

# Majolica Matters

The Newsletter of the  
Majolica International Society  
Summer 1995

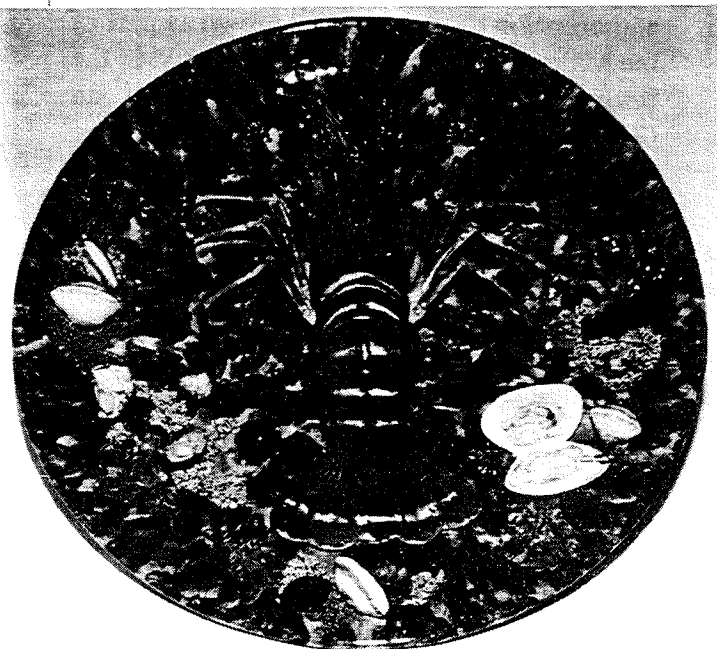
## In This Issue:

"Nineteen-Century Portuguese Palissy Ware" °  
by Marshall P. Katz -- Page 1

"Oh, What a Time We Had!" Report on  
the Annual Meeting in Atlanta -- Page 5

"Majolica and Its Makers," a personal  
reminiscence of Griffen, Smith & Hill from a talk  
by Frances W. Pennypacker, a niece of Harry  
Griffen's. -- Page 9

Plate by Avelino Soares Belo, 15" diameter,  
c 1900, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal.



## Nineteen Century

### Portuguese Palissy Ware °

by Marshall P. Katz

(Excerpts from a forthcoming article.)

Brightly colored crawling lizards, slithering vipers, menacing pike and docile crayfish are the hallmark of Bernard Palissy, a 16th century French ceramist whose works can be found in major museums around the world. The nineteenth century would see a revivalist movement of these works, principally in France and Portugal from 1843 to the end of the century.

## Caldas da Rainha

It is little wonder that Portuguese potters with a long history of ceramic tradition would embrace the French initiative and adapt the Palissian rustic style in their own manner. For more than 50 years, in the town of Caldas da Rainha, Portugal, small ceramics factories and workshops called *Fábricas de Fainças* (faience factories) produced a variety of glazed and enamelled rustic earthenware which enjoyed wide acceptance in the marketplace both at home and abroad.

## Manuel Mafra

The town probably owes the foundation of its ceramics reputation to Manuel Cipriano Gomes (adopting the last name Mafra), who moved to Caldas from the town of Mafra and in the year 1853 established the first ceramics factory in Caldas to export its products.

(...cont. on Page 2)

Plate by Manuel Mafra, 15 1/2" diameter,  
c. 1860/1880, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal.

Majolica Matters is published quarterly  
for its members by:

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### Important Note:

With this issue, members in good standing will receive the Society's "Yellow Pages," the annual listing of members.

### Portuguese Pallisy Ware, cont.

Gaining initial employment as a waiter, Mafra later joined the ceramics factory of Maria dos Cacos which he would later buy. Mafra would be the first to perfect the technique of jasper, the first to adapt and refine the technique of "musgo" (moss) and the first to enlarge the color palette of basic colors and shades. Manuel Mafra worked uninterruptedly for nearly 30 years before turning over the factory management to his son, Eduardo Augusto Mafra in 1880. The factory was subsequently sold and ceased operations around 1900.



Mafra travelled extensively throughout Portugal exhibiting his wares at ceramics fairs and major industrial and commercial exhibitions. King Fernando bestowed upon the factory the title "Royal Supplier to the King", and as an ardent potter himself, purchased many pieces for the royal household. He even granted authorization to use the royal crown as part of the Mafra mark which was incorporated in the "crown-over-anchor" emblem impressed on the reverse of many Mafra pieces. Other Mafra marks include the initials "MCG", "MCM" or "MCGM", "Mafra, Caldas, Portugal" with "anchor"; and "M. Mafra, Caldas, Portugal."

Another important Caldas potter is José Alves da Cunha who established a small factory in 1866. By the end of the century, the factory was no longer in business. The most common marks are the oval impress, "José A. Cunha, Portugal, Caldas Rainha" or "JAC, Caldas, Portugal".

Relatively unknown in the United States are a number of other talented and successful Caldas ceramists whose works are well respected in Portugal: José Francisco de Sousa (marks are an oval impress with initials "JFS" in fancy script or a circular impress "Francisco de Sousa" and the "date" or "Portugal, Caldas"); Francisco Gomes Avelar (Mark is an oval impress "F. Gomes Avelar, Caldas da Rainha"); João Coelho César (mark is an oval impress "J.C. CESAR, CALDAS"); Avelino Soares Belo; Herculano Elias; and José Domingos de Oliveira.

### **Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro**

Strangely, the most famous and successful Portuguese ceramist in history is virtually unknown in the United States except in lofty ceramics circles. Lisbon-born Rafael Augusto Bordalo Pinheiro (1846-1905) came from a distinguished family of artists. His father, Manuel Maria Bordalo Pinheiro was a painter of some acclaim whose works hung in many collections including that of King Fernando, who owned five of his paintings. Rafael was one of nine children many of whom continued the family's artistic tradition.

At the age of 11, Rafael received his first lessons in drawing and modelling from his father in his workshop. At school, Rafael displayed an inclination toward acting and upon graduation enrolled in a school for dramatics. His father, not desiring his son to squander his education, secured a civil service job for the young man. Rafael then applied to art school and took courses in architectural and ancient design. Except for drawing, he spent classes making caricatures or cartoons of his teachers.

In 1866, he married Elvira Ferreira de Almeida and dedicated himself to drawing. By 1870, his drawings had turned into full-scale political and social caricatures and were appearing in magazines and pamphlets. In 1871 and 1872,

his drawings won prizes at exhibitions in Lisbon and Madrid.

In 1875, Rafael was invited to direct a satirical magazine, **O Mosquito**, in Brazil, where he lived with his family for four years and enjoyed considerable success, eventually purchasing the magazine and publishing booklets. In 1879, he returned to Lisbon where his success continued as he published his political cartoons and satire.

