1850.

Nina Fletcher Little found her passion in the work of scouring archives, studying other collections, and piecing together scraps of genealogical information to better understand the painted surfaces she and her husband so clearly cherished. However, when it came to replicating those painted surfaces, she admitted, "I just don't seem to have the urge to actually do the work." In a talk given by Nina Fletcher Little to honor Esther Stevens Brazer, Little singled out Brazer's willingness to get her hands dirty:

"I have seen her make a stencil from a wall design, put it on the paper and expertly and quickly fill in color so when finished the two were absolutely identical. I thought it was amazing then and I found now in trying to do something I more than ever realize how expertly she could do it. It was an education to see her mix paints on an old newspaper palette and arrive so quickly at clear colors and then take that paint and apply it to woodwork. You could not tell her work and the original apart – it was certainly exceptional workmanship."

While Mrs. Little herself was not a painter, what united her and Esther Stevens Brazer, and those who followed in their footsteps, was a cultivated curiosity about early American decorative arts – and by extension, early American life.

This curiosity extended to historic wallpaper. Esther Stevens Brazer had an interest in stenciled walls, shared by many subsequent members of HSEAD. In 1923, Brazer donated to Historic New England two cut samples of reproductions she had made based on extant wallpaper found in the John Hicks House in Cambridge, which Brazer (Mrs. Fraser at that time) and her husband, Cecil Eaton Fraser (Professor at Harvard), occupied from 1922 until about 1930. During the time she was restoring the house, Mrs. Brazer encountered wads of paper stripped from the walls of the upstairs bedroom; these thick scraps contained remnants of fifteen layers of wallpaper, from which she reproduced by hand the three oldest designs. Two of them were stenciled, but the third was a block-printed pattern; to reproduce the latter, Brazer wrapped a linoleum block around a sewer pipe and was able to successfully print the design. Over the years, Historic New England has been the grateful recipient of other historic wallpaper samples donated by members of the Historical Society of Early American Decoration; these contributions help to make our collection of wallpaper one of the two largest in the United States, and certainly the best documented wallpaper collections in the world.

These donations also help to flesh out the story of wallpaper design in New England, shining the spotlight on itinerant painters like Moses Eaton (1796-1886), who, in the words of Nina Fletcher Little, “brought color and imaginative decoration to the homes of the outlying settlers in rural America.” Moses Eaton traveled from town to town, taking with him a small kit of paint brushes, colors, and cut-out stencils, with which he created a seemingly endless variety of decorative wall treatments. Eaton is believed to have decorated countless New England homes before finally settling down to the life of a farmer in Hancock, New Hampshire. Moses Eaton’s stencil kit was discovered by Janet Waring, whose book *Early American Stencils and Walls and Furniture* is still the classic source on the subject. Waring visited Moses Eaton’s descendants who were living in New Hampshire and found in their attic was a box containing eight brushes and seventy-eight stencils. Also in the box were several wooden stamps, older than the rest of the contents and likely once used in textile printing. Janet Waring compared the Eaton stencil patterns to stenciled walls in the David Thompson House in West Kennebunk, Maine and the Lawrence Blake Turner House in Pepperell, Massachusetts to verify the attribution of Moses Eaton as the artist.



*Painter's Work Box and Stencils, Moses Eaton (1796-1886), 1825.
Bequest of Miss Janet Waring, Historic New England*

Historic New England also has a section of original Moses Eaton stenciled walls in the collection, saved from when the David Thompson House was destroyed and donated by Nina Fletcher Little in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s, Dorothy Waterhouse, a noted authority on early wallpaper, used these stencils and surviving fragments to adapt several of Moses Eaton's patterns for a line of reproductions offered by her company, Waterhouse Wallhangings, Inc. Dorothy Waterhouse's passion for wallpaper emerged in 1937, when she and her husband were restoring their circa 1799 house on Cape Cod and she uncovered several layers of wallpaper, the earliest being hand blocked prints with royal seals and tax stamps intact on the back of the papers. She began visiting old New England homesteads looking for other surviving fragments, and what started out as a passionate hobby soon became a business offering her well-documented wallpaper collection for reproduction.

Another strong sub-category of Historic New England's collections is china painting, particularly by women painters. This includes the works Lydia A. Trippe of Wellesley, Massachusetts, who painted dozens of Limoges porcelains for her family between the 1870s and 1880s. Limoges blanks came in all forms and sizes, including dinnerware, chargers, teapots, planters, lamps, punch bowls and vases. These blanks were produced in the factories in France then exported to the United States for one of the many amateur artists of the era to pur-

chase and paint by hand. Lydia Trippe represents many late nineteenth century women who found in decorative painting a skill to nurture and a pleasurable activity to devote their leisure hours; but on the opposite end of the spectrum were women like Celia Thaxter and Jane Tucker, who each used decorative painting as a means of charting a new course for their lives.

Celia Thaxter (1835-1894) was an important late nineteenth-century American poet and literary figure whose works were published in literary magazines. Born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Thaxter grew up on a small rocky island off the coast of New Hampshire where her family ran a hotel. She published her first poem at the age of 26, and her first book of poetry was published in 1872. Thaxter was dependent on writing for her income, which once caused her to complain to her friend, “foolishness it is, I think, ever to force one’s pen to do anything.” In 1874, she discovered decorative painting, a hobby that transformed her entire perspective. “I can scarcely think of anything else,” she later wrote to another friend.

“I want to paint everything I see; every leaf, stem, seed, vessel,
grass blade, rush, and reed and flower has new charms, and
to think I knew them all before. Such a new world opens...

What a resource for the dreary winter days to come!”

Celia Thaxter soon began decorating blank teacups and saucers, pitchers, and vases, which she then sold, earning her a neat and tidy profit. In the winter of 1877 alone, she completed 114 ceramic pieces for sale.

Like Celia Thaxter, Jane Tucker was also responsible for helping support her family. While the Tuckers had been affluent in the mid-nineteenth century, financial reverses in the 1870s left them destitute and needing to pay for their large house in Wiscasset, Maine. While her brothers found varying degrees of success, Jane worked for a short time as an embroiderer at a Boston department store before she began painting china for income. This was one of the few socially acceptable ways for middle-class women to earn money in the nineteenth century. One article in *Harper’s* published in 1882 titled “Money-Making for Ladies” noted the excess of hand-painted china on the market, and the author wrote: “Exceptionally beautiful work of this kind is always well paid; but among the quantities for sale the stamp of genius is not often found.” Jane Tucker may have been one of the few exceptions, as shown by a set of twelve plates decorated with flowers and fruit made for her family before she was twenty years old.



*Set of plates painted by Jane Tucker, 1879-1885.
Gift of Miss Jane S. Tucker, Historic New England*

Jane Tucker won two first prizes for china painting at the State Fair in Lewiston in 1886 and a display of her works could be viewed at the town drugstore. This success may have encouraged Tucker to attempt to set-up classes teaching china painting, for in 1889 she canvassed surrounding towns to find women who would pay to for instruction. Unfortunately, she found insufficient local interest. The truth is that few women made significant money as china painters. While successful painters could earn as much as \$500 to \$800 a year (in comparison, a typical middle-class family earned roughly \$750 a year), the average painter made as little as \$25 a year. Jane Tucker eventually gave up on the trade and went on to work as a traveling saleswoman, as a boarding housekeeper and as a provisioner, raising vegetables and squab, which she sold to a local inn.

