

Majolica Matters!

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MAJOLICA INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY
www.majolicasociety.com

SUMMER 2001

MIS 14th ANNUAL: CONVENTION

May 3-5, 2001
The Westin Atlanta North
Atlanta, Georgia

Mark your calendar now
Look for more details now at
www.majolicasociety.com or in future
issues of Majolica Matters.

Notes From The Editor's Desk

Moe Wizenberg

Wow! If you weren't in Dallas for the 13th MIS Convention you sure missed a great one. Phil English and Duane Matthes picked a winner at the Marriott Quorum and with the help of the program committee, the dealers, and the other members of the local arrangements committee, Wanda Matthes and Alan and Heidi Holloman gave us a meeting to remember. The accommodations, program, shopping and house tours were superb (not to mention that for the first time I could drive to the meeting). The 2002 meeting will take place in Atlanta on May 3rd to 5th and already promises to be another winner. LeRoy Davis and his crew are busy working on the details; our guest speaker will be Paul Atterbury of London England who so delighted us in the same role seven years ago. Follow the rapidly developing news about the meeting on our website, www.majolicasociety.com or for the snail mail users more information will appear in each issue of Majolica Matters.

I appreciate your asking me to continue as your editor. It has been a satisfying learning experience. I could not have begun to produce the newsletter without the great assistance of my associate editors, Deborah English and Helen Cunningham and the regular infusions of news from Marilyn Karmason and Duane Matthes. I also very much appreciate the articles and items some of you have contributed. If your contribution has not yet appeared please do not feel rejected---I have them on hand and will use in future issues. Keep them coming: we can always use more.

I apologize for the lateness of this issue. It's been a long hot summer in more ways than one, and future issues will be on time. (In case you are concerned I'm still well, married, avid about majolica and haven't broken any Palissy Ware or bones!)

Lightning Strikes At The 2001 MIS Meeting!

Linda Ketterling

Our packout occurred during a fierce rain and thunderstorm. Peter was working with the porters to load the van while I stayed inside finishing up the packing. All of a sudden, Peter ran in excitedly and said " Guess what's happened?" He then told me that lightning struck the tree next to our van, and that it had fallen on our roof! I ran out in disbelief but there it was, right across the middle of our roof. Hotel staff came to our aid, and one guy borrowed Peter's saw and proceeded to cut down the tree. I thought I'd seen everything, but this one takes the Majolicake! Luckily the roof rack Peter had built and installed saved our JollyVan from any damage. Needless to say, packout took about an hour longer but we were pleased that no one got hurt.



EDITORIAL BOARD

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

Thirteenth Annual Meeting of the Majolica International Society

The thirteenth annual meeting of the Majolica International Society took place the weekend of May 4-6 at the Marriott Quorum Hotel in Dallas, Texas. A special Saturday evening dinner meeting took place led by John W. Keefe, the RosaMary Foundation Endowed Chair and Curator of Decorative Arts of the New Orleans Museum of Art, and Brooke Hayward Duchin, writer and donor of her collection of Palissy ware, and English and American Majolica. In addition to Mr. Keefe's scholarly and comprehensive lecture on the Mrs. Duchin's collection, they both dealt with the intricacies of the curator/donor relationship.

A new feature of the weekend was organized by Duane Matthes, vice-president and web-master of the MIS. Mr. Matthes conducted individual lessons with members who had difficulty regarding different aspects of the Internet. Digital pictures were also shown via the Internet.

Friday evening's topic was "Authors and Authorities," with lectures and slide presentations by several MIS authors: Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke (Majolica: A Complete History and Illustrated Survey), Helen Cunningham (Majolica Figures), and Marshall Katz (Palissy Wares).

Jerry Leberfeld and Jim Trout spoke of their special interests in majolica, accompanied by slides of unusual pieces. Jerry Leberfeld sang his version of the Majolica Quest of the Man of La Mancha! The program was held Saturday morning, appropriately succeeded by members' bus tours of antiques shops in Dallas. Dallas members opened their homes to members to view collections of beautiful majolica.

"Majolica Heaven" doors opened on Sunday morning to reveal thousands of pieces of Victorian majolica. Dealers included: Richard & Connie Aranosian, Newtown, PA; Carla Benhardt Antiques, St. Louis, MO; Jerry Hayes, Oklahoma City, OK; Linda Ketterling, Toledo, OH; Passages Antiques, New Orleans, LA; Randi Schwartz, Raven and Dove, Wilmette, IL; Charles Washburne, Chappaqua, NY; John C. Weld, Jr., Yarmouth, MA.

