

# Silversmiths of Lancaster

By CARL W. DREPPERD

Mr. Drepperd, now of New York City, was a former resident of Lancaster, and for a number of years a member of the Lancaster County Historical Society. His article, which appeared originally in the August, 1944, number of *Antiques* magazine, is reproduced, with the illustrations, by courtesy of that magazine.

“**H**IS SILVERWARE is superb. He was a great patriot, a member of various committees of safety, a rider for Revolutionary committees, a burgess of the community, and a lieutenant (later a captain) in the Continental Army.” No, not Paul Revere, but Charles Hall, silversmith, goldsmith, watchmaker, and mechanic of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Lancaster had a good many silversmiths in the eighteenth century. The first of record is Daniel Syng, son of the famed Philip Syng of Philadelphia. Daniel Syng, after his marriage to Mary Gray in Christ’s Church, Philadelphia, moved to Lancaster, and apparently worked there from 1736 to 1744. His silver is marked *D.S.* and *D.SYNG*. At Lancaster he was one of the founders of Saint James’ Episcopal Church. The second Lancaster silversmith of record is the Dutchman Lewis Heck who, apparently, was working there in 1760. His known marks are *L.H.* and *L.HECK*. Several examples of silver by this maker are known. The third silversmith of Lancaster is Charles Hall and, thanks to his interest and participation in public affairs, his history is an almost open book. He was a friend of Christopher Marshall, Revolutionary diarist, and is mentioned several times in Marshall’s “remembrancer” (*Diary of Christopher Marshall, 1774-1781*, William Duane ed., Joel Munsell, Albany, 1877).

Charles Hall was born in Philadelphia in 1742, a brother of David Hall known as a silversmith of Philadelphia. By 1760

Charles was at work in Lancaster. In 1763 he is noted as one of the founders of the Presbyterian Church. In 1774 he served on the Committee for Correspondence. In the same year he was elected to the Committee of Observation. In 1776 he was a lieutenant in Captain Samuel Boyd's Company of Associators of the Pennsylvania Line. This company saw service in the Jerseys, and by 1779 Hall was a captain. In 1778 he was made Lancaster County agent for the seizure of forfeited Tory estates. In 1780 Hall, with George Ross and Judge Jasper Yeates, was one of the founders of the Select Academy for Boys, which engaged the interest of Benjamin Franklin and eventually became Franklin (now Franklin and Marshall) College.

Readers of *Antiques* may remember that in February, 1928, the Magazine pictured a pewter flagon, then in the Reifsnnyder collection, now in the Mabel Brady Garvan collection at Yale, bearing the touch mark *I.C.H. Lancaster*. This was attributed to J. C. Hera. Later, thanks to the skepticism of the late Homer Eaton Keyes and the patient research of John J. Evans, Jr., the maker's true identity was discovered. At this distance of time it is of interest that the key to the whole situation stood in type, ready to be read and followed, in Ellis & Evans' *History of Lancaster County*. There J. C. Heyne (Hain, Hayne, and so forth) is identified as a pewterer, his term of activity mentioned, and also his close connection with the Steinman family and their hardware store which, founded in 1744, is still in business in Lancaster.

It is Ellis & Evans' *History of Lancaster County*, p. 373, which also exposes a vastly interesting piece of documentary evidence regarding Charles Hall: "May 16th, 1775, by cash to Charles Hall, for a Silver Tea Sett as a present for Mr. Atlee for his trouble relating to the borough Law, £14, 5s, 0d." This is from the records of the Burgesses who, in spending public money to reward Chief Burgess Atlee, did so with the full approval of the taxpayers. Chief Burgess Atlee had written the code of laws for the government of the borough and for this task he would accept no pay. I'm afraid I have started a treasure hunt among Atlees everywhere for this Tea Sett, which appears to have evaporated. None of the Chief Burgess' direct descendants has it, or even a piece of it.

