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ELEGANT PATTERNS OF UNCOMMON GOOD TASTE:
DOMESTIC SILVER BY THOMAS FLETCHER AND
SIDNEY GARDINER.

University of Delaware, M.A., 1972
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ELEGANT PATTERNS OF UNCOMMON GOOD TASTE:
DOMESTIC SILVER BY THOMAS FLETCHER AND SIDNEY GARDINER

by
Donald L. Fennimore

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of
Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture.

June, 1972

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Preface

Of those American silversmiths who worked in the Empire style, Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner of Boston and Philadelphia have drawn the greatest attention. Interest has centered in their presentation silver of which a fairly large body exists. It was widely admired and publicized in its time, which is evident in surviving advertisements, diaries, newspaper notices, personal letters, and the firm's business correspondence.¹ Fletcher and Gardiner were apparently without equal in supplying the great demand for presentation silver which can be attributed, in no small part, to Fletcher's astute business acumen. In addition, the designs they created seem to have captured and expressed America's amor patriae better than those of any contemporary silversmith. In spite of the spectacular expense and ceremony of these presentation pieces, the firm could never have survived on presentation silver alone. The bulk of their silversmithing activities was concerned with the fabrication of domestic plate.

Traditionally, studies of American silver have tended to gloss over objects produced after 1810. Surveys have shied away from the Empire period, characterizing its silver as "not only diverse but heavy, cumbersome and lacking in artistic interest."² One important survey of American silver devoted only three pages of text to the

nineteenth century and titled these "The Vagaries of 19th-Century Taste."³ Within the past six years, however, an increasing interest has appeared in the decorative arts of this period. Of note have been the exhibition Classical America 1815-1845, assembled by the Newark Museum in 1964, and the exhibition 19th-Century America, organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1970. The recent book, Collecting American 19th-Century Silver, has helped to focus attention on the attributes of post-1810 silver. Any number of additional exhibitions and numerous articles in major periodicals have begun to lay a framework for future study, understanding, and appreciation of this formerly neglected subject.⁴

If we are to understand the silver Americans produced during the Empire period, we should begin by trying to discover how those Americans felt about it. As editor and compiler for the federal census of American manufactures for the year 1810, Tench Coxe would have known as much about America's attitude toward silver and the state of the art as any of his contemporaries. In his preface to the census, Coxe included a short statement about each area of manufacture. Of American silver, he said:

The increase of general capital, with the consequent freedom of consumption and extension of manufactures and commerce has occasioned goods made of gold, silver, and finer mixed metals to be greatly multiplied, diversified and improved. Gold and silver wares are made in all the considerable towns and have reached a very high degree of convenience, excellence and beauty in some places. They are not only sufficient for the supply of every possible demand of the country, but our present workmen could make a stock of gold and silver wares for foreign sale, equal to the quantity exported by any nation of Europe.... The use of rollers

and other contrivances to save labor in some degree has been gradually introduced into the gold and silver manufactory; and being numerous, they have, though small, at length reached to a considerable aggregate importance. They would indeed be, at this time, highly convenient and valuable, did not taste and fashion, to the dominion of which this branch is peculiarly subject, render it unsafe to make too large a stock of goods, though exhibiting in their forms, every line of beauty and grace....⁵

The amount of domestic silver extant today, dating from the early nineteenth century, indicates the metal was more than a suitable medium for expressing public thanks; it was ideal for private consumption and a sought-after embellishment for early nineteenth-century households. Coxe's introduction clearly demonstrates silver of this period reflects a broadening awareness of and desire for stylish objects in America. In this period, a number of conditions developed to cause an increasing consciousness of style on the part of the general population. Urban areas were growing, international trade was burgeoning, per capita wealth was rising, and increased communication stimulated curiosity about Europe, its affairs and products. Silver's intrinsic value made it an ideal medium for expressing its owner's knowledge and appreciation of current European styles. Consequently, the demand for silver objects rose considerably.

Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner established their firm to capture and dominate this growing market. Through bulk purchases of stylish European goods, dissemination of these to the American market, and fabrication of high style silver objects, they intended to give themselves a "decided superiority in point of business to any in their line."⁶ Public demand for their creations with consequent

economic success for their manufactory indicates the partners were, indeed, in tune with the time. As students of the American ethos begin to look more closely at the nineteenth century and discover the milieu in which Fletcher and Gardiner were working, it will be, in part, through the objects the partners made. Their silver, in its appeal to nineteenth-century Americans, can serve as a valuable tool in understanding the mood, motivation, and taste of that era.

Scholarly work has been done with Fletcher and Gardiner's presentation silver.⁷ The intent of this work is to compliment that. For example, past research has indicated Fletcher was the firm's dynamic force. Just how deeply was he involved with its operation? Can his hand be seen in the design, production, and marketing of his firm's products or is his reputation supported today by what was then a cooperative comingling of talent and specialty? Little has been said of the mechanics of producing their silver objects. As Tench Coxe stated, this was a very real concern to them. To what extent did they sacrifice artistic merit for mechanical innovation in an age which contradictorily lauded both? Just how the partners fit into this dichotomy of taste and fashion versus mechanized productivity will be explored in this paper.

The value of an individual case study is that specific information can be brought to bear on each question. Exploring one firm's solutions to the myriad problems of economically supplying an artistic product to a demanding and often fickle clientele will help to create

a viable body of information. This, as it is increased and amended, will allow better understanding of a particularly productive, innovative, and misunderstood age.

In my pursuit of answers, I am particularly indebted to Roger Moss, Director of the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, for allowing me to see and use the group of Thomas Fletcher papers contained in that repository. Without his advice and help, my study would have been impossible. I am also indebted to any number of others who provided me with a body of Fletcher and Gardiner's domestic silver and information relating to that silver during the course of my work. Their generosity, interest, and time have been remarkable, to say the least. My thanks go to Gail Anderson of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and especially Ellen Beasley for her help as a silver sleuth. I also thank The Very Reverend Charles H. Buck, Karen A. Christensen of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Barbara J. Coffee of the Smithsonian Institution, Gail F. Daly, Mrs. James W. Dean and Capt. A. G. Ellis, U.S.N. Mrs. Dean A. Fales, Stuart P. Feld, Edwin H. Fitler, and J. Herbert Gebelein have been particularly generous in helping me with my work. Peter P. Grey, William H. Guthman, Philip Hammerslough, David A. Hanks of the Art Institute of Chicago, and Norman Herreshoff and Patricia E. Kane of the Yale University Art Gallery, have also been helpful. I especially thank Jane B. Larus for her generous help. Others who shared interest in my work were Katharine Morrison McClinton, Harriette G. Miller, Dr. A. J. Mourot, Walter C. Peters, Richard H. Randall of the Walters Art Gallery, Mrs. Howard W. Reisinger, Mrs. Clarence T. Rives, Virginia

Swarm of the Maryland Historical Society, and particularly Kevin L. Tierney of Parke-Bernet Galleries. In addition, I thank Robert T. Trump, Nicholas B. Wainwright of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, David B. Warren of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Robert B. Wheeler of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, Edwin Wolf of the Library Company of Philadelphia, and Mrs. Charles B. Wood.

I thank two of my fellow classmates, Wendy Cooper and Carolyn Weekly, for thinking of me and my thesis while immersed in their own. I am also greatly indebted to Ian M. G. Quimby, my adviser, for his patience with and criticism of my frequently confused paragraphs.

To my uncle, Charles V. Swain, I must concede credit for the original inspiration for this study. His constant encouragement and willingness to share his knowledge have proved invaluable. Finally, as a majority of one, I pass a vote of confidence in my wife for her patience and perseverance during my protracted visit with our house guests, Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner.

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SUMMARY

Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner are remembered today as creators of monumental presentation plate commemorating the heroic activities of individual Americans during and after the War of 1812. They created, in addition, a large body of domestic silver for the American public. Gardiner supplied the silversmithing skill while Fletcher applied his design and marketing abilities. By combining these specialized related talents, the partners made their manufactory an important source of stylish American-made silver between 1808 and 1842.

Many hundreds of style conscious Americans looked to Fletcher and Gardiner for "elegant plate," ownership of which was, in part, an expression of status and taste. The silver contained herein demonstrates that a drastic change in "taste" took place during the thirty-four year period in which Fletcher and Gardiner were in operation. This change was neither smooth nor regular. In fact, the parallel and counter currents of Gothic, Rococo, and Greek influences emanating from England and France between 1810 and 1840 became so intermingled in the American decorative arts that it is frequently difficult to isolate them.

Fletcher and Gardiner's firm was founded when all these

national and historical forces were beginning to coalesce as the Empire taste; it spanned this period through the 1830's when they all began to recombine into what is today called Victorian. As the partners supplied stylish silver throughout this unsettled period, they were particularly subject to this multitude of influences. Fletcher and Gardiner's command of and reaction to the direction of high style American silver presents a graphic picture of the movement of the decorative arts in America between 1810 and 1840.

Chapter I.

HISTORY OF THE FIRM

Although Thomas Fletcher's name does not appear in a Boston city directory until 1809, there is evidence that he was living in Boston as early as 1806. On February 25 of that year, he was sent a letter by Thomas Loring to an address at 78 Newbury Street. Slightly over one year later, he was being addressed at No. 48 Marlboro Street, the workshop and warehouse of Joseph C. Dyer, jeweler.¹ After establishing a partnership with Sidney Gardiner some years later, Fletcher referred to Joseph Dyer as "my friend and former master."² Fletcher had probably been apprenticed to Dyer about 1806 but not as a jeweler. During the period of his presumed apprenticeship, Fletcher received personal correspondence addressing him as "Merchant," not silversmith or jeweler. When Fletcher opened his own shop with Sidney Gardiner about November 9, 1808, their advertisement discreetly noted:

Th: Fletcher respectfully solicits the custom of those who have formerly done business with Mr. Dyer and Mr. McFarlane (having had the principal management of the business of those gentlemen for some time past....)³

Fletcher had probably been employed as an apprentice shopkeeper which was not uncommon. After entering his own business, he did the same for his partner's younger brother, Baldwin, and his own younger brother, Charles. He found Charles:

apt and willing to learn & think he will make a good shop-keeper.... I have conversed with him on the subject and find him rather leaning to the mercantile interest. Should you [Thomas' father] conclude to put him apprentice to us we will...do all in our power to give him information in every branch of our business. He will see enough of the mechanical part of the business to know the quality of goods and be able to carry on any branch of it he pleases when of age by the help of a journeyman...the probability is that his line will be principally taken up in the front shop.⁴

This training was the means whereby Fletcher perpetuated that which he, in turn, had learned while apprenticed to Dyer.

John McFarlane bought out Dyer and took over his warehouse in April, 1808. He continued in operation there, with Fletcher in his employ, until September 21 of that year, at which time he advertised:

AT AUCTION: ...On Monday, 3d of October, at WAREHOUSE, No. 48 Marlboro Street will be sold without the least reserve JOHN MCFARLANE'S whole STOCK IN TRADE...Those persons who may wish to purchase any of the above articles previous to the Auction, will be supplied at prices which cannot fail to give satisfaction.⁵

Fletcher and Gardiner must have bought most of McFarlane's stock before it reached the auction block, as indicated by a letter Fletcher wrote several months after the auction. Since Fletcher was working as a trusted employee for McFarlane, it would have been relatively easy to come to terms. In that letter, addressed to John Gardiner, Sidney's father, he stated:

The whole of our notes to Mr. McFarlane are considerably overdue amounting to about \$2500, a part of which has been due more than two months...In addition to this [Joseph Dyer] is on our paper to a large amount....⁶

Although no conclusive documentary evidence has been discovered, the probability is that Sidney Gardiner was in the employ of Joseph.

Dyer and John McFarlane, with Thomas Fletcher. This would readily explain how the two came to know one another. Such a close friendship, in which each knew and trusted the other's talents and capacities enough to form a business partnership, would most easily have developed in Joseph Dyer's establishment. Fletcher's use of the plural "we" and "our" in reference to debts owed Dyer and McFarlane was probably not semantic. It implies Dyer and McFarlane personally knew and trusted both Fletcher and Gardiner well enough to extend considerable credit.

Whereas Fletcher had worked as a shopkeeper, Sidney Gardiner was a silversmith. It is made clear in the partners' first advertisement that he was capable of producing any object of silver or gold. Customers were assured that the partners could speak with the fullest confidence:

of the manufacturing branch...as the whole attention of one of the partners will be devoted to this part of the business, who hazards nothing in stating, that his work shall be, in every instance, equal to any imported.⁷

This person could be none other than Sidney Gardiner, since Fletcher is mentioned immediately after as being the manager of the business.

The partners' advertisements during their three years in Boston were usually quite extensive, with the bulk of their advertising space devoted to imported goods, such as Sheffield and Birmingham plated wares, watches, jewelry, Britannia metal hollow ware, razors, pen-knives, pocket books, tea trays, sabres, plumes, epaulettes, pistols, bead trim for dresses, tortoise shell combs, tooth brushes, gold and silver spangles, and lace. In addition, mention is always made of

their capacity for manufacturing jewelry and silver ware. Demand for their goods was brisk. Boston provided a good market for their fancy hardware store, plate and jewelry manufactory. One year after they had opened, Thomas wrote his father:

I have just finished my balance sheet and have ascertained ...the net profits of our business the past year has been upwards of eight hundred dollars. This sum is ours after paying \$700 for repairing our shop and every other expense attendant on our business. You will no doubt be astonished when I tell you that without a cent to begin with, I contracted debts the past year to the amount of \$20,000.... My sales amount to more than \$14,000 and my stock is worth at least \$9,000.⁸

By 1810, the business had grown so large it was moved to new address at No. 59 Cornhill. By this time, the partners had a number of people in their employ, including Charles Fletcher and Baldwin Gardiner. Jeremiah Tolman repaired watches for them and probably fabricated jewelry. Samuel Whittington was apprenticed to the partners on December 19, 1809, to learn the "art, trade or mystery of a jeweller."⁹ George Fletcher, another younger brother, probably began his apprenticeship for the partners at this time, and they may have employed additional workmen as well. On February 4, 1811, Thomas wrote to his father:

...you have probably observed it in the papers that Mr. McFarlane has been admitted as a partner into our business. He brings into the concern a handsome Capital, and shares equally with us in profit and expense. Since this addition, our business is more extensive and profitable than before and bids fair to encourage us....¹⁰

Most of the goods they imported and manufactured were sold in the Boston area. However, through James Fosdick Fletcher, Thomas'

older brother, who moved from Boston to New Orleans in 1808, the partners did have occasion to produce for a more distant market. In subsequent years, their long distance market grew to be a considerable portion of their total annual business, but in their early period most of their customers were from Boston and its surrounding towns. Judging from the partners' advertisements, jewelry was their specialty. They called themselves "working jewelers," not silversmiths:

Their principal attention [being] directed to the manufacturing of Gold and Silver work of every description and particularly elastic HAIR WORK, for Bracelets, Necklaces, Ear Rings and Watch Chains.¹¹

They also offered for sale precious and semi-precious stones, for which they would manufacture settings of any type. The partners' balance sheets do not separate jewelry from plate, but their sales for domestic silver and jewelry were probably very close.

On September 11, 1811, Fletcher and Gardiner informed:

their friends that they continue the manufactory of rich Pearl and Gold Jewellery and that orders may be left (for the present) at Mrs. Veron's, No. 59 Cornhill, where one of them may be found at the usual hours of business.¹²

Shortly thereafter, Thomas wrote to his father:

I arrived [in Philadelphia] on the 10th of [November] since which I have been so much occupied in filling up our store and purchasing goods that I have not been able to write...Although the removal of our business here has been attended with great expense we have reason to believe we will meet with success. We opened on the 2d of [December]. Our store is No. 24, South Second Street.¹³

Personal correspondence fails to reveal the partners' reasons for moving from Boston to Philadelphia. Their balance sheet for the

year 1810 shows they had over \$20,000 a year business with a net gain to them of something over \$1,800. The partners had prospered in supplying the Boston area, but it is probable that the lure of Philadelphia was not ill-founded. Their total sales in that city jumped from \$2,596 in 1811 to \$21,904 in just one year and continued to increase thereafter. Fletcher was obviously pleased with their success of which he informed his brother, James Fosdick, on October 5, 1814:

Since Mr. Gardiner and myself removed to this city¹⁴
we have enjoyed a patronage beyond our expectations...

Thomas Fletcher was a gregarious person, very much interested in politics. As early as 1808, there is record of him being involved in political activity with Ebenezer Seaver, county treasurer in Boston. His political avidity accompanied him to Philadelphia. By 1812, his firm had become so well known, it was chosen to make a large number of trophies commemorating American victories in the War of 1812. Their selection for these commissions was no accident. The partners had decided to establish in a city which already had many competent and flourishing gold and silversmiths, so success in such an environment would depend on more than mechanical competence at their craft. In great part, their quick rise was the result of Fletcher's outgoing personality; in less than two years after their arrival in Philadelphia, the partners could boast of their popularity.

The timing of their move to Philadelphia was fortunate, for it fell at a propitious moment when elevated public spirit was willing to finance elaborate pieces of presentation silver. Fletcher's ability to

turn this enthusiasm to his firm's favor is a testament to his astute business perception. The partners' first few years in Philadelphia were crucial. Success depended on attracting commissions through which they could build a reputation. The urn presented to Isaac Hull by the citizens of Philadelphia was their first piece of monumental presentation silver, and it met with instant approval. They had "thousands to view it."¹⁵ The renown Fletcher and Gardiner created for themselves through this and other similar trophies was the touchstone of their success. It enabled them to dominate their craft in Philadelphia in spite of strong competition. Because of this reputation, Fletcher and Gardiner had Americans from most major cities and many smaller towns as well as rural areas looking to them for stylish domestic silver objects.

