

SHARDS

A Newsletter of the China Students' Club of Boston

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A Message from Our President

Dear members,

Sometimes life throws you curve balls. My apologies for our November 24th meeting! Who knew that manhole explosions in the Theatre District would knock out power to the College Club? With no sense of when electricity would be restored and the potential for accidents in the dark, the College Club in consultation with the China Students Club decided that we should cancel our meeting. I hear that electricity was restored by 11 AM that day, probably just as our speaker Melissa Bennie was taking off to return to New York City. We hope to have Melissa back on the program schedule for next year, and with any luck, we will hear all about Lenox Porcelain.

I want to remind you that New York will again be the center of the ceramics world for Americana Week (January 21-February 1). The New York Ceramics Fair (www.caskeylees.com) will be featuring about 35 ceramics dealers at the National Academy of Design. This fair also has the added benefit of expert lecturers; this year talks will be given by Don Carpentier, Jonathan Rickard, Leslie Grigsby, Jonathan Gray, Rob Hunter, Miranda Goodby, Ron Fuchs, and Angela Howard. There will also be some auctions of great interest to fans

of Chinese export porcelain. Christie's will be selling the third installment of the Leo and Doris Hodroff Collection on Jan. 21, as well as a general Chinese Export Porcelain sale on the same day. Christie's American Furniture and Decorative Arts sale also features 150 lots of Dutch (including many tiles) and English delftware (www.christies.com).

Our next meeting on Thursday, January 22nd, will feature Walter Denny, Professor of Art History at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Walter will be speaking on "European Copies of Turkish Ceramics: The Sincerest Form of Flattery." Special thanks go to Club Member Gail Homer for suggesting our lecturer. In addition to teaching at UMass, Walter also works at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a Senior Consultant in the Department of Islamic Art, helping to plan the museum's new Islamic galleries. Unfortunately I won't be able to attend the January meeting, but I leave the Club in good hands with Cheryl Robertson, our Vice President. I look forward to seeing you again in February.

Best wishes,
Amanda Lange
President

September Meeting: Historic Deerfield Symposium on "Hot Beverages: All About Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate in 18th Century America"

Reviewed by Jeff Brown

Illustrations on pages 4 and 8.

Our 2008-2009 program year began on Sept. 27th with a kind invitation to all CSC members to attend three lectures on "Hot Beverages!"—a one day forum on tea, coffee and chocolate history. There was a lamentably low number of members attending from the eastern part of the state, but those who braved a rain-soaked drive were richly rewarded with informative, fun lectures and a warm Deerfield welcome. Here is an overview of the talks.

The first of our lectures at Historic Deerfield was given by Gerry Ward, the Katherine Lane Weems Senior Curator of Decorative Arts and Sculpture at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. His topic was coffee.

Coffee was introduced into England and America in the 17th century along with chocolate and tea. All of these exotic beverages were initially thought to have medicinal properties. Coffee arrived from North Africa and the Middle East, the principal species of the plant,

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Tea, Coffee, and Chocolate

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coffee Arabica, being indigenous to Northern Africa. From these origins its cultivation spread to the West Indies and Central and South America. The coffee bean, as we all know, must be dried, roasted, and ground before it is brewed.

Most scholars give 1637 as the date of the first documented use of coffee in England, and 1652 as the first documented coffee house in London. The beverage made its appearance in Boston around 1670 and coffee houses seem to have been as popular here as they were in the mother country.

Craftsmen wasted no time indulging consumers' taste for this exotic beverage by producing the equipage needed for the drink—namely coffee mills and coffeepots. Coffeepots were made of brass, silver, and ceramics, the coffee most likely being brewed in base-metal vessels and poured into more elegant ceramic or silver wares for serving. Imported ceramic cups and saucers were also an essential part of this exercise. Coffee and chocolate pots are virtually indistinguishable from each other, save for the chocolate pot having a lid that allows for the insertion of an implement to stir up the chocolate sediment. Both coffee and chocolate pots are usually taller and larger than teapots of the period and can have their handles directly across from the spout, or at a right angle to it.

Serving vessels for coffee were extravagant and luxurious items and only about 37 pre-revolutionary examples are known. Silver vessels for coffee were made in most major colonial cities, New York producing some of the earliest ones. By 1800, coffeepots became more common, many in the popular neo-classical style and often made ensuite with teawares to form a complete coffee and tea set.

As with tea and chocolate, coffee and its merits were debated back and forth over the centuries; some finding its medicinal benefits multitudinous, others seeing its consumption as deleterious...the debate continues to this day...see you at Starbuck's.

