

DUNHAM TAVERN MUSEUM

News

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FROM THE COLLECTION:

The Ubiquitous Pewter Candlesticks of Flagg and Homan

There are many who still cling to the old notion that the Ohio frontier was a rough and rugged place, filled only with uncouth men wearing buckskin. While the frontier life was, indeed, difficult, most settlers wanted to divest themselves of log homes and homespun shirts. They craved consumer goods and, from the frontier period into the middle of the nineteenth century, hundreds of craftsmen settled in Ohio to take advantage of the ready market that existed.

One such craftsman was an English potter named Asa Flagg, who settled in Cincinnati in the 1840s and partner with Henry Homan in the manufacturing of pewter for domestic and ecclesiastical use. Beginning in 1847, the pair made chalices, baptismal bowls, tankards, basins, beakers, chargers, plates, pitchers, tea sets and many other types of pewter wares. Their location in Cincinnati, along the Ohio River, allowed them to capitalize on the riverboat traffic, manufacturing items to be exported down river, as well as items specifically for the boats, such as oil lamps mounted on a swivel so that it remained level even in a rocking boat.

Likely the most prolific aspect of Flagg and Homan's business was their manufacturing of candlesticks, the most popular of which was a graceful, baluster form with a band at the waist. These candlesticks were available in seven sizes, but are most often seen in the 8" and 10" varieties. Such candlesticks grace many private and institutional collections today, including the Dunham Tavern Museum, which owns a pair of 10" Flagg and Homan candlesticks. At mid-century, given the flourishing trade permitted by water (rivers and canals) and by rail, many taverns around the state probably had pairs of pewter candlesticks by Asa Flagg and Henry Homan.

It should be noted these sticks proved so popular in the period, that in the early twentieth century, the Homan Manufacturing Company (as it was then called, and which remained in business until 1941) reproduced these baluster candlesticks. These early reproduction can be easily identified by their lack of push-up candle ejectors as well as a stamped mark which includes the word "pewter." Originally, most of these candlesticks were unmarked, though some occasionally turn up with a cast mark "Flagg & Homan" in an oval.

Andrew Richmond is an Americana Specialist for Garth's Auctions in Delaware, OH. His research has focused on the furniture and decorative arts of early Ohio. He is currently assembling a database of early Ohio furniture. Contributions to that database of photos and information can be sent to asmr@columbus.rr.com.

The **Dunham Tavern Museum Antiques Show** returns Saturday, November 29 (11am-5pm) and Sunday, November 30 (11am-4pm) to Shaker Middle School.

New features added to the Show for 2008 include:

- **antiques appraisals by Aspire Auctions** (Sunday only, 11am-2pm, \$10 per item or three items for \$25). In addition to conducting Sunday appraisals from 11am-2pm, Aspire Auctions' booth will be staffed by antiques specialists sharing information about internet auctions and services.
- a reproduction kitchen display by the **Workshops of David T. Smith** (all-weekend, www.davidsmith.com)
- crystal and china repair/glass grinding by **Mary Lou's Crystal/China Repair** (all-weekend)
- a Dunham Tavern Museum Member **consignment booth**
- a café by **Chef's Cooper's Catering** (all-weekend) where patrons can purchase quality coffee and pastries, made-to-order omelets (preview only), sandwiches and other gourmet treats during the show

The volunteers have decided to dedicate this year's show to the memory of Ralph Kovel.