

**Whiting Manufacturing Company:
A History of the Firm and its Japanese-Inspired Silver (1860-1890)**

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Introduction

In the nineteenth-century, a growing middle class sought to acquire and display silver objects, which had long been symbols of wealth and status. This increased demand, combined with an *ad valorem* tariff in 1842 that raised the price of foreign silver, stimulated one of the most productive and innovative periods of American silver production. Industrialization and specialization of silver manufacturing helped increase production. By the mid 1800s, American silver manufacturers produced an unprecedented variety of sterling silver goods – everything from toilet sets to pocket knives, snuff boxes to lace pins, and macaroni servers to asparagus tongs competed for the attention and dollars of a rapidly growing consumer market.¹

At the same time, the industrialization that propelled an acquisitive middle class also produced anxiety and unease as traditional work and connection to the land gave way to mechanization and urbanization. The American Aesthetic movement, part of an international design reform sentiment, arose in response, offering an artistic counterpoint through fine and decorative arts that called upon naturalistic themes, particularly those borrowed from and influenced by the art of Japan. Silver, which was malleable, versatile and easy to ornament, was an ideal medium for conveying the ideas of the American Aesthetic movement.

Popular interest in Japanese objects grew through the nineteenth century in America, especially after the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876. This

¹ Discoveries of silver in the American West, including the rich Comstock Lode in Nevada (1859), further reduced the cost of silver ore to American manufacturers and consumers. Venable, 27.

interest in Japanese art and objects was an international trend and Americans were exposed to Japanese art both from objects imported from the Far East but also by Western objects and paintings produced in the “Japanese” or “Japanesque” taste. The silver industry was primed to interpret new trends, such as this interest in Japanese art, and it produced innovative designs quickly. A silver designer’s job was to decipher consumer interest and harness stylistic influences to gain commercial advantage. In this way, silver designers interpreted and shaped taste. They used their understanding of the latest trends and new technologies (such as electroplating) to ornament goods from flatware to elaborate tea and coffee services that served to satisfy consumers’ physical and psychological needs.²

Whiting Manufacturing Company (WMC) was among the most prolific and commercially successful producers of silver in the Japanesque style, along with Tiffany and Company (Tiffany) and Gorham Manufacturing Company (Gorham). This thesis was undertaken after preliminary research revealed incomplete, or in some cases incorrect, knowledge in the field about WMC. Specifically, the field lacked information about WMC after a devastating fire at its North Attleboro, Massachusetts factory in 1875; there was no detailed research about the firm in the period between 1874 and 1890 when it produced its most sophisticated Japanese-inspired silver; and the identities of many of WMC’s designers were unknown. An examination of surviving WMC objects suggested the influence of more than one designer, but research was needed to prove this. Then, there was the question of how WMC had so quickly become one of the largest silver manufacturers in

² Regina Lee Blaszczyk, “The Aesthetic Moment: China Decorators, Consumer Demand, and Technological Change in the American Pottery Industry, 1865-1900,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 29, no. 2/3 (1994): 122.

America, produced some exquisite silver and then just as quickly, faded into relative obscurity. Research for this thesis sought to uncover an accurate timeline of the firm, a better understanding of its Japanese-inspired production, its manufacturing locations and, most importantly, the identities of the designers who created its Japanese-inspired designs.³

Research for this essay identified eighteen previously unknown designers, six chasers and four modelers or engravers employed by WMC between 1866 and 1924, a major advance in the knowledge of the firm. Research discovered Edwin French, the head of WMC's engraving department from 1869 to 1894, and connected his designs with a number of WMC objects. Evidence also indicates that Charles Osborne, who left WMC for Tiffany in 1878, continued to produce designs for WMC in 1882 and 1883 while also working for Tiffany, a significant discovery. Archival research also uncovered a WMC numbering system, which will no doubt help scholars in dating WMC objects. Research also uncovered the existence of WMC's design library, which will provide future scholars with a rich source of information on the firm's designs.

Section I of this essay outlines the history of WMC between 1866 and 1924, its silver before the Japanese style gained popularity, its silver in the Japanese style, and a brief history of the firm after 1890. Section II discusses the history of the influence of Japan on American design and consumer taste from 1860 to 1890 and documents the establishment of popular interest in Japanese forms at the

³ Competition was fierce among Tiffany, Gorham, WMC and Dominick & Half. Skilled workers in every department moved among firms. Tiffany & Company of New York hired Charles Osborne away from WMC and he brought at least one, but probably more, WMC employees with him, a standard practice in the industry.

Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. This section also discusses the American Aesthetic movement and the development of Aesthetic interiors. Section III situates Japanese-inspired silver in the domestic interior. Original research at the New York Historical Society, and online research in the digital collections of New York Public Library, The Library of Congress, The Museum of the City of New York and the Utah Historical Society found previously unpublished images of Aesthetic-style interiors. These findings have helped illuminate the broader questions of how and why WMC developed its line of Japanese-inspired silver. Finally, Section IV hypothesizes that Americans purchased Japanese-inspired silver because of a complex relationship with nature.

Section I: A History of Whiting Manufacturing Company

Founded in 1866 in Attleboro, Massachusetts, WMC was a well-regarded, well-capitalized, and profitable company whose principals were experienced businessmen. Manufacturing innovations made by William Dean Whiting, its chief designer, positioned the firm to grow into the third largest American silver-manufacturing firm by 1893. The businessmen, particularly president Charles Bulkley, were smart and well-connected, and effectively managed firm's growth. Most importantly, they had access to capital to expand the business and respond to changing market developments and consumer tastes. The firm operated independently until 1905, when the Gorham Manufacturing Company acquired it. From 1905 to 1924 the firm continued to produce silver under the WMC brand. In 1924 Gorham discontinued the use of the WMC mark.⁴

While the firm is widely recognized as an important silver-manufacturing firm in the United States, particularly for its Japanese-inspired designs, remarkably little has been known about its designers. The following section traces the history of WMC from 1830 to 1924. This section also presents the findings of primary research, introduces new details about the firm's designers and Japanese-inspired silver designs, and resolves erroneous citations in the existing literature. Specifically, this section addresses confusion in the field about the firm's response to a devastating fire in 1875, its relocation to New York City, and identifies four designers and five chasers working for WMC between 1878 and 1887.

⁴ M. Camille Krantz, *International Exposition of Chicago, 1893* (Paris, 1894) quoted in Charles Venable, *Silver in America, 1840-1940: A Century of Splendor* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art; New York: Distributed by H.N. Abrams, 1995), 152.

Origins of Whiting Manufacturing Company

Attleboro, Massachusetts, a regional center for jewelry and silver manufacturing, was a typical nineteenth century New England factory town. Founded in 1788, Attleboro had been an agrarian village located along the banks of the Ten Mile River and the Blackstone River, halfway between Boston and Providence. Industrial manufacturing began in Attleboro in the 1830s. When the Boston-Providence Railroad was built in 1835, Attleboro became a stop along the line, which further encouraged the industrial growth of the city. Inexpensive land and access to transportation attracted European immigrants, many of whom were trained as jewelers. The gilt and plated jewelry industries thrived in Attleboro in the second half of the nineteenth-century. Factories produced such items as watch cases, chains, guards, seals, lockets, match-safes, rings, and bracelets. While Attleboro manufacturers produced most of the jewelry in the United States, its output was not known for being high in quality. Periodicals, such as *New England Magazine*, used the term "Attleboro Jewelry" to imply an item was cheaply made. As the industry grew, it began to perfect its manufacturing, inventing both more sophisticated production machinery and producing higher quality finished goods.⁵

William Dean Whiting (1815-1891) was an Attleboro silversmith. He began his career as an apprentice to his uncle at the Attleboro jewelry-manufacturing firm Draper & Tiff. Later he joined R. & W. Robinson as a chaser of silver buttons. He then moved to Draper & Blackington where he worked primarily as a jeweler. After

⁵ Orra L. Stone, *History of Massachusetts Industries: Their Inception, Growth and Success* (Boston: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1930), 279; George Randall, "Rehoboth and Attleboro," *The New England Magazine*, 11 October, (1894), 235-241.

this, he was employed as a foreman for H.M. Richards, a firm that manufactured enameled jewelry. Whiting moved to Philadelphia when H. M. Richards relocated there, and was eventually promoted to superintendent. In 1840 he returned to Attleboro and formed Tift & Whiting in partnership with his cousin, Albert Tift, and with the backing of his uncle. Tift traveled to New York as a salesman, while Whiting supervised the design and manufacturing of such items as gold hearts, crosses and rings. The business was successful and, by 1847, had grown to 40 employees. The firm's growth necessitated more space and more manufacturing capacity. The firm bought land at 262 Broad Street in Attleboro and built a three-story steam-powered factory. By the 1850s Tift & Whiting employed 150 workers and had expanded production to sterling silver goods, including cups, flatware, and combs, in addition to jewelry. The firm's products were of high quality, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. ⁶

⁶ William R. Cutler, *Genealogical and Personal Memoirs Relating to the Families of ... Massachusetts* (New York, 1910), 1875-1878; Randall, 241; Stone, 279; William Dean Whiting's purchase of the land in Attleboro would prove to be extremely important, both as the eventual site of his most successful enterprise, WMC, but also as an enduring investment in which he maintained an ownership stake even after WMC moved its manufacturing and business offices to New York City in 1875. As testament to this enduring investment, his son Frank M. Whiting would later use the factory for his own silver manufacturing business in 1887.



Figure 1: Pair of silver creamers, by Tiff & Whiting, North Attleboro, circa 1855-60. 4 inches high. Marked with Tift & Whiting mark and "pure silver coin". Private collection.



Figure 2: 10 silver luncheon knives, by Tiff & Whiting, North Attleboro, circa 1850. 8 3/8 inches long, 15.40 troy ounces. Engraved with initials MEW. Previously from the collection of The Jean and Graham Devoe Williford Charitable Trust, current location unknown.



Figure 3: Silver cup, by W.D.Whiting, North Attleboro, circa 1856.
4 ¼ inches high. Engraved "Fannie Forester Brownell from Mrs. C. J Hubbard August 8, 1856".
Private collection.

In 1853, Albert Tiffit retired and Whiting bought Tiffit's share of the business for \$90,000. In need of a wholesale sales presence, Whiting established independent offices in New York City, where he appears in the 1853-54 city directories listed as "W. Whiting, Jeweler." Whiting consistently chose to expand the business by adding investors, in the form of additional partners, rather than borrowing money from a bank.⁷ Between 1855 and 1866 Whiting's firm underwent several such expansions. The firm became first Whiting & Gooding (1855-58), then Whiting, Fessenden & Cowan (1858-59), then Whiting, Cowen & Bowen (1864- 1866). Whiting, Cowen &

⁷ These partners included Benjamin Bancroft, Simon Bowen, George Buckley, Charles E. Bulkley, William M. Cowen, and Frank Salisbury. A small number of additional shares were sold and a Dun inspector noted that Ira A. Richards and O.W. Draper, well-established jewelers in Attleboro, were thought to be some of the outside stockholders; Simon Bowen, who was named president of WMC, was a lawyer and North Attleboro native. William M. Cowen was named vice president; William Dean Whiting was named superintendent; Charles E. Bulkley was named treasurer and secretary; L.W. Winchester was added as a trustee in 1867, to aid in the capital expansion of the business, which increased to \$175,000 between 1866 and 1871; The financial panic of 1873 affected the firm, as it did many of Attleboro manufacturers. In June 1873, a Dun inspector noted that business was slow and advised extending only limited credit to the firm. But, by the end of 1873, WMC was again manufacturing at full capacity; In 1875, at the retirement of Simon Bowen, Charles E. Bulkley was named President and Frank Salisbury was appointed Treasurer, posts they would hold for the next thirty years, providing WMC with stable and capable leadership; According to the local newspaper, *The Attleboro Chronicle*, the firm employed between 150 and 200 people in 1875. Massachusetts, Vol. 317, p. 300, subpage M, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School; Massachusetts, Vol. 325, p. 1086, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School; Massachusetts, Vol. 325, p. 1026, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

Bowen liquidated in 1866 due to debts, but Whiting, Cowen, Bowen, and four other partners founded WMC later that year. The firm was incorporated in New York State with capital of \$100,000, primarily raised by Whiting's business partners. These partners, having contributed the majority of the capital, retained majority ownership of the new firm. The firm benefited from the financial backing and social connections of its wealthy partners. In particular, Frank Salisbury, the treasurer of the WMC from 1875-1904, was from an established New York family and used his social connections to benefit the firm over the course of his career. His membership in the New York Yacht Club led to commissions for many trophies from WMC. Other family members were active in the Larchmont Yacht Club, leading to additional trophy commissions for the firm.⁸

By the 1870s the firm was a steam-powered, belt-driven factory employing highly specialized workers, such as die makers, turners, and engravers. The

Attleboro Chronicle describes the organization of a typical industrialized factory:

They (the employees) include a designer, by whom all the new and varied patterns are designed, and on whom rests a special responsibility, the draftsmen, who make drafts in penciling of all the designs originated; the modelers, who construct models of wax from the drafts furnished by the draftsmen; those who do the casting from the models, and last the skillful workmen who perform the separate operations in the construction of silverware from the various castings. This represents the operation sketched with extreme brevity. There are the many operatives who execute

⁸ Frank Salisbury, a recent college graduate whose father had been a merchant and jeweler in New York, was also an officer of the firm; *Record of Class meetings*, Yale University Class of 1866, (Hartford, CT: Press of the Case, Lockwood and Brainard Company, 1891), 45; "New Yorkers Name In Woman's Will," *New York Tribune* June 23, 1906; Harvard University "Secretary's Report Class of 1886," 8, (1906): 139; Despite establishing a wholesale presence in New York City, Whiting maintained his residence in Attleboro, MA only moving to New York City in 1875 when the WMC combined its retail and manufacturing into one building at 694 Broadway.; Massachusetts, Vol. 325, p. 1026, R.G. Dun & Co Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

intermediate processes and those by whose delicate skill the many exquisite tracings are made in the final operation of ornamenting the polished wares.⁹

The early adoption of an industrial factory model that allowed for increased production and an easy ability to scale production up and down would be critical in WMC's growth to the third largest silver-manufacturing firm by 1893.¹⁰

⁹ "Our Industries, The Whiting Manufacturing Company," *Attleboro Chronicle*, September 20, 1873.

¹⁰ *Attleboro Chronicle*, October 25, 1873; *Ibid*, November 1, 1873; Katherine S. Howe, "In Honor of the Conspicuous Consumer: Tiffany & Co. Presentation Silver, 1875-1925," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 9 Summer (1988): 62.

Design at the Whiting Manufacturing Company 1866 - 1880

By the end of the 1860s, WMC produced high quality silver flatware, sterling silver hollowware, and novelties. Novelties, such as the snuffbox seen in Figure 5 and the aide-de-memoir seen in Figure 86 were small ornamented functional objects. These were in great demand in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and made up the bulk of WMC's early production. The parcel-gilt cup in Figure 4 and the snuffbox in Figure 5 are examples of the elegant and traditional silver produced by WMC in the early 1870s.¹¹

While it is difficult to identify the work of particular designers in an era when silver pieces were not signed or marked individually, a review of the principals of the firm and patents issued in the period suggests that William Dean Whiting, as superintendent of the firm, also oversaw the design department. A firm as large as WMC would have employed a number of designers (both in-house and freelance) at any given time to supply designs for the wide variety of objects it sold. Research into patents issued by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) identified four designers who designed for WMC in this period, presumably for William Dean Whiting. There were almost certainly other WMC designers who did not apply for patents.

In 1869, the USPTO issued patents to Frederick Whitehouse (a design for a spoon) and Charles Osborne (1848-1920) (a design for a spoon and fork handles), both of Brooklyn, NY, with WMC listed as the patents' assignee. In this case

¹¹ William P. Hood, "19th century AD" *Magazine Antiques* September, 2004.

Whitehouse and Osborne were probably freelance designers, given that they lived in Brooklyn. In 1873, designers Enos F. Marble and Reuel W. Glidden, both of Attleboro, MA, were jointly granted a patent for an improvement in smelling-bottle stoppers. WMC also purchased the flatware dies of silversmiths Michael Gibney and Henry Hebbard in 1869-70. Gibney's *Tuscan* design was one of the first standard patterns issued by WMC. The firm used a variety of methods to obtain designs – from in-house designers to freelancer designers to buying the designs and flatware dies of other silversmiths outright.¹²

Charles Osborne, who would later become a widely recognized silver designer, was hired in 1871 upon graduation from the National Academy of Design. Osborne was a prolific designer; research for this essay in the USPTO uncovered 34 patents issued to him, 33 of which list WMC as the assignee. He patented twenty-one flatware patterns for WMC between 1869 and 1914, including a Japanese-inspired flatware design in 1874 (Figure 6). He also patented six ornamental border designs, two hairbrush back designs, a teapot, a match-safe design and hinge, and a method for perforating metal.¹³ His designs for the firm from 1871 to 1878 were primarily flatware patterns. In this period his style was elegant, and his designs were symmetrical and traditional. Later his designs become asymmetrical and highly inventive (Figures 25, 26 and 27).

¹² Rainwater and Redfield, *Encyclopedia of American Silver Manufacturers* Rev. 4th edition (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1998), 122; Katharine Morrison McClinton, *Collecting American 19th Century Silver* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 62; Charles Osborne, "Design for Spoon & Fork" (U.S. Patent 3,656 filed September 20, 1869); Frederick Whitehouse. "Design for a Spoon" (U.S. Patent 3,391 filed February 23, 1869).

¹³ For a more through discussion of Charles Osborne and his designs at Tiffany and Company see John Loring, *Magnificent Tiffany Silver* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 154; Charles Osborne, "Handles for Spoons and Forks" (U.S. Patent 7,909 filed June 20, 1874); Charles Osborne, "Design for Spoon & Fork" (U.S. Patent 3,656 filed September 20, 1869); Charles Osborne, "Tea Pot" (U.S. Patent 22,369 filed April 25, 1893).



Figure 4: Silver cup, by WMC, North Attleboro, circa 1871. 4 inches high, 5 ounces. Engraved "To grandfather and grandmother, from James Barlow 1846 Oct. 13 1871". Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



Figure 5: Silver snuff box, by WMC, North Attleboro, circa 1871. 3 inches wide. Engraved "To S.H. Reynolds, from W.A. Wilson, Sept. 4th 1871". Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



*Figure 6: Silver flatware pattern "Japanese", by WMC, North Attleboro, circa 1874. As cited in Sotheby's, *Important Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, January 20, 2005), 60. Charles Osborne designed this pattern.*



*Figure 7: Parcel-gilt silver five-piece tea and coffee set, by WMC, New York, circa 1880. Numbered 345. As cited in Sotheby's, *Important Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, January 22-23, 2010). Lot 404. While the numbering on this item indicates it was made in 1880, it is stylistically representative of the earlier period.*



WHITING'S FACTORY.

*Figure 8: WMC's rebuilt factory in North Attleboro. As cited in George Randall, "Rehoboth and Attleboro," *The New England Magazine* (11 October 1894), 235.*

The Fire of 1875 and Relocation to New York City

On September 20, 1875, fire broke out in the WMC factory in Attleboro, Massachusetts. The cause was unknown and the damage was extensive, creating a ripple effect in the community and changing the course of the firm's development. The fire burned the factory to the ground and was reported across the region and in the New York City papers. Losses at WMC were \$150,000, exceeding the firm's entire operating capital of \$100,000. Two smaller firms that rented space in the factory, F. S. Draper & Co. (a jewelry manufactory) and Smith & Ginnode, suffered significant losses as well. According to newspaper reports, WMC's silver stock was secured in a vault and survived the fire, as did the spoon dies and the industrial

equipment needed to turn lathes. However, the majority of the heavy machinery was destroyed, along with the stamping, polishing and rolling rooms. The fire also destroyed most of the company's business papers and design materials.¹⁴

The 1875 fire marked a significant turning point in WMC's history and has led to considerable confusion among scholars, historians and collectors. The fire explains the firm's absence from the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition in 1876, previously interpreted as a lack of WMC's marketing sophistication. Auction catalogs and other silver scholarship have previously believed that WMC rebuilt its factory in Newark, New Jersey after the fire. Extensive research and review of the Newark city directories, as well as periodicals including *The Attleboro Chronicle* and *The Jewelers Circular*, make clear that the firm never had a factory in Newark. The firm moved directly from Attleboro to New York City in 1875, where it remained headquartered until relocating to Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1910.

