

SHARDS

A Newsletter of the

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China Students' Club of Boston

January 2007

New Format for *Bits & Pieces*

To give our perennial panel members a well-deserved rest, the CSC Board decided that *Bits and Pieces* this year will have a different format: Attending members may take up to three minutes to discourse on what

they know and don't know about each of their objects (maximum of two per person). Members of the audience may then discuss and offer their knowledge and opinions about the objects.

Planning CSC's 75th Anniversary Celebration

By Louise Richardson

The 75th anniversary of the China Students' Club will be celebrated in 2009. The anniversary committee had a very productive meeting after the November lecture and plans to meet again in February. Several people are exploring possible sites for an exhibition, including the Fitchburg and Concord Museums, the National Heritage Museum (formerly the Museum of Our National Heritage) in Lexington, as well as the Jones Museum. The theme will be *the ceramic trade in New England,*

from the 17th through the 20th century, giving just about everyone in the Club a chance to participate. We discussed the content and possible funding of a catalog, and will form a selection committee to solicit and select exhibition items with either a New England history or ties to archaeology. Historic Deerfield has several exhibition cases that we may use. Members interested in working on the exhibition are invited to join us following the February meeting.

Carolyn Parsons Roy on "At the Sign of the Golden Teapot: Abraham Isaac in 18th-Century Portsmouth, New Hampshire"

Reviewed by Jeff Brown

The CSC began its 2006-2007 program season by welcoming back to the podium our former President, Carolyn Parsons Roy, who spoke to us on research that she has been doing on the life of Abraham Isaac, Portsmouth's first Jewish citizen.

As very little is known about Isaac, Carolyn has had to piece his life together through his trade advertisements in local newspapers. These show not only his development as a merchant in the community, but illustrate the merchandise and ceramics available to the consumer during Portsmouth's boom years between the Revolution and the War of 1812.

Abraham Isaac and his wife Rachel are recognized as Portsmouth's first Jewish family, arriving there in 1789 from their native Prussia. It is presumed they came through England, and their port of entry into the new Republic here is unknown. Despite the lack of a Jewish community, they seemed to have remained faithful to their religion and its observances as their shop ads always

mention that they were closed on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath. At first they rented rooms in Water Street and accumulated enough merchandise to open a shop called "The Cheap Store." The merchandise was enormously varied—sugar, candles, shawls, fabrics, playing cards—anything he could get cheaply for re-sale. Soon they leased more space next door and opened an auction room that sold both useful and luxury goods. Auctions were a very popular form of marketing merchandise in the 18th century. It was a way to sell new goods as well as unload damaged or unsold merchandise. It was a way for peddlers to pick up items for re-sale, and for the average citizen to get a bargain. And there was, of course, also the social factor. These sales did well for Isaac and once again he was on the move, this time to Buck Street, one of the town's main thoroughfares. The varied inventory continued and expanded, and ceramic offerings now included blue and white cups and sau-

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Abraham Isaac in 18th-Century Portsmouth

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cers, teapots, jugs and mugs, and bowls, as well as the green and blue feather-edged pearlwares that were enormously popular at the time. In 1792 Isaac established a relationship with James Sheath who owned a ship named *The Apollo* that ran to Liverpool. From shipments such as these he culled his inventory, always upgrading and improving his merchandise, now offering complete dinner and tea sets. Gone were the days of "The Cheap Store," Mr. Isaac now being the proprietor of the more prestigiously named "Golden Teapot." By 1795 Isaac reached the pinnacle of his ceramics offerings. He was fully established now in a prime location with shop and auction room, purveying first quality wares in the latest

fashions, including decorative figures for chimney pieces and a wide variety of glassware. An interesting sideline seems to have been the sale of first quality feathers for bedding and bolsters, a lucrative trade item in a period of no central heating!

By 1798 Abraham and Rachel had bought a house at 14 State Street, but the family's rather rapid rise to success was cut short when Abraham died at the young age of 47 in 1803. Rachel eventually sold the house and moved in with an adopted son until she died in 1820. Abraham Isaac left us virtually no personal history, but through the newspaper ads of his thriving business we are given a glimpse into his world and that of late 18th century Portsmouth.

TO-MORROW,
AT THREE O'CLOCK, P.M.
Will be sold at PUBLIC VENDUE, at
Abra'm Isaac's
AUCTION ROOM,
In Water Street,

CHINTZES, **Shawls**, Hankerchiefs,
Hair-Ribbon, white Silk Stockings,
Silk Waistcoat Patterns, black Russet,
large Looking-Glasses, Oval and Square
Dressing ditto, Block-Tin Tea-Pots,
Knives & Forks, Warming-Pans, Gim-
blets, Knitting-Needles, Copperas, In-
digo, Currying-Combs, a great variety
of Crockery Ware, Household-Furniture
of all sorts and several casks of Lime.