Even with this prosperity, Fletcher and Gardiner were ambitious for more. The partners imported quantities of English goods, but their manufactory was their "greatest dependence, and became daily more profitable."¹⁶ Apparently, business was so brisk the partners had time for little else. Instead of continuing to supply the growing demand for tasteful objects at their established capacity, Fletcher saw an opportunity to grow with the market. Going to Europe was the first step in achieving this goal. He wrote his brother:

Should peace take place during the ensuing autumn or winter [1814], I shall no doubt leave here for Europe early in the Spring where by the means of certain funds to be there placed at my disposal I shall make such purchases as will give us a decided superiority in point of business to any in our line.... My head is so full of vast projects & I shall never rest untill [sic] I have

put them in execution...¹⁷

This trip was intended to cement relations with English manufacturers and merchants, to make new contacts in England and France for the importation of more goods, to determine the extent of the application of power to manufacturing plated ware, and ascertain current European styles. Fletcher left Philadelphia for Liverpool, March 16, 1815.

It is during this period of thirteen months while Fletcher was abroad that Sidney Gardiner's role in the firm begins to focus. The absence of his name from earlier records necessitates supposition about his corporate position. Although he is infrequently mentioned, those few letters by or about him, dating just before and during Fletcher's trip abroad, indicate he was not spending all of his time in the manufactory. As he was the partner with the craft training, his early years in the partnership were necessarily spent in the shop completing orders and training apprentices. With their growing success in Boston and Philadelphia, additional apprentices and journeymen were added to the shop, and George Fletcher was allowed to assume charge of the manufactory. Gardiner began to make time for himself to engage in mercantile pursuits which were to comprise an increasingly larger part of his activities until his untimely death in 1827. By 1814, he was traveling the East Coast buying for the firm. When Fletcher left the next year, all domestic business affairs came into his hands. Also, he advised Fletcher as to the state of the Philadelphia market:

I find on examination that there is a very great chois [sic] in Bennington Gill's Invoice of plated goods. I shall enumerate a few articles whitch [sic] I think worth attending

to--I refer you to Nos. 33, 662, 721, etc. which are without doubt the cheapest Castors ever sent to America ...The few numbers that I have mentioned I think better & cheaper than any other. I must order a number of casks from him for our Spring Business. Baldwin Gardiner nor Harvey Lewis did not mistrust but they were all of the best Sheffield, you will no doubt order largely of the numbers I have mentioned. I think we can hoalsale sic them for 75 or 100 per cent.¹⁸

Based on this information and advice, Fletcher would then select his exports accordingly. Gardiner encouraged new retail outlets for their imported goods and advised Thomas to establish his younger brother Henry in a fancy hardware store in Boston and export directly to him from England. In all these activities, his greatest concern was in maximizing the "proffits."¹⁹

Sidney Gardiner was as ambitious as Fletcher for the success and reputation of their firm. As Charles wrote his brother in Liverpool:

...our shop is almost completed & will be by far, the handsomest in the city when completed. Mr. Gardiner says he intends it shall be the headquarters for the fashionable ton-- & says that he intends to 'drive' business this fall.²⁰

Gardiner apparently did just that. The combined mercantile efforts of the partners produced for them an enviable position in supplying the fancy hardware trade. Gardiner wrote his partner:

Our goods cause so much interest this last week that I have not had a moments time from morning till 11 at night --but I can tell you that no other store in the United States looks so well as ours does at this time & the people flock around our windows & in the store as if they had never seen anything of the kind....²¹

Gardiner's personal pride may have exaggerated the statement somewhat,

1

but their balance sheets show that it contained a good deal of truth. Their sales increased annually so that by 1817, the partners were selling approximately \$100,000 worth of goods a year.

Prior to 1818, every year had brought increased sales and profits. In that year, business began to slow down. After "taking account of stock and balancing the Books," Fletcher commented:

The year's business is quite equal to my expectations though not so great as the two former years--Sales 73,000, clear~~ed~~ 14,000: on hand 49,600. Business has fallen off very much since New Years but orders for plate continue to course in...²²

This slump in the firm's sales was to continue until about 1825, at which time there was a short two or three year rally. A combination of forces was responsible for the decline. Philadelphia was, at this time, beginning to feel the effects of New York's bid for economic supremacy of the east coast of the United States. In fact, the city began to lose business to New York at an increasing rate after 1819. Also, there was a series of economic fluctuations which affected sales of luxury items in which Fletcher and Gardiner were dealing. This was, in large part, due to readjustments in the economic community after the War of 1812. Cessation of the war directly affected Fletcher and Gardiner's manufactory. The patriotic fervor which had prompted expensive commemorative silver for military heroes, cooled after the war's end. Whereas the partners had been asked to make about \$14,000 worth of presentation silver between 1812 and 1816, they had to wait eight years, until 1824, for their next major commission--the De Witt Clinton urns.²³ Although their manufactory

had continuing orders for plate and jewelry, increasing "importation of foreign articles of similar manufacture" made inroads into their production.²⁴

The partners never lost interest in their plate and jewelry manufactory, but about 1818 they began investing in other fields of entrepreneurial activity. From that year, the partners were constantly and deeply involved in other economic activities. Their undertakings were all ambitious and, as such, involved a certain amount of risk. Even though they were sound in character, for one reason or another, they usually met with less success than the original partnership. In some instances they met with dismal failure, such as the wood screw manufactory which they founded in 1819. After the partners had invested heavily, a fellow speculator failed, leaving Fletcher and Gardiner liable for the amount of his default. In 1823, the partners undertook to discover an overseas market in Mexico for European and American goods. This venture was primarily undertaken by Sidney Gardiner, who made two trips to Mexico between 1823 and 1827. Over a period of four years, they met with reasonable success in selling a great variety of goods through factors in Vera Cruz. This promising connection was cut off by Sidney Gardiner's untimely death in 1827. In that same year, Fletcher invested in R. Tyler & Co., a firm involved in "machine making and calico engraving."²⁵ He sold out ten years later. Again in 1838, he and his brother George bought into a patent for a direct drive water wheel for \$5,000. The firm of Fletcher and Gardiner was relied upon for revenue to back these investments, but none of them

ever produced as well as the original partnership.

Shortly after Gardiner's death, the name of Calvin W. Bennett, another relative of Fletcher's, appears in personal and business correspondence. He may have been working for the firm before Gardiner's death. He probably replaced Charles Fletcher who had been working in the front shop selling goods and keeping the books. Bennett eventually achieved full partnership in the firm between 1835 and 1839, as indicated by the Philadelphia directories, but he was probably never directly involved in the production of silver objects or jewelry. About 1825 or 1826, Charles became a "traveling jeweller," promoting and selling the firm's jewelry and plate from North Carolina to Massachusetts.²⁶ This method of selling was probably necessitated because of shrinking sales. He met with moderate success in selling his goods, but an unexpected dividend from this activity was the contacts he made for the firm throughout various parts of the country.

As early as 1808, Fletcher and Gardiner had supplied other silversmiths and jewelers with their products. But it was about 1825, when Charles became a "traveling jeweler," that they were called upon to supply a large number of these men. Even though competition was rather severe between members of their trade, it would appear that there was an extensive cooperative spirit. Jewelers would call upon one another for services or supplies as the need arose. In fact, extant silver dating from the early nineteenth century can be deceptive as to its real designer, maker, or seller. The number of specialized

people involved with the production of any single piece of plate at this time was considerably greater than in the eighteenth century. Although one man's name might be impressed on a piece of silver, it does not necessarily follow he was the person responsible for its design or fabrication. Complex, changing, and interwoven ties between silversmith, designer, engraver, and merchant complicate the problem of artistic responsibility. Fletcher was making silver for men who are listed in today's directories as silversmiths in their own right. George Heresly of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, requested Fletcher to supply him with silver spoons which he, in turn, intended to retail. R. & A. Campbell, Baltimore silversmiths, ordered from him:

two sets of plate consisting of coffee, two Tea, one cream pot, sugar dish & slop bowl to each set...of the large size and newest pattern...²⁷

The reverse holds true. Fletcher called upon other silversmiths, designers, or engravers to supply him with finished products. As mentioned earlier, he had a brisk trade in European goods. He also handled American-made manufactures from Philadelphia and other metropolitan areas, such as New York. Not only did he act as a commission merchant for finished products of other silversmiths and manufacturers but he also subcontracted to other craftsmen in completing orders he had received. Fletcher asked Robert Lovett of New York to supply him with engraved gold tablets which Fletcher intended to include on a presentation sword he was making.

In addition to dealers, other individuals were writing to Fletcher and Gardiner (T. Fletcher between 1827 and 1836 and Fletcher

and Bennett from 1835 to 1839) for domestic and presentation silver. This demand was not all from the Philadelphia area. It extended to such geographically remote towns as Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Mobile, and New Orleans. Customers from these areas turned to Fletcher and Gardiner because of the fame they had acquired as producers of high style presentation silver and through Charles' promotion of the firm during the course of his travel. John H. Hopkins of Pittsburgh had been selected to obtain for his church "Communion vessels...handsome and rich in their effect."²⁸ Instead of using local silversmiths, he turned to Fletcher, undoubtedly because he had read or heard at some time previously, of the firm's eminence. Often customers from distant markets used the firm after visiting Philadelphia for reasons other than procuring silver, such as M. W. Peirce of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, George Gibbs of Newport, Rhode Island, or Ana Maria Yturbide, who wrote from Washington, D.C.:

Have the goodness to send me the service of plate for tea you showed me when I was in Philadelphia last summer.²⁹

Even though Fletcher did continue to receive orders for plate and jewelry, these were not enough to satisfy his mounting debts incurred because of investments. Business became so slow that in 1829, Fletcher was "obliged to discharge some of the hands in the factory,"³⁰ and he complained at being "plagued by money matters."³¹ During the 1830's, Fletcher's silver was still in demand as evidenced by the commission he received to make a group of presentation silver for Nicholas Biddle. But his money problems became so entangled that by

1842, his creditors put his manufactory in the hands of an assignee.

In May of that year, his business was auctioned at a considerable loss.

Fletcher lamented:

Nevertheless [Charles C. MacKay, auctioneer] seems determined to close up the business and when that is done I know not what to go at--My factory and tools are all gone--my store will soon be stripped and I am without the means of meeting my daily expenses.³²

Fletcher did, however, continue to live in the boarding house he owned at 188 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia until 1850. In that year, he was forced to sell it and move to Delanco, New Jersey, where he remained until he died on November 14, 1866.³³ The Philadelphia directories continue to list Fletcher as a silversmith until 1851. He was not producing any silver after his factory was sold in 1842, but he was still involved in designing it. A presentation sword, now in the Maryland Historical Society and given by the State of Maryland to John A. Webster, was ordered from Fletcher May 26, 1842, just five days before his factory and tools were sold.³⁴ As of April 13, 1843, the sword had not been completed, but it was delivered shortly thereafter. Fletcher did design it but had no factory in which to make it. It was probably done by another Philadelphia silversmith of his acquaintance.

Fletcher was a brilliant designer, as evidenced by his best silver, and he is remembered today for his work in silver design. However, this area of activity was only a small part of his life and interests. He was primarily an ambitious entrepreneur, interested and

very much involved in the productive and economic forces developing in this country during the first half of the nineteenth century. His partnership with Sidney Gardiner was the most successful of his ventures, due not only to his talents as a draftsman and designer but equally to his promotional abilities. Even though many Americans looked to the firm for the most fashionable objects of precious metals fashioned in this country between 1808 and 1842, the firm eventually failed. The fault lay not for want of satisfying clientele. Fletcher's overwhelming and continued interest in investing in other capital enterprises, most of which proved less than successful, ultimately forced liquidation of his "plate and jewellery establishment."



Chapter II.

STYLISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF DOMESTIC SILVER

On April 27, 1808, seven months before Fletcher and Gardiner announced their business venture, John McFarlane advertised:

Just received from Liverpool...an elegant assortment of best Sheffield PLATED WARE of patterns entirely new and different from any yet imported into this town...new oblong shape...gadroons and elegant engraved Borders... As the above are nearly all new patterns and only one or two of a pattern, purchasers will do well to call in season.¹

The advertiser purposely mentioned these elegant goods had come "via New York." In doing so, he was admitting New York had the oblong shape with engraved borders at sometime earlier and implied that New York was looked to as a style center by style conscious Bostonians. This and other advertisements extolling imported "Elegant Philadelphia manufactured silverware...with superb chaste work and figured borders," indicates Boston, in the early nineteenth century, was taking its stylistic impetus from England and, more significantly, from other American coastal cities.² Boston was no different from any other American city in looking to Europe for the style of its domestic silver. However, the fact that Philadelphia and New York are mentioned as intermediate steps in the movement of domestic silver from Europe to Boston points to the conservative stylistic tradition dominating the

latter at that time. Such was the environment in which young Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner were practicing their respective crafts. Even so, the importation of English plated ware did have a recognizable effect on the taste of Bostonians. The silver they commissioned local artisans to make resembled in form and ornament that being imported and advertised as the fashionable style.

The partners remained in Boston only three years, and the style of their silver did not alter radically during their first few years in Philadelphia. Therefore, one must be very careful when attributing any piece of Fletcher and Gardiner silver to their Boston period. It is probable that none of the domestic silver examined dates from the partners' Boston period. Their early Philadelphia silver is of the same style and can, therefore, be used to illustrate certain common characteristics; but the character of cast and chased ornament on extant silver of their "oblong" style strongly suggests Philadelphia influence. Eagle head spouts, in particular, are practically identical to those used on sword pommels at this time, only in Philadelphia. Cast lion paw feet are probably also inspired by Philadelphia émigré prototypes, as English plated goods in the "oblong" style, from which a large amount of the partners' Boston silver must have been inspired, rarely used such terminals. However, the style of Fletcher and Gardiner's domestic silver can be readily ascertained. Their advertisements and those of their Boston contemporaries present a fairly complete picture of the popular taste in silver during the first two decades of the nineteenth century.

Fletcher and Gardiner's domestic silver can be grouped into a number of chronological stylistic categories. Each is not separate and distinct. There appears to be a considerable amount of overlap. However, they are chronological and document the progressive shifts in American taste with respect to the decorative arts. Boston advertisements make occasional reference to "oval" or "octagonal" hollow ware between 1802 and 1810.³ These forms are what we today call the "Federal style," in which Paul Revere worked so successfully. Most advertisements of that period, however, promote the "oblong" style.⁴ The three are related. Whereas the "oval" and "octagonal" are light and delicate, employing attenuated interpretations of classical ornament, the "oblong" style is more typically robust and curvilinear. In plan, oblong hollow ware is basically rectangular with rounded corners. In elevation, its outline is a series of cyma recta and reversa curves (Figure 2). The type of domestic silver Fletcher and Gardiner were producing in Boston (Figure 1) is succinctly described:

Silver Setts [in the new oblong style] containing Coffee and Tea Pots, Sugar Basons, Cream Pots and Slop Bowls with rich borders in relievo and some engraved...leaf borders...⁵

Although at least half their work was in the fabrication of jewelry, their manufactory also offered:

a very elegant and complete assortment of [other] SILVER PLATE [silver, not plated ware] consisting of...Tumblers, Porringers, Cups, Cans, Pitchers, Sauce Boats and Soup Ladles, CHURCH FURNITURE [Church silver such as chalices, baptismal bowls and patens] Table and Tea Spoons.⁶

As with all early nineteenth-century silversmiths, however, tea and coffee sets were their most popular hollow ware.⁷

The monumental design books published on the continent and in England during the eighteenth and very early nineteenth centuries contain many examples of classical vessels and contemporary adaptations. The hollow ware pictured in them is mostly some variation of the urn shape. Fletcher and Gardiner's vessels are oblong in section and boat shaped in profile. There is no relation between the form of their vessels and those depicted in the standard dictionaries of classical objects. Something other than design books must account for the partners' early choice of form for their early domestic silver. To find a precedent, one need only look at the latest "fall assortment," "winter assortment," or "spring supply" of Sheffield and Birmingham plated wares which virtually every Boston silversmith was importing in quantity.⁸ Very strong similarities tie these imports to Fletcher and Gardiner's early silver.⁹ Both are in the oblong form. Shapes of handles and spouts are the same. Each stands on footrings, balls, or paw feet. Use of applied ornamental borders around the upper shoulder of vessels as the primary decorative motif is common. The decorative content of these borders is related, consisting generally of plant motifs such as roses, vines, oak leaves, and acorns, or more abstract designs of leaves or shells. The manner in which these borders are made gives them a distinct character. Earlier Federal style silver was decorated with bands of flat chasing described as "engraved borders." This was a two dimensional decorative

technique. Fletcher and Gardiner's decorative bands were stamped in relief, giving them more of a three dimensional character than the Federal style bands from which they evolved. This and the liberal use of cast ornament for finials, feet, and handles gives their silver a very sculptural quality (Figures 1 - 3). When the partners advertised in the Columbian Centinel "they will manufacture any article in the Silver-Plate [silver, not plated ware] line to any pattern," imported Sheffield and Birmingham plated wares were a large part of their inspiration.

