

Majolica Matters!

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

AUTUMN 2000

MIS ANNUAL MEETING – MAY 4TH TO 6TH, 2001 Dallas Marriot Quorum Hotel Dallas, Texas

Plans for the annual meeting of the MIS are proceeding well. We will have multiple educational sessions on Friday evening and Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon will be free for you to schmooze and shop at the many local antique shops as well as the nearby Galleria Shopping Mall and Prestonwood Shopping Mall. Saturday night will be our usual gala banquet with a presentation from our guest speaker. Sunday morning will begin with our business meeting followed by Majolica Heaven. This year all of the society activities will take place at the hotel.

The hotel is located on Dallas Parkway on the north side of town. It is about 20 minutes from DFW Airport and about 10 minutes from Love Field. The society has been able to secure the great rate of \$99 per night for double occupancy.

Dallas is the hub for American and Southwest Airlines so good fares should be available. Plan to come and help us celebrate our first (sort of) middle of the country meeting.

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Moe Wizenberg

I hope that you enjoyed the last issue of Majolica Matters and I appreciate those who contacted me to comment favourably on it. Based on that very small vote, with no recount, I would say it was unanimous ----see what you can assume when you're the editor!

I am particularly grateful to Jim Trout, Marilyn Karmason, and Barbara McIntyre who contributed articles to this issue. Barbara's article on Sir

Joseph Paxton and the Crystal Palace begins in this issue and will continue in subsequent issues. I have other fascinating articles in hand and in the pipeline for future issues and I will acknowledge those contributors as we publish their contributions. We can always use more to make the news letter bigger, and better reading. It is in the nature of editors to feel unloved and neglected, so send me your comments, wanteds, articles, comments, cartoons, recipes, meeting news and notices and so on---the more the merrier.

You can never predict what a desperate editor might publish. Two articles that have come to mind are "Multivariate Analysis of the Probability of Finding a Minton Majolica Peacock and a George Jones Garden Seat in a Single Tag Sale" or "A Study of Tremors Produced by Handling Expensive Majolica"----only your submissions can save you from my doing that to you----GIVE!

On a more serious note, our other information source, the Website has been an enormous success. Our webmaster Duane Matthes has created a valuable resource with meeting information, catalog pages, copies of articles and of old newsletters and a wealth of resources. The site has had over 2500 visitors and is becoming a source of new members. The site is listed on a number of search engines which direct people searching majolica to our site. The website will be a more rapid and current source of society information than is possible with the printed page and promises to be a major resource for the society. If you haven't been there yet give yourself a treat and go to www.majolicasociety.com Have a wonderful Xmas and A Happy New Year. Next issue January 2001.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Moe Wizenberg, Editor
Helen Cunningham, Associate Editor
Debra English, Associate Editor

RARE FORESTER TANKARD

Marilyn Karmason



A rare find was made by Sheldon Rice, a long standing MIS member. Pictured here is his tall tankard with a monochrome glaze, decorated by "buttons" resembling a medieval tankard covered in leather. Tankards such as this, similarly designed, were produced by Josiah Wedgwood and Sons (MAJOLICA, Victoria Bergesen, p.49., and MAJOLICA, Karmason/Stacke, p.72.)



Thomas Forester, the manufacturer of this tankard which bears his name, had surprisingly marked this piece in capital letters on the undersurface. Forester's Majolica Works was established in 1877. Very few of his majolica pieces were marked; much of the identification of his pieces was made by comparison of a Forester piece with similar illustrations in advertisements of the "Pottery Gazette". There is no record of any application made by Forester, using the British Registry mark, prior to 1883. Pieces of Forester Majolica bearing a post 1883 mark were very rare.

The "Pottery Gazette" was a trade paper, including articles on the growth and development of the pottery industry, (Karmason/Stacke, *ibid.*, p.109). On the same page there is mention of Forester's tall tankards, graduated pitchers, and cheese bells with mottled glaze, all in the Wedgwood style.

Forester's designs in majolica reflected the designs of Minton, George Jones and Wedgwood. Forester repeated many designs borrowed from the major manufacturers of majolica. It is important to note that Forester did produce a great deal of majolica even post 1883. It may be Forester's work that continued the tradition well after more celebrated majolica factories moved on to other famous pottery production.....except of course the seven-foot Minton elephants of 1889 displayed in the windows of Thomas Goode and Company, London....but that is another story.

MAJOLICA AUCTIONS

Sotheby's Sale Announcement January 22nd, 2001

The sale of the Harriman Judd Collection is scheduled for January 22nd, 2001 in New York. The sale will include about 30 pieces of English Majolica including a Minton game pie dish with 2 hare's heads, a Minton Majolica "Spiny Fish" teapot, and a Minton majolica stand modeled as an African Male Figure 72 3/4 inches in height.

