

Early American Antique Furniture

By Morton Yarmon

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Cover Kodachrome courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Avenue at 82nd Street, New York 28, N. Y. Scene is from a period room in the American Wing and depicts a parlor from the Duncan House, Haverhill, Mass., 1818.



Children's plates were neither as varied nor as artistic as mugs, and usually illustrated stories or maxims. This scene from "Uncle Tom's Cabin" has embossed daisy border, and is one of a rare series.

Children's Mugs and Plates

B. Gerald McMurtry

*Silver and copper luster, transfers and embossing
decorate a wide variety by many famous potteries.*

CHILDREN'S mugs of the 19th century are interesting to present-day collectors. There are many types of mugs, from those with cheap transfer prints and rhymes and jingles, which are collected as a relic of a passing day rather than for any beauty they may possess, to the fine early decorated creamware mugs of Leeds, Bristol, and Liverpool, as well as a variety in lusterware. The subject matter ranges from early scenes to those of the Kate Greenaway period. Of the twelve hundred mugs in the collection of Margaret H. Jewell, which is on display at the Harrison Gray Otis House in Boston, there is hardly a duplicate and there are enough mugs of each type to make the study of the subject complete.

Among the earliest types of children's mugs are the creamware mugs decorated with bands of blue, brown, tan, or olive green together with a name and inscription. Some of them have hand-painted wreaths of light olive-green leaves. On one mug the inscription reads "A Trifle from Yarmouth," and for this reason these mugs have been listed as "Yarmouth type," although, since there was no pottery works in Yarmouth, they were probably made elsewhere. There was, however, a potter at Yarmouth named Absolon who painted creamware made elsewhere and burnt it in his ovens. Since he also painted and sold Bristol glass around 1800, it is likely that he also bought creamware at Bristol to decorate and that the "Yarmouth type" mugs are Bristol pottery. Other inscriptions include "A Gift for Jinny," "A Gift for William," "A Present for Nancy," "A Present for Sarah," and "For My Sweet Girl." These mugs are rare.

Another type of early child's mug was made of canary-color creamware and decorated with a transfer of black or dull

orange-red. Some of them have an oak wreath or a garland of roses and an inscription such as "A Trifle for James"; others have a star enclosing an initial. Still others have a quaint transfer scene such as cows grazing, a Chinese figure, or a scene with mother and children, or a man, boy, and house, and the inscription "For a Good Child." Another group of these early transfers on canary grounds has such inscriptions as "A Carriage for Ann," "A Squirrel for Mary," "A Pony for Edward," "A Harp for Elizabeth," "A New Doll for Margaret," and "A Nightingale for Eliza," together with appropriate and quaint transfer pictures of the animal or object mentioned. Another canary mug has a black transfer with the inscription "Come dear child and let me see how you can do ABC." It has an ABC border around it and is undoubtedly one of the first types of ABC mugs made. Another type of rare and early child's mug was decorated in silver resist on a canary ground. The designs included a bird on a branch, all-over geometric patterns, and borders of leaves, scrolls, and bands, in silver resist. One group has bands and a wreath of silver resist on a cream ground and an inscription such as "A Present for Mary," also in silver luster. Classical scenes of mothers and children in red, brown, or black transfer on a canary ground with bands of silver luster form another type. The miniature mugs of silver resist on cream and canary ground are especially rare and attractive. One rare canary creamware mug reads, "To taber and pipe my figures dance Through England, Ireland, Scotland and France." Another group of canary mugs has hand-painted conventional flower borders in greens, pinks, and orange.

There is also a large group of mugs in copper luster. Some of these have transfer

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Yarmouth-type hand-painted mugs, c. 1800-1815, with yellow-green wreaths on green and orange bands.



Left. "Mother" plate, hand-printed and colored, made by Stevenson at Cobridge.



Right. Commemoration plate of Princess Charlotte, c. 1830, with floral border.

patterns and inscriptions, and others have typical copper-luster patterns including colored blue, cream, or tan bands, sanded bands, and flowers in relief, or flowers painted in aster and leaf, and other patterns. There are also mugs with six different patterns of Gaudy Welch pottery with luster. These are of ironstone pottery and date about 1840 or 1850.

An interesting creamware mug marked "Phillips & Co. Sunderland Pottery" has a ship and a garland in black transfer and the following verse:

Here's to the wind that blows
And the ship that goes
And the boy that fears no danger
A ship in full sail
And a fine pleasant gale
And a girl that loves a sailor.

Another group of creamware mugs, made before 1840, have a black transfer laurel wreath of the type used by Enoch Wood and the inscription "A present for Mary," for example, or "A Present for my dear boy." Simple creamware mugs of an early type have the names of children painted in black and a hand-painted band. The names include Maria, Cynthia, Isabella, Anne, Sarah, Martha, Margaret, Frances, Eliza, Ellen, Emma, Sophia, Kate, James, John, Charles, Philip, George, and William. The Union of Odd Fellows mug with a shield and the figures of Justice and Truth printed in brown and red is probably early 19th century.

