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BATEMAN SILVER

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A Brief History of English Silver Prior to the Bateman Era.

No other form of the arts has been as subject to changes, wars, crises and fluctuations in trade, as that of the Goldsmiths. (All workers of precious metals are referred to in this paper as Goldsmiths).

It was not until the middle of the last century that the concept of preserving earlier pieces purely on account of their age or artistic merit became generally accepted; until then gold and silver plate was regarded by its owner as reserve to be consigned to the melting pot and converted into coin whenever the need arose. In this way gold and silver suffered a disadvantage encountered in no other branch of the applied arts. A picture, a piece of procelain or furniture reduced to its essentials is quite valueless. There are many cases of magnificent pieces of silver being melted shortly after they were made, particularly in seventeenth and eighteenth century France. In addition, records show that domestic silver in daily use received such hard wear that much of it had to be refashioned frequently and when one consideres that silver took the places that china and procelain occupy today it is perhaps remarkable not that so much has disappeared but that so much has survived.

The beauty and artistry of many pieces cannot be fully appreciated unless a little is understood of the Goldsmiths' techniques. Both gold and silver are in their natural state too soft for practical use. Copper is therefore added to silver in the proportion of 925 parts fine silver to 75 parts copper. The resultant alloy which melts at 890° C. is known as sterling silver and is the legal standard bearing the sterling mark and the various hall marks. This metal probably received its name from the Easterlings (early German coiners brought to England to improve the quality of coinage). Pure or Fine silver in its most refined state, like gold, does not tarnish.

The silver was shaped into small ingots and here is where the Goldsmith begins to work. His basic tool is the hammer, hammers of all sizes and shapes.

He hammered the small ingot into sheets of the right thickness and size before beginning the processes of sinking and raising. As the metal is beat it becomes hard and brittle and easily splits or cracks. It must therefore be constantly heated to a dull red color or about 600^0 C. to return it to a pliable state. This is known as annealing. Pieces shaped in this way have no seams or joints of any kind. To raise a narrow necked jug from a flat piece of silver requires considerable skill and a very accurate eye. Another method, which does involve a seam, was generally encountered with straight-sided examples, tapered cylindrical coffee pots, tankards, and other pieces. These were hammered and curved from the sheet and soldered generally along the line of the handle socket and the joint, and is virtually undetectable.

Later in the 18th centurymore practical methods of rolling the silver into thin sheets was used and finally the method of casting silver was used which resulted in a heavier piece but required far fewer man hours, thus the extra cost of the silver was offset by the decreased amount of labor. Frequently duplicates of such items were encountered.

Various pieces were also made by hand raising. Then feet, handles, rims and spouts, previously cast, were added by soldering them on.

The ability to solder feet on trays to make salvers, lips on tankards to make jugs and general re-shaping or altering pieces has unfortunately led to ruining some otherwise lovely pieces. This practice wasn't intended to mislead the collector but was carried out under private requirements to bring the pieces more in line with the, then, contemporary tastes. Unless additions are hall marked, these pieces cannot be legally sold in England at this time.

Fakes do exist, for silver is one of the very easiest items to forge merely by placing another makers set of marks on it. Bateman silver is no exception.

HALL MARKING

A system of marking silverwork, denoting that the metal is the legal standard of purity has been officially recognized since the year 1300, when Edward I ordained that Wardens should go 'from shop to shop amongst the workers assaying that the gold be exactly like the aforesaid touch, and if they find any worse than the touch, that piece shall be forfeited to the King.' It was to their own advantage to see that the wares they offered for sale maintained their good name and to the scrupulous and honest worker, investigation would be no hardship. Silverwork which had not first been tested by the Wardens of the London Goldsmiths could not be legally sold.

Work of the required sterling standard was marked with a punch of a leopards head. The leopards head was used along until 1363 when craftsmen were required to have a mark by which their work could be recognized. At first a symbol, probably derived from a shop sign was used by the craftsman. Later the use of his initials became compulsory.

In 1477 there was concern that the system wasn't working well and that people were 'grievously deceived' by laxity in the laws. The result of this investigation was that the leopard's head should be crowned and so it was until 1821. The crowning was presumably to indicate the mark's status as the King's mark. The next and most important thing was to institute the now so useful system of date letters. Since the Company of Goldsmiths were being made responsible as a body for any penality incurred by the Wardens mistakenly marking sub-standard or illegal plate, the system made quite certain that the Goldsmiths would know at whose door the blame would lie, even if the fault were not revealed for several years.