The hand-painted china by Celia Thaxter and Jane Tucker represents one type of suitably “appropriate” work that was becoming increasingly available to women as they neared the twentieth century. Similarly, the Paul Revere Pottery was founded during the Progressive Era to give Italian and Jewish immigrant girls in Boston a means to improve their education and support themselves through the sale of hand-decorated ceramics. Although the pottery never made money and was supported by Boston philanthropists, nearly all the women who worked there graduated high school and over half of them pursued higher education. For them, painted decoration represented economic independence. Around the same time, even in the same city, folks like Esther Stevens Brazer and Nina Fletcher Little had found a different

kind of purpose in the study of historic painted decoration. Brazer and Fletcher were keenly aware of the preciousness and fragility of their own material heritage, and the work of preservation became their own vocation, encompassing not only collecting and documenting but also learning, reproducing, and teaching the techniques of early American decoration which waned with the rise of the contemporaneous Arts and Crafts and Industrial Design movements.

While there are many members of HSEAD that I could highlight as practitioners of early American decoration, I'll draw attention to one individual whose own artistic legacy is preserved in the collections of Historic New England: Laura Godfrey Loud Orcutt (1910-1997), who was a charter member of the Stevens Plains (Portland) chapter. Laura Orcutt was born in Bangor and spent much of her adult life in Portland. She trained in New York at the School of Applied Arts and the Arts Student League. By the 1960s, she was painting on tin and had submitted several pieces into exhibitions. Orcutt also made reverse painted glass, stenciling on chairs, theorems of cloth, and other forms, which were featured in issues of *The Decorator* and donated to HSEAD. She also donated to Historic New England a tea cannister dated to between the 1820s and 1840s; there is a note painted on the bottom of the cannister that reads: "when striped 1943, traces/found of ribbon knot and/festoon at ends of caddy /too faint for reproduction." I wonder if Laura herself created this note (although it would seem very early for her) or if she recognized the hand of a kindred spirit, someone who sought to recover "previous inheritance" underneath the layers of paint and, when that failed, added their own decoration to the surface – and ensured that the next person who handled this object would know the full story of its life.

When I set out to research and write this talk, I had already committed to the somewhat ambitious subtitle "The Past, Present, and Future of Early American Decoration." While I cannot predict the future of this field, I have many reasons to be optimistic that HSEAD's work will continue to be relevant, interesting, and valuable for generations to come. We've all observed a recent yearning among the public, and especially younger people, to have tangible, meaningful interactions with America's material heritage. When I show students needlework samplers made by girls as young as ten years old, they instantly make a connection to the hand of the maker who existed centuries ago. Similarly, when I show visitors the tools of the artisan's trade, includ-

ing the stencils, kits, and brushes they used to create something decorative and beautiful, it reminds them of the skill, training and talent that went into ornamenting everything from wallpaper to furniture. Then, when we put faces to the names of the people who made these objects, whether they were amateur or professional, itinerant artist or factory worker, it unlocks an even greater sense of understanding and, most importantly, empathy for those who came before us and helped to steward this grand tradition of decoration that we've inherited.

Lastly, when you ask an individual to slow down and look closely at an object, especially a utilitarian object that was ornamented for the pleasure of the owner and user, whether for profit or for personal enjoyment, it serves as a reminder that decoration is a universal in human society. We are compelled to seek out beauty and charm and whimsy; we gravitate towards things that give us joy to look upon; we are perpetually curious about the patterns and designs and skills of an earlier era. As we continue to reinvest in the work of our own hands and as we recover more stories of the men and women whose skill and labor created the many precious things we've inherited, I believe that the traditions we've preserved and reproduced will continue to inspire people's own passion, curiosity and eagerness to learn from the past.

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4. Nina Fletcher Little, *Little by Little: Six Decades of Collecting American Decorative Arts* (Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1998), 185.
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 10. Arthur and Sybil Kern, "Almira Edson, Painter of Family Registers," *The Magazine Antiques* (September 1982): 558-61.
 11. Nina Fletcher Little, "Talk by Nina Fletcher Little at Kingston, Mass., On September 29, '49" in *The Decorator* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1949): 7-8.
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 13. Nina Fletcher Little, "Itinerant Painting in America, 1750-1850." *New York History* 30, No. 2 (April 1949): 204.
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Berlin Tinshop Logo

The Pattison Family's Legacy in Tinware

by Sallie Calianndri

The tinware saga in Berlin, Connecticut started with two brothers, Edward and William Patterson or Pattison. They were born in Dungannon, County Tyrone, in Northern Ireland, but the family originated in Scotland. Along with a sister, Anna, and perhaps other family members, namely Noah and Jennie, they emigrated from Ireland around 1740. The U.S. Delaware Crafts-persons File, 1600-1995, lists at least 69 tinsmiths from Berlin, and I believe there are more with ties to the town. What made the Pattisons choose central Connecticut is hard to say, but there was another “Patterson” family in the area, and I can’t help but wonder if there were a connection. That is a story for another time. Berlin, at the time of the Pattisons’ arrival, had not yet become a separate town, but consisted of portions of Farmington, Wethersfield and Middletown. It was incorporated in 1785. When the Pattisons arrived, the townspeople were almost exclusively from England and belonged to what is now the Congregational Church. They worshipped in a meeting house, known as the Kensington Ecclesiastical Society, which had started out as the Great Swamp. It was located at the northeast corner of Farmington Avenue and Porter’s Pass, across the present Walgreens Pharmacy, now considered the center of town. This was Kensington, still the western part of Berlin. Later, New Britain and Worthington were set apart as separate sections, with New Britain becoming a separate town in 1850.

William initially lived on East St., New Britain and later moved to Kensington, while Edward settled on Lower Lane, which was then known as the Hartford-New Haven Path. According to Andrews’ History of New Britain, they both married local girls. William married Sarah Dunham, an original member of the First Church in New Britain, established in 1758. Solomon Dunham, Sarah’s brother, also became a tinsmith. William and Sarah later moved to Kensington (possibly to Lower Lane) in 1762. Edward,



Pattison Tin shop on Lower Lane, since demolished. Berlin Historical Society Photo

who came to America with 18 cents in his pocket, married Betsey Hills and established a tin shop across the street from Lt. Samuel Hart, whose granddaughter, Emma Hart Willard, was a noted educator. A poem written by Mrs. Willard, (*Bride Stealing*), mentioned the shiny tinware manufactured across the street. Edward and William's sister, Anna Pattison, married

Amos Galpin of Berlin (then Middletown). All three had numerous children, many of whom had ties to the tin business.

There was ample opportunity for the townspeople to mingle, and soon others in the community began to show an interest in this new industry. Edward remained on Lower Lane and trained apprentices to help in his work. Among them was James Upson, who eventually established a shop in Southington. Edward had begun to peddle his wares around central Connecticut, and later as the business grew, he went farther afield. This early tinware was undecorated. Edward's two sons, Edward and Shubael, worked in the trade with their father. Shubael Pattison was quite the entrepreneur, who according to stories, partnered with John Jacob Astor and traveled as far north as Canada. He also partnered with local tradesmen, including Samuel Porter and his son-in-law Elisha Peck. Shubael married Sarah Hart, literally the girl next door, and they had eight children.

Shubael's daughter Harriet married Orrin Beckley, who was in Wilmington, Delaware by 1812 along with his brothers Chester and Nathaniel. Orrin later returned to Berlin and ran a store on Worthington Ridge, later known as the Galpin Store. This building burned in 1862. It was rebuilt and is now a private home. Another daughter, Chloe Shubael, married her cousin Elisha Peck, son of Lucretia Pattison, Edward's daughter, and they moved to New York State.

Sometime before the American Revolution, William Pattison and his family moved to Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Sarah's brother Solomon



*Worthington Meeting House
Berlin Historical Society Collection*

Dunham lived in Wethersfield (now Berlin) just north of the Worthington Meeting House.

Anna Patterson married Amos Galpin, son of Caleb and Elizabeth Galpin and had three children: Amos, Thomas and Anne. Catharine North said they lived on “Hart St.” also known as Lower Lane. They may later have moved to Worthington Ridge, as the Galpin family owned a lot of land in that area.