Skinner's Boston Auction December 9, 2000

Skinner's Boston Fine Ceramic Sale of December 9th, 2000, features several fine collections of Wedgwood and other English Ceramics. Included will be a small assortment of Majolica including Wedgwood and Minton pieces. Inquiries should be directed to Stuart Slavid at 978 779 6241 or via e-mail to sslavid@skinnerinc.com

MAJOLICA PUBLICATIONS

New Book. PICHETS EN BARBOTINE by Maryse Bottero, published September 2000 by EDITIONS MASSIN. This book is similar to and an excellent companion to "LES BARBOTINES" also published by Massin. In French, it is 192 pages with numerous color illustrations, a history of the manufacturers and a listing of factory marks.

New Article. English Majolica: Brilliant Victorian Color and Design, by Jeffrey B. Snyder. In Antique Weekly, Central Edition, V33,#31, Monday October 16, 2000

Calling All Majolica Collectors! Majolica & Ceramic Tour of England May 18-27, 2001

Hosted by "Raven and Dove" owner Randi Schwartz

Tour the "Potteries", special guided tour with Joan Jones, observe craftsmen at work at Gladstone Museum, shop for antiques along England's Romantic Road, sip afternoon tea in an English garden, spend 3 nights in London, enjoy deluxe accommodations!

\$2175.00 Per person Dbl Occup.
Tour cost exclusive of air.

Contact us for special airfares from your city.
*MIS members will receive \$100 p/p discount.

Roundabout Europe

PHONE: 888-849-4222

EMAIL: info@roundabouteurope.com

Visit our Website at

www.roundabouteurope.com

Please send your comments and material
for the newsletter to:

M.J. Wizenberg
1608 Elmhurst Avenue
Oklahoma City, OK 73120-1218
Phone: 405 848 4028
Fax: 405 848 4531
E-mail: moewize@aol.com

Deadline for the next issue of Majolica
Matters is December 25, 2000.

A BIT OF HISTORY

by Barbara W. McIntyre



Like many others, I am fascinated by the Victorian era. Undoubtedly, this fascination was initially fueled by my passion for Majolica. Majolica was introduced to the general public at the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in London in 1851. This exhibition was housed in a unique building called the Crystal Palace. Sir Joseph Paxton designed the Crystal Palace and it is my research into the life of this extraordinary man and his moment in British history that I would like to share with you.

When Victoria married Albert in 1840, England was sailing the seas of the world. The wonders of the world were being brought to her doorstep. Among these marvels were examples of exotic horticulture. Wealthy European botanists were developing a taste for the unusual and were sending adventurers around the world to locate and bring back rare flora and fauna.

William Spencer Cavendish, the 6th Duke of Devonshire, was a very wealthy bachelor who had a great passion for horticulture. In 1826 he hired a farmer's son, Joseph Paxton, to work in his gardens. The young man had no formal education but was working for the Horticultural Society at Cheswick and seemed especially bright. Paxton eventually became one of Victorian England's greatest polymaths.

Half my references state his date of birth as August 3, 1801, the other half as August 3, 1803. After studying an outline of his accomplishments, I believe that he was born in 1803 in Woburn,

England. Paxton came to work for the Duke of Devonshire at the Duke's Chatsworth Estate and he flourished. His passion matched the Duke's and the Duke gave him an unlimited budget. As he met problems in his work, he invented solutions. When slugs attacked the Duke's strawberries, Paxton invented a crinoline that kept the slugs away. England honored him by naming a species of strawberry after him. He saw some miniature bananas on a piece of Chinese wallpaper and bred an English version, the *Musa cavendishii*, from which all British bananas are derived to this day. On one British web site, you may still order a watering can designed by Paxton made by "the last of the remaining tinsmiths in Birmingham."

As Paxton's knowledge grew so did his accomplishments. He invented, he wrote, he traveled, and he published. In the 1830's he constructed a conservatory that enclosed over an acre of ground. It was called the Great Conservatory at Chatsworth. His ideas, inventions, and experiments were fueled by the Duke's financial support. The efforts of this unlikely team fanned the Victorian enthusiasm for all of nature. Flora and fauna became a predominate motif in Victorian Majolica and all other art forms of the Era.