☞ At private Sale a good Fallback-
Chaise, for which country produce will
be received in payment.

☞ Sale to begin at three o'clock
precisely, and to be held **statedly twice**
a week, on Tuesday and Thursday.

Portsmouth, March 24, 1799.

New Hampshire Gazette advertisements, March
1790 (above) and 12/22/1795 (right)

Variety Crockery & Glafs
Ware Store

in Buck  Street,
Sign of the
Golden Teapot.

Abraham Isaac

Respectfully informs his town and country cus-
tomers, that he has just received
a few bags of

Sea-Fowl & Geese Feathers,
Fresh and Good.

—LIKEWISE—

A GREAT variety of
Crockery, almost of all sorts and
kinds, viz. blue and green edg'd Ware of
all kinds; red, white and cream color'd
ditto; large painted gallon Punch-
Bowles; half-gallon do; gallon Pitch-
ers; half-gallon do; China Tea-Cups
and Saucers, some complete sets; China
Images for Mantel-Pieces; a great varie-
ty of Stone-Jugs and Pickle-Pots.

—ALSO—

A very extensive assortment of
Glass Ware, viz.

Decanters; English Wine
Glasses; English double flint Tumblers;
Punch Tumblers; Glass Cans plain and
painted; Vinegar Cruets; Salt Cellars
and Mustard Pots. All of which he will
sell very cheap indeed.

☞ Constant attendance given, and every
favour gratefully acknowledged.



Robert Emmerson on “The Early English Tea Ceremony”

The Vivian and Lloyd Hawes Memorial Lecture, Reviewed by Jeff Brown

The October meeting of the CSC convened at the College Club to hear Robin Emmerson, Curator of the Department of Decorative Art at the National Museums in Liverpool, speak on “The Early English Tea Ceremony.”

The basis for Robin’s research and talk was the question of why tea became England’s national drink—a question that he thought has never been fully resolved. He started with the late 17th century, noting that society had been split both politically and religiously by the civil wars. There was still a strong Puritan element running through society along with rampant hatred of the Catholics and fears of plots to overthrow the fragile newly restored monarchy. The landowners came to realize they had to overcome their political differences and social prejudices and stick together in order to solve their problems in a civilized way, in the face of constant Catholic conspiracies both real and imagined. They now had what would be called today a “class interest.” Prior to this people were far more concerned with their place in society where every household was riddled with questions about gradations of rank. After the expulsion of the Catholic James II by a group of Protestant landowners, this class had to maintain an identity in order to stay in power. They did this by creating “polite society.” They bonded with other landowners above and below them in rank, and separated themselves from the lower classes by specific codes of dress, manners, and behavior. What is quite ironic is that they looked to France, their age-old enemy, as the model of what a civilized, polite society should be like. The British resisted the French by copying them—in deportment, fashion and the decorative arts.

One of the earliest French books on etiquette to be translated into English speaks to the finer points of taking tea, chocolate, and coffee. So why did not the English indulge in all three equally? Robin thinks that, for one reason, English society extended down the social ladder to include a larger group than the very exclusive French aristocracy. Coffee, tea, and chocolate were expensive, but you could make more tea to drink from a pound of tea leaves than you could get chocolate to drink from a pound of chocolate, and likewise with coffee.

So, though still expensive, tea gave the better value. You had a larger group of people in England aspiring to the rituals of “polite society” and tea provided that indulgence most economically. Another promoter of the popularity of tea was the East India Company which was especially dynamic in seeking new markets for its products. From 1670-1730 the growth of tea drinking directly correlates to the ever increasing amounts of tea imported by the East India Company.

Members of this new polite society sought out areas where they could best show off their accomplishments, and the tea ritual provided an ideal arena; in turn, the tea ritual and its equipage became increasingly bound up with the notion of what constituted polite society. Polite society was a very serious matter to people like Richard “Beau” Nash, the social arbiter of Bath, who ran the spa town dictating behavior and dress for everyone from the country squire to the highest nobility. Through knowing things like proper tea etiquette, the lowly squire could hob-nob with his betters and the nobility wouldn’t lose face by associating with the locals—everyone was put at ease by observing the standards of dress and behavior.

