

Newsletter  
Majolica International Society  
June 1992

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**President**  
Michael Strawser

**Secretary**  
Marilyn Karmason

**Vice President and  
Annual Meeting Chairman**  
Gerald Leberfeld

**Treasurer**  
Joan Stacke

Majolica International Society  
Suite 103, 1275 First Avenue; New York, NY 10021

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**From the Co-Editors,  
Thea Benenson and Polly Wilbert,  
A Brief Note on the Newsletter**

Please bear with us while we go through a newsletter transition period. It's taken us a bit to get the mailing list, but we're pretty well set up now. Let us know of any address corrections or mailing duplications. Later in the summer, Polly will be getting new software, which will make the newsletter look nice, and we also will be setting up a mechanism for regularly getting information from Society members to share with everyone through the newsletter. We hope to send out three newsletters this year (two more after this one) and then to move to a quarterly schedule in 1993 and beyond. We look forward to being a vehicle for communication among members and to sharing information about our mutual passion, "majolica", with all of you.

**Secretary's Report:  
Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting  
by Marilyn Karmason**

The fourth annual meeting of the Majolica International Society was held the weekend of May 2-3, 1992 at the Sheraton Monarch Place Hotel in Springfield, Massachusetts. Attendance was greater than at the previous year's meeting, with 102 members representing 19 states, Canada, England, and France at the formal part of the program.

On Saturday morning, a bus took early-morning shoppers to Brimfield. Complete with map and guide, the M.I.S. members found majolica dealers on all parts of the field. The bus returned the shoppers to the hotel in time for Saturday evening's festivities.

Saturday evening's events began with a cocktail party, during which members met old and new friends and displayed photographs of their collections and where unattributed pieces were viewed for identification. Dinner was followed by the creative surprise of the evening: a "majolica cake" which Polly Wilbert arranged to have created and decorated with the motif of a majolica pitcher produced by Samuel Lear (p. 114, "Majolica", Karmason/Stacke) and the pitcher itself sat upon a decorated platform on top of the cake. The cake was delicious, the pitcher went home with Polly!

The speakers at the dinner meeting included: Nicholas M. Dawes, author of "Majolica" (Crown Publishers, 1991), who presented the historical, cultural, and artistic backgrounds of Victorian majolica; "Majolica John" and Beckie Boraten, who gave a slide presentation of their extensive collection of Etruscan majolica; and Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke, who revealed the just-discovered history of Tenuous majolica manufactured in Peekskill, New York.

Sunday morning's business meeting opened with the consideration of the proposed bylaws for the Society. With the change of the number of regional delegates from three to four, the bylaws were unanimously accepted. It was hoped that four regional delegates would more equally represent all parts of the country. This also elicited discussion about the need for regional activity in addition to the annual national meeting.

During the bylaws discussion, although not in keeping with Robert's Rules, there was much said about other matters as well, such as the location of future annual meetings. Both members and dealer-members presented their views. It soon became apparent that the members want to hold the annual meeting in conjunction with a large antiques show such as Renninger's or Brimfield, that the dealers (except for some hardy souls such as Fletcher and Hayes who attended from California) found it too difficult to go too far from home base, and that the Midwest dealers did not know of any large shows that would compare favorably with those in the East. A vote was called for the location of the 1993 meeting and the Renninger area near King of Prussia or Kutztown, Pennsylvania was chosen unanimously.

It was also apparent that the membership wanted more than one meeting a year and that regional meetings at other times would serve a real purpose. News from regional meetings could then be sent to the newsletter so that the entire membership could benefit. Plans and suggestions for enlarging the scope of the newsletter were also discussed.

The next order of business was the election of officers. Insofar as the Executive Committee felt that the organization was getting on firm ground, it was suggested that the Society continue with the same officers from the past three years. The slate, which was passed unanimously, included: Michael Strawser, president; Gerald Leberfeld, vice-president and chairman of the annual meeting; Marilyn Karmason, secretary; and Joan Stacke, treasurer. Polly Wilbert and Thea Benenson will be co-editors of the newsletter. (Howard Silby, our first editor, was thanked for his great contribution in organizing and printing the newsletter singlehandedly these past three years! No jokes, please, about it taking two women to replace one man!) Russell Keith, a lawyer and member from Peru, Indian, who had struggled mightily when our discussions straggled from the designated topic, was rewarded by being voted chairman of the bylaws committee.

The four regional delegates are Linda Ketterling, Midwest; Roberta Musser, East; Pat Clark, West; and Gayle Green, South. The delegates will call on other members in their area to help promote regional activity. The delegates also may be called upon to help set up the annual meeting, especially if the meeting is in the delegate's area. Although each delegate serves for three years, the assignment

to work on the annual meeting is for only one year of the three; the meeting chairman serves for three years.

