

George Barton Cutten and American coin silver

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The silver of the American colonies and early republic has always been prized for its rarity and its historical associations, while a special cachet attaches to anything made in the southern states before the Civil War. As to its quality, the best silversmiths of Boston, Philadelphia, and New York were equal in taste and skill to those of London, Edinburgh or Dublin. But after the revolution of 1776, lacking a hereditary aristocracy, they supplied a clientele that seldom aspired beyond owning a handsome tea and coffee service. Outside those east coast centres, most silversmiths simply made flatware and the occasional christening mug: simple items that attract little interest on the other side of the Atlantic. This article introduces the first scholar and collector to have taken them seriously.



Fig 1 George Barton Cutten: *photograph by Stone's Studio, Syracuse, New York, circa 1940*
(Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Colgate University Library)

George Barton Cutten (1874-1962) [Fig 1] is a familiar name in American silver studies thanks to his books on the silversmiths of Utica, New York (1936), North Carolina (1948), Virginia (1952) and Georgia (1958).¹ Like Arthur Grimwade's study of the London goldsmiths, Cutten's books and articles chronicle, as best they can, the lives and relationships of an elusive class of characters: all the more elusive since Cutten's chosen regions were virtually terra incognita. He worked from crumbling newspapers, city directories, church, court, tax and census records, while the main collection at his disposal comprised his own twelve hundred spoons.

Here Cutten describes the genesis of these humble heirlooms as it might have happened in the inland regions.

Procuring spoons when these were made was no small task, and was accompanied by no mean ceremony. It meant far more than simply dropping into a jeweler's, selecting the spoons, and carrying them home. The first and most difficult question was where to procure the silver, for this had to be furnished to the smith by the customer. The only source of this precious metal was coin, and coin was far from plentiful. Of course, on the coast, visited by sea captains and pirates, coin was not uncommon, but little of it trickled through the ten days' journey [to Utica] from the ports of New York and Boston. It might mean gathering and hoarding for months before the requisite amount could be procured. And what a motley lot! Spanish, Portuguese, French, English, Swedish, and even American; pieces of eight, dollars, crowns, double florins, guldens, and, perhaps, even a Pine tree shilling, now almost priceless. When it was handed on to the silversmith he weighed it, then proceeded to melt it and to hammer out the spoons. In due time they were completed according to order, they were carefully weighed, and the customer was credited or charged with the difference between the weight of the coin furnished and the spoons; then the smith was paid for his work. Before the days of banks, it was considered advisable to have one's silver made into some kind of useful utensils, plainly

marked, for then, if they were stolen, they could be more easily identified.²

This excerpt explains why most American silver before the Civil War is known as 'coin silver', with a nominal purity of 900/1000 (approximating that of the Spanish coinage), rather than the sterling standard of 925/1000.³ It also explains why earlier articles were stamped with nothing but the maker's name, if that: the original buyer knew where the silver had come from. Post-Cutten research has, however, modified this appealing picture. By the 1830s larger silversmiths were manufacturing flatware in quantity and sending it to retailers who stamped it with their own names. Such pieces may also bear marks of lions, busts, eagles, stars, etc, sometimes called 'pseudo hallmarks' as though trying to pass as English sterling, but now recognised as an innocent code of manufacturers' marks.⁴ One often sees the mark 'COIN' or 'PURE COIN', guaranteeing the origin of the material. Although there was no legal control or inspection, the quality of American coin silver from coast to coast remained surprisingly high, as proven by recent assays using x-ray fluorescent testing.⁵

Coin silver appealed to collectors like Cutten for various reasons: a love of regional history, of country antique shops and minor historical societies, the hunt for the rare item and the pleasure of getting it for next to nothing; and perhaps most of all, a William Morris-like nostalgia for the pre-industrial era and for the union of beauty and utility under the craftsman's hand. In the post-revolutionary period, as Cutten's lists show, every small American town and many villages had one or more silversmiths who might double as watchmaker, jeweller and dentist (America's most famous silversmith, Paul Revere, tended George Washington's teeth). The spoons that became heirlooms for their modest clients seem flimsy and two-dimensional compared to British ones: a typical teaspoon weighs somewhat under 10 dwt (15.55g). After 1800 the overwhelming majority are fiddle pattern, which takes on every proportion and variation imaginable. Stephen Ensko, another pioneer in the study of