Another aspect of the developing tea ceremony and the formation of this polite society was the Englishman’s interpretation of images of Chinese society as seen on the newly imported and very fashionable porcelain and lacquerware. Images of exotic Chinese people at tea and leisure inspired the Briton to create the “paradise on earth” as many viewed this ancient culture that provided this exotic beverage.

An inventory taken in Yorkshire as early as 1688 includes a silver teapot, spoons and canisters for green and black tea as well as sugar—demonstrating that the equipage for tea was already established before 1700. The earliest images of the tea ceremony date to around 1700. They show a tea kettle set upon a metal stand, and the ubiquitous tea chest; it was the lady’s responsibility to unlock the precious contents, measure out the leaves (sometimes using the canister lid), and brew the tea. Some of the earliest teapots were tall and cylindrical, the easiest shape to make out of metal—a form

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The Early English Tea Ceremony

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based on the larger catering pots used in coffee houses. Coffee pots retained this silhouette, but the teapot soon developed its short shape based on the Chinese porcelain ones being imported about this time. From the 1670s on the British were producing redware teapots in imitation of the Chinese ones. Porcelain cups were preferred over silver as they didn't burn the fingers. Porcelain tea canisters were slow to catch on, though, as their lids didn't fit as tightly as silver ones did. The idea that all the components of a tea set had to match was also slow to catch on. The fashion of taking tea is said to have begun with Charles II's queen Catherine of Braganza who, after having arrived from Portugal in 1662, asked for a "nice cuppa." By the 18th century this luxurious exotic drink was taken after dinner, around 2-3 in the afternoon. The ladies would retire from the table to the drawing room to brew the tea while the men lingered behind to drink. By 1770 the tea kettle was replaced by a hot water urn as more tea was being consumed. And by 1784, because of bad harvests and the skyrocketing price of grain (and thus of beer), Prime Minister Pitt removed most of the tax on tea in order that the lower and middle classes could have an economical substitute for malt liquor.

All these things combined to encourage tea as the British national brew of choice. Cheers!



Tea Party, ca. 1725; Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia. The silver equipage includes (left to right) a sugar bowl and cover, tea canister, hot water jug or milk jug, slop or waste bowl, teapot, sugar tongs (in front), spoon tray, and teaspoons



Pious conversation, or tea and scandal? ca. 1740; note the tea-chest at the lady's feet, and the servant at the door with tea-kettle



Left: Transfer on glass: Lady Nightcap at Breakfast, printed for Carrington Bowles, London, England, paper, glass and paint, 1772; Historic Deerfield, Deerfield, Massachusetts. This satirical print depicts a woman wearing an elaborate nightcap and drinking tea from her saucer
See additional illustration on page 8



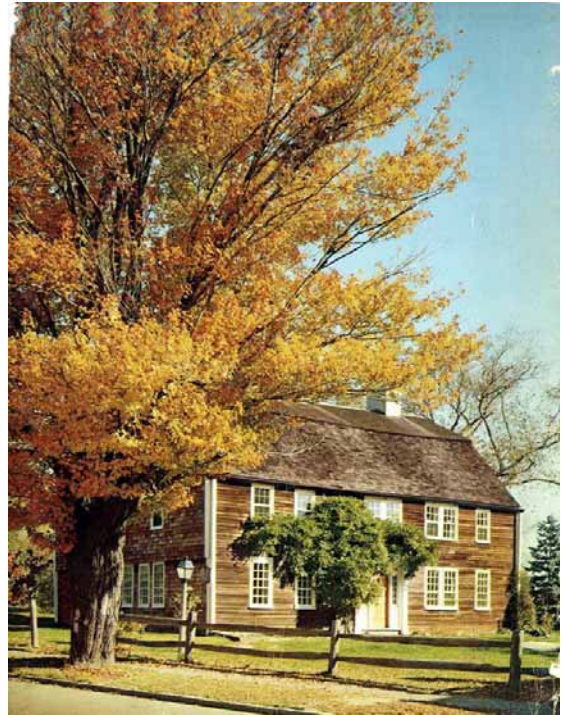
**John Vander Sande on
“Collecting Ceramics for an Early Coastal Massachusetts Home”
Reviewed by Jeff Brown**

The CSC concluded its 2006 lecture season on a balmy 65 degree day and with the College Club fully dressed in all its holiday decorations. The Club enjoyed a very interesting talk by enthusiastic local collectors Mr. and Mrs. John Vander Sande who spoke on “Collecting Ceramics for an Early Coastal Massachusetts Home.”