[William Henry, while a prosperous practical mechanic of Lancaster, was a lover of the best in literature and art, and as further

evidence of his desire for the good things in life we note his purchase of Hall silverware, for "in January of 1782, he bought of Charles Hall, a silversmith of Lancaster, one dozen silver spoons and a cream jug for Mrs. Henry, and a pair of gold buttons for Mrs. Rose, his mother-in-law, paying for them seven pounds and ten shillings."]<sup>1</sup>

There was a time when almost everybody who was anybody in Lancaster had some Hall silver. This statement can be made on the strength of a list compiled from a Hall account book which, at one time, was in the possession of the Zahm family, also silversmiths and watchmakers in Lancaster. A lad apprenticed to the Zahms (*c. 1850*) copied the following names of purchasers from the book: Cookson, Sanderson, Johnston, De Huff, Webbe, Fordniere, Hublei, Ffunk, Bickham, Boude, Whitlock, Slaugh, Smythe, Ewarts, McGonigle, Bilbertin, Marshall, Burd, Stone, Derbert, Roliffe, Bough, George, Lockhard, Bartholomew, Singer, DeMuth, Finiere, Yeates, Porter, Krug, Haire, Gill, Humes, Jenkins, Hand, LeFevre, DeLette, Christensen, Lund.

But the silverware of Charles Hall is rare indeed today. He was stricken at the very peak of his career as a public man and popular silversmith. The record states that in 1783, at the age of forty-one, he slipped on some small shot which, rolling from under him, caused him to fall heavily. He suffered a hemorrhage, and died, April 22 of that year. Family traditions handed down to me had it that Hall was a friend of my own great-great-grandfather, John Drepperd, and that he and Hall owned lots together in Mussertown. This is borne out by Hall's will which mentions lots in Mussertown as part of his estate. Hall's shop was located (*1760-1783*) in Queen Street, between the properties of Lewis Heck and James Shaeffer. That put him right next door to his chief competitor for custom, Heck, during his business life.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth silversmiths of Lancaster still pose a problem of research. Little is known of John Edwards who, listed by Brix as working in 1773, has not yet been located on the tax rolls of the town. John Price, a silversmith who is supposed to have worked about the same time as Edwards, also remains a man of mystery, as does Philip Becker. Another little-

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<sup>1</sup> "The Life of William Henry," by Francis Jordan, Jr., p. 6; Lancaster, 1910.

known smith was Henry Crone, who worked in silver at Lancaster about 1780. But perhaps the legend that he was a deserter from the Revolutionary Army has something to do with the lack of readily available data on the man.

Of Peter Getz who worked in the last decade of the eighteenth century we have more information, and some silver. A piece of Getz silver was in the loan exhibition of the Pennsylvania Museum, May, 1921: a scroll-handled can, with molded base, marked twice, *P.GETZ* in a rectangle. This was given a date around 1790. That, too, is the date ascribed by Stephen Ensko to the creamer marked *P.G.* four times (*Fig. 2*). Peter Getz was a self-taught silversmith, watchmaker, goldsmith, and diecutter. It is a matter of record that he was selected to cut the dies for the 1792 copper cent and the dies for the silver half dollar of the same date for the United States mint. Getz also worked in the early 1800's and, judging from the frequency of mention of his mark in even early attempts at recording the silversmiths of the country, a great deal of his silver was in existence, at least until after 1900.

John Ewing, silversmith and jeweler of Lancaster, appears to have worked in the last three decades of the eighteenth century. Little is known about this man except that he is sometimes confused with the nineteenth-century silversmith John Ewan of Charleston, South Carolina. Only one piece of Ewing silver was found in my research, a baptismal bowl or font (*Fig. 3*).

It is hoped, of course (doesn't one expect it to happen when the plea is put forth in *Antiques?*) that owners of silver marked *D.Syng*, or *D.S.*, *L.Heck*, or *L.H.*, *C. Hall*, or *C.H.*, or *P.G.*, *H.Crone* or *H.C.*, will communicate to the author detailed information about their treasures.

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The Publication Committee, desirous of enlarging upon Mr. Drepperd's splendid article, have found a paucity of information of the early silversmiths, and gathered but few additional names. We can add the following facts:

The will of Daniel Syng was dated January 30, 1745, and recorded March 19, 1745, in the Philadelphia courthouse. His wife, Mary Gray, and children, Mary, Susan and George, survived. His brother, Philip, and James Coullas, were executors of the estate.