Fig 2 Basket of flowers table-spoon handle, circa 1830, retailed by Benedict & Scudder, New York City (Author's photograph)



Fig 3 Sheaf of wheat teaspoon handle, 1824-25, retailed by Colton & Collins, New York (Author's photograph)

American silversmiths, wrote scathingly in 1937

The fiddle-back type of spoon is offered rather for record than for interest. With exception of the graceful designs of the "Basket of Flowers" and the "Sheaf of Wheat", these 19th century spoons have little to recommend to any collection.⁶

To George Cutten, on the contrary, every spoon presented the challenge to track down its maker and tell his tale. As for the "graceful designs", Ensko was referring to a fashion that began around 1810 for decorating the end of the handle with a basket of flowers or a sheaf of wheat with a sickle stuck through the binding [Figs 2 and 3]. These designs were made by compressing the handle into a steel swage or mould and were often complemented by a scallop shell on the back of the bowl. Beside teaspoons and tablespoons the village silversmith made

1 George Barton Cutten (from henceforward Cutten) and Minnie Warren Cutten (from henceforward Cutten), *The Silversmiths of Utica, With Illustrations of Their Silver and Their Marks*, Hamilton, NY, 1936; George Barton Cutten, *The Silversmiths of North Carolina*, Raleigh, NC, 1948; George Barton Cutten,

The Silversmiths of Virginia, Together with Watchmakers & Jewelers, from 1694 to 1850, Richmond, VA, 1952; George Barton Cutten, *The Silversmiths of Georgia; Together with Watchmakers & Jewelers - 1733 to 1850*, Savannah, GA, 1958.

2 Cutten, *ibid.* 1936, pp 10-11.

3 More informative than any treatment in print is the online discussion of coin silver by members of the Silver Salon Forum from 2002 onwards. See <http://www.smpub.com/ubb/Forum19/HTML/000234.html>

4 This discovery is largely due to John R McGrew's

detective work in comparing thousands of such marks. See John R McGrew, *Manufacturers' Marks on American Coin Silver*, Hanover, PA, 2004.

5 See the post of 4 November 2002, in the discussion mentioned above, note 3.

6 Stephen G C Ensko, *American Silversmiths and Their Marks*, New York, 1937, vol 2, p 13.

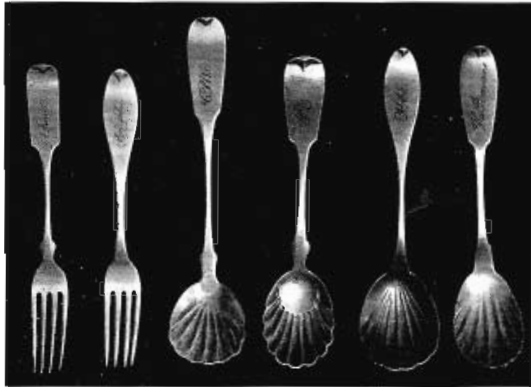


Fig 4 Forks and sugar shells: illustration from *The Silversmiths of Utica*, p 36

some salt spoons, sugar tongs and shells [Fig 4], cream and mustard ladles. Dessert spoons are rarer; coin silver forks even more so. Cutten sums up the situation in the inland settlements that were rising out of former Indian territory and primeval forest:

Clasp knives, butcher knives, carving knives, or hunting knives could also be used at the table, fingers antedated forks and served in place of forks for millenniums, [sic] but spoons were spoons, and some kind of spoon was necessary to take liquids into the mouth.⁷

By the middle of the nineteenth century, several things were changing⁸ and Cutten wrote in his booklet on the New York State silversmiths

The year 1850 is an arbitrary date [for ending this study], but machinery was being introduced so rapidly at that time that hand-made silver was becoming scarcer.⁹