Unlike the forms the partners were producing, their ornament does appear to be a generalized adaptation of that used by classical civilizations. The Greek and Roman objects depicted in the standard dictionaries such as Lettice and Martyn's Antiquities of Herculaneum or Percier and Fontaine's Recueil de Dècorations Intérieures are decorated with bands of anthemion, egg and dart, imbricated laurel leaves, acanthus leaves, and the like. They also use lion paw feet, snake handles, griffins, winged figures, and classic busts. Some of these elements can be found on Fletcher and Gardiner's early domestic silver. However, their character differs markedly from Greek and Roman examples as depicted in European design books. While European students of the classical decorative arts were carefully depicting lion's paw terminals properly conjoined with appropriate wings, lion's head, human head, or acanthus leaf, Fletcher and Gardiner use only a simple, dismembered lion's paw or even a ball and claw foot (Figures 1 and 2). Each anthemion in a European or English design book has

character; its petals are shaped, rounded, individually delineated, and well integrated. By contrast, an early band of anthemion decoration made by Fletcher and Gardiner is simply a series of triangles composed of parallel lines of varying lengths (Figure 1). At its vaguest, their ornamental borders approximate overlapping leaves or shells (Figure 2). Comparison is not made to imply the work of their early period was bad, but only to demonstrate how far removed it was from its ultimate classical prototype. Indeed, the partners consistently produced work of the highest calibre when compared to that of their American contemporaries. Their understanding and mastery of the Empire style was at least as good as that of any native working jeweler or silversmith, given the source of their inspiration. But it cannot be said they were close to the source of the style in which they were working, as their early work was primarily derivative from the mass produced plated ware of Birmingham, Sheffield, and other English manufacturing towns. These wares, in turn, were derivative from English and French silver, design books, or, in some instances, actual classical objects.

After the partners removal to Philadelphia, they continued to work in the oblong style and, doubtless, continued to import English plated wares. With the move, though, a new group of forces came to bear on their work which was to greatly alter the character of their silver. In 1810, Philadelphia's commercial activity in the precious metals was between four and five times as great as that of all Massachusetts.¹⁰ This cosmopolitan environment attracted Fletcher

and Gardiner. It also attracted a substantial number of emigrating French silver and goldsmiths, among whom were Simeon Chaudron, Louis Descuret, John Baptiste Dumotet, Daniel Dupy, and John Tanguy. These men and others like them introduced the most recent developments in French silver styles to the Philadelphia market, which seem to have been quickly accepted by that city.

The work of the French émigrés was quickly assimilated by Fletcher and Gardiner after their arrival, and within a few years they were incorporating unadulterated French motifs into their silver. In fact, some of their silver dating between 1814 and 1820 cannot be distinguished from comparable French examples (Figure 7, covered dish). Their first few months in Philadelphia were spent in "filling up their store and purchasing goods." In the process of buying:

elegant plated goods...and a variety of other scarce articles of FURNITURE decorative domestic objects of silver, plated ware, porcelain, brass, Derbyshire spar, etc.] all of the most elegant patterns...

they would necessarily have met and done business with other Philadelphia silversmiths and jewelers, among them the French émigrés. From these acquaintances, close professional and social relationships would have developed, resulting in a mutual and free interchange of ideas relating to taste and style as expressed in silver. Under the influence of the French in Philadelphia, Fletcher and Gardiner's silver begins to assume a strong vertical accent. It is also French example which causes the partners to begin fashioning their hollow ware in the "round pattern." That is to say, their teapots, ewers, sugar bowls,

etc. are made round in section instead of oblong (Figures 3 and 4). Their ornament becomes much more specific in character and begins to show a stronger relation to archaeological prototypes (Figure 3). From 1812 to about 1817, the partners' archaeological emphasis seems to be moving in the direction of a predominantly French interpretation rather than an English one.

After having submerged themselves in a city with close and direct European ties, Fletcher decided to go to England and the continent in 1815. The effect of this exposure to European activity in the decorative arts was to have important ramifications for the partners' silver. After arriving in England in the spring of 1815, Fletcher traveled through Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, and London, his time being "very much taken up going among the manufactories and in buying goods." These goods consisted of anything in the fancy hardware line, plated ware, military hardware, jewelry, work boxes, scissors, penknives, gold and silver pencils, watches, japanned tea trays, Derbyshire spar, and china. In addition, he also acquired pattern books. These were the trade catalogues Thomas Bradbury, James Dixon, Joseph Rodgers, and all English plated ware manufacturers published. They were simply books of numbered engraved prints of domestic utensils and were published for customers' use to see the type and style of wares each manufacturer produced and to facilitate ordering and reordering. Fletcher and Gardiner used these catalogues in this manner, but, in addition, they proved valuable for another purpose. From them, the partners could copy or adapt currently

stylish elements and motifs for use in silver of their own manufacture.

Although Fletcher was not buying English silver objects for resale in the United States, he did take time to study the current styles for English silver.¹¹ When visiting England's most fashionable silver manufacturer, Rundell, Bridge and Rund he saw:

cases filled with goods of the most costly kind, a fine vase copied from one in the possession of the Earl of Warwick at Warwick Castle which was dug from the ruins of Herculaneum. [It] is beautifully made--it is oval, about 2/3d the size of that made for Hull [the Hull urn is 28 inches tall], the handles are grape stalks and a vine runs all around covered with leaves & clusters of grapes--below are heads of Bacchus &c. finely chased--some wine coolers in the same style & a candelabra formed of branches supported by figures of boys &c....were very beautiful.¹²

In seeing, studying, and recording the form and ornament of this vase and other similar objects in Rundell, Bridge and Rundell and the British Gallery, Fletcher was coming very close to the actual antique objects which were always the ultimate source of inspiration for the partners' silver. The effect on Fletcher was immediate and direct, as seen in the banded decoration in Figure 12.

After three months in England, Fletcher crossed the English Channel for Paris where he continued with his purchases. While there, he paid \$1.50 for a "Catalogue of Antiques," \$3 for a "Sketch Book," \$50 for "Engravings," and \$165 to Deniere and Matelin for "Models."¹³ All these came to America on or before Fletcher's return in April 1816, and were to serve as an inexhaustible well from which the partners could

draw for inspiration. It is highly unlikely this short list was the only printed source material Fletcher acquired while abroad. As already mentioned, he had been getting English pattern books. Because he never thought to include titles, which books must be a matter of speculation.

Both partners owned libraries. Sidney Gardiner's executors listed "30 vols books" as part of his estate in 1827.¹⁴ The inventory of Thomas Fletcher's goods indicates that he was a poor man when he died. Yet, the single most valuable personal possession, other than a lot of jewelry and debts owed him, was his library. His books were valued at \$30--more than any other single object he owned.¹⁵ Design books were certainly among them. Because of the multiplicity of printed sources at the time Fletcher and Gardiner were producing their silver, it is indeed difficult to assign a specific printed source to any single piece of silver or motif. However, educated guesses can be made. There was certainly nothing new about the classical forms and ornament the partners were using. Both can be found in published form at least as early as the first quarter of the eighteenth century. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Thomas Martyn and John Lettice, Nicholas Langlois, Pierre Maréchal, and a number of others had delineated these classical objects for private and public edification. Greek and Roman artifacts were common knowledge for those who were interested. The large and expensive folios produced by the men just mentioned are without doubt part of the ultimate source for Fletcher and Gardiner's designs. They were probably not their immediate inspiration. As their

"plate and jewellery" was in great demand, they would have had little time to peruse such large, sometimes awkward, relatively rare folios. Such publications would more likely be found in private collections of wealthy dilettantes rather than a silversmith's workshop. Impracticality would rule out the large folio volumes of classical architectural compositions as a potential printed source for immediate inspiration.

The "Catalogue of Antiques" Fletcher bought in Paris was obviously used in his shop, but it could not have been more influential on the partners' silver than a number of English design books published between 1807 and 1817. Three books in particular seem to have exerted a strong influence on Fletcher and Gardiner's designs. Convenient size and simplicity favor their being used in a silver designer's workshop. They are Thomas Hope's Household Furniture and Interior Decoration published in London in 1807, Henry Moses' A Collection of Vases, Alters, Paterae, Tripods, Candelabra, Sarcophagi published in 1812, and, later, Rudolph Ackerman's Selection of Ornaments published in 1817. The prefaces of these books clearly indicate the clientele they were intended to serve. They were not meant for the wealthy connoisseur but were intended for the use of "Sculptors, Painters, Carvers, Modellers, Chasers, Embossers, [Designers], &c."¹⁶ They do not contain elaborate landscapes cluttered with architectural remains. Instead, each plate isolates specific Greek or Roman motifs and presents them as an artist or craftsman would find most convenient. They are unabridged dictionaries of classical elements, compact,

portable, inexpensive, with straightforward presentation. Such books as these would have been ideal for a silversmith's, engraver's, or designer's professional library. Indeed, practically every motif the partners used in their domestic silver can be traced directly to one or more plates in these books. Ackerman's Selection of Ornaments is particularly important, both for the ease with which its designs can be copied and for their very close resemblance to Fletcher and Gardiner's work.

It is not unreasonable to expect local printed matter to come to the attention of the partners, as it related to their work. The Builder's Assistant published in Philadelphia in three volumes in 1818, 1819, and 1821, was illustrated by Hugh Bridport. Its preface states:

The Carver, and everyone to whom Decorative Ornaments are useful, will be furnished with a complete set of elegant examples...copied from the antique.

The similarity of some of its engravings to the decorative elements used by Fletcher and Gardiner after Fletcher's return from England is close. The partners had employed:

Mr. Bridport [in 1815 to design] Col. Armistead's Urn-- in the form of an shell supported on 4 Eagles Standing upon a round foot: the body without any chasing....¹⁷

A watercolor by Hugh Bridport of one of the De Witt Clinton urns which Fletcher and Gardiner designed and made in 1824-1825 proves the association between the men lasted at least ten years.¹⁸ This close professional relationship would have rendered The Builder's Assistant quite accessible. The partners not only saw the volumes but undoubtedly owned them.

Although Fletcher did spend time in both France and England in 1815-1816, the bulk of it was in England, looking at English manufactures and buying English products.¹⁹ As a result, after 1815, the French influence on their domestic silver is somewhat mitigated. The partners seem to hold no allegiance to national origins or a particular style but are concerned only with its currency. They borrowed from both England and France.²⁰ It is of some interest to note that within the space of four years after their arrival in Philadelphia, this eclectic attitude had placed the partners among the city's most fashionable silversmiths. In 1815, Fletcher's younger brother and partner wrote to him in England asking him to:

send [us] some new patterns of plate. It [is] time for [us] to get up something new and different from what is now made as most of the silversmiths make our patterns.²¹

Clearly, Fletcher and Gardiner gave as much as they received in the interchanges of ideas and styles relating to American silver design.

No documents survive showing they were importing French domestic silver or plated ware. Many, however, prove they were importing English plated ware in quantity. The influence of these English wares and English silver on their domestic silver became quite strong by 1817 (Figure 8). Silver ware "of the round pattern," in which the partners were working as early as 1815, was to become their most popular style until between 1820 and 1825. These round forms did have more plausible classic precedent than the partners' earlier style. Design books of ancient objects depict Greek and Roman vessels which are round in section. The partners' ornament was also archaeologically correct,

indicating that they were becoming more aware of and proficient in properly utilizing the Empire or Regency style. Their major decorative element, the ornamental border, passes from a vague, highly stylized leaf form (Figure 2) to a very individual and classically correct grape border (Figure 14). Cast ornament also evolves in the same manner; compare the cast feet on the teapot in Figure 1 to those on the basket in Figure 10. The French inspiration for this high style Empire silver was never more obvious than in 1817 (Figure 7), but the partners' silver of this period was not exclusively French in taste, as seen in Figure 8. The former looks directly to French silver for its style, while the latter completely ignores it and turns to England. The fact that both these groups of silver (Figures 7 and 8) were made in the same year, indicates a number of influences are pressing on high style American silver in this period. It also shows Fletcher and Gardiner's eclectic response to these pressures to suit their own particular needs.

International politics was probably a deciding factor in creating parallel currents of popular English and French taste, and it is difficult to determine just who the arbiters of these tastes were between 1810 and 1830. A number of prospective customers who wrote Fletcher and Gardiner for silver ware did state that the form and ornament of that silver could be determined as the maker's "own good taste will supply." This statement is invariably, quickly, and insistently modified to leave no doubt the objects are to be in the "newest pattern." With a rather vague notion of just what the "newest pattern" was, these customers were content to allow the partners to determine

how their silver was to look. Undoubtedly, the reputation their presentation silver had created for them aided immensely in persuading customers to let Fletcher and Gardiner be the arbiters for the style of their domestic silver.²² For Fletcher and Gardiner, the "newest pattern" was subjective. They were at ease with both the vertical, round, archaeological work of the French and the more horizontal mode of the English, often combining the two (Figure 11).

About 1820, Fletcher and Gardiner's design talents were called upon to assimilate an increasingly strong Empire taste with a resurgence of the rococo. Their hollow ware begins to assume a distinct urn shape by the early 1820's (Figure 11), a manifestation of continued interest in archaeological Neo-classicism. Yet; these urn shaped vessels are joined, sometimes in the same set, by high style hollow ware which harks back to the late eighteenth-century rococo (Figures 12 and 13). The coffeepot in Figure 12 has matching teapots in the "round" style. The teapot in Figure 13 was not made pear shaped. Instead, the three teapots are true to the period in which they were made, two in the round pattern and the other in a rudimentary urn shape. Both shapes were popularly used between 1815 and 1830 and were approximately concurrent with one another, the round pattern tending to be more popular toward the early half of that period and the urn shape slowly developing from it during the 1820's. Yet, Fletcher and Gardiner saw nothing inconsistent with juxtaposing them with coffeepots which are of a completely different stylistic interpretation.

The coffeepots were not made from design book sources but from examination of eighteenth-century Philadelphia examples, many of which would have still been in the area. Fletcher and Gardiner probably melted a number of them down to be reformed into more currently fashionable objects. Their bodies are late eighteenth-century in style, yet the lid, finial, and other decoration are unmistakably nineteenth century. The spout and handle sockets are identical to those used by John David, David Hall, Philip Syng, Jr., and Nathaniel Richardson, all of whom worked in Philadelphia when the American rococo was at its peak, just before the American Revolution. The fact that all these men used identical spouts and handle sockets might suggest a common source for these parts. It is possible that Fletcher and Gardiner acquired the parts unused and built coffeepots on which they could be utilized. Such a use of silver strongly indicates an eclectic and receptive attitude, not only on the part of the silversmiths but also of the clientele they were serving. Their work in the rococo style was not happenstance though. The partners fashioned objects which were intended to be nineteenth-century rococo, not just isolated copies of eighteenth-century examples. The compotes in Figure 14 and salver in Figure 15 are examples of this. The compotes in their form resemble the kylix, a classic vessel; their grape vine border is also classic in origin. Yet, the manner in which that ornament breaks through the outline of the vessels and, in effect, becomes a structural element, determining the lips of the compotes, is atypical of Neoclassic silver. It is purely rococo in conception. The lip of the

salver performs in the same manner. In addition, unlike the grape vine border, the asymmetrical scanthus leaf-shell has no purely classical prototype. A number of ornamental borders which use scallop shells, C-scrolls and highly asymmetrical compositions (Figures 16 - 19) also point to the partners' facility in combining Neo-classic and rococo motifs. Most of the firm's silver dating from the early 1820's manifests these combined influences. Even forms as severely classical as the tureen in Figure 20 or the teapots in Figure 21 have some rococo ornament in their handles or spouts.

Pyriform and bulbous pear shaped coffeepots excepted, the partners' silver of this period seems to move toward an increasingly strict interpretation of Neo-classic form with a contrasting emphasis on the rococo in its ornament. Even though Fletcher saw and ordered "rich [proto-Victorian] plated goods" during his return to England in 1825, he continued to produce in this variant of the Empire style until about 1830.²³ In 1831, Robert Campbell, Baltimore silversmith, complained about some silver Fletcher had sent him that "plate more showy and not so well made suits Baltimore better."²⁴ This complaint hints at a growing tendency toward more elaboration in American silver by the end of the 1820's. Indeed, well before 1830, silver began to show increasing ornament. The cake basket in Figure 22, the tray in Figure 23, and the tea set in Figure 24 are examples of Fletcher's response to that mood and document the beginning of the shift in American taste toward increased elaboration and naturalism in silver. All three continue to use banded ornament of the type Fletcher had been using on his silver

since 1808. Unlike his earlier examples, these borders, especially those used on the tray and tea set, have been purposely and regularly broken in an attempt at elaboration. The same effect has been sought by covering the handles with a profusion of plant forms in a complex, overly elaborated, seemingly naturalistic composition. In fact, though, nothing about the decoration on these objects is natural. It has all been put together with a view toward balance and symmetry by using an imposed system of design.

The ornament on the sauce boat illustrated in Figure 25 has not progressed markedly beyond that on the tray, the cake basket, and the tea set, except in its handle. This handle is in a completely different vocabulary from all ornament Fletcher and Gardiner had used previously. Instead of being forced into a manmade proportional system in which ornament is subservient to the form on which it is placed, this bud is a literal translation from nature to the object (compare to the handles used in Figures 3, 6, 7, 12, and 14). The result is a highly naturalistic element which contrasts greatly with the regular, organized, banded ornament around the sauce boat's lip, body, and foot. It contrasts, also, with the form of the sauce boat on which it has been placed.

Fletcher's silver of the early 1830's (Figures 22 and 23) begins to show a change in the handling of ornament which elevates it beyond mere decoration. He was attempting to make it naturalistic and a determining factor in the form of the object on which it was included.

The effect Fletcher achieved, however, seems to be one of elaboration rather than naturalism. In 1836, Fletcher sold a six piece "tea and coffee set [in the] new fluted pattern."²⁵ This tea and coffee set reflects Fletcher's continued attempts to work in the currently stylish mode. An example of the style in which that tea set was made is pictured in Figure 26. Fletcher is beginning to work with the surface and outline of his objects (fluting on body and foot and elaborate outline of handles). It would seem the intent was to achieve a naturalistic effect, but Fletcher fell short. Instead, he simply dressed up an old form (compare to sugar bowl made in 1817, pictured in Figure 8). The two are virtually the same form. The sugar bowl made in the 1830's was merely given an elaborate overlay in an attempt to bring it up to date, and it testifies to the fact that Fletcher had not given up his penchant for the Empire style.