Joseph Simon, famous merchant and Indian trader of Lancaster, is known to have employed silversmiths in the making of trinkets for the Indian trade, but who they were is not known.

The tax lists of Lancaster revealed but two additional names of silversmiths.<sup>2</sup> In 1773, along with Charles Hall, are listed the names of Daniel East and Joseph Mayr. No doubt the latter was a prominent tradesman, for while he was taxed £1 3s, Charles Hall was taxed but 12s.

No, Mr. Drepperd, John Edwards was not found in the tax lists, but here is a more savory item, which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for September 1, 1773: "The Lancaster County Jailor, George Eberly, states that John Edwards and Thomas Hutchison calling themselves silversmiths, and Edwards having a horse and a woman and a several weeks' old child with him, . . . are all held in said jail as suspicious persons and vagrants. All persons having any claim on any of them shall give notice to any justice of the county."

In 1796, Peter Getz, the silversmith and jeweler, had a store opposite Slough's tavern, on Queen Street (South Queen near Penn Square), where he displayed "a large assortment of useful ornaments, gold and silver watches, etc."<sup>3</sup> After his failure to become director of the new Philadelphia mint, his successful opponent, the celebrated David Rittenhouse, had this to say of him: "Peter Getz was lately a self-taught mechanic of singular ingenuity in the borough of Lancaster, where he many years exercised the trade of silversmith and jeweler, and was remarkable for the extraordinary accuracy and elegance of the workmanship he executed."

In the *Lancaster Zeitung* of May 19, 1790, we are told that "Mr. Getz carries in stock all kinds of silversmith's work, manufactured after the newest methods, such as necklaces, wedding rings, gold plated studs, shoe and knee buckles, watch cases, chains, signets and keys."

William Haverstick, son of Michael and Salome Haverstick, was a gold- and silversmith in Lancaster. With this occupation, he advertised in 1798 that "he had also at his place of business, on King Street, dry goods and groceries."<sup>4</sup> He served in the

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<sup>2</sup> Pennsylvania Archives, 3d series, vol. 3, pp. 456, 458, 461.

<sup>3</sup> Ellis and Evans' *History of Lancaster County*, p. 371.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 371, 986.

Revolutionary War. He died in Philadelphia, on October 31, 1823, aged sixty-seven years.

John Musser was a silversmith in 1816. In a deed, dated November 9, 1816, John Musser, silversmith, and wife Margaret, eldest daughter of Benjamin Schaum, coppersmith, transferred property to Frederick Augustus Muhlenberg, whose wife, Elizabeth, was a daughter of Benjamin Schaum. (Deed Book 8, vol. 7, p. 359.)

A silversmith is mentioned in the marriage records of the Moravian Church. In 1820, George Franciscus, son of George Franciscus and Margaret Ply, was married to Mary Schwartz (widow), daughter of Henry Pinkerton and Elizabeth Franciscus.

#### THE COST OF SILVERWARE <sup>5</sup>

The following items will show the cost of silverware in the early days in Philadelphia. Comparison should be made with the prices charged by Charles Hall for his work for Chief Burgess William Atlee and William Henry.

October 11, 1750

Seal for York County .....	£4	12s	5d
Broaches at .....	8 to	11s	per dozen
Crosses at .....	12s		"
Arm Bands at .....	20s		each
Rist Bands at .....	8s		"
Gorgetts at .....	25s		"

1775

	£	s	d
12 Silver polisht Table Spoons .....	17	11	3
12 Silver polisht Tea Spoons .....	4	17	3
To a pr. polisht Spring Tea Tongs .....	1	4	9
To a polisht fluted Soup Ladle .....	4	17	6
To a Tea Pot .....	6	16	7
To a Shugar Dish .....	5	16	0
To a Milk Pot .....	3	6	4
To a Slop Bowl .....	6	8	9

<sup>5</sup> *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 54, p. 32, "The Cost of Old Silver," by Harrold E. Gillingham.

1809

1	Coffee Pot .....	\$27.82
2	Pair large square Candlesticks .....	8.00
2	Pr. Coasters .....	2.50
2	Goblets .....	6.00
1	fish Trowel .....	1.00
1	Pr. Snuffers, plated stand .....	2.00