

Majolica Matters!

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

Originally Published *Winter 1994*

This online version has minor omissions from the original.

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

New Year's Greetings

The Executive Committee wishes all of our members and friends a very healthy and happy New Year and many wonderful majolica finds in 1995!

The Auction Scene

By John J. Collins

Leading off the auction season in October in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, was Michael Strawser's Majolica Auctions with a sale of over 500 pieces. Included in the auction were the redoubtable Minton oyster server and a superb large rope and fern cheese keeper. A Tenuous Majolica leaf tray also attracted a lot of attention, as did a large range of excellent pieces.

New to the scene was the William Doyle Galleries' auction in Manhattan on November 30. Organized by Nicholas Dawes and consisting of over 200 lots comprising many hundreds of pieces, the auction was well attended by MIS members from several states. There were bidders on the phones as well as absentee bids and many bidders not present in the room were successful. Over 52% of the lots sold for prices that were higher than the range expected in the beautiful, full-color catalog - - some much higher -- but 24% sold below expected ranges. Color and condition were the hallmarks of the pieces, which went high, with cobalt and high-quality glazes commanding premiums. William Doyle Galleries hopes that their majolica auction will be an annual event.

Majolica Auctions will hold another sale in March in Indiana, with a planned color catalog, and there may also be one in the fall, back on the East Coast.

Interested MIS members should contact either Majolica Auctions or the William Doyle Galleries for details. And, as is our policy, the MIS reports items of interest to members but does not endorse any commercial event.

Society Responds to Reports that MIS Tour Group Bought All the Majolica in England

By Polly Wilbert

But, seriously, folks, as was long planned, a group of 17 members visited England in October. The highlight of the trip was their visit to the Frogmore Dairy. The group enjoyed tours at the Wedgwood and Minton Museums in Stoke-on-Trent and the V&A Museum in London and visited Bonhams auction house and a number of antiques dealers and shows.

One of the group, Marshall Katz, has provided us with a photo of everyone at Frogmore. (See photos on page 8.) (For me, the final somewhat daunting task was to thank appropriately all the wonderful people who made this possible. It is not everyday that one forwards their profuse thanks to the Keeper of the Privy Purse, Sir Shane Blewitt, to be passed along to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II! I then received a thank you note for our thank you note!!!)

All Majolica Trails Lead to Sunny Atlanta!

The 1995 Annual Meeting of the Majolica International Society will be held in a new locale. After several years near Philadelphia or in New England for Brimfield, this year we will be meeting from Friday, April 7, through Sunday, April 9, in the South at the Hotel Nikko Atlanta (brochure enclosed) in Buckhead, a beautiful area of Atlanta, Georgia. In order to coordinate our meeting with two Atlanta antiques shows, our 1995 meeting is being held almost a month earlier than last year's dates. If you feel that your reservations for our meeting are being asked for early (by Friday, March 3), you're right!

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In making the move to a new location, the Society's Executive Committee is responding to requests to hold the meeting somewhere other than in the East. We have been working hard to make the 1995 meeting -- our seventh -- the most interesting to date while still offering the aspects that have made previous meetings so attractive: interesting and informative presentations on majolica, local antiques shopping, and, of course, Majolica Heaven! Atlanta has much to offer us: antiques shopping, beautiful weather, interesting and historical sightseeing, and easy accessibility because it is an airline hub. It has a new and efficient subway system and also is close to a number of interstate highways.

The success of this meeting in Atlanta will encourage us to go to other areas of the country for future meetings. The Executive Committee believes, however, that because so many Society members and majolica dealers live in the eastern region of the country that the annual meeting should be held in the East at least every other year or two years in a row with the third year's meeting being in a new location.

Expanded Annual Meeting Events:

This year we are offering an expanded weekend program. In addition to our usual Saturday evening program, on Friday, April 7, we will be holding a roundtable discussion, MajoliCake & Coffee, at 9:00 p.m. We have scheduled this program in the hope that there will be time for those who are traveling to Atlanta on Friday to reach the hotel, get settled, and then join us for dessert and coffee and a very interesting series of participatory discussions on majolica and related subjects. Please see the back of the registration form (at back of newsletter) for more details.

During the day on Saturday, April 8, you can attend the two large local antiques shows (Scott's and Lakewood -- if you haven't already been to them on Friday), sightsee, or antique in the Buckhead area and beyond.