In 1838, Thomas Fletcher was commissioned to make a set of domestic plate to be presented to Nicholas Biddle by the directors of the Second Bank of the United States. It was in this set that Fletcher came closest to acceptance of the major movement in silver style taking place in the 1830's (Figure 27).²⁶ Fletcher again chose the urn, an old form, for the shape of the vessels but dressed it up and elaborated its outline. He used some naturalistic ornament and created a florid composition in which the whole surface of each piece has been decorated. Looking closely at that decoration, however, it is still basically in ornamental bands (the row of anthemias at the lip of each vessel or the ring of C-scrolls around the shoulder of each).

Fletcher has not given his ornament complete freedom to meander naturalistically. He has created his effect using loose bands of anthemias and C-scrolls and small individual groupings of vegetable forms. Key places, such as the finials or specific elements in the decoration of the body, are truly naturalistic, but most of the set's form and ornament is a rearrangement of the same elements Fletcher had always used. He had been accustomed to highly structured and organized compositions, clearly defined and separated elements, and monumental Neo-classical motifs. This silver is in that tradition. The only difference between it and those produced earlier is that the lines of organization have been relaxed, not removed.

Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner, during their early years in Philadelphia, worked in the high Empire style. Their particular interpretation of this style, in which they drew liberally from both English and French sources, placed them among the avant garde of American silversmiths between 1812 and 1825. They established a standard for silver of that type which silversmiths in other cities were still producing as late as 1835.²⁷ By that time, however, the Empire taste had passed its zenith and was being replaced by the type of silver Samuel Kirk began producing as early as 1824.²⁸ This was the proto-Victorian taste, and it seems to have been America's solution to reconciling the combined influences of the Neo-classic and the rococo. By 1820, historical awareness of the sequence and relationships of past styles, which archaeology had helped to uncover, did not allow the terms "correct" or "incorrect" to be indiscriminantly applied to

differing styles. They all had historical precedent, and the only place to turn for original artistic inspiration was to nature.

Thomas Fletcher could not accept that. The result is that his silver, although always done well, passes from inspired originality in the 1810's and 1820's to reinterpretation of high Empire motifs to suit the changing tastes of the American public in the 1830's.

Chapter III.

ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

During the course of Fletcher and Gardiner's productive period, November 1808 to May 1842, their firm fashioned unnumbered thousands of silver and gold objects. Of those, only a small number has been found and an even smaller number examined by the author. Yet, this body is of sufficient size and variety to allow a tentative statement about the techniques by which these objects were manufactured.

It has been said of the period in which Fletcher and Gardiner worked that mechanization was beginning to erode traditional handcraft production. Indeed, Tench Coxe's statement in the federal census for 1810 demonstrates that more sophisticated tools for working silver were being developed at this time. However, Coxe is careful to qualify his statement, pointing out that consumer taste was too fickle to justify heavy capital investment in mass production equipment. This attitude resulted in an extended period during which machinery was slowly introduced into the decorative arts. Fletcher and Gardiner's firm is a case in point.

When their manufactory opened in Boston, Fletcher and Gardiner simply bought out the tools and equipment which Joseph Dyer and John

McFarlane, in turn, had owned. It is impossible to know exactly what tools the partners had at this time, but certainly they owned the traditional variety of hammers, anvils, swages, engraving tools, etc. which had been used in the eighteenth century. They probably owned some more modern equipment also.

Although flatting mills and gadroon mills had been used in America since the second half of the eighteenth century, they were being frequently "bought with cash from the Manufacturers of London, Birmingham and Sheffield" for use in the United States at the time Fletcher and Gardiner were opening their shop.¹ Such tools were used, in Tench Coxe's words, "to save labor" and can broadly be defined as "machine tools." That is, these tools, even though hand powered, could through the use of levers, screws, or gear trains increase the volume of productivity while, at the same time, lessen the amount of labor involved. These machine tools were similar to those being used in England at this time, but differed in one critical respect. English manufacturers were applying steam power to their mills and presses, but American examples were smaller and simpler devices and invariably hand powered. This continuing reliance on hand powered production techniques during the first half of the nineteenth century is important for it meant American producers and merchants were saddled with high labor cost while the English were systematically cutting it away by applying non-human power. Even so, the presence of these machine tools in early nineteenth-century inventories indicates that American silversmiths were aware of English production innovations even though they

chose not to adopt these developments to their fullest extent.

In 1815, no American silversmith was more interested in learning about English manufacturing than Thomas Fletcher. During his trip that year to England, ostensibly for the purpose of purchasing plated ware and making business contacts, Fletcher was carefully noting English production techniques as applied to plated ware. His letterbook contains numerous pages of narrative description of the English silversmithing industry, accompanied by pencil sketches of stamping presses and other machines. Fletcher was obviously impressed by what he saw, as in his description of Sheffield's plated ware manufactories. He described one of them as being:

from 80 to 100 feet in length, divided into five or six different apartments, [in which work] from 100 to 120 workmen, women & boys.... The lower room or cellar contains about 20 stamps or downfall sliding weights and a vast quantity of steel dies used for striking up parts of articles of various kinds. The copper [is] plated in bars about 8 inches long & rolled into sheets of 18 by 24 inches and cut up by patterns into the proper size and shape wanted, after which the larger vessels are raised, soldered and swedged as we do our silver work.... Candlesticks are almost entirely completed by the dies and are made with much facility. The whole process of manufacturing Plated Ware appears extremely simple and easily obtained by those who have been in the habit of making silver work. The principal obstacles to such an establishment in our Country are first, the great amount of capital required [and] secondly the high price of labor.²

Even though skeptical about establishing an American factory on the scale of the English, Fletcher saw possibilities in applying British ingenuity to his manufactory. Not long after seeing the English factories, Fletcher recorded in his letterbook:

Bot [sic] of Darwin [England's largest producer of silversmithing tools and equipment] a pair of 10 inch rollers with frame & wheels & pinions complete for [£] 32 1/2 & two small mills besides a letter press which I intend to have altered for a cutting press, the whole cost £48.15.³

The frame with ten inch rollers, a flatting mill, was used in Fletcher and Gardiner's manufactory for making sheet silver. However, none of their hollow ware examined shows evidence of having been seamed from sheet silver. Instead, the partners probably used most of this type of silver for making ornaments. As pointed out in Chapter II, ornamental borders were one of the partners' favorite means of decorating their silver. These borders were cut from sheet silver with a cutting press like the one Fletcher bought in England. The resulting strips were then made into ornamental borders by one of two methods. The first involved the use of a mill upon which were installed two ten inch "rolls."⁴ These "rolls" were interchangeable and had edges upon which were engraved ornamental designs. As the strips of silver were cranked between the rolls, the engraved design was impressed upon them, after which the decorated strips were filled with soft solder, chased, and applied to the object being decorated.⁵ Another method of obtaining the same result was with a downfall press, similar to the type used in most English manufactories. In Fletcher's words, these presses made borders:

By a downfall, the weight of which does not exceed 150 lbs. [The weight] is placed between two posts and a wheel about 2 feet [in] dia[meter] is fixed above over which the band is passed which raises the blocks, by which the workman is enabled to raise it with one hand & strike up whatever he wishes with the greatest facility...⁶

By means of such a press, short segmented borders or handles could be struck (tray in Figure 23). Longer continuous borders were cranked through the rotary mill (teapot in Figure 1).

Fletcher paid only slightly over £48 for three of these mills in 1815, but he wrote a friend three years later:

...after having spent more than a year in England & France [where I] examined with critical attention the manufacturing establishments of those Countries, I have since my return devoted myself almost exclusively to the improvement of Manufactures at home, in which I have been tolerably successful. Our Plate and Jewellery establishment is in a flourishing condition...⁷

In 1820, the partners completed a federal census which listed the specifics of Fletcher's endeavor. By that year, the partners had invested "about 8,000" dollars in "hand mills, downfall presses, hammers, vices, files, burnishers, gravers, &c."⁸ This is an impressive amount of capital goods but probably modest when compared to the typical English silver or plated ware producer.

Whereas that short list consists completely of hand and machine tools for manufacturing objects and their attendant ornament, Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, England's most fashionable silversmithing firm, was using a steam powered press which "weighed 10 tons to strike up vegetable dishes at a blow."⁹ Fletcher and Gardiner had nothing of that sort. As America's most fashionable silversmiths, they continued using laborious hand techniques for making their vessels. Raising appears to have been the only means by which the partners fashioned their hollow ware; all their objects were hammered into shape from a

disc of silver, using anvils of the proper size and curvature. To do this, the partners had to employ a large work force.

Not long after founding their business in Boston, the partners had a substantial number of journeymen and apprentice silversmiths and jewelers working for them. When the partners moved to Philadelphia, they began immediately to advertise for journeymen silversmiths, and they were apparently quite successful in finding men to work for them. By 1815, there were sixteen apprentices in their shop.¹⁰ Shop organization was such that there were four or fewer apprentices under each journeyman. In addition, there were a few burnishers, two females in 1820, which would have brought the total factory workforce to about twenty-two persons. The partners also employed a front office staff, usually two or three relatives, to keep account of the goods and conduct daily business matters. Of the shop personnel, George Fletcher must have been the most important. He probably took Sidney Gardiner's place as shop foreman when the latter eased himself into merchant activities. Thomas described George as having conducted himself "entirely to my satisfaction - we now have four apprentices under him - he has improved much of late & bids fair to become our best workman."¹¹ George and his workforce were responsible for filling all orders, "raising, soldering and swedging" the silver in eighteenth-century manner.

During the firm's early years, the partners also acquired gold and silver in the accepted eighteenth-century fashion from their

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customers. While in Boston, the partners usually included a short terminating sentence in their advertisements offering the "highest prices" for old silver or gold. From this, it must be concluded that out-of-style silver or coin was probably the most important source of metal for the partners' manufactory. After moving to Philadelphia, their advertisements no longer mention old silver and gold.

Undoubtedly, such articles were still brought to them for conversion to fashionable tea sets, but it was no longer their most important source of metal. Instead, a new source of supply became available to the men, one on which they were to rely increasingly in the 1820's. This supply came from the amazingly productive Mexican silver mines. By 1816, these mines had become important enough for the United States that they were given prominent mention in a study of United States commerce published in that year. This study pointed out that

...the coinage and commerce of Mexico, and particularly that part of the commerce carried on from the port of Vera Cruz, cannot be uninteresting to an American merchant or statesman.... The articles of produce and manufacture exported from New-Spain, are...gold and silver, in bullion and coined and gold leaf for gilder's use.¹²

The Mexican mines were the wealthiest in the world, \$1,464,818 in gold and \$24,172,982 in silver being coined from them in 1809 alone. This wealth could hardly have gone unnoticed by American silversmiths. Indeed, Fletcher and Gardiner imported large quantities of Mexican coin for use in their manufactory, especially after Gardiner had made connections with merchants and commission agents in Vera Cruz.

The partners probably turned to Mexico for their silver for

two reasons. First, it was easy and quick to ship from Vera Cruz direct to Philadelphia. More importantly, Mexican coin probably was considerably cheaper than European or American. This element of cost was vital, as it was high and continued to rise between 1810 and 1840. Fletcher complained as early as 1814 that he had to "pay 12 1/2 per cent for silver and 15 per cent for gold."¹³ Even though Mexico proved to be a cheap overseas supply, the premium for these metals continued to rise. By 1826, the partners had to pay \$277.90 for a shipment of "\$225.25 Spanish dollars."¹⁴ This amounted to a premium of 18 1/2 percent for insurance and shipping. With an annual consumption of 10,000 ounces of silver and 340 ounces of gold, the partners' expense for materials was considerable.¹⁵ This is conveniently depicted in a short and, unfortunately, singular chart which Fletcher probably did, breaking down the cost variables involved in two swords the partners made in 1834.¹⁶ It reads:

<u>Cost of Towson Sword</u>	
Gold 263 dwt @92 <u>cents per dwt</u>	\$ 241.96
Silver 11 oz @\$1.20 <u>per ounce</u>	13.20
Cast steel blade	10
Ornamenting do	30
Making & Gilding scabbard	20
+155- +125-	
chasing & mounting gold hilt &c	280
engraving inscription	5
case for sword	5
	\$ 605.16
<u>Cost of Gallagher Sword</u>	
Gold 225 dwt @85 <u>cents per dwt</u>	\$ 216.75
cast steel blade	10
ornamenting do	30
making hilt & mounting	115
chasing do & do	125
case & scabbard	7
engraving inscriptions	5
	\$ 508.75
Total	\$ <u>1113.91</u>

The Towson sword cost \$270.16 in parts, \$225.16 of which was for precious metals. The Gallagher sword cost \$216.75 in gold and only \$17 in other materials.

It must be noted that materials were not the partners' greatest expense however. The Towson sword cost \$270.16 in parts but \$335 in labor, while the Gallagher sword cost \$233.75 for materials and \$275 in labor. As can be readily seen, their greatest expense was labor. Unfortunately, the partners are usually not so explicit in outlining this, but something can be deduced from the few recorded prices for which they sold their silver. These prices were quoted at a given price per ounce, although that price was never constant. Their flatware varied between \$1.05 and \$1.87 per ounce during the 1830's. Hollow ware was usually more during the same period, fluctuating from a low of \$1.15 to a high of \$3.48 per ounce.¹⁷ The uniformity of silver content in the objects the partners made is fairly consistent, so that fluctuations in the price per ounce cannot be explained in terms of a purer or more adulterated alloy.¹⁸ The great variable is labor which is always included in the price per ounce. For example, in 1836 Fletcher's firm made to order a six piece "tea and coffee sett [of the] new fluted pattern" (Figure 26). It weighted a total of 227.04 ounces and sold for \$2.31 an ounce. It cost the customer \$524.83.¹⁹ If the Towson and Gallagher swords are used for reference, the cost of this tea set could be broken down into parts and labor. If this was done, it would readily be seen that, again, the bulk of the expense of making this \$524.83 tea set was in labor. By contrast, imported

English plated tea sets, every bit as stylish, were selling for considerably less.

English plated ware manufacturers, by using steam powered machinery, were producing "rich" domestic silver articles which Fletcher's workmen were laboriously hammering out in eighteenth-century fashion. The capacity of English machines to eliminate a large part of the labor involved in silver production and, therefore, its expense, enabled these plated ware manufacturers to undersell Americans who continued employing highly skilled craftsmen. The inevitable consequence was that the latter were priced out of the market.

Fletcher and Gardiner had been receptive to English innovation but failed to adopt English machine production to the extent the English had developed. Their failure to convert to total machine production resulted in the firm being overtaken and replaced by a new type of silver manufacturer, epitomized by the names of Kirk and Tiffany. Fletcher and Gardiner's shop had been geared to filling the needs of a craft oriented society which it did well. Unfortunately for the partners, America had grown beyond that. America's phenomenal population growth, trade, and transportation revolutions could not be satisfied with the volume of which a craft shop was capable. Mechanized mass production more efficiently satisfied the nation's needs and inexorably forced Fletcher out of business.

CONCLUSION

Fletcher and Gardiner founded their plate and jewelry manufactory with the ambitious intent of dominating the Boston market, but that aspiration quickly grew to include the whole United States. They began pursuit of their goal by moving to Philadelphia, a much more dynamic and attractive center of trade. From 1811, the year of their relocation, to 1817, their business and influence mushroomed. In large part, this was due to the commissions for presentation silver they received as a result of public patriotism over the War of 1812. Their presentation plate created for them a reputation which literally made the partners' names known from one end of the country to the other. Even so, presentation silver was not the partners' primary source of income. That lay in the much more mundane but infinitely larger demand for "elegant" domestic silver and jewelry.

The domestic silver these men created during the first two decades of their partnership was, for the most part, in the high Empire style, and it can only be described as among the best to be had. As a designer, Thomas Fletcher was at his best in the Empire taste. The particular suitability of this style for the mood of the American public at this time resulted in the partners' firm being elevated to a position of leadership in the creation and dissemination of American

silver design.

With their position assured, the partners began about 1817 to invest in American manufacturing outside their previous experience. They became deeply interested and financially involved in such things as a wood screw manufactory, overseas trade, and other similar speculative ventures, most of which, unfortunately for the partners, failed. Approximately concurrent with the partners' broadening interests, American taste in silver began to shift from high style Empire to a more eclectic fashion which by 1830 manifested itself as the Victorian style.

It would appear that the shift in taste on the part of the American public and the partners' distraction by other investments were both important factors in the economic decline of Fletcher's business and the stylistic decline of his silver which began about 1825. From approximately that year to 1842, the year in which his firm failed, Fletcher's silver passes from inspired originality. Whereas his designs dating before 1825 were avant garde and copied extensively, after that date other silversmiths and designers, such as Samuel Kirk, began to assume the position of leadership in American silver design. Although Fletcher continued to produce good silver during the 1830's, with a few exceptions, his work of this period is simply a restatement of his penchant for the Empire style in an attempt to keep up with the movement of American silver into the Victorian taste.

FOOTNOTES

Preface

¹A group of Fletcher and Gardiner's personal and business papers is on deposit in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP). In addition, there is a small group of business letters, an account book, and a letter book in the Joseph Downs Manuscript and Microfilm Library of the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum (hereafter DMMC) and an important body of papers in the Athenaeum of Philadelphia (hereafter Ath.). Also, a number of designs for plate and swords by Fletcher et al are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Maryland Historical Society.

²Louise C. Avery, Early American Silver (New York, 1930), p. 89.

³John Marshall Phillips, American Silver (New York), p. 112.

