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DECORATIVE ARTS

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INTRODUCTION

It is with pleasure that we announce the publication of the first issue of the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*. We have long felt a need for publication of information concerning our various programs of research, study and museum activity.

As museums go, MESDA is but an infant, both in size and in age. Its opening in January, 1965, was filled with the hope that a museum displaying the decorative arts of the early South would fill a void in the knowledge of art historians and antiquarians concerning this part of our southern cultural history. To some extent, the museum has indeed achieved this. We quickly realized, however, that even our dreams for an expanding museum collection, together with lectures and special exhibits, could never gather and display more than a minor part of surviving southern decorative arts. Publication seemed the answer. We made plans to record antiquities outside our collection.

In the spring of 1972 we began a pilot program of field research, sending MESDA's first representative to the Cape Fear area of eastern North Carolina. Through gifts and endowment income we were able to continue our search and to expand our force, during the summer months of 1973, to five representatives. Our experience was so rewarding that the National Endowment for the Humanities has now granted funds, on a matching basis with the MESDA Endowment Fund, to continue the program for three years into 1977. We now have one part-time and four full-time representatives.

At this writing we are nearing completion of our survey of eastern North Carolina and Kentucky. We have also made

a good beginning in Tidewater and Eastern Shore, Virginia. Our constantly expanding study file is beginning to show the extent to which cabinetmakers, silversmiths, artists, potters and other artisans worked in the South. Through the patience and courtesy of hundreds of cooperative owners, we have compiled folders of publishable photographs and data on more than 1500 items.

In 1972 MESDA also initiated its second program of research: that of reading and compiling data from documents relating to the decorative arts of the South. While we have plans to expand this to include information from a variety of manuscript sources, we are preparing first a file of material gleaned from the many newspapers published in Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee before 1821. Through the cooperation of the Archives of the North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, we were able to acquire film of all known North Carolina newspapers of our period. We have also acquired all film known of other southern papers, but find that no other state archives has attempted as comprehensive a program as North Carolina's. Thus, it has become necessary for us to start a microfilming program and to assemble film. When filming is completed for various titles, our plans are to donate the negatives to various state archives or historical societies. This should make the material readily available to scholars of many areas of the South's history. We are seeking papers from private collections to fill in the missing links in our microfilm program.

Our study of newspapers, now in its third year, has been rewarding and over 20,000 entries have been indexed. One can now begin to trace the movements of artists and craftsmen from one geographical area to another, to understand their capabilities and problems, and to know the social and cultural climate of the areas in which they worked. Our approach has been to survey all arts, not just the ones of more popular interest, and so our files tell of the brickmaker and the plasterer as well as the silversmith and the cabinetmaker.

It is, as you see, time to tell you something of our findings, thus the *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*. We hope it will grow. We need your support.

FRANK L. HORTON
Director
May, 1975

*Discovery: A Documented Bow Bowl
Made For Halifax-Lodge / North-Carolina*

BRADFORD L. RAUSCHENBERG

One of the many by-products of an intensive field research program is the discovery of significant ceramics not manufactured in America, but produced for the use of American colonists. Such is the discovery of a Masonic punch bowl made by the Bow factory in London for "Hallifax-Lodge/ North-Carolina."

Located in northeastern North Carolina, Halifax is today a small town with a rich colonial political history. The town is known for its Halifax Resolves of April 12, 1776, an anti-British manifesto which helped prepare the way for the Declaration of Independence. That Halifax produced such a statement was certainly not owing to its size. As George Washington said, after visiting there in 1791: "It seems to be in decline, and does not, it is said, contain a thousand souls." Perhaps the real reasons for its place in history was the influence of its Masonic lodge, the Royal White Hart Lodge, Number Two.

This lodge, the second oldest in the colony (next to Wilmington's St. John's Lodge), held its first meeting in April of 1765² and in subsequent years furnished many of the leaders whose ideas and attitudes helped make the town a center of revolutionary activity.

What is most interesting for our purposes, however, is its 1767 order for "4 bowls Bow China. . . ."

It was the recent discovery of one of these bowls that brings new evidence to the study of Bow porcelain.³



Photographs by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts except where noted.

Figures 1-4. The Halifax Bowl, 1768. Height 4-9/16 inches, diameter 10 7/8 inches.