It was because of his brother, army colonel Feliciano Bordal Pinheiro, that Rafael would be attracted at age 37 to a profession in ceramics. Feliciano was a frequent visitor to the spa at Caldas da Rainha as well as an admirer of the local industry and beautiful countryside. Convinced that the ceramics factories there were primitive and outmoded, he persuaded Rafael to lend his artistic talent to a modern enterprise, and in October 1883 drew plans for a new business to be known as Fabrica de Faianças das Caldas da Rainha (Faience Factory of Caldas da Rainha). Toward the end of 1884, the initial phase of the new factory was completed. By June of the following year, the second phase was completed, although the final phase would not be in operation until 1888.

For the next three years, Rafael oversaw the artistic direction of the company. Unfortunately, he was a poor businessman, and the fortunes of the enterprise which employed more than 50 workers declined. By 1889, the factory needed a major cash infusion. Fortunately, the Portuguese government granted a loan to save it from impending bankruptcy which enabled the company to exhibit at the Paris International Exhibition of that year.

By 1892, however, the company's debt had become so great that the original shareholders were forced to relinquish their holdings to the

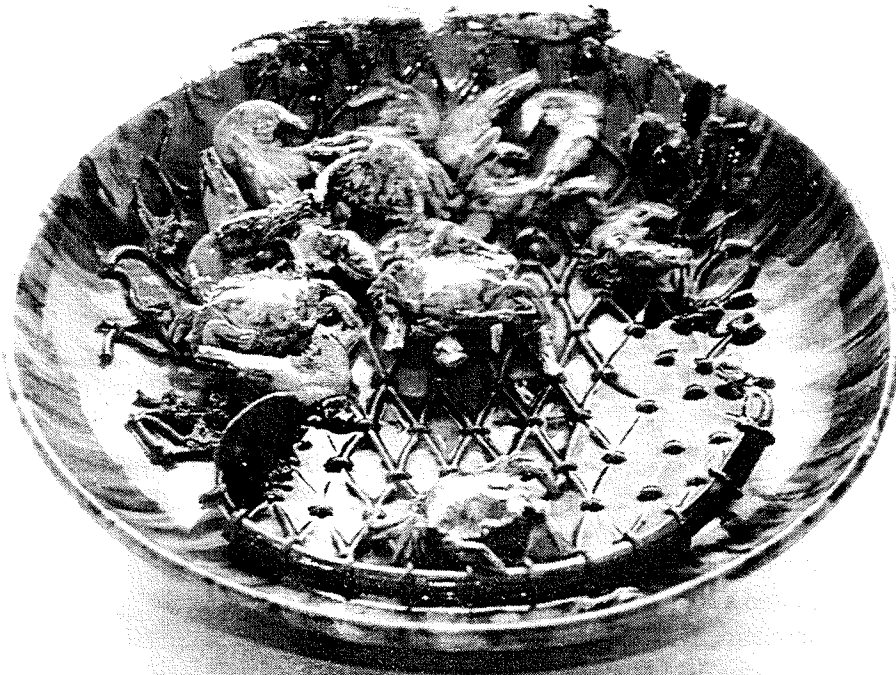
Bank of Portugal. Through his friendship with Julio Vihena, the governor of the bank, Rafael continued to direct the factory's operations until 1900 when he turned over control to his son, Manuel Gustavo Bordalo Pinheiro, who was a gifted artist in his own right. Rafael then returned to Lisbon where he died five years later from bronchitis in 1905. After Rafael's death, the factory began to lose its reputation and was put up for auction. Manuel Gustavo erected a new factory on another site, but its operations were short lived and it was later dismantled.

The marks of Pinheiro's factory at Caldas da Rainha are quite varied and numbered over 30 during its twenty years of operation. The principal mark used from 1884 to 1894 was a rectangular impressed "Fabrica de Faianças da Rainha". From 1894 to 1905, the principal mark was an impress of the letters "FFCR" elaborately entwined. ♦

Creamer by Jose Alves Da Cunha, 5" x 3",  
c. 1870/1890, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal.



Plate by Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, 11" diameter,  
c. 1890, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal.



(... more photos, page 6)



## Oh, What A Time We Had! Annual Meeting, Atlanta 1995

by Polly Wilbert with ever helpful  
input from John Collins

Plate by Jose Francisco de Sousa, 14" diameter,  
c 1860/1890, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal.

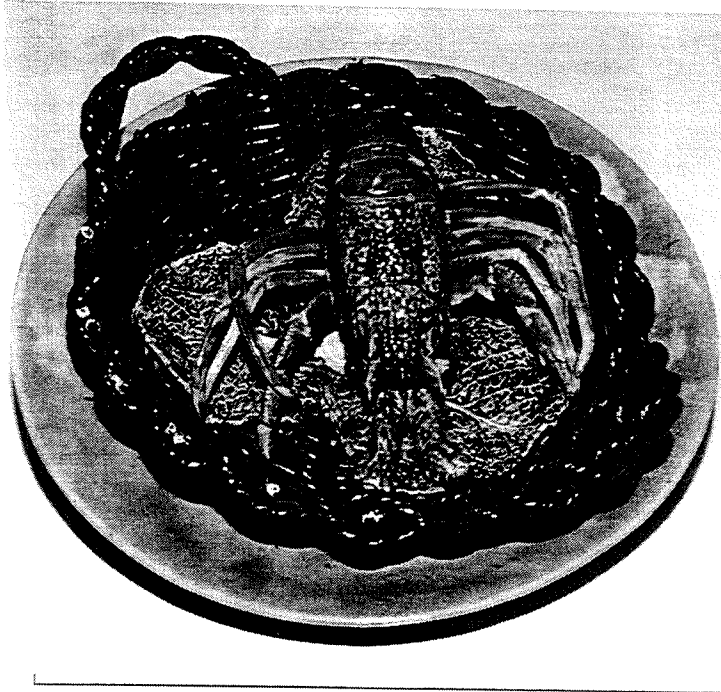
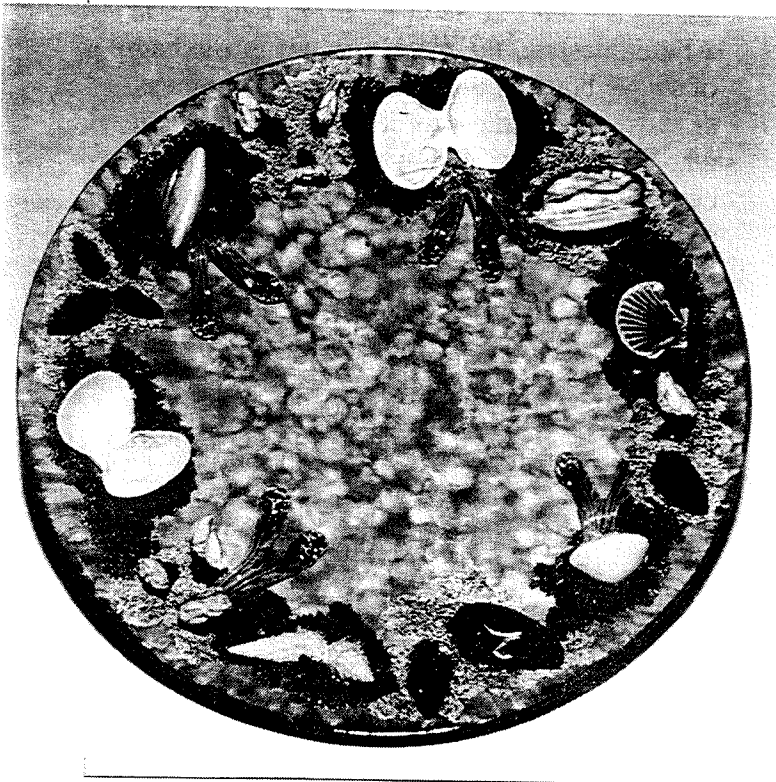