⁴A major catalogue by Kathryn C. Buhler and Graham Hood, American Silver, Garvan and Other Collections in the Yale University Art Gallery (New Haven, 1970), includes numerous examples of nineteenth century silver from many areas of the country. Others of interest are Martha Gandy Fales, Early American Silver for the Cautious Collector (New York, 1970) and Peter Bohan and Philip Hammerslough, Early Connecticut Silver, 1700-1840 (Middletown, Conn., 1970); both include many examples of nineteenth-century silver. A number of articles have treated the subject in a more narrow context. See: Martha Gandy Fales, "Obadiah Rich, Boston Silversmith," Antiques, XCIV (October 1968), 565-569; Louise Durbin, "Samuel Kirk, Nineteenth-Century Silversmith," Antiques, XCIV (December 1968), 868-873; Berry B. Tracy, "Late Classical Styles in American Silver, 1810-1830," Antiques, LXXXVI (December 1964), 702-706. Several exhibitions produced catalogues of interest. See: H. Parrott Bacot, Southern Furniture and Silver: The Federal Period, 1788-1830 (Baton Rouge, 1968); David B. Warren, Southern Silver: An Exhibition of Silver Made in the South Prior to 1860 (Houston, 1968); and H. Parrott Bacot, Natchez-Made Silver of the Nineteenth Century (Baton Rouge, 1970). These articles and catalogues have provided the beginnings of a regional background for American Silver, 1800-1840.

⁵Tench Coxe, A Statement of the Arts and Manufactures of the United States of America (Philadelphia, 1814), pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

⁶Fletcher to Charles Fletcher, October 5, 1814, Fletcher Papers, Ath.

⁷See: Elizabeth Ingerman Wood, "Thomas Fletcher, A Philadelphia Entrepreneur of Presentation Silver," Winterthur Portfolio, III (1967), 136-171; Katharine Morrison McClinton, "Fletcher and Gardiner, Silversmiths of the American Empire," The Connoisseur, CLXXIII (1970), 211-221; Richard H. Randall, Jr., "Sword Designs by Thomas Fletcher," The American Arms Collector, I (1957), 103-108; Jay P. Altmayer, American Presentation Swords (Mobile, Ala., 1958), pp. 16-19.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I.

- ¹Samuel Woodworth to Fletcher, June 1807, Ath.
- ²Fletcher to John Gardiner, April 21, 1809, Ath.
- ³Columbian Centinel, Boston, November 9, 1808, Ath.
- ⁴Fletcher to father, August 2, 1809, Ath.
- ⁵Columbian Centinel.
- ⁶April 21, 1809, Ath.
- ⁷Columbian Centinel, November 9, 1808, Ath.
- ⁸November 21, 1808, Ath.
- ⁹Certificate of Indenture, Ath.
- ¹⁰Ath.
- ¹¹Columbian Centinel, November 9, 1808, Ath.
- ¹²Ibid.
- ¹³December 16, 1811, Ath.
- ¹⁴Ath.
- ¹⁵Fletcher to father, December 19, 1813, Ath.
- ¹⁶Fletcher to father, February 4, 1811, Ath.
- ¹⁷To James Fosdick Fletcher, October 3, 1814, Ath.
- ¹⁸Sidney Gardiner to Fletcher, December 16, [1815], Ath.
- ¹⁹Sidney Gardiner to Fletcher, August 9, 1815, Ath.

- ²⁰To Fletcher, July 8, 1815, Ath.
- ²¹To Fletcher, December 15, 1815, Ath.
- ²²Fletcher to Henry Fletcher, February 8, 1818, Ath.
- ²³Undated and unsigned letter, c. 1838-1840, Ath.
- ²⁴Sidney Gardiner (532), 1820 Census of Manufacturing Establishments, City of Philadelphia, Eastern Division, Frames 16-18, General Services Administration.
- ²⁵Certificate of Indenture, December 30, 1837, Ath.
- ²⁶Charles Fletcher to Fletcher, May 15, 1828, Ath.
- ²⁷R. & A. Campbell to Fletcher, June 8, 1831, Ath.
- ²⁸John H. Hopkins to Fletcher, June 9, 1829, Ath.
- ²⁹To Fletcher, April 19, 1831, Ath.
- ³⁰Fletcher to Charles Fletcher, January 3, 1829, Ath.
- ³¹Fletcher to Charles Fletcher, February 25, 1829, Ath.
- ³²Fletcher to son, June 17, 1842, Ath.
- ³³Fletcher to Charles Fletcher, September 6, 1850, Ath.
- ³⁴John LeGrand to Fletcher, Ath.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter II.

¹Columbian Centinel, April 27, 1810.

²Ibid., August 11, 1810.

³Columbian Centinel, October 23, 1805.

⁴The adjective "oblong" is frequently used between 1805 and 1811 by such merchants as Dyer & Eddy, Eben Moulton, John McFarlane, A & G Wells, and William Leverett to describe their most fashionable imports.

⁵Columbian Centinel, October 6, 1810.

⁶Columbian Centinel, April 20, 1811.

⁷Forks and spoons were made in greater quantity than any other form. Although the sample of domestic hollow ware taken is too small to establish a definitive norm (between 150 and 200 pieces, counting a tea set or a pair of something as a "piece," have been discovered), forty to fifty percent of that group is in the form of tea and coffee sets.

⁸The Columbian Centinel, during the years examined, 1804 to 1811, carries innumerable advertisements by most of Boston's major fancy goods merchants and silversmiths offering English plated wares and, in a few instances, English silver. These advertisements and Fletcher and Gardiner's personal correspondence indicate the cycle for the market was geared to seasonal changes. Every spring, summer, autumn, or winter brought advertisements offering new adaptations, changes, or refinements in the style of goods offered.

⁹Thomas Bradbury & Sons, Thomas Bradbury & Sons, Ltd. (Sheffield, undated, circa. 1924), p. 3. This pamphlet lists a number of early nineteenth-century American customers of Thomas Bradbury. The firm of McFarlane, Fletcher and Gardiner is listed as having bought over £232 of plated domestic goods in 1810. They were also buying from other English plated ware manufacturers.

¹⁰Tench Coxe, A Statement of the Arts and Manufactures of the United States of America (Philadelphia, 1814), pp. 6 and 53. Philadelphia is listed as producing \$788,000 worth of gold, silver, and jewelry in 1810 as opposed to \$161,000 for all of Massachusetts in the same year.

¹¹Fletcher to Sidney Gardiner, June 6, 1815, Ath. This letter states: "Silver plate [silver, not plated ware] cannot be bot [sic] here cheaper than we can make it." It was economically unsound for the partners to involve themselves with importing something which they could make themselves more cheaply.

¹²Thomas Fletcher, Letterbook, p. 144, Ath.

¹³There is a sketch book in the Fletcher papers in the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. Presumably, it is the one bought in Paris. It contains a number of varying subjects drawn by Fletcher, not all pertaining to silver. There is, however, a group of six undecorated vases which are identical to those depicted in Henry Moses' A Collection of Antique Vases... and Thomas Hope's Household Furniture... There are, in addition, three examples of ornamental borders. Two of these can be found on the silver produced by the partners between 1812 and about 1825 (flower border in Figure 1 and laurel border in Figure 15). Oddly, the third border does not appear on any of the firm's silver until the 1830's (tray in Figure 25). There is also drawn in this sketch book a handsome pair of entwined dolphins which the partners used on the urn presented to Captain Isaac Hull by the Citizens of Philadelphia in 1812 and on a group of eight thistle-shaped urns which Thomas Biddle gave his brothers and sisters in 1831. The remainder of the sketch book contains drawings of schooners, brigs, and clipper ships, portrait sketches, mechanical drawings, and other miscellaneous data. The models for which Fletcher paid over \$150 were probably casts of antique artifacts. They were mentioned in a letter which Major General Winfield Scott wrote to the Governor of Virginia on July 9, 1821. Scott was writing from Philadelphia in reference to a sword which the Legislature of Virginia had resolved to present Scott for his military prowess at the battles of Chippewa and Niagara. Scott thanked the state and continued:

In answer to your inquiries...all general officers in the service of the U. States, wear straight swords (cut & thrust) ...Messrs. 'Fletcher & Gardiner, Manufacturers in Chestnut Street, Philadelphia,' are the workmen whom I beg leave to recommend for all the parts of the sword. I have seen several of their make, ordered by public bodies, executed with superior taste and workmanship. They made the best cast steel blades & have a great variety of antique models from which to compose the ornaments of their work...should the ornaments in general be left to the discretion of the artists...it will be in [their] power...to render [them]

superior for any given sum of money.
 (Jay P. Altmayer, American Presentation Swords [Mobile, Alabama, 1958], p. 18.)

These models must have served as a primary source of inspiration for the ornament the partners used on their presentation and domestic silver.

¹⁴City of Philadelphia, Register of Wills, 1828, no. 128, Admin. no. N, p. 194.

¹⁵Burlington County Court House, Mt. Holly, N. J., Surrogate's Office, book 1, p. 174.

¹⁶Rudolph Ackerman, Selection of Ornaments (London, 1817).

¹⁷Charles Fletcher to Fletcher, July 2, 1815, Ath.

¹⁸This watercolor is now in the collections of the print department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

¹⁹Fletcher was absent from the United States on this trip for a total of thirteen months, seventy days of which were spent crossing the Atlantic. Of the remaining eleven months, approximately three were spent in Paris and the other eight in England.

²⁰The problem of predominant influence in the partners' silver is knotty. Conclusive proof of absolute dominance of either English or French silver designs cannot be put forth because one did not operate to the exclusion of the other. Manuscript evidence indicates the partners were looking to the products of both countries. In comparing their silver to English and French examples, closer over-all resemblance seems to weigh in favor of England. French influences began to operate on the partners with their move to Philadelphia and reached their peak between 1815 and 1817.

²¹Charles Fletcher to Fletcher, July 8, 1815, Ath.

²²Newspapers, in the interest of noteworthy news, carried notices about public events, such as gifts to nationally known figures, even though the news might not pertain directly to the local area. For example, the Salem Gazette carried the following article on September 27, 1816:

A superb silver Vase, weighing 14 lb. 10 oz. has been recently presented to General Jackson, by the ladies of Charleston. It is the workmanship of Messrs. Fletcher and Gardiner, of Philadelphia, and is said to be of uncommon taste and elegance.

After reading this notice, a Salem resident, desiring a stylish tea set or cake basket, could feel confident of getting one if he sent to Fletcher and Gardiner. When Fletcher wrote his father that thousands had been past his shop in Philadelphia to view the Isaac Hull urn, the possibility of exaggeration does exist, but such a statement does indicate that their work was well known. With such a reputation, style conscious persons were willing to commission domestic silver from the partners, even through the mail.

²³Fletcher to Sidney Gardiner, September 29, 1825, HSP.

²⁴R. & A. Campbell to Fletcher, [1831], Ath.

²⁵DMMC, 68x22.2-.14.

²⁶The Biddle plate was melted down for the silver when the Second Bank of the United States failed. Drawings of a teapot, sugar bowl, and creamer from this set are presently held in the print department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The set here illustrated is not part of that made for Biddle but is practically identical.

²⁷The Boston Public Library owns an urn presented to Daniel Webster by the citizens of Boston in 1835. It was made by Samuel L. Ward and Obadiah Rich and is practically identical to the pair Fletcher and Gardiner made for presentation to De Witt Clinton ten years earlier.

²⁸The very accomplished naturalistic silver which Samuel Kirk was manufacturing as early as 1828 stylistically replaced Fletcher's silver in its anticipation of Victorian design. This crucial twenty year span, 1820 to 1840, was the period in which the Empire style of silver which Fletcher had made was modified, discarded, and replaced by proto-Victorian designs. It was not until the 1840's and 1850's that the Victorian style in American silver really became popularly produced, but its beginnings can be traced to the 1820's in such silver as is pictured in Katharine Morrison McClinton, Collecting American 19th-Century Silver (New York, 1970), p. 43.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter III.

¹Columbian Centinel, December 25, 1805.

²Fletcher to Sidney Gardiner, May 15, 1815, Ath.

³Fletcher letterbook, p. 161, Ath.

⁴Mark Tyizacth (?) to Fletcher, February 6, 1816, Ath. This letter reads:

I received your parcel with Patterns enclosed for Two Borders and will endeavor to have them done to your satisfaction as well as the others before order/e/d - But respecting the time I cannot speak precisely for I have not yet got the rolls...

⁵This process is described on the basis of a series of passages taken from Fletcher's letterbook and other letters.

⁶Fletcher letterbook, p. 124, Ath.

⁷Fletcher to William Pelham, April 25, 1818, Ath.

⁸Sidney Gardiner (532), 1820 Federal Census of Manufacturing Establishments, City of Philadelphia, Eastern Division, Frames 16-18, General Services Administration.

⁹Fletcher letterbook, p. 161, Ath.

¹⁰Charles Fletcher to Fletcher, July 2, 1815.

¹¹Fletcher to father, December 19, 1813, Ath.

¹²Timothy Pitkin, A Statistical View of the Commerce of the United States (Philadelphia, 1816), Appendix 1. [1967 reprint.]

¹³Fletcher to father, December 14, 1814, Ath.

¹⁴William Dubs to Fletcher and Gardiner, September 11, 1820, Ath.

¹⁵Sidney Gardiner (532), 1820 Federal Census of Manufacturing Establishments, City of Philadelphia, Eastern Division, Frames 16-18, General Services Administration.

¹⁶Letter, unsigned and undated, Circa. 1838-1840, Ath.

¹⁷These figures represent the high and low of all the prices gleaned from bills and personal correspondence dating between 1829 and 1841. Between them, there are many intermediate prices which were quoted for other flatware and hollow ware. If extant silver could be related to some of these bills, a much clearer picture of the elements of cost could be assembled. As of now, it must be assumed that the more labor involved in the production of any given piece of silver, the higher will be its cost per ounce.

¹⁸A number of Fletcher and Gardiner's domestic silver objects have been examined on the nondispersive X-ray fluorescent analyzer ["New Instrument Analyzes American Silver," Winterthur Newsletter, XVI (November 1970), 5-7.] belonging to the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum. The sample taken is, admittedly, much too small to allow a definitive statement concerning early nineteenth-century American silver. However, some tentative conclusions can be assembled from those objects examined. The silver content of these objects is uniform. Raised objects are consistently below the sterling standard of 925 parts silver per 1000, ranging between 88 and 92 per cent purity. Cast parts seem to be consistently equal to or higher than sterling standard, having as high as 95 per cent purity in some instances.

¹⁹DMC, 68 x 22.2-.14.

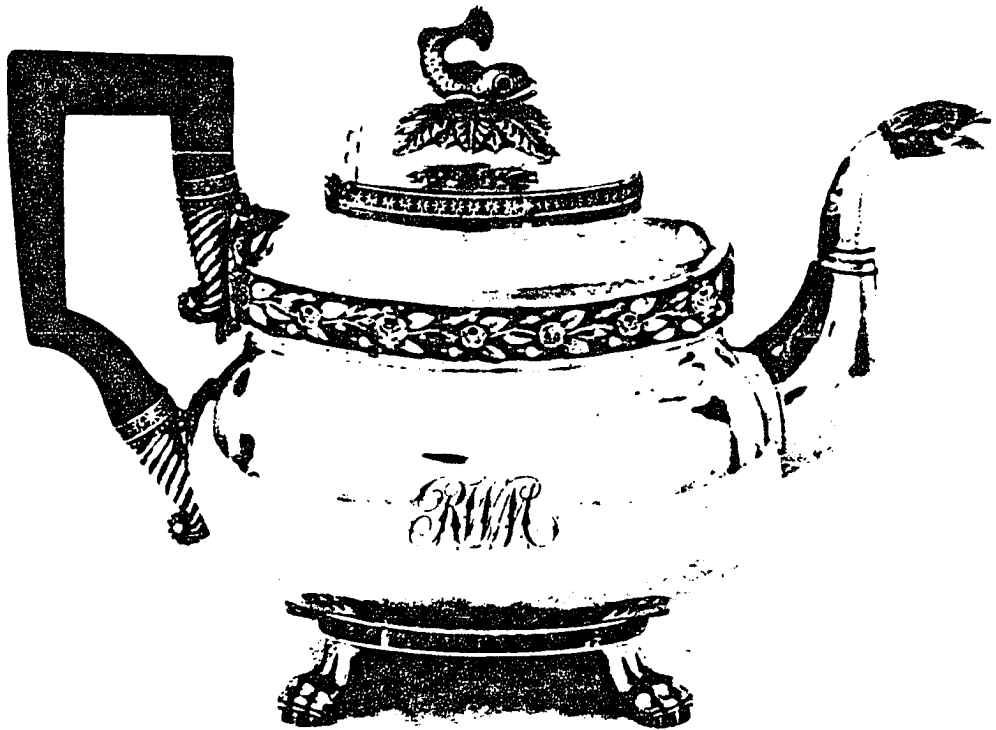


Figure 1

Fletcher and Gardiner, Teapot in "oblong" style,
Philadelphia, 1812-15. Height: 8 inches. Engraved
monogram RWM; mark: F&G (Figure A).
(Collection of Stuart P. Feld)



Figure 2

Fletcher and Gardiner, Five-piece tea and coffee service in "oblong" style, Philadelphia, 1812-17. Height of coffeepot: 11 1/4 inches. Engraved monogram WAS; mark: F&G (Figure A). (Courtesy of The Newark Museum)



Figure 3

Fletcher and Gardiner, Ewer in "round" style, Philadelphia, 1813-20. Height: 16 inches. Mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure D).
(Courtesy of The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum)



Figure 4

Fletcher and Gardiner, Five-piece tea and coffee service in "round" style, Philadelphia, 1814-18. Height unknown. Engraved monogram; marked by Fletcher and Gardiner. (Parke-Bernet Sale No. 1076, May 1949, Item No. 17)

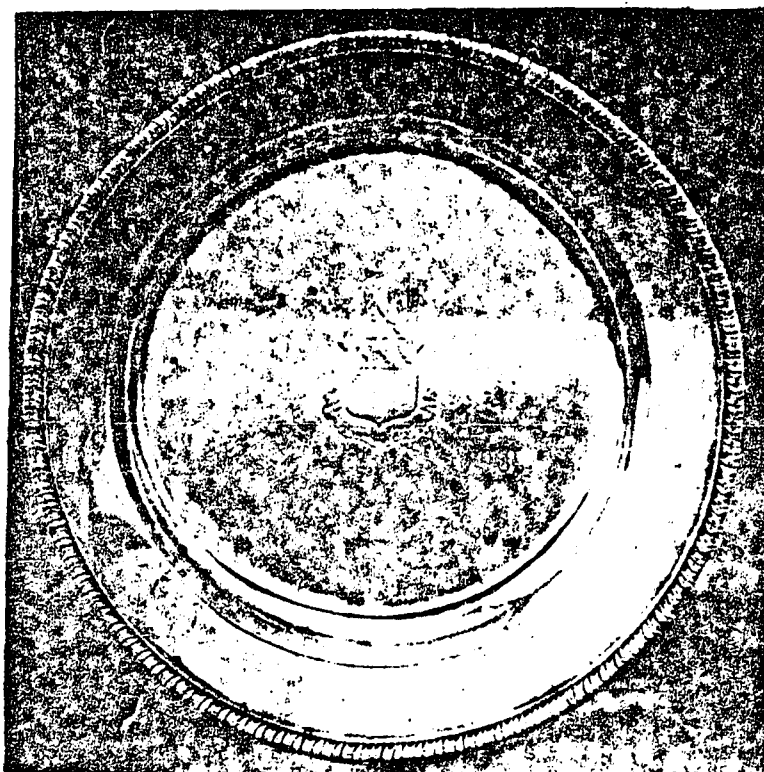


Figure 5

Fletcher and Gardiner, Plate, Philadelphia, 1812-25.
Diameter: 9 7/8 inches. Engraved Wetmore family coat
of arms; mark: F&G (Figure A).
(One of a pair owned by Charles V. Swain, Jr.)