Our second lecturer, Jennifer Goldsborough, museum curator and teacher, has spoken to the Club before. It was a pleasure to hear her again, this time speaking on one of her favorite subjects: tea drinking.

It is hard to underestimate the influence tea drinking had on Western culture in the 17th and 18th centuries. Its influence was felt in so many spheres, from trade and politics to changes in manners, decoration, forms of furniture, ceramics, and silver, to a woman's role in society.

Let us focus on the equipage alone. The teapot is descended from the Chinese scholar's wine pot, a small vessel, easily carried in his voluminous sleeves and drunk from by the spout. Early teapots were likewise small in size because tea was so grossly expensive, but also because etiquette demanded that a fresh pot be steeped for each guest individually. The shape was globular, a time-tested design allowing for the best brewing of tea. It was made of Chinese export porcelain or redware, both influencing ceramic and silver design in Europe throughout the 18th century. The teapot did evolve in shape throughout the 18th century. The double belly and apple shaped silhouettes came in around the 1750s and 60s and, once English pottery makers got established, there was no end of exotic, whimsical and novel designs from early salt glaze pieces to the Wedgwood/Whieldon pots in the form of pineapples and cauliflowers. This fashionable new beverage required specialized furniture such as the tea or "china" table and a tea chest in which to store under lock and key this valuable commodity. It is interesting to note in period paintings that the tea chest seemed to have been treated as a piece of furniture and was kept on the floor at the hostess's feet. The chest contained compartments or containers in order to offer the guest a choice of green or black tea (black tea was considered more common, green more elite). Tea was sometimes kept in silver or porcelain canisters. These were not referred to as "caddies" until late in the 18th century. As the Chinese did not take their tea with milk or sugar, containers for the latter had to be created—the cream jug scaled down from the English beer jug, the sugar bowl an adaptation of the Chinese rice bowl. Smaller silver spoons had to be made to fit with the small, delicate cups. And as for the tea bowls—the Chinese experimented with handled cups but the idea was initially abandoned for it seemed to them that the sensuous experience of holding the warm cup was as

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important as the experience of actually tasting the tea. The Chinese also did not have any saucers; these were adapted from English sauce dishes. Saucers, along with teapot stands, spoon trays, and kettle stands protected the richly polished surface of the tea table. Slop or waste bowls collected used tea leaves and remained part of the tea service well into the 20th century, long after their original use was forgotten. Lots of boiling water was provided by a silver tea kettle over an alcohol lamp and, sometimes, the whole assemblage rested on a large silver salver so big that it was called a “table” in period terminology. In conclusion, it is interesting to note that it wasn’t until well into the 18th century that all these pieces were designed as a matching set.

The last lecture of the morning was given by CSC President and Deerfield Curator Amanda Lange who spoke on the history of chocolate in early America.

Chocolate comes from the pods of the cacao plant with each pod producing about 30-40 seeds in a juicy pulp. These seeds, removed from the pod, are allowed to germinate—giving them their chocolate flavor. They must ferment and dry and then be roasted and a thin shell winnowed or peeled off. Then the “nibs” or “cacao nuts” must be ground as finely as possible, the smaller the particle the more chocolate flavor is released. The oily chocolate paste resulting from this rather strenuous grinding or rolling was shaped into cakes or lozenges weighing two to four oz. each.

Introduced into Europe by the Spanish conquistadores in the 16th century, chocolate, like tea and coffee, was thought to have medicinal benefits that were debated over the centuries. Chocolate was often taken as an expensive medicine. It was introduced into England in the 1650s after Cromwell’s forces took the island of Jamaica, with its cacao plantations, from the Spanish empire. By the end of the 17th century it was readily available in Boston, and in 1757 there is a record of Deerfield merchant Elijah Williams purchasing quantities of it from Boston. Pound for pound chocolate was more expensive than coffee, but less expensive than tea—about 10 shillings a pound (the average wages for a laborer at that time was about 2 shillings a day). Adulteration of chocolate was quite common, including the

addition of starch, chalk, clay, dirt, paraffin, talc, cacao shells, even brick dust, to extend the amounts and defraud customers.

American manufacturers were concentrated in four major cities: Boston, Newport, New York, and Philadelphia. Practically no prepared chocolate was imported from Britain and although it could be painstakingly made at home with a chocolate stone and roller, most chocolate in the colonies was mass produced on milling machines. Chocolate millers often diversified into grinding other commodities such as coffee, oats, spices, mustard, and tobacco.

