

What 20th-Century Flagg & Homan Reproductions Tell Us About the Originals

By

Gary Wiggins

Final version 4/17/2018

The Homan Manufacturing Company's voluminous early 20th-century line of pewter wares, with over 200 numbered objects marked Flagg & Homan, offers a window to the original Homan products from the period 1847-1865. Those are the years encompassing the Asa Flagg and Henry Homan partnership in Cincinnati (1847-1852) through Homan's death in 1865. The extent to which the 20th-century reproductions are true copies of the originals is examined in this article. Contrasts are made between the styles of the originals and reproductions, and the possible existence of yet unknown 19th-century Flagg & Homan or Homan & Co. items is explored, based on the 20th-century products.

The Homan Manufacturing Company's Catalog No. 59 from 1931 contains the complete list of Flagg & Homan pewter items available at the time (reproductions and new styles) and includes a brief history of the firm. It states, "Many Flagg & Homan pewter patterns have been revived from the original tools and designs of the firm established in 1847, eighty-four years ago." (1) Original 19th-century prints of the designs had been retained, a fact confirmed by Knittle in 1932 when she interviewed Henry Homan's son, Joseph T. Homan. (2) The 1931 catalog's one-page history indicates that the molds and other tools used in the manufacture of the original items were still available and that those were used to create the reproductions. "Forms, handles and even such details as tips" were represented as true reproductions of products from the older period. Catalog No. 59 also states that, "In many cases the original system of numbering the patterns has been retained, so that a candlestick and a tea service may bear the same number." See, for example, the no. 8 candlestick in Figure 8 and the no. 8 tea set in Figure 9.

The Flagg & Homan Mark

Although Flagg & Homan adopted the oval mark seen in the figures below to brand their business at the time of their partnership, they did not include it in

their first large advertisement in the 1850-51 *Williams Cincinnati Directory*, opting instead for the image seen in Figure 1. (3)



Fig. 1. Flag & Homan ad in the 1850-51 *Williams Cincinnati Directory*.

20th-century Homan Manufacturing Company pewter pieces, both reproductions and new patterns, typically include the Flag & Homan mark in an oval and the word "PEWTER" between the mark and the number, all of which are incused. Except for candleholders and one other item, there is no Flag & Homan mark on the 19th-c. items pictured in this article. They bear either the incused "HOMAN & CO" or "H. HOMAN" mark.

Candleholders

Brown says that there were two early marked forms of Flag & Homan or Homan and Company candlesticks. (4) One style of 19th-century candlestick has the Flag & Homan names incused in a straight line on a metal insert soldered into the base, as documented by the McClaskeys and depicted in Figure 2. (5) It could have been an early product of the partnership before they decided on the oval mark.



Fig. 2. Flagg & Homan 19th-c. candlestick with straight-line mark.

Knittle states that Flagg & Homan candlesticks were made in 7 sizes, and the 1931 Homan catalog shows seven sizes, with approximate heights of 5", 7", 8", 10", 11", 13", and 14" plus two chamber candleholders (2" and 4"). (6) The 2" chamber candleholder reproduction is seen in Figure 3.



Fig. 3. Flagg & Homan 20th-c. chamber candleholder reproduction no. 4. As the 1931 catalog page reproduced as Figure 4 reveals, none of The Homan Manufacturing Company's candlestick reproductions in the first third of the twentieth century bears even the slightest resemblance to the McClaskeys' candlestick which is 8 5/8" tall.