Left. A very rare Washington and Lafayette mug, c. 1824, and, next to it, an early 19th-century type with laurel wreath border. Pres. Adams mug is attributed to potter Adams, right, a pink luster mug.

Blue-and-white pottery mugs with names and inscriptions form another group of children's mugs. Some of these have blue and white bands and a simple medallion with such inscriptions as "A Present for Sarah" or the more unusual "A Trifle shews Respect." Some have a blue-and-white scene covering the body of the mug, and then there are some mugs with the same type of blue-and-white scenes without inscriptions. The blue varies in tone from light to dark, and some mugs are printed in a rich dark blue. One of the most interesting mugs is a little toy mug with a stippled border and the old English potter's rhyme:

No Handycraft can with
Our art compare
We make our pots of
What we are.

Another toy mug worth special mention because of its rarity is the souvenir mug of the New York fire, with the inscription printed in black:

Conflagration
City of New York
16th Decr. 1835
700 houses burnt
Amount Property destroyed 25,000,000
Dollars
Did not affect Public Credit

There are many other toy mugs showing the various activities of children: playing with hoops, fishing, skipping rope, and playing various games. There are also toy





Franklin maxims and similar transfers. The Franklin mugs were made by different potters, in varying shapes and designs, and are most sought after today. Most are heavy ironstone, some are creamware.

mugs painted with flowers, as well as those already mentioned with canary glaze and figures and designs in black and red transfer.

The later type of mugs which are most available today had rhymes and scenes from children's poems, including Dr. Watts's *Poems for Children*, and verses by Jane and Ann Taylor. The scenes were taken from such books as *The Boys' Treasury of Sports and Pastimes*, which provided the subjects of the game series, and the "Peacock at Home." Franklin's maxims from *Poor Richard's Almanack* provided the subject matter for another series. The Franklin maxim mugs are among those most sought after today because of their subject matter, although from the costumes in the pictures they are earlier than other mugs of this later illustrative type. These Franklin mugs were made by several different factories and the designs vary as well as the shape of the mugs. Most of them are of a heavy ironstone, but two are of creamware with a pink-luster band. None of them are marked, but we know that plates with Franklin maxims were made at Leeds in 1820 and later by Clews Meakin, and various other manufacturers. Usually there are two maxims on each mug, but sometimes there are four. One of the maxims most available on mugs is "Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee." The earliest scene illustrating this maxim shows a shop with the name "Do-

nothing" and a sign reading—"To Let."

Another group of mugs is the Reward of Merit series. These have a variety of labels, including: "A Present for Knitting Well," "For Attention to Learning," "Present for Sewing Well," "Present for Going to School," "Present for Writing Well." There is a miniature or toy plate with the inscription "A prize for Sewing Well" and a scene in brown transfer.

One of the prettiest mug series is the Months. Each month has a verse of four lines. The January verse is:

How the rolling seasons Vary
Through the years from January
When the Infant Smile Awakes
On New Year's gifts and sugared cakes.

There is also a series of months marked "The Seasons," but they are of a later date.

There are several series of mugs with boys playing games. The earliest series includes "Ring Taw," "Whip Top," "Pyramid," "Walk My Lady Walk," "Shuttlecock," "Northern Spell," and "French and English." Later games on mugs included blindman's bluff, leap frog, and marbles. These were printed in black, brown, red, or blue with crude splashes of red, yellow, and green daubed on. There is also a series of mugs with children and animals such as "Puss Breakfast," "Little Playfellow" (dog), "Beggar's Petition" (dog), "Billy Button" (horse), and "Bird Catchers." Another series is entitled "Grandma's Tales." There are mugs with Tam o'shanter, John

Left. A famous Biblical plate, with embossed border, by J. and G. Meakin, depicting a scene in story of Joseph. Right. The famous Millenium plate, also made with borders of wheat, cauliflower, tulips.





Hand-painted creamware, orange, yellow and green predominating, probably made at Leeds or Bristol.

Gilpin, and several types of alphabet mugs, even the deaf-and-dumb symbols. Most of them have large letters and a picture, and some have a verse with the letter. Of the latter there are at least two series, for one says:

E. was an eagle chained to his perch
F. stands for Fanny returning from church.

and another says:

E. was an Emperor who ruled in fear
F. was a fiddler who fiddled for beer.

There is also a group of mugs with animals including elephants, tigers, goats, dogs, and all sorts of birds. The lion with a palm tree printed in blue is marked "Davenport," and there is a Davenport mug with a zebra, so we assume that Davenport made an animal series. Another series of animals is printed in brown with splashes of green, red, and yellow paint and is marked "Field Sports E. M. & Co." Other animals are shown on the late mugs labeled "New York," "Philadelphia," "Delaware," and "Carolina."

Besides the makers already named, children's mugs were made by Thomas Godwin. One John Gilpin mug in brown transfer with splashes of blue, green, and yellow paint was marked "T. G." and one with a scene of a girl and cats printed in black is marked "Thos Godwin Burslem, Stone China." Several mugs are marked Wedgwood, and mugs with transfer prints were made at Leeds Pottery and Swansea. While a collection of mugs with late transfer scenes may be acquired at a moderate price, early transfers and such types as silver-resist patterns are comparatively scarce and expensive.