Norris Galpin, Thomas’ son, married Hepzibah Wilcox, and after Norris’ death, Hepzibah married Benjamin Wilcox, her first cousin. Henry Galpin, Norris’ son, was only 6 years old when his father died, and he was raised by Benjamin Wilcox. Benjamin and his first wife, Betsy Savage, had three children, Eliza, Samuel and Edward.

Thomas’ grandson Samuel Warner Galpin was a peddler living on Worthington Ridge in 1850.

Benjamin Wilcox (1782-1843), along with brothers Richard and Sylvester, owned a tin-making business with an office in Richmond, Virginia. He built a house on Main St., East Berlin, which still stands. Richard (1785-1839) lived on Berlin St. also in East Berlin. They had a local shop on Berlin St. near the boundary with Cromwell. Sylvester moved to New York State.



*Galpin Store
Berlin Historical Society Collection*

The North Family

There are 14 North tin-makers from Berlin found in the U.S. Delaware Craftspersons File, 1600-1995. They are all related in some way, and many have direct connections to Levi North, (1760-1846), a soldier in the American Revolution, who was captured, held prisoner and forced to work on the prison ship mending tools and weapons. After the war ended, he billed the British government for £1200 for his labor. THEY PAID THE BILL! He used the money to build his house, where he and his wife established an inn. Many of his children became involved in the tin industry, namely: Jedidiah (1789-1855); Edmund (1797-1874), who married Maria, Richard Wilcox’s daughter, (lived in East Berlin); Marilla (1799-1872), a tin painter, who was with Benjamin Wilcox in Richmond in 1819; Norris (1802-1891), who moved to Elmira, New York and Levi (1807-1885), a tinsmith and later tin-tool maker, who remained in Berlin. Simeon North (1765-1862), Levi Senior’s brother,

was the first official pistol maker for the United States during the War of 1812.

Samuel North (1742-1814), was a cousin of Jedidiah & Edmund. He was also a tinsmith. His sons Elijah and Elisha moved to Stevens Plains, Maine. Elijah may have been apprenticed to Zachariah Stevens, and Elisha married Stevens' sister Abigail.

Another relative was Stephen North, the pistol maker and brother to Levi Senior and Simeon. Also, a tinsmith, he moved to Fly Creek, New York around 1790. Mercy North, his daughter, painted tinware, and his sons Linus and Albert were tinsmiths, as was his grandson Ceylon.

Tinware decorating began sometime after the American Revolution. Girls generally had approximately six weeks to learn 'flowering.' They learned on the job, while boys had a traditional apprenticeship. The ladies also earned a paycheck, while boys had room, board and clothing. Although most decorated tin items were not signed, the Berlin Historical Society recently purchased a foot warmer signed by Beulah North. It is not known if the warmer was decorated by her, or if it was her own personal possession. Decorators may have worked for more than one tin shop and designs may have been shared or adapted according to the artist.

The following tin painters associated with Berlin:

Miss Bennett worked for John Dunham and others

Joseph Brown

Roxy Deming, daughter of John Deming

Hubbard girls daughters of John Hubbard

Mercy North, daughter of Stephen North of Fly Creek

Beulah North, sister of Edmund, Jedidiah et. al

Marilla North, Sister of Beulah

Polly Parsons

Candace Roberts

Roxy Roberts

Hepzibah Wilcox m. (1) Norris Galpin (2) Benjamin Wilcox



*Foot Warmer Signed Beulah
North Berlin Historical Society Collection*

Examples of Berlin Tin Decoration



*Tin Making in America
It All Started in Berlin, Connecticut
Berlin Historical Society Collection*



*Trunk Decorated with Ribbon Border
Berlin Historical Society Collection*



*Trunk Decorated with Chevron and Swags
Berlin Historical Society Collection*



*Trunk with "Rake Design," 1800-1846
Filley Tin Shop, Bloomfield, Connecticut
Berlin Historical Society Collection*

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Sallie Caliandri is a lifelong resident of Berlin, Connecticut and President of the Berlin Historical Society. She was recently appointed Town Historian.

The Decorative Arts Chicken or the Garden Egg... Which Came First?

by Richard Benfield

If there is one motif that dominates the decorative arts, with the possible exception of scenes of classical antiquity, it is the plant or flower or, in some cases, a depiction of a full garden. The reason the flower is so ubiquitous on porcelain, sculpture, glass, or furniture is probably obvious, namely the intrinsic visual beauty of flowers and plants. More recently the power of flowers and plants to stimulate other senses of touch, feel, implied smell, even taste, suggests that plants and flowers have a powerful influence on human perceptions of beauty and their aesthetic power to please. The link between the decorative arts and plants and gardens is one of mutual influence, and possibly even symbiosis, but the influence of plants, their history and characteristics have rarely been linked in the literature with the decorative arts. However, the story of gardens and plants is reflected in and influenced by decorative arts movements (think Arts and Crafts movement) and similarly the decorative arts have been greatly influenced by plant introductions and appropriation (think chrysanthemums, clematis and camellias – better recognized as tea!).



Fig. 1. Stellae. Temple of Karnak, Egypt. Author's Photo.



Fig. 2. Book of Hours. Circa 1406 with Acanthus Border.
Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia.

At the HSEAD's 75th Anniversary Meeting Dr. Richard Benfield, world-leading authority on garden tourism, explored the intrinsic attraction of flowers and plants, traced the history of gardens and their relationship to decorative arts, isolated and discussed the roles of five significant, nay titans, in the

introduction of plants into the (decorative arts) world and concluded



Fig. 3. Disc with Lotus Design, Amazon.com.

with areas where gardens and art continue to delight, amaze and contribute to our cultural heritage and evolution.

Plants and gardens are featured in the earliest depictions of society, namely in Egyptian stelae (Fig. 1) and wall paintings. The lotus (Fig. 3) was of course central to Egyptian civilization and is found in most all remnants of the civilization. The subsequent Greek Period was equally desirous of showcasing



Fig. 4. Acanthus Decorated Corinthian Column, Photo Courtesy of Wikipedia.

plants in its art. Indeed, the *acanthus* is almost universal in the decoration of columns, (Fig. 4). The popularity of the *acanthus* has continued long into historical decorative arts, particularly in furniture and as a decorative border, (Fig. 2). However, the *acanthus* was not the first mention of some of our most important flowers, namely the rose, dianthus or carnation and anemones. The profusion of perennial flowers in the Mediterranean Basin was probably the reason that the Greeks were the first to delineate the study of plants as the science of Botany, and that science

has driven plant discovery and use for over 2,000 years.

The Roman Empire saw the first expression of decorative wall art by use of garden scenes and plants in their city and country villas. Numerous examples, from Pompeii to Museum Exhibits in San Antonio, (Fig. 5) testified to the importance Romans placed on plants and gardens in Roman life. Rose, violet, geranium and buttercup pollen samples have been uncovered at garden sites, and lilies, irises, daisies

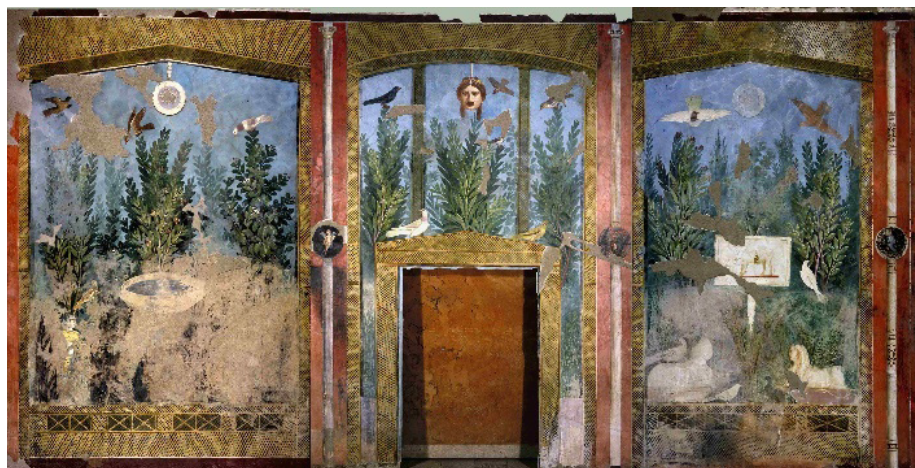


Fig. 5. Wall painting is decorated with sculptures and birds in a garden, Roman/Pompeii, late 1st Century B.C.- early 1st Century A.D. Pigment on Plaster, approx..109 ½" x 215", Parco Archeologico di Pompei, 59467 a-b-d), San Antonio Museum of Art.