He would observe this terminal date in all his subsequent studies. Hollow-ware in the Federal period (corresponding to the Regency period in Britain) had already compromised its hand-raised quality with the application of ready-made rolled bands, stamped with repeating decorative motifs and cut to size. Prosperity and fashion called for a heftier kind of flatware which made it possible to market silver forks to match the spoons. Mid-century taste favoured eclectic styles and the adornment of every surface; social aspirations were exploited to create implements for the 'correct' serving of every food. With steam presses and industrial production complex designs could be easily replicated and thereupon began the array of patterns churned out by the big manufacturers from that day to this. Electroplating, invented

in the 1840s and perfected after the Civil War, created a new public for whom the look was more important than the intrinsic value. Companies such as Gorham in Providence (Rhode Island) and Kirk in Baltimore (Maryland) also set their sights on those upscale customers who had all along preferred to buy English or French silver for its better weight, fineness, and design. For a while the two standards, coin and sterling, coexisted, until in 1868 Gorham led the way by abandoning the lower standard.¹⁰ The firm's competitors were forced to do the same, and in a very few years coin silver had gone the way of the village silversmith.

Having sketched the boundaries of George Cutten's silver researches, I turn to the man himself.¹¹

We proceed with some bare facts. Cutten descended from a family originally called Cutting which had left New England for Canada in 1759. He was born on 11 April 1874 in Amherst, Nova Scotia, to William Freeman Cutten, a merchant and municipal judge, and his wife Abbie Ann Trefry Cutten. His father died when George was fourteen and he did not go to school until he went to college at eighteen. He attended Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, and graduated as a BA in Philosophy in 1896. Proceeding to Yale University, he earned another BA (or AB) in Philosophy in 1897 and the added kudos of playing on the Yale football team. In the same year he was ordained and began a thirteen-year career in the Baptist Church, ministering to congregations in Montowese, Connecticut (1897-99), New Haven (1899-1904), Corning, New York (1904-1907) and Columbus, Ohio (1907-1910), where he was a voluntary football coach for Ohio State University.¹² In 1898 he married Minnie Warren Brown, with whom he had four children.¹³ Alongside his ministry he laid the basis for a second career by earning a PhD in Psychology from Yale in 1902, and a BD in Theology from the same university in 1903. In that year he travelled through Europe, North Africa, the Near East, and the Holy Land. He later wrote about his education:

Looking over the 12 years spent as a pupil in college or in the university, I am sure I had only one superior teacher and three or four capable ones ... The poorest were the ones who had written the most books and articles¹⁴.

Cutten's dissertation was on *The Psychology of Alcoholism*. As one would expect of a Yale doctorate it was a thorough study of the medical, psychological and social symptoms of alcoholism as understood by the more progressive schools of thought. When Cutten expanded it into a book of the same title, published in 1907, he added some more speculative chapters.¹⁵ One of these adapted his BD thesis, arguing that the only sure cure for alco-

holism is a religious conversion, although this was not expressed in a dogmatic or even a specifically Christian way. Like the Harvard psychologist William James, whom he often quoted, he trod a narrow path between science and faith, writing

However much we may believe in the divine element in conversion and in the religious life generally, it must remain an unknown quantity, and can only be judged by the apparent effects upon the person experiencing it.¹⁶

Cutten also knew his Freud; he was certain that God's mysterious ways, especially sudden conversions, must involve the subconscious mind. He studied the new field of psychical research, reading the works of F W H Myers and Edmund Gurney, and was up to date in the theory and practice of hypnotism. It was the latter that furnished the vital link between faith and therapy. He wrote

The cure of the drunkard in conversion is one peculiar to itself but which contains elements found in hypnotic and allied practices, and it necessarily must if it embraces the whole man in its scope.¹⁷

By 1900 and 1901, when alcoholics came to him for treatment, Cutten would hypnotise them, and once they were entranced, he would plant thoughts of disgust and shame at their sinful state, suggestions of aversion ('alcohol will taste like castor oil'), and, most importantly, glowing pictures of the new life that awaited the ex-alcoholic and all around him.

Unlike some of his denomination, the Rev Cutten was no hell-fire preacher nor did he imagine all Roman Catholics as having horns and a tail. In a pamphlet *The Christian Life in a Baptist Church*, aimed at his fellow pastors, he urged them to educate their flocks.