The members elected at the Sunday morning business meeting are Philip English, President; LeRoy Davis, VP and annual meeting chairman; Moe Wizenberg, VP and "Majolica Matters" editor; Jim Trout, VP and membership chairman; Duane Matthes, VP and website chairman; Marilyn Karmason, Secretary; and David Stone, treasurer. Karen Coscia, Linda LaPointe and Cheryl Smith were elected as Members-at-Large of the board. Other members of the board are the past presidents Joan Stacke Graham, Jerry Leberfeld and founder Michael Strawser.

UPCOMING SHOWS AND SALES

SANDED MAJOLICA

The Jones Museum of Glass and Ceramics, at Sebago Maine will be showing a collection from the over 500 pieces recently given to the Museum by MIS member Margaret "Pegge" Howland. The show will continue to November 18th, 2001. For more information call the Museum at 207-787-3370

THROWN, MOLDED, DIPPED, AND GLAZED CERAMICS OF SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Over 200 pieces of ceramics in a wide variety of styles will be shown at the Chester County Historical Society, 225 N. High Street in West Chester Pennsylvania through December 31, 2001. Many of the pieces shown are majolica, especially from the Griffen, Smith and Hill factory. The show is open 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM, Monday to Saturday. For more information call 610-692-4800 or visit the web site at www.chestercounty-historical.org

MAJOLICA AUCTIONS

Michael Strawser and MAJOLICA AUCTIONS will hold their fall majolica auction in Hatfield Pennsylvania on October 26 and 27, 2001. For further information see www.majolicaauctions.com or call Michael at 219-854-2859.

THE HARRIMAN JUDD COLLECTION, PART II

A sale of British art pottery including majolica. Sotheby's New York October 6, 2001. Catalog NY7709. For more information call 212-606-7000 or visit www.sothebys.com



One bear Jim Trout doesn't have yet.
Notice the modesty of the bear.

DECEPTION AS ART: TROMPE L'OEIL DESIGNS FOR THE TABLE

by Helen C. Cunningham

Majolica collectors are familiar with the ever-present trompe l'oeil designs on our beloved pottery, but how many of us know that these designs reach much farther back in time than just the last few centuries? An ancient though not critically accepted design, trompe l'oeil has resurfaced in the decorative arts over the centuries.

Artists of ancient Greece and Rome began experimenting with a unique type of illusion as they painted large-scale murals in homes and temples. These early interior decorators, as we might call them, seemingly enlarged the space by tricking the observer into believing he approached an ornate, arched doorway leading into a beautifully landscaped courtyard.

Ancient trompe l'oeil designs were painted on two-dimensional surfaces with such detail and accuracy that they appeared three-dimensional. The style exhibited a delightful richness and depth as it pulled the viewer from reality into the imagined scene.

Periodically throughout the centuries, trompe l'oeil has reappeared. Never credited with achieving artistic merit, these designs have nonetheless retained their popularity with consumers. During the Renaissance, these designs reached a level of acceptance. However, it was not until the nineteenth century that trompe l'oeil designs became a truly successful commercial venture.

Sophisticated art critics of the nineteenth century dismissed trompe l'oeil (French for "deceive the eye") designs as trickery. John Ruskin, founder of the Arts and Crafts movement, indicted trompe l'oeil as having no artistic merit. In his 1849 book *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, Ruskin referred to the trickery of trompe l'oeil designs as mere "deceits." The lay person of the day, however, enjoyed trompe l'oeil as a clever novelty rather than think of it as a dishonest illusion.

Typical of the Victorian love of whimsy, trompe l'oeil offered a technique embodying the Victorian ideals. Majolica carried the concept of trompe l'oeil to new heights. Pieces must first attract the eye, and only then should their usefulness be considered.

This brightly colored pottery which Minton first

introduced in 1851 at the Crystal Palace Exhibition immediately caught the fancy of the consuming public. Soon all major manufacturers of majolica, both in Britain and on the continent, initiated production of elaborately deceptive pieces. Particularly popular designs included fruit dishes, realistic looking plates of fish or oysters, leaf plates, and game dishes.

Perhaps one of the most popular trompe l'oeil designs in French majolica consisted of asparagus plates and cradles. "Stalks" of the delicacy lay across turquoise plates or loosely "wrapped in napkins." This whimsical presentation of vegetables surely delighted the nineteenth-century dinner guest.