Candlesticks

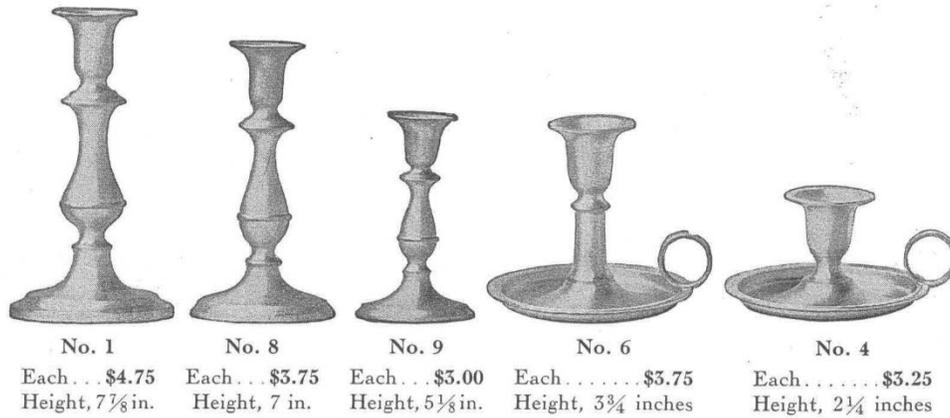
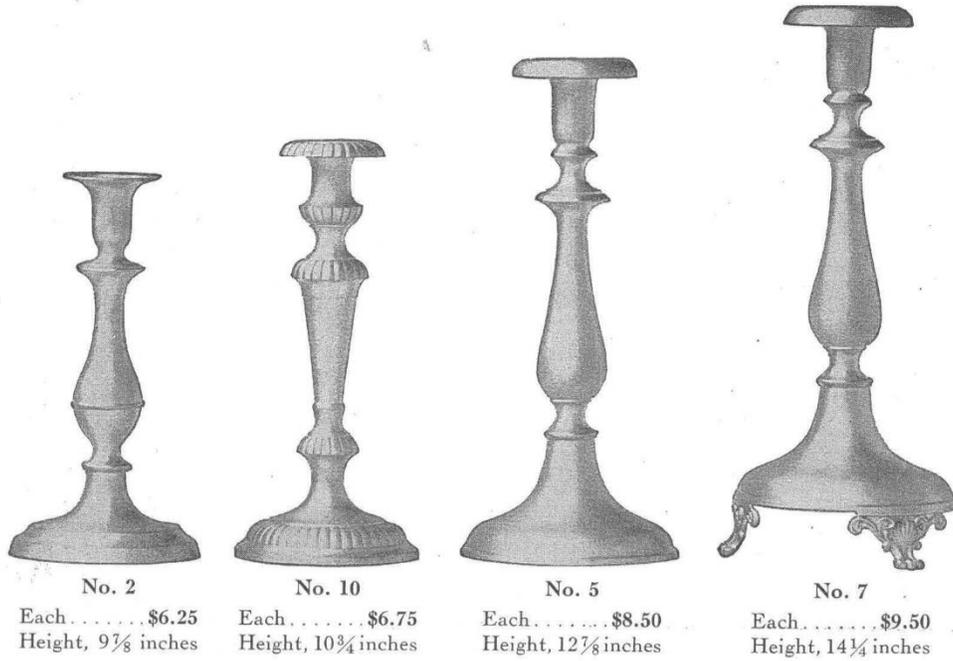


Fig. 4. Page 24 from the 1931 Homan Manufacturing Co. catalog.

The Wolfs provide pictures of Flagg & Homan candlesticks in their 2006 book, including two with raised marks and raised numbers. (7) They note in a 1977 article, “The interesting feature about these candlesticks is that they are marked Flagg & Homan in raised oval cast in the base.” (8) Mel Wolf believed in 1983 that Homan made candlesticks only in 3 patterns: the trumpet-shaped style pictured in Figure 2, a gadrooned style (that, like the products of some others, mimics a Meriden Britannia Co. candlestick), and the ubiquitous baluster-style Homan candlesticks that are usually unmarked. (9) It is now generally accepted that other Flagg & Homan candlesticks from the mid-19th century were cast with raised marks and numbers.

Some candlestick reproductions made after 1925 are sealed at the base with a disk on which the Flagg & Homan oval mark, the word “PEWTER,” and a number are incused as seen in Figure 5.



Fig. 5. Flagg & Homan mark on a 7" 20th-c. candlestick reproduction no. 8.

Parker explains the variations that distinguish the original 19th-c. Flagg & Homan candlesticks with raised marks and numbers from the reproductions made with the original molds. (10) The 20th-c. Flagg & Homan candlestick reproductions usually have a small round disk with incused "PEWTER" inserted in the hole, as shown in Figure 6.



Fig. 6. Flagg & Homan 11" 20th-c. candlestick reproduction no. 10.

Parker warns that unscrupulous people have sometimes removed the disks to make the reproductions appear to be originals. He says that the undersides of the bases of the 19th-c. originals are generally rough and unfinished, whereas those of the 20th-c. reproductions are highly finished. Fig. 7 shows an example that was apparently modified in this manner.