Two quotations sum up his attitude:¹⁸

God has provided a way of salvation for everyone. (Lesson II, 2)

Besides the individual church we recognize the Universal or Catholic church, composed of all true Christians, regardless of denomination or creed, of which Jesus Christ alone is the head. (Lesson X, 10)

Cutten's pastorships allowed him time to write two more books. *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*¹⁹ has all the authority and certitude of a successful thirty four year old. The answers to humanity's problems have arrived, he seemed to say; we just need the sense to apply them, by passing our faith through the corrective lens of modern psychology. The many chapters on religious fanaticism and paranormal phenomena show his fascination with things that most scientists preferred to ignore, as does the third volume of this early trilogy. *Three Thousand Years of Mental Healing*²⁰ is a factual account of ancient, medieval, and modern instances of the power of mind over body: something of which his hypnotic practice had convinced him.

Cutten's next career started out at the top. Although he had never held an academic position, in 1910 Acadia University, his alma mater, invited him to be its President. Acadia was an old institution by Canadian standards, founded in 1838 to train Baptist ministers and, like many sectarian foundations in the New World, it was transforming itself into a liberal arts college to prepare young men for any profession, while maintaining a high moral tone. Cutten was the ideal muscular Christian: a broad-minded pastor and well-published scholar, ex-captain of Acadia's football team with the additional halo of Yale's, and married to a woman with her own college degree.²¹ During his presidency he

7 Cutten, *Silversmiths of Central New York* (Paper read to the New York State Historical Society), Hamilton, NY, 1937, unpaginated.

8 For a conspectus of the process with illustrations, see Graham Hood, *American Silver, A History of Style, 1650-1900*, New York, 1971, pp 191-212.

9 Cutten, *The Silversmiths Watchmakers and Jewelers of the State of New York Outside of New York City*,

Hamilton, NY, 1939, p 2.

10 Dorothy Rainwater, *Encyclopedia of American Silver Manufacturers*, 4th ed, Atglen, PA, 1998, p 127.

11 Biographical data is taken from the George B Cutten Papers in Colgate University Library's Special Collections and Archives (call no A 1058), especially the faculty records form filled out in 1940 by Cutten himself, a selection of obituaries, and the notes prepared in 1953-55 by his sec-

retary, Alice J Smith, for a history of the Cutten administration. For a list of the Cutten Papers, see <http://exlibris.colgate.edu/speccoll/findaids/html/A1058.html>.

12 The dedication page of Cutten's *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity* (New York, 1908) mentions three churches in Nova Scotia which he served as pastor before his ordination.

13 Muriel Grace, born in Corning, later Mrs Ralph Hoitsma; Claire Manwell, MD, born in Corning; William Francis, born in Columbus; Margarita Joy, born in New Hampshire, who died in 1926.

14 Cutten, 'The College Professor as Teacher', p 374.

15 Cutten, *The Psychology of Alcoholism*, London and New York, 1907.

16 Cutten, *ibid*, p 282.

17 Cutten, *ibid*, p 316.

18 Cutten, *The Christian Life in a Baptist Church*, Corning, NY, 1906, unpaginated.

19 Cutten, *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*, New York, 1908.

20 Cutten, *Three Thousand Years of Mental Healing*, New York, 1911.

21 See dedication page of Cutten, *Psychology of Alcoholism*, note 15.

secured the university's finances, raised the faculty from fifteen to twenty-five, and left it with seven new buildings.²² When Canada entered the First World War he enlisted, but was refused for overseas service because of football injuries; he served instead as a recruiting officer and, after a munitions explosion had devastated the city and harbour of Halifax, as Director of Rehabilitation for the Halifax Relief Committee.²³

By 1922, Major/President/Reverend/Doctor Cutten was ready for pastures new. He would spend the rest of his life in the United States and his working years as President of Colgate University in central New York State: another old Baptist foundation (1819) that had expanded into a liberal arts college, rechristened in 1890 to honour the soap and toothpaste magnates who were its major benefactors. Like Acadia, Colgate retained the name of 'university' even though the great majority of its students graduated as Bachelors of Arts. Cutten captained it through the rough seas of the Great Depression, built half a dozen halls of learning in the local grey stone,²⁴ and of course "put Colgate on the football map."²⁵