After the fire, WMC collected the proceeds of its insurance policy totaling \$110,000, leaving a significant loss, but providing the capital to rebuild the factory in Attleboro. While the rebuilding was underway, the firm filled orders in a makeshift factory on the property, a testament to the organization and dedication of the owners and workers. As one of the larger firms in Attleboro, WMC had contributed both jobs and revenues to the city. The firm had also maintained

¹⁴ "A Big Fire," *Attleboro Chronicle*, September 25, 1878.

housing for its employees; in 1874 the firm owned and maintained some 20 houses in town.

In November 1875, the stockholders of WMC voted to combine its manufacturing operations and offices into a one large, double-corner building at 692 and 694 Broadway at Fourth Street, extending through to Lafayette Place, in New York City. WMC elected to maintain its rebuilt factory in Attleboro and rented it to other firms, providing a source of revenue in future lean years. Editorials in the *Attleboro Chronicle* express disappointment with WMC's move and concern for dismissed workers. By January 1, 1876, the entire factory had moved to New York City. Of the approximately 200 employees of the firm in 1875, some 40 families (indicating between 40 and 80 employees) relocated with the firm to New York.¹⁵

¹⁵ The cost of rebuilding its factory in Attleboro while simultaneously renting a new space in New York City strained WMC's finances. In January 1876, for the first time in its history, the Dun inspector reported that WMC was on the brink of debt, with capital and liabilities of \$175,000; The firm had a wholesale showroom at 181 Broadway from 1865-1876. From 1876-1904 the firm's manufacturing was located at 692-4 Broadway. It is not clear where the firm's manufacturing was located between 1904 and 1910 when the firm relocates manufacturing to Bridgeport, CT. From 1886 to 1893 the showroom was located at 31 Union Square. From 1893 to 1910 the firm's showroom was located at 896 Broadway (18th Street). In 1910 the firm decides to no longer keep a showroom. The firm is listed in city directories from 1910 - 1917 as located at 17 Maiden Lane; this may have been the firm's business offices. "Our Industries, The Whiting Manufacturing Company," *Attleboro Chronicle*, September 20, 1873; Metropolitan Museum of Art American Wing Silver Manufacturer Files, Whiting Manufacturing Company; Trow's New York City Directory, 1859-1924. By 1881, operating capital had expanded to \$200,000. The R.G. Dun & Co. inspector noted in 1879 that the firm had a net lease on its building in New York, but sublet two-thirds of the space to other firms; Massachusetts, Vol. 325, p. 1026, R.G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

Whiting Manufacturing Company's Japanese-Inspired Silver, 1878-1890

WMC flourished after the move to New York City. Most notably, the firm produced a beautifully designed and executed line of Japanese-inspired silver between 1878 and 1890. Production of this line of silver peaked in 1886. Often startling in their realism, these silver objects were characterized by the use of bird, fish, and flower motifs drawn from Japanese prints, pottery, metalwork and textiles. This interest in Japanese motifs was driven in part by the international Aesthetic movement (as will be discussed in Section II of this essay) but it also shows an American fascination with nature and the American landscape.

Charles Carpenter identified three periods of American aesthetic silver production across the three major silver firms (Tiffany, Gorham, and WMC): first, an early phase of appropriation of Japanese motifs (1871-1877); second, a stylistically mature period (1877-1882); and third, a broadly naturalistic period that did not directly appropriate Japanese motifs (1885-1890). Tiffany was the first to retail Eastern objects in 1837 and the first to manufacture Japanesque silver. WMC and Gorham's designs were both initially derivative of Tiffany's early Japanesque designs but each firm eventually developed its own take on the Japanesque style.¹⁶

At WMC, the first phase of this new design aesthetic (1874-1880) was characterized by traditional forms with engraved, etched or applied Japanesque motifs that were asymmetrically arranged on a shallow ground, in imitation of Japanese woodblock prints and decorative arts. WMC's "Japanese" flatware pattern,

¹⁶ Charles H. Carpenter, Jr. and Mary Grace Carpenter, *Tiffany Silver* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), 190-7; Janet Zapata, *Jerome Rapoport Collection of Aesthetic Silver* (New York: Sotheby's, 1986), 3.

patented by Charles Osborne in 1874, is an example of this first phase (Figure 9).

The backgrounds of objects in this period are polished (later they will be hammered). The elements of the design, often images of fish, crabs, seaweed, shells, ferns, and insects, were not related by context or scale.



*Figure 9: Silver flatware pattern "Japanese", by WMC, North Attleboro, circa 1874. As cited in Sotheby's, *Important Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, January 20, 2005), 60. Charles Osborne designed this pattern.*

After the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, American Aesthetic silver entered a second more stylistically mature phase from 1877 to 1884. Research has shown that for WMC, this second phase lasted from 1880 to 1887, a bit longer than it did for Tiffany and Gorham. The WMC silver of this phase was characterized by hammered surfaces, less traditional forms that often imitated Eastern vessels, and by a more playful approach that re-imagined, rather than faithfully reproduced, Japanese motifs. Overall, the scale of decoration in relation to

the form became more integrated and subtle, and the designs became simplified and unified. Realistic vignettes mark this period of production. The bird shown in profile perched on a cattail on the water pitcher shown in Figure 14 exemplifies the heightened realism of this period. These scenes have an almost painterly quality, especially when metals other than silver are used. WMC seems to be the only firm that used the technique of rendering animals in half relief.

A vase with applied cattails, seen in Figure 10, is an early example of this second phase. The Japanese motifs have been applied to the object in the manner of the first period, but the cattails attempt to integrate the whole scene. Figure 10 is more related to the first phase of Japanese-inspired design. The gourd-shaped tray in Figure 16 is an example of a less traditional form. However, this design was not completely successful – the gourd engraving and the spider web are not related with each other visually or conceptually. Figures 10 and 16 illustrate how transitions between phases were not always smooth.¹⁷

While Tiffany experimented with other Japanese techniques, such as *mokume* (the lamination of several metals in layers that were then folded and cut to create the effect of wood graining) WMC does not seem to have explored these techniques,

¹⁷ Carpenter and Carpenter, 190-197; William Hood, Roslyn Berlin and Edward Wawrynek, "Tiffany's Japanesque Flatware," *The Magazine Antiques* August (2000): 184-193; Frances Safford and Ruth Wilford, "Japanesque Silver by Tiffany and Company in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *The Magazine Antiques* 132, no. 4 (1987): 808-819; Examples of these "matched" sets are illustrated in *In Pursuit of Beauty*, 267; Ann E. Berman, "Japanesque Silver," *Architectural Digest* 52, August (1995): 94-99.

probably because it lacked workers with the necessary skills to do so. WMC experiments in enameling were also only marginally successful.¹⁸

The WMC tea service in Figure 12, dated to 1882, is an example of an adapted Asian form. The undated water pitcher with hammered surface and applied bird in Figure 14 is an example of how much more integrated and successful the use of Japanese naturalistic motifs had become by the 1880s. The hand mirror in Figure 20 is a successful example of an asymmetrical design.



*Figure 10: Silver vase, by WMC, New York, circa 1880. 7 inches high. As cited in Sotheby's, *Important Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, January 20, 2005), 68. The vase is engraved with swimming catfish, eels, frogs and lotus flowers, applied with cattails emerging from textured sand speckled with copper.*

¹⁸ Mixed metal ornament is the result of a process called electrotyping, where metal was electrically deposited onto a mold and the results were applied to the object being made.



Figure 11: Silver salts with gilt interiors, by WMC, New York, circa 1880. 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches high. Private collection. Image courtesy of Fine Silver Britannia. The lotus salts are numbered 57, which dates them to 1880. These are an example of the beautiful and inventive WMC designs of this period.



Figure 12: Silver tea set, by WMC, New York, circa 1882. The teapot is 3.5 inches high, the set weighs 18.1 ounces. Image courtesy of Spencer Marks. Edwin D. French may have designed this tea set, given stylistic similarities of the dense ornamentation in the vase shown in Figure 32.



Figure 13: Silver and mixed metal pitcher, by WMC, New York, circa 1883. 8 inches high, 31.10 ounces. Engraved "De Molay Commandery No. 12 Louisville, Kentucky from E.L. Lindsley, Wm H. Carroll, Robt. McDonough, Lyman C. Parks, J.A. Ford San Francisco Triennial 1883". As cited in Christie's, *Important American Furniture, Silver, Prints, Folk Art and Decorative Art* (auction catalogue, New York: Christie's, January 21, 2000), 215.



Figure 14: Silver and mixed metal pitcher, by WMC, New York, circa 1883-1888. 7 ¾ inches high, 29 ounces. Hammered surface applied with a kingfisher in flight, another bird perched on silver and copper cattails, copper insect, two silver and copper carp, and various aquatic plants and shells, gilt interior. Engraved on base "RC Hall RC Hall 257 Madison Ave Baltimore Maryland" Numbered 813 F. As cited in Sotheby's, *Important Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, January 23, 2009) Lot 104.



*Figure 15: Silver and mixed metal pitcher, by WMC, New York, circa 1883-1888. 7 ¼ inches high, 28.15 ounces. Hammered neck, applied with a copper-bodied crab on silver legs, body chased with overlapping mussel shells and seaweed. Numbered 813 A. As cited in Sotheby's, *Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, October 7, 2006) Lot 97.*



Figure 16: Silver tray, by WMC, New York City, circa 1883. 7 1/8 inches high, 6.02 troy ounces. Engraved with two gourds suspended above cobweb with spider at center. Numbered 893B. Private collection. Image courtesy of Heritage Auctions.



*Figure 17: Silver bowl, by WMC, New York, circa 1886. 9 ½ inches in diameter. As cited in Sotheby's, *Important Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, June 20, 1996) Lot 37.*



*Figure 18: Silver water pitcher, by WMC, New York, circa 1884. 9 ¾ inches high, 40 ounces. Applied and partly etched on one side with a spray of carnations and on the other with a spray of irises. The neck and handle applied with linked flowerheads decorated with matte red lacquer. Gilt interior. Numbered 1008. As cited in Sotheby's, *Fine Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, January 23, 1994). Lot 549.*

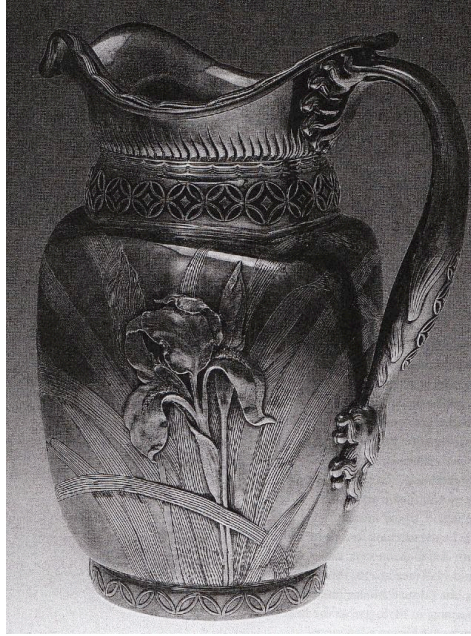


Figure 19: Silver water pitcher, by WMC, New York, circa 1884. 9 5/8 inches high. Engraved on bottom, Eastern Yacht Club Annual Cruise / Commodore's Cup/ For Sloops/ Won in Buzzards Bay/ July 1884 by Cutter "Bedouin". As cited in Donald C. Peirce, *Art & Enterprise: American Decorative Art, 1825-1917, The Virginia Carroll Crawford Collection* (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1999), 200.

The two water pitchers in Figures 14 and 15 were made from the same design (813) but were decorated with different motifs and made at different times, as indicated by the different letters "A" and "F" – the letter were used sequentially, indicating that the pitcher in Figure 14 was made after the pitcher in Figure 15. These two pitchers show how WMC designers varied the decorations on a relatively small set of forms. The two water pitchers shown in Figures 18 and 19 are similar, but not identical, in design. The first image is numbered 1008 and the second 1008 B and is dated to 1884. This was a popular form and model for WMC and a number of examples exist, all with different ornamentation. The design variations on these forms reveal the extent to which particular forms could be customized for particular clients and to keep up with changing consumer taste.



Figure 20: Silver hand mirror, by WMC, New York, circa 1887. 8.2 inches long and 5.6 inches wide. Engraved "Ettie". Numbered 2644. Private collection. Image courtesy of Heritage Auction.



Figure 21: Silver seafood bowl and serving pieces, by WMC, New York, circa 1887 – 1893. Bowl is 11 inches in diameter, servers 12 inches long. 39 ounces 10 dwt. Repoussé and chased with clam, oyster and mussel shells and two color gilt seaweed. Gilt interior. As cited in Christie's, *Important American Furniture and Decorative Arts* (auction catalogue, New York: Christie's, January 15-16, 1999). Lot 47.



Figure 22: Silver water pitcher, by WMC, New York, circa 1883 – 1888. 6 7/8 inches, 21 ounces 10 dwt. Numbered 1225Y. Body chased with seaweed and overlapping oyster, mussel and scallop shells. As cited in Sotheby's, *Important Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, September 26, 2008), 150.



Figure 23: Silver water pitcher, by WMC, New York, circa 1883-1888. 7 inches high, 21 ounces 15 dwt. Numbered 1225Y. As cited in Sotheby's, *Important Americana* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, January 22-23, 2010). Lot 399.

While WMC clearly imitated Tiffany during the first period – WMC’s “Japanese” flatware pattern is derivative of Tiffany flatware patterns such as “Japanese” (1871) (now called “Audubon”) – the silver of WMC in the second period was far less derivative and shows the clear guidance of a capable and original designer.

The silver of the third phase, 1887 to 1890, was not as tied to actual Japanese motifs, but rather, focused more broadly on nature and naturalistic motifs. For WMC, this third phase extended from 1887 through the early 1890s. WMC produced a large number of seashell-encrusted bowls and tureens, an example of which is seen in Figure 21. These were often used to serve seafood or as centerpieces. Figure 22 is a particularly good example of the silver of this third phase. The form of Figures 22 and 23 is not Japanese, the seashells depicted could be found on an American beach, and there is no ornament directly tying it to Japan. However, for all of this, it is clearly informed with a sense of the natural world found in Japanese art. The design of the Gorham basket, seen in Figure 24, includes objects cast from actual seashells and seaweed, showing the extremes to which the industry took this third phase.



*Figure 24: Silver dish, by Gorham, Providence, circa 1886. 6 inches in diameter, 6 ounces. As cited in Christie's, *Important American Silver* (auction catalogue, New York: Christie's, January 17, 2008). Lot 92.*

The Japanese-inspired silver of WMC did more than just assimilate an Eastern vocabulary. At its best, WMC's Japanese-inspired silver absorbed the power of the Japanese aesthetic itself to create intimate, harmonious and decorative goods. WMC designers and chasers transformed the utilitarian forms of teapots, water-pitchers, flatware and bowls into new shimmering metal works of art.¹⁹

¹⁹ Some of WMC's design library survives as part of the Gorham design library currently held in the Rhode Island School of Design library.

Whiting Manufacturing Company Designers, 1878-1887

Between 1878 and 1880 the WMC design department underwent significant changes. Charles Osborne, the superintendent and a prolific designer for the firm, left to join Tiffany in 1878, taking with him the foreman of WMC's manufacturing department and quite possibly other employees. William Dean Whiting retired from the business in 1880, taking designers Edwin French and Frank Capron and presumably other employees with him to start F.M. Whiting & Company with his son. This turnover of personnel created a substantial change in the way the design department was organized and in the silver the firm produced. Indeed, between 1878 and 1887, WMC produced some of its most sophisticated and important silver pieces.²⁰

Archival research at Brown University in the Gorham Archive uncovered a WMC inventory system instituted in 1880. This was a major innovation for the firm. For the first time, every piece of silver WMC produced was stamped with a sequential number, allowing the designs and objects to be systematically tracked. Given a lack of archival material, it is impossible to fully explain these changes, although they do point to the presence of a capable and experienced superintendent. Appendix B describes this numbering system in detail.²¹

Until now, little has been known about the designers responsible for the silver designs between 1878 and 1890. Research suggests that throughout WMC's

²⁰ Ira Hutchinson Brainerd, ed., *Edwin Davis French: a memorial; his life, his art* (New York: The De Vinne Press, 1908), 21; *The Jeweler's Circular*, October 26, 1898.

²¹ The design department also stopped applying for patents between 1878 and 1890, when previously patents had been applied for regularly; Tiffany and Gorham both had numbering systems in place prior to WMC's adoption in 1880. This may point to a designer from either firm coming to WMC.

history a superintendent oversaw the design department, coordinating multiple designers, including freelancers. Of the eighteen previously unknown WMC designers discovered during the course of research, three designers – Edwin D. French, Paul Witteck and James T. Hunter – worked for the firm in the years between 1878 and 1890. A fourth designer, Frank Mauser, has been connected to the firm in the 1890s and may have worked for the firm in the 1880s. Examples of Mauser's later silver designs and WMC objects that are similar in design are found in Appendix A.

It had been widely assumed that upon his departure from WMC in 1878, Charles Osborne designed exclusively for Tiffany. However, research indicates that Charles Osborne did some freelance design work for WMC in 1882 and 1883. One of the WMC objects Osborne designed while at Tiffany was the 1883 Goelet Schooner Yacht Prize. An article in the *Art Amateur* clearly states that the prize was designed by Charles Osborne in 1883 and manufactured by WMC. However, in 1883, Osborne was supposedly working for Tiffany. A number of other WMC objects dated to 1883, as seen in Figure 28 and 29, have obvious Osborne design characteristics, notably the pearling and seaweed designs. The existence of these objects, along with Osborne's status as a freelance designer for Tiffany, credibly indicate that Osborne continued to produce designs for WMC after his departure and as late as 1883. Furthermore, it is conceivable Osborne provided designs for other firms. Osborne's papers, held at Winterthur, indicate he was commissioned to create a number of medals unconnected with Tiffany following 1878, lending further credence to the contention that he continued work for WMC while freelancing for Tiffany. Such

freelancing at Tiffany was highly unusual and further research in the Tiffany Archives is needed to fully understand the nature of Osborne's employment while at Tiffany.²²



Figure 25: Silver Goelet Schooner Yacht Prize, by WMC, circa 1883. 12 9/16 inches high, 74 ounces, 19 dwt. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

²² Osborne's freelance status at Tiffany is supported by a reference in a January 23, 1888 letter (91x23.47) between Osborne and the management at WMC which notes WMC will transfer shares of its stock to Osborne (as part of his new employment contract with WMC) provided Osborne can "secure his release from a certain verbal understanding with Tiffany & Co." Research done by Katharine John Snider for her article "An Air of Originality and Great Richness': The Professional and Private Paper of Silver Designer Charles Osborne, 1871-1920" indicates that Osborne's freelance status at Tiffany appears to be unusual. Further research is needed at Tiffany's Archives to fully understand Osborne's status during his employment there. Osborne Papers, 91x23.44; 91x23.40; 91x23.47 Downs Collection, Winterthur Library; Katharine John Snider, "An Air of Originality and Great Richness': The Professional and Private Paper of Silver Designer Charles Osborne, 1871-1920," *Winterthur Portfolio* 36, no. 4 (2001), 174; McClinton, 141; "The Goelet Schooner Yacht Prize," *Art Amateur* 8 April (1883): 99; Loring, 157.



*Figure 26: Silver coffee pot, by Tiffany, New York, circa 1880-1891. 6 ¼ inches high, 11 ounces. This coffee pot exhibits the spiraled pearling of Charles Osborne. As cited in Christie's, *Important American Furniture, Folk Art, Silver and Chinese Export* (auction catalogue, New York: Christie's, January 21-25, 2010), Lot 45.*



Figure 27: Silver water pitcher, by Tiffany, New York, circa 1881. 7 ¼ inches high, 29.65 ounces.

Note the wandering seaweed, a motif of Osborne's in later designs for WMC and that the pitcher form here is nearly identical to Figure 23, made by WMC. The similarities between the forms indicate that Osborne designed the later objects at WMC.