Fig. 7. Flagg & Homan raised mark on a 14" candlestick reproduction no. 7.

The candlesticks whose marks appear in the previous 3 figures are found in Figure 8.



Fig. 8. Candlestick reproductions nos. 8, 7, and 10.

Tea Sets

Some 20th-century tea set patterns are close matches to known Homan products of the preceding century. The reproductions in Figure 9 and the original pieces in Figure 10 appear very much alike, but there are differences, such as the obvious

insertion of the black pieces in the handle of the reproduction teapot, presumably to prevent it from becoming too hot.



Fig. 9. Flagg & Homan 20th-c. reproduction tea set no. 8.

There are also significant differences in size, particularly of the bases, as is evident in Figure 11. The Homan & Co. no. 8 creamer is 5 5/8" high and has a base 3 1/4" in diameter. The no. 8 Flagg & Homan reproduction creamer is 5 1/2" high, with a base diameter of 3". The base on the reproduction teapot is 4 1/4" in diameter, while that of the original H. Homan teapot is 4 3/4". There is also a size difference in the bases of the sugars, 3 5/8" vs. 4 1/16".

It is surprising that no reproduction tea set has been found that matches the very popular 19th-century pattern IX, shown in Figure 12. However, pattern 6 was duplicated.



Fig. 10. Homan & Co. 19th-c. tea set no. 8.



Fig. 11. Comparison of the marks and sizes of the no. 8 creamers.



Fig. 12. Homan & Co. teapot no. IX.

Tear-drop finials and mace-like handles are found on tea sets no. 6 from both centuries. (Figs. 13-14). 19th-c. Homan products with similar handles were probably all made in the mid- to late 1860s, so they fall far outside the period of the Flagg & Homan partnership. A picture of a Cincinnati Britannia Company set with similar handles is found in the Wolfs' 1977 "Cincinnati Pewter" article, and

the two teapots have an April 14, 1868 patent date. (11) This lends credence to fixing the mid- to late 1860s as the probable production dates of this style.



Fig. 13. 19th-c. Homan teapot no. 6 (l.) and an unknown number (r.).



Fig. 14. Flagg & Homan 20th-c. reproduction tea set no. 6.

Other examples of this style of handle are shown in Figures 15-17. The cameo on the teapot in Figure 15 may be a depiction of Queen Victoria. 1867 was the 40th anniversary of her coronation, and 1869 was her 50th birthday. The bottoms of that pot and the one on the right in Figure 13 were replaced with copper, so I am not sure of their numbers. Copper bottoms began to be applied to teapots and coffeepots in Ohio around 1860. (12)



Fig. 15. "Queen Victoria's" tea pot.



Fig. 16. Homan & Co. creamer no. 50.



Fig. 17. Flagg & Homan 20th-c. reproduction pitcher no. 3

Large Pitchers.

Nearly identical in body size and design (except for the lid on the original) are the pitchers shown in Figure 18, H. Homan pitcher no. 1 and the 20th-c. Flagg & Homan reproduction no. 2. The base on the original measures 5 ½" in diameter, while that on the reproduction is 5 1/8". The original was likely made in the early 1850s, about the time of the breakup of the partnership with Asa Flagg. The existence of the no. 2 reproduction implies that there was also an unlidded version of the pitcher with that number. The handle and finial styles are used on other original products with the number 2, such as a syrup pitcher with the Homan & Co. mark and another marked H. Homan, as well as a Homan & Co. coffee pot no. 2. (See Figure 19.)



Fig. 18. H. Homan pitcher no. 1 and 20th-c. reproduction no. 2.



Fig. 19. Other 19th-c. Homan items with number 2.

Less closely matched, but nevertheless showing several features in common are the pitchers in Fig. 20, Homan & Co. lidded pitcher no. 4 and Flagg & Homan reproduction pitcher no. 5. The base of the original is larger than the reproduction, 5 ½" diameter vs. 5" diameter, but both are 8 15/16" high at the uppermost points of the handles.



Fig. 20. Homan & Co. pitcher no. 4 and Flagg & Homan reproduction no. 5.

A much closer match to the no. 5 reproduction pitcher in Figure 20 is a Homan & Co. pitcher of unknown number found on the web. That one was described as having a 6 ½" d. base and being 9 ½" high. (13)



Fig. 21. Flagg & Homan Sauce Boat #21.

