Let Me Introduce You to Sam Laidacker -

It seems only fitting, that we should include in the initial issue of The Quarterly, an introduction to a gentleman named Sam Laidacker. Mr Laidacker dominated the field of Historical Staffordshire, and to a lesser degree, the field of Early American Glass, for a twenty year period during the 1930s to 1950s. Sam recently died, but he will be immortalized by the vast amount of information that he compiled and made available to the collectors of his day. He is probably best known for his books, Anglo-American China PART I (the American Views) and Anglo-American China, Part II, (the English and other views), which he published in 1954 and 1951, respectively. These were both an update of his 1938 work, The Standard Catalogue of Anglo-American China, 1810-1850, in which he combined a listing of items by maker, by border, by view, by item and added current auction prices. This led to what we termed as the “second great period of collecting” in the field of Historical Staffordshire, in the introduction to our book, Historical Staffordshire; an illustrated check-list. However, it is not these books that we wish to introduce you to at this point, but rather the little pamphlet initially titled, The Antique Collector, but changed by the second issue to The American Antiques Collector, because of a conflict with another publication of the same name. Sam published twenty-nine issues of the AAC during the period from 1939 to 1956.

Journey with us, back to February, 1939. To set the historical stage, America was at peace, although the World had been at war for some time. The Japanese had invaded the Asian mainland, Churchill was in the Opposition Party in England and the Axis Powers were reigning unchecked in their landgrab in Europe and Africa. FDR was President. Many of us, including myself, were probably not even born.

Author’s note: The front cover of the 1939 issue had one cup plate with a single medallion of George Washington surrounded by the Oak Leaf border of R. Stevenson and Williams. Chipped and somewhat battered, it is unique. At the time of the printing of Laidacker’s first issue, it was in the collection of a Mrs. R. W. Tener, who purchased it from Richard and Virginia Wood, specialist dealers who lived in Baltimore, Maryland. At the time of the dispersal of the Tenner Collection, it was acquired by Ellouise Baker Larsen, the author of her own book on the subject. Upon her death, her entire collection was given to The Smithsonian, where the little plate resides to this date. Many years ago, I was told a story with a moral, by a fine man, named Caleb Ewing. Cal, who died a millionaire many times over, was employed by an oil company in his youth and his territory covered the area between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, along U. S. Route 30. At one time, this was the trail used by peddlers selling their wares to early settlers in the first quarter of the 19th century. They would fill their wagons in Philadelphia and peddle their way to Pittsburgh, replenish there and peddle Pittsburgh items on their way back to Philadelphia. Cal found many wonderful pieces of early glass and china during his travels. Since he was raising a rather large family at the time, he would supplement his income by selling the majority of these items, to the vari-
ous dealers he knew. Whenever possible, he would squirrel a piece away to join his own growing collection (we'll do an article in the future on the fabulous Ewing Collection). I know I'm rambling, so I'll get to the point - Cal found THE medalion cup plate one day and decided that since it was sooo battered, he would sell it. He called his friend Dick Wood and sold it to him for $75.00. Wood sold it to Tenner, and Cal regretted making that call to his dying day. The moral of the story, as Cal told it, was keep that rarity until you find a better example, and then sell it. Anyway, I digress, back to Sam Laidacker.

I think you might find it rather amusing to see the four page sales listing that was contained within the pages of that first
ing Staffordshire, English Ceramics, American Glass, Historical Flasks and others. In the 1939 edition Sam included the following article on Staffordshire.

THE VINE LEAF BORDER SERIES A33

Fort Gansevoort 345
Brooklyn Ferry 339
Hospital Boston 342a

If this initial article I will not discuss the maker to great extent because there is yet considerable question. Chaffers has Ralph Stevenson alone in 1813 & 50's in 1845 and gave up business in 1860. He was connected with others in this series impressed "STEVENS"O" and quite often the back has "R.S." printed and which can be understood quite easily, while others have "NG" which is puzzling. The sail on a boat in the Left and Center is "R.S. & W. Cobridge Pottery" on it and I have a small tray in front of me, with a double scroll mark "R.S. & W. Cobridge Staffordshire", which will explain the initials. Just what this partnership was and when it was in fact is not clear from present information. For detailed information on both Andrew and Ralph Stevenson I refer you to Antiques Magazine, Nov. 1944 by E. B. Larsen. Regardless of missing details we do know that it is one of the most beautiful series of American views as well as one of the most elusive. Most pieces are found both with and without the ogee edge.