Chocolate took a secondary role in early New England to coffee and tea. Drinking chocolate was both a public and private custom. It was taken in taverns, but also at home, particularly in the morning as a breakfast beverage. The other important use of chocolate at the time was by the military to supplement their meager rations. It was a well-known energy food, dense with calories, easily portable, and not prone to spoilage.

Preparing chocolate was expensive and time-consuming. In addition to the lozenge of chocolate, period cookbooks call for milk, eggs, white wine, rose water, sugar, mace, or cinnamon to be boiled together. With at least 50% of the drink being cacao butter, the fat had to be either skimmed off or flour, bread or toast added to absorb the fat in order to make the chocolate more palatable. The cook used a chocolate pot complete with a stirring rod, “chocolate mill” or molinet. Typically made of wood, this was placed in the pot and whirled between the hands. The notched knob at the end of the molinet produced a uniform consistency and a desirable froth.

The French are credited with inventing the chocolate pot form which has a lid that allows for the insertion of the molinet. This form was made in silver, but they are extremely rare in American silver, the few survivors attest to the importance and status of chocolate in early American life. The form sometimes has its handle opposite its spout, sometimes at a right angle to it. The form also appears in copper, brass, tinned sheet iron and, very rarely, in porcelain. As for the cups, they appear to be larger in size and often taller than coffee cups

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in order to extend the time for the precious froth to survive. Americans appear to have been less particular than Europeans in their use of specialized forms; they consumed their chocolate from anything at hand—bowls, porringers, mugs, etc.

By the early 19th century chocolate drinking has been relegated to children and the infirm—tea and coffee

having become the preferred breakfast beverages. In 1828, a Dutch chemist figured out a way to reduce the fat content of chocolate, making the commodity lighter and easier to mix with liquids. The cacao butter found much use in the confectionery and cosmetics industries, and chocolate drinking experienced a resurgence in the late 19th century, spawning a new demand for fashionable ceramic sets with which to serve it.



Our speakers, left to right:

Gerry Ward

Jennifer Goldsborough

Amanda Lange



Clockwise from top left:
Teapot, Staffordshire, lead-glazed cream-colored earthenware with metallic oxide colors (agateware), 1750-1760;
Paul Revere coffee pot, 1791;
Chocolate Cup and Saucer, Staffordshire or possibly Yorkshire, lead-glazed creamware, c. 1770, Historic Deerfield



October Meeting: The Vivian Hawes Memorial Lecture Robert Hunter on “What’s in a Name? China Glaze vs. Wedgwood’s Pearl White”

Reviewed by Jeff Brown

The CSC convened in the newly redecorated College Club to host our annual **Vivian Hawes Memorial Lecture**. This year’s speaker, Robert R. Hunter, editor of *Ceramics in America*, lectured on “What’s in a Name? China Glaze vs. Wedgwood’s Pearl White”.

The focus of Robert’s talk was what he believes to be one of the most popular patterns ever created in the world of ceramics: a blue decorated earthenware that was hugely popular during the last quarter of the 18th century. And although we give credit to Josiah Wedgwood for many innovations including the “pearl white” glaze that made this pattern so popular, Wedgwood himself seemed to distance himself from this product. He seemed far more interested in promoting his high-end products, such as the Etruscan wares that were based on the archaeological discoveries being made at Herculaneum, rather than in the more pedestrian pearl white wares. In addition to the glaze that made this ware so popular, he created the four basic pattern shapes that people never seemed to tire of. Originally made in creamware, these shapes include: the Queen’s Shape, the Royal Shape, Shell Edge, and Feather Edge (see

illustration on page 7). These shapes were imitated by virtually every potter in Britain. The Shell Edge reflects the last vestiges of the Rococo with an uneven, asymmetrical edge, replaced by 1800 with a shell edge that is

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Above: Queen’s-edge plate, probably Josiah Wedgwood, lead-glazed creamware, Staffordshire, c. 1780. Cathcart’s Antiques

Right top: Royal-edge plate, made by Josiah Wedgwood, lead-glazed creamware, Staffordshire, c. 1775. Transfer printed with a scene of Corinthian Ruins. Historic Deerfield,

Right bottom: Shell-edge plate





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regular and even, based on balanced, neo-classical aesthetics. For a man who eschewed this popular ware, Wedgwood certainly seemed to have a lot of influence over its design and longevity.

