I first became aware of Mrs. Emma DeF. Morse, when two pieces, a brown 17" platter depicting the "State House, New Haven" and a mulberry 17" platter with "Harvard College" were published in the May 1902 (that’s right...1902) issue of the Old China Magazine. I first became seriously interested in Mrs. Morse, when the same magazine published portions of her holdings in the extremely rare medallion group, in September 1902. Later, while researching some of Sam Laidacker’s American Antique Collector magazines, I learned that Mrs. Morse had donated her collection to the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. So that is what brought me to Worcester on March 31st, during the beginning of a massive snow storm, which was later characterized, by the local media, as a "white hurricane," dropping 30+" of wet heavy snow, whipped by 60-70 mph winds. Nature’s April-fool, since the previous day we had enjoyed 60-70 degree temperatures.

The American Antiquarian Society located at 185 Salisbury Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, is not only the home of the Emma DeF. Morse Collection of Historical Staffordshire, but also contains a fabulous collection of 18th and 19th century American books, broadsides, ledgers, advertisements and prints, plus a fine collection of American portraits.

As I parked in front of the impressive brick structure, I was greeted by a very large wild turkey standing approximately 6' from the car. It seemed, she too was visiting the Society and had taken up residence there for the last two months. This in the center of Worcester, the second largest city in Massachusetts. Anyway, back to the collection of Mrs. Morse.

From information provided to me by the gracious Curator of Graphic Arts, Mrs. Georgia Barnhill, I learned that Mrs. Morse and her husband Edwin, started collecting in 1885, with the intent of obtaining every known American view. Edwin had been an invalid for several years, as a result of wounds received as a Captain in the Worcester Guards, at the Battle of Spotsylvania, during the Civil War, died in 1890. Mrs. Morse continued her collecting and by 1907, she and her collection were featured in the magazine “American Homes and Gardens,” with the comment by Alexander Hudnut (another early Staffordshire collector) that she was one of the...
Above and to the right: The bowl and pitcher set is one of the smallest I have seen, with the pitcher measuring a scant 7 1/2" h. Manufactured by Ralph Stevenson and Williams, they are a lovely mixture of light, medium and dark blues. The figure in the foreground, according to Mrs. Larsen, is "Justice". Yes, there is a wedge-shaped piece out of the lip of the pitcher, but it is intact, located inside the piece, waiting for a very easy restoration.

Below: These two square vegetable dish bases are among the rarest views in historical "blue". On the left we have the "Dutch Church at Albany", a transfer apparently used here by Ralph Stevenson and also by Andrew Stevenson, who made pitchers containing the view. According to Mrs. Larsen's note, this is the only vegetable dish with this view. The second base is "Albany Theatre 1824", also by Ralph Stevenson and apparently only known to exist on this particular dish in this Collection. I noticed only one cover at The Society and that has the four medallions of "Washington", "Jefferson", DeWitt Clinton" and "Lafayette" placed on the four sides.
it be properly and safely displayed. Thus, in 1913, the Society paid $1,200.00 for the permanent installation of the cases in which the collection is displayed to this day, in what is now Mrs. Barnhill's office. For our reader's further information, The American Antiquarian Society is a fine research library with extensive holdings of 18th and 19th century American books and prints, which means they have many of the source prints for Historical Staffordshire and Liverpool. In addition, they have a large representation of period trade catalogues, ledgers and advertisements, all of which should be of interest to the serious collector and researcher in the fields of both glass and ceramics. It is a little jewel of a place and I can't urge you enough, to visit, should you be in the area of central Massachusetts.

As previously stated, the Collection consists of approximately 280 pieces, consisting mostly of the dark blue, with groups of pink, mulberry and brown displayed in two of the six cases. Because of the confines of the office, some of the most successful collectors of the last decade. In 1913, although she was not a member of the American Antiquarian Society, she donated her 280-piece collection with the proviso that camera angles and lighting effects, were somewhat less than optimal, but I believe we have photographed the Collection in its entirety and you should be able to identify most of the views. You will note that the Collection is typical of one formed in this period, in that it consists primarily of plates and platters, with little representation of the hollow pieces. The reason is simple, until the last thirty years, this ware was displayed as the ceramics prints that they are and were hung on walls in the place of framed prints. However, the hollow pieces that are in this Collection are rare and quite wonderful.