*Figure 28: Silver hand mirror, by WMC, New York, circa 1883. 9 ½ inches long. The mirror is stamped with number 1250, which dates it to 1883. The pearling is a well-known Osborne design motif, which may support that Osborne did some presumably freelance design work for WMC while also employed by Tiffany. As cited in Sotheby's, *The Jerome Rapoport Collection of American Aesthetic Silver* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, June 20, 1996). Lot 61.*



Figure 29: Silver oyster tray, by WMC, New York, circa 1883. 15 inches long, 30.15 ounces. The tray is stamped 1234A, which indicates it was made in 1883. The design of this tray also features Osborne's signature pearling. Private collection. Image courtesy of Beverly Bremer.

Edwin Davis French (1851-1906) was a designer and chief of the engraving department at WMC from 1869-1894, with the exception of the years 1881-1883, when he was a designer at the F.M. Whiting Company. No specific pieces of silver produced by WMC have been previously attributed to Edwin French. However, research for this essay has identified a strong and plausible connection between French's later designs for bookplate engravings and design motifs of WMC silver during the period of his employment there. French was without question a talented designer. After his retirement from WMC in 1894, French turned his considerable skill to engraving bookplates, such as one seen in Figure 31. He became well known for his bookplates, over 350 of which he designed between 1894 and 1906. Individuals and organizations commissioned personalized bookplates from him, including the Grolier Club (of which he was a member), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Union Club, Yale University, and Harvard University. Collectors seek his bookplates today. Exhibits of his work were held in Cleveland in 1899 and in New York, at the New York Public Library in 1907.²³

²³ Ira Hutchinson Brainerd, ed., *Edwin Davis French: a memorial; his life, his art* (New York: The De Vinne Press, 1908), 21.



*Figure 30: Edwin Davis French in his studio. As cited in Ira Hutchinson Brainerd, ed., *Edwin Davis French: a memorial; his life, his art* (New York: The De Vinne Press, 1908), 12.*

The design of the vase seen in Figure 32 can be attributed to Edwin French, as the lilies on the vase seem to be done by the same hand as the lilies seen in Figure 31, a bookplate he designed.

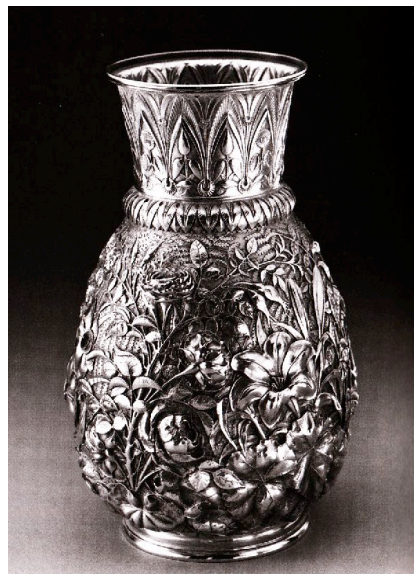
French's success as a bookplate engraver at the end of his career had, up to now, largely eclipsed his long and successful career at WMC. His strengths as a designer and his success outside of WMC make a strong case for French having been a critical part of the design team at WMC during the years 1887-1890, after William Dean Whiting had retired and Osborne had gone to Tiffany. See Appendix A for more objects designed by Edwin French.

Research also identified William Rittenmeyer as a designer working for WMC in the 1880s. Research was not able to uncover any additional information about this silversmith and his background is a ripe area for further research.²⁴

²⁴ *First Annual Report of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration of the State of New York* (New York: Troy Press Company, 1888) 561-673.



*Figure 31: Bookplate, by Edwin Davis French, New York, circa 1890. As cited in Walter Hamilton, *Dated book-plates (Ex libris) with a treatise on their origin and development*, (London: A. & C. Black, 1895), 196. In Figure 31, above, note the design of the lilies in the bottom right corner that are very similar to the lilies found on the WMC vase in Figure 32. Overall the dense quality of the decoration in this bookplate matches the dense decoration in the vase.*



*Figure 32: Silver vase, by WMC, New York, circa 1882-83. 7 ½ inches high. Numbered 568 which indicates it was made between 1882-83. Signed L. Goerck, chaser. As cited in Doreen Bolger Burke et. al, *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Rizzoli, 1986), 254. It is highly unusual to have a piece of silver marked by an individual. Note the similarity of the design to Edwin French's bookplate in Figure 31 which may indicate that French designed this vase.*

Chasers were silversmithing employees responsible for translating designs on paper (created by designers like Osborne) into three-dimensional objects; they are perhaps the most important and most overlooked members of the nineteenth-century silver industry. As the industry grew in the nineteenth century and developed industrial methods to increase production, the work of designers had become increasingly removed from that of chasers. While it is likely that William Dean Whiting both designed and chased work, it is unlikely that designers of Osborne's generation who worked for large, industrialized firms actually produced or ornamented the objects they designed. Chasers, who became highly specialized, did this decoration, but were not responsible for the designs themselves.²⁵

Research for this essay has identified five chasers working for WMC between 1878 and 1887. One of these, Lewis Goerck, was the foreman of the chasing department and was responsible for the vase in Figure 32, which he signed. The effect of having individual chasers embellish different objects from the same designs explains why the Japanese-inspired designs in Figure 18 and 19 are similar but not identical — the design on paper may have been the same, but two different chasers executed the decoration.

Research has not been able to establish the identity of the superintendent at the firm between 1878 and 1887. Whoever held the superintendent position must have been a talented and sophisticated designer who would not have gone unnoticed by the industry. In fact, this unidentified superintendent (or superintendents, as the case may be) is probably already known to scholars, but his

²⁵ Carpenter and Zapata, 15.

connection to WMC is not. Perhaps this person left the firm in 1887 to start his own firm, and scholarship has not yet made the connection between him and WMC.²⁶ Appendix A lists the WMC designers and craftsmen discovered in the course of research, along with biographical information where available.

²⁶ Research into this period is hampered by a scarcity of company archival material, and the fact that WMC did not apply for or receive any patents between 1878 and 1888; Ledgers held in the Gorham Archives at Brown University indicate that 1886 was the year of peak production for WMC between 1880 and 1887; Gorham Company Records, John Hay Library, Brown University. Some WMC design material is held at Brown University as part of the Gorham Archives. Business papers for the firm did not survive; William Hosley notes Jane Converse Brown's research into late Victorian Periodicals, who identifies the height of the Japan Craze as 1885-1889, which peaked in 1889. WMC's production records support this; William Hosley, *The Japan Idea: Art and Life in Victorian America* (Hartford, Conn.: Wadsworth Athenaeum, 1990), 45. Further research is needed to clarify Frank Mauser's history prior to founding his own firm in 1887; French's biographer only briefly mentions his work at WMC, noting that his designs for the firm were unsigned.

Whiting Manufacturing Company, 1887-1924

WMC thrived throughout the 1880s and 1890s, with a steady stream of yacht trophy commissions in addition to their normal trade. According to surviving design ledgers, 1894 was the firm's busiest year between 1880 and 1895 in terms of number of objects made.

Charles Bulkley and William Cowen were astute businessmen who managed to keep WMC's debts low, mostly by borrowing money from the partners in the business, and by paying cash for silver. Silver, of course, was their main raw material and the primary expense above their payroll. After the R.G. Dun & Co. credit reports on the firm end in 1883 the business history of the firm is undocumented. Research reveals that the years after 1883 were not easy from a management perspective; the firm faced multiple labor disputes in the late 1880s. The most serious strike was in 1887 and involved half of the WMC workforce. *The Jeweler's Circular* indicates that Charles Bulkley was aggressive in defending WMC's patents and trademark in the courts.²⁷

In 1905, partially as a result of labor problems across the silver industry, WMC joined Gorham's Silversmiths Stock Company. At this time, with the retirement of longstanding partners Charles Bulkley and Fred. S. Salisbury, the firm experienced another management transition as it had in 1880. Charles Osborne, formerly the superintendent, was promoted to Vice President and presumably a new superintendent was brought in to replace him. As in 1880, a change in

²⁷ I do not discuss WMC's yachting trophies as they were not predominately Japanese-inspired; Massachusetts, Vol. 325, p.1026, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

superintendent led to major changes to the organization of the design department; in 1905 the firm introduced a year symbol to their mark, which appeared on all silver produced through 1924. In addition, after 1905, the quality of WMC's silver design declined. Scholars today do not consider WMC's design work after 1905 on par with Tiffany and Gorham. Further research is needed to understand the history of the firm from 1890 to 1924 and the dynamics and personnel involved in design at the firm.²⁸

In 1910 the firm moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut after losing the lease on its New York City space, which the firm had rented for 35 years. At the time of the move, the firm was capitalized at \$1,000,000. In Bridgeport they had 400-500 employees, which shows that the firm was still a large producer even if its prestige had faded. Although owned by Gorham, the firm operated independently until 1924, when Gorham moved its operations to Providence. Gorham finally stopped using the WMC trademark in 1926.²⁹

²⁸ Gorham also utilized a date mark, and WMC's adoption of a year mark may indicate the influence of Gorham, their parent company.

²⁹ *The Jeweler's Circular*, March 6, 1887, 2272; For more on WMC and the silversmiths' strike see *First Annual Report of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration of the State of New York* (New York: Troy Press Company, 1888) 561-673, which contains detailed information on the entire conflict, including transcribed interviews with designers and chasers at Tiffany, WMC and Dominick & Haff; Gorham bought WMC for \$800,000, "Trade Items," *Brass World* 1, no. 4, April (1905): 141; "Trade Items," *Brass World* 5, no. 6, June (1909): 226; For more on WMC's marks see Dorothy T. Rainwater and Judy Redfield, *Encyclopedia of American Silver Manufacturers*, rev. 4th ed. (Atglen, Pa.: Schiffer publishing, 1998), 368; Harold H. Hamilton was president after Bulkley's retirement; George Curtis Waldo, ed., *History of Bridgeport and Vicinity, Volume 2* (New York: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1917), 456.

Section II: The Influence of Japan on America, 1860-1890

WMC's Japanese-inspired silver was part of a larger American cultural interest in Japanese art. American artists and designers were influenced not only by Japanese objects directly, but also by the work of French and British fine and decorative artists who had themselves seen and appropriated elements of Japanese art. However, it would be a narrow, Euro-centric view of the diversity of influences on nineteenth-century America and American designers to say that the British and French stylistic movements entirely explained the interest and effect of Japanese objects in America. The emergence of an American Japonism and eventually an American interest in the tenets of the British Aesthetic Movement can be seen not as coming wholly from outside the United States, but rather, that the movements in France and Britain resonated with feelings and interests already deeply ingrained in American culture.³⁰

The American Aesthetic movement was an artistic response to the confusion and anxiety of America's newly and highly industrialized society between 1870 and 1890. American artists and critics looked for art, both fine and decorative, that

³⁰ Clark, 1; Hosley, 18-24. It was an American naval officer, Commodore Matthew C. Perry (1794 - 1858), whose contact with Japan initiated Japan's westernization in 1854. The United States was particularly interested in formalizing a trading relationship with Japan, as Japanese ports were a relatively short twenty days travel by steamer from California. Britain had waged an expensive war for control of trade with China from 1839 to 1842. The overall result of this conflict was to greatly expand Western influence in China. This brutality and imperialism alarmed the Japanese and consequently both Japan and the United States had reasons to cement a partnership: Japan was anxious to avoid colonization by Britain and the United States sought a larger presence on the international stage, just as it wanted practical solutions to trade, such as a coaling station for its China-trade steamers and a naval base to provide protection for its Pacific whaling fleet. The American press carried extensive coverage of diplomatic actions in Japan. American interest in Matthew Perry's 1854 trip resulted in a number of publications about Japan, including the widely read *Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan Performed in the Years 1852, 1853 and 1854 under the Command of Commodore M.C. Perry, United States Navy*, written by Francis Hawks. Hawks wrote enthusiastically about Japanese prints and included illustrations of Japanese woodcuts. Of course, this piqued American interest in the art of Japan. For a nuanced exploration of the effect of Japanese art on American artists see Julia Meech and Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Japonisme Comes to America* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990).

could be called national and original. Artists and designers from a wide range of industries were drawn to Japanese art, which they looked to as a model on which to base this new “American” style of art. This new style embellished everyday, useful objects with motifs from nature and two-dimensional patterns, often incorporating design motifs from non-Western cultures.

Japan in particular had a large and lasting effect on American Aesthetic movement artists. The anxieties about the need to develop an “American” style of art and the appeal of Japanese art is seen in the following quote from an art critic in

The Independent:

The great charm of their [Japanese] art is that it is altogether national, sincere, and original. They copied nothing from other nations, and they could say it was their own, whatever merit it might possess. Our artists ransack history and go rummaging all over the world in quest of objects and styles to imitate.³¹

The effect of Japanese art and artifacts on Western culture has been called by many names: Japonism, Japonisme, the “Japan craze”, the Japanese art movement, and the “cult of Japan.” The variety of names suggests two things: first, that every Western country that came in contact with Japan, either through exported Japanese objects or through first-hand accounts of the island empire itself, was quickly and indelibly influenced; and second, that this effect was widespread within each culture, not only in elite circles of art and society but also in the popular culture and industrial products. This section will examine the influence of Japanese art on both painting and the decorative arts before and after the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876

³¹ “The Decline of Japanese Art,” *The Independent* (New York), April 19, 1877, Vol. 29, Iss. 1481.

as part of an examination of the roots of and context for American Aesthetic silver produced between 1870 and 1890.³²

The Influence of Japan on American Artists, Collectors and Merchants, 1860-1876

From the 1860s onwards, artists, collectors, and merchants in France, Britain, and America championed Japanese objects and art. In each country artists appropriated the decorative two-dimensional patterns, asymmetrical compositions, bold color, and above all, the simplicity of Japanese art to solve design dilemmas in their own countries. These new elements of art and design attracted a vanguard of wealthy collectors and tastemakers. And, in each country, merchants capitalized on the growing market for Japanese goods. In America, artists such as John La Farge (1835-1910), Winslow Homer (1839-1910) and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), collectors like Edward S. Morse (1838-1925) and William Vanderbilt (1821-1885), and merchants like A.A. Vantine (1821-1890) were influential in promoting Japanese art prior to the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876. The Centennial, which introduced millions of Americans to Japanese art, created a

³² Carol C. Clark, *American Japonism: Contacts between America and Japan 1854 - 1910* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1970), 1; Anna Jackson, "Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture," *Journal of Design History* 5, no.4 (1992): 245; Asian culture and art had intrigued Westerners from the Age of Exploration forward. As early as 1784, when the American vessel *Empress of China* left New York harbor en route to China, traders from Boston and New York had been importing Chinese products directly. Chinese exports of ceramics, art, and textiles had reached European and American ports throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a result of the openness of China to limited Western trade. Fascination with these goods led to the development of successive applications of Chinoiserie elements to contemporary forms. The interest in Chinoiserie can be seen as a precursor to the intense Western interest in and appropriation of Japanese art. Japan's 1683 break with the West, which sealed its borders against outsiders for two centuries, did not lessen its hold on Western artistic imaginations or reduce its attractiveness to imperialist ambitions. Indeed, Japan was not "closed" as tightly as one might think; the Chinese and the Dutch used the Japanese port of Nagasaki throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In this period both Chinese and Dutch merchants imported Japanese goods to their countries, thus sparking the true beginning of Western interest in Japanese arts and culture which would eventually affect Western fine arts, decorative arts, architecture, applied art, and philosophy. See also, Anna Jackson, Amin Jaffe, eds. *Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe 1500 - 1800* (New York : Distributed in North America by Harry N. Abrams, 2004).

massive consumer market for American made Japanese-inspired objects such as WMC's silver.³³

The American painter, muralist, and stained glass window designer John La Farge was one of America's earliest and most passionate champions of Japanese art. La Farge had been intrigued by Asia since childhood, when he had read accounts of early travel to the East. In the 1850s, as an art student in Paris, he began collecting Japanese prints. La Farge wrote one of the first serious and readily available American essays on Japanese art, which was published in *Across America and Asia, Notes on a Five Years' Journey Around the World and of Residence in Arizona, Japan and China* (1870). His essay articulates what Western artists found fascinating about Japanese art:

The opening of the treaty ports has made [Japanese art] familiar to all of us. We have all admired the many objects made lovely by their workmanship: their inimitable lacquers, embodying on their surface a complete school of ornament; their unrivaled ivory and metal work; their porcelains and enamels; their bronzes, of colors unknown to ours, cast and polished beyond our means; their colored printing, contrasting with our own brutal chromolithographs by its frankness, or by a delicacy equal to exquisite hand work. These things all please the eye, as if with the sense of touch. On analysis, besides the wondrous finish, we notice the novelty of the design, its energy, its accuracy, its sentiment, very often the grandeur of its style, very often a stamp of individuality or personal talent, its recalling of natural objects, the enchanting harmony of its colors, and its exquisite adaptation to the surface ornamented. We feel that we are looking at perfect work, that we are in [sic] presence of a distinct civilization where art is happily married to

³³ These merchants include Siegfried Bing in France, A.A. Vantine in America, and Arthur Lasenby Liberty in London.

The Japanese objects to which artists, collectors and designers responded were not always the objects displayed at the expositions, as the Japanese Exhibition Bureau staff and its suppliers tailored their displays to what they thought were American tastes.

industry. These accompaniments of every day life, studied out, reveal a complete school of art.³⁴

La Farge's large collection of Japanese art was sold at auction after his death in 1908. Critics at the time noted its size and importance. A description of it illuminates what a collector of Japanese objects in the nineteenth-century might have bought:

The collection of Japanese color prints and kakemonos, of rare antique lacquers, bronzes, pottery and curios, of ancient Chinese porcelains and fine old screens, of temple panels and Ramas textiles and embroideries, collected by the eminent artist and connoisseur, John La Farge, is one of the most interesting and unique collections that has been show in the American Art Galleries in a long time.... There are Japanese theatrical costumes of dark blue satin, richly embellished with twigs of oranges and bamboo leaves, brocaded in gold threads and lined with purple silk; of dancer's costumes of purple Takeyamachi brocade, with bamboo and vine designs woven in gold threads, and priest's robes, also of Takeyamachi brocade, with Kiri leaf, howo bird and stork designs, woven in gold of alternating panels of brilliant red and white, many kimonos, some of dark blue silk brocade, with dragon crest, howo bird, flowers and vines...³⁵

La Farge appropriated the visual language and delicate grace of Japanese art in his watercolors. His watercolor *Nocturne*, seen in Figure 33, and his painting, *Waterlily*, seen in Figure 34, perfectly integrated Japanese principles of design and color.³⁶

Winslow Homer was a friend of La Farge's and probably saw and discussed Japanese art with him. Certainly Homer's paintings reflect an understanding and appreciation of the principles of Japanese art. His 1868 fantastical illustration for

³⁴ John La Farge, "An Essay on Japanese Art" in *Across America and Asia, Notes on a Five Years' Journey Around the World and of Residence in Arizona, Japan and China*, ed. Raphael Pumpelly (New York: Leypoldt & Holt, 1870), 195.

³⁵ "La Farge Curios Put on Exhibition," *The New York Times*, February 10, 1908.

³⁶ Christopher Benfey, *The Great Wave: Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics, and the Opening of Old Japan* (New York: Random House, 2003), 133.

Harper's Weekly, in Figure 36 reflects a familiarity with Japanese figures. This illustration introduced Japanese art to the readers of *Harper's*, a widely circulated American magazine. Homer's training as a printmaker gave him an appreciation for the flattened simplicity of Japanese prints. Homer used Japanese techniques of cut-off compositions and low points of view in his paintings. He did not directly copy Japanese composition, but instead allowed Japanese prints to change the way in which he looked at the world around him, particularly the natural world. This quality distinguishes the most successful works of both fine and decorative art influenced by Japan.³⁷

³⁷ Clark, 5.



Figure 33: Nocturne, by John La Farge, circa 1885. Collection of Fogg Museum of Art.