Another 19th-C. Flagg & Homan Product?

A possible 19th-C. product with the raised Flagg & Homan oval mark is the #21 sauce boat (Figs. 21, 22), the only piece besides candleholders I have seen with that mark that appears to be from the 19th century. The unusual handle design is similar to that on a Cincinnati Britannia Co. flagon that can be seen on the web at <http://www.hoosierpewter.com/cincbritco/>

Sauce boats often had accompanying trays to catch the drippings, and the fact that there is a 20th-c. tray no. 21 argues for its existence in the original Flagg & Homan line. The basic design of the early sauce boat was repeated in the 3-legged 20th-c. reproduction #22. There are identical reproduction trays for both the #21 and #22 reproduction sauce boats, and the legs on sauce boat 22 fit perfectly in the tray (Fig. 23).



Fig. 22. Mark for #21 Flagg & Homan Sauce Boat.



Fig. 23. 20th-c. reproduction sauce boat and tray no. 22.

Finials

A few of the 20th-century products include finials with the flower-on-a-leaf pattern widely used by Homan in the 19th century and seen in Figure 24, but even finials with the less-common cluster of grapes on a vine turn up on some reproductions (Figure 25).



Fig. 24. Removable flower finial.



Fig. 25. Grape cluster finial on 20th-c. Flagg & Homan syrup reproduction no. 7.

Figure 26 includes 20th-c. lidded syrup pitchers nos. 17 and 7 (on the left and right respectively) and 19th-c. Homan and Co. lidded pitcher no. 3 in the center.



Fig. 26. Grape cluster finials on 19th- and 20th-century Homan syrup pitchers.

Porringers

Homan porringers were also reproduced in the 20th century: nos. 156 (4 ½" d, depicted in Figure 27), 184 (2" d), 185 (3" d), and a 2-handled variant, 188 (2" d). Figure 28 shows a 19-c. Flagg & Homan porringer with the same handle pattern. (14)



Fig. 27. 20th-c. Flagg & Homan reproduction porringer no. 158.