Speaking of rarities, the jewel of the Collection is the diminutive washbowl and pitcher set in a vibrant blue depicting "The Capitol, Albany" with portrait medallions of "Sir Edward Coke" (English, 1552-1634) and "Chief Justice of New York, Kent" (1763-1847). Two creamware bowls in black and white with this view have been recorded (one was offered in the last Quarterly by an advertiser), but only one set has been found in blue and that is the Morse example, illustrated in the Old China Magazine and once again in Mrs. Larsen's book. The pitcher is adorable (I'm gushing, aren't I?), since it is only 7 1/2" H. Why has there only been one set located in blue? Does anyone know...
of another?

Running a close second as to desirability and rarity are the two high domed coffee pots from the exceedingly rare "Baltimore" series by an Unknown Maker (I'm pushing for Davenport as the manufacturer). These two pots, 10 3/4"h and 9 1/2"h are the only two recorded examples that I can locate and they are only illustrated in the February 1903 issue of the Old China Magazine. I was also fortunate enough to make an up close personal acquaintance with the elusive 7 1/2"d plate by Stubbs from the Eagle border series "View At Hurl Gate, East River." Mrs. Larsen in her fine work, American Historical

Views On Staffordshire China blithely lists this as occurring in "Plates, 7 1/2, 7 1/4, 7 inches," however I truly doubt that there are three pieces with this view in existence, as this is the only one I have ever heard of or personally viewed. Once again, does anyone know of another? Enough said for now, let me take you on a photographic tour of The American Antiquarian Society's collection of Historical Staffordshire formed by the late Mrs. Emma DeF. Morse.

Close up views of the coffee service illustrated earlier in this article. Made by an unknown maker, this rare service has many characteristics shown by other unmarked series with American views that are now known to have been manufactured by the Davenport firm. Long considered the rarest of the rare, there have been very few pieces offered in the last thirty years, with one notable exception. In 1981, due to a rather strange decusceation of a portion of the fabulous Duckworth Collection, eight pieces came on the market, which we acquired and offered on our mail order list. These consisted of four perfect cups and saucers with views of "Baltimore Hospital" and "University of Maryland", a teapot and sugar bowl, both with "Baltimore Almshouse" and two waste bowls, one with "Baltimore Assembly Rooms" and the other with "Baltimore Court House". The entire group sold to the first caller for over $9,000.00 (three of the major pieces had damage).
Left: Show-case #1 contains quite a few
great rarities. Please
note the three white
embossed rim cup
plates by R.S.W.
from the Acorn and
Oak Leaf border
series: "Octagon
Church", "Boston
State House" and
"Stoughton's
Church". Below the
"Battle of Bunker
Hill" vegetable dish,
you will see an
extremely rare 6"d
"Harvard College-
End View" and a
5"d "Boston Court
House" both also by
R.S.W. from the
Oak Leaf border
series. To the right of
this last plate, you'll
find a 10"d
"Constitution and
Guerrilla" plate by
Wood from the
Irregular Shell
border series. Case
#2 on the right, is
shown in three
sections. The upper
section contains one
piece which I had
never seen prior to
this visit - it is the
small round piece to
the right of the large
"Upper Ferry
Bridge" platter. It is
a 5"d round,
scalloped rim, leaf-
shaped dish with the
view "Upper Ferry
Bridge" from the
Eagle border series by
Stabbs. The
center section has a
"Pickett's Charge"
platter and a rather
rare 10"d
"Franklin's Tomb"
plate to its right.
Below the 21"
"Capital, Washing-
ton" platter by
Ridgway, you will find
the large "Detroit"
platter by Davenport
from the Cities series. Below this, continued in the next section are others from this
series: "Sandusky", "Columbus" and "Louisville", on the far left of this lowest section is
an extremely rare 9 1/2" "Chillicothe (rail)" platter. This case also contains two pieces
from the medallion series, a 9"d plate with four medallions and the view "Faukborne
Hall". This is by Andrew Stevenson from the Wild Rose border series. The other
medallion is from the large scroll series by R. S. W. and contains two tiny medallions of
"Washington" and "Lafayette". There are quite a few other views readily identifiable.
How many can you identify?
Showcase #3, above, displays several of Enoch Wood and Sons lovely Shell border pieces, notably a 21" platter "Castle Garden", a very rare "Hope Mill" soup tureen undertray, a 10" "Lake George" platter, a 14" "Niagara From the American Side" platter and two 12" platters, "Highlands, Hudson River" and "West Point". The two Stevensons also have several examples, including a two medallion "City Hotel, New York" and a four medallion "Park Theatre, New York", plus an extremely rare "Troy from Mt Ide" 10" platter, a 16 1/2" "New York From Heights Near Brooklyn" platter and a 20" "View of New York From Weehawk" platter. In my opinion, the three rarest pieces in this case are the 10"d "Highlands, North River" plate and the 7 1/2"d "Hurl Gate" plate, both by Stubbs and the lovely 10 1/2" platter, "Brooklyn Ferry" by Ralph Stevenson.