It was the custom for the Warden to hold his position for 1 year only. The lettering system is good for a 20 year cycle.

It is interesting to note that the lettering system which could be used to accurately date a piece of silver was not discovered until 1853, when it was finally realized that these regular cycles had been followed religiously for hundreds of years.

Again, the leopards head was to stand for the guarantee mark on the silver. The makers mark told who made it and the letter punch denotes the year made. The fourth mark was the lion passant which denotes that it was of London origin. Each town with its own assay has another mark, and it is another guarantee of sterling.

The fifth mark usually found is the sovereigns' head in profile. This was to denote that the duty has been paid to the King (from 1784 to 1890). The reason for this duty was the desperate need for more and more revenue and the apparent ease with which the authorities could raise easy money from a craft already bound by regulation to submit their wares for official assay. The kings' profile was a receipt that the duty had been paid and was to overcome any duty-dodgers, although many a sharp silversmith learned to overcome this practice by submitting a small article for assay and when the punch was prepared, a larger piece was presented for mark. Duty was largely determined by weight.

Exception from hallmarking was frequent. It wasn't always easy to impress a series of hallmarks on very small articles and those of very thin guage, especially if they were covered all over with chassed or pierced designs. Small pieces were not numerous and went unchallenged for three centuries. Then they started to tidy up the laws and from 1738 until 1790 they began a series of complicated legislation that have confused silversmiths and lawyers even today. To avoid confusion some silversmiths sent everything that was exempt, small items such as neck bottle rims and collars and toothpick cases, to be assayed and marked.

SILVER AND ITS USES DURING THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

Silver was primarily for the rich, though the man of moderate means in the fifteenth century might hope to possess at least three or four pieces of plate. Many wills of early times bequeathed articles of silver to loved ones and respected friends.

To possess silver was a token of standing of the middle ages, a time when such status symbols were fairly rare! The nobleman and the rich merchant vied with each other to display their wealth. Such displays of wealth were not an example of bodily comforts. English homes of the 15th and 16th centuries, however stately, were not exactly comfortable dwellings. Rich clothes, rich hangings, elaborate bed-covers and an extravagant show of plate had to stand as status symbols of an otherwise hard and scarcely civilized existence.

Until the end of the Tudor period ceremony still had to compensate for lack of comfort. Perhaps it really was a comfort to know that one was placed correctly in relation to the salt, that one was drinking from a silver goblet and eating with a silver spoon, although one's back ached from hard wooden benches and one's feet froze on the bare stone floors. Small wonder the poets sang so merrily at the approach of Spring.

The Church so long a dominant force inevitably bowed to the state during the reign of Henry VIII and in the change new power and wealth settled on the gentleman of England, the Aristocracy and the landowner and the merchant. In the turmoil much of England's treasures went into the melting pot. The King's inexhaustible need for money caused the currency to be debased time and time again. The wealthy hoarded plate which was far more profitable than the substandard money.

During the 16th century much of the silver work rose to a new ornate yet delicate form, lavish with foliage, figures and flowers, which was not to be seen again until the 18th century. Fortunately, much of this still remains

and the simpler designs probably went into the melting pot when the Rennaissance made its impact on English tastes.

Although most of the silver made for use at the high tables of the court was richly decorated, the Protestantism of the church had its influence on the patrons of the silversmiths at the end of the 16th century. In an effort to do away with anything that might be considered papist, the new style of silver became simple in form, classic in shape, and was quite a bit less expensive.

The turn of the century brought the new King, James I, to the throne and he loved the beauty of the rich court. He kept silversmiths busy replacing the elaborate ceremonial pieces he so lavishly gave away to Spain on conclusion of the peace treaty.

English silver began to emerge in new forms at this time. The steepal or pyramid finials appear to be an English invention and were used simply or elaborately.

The wealthy had vast arrays of silver pieces for table use. While the poorer merchants and moderate class decorated their tables with beautiful salt containers of all shapes and forms. Tankards were common as well as silver cups and spoons.

Unhappily, pressing economic needs destroyed countless examples of both earlier and contemporary plate because of the leying of the Forced Loan by the King, in order to try to replenish the Exchequer. It was either the army or jail for those who refused to pay, so into the melting pot again went the hoards of silver from all alike.