Plate by Herculano Elias, 14" diameter,  
c 1900, Caldas da Rainha, Portugal.



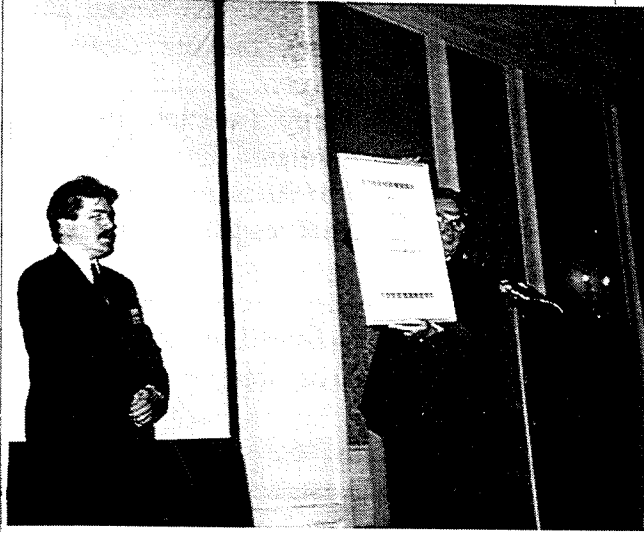
Atlanta was terrific! Everyone who attended seems to agree that it was our best meeting yet. As promised, the flowers were out (it was Dogwood Festival weekend and the wisteria was also turning the woods along the highways lavender), the sun shone (it was 80°+ and sunny everyday), and there were lots of antiques to buy (whether you went to Scott's at the Atlanta Expo Center or to Miami Circle or to the many other areas where there were antique shops). The Nikko hotel was lovely, with wonderful service, and meeting and banquet areas that truly met our somewhat unusual space needs (Barter 'n Buy filled up a whole hallway!).

After cocktails on Saturday night, 163 members and guests sat down for dinner in the Nikko's ballroom. We began with our traditional introductory exercises. This year we were honored to identify in our midst a majolica collector of more than 50 years, Mrs. Helen Povich of Ellsworth, Maine, who attributed the start of her collection to her savvy lawyer husband. As he went around the diningroom with a wireless mic so each person introduced him or herself, Gerry Leberfeld quipped that there were enough people from Dallas that we should have chartered a plane! Among the introductions was one husband who allowed as how he was "The Enabler" to his wife "The Collector." (Later, Susan Zises Green mused that perhaps "Majolica Anonymous" might be needed for the truly addicted collector.)

At this point in the evening's proceedings, Society Founder Michael Strawser was honored for his six years as president with a commemorative plaque and a standing ovation by all of the members present. All of us are

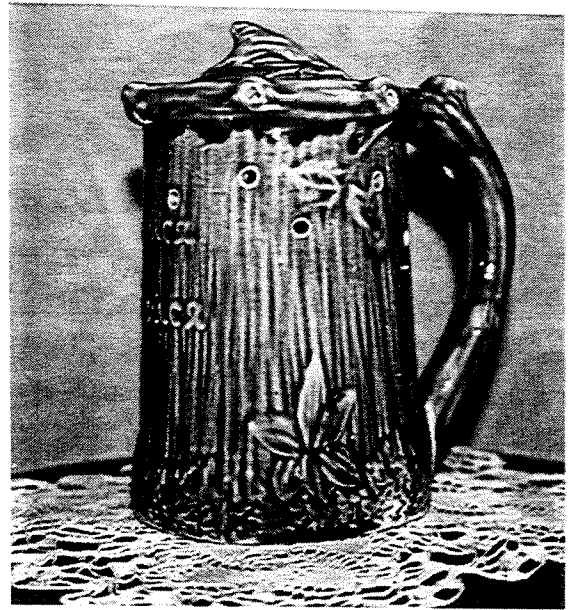
grateful for Michael's having conceived of and hosted the Society's organizational gathering in Ft. Wayne and for his leadership and nurturing of the Society during the last six very successful years of the Society's development and growth.

Gerry Leberfeld (r) presents Michael Strawser with a plaque in gratitude for service to the Society.



Over dinner, one of my most interesting discoveries was that tablemate Anne Horwedel of Otterbein, Indiana had purchased the Russian majolica puzzle jug that several of us had pored over (get it? . . .) in MIS dealer Randy Grant's booth at Scott's. Having the traditional details of majolica, the jug (see photo) featured a lovely blue colored ground that was more turquoise than cobalt. We tried to have the Russian saying on its front translated by a student of the language, who also happened to be at our dinner table, but were finally left to guess that it was slang. Perhaps, however, Anne has discovered a whole new geographic region for majolica research.

Russian puzzle jug. Photo by its new owner Anne Horwedel of Otterbein, Indiana.



Speaking of Scott's, Harry Thurmon of Dallas, Texas sent along a photo (See Page 18) of the somewhat amazing piece of majolica which was being shown outside among the tents at Scott's. From a garden in a Florida estate, the piece was not in the best of shape, but was the cause of much comment as those of us who saw it tried to figure out who had made it and what its purpose had been. I, for one, thought that Scott's was one of the nicest shows I had been to in some time. It was an interesting mix of antiques, collectables, and a decorator element that kept one going around every corner.