Showcase #4 really holds some treasures. The upper section has on the far upper right, a partial view (my photography does leave a bit to be desired, but this case was especially difficult to shoot) of one of the rarest and most desirable platters in the field, namely an 11 1/2" "Temple of Fame...To The Memory of Commodore Perry" by Andrew Stevenson. Below that, and somewhat more visible are MAYER'S "Arma" including a "Pennsylvania", "New Jersey", "North Carolina", "South Carolina", "Virginia" and a "New York" beaded bowl. In the center is the rare 18 1/2" States" platter, surrounded by plates depicting heroes of the War of 1812, from left to right "Major Gen'l Brown", "Pike", then two of "Lafayette" (yes, I know he was earlier than 1812) and on the right the "Washington" Liverpool and a "Jones of the Macedon" and finally a "Capt. Hull of the Constitution". Of course, you should readily recognize the "Dutch Church" and the "Albany, Theatre" vegetable dishes. Not only does the lower section contain THE washbowl and pitcher, but it also has a four medallion cut-corner square bowl with the view "Dorsey Court" from the Oak Leaf border series. On the shelf with the "Baltimore" pieces, there lurks a "Belleville on the Passaic" soup tureen by Wood and directly below that is a very rare small soup tureen by Ridgway with four little peg feet and the view "Almshouse, Boston". This is really a great collection!

As you can see, this Collection contains great rarities and "boring common" pieces all mixed together. What gives me great food for thought is this... this woman and her husband, without any of the reference books we now take for granted,
Showcase #5 is all reds and pinks, with a few mulberry that includes six platters from Adam’s “U. S.” views series. From the top we see the 20” “Falls of Niagara”, a 17” “West Point”, the outer two edges of a 15” “Harpers Ferry” (between section one and two), a 13” “Lake George”, an 11” “White Mountains, New Hampshire” and a 10” “Schenectady on the Mohawk”. Close inspection also reveals a large “Enamelled Campaigne” platter and a red “Buffalo on Lake Erie” vegetable dish from Wood’s Celtic China series. We do not list red/pink as one of the known colors in this series. Learn something new every day.

Showcase #6

The last case is filled with blues and purple and includes a fine representation of pieces by Wood, Clewes and Jackson.

scoured the country-side and managed to assembled the only known examples of at least four views. Remember the time-frame, 1885, prior to the automobile and its resultant mobility. Prior to electricity and prior to trade periodicals, where one could locate specialist dealers. How did they do it? Did they hop into their buggy and knock on farmhouse doors, as is described in the 1913 work by Camehl in “The Blue China Book”? Mrs. Morse donated her Collection by the time that book was available. Did they own one of the early volumes of Halsey’s great work, “Early New York on Dark Blue Staffordshire Pottery”? How did they know what to buy and where did they find it (just around Worcester)? Interesting questions.

All photographs courtesy, American Antiquarian Society
The Grapevine Border Series

Openwork undertray Wellcombe, Warwickshire. The view taken from Neale's "The Seats of Noblemen and Gentlemen in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland."

A Class Glass Collection

Yellow-Glazed Earthenware

Three views of the same Wedgwood gravy tureen in a melon form, placed on a leaf-shaped undertray. Highlighted in green, orange, red and black. Note the butterfly and the ladybug on the sides. It was these "fruit" tureens that caused Josiah Wedgwood to experiment with the yellow glazes.

Meet the Collectors

Mrs. Emma DeF. Morse's coffee pot "Baltimore Assembly Rooms" and "Baltimore Almshouse" by an unknown maker (probably Davenport) at The American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Plus So Much More........