Towards the end of his first year as President, Cutten addressed the Canadian Society of New York with words that were reported in the local press. Such opinions as these would return to cloud his memory in the eyes of a later generation:

What this thought of "democracy," "equality" and the "melting pot" has accomplished is to permit persons of different races and intellectuality to marry and deteriorate our stock at an alarming rate. Not only philanthropy, but modern medicine is deteriorating the stock, for by this means is inferior stock kept alive.²⁶

Preaching eugenics was a respectable if not a majority position in 1923. After the Nazi experience it was not, and to emphasise the fact, the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, in New York City, exhibited another quotation from Cutten.²⁷ It included these words

The danger that the "melting pot" brings to the nation is the breeding out of the higher divisions of the white race and the breeding in of the lower divisions.

When this was noticed in 2001, with its embarrassing credit to Colgate University's eighth President, there was agitation to rename the university's Cutten Complex of student housing after someone more in tune with contemporary ethics. However, the historically-minded faculty argued that the mores of the past should be learned from, rather than erased and hence forgotten, and so the name remains.

Cutten was a man of his time, who gloried in the name of 'rugged individualist': a class broad enough to include both John B Rockefeller and, in Cutten's opinion, Jesus Christ.²⁸ In one of his addresses to students he quoted a popular definition of religion

Betting your life that there is a God.

No! He said:

Religion is betting your life that you are a god and acting accordingly.²⁹

Such action has its hazards. On 8 May 1924 Cutten was arrested for speeding through the streets of Utica at forty miles an hour.³⁰ Local law required a mandatory one-day prison sentence for such infractions, but the charge was somehow wangled into another jurisdiction, and 'Colgate's Prexy' was spared an ignominy that would have taken some living down. When the *Utica Observer* mentions that his passenger was Raymond B Fosdick, this opens a window into Cutten's network: Fosdick was already a trustee of the Rockefeller Foundation and would become its President. His brother Harry Emerson Fosdick, a Colgate graduate of 1900 and leader of the modernist movement against Christian fundamentalism, would become pastor of the Rockefellers' Riverside church in New York City.³¹ With such allies, and the powerful support of James Colby Colgate (1863-1944), Cutten left Colgate University twice the size and much more securely endowed than when he arrived.

Starting in 1925, Yale University Press published Cutten's second trilogy of books: *Mind, Its Origin and Goal*, *The Threat of Leisure* and *Speaking with Tongues*.³² So far had Cutten come from biblical literalism, indeed from the whole concept of revelation, that he could now write:

The basis of both science and religion is the same: namely, intellectual curiosity: and if we are living in a *universe*, curiosity must be satisfied in a way which will be antagonistic to neither.³³

The thesis of *Mind, Its Origin and Goal* is that the human mind is a natural outcome of animal evolution, and in due course has enabled the creation to know its creator. But it must now learn God's will from nature, whose method is not to coddle the unfit, the weak, and the stupid, but to promote the survival of the fittest. There follows a eugenic treatise, with tables and statistics showing the inevitable degeneration of America if the lowest elements continued to out-breed the highest.

The message of the second book, *The Threat of Leisure*, can easily be imagined: it arises from Cutten's disgust at the

ways most Americans behaved when not working. *Speaking with Tongues* is the first book in English on glossolalia, already discussed in *The Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*. Here Cutten took advantage of later French and German treatises and expanded the field to include trance speaking, automatic writing, speaking a language one has never learned, and in a famous recent case, revealing the "Martian alphabet".³⁴ He neither mocked nor admired the gift of tongues and attributed most of it to the phenomenon of multiple personality, but did admit that in some cases it defies scientific explanation.

As President of Colgate University, Cutten ensured that this kind of research would continue by bringing in George Hoben Estabrooks (1895-1973), a protégé from Cutten's Acadia days. During his long career as a Professor of Psychology Estabrooks became a national authority on hypnotism, extra-sensory perception and spiritualist phenomena.³⁵ Like his mentor, he treated them from a scientific point of view, but was not afraid to admit his private belief in telepathy and the immortality of the soul. During the Second World War Estabrooks worked with military and secret services to create a special kind of spy, using a method similar to Cutten's own experiments with alcoholics.³⁶ The principle was that through hypnotism one could create an alternative personality and instill it with sympathy for the enemy. (He recommended using Americans of German or Italian descent, taken from hospitals.) Upon awakening with no memory of his brainwashing, the subject would gravitate to spy networks and get involved in their plots; then he would be retrieved, hypnotised back into his original personality, and patriotically spill the beans on his comrades.