Stylistically, the bowl associated with this lodge dates around 1770. In the lodge minutes⁴ for the meeting of December 28, 1767, was discovered the following:

Ordered that Brother Miller⁵ get for the use of the Lodge the Sundry things under viz

6 doz wine glasses	} w ^t worm'd Stalks	} with the words Enameled upon them Halifax Lodge N ^o Carolina
12 half pint D ^o		
24 pint D ^o		
3 doz Punch D ^o		
½ doz quart Decanters		
3 2quart D ^o		
4 bowls Bow China to hold 1 gallon each		

This was the first time a documented reference had been found specifying an order of Bow porcelain decorated especially for the American market.⁶ It is ironic that 1767 was also the

year that Josiah Wedgwood sent Thomas Griffith to the Cherokee town of Ayoree in western North Carolina with orders to search for the Cherokee clay, *Unaker*, which had already played an important role in the production of porcelain in England.⁷ Though the Griffith expedition did not send clay to the Bow factory, it is known that shipments of *Unaker* to Bristol,⁸ Plymouth,⁹ and perhaps Liverpool,¹⁰ did occur. Andrew Duché may have brought some Cherokee clay to the Bow factory in the late 1740's¹¹ Duché's apparent connection with Bow's first patent for porcelain and later employment as agent for the quantities of Cherokee clay shipped from the Carolinas to London¹² provides an additional reason for romanticizing that the bowl ordered by the Halifax Lodge might have been made out of Cherokee clay.

The man responsible for this order was probably Joseph Montfort, who became Master of the lodge in 1768 and later became the Provincial Masonic Grand Master of North Carolina. Montfort, who was also treasurer of the Province of North Carolina, delegate to the Provincial Congress, a colonel in the militia and the first clerk of the Court of Halifax County, had traveled widely both in the colonies



Figure 2.

and in England. On returning from one of his trips to England he gave the lodge a floor cloth painted with Masonic symbols, which is in the lodge today.¹³ Montfort certainly was aware of London fashion, and when it came to ceramics, he evidently knew that Bow was among the best.

There is little archaeological evidence for Bow on American sites. The most significant, perhaps, is a caudle cup made in the 1753-55 period and excavated from a well at Arell's Tavern in Alexandria, Virginia.¹⁴

Archival evidence is equally scarce. Imports from the Bow factory into the colonies are probably masked in advertisements and manifests by such terms as "1 set English China" or "2 burnt China punch bowls." One rare use of the Bow designation occurred in 1754, when Philip Breeding of Fish Street, Boston, had for sale a "variety of Bow china, cups and saucers, bowls, & c."¹⁵ On February 19, 1758, when Benjamin Franklin was in London, he wrote a letter to Deborah, his wife, in which he enumerated the various gifts he had sent to her:

In the large Case is another small Box, containing some English China . . . a Bowl remarkable for the neatness of the Figures, made at Bow, near this City; some Coffee Cups of the same, a Worcester Bowl, ordinary. To show the difference of Workmanship there is something from all the China Works in England; and one old true China Bason mended, of an odd colour. . . . Look at the figures on the China Bowl with your spectacles on; they will bear Examining.¹⁶

Franklin, in a world of diplomats, here expresses his taste and inventiveness to leave us with the only account specifically mentioning Bow being sent to America. Viewed in this light, the discovery of the Halifax order seems all the more remarkable. It was in Halifax that Bow was chosen in preference to the usual Chinese export porcelain and English creamware decorated for Masonic use.

The Halifax bowl falls into the last of four main phases of Bow production. The first, from 1744 to 1750, has left us with no documented examples. This was a period of experimentation, and the products probably varied in quality. The second period (1750 through 1753) was marked by steady growth and climaxed by the opening of a London branch.

Fortunately we have examples representative of Bow production during the second period, and also for the third period

to 1758. Both are known for their grayish-white paste. Some time after 1754 the porcelain makers added the process of 'transfer decoration' to their art. It was also about this time that they began to produce most of their waxy looking glaze and creamy warm-toned paste examples.

During the fourth period, following the 1757 bankruptcy of the owner and the subsequent retirement of the factory manager, Thomas Frye, Bow porcelain took on a decidedly inferior quality. The paste was no longer always translucent with a creamy glaze. Often it had a brownish translucency and a rough glaze, sometimes marred by black specks and blue tinges. The addition of cobalt was "apparently an attempt to counteract the former yellowish or ivory tone, which was evidently regarded as a shortcoming."¹⁷

During this last period of Bow production, up until about 1776, we find much evidence of Chelsea-Derby and Worcester influences. About this time the Bow factory tools and molds were moved to Derby, signalling the end of the manufacture of Bow porcelain as we know it today. It is to this fourth period that the Halifax bowl belongs.

The bowl exhibits all of the technical characteristics of paste and glaze common to the 1759-1776 production at Bow. While unmarked, stylistically it is like the anchor and dagger marked Bow which is decorated with colored grounds, birds, flowers and insects. The paste is very low in translucency, almost opaque, and has a cold chalk-white appearance. Beneath the glaze, and so evident in the protrusion through it, are the black specks common to Bow. They are especially obvious in the green ground. The glaze exhibits the so-called "egg shell" surface associated with an inadequate glaze-firing.¹⁸ There is also a quantity of blue dots caused by the addition of cobalt and presence of kiln ash. The cobalt is also responsible for the blue-green pooling inside the foot ring. The base of the foot ring shows that there has been grinding to smooth the unevenness left over from the glazing process.