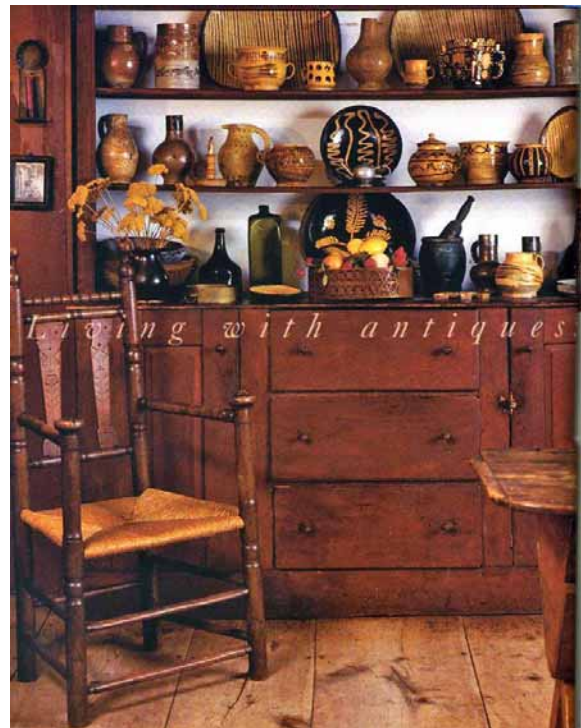
For the past 30 years they have been collecting objects to furnish their coastal Massachusetts home in Newbury which dates to the late 17th century. They began with furniture and soon graduated to ceramics and glass and other small objects that completed the atmosphere that they wanted to achieve. They focused on the 1620-1720 time period. A daunting task, but accomplished with such thoroughness that the Vander Sandes’ home and collections were featured in a recent article in the magazine *Antiques*. John pointed out, though, that the collecting bug has so long been entrenched that the collection now extends way beyond what would have been contained in an average 17th century home.

The formation of the collection was based on years of thorough research which, at times, produced frustratingly vague results. For example, there are literally thousands of inventories that survive listing the contents of period homes, but they often have only nonspecific descriptions such as “four pieces of pottery.” Period newspaper advertisements can be a bit more specific as in “Just arrived from England, a fine assortment of Delph (sic)” which helps give a more accurate idea of what sort of products were available to the local consumers of the time. And finally, most helpful to research is the archaeological field-work which yields physical examples of objects actually used on the sites. Synthesis of such data provided the Vander Sandes with an impressive spectrum of object types and their geographic origins. Strictly speaking, an object does not belong in the collection unless it can be proven by one of these means that objects of its type were present in the area at that time, but the Vander Sandes are willing to compromise and acquire seemingly appropriate objects even when strict proof is lacking; in such cases, they vigorously pur-

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**Vander Sande home in Newbury
exterior and interior views**





Collecting Ceramics for an Early Coastal Massachusetts Home

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sue inquiries trying to find the missing proof, and they are quite pleased when a shard of one of these pieces is unearthed in some dig.

One such type of object was the ubiquitous Westerwald stoneware most likely made in the Frechen region of Germany and exported all over the world—examples have even turned up in Zaire. These wares were extremely durable and often very decorative as well. The decoration was tailored to specific export markets, those pieces going to England often carrying the initials of the reigning monarch—which helps date the pieces. Stoneware bellarmine jugs are often decorated with a man's face or mask; the earlier ones from the 16th century are detailed and realistic, while later examples tend to be more stylized and grotesque. Earlier jugs also tend to have three bosses around the sides, a motif that tends to disappear over time. The Vander Sande collection also contains very fine examples of both English and Dutch delftware with an especially fine grouping of tulip chargers from ca. 1680-1720 that illustrate the stylistic changes over forty years of that design. The collection also includes fine examples of early English slipware and salt glaze as well as some Chinese Export porcelain. Some pieces shown were especially superb examples, but John was quick to point out that these survived precisely because they were fine pieces in their own time—they were special, admired and passed on. The rarest objects, the most difficult to obtain, are usually the most “lowly” ones—they were used, abused and thrown out. Objects such as porringers or bleeding bowls are hard to come by for that reason—although they were probably plentiful in their day, they were used and thrown out.

John concluded the slide presentation and then treated us to a show of magnificent objects from his collection that he had brought in with him.



KM Delftware plate: Much Dutch delftware has been unearthed in New England sites. This lobed dish contains the portrait of Queen Mary of England (1688-1694) and a typical floral border. It is unusual in that it is only 8 inches in diameter



Objects and Shards: A group of English and German stoneware comparing whole objects to shards found at the Warner House in Portsmouth, NH. The two GR Westerwald jugs, and the two English stoneware bottles in the first row, are from the Vander Sande collection.