The widespread use of domestic silver in 1697 was evident when it was declared illegal to use the silver plate, that was reserved for the wealthy, in the taverns and inns. With the coinage being debased, the numbers of robbers became so frequent that it was necessary to ban its use in public places.

The destruction of so much silver was of course a blow to the craftsman who was beginning to contribute a style that was in late years to develop into the fundamental style of all English silver.

After the middle of the 17th century silver became highly ornate to the point where proportion was sacrificed in order to imitate the skill of the lavish Dutch styles introduced into England. These styles were reinforced by the French Huguenots who settled in considerable numbers in both England and America. The most famous of these refugees was the son of a French officer who was taught a trade by a family friend so he could make his way. He was Paul de Lamerie.

The American colonies imported a large amount of English silver and one would expect to find the European influences on the development of the American craft. There is some Dutch influence but the characteristic of American silver throughout the 18th century is its simplicity of line; the ornate Rococo never found much favor.

The most well know American Goldsmith of the 18th century America, was, of course, Paul Revere. While he designed and slowly worked the sheets of silver into graceful and lovely forms the beat of his hammer was being echoed across the ocean from the hands of another smith, whose own work and design bore a tremendous likeness. As Paul Revere is the King of the American silversmiths, England had her Queen; Hester Bateman.

The Era of the Batemans

HESTER BATEMAN

Hester Bateman was born the youngest daughter of Thomas and Ann Needham, probably early in March, 1709. She was one of many children in a large family and her inherent strength and toughness was demonstrated by the fact that in a time when 3 out of every 10 children died in infancy, she was over 80 when she retired and was an adviser to her children's business until her 86th year.

Nothing is known of her early life and childhood. She did not attend school and could neither read nor write. She married John Bateman at the Fleet, which was a jail used for persons imprisoned for debt. The Fleet was a haven

for legal marriages performed for a dram of gin or a roll of tobacco. Two years after their first son John was born, Hester was properly married in a church.

Her husband, John Bateman, was probably never fully apprenticed and was described as a chain maker and goldsmith. His name does not appear as a registered Goldsmith because the silver he made was probably done as "out work" for other master men. It was on such small pieces that Hester, between her household chores and the caring of her children first used the tools of a trade in which she was later to excel.

It is known that Hester could neither read nor write yet she was regarded as far superior intellectually to her husband, and it was by her choice that all of their children received educations. During her marriage to John she devoted herself to her home and children and their happy marriage. After the birth of John, two girls followed, Lettica and Ann, followed by Peter, William and Johnathan. Little is known of William; perhaps he died before the business became well established or perhaps he left the family business and set up his own. Since the family was very close knit this seems unlikely.

John prospered under the character of the English government which believed trade was good for a country. Prosperous traders meant an increasing demand for products of good craftsmen. There were many such craftsmen, and London was the center of the English silver world.

Prosperous as it was, it was not a placid time. Riots were instigated by politicians. John Wesley and George Whitefield were rousing the poor and underpriviledged to such religious frenzies that the screams of people contemplating vivid hells were heard in every street as they fell to the ground crying out for salvation. Fires and riots at one time threatened the Bateman home.

The Batemans moved to a large Georgian house on Bunhill Row, which was then almost in the country, away from the filth of the city. As was the custom, this was their home and factory. Bunhill Row was also the address of other Goldsmiths.

By 1744, John their oldest son, had been apprenticed to a silversmith and Lettica left Bunhill Row to marry Richard Clarke, Jeweller and Goldsmith. Clarke played an important part in the House of Bateman, for it was to him that both Peter and Johnathan were apprenticed.

Until 1760, the family pursued its course in a quiet and even way, the boys being apprenticed and the girls attending to their children. John Bateman later assisted by his eldest son, fashioned watch chains, worked silver and did many small jobs for his fellow tradesmen, while Hester directed the affairs of her growing family, attending to her husbands needs, the servants, the home and in his workshop, learning the use of the silversmiths' tools.

In 1760, with England at war with France, a new king, George III came to the throne and with him the dawn of a new era. For Hester it was an unhappy year. On November 16th, John died from consumption. One may reasonably suppose that both Hester and John would have known for some time that his illness was mortal and that at his death she would assume responsibility for the business. For in his will he specifically left Hester the tools of his trade. In the 18th century the tools of a trade were the most valuable possession of an artisan and he would not entrust them to anyone incapable of using them,even after his death. John's confidence in Hester must have been very great. To see a piece of silver punched HB is to see that his confidence was in no way misplaced.