It is obvious that the bowl was in frequent use. The gilt as well as some of the Masonic symbols, the overglaze decorations in the well of the bowl, have worn away. What remains are the underglazed blue cartouche and name, as well as the blue swags along the rim — evidence of Bow factory decoration rather than "outside decoration."

The rococo cartouche is reminiscent of those on Dutch tin-glazed pharmacy jars made in the second half of the



Figure 3.

eighteenth century.¹⁹ It even more closely resembles the cartouche of a side panel on a Worcester underglazed blue teapot, dating about 1760.²⁰ It is interesting that products from the Lowestoft factory exhibit many cartouches and other features which appear on Bow porcelain.²¹ One might also compare the 1759 Bowcock bowl with its four reserve panels on the exterior and, on the interior, a large scene encased by a rococo frame.²² The similarities obviously suggest a need for more research into what has sometimes been called craftsmen migration between factories. James Mottershead, for example, was a china painter who worked at Bow, then Lowestoft, and finally moved northward to the potteries at Hanley.²³

The use of the Halifax cartouche at so late a date is *retardataire* and suggests an earlier style not exhibited by known examples of Bow. Within the cartouche are the words, "HALLIFAX - LODGE / NORTH - CAROLINA," evidently painted after the cartouche. The misspelling of Halifax might be attributed to the decorator's attempt to balance thirteen letters on each line. A slight overlapping of the cartouche at either end suggests that the maker planned his work more

carefully than the craftsman responsible for the Bow mug of "JOSEPH & MARGRET PENNYFEAT[H]^{cr}/April 1770."²⁴

The similarity between the Halifax bowl and the Penny-feather mug is more than just decorative, for this author believes the inscription is by the same painter. These inscriptions also compare quite favorably with the Robert Crowther plate of 1770.²⁵

Within the Halifax bowl cartouche and under the words "NORTH-CAROLINA" are two Masonic symbols: the square and compass and the crossed column and shaft. Above the main cartouche and in what would be the crest of an armorial arrangement is a small panel showing an upraised arm and a fist clutching a trowel. These three overglaze *rouge-de-fer*²⁶ symbols, together with the underglaze blue swags and overglaze tassels seen in Masonic wall murals,²⁷ were undoubtedly chosen by the Bow factory.²⁸

Around the cartouche, in *rouge-de-fer*, are four branches of *Indianische blumen*²⁹ flowers which evidence remains of gilding leached gray by use of the bowl. Also in *rouge-de-fer* overglaze are eight tassels and cord reminiscent of the previously mentioned Dutch cartouche decoration but not at all reminiscent of anything in the early periods of Bow manufacture. The use of *rouge-de-fer* to accentuate or add dimension to the gilded tassels is similar in technique to the vermilion used by Richard Champion in Bristol. Between each of the tassels are underglaze blue swags painted in anticipation of overglaze decoration and in some places thinned by the running of the cobalt.

To heighten the effect of the swags and possibly also to draw attention away from the running of the cobalt, the gilder added a diaper pattern identical to the gilded underglaze blue mons found on a Worcester cup of the 1760 to 1770 period.³⁰

On the exterior there is a ground color only slightly lighter than Worcester's 1769 "pea green." The ground color and the gilt of the reserves and foot-ring do not touch. The gilt was applied just inside the reserve on the white glaze for the technical reason that it would not adhere to green, yellow or pink grounds. In addition, the ground is uneven and spotted.

Exotic birds and *deutsche blumen*³¹ decorate two large rococo reserves, and insects appear in each of two smaller reserves. The high foot-ring exhibits an interesting series of gilded diagonal lines forming an overall dentate effect identical to that on the body rim of a teapot thought to be Bow.³² Otherwise, the pattern is rare.



Figure 4.

Stylistically, one could say, the enamelling is a product of James Giles' workshop; however, closer inspection suggests that the decorator might only have known of Giles' style. James Giles (1718-1780)³³ was one of the most famous porcelain enamellers, and worked as an "outside decorator" in London, largely for Worcester. Besides Worcester, Giles decorated for many London dealers, as mentioned in the papers of John Bowcock, Clerk of the Bow factory from 1753-1763.

Generally, there are seven styles designated as Giles' decoration. Within this classification variations occur because of the many decorators employed by Giles. However, the two styles appearing on the reserve panels of the Halifax bowl vary from the accepted classifications of Giles' decoration. These variations suggest that the Halifax bowl was decorated at the Bow factory rather than by an outside worker. This is perhaps best illustrated by the unusual swags. The decoration of these swags and the stages of application would indicate a closely coordinated understanding on the part of designer, enameller and gilder — an understanding impossible except under factory conditions.