Following dinner, we were honored to hear noted ceramics authority Paul Atterbury, who gave a talk that one member termed, "Majolica 301, the Advanced Course" and another described as a "Knock out!" Featuring many fascinating designs from the archives of the principal English manufacturers of majolica, Mr. Atterbury's slide show detailed the development of the themes that have become so familiar to today's collectors



of Victorian majolica. Noting one of the more fantastical concepts, Mr. Atterbury cautioned that its designer might not have been someone you would have wanted to "invite home for weekend." It was educational as well as fascinating to listen as he wove together the threads of ceramic influences from Italy, France, and Spain as they became the forms and designs of English majolica. (He also made a point of noting that he believed that all the majolica was now surely in the United States, not much being left in England.) In sum, he gave us valuable historical perspective and superb scholarship and his generous participation on antiquing in England at MajoliCake & Coffee on Friday night as well as his presence at Majolica Heaven on Sunday were very much appreciated. (For those of you not present, when it was learned in the midst of general introductions on Saturday evening that it was, in fact, Paul's 50th birthday, a cake was quickly organized and presented to him accompanied by the customary singing by all present-- see photo.)

By the way, Friday night's MajoliCake & Coffee event was a big draw, with our having had to set up 30 more seats to accommodate an unexpectedly large crowd of over 100. Obviously, there was a keen desire for a Friday night kick-off event to our weekend.

Sunday's business meeting began with John Collins' opening the Society's triennial election followed by Kansan Jim Trout and his volunteers collecting and counting the ballots.

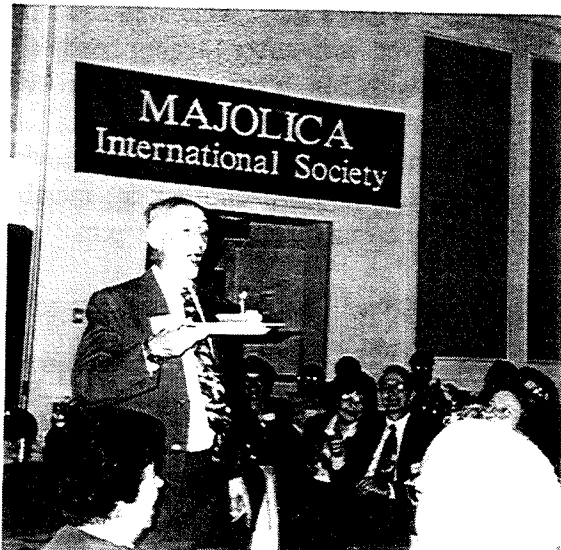
The new officers elected for the next three years are:

Gerry Leberfeld, New York City, President;  
 John Collins, Saratoga Springs, NY, Vice President and Annual Meeting Chairman;  
 Joan Stacke, New York City, Treasurer;  
 Marilyn G. Karmason, New York City, Secretary;  
 Polly Wilbert, Salem, Mass., Newsletter Editor;

Delegates at Large are:

Pat Clark, Tempe, Ariz.; Valerie diSpaltro, New Vernon, NJ; Phyllis Ann Hays, Tulsa, Okla.; and Pam Ferrazzutti, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Happy Birthday, Paul Atterbury!



Following elections, there was general discussion about locations for future annual meetings. Some possible sites suggested were returning to Atlanta, or going on to New Orleans, Charlotte, Chicago, Baltimore, or the Rye, NY Hilton outside New York City. The executive committee noted a desire to maintain some balance for the membership by holding the meeting in the Northeast every other year or so because of the large number of members who reside in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Generally, there was still a desire to tie the dates of the meeting to a major antiques show of general interest, but also to hold the meeting in an area where there were other attractions as well. Comments from the members present also indicated that if we were going to be in the East next year then a location near Brimfield would be desirable.

Of course, following these discussions, the rush was on to Majolica Heaven. This year, a dozen dealers set up one of the most beautiful Heavens we have ever had and we were pleased to welcome five new dealers, including John Weld from Boston and Ticia Robak of Canandaigua, NY. Lynda Willauer of Easton, Connecticut raised the ante on "Heavenly" booth decor a bit when she brought in a fine upholstered settee and tole tray coffee table, which she and her daughter Emily set up on an oriental carpet. These were surrounded by shelves filled with majolica and a background complete with a beautiful wallpaper frieze. Not to be outdone, Gail Dearing of Atlanta brought in sheer majolica pink tablecovers and a pine armoire, and right off the bat sold the armoire along with her majolica! After having brought in a number of special majolica collections for exhibition over the weekend at his Miami Circle shop, John Tribble and his staff from Joseph Konrad Antiques raced up the hill to the Nikko to set up a booth filled with many intriguing pieces of majolica. It was great to have all of these new exhibitors with us.

Pam Ferrazzutti's booth before the Rush!



To veteran observers of the Heavens, however, one of the most amazing sights had to be the line that formed in Pam Ferrazzutti's booth as she did a business that put one in mind of the California Gold Rush!! In fact, when other dealers had pretty much packed it up for the day, Pam was still in her booth selling. What a gal! This was the first year that I ever remember seeing people leave Heaven with big boxes filled with majolica. We were also pleased to have 30 people become members of the Society at the door on Sunday and to have another 50 members of the public come through after 1 p.m.

Atlanta '95 will be a very hard act to follow next year and in years to come.

The Executive Committee plans to meet soon and encourages all the attendees at the Atlanta meeting to mail back their questionnaires right away and also asks any other members who have comments as to the location of future meetings or other input to drop us a note in that regard or you may call or fax John Collins at 518-587-6543.

Lynda Willauer's booth, Majolica Heaven '95!





**American Majolica Maker's  
Descendants Reconnect**  
by Polly Wilbert

As many readers of **MM** already know from their own experiences, the collector's search for majolica can sometimes lead to other finds -- in this instance, the rediscovery of cousins. Some time ago, Marilyn Karmason mentioned to me that among some past correspondence to the Society was a letter from a woman in California who had noted that she was a descendant of Henry Griffen of Griffen, Smith & Hill (as am I). The letter writer, Esther Griffen Miller Morris, a member of MIS, lives in Santa Barbara, and she and I have now exchanged several letters and have established that, although somewhat removed -- and not just geographically -- we are, in fact, cousins. Of course, we also share a love of majolica, particularly Griffen Smith & Hill.

In one of her letters, Mrs. Morris generously shared with me a copy of a speech which had been given many years ago [we don't have a good idea of the year] by Miss Frances W. Pennypacker, who was my mother's aunt. With Mrs. Morris' permission, we would like to share the text of this talk on GS&H with you, but because it is fairly long, it will be published in two parts, the second portion appearing in the next issue of **Majolica Matters**. Miss Pennypacker's speech is being printed with only slight changes in punctuation and without some typographical errors. In addition, although some portions of the talk were crossed out in the original version (probably to shorten its duration), we are printing the entire text for you. We hope those of you who are collectors of Etruscan majolica will enjoy this personal reminiscence of the Pennsylvania pottery.