Courtesy of the Ministero della Cultura - Parco Archeologico di Pompei.

and other common flowers featured prominently in garden frescoes.

For the next 1,500 years plants and art entered what we still call the Dark Ages in Europe, and while monastical documents proved to be an ongoing interest in plants, especially horticultural interest in gardens, the world was not without the influence of gardens and art in the Islamic World. The death of the prophet Mohammed in 632 A.D. and strictures on reproduction of images of his likeness meant that flowers, gardens and geometric patterns dominated artistic impression. Indeed, the Arabic for garden or *Janna* means “paradise” in the Koran, and the word garden is mentioned almost 150 times in the Koran. The overwhelming use of flowers in Islamic art is too large to discuss here but floral carpets from Iran (Fig. 6.), floral tile work in the Taj Mahal (Fig. 7.) and gardens as the antechamber to living areas testify to the importance of gardens in Islamic decorative arts.



Fig. 6. The Wagner Carpet. From: *The Story of Gardening*. Hobhouse and Wilson, Pavilion Press, 2019.

The year 1545 was the most significant year in garden evolution for it was in that year the first University Botanic Garden opened in Padua, Italy. Owing to a diminution of wild plant availability for study and “new” plants coming from Asia, the new world saw a need, particularly for medicinal use, for an ex-situ museum for plants – the Botanic Garden. These first Botanic Gardens were thus Physic Gardens or gardens for education and medicine, but the need for order and the rise of nobility saw a rapid movement towards the garden as art in which beds and plants were laid out in an esthetical pleasing style and manner. The decorative arts soon copied this trend, and here the works of Daniel Marot (1661-1752) in his Knot - Garden designs (Fig. 7.) and in his Geometric Tables (Fig. 8) show the linkage in styles in art and garden.

Almost 100 years after the establishment of the first Botanic



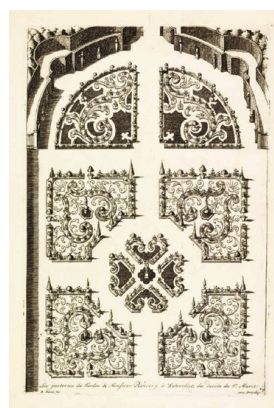
Fig. 7. Itimad al-Daula, Taj Mahal, India, The Story of Gardening. Hobhouse and Wilson, Pavilion Press, 2019.

Garden, the introduction of the tulip into western Europe from Asia via Istanbul caused a sensation in both the garden and the art world. The tulip was first visually recorded in Leiden in 1610, but by 1637, it had caused an economic and, soon, an artistic storm to arise. The cause was the demand for variegated or “broken” tulips, and it caused what has been called the first economic bubble burst in history. From the price of a house in November 1637, to a pile of worthless rotting bulbs in February 1638, the tulip has a remarkable place in plant history.

For our purposes, art featuring the tulip flourished in the



*Fig .8. Geometric Table by Daniel Marot.
Courtesy of Pinterest and Wikipedia*



*Fig 8a. Engraving of a Garden Design by Daniel Marot c.1700.
Courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England.*



*Fig. 9. Wedgwood Bulb Pot, c.1780.
Permanent Collection, Courtesy
of San Antonio Museum of Art.*

form of paintings and ceramic bulb holders, (Fig. 9) but the lure of the tulip lingers in our decorative arts today.

Across the English Channel, a father and son team began to collect plants from the low countries and levant and, most importantly, from the New World, particularly the Northeast USA. The ability of the Tradescants, father and son, to acquire new plants,

enabled them to open the world's first plant museum (their "Ark" – entry fee sixpence) and the availability of a variety of new plants from the New World, saw a movement away from the regular geometric design of gardens as art, into a more open, landscape style of design. This change certainly appealed to the decorative arts movement as trees, shrubs and new forms of plants (*Viburnum* spp.) made for creative expression in the arts. One area, where the landscape movement embraced retro styles, was the landscape garden that thought statuary and buildings of classical Greece were necessary parts of a garden. Thus, Stourhead, Stowe and Rousham became outstanding examples of English landscape gardens.

Concurrent with these trends in Europe, there were two outstanding botanists in the employ of Kew and the Dutch East India Company, Francis Masson and Carl Per Thunberg, respectively. They were sending back from the Cape of Good Hope, on the southernmost region of Africa, new plants such as pelargonium, gladioli, iris and proteas. While from Japan, Carl Per Thunberg and his successor, Von Siebold, were secreting out azaleas, lilies, hydrangeas and camellias. Of course, the opening (albeit limited) of new plants from the Asian countries caused an explosion in the decorative arts in all things Japanese. The emergence and popularity of English porcelain by Wedgwood (Figs. 10 and 11) and others and the increasing wealth of the English provided the vehicle for this demand for all things Japanese. In many ways this demand remains unabated.

The coming of the Industrial Revolution only exacerbated the mania for all things Asian, but the name of the plant hunter, to whom perhaps most is owed for both plants and porcelain, was Robert Fortune. For many years, tea had been the drink of choice for only the



Figs. 10 and 11. Wedgwood Flower Vases and Water Pitcher c.1780.
Photo Courtesy of www.Wedgwood.com.

wealthy, and Chinese porcelain tea services were the prerogative of the wealthy. The English, for numerous reasons, had wanted to become involved in the tea trade, but the means of converting *camellia sinensis* to the hot drink was a

well-guarded secret of the Chinese as well as holding a monopoly on the plants that were needed. In 1841, Fortune in the employ of the East India Company, (and four years later Kew Gardens) disguised himself as a Chinese emperor and left the only port the Europeans had access to, Canton (today Guangzhou), to steal the secret and some plants. Of course, he succeeded and the rest as we say is history. Today, tea is the most consumed beverage in the world, and in the years following Fortune's theft, the decorative arts movement provided the porcelain and earthenware for the English masses to enjoy the drink (Fig. 12).