The most obvious variation occurs in connection with the Halifax bowl's reserve of exotic birds. Though interestingly enameled, the decorator's palette is less full than that of Giles' employee, the so-called "disheveled bird" decorator; and the overall quality of the reserve is not as fine as Giles' work.

The reserve featuring the *Deutsche blumen* is also decorated in the Giles style, but is not a product of his workshop. As with the exotic bird reserve, the palette is not so extensive nor

are the flowers executed in the most highly crafted manner. Also, the tulip featured on this reserve does not have the "divergent petals" common to the Giles workshop, though certainly the use of puce on the petal ends is similar.

From this discussion one can begin to understand and appreciate the many comparative problems relating to this unique bowl. Its survival, together with the archival documentation of its order, presents new and important considerations for the scholar studying ceramics for the colonial American market. It is hoped that the many questions and problems surrounding this remarkable bowl will provide an impetus for new discoveries of Bow imports to the American colonies.

Mr. Rauschenberg is Assistant to the Director of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

NOTES

1. Allen, W. C., *History of Halifax County* (Boston: Cornhill Co., 1918), p. 67.
2. Carraway, Gertrude, *Years of Light* (New Bern: Owen G. Dunn Co., 1955), p. 11.
3. The bowl was recently returned by bequest to the Lodge. It was rescued from a trash pile, in broken condition, some years earlier. Since its discovery by the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, it has been on loan to the museum, and traveled to England and back for study and repair. The author is especially grateful to Miss M. Mellany Delhom, Curator, Delhom Gallery, Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, N. C., Mr. Hugh Tait, Deputy Keeper, Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities, British Museum, Dr. Thomas C. Parramore, History Department, Meredith College, Raleigh, N. C., Mr. Elias Bull, Charleston, S. C., Miss Arlene Palmer, Curator of Glass and Ceramics, Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum, and Mr. R. J. Charleston, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, for their help in studying, repairing and researching the many records connected with this paper.
4. Records of Royal White Hart Lodge, Number 2, 1765-1772, and 1783 to date, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill.
5. Andrew Miller, merchant of Halifax, had strong personal and mercantile ties with England. His Loyalist sympathies later resulted in the confiscation of his property.
6. The enameled glass, none of which is known today, was probably ordered from the Beilby's manufactory at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The story of this glass must await an archaeological investigation of the grounds in the vicinity of the Lodge.

7. Goff, John H., "Thomas Griffith's 'A Journal of the Voyage to South Carolina, 1767' to Obtain Clay for Josiah Wedgwood, with Annotations," *Georgia Mineral Newsletter*, Vol. XII, No. 3 (Atlanta, 1959), pp. 113-122.
8. Owen, Hugh, *Two Centuries of Ceramic Art in Bristol Being a History of the Manufacture of the True Porcelain* by Richard Champion (London: Bell and Daldy, 1873), pp. 8-14.
9. British Museum, *Catalogue of the Bow Porcelain Special Exhibition* (Aberdeen: The University Press, 1959), p. 9.
10. Hamer, Philip M., ed. *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, Vol. 2 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), p. 431, letter, Henry Laurens, Charleston, to Thomas Mears, Liverpool, January 24, 1757, who is to be sent "... by the first opportunity that shall present for 2 or 300 lb. weight of the Cherokee Clay. 'Tis not often in our power to get it down as it lyes at the distance of 3 or 400 Miles."
11. Hood, Graham, "The Career of Andrew Duche'," *The Art Quarterly*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (Detroit: Founders Society, Detroit Institute of Arts, 1968), pp. 173-176.
12. British Museum, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.
13. Typescript, extracts from records of Halifax Lodge, April 18, 1765, meeting at the house of Daniel Lovel.
14. Interview with Mrs. Ivor Noël Hume regarding Colonial Williamsburg excavations, where a very small amount of blue and white Bow has been found, and with Miss Susan Meyers and Mr. J. Jefferson Miller II, Smithsonian Institution, regarding the cup (H. 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in., D. 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ in., Cat. No. 67.1551), similar to that described in British Museum, *op. cit.*, p. 25, No 37.
15. Dow, George Frances, *The Arts and Crafts in New England*. (Massachusetts: The Wayside Press, 1927), p. 88.
16. Labaree, Leonard W., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 7 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 379-384.
17. Scott, Cleo M., and G. Ryland Scott, Jr., *Antique Porcelain Digest* (England: The Ceramic Book Co., 1961), p. 94.
18. Watney, Bernard, *English Blue and White Porcelain of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), p. 19.
19. Crellin, J. K., *Medical Ceramics in the Wellcome Institute* (London: Wellcome Institute of the History of Medicine, 1969), plate 125, p. 73.
20. Hobson, R. L., *Worcester Porcelain* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1910) plate XXI, Fig. 2. This teapot is 6 in. tall and has a cursive "W" mark.
21. Watney, *op. cit.*, plate 76, 81B, 85D.
22. British Museum, *op. cit.*, Fig. 33, p. 49.
23. Watney, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-95.
24. British Museum, *op. cit.*, Figs. 50 and 51, p. 53.
25. *Ibid.*, Figs. 53 and 54, p. 53.