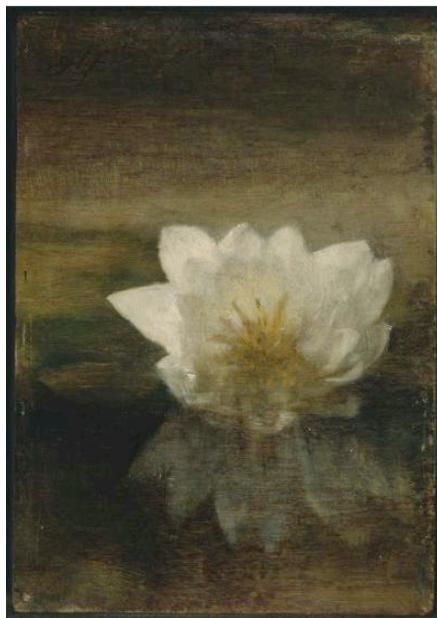


Figure 34: Waterlily, by John La Farge, circa 1879. Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 35: Japanese prints reproduced in La Farge's essay on Japanese art, circa 1870.

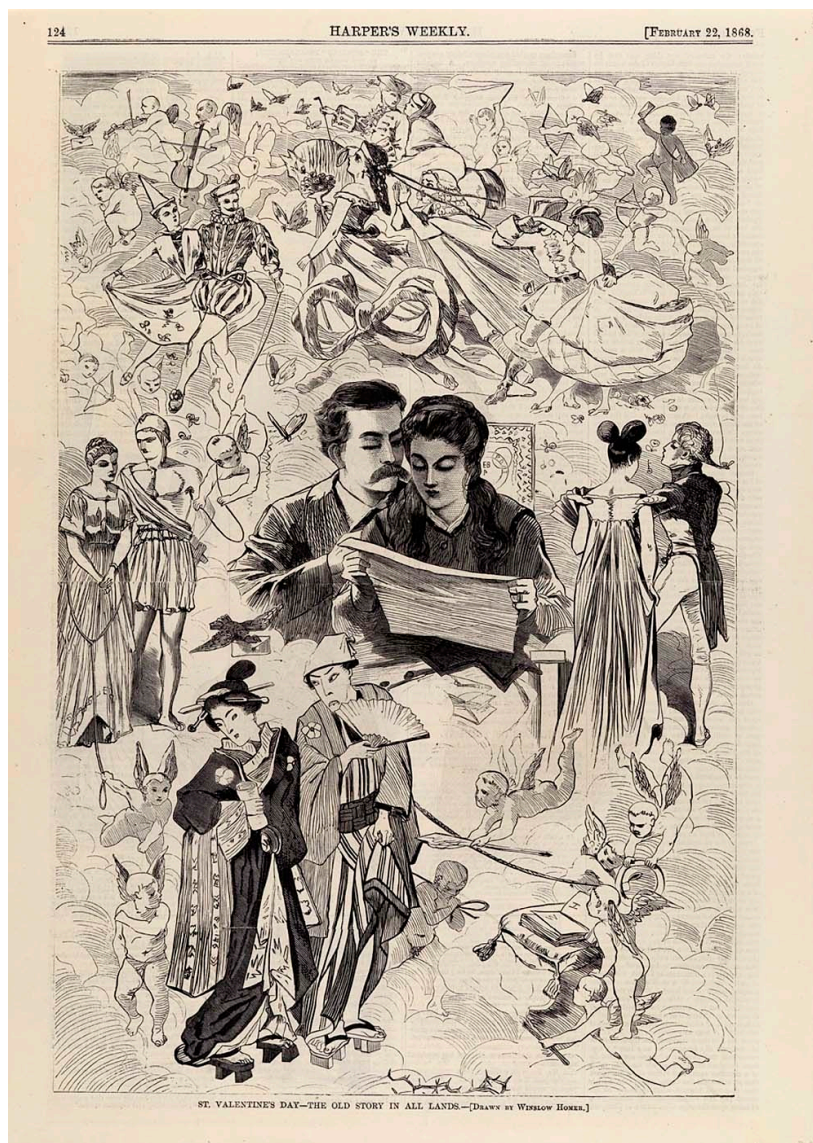


Figure 36: Valentine's Day Illustration, by Winslow Homer for *Harper's Weekly*, circa 1868.

Leaping Trout (1889), seen in Figure 37, reveals Homer's affinity for Japanese art. In 1879, a reviewer of the National Academy exhibition of Homer's painting *Upland Cotton* said the painting was "a remarkable penetration of Japanese thought into American expression... This picture is a superb piece of decoration, with its deep, queer colors like the Japanese... This picture seems to us original and important as an example of new thought." During the 1890s, Homer further refined

his depictions of nature, which became more influenced by Japanese ideas of nature. His watercolors of fish demonstrate both his assimilation of Japanese devices and his increased exploration of the natural world. He also assimilated conventionalized Japanese wave patterns into his paintings of sea scenes at Prout's Neck in Maine.³⁸



Figure 37: Leaping Trout, by Winslow Homer, circa 1889. Collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

³⁸ Ibid., 6



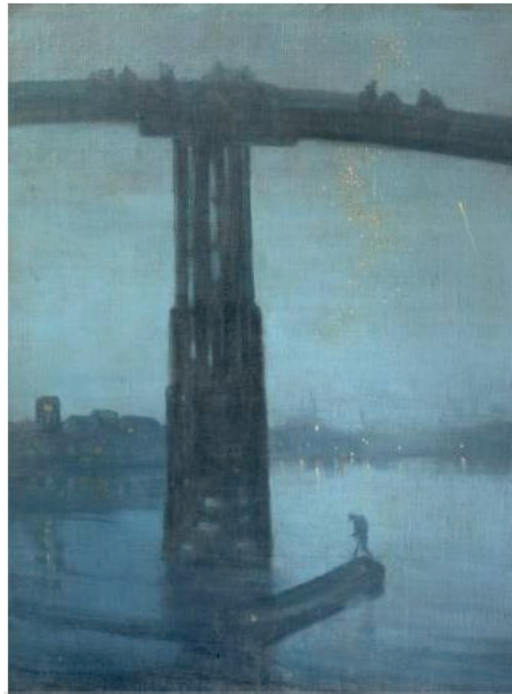
Figure 38: Upland Cotton, by Winslow Homer, circa 1879.
 As cited in Carol C. Clark, *American Japonism: Contacts between America and Japan 1854 – 1910*,
 (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1970), 5.

James Abbott McNeill Whistler also spread ideas about Japanese art to American painters. He painted his first Japanese-influenced painting, depicting a woman in Japanese dress, in 1864 (Figure 39). His nocturne series of paintings, completed in the 1870s, consist of a surface composed almost entirely of a single plane, and show a more sophisticated understanding of the principles of Japanese art.³⁹

³⁹ Ibid., 8; Julia Meech-Pekarick, "Early Collectors of Japanese Prints and the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *The Metropolitan Museum Journal* 17 (1984): 95.



*Figure 39: Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, circa 1864. As cited in Carol C. Clark, *American Japonism: Contacts between America and Japan 1854 – 1910*, (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1970), 5.*



*Figure 40: Nocturne, by James Abbott McNeill Whistler, circa 1875. As cited in Carol C. Clark, *American Japonism: Contacts between America and Japan 1854 – 1910*, (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1970), 5.*

American art collectors also played an influential role as tastemakers prior to the Philadelphia Exhibition. Edward S. Morse (1838-1925) and Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919) influenced American museums to start collections of Japanese art. Morse, a collector and professor of zoology who traveled to Japan in 1877 and quickly became a fervent Japanophile, was an important champion of Japan in America. His lectures on Japan introduced Isabelle Stewart Gardner (1840-1924) and a number of other Boston art collectors to Japanese art and culture. Detroit industrialist and collector Freer acquired Japanese art and American paintings inspired by it, such as those by Homer and Whistler.⁴⁰

Merchants such as Ashley Abraham Vantine (1821-1890) were also critical in introducing Japanese art to American artists, designers and collectors. While La Farge, Morse, and Freer all traveled to the East to collect Japanese objects, these objects were also available for sale in the United States. In 1866, Vantine founded the import company A.A. Vantine and became the first New York City merchant to import Chinese and Japanese goods. His store was popular and successful, selling everything from Japanese porcelain to flower pots, and bronzes to ashtrays.

An 1875 advertisement (Figure 41) and two postcards (Figures 42 and 43) detail the breadth of Japanese art available to designers and collectors who did not have the means to travel to Japan. The variety and quantity of objects available for sale at A. A. Vantine in 1874 shows a strong market for Japanese goods before the Philadelphia Centennial exhibition of 1876. An 1874 advertisement confirms that

⁴⁰ Freer gave his collection to the nation, as the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Benfey, 79-80.

Japanese goods were already being used as mantel ornaments, tablecloths, serving trays, screens and carpets, a precursor to the Aesthetic style of interiors. A. A. Vantine was open to the public and carried merchandise at a variety of prices — from expensive Japanese bronzes to cheaper kites, fireworks, paper lanterns and toys. An essay on Vantine by journalist and philosopher Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915), founder of the Roycroft Arts and Crafts community in East Aurora, New York, confirms that artists used the exotic imports available at the store for inspiration.⁴¹

He writes:

Vantine's is a bazaar, an object-lesson, a sermon, a school, a fair, an exposition - a store. There is only one objection to the place, and that is, it exhausts your stock of adjectives. I have known Vantine's for a quarter of a century. I used to stand outside the show-windows and look long, also longingly, at the beautiful things displayed.⁴²

⁴¹ Henry Hall, *America's Successful Men of Affairs* (New York: New York Tribune, 1895), 96; William Blake, *Ceramic Art* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1875), 149.

⁴² Elbert Hubbard, "A Little Journey to Vantine's," *The Philistine* 3, no.1 (1911): 33.

A. A. VANTINE & CO.,
831 Broadway, New York.

Japanese, Chinese & India Goods,
RICHLY DECORATED
PORCELAIN AND FAIENCE.

Superb Vases, large and small, for Mantels, Flowers, and Decoration generally. Over 200 varieties, selected with great care and expense at the chief centers of production in Japan, China and India. **Tea and Dessert Services, Fire-Proof Tea Pots, Fruit Dishes, Fish Dishes, Salad Bowls, Punch Bowls, Dinner Services, India and Japanese China Dinner, Tete-a-Tete, Toilet, Cologne, Dessert and Chamber Sets, Water Bottles, Flower Pots, Ring Stands.**

SATSUMA & MIACO FAIENCE,
Richly Decorated and made to Special Order for this Stock.

Rare and curious specimens of Porcelain of various makers and dates, secured in Japan and China by our agents. Amateurs, Collectors, and the public generally, are invited to examine.

JAPANESE BRONZE GOODS,
In great Variety, and of great Rarity and Excellence,

Such as **Vases, Flower Pots, Card and Ash Receivers, Storks, Candle Sticks, Mantel Ornaments,** and many other objects.

LACQUER WARE AND SILK GOODS,

Consisting of Stripes and Check **Wash Silks and Pineapples.** White, Drab and Buff **Pongees.** Every shade of **India Grenadine and Gauze,** all Silk, Plain, and Satin and Silk Stripes. Beautiful Embroidered **Satin Bed Spreads, Smoking Caps, slippers, Pin, Sofa and Chair Cushions, Grass Cloth, White and Drab, Extra Quality Bamboo Cloth,** and fine **Grass Cloth Handkerchiefs.**

Table Mats, Japanese Sun Shades, Umbrellas, Canes, and Cocoa Brooms; **Pine Cane Baskets, and Rattan Bird Cages;** Lacquered and Gold Fancy Trays, Round, Square, Oval and other shapes; Beautiful Cabinets in great variety; **Sleeve Buttons, Crystals, Lockets, and Bamboo Chains;** Silk, Sandal Wood, Ivory, Lacquered, and White and Black **Feather Fans;** Silk, Embroidered and Paper **Screens; Puzzles, Rice Paper, and Rice Paper Pictures.**

Painted **Skeleton Leaves;** Camphor Trunks; Japanese and Chinese Toys; **Lacquered Dessert Plates; Tea Pots; Large Painted Figures; Illustrated Books; Magic, Trick, Bamboo and Puff Boxes; Wine Bottle Stands; Magic Eggs; Paper Lanterns; Parlor Fire Works and Alarming Paper; Magic Flowers; Lip Rouge and Toilet Powder; New Bread and Fruit Trays; Tooth Powder; Wicker Cups, Curiosities in Pottery; New Styles Wax-Wood Puff and Tobacco Boxes; Magnetic Fish and Fish Poles; Gold Lacquer, Sandal Wood, and Rich Laid Glove; Handkerchiefs, and Other Boxes; Jewel Caskets; Mermaids, and a great variety of Bird Kites, and other goods, at wholesale and retail.**

TURKISH and PERSIAN CARPETS and RUGS personally selected by Mr. VANTINE when in Turkey.

A. A. VANTINE & CO.,

831 BROADWAY, BETWEEN 12th AND 13th STS, NEW YORK.

Figure 41: Advertisement for A.A. Vantine & Co. This ad appeared in William Blake, *Ceramic Art* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1875), 149.



Figure 42: Undated postcard view of A. A. Vantine showroom, New York City. Private Collection.



Figure 43: Undated postcard view of A. A. Vantine showroom, New York City. Private Collection.

Whiting Manufacturing Company's Design Sources

WMC designers, constantly attuned to trends in the art and design, could have seen Japanese objects first hand at John La Farge's exhibitions of Japanese prints in the 1860s, in the Asian objects sold at one of the two dozen Japanese import firms in New York City, (A.A. Vantine was just five blocks from WMC's design studio), and in the collections of Japanese artifacts assembled by Dr. Christopher Dresser and sold at Tiffany in 1877. In addition, Tiffany's Japonique silver was well received at the 1878 Paris Exposition and was widely reported on in the United States. WMC designers certainly would have been aware of and no doubt influenced by Tiffany's new line of silver.

While designers certainly went to the Japanese exhibits at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, it is unlikely the exhibits were direct sources of iconography, given that Japanese prints and paintings were not displayed. It is only in the display of vases, a bronze stork, and a screen in Figure 50 that one sees objects that might have directly influenced individual silver objects made by WMC. The applied stork on the vase on the left-hand side of the photograph in Figure 50 is the sort of applied motif used by WMC in the silver water pitcher with applied crab seen in Figure 15.⁴³

The motifs used in WMC's Japanese-inspired silver were derived from both Japanese artifacts and prints and secondary sources, such as the illustrated art magazines published in France and the United States between 1860 and 1890. The Japanese sources included prints, ceramics, decorative items such as fans, and metal

⁴³ Jackson, 254; Roger B. Stein, "Artifact as Ideology," in *In Pursuit of Beauty*, ed. Doreen Bolger Burke, 36 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986); Charles Carpenter and Janet Zapata, *The Silver of Tiffany & Co. 1850-1987* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987), 10.

work such as Japanese sword-guards (tsuba) as seen in Figure 44. The secondary sources may have included periodicals like the *Decorator and Furnisher*, *The Art Amateur*, *Appleton's Art Journal*, or *The Art Interchange*, all of which promoted Japanese art. American magazines with wider circulations, including *Harper's Bazaar*, *Scribner's Monthly*, and the *Atlantic Monthly* were also influential. French and British periodicals circulated in America and were another source of inspiration and iconography for designers.

Designers did not strictly copy Japanese designs; any illustration of the natural world could be used as inspiration, regardless of country of origin. For example, Tiffany designers are known to have used scientific and biological illustrations from the French periodical the *Magasin Pittoresque* as a source of their Japanese-inspired designs.⁴⁴

Tiffany and Gorham's design libraries are still largely extant; Tiffany's is held in the Tiffany Archives and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Watson Library. Gorham's design library is held in the Rhode Island School of Design's special collections library. Research for this essay uncovered that Gorham absorbed WMC's design library into its own, and that part of the WMC design library is held in the Rhode Island School of Design collection. George Audsley's 1883 publication *The Ornamental Arts of Japan* was held in the WMC's design library and was a source of iconography for WMC's Japanese-inspired silver.

A WMC covered jar with an octopus lid, seen in Figure 45, has been linked to images found in an 1883 issue of *The Art Exchange*. Clearly, the design influences at

⁴⁴ "Le Pecheur Naturaliste," *Magasin Pittoresque*, Janvier 1870, 340.

work on WMC designers were sophisticated and multifaceted. As Roger Stein writes in *Pursuit of Beauty*, “the Aesthetic movement made possible a kind of creative play with form and color and texture” which encouraged designers to combine motifs and iconography, regardless of geography or source. The result of this “play” is beautifully illustrated by WMC’s American Aesthetic silver.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Hosley, 45; Stein, 39; Rhode Island School of Design Special Collections, Gorham Design Library; Zapata, 1; For an excellent chronology of French design publications about Japanese art from 1818-1910, see Galleries Nationales Du Grand Palais Paris, *Le Japonisme* (Paris: Ministère de la culture et de la communication, Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1988).



*Figure 44: Sword-guard (Tsuba), by Ishiguro Masayohi, circa 19th century. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.*⁴⁶



*Figure 45: Silver New York Yacht Club trophy, by WMC, New York, circa 1885. 9 3/4 inches high, 43 ounces. Engraved "Annual Regatta 1885 Athlon". Stamped with 1766, which confirms this was made in 1885. As cited in As cited in Sotheby's, *The Jerome Rapoport Collection of American Aesthetic Silver* (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, June 20, 1996). Lot 62.*

⁴⁶ Tiffany design director Edward C. Moore began collecting Orientalia in the late 1860s and created a collection of sword-guards that are now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The Selling of Japan: The Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876

American artists and designers had been intrigued by the art of Japan since the 1860s, but it was in 1876, at the Japanese pavilions and exhibits of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, that 10 million Americans directly experienced Japanese art and architecture. The Centennial Exhibition, part of the American centennial independence celebration, coincided with the American search for a national identity and American artists' craving for an "American" style of art.⁴⁷

The United States and Japan each hoped the Philadelphia Exhibition would establish their international importance and power. Interested in developing markets for its export goods, Japan saw international expositions as a perfect marketing tool. The Japanese organizers had displays at the Exposition Universelle in Paris (1867) and the World's Fair in Vienna (1873). By 1876 the displays (as seen in Figure 46 and 47) showcased not only Japanese goods, but also the sophisticated and savvy business acumen of the Japanese organizers, who used tiered stands and larger objects on the perimeter of the exhibit to attract visitors. They used decorative hangings as marketing materials, as they were visible the length of the long hall.⁴⁸

Figures 46 through 53 illustrate the Japanese exhibits as visitors would have seen them at the Centennial. One part of the Japanese exhibit focused on Japanese art and the other on the products of Japanese manufacturers. The art exhibit included separate displays of sculpture, metalwork, carving in wood, ivory and

⁴⁷ Hosley, 41.

⁴⁸ Hosley, 32; Jackson, 246.

metal, watercolor pictures, paintings, engravings, photographs, artistic castings, and inlaid work. The Japanese manufacturing exhibit included a wide selection of Japanese industrial output including displays of ceramics, pottery, porcelain (including bricks, earthenware, stoneware and faience), furniture (including lacquer-ware, seen in Figure 46), yarns and textiles, silk fabric; clothing and ornaments (accessories), paper, blank books and stationery, military armaments, medicine and surgery.

The Japanese exhibits of the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition did not draw a distinction between utilitarian and decorative objects. The difference between the art exhibit and the manufacturing exhibit was vague— for example vases from the same potters were exhibited in both sections, with seemingly no distinction between the two, while furniture was exhibited in the art section but not in the furniture manufacturing section. It seems plausible that the divisions were drawn more on the basis of which Japanese manufacturers wanted to exhibit and less on the objects selected for the art section. Exhibit organizers kept Western needs in mind and focused on items that could be used on the table; cups, jars, plates, bowls, boxes, cigar stands, and vases.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Gisela Jahn, *Meiji Ceramics: The Art of Japanese Export Porcelain and Satsuma Ware 1868-1912* (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche, 2004), 56.



Figure 46: Photograph of Main Building - Japanese Exhibit, Philadelphia Centennial, by Centennial Photographic Co, circa 1876. Collection of Free Library, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, c022247.



Figure 47: Photograph of Main Building - Philadelphia Centennial, by Centennial Photographic Co, circa 1876. Collection of Free Library, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, c042446. This photograph gives a sense of the scale of the Centennial. Japanese Exhibit is second on the right.



Figure 48: Photography of Lacquer Work - Japanese Exhibit, Philadelphia Centennial, by Centennial Photographic Co, circa 1876. Collection of Free Library, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, c011580. These lacquer objects would have been of interest to silversmiths.