During the nineteenth century, majolica manufacturers used trompe l'oeil designs with unparalleled success. However, that success is experiencing a rebirth today as more and more majolica collectors appreciate these unique "deceits." Consumers are not deceived about the prices however. Unique dishes in trompe l'oeil patterns can cost well into the hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Perhaps those ancient artists would delight in knowing that these designs are currently among the most appreciated of art forms!



Trompe l'oeil designs such as this Sarreguemines asparagus dish set an attractive dinner table for the middle class in nineteenth century.

MIS 2001
People and place you missed if you weren't there.



Carol Gordon, El Paso, TX; Helen Cunningham, Nashville, TN; James Cox, Quimper, France



Brooke Hayward Duchin and John Keefe (ctr) with local tour hosts the Hollomans (l) and the Ryders (r)



Duane Matthes giving a hands on MIS website tutorial to LeRoy Davis



The changing of the guard.
Joan Stacke Graham and Philip English



Karen Cox, Dallas, TX; Jerry Leberfeld, New York, NY; Phyllis Hays, Tulsa, OK



A corner of Wanda Matthes' shop (Trilogy Antiques) on our shopping tour.

MIS 2001
People and place you missed if you weren't there.



Brooke Hayward Duchin, John Keefe and Marshall Katz checking out Palissy Ware at the Ryder's



Just a little corner table in someone's living room



Thelma and Robert Cluett, Rugby, England



The "Girls"
Joan Stacke Graham, Aviva Leberfeld
and Frances Rothschild



"Serious Stuff"



"Shoulda been there"

THE EXHIBITION

by *By Barbara McIntyre*



The purpose of this series of articles is not to add to your knowledge of majolica ware but to give you a feel for the times and society in which it was first introduced. The cast of characters and events leading up to the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations gives one a feel for those Victorian years in Great Britain but the Exhibition itself epitomizes the Victorian era.

The Exhibition at the Crystal Palace was like a fairy tale come to life. It came together as if it had a charmed existence. The magic in London that summer of 1851 was tangible. There was national pride, amazement, good fellowship and pure joy. The interior decoration of the Crystal Palace was under the supervision of Owen Jones, an expert in Byzantine architecture and color. The interior vertical metal framework was painted pale blue and trimmed in yellow. The girders were painted bright red. On the exterior all the participating nations' flags were flown on poles across the roof.

The exhibits began arriving almost immediately after the completion of the building. The British reserved the western section of the building for its own displays and those of its colonies. The Eastern wing was for foreign product display. Each participating nation had its own display area. An area was reserved for products of China but the Chinese sent no exhibits. The British merchants scoured London to fill the empty space with products from dealers of oriental wares and from private chinoiserie collections.

There is a Ripley-esque, yet funny tale reported at that time in numerous publications. Just before opening day, countless sparrows were found in the trees within the central transept. These birds would undoubtedly soil the

patrons and ruin the exhibits. Lord Wellington was consulted and during a visit to view the birds, he suggested that the only way to be rid of them was to import sparrow hawks. It was actually reported that having heard that, the sparrows departed with Lord Wellington never to return.

As opening day neared, the Chief Commissioner of Police asked for and received 1000 extra men for crowd control and emergency help in case of disaster. The British were horribly afraid of the hordes of foreign spectators that were expected to flock to the Exhibition. It is also reported that Wellington had 10,000 troops on reserve at a hidden location. None were needed.

Her Majesty and her entire entourage opened the Great Exhibition on May 1, 1851. Only those invited guests and those with season tickets to the Exhibition were allowed to attend the opening ceremonies. After Queen Victoria's entry music ended, Prince Albert, as President of the Royal Commission, thanked Mr. Paxton, the subject of my first article and rescuer of the entire Exhibition, for his part in the inception of the Crystal Palace. Prince Albert repeated his hope that the Exhibition would further peace and friendship between nations. Her Majesty is said to have attended the exhibition at least 12 times with her children during May and about 50 times in all. Within a few days of the opening, Victoria wrote to her uncle, King Leopold: "My Dearest Uncle – I wish you could have witnessed the 1st May, 1851 the greatest day in our history, the most beautiful and imposing and touching spectacle ever seen, and the triumph of my beloved Albert. Truly it was astonishing, a fair scene. Many cried, and all felt touched and impressed with devotional feelings. It was the happiest proudest day in my life, and I can think of nothing else. Albert's dearest name is immortalized with the great conception, his own, and my own dear country showed she was worthy of it --." Quite a bit of what we know about the Exhibition has come from Victoria's journal entries as well as published reviews. There is a 3-volume catalog of the Exhibition's entire contents. Each volume contains 500 pages.