Our investigation of the history of plants and gardens should not go any further without detailing what has been called the coming of the second Tulipomania (see above), namely, the passion for orchids, now referred to as Orchidelirium. Certainly, orchids and orchid cultivation had been known since the Greek Theophrastus in 300 B.C. and the Dutch East India Company had spirited out orchids from Japan



Fig. 12. Wedgwood Tea Service c. 1880.
Photo Courtesy of www.Wedgwood.com.

in 1639 owing to their exclusive trading rights, but it was the massive expansion of the British empire in the 19th Century that saw the delivery of over fifty orchid species to the gardens at Kew, and that today, the orchid is the most popular

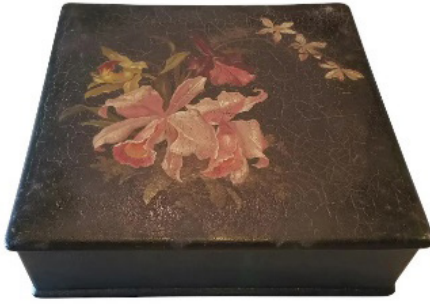


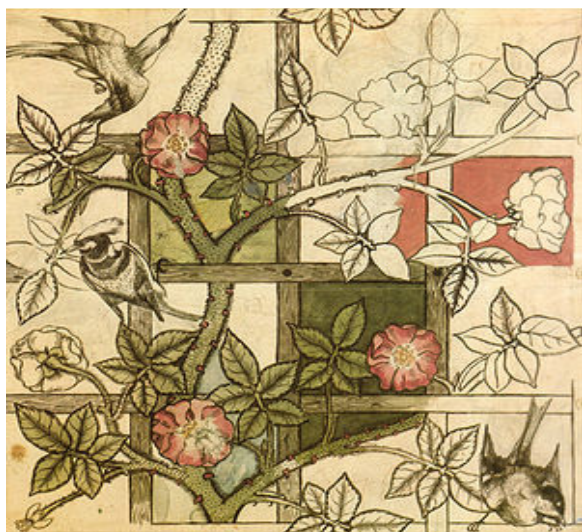
Fig. 13. Orchid Box. HSEAD Exhibition,
Spring 2023.
Author's Photo.

flower grown by amateur plantsmen and constitutes almost 10 % of the world's seed plants. The 28,000 species in the world, today, mostly emanate from the success of the Singapore Botanic Garden that successfully hybridized the orchid in 1899. Today, of the 750 genera of orchids, there are over 100,000 hybrids. What is generally unknown is that it was Charles Darwin in 1862 who first investi-

gated and led the way to the successful human pollination of orchids. Such was Orchidelirium during Victorian times that the decorative arts were redolent with orchids as decoration, culminating perhaps in *The Great Gatsby* when Gatsby brings in a greenhouse of white orchids (which symbolized, "Infidelity prevented!") at Daisy's first meeting with Nick.

By the end of the 19th Century, there was a reaction to the gritty, grimy and exploitative Industrial Revolution, and there occurred in Great Britain, under first the urging of John Ruskin and later William Morris, what has been termed the Arts and Crafts movement. While much of the early urging of Morris was for a more natural approach to arts and crafts, with nostalgia for romance, integrity and craftsmanship, much of what we see today can be seen in gardens and parks. Ironically, William Morris's wallpaper, *Trellis*, with its medieval motifs and plants, is as famous as the houses and gardens that were so much influenced by the movement, (Fig. 14). His garden at Red House and Kelmscott Manor may still be visited, and the other names and places most associated with this movement are: Gertrude Jekyll (Hestercombe and Munstead Wood); Laurence Johnson (Hidcote); the earliest arts and crafts garden example by the author, William Robinson (Gravetye House), now a hotel! The Arts and Crafts Gardens in the UK are often described as the height of English garden design.

In the United States, examples are the many gardens founded by the DuPont family in the Brandywine Valley (Longwood, Winterthur). However, among the most noteworthy examples are the works of Beatrix Ferrand, the garden designer, whose gardens in the Northeast lead to the term, Country Place Era. Ironically, one of Beatrix



*Fig. 14. Trellis Wallpaper Pattern, from William Morris
Public House, Hammersmith, London, England.
Author's Photo, 2023.*

Ferrand's most famous gardens, Dumbarton Oaks, in Washington, D.C., was bequeathed to and is now owned by Harvard University. Harvard became the custodian of what Mrs. Bliss, the benefactor, described as "a repository with especial emphasis upon Byzantine Art. It represented the history and culture of the Eastern Empire in all its aspects."

Today, decorative arts

and gardens may all be seen in one location! In another twist of irony, the only Gertrude Jekyll designed garden in America is the garden at Glebe House – three miles up the road from HSEAD's 75th Anniversary Celebratory Convention!

In a discussion of art and flora, it would be a mistake to leave the 19th Century without a reference to the influence of Monet on the role played by floral splendor on Impressionist and Post-Impressionist Art. What is equally exciting is that one may still visit Monet's Garden, planted and painted between 1892 and 1925 in Giverny, France. The famous water-lily pond is still there, and the equally important, Clos Normand, where Monet first experimented with light and color in art, is a feast for the eye, (Fig. 15).

The period following the First and Second World Wars saw a decline in garden maintenance and building largely due to the lack of available labor and the scarcity of materials. Certainly, Arts and Crafts Gardens did not disappear as the imperative for color and creativity continued. Thus, we might include for mid-century iconic gardens those gardens associated with Vita Sackville-West in the UK -Sissinghurst and in America those surrounding the architectural masterpieces of Frank Lloyd Wright. It was really not until the seventies that gardens moved from utilitarian garden plots in new suburbs to more modernistic and ambitious projects. Concurrently, many other old gardens

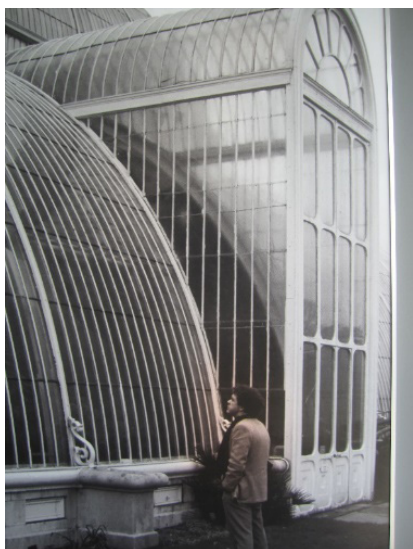


Fig. 15. Monet's Pond, Giverny, France. Author's Photo.

were restored and renewed. The success of melding historic gardens with new inviting gardens has been such that garden tourism is perhaps the most dominant form of tourism today with over 130 million visits in the USA and over 100 million in the UK. Today Garden Tourism is more popular than visits to Disneyworld and Disneyland combined, and it is more popular than visitors to America's most popular tourism destinations, Orlando or Las Vegas both, with "only" 70 million visitors annually. In the UK, National Trust Properties which are dominated by historic properties furnished with decorative arts, receive over 25 million visitors annually.

Garden staff learned that the number of visitors to their gardens increased dramatically with the addition of events and shows, and the lure of exotic plants or pretty flowers is just not enough these days! Notwithstanding the plethora of new gardens and their increasing partnerships with decorative arts, we might conclude with three examples of the success of gardens partnering with decorative arts.

First, in Seattle in 1971, a young art student from Tacoma Washington was hitch-hiking around Europe, and he stopped at Kew Gardens to admire the flowers, (Fig. 16). So impressed by the power

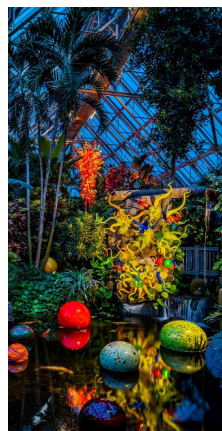


*Fig. 16. Dale Chihuly, Kew Gardens, 1971.
Photo Courtesy Dale Chihuly and
Kew Gardens.*

of flowers and following a successful first installation in Franklin Park Botanic Garden in Columbus, Ohio, he became an accomplished artist in glass. He asked Kew in 2005, if he could exhibit some of his glassware in the conservatory. Kew agreed, and again,....the rest is history. His name was Dale Chihuly, and it started what became a major feature of decorative glass art in gardens. To date, Chihuly glass has been exhibited in over ten world famous Botanic Gardens around the world from Kew (again) to Singapore, and in 2012 Chihuly opened a permanent exhibition entitled, Glass and Gardens beneath the

space needle in Seattle, (Figs 17 and 18).