Figure 49: Photographs of Japanese Exhibit, Philadelphia Centennial, by Centennial Photographic Co, circa 1876. Collection of Free Library, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, c050550.

This series of photographs show the breadth of objects displayed and the playfulness and exotic qualities of the exhibits which included miniature pagodas, oversized porcelain bowls, a tree complete with chrysanthemums, fans, mirrors, fountains, peacocks and every type of porcelain imaginable. With so many new and exotic objects on display, it is not a surprise that the Japanese exhibits attracted millions of visitors and extensive press.

American critical reception of the Japanese displays was overwhelmingly positive; the beauty of Japanese utilitarian objects delighted Western critics. Critics described the Japanese exhibits with adjectives that could have equally described how Americans viewed themselves. Thompson Westcott, author of the *Centennial Portfolio* summed up the positive attitude of many American visitors when he compared the Japanese favorably to Americans: “The Japanese are certainly the Yankees of the Asiatic continent. There is utility in their arrangements and a wide-awake appreciation of the demands of business which show thrift and thorough mercantile ability.”⁵⁰

George T. Ferris in his *Gems of the Centennial Exhibition* (New York, 1877) wrote,

Japanese art is so subtle, free and varied in decorative expression, so full of delicious coquetries and surprises, that it never becomes stale or monotonous...The Japanese section was rich in the extreme in their peculiar art-products and no department of the Fair attracted such throngs of admirers... Japanese art is full of vitality, vigor, and movement, significant rich creative imagination, that roams through all the boundless realms of

⁵⁰ Thompson Westcott, *Centennial Portfolio* (Philadelphia: T. Hunter, 1876) quoted in The Free Library of Philadelphia "Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection" Philadelphia: The Free Library of Philadelphia. <http://libwww.library.phila.gov/CenCol/index.htm> (2001); The Free Library of Philadelphia's "Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection" is a good resource for images of the exhibits of the Centennial. All the images of the Centennial come from The Free Library's database, which is accessible online to the public at <http://libwww.library.phila.gov/CenCol/index.htm>.

Nature, and bend everything to its own purpose, regardless of the limitation of form.⁵¹

The large wooden wardrobe pictured here may have been designed especially for a Western audience, and no doubt influenced American designers. An example of the influence of this type of furniture on American designers can be seen in the faux-bamboo mantel in Figure 59.

⁵¹ George T. Ferris, *Gems of the Centennial Exhibition* (New York, 1877) quoted in Carol C. Clark, *American Japonism: Contacts between America and Japan 1854 - 1910* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1970), 2.

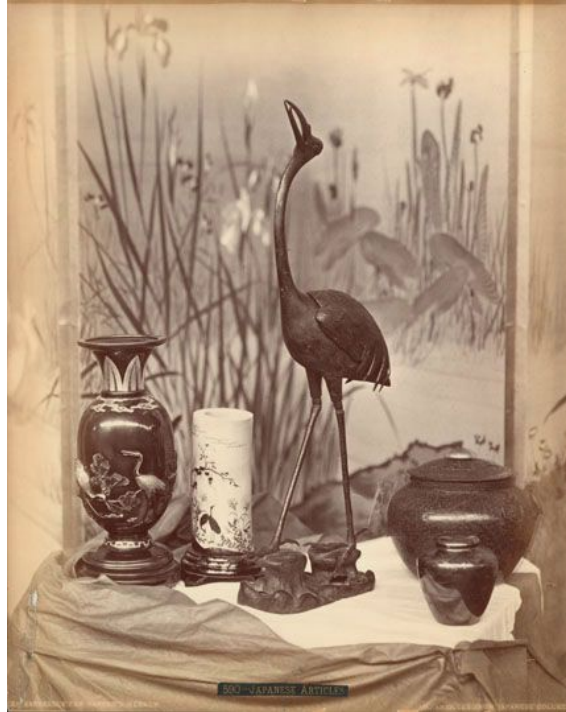


Figure 50: Photograph of Japanese Decorative Arts - Japanese Exhibit, Philadelphia Centennial, by Centennial Photographic Co, circa 1876. Collection of Free Library, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, c020590.



Figure 51: Photograph of Japanese Furniture, Rug, and Wallpaper - Japanese Exhibit, Philadelphia Centennial, by Centennial Photographic Co, circa 1876. Collection of Free Library, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, c011582.



Figure 52: Photograph of Japanese displays of porcelain, Philadelphia Centennial, by Centennial Photographic Co, circa 1876. Collection of Free Library, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, c062015.



Figure 53: Photograph of Japanese House, Philadelphia Centennial, by Centennial Photographic Co, circa 1876. Collection of Free Library, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, c090230.

The most popular section of the Japanese exhibits, and the one seen as most exotic and foreign, was a traditional Japanese house and garden (Figure 53). Westcott describes,

This house, during its erection, created more curiosity and attracted infinitely more visitors than any other building on the grounds. It was erected by native Japanese workmen, with materials brought from home, and built in their own manner with curious tools and even more curious manual processes. In fact the whole work seemed to be executed upon exactly reverse methods of carpentering to those in use in this country.⁵²

The exhibits of the Philadelphia Centennial facilitated a sophisticated and complex cross-cultural exchange between Japan and the West, with each country taking from the other what was most useful. Americans utilized the refinement and achievement of Japanese art to destroy European claims to cultural supremacy. America appropriated Japanese design ideals and sensibilities as a way to counter the European notion that America was culturally underdeveloped. It was harder to argue for European hegemony when the arts of Japan were so refined and sophisticated.⁵³ At the same time, the Western world had deeply ingrained convictions of its own superiority. Japan could be admired artistically, but it was the West that had the industrial strength and military might. Indeed, the vocabulary of “arts for arts sake” used by designers of the British and American Aesthetic movements masked the degree to which stylistic appropriation was a form of

⁵² Westcott, *Centennial Portfolio*.

⁵³ Jackson, 246.

cultural appropriation. To Americans, there was something powerful about putting Japanese culture to work for their own purposes.⁵⁴

While Japanese art and culture were making their way into American (and European) minds, Japan itself was changing rapidly. Starting in 1867, the Meiji Restoration government began a widespread program of westernization and modernization. Within a decade, aided by a variety of American and British experts, Japan had built a new infrastructure complete with the latest Western technologies; telegraph lines, railroads, gas lit streets and Western-style architecture, just as they westernized their education system and methods of production.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, in the West, Japan had been a fantasy world of sorts for thirty years — a world seen and described as filled with simplicity, taste, and aesthetic contemplation. As such, many in the West saw Japanese culture and art as a profoundly anti-modern antidote to industrialization. Japan cultivated and commercialized this image of itself as naturalistic, ancient, and unspoiled. At the same time Japan appropriated the West's industrial methods for its own modernization.

While enthusiastic collectors of Japanese goods, interested designers, and urban dwellers in San Francisco and New York might have been able to see Japanese items in museums or at stores specializing in Asian imports, for the majority of

⁵⁴ Stein, 27.

⁵⁵ Hosley, 28; For more on the influence of the West on the East; see Catherine Pagani, "Europe in Asia: The Impact of Western Art and Technology in China" in A. Jackson and A. Jaffer, eds., *Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe, 1500-1800* (London, 2004), pp 296-309; Ming Wilson "Chinese Fantasies of Europe" in A. Jackson and A. Jaffer, eds., *Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe, 1500-1800* (London, 2004), pp 338-347; C.J.A. Jorg, "Exoticism in Japan: Japanese Interest in Dutch Ceramics and Other Curiosities," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* vol. 58 (1993-94), pp. 1-21.

Americans, the Centennial Exhibition was the moment when a multitude of Americans were able to see Japanese imports first hand. Stoked by careful marketing on the part of the Japanese government and industry, the Centennial Exhibition produced an American mania for all things Japanese.

The Centennial Exhibition delineates two phases in the history of the influence of Japanese art on America: before 1876, artists were influenced by the flattened planes of perspective and designers were appropriating Japanese motifs directly as seen in WMC's "Japanese" flatware pattern shown in Figure 6. After 1876, as the market for American made Japanese-inspired objects developed, artists incorporated tenets of Japanese art into their methods and designers had moved away from direct appropriation and into a more sophisticated phase, producing products that would never have been mistaken as authentically Japanese.

Japan and America After 1876: The Aesthetic Interior

After 1876, it became fashionable across the social spectrum to display Japanese or Japanese-inspired goods in the home. For the elite, like Mary Morgan or William H. Vanderbilt, this meant original Japanese art, furniture, lacquer-work and ironwork, and of course, American-made Japanese-inspired silverware. For the middle class this meant woodblock prints, screens, fans, blue and white china from Britain's potteries. For the working class this might mean acquiring American-made china decorated with Japanese motifs, inexpensive Japanese paper lanterns for festive illuminations, or Japanese-inspired novelty scrapbooks, Christmas cards or printed textiles. Indeed, one of the overlooked significances of the American Aesthetic movement is that it marked the democratization of genteel living.⁵⁶

No form of American artistic production escaped Japanese motifs. Japanese art and artifacts affected writers, playwrights, fashion designers, interior decorators, and industrial designers. American designers of silver, as well as ceramics, furniture, textiles, and other decorative arts, were captivated by — and began appropriating for their own use — the Japanese motifs of blossoming trees, lotus and water-lilies, leaping carp, dragonflies, butterflies, and insects, sea creatures, seaweed, and seashells.⁵⁷

Consumers of all classes began to mix authentic Japanese objects with these American-made objects inspired by Japanese design. The combination of these

⁵⁶ Catherine Lynn, "Surface Ornament: Wallpapers, Carpets, Textiles, and Embroidery," in *In Pursuit of Beauty*, ed. Doreen Bolger Burke, 65 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986); Michael Snodin and John Styles, *Design and The Decorative Arts Britain 1500-1900* (London: V& A Publications, Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 358; Blaszczyk, 122.

⁵⁷ Hosley, 14.

elements in new Western interpretations was viewed as a sign of high culture. The Aesthetic-style bed, seen in Figure 54, made by Herter Brothers, New York and the water pitcher, seen in Figure 55, made by the WMC, are both examples of how American designers took Japanese motifs and transformed them into uniquely American objects. The decision to mix older authentic objects with both new artistic objects and traditional furnishings is at the very heart of the development of a new Aesthetic style.⁵⁸

The Aesthetic movement declared its freedom from the limitations of style as a historically embedded form of expression... By liberating the artist, the decorator, the collector, and the perceiver more generally from a responsibility to the historical past and geographically distant cultures, by making artifacts available as individually beautiful objects for home consumption, the Aesthetic movement made possible a kind of creative play with form and color and texture that helped to revolutionize our ways of seeing and knowing. It focused attention on harmony and symmetry (or Japanese asymmetry) and on arresting juxtapositions of works from different worlds, creating cumulative effects for the sake of sensuous and formal enjoyment and stressing the visual composition as a whole. The demands of narrative, associative, or symbolic meaning and the earlier belief that art was the servant of some extrinsic purpose were exchanged ... for the pleasures of art for arts sake.⁵⁹

At its most idealistic, the American Aesthetic movement sought to improve society through art. Indeed, the press in this period often lamented the lack of a spiritual center to American society. To Americans who felt this emptiness, the artists of the Aesthetic movement offered art as an alternative to materialism. The word “art” was everywhere and new public institutions were dedicated to art – museums, libraries,

⁵⁸ Marilyn Johnson, “The Artful Interior,” in *In Pursuit of Beauty* explores the Aesthetic interior; she addresses the roles of interior designers and architects as well as decorative arts made by firm such as Herter Brothers.

⁵⁹ Stein, 39.

opera houses, orchestras – sprung up in cities around the country. Parks and civic sculpture also made an appearance.

There was art furniture and art decoration, industrial art and household art. In a world in which technology made possible a dazzling spectrum of product choice, art demanded the attention of even the Philistine, justified a rapacious acquisitiveness, and led to the formation of a taste-making elite. Wending its way from a small cult of devotees to the constantly widening circle of those wishing to be cultured, it left forever the rarefied domain of privilege and entered the house of the common man and woman. There, art was visible not only upon walls but also upon the velvet-covered shelves of mantels and cabinets. One could sit upon art in the form of an elegant chair of ebonized finish and spindly frame, and one could even walk upon it in the form of a Persian carpet. Art fluttered in Japanese fans arranged with studied carelessness.⁶⁰

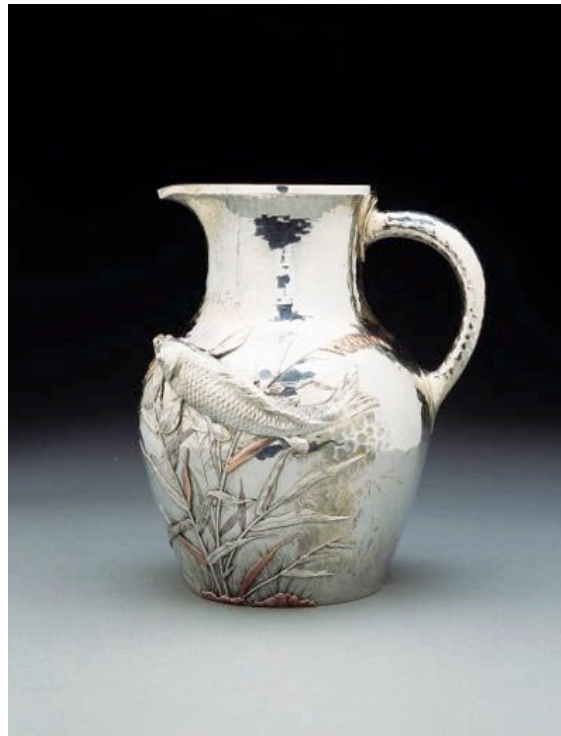
Art, according to the philosophers and critics promoting the Aesthetic movement, had a spiritual significance.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Marilyn Johnson, "The Artful Interior," in *In Pursuit of Beauty*, ed. Doreen Bolger Burke, 111 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986).

⁶¹ Jaffee, David. "America Comes of Age: 1876–1900". In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/amer/hd_amer.htm (April 2007); Stein, 23; *In Pursuit of Beauty* is an excellent resource for scholars interested in the American Aesthetic movement.



Figure 54: Aesthetic style bed, by Herter Brothers, New York. Collection of High Museum of Art.



*Figure 55: Silver and mixed metal pitcher, by WMC, New York, circa 1883. 8 inches high, 31.10 ounces. Engraved "De Molay Commandery No. 12 Louisville, Kentucky from E.L. Lindsley, Wm H. Carroll, Robt. McDonough, Lyman C. Parks, J.A. Ford San Francisco Triennial 1883". As cited in Christie's, *Important American Furniture, Silver, Prints, Folk Art and Decorative Art* (auction catalogue, New York: Christie's, January 21, 2000), 215.*

American collectors were influential in the development of an American Aesthetic style after 1876. These men and women, with names like Vanderbilt, Gardner, Hewitt, and Morgan, created Aesthetic interiors from their collections of both American and Japanese art. The 1886 sale of New Yorker Mary J. Morgan's art collection captured the imagination of the public through its size and scope (the catalogue alone was 300 pages). In addition to a superb collection of European fine and decorative art, including Minton faience, Dresden porcelain, and royal Viennese porcelain, the sale included Chinese and Japanese objects, silver, jade, twenty-one Japanese vases, bronze sculptures, ivory and wood carvings. Morgan's library was also sold. It included a number of early accounts of travel to Japan; Humbert's 1874 *Japan and the Japanese*, Trowson's 1859 *Personal Narrative of a Voyage of Japan*, and Alcock's 1863 *Capital of the Tycoon*. Her collection included American Japanese-inspired silver made by Tiffany and Gorham. Newspapers and magazines published articles about these collectors and their collections were exhibited at auction houses and shown in books, exposing ever larger audiences to Japanese art and American Aesthetic style.⁶²

Artists of the Aesthetic movement captured the role of these objects in the domestic interior. John Singer Sargent's painting, *Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, (Figure 56) illustrates that Americans who wished to be seen as cultured surrounded themselves with Eastern objects. This painting depicts four children in a domestic interior that contains at least five Eastern objects; two large Japanese

⁶² The collection sold by Tiffany was selected by Christopher Dresser; *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection* was a vanity publication and did not circulate widely; Marilyn Johnson, "The Artful Interior," 131; Benfey, 148.

ceramic vases, and two smaller vases, and an oriental rug. The 1883 portrait of Dora Wheeler (1856–1940) painted by William Merritt Chase (1849–1916), shown in Figure 57, is an excellent example of the American Aesthetic impulse to mix Japanese objects with American Japanese-inspired objects. Wheeler was an artist, textile designer, and the daughter of Candace Wheeler. This portrait was painted in her studio in front of a Japanese-inspired wall hanging produced by the company for which she worked. The textile design, which is Japanese-inspired, consists of flowers, birds and dragonflies arranged asymmetrically across its surface. A Chinese taboret used as a side table, a blue pottery bowl, and an Elizabethan-revival chair artfully arranged in front of the hanging are typical of an Aesthetic interior. Wheeler's attire is also Aesthetic-inspired.⁶³

⁶³ "The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit," Museum of Fine Art Boston Collections Database, <http://www.mfa.org>. While this portrait was painted in Paris, Sargent painted it for an American family that traveled between Europe and America; Doreen Bolger Burke, "Painters and Sculptors in a Decorative Age," in *In Pursuit of Beauty*, ed. Doreen Bolger Burke, 322 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986); For more on Candice Wheeler see Amelia Peck and Carol Irish, *Candace Wheeler: The Art and Enterprise of American Design, 1875–1900*. Exhibition catalogue. (New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001).



Figure 56: The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit, by John Singer Sargent, circa 1882. Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 57: Portrait of Dora Wheeler, by William Merritt Chase, circa 1883. Collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Figures 58, 59, and 60 are examples of the art filled Aesthetic interiors. The first, Figure 58, the Rockefeller bedroom from 4 West 54th Street, Manhattan, decorated in 1881 for Arabella Worsham in the Renaissance Revival style. The bedroom is the Anglo-Japanesque room. These rooms show the most luxurious type of Aesthetic interior, with custom wall hangings, curtains, woodwork, light-fixtures and carpeting. Figure 59 shows a more modest Aesthetic interior from a house built in 1886 in Grafton, MA. This bedroom mantel combines sunflower-motif tiles with faux-bamboo moldings.⁶⁴



Figure 58: Anglo-Japanesque Bedroom from 4 West 54th Street, Manhattan as installed at the Museum of the City of New York, 1939-2008. Now awaiting reinstallation at Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

⁶⁴ Arabella Worsham was later Mrs. Collis P. Huntington; then Mrs. Henry E. Huntington of San Marino, California. Brian Coleman, "Orientalism," *Old House Interiors*, December 2005 - January 2006, 77.



*Figure 59: Aesthetic interior, circa 1886. As cited in Brian Coleman, "Orientalism," *Old House Interiors*, December 2005 - January 2006, 75-90.*



Figure 60: Moorish Smoking Room, The Worsham-Rockefeller House, 4 West 54th Street Manhattan, built circa 1864–65, remodeled circa 1881. Collection of the Brooklyn Museum. Image courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum.

The Rockefeller Moorish Smoking room, seen in Figure 60, is another example of Aesthetic interior design in style and execution. The room is layered with Aesthetic elements, including an elaborate ceiling, a decorative cornice, exquisite fabric wall hangings, ebonized woodwork and mantle, and ebonized furniture with both Asian and Moorish inspired motifs.

Japanese art, first introduced to a small circle of artists and collectors in the 1860s, was steadily appropriated by both artistic culture and popular culture through the 1870s and 1880s. This led to the creation of some of the most beautiful works of fine and decorative art in America in the nineteenth century. While its importance faded in the 1890s, Japanese art and culture would remain appealing to Americans throughout the twentieth century as a signifier of worldliness and culture.

Section III: Silver in the American Dining Room, 1870-1890

The beauty of WMC's Japanese-inspired silver often eclipses the fact that this silver was used in American homes between 1870 and 1890 to express Americans' culture, values, and taste. WMC's Japanese-inspired silver designs were primarily for objects used in the dining room; water pitchers, centerpiece bowls, seafood bowls, spoon cups, and flatware. Extensive research at the New-York Historical Society, and online research in the digital collections of The New York Public Library, The Library of Congress, The Museum of Fine Arts Boston, The Museum of the City of New York and the Utah Historical Society attempted to uncover images that would document Aesthetic style silver in an American interior. Research located one photograph (Figure 62) of a dining room with what appears to be Aesthetic silver. This photograph allows for a greater understand of how this silver might have been used and displayed by consumers in the 1880s.