Annual Meeting in Atlanta, The Antiques Shows:

In Atlanta, we will be meeting in conjunction with two very large regional antiques shows: Scott Antiques Market Show at the Atlanta Expo Center and the Lakewood Antiques Market at the Lakewood Fairgrounds, each of which features thousands of dealers. As in the past, the Society will arrange for a bus to take members to these shows for a small fee. For those of you who would like to take advantage of the MajoliBus, please so indicate on the registration form, which is printed elsewhere in this issue.

Scott Antiques Market Show, Atlanta Expo Center
Friday, April 7, and Saturday, April 8, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Sunday, April 9 10 am. to 5 p.m.
Directions: Take 1-285, Exit 40 to Atlanta Expo Center

Lakewood Antiques Market, Lakewood Fairgrounds
Weds., April 5, thru Sat., April 8, 9 a.m. - 6p.m. (Early Buyers on Wednesday during Set Up)
Sunday, April 9, 10 am. - 5 p.m.
Directions: Take 1-75/85 to Exit 88. Go east to Lakewood Fairgrounds.

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Annual Meeting in Atlanta, The Saturday Evening Program: Cocktails and “Barter and Buy”

Saturday evening starts off at 5:30 p.m. with a cocktail reception featuring “Barter and Buy”. Members may bring up to 15 pieces of majolica to sell or trade at Barter and Buy.

The price, condition, and name of seller must be marked on each piece. Whether you are buying or selling, “Barter and Buy” is a terrific resource for adding to your collection or for streamlining it while filling your kitty for **Majolica Heaven!** the following day.

Please also bring photographs or photo albums of your majolica collection to the cocktail party. We’ll have plenty of tables so you can sit down while leafing through the wonderful photos that we get to pass around each year! Curious to know more about a piece in your collection? Bring a photo and ask an expert. We’ll have plenty in attendance!

At 7:00 p.m. we will sit down for dinner and the traditional “majolica collectors’ exercises led by Society Founder and President Michael G. Strawser. If you will be joining us for the first time, don’t be late for dinner and the fun we have getting to know one another!

Annual Meeting in Atlanta The Saturday Evening! Program: Paul Atterbury

We are truly excited about the opportunity to hear Paul Atterbury. Mr. Atterbury will be joining us from London, England, where he is well known as a frequent contributor on 19th-century design to the BBC’s enormously popular television series, “The Antiques Roadshow.” Over the past 20 years, Mr. Atterbury has given over 1000 lectures on ceramics, and art, architecture and design history of the 19th and 20th centuries. Mr. Atterbury will speak on “Fact and Fantasy, the Majolica Universe”.

In 1994, much of Mr. Atterbury’s time was taken up as the editor of the catalog for the very successful exhibit, “Pugin: A Gothic Passion,” at the Victoria & Albert Museum. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin was a tremendously influential architect and designer of the early Victorian era. Mr. Atterbury’s first museum curatorship was for the 1976 Minton exhibition at the Victoria and Albert. He subsequently became historical advisor to Royal Doulton, helped to develop the Minton and Doulton Museums in Stoke-on-Trent, and mounted the Doulton exhibition at the V&A in 1979.

Mr. Atterbury is the editor with Lars Tharp of the Illustrated Encyclopedia of Antiques recently published by Little, Brown & Co. His publications include: Encyclopedia of Antiques Moorcroft Pottery, Dictionary of Minton, Art Deco Patterns, and he edited The Parian Phenomenon. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Annual Meeting in Atlanta Slides Apoppin’:

Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke will be back at it again this year with slides of the newly discovered as well as a peek or two inside some very interesting majolica collections. If you’ve found something that hasn’t been seen before, please let them know so they can arrange to include your slides or just bring them along and let them know what you’ve brought.

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Annual Meeting in Atlanta The Sunday Business Meeting and Triennial Election:

The business meeting of the Society will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday (with continental breakfast available from 8:00 a.m.). This year we will be electing the Society's officers for the coming three years, which is a very important opportunity for MIS members to influence our direction and efforts during that time. More about the election will be forthcoming in the next issue of the newsletter. Members must be present to vote.

Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Majolica Heaven 1995!

Breathtaking! How else to describe the scene as you enter the door of **Majolica Heaven!** Thousands of pieces of exuberantly colored and brightly lit Victorian majolica. More majolica **for sale** in one place and at one time than you will see anywhere else during the year and surely some pieces that you may never have seen before. Bring your wish list. Bring your piggy bank. **It's Heaven!**

Majolica Heaven '95! is the culmination of the Society's yearly members' gathering as well as one of its highlights. The dealers who exhibit bring their best pieces to Majolica Heaven! and all year long we look forward to seeing them and their displays. The doors to Majolica Heaven '95! open for Society members at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday and for the public free of charge at 1:00 p.m.