In The Standard Catalogue of Anglo-American China I list fourteen different and I find there is still another. I suspect it when I list a soup tureen ladle with "Fort Gansevoort" 345 on it. Now two of the tureens have come to light. The main view is "Pennsylvania Hospit", the first time I saw it and I have "Albemarle, Boston" 345 on the cover. The second has "Battle of Bonneville" 337 on the cover and inside. The tureen is the same shape as the "Pittsburgh Market" 346 gravy tureen which is shown here. "Pittsburgh Market" in New York City is a very rare subject and I have seen but two in my experience. This little tureen sat on the "Columbus College" 341 tray all day in my front porch chased by the Tensers at the Hearst sale for $150.00. Note in the catalogue that neither has been sold in recent years. There is a tray

It might be interesting to see what the last fifty+ years have added to our knowledge of this particular series, based on this article. First, do I know for sure that the maker is actually Ralph Stevenson and Williams? If you said yes, you're correct. On the next paragraph. Sam lists a soup tureen with a view titled Fort Gansevoort. This is correct, since it was illustrated on the May, 1904 cover of The Old China magazine. (yes, I said 1904, but more about The Old China Magazine in another issue). However, do I know of any other? (The answer is yes. The Larry Fair/Ely Groves collection contained a soup tureen with New York Battery/Flagstaff Pavilion on it. That Collection was sold by us in 1985 and the ladle, which was perfect, brought $1320.00). He makes another interesting statement, as regards the form of the soup tureens, in that they have the leg feet and slightly swayed back of the little gravy tureen. That is not the norm, but rather the exception in this series. Of the five or so soup tureens known to exist, the majority are oval in shape and have a solid, not footed base. One very interesting item that is mentioned was that there was a marked example with the title

In addition to the listing of prices, The American Antiques Collector published original research in many fields, includ-

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to travel back in time with the money you earned in 1996 in your pocket? You could buy the whole list for the price of a few pieces, at today's prices. However, this should not surprise us, since it has been over fifty years since these prices/pieces were offered. If you had put the money in an 8% certificate of deposit in 1939, what would that $225.00 you spent on the Juncture of the Sacandaga platter with Sam, bring you today? Of course, there are other benefits to owning a lovely piece of old blue, rather than just the monetary.

issue. So, for your amusement and education, here it is:

China Listing (Concluded)

Various Makers

- "American Indian" so-called 3 1/2" soup plate. Fine crack. (One cover)
- "Exeter" 18" plate. Brilliant proof.
- "American Indian" oval 18" plate.
- "Ship and Whaling" oval 18" plate.
- "Floral" oval 18" plate.
- "American Village" 9 1/2" dark blue plate. Proof.
- "American Indian" oval 18" plate. Fine crack. (One cover)
- "American Indian" oval 18" plate. Fine crack. (One cover)
- "American Indian" oval 18" plate. Fine crack. (One cover)
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The Rolfsing Collection - Part I


The elderly lady in the wheelchair pushed herself out of the booth next to mine and as soon as she caught sight of the four showcases filled with the Caleb Ewing Collection of glass, she headed in my direction. “Do you purchase glass?” she asked. “What type of glass do you have?” I answered. “Well, if you are interested, why don’t you come to my house tomorrow, before the show opens.” Naturally, the next morning I could be found ringing the doorbell, at the appointed hour, of a rather large house on Lake Michigan, about one hour north of Chicago.

The same lady opened the door and noted the surprise on my face, when I saw she was without the wheelchair. “I just use the darned thing when I’m on my feet a long time,” she explained. She invited me in and stated that I probably wanted to see the glass. She opened a corner cupboard in the hallway to reveal a large group of clear pattern glass. Noting my face dropping in disappointment, she guided me out to the kitchen and there, with light streaming through it, was a showcase containing glass. Blown and pattern molded glass, in blue, green, citron and amethyst. Sugar bowls, creamers, salts, pans and vases. Wow!!! Over the next few months we quickly became friends, while negotiating the sale of the collection. I learned that she and her late husband had formed the collection during the period from 1930 through the late 1940’s, buying their pieces from two giants of the time, Neil Gest and Rhea Knittle. She said they did buy a few pieces from that “young man,” George McKearin. They had enjoyed the pursuit of the items and the thrill of ownership and now it was time to give other collectors a chance. Thus the collecting world was given the opportunity to obtain some of the finest glass ever made in America, and we initiated a new sales concept, called an “absentee auction.”

Lawrence Mansion. Please contact us if you have seen this title on any piece from this series. Back to the article, Sam closes with the cover of the gravy tureen as being an unknown view. As we now know, it is a rare view of a rare building, namely the Masonic Hall, Philadelphia. It is illustrated and identified in our book, Historical Staffordshire, an illustrated checklist. So, as you can see, we have learned a bit since 1939. However, I bet that much of the above “new” information was learned as a result of the AAC.

In future issues, we will explore many more of the twenty-nine volumes of The American Antiques Collector and you will become better acquainted with Sam and the other dealer/collectors of this period. In the Spring issue, we will review one of his articles on the English views.

Gravy tureen cover, Masonic Hall, Philadelphia
What's Inside

The Rolfsing Collection - True Jewels of American Blown Glass

Laidacker's First Issue of the AAC

Northeast, C. S. & S. and Sotheby's sell blue ... lots of it!

A Fabulous New England Collection

The Barlow Sale - October, 1996

Plus So Much More......