In 1837, a very large lily plant was discovered in British Guyana and in its natural setting was truly gigantic. It had not grown well at Kew Gardens, the Royal Botanical Gardens near London, so Sir William Hooker, the Director of Kew Gardens, gave Paxton a small 6-inch lily plant to experiment with in his conservatories. At Chatsworth, the lily was planted in a 12-foot square heated tank on August 10th. By the end of September the largest leaf was 3 feet in diameter. Paxton rushed to build a larger stove-house (hot house) for the ever-expanding plant. Paxton's brilliant mind immediately saw that the ribs of the plant formed cantilevered trussing, giving the leaves their strength. The new conservatory, the Victoria Regia House, was built with a glass ceiling sitting on wooden beams set across

continued

A BIT OF HISTORY

continued

iron girders compliant with the structure of the lily leaf. The new stove house was 47 feet by 60 feet or 3000 square feet in area. This was the birth of the architectural design for the Crystal Palace. The lily was named *Victoria Regia* by Paxton to honor the Queen, but eventually became known botanically as the *Victoria Amazonica*. The *Victoria Regia* bloomed on November 8th and Paxton presented a bloom and leaf to Victoria and Albert at Windsor Palace. That year, in its new house which Victoria and Albert visited, the lily produced 112 flowers and 140 leaves. The leaves were said to have a 6-foot diameter, the flowers the size of cabbages, and the perfume like that of a pineapple.

One day, Paxton posed his 7-year-old daughter Annie in a fairy costume on one of the leaves. Amazed at the strength of the leaf, he then piled a total of 5 children on its surface. The single leaf held 300 pounds. It soon became the rage to have your picture taken on the leaves of this famous lily. Susan Orlean in her book, *The Orchid Thief*, states that so widely distributed was Annie's photograph that a Victorian poet, Douglas Jerrold wrote 'On unbent leaf in fairy guise/ Reflected in the water/ Beloved, admired by hearts and eyes/ Stands Annie, Paxton's daughter.' How many of us have *Majolica* pieces with the lily as its theme? Now you know why!

Paxton was not a man who enjoyed idleness. In addition to overseeing all the Duke of Devonshire's estates, he designed gardens and conservatories for many other estates. In the 1830's and early 1840's Paxton traveled to Paris, Versailles, Switzerland, Italy, Malta, Greece, Turkey, Germany, and Austria as well as to much of the English countryside. Paxton's design and construction of conservatories for the Duke gave him great knowledge of engineering. His exploration for exotic flora also gave him knowledge of little known animals and people in far away lands. He read widely, wrote well, and his botanical sketches were exceptional. His sketches are very collectable today and make interesting companions for a *Majolica* collection. Is it possible that some of these sketches were used as a basis for some of the *Majolica* designs?

In the 1830's, this farmer's son, became Editor of

the *Horticultural Register*, published Paxton's *Magazine of Botany*, wrote *A Practical Treatise on the Cultivation of Dahlias*, the *Pocket Botanical Dictionary* and with John Lindley, he founded the *Gardener's Chronicle*. He later founded the *Daily Chronicle* with Charles Dickens as editor. In 1850 Joseph Paxton received knighthood for his success in growing the giant lily in a conservatory.

Paxton loved railroads, invested money in them and became Director of the Midland Railways. He was a municipal planner, a non-professional architect, and a Member of Parliament from Coventry from 1854 until his death in 1865. Truly a remarkable man!

Joseph Paxton's design for the Crystal Palace was really a scaled up version of the conservatory at Chatsworth. Henry Petroski writes in his book, *To Engineer is Human: The Role of Failure in Successful Design*, "He solved the problems of housing a giant water lily and a great exhibition alike with buildings that departed both from conventional methods of construction and architectural traditions. In short, Paxton, in his professional naiveté, struck out in brilliant new directions that produced models for the architects and engineers of the next century." I believe we could add to that high praise the recognition of his role in the evolving Victorian culture, which included the development of the natural motifs in all its art forms. This is Paxton's ultimate contribution to the Age of *Majolica*.

MEA CULPA

In the last issue of *MAJOLIC MATTERS*, Charlie Washburn and Randi Schwartz were inadvertently omitted from the list of dealers who showed at *Majolica Heaven* in Wilmington Delaware. My apologies to both whom I hope to see in Dallas. The Red Faced Editor!

THE LAST BEAR HUNT

Jim Trout

During the years 1919 – 1925 my father, along with his brother, was a US Govt. Hunter in Wyoming. He was paid by the feder-



al government to eradicate certain species of predatory wildlife (wolves, coyotes, etc.) that were decimating cattle and sheep herds throughout the state. Never having had the opportunity to live the life of cowboy/hunter I've contented myself with the pursuit of less dangerous but rarer game – MAJOLICA FIGURAL PITCHERS; special to that pursuit are BEARS.

The publication of Karmason/Stacks', "Majolica" in 1989 and Cunningham's 1997 publication of Majolica "Figures" have served to guide my pursuit. These authors must bear (pun intended) a measure of responsibility for afflicting me with the wild-eyed zeal necessary to continue seeking even when funds for purchase are only semi-available (not part of cash flow).