See also illustration on page 8

CSC Members Earn Promotions at Historic Deerfield

The following promotions were announced at Historic Deerfield on December 15: Our Program director Anne Lanning will become Vice President for Museum Affairs with the Curatorial Department, Education/In-

terpretation, and the Library reporting to her. Our president Amanda Lange will take her place as Chair of the Curatorial Department.

Our heartiest congratulations to both of them!



Upcoming Ceramics Events

CSC Meetings

All meetings at 1 PM at the College Club, 44 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston

1/25/07, Chinese Porcelain: The Yuan Revolution (1279-1368); Robert D. Mowry, Alan J. Dworsky Curator of Chinese Art, Harvard University Art Museums

2/22, Bits and Pieces; Members are invited to bring an object or two for discussion (see p.1 for new format)

3/22, Tiles—Commonplace, Yet Sublime; Wendy Harvey, tile enthusiast

4/26, Edward Lycett and the Faience Manufacturing Company; Barbara Veith, Research Associate, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

5/24, Annual Meeting and Tea; Lady Charlotte Schreiber: Collector Extraordinary; Yonathan Bard, CSC member.

Auctions

Asian:

1/19, Sotheby's NY (Chinese)

1/23, Christie's NY (Chinese export)

1/29-31, Sotheby's Amsterdam ("*Made in Imperial China: 76,000 pieces of Chinese export porcelain from the Ca Mau shipwreck, ca. 1725*")

3/7, Sotheby's NY (Chinese)

3/20, Christie's NY (Japanese & Korean)

3/22, Christie's NY (Chinese)

5/2, Christie's Amsterdam (Chinese, Japanese)

5/15, Christie's London (Chinese)

5/16, Christie's London (Japanese)

5/18, Christie's London (Chinese)

British and/or continental:

1/10, 4/17, Christie's London

5/15, Christie's Amsterdam (incl. Dutch Delft)

Miscellaneous:

1/14, Christie's London (Ardmore ceramic art)

1/20, Sotheby's NY (Susan & Mark Laracy collection)

1/24, Christie's NY (Leo & Doris Hodroff collection)

1/26-27, Skinner Boston (incl. ceramics).

Exhibitions and Fairs:

The New York Ceramics Fair, Jaanuary 17-21, National Academy Museum, 1083 Fifth Avenue, New York (www.caskeylees.com)

Louis Comfort Tiffany and Laurelton Hall, until May 20, 2007, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (www.metmuseum.org)

A Taste for Opulence: Sèvres Porcelain from the Collection, until February 25, 2007, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (www.metmuseum.org)

Contemporary Clay: Japanese Ceramics for the New Century, until January 21, 2007, Japan Society, 333 East 47th Street, New York (www.japansociety.org)

Parades: Freer Ceramics Installed by Gwyn Hanssen Pigott, until November 30, 2007, Freer Gallery of Art, Jefferson Drive at 12th Street, Washington, D.C (www.asia.si).

Please send comments/contributions to: Yonathan Bard, 6 Holland Street, Newton, MA 02458; telephone (617) 244-7688, fax (617) 965-2897, e-mail (the preferred venue!) doryon@rcn.com

Charlotte Wilcoxon

It is with great sadness that we report the passing on August 27 of Charlotte Wilcoxon, former CSC member and ceramic scholar extraordinary who died at the age of 101. She had a great passion for colonial Dutch history and 17th century ceramics, Delftware, and Chinese export porcelain in particular. She published many articles and two books, including the landmark *Dutch Trade and Ceramics in America in the Seventeenth Century* (Albany, 1987); she lectured on these subjects and was quoted widely in historical and archaeological publications. She volunteered at the Albany Institute of History and Art for 14 years, and here at the Fogg Museum while she lived in Cambridge from 1987-2002. All these interests and accomplishments were imbued with a warmth and wide-eyed wonderment and good-humored charm that will make her sorely missed.



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Above: Tyg from Vander Sande Collection: Potters working in Wrotham, Kent, England, produced drinking cups, known as tygs, with a repertoire of ornamentation—including slip trailing, stamped embossing, and multiple looped handles often decorated with twisted ropes of clay. This example has fleur-de-lis and star embossing, the initials *IW*, and the date 1657



Right: Teapot, London 1670, with engraved inscription recording the presentation of 'this silver tea-pott' to the committee of the East India Company. Victoria and Albert Museum.
This shape was soon discarded in favor of the globular Chines-style teapot.