Of George Barton Cutten's four careers: Baptist minister, writer on psychology and religion, college President and silver expert, the first three seem to hang together in log-

ical progression, as part of a mission to improve humanity, or the small proportion of it he deemed worth improving. But nothing about him had so far signified the antiquarian or the aesthete. It was as though he discovered a long buried talent and made up for its neglect by something close to obsession. Thus in his second decade at Colgate he turned his formidable energies to the study and collecting of silver. Later, in 1947, he would say that he had begun collecting fifteen years previously, ie. around 1932.³⁷ As for the catalyst, an unsourced clipping in the Cutten Papers states that

Mr Trefry of Trefry & Partridge, the Beacon Hill [Boston] jewelers, started Dr Cutten on his quest for old spoons.³⁸

Seeing that his mother's maiden name was Abbie Ann Trefry, a family connection seems likely.

A more certain influence was that of Francis Patrick Garvan and his wife Mabel Brady Garvan to whom *The Silversmiths of Utica* is dedicated

In recognition of their patriotism and generosity in preserving for posterity the work of the early craftsmen of America.

Francis P Garvan (1875-1937) had graduated AB from Yale in the same year as Cutten (1897) and gone on to become President of the American Chemical Society, Director of the Bureau of Investigations (predecessor of the FBI), and one of Yale's great benefactors. In 1930 he commemorated his twentieth wedding anniversary with a stupendous gift of early American furniture, pewter, glass, prints, ceramics, numismatics and especially silver to the Yale Art Gallery;³⁹ with his later donations it comprised over 10,000 objects.⁴⁰

22 Obituary in *New York Herald Tribune*, 5 November 1962.

23 Ibid.

24 Andrews Hall, 1923, Huntingdon Gymnasium and Lawrence Hall, 1926, Stillman Hall, 1927, McGregory Hall, 1930, Student Union, 1937, plus a golf course.

25 Article on Cutten's induction into the Corning and Painted Post Sports Hall of Fame, *Sunday Telegram*, Elmira, NY, 10 June 1979.

26 'Melting Pot National Suicide Says Colgate University Head', *Rome [NY] Daily Sentinel*, 15 May 1923.

27 The exhibition opened in 1991. Cutten's statement was taken from a publication of the American Defense Society: Henry Wise Wood, *Who Shall Inherit the Land of Our Fathers?* New York, 1923. Information from the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 5.

28 Cutten, 'Rugged Individualism', convocation address delivered at Colgate University on 20 September 1934, unpaginated.

29 Cutten, 'Natural Checks or Higher Controls: Which?', convocation address delivered at Colgate University on 25 September 1935, unpaginated.

30 'Colgate's Prexy Has Case Moved from City Court', *Utica Observer*, 23 June 1924.

31 Information on the Fosdicks from standard biographical sources.

32 Cutten, *Mind, Its Origin and Goal*, New Haven, 1925; *The Threat of Leisure*, New Haven, 1926; *Speaking with Tongues, Historically and*

Psychologically Considered, New Haven, 1927.

33 Cutten, *ibid.*, 1925, p 129.

34 The case in question was studied in Théodore Flourenoy's *From India to the Planet Mars*, New York and London, 1900.

35 Obituary in *American Journal of Clinical Hypnosis* 16/3 (1974), accessed online.

36 Jim Bronskill, 'Manchurian Candidates of Our Own - When RCMP Flirted with Brainwashing', *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 December 1997. Accessed online.

37 'Amateur Silversmith Makes a Hobby of Spoons', *The Hobby Reporter*, 1/3 (1947), pp 3-4.

38 Clipping in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 10.

39 'The Mabel Brady Garvan Collection', *Bulletin of the Associates in Fine Arts at Yale*, 8/2 (1930), pp 6-7.