26. An orange-red color made from ferric oxide.
27. Lipman, Jean, "An Early Masonic Meeting Place," *Antiques* (May, 1949), pp. 355-57.
28. Letter, Bernard Watney to author, March 5, 1975, notes the existence of Bow plates with similar gilded and fringed swags minus the tassels and rope. The plates are marked with the anchor and dagger.
29. East Indies flowers, a style of floral decoration used by Meissen in 1730, then spreading to other factories. It was partially based on the Kakieman style.
30. Sandon, Henry, *The Illustrated Guide to Worcester Porcelain* (New York: Praeger, 1970), plate 60.
31. *Deutsche blumen* or German flowers is the 1740 floral style that replaced the *Indianische blumen* of the 1730's.
32. Solon, M. L., *A Brief History of Old English Porcelain and Its Manufactories* (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1903), plate 56, p. 174.
33. Marshall, H. R., "James Giles Enameller," *Transactions of the English Ceramic Circle*, Vol. 3, pt. 1 (London: William Clowes and Sons, (Ltd., 1951, pp. 1-9.

Carved Furniture of The Albemarle: A Tie With Architecture

FRANK L. HORTON

The Albemarle Sound, with its Roanoke and Chowan river valleys, was the most densely populated area of North Carolina during the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Like the entire eastern seaboard, it was predominantly English, and was the earliest region settled in North Carolina, having been peopled by immigrants moving southward from Virginia. Its Port of Roanoke was difficult to reach through the treacherous shoals surrounding the Outer Banks. It never became an important commercial center for Carolina, but it did serve a small merchant class in Edenton, on the sound, and in Halifax, just below the falls of the Roanoke.

Most of the furniture from the Albemarle reflects an isolated society dominated by agriculture, with many small farms and a few large plantations. Originality of design and the predominant use of local woods tell us that there was little stylistic influence from other areas. Surviving port records show little furniture imported from abroad, but we do note, by comparison, 36 desks, 12 bedsteads, 370 chairs and 8 tables imported from Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Connecticut between 1771 and 1774.¹

During the five post-war years from 1785 to 1789, far less New England furniture imports are listed, these usually described simply as "household furniture". New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland are most frequently mentioned, and Windsor chairs are often listed.²

Academic influence is seen occasionally in Albemarle furniture but, because of its rarity, it is startling when compared to the more provincial furniture of the area. One such group was discovered by the MESDA field research program, and has been associated with interior architectural carving of the Blair-Pollock house of Edenton, c. 1766.³ Not knowing the cabinet-maker's name, we tentatively call the furniture the "Edenton Stair-Hall Group."

The stair brackets and fascia have shallow shell, vine and flower relief carving of distinctive design not readily associated with carving in other areas of the South (Figs. 1a & b). This is surprising when one notes the frequent movement of southern



Figure 1a. Fascia board of poplar wood, cleaned of paint, from Blair-Pollock House, Edenton, North Carolina, c. 1766, now in the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.



Figure 1b. Stair bracket of poplar, cleaned of paint, from Blair-Pollock House.

artisans, particularly in the building trades, to accommodate available work.⁴ The unusual strapwork bordering the fascia, the four-petal flower at the upper corners, the unusual sparsely placed punchwork of the background as clearly seen in the bracket, and the general character of the vine motifs can be associated with the carving on the knees of two identical gaming tables and one dressing table, two of which have long Albemarle histories.

The tables (Figs. 2 & 3) have identically carved knees and brackets with similar strapwork running across the top and down the brackets to the leaf carving, and the same sparsely placed punchwork backgrounds. The back talons of the feet are unusually knife-like (Fig. 4). We attribute the carving to the same hand as the stair carving of the Blair-Pollock house.



Figure 2. One of two identical gaming tables, one having descended in the Willie Jones family, "The Grove," Halifax, North Carolina. It is of mahogany with felt top fitted for counter pockets and candle reserves, and with secondary woods of red oak for frame and medial brace, American black walnut for gate frame. 27½" HOA, 31¾" WOA.



Figure 3a. Dressing table descending in a family of Bertie County, North Carolina. The shallow top drawer is fitted with compartments and originally had a ratcheted looking glass. The table is of mahogany with red oak drawer liners, yellow pine back and inner case. 29" HOA, 36½" WOA.



Figure 3b. Dressing table knee carving, attributed to the same hand as the stair-hall carving, figs. 1a and 1b.



Figure 4. Foot detail, showing the unusual knife-like back talon in combination with knuckled front talons over an oval ball without connecting web, considered typical of the Albemarle region.