**Majolica and Its Makers**  
by Frances W. Pennypacker

When I was quite a little girl, one of my delights or sins, depending upon whether the point of view was mine or my mother's, was running away, and one of my vivid recollections is a journey, with my next door neighbor, to the Pottery. The Pottery was at Church and Starr Streets, Phoenixville, just below St. Peter's Church where I went to Sunday School, and I can remember crouching down as I passed the wall in front of the Rectory so that the rector's wife would not see me and send me home. My companion was the daughter of Mr. E. I. Brownback who, with Mr. Enos L. Buckwalter, was operating the pottery at the time. I seem to remember dusty, dirty, tumble-down buildings, with ramps running from the street to the second floor, and, as the pottery was on both sides of Church Street, men in sleeveless shirts carrying large wooden trays of crockery across the street and up the ramp.

Inside the pottery we watched women applying decalcomania<sup>1</sup> designs to toilet sets and white plates and dishes, jardinières, and umbrella stands. This business must have ceased shortly after my runaway visits, because I started to school soon afterward and frequently passed these disintegrating buildings which by then had become empty and mysterious. Eventually the buildings were torn down and now nothing remains. It was in this same pottery, at Church and Starr Streets, in the late 1870s and the 1880s that my two uncles, Harry and George Griffen, were making majolica. They experimented with Parian and porcelain too, but now they are remembered almost entirely as the makers of Etruscan majolica. ⇨

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<sup>1</sup> Decalcomania was the art or process of transferring pictures or designs from specially prepared paper to wood, metal, glass, etc.

My interest in majolica dates back to my childhood, not so much for any love of majolica itself, but because I frequently heard the family and the relatives reminiscing about the pottery. We had quite a number of pieces of the ware but did not prize them very highly. At one of my cousins, the shell and seaweed plates were used to heat up leftovers in the oven or as refrigerator dishes. They were crazed and worn. As interest in majolica has increased, these dishes have come out of the kitchen and have formed the nucleus of an interesting collection.

The appeal of majolica is far from being universal and not all majolica is attractive to look at, but there are some lovely pieces. One of my young friends looked at my collection with evident distaste and said "I think it must be an acquired taste." However, there are enough people who do like majolica and who are collecting majolica to make it quite rare.

Just what is majolica -- or maiolica as it is sometimes called? It is a pottery with a cream-colored earthenware base molded with all-over relief designs usually in realistic patterns of leaves and flowers, and sometimes even birds and fish and vegetables, and covered with a bright colored or white opaque glaze which completely hides the body. Its name is derived from its resemblance to a kind of Italian ware with relief design covered with colored glazes or enamels which are thought to have originated in the Island of Majorca in the Balearic Islands. It is related to the Delft ware of Holland and Faience of France and Italy. The original glazes were tin enamel, but many American glazes contained lead. I remember many years ago hearing my aunt say she had had a caller from Memorial Hall in Philadelphia to whom she had given some notebooks of my uncles in which were formulae for glazes containing tin.

This was confirmed by me when I visited Memorial Hall recently. In their file on Phoenixville majolica, all their cards were marked "tin-enameled majolica". It is probable that lead glazes were also used in Phoenixville because Mrs. Garrett Murphy tells me they were warned against the danger of lead poisoning when decorating majolica, and Mrs. Annie Dyer tells me she had to leave the majolica department because she developed lead colic<sup>2</sup>. I asked the Museum if my uncles' notebooks were still in existence, but they could find no trace of them. They said that my aunt's caller was undoubtedly Edwin Atlee Barber, who was for many years the Director of the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art. Edwin Atlee Barber's book, **The Pottery and Porcelain of the United States**, is the source of most of my information about other makers of majolica in America. Of the decoration of majolica, Dr. Barber says, "Majolica is decorated by applying color, mixed with glaze, with a brush, by dipping, or both. The colors, being soft, blend easily at a temperature somewhat higher than the usual enamel or overglaze heat and thus beautiful effects are often produced."

Very beautiful majolica was made in England and continental Europe. It is said to have reached Italy in 1115 when the Pisans conquered Majorca and brought back the richly colored ware which had flourished under the Moors. Its popularity spread through France, Spain, Holland, and England. In 1850, Minton at Stoke-on-Trent introduced a cream-colored ware covered with richly tinted lead glazes "rendered opaque by metallic oxides of various beautiful colors."

It was not until after the middle of the 19th century that majolica became generally ⇨

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<sup>2</sup> Lead colic resulted from lead poisoning and among its symptoms was intestinal distress.

popular in America. Some of the American majolica is of fine quality and compares favorably with and is often indistinguishable from imported ware. My grandmother [Mary Eliza Leggett Griffen] once visited an importer in Philadelphia and saw a pile of shell and seaweed plates, marked with a high price, as imported ware. She indignantly told the proprietor that they were not imported but were made by her sons in Phoenixville and could be purchased for a quarter a piece! As interest in majolica reached America, a number of firms took up its manufacture.

In 1846 Edwin Bennett came from England via Jersey City, East Liverpool, Ohio; and Pittsburgh to Baltimore and made a great deal of Victorian majolica. His designer, Charles Coxon, modeled an early majolica bust of Washington and a green pitcher with fish relief, 20 years before majolica, as we know it, became popular.

James Carr of the firm of Carr and Morrison made the first cauliflower-shaped teapot in America. It was of good form and color. In an article in the *Country Gentleman*, July 1934, entitled "Grandmother's Dishes," Grace Mollrath Ellis says, "The cauliflower design was originated by a famous English potter of the 1700s, Thomas Whieldon, to whom Wedgwood once apprenticed." Other designs of James Carr reproduced Minton forms.

In Trenton, a pottery center, majolica was made at the Arsenal Pottery of the Mayer Pottery Manufacturing Co.

The Hampshire Pottery of J. A. Taft and Co., in Keene, N.H., made majolica quite extensively. In 1878, Odell and Booth Brothers in Tarrytown, N.Y. were making majolica.

The Faience Manufacturing Co., of Greenpoint, L.I. made pottery with hand

modeled flowers applied to the surface and painted under the glaze. When interest in this type of pottery waned, they made a so-called majolica ware in plain shapes dipped in colored glazes. By blending various colors in streaked and marbled effects, they produced some pleasing results.

Between 1882 and 1884, a Mr. A. M. Beck from England made majolica at Evansville, Indiana.