In just such condition on April 27, 2000 I arrived in Wilmington, DE for the annual MIS Meeting. An earlier phone call had alerted me to the possibility of finding the bear at Majolica Heaven. Eleven years in pursuit of the bear to complete a trio was a pretty exciting prospect. Like a kid standing on the sidewalk with nose pressed against the plate glass of a candy store I waited. The hour was at hand... the doors opened – all surged forward... Majolica

Heaven was underway. Great restraint kept me from breaking into a sprint toward the booths loaded with you know what. At a fast walk; a quick perusal of the

closest dealers' wares – then on to the next – the next – the next – waitwait – the Bear! It's here!!

Acting casual to avoid alerting the dealer to anything but mild interest is futile. Our Majolica dealers know our passion – they share it. Still I was hoping not to appear eager. I avoided overt interest in any one object. I stepped into the booth. A profusion of Majolica surrounded me. The glazes dazzled – myriad colors adorned the pieces. All were pale beside the bear. Brown was my color obsession. I was almost sure it was the one – shorter than my tall one – taller than my short one – 8-1/2" of bristling brown fur, the yellow outlined blue drum secure on its back, a red tipped drum stick held firmly in each paw – the perfect physical specimen.

Holdcrofts never did better modeling. No question – this was it. Capture wouldn't be easy – I moved closer – I didn't flinch – neither did the bear – I stared – the bear stared – I blinked – the bear didn't – I viewed the price – another blink – it was then or never. Moving suddenly I was upon the beast – both hands clutched the neck and body. Possession, the first part of capture was accomplished but work remained...

THE LAST BEAR HUNT

continued

Dad was armed with large caliber weaponry when hunting the predatory animals in Wyoming. By contrast I'm armed only with a small caliber checkbook and transparent guile. Nevertheless, the final part of possession – ownership, went smoothly. My time-tested strategy and method in any purchase negotiation has been and will continue to be: **PAY THE PRICE.**



The Drummer Bear (8-1/2") has joined its family of 7-1/2" and 9-1/2" in the Trout household and shares privileges with six sitting bears (4-1/2", 5-1/2", 7-1/2", 7-1/2", 7-1/2", 8-1/2"), two French traveling fair bears (8-1/2", 8-1/2") and five honey pot bears (9-1/2", 10", 10-1/2", 10-1/2" 12") all of which are figural pitchers. Who knows how many different sizes of the honey pot bears were potted or whether 6-1/2" sitting bears exist.

I know for sure however, that each spring will bring together some of the beasts at auction and Majolica Heaven. Meanwhile they hide in collections, or sit forgotten in basements or attics. Perhaps as I write a grizzly is being readied for an estate or garage sale – or has just arrived at the antique mall and shops I visited yesterday. I think I'd better check.



MAJOLICA AUCTION RESULTS

Michael Strawser held his Autumn 2000 Majolica Auction at Hatfield , Pennsylvania on October 27th and 28th. Over 1200 lots (2000 pieces) were offered and only a handful failed to sell at the close of bidding. Among the rarer (and higher priced) items were the following, Minton monumental Beehive Cheese Keeper \$46,750, George Jones Punch Bowl \$22,000, Rare Minton Fish Tureen \$57,500, Pair of Minton Walking Stick Stands, 40"high, \$49,500, George Jones Garden Seat \$24,200, Etruscan Triple Dolphin Shell Compote, (one of three known) \$6,050, Minton Cat with Glass Eyes \$25,300. All prices include buyers commission.

There were many great pieces at very reasonable to low prices--often considerably lower than some of the prices realized on internet auctions. A very good time was had by all of us there even though we may have had some explaining to do when we returned home with the booty.



A group of happy bidders who look as though they got what they came for.

MIS FISHING CONTEST

The largest majolica fish of which the editor is aware is the salmon on the the Wedgwood platter which measures 22 1/4 inches from nose to tail, but undoubtedly there are larger. We are interested in finding the largest majolica representation of a fish. The fish should be measured from the tip of its nose to the furthest point of the tail. Entries should be sent to our judge, Jim Trout (naturally), together with a photograph of the specimen and information about the piece. The owner of the longest fish will receive a certificate noting that they have landed the largest majolica fish of the millenium (true). In case of a tie the most unusual fish will be declared the winner. (Your editor had wanted the decision to go to the most unusual owner but has been convinced by the judge that doing so would create trouble). The decision of the judge shall be final. Entries must be postmarked not later than December 25, 2000. The judges address is: Jim Trout, 6808 Antioch Rd. #143, Merriam, KS 66204

IDENTIFICATION NEEDED



One of a strange looking pair of devilish or gargoyle looking wall brackets. They are each 5-3/4" inches wide and 6 3/4" long. No markings. Anyone who recognizes them or who can shed some light, please contact the editor.