Figure 6

Fletcher and Gardiner, Cake basket in "oblong" style,
Philadelphia, 1815-25. Length: 17 inches. Engraved
R. F. Stockton; marked by Fletcher and Gardiner.
(Parke-Bernet Sale No. 2781, December 1968, Item No. 54)

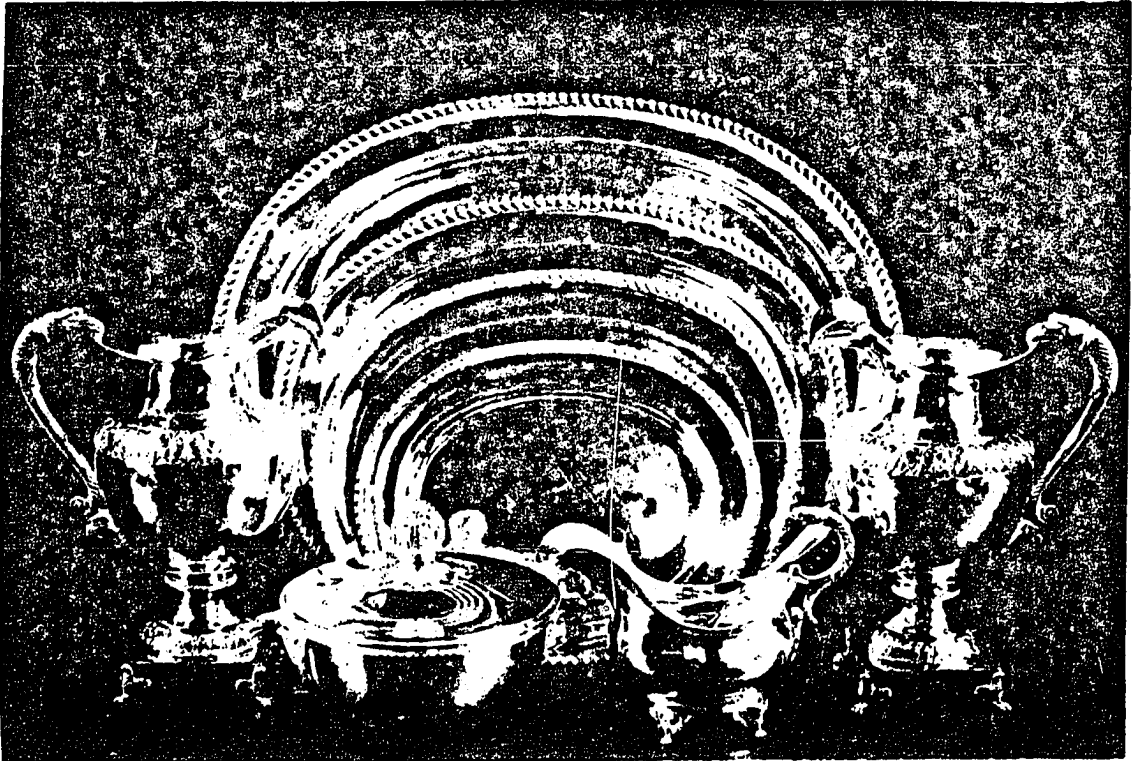


Figure 7

Fletcher and Gardiner, Dinner service, Philadelphia, 1817. Length of largest platter: 22 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Engraved presentation inscription to Commodore John Rodgers; mark: Fletcher & Gardiner (Figure E). (Courtesy of The Maryland Historical Society)

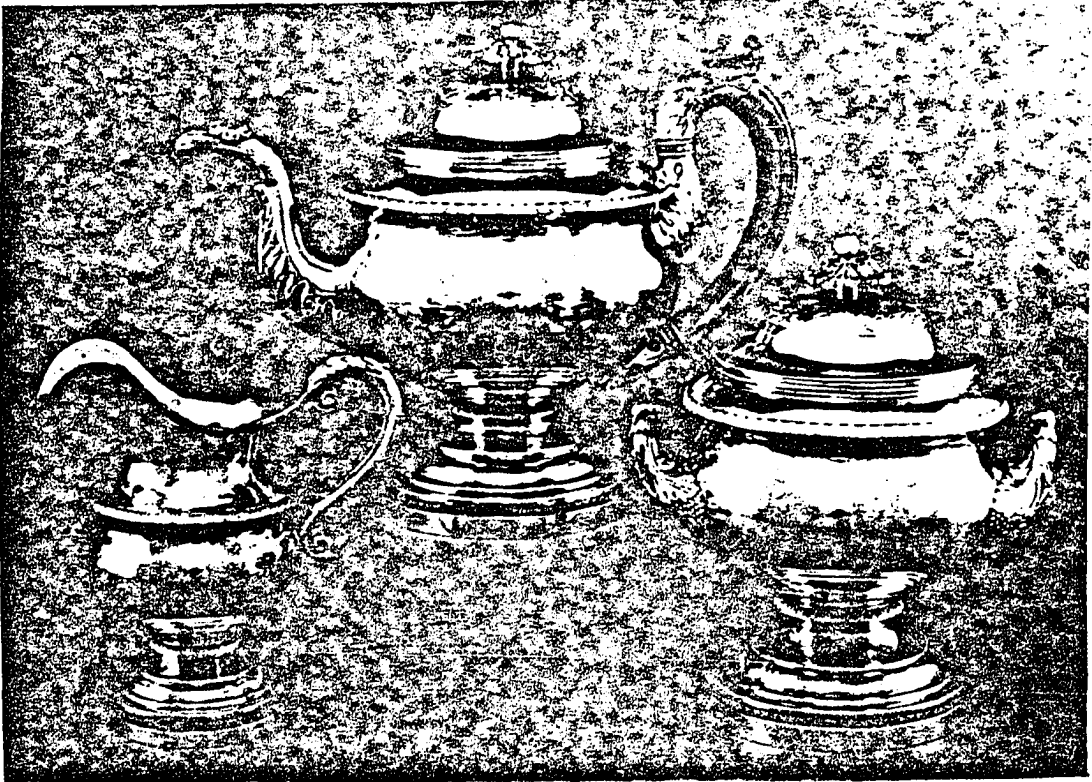


Figure 8

Fletcher and Gardiner, Three-piece tea set in "round" style, Philadelphia, 1817. Height of teapot: 9 inches. Engraved inscription underfoot From the family of George Gibbs to Walter Channing 1817; mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure E). (Collection of Charles V. Swain, Jr.)



Figure 9

Fletcher and Gardiner, Pair of tankards, Philadelphia, 1813-19. Height: 4 3/4 inches. Engraved monogram EW; mark: F&G (Figure B).
(Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Denison H. Hatch)

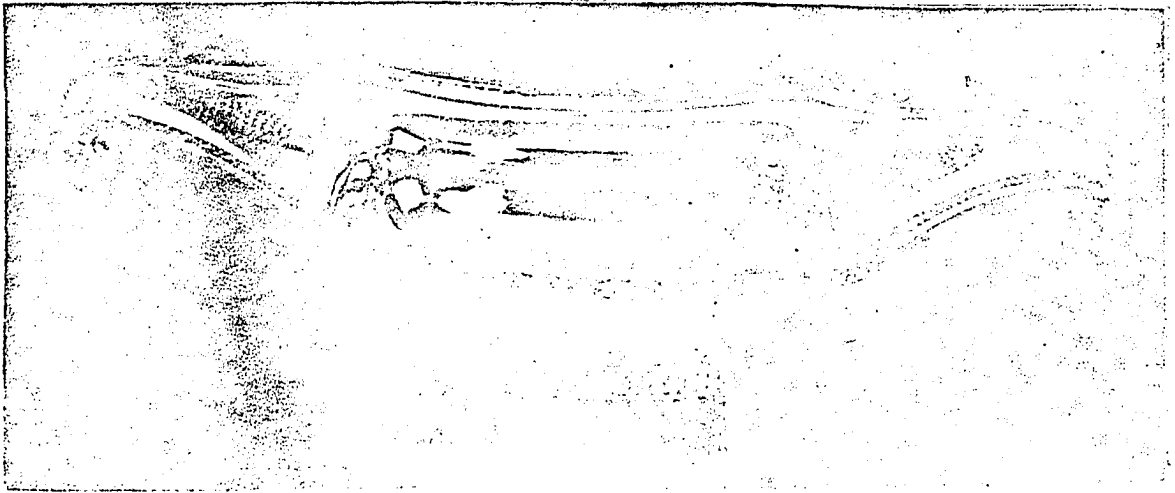


Figure 10

Fletcher and Gardiner, Cake or fruit basket in "oblong" style, Philadelphia, 1815-20. Length: 14 inches.
Mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure D).
(Courtesy of The Smithsonian Institution)

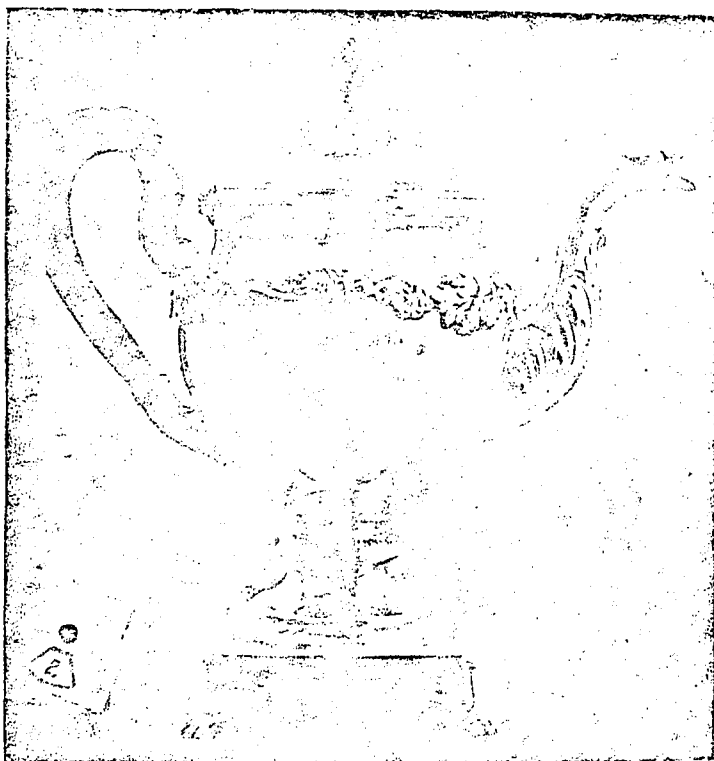


Figure 11

Fletcher and Gardiner, Urn-shaped teapot, Philadelphia, 1819-22. Height: 11 inches. Engraved monogram MH; mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure E).
(Part of a privately owned four-piece tea set)



Figure 12

Thomas Fletcher, Pyriiform coffeepot, Philadelphia, 1818-25.
Height: 13 inches. Engraved coat of arms; mark:
T. Fletcher (Figure F).
(Part of a privately owned six-piece tea and coffee service)



Figure 13

Thomas Fletcher, Four-piece tea and coffee set, Philadelphia, 1823-30. Height unknown. Engraved monogram EMJ; marked by T. Fletcher.
(Parke-Bernet Sale No. 3112, November 1970, Item No. 18)

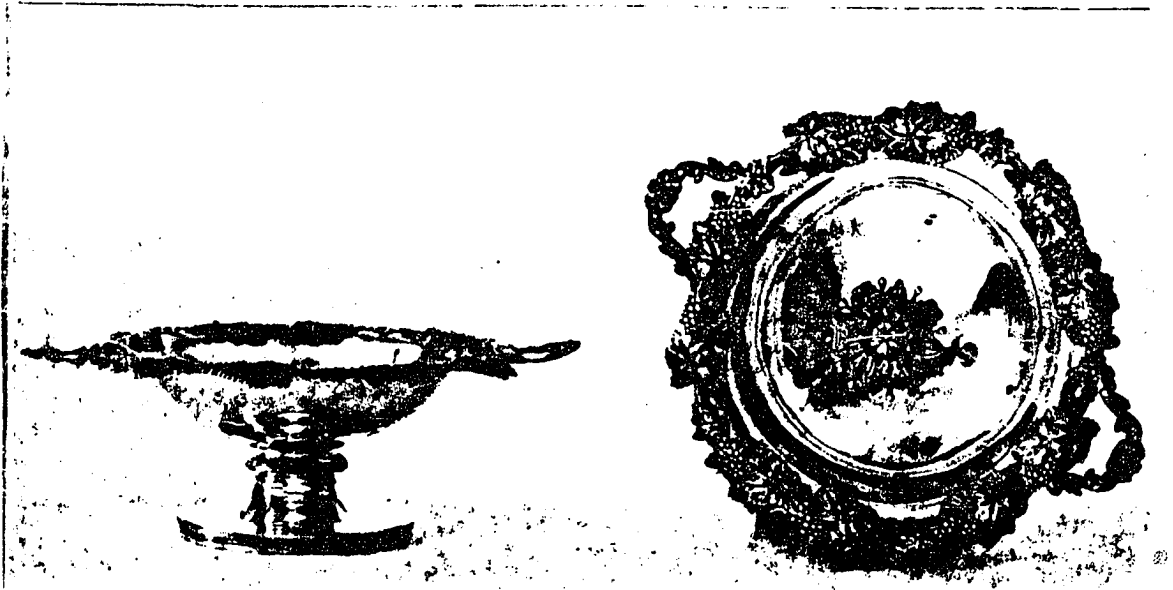


Figure 14

Fletcher and Gardiner, Pair of compotes; Philadelphia, 1818-25. Diameter: 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure E). (Privately owned)

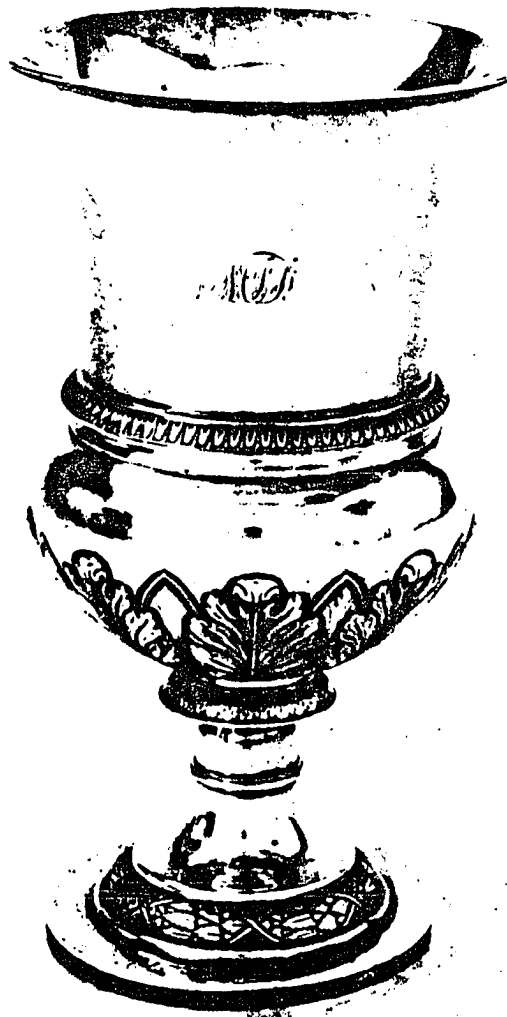


Figure 15

Fletcher and Gardiner, Thistle-shaped chalice,
Philadelphia, 1817-27. Height: 8 inches. Engraved
monogram MJF; mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure E).
(Collection of Stuart P. Feld)

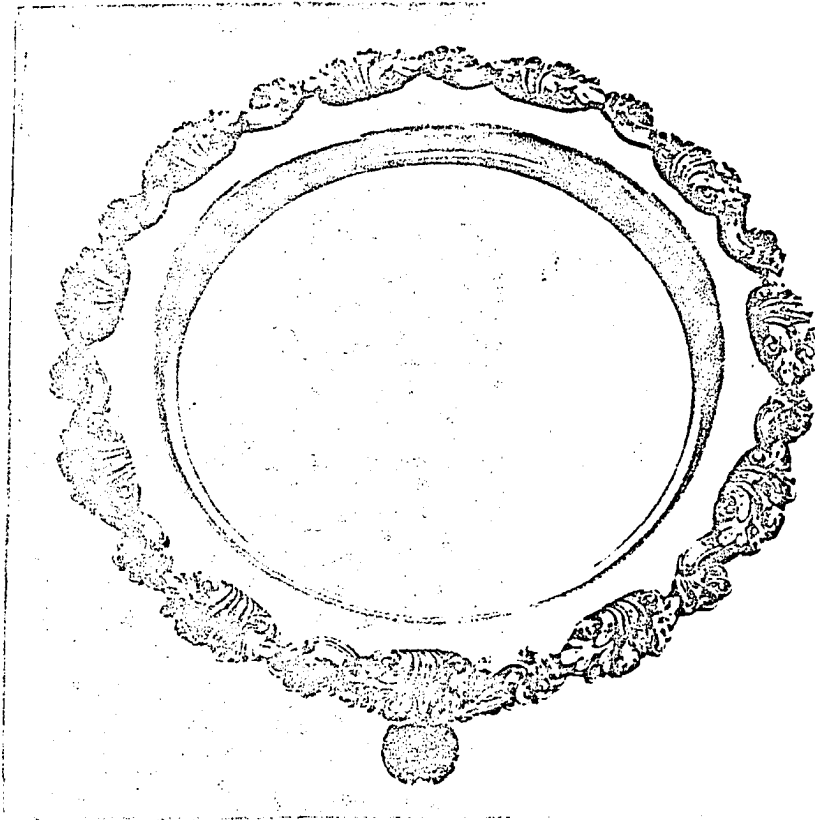


Figure 16

Fletcher and Gardiner, Footed tray, Philadelphia,
1818-28. Diameter: $17 \frac{15}{16}$ inches. Mark: FLETCHER
& GARDINER (Figure E).
(One of a pair owned by Carl R. Kossack)

100-100-100



Figure 17

Fletcher and Gardiner, Teapot in "round" style,
Philadelphia, 1818-28. Height: 9 7/16 inches.
Mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure E).
(Collection of Charles V. Swain, Jr.)