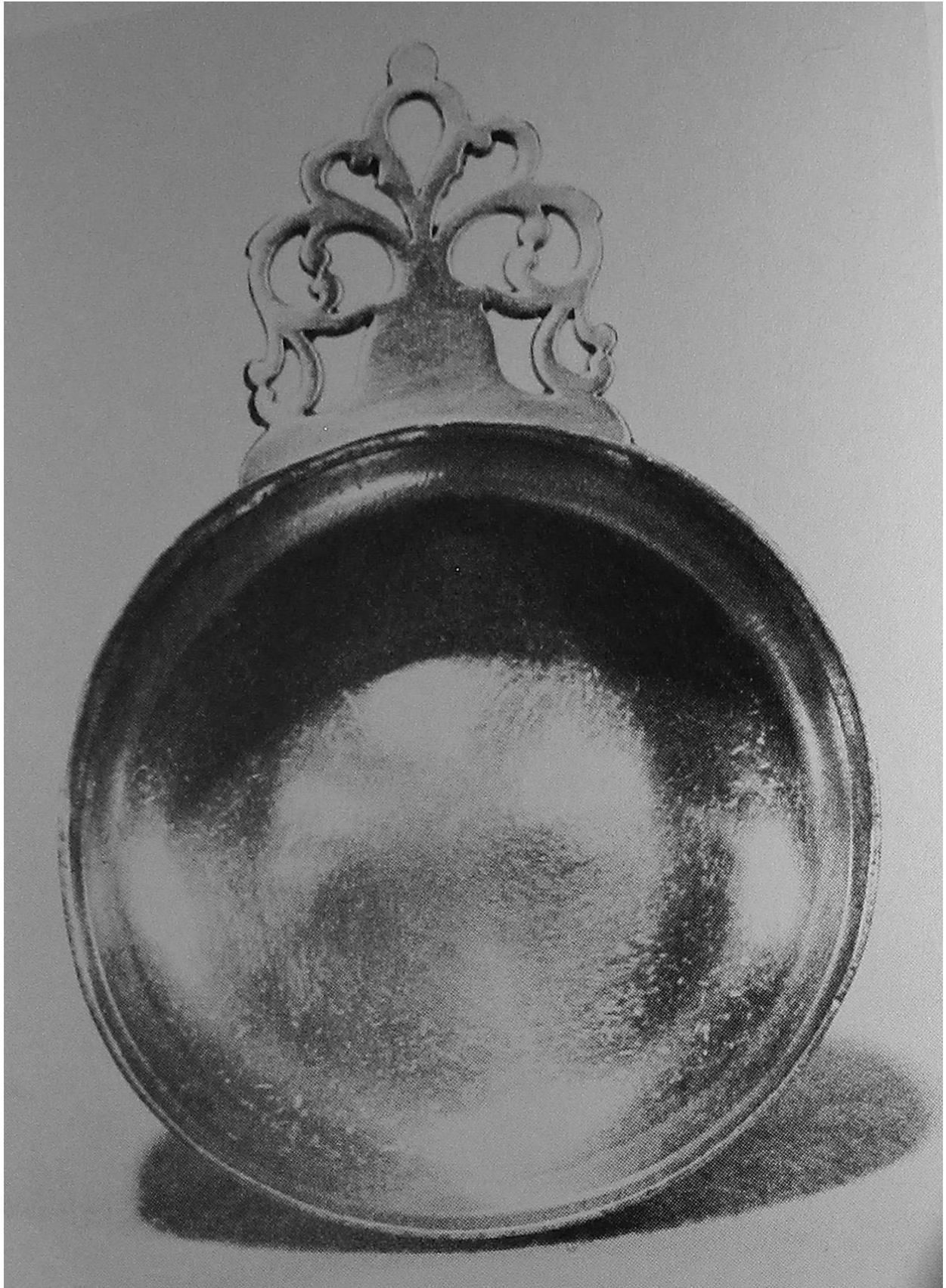


Figure 28. 19th-c. Flagg & Homan porringer.

The “Eighteenth Century” Line of Homan Products

In the later stages of making pewter in the first third of the 20th century, The Homan Manufacturing Company released a line of pewter that included in the mark the phrase “The 18th Century” in cursive script (scattered numbers from approximately 163 to 192). The first 3 pages of the 1931 catalog are devoted to 24 items in the pattern. A bowl of that design is featured on the title page of the 1931 catalog and shown below in Figure 29. It is unlikely that Flagg and Homan produced counterparts of this series in the mid-19th century.



Fig. 29. 20th-c. Flagg & Homan bowl no. 169.

An anomaly

One 20th-century product that included the Flagg & Homan raised mark is the no. 39 shot glass or beaker. Paradoxically, it also has a raised depiction of the word “PEWTER” between the oval mark and the number, as seen in Figure 30.



Fig. 30. Flagg & Homan shot glasses no. 39.

Conclusion and Questions

The implication that The Homan Manufacturing Company created many 20th-century pewter items that were revived from the period when founding father Henry Homan worked was overstated in the 1931 catalog. In fact, even if they had no 19th-century antecedents, Henry Homan's son, Joseph T. Homan, who ran the business in the 20th century, used the Flagg & Homan oval mark to brand all 20th-century Homan Manufacturing Company pewter products. A 1929 catalog of unknown source reveals that not all 20th-century pewter pieces with the Flagg & Homan mark are faithful to Homan originals. "The remainder are inspired by works of early American pewterers or by English models." (15)

Aside from candleholders, tea sets, and large pitchers that are true or close reproductions, some early Homan designs of parts were adapted to other pieces with the 20th-century Flagg & Homan pewter designation. Those products appear not to be true reproductions of 19th-century pewter made during the period 1847-

1865. Or were they? The fact that there are true reproductions in some patterns raises the possibility that other 20th-century products mimicked 19th-century Homan originals that have not yet been found by collectors. This is undoubtedly true of the nos. 4 and 6 chamber candleholders, and probably for some other Flagg & Homan 20th-century reproductions, especially those that have low numbers, for example, the no. 3 pitcher in Figure 17, nos. 11, 12 and 13 bowls, and large serving trays nos. 16 and 26. It is not unreasonable to think that counterparts for those and other products existed at one time in the 1800s. Knittle lists eight Homan tea set patterns of the middle period for which she saw drawings during her 1932 visit with Joseph T. Homan (Brunswick, Albata, Grecian, Grape, Olive, Beaded, Tipped, and the French Tipped), writing “I believe two or three of these patterns have been recently revived.” (16)

One wonders also whether there was a candlestick no. 3 made by Flagg & Homan. Was that number omitted from the 20th-century candlestick reproductions found in Catalog no. 59 because the original makers skipped a number? Was the mold for it lost? Figure 31 shows a recent picture of the mark on the trumpet-style candlestick in Figure 2. It clearly shows that it bears the number 2. (17) That is not the style of the no. 2 candlestick in the 1931 catalog, p. 24 (Fig. 4). Perhaps it is the real no. 2, and the no. 2 candleholder in the catalog should have been labelled no. 3.