The membership then voted to proceed with the printing of a directory of members and dealers. Members can include their names, addresses, and phone and fax numbers in the directory. The Directory questionnaire is attached as the last page of this newsletter. The directory will only be available to active Society members. If you do not return your preference, your information will be included.

The meeting closed with a presentation by Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke of this past year's majolica auction prices in the United States and England.

At 11 a.m., the doors to "Majolica Heaven" were opened and members of the Society scouted among the booths of twelve dealers and about 2,000 pieces of brilliant, colorfully glazed majolica to find the perfect additions to their collections. Non-members were admitted at 1 p.m. and six visitors also became new members.

Dealers at the exhibition and sale included: Dimitrios Bastas, Philadelphia; Cara Antiques (Constance and Richard Aranosian), Concord, New Hampshire; Pam Ferrazzutti, Burlington, Ontario; John Fletcher and Jerry Hayes, Shell Beach, California; Gayle Green, Glen Flora, Texas; Karmason/Leberfeld/Stacke, New York City; Linda Ketterling, Toledo, Ohio; Alvin A. Lake, Putnam Valley, New York; Wilma Murray, Philadelphia; Peddler's Chest (Carl and Nancy Schaefer) Trumbauersville, Pennsylvania; Ann Stratton Antiques, New York City; and Charles Washburne, Chappaqua, New York.

#### Tenuous Majolica: A Mystery Solved

A presentation by Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke at the Society's Fourth Annual Meeting.

On page 161 of our book, under the protective shadow of the chapter on Etruscan majolica, we came up with the idea that Tenuous majolica was produced by William Hill. We postulated that Hill, a potter whose partnership in Griffen, Smith, and Hill ended in 1880, had gone on to copy not only the Etruscan designs of begonia leaves and Shell-and-Seaweed, but that he had also created pottery marks, which instead of "GSH" included a capital "H", no doubt a tribute to Mr. Hill ... or so we tenuously surmised.

That was not at all the way it was! Research comes in many forms, and the solution to the mysterious history of Tenuous majolica came from a serendipitous visit to an antiques show. Joan was at Linda Willauer's booth admiring the majolica and unaware that she was about to take part in a great discovery! Linda generously introduced Joan to a collector of Tenuous majolica, Kurt O'Hare of Putnam Valley, New York. In turn, Joan waited to hear the history of Tenuous majolica from Mr. O'Hare until she and Marilyn could learn about it together. A trip to Putnam Valley was soon arranged and at Kurt and Barbara O'Hare's home, we learned about the early days of Tenuous majolica.

Several years ago, the O'Hares inherited a collection of Tenuous majolica from a dear family friend, William Fredrich Hunt. Mr. Hunt

was a well-known antiques dealer in the Shrub Oak-Putnam Valley area. He also documented the gift to the O'Hares with a copy of the Peekskill Evening Star of Saturday, January 22, 1966. Right on Page 1 was an article by Colin T. Naylor, headlined, "Big Majolica Collection Recalls Manufacture Here", which established that Tenuous majolica was manufactured by the Peekskill Pottery Company. This was all corroborated later in a talk with the archives historian of the Field Library in Peekskill, Mrs. Barbara Zimmer.

Both the O'Hares and Mrs. Zimmer referred us to William C. Ketchum, Jr.'s book, Early Potters and Potteries of New York State (Fund and Wagnalls, New York, 1970), in which Richard Harrison, the owner of the Peekskill Pottery Company, is identified. There is some question as to whether the pottery was established as early as 1867. It is certain, however, that Harrison, for many years a local crockery and glass merchant, produced Tenuous majolica from about 1882 to 1887 and kept the general pottery in production until about 1896.

Records from the Couch genealogical files in the Field Library establish that Harrison was born in England in 1813 and that he emigrated to the United States with his wife Rebecca. Mr. Hunt surmised that Harrison had arrived in this country some time after the Civil War, but we have not yet encountered documentation on this. There is also no indication (as yet!) of his having worked in Phoenixville and thereby becoming familiar with the majolica of Griffen, Smith and Hill.

The Harrison family, including son John and daughter Amelia, lived at 1432 Main Street. A page from the Peekskill Merchants' Directory of 1875 in the Field Library archives indicates that Harrison and his son John ran their business dealing with china, glass, housewares, and furnishings on Main Street, near Division Street. About 1885, the business was moved to 53 Broad Street, and it was probably there that most of the majolica was produced. In the early 1890's, the pottery works were at 102 N. Broad Street, and in 1898, at 901 Main Street, the Harrisons ran a grocery. The business was closed in 1901 and that year, Harrison moved to Pontiac, Michigan, where he died at the age of 88.