What Wedgwood named “Pearl Glaze” and collectors now call pearlware, was at the time referred to as “China Glaze” by most potters actually making the stuff. It was “China Glaze” not only in its attempts to imitate the body of Chinese export porcelain, but because of its ubiquitous Chinoiserie decoration. This is really a continuation of the Chinese style that had been in vogue since export wares first arrived on European shores. So whether Delft, earthenware, or soft-paste porcelain, all these wares were created to appease the unending love consumers had for Chinoiserie decoration. About 1760 the transfer-printing process was developed. Hand-painted porcelain began to look dated and a lot of decorators were thrown out of work. Fortunately, the timing was right for them to move into the earthenware potteries to hand-decorate this new “China Glaze” product coming on the market. The design called “The Chinese House Pattern” is rather formulaic; it simply depicts a tree, a fence, a Chinese house, another tree, and another fence. But, because it is hand painted, each example has spontaneity and charm. Everyone thinks that these earthenware potters were slavishly copying Chinese Export wares, but this is not necessarily so. In actuality, there is an intermediary step: the earthenware potters were really copying English contemporary soft-paste wares such as Bow, Liverpool, and Worcester and *their* interpretations of Chinese patterns. This was also happening in America, where two fledgling potteries, Bonnin and Morris of Philadelphia and John Bartlett of Charleston, were both creating earthenwares in the latest fashion with blue and white Chinese style decoration. John Bartlett was a skilled Staffordshire potter and Bonnin and Morris employed former decorators from Bow. Much more research needs to be done.

Eventually the charm of the hand-painted decoration was lost as consumer demand for the standardized designs eventually led to the use of transfer printing ev-

erywhere, resulting in the development of the “Willow Pattern” which became indistinguishable from factory to factory. But from about 1780 to 1820 “The Chinese House Pattern” appeared on virtually every form, made by every potter, and used in virtually every household.



Top: Chinese House Pattern
Bottom: Willow Pattern



Upcoming Ceramics Events

CSC Meetings

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

1/22, *European Copies of Turkish Ceramics: The Sincerest Form of Flattery*, Walter B. Denny, Professor of Art History, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

2/26, *Bits and Pieces*: Members are invited to bring an object or two for discussion

3/26, *The Ceramics of Hugh C. Robertson, before and beyond: Dedham crackle-ware*, James D. Kaufman, C.S.C. Member

4/23, *Chinese Blue and White from Tang to Ming*, Rose Kerr, Keeper Emeritus, Far Eastern Department, Victoria & Albert Museum

5/28, Annual Meeting and Tea; *Learning to Mix a Jingdezhen Sling: Highlights of the American Ceramic Circle's 2008 tour to China*, Karina Corrigan, Associate Curator, Asian Export Art, Peabody Essex Museum; C.S.C. Member.

Connecticut Ceramics Study Circle Meetings

For information call 203-622-1128

1/12/09, *Traditions and Transformations: Southeast Asian Ceramics*, Denise Leidy

2/9, *Majolica for the Crystal Palace Exhibition, 1851*, Melissa Bennie

3/9, *Japanese Tradition in Ceramics: How is it expressed Today?* Joan Mirviss

4/20, *Topics in Chinese Ceramics*, Rose Kerr

5/21, *Secrets of the Potter's Art*, Robert Hunter

6/15, to be announced.

Auctions (Note: the auction houses are increasingly laconic in their sales calendars. We may, therefore, have missed some interesting auctions)

Asian:

1/21, Christie's, NY (Chinese Export, including part III of the Leo and Doris Hodroff Collection)

3/17, Sotheby's, NY (Chinese)

3/17, Christie's, NY (Japanese & Korean)

3/18,19, Christie's, NY (Chinese)

5/12,15, Christie's, London (Chinese)

5/13, Christie's, London (Japanese).

European:

3/19, Christie's, London

Exhibitions and fairs

New York Ceramics Fair, The National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts, 1083 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 1/21/08-1/25/08.

Alistair Sampson Collection of English Creamware, ongoing at the Flynt Center, Historic Deerfield

Ceramics from the Pflueger Collection, ongoing at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; includes several oversized animal figurines from Augustus the Strong's Meissen menagerie

At the Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC:

Taking Shape: Ceramics in Southeast Asia

Korean Ceramics

Contemporary Japanese Ceramics

Arts of the Islamic World (including ceramics)

Black & White: Chinese ceramics from the 10th-14th centuries

Royal Porcelain from the Twinight Collection, 1800-1850, 9/16/08-4/19/09, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Feather-edge pattern; Josiah Wedgwood, lead-glazed creamware, Staffordshire, England, c. 1775. The image is a transfer print of an actress playing the role of Flora. Historic Deerfield

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



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Chocolate pot in the form of a Roman askos (drinking vessel), manufactured in 1801 by Anthony Simmons and Samuel Alexander, Philadelphia, PA, silver. Owned by Thomas Jefferson at Monticello. Courtesy of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Charlottesville, VA