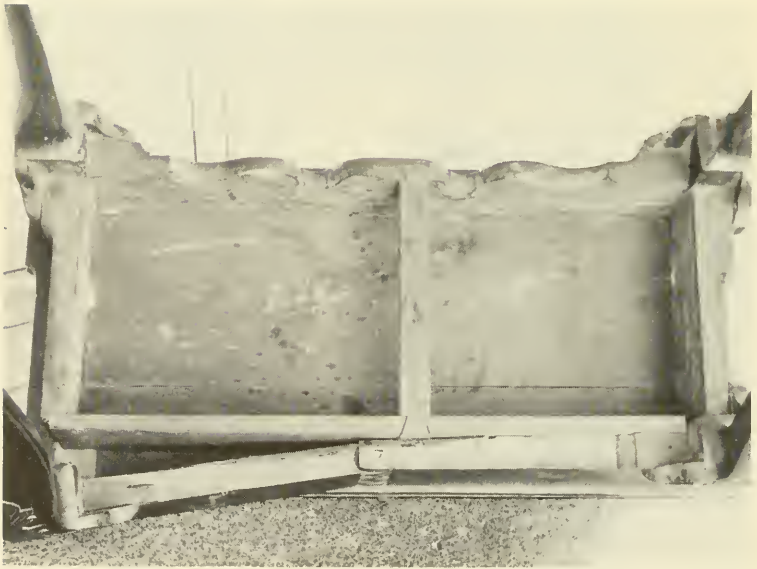


Figure 5. Construction of the gaming table, with dovetailed medial brace and rounded gate hinge joint designed to lock leg into right-angle position when opened.

The two gaming tables are constructed with a medial brace from front to back frame, and the hinge joint is rounded to form a lock, stopping the swing leg at a right angle to the frame (Fig. 5). Medial braces are frequently found in Albemarle furniture. Although the rounded gate hinge is not rare in English or American cabinetry, it is seldom seen in this part of North Carolina. Mahogany, seldom found in the region, is the primary wood of all three examples.

The dressing table, with compartmented upper drawer, is of great interest because of its forward facing back feet. This feature has been seen on a sophisticated slab-top table of probable Albemarle origin, but we have not seen it elsewhere in America and can find no precedent in England.

The name of the cabinetmaker of this group of furniture eludes us. Records indicate only five cabinetmakers working in the region during the period just prior to the Revolutionary War.⁵ Perhaps we will one day find another example that is signed or can be traced by family papers or cabinetmaker's accounts to the hand that wrought such sophistication in northeast Carolina.

*Mr. Horton is the Director of the Museum of Early Southern
Decorative Arts.*

NOTES

1. Elizabeth Van Moore, unpublished gleanings from Port of Roanoke records, James Iredell Collection, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, MESDA file 57-13.
2. Gail Leonard, unpublished gleanings from the Treasurer and Comptroller's papers, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, MESDA file 57-13. For a comprehensive study of Rhode Island furniture exports for this period, see Joseph K. Ott, "Exports of furniture, chaises, and other wooden forms from Providence and Newport, 1783-1795." *Antiques*, January 1975, pp. 135-141.
3. The house stood on a lot purchased by George Blair in 1763, and is represented on the Sauthier map of Edenton in 1769.
4. Many examples of the migration of house-joiners, carvers and cabinet-makers exist. An advertisement in the *South-Carolina Gazette*, Charleston, May 19, 1739, notes that "Stone and Wood Carving and Carpenters and Joyners Work, [was] done by Richard Bayliss, from London . . ." A man by the same name appears in Virginia during 1751-53, and is paid for work at Carter's Grove in James City County. Mardun Vaughn Eventon, by his advertise-

ment in Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*, Williamsburg, August 22, 1777, makes it known that he was a "Master Workman in the various Branches of the Cabinet Business, chinese, gothick, carving, and turning . . ." He states that his "chief Desire is to act in the Capacity of Superintendent, or Supervisor, over any reasonable Number of Hands, either in public or private Buildings," and that he had "an elegant Assortment of Tools, and Books of Architect [sic]" which he had imported from London and Liverpool. Eventon worked in several Virginia Tidewater locations, and we have advertisements from 1762 through 1779, working in Stafford, Chesterfield, Charles City and Henrico counties. A handsome desk and bookcase by Everton, later Evington, is illustrated in *Antiques*, February, 1954, page 131.

5. Of the nine-county area, the following "cabinetmakers" are listed in court records between 1763 and 1777: Chowan County: Samuel Black, Alexander Montgomery and James McLane; Bertie County: David Turner and Thomas Booth. Also, it is known that Gilbert Leigh and John Green, "joiners," made benches and "presses" for the Chowan County court house and clerk's office. Information courtesy of Elizabeth Van Moore, Edenton, North Carolina, 1962, MESDA file 11-4. See also James Craig, *The Arts and Crafts in North Carolina* (North Carolina, 1965) for various entries.