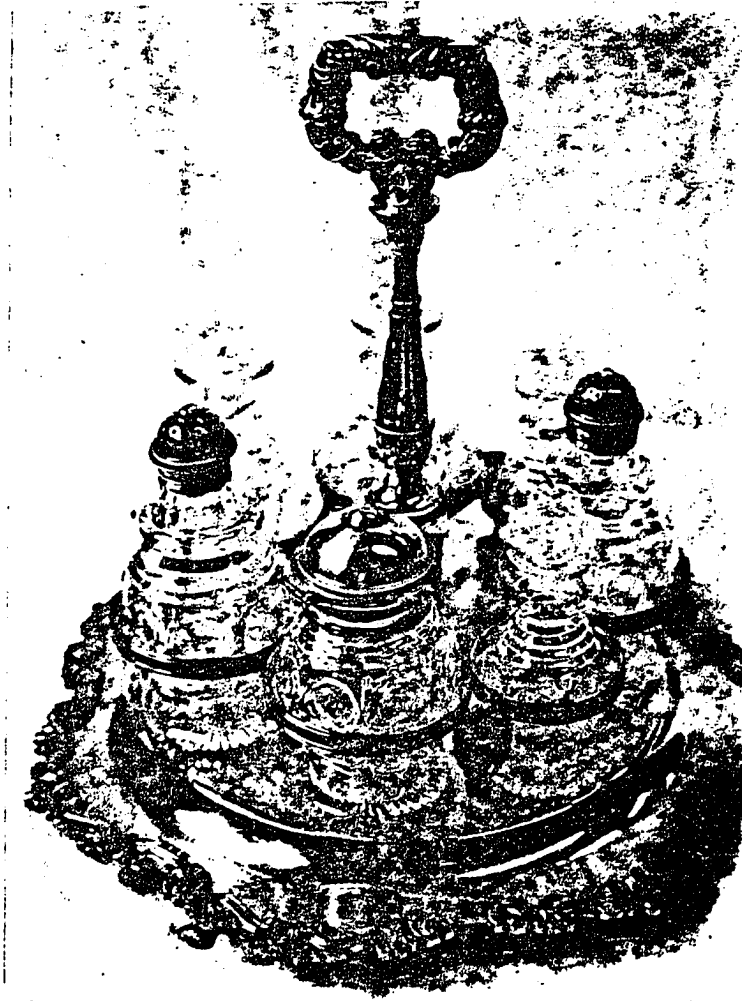


Figure 18

Fletcher and Gardiner, Seven-bottle caster set,
Philadelphia, 1820-27. Height: 11 1/2 inches.
Mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure E).
(Privately owned)



Figure 19

Fletcher and Gardiner, Six-piece tea set in "round" style, Philadelphia, 1820-27. Height of teapots: 9 5/8 inches. Mark: FLETCHER & GARDINER (Figure E). (Courtesy of The Philadelphia Museum of Art)



Figure 20

Thomas Fletcher, Oval tureen with tray, Philadelphia, 1825-30. Height: 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Mark: T. FLETCHER (tureen, Figure F; tray, Figure H).
(One of a pair owned by Charles V. Swain, Jr.)



Figure 21

Thomas Fletcher, Seven-piece urn-shaped tea and coffee service, Philadelphia, 1824-30. Height of coffeepot: 11 3/4 inches. Engraved Stockton family coat of arms; marked by T. Fletcher; lampstand and tea caddy are later additions by the Gorham Company. (Parke-Bernet Sale No. 2825, March 1969, Item No. 76)



Figure 22

Thomas Fletcher, Cake basket in "oblong" style,
Philadelphia, 1830-35. Length: 16 3/4 inches;
Engraved Peirce family coat of arms and the name
Mary Peirce underfoot; mark: T. FLETCHER (Figure F).
(Collection of Charles V. Swain, Jr.)

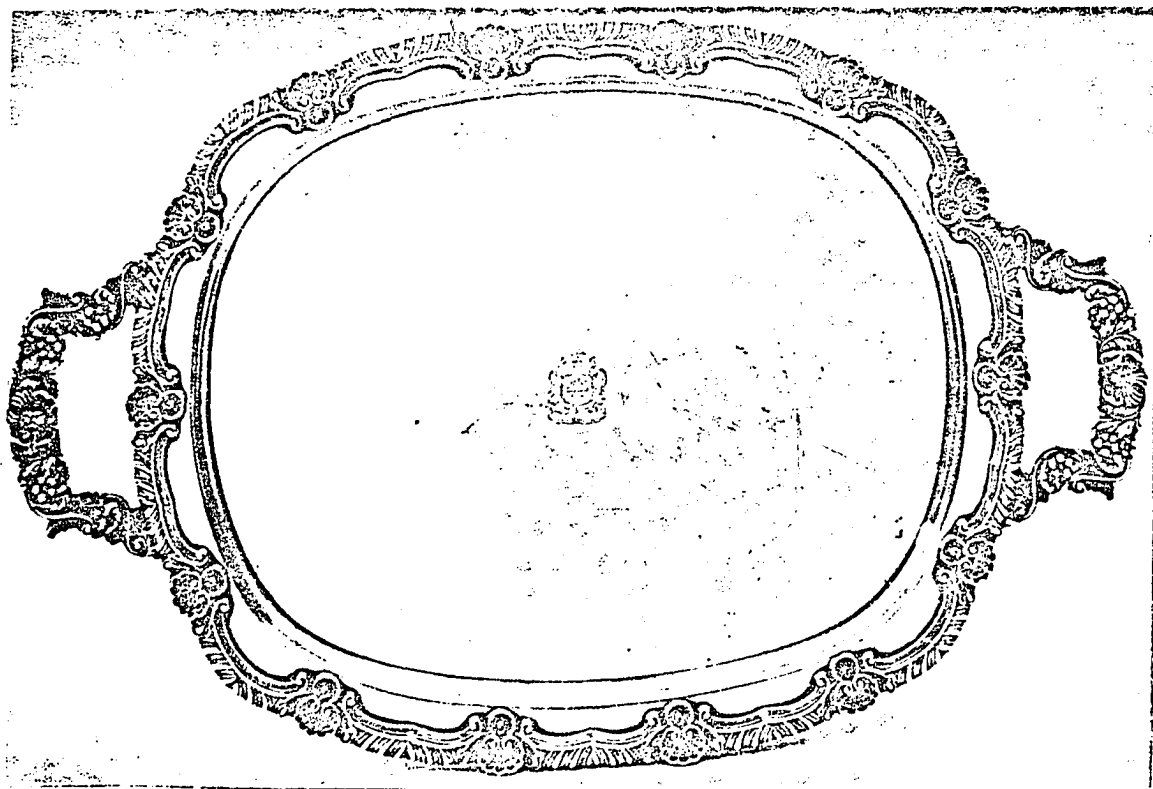


Figure 23

Thomas Fletcher, Rectangular tray, Philadelphia, 1830-35. Length: 21 1/4 inches. Engraved Peirce family coat of arms; mark: T. FLETCHER (Figure F). (Collection of Mrs. Mark Bortman)



Figure 24

Thomas Fletcher, Seven-piece tea and coffee service, Philadelphia, 1830-35. Height unknown. Marked by T. Fletcher; hot-water kettle and lampstand are later additions by Baily & Co.
(Parke-Bernet Sale No. 3174, March 1971, Item No. 85)



Figure 25

Thomas Fletcher, Sauce boat and tray, Philadelphia, 1830-36. Length of sauce boat: 9 1/2 inches. Engraved crest on each; mark: T. FLETCHER (sauce boat, Figure F; tray, Figure H). (Privately owned)



Figure 26

Thomas Fletcher, Urn-shaped sugar bowl, Philadelphia, 1833-38. Height: 9 inches. Engraved monogram underfoot ZEL; mark: T. FLETCHER (Figure F). (Collection of Norman Herreshoff)

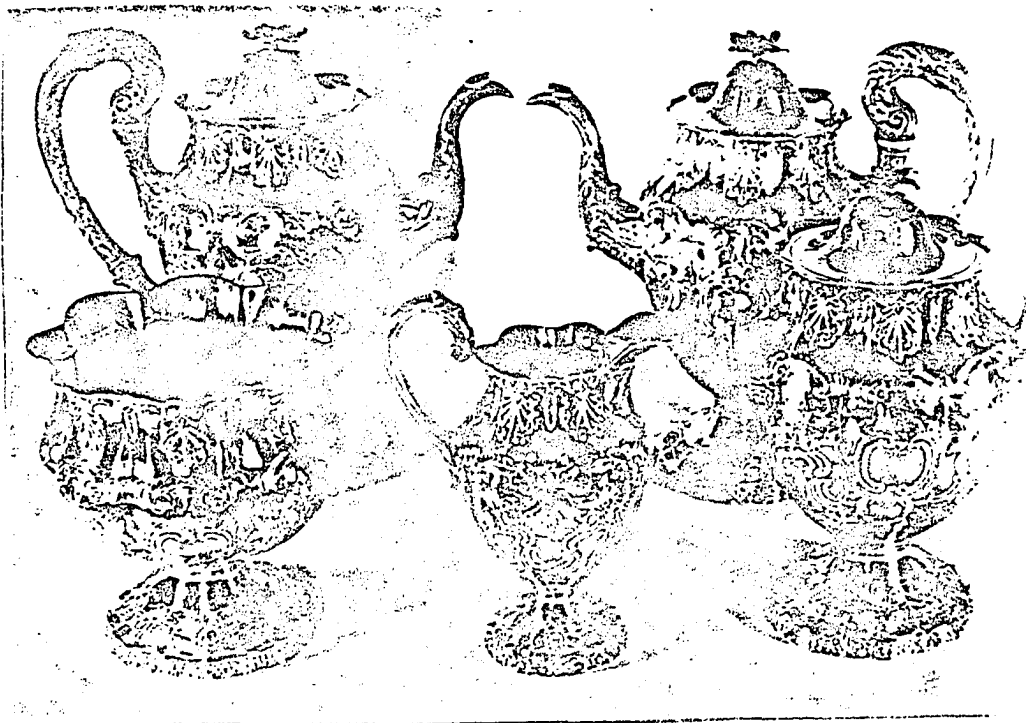


Figure 27

Thomas Fletcher, Five-piece urn-shaped tea set,
Philadelphia, 1835-40. Height of teapots: 10 $\frac{3}{8}$
inches. Mark: T. FLETCHER (Figure F).
(Collection of Walter C. Peters)

Appendix I.

NOTES ON PRESENTATION SILVER

Although this study has dealt with Fletcher and Gardiner's domestic silver, no consideration of them would be complete without some mention of their presentation plate. The partners' reputation was built on the monumental presentation silver they created, and it is this area of their work which has received greatest attention in the past. This appendix is not to reinterpret past work but to shed additional light on the men and the phenomenon of their silver.

Fletcher and Gardiner's first commission for a piece of important presentation plate was that given by the citizens of Philadelphia to Captain Isaac Hull. It could only have been through Fletcher's active business and political activities that his firm was given such a major commission in less than two years after moving to Philadelphia. On January 19, 1814, Fletcher wrote to his father:

Our great work the Urn for Capt Hull is at last completed. It weighs 502 ounces pure silver and has cost nearly 2300 dollars. I need not tell you how proud it makes us (we have had thousands to view it, and it is allowed to be the most elegant piece of workmanship in this Country). We do not fear a competition very soon. When will the public feeling be excited to this degree again? Others are in hand for Bainbridge, Jones, Morris, Biddle, & the Immortal Perry. We have them all to make.

Not only had the partners obtained the commission for the Hull vase

but also those for five other nationally known figures within three years after moving to a town in which they presumably had no long standing business connections.

In addition to these six urns, the partners were asked to make three other groups of presentation plate before 1816: an urn presented to Major General Andrew Jackson by the "ladies of Charleston," a set of plate for Commodore John Rodgers paid for by the "citizens of Baltimore" who also asked Fletcher and Gardiner to make a punch bowl for Lieutenant Colonel George Armistead. The close similarity of the urns presented to Hull, Jones, Bainbridge, Biddle, and Perry trace them as coming from the imagination of one man, Thomas Fletcher. The Rodgers silver service, in its obvious debt to classic prototypes, can also be given to the designing talents of Thomas Fletcher. The George Armistead punch bowl owes little to classic example and, as such, is atypical of the designs Fletcher was doing. Although Fletcher and Gardiner's firm made the punch bowl, they employed Hugh Bridport to design it. This was probably done because Fletcher was in England at the time. Rather than trust the design for so important a commission to anyone else in the firm, it was given to a professional artist and engraver.

Even though Fletcher did not design the Armistead punch bowl, he may have been doing some designing while in Europe. He wrote his brother Charles from Paris on August 31, 1815:

...if you can send me a sketch of the urn you are making
 [probably the Armistead punch bowl] and some other matters

& things that I can turn to advantage - such as the portraits of our naval officers &c - it will be well.

The partners' next major commission for presentation silver was not until 1824. This was the pair of urns presented to De Witt Clinton for his promotion of the Erie Canal. On May 7, 1825, Fletcher personally spoke with De Witt Clinton about the urns. He reported to his wife:

Governor Clinton says the urns have been much admired, and good judges have pronounced them superior to any they have seen in Europe.

Of course, had these judges looked, they would have seen any number of similar vases in Europe, all copied from the Warwick vase.

On March 12, 1825, after a "fatiguing journey" to New York, Fletcher wrote his wife:

There is to be a meeting of the subscribers to the De Witt Clinton urns this evening at the City Hotel where the vases will be exhibited. It will then be determined how much I am to get for them.... The vases are to be exhibited to the public on Monday and Tuesday and I shall have to attend and explain the work.... I shall dine with Mr. Hone tomorrow and after dinner he and I shall draw up the description for publication.

Fletcher's most interesting and remarkable comment in this passage is in reference to the subscription price. It is apparent that the partners undertook to make these urns with no discussion about subscription price. Subscription prices were always specifically stipulated in advance. Yet, in this rare instance, one of the partners' most ambitious undertakings, the amount of payment apparently was not agreed upon until after the work had been

completed.

On August 28, 1828, Thomas Fletcher received a very interesting letter from Baldwin Gardiner who had trained as a shopkeeper and merchant, not a silversmith, in the shop of his older brother, Sidney Gardiner, and Thomas Fletcher. At the time, Baldwin Gardiner was an independent merchant and commission agent, not a silversmith, in New York City. His letter read:

Dear Sir: I have been applied to, to make a Splendid Vase & a pair of Pitchers, intended to be presented by the Citizens of New York to Mr. [Hugh] Maxwell (the District Att[orne]y) as a token of their respect and approbation of his course of prosecuting the late conspiracy cases, so called - The price to be paid for the Vase & Pitchers, from \$800 to \$1000. These are the particulars.

If you are disposed to make them, and in such a way as will answer my just expectations of profit, I shall be glad to have you undertake...them - and I am ready to say I shall be satisfied with a very small profit; the more so to enable you to bestow the greater pains in their elegant execution, for I shall look as much to the honor of [the] thing, as to the profit. Of course, I shall expect to have my name stamped upon the bottom....

None of the silversmiths here know that I have the order, as several of them w[oul]d drop the hammer for me if they knew I sent to Philad[el]phia and as soon as I am ready for such a courte [sic] on their part, I shall be very glad to have them.

Please let me...how soon I may expect your drawings.

This vase is presently owned by the New York Historical Society.

It is one of Fletcher's most magnificent designs, showing him at his innovative best in the Neo-classic style. The vase returns us to a problem which originally appeared with the George Armistead punch bowl. With the punch bowl, the partners were drawing on outside talent

to design their work; with the Maxwell vase, Fletcher was the independent agent, employed by another to design and fabricate an order. Neither the Armistead punch bowl nor the Maxwell urn bears the name of the man whose imagination conceived them. As these two objects exist today, they do not tell the complete story of their history. They omit the important factor of artistic responsibility. The problem, as it existed in early nineteenth-century England, was discussed by Charles Oman, "A Problem of Artistic Responsibility," Apollo, LXXXIII (1966), 174-183. This sharing of talents resulted in a vast network of combined mercantile and artistic effort geared to supply the early nineteenth-century American public with stylish products. Such arrangements were convenient for those involved but very confusing for those who are today attempting to determine artistic responsibility for any given object. Personal contacts between men in many cities across the country made such mercantile and artistic arrangements for domestic and presentation silver far from unusual.