Children's Gift Plates

Children's plates were not made in so many different patterns as mugs. Most of the plates are later in date, and the majority of them illustrate a story or maxim. A

few early ones are found with illustrations of mother and child, but the popular plates are the alphabet type which have become increasingly popular with collectors the last few years. These white earthenware plates are decorated with transfer prints which are illuminated with crude splashes of hand coloring. The borders are usually embossed with the letters of the alphabet, hence the popular name of ABC plates.

These plates were made between 1820 and 1860, and reproductions were made even later. The transfers are in black, brown, green, red, or blue, and the hand coloring is usually in red, yellow, green, and orange. Besides the alphabet, dots, scrolls, embossed daisy, lily of the valley, or rose borders are used, as well as the rarer embossed swan and flower border. These plates have little aesthetic value, and their chief interest for the collector lies in the transfer scenes of American life in Victorian days. One series portrays American sports, including baseball, while another series is called "Our Early Days," and depicts scenes in a child's everyday life, such as "Half Holiday" and "The Playground," which have ABC borders. Another series includes Robinson Crusoe scenes with such subjects as "Crusoe Viewing the Island," "Crusoe at Work," and "Crusoe Milking." This series has ABC embossed borders. One of the most sought-after series is that showing Franklin's maxims from Poor Richard's Almanack. The border on this series is embossed wheat and rose, or there may be a raised rosette border which is sometimes colored. All these designs were made by J. & G. Meakin and various other manufacturers. Perhaps the rarest were made by Leeds Pottery in about 1820. They made a series with Franklin's maxims and also made plates with transfer-printed hymns. These are much earlier than those by Meakin, although Meakin and Clews made them originally in the first third of the 19th century. Most of these plates are

unmarked. The Meakin mark, when used, was stamped in the ware and also printed in black: "J.&G. Meakin."

Some of the maxims found on these plates are: "Three removes are as bad as a fire. A rolling stone gathers no moss." Wheat and rose on ABC border, or an embossed daisy border on an octagonal plate.

"Keep the shop and the shop will keep thee." ABC border.

"It is easier to suppress the first desire than to satisfy all that follows." Raised scroll border.

There is a group of children's plates with the center printed with different kinds of animals. These have embossed ABC borders and some are marked "Wm Adams & Co." Still another group with ABC borders has scenes from nursery rhymes such as "Little Boy Blue" and "There was a crooked man." One series of plates has large letters of the alphabet and embossed daisy borders. Examples of these read "B is for ball" and "J is for June." American cities are the subject matter for a series which includes Philadelphia buildings, Manhattan Beach, and Plymouth Rock Monument.

Other plates with alphabet borders include the Village Blacksmith, the Arrival of Gen. McClellan and a transfer of a Dutch boy and girl with an alphabet in sign language. This last plate is marked "H. Aynsley & Co., Longton," with an English registry mark.

Among the rarer gift plates for children are those made by the Cambrian Pottery at Swansea between 1831 and 1850. These had molded borders of flowers and swans with a line of gilt on the rim. Several plates illustrate the "Ages of Man" and one plate, "The Cruel Boy," shows a boy tying a can to a cat's tail. The plate has an embossed border of roses, and the scene is in pink transfer with hand coloring in pink, green, and yellow. Another Swansea plate has the following religious verse in brown transfer:

The child that longs to see my face
Is sure my love to gain
And those that early seek my face,
Shall never seek in vain.

Several other plates should be considered here, not perhaps as children's giftware, but because they have the same embossed borders, and their center decoration is transfer with splashes of hand coloring. One of these is the well-known Millenium plate showing Christ Rising from the Dead. This is made with a cauliflower border by J. & G. Meakin who also made a similar plate with the "History of Joseph." The

Millenium plate was also made with embossed border of lilies of the valley, wheat, and tulips.

A plate with a portrait of Princess Charlotte printed and colored by hand and an embossed border of flowers was made by Ralph Stevenson at Cobridge in about 1830. He also made a plate with a picture of a woman and child and the inscription "Who ran to help me when I fell, and would some pretty story tell or kiss the place to make it well—my mother." The border is a floral pattern. Another popular plate shows a transfer portrait of Wesley. The border on this plate is embossed flower sprays of various colors together with luster. A verse called "Grace at Meal" decorates the center of another plate, which has a border similar to the Wesley plate. Other plates have transfers of various colors with such inscriptions as "A reward for diligence." The inscriptions are in black, orange, purple, and other colors, and have gold or silver luster bands. The black transfer of the reclining mother and child and the "Peacock at Home" have similar luster bands. The mother and child plate was made by Leeds Pottery. Plates with "The Sower," "The Plowman," and similar scenes with embossed and colored rose and daisy borders were also made at about the same time. Many of these scenes on children's plates were also made in cup plates as well.

Besides the potteries already mentioned, makers of children's transfer-printed plates were Goodwins & Harris; Elsmore & Forster; Malkin, Edge & Company; H. Aynsley & Company; and various potteries in Scotland. •

The "Death of Uncle Tom" transfer, another plate in this series, difficult to obtain these days.