However, photographic evidence was limited as the 1870s – 1890s were a time when photography was still mostly the purview of professional photographers and the technology of photography was cumbersome and made interior and often low light photographs difficult. Research did uncover a number of photographs of Aesthetic dining rooms and interiors from 1890s through the turn of the century, a time when photography had grown in popularity and the technology was more accessible to the amateur photographer and so a greater number of photographs, including those of interiors, survive. These photographs, while taken ten or twenty years after the period in discussion, are still useful; these photographs both illustrate the importance of the dining room in the nineteenth century and help

contextualize where WMC's Japanese-inspired silver would have been used. Then, as now, even as interior decoration trends change, not every household changes its decoration with the whims of taste. In this way, photographs of an interior from 1910 can still reveal much about the earlier period to the modern observer.⁶⁵

The Aesthetic interiors of rich Americans, such as Louis Comfort Tiffany and Frederick Thompson, whose Aesthetic dining rooms can be seen in Figure 67 and Figure 69, have been the subject of much scholarship for obvious reasons; the interiors are beautiful and well documented. These interiors are helpful in understanding the cultural context in which WMC's Japanese-inspired silver might have been used. Both Tiffany and Thompson's dining rooms incorporate the display of silver and Asian decorative arts into their design. This indicates that the display of Japanese-inspired silver (as an indicator of status, about which more will be discussed later) was as important as whatever functional uses the silver might have had on the dining table.

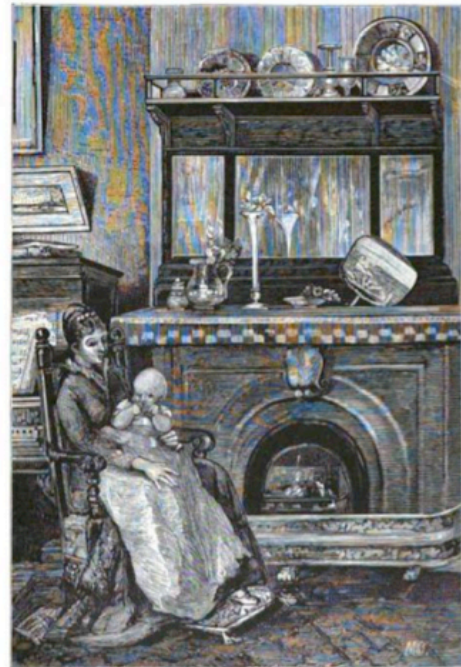
The Aesthetic interiors of more modest households are equally deserving of scholarship. Thanks to numerous publications aimed at educating housewives on the benefits of Aesthetic interiors, many upper middle class homes had elements appropriated from professionally designed Aesthetic interiors. Clarence Cook's *House Beautiful* (1877) was one particularly influential publication. These household manuals made the case that the quality of a family's surroundings affected the quality of their life; that an artistic interior could influence the character

⁶⁵ Domestic artifacts of everyday life mirror a society's values. Kenneth L. Ames, "Meaning in Artifacts: Hall Furnishings in Victorian America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 1 Summer (1978): 19-46.

of its occupants. Artistic, pleasing objects such as WMC's Japanese-inspired silver, had the power to inspire, while poorly designed, mass produced objects would degrade and defile. Figure 61 depicts two illustrations from *House Beautiful* that Cook used as positive examples of artistic interiors. Asian pottery is seen in the first and a Japanese fan and a variety of porcelain and silver is shown in the second.⁶⁶



A Cupboard of To-day.
No. 39.



An Every-day Mantel-piece, Simply Treated.
No. 45.

Figure 61: Illustrations from *House Beautiful* of cupboard and mantel with Japanese and Asian objects, circa 1878. As cited in Clarence Cook, *House Beautiful* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, 1878)105, 125.

⁶⁶ George A. Schastey & Co worked with Arabella Worsham, Christian Herter of Herter Brothers worked with Vanderbilt.

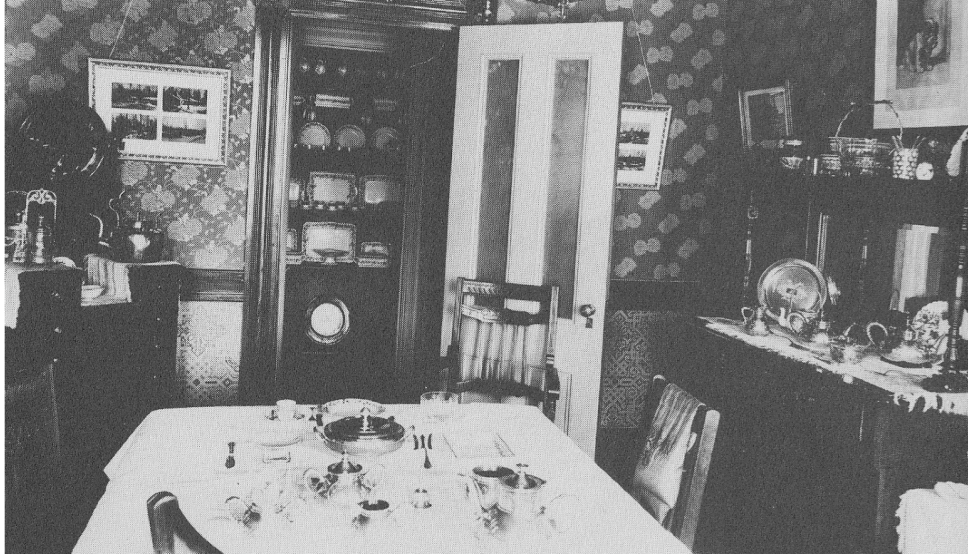


Figure 62: Photograph of dining room, photographer unknown, location unknown (New England), circa 1880s. As cited in Susan Williams, *Savory Suppers & Fashionable Feasts: Dining in Victorian America*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 56. The teapot in Figure 63 is similar in form to the teapot on the table in Figure 62. The squat silver teapot on the sideboard is a Japanese-inspired form.

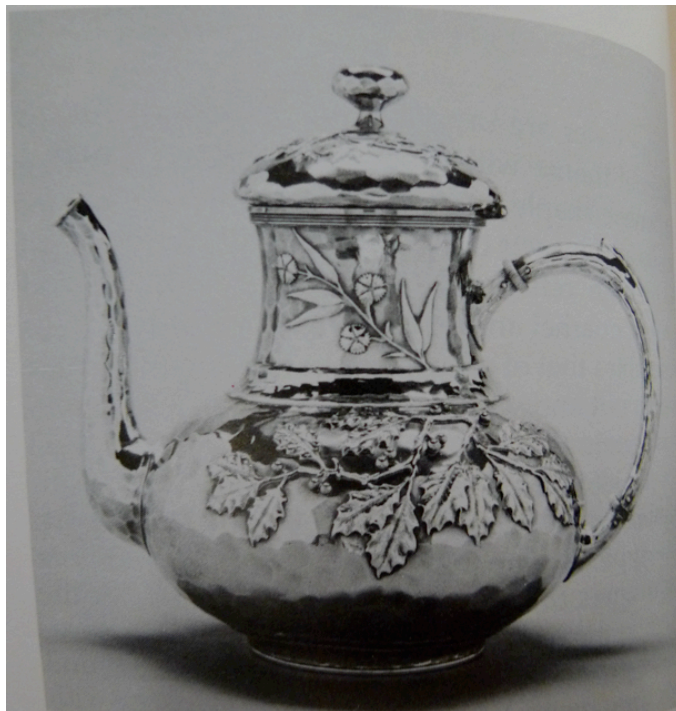


Figure 63: Silver coffeepot, by WMC, New York, circa 1880-1890. As cited in Kahren Jones Arbitman and Ellen Rosenthal, *Clayton* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 50.

The sale of silverware rose in America between 1870 and 1890. The continuing drop in the price of silver ore, as larger and larger quantities were found in the American West and as U.S. ceased to regulate silver prices, explains this rise in consumption. The *ad valorem* tariff of 1842 made silver produced by European firms prohibitively expensive, giving American silver producers the opportunity to create demand without foreign competition. While economic instability marked the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, personal prosperity increased between 1870 and 1900, and per capita income rose by one-third. Still, silverware was a luxury, not a necessity. The increase in demand for silver was driven in large part by its positive moral and artistic associations, which were expressed in a growing variety of available forms and motifs.⁶⁷ Indeed, silver was a particularly effective method to communicate status in the nineteenth century. Regina Lee Blaszczyk writes:

Late nineteenth-century Americans were accustomed to reading and deciphering the language of domestic material culture and determining others' socioeconomic class according to telling physical evidence, including the style of their furniture. In the aesthetic decades seeing was believing, possession mattered more than ever before, and style was evidence. Consumers strove to fill their homes with mass-market goods – machine-carved bedsteads, stamped silver plate, and pressed glassware – that simultaneously expressed individuality, betokened a social class's notions of refinement, and testified to participation in mainstream culture or industrial capitalism.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Venable, 123; *Ibid*, 73.

⁶⁸ Blaszczyk, 132.

For families looking to establish a morally beneficial, culturally sensitive, and refined dining room, the purchase and display of appropriate silver was critical.

Charles Venable writes in *Silver in America*:

All objects, while they physically exist only in the present, live spiritually in the mind of the viewer, where time and space are as malleable as silver. This power of object to bridge time makes them ideal carriers of the hopes and dreams of family or an entire people. Consequently, the passage of ideals and values from generation to generation is a seminal act, in which silverware has an important role. Silver is an ideal medium for gift giving. High in status as a precious metal and able to carry symbolic ornament, silverware has been presented to individual and groups and passed from generation to generation for millennia as “icons of continuity.”⁶⁹

In particular, silver helped women establish their identities in the domestic interior.

Silver objects, especially when given as gifts, were a link to the future. Silver objects were heirlooms expected to endure and be passed down to future generations.

Silver was also a matriarchal object, transferred from mother to daughter or from aunts to nieces. As such, a silver teapot carried not only tea between generations, but also values, history, and continuity. Venable writes, “throughout the ebb and flow of life, silver could also be given to mark milestones such as graduation, a sports victory, or anniversary. And at death, silver objects were typically passed to the next generation, gifts from the dead to the living.”⁷⁰

The dining room was a showcase where families (and especially women) displayed their social, cultural, and familial aspirations, as well as their status,

⁶⁹ Venable, 141.

⁷⁰ Venable, 141; For more on gift-giving and the meaning of objects see Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); the 1950s and 1960s practice of converting no longer fashionable silver soup tureens into lamps is proof of the desire to maintain a connection through silver objects used by family members in the past; for more on gift giving and silver see Susan Williams, *Savory Suppers & Fashionable Feasts* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 9.

political ideas, stylistic currency, and mastery of the tenets of feminine hospitality. Indeed, the dining room, where a family's private life was most often on display to guests, was consistently cited as one of the most important areas of family and social life in nineteenth-century literature.

Within the nineteenth-century dining room, the sideboard was an important piece of furniture. It functioned to serve food but it was also where the woman of the house displayed her silver and in doing so, exhibited her good taste, her family's wealth, worldliness and refinement. As awareness of museums and international exhibits grew, so too did the awareness of the power of display. Women of all social classes and financial means curated display of objects on sideboards, as a way of symbolizing the value of the objects to the family and also ensuring they would be seen by visitors to the house. This type of display can be seen in the dining room pictured in Figure 65 and in the dinner party in Figure 66. In Figure 65, the Barber family silver is displayed on the sideboard (including a water pitcher that is possibly Japanese-inspired) and on an additional side table. In Figure 66 a large sideboard displays the family's silver (large hollowware and candlesticks) and other goods, while the family is at the table eating (and using other silver on the table).⁷¹

The dining room seen in Figure 64 is an example of the type of dining room a reader of *House Beautiful* might have decorated. It shows an attempt at creating an Aesthetic effect, mixing traditional furniture and decorative objects (a glass vase, a French clock) with fifteen pieces of Japanese export porcelain, a set of Japanese

⁷¹ Williams, 52; Venable, 124. The culture of dining and the improvements in transportation and refrigeration, which led to a broader distribution of delicacies explains the intense specialization of silver goods in the 1880s and 1890s.

wind chimes, a Japanese-inspired tray and an American silver tea set. Of course, Japanese objects were not alone in representing cultural and stylistic ideas in the domestic interior. According to Kenneth Ames's research on iconography in nineteenth-century dining rooms the presence of the stuffed bird on the mantel is a symbol of the hunt and of bounty.⁷²



Figure 64: Photograph of interior of Bransford Apartments, by Shipler Commercial Photographers, circa 1915. Detail of Japanese export porcelain and wind chimes, A silver tea set displayed on built-in sideboard. Even when not in use, this tea set was on display. Collection of Utah State Historical Society, Shipler Commercial Photographers Collection, #15885.

⁷² Charles Venable in *Silver in America* writes about dining as control and as a showcase for one's education, control, refinement; Venable, 124-128; Kenneth L. Ames, *Death in the Dining Room* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 44-96.



Detail of Japanese export porcelain and wind chimes, A silver tea set displayed on built-in sideboard.
Even when not in use, this tea set was on display.



Figure 65: Photograph of Barber house, Frances Benjamin Johnston, Washington, D.C, circa 1890. Collection of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. LOT 11727 [P&P]



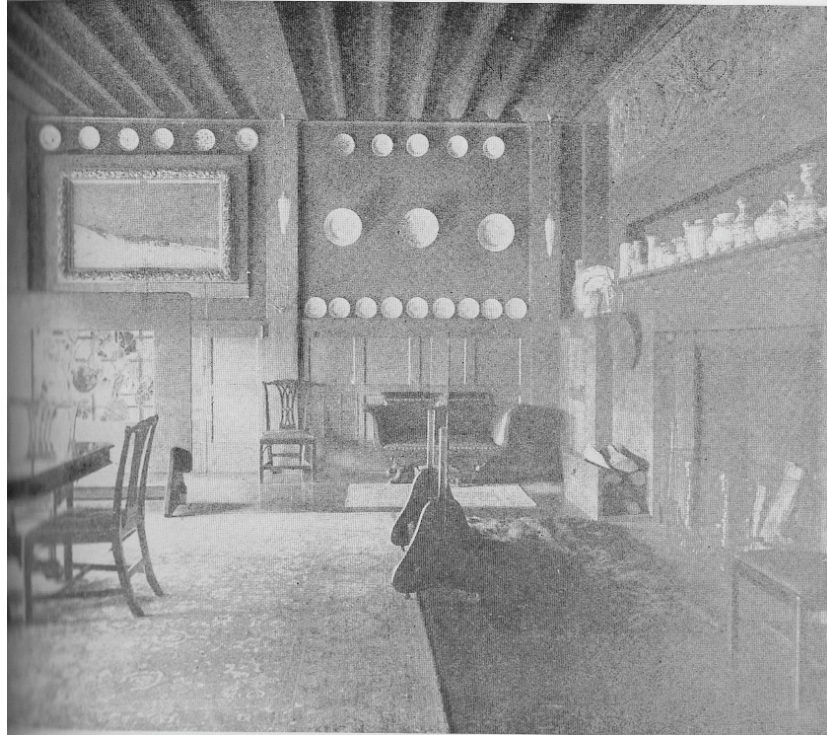
Figure 66: Photograph of dinner for twenty, photographer unknown, circa 1913-1916. Collection of the Museum of the City of New York, 93.1.1.3814.



Figure 67: Photograph of party looking at photographs, by Wilbur Wright, Dayton, Ohio, circa 1899. Collection of Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. LC-W85-63 [P&P]



Figure 68: Photograph of interior of Antone Lichter Residence, by Shipler Commercial Photographers, circa 1906. Collection of Utah Historical Society Digital Archives, Shipler Commercial Photographers Collection, #2249



*Figure 69: Photograph of dining room, Louis Comfort Tiffany apartment, northwest corner of Madison Avenue and East Seventy-second Street. Designed by McKim, Mead & White and Louis Comfort Tiffany, New York, 1882-1885. As cited in Robert A.M. Stern et. al, *New York 1880*, (New York: The Monacelli Press,1999), 627.*

The decoration of the dining room in Figure 67 and the entry hall in Figure 68 are not the work of a professionals, but both interior have a mixture of Western and Eastern elements, including a Japanese paper lantern and landscape in Figure 67 and a Japanese fan, an Asian scroll painting, a number of Western-style landscapes, in addition to a rattan bench and a full bookshelf in Figure 68. Much as Edward Darley Boit's Japanese vases in John Singer Sargent's painting were meant to communicate his refinement, education and wealth, so too are these few Asian or Japanese goods meant to communicate the culture and worldliness of the owners.

Modern scholarship on nineteenth-century silver does not typically focus on both objects and their producers and the culture in which these objects were consumed. However, it is a worthwhile exercise to consider WMC's Japanese-

inspired silver in the context in which it was purchased and used. If in the 1870s and 1880s, as Blaszczyk suggests, seeing was believing and style was evidence, then stylish Japanese-inspired silver played a critical role in creating identity in American homes and dining rooms.

Section IV: Nature and the American Consumption of Japanese-Inspired Goods

Section II of this essay established the link between WMC's Japanese-inspired silver and the American Aesthetic movement, and explored the roots of American interest in Japanese objects. Section III established that this silver was largely designed to be used in the dining room, where it displayed a family's style and values. This section hypothesizes that Americans brought Japanese-inspired silver into their homes for another, less obvious reason: a conflicting desire to both revere and domesticate nature.

Nature had both nationalistic and spiritual meanings for Americans, as intellectuals and artists routinely linked nature with the spiritual and the patriotic. As the nation had expanded its geographic reach in the middle of the nineteenth century, lithography and photography illustrated the new American territories. These images, carefully selected by editors of periodicals like *Picturesque America*, gave urban Americans a sanitized and often romanticized view of a rugged American landscape. These images were powerful and encouraged movements to settle the American West, to preserve national parks, and to create city parks. In 1869, the Museum of Natural History was founded in New York. In 1872, Yellowstone Park was established.⁷³

⁷³ I suggest American silver was used in a patriotic fashion because this silver was made of American silver ore and transformed by American artists. Consumers would have been aware of this "American" quality to these objects. Illustrated magazines included *Harper's Weekly*, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*, *Appleton's Journal*, *New England Magazine*; Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6; Jaffee, David. "America Comes of Age: 1876-1900."; Sue Rainey, *Creating Picturesque America* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1994), 23.

Spirituality and nature were often linked in the art and intellectual discourse of nineteenth century America. Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, and Frederic Edwin Church believed that nature in the form of the American landscape was a manifestation of God, and this attitude persisted throughout the late nineteenth century. City-dwelling Americans, increasingly removed from nature, yearned for a deeper and spiritual connection to nature.

Of course, Americans were not alone in their interest in the natural world. Many urbanized and industrialized European countries experienced a similar fascination with nature and natural history in the nineteenth-century. The British Victorians were particularly interested in natural history and collected rocks, minerals, shells, and ferns.⁷⁴ The British author and botanist Margaret Plues connected the study of nature and God, echoing American sentiments about nature:

Botanists living in the country enjoy the privilege of observing ferns in their natural habitat all the year round, but those who reside in town only enjoy that privilege for a brief period, and at rare intervals. But these may obviate such disadvantages by bringing plants home and domesticating them in a Wardian case; thus they can observe their structure and growth even more accurately than the country botanist, and become thoroughly acquainted with their every peculiarity. Fern lovers, whether they regard ferns scientifically, grouping them with their natural surroundings in well contrived artificial ferneries, or cherishing them in conservatories and Wardian cases, must be lovers of nature; and as to love nature is to love God's work, and to study nature is to observe the mind of God, such love and such study must exercise an ennobling and purifying effect on the human soul.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Barbara T. Gates, "Introduction: Why Victorian Natural History," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 35, no.2 (2007): 539.

⁷⁵ Margaret Plues, *British Ferns* (London: Lovell Reeve & Co, 1866), 3.