*Further Notes on William Dering,
Colonial Virginia Portrait Painter*

CAROLYN J. WEEKLEY

The title for this small article was selected for several reasons. The article presents little new documented material since Dr. J. Hall Pleasants' 1952 study, "William Dering, A Mid-Eighteenth Century Williamsburg Portrait Painter," appearing in *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* in January, pp. 56-63. Published accounts or biographies of colonial southern artists, particularly those who worked in Virginia, are few and usually incomplete. The relatively small amount of research which recently has been devoted to colonial Virginia portraiture has left us with more questions than answers. Ultimately, there are only a few scholars of southern painting who are collecting miscellaneous "notes" on various artists, materials which need desperately to be shared, compared and brought together in some sort of fruitful conclusion in the months and years of study ahead. This is surely the case with the portrait artist William Dering, whose name is obscure and rarely if ever found in the various general histories treating American painting.

At present it cannot be said that Dering was a major colonial artist for Virginia in the sense of John Durand, John Hesselius or John Wollaston. He was, however, on intimate terms with at least one well-known and much admired Virginian of his time, Colonel William Byrd of "Westover." Pleasants proved this point well in his article and cites numerous references to Dering in Byrd's diaries for the years 1739-1741.²

The recent discovery of two attributable Dering portraits of members of the Booth family of Gloucester County, Virginia, certainly indicates that the artist made his way among other noted families then living in the Tidewater area. The portraits of "Mrs. Mordecai Booth" and a young man who was probably her son, "George Booth," present important new stylistic characteristics for further consideration of Dering's portrait formulas and paintings techniques (Figs. 1 and 2). The Booth portraits are attributed on the basis of stylistic comparison with the only known signed work by the artist, "Mrs. Drury Stith" (Fig. 3).³

The portrait of "George Booth" is perhaps the more fascinating of the two. The boy is shown in a full length pose and holds a bow and arrow in his left hand. The little dog in the right foreground holds a bird, presumably killed by one of the subject's arrows, in his rather exaggerated teeth. The most interesting aspect of the portrait, however, is the background. Immediately behind the subject and flanking him are two architectural plinths supporting two nude female busts. The arrangement, though in no way identical, is reminiscent of architectural settings seen in the portraits of the early Maryland artist, Justus Engelhardt Kühn.⁴ As far as this writer has been able to discern, the busts are unique in this period of colonial southern painting. One suspects that the incorporation of these bold statuary elements was considered unique by Dering's Virginia contemporaries as well.

The landscape background, center and beyond the subject, also poses interesting questions. Family tradition has held that the buildings, though somewhat indistinct in the painting, depict a scene in Williamsburg, Virginia. The Architectural Department at The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has been unable to identify this as related to that town, and so one is left with the question: Is this artistic license by Dering or does this scene illustrate another area of early eighteenth-century Virginia?⁵ Further study of the background of this portrait and the various motifs used by the artist should eventually prove helpful in identifying other works by Dering.

The portrait of Mrs. Booth is equally as interesting and provides the most convincing comparison with the signed portrait of Mrs. Stith. Stylistic analogies are particularly noticeable in the drawing of the head and facial features. Although both paintings have been restored in recent years, the viewer cannot miss the striking similarities of the mouth, the eyes and

nose, and the shape and modeling of the chin. The same broad and rather naive modeling of fabrics appears in these portraits as well as in the likeness of young George Booth. The general quality of the painting and the stiff poses of the sitters in the Booth portraits remind one of portraits executed earlier in New York.⁶

The sitters' costumes in the Booth portraits suggest a date of 1740-45, which is within the period of Dering's stay in Virginia. Pleasants states that the first notice of the artist in the American colonies appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for April 10, 1735. In this notice Dering announced the opening of a dancing school.⁷ The artist advertised again in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in February, 1736, and by then had expanded his repertoire of teachings to include ". . . Writing . . . Plain Work, Marking, Embroidery, and several other Works. . . ."⁸ His first recorded date for being in Virginia is for November 25, 1737:

THIS is to give Notice, that this Day the Subscriber has opened his School at the College, where all Gentlemens Sons may be taught Dancing, according to the newest French Manner, on Fridays and Saturdays once in Three Weeks, by William Dering, Dance Master.⁹

According to Pleasants, Dering purchased land in the city of Williamsburg on Palace Street in 1742. Evidently the artist and his wife lived on this site until his death early in 1751. John Blair recorded in his diary for that year that he was present at "Mrs. Dering's outcry" on February 14.¹⁰

One important reference documenting Dering's painting activity in Williamsburg has survived. John Mercer, a plantation owner and merchant from Stafford County, recorded in his ledger for May 1749 that Dering was credited £9.2 "By drawing my picture."¹¹ In this same account Dering received from Mercer "sundry Paints cost 29/20 sterl. . . ."¹² The Mercer account with Dering suggests that these paints were part of Mercer's payment to the Derings for lodgings he had at their house in Williamsburg.