It was not infrequent for a silversmith's widow to continue the business, since silversmithing was often a family affair. The widow would continue the business, holding it in trust, perhaps for her sons. It was customary for a widow, if she had been associated with her husbands' business for at least 7 years (an apprenticeship by association), to be able to register her mark at Goldsmith's Hall. Throughout the 18th century, widow's marks, enclosed in the hatchment-like lozenge shape that betokens a widow, was often to be found on silver. It is unlikely, that many women were fully-fledged silversmiths in

their own right, though long acquaintence with the trade made them fully capable of running a busy workshop and even seeing an apprentice through the last years of indenture. Probably, too, they had a lot to do with the quality and designs of pieces that went out under they sponsorship.

Many factors influenced Hester's decision to keep the business for herself. Her son John had become a freeman and had joined his parents in their trade. Son Peter was well advanced in the final stages of his apprenticeship. John Linney, an apprentice to the Batemans, assisted in the workshop; her son-in-law, Richard Clarke was able to introduce her to new clients and give her work that he was unable to do himself.

Even with these positive factors, Hester was stepping into a highly competitive world where women were not so generally accepted. Many successful silversmiths lived on Bunhill Row and in her parish. And finally, the greatest hurtle to overcome was the invention by Thomas Baulsover in 1745 of making Sheffield plate, which was fast become popular, because of its low cost compared to silver. It had already forced more than one silversmith into bankruptcy.

As a credit to her determination, Hester at the age of 51, registered her mark, a script HB in 1761. Why then from 1761 till 1774 is there so little Bateman silver? It was because almost the entire output of the Bateman workshop for that period was work commissioned by other silversmiths. Even though it was a necessary and useful way to make a living, for Hester and her sons, the indignity of having other silversmiths and even resilers overstamp her mark with their own mark, was great. (This practice continued even after she was well known).

Hester was a very shrewd woman and realized that there were still many people who preferred sterling silver to the sheffield plate, providing the price was right. Fortunately, taste had veered away from the highly ornamental Rococo style. Engraving, beading, formal piercing and occasional fluting were the order of the day. Hester decided to excel at these and so produced silver for the middle class with a nice balance between restrained, almost Quaker-like

simplicity, and classical elegance.

Although most of the output of the workshop was of a domestic nature, being casters, salts, sugar bowls, cream jugs and tea pots predominately, by 1780 some useful orders for presentation pieces were coming her way. Large salvers and punch bowls meant success and in 1786 the Batemans were able to expand their workshop at Bunhill Row.

In 1769 Jonathan finished his apprenticeship and moved back to the family with his new wife Ann. Ann was the daughter of a Hugenot family and it has been suggested, but not proven, that she was descended from silversmiths in view of her great ability as a silversmith. She did bring a large dowry to her marriage and at her husband's death many years later, he was worth £5,000, far more than any of his brothers. Jonathan and Ann had four children that survived to adulthood, two daughters and two sons, Jonathan Jr. and William.

In 1779 Peter registered his mark with Jonathans' which is the rarest Bateman mark in Bateman silver. The PJ silver is rare because the partnership lasted only a short time. In 1791 Jonathan Bateman died of cancer, leaving in his simple will everything he possessed to his wife Ann, including his tools.

Hester retired in 1790 and left the business to live with her widowed daughter, Letticia Clarke. The death of her third son was an added blow and she died in 1794.

Silver bearing Hester Bateman's mark whether made by herself or by her children employed in the workshop, has a characteristic elegance that makes it unmistakable. Beaded borders are perhaps the most typical feature of Bateman family silver, and appear along the edges of spoons and ladles, around the tops of boat-shaped salts and helmet-shaped cream-jugs, on tea pots and tea pot stands. But the years to come were to see a gradual increase in the use of ornament. Soon even the Batemans were decorating the sides of their tea pots with delicate festoons, flowers and Adamesque borders, using the skillful and

now almost lost art of bright-cut engraving. The brilliant effects of this method of engraving were particularly suited to the formal decoration favored between 1780 and 1790, and came off especially well in conjunction with piercing. Hester Bateman used engraved and pierced ornament to good effect on the upper edges of boat-shaped and oval salts, and in wheel motifs on the sides or ends, through which the blue glass of the liners showed. There was something very feminine about Hester's tea-services, with their flat-based oval pots, their swing-handled baskets for sugar and their tall cream jugs. In 1787 one of the finest and most elaborate wares to come from Bunhill Row was struck with her mark. It was a large oval tea tray weighing 148 oz. The center is quite plain except for the armorials of D'Arch, but the border shows the Bateman silversmiths to be capable of the most refined applied ornament. The rim is pierced with a repeat pattern of arcading, and is edged with a guilloché border; overlaying the arcaded piercing are festoons of acorns and oak leaves, each scallop of the festoon terminating in either a classical vase form or a foliate medallion. One suspects that if Hester had been a young woman in the 1790's instead of a very old one, her work might well have achieved a richness which, allied with her innate good taste, would have produced many noble pieces of silver.