Americans' interest in the natural world was, however, imbued with an intensity particular to the United States. Urban life in particular revolved around activities inside the home as opposed to a country life that revolved around activities outside the home. Indeed, as Celia Betsky writes, "Urbanization, with its physical and human squalor, and industrialization and its discontents caused much of American culture to move inside and turn inward." It is no surprise then, that Japanese-inspired decorative and fine art, so full of references to nature and natural motifs, was welcomed in American homes both for its exotic qualities and its obvious invocation of nature.⁷⁶

Nature is depicted as harmonious and safe in WMC's Japanese-inspired silver. The images of nature were peaceful and not at all wild. Animals, when they are shown, are non-threatening small fish, birds and crabs. This silver presented a vision of the natural world that appealed to urbanized Americans' nostalgia for nature. This yearning for nature, and the desire to domesticate it, can be seen in the growth of conservatories in the nineteenth century (both in American and Britain), and in the incorporation of naturalistic motifs in decorative arts including silver and wallpaper. The conservatory built by Mark Twain (1835-1910), shown in Figure 70, in his residence at Nook Farm in Hartford, Connecticut was an expression of his interest in the natural world. His conservatory was decorated with Japanese lanterns, a clear example of the connection between Japan, nature and the American domestic interior. The dining room in Figure 71 is attached to a conservatory,

⁷⁶ Celia Betsky, "Inside the Past: The Interior and the Colonial Revival in American Art and Literature, 1860-1914," quoted in *In Pursuit of Beauty*, ed. Doreen Bolger Burke, 326 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986); Marx, 6.

creating a room where the act of dining was done in a sanitized and controlled natural setting.⁷⁷

Kenneth Ames makes the case that the dining room was a shrine to the notion of man's dominion over nature – in particular Ames examines carved wooden sideboards depicting dead fowl and harvested vegetation. The presence of taxidermied game in dining rooms in Figure 64 and 66 and in the painting in Figure 72 are another way in which nature was depicted in the dining room. Japanese-inspired silver certainly had a role to play in reinforcing these ideas about human dominion over nature.⁷⁸

The painting *The Contest for the Bouquet: The Family of Robert Gordon in Their New York Dining-Room* by Seymour Joseph Guy (1824–1910), seen in Figure 72, is an excellent illustration of a mid nineteenth-century dining room, complete with silver on display on a sideboard, mounted game on the wall and domesticated nature in a small Wardian case. At least twenty landscape paintings are displayed in the room, literally covering the walls with depictions of nature, and effectively bringing the outdoors, now safely domesticated, inside.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Johnson, "The Artful Interior," 112.

⁷⁸ Ames, 44-96.

⁷⁹ The Wardian case, invented by Dr Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward (1791–1868) was popular in the mid 19th-century in both the United States and the United Kingdom.



Figure 70: Photograph of library and conservatory, Mark Twain House, Hartford, Conn. Designed by Edward Tuckerman Potter, circa 1874 and decorated by Associated Artists, New York, 1881. As cited in Doreen Bolger Burke et. al, *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Rizzoli, 1986), 113.

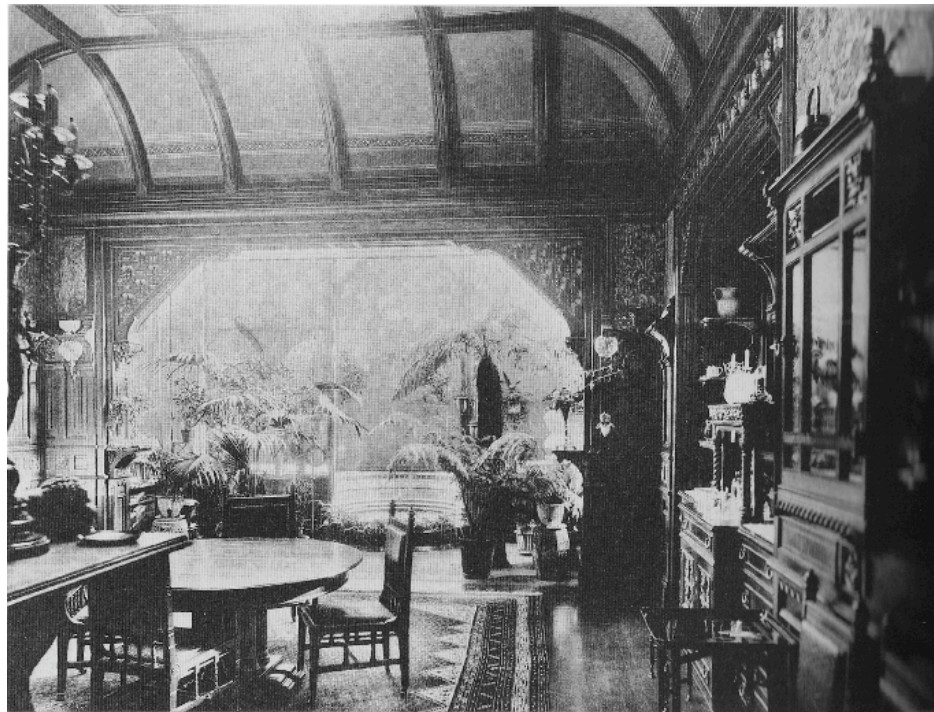


Figure 71: Photograph of dining room and conservatory, Frederick F. Thompson house, 283 Madison Avenue, between East Fortieth and East Forty-First Streets. Designed by McKim, Mead & White, New York, 1879-1881. As cited in Robert A.M. Stern et. al, *New York 1880*, (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999), 620.



Figure 72: The Contest for the Bouquet: The Family of Robert Gordon in Their New York Dining-Room, by Seymour Joseph Guy, circa 1866. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

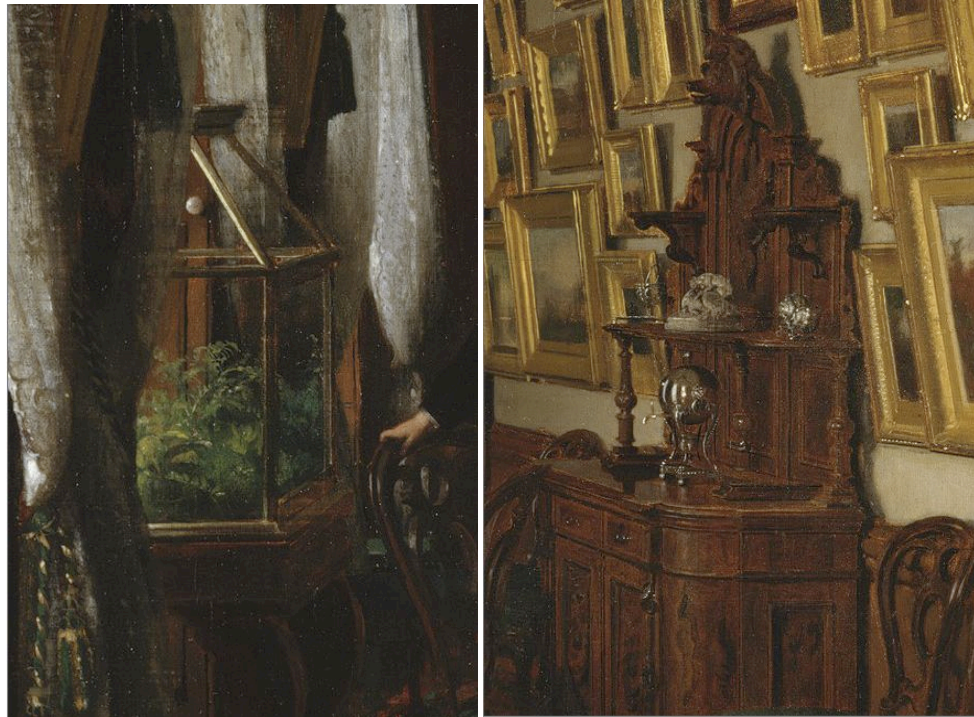


Figure 73: Details of the Wardian case and sideboard.

Japanese-inspired silver, landscape paintings and Wardian cases were not the only places where nature was domesticated in the dining room. Stuffed and mounted birds and wallpaper designs incorporating images of wildlife or the hunt, both commonly found in American dining rooms, expressed a human-centered vision that suggested man had dominion over nature. The dining room in Figure 76 again shows nature domesticated inside the domestic interior — the room is decorated with plants, an illustration of a polar bear hangs over the mantel, and a wallpaper design incorporating a grouse-like bird.⁸⁰



Figure 74: Photograph of interior of the Thomas Kearns Residence, by Shipler Commercial Photographers, undated. Collection of Utah Historical Society Digital Archives, Shipler Commercial Photographers Collection, #16429.

⁸⁰ Ames, 71.



Figure 75: Detail of wallpaper from Kearns Residence.



Figure 76: Interior of the Dr. W. M. Waddell Residence, by Shipler Commercial Photographers, circa 1917. Collection of the Utah Historical Society Digital Archives, Shipler Commercial Photographers Collection, #18548.

While Americans' relationship with nature was complex in the nineteenth-century, there is no doubt that images of nature were used in the dining room in the form of landscape painting, prints, Japanese-inspired silver,

wallpaper of various designs and the presence of plants and terrariums. This interest in nature and natural motifs, whatever the source, at least partially explains the market for WMC's Japanese-inspired silver that developed in the nineteenth-century.

Conclusion

Beginning in 1860 the American silver industry stood at the intersection of technological, social and cultural currents that altered its course by 1890. Falling silver ore prices and steam powered manufacturing processes such as rolling and spinning allowed silver manufacturers to produce large quantities of silver objects for a growing consumer audience. The opening of Japan, an emerging Aesthetic response to industrialization and the opening of American West informed consumers of silver. For American artists and critics looking for art, both fine and decorative, that could be called national, sincere, and original, the Japanese-inspired silver of Tiffany, Gorham and WMC offered exactly that: an American style of silver that was universally recognized as not having been derived from European models. This silver also provides us with clues about nineteenth century American taste, ideas about morality and relationship with nature.

Whiting Manufacturing Company, propelled by the business acumen of its partners and the quality of its designers, rose from among a community of unremarkable Attleboro jewelry manufacturers to become a major producer of Aesthetic silver alongside Tiffany and Gorham. While Tiffany and Gorham were larger, more established manufacturers, WMC and its designers were uncommonly successful in translating Japanese and naturalistic motifs, which had captured the imaginations of artists, collectors and consumers alike, into beautiful and useful silver objects.

Despite the commercial setbacks of a devastating factory fire in 1875 and the departure of key principals and designers in 1880, WMC produced original designs

that remain among the best examples of Aesthetic movement Japanese-inspired silver. The discovery of eighteen designers and a variety of other design-related employees supports the thesis that WMC employed a number of designers throughout its history. This research illuminates the story of WMC and brings to life how these designs were made.

For as much as has been discovered, a great deal of research remains to be done. WMC's design library is a rich source of potential information about the firm's design influences and practices. More biographical information about individual designers still needs to be found. Given the number of periodicals published in the nineteenth century, there is still periodical research that would no doubt shed light on WMC's commissions and employees. In particular, the art periodicals such as the *Art Amateur* remain to be thoroughly read for references to WMC. WMC's exquisite line of yachting trophies and presentation silver also deserves further research and scholarship. The study of the use of Japanese-inspired silver in the dining room would be greatly aided by further photographic evidence and more research remains to find this type of image.

Finally, as much as WMC's story is about the beautiful line of Japanese-inspired silver it produced, it is also about the business conditions that allowed the firm to expand from a small firm in 1866 to one of the largest in 1893. WMC's rise and decline are part of the story of the industrialization of the silver industry in the nineteenth-century.

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Appendix A: Whiting Manufacturing Company Designers and Craftsmen

Whiting Manufacturing Company Designers

Research for this essay identified the names of eighteen designers, seven chasers and six modelers or engravers associated with WMC. Among these, the research uncovered biographical and other substantive details for nine. Of course, this provides ample opportunity for further research on the remaining names and to identify additional WMC employees.

William Dean Whiting

William Dean Whiting (1815-1891) was the founder and primary designer of WMC through the 1870s. Given that Whiting was the head designer at Tiffet & Whiting, it can be assumed that he continued in this role, at least initially, at WMC. He received four patents for improvements to WMC's manufacturing processes, including a new variety of perfume bottle in 1873 and a method for casting silver spoons in 1874. In contrast, other WMC designers, including Charles Osborne and Frederick Whitehouse, received design patents for flatware patterns.

Whiting left WMC in 1880 and returned to Attleboro, Massachusetts to form his ninth entrepreneurial venture, the F.M. Whiting Company. Whiting launched the company with his son, Frank Mortimer Whiting, who himself worked at WMC as a salesperson before leaving in 1878 to form Holbrook, Whiting and Albee, a manufacturer of plated jewelry and novelties. That Whiting chose to leave WMC – a business he had founded and that bore his name – rather than bringing his son into the firm as a partner, suggests financial or partnership distress. Over time, Whiting

had taken on so many partners in the business that his ownership share of the firm was likely to have been diluted, reducing his influence as well as his share of profits.

William Whiting provided F.M Whiting Company with design and manufacturing expertise specific to silver flatware, hollowware and novelties. Several patents issued to William Whiting after 1880, including an 1883 method for manufacturing thimbles, demonstrate his continued activity as a designer after leaving WMC.⁸¹

Charles Osborne

Charles Osborne (1848-1920) is a silver designer known for his work with WMC, but more widely recognized for his later association with Tiffany. Osborne, who lived in Brooklyn, New York, began working for WMC while still a student at the National Academy of Design in New York City. His early association with WMC can be definitively dated to an 1869 patent for the design of a sterling silver spoon. WMC officially hired Osborne in 1871.

⁸¹ William Dean Whiting founded the F. M. Whiting Company with his son Frank Mortimer Whiting upon his return to Attleboro in 1880 and continued to be involved in the business until his death in 1891. The F.M Whiting Company produced a variety of sterling silver novelties and flatware. Frank Mortimer Whiting had joined WMC in 1869, as an assistant in the office in Attleboro and then later in the New York office. He later become a traveling salesman for WMC and in 1878 organized the firm of Holbrook, Whiting and Albee, which manufactured plated jewelry and novelties in the original WMC factory in what was now North Attleboro, MA. Cutler, 1878. Frank Mortimer Whiting was a businessman, who at one point was even a director of the North Attleboro National Bank, and was not trained as designer. Cutler, 1878. The fact that he was not brought into The WMC as a partner suggests that there was some barrier to his entry, whether a concern on the part of the existing partners not wanting to diminish their own share of the profits, a lack of capital or perhaps even a lack of desire to join on Frank Whiting's part. F.M.Whiting & Company expanded from the production of plated jewelry to the production of sterling silver goods when William Dean Whiting came on as a partner in 1880, suggesting that in some way, William Dean Whiting was influencing the design process at F.M.Whiting & Company; Many of the designers who had patents assigned to the WMC while the firm was in Attleboro did not live in Attleboro which suggests that designers did not always live in the same city as the firms they designed for; William Dean Whiting, "Manufacture of Sewing Thimbles" (U.S. Patent 273,924 filed October 29, 1881); William Dean Whiting, "Manufacture of Spoons" (U.S. Patent 152, 266 filed March 13, 1874); William Dean Whiting, "Improvement in Perfume Bottles" (U.S. Patent 149,017 filed July 7, 1873); W.D.Whiting, W.M.Cowan & C.E. Bulkeley, "Bottles for Perfumery" (U.S. Patent 149,018 filed July 8, 1873).

Osborne was a prolific designer at WMC and research for this essay in the United States Patent and Trademark Office archives identified 34 patents issued to Osborne, 33 of which were assigned to WMC. Osborne patented 21 flatware patterns between 1869 and 1914, including a Japanese-inspired flatware design in 1874 called, simply, “Japanese.” He also patented six ornamental border designs, two hairbrush back designs, a teapot, a match-safe and hinge, as well as a new method for perforating metal.⁸²



Figure 77: Design for a teapot, patent number D22369, by Charles Osborne, New York, circa 1893. The feet, with a wide curved paw-like design, are to found on a number of objects manufactured by WMC, suggesting that these objects could be attributed to Osborne.

⁸² For a more through discussion of Charles Osborne and his designs at Tiffany and Company see John Loring, *Magnificent Tiffany Silver* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 154; Charles Osborne, “Handles for Spoons and Forks” (U.S. Patent 7,909 filed June 20, 1874); Charles Osborne, “Design for Spoon & Fork” (U.S. Patent 3,656 filed September 20, 1869); Charles Osborne, “Tea Pot” (U.S. Patent 22,369 filed April 25, 1893).



*Figure 78: Silver bowl, by WMC, New York, circa 1890-1900. 11 ¼ inches high, 37 ounces. As cited in Christie's, *Important American Furniture, Folk Art, Silver and Prints* (auction catalogue, New York: Christie's January 20-21, 2005). Lot 76. The paw feet on this bowl could indicate Osborne designed it, probably in the 1890s. The presence of seaweed in this bowl, a known motif in his design work, may suggest that Osborne designed WMC's line of realistic seashell bowls and water pitchers.*

In 1874 Osborne competed unsuccessfully for the Bryant Vase commission. The Bryant Vase was to be a testimonial vase commemorating the poet William Cullen Bryant. The competition was an important event in nineteenth-century silver design, and the leading firms all participated. Tiffany produced the winning design, submitted by their head designer James H. Whitehouse. Although Osborne's design for WMC's entry was not selected, the competition raised his profile. Tiffany later recruited him in 1878. Tiffany did not offer Osborne an employment contract and he does not appear as an employee in the employment records in the Tiffany archives. He apparently worked for nine years on a verbal understanding alone, an unusual arrangement in a competitive industry. However, Osborne's papers indicate his

strong desire to work under Edward C. Moore (1827-1891), then general manager and designer for Tiffany's silverware division. By all accounts Osborne was successful at Tiffany and produced beautiful work there, as seen in Figure 26 and 27.

In 1888, the WMC management wooed Osborne back with a four-year contract, a high salary, the title of superintendent and stock options. While he did produce exquisite silver for WMC after 1887, seen in Figure 79 and 80, the overall production of the firm under his supervision after 1887 was far more subdued and more traditional than was his work at Tiffany in the 1880s. This decline in the quality of silver designs may be a result of Osborne taking on more managerial work (he was promoted to Vice President in 1905) and doing less actual design work.⁸³

⁸³ Osborne Papers 91.23.47, Downs Collection, Winterthur Library; *First Annual Report of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration of the State of New York*, 586.



*Figure 79: Silver yacht prize tankard, by WMC, New York, circa 1899. 12 inches high, 145 ounces, 15 dwt. As cited in Sotheby's, *Symbols of Excellence - The Victor Niederhoffer Collection of Trophy and Presentation Silver*, (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, December 15, 1998), 35. Stamped 5171 on bottom, which confirms the date of manufacture to 1899. The presence of signature Osborne design elements - the paw feet, sea horse and pearling on the lid - suggest that Osborne was responsible for the design.*



*Figure 80: Silver punch bowl, by WMC, New York, circa 1900-1902. 12 1/8 inches in diameter, 66 ounces. Stamped on base 5504, which dates this bowl to 1900-1902. As cited in Sotheby's, *Symbols of Excellence - The Victor Niederhoffer Collection of Trophy and Presentation Silver*, (auction catalogue, New York: Sotheby's, December 15, 1998), 37. The meandering seaweed design of this bowl indicates Charles Osborne may have designed it. The oysters are similar to those in the design of the tray in Figure 29, which is also attributed to Osborne.*

Edwin Davis French

Edwin Davis French (1851-1906) was a designer and chief of the engraving department at WMC from 1869-1894, with the exception of the years 1881-1883, when he was a designer at the F.M. Whiting Company. French's biography, published in 1908, discusses his tenure at Whiting; however, published literature in the field has not since made note of his role at the firm.

French was born in Attleboro and attended Brown University for two years before joining WMC. He was curious, well read and, in addition to his skills as a designer and engraver, he had a terrific facility with languages.⁸⁴



Figure 81: Silver bowl, by WMC, New York, circa 1888. 3.2 inches high, 13.4 ounces. Engraved with date July 4, 1888. Private collection. Image courtesy of Heritage Auction. Stamped on the base 1543M. The number 1543 dates to 1884, but the letter 'M' indicates thirteen of these were made after that point. This explains the later date. Given the similarities in design to the vase in Figure 32, this design may be attributable to Edwin D. French.