In Tucson, from October 2016 until May, the Exhibit "Frida Kahlo: Art, Garden, Life" was on loan to the Tucson Botanic Garden from the New York Botanical Garden. This Exhibition explored the natural world and, in particular, the colors and forms that characterized the art of Frida Kahlo. This Exhibit generated an increase of over 50% in visitor numbers and doubled the revenue in the gift shop. It is believed that the Frida Kahlo Exhibit moved the garden from a small municipal garden to one of the nation's top "must see" gardens and



Figs. 17 and 18. Gardens and Glass, Seattle, Washington. Author's Photo, 2019.

noted as one of the best Gardens in America.

Finally, in what has to be one of the most ironic convergence of gardens and decorative art, in 1999, Tim Smit, the music impresario, visited an abandoned and disused China clay - Kaolin quarry in Cornwall, UK. The pit had been abandoned many years ago, had no soil, was fifteen feet below the water table and was heavily polluted. Smit established the Eden Project, two large exhibition domes in which are placed a rotating exhibit of sculptures and artistic pieces, an education



*Figs. 19 and 20. Eden Project, Bodelva-Cornwall, England.
Garden Tourism, Author's Photo 2016.*

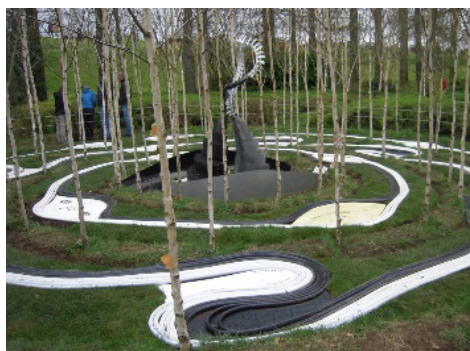
center and hospitality facilities, and today, the Eden Project attracts over 1 million visitors a year. In short, from decorative art to garden to decorative art, (Figs 19 and 20).

What lies in the future for gardens and decorative arts? Certainly, we can expect flowers to continue to dominate in all the decorative arts, but if evidence from what Botanic Gardens have been showcasing in the 21st Century, we might expect to see more glass sculptures a la Chihuly, more sculptures in the gardens and a wider range of artistic expression, possibly more controversial and

certainly creations more than just purely aesthetically pleasing to the garden visitor. Perhaps. the best example of the marriage of gardens and art was the opening in 2006 (and subsequently expanded significantly) of Glenstone, outside Washington D.C. At the heart is a museum of modern art. However, within the grounds' 92 acres, Jeff Koons'



*Fig. 22. Jeff Koons, "Split-Rocker," 2000.
Photo Courtesy of Glenstone Museum,
Potomac, Maryland.*



*Fig. 23. Garden of Cosmic Speculation,
Dumfries, Scotland.
Author's Photo, 2016*

sculpture, "Split-Rocker," dominates, with 27,000 flowers, (Fig. 22).

At the other end of the spectrum, the Garden of Cosmic Speculation in Dumfries, Scotland, and yet only open once a year, uses mathematical designs and forms (double helixes, fractals, black holes) to provide a visual manifestation of the cosmos.



Dr. Richard Benfield, former professor at Central Connecticut State University, is an independent researcher and author of Garden Tourism.

A Tradition Evolves

by Valerie Burnham Oliver

A welcoming atmosphere was always intended at the initial Esther Stevens Brazer Guild / HSEAD meetings, whether happening naturally or planned. The descriptions of meetings in the early *Decorators* and Annual Reports gave only a slight glimpse into the actual welcoming aspects; reports focused on the business at hand. However, one can see that having a special tea, with members appointed as servers, was the first way to provide a welcoming and social atmosphere for attendees. The Hospitality Committee, for the Hampton Bays, L.I., New York Meeting in May 1955, was reported as helping with Exhibition, Registration, during tours and seating arrangements at lunches and dinners. The Seneca Chapter provided flowers for the dinner tables, corsages for the VIPs, sold miniature furniture and provided a suggestion box at the 10th Anniversary Celebration in May of 1956 in Rochester, New York. Other chapters helping with hospitality were New Jersey, William Penn and Fairchester, whose members served as hostesses at all functions, provided a bulletin board of information and a suggestion box for the Atlantic City, New Jersey Meeting, June 1958.



May 1960

Hospitality's Hudson Valley Chapter made place cards for table hostesses, noted as "antique mirrors" and made cookies for the tea at the Lake Placid, New York, Fall 1959 Meeting. With the theme, "Chippendale," for Williamsburg, Virginia, Spring 1960, the Hospitality Committee provided "decorative name tags," banquet place cards, flowers, including table arrangements, corsages, helped with Exhibition and provided a suggestion box. [May 1960]

It was at this time that specific hospitality activities were included in the two individual meeting reports. Old Colony Chapter was noted as decorating 200 bellow shaped tags that were sent to the Registration Chair for the Harwichport, Massachusetts 1962 Meeting. "Charming" Cape Cod sea shell cor-

sages were appreciated by President Emilie Underhill. Interesting to note also was that their afternoon tea was reported costing .50 each. The Long Island Chapter hosted the opening tea for the East Hampton, May 1964 Meeting where they volunteered to assume expenses for the tea-set honoring new members and “A” Award winners. This Chapter also made nosegays for honorees, place cards for the banquet, flowers for the speaker's table, arranged social hours, provided the bulletin board and suggestion box and helped with Exhibition. The Hudson Valley Chapter, with country



Spring 1967



Fall 1967

painting (CP) the theme, painted CP designs on large buttons for new members as well as making name tags, trustee identification tags and place cards for the Cooperstown, New York Meeting Sept. 1964. At the Stockbridge, Massachusetts Meeting, Fall 1965, the tea was limited to new members and those who had won awards. (All were, of course, welcome at Norman Rockwell's talk.)

Decorative efforts were increasing, or at least the reporting was more complete, as for the Newport, Rhode Island Meeting, Spring 1967, Mary Jane (MJ) Clark's Hospitality Committee provided Viking Ship place cards for the Head Table and hostesses, mementoes for the trustees and name tags featuring stenciled pineapples (the symbol for Newport and hospitality): gold pineapple on black background for members, silver pineapple on black for applicants and gold pineapple on red background for guests. Committee members also helped as greeters and with tours. The hand work continued as for the meeting at Grossingers, Fall 1967. Hospitality designed and stenciled 250 member and guest tags; 42 place cards were stenciled, and dried

flower corsages were made for the trustees. [Spring 1967 / Fall 1967]

Sara Tiffany designed name tags that were made by Hospitality's William Penn Chapter for the Wilmington, Delaware May 1968 Meeting.



May 1968

The tag depicted the old red brick Court House in New Castle. Here also tags were slightly different, a black background for members and a green background for guests. The Friday dinner tables held a "Blue Hen," related to Delaware folklore, and the Saturday dinner saw hostess favors of small azalea theorems made by Jane Bolster. Hospitality's Jean Bennington received help from William Penn and Baltimore Chapters in providing "Exhibition sitters," greeters, enamel flower pins for trustees, corsages for new Master

Teacher (Virginia Martin) and the wife of the speaker. [May 1968]

For the Pike, New Hampshire Sept. 1968 Meeting the theme was "Autumn Gold." Strawberry Banke assisting Hospitality Chair, Mrs. John Clinkman, made "leaf tags" and "Old Man Mountain" guest



May 1969

tags; "skiers" place cards were made for the head table. These decorative touches complemented the talk on "Techniques in Gold Leaf" by M. Swift & Sons and the talk by Mrs. Stanley Van Riper on gold leaf on metal.