When we've made our purchases, it's time to pack, to say farewell to our new collector friends, and to head home -- this year with the added benefit of a sunny respite in the South.

The Case for the MajoliVacation in Atlanta:

Really, this doesn't need a lot of thought. After some of the winters we've seen in the not-so-distant past, planning a stay in sunny southern Atlanta shouldn't be too difficult. Come to the city a day or two in advance of the meeting. Our special hotel rate applies. There is much to see. There will be much to buy. And, if you simply wish to sit in the sun and take in the spring flowers, you'll have it made. (And, if you're of a mind to golf you know what state they play the Masters in, don't you?)

**Our promise: It will be warm.
There will be flowers and majolica.
Southern hospitality will prevail.**

Our special room rate at the 4-star Hotel Nikko Atlanta, \$115/night with valet parking at \$3/day, (the usual room rate is \$200/night) prevails for two days before and two days after our meeting. You must confirm the room rate when you make your reservation by indicating you will be attending the Majolica meeting. (See registration form.)

Could it be true that Nikko is Japanese for majolica?

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Repro Redux

We were delighted to see a great deal of majolica featured in the December issue of Bon Appetit, that is, until we realized that all the pieces shown (p. 106) are of the reproduction variety. Perhaps the article can serve as a useful guide to what is not legit...

MIScellany

by G. Jones II

Several MIS members have expressed concern that the Society's mailing list is being used for commercial purposes.

The Majolica International Society maintains a computerized membership list. It does not sell this list to anyone. The MIS does distribute a copy of the list annually to each member so that an MIS member wishing to contact or "network" with other majolica collectors may do so more easily. (Any member wishing not to be listed may exercise that option with a single telephone call or letter to any one of the Executive Committee and that member's name will never again appear on any printed list, although clearly he/she will continue to receive the newsletter and any other MIS mailings.)

The Executive Committee has extensively discussed this matter of commercial use and offers the following two opinions: first, the Society will not sell the MIS membership list. Second, if any member wishes to use the list for commercial purposes, well and good.

Why well and good? One reason only: commercial events whether auctions or dealers' notices of upcoming shows or new merchandise, serve only to keep MIS members informed, thereby offering each of us the opportunity to upgrade our collections. Essentially, commercial events recycle the majolica and make it available to all of us.

When Michael Strawser or the William Doyles Galleries in Manhattan or Skinner in Boston or any other entity auctions majolica, MIS members may upgrade their collections by buying or selling through that auction. Or MIS members may simply choose to attend the event to enjoy the majolica on display and the company of fellow collectors. This is a superb way to study and appreciate a lot of majolica in one place. While the Majolica International Society does not endorse any commercial event or any particular entities, the MIS does not object to the membership list being used by members to draw attention to an event or opportunity about which most MIS members would otherwise not be aware.

Use of the term "does not endorse" in this context means that the Society is in no position to vet majolica being offered for sale. The MIS does not and cannot preview auctions. It cannot look for hairline cracks or flawed repairs or in any way issue opinions as to the condition of items for sale, individually or collectively. Even if auction catalogs offer brief descriptions of the conditions of each piece, it is still completely the buyer's responsibility to be sufficiently informed and observant to judge the piece's condition. This is all the more important at auctions when conditions are not published in the catalog or at shows where no catalog exists. Moreover, the MIS cannot be expected to be able to tell a commercial venture how to do business.

(The MIS has a Standards Committee which is actively struggling to codify the issues. For example, with such a large amount of reproduction "majolica" flooding the market, the Standards Committee is studying whether the term "Victorian" ought to be formally appended to the majolica we collect to distinguish it from the modern day copies. This may not be legally possible but it may become ethically warranted. The Standards Committee is also working to ensure that dealers and auctioneers and others on the commercial side of majolica act responsibly and clearly most do now. More to come on this issue of Standards.)

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One more thing: The Society's President and Founder Michael Strawser maintains a large mailing list for his auctions. By including an MIS brochure in his most recent mailing, the Society gained over 50 new members who were unaware of the MIS before that mailing and who now enjoy this newsletter and all the fruits of MIS membership. So the issue of mailing lists cuts both ways: Michael has access to our list -- small compared to his -- but the MIS benefited by the inclusion of our brochure in his mailing. A symbiotic quid pro quo.

(G. Jones II is the pseudonym of an MIS member, who prefers it to "Gasbag".)

Letter to the Editor

New Member from Australia!