The Chesapeake Pottery, Baltimore, Maryland, 1881, was started by B. F. Haynes and Co. They made a variety of wares of refined workmanship and did much experimental work in the firing of kilns. At this time there was a great demand for majolica. Their first product was called Clifton and was superior in body and glaze to ordinary majolica and pronounced by those who knew it to be equal to Wedgwood ware of that grade. It had a distinctive mark. It is difficult to trace much of the American majolica because few firms marked their wares.

In his *American Potters and Pottery*, John Ramsey says "Of the many plants in the field, the Phoenixville Pottery of Griffen, Smith and Hill is the best known since its ware, made between 1881 and 1892, bears the monograms of the firm with the title, Etruscan Majolica.

The original pottery in Phoenixville was known as the Phoenixville Pottery, Kaolin and Fire Brick Co., and was founded in 1867. Its chief function was to make fire brick for the Phoenix Iron Co., but it also made pottery ware. There is a dog's head from this period in Memorial Hall, Philadelphia. This company was followed by Messrs. Schreiber and Co. who made yellow and Rockingham ware, terra-cotta ornaments and wall pieces such as stag's and boar's heads used in inn and tap ⇨

rooms for wall decorations. Memorial Hall has one of these boar's heads on exhibition.

In 1877, the firm was taken over by Beerbower and Griffen and made c.c. ware, the commonest sort of cream-colored ware. In 1879 the firm again changed hands and name, and as Griffen, Smith and Hill began the manufacture of Etruscan majolica with its well-known monogram GS&H.

The Griffens of this firm were George and Harry Griffen, sons of John Griffen, then the General Superintendent of the Phoenix Iron Company. They had been educated at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute at Troy, N.Y. as civil engineers. When they returned from college, their father had some objection to their entering the employ of the Phoenix Iron Co. George at first found employment away from Phoenixville, but a share in the Phoenixville Pottery was purchased for Harry. He was taught the pottery business from the ground up. He learned every step of the process from the clay to the finished product. Later, George returned to Phoenixville and became connected with the business end of the company.

Mr. David Smith was the superintendent of the pottery and was familiar with the whole process. Mr. William Hill was the potter. He left the firm in the early 1880s, but his initial was retained in the monogram because, as Mr. Smith said, "The GSH stood for Good, Strong, and Handsome." The designer was an Englishman named Bourne. To him has been given the credit for the artistry and refined quality of much of the Phoenixville majolica. Mr. Scott Callowhill, an English artist, for a while was employed in modeling and painting, and Mr. Mahan taught decoration to the young artists, and there are still living in Phoenixville a few of the original workers in

the pottery. Among them are Mrs. Garrett Murphy, Mrs. Charles Coyne, and Mrs. Joseph O'Neill, who were decorators or "artists", and Mrs. Charles Knox, who was a brusher, and Mrs. Annie Dyer, who was a chipper, and Mr. John Austin, who was an apprentice there in the early 1890s.

In 1938, Frank C. Benham collected some interesting data about the Phoenixville Pottery which was published in the **Daily Republican** in the column, "How's Your Memory?" According to these articles, a Pennsylvania Dutchman, named W. A. H. Schreiber persuaded the officials of the Phoenix Iron Company to incorporate a pottery works to make fire bricks from the deposits of kaolin near Yellow Springs, the clay pits on Third Avenue near Main Street, Phoenixville, and a quarry in Schuylkill Township on the road to Valley Forge. They thought these sources would provide an inexhaustible supply of clay. A Board of Directors was elected and a site at the foot of Church Street was chosen. Three kilns were built and firebrick and white, black, and yellow ware were made. Phoenixville expected this works to become one of its leading industries.

When the pottery was taken over by Griffen, Smith and Hill, the manufacture of firebrick was discontinued by this company and taken over by one of the several brick works in the vicinity. The clay deposits had run out and clay for the manufacture of majolica was shipped in on a siding of the Pickering Valley [Rail] Road and unloaded at the warehouse along Starr and Bridge Streets. According to John Austin [the apprentice], no one could find out where this clay came from. My mother says it came from Brandywine Summit, because the family owned a clay farm there. It seems to have been a clay of high quality. ⇨

The clay was mixed with water until it became like dough. In a pug-machine, the water was drained off and the clay was steam heated dry. From there, it was placed on a block where wide paddles were used to beat out the air bubbles, otherwise it would be honeycombed with holes. It was now ready for the jiggerman (or molder of pottery) who placed it on his jigger wheel to mold it into pitchers, jugs, etc. Cups, saucers, and platters were machine made. It must be remembered that this was in the days before we had electricity and all the machines were worked by hand power or foot power. A boy had to turn the potter's wheel.

After the pieces were molded or pressed, either by hand or by machinery, they were carefully placed in saggars or fire clay boxes. These boxes protected the pottery from injury from direct heat or hot combustible gases. I was interested in reading in the dictionary that the word, saggarr, was a contraction from "safe guard." These saggars were stacked, one on top of another, each one separated from the next by little wads of clay. They reached to a dizzy height in the bisque kiln where the clay was changed by heat to biscuit. After this first firing, chippers and brushers removed any irregularities and the marks of the clay tripods or "stilts" on which each piece stood during the firing. This was work that had to be done carefully because it was very easy to mar the fragile biscuit in this state. Mrs. Charles Knox, who was a brusher, said that sand was placed between the pieces of pottery during the firing and the brushers had to brush off the sand after the firing. Mrs. Dyer said she had to chip off the marks of the stilts with a steel chisel.

Now the pottery was ready for glazing. ♦

(To be continued in the Fall 1995 issue.)

## **Say, What's This Maple Leaf Plate Worth Anyway?**

by George Jones II

Even in the best of families it is prudent to speak about money every now and again. This article will review the current and future dollar prospects faced by we Victorian majolica collectors in continuing to pursue our passion.

A February 1991 article in **The West Coast Peddler** took note of the renewed interest in Victorian majolica during the 1980s and concluded that although prices had run up, "... the majolica market appears to be supported by a dedicated group of collectors and dealers, probably numbering between 100 and 150 individuals. In market terms, this is a relatively strong nucleus to support a category." The article then forecasted a leveling off all around.

Wow: How wrong they were! The MIS now counts 500 members in six countries and not all collectors or dealers are yet members. Michael Strawser's Majolica Auctions maintains a mailing list of over 1800 active and interested potential buyers and for years has scheduled at least one majolica-only auction annually, each one featuring 600 to 850 pieces. In the United States, two other major auction houses (Skinner in Boston and William Doyle in Manhattan) have joined Sotheby's in regularly scheduling majolica sales. Majolica Heaven, a major specialty show sponsored annually by the MIS, attracts up to 20 dealers showcasing literally thousands of pieces of Victorian majolica.