An especially outstanding hostessing job was carried out by the New Jersey Chapter for the Atlantic City, New Jersey Meeting, May 1969. Here the theme was "The Sea-Shell in Ornament." The Spring 1969 *Decorator* provided details: shell designs on name tags, paper weights with a shell for Head Table participants, "pearl sprays" for trustees, coffin pins with painted shells for Table Hostesses, and "real shell compositions" for flower arrange-

ments for Exhibition made by Elizabeth Bourdon. [May 1969]

These decorative touches contributed by Hospitality Committees, Hostess Chapter members and others have continued reflecting a meeting theme, meeting location or other factors. With the publication of a Newsletter beginning formally in 1975, there is space to communicate further details of who and what is involved to create a welcoming atmosphere at national exhibition meetings, now just once a year in the spring.

Indeed, the HSEAD 75th+2 Anniversary Exhibition Meeting, held at the Wyndham Southbury, Southbury, Connecticut, April 21-23, 2023, is no exception. The Charter Oak Chapter was asked to help in these endeavors. With the Diamond Anniversary, 75 Years, the theme, the Chapter began to plan. The name tag consisted of a photo of the Charter Document. For the Friday evening dinner, a cluster of 16 white boxes containing special coffee mugs were placed in the center topped with a large silvery bow. The white mugs were designed by Sandra Cohen with colored decorated objects representing our decorative categories along with the HSEAD seal and meeting information. The box also contained the seal and meeting data. Each person at the table received two mugs. Additionally, at each place setting was a small booklet designed by Valerie Oliver with Charter Document, 1947 Membership List from *The Decorator* and a list of all Chapters.

For the Saturday evening's dinner, the round tables, seating 8, were set with dark charcoal colored table cloths and white napkins. A large white cloth square was in the center with a silver paper circle in its center. Standing tall in the center were white (and a few pink) orchids secured by Jane Cary. Nearby in each center was a shiny, silver paper wrapped 5 x 7" framed item. The large silvery bow enhanced its decorative effect. Chapter members painted flowers, any style, for the frames that had been secured by Becky Kidder. She mailed the number of silver frames to those interested in painting the flowers. The bows were secured by Mary Avery. The shiny silver wrapping papers were secured by Becky Kidder and



Sandy Strong. Once wrapped, all would be a surprise.

At each place, the white napkins were adorned with silver napkin rings with sparkly diamonds (not real of course) that were Mary Avery's idea. She even attached a small white sales tag with the



red HSEAD logo and "75" in black. With the setting so decorated, Jane Cary led the tables in deciding who the winners would be of the orchid and the wrapped silver package. The printing of name tags, small circular

meeting tags, Charter Document booklet and general expenses for mugs, napkin rings, flowers, etc. were provided by HSEAD.

By working together, the Society and the Chapter were able to present a sparkly and warm welcome to all attendees - continuing a tradition that started with a simple, but special tea, hosted by honored members.



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



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 of encouraging excellence through evaluation of members’ work began at the Fall Meeting at the Wellesley Hills Country Club, Wellesley, Mass. in 1947 (recorded in Vol. 1, No.2 of *The Decorator*).

The following excerpted overview offers a perspective of the guidelines (reviewed and revised with respect to ongoing research over the years) for recording 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
Bartow, Pauline 2022

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



Polly Bartow: Master Craftsman

by Sandra Cohen

A student of history and New England studies, Polly Bartow, whose mother was an artist, had a natural talent and a penchant for early America's arts and crafts. After marrying in 1976, she met her husband's grandmother, Helen Blauvelt Fish, who had been an active HSEAD member in the New Jersey Chapter. Over the years, Polly visited Helen's studio, saw her beautifully decorated works and listened to her excitedly share her patterns and the painting techniques that required time and practice; Helen had earned five "A" Awards. Polly was inspired by Helen's enthusiasm and dedication to honing her skills, and she was clearly captivated by the beauty of early American decorative painting. Polly said that she "fell in love with the Ransom Cook Box," a bronze powdered stenciled antique, that caught her eye from the beginning, and initially, reproducing it had become her goal.

In 2002, Helen passed away and left her studio to Polly, who now had the time to enjoy Helen's gift. Polly immediately sought a teacher and discovered Lois Tucker, who lived an hour-and-a-half away and "who pushed me to do my best work." Polly studied for twenty-two years with Lois, a researcher, teacher and a Specialist in Country Painting with skills in each HSEAD category of decorative painting. Her initial intention was to reproduce the Ransom Cook box, but in her words, "I took lessons and was hooked." Polly became a Brazer Guild Member in 2003 and said that she received a "B" Award for her first entry (2007) for Bronze Powder Stenciling on Wood. Polly then "set the quiet little goal for myself of trying to earn an "A", which was realized in 2014, for her Reverse Painting on Glass.

Over the years, Polly has taken the opportunity to study with the following Specialists and Master Craftsmen who have shared their expertise and years of tips and trials in achieving the best recordings of original early American painted designs: Linda Brubaker, Dortia Davis, Anne Dimock and Astrid Donnellan.

Polly and her husband, Ken, live in Maine and enjoy proximity with their two sons, daughters-in-law and five grandsons. She serves as Treasurer of the Otisfield Historical Society and is President of the 1839 Bell Hill Meetinghouse Association in Otisfield, Maine. Polly, a grant writer for both, is leading a significant restoration project of the Bell Hill Meetinghouse. A long-time member of the DAR, Polly has served as Maine State President (Regent), 3 years; National Long Range Planning Commission, 3 years; National Chairman, American Heritage Committee, 3 years; National Executive

Officer, Office of Librarian General, 3 years. She and Ken volunteer weekly for Meals on Wheels and are active in their church. Both she and Ken had worked tirelessly on locating and renovating HSEAD's new Research Center in Schenectady, New York.

Polly's interest in early America's history and her admiration of its decorative arts are demonstrated in her work for historical societies and organizations dedicated to preserving landmarks and objects that house America's storied past. Her artistic talent in reproducing its beautifully decorated antiques is duly acknowledged and has earned her the Master Craftsman Award.

Upon meeting Polly and seeing her work, Astrid Donnellan, Master Teacher and Master Craftsman, "was impressed with her craftsmanship and thrilled with her accomplishments...Her love and enthusiasm for this art glowed...She was going to be our next Master Craftsman. My wish came true," as did Polly's and likely, grandmother Helen's.

Polly Bartow, Biddeford, Maine
Recipient of Master Craftsman Award
2023 Spring Exhibition, Southbury, Connecticut



Polly Bartow



*Victorian Flower Painting
"A" Award 2022*



*Stenciling on Wood
"A" Award 2007*



*Free Hand Bronze
"A" Award 2011*

Polly Bartow, Biddeford, Maine
Recipient of Master Craftsman Award
2023 Spring Exhibition, Southbury, Connecticut



Country Painting
"A" Award 2012



Stenciling on Tin
"A" Award 2015



Metal Leaf
"A" Award 2016



Clock Dials
"A" Award 2016

Polly Bartow, Biddeford, Maine
Recipient of Master Craftsman Award
2023 Spring Exhibition, Southbury, Connecticut



Country Painting
"A" Award 2017



Pontypool
"A" Award 2018



Gilding on Glass
"A" Award 2019

**Members' "A" Awards
2023 HSEAD's Annual Exhibition
Southbury, Connecticut**



Theorem
Watercolor on Paper
Parma Jewett

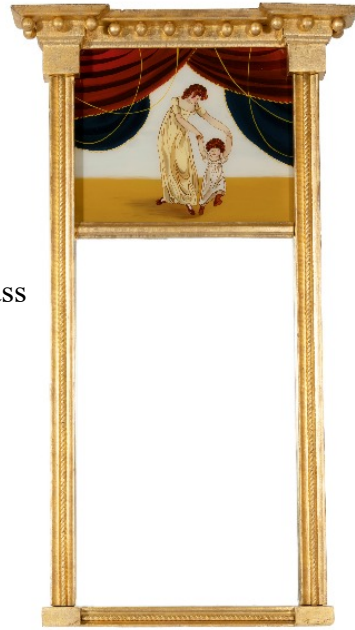
**Women's
Painted Furniture
Betsy Salm**