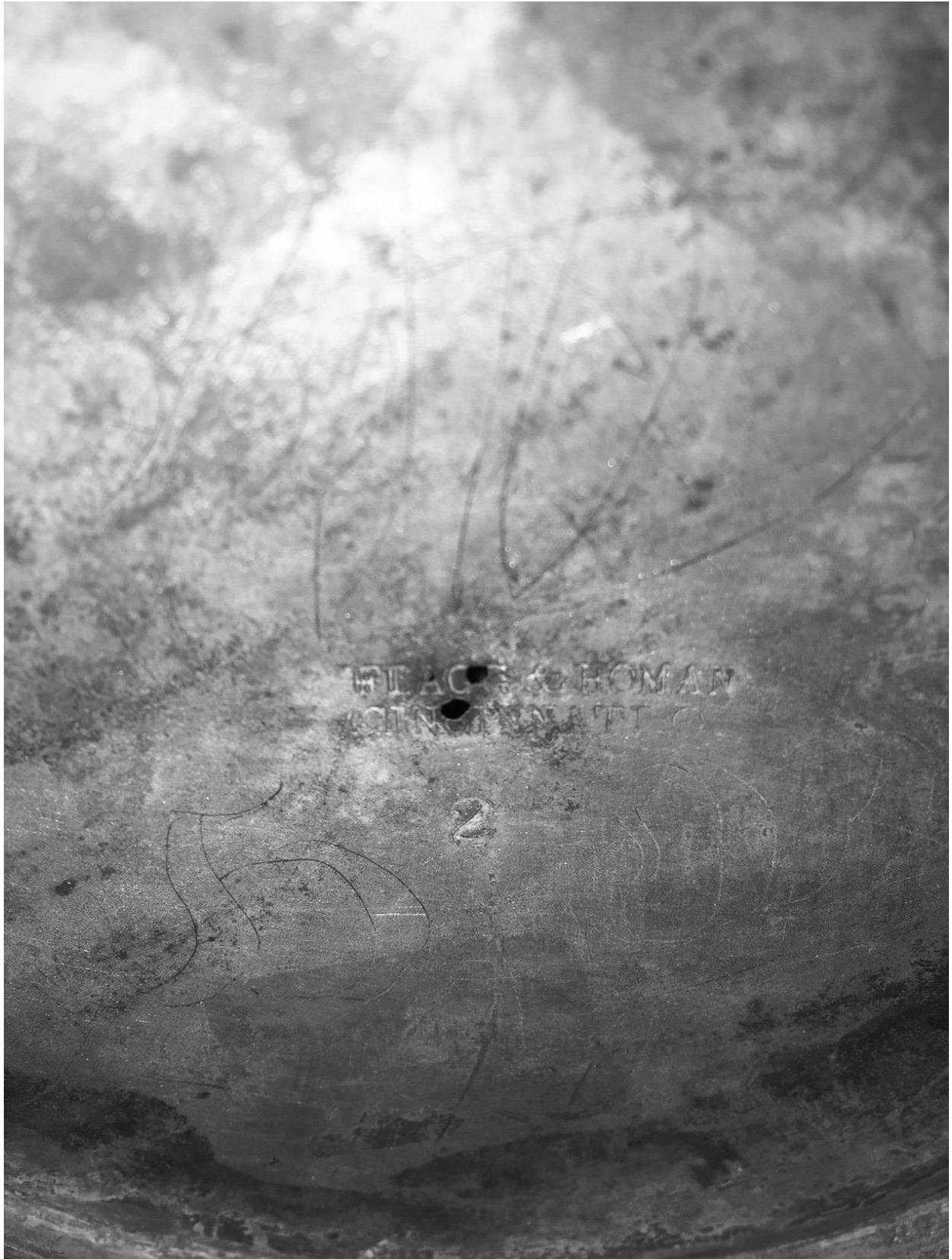


Fig. 31. A recent picture of the Flagg & Homan straight-line mark.