Harrison's majolica was marked PEEKSKILL POTTERY CO. and HARRISON'S POTTERY WORKS/PEEKSKILL, N.Y. TOBEY MAJOLICA was the mark on Toby jugs. The more definitive marks (in the style of Griffen, Smith and Hill) included TENUOUS in an arc and MAJOLICA in a straight line; and most important, TENUOUS MAJOLICA impressed within two concentric circles. It is these last two marks that include the no longer mysterious "H" we had thought to be for Mr. Hill, but which were, of course, for Mr. Harrison.

The following is from a text written by William Hunt, the antiques dealer who assembled this collection of Tenuous majolica:

"This is the legend in a die-stamped impression on the back of a fine, oval-shaped Majolica corn bread platter with basketweave center and a raised border of white corn ears and green leaves. Corn bread, or Johnny cake, was very popular and an important "staff of life" in the last century. The design of these platters seems to be original to the

Harrison Peekskill Pottery Works; no other similar design has been found. The corn ears are usually yellow, although a few platters are decorated with white corn."

Little is known about the Harrisons, wrote Mr. Hunt, and they seem to have been quiet in civic affairs. At the turn of the century, Harrison's pottery was demolished and a factory erected on the site. Remnants of a pottery kiln have been found near the modern buildings constructed in the area of the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Peekskill.

Mr. Robert Downing, owner of the Wishing Well Book Store in Peekskill and an amateur archeologist, reports finding shards and marked pieces of Tenuous majolica at the site of the factory that succeeded the old pottery. He also stated that he had never found an advertisement for the Harrison pottery, which might account for our difficulty in tracing the firm when we were initially writing our book. The Peekskill Merchants' Directory in the Field Library indicates under Harrison's listing that there was an "adv. front page", but the advertisement is missing.

The die-stamp of the Harrison pottery is in the Peekskill Museum. Two pieces of unmarked Harrison majolica, donated by Wilkie Todd, are also there.

Tenuous majolica corn bread trays were made in two sizes: 13 1/2" wide by 10 3/4" deep and 8 1/8" wide by 6 1/4" deep. A bread tray in the shell-and-seaweed pattern is 13 1/8" wide and 10 7/8" deep. Pitchers are 6" and 9" tall. A Toby jug is 6" tall. Syrup pitchers are 5" tall. These are all in the O'Hares' collection. Colors include the one immediately recognized by the experienced majolica collector: blues and greens or greens and pink on the yellow corn. Existing also are a child's tea service complete with dessert plates, modeled as cabbage leaves in shades of green, and another set of dessert plates. True to tradition, many of the pieces are lined in a rich pink glaze, linking Tenuous majolica of Harrison's, Peekskill, New York to the majolica of Phoenixville, Pennsylvania and Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, England.

Photographs of Tenuous majolica accompanied this lecture and were taken by Joan Stacke at the home of Kurt and Barbara O'Hare. Wilma Murray, a dealer who specializes in Tenuous majolica, displayed her collection at the annual meeting.

#### Majolica Auction Prices: Up, Up, and Away

The following is a brief summary of a presentation by Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke on majolica prices at auction during the past year or so. (Add a 10% buyer's premium, double the amounts in pounds to approximate cost in dollars. Unless noted, condition and size were unknown.)

#### Phillips, London, 6/91:

Minton 1868 game-pie dish w/hound dog and hunting paraphernalia.

Est. 900-1,200 pounds. Price: 1,600 pounds.

Minton rooster teapot. Est. 700-800 pounds. Price: 2,600 pounds.

Minton teapot with a finial of putto rowing a boat (rare). Est. 600-

800 pounds. Price: 1,300 pounds.

George Jones ewer w/dog chasing a fowl on one side, on the other side two rabbits. Est. 180-220 pounds. Price: 520 pounds.

Phillips, London, 9/91:

Minton pair of vases. Est. 400-500 pounds. Price: 400 pounds.

George Jones castellated Stilton dish and cover. Est. 500-700 pounds. Price: 800 pounds.

Minton "Shell Carriers" (w/damage). Est. 200-250 pounds. Price: 600 pounds.

Minton Chinese actor teapot. Est. 400-500 pounds. Price: 400 pounds.

Phillips, London, 12/91:

Wedgwood strawberry dish. Est. 380-540 pounds. Price: 550 pounds.

Minton tortoise teapot. Est. 600-800 pounds. Price: 850 pounds.

(At Christie's London in March, the same piece sold for 2100 pounds.)

George Jones nut dish. Est. 250-350 pounds. Price: 750 pounds.

Skinner, Bolton, Mass., 12/90: (Many pieces were sold in groups)

Minton 3-part butter dish. Est. \$5,500-7,500. Price: \$7,000.

Minton cat and mouse teapot in turquoise. Est. \$5,000-7,000.