Country Painting
Dennis Lambert

Members' "A" Awards

Reverse Painting on Glass
Linda Brubaker



Women's Painted
Furniture
Betsy Salm



Members' "A" Awards



Free Hand
Bronze
Linda Mason

Women's
Painted Furniture
Betsy Salm



Reverse Painting on Glass
with Border
Mary C. Roth

Members' "A" Awards

Penwork
Polly Bartow



Country Painting
Alexandra Perrot



Women's Painted
Furniture
Nancy Toombs

Members' "A" Awards

Country Painting
Dennis Lambert



Women's Painted
Furniture
Betsy Salm

Country Painting
Tracy Harris



Members' "A" Awards



Penwork
Polly Bartow



Theorem
Oil on Velvet
Karen Graves



Women's Painted
Furniture
Betsy Salm

Members' "A" Awards

Country Painting

Linda Brubaker



Country Painting
Alexandra Perrot

Metal Leaf
Roberta Edrington



Members' "A" Awards

Metal Leaf
Tracy Harris



Metal Leaf
Roberta Edrington



**Members' "B" Awards
2023 HSEAD's Annual Exhibition
Southbury, Connecticut**



Country Painting
Dennis Lambert

Women's Painted
Furniture
Glenda Barcklow



Metal Leaf
Roberta Edrington

Members' "B" Awards



Free Hand Bronze
Nanci Markusson

Country Painting
Susan Tash



Women's
Painted Furniture
Martha Dolan

Members' "B" Awards

Country Painting
Linda Sheldon



Country Painting
Lucia Murphy

Women's Painted
Furniture
Nancy Toombs



Members' "B" Awards

Country Painting
Linda Brubaker



Free Hand Bronze
Susan Tash

Country Painting
Linda Brubaker



Members' "B" Awards

Country Painting
Linda Brubaker



Country Painting
Susan Tash



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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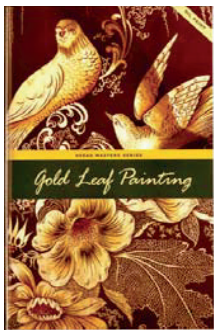
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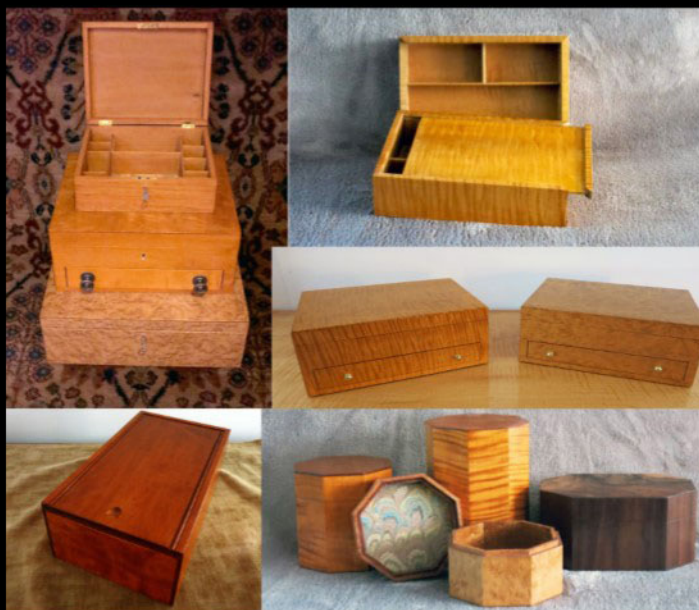


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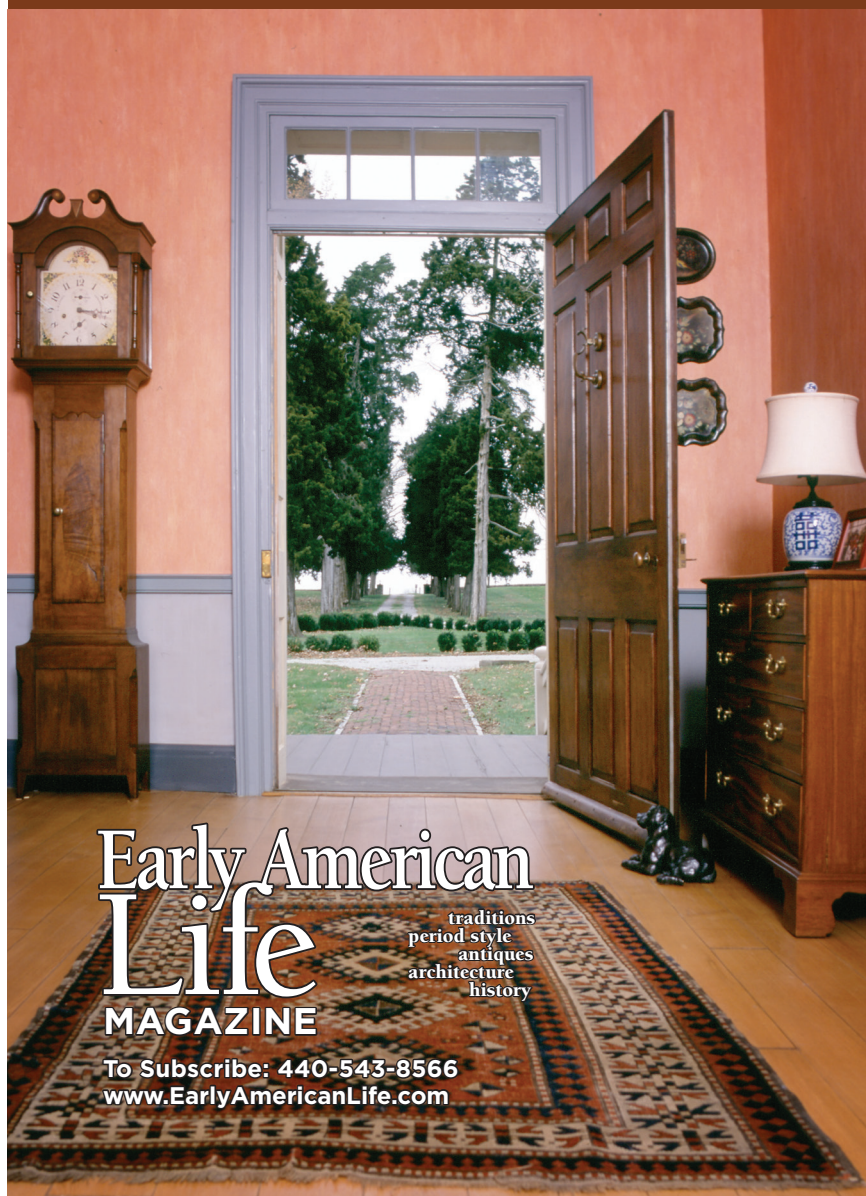
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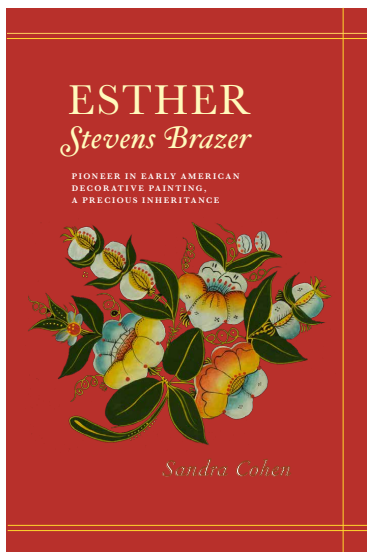
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by
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