But, what does all this activity mean to the average collector? Several good things, I think. Although it is egalitarian to suggest that the activity is pricing the average person out of the market, I believe quite the opposite is true. The sustained amount of activity now

provides the collector with both an opportunity to dispose at a fair (market) price pieces no longer wanted and also to find and to buy new pieces for his or her collection. The selection of Victorian majolica now available is simply wonderful and it is no longer concentrated only in collections of a very few patrons or hidden away in unseen places. Hundreds of persons across the globe have been able to discover Victorian majolica and to build their collections. It doesn't get any better than that!

Will prices fall? I think not. Prices have stabilized over the past couple of years as the average collector has become more discriminating and better informed. For example, a beautiful GS&H shell and seaweed plate in superb condition will cost several hundred dollars, but a poor one with chips, dramatic hairlines or pooled, muddied glazes will not command a premium in the marketplace. As in all things, quality will out. An in-depth review of auction activity shows a complete range of prices paid, so we collectors not only have the opportunity to buy at reasonable cost but also to select from a plethora of goods. Many dealers, too, will negotiate price with knowledgeable collectors in an honest effort to establish a long-term relationship profitable to both. I firmly believe that good economic value can still be found by those who "do their homework."

The quoted article in **West Coast Peddler** also referenced a book which postulated that, "...the end of a price run is reached when three or more books are published within a short span on the same topic and a collectors' club is organized." The 1991 article takes note of three then-recent books and the formation of the MIS in 1989, suggesting that the point is proven and prices had peaked. I disagree completely. A quick perusal of the superbly annotated bibliography in Victoria Bergesen's major book, **Majolica** (Barrie & Jenkins,

London, 1989), discloses literally hundreds of references, most quite current. And new books and articles are appearing all the time. High-quality national and regional magazines, (**Martha Stewart's Living**, for example) reaching millions of readers now frequently show or feature Victorian majolica.

As a more subtle indicator, your correspondent must now regularly wrestle with the Editor of **Majolica Matters** for space in this commentary column since so many other members are now submitting material to the newsletter. What a great problem to have! I suggest this shows that rather than signaling a price or economic peak, our passion for collecting Victorian majolica has formed a critical mass, which will be self-sustaining and probably growing for the foreseeable future.

It is true that finer undamaged pieces of true Victorian majolica, colorfully painted, well formed, and with excellent glazes, marked by the maker and in short supply, all command prices in the hundreds of dollars. (Sometimes much more!) That's not necessarily bad for the average collector since many own pieces of this type and may now realize their full economic value by selling -- if they so choose -- through the auction houses or dealer network. In a like manner, pieces purchased recently will probably hold their value as the large number of persons in several countries educate themselves and continue to upgrade their collections. But again, quality will out: ratty pieces of majolica are no better than are ratty examples of any other collectable, regardless of age. A sad indicator of the strong economic health of our collecting is the surprising number of reproduction and counterfeit pieces now seen all over the place.

I urge members of the MIS to continue to search out examples of Victorian majolica which bring such joy to us. It may once have



been that a Minton tile could be found at a flea for \$10, a game dish with cover and only a few small chips for \$75, and a Caterer Jug with top in place for \$125. But the fact that this kind of discovery is now unlikely should not diminish our zest for improving our collections and for caring for the pieces that we already have.

All the Victorian majolica we have has come to us from someone else, mostly via the market process. Isn't that wonderful? ♦

(George Jones II is the nom de plume of a correspondent who prefers it to "Windy".)

### **Society Loses Long-Time California Member**

MIS member Helen Neufeld died at her home in Beverly Hills in February after a courageous battle against cancer. Born in New York City, she attended Brooklyn Friends School and graduated from Bryn Mawr College in 1953 with a B.A. in English. She was married to film producer Mace Neufeld in 1954. They had a daughter and two sons and Helen enjoyed a career as a textile artist while raising the children. Her unique work made its way from Bergdorf Goodman's windows to museum exhibitions. A former commissioner of the Smithsonian Institute Museum of African Art, she was very active in the Los Angeles community and was a founder of the Museum of Contemporary Art and the American Film Institute Associates. ♦

### **Quake Wax!!!!**

Seen in a short bit in *The New York Times*. Mention of Quake Wax (known as Anchor Wax on the East Coast). Made by Conservation Materials Ltd. of Sparks, Nevada. It is a sticky substance that holds art

objects in place. Trevco of Monrovia, California makes a competing product called Quake Hold (called Collectors Hold in the East). Quake Wax has received credit from the J. Paul Getty Museum for helping its art collection "to survive the 1994 Northridge earthquake virtually unscathed." ♦

### **MajolicAds**

#### **Help Wanted to Identifv Majolica**

Was it a paper weight, an advertising piece, or a premium gift? The back has a very slight indentation, but probably not enough for it to be a lid to something. Anyone have any knowledge or a similar piece?

Lucy Thompson  
37320 Mt. Home Dr.  
Brownsville, OR 97327  
Ph: 503-466-5276

The raised letters "MAYER" and  
the painted number "14"  
appear on the back.



5/95

**Wanted to Buy:**

A copy of Charles Rebert's  
**American Majolica: 1850-1900.**

John Collins  
12 Wedgewood Dr.  
Saratoga Springs, NY  
Ph: 518-597-9977

5/95

**Wanted To Buy:**

- 1) GS&H Etruscan Shell & Seaweed lid for coffee pot. Lid is 4" in diameter.
- 2) Holdcroft bear pitcher with spoon handle. (Ref: Karmason-Stacke, p. 107)
- 3) GS&H Etruscan "Coral" syrup pitcher. (Ref: Karmason-Stacke, p. 154)
- 4) GS&H baseball and soccer jug. (Ref: Karmason-Stacke, p. 158)
- 5) Wedgwood cricket and soccer athletic jug. (Ref: Karmason-Stacke, p. 158)
- 6) GS&H sardine box lid. White ground with swan finial (Ref: Karmason-Stacke, p. 153) Also, underplate, if available.

Jim Trout  
1990 E. Santa Fe  
Olathe, KS 66062-1660  
OPh: 913-829-2700  
OFax: 913-829-2780

5/95

**Wanted:**

Pictures from the annual meeting.  
Too busy to take any myself.  
Would be grateful for any you can spare, esp. the displays, the dealers, the members, the Heaven in Action, the Hotel, the Doorman, etc. I will reimburse you, of course. (Or, nice discount next year to ones who send me photos.)

Pam Ferrazzutti  
Harbourfront Antique Market  
390 Queens Quay West  
Toronto, Ontario M5V 3A6  
CANADA

5/95

**Looking For:**

Matching planter to go on stand.