Price: \$13,000.

Minton cat. (cover photo of catalogue) Est. \$1,200-1,800.

Price: \$5,250.

Pair of George Jones compotes. Est. \$5,500-7,500. Price: \$4,600.

Minton wine cooler. Est. \$1,800-2,200. Price: \$2,400.

Holdcroft Chinaman teapot. Est. \$900-1,200. Price: \$1,100.

Minton Chinaman actor teapot. Est. \$1,200-1,500. Price: \$1,600.

Minton monkey teapot. Est. \$1,800-2,500. Price: \$2,400.

Luper Companies, Richmond, Va., 3/92: (No pre-sale estimates)

Footed bowl, Morning Glory pattern. Price: \$175.

Clifton platter, ivory ground w/flowers and berries. Price: \$200.

Etruscan mug, Waterlilies and Cattails, yellow scalloped border.

Price: \$110.

10" Gurgling Fish vase. Price \$155.

Shell bowl on Snail Shell feet, poss. Holdcroft. Price: \$350.

Etruscan Sun Flower syrup pitcher. Price: \$400.

9" Etruscan Shell and Seaweed plate w/hairline. Price: \$250.

Etruscan Shell and Seaweed platter, large, w/chips. Price: \$550.

Etruscan albino Shell and Seaweed butter pat. Price: \$85.

Etruscan Smylax butter pat. Price \$50.

Etruscan Ivy and Oak Leaf cake stand. Price: \$225.

English Shell and Seaweed spittoon w/cobalt background. Price: \$400

(This piece is now one of 35 spittoons owned by our organization's president!)

Sotheby's, London, 4/14/92:

George Jones cachepot w/cartoon-like sea life. Est. 1,000-1,500 pounds. Price: 1,100 pounds.

Minton Moorish-style garden seat w/claret and orange glaze.

Est. 1,000-1,500 pounds. Price: 750 pounds.

Pair of Brown-Westhead, Moore garden seats, Egyptian revival style.

Est. 6,000-8,000 pounds. Price: 7,000 pounds.

**Most Spectacular Prices at Auction: Christie's, 9/91:**

Minton fawn flower holder, 32 3/4" high, modeled by Paul Comolera.  
Est. 5,000-7,000 pounds. Price: 7,500 pounds.

Two Minton frogs courting under a bunch of leaves, 48" high, w/damage.  
Est. 6,000-10,000 pounds. Price: 17,000 pounds.

Minton game-pie dish (p. 48, Majolica, Karmason/Stacke) (incredibly rare). Price: 40,000 pounds!!!! (to a member of the Majolica International Society!!!)

**Proposed Sections for the Next and Upcoming Newsletters:**

**MajolicAds** Looking for swaps, pieces of sets, items for sale, requests for information, etc. Set up in a "classified ad" small print format. Please send in your MajolicAds to:

Polly Wilbert; 7 Cedar St.; Salem, MA 01970

**Dealer's Corner** Highlighting one or two dealers an issue, with an interview covering the specialty and philosophy of the featured dealer. Dealers, we will be contacting you, please plan to bare your 'lil ole majolica souls! We also would use this section to note dealers' show schedules. Please let us know as far in advance as possible what shows you will be doing, the dates, and their locations.

**Regional Notes** A short section in each newsletter with news from the regional coordinators as well as from individual members. This would be a potluck section covering prices, shows, new information about majolica, any planned regional activities, etc.

**Cover Articles** In two newsletters a year, we would like to feature a cover article on a topic of special interest to our membership. We would very much appreciate your suggestions and ideas as to what would be of particular interest and are presently discussing a story on what can be done by the individual collector in the way of conservation of their majolica collection. The other two newsletters would be about the annual meeting: one issue preparing for it, the other reporting on it.

**Deadlines for Materials for Remaining 1992 Newsletters:**

September 15

December 15

Majolica International Society  
Suite 103  
1275 First Avenue  
New York, NY 10021

MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

(IF YOU DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM, the member information that we have for you WILL be included in the directory. Please return by 7/30/92.)

I would like the following information to be included in the M.I.S. Directory, which will only be made available to the Society's members and member-dealers:

(FILL IN ONLY WHAT YOU WANT INCLUDED AND PRINT LEGIBLY, i.e., IF YOU ONLY WISH YOUR NAME AND TELEPHONE NO. TO BE LISTED, PLEASE FILL IN ONLY THAT INFORMATION.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Nos: Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Office: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Fax: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Office \_\_\_\_\_

I do not want to have any personal information about myself included in the M.I.S. Directory.

If this is so, please check here: \_\_\_\_\_ and print your name

here: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail the completed form by Tuesday, July 30 to:

Majolica International Society  
Suite 103  
1275 First Avenue  
New York, NY 10021