It is interesting that Dering never publicly advertised his portrait work. This was not uncommon for an eighteenth century artist in the colonies, for John Wollaston, Virginia's most prolific limner from 1754 to 1758, did not advertise.

Perhaps the presence of the portrait artist Charles Bridges in Virginia from 1735 to 1740 accounts for Dering's early reluctance to publicly announce his artistic talents.¹³ Bridges

was, by far, a more accomplished artist than Dering, whose work seems flat and primitive by comparison. Other reasons for the absence of advertisements by Dering suggest still further problems, all unsolved and associated with portrait painting in Virginia prior to 1750. The MESDA research files on Virginia portraits for this period indicate that there were two and perhaps as many as three artists working there whose names are unknown. Their styles are remarkably close to that of Bridges, indicating that they were probably English immigrants capable of producing "in the latest fashion." Perhaps these unknown portrait artists presented further competition for Dering, whose style was less sophisticated.

Whatever Dering's reasons for quietly going about his portrait work, he has certainly left us with two of the most remarkable paintings executed in Virginia prior to 1750. We are hopeful that other works by him will be recognized in the future and from these we can learn considerably more about his role in colonial southern painting.

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Decorative Arts.*



Figure 1. MRS. MORDECAI BOOTH (Joyce Armistead, dates unknown) Oil on canvas, 50 x 39½ inches, actual size.

Private collection.

The subject was the wife of Mordecai Booth (1703-1774) of Gloucester County, Virginia. She was the daughter of William Armistead of "Hesse," also of Gloucester.

Mrs. Booth wears a dark blue dress with white lace at neckline and white sleeves and cuffs; the dress panel is light brown with accents of red. She sits in a red upholstered chair with her left arm resting on a marble-top table and she holds a brown snuff box in her lap. An elaborately arranged red curtain trimmed with gold is draped from the upper right corner down across the table. An unidentified bluish-black book rests on this fabric on the table. Her eyes and hair are brown and the background is black.

The portrait descended through the family to the present owner.



Figure 2. GEORGE BOOTH (dates unknown) Oil on canvas 50¼ x 39½ inches, actual size.

Private collection.

Booth was probably the son of Mordecai Booth and his wife (figure 1) of Gloucester, Virginia.

He is dressed in a brown coat with brown knee britches. His waistcoat is red with gold trim and his shirt is white. The flanking plinths and busts are painted light gray to simulate stone. The little dog is modeled in whites, grays, and browns.

Of interest is that the portrait retains its original stretcher and black painted frame, both of American yellow pine, a wood which grew and was used frequently in the South.



Photograph courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

Figure 3. MRS. DRURY STITH (Elizabeth Buckner, circa 1698/1700-1756) Oil on canvas, 30½ x 22½ inches, actual size. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

Mrs. Stith wears a light blue dress with a red lining showing at the left sleeve and at the bodice. Her hair and eyes are brown.

The provenance for this portrait is particularly well documented and the reader is referred to Pleasants' article for additional information.

NOTES

1. Pleasants, J. Hall, "William Dering, A mid-Eighteenth Century Williamsburg Portrait Painter," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 60 (Richmond, Virginia: The Virginia Historical Society, January, 1952) p. 56.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
4. The standard work on Kühn is J. Hall Pleasants, *Justus Engelhardt Kühn, An Early Eighteenth Century Maryland Portrait Painter* (Massachusetts: The American Antiquarian Society, 1937).
5. Author's correspondence with Mr. Paul Buchanan, Director of Architectural Research, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, July 19, 1974.
6. The author refers to portraits by Gerret Duyckinck and others by unknown artists such as the three portraits of the De Peyster children in the collections of the New-York Historical Society.
7. Pleasants, "William Dering," p. 58.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.* The full quote used here was taken from *The Virginia Gazette*, Williamsburg, Virginia, November 18 to November 25, 1737, p. 4, col. 2.
10. Pleasants, "William Dering," p. 61.
11. The author is grateful to Mr. Graham Hood, Director of Collections, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, for bringing this reference to her attention, and to Mr. Harold B. Gill, Research Associate for that organization, for supplying the quoted portions from the John Mercer Ledger, 1725-1750. The original copy of the Mercer Ledger is in the Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pennsylvania. See also C. Malcolm Watkins, *The Cultural History of Marlborough, Virginia* (Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1968), p. 32.
12. *Ibid.*
13. The standard work on Bridges is Henry Wilder Foote, "Charles Bridges: 'Sergeant-Painter of Virginia' 1735-1740," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 60 (Richmond, Virginia: The Virginia Historical Society, January, 1952), pp. 3-55.

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