Berwick, Victoria, Australia
5th October 1994

Dear Ms. Wilbert,

Thank you for your cordial welcome to the Majolica International Society. I have been collecting Majolica for about 20 years but unfortunately know very little about any Majolica that may have been produced in Australia. However, I have passed your letter onto a gentleman, Mr. Greg Hill, who has some expertise in this matter and whom I am sure will write to you on this subject.

Regarding your article "Majolica, The Real Thing or Phony Fake", my Husband has seen many such pieces in Department Stores in Singapore and S.E. Asia and has noted that they are all products of the Philippines.

Sincerely,
Josephine Hogg

Member Seeks Information

September 9, 1994

Mr. Michael Strawser:

I am a member of the Society and have been a collector for three years now. I have been interested in majolica for almost 4 years. During a recent trip to France, I purchased a "smoker's set" which is truly beautiful and in mint condition except for a lid missing. I really never read about smoker's sets and I would like to know if anyone knows their origin or where they were made. I suspect this is French, but in no majolica books do they have either pictures or talk about them.

I am enclosing photos, which if you like you could publish in the newsletter in case anyone knows anything about them. Please contact me at the following address. Thank you very much.

Catherine Vignole
17616 Lindstrom Court
Gaithersburg, MD 20877 Ph: 301-926-8457

Karmason and Stacke to Lecture in Florida and Massachusetts on "Victorian Majolica: The Glaze of Glory"

In March, Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke will carry the Society's banner to Naples, Florida, and then to Westwood, Massachusetts.

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Victorian majolica will be the thematic focus of the 14th annual Trinity-by-the-Cove Antiques Show & Sale in Naples. Marilyn and Joan will deliver a lecture and slide presentation entitled "Victorian Majolica: The Glaze of Glory" at 10 a.m. on Thursday, March 9. The 4-day event will be held at the Trinity-in-the-Cove Episcopal Church, 553 Galleon Drive. The Show is open to the public Thursday through Saturday, March 9 to 11, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is \$10/person. Among the 28 exhibitors will be Charles Washburne of Chappaqua, NY, an MIS member/dealer, and Lynda Willauer, another well known majolica dealer from Easton, Connecticut and Nantucket, Massachusetts. For further information, please call: 813-262-6581.

Farther north, on Sunday, March 19, at 2 p.m., at Fox Hill Village in Westwood, Massachusetts (near Boston), Marilyn and Joan will speak at a meeting of the Wedgwood Society of Boston. The lecture will be free and open to the public. Information about the lecture or the Wedgwood Society of Boston may be obtained from:

Lorraine Horn
25 Laurel Avenue
Wellesley Hills, MA 02181
Ph: 617-237-9201

Tulsa Regional Group Meets

by Phyllis Hayes

The Tulsa Majolica Society met Sunday afternoon, October 23rd, at the home of Sharon Jones. Sharon's home is the perfect setting for her extensive collection of majolica and was much admired by the 11 members and two guests that attended from Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

The upcoming meeting of the Majolica International Society in Atlanta was discussed and several of the members plan to attend. It was mentioned that though Atlanta isn't in our backyard, at least it's getting closer.

The members of the Tulsa Majolica Society who attended the International meeting in the spring gave a film tour and report on the meeting and side trips to Brimfield.

Polly's Recommended Light Reading

All of Anne Perry's Victorian Mysteries featuring Inspector Thomas and Charlotte Pitt. Her mysteries are set in Victorian London and are brimful of details of everyday English Victorian life of all classes. Interesting and entertaining light reading. I read all of them The Editor's "Everything I Want for Christmas" Section Wherein the contents are subjects near and dear to the editor's heart 97it's a little Christmas present to myself I could find in about a month this past summer. Published by Ballantine Books.

Also Eugenia Price's series, which features Stranger in Savannah. For those of you who will be coming to the annual meeting in Atlanta, may I recommend these well written and historically accurate novels set in Georgia before the Civil War. You have just enough time to read them all before April! I found the series fascinating reading and terrific historical background for a trip I made to Georgia a couple of years ago. The tour guides in Savannah say that they can tell which of their visitors have read Miss Price's books because they're the ones who know so much about Savannah's history.

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Henry Griffen of Griffen, Smith & Hill

If you're a new member of the Society, you may not be aware that my great-grandfather was Henry Griffen, one of the founding brothers of Griffen, Smith & Hill. The following biographical information about him was recently rediscovered among John Griffen's (my grandfather's) papers:

Henry Ramsey Griffen

Born: Phoenixville, Penna., Aug. 23, 1857.