Most of Fletcher and Gardiner's presentation silver has been discovered and published. An unsigned and undated letter in the Fletcher papers in the Athenaeum of Philadelphia lists presentation silver they made for American military heroes. (See transcription of letter on page 93.) The letter includes silver or gold given to major American military heroes but excludes all other presentation plate made by the firm, such as the urns given to De Witt Clinton, Hugh Maxwell (indirectly), the United Downen punch bowl, and the Nicholas Biddle silver. Interestingly, a large body of presentation

swords for American military heroes is included. These swords are little known and have not attracted much attention in the past. Yet, those which have survived are of superior artistic quality. The sword given Major General Winfield Scott by the Legislature of Virginia which Fletcher and Gardiner made about 1823 (not included on the list) is such an example. Its hilt is of solid gold and has been worked into elaborate Neo-classic designs.

Although the list of swords is lengthy, it does not include all the swords they made. One important example not included is that made for Señor Don Cecilio, Governor of Matanzas in 1832 at the request of J. A. Grace of Newport, Rhode Island. This sword cost \$1,200 and must have been one of the most expensive and elaborate swords they made. There are innumerable others made for private individuals which are not listed either. These swords, like their domestic silver, have been generally neglected in the past. Yet, their artistic merit is such that if studied, they would add considerably to our knowledge of early nineteenth-century American decorative arts.

TRANSCRIPTION OF LETTER

The following is a list of plate and Swords delivered to some of our military and naval heroes, with a statement of the actions for which they were awarded, by whom paid for, the dates of delivery and the cost respectively. The delay in most cases has been wonderful and discreditable. But better late than never. All the articles were manufactured by the house of Fletcher & Gardiner, afterward Tho[mas] Fletcher & now Fletcher & Bennett of Philada.

No.	Plate	by whom paid for		date of delivery	value [in dollars]
1.	Lieut Biddle	Citizens Philada	Wasp & Frolic	1813	500
2.	Capt. Hull	" "	Constitution & Gurriere	1814	2200
3.	Lieut Morris	" "	" "	1814	750
4.	Capt J. Jones	" "	Wasp & Frolic	1814	500
5.	" O. H. Perry	" "	Battle Lake Erie a silver vase	1815	500
6.	Col Armistead	" Baltimore	defense of Ft. McHenry	1815	2000
7.	Com Rodgers	" "	" Baltimore	1816	4000
8.	" Bainbridge	" Philada	Constitution & Java	1816	1000
9.	Gen Jackson	Ladies of Charleston	defense of New Orleans	1815	500
Swords					
1.	Capt Connor	Penna.		1825	400

Swords (continued)

No.		by whom paid for		date of delivery	value [in dollars]
2.	Lieut Thubrick [or Shubrick]	Citizens Charleston		1814	325
3.	Gen Jackson	Legis Mississippi		1815	500
4.	Lieut Grissenger [or Geisinger]	Legis Maryland	Wasp & Reindeer		400
5.	" Contee	" "	Constitution & Java	1835	400
6.	" Smoot	" "			400
7.	Capt Ballard	" "		1830	500
8.	" Gallagher	" "	United States & Macedonian	1834	500
9.	" Kennedy	" "	Tripolitian Gunboats	1804	500
10.	Col Towson	" "	Bridgewater, Chippewa	1834	800
11.	Col Worth	" New York	" "		
12.	Gen H. Brady	" Penna	do & Waynesbridge	1838	1100

[Miscellaneous]

Com McDonough	Delaware	a set of plate & sword	1815	
" "		2 G ^d sword for Gov of Georgia	1815	

Miscellaneous (continued)

	by whom paid for	date of delivery	value <u>in dollars</u>
Lt Col Apling	State of Georgia	1816	500
Lieut McIntosh	" "	"	280
Gen Hindy	Secretary of Miss	"	450

Appendix II.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF TOUCH MARKS

The following photographic list includes all known touch marks used during Thomas Fletcher's silversmithing career. It has been arranged chronologically, based on dated examples of silver. Each mark is identified by the earliest and latest dated silver objects on which it was used. In some instances, only one dated example was discovered. In others, a date range must be assigned on the basis of style. In addition to these marks, the partners or Thomas Fletcher alone, engraved marks on presentation silver, usually in conspicuous places. These show considerable variation but generally consist of one or both names with the place and date of fabrication in script.

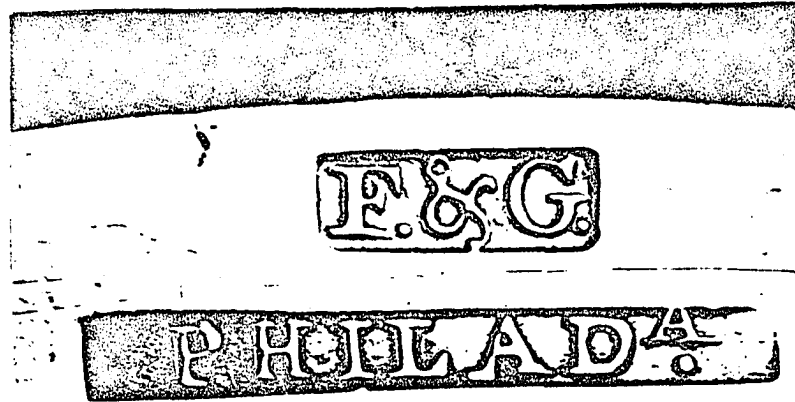


Figure A

Depressed rectangle containing raised block letters "F.&G.," with an elaborate ampersand, each followed by a period.

1811 - Pair of two-handled church cups given by Joseph Shed to the Second Baptist Church in Boston, now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

1814 - Oliver H. Perry presentation vase, now in the United States Naval Academy Museum.

The partners used this mark in Boston but continued to use it after moving to Philadelphia where they usually accompanied it with a depressed rectangular mark containing the raised block letters PHILAD^A.

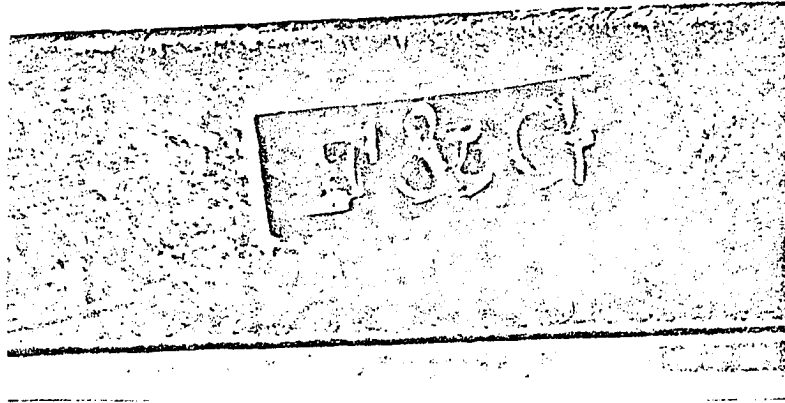


Figure B

Depressed rectangle containing raised block letters "F&G," the "G" with a tail.

No piece of dated silver has been found bearing this mark. A fish slice, now in the Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan, with this mark and the inscription "M.G. to R. Gibbs" may have been in the group of silver given to Ruth Gibbs on the occasion of her marriage to the Reverend William Ellery Channing in 1814.

This mark was probably used from 1808 to about 1827, the year of Sidney Gardiner's death.

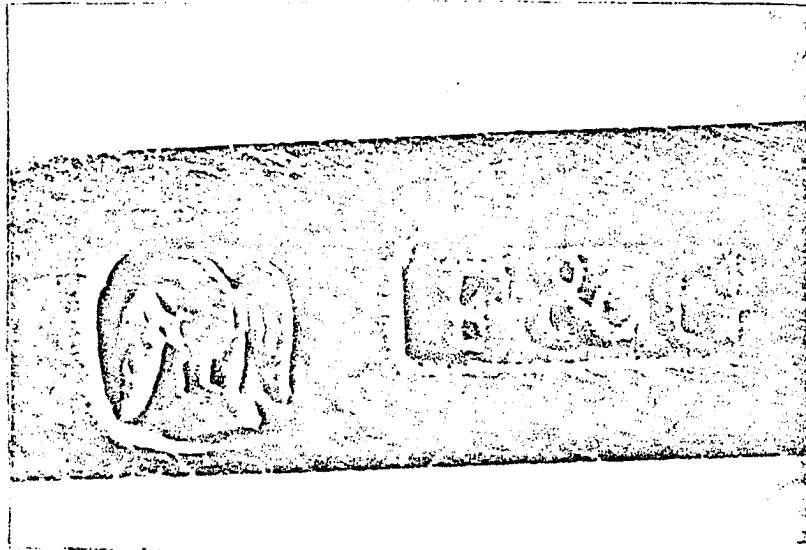


Figure C

Depressed rectangle with clipped corners containing raised block letters "F&G," the "G" with a tail.

No piece of dated silver has been found bearing this mark. On stylistic evidence, it can be dated between about 1820 and 1830.

The eagles are pseudo hallmarks which the firm seems to have used in the 1820's and early 1830's.



Figure D

Depressed rectangle containing raised block letters
"FLETCHER & GARDINER."

1816 - George Armistead punch bowl, now in the
Smithsonian Institution.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

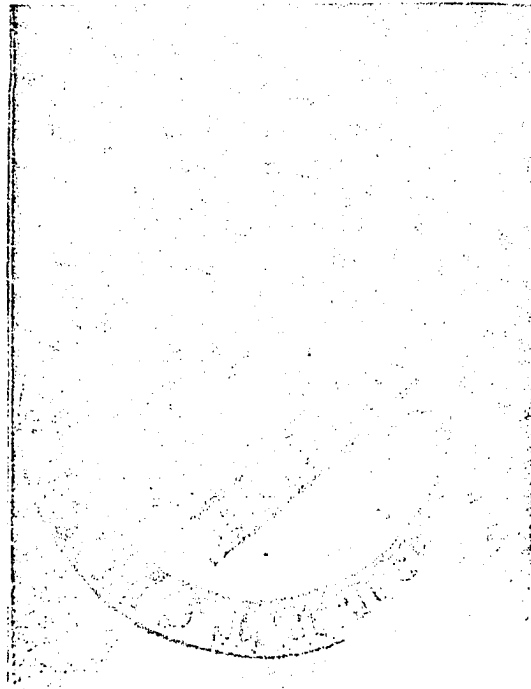


Figure E

Depressed circle containing raised block letters
"FLETCHER & GARDINER," depressed rectangle within
circle containing raised block letters "PHIL^A."

1817 - John Rodgers dinner service, now in the
Maryland Historical Society.

1830 - James C. Fisher presentation urn, now in
the Yale University Art Gallery.

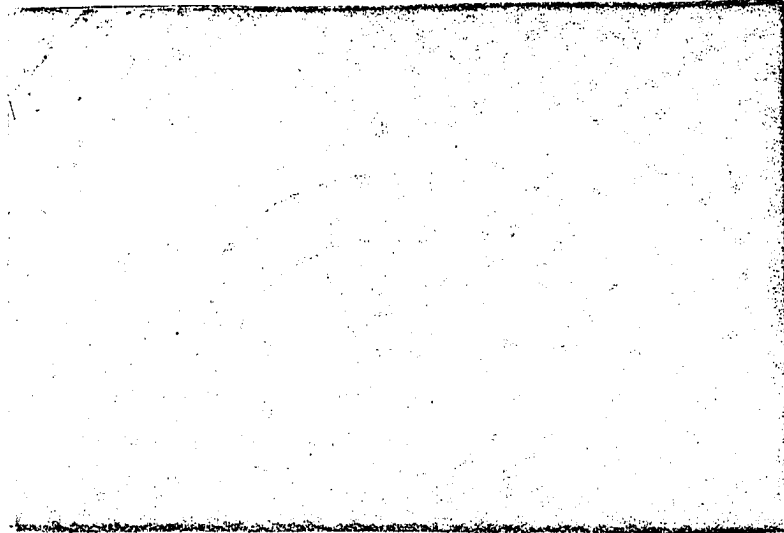


Figure F

Depressed oval containing raised block letters
"T. FLETCHER . PHILAD."

1825 - Plate, paten, and chalice given to Christ Church, Philadelphia, by Sarah Redman. It is interesting to note that Fletcher was using this touch containing his name only, even though at this date he was still in partnership with Sidney Gardiner.

1833 - Thomas Firth presentation urn, now privately owned.



Figure G

Depressed "Z" shaped banner containing raised block letters. "FLETCHER & GARDINER."

1825 - De Witt Clinton presentation urns, now in the New York City Chamber of Commerce.

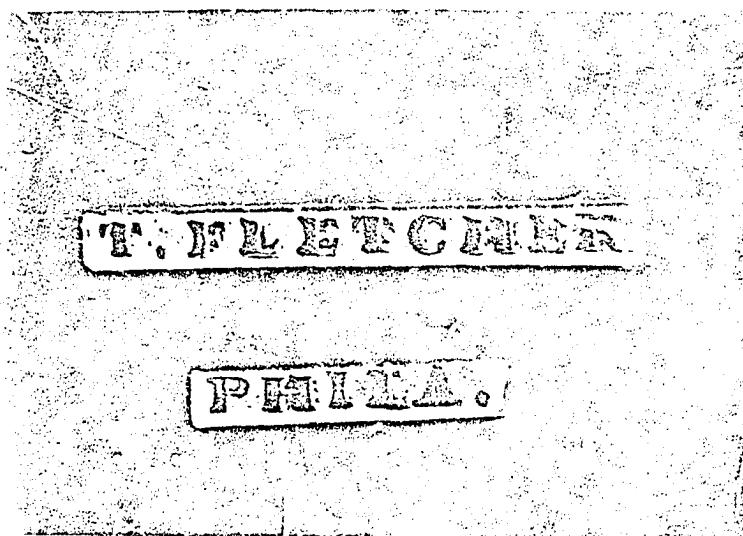


Figure H

Depressed rectangle containing raised block letters
"T. FLETCHER."

No piece of dated silver has been found bearing this mark, but its style of silver dates approximately between 1825 and 1835.

The smaller depressed rectangle containing the raised block letters PHILA. is usually found in conjunction with this mark, though not always.

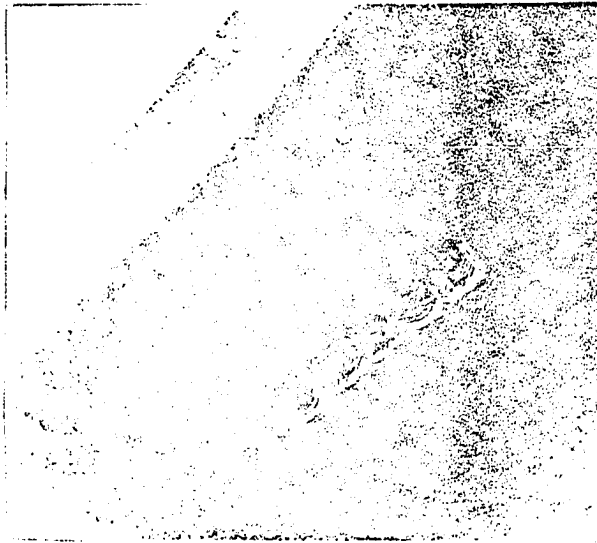


Figure I

Three depressed shield shaped hallmarks with diagonally striped grounds containing one raised block letter each "T," "F," and "P." Two depressed circles, one containing raised bust facing left and the other containing a raised spread eagle facing left.

1830 - James C. Fisher presentation urn, now in the Yale University Art Gallery.

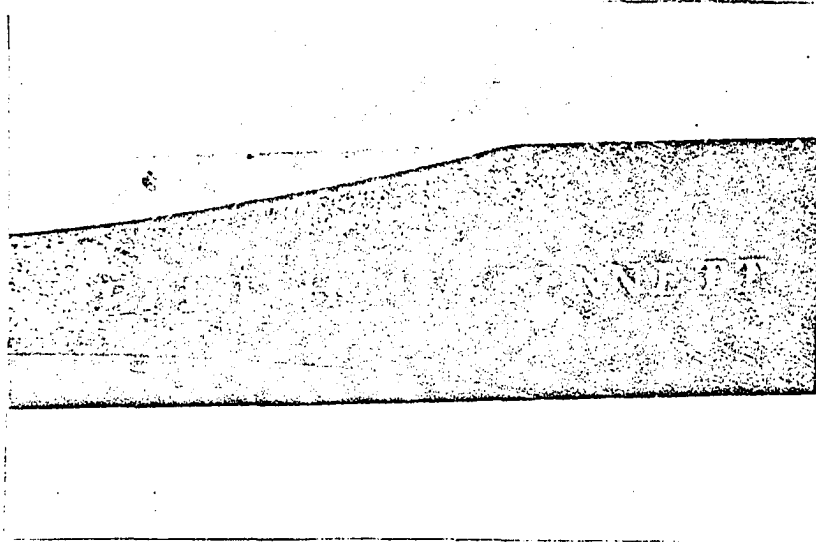


Figure J

Incised block letters "FLETCHER & BENNETT."

No dated silver has been found with this mark. Calvin W. Bennett was working with Fletcher as early as 1829, but this mark was probably not used until he achieved full partnership. According to the Philadelphia directories, this was between 1835 and 1839, and this mark can be safely dated to those years. It has been found in conjunction with "LOUISVILLE, KY." Such silver was made in Philadelphia and sent to Louisville for sale by Henry Fletcher, one of Thomas' younger brothers.

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