In her will she left £1,250 ($45,000 by present day values). The bulk of her estate went to her daughter Letticia, son Peter, and her daughter-in-law Ann. Hester may have been illiterate, but she was no fool.

Hester's retirement in 1790 and Jonathan's death in 1791 deprived Peter of his most important associates; he turned to his sister-in-law Ann. It is significant that she joined him as a partner when Jonathan died, although their eldest son was only within a few months of finishing his apprenticeship and could have assumed his father's share of the business. With the Batemans, however, even above the call of tradition was continuity of skill. This was evident when William, the youngest son of Jonathan and Ann became sole owner

of the Bateman firm upon Peter and Ann's retirement. William was Ann's youngest son and had been taken into the firm as a full partner in 1800. This cannot have been solely because he was Ann's son for so was Jonathan, who was never accorded that honor. In light of William's work it is obvious that the granting of partnership was a recognition of superior craftmanship.

Ann was much like her mother-in-law, shrewd, competent and the driving force from 1790 onward. Her initiative and drive were passed on to her son who was also under the mark of $\frac{PB}{AB}$. And becoming the 3rd generation of Batemans to carry on the trade.

Silver bearing the $\frac{PB}{AB}$ punch mark seems at first to be of a different style from that of Hester, particularly in the substitution of a tread decoration for the bead. This change had taken place before Hester's retirement and is as much of a characteristic of her later work as of theirs.

It was during their partnership that the tea and coffee service came into its own. Where before, the use of the coffee pot or jug had been optional, it now became obligatory to serve coffee from a pot. And the jug was relegated to the milk container. Consequently, with each piece serving only one function, the whole equipage had to have a continuity of shape and design. The era of the full sets, ordered as a set, had not arrived, but the trend became apparent in the partnership of Peter and Ann.

The design and quality of Bateman silver did not change until 1815 when William became the sole owner. William was a co-partner for 5 years before his mother's retirement and had a full understanding of the Bateman styles which he maintained until, in his later years, he succumbed to the dictates of the Victorian society and turned his back on Bateman good tastes. William registered his mark along for a short time upon his uncle's retirement. Peter, not being able to stay away from the craft he had known since he was 14, took up his tools again, registering his mark with William (P/W).

Peter continued to work until 1815 when old age compelled him at last to retire. Shortly before Peter's retirement William suffered the loss of his mother, an acute one, for she was not only his mother, but his senior partner and the master who had taught him much of the craft. Peter, whom he had always looked upon as a second father was old and not expected to live much longer. From 1815, William became the head of the business, for the first time in the entire history, the sole Bateman in the firm (his older Brother Jonathan died in 1798). Hester would have been proud of her grandson and his silver was a credit to his name, as long as he stuck to the Bateman style. In him, the Goldsmith Company was to honor the house of Bateman.

Upon the death of his uncle in 1825, William lost the last link with the true 18th century Batemans and, like a duck taking to water, he became a true Victorian.

By 1840 the domestic arts had degenerated into a medley of styles and excesses which are typlified in the single work Victoriana. From 1825 onward the lovely lines and proportions which had been accepted became tortured and distended as the fashions changed.

In his early years William had made equally delicate and beautiful pieces as any of the other Batemans. The later pieces became tainted with poverty of design, although his high quality of workmanship never deserted him. In some ways it might have been better had it done so, for nothing is wrose than the quality of production lavished with poor taste on badly designed articles.

His son William, disgraced the family by marrying a servant girl, but did assume control of the family business in 1839. He was a good craftsman and took as his partner Daniel Ball, thus severing the chain of family craft and tradition. He was a good craftsman, well taught by his father, but wholly in the manner and style of the Victorians. He therefore has no part in this history for all the silver that bears the name of Bateman, famous now, was fashioned

before 1820. With the early work of William an epoch of grace and elegance, of which England may be proud, came to an end.

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