Prepared at Lauderbach Academy, Philadelphia, PA

1876, Civil Engineering,
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Delta Phi, Lambda, 1873)

1877-88: Member of the firm, Griffen, Smith & Co., manufacturers of pottery, including "Etruscan" Majolica, Phoenixville, PA

1888-91: Manager, Griffen Bros. & Miller, manufacturers of enameled brick.

1891-94: Manager, Griffen Enamel Brick Co.

1894-96: Glaze Expert, American Terra Cotta Co., Terra Cotta, IL.

1896-98: with, and 1902-03 in charge of, shipping dept.,

1903-07: auditor, Phoenix Iron Co., Phoenixville, PA

1898-1902: Inspector for Penna. Lines west of Pittsburgh, PA

Died: November 20, 1907. Buried Morris Cemetery, Phoenixville, PA

Henry R Griffen also has to his credit the development in enamel brick manufacture of a process which enabled the firing of the brick and of the enamel in one operation. Prior to that invention it had been necessarily first to fire the brick, then apply the enamel, and finally refire the enameled brick. The improved method resulted in a material reduction in cost and has been almost universally employed since [as of the time of John Griffen's notes which were made in 1957]. The enameled brick extensively used in the Reading Railway Terminal in Philadelphia was manufactured by him in a brick works situated near the mouth of Perkiomen Creek, which flows into the Schuylkill River about opposite Valley Forge.

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The Editor's Thank You's

My thanks are overdue to Carl and Nancy Schaefer for passing along the article on reproductions that initiated the piece on that topic featured in the last issue. Thank you both. During the year, many members of the Society drop me notes that lead to any number of interesting items that can be read in Majolica Matters. I am grateful to everyone who has given me a hand with the newsletter and I encourage all of you to clip, comment, put pen to paper, or just plain surmise in my direction for the benefit of all.

Thanks in particular this year to: **Michael Strawser, Valerie DiSpaltro, Kathy Duane, Marilyn Karmason, John Collins, Ian Smythe, Marshall Katz, Phyllis Hays, Pam Ferrazzutti, and Wilma Murray.**

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How Society Stuff Gets Done

By the by, that brings up something else that it might be good to make sure everyone understands. Although the Society has a mailing address in New York City (and not really an office per se), most of the efforts by the Society's officers take place in various locations across the country. For example, as you may already have noticed, I live in Salem, Massachusetts and work in Boston. When you get your newsletter, it has a Boston postmark because I send out the newsletter from my office. As a volunteer, I edit, have copied, and then fold, staple, etc., etc.

All of the officers of the Society spend a great deal of time writing letters, making calls, organizing, and working on the Society's behalf, generally from their homes or offices. You can just imagine how much work Gerry Leberfeld (NYC) does in finding the annual meeting location, negotiating with the hotel, making arrangements for all the events that occur over the weekend, and setting up Majolica Heaven! and making the whole weekend happen. Marilyn Karmason (NYC) is constantly communicating with members, dealers, and the outside world on behalf of the Society and she finds the very interesting speakers we have at the annual meeting. Joan Stacke (NYC) pays all the bills, keeps our accounts and the membership records, and pitches in everywhere including arranging the MajoliBus for the annual meeting. Among other activities for the Society, this year Michael Strawser (Wolcottville, Indiana) produced our beautiful brochure and then sent out 1300 of them to his very large mailing list, which resulted in lots of new members. John Collins (Saratoga Springs, NY) has taken on numerous tasks including annual meeting registration and heading the Nominating Committee for this year's triennial election of Society officers. We also meet three or four times a year as a committee to plan, prepare, compare, share, propose, etc. Plus we fax. Boy, do we fax!!!

You Can Help!

We need more hands and brains. Do you have a skill or enthusiasm that would be of service when put to work on behalf of the Society? Or, perhaps you have a majolica-related interest that you would like to research? Every member of the Society wants to learn more about majolica and we always need researchers. Drop us a line or mention any ideas you might have to any one of the Society's officers at the next annual meeting. We want to hear from you! We'd be delighted to have you volunteer! We need you!

You can even do something as simple as go through old antiques magazines that you encounter when you are antiquing to see whether you can find articles on majolica or information on potteries. Make a visit to your local historical society. Find out if they have anything about local potteries that might have manufactured majolica or perhaps they have old newspapers or periodicals from the late 1800s and you could look through them for ads for majolica or stories or notices about potteries and what they were manufacturing. Then send copies to me to be reprinted in the newsletter and to be put in the Society's Archives. Above all, please keep us in mind if you have a serendipitous majolica history encounter.

Just retired and looking for a project? Drop us a note and you'll be busy in the land of Majolica!

**... The End of the Editor's
Christmas Present...**