Gayle Jarrett Ph: 918-836-2240

5/95

Interested in any information on  
manufacturer/origin of this carafe and underplate.  
Bird motif on carafe with cobalt ground.  
Underplate has leaf and fish(?) motif.



Dolores Johnson Ph: 508-443-8251

Wonderful restorer recommended by a number of members from the Midwest:

Broken Art Restoration  
1841 West Chicago Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60622  
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Exhibitor at Majolica Heaven '95! in Atlanta

5/95

Ann Stratton and John Geisler  
of Westport, Connecticut  
are pleased to announce the birth in February  
of their son, Reed Stratton Geisler,  
weighing 9 pounds, 1 ounce.

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Majolica Market is a bi-monthly international trade  
paper designed to create a network between collectors  
and dealers of majolica.

This important source of information on majolica  
allows you to keep abreast of current market values,  
upcoming shows, auctions, and private sales  
and enables you to learn more about  
the history of majolica.

Reading Majolica Market will be a  
heartwarming pleasure as it rekindles images  
of the Victorian era through a unique layout that  
creates and evokes nostalgia for the time  
when majolica was so prevalent.

This past year featured several  
important authorities on majolica  
with guest articles by  
M. Robert Lehr of France, Marshall Katz,  
Helen Cunningham and others. Also mentioned  
recently by Kovel's on Antiques and Collectibles.

For subscription information, write to:

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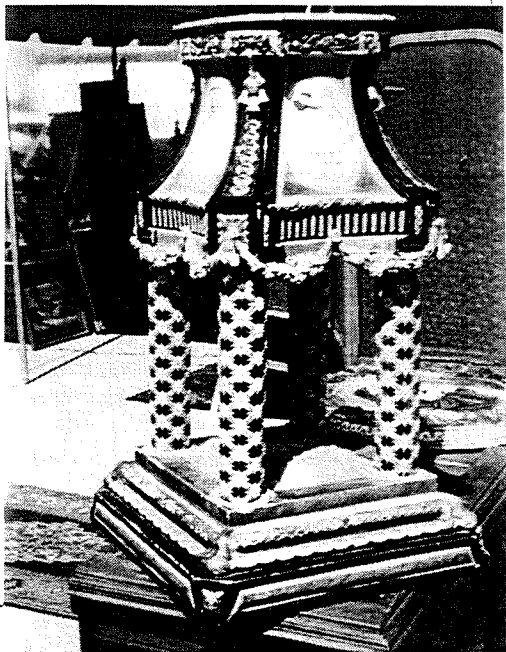
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**1995 Publication Deadlines  
for Material for Majolica Matters**

Fall	9/15/95
Winter	12/01/95

Please mail newsletter items to:  
Polly Wilbert, 7 Cedar St., Salem, MA 01970

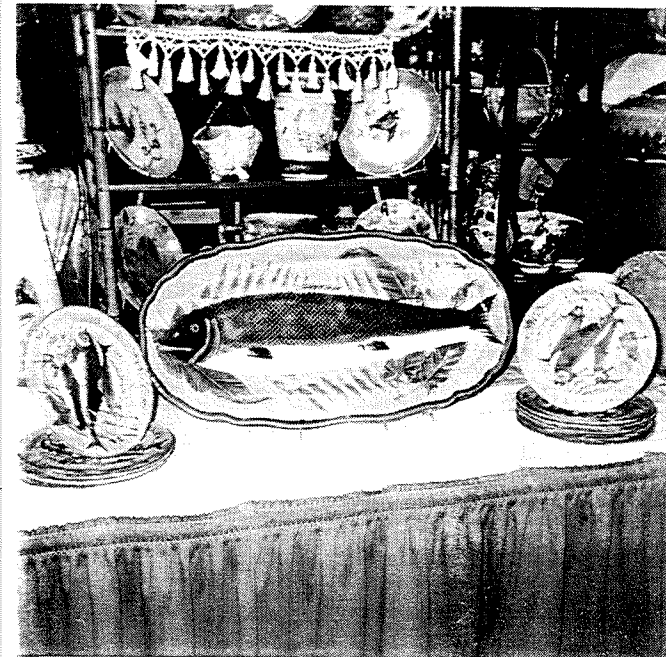
Architectural majolica piece seen outside at Scott's in Atlanta. Photo by Harry Thurmon.



Schmoozing at the Registration Table: (l to r) Milton Levy, Dallas, TX; Moe Wizenberg, Oklahoma City, OK; John Collins, Saratoga Springs, NY.



The Fishing's Fine! Linda Ketterling's booth. Majolica Heaven '95!



Foolin' around at Heaven setup. (l to r) Aviva Leberfeld, NYC; Michael Strawser, Wolcottville, IN; Bevin (Pam's Atlanta helper); Pam Ferrazzutti playing keep away, Toronto, Canada; Gerry Leberfeld, NYC.



**Information Received  
Just Before MM Press Deadline!**

**Majolica Auction Scheduled in London  
Wednesday, November 8, 1995**

**Bonhams  
Montpelier Street  
Knightsbridge  
London SW7 1HH**

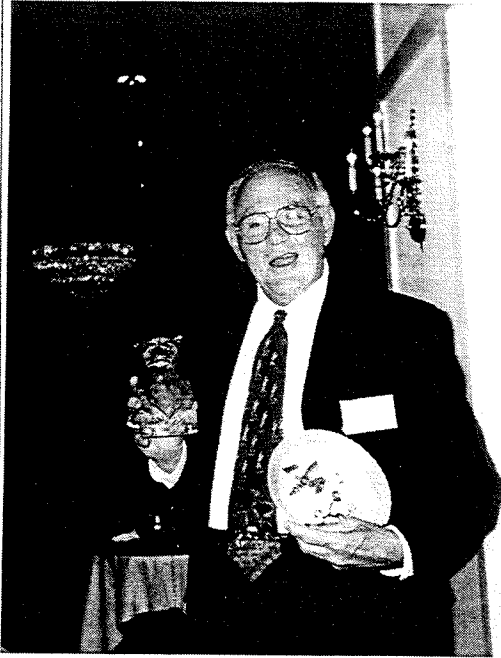
**For auction information, contact:  
Eric Knowles or Fiona Gallagher  
071-393-3942**

**Wonderful majolica piece displayed in  
Charlie Washburne's booth, Majolica Heaven '95!**



**Majolica Auctions' Sale  
Sunday, October 29, 1995  
Sheraton Valley Forge, Penna  
For information: Ph: 1-219-854-2859**

**"What a cute bear!" Jim Trout, Olathe, Kansas  
with two of his purchases at Barter 'n Buy.**



**The Answer Lady aka Mariiyn Karmason (l)  
provides some information at Saturday night's  
cocktail party.**



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**The Quarterly Newsletter of**  
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