The reviews of the Exhibition were varied, from ecstatic to total pans. In an example of the latter, Jane Welsh Carlyle actually wrote, "—Such a lot of things of different kinds and of well dressed people – for the tickets were still five shillings – was rather imposing for a few minutes; but when you came to look at the wares in detail there was nothing really worth looking at – at least that one could not have see samples of in the shops. ---"

In the center of the Crystal Palace's transept rose a crystal fountain 27 feet high made by Follett Osler. It contained 4 tons of pure crystal glass. On either side of the fountain were groups of statues by famous British sculptors.

THE EXHIBITION (cont.)

by Barbara McIntyre

The center transept also contained the world's largest organ sent from America. It also housed a circus with a famous tightrope walker.

The number of exhibits varies from report to report. Most report the numbering of exhibits from 13,000 to 17,000. Among the American exhibits were the McCormick reaper and the Colt revolver.

The exhibits ranged from the exquisite Kohinoor diamond to some stuffed frogs in human poses sent by Germany. The frogs were a special favorite of Queen Victoria. Is this why there are so many Majolica designs with frogs in human poses? There were exhibits of lace, fur, hair, fabrics of all kinds, machinery in motion, tools, minerals, railroad engines, steam hammers, arms, tapestry, furniture, carpets, glass, china, and jewels. The list of items on display makes one wonder how many days it would take to view them all.

George Jennings built the first "pay to use" public restrooms. It was reported that over 827,000 people willingly did so. The administration was required to have pure drinking water available to all at no charge. In a reaction to this requirement, the magazine *Punch* is quoted as replying, "whoever can produce in London a glass of water fit to drink will contribute the rarest and most universally useful article in the whole Exhibition."

Throughout the entire park there were many other attractions. There was a display of fountains with about 12,000 water jets. There were copies of famous statues from around the world, a model of a lead mine and even replicas of extinct animals such as dinosaurs.

More than 6 million people attended the Exhibition during its 141 days. During this same period over 4 million visitors arrived in London. That was twice as many as that period the year before. Foreigners accounted for 58,427 of those visitors with the French and Germans leading the way. Many of the other popular tourist attractions also benefited from the crowd. Here are some attendance reports at other attractions versus the year before:

	1850	1851
Tower of London		
(armory)	32,313	233,561
(jewels)	32,888	209,000
British Museum	720,643	2,230,242
Windsor Castle	31,228	129,400

Public admission to the building ended on October 11, 1851. The exhibitors and their friends were allowed to attend on October 13th and 14th. After a short closing ceremony at which Prince Albert spoke briefly, the Hallelujah Chorus was played. The Exhibition officially ended.

We remember this exhibition because of Minton's introduction of Majolica ware and also of the displays of Palissy ware.

However, the Crystal Palace Exhibition did not particularly increase trade or promote peace and more interaction between nations as Albert had hoped. It did however produce a grand profit of 180,000 pounds. The Commissioners used this money to purchase the land that would be the future homes of the Victoria and Albert Museum, The Science Museum and Library, The National History Museum, The Geological Museum, The Imperial Institute, The Royal College of Science, The Royal School of Mines, The City and Guilds College, The Royal College of Art, The Royal College of Music, The Royal College of Organists and The College of Needlework.

John Paxton oversaw the dismantling and re-building of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, England, a 200-acre theme park, in 1852. Concerts and exhibitions were held there, and it eventually became a sports arena. A television company was established in the south tower, and the nation's first color television was developed there. In 1936, the Crystal Palace burned to the ground after serving the British for 85 years. Before I am besieged with e-mail - my sources did not inform me as to how a glass and iron building could burn to the ground!

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MAJOLICA HEAVEN 2001

Things You Could Have Bought Had You Been There



Connie and Richard Aranosian with centerpiece



Charles Washburne with Minton Centerpiece



Helen Wirth and Jennifer Tujaque with
French Wall Cistern and Basin



Carla Benhardt with Child's Tea Service



Linda Ketterling with Platter



Jerry Hayes with Toothpick Holder