⁸⁴Brainerd, 7. In a biography of French, his wife writes: "In school and college he had shown a fondness for languages. Indeed he was a natural linguist. A leaf from a copy of Dante was often on his bench before him for reference from time to time in the intervals of his work and he read the Divine Comedy as he walked Broadway with the jangle and commotion of the traffic about him. His bookplate records his taste in the classics Dante Virgil and Lucretius standing side by side with Emerson whose serenity he shared. Volapuk [an artificial language] very naturally attracted him and for years he held an extensive correspondence in this language attending conventions and contributing to journals devoted to it."



Figure 82: Pair of silver creamers with floral repoussé, by WMC, New York, circa 1883-1888. 7 1/8 inches high, 54.2 ounces. Private collection. Image courtesy of Heritage Auction. Stamped on base with 1225K. Number 1225 dates to 1883, but the “K” may indicate it was made between 1883 and 1888. The dense floral imagery may indicate Edwin D. French designed these.



Figure 83: Silver tea set, by WMC, New York, circa 1882. The teapot is 3.5 inches high, the set weights 18.1 ounces. Image courtesy of Spencer Marks. Edwin D. French may have designed this tea set, given stylistic similarities of the dense ornamentation in the vase shown in Figure 32.

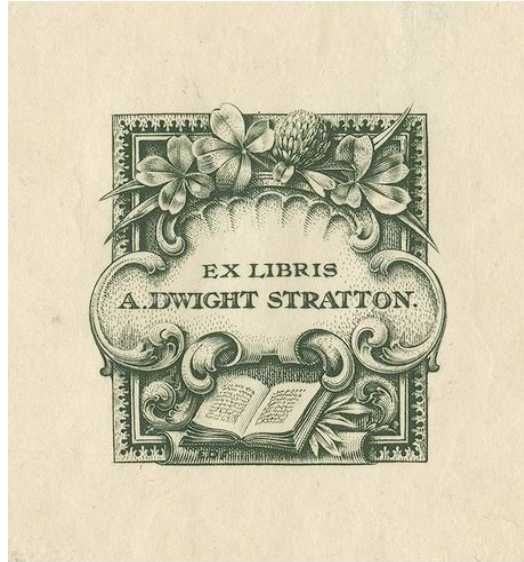


Figure 84: Bookplate, by Edwin Davis French, New York, circa 1890. Collection of Pratt Institute Libraries, Special Collections 1205 (sc01442).



Figure 85: Silver match safe, by WMC, New York, undated. Private collection. Edwin D. French may have designed this as the design is similar to the bookplate illustrated in Figure 84.

Frank Mauser

Frank Mauser (d. 1908) was employed as superintendent by WMC for an indeterminate period, but most likely after 1890. His obituary notes he was a superintendent at WMC but does not provide a specific date. An 1891 patent establishes that he was employed by WMC in the 1890s. There are similarities between objects made by the Frank Mauser & Company and WMC objects, as seen in

comparing Figure 86 with Figure 87. Mauser began to manufacture sterling silver goods in North Attleboro in July 1887. His history prior to 1887 is unknown – one hypothesis is that he was the superintendent at WMC between 1878 and 1887. However, given confusion about his role in his own firm in the 1890s, further research is needed to establish a timeline of his life and designs, both for WMC and the Frank Mauser & Company.⁸⁵



Figure 86: Silver coffee pot, by WMC, New York, circa 1875-1890. 9 ¼ inches high, 15 ounces, 18 dwt. Collection of Yale University. The design is similar to a bowl manufactured by Frank Mauser in Figure 85.

⁸⁵ Mauser witnessed a patent received by Charles Osborne in 1891; *Brass World* 4, no. 5, May (1908), 179; "Dies As He Plans For His Funeral," *New York Times*, April 11, 1908; Rainwater and Redfield, 4th ed., p. 208, states that in March 1888, one Frank O. Coombs became a partner. He was designer and chaser for the growing concern. A note in the *Jewelers Circular* (1-6-1897) says that the "Mauser Mfg. Co., New York, is successor to Frank Mauser & Co." In 1903, Mauser Mfg. Co. merged with the Hayes & McFarland Company of Mount Vernon, NY, and the Robert Williams Silver Company of Providence, RI, to form the Mt. Vernon Company Silversmiths, Inc., which was purchased by Gorham in 1913. Confusion over his role in his own company stems from a reference in the October 11, 1893 *Jeweler's Circular* states "Frank Mauser, formerly superintendent of the Mauser Mfg Co, resigned from position Thursday and severed his connection with the company."



Figure 87: Silver bowl, by Frank Mauser, New York, circa 1887-1903. 6 inches in diameter. Private collection. Image courtesy of Leonce Antiques. Given similarities between these bowls and the coffee pot in Figure 85, it is possible Mauser designed the coffee pot.

Frank R. Capron

Frank R. Capron (d. 1898) began as an apprentice at WMC and moved to New York City with the firm in 1875. He was a witness to Charles Osborne's 1875 patent, No. 8,069, a design for fork and spoon handles, indicating he worked in the design department and was possibly already a designer at WMC. He left WMC in 1880 to work for the F. M. Whiting & Company as superintendent, where he remained until his death in 1898. The title of superintendent was one of importance, as it was the position that William Dean Whiting had in his own firm in 1866 and one that Charles Osborne had in 1887 when he returned to WMC from Tiffany. Frank R. Capron was most likely a highly skilled craftsman with much design

experience to merit promotion to superintendent. Unfortunately no archival evidence exists that would allow the attribution of silver made between 1875 and 1880 to him.⁸⁶

Frederick Whitehouse

Frederick Whitehouse was a silver designer, based in Brooklyn, who worked for WMC in 1869. He was awarded a design patent in 1869 for a flatware pattern assigned to WMC. Frederick Whitehouse was employed by Tiffany in 1897 and received a design patent for a badge in that year. He was awarded a design patent for a finger ring as an individual in 1914, which indicates that he may have been a freelancer at this point. He was also awarded a design patent for a design for a badge with Tiffany as the assignee in 1917. It is unknown if Whitehouse continued to design for WMC after 1869. The 1875/76 and the 1877/78 Brooklyn City Directories list him as a designer. James H. Whitehouse (1833-1902), the English-trained designer and head of the Tiffany chasing department, who designed the winning entry in the Bryant Vase competition, is listed in the Brooklyn City Directories as living next door to Frederick Whitehouse. This may indicate that they were related. They certainly worked together at Tiffany; Frederick Whitehouse witnessed a patent issued to James H. Whitehouse at Tiffany in 1886.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *The Jeweler's Circular*, October 26, 1898.

⁸⁷ George T. Lain, ed., *The Brooklyn City and Business Directory 1875/76 & 1877/78* (New York: Lain & Company); James H. Whitehouse, "Design for a Badge" (U.S. Patent 16,647 filed April 20, 1886.); F. Whitehouse, "Design for a spoon" (U.S. Patent 3391 filed February 23, 1869); F. Whitehouse, "Design for a badge" (U.S. Patent 27, 201 filed March 31, 1897); F. Whitehouse, "Design for a finger ring" (U.S. Patent 45,247 filed November 12, 1913); F. Whitehouse, "Design for a badge" (U.S. Patent 51, 248 filed July 11, 1917).

Enos F. Marble and Reuel W. Glidden

Enos F. Marble and Reuel W. Glidden were Attleboro, Massachusetts-based designers for WMC. In 1873, they were issued a patent assigned to WMC for a design for smelling bottle stoppers.⁸⁸

George A. Glahn and Gurdon W. Hull

George A. Glahn and Gurdon W. Hull were Wallingford, Connecticut-based presumably freelance designers for WMC. In 1891, they were issued a patent assigned to WMC for a design for a spoon or fork. Gurdon W. Hull was a partner in the Connecticut firm Simpson, Hall, Miller & Co in the 1860s.⁸⁹

George E. Ball

George E. Ball was a Stratford, Connecticut based designer for WMC in the 1910s and 1920s. He received seven patents assigned to WMC between 1916 and 1923.⁹⁰

Harold H. Hamilton

Harold H. Hamilton was a Bridgeport, Connecticut based designer for WMC in the 1910s. He received a patent for a handle for a spoon or fork in 1916.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Enos F. Marble & Reuel W. Glidden, "Smelling -Bottle Stoppers" (U.S. Patent 127, 938 filed January 15, 1873).

⁸⁹ George A. Glahn & Gurdon W. Hull, "Design for a spoon or fork" (U.S. Patent 21,169 filed October 19, 1891).

⁹⁰ G. E. Ball, "Body of a Teapot" (U.S. Patent 50,563 filed February 10, 1917).

⁹¹ Harold H. Hamilton, "Handle for a spoon or fork" (U.S. Patent 48,719 filed July 22, 1915.)

Adolph H. Reimherr

Adolph H. Reimherr was a Bridgeport, Connecticut based designer for WMC in the 1920s. He is listed in the firm's design ledgers and received a design patent for a spoon handle assigned to WMC in 1920.⁹²

P. W. Bremen

P.W. Bremen's name is noted in the WMC design ledgers, in the same manner as Adolph H. Reimherr. This may indicate that he was also a designer for the firm. Research has been unable to locate any information about Bremen. He did not receive any design patents.⁹³

Paul Witteck

Paul Witteck worked as a designer for WMC from 1882 - 1885. In 1885 he left WMC to design for the Butler Rubber Company, where he designed novelties like combs. Given the nature of his designs for the Butler Rubber Company, it would seem that his work for WMC was probably designing smaller novelties.⁹⁴

James T. Hunter

James T. Hunter (d. 1952) was employed as a designer at WMC from 1886 to 1891. He left the firm in 1891 to work for Gorham Manufacturing Company. In 1894 he opened his own firm to manufacture silver flatware. He also did repair work for the

⁹² A. Reimherr, "Handle for a spoon" (U.S. Patent 54 452 filed March 7, 1919; Gorham Company Records, John Hay Library, Brown University).

⁹³ Gorham Company Records, John Hay Library, Brown University.

⁹⁴ *History of Morris County New Jersey, Vol II* (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1914); Paul Witteck, "Comb" (U.S. Patent 22,151 filed December 14, 1892).

Brooklyn Museum. Hunter did not receive any design patents and little is known about his design work.⁹⁵

John H. Barber

Research has also shown that John H. Barber (1852-1888) was connected to WMC in the 1870s. He was a silversmith who had been apprenticed to Gorham Manufacturing Company. In November 1875, when he had completed his apprenticeship and become a journeyman silversmith, he joined WMC just as they were moving to New York City. He moved with the firm to New York, where he was employed as a foreman of the manufacturing department. In 1878, he left WMC to work at Tiffany, again as a foreman, and stayed there until 1881 when he left the silver manufacturing business altogether. It seems probable that Osborne brought Barber, his foreman, with him to Tiffany.⁹⁶

Hudson B. Britten

Britten was superintendent at WMC in 1897 and witness to a patent in 1898. While he did not receive any patents, he was presumably involved with design.⁹⁷

Robert Wright Higgins

⁹⁵ "James T. Hunter, Silversmith, 81," *New York Times*, January 7, 1952.

⁹⁶ Henry R. Caufield, *Illustrated History of Pawtucket, Central Fall and Vicinity*, (Pawtucket, R.I.: Pawtucket Gazette and Chronicle, 1897), 243.

⁹⁷ "Attempted Suicide," *The New York Times*, July 21, 1897.

Robert Wright Higgins (b.1874 - d.?) was superintendent at WMC in 1917 while the firm was located in Bridgeport, CT. While he did not receive any patents, he was presumably involved with design.⁹⁸

William Rittenmeyer

William Rittenmeyer worked for WMC as a silversmith and designer in the 1880s.⁹⁹

Whiting Manufacturing Chasers, Engravers and Medalists

Lewis W. Goerck

Lewis W. Goerck (d. 1888) was a talented chaser and foreman of the chasing department at WMC from 1871 to 1888. According to his obituary in the New York Times, "The fine repousee work on many prize cups and trophies was executed by him." The vase in Figure 32 is an example of his work and is signed by him, a highly unusual occurrence.¹⁰⁰

Frederick E. Bodman

Frederick E. Bodman was a chaser at the WMC in the 1870s. Unusually, he was also listed as a stockholder in the firm in 1920s. The fact that he was a stockholder in such a closely held company indicates he was either given an opportunity to invest in the company or had been given stock in the company. It may also indicate that he worked for Gorham over the course of his career (or after 1915, when he stops

⁹⁸ Katharine Chapin Higgins, *Richard Higgins and His Descendants* (Worcester, MA: Privately Printed, 1918), 570.

⁹⁹ *First Annual Report of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration of the State of New York* (New York: Troy Press Company, 1888) 561-673.

¹⁰⁰ "Obituary Notices," *The New York Times*, May 26, 1888.

appearing in the Attleboro City Directories). Primary research in the Attleboro city directories indicates he moved from Attleboro to New York with the firm in 1875, as he did not appear in the directories until 1881. He was listed in the Attleboro city directories from 1881 through 1915, first as a chaser, then as a toolmaker; then as a foreman of the Simmons Company, a jewelry-manufacturing firm, in 1897 and as the secretary of the Makepeace Company, another jewelry manufacturing firm, in 1915. He does not appear in the Brooklyn or New York city directories.¹⁰¹

John Fearn

John Fearn was a chaser for WMC in the 1880s. He started as chaser in 1885 and was active in the strike of 1887.¹⁰²

Henry A. Pickney

Henry A. Pickney was a spoon maker for WMC from 1878 to 1887. He was also involved in the 1887 strike.¹⁰³

Adolph Brumm

Adolph Brumm was a chaser for WMC in the 1880s.¹⁰⁴

Francis A. Gunner

Francis A. Gunner was a chaser who worked for WMC in the 1870s. He also worked for Dominick and Haff and Tiffany in the 1880s.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Gorham Company Records, John Hay Library, Brown University, Folder Two, Box I 8 A2.

¹⁰² *First Annual Report of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration of the State of New York* (New York: Troy Press Company, 1888) 561-673.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Daniel J. Mahoney

Daniel J. Mahoney was a chaser at WMC in Attleboro 1871-1874.¹⁰⁶

George Hampden Lovett

George Hampden Lovett (1824-1894) was a prolific designer, diesinker, and medallist. He was well known for his medals for the Centennial Exposition (1876), The Cotton Centennial Expo of New Orleans (1885) and the Columbian Exposition of 1892-93. He prepared about 75 dies for the United States Mint in Philadelphia. The dates of his work, presumably as a freelancer, for WMC are unknown.¹⁰⁷

Euphrosyne ('Effie') Stillman

Effie Stillman (1872-1911) was the modeler for WMC's Bayard Loving Cup (1897). She was probably commissioned by WMC to do the portrait of Thomas F. Bayard, the U.S. Ambassador to England. She was the daughter of well-known British Pre-Raphaelite painter Marie Spartali Stillman (1843-1927).¹⁰⁸

Carl T. Hamann

Carl T. Hamann (d. 1927), a sculptor and jeweler, was head modeler for the WMC in 1892. He was also connected with Durand & Company, Newark N.J. and later with

¹⁰⁵ "The Cause of the Lock-Out," *The New York Times*, June 3, 1887; Men by the name of Kennedy (head of the chasers, under foreman); Schmidt; Sheridan; Jenkins; Truax; Lucas; Rock; Cullen; Fox are listed as WMC employees in 1887.

¹⁰⁶ *First Annual Report of the Board of Mediation and Arbitration of the State of New York* (New York: Troy Press Company, 1888) 561-673.

¹⁰⁷ W.R. Weeks, "George Hampden Lovett," *American Journal of Numismatics* no. 139 (1893): 105.

¹⁰⁸ "Mr. Bayard's Loving Cup," *The New York Times*, August 8, 1897.

Tiffany & Company, New York. He traveled to Europe and studied in Munich and Paris before joining WMC. He was an instructor in jewelry at Pratt in 1904.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Julius Wodiska, *The Precious Stones* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 267-8; 'Haman Obituary' *Jewelers' Circular* 95 (November 17, 1927), 63.

George Stribel

George Stribel was a diesinker and engraver at WMC. Hired in 1883, he was second in command of die-sinking department at WMC in 1897. His father was an expert engraver at Tiffany and Company.¹¹⁰

G. A. Schuman

G. A. Schuman was a designer and toolmaker for WMC.¹¹¹

C.F. Pruden

C.F. Pruden was an engraver for WMC.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ "Attempted Suicide," *The New York Times*, July 21, 1897.

¹¹¹ "The Attleboros" *The Jeweler's Circular*, March 2, 1898, 33.

¹¹² *Illustrated Boston, The Metropolis of New England* (New York: American Publishing and Engraving Company, 1889), 270.

Appendix B: Numbering on Whiting Manufacturing Company Silver

Two surviving ledgers in the WMC archives at Brown University document a numbering system that records many surviving pieces of WMC hollowware. The numbering began around 1880, and the surviving ledgers were started in 1883 at number 1,000 and record in detail the silver designs for years 1883-1894. The numbers are recorded in the ledgers and are dated by month and year. Research for this essay has matched many WMC objects with a known number to illustrations in these ledgers. Flatware is not registered in this ledger, although novelties are included, such as lace pins, pocketknives, and aides-de-memoir such as the one in Figure 88. The production numbers for years 1880, 1881, and 1882 are estimated values. Given that the average number of objects produced in the nine years between 1883 and 1891 was 313, it is possible to assume a relatively steady rate of production and to postulate that the ledger-system was started in 1879-1880. This also fits with personnel changes at the firm.

Designs that were manufactured more than once are marked with a number-letter combination, as seen in Figure 14, 15, 16, and 19. The difficulty with these objects is that there is no way to date the objects stamped with a number and a letter — objects that were duplicated were not recorded in the ledgers. It seems that the number and letter combination indicates the model and ornamentation, as the two water pitchers in Figure 22 and Figure 23 are both stamped with 1225 Y and share a similar decoration.

The dates and accompanying production number are as follows:

Table 1: WMC Production Data

<u>Production Year</u>	<u>Production Number</u>	<u>Pieces Produced</u>
1880	0-300*	333*
1881	300-600*	333*
1882	600-1000*	333*
1883	1000-1341	341
1884	1341-1623	281
1885	1624-1951	327
1886	1953-2317	364
1887	2318-2648	330
1888	2649-2940	291
1889	2941-3231	290
1890	3232-3465	233
1891	3466-3827	361
1892	3828-4050	222
1893	4051-4332	281
1894	4333-4740	407

**These are estimated numbers and production ranges.*

Objects like the WMC pitcher and two cups, seen in Figure 89, are puzzling. The pitcher is numbered 406 and the cups are numbered 121, dating their production to 1880-81. However, the pitcher is engraved with the date 1876. This presents the possibility that the WMC numbering system was actually started in 1876, with the move to New York. Equally possible is that these pieces were in fact made in 1880-81 and presented as a commemorative gift engraved with an earlier date unrelated to the date of their production.

In the fourteen years of data available on WMC production, it is possible to say that the firm produced roughly a thousand objects every three years. If a relatively steady rate of production is assumed then the numbering between 1895 and 1900 can be estimated to be 4800 – 6000. The production between 1900 and

1905 probably declined, as the firm lost ground to Tiffany and Gorham and the silver industry in general declined. The numbering then for the years 1900-1904, when the firm introduced a date mark, can be estimated to be 6000-7000.



Figure 88: Silver and ivory aide-de-memoir, by WMC, New York, circa 1887. 3 inches long. Private collection. Images courtesy of Spencer Marks. Stamped 2535 which indicates it was made in 1887.



*Figure 89: Silver pitcher and two cups, by WMC, New York, circa 1876. Pitcher 11 13/16 high, cups 4 5/16 inches high. Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. As cited in Jeannine Falino and Gerald W. R. Ward, *Silver of the Americas, 1600-2000* (Boston: MFA Pub. ; New York: [Distributed by] D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2008), 306. The pitcher is numbered 406 A, and cups are numbered 121 A, and engraved with date 1876.*

Appendix C: Nomenclature

Any scholar researching WMC should be advised that the firm is referenced in periodicals and books in various forms, including:

Whiting Manufacturing Company

Whiting MFG Co

Whiting and Company

The Whiting Company

Whiting