A question that vexes me is why Flagg & Homan did not include the oval mark in their 1850-51 ad (Fig. 1) if they were seeking to establish a trademark that would be associated with the company. The type font used for their names in that ad appears to be identical to the font style used in the straight-line mark and all other 19th-century HOMAN marks, but it is not the fonts used in the rest of the ad. This implies that a conscious decision had been made by 1850 to use that font in the firm's straight-line signature labels. What if the oval mark never really existed in the 19th-century? Could it have been a 20th-century fabrication by Joseph T. Homan to market his firm's pewter products? In that case, a lot of collectors have been fooled by the candlestick reproductions! It is more likely that the oval brand was limited to certain types of products that Flagg himself had a major role in producing, such as candleholders.

We may never know the answers to these questions, but the 20th-century Flagg & Homan reproductions give us valuable clues about what other pewter products may have been made by the Homan Company from 1847-1865.

NOTES

1. *Pewter by Flagg & Homan*. (Made as it was over 80 years ago). Catalogue no. 59. Cincinnati, OH: The Homan Manufacturing Co., July 15, 1931. A copy of the 1931 catalog is held by The Henry Ford Museum Library. Catalog no. 59 does not include all 20th-c. pewter made by the company that bears the Flagg & Homan oval mark. An attempt has been made to identify all such products on the Hoosier Pewter web site, <http://www.hoosierpewter.com/flagghoman/>. Pictures of over 190 item numbers are found there as of this writing.
2. Knittle, Rhea Mansfield. *Early Ohio Silversmiths and Pewterers, 1787-1847*. (The Ohio Frontier Series, 1787-1947) Cleveland, OH: Calvert-Hatch Co., 1943. p. 55. Knittle saw the original drawings when she interviewed Joseph T. Homan in 1932.
3. *Williams Cincinnati Directory*, 1851-52. http://www.donslist.net/PGHLookups/cgi-bin/HandOff-1_0.cgi?CinciOH1850-51+CinciOH1850-51+0061SP (accessed 29 March 2018).

4. Brown, John F. "Vas You Effer in Zinzinnati?" *The Pewter Collectors Club of America Bulletin*, v. 7 no. 5 (74), April 1977, pp. 180-185. p. 182.
5. McClaskey, Fred and Mary Ellen McClaskey. "Flagg & Homan, Cincinnati, O. Pewterers, 1842-1854." *The Pewter Collectors Club of America Bulletin*, v. 7 no. 3 (76), February 1976, pp. 104-105.
6. Knittle, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
7. *An American Pewter Collection; The Collection of Dr. Melvyn and Bette Wolf*. 1st ed. n. pl., n.p., 2006. Images 104, 107, and 108.
8. Wolf, Dr. Melvyn D. and Bette A. Wolf. "Cincinnati Pewter." *The Pewter Collectors Club of America Bulletin* v. 7 no. 3 (75), September 1977, pp. 220-231. pp. 229-230.
9. Wolf, Melvyn D. "American Pewter Candleholders of the 19th Century." *The Pewter Collectors Club of America Bulletin*, v. 8 no. 7 (86), March 1983, pp. 238-251. p. 239.
10. Parker, Robert. "Will the Real Homan Candleholder Please Stand Up." *The Pewter Collectors Club of America Bulletin*, v. 14 no. 1, Summer 2009, pp. 33-35.
11. Wolfs, *op. cit.*, 1977, p. 229.
12. Thanks to Mark Duffy whose search for copper bottom tea and coffee pots on www.genealogybank.com using the dates of 1800 to 1870 found the earliest newspaper reference to be an ad in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* in 1861.
13. The web photo can be seen at:
http://www.hoosierpewter.com/homan/pitcher_Homan_and_Co.jpg
14. The photo of the porringer was reproduced from Katherine Ebert's *Collecting American Pewter*. N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973; ISBN: 0-684-1458-0, p. 89. [Publisher's permission to reproduce the photo is pending.]
15. See: http://www.hoosierpewter.com/flagghoman/1929_ad_p_131.jpg
16. Knittle, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
17. Thanks to Gary Mezack for permission to use the photo of the no. 2 Flagg & Homan candlestick mark.