40 Now called the Mabel Brady Garvan Collection of American Decorative Arts.

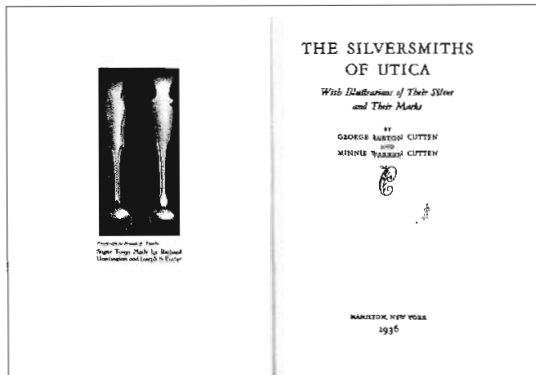


Fig 5 The Silversmiths of Utica, frontispiece, showing sugar tongs, and title page

The Garvans had hired a young scholar, John Marshall Phillips (1905–1953), to research their collection and when the gift was made to Yale he accompanied it, joining the Art Department and later became Director of the Yale Art Gallery and curator of the Garvan Collection. In 1935, to celebrate the tercentenary of the state of Connecticut, the gallery published Phillips's study of early state silver as a thirty seven-page booklet.⁴¹ This may have spurred the Cuttens on to emulate Garvan. George Munson Curtis's pioneering work on the same subject provided another model, with its address to "lovers of old plate", its good paper and typography, and its biographies.⁴² The Cuttens published *The Silversmiths of Utica* themselves from Hamilton, New York, in 257 copies, bound in grey crinkled boards with a silver cloth spine, a silver paper label with the initial C in the style of coin-silver engravings, and a text of sixty-seven pages on thick untrimmed paper [Fig 5]. Four photographs of flatware were tipped-in, the marks were probably drawn by Minnie in India ink,⁴³ and the verso pages left ample space for additional marks and notes. Of Cutten's four silver books it is the most attractive, and the only one not yet reprinted.

Minnie Cutten shared in her husband's quest, or was it originally hers? She also co-authored this first fruit and I suspect her of the arch humor of the opening lines:

During the past year we have had a very interesting experience and have become acquainted with a number of attractive people. So far they have not objected to our calling them our friends. We have never talked with them, to be sure, for we met them in the Public Library, and everyone knows that there is no conversation permitted in a Public Library – the placards on the wall say so. We have greeted them, though, week after week, and as we read items about them in the newspapers, we have passed these back and forth as tasty tid-bits⁴⁴.

The friends in question are of course the long-dead silversmiths whom the Cuttens were researching in the Utica Public Library. The whole preface has a jaunty tone quite foreign to George Cutten's usual prose, for his humour, when it comes out, is more biting.

Utica, thirty miles from the Cuttens' home in Hamilton, had been one of the richest cities in New York state. Incorporated as a village in 1798, it reaped the profits of trade between the interior and the coast, first by ox cart and stage coach, then by barge on the Mohawk river and the Erie canal, and eventually by train. Until Syracuse overtook it late in the century, Utica was central New York's industrial hub, with textile mills, foundries and breweries. The Works Projects Administration's invaluable guide to New York state offers a telling statistic: during the First World War, Utica's Savage Arms Company turned out Lewis machine-guns for the British government in a quantity equal to two-thirds of Great Britain's entire output.⁴⁵ But Prohibition (1920-33) closed the city's breweries, and the Depression was hard felt.

The Silversmiths of Utica lists 191 names of silversmiths, jewellers, watchmakers and repairers (but not silver platers or clockmakers) who worked in Utica between 1799 and 1860; before the industrial era these crafts frequently overlapped. A typical entry reads:

Butler & Osborn (- 1807)

Nathaniel Butler and John Osborn. In March, 1805, this firm advertised new watches, prices six to twelve dollars, and in May, 1805, advertised military goods. In 1806 they advertised silver tea and table spoons, gold beads, hoop and knob earrings of the newest fashion. "All kinds of masonic medals will be made and engraved in the neatest manner." The partnership was dissolved in 1807.⁴⁶

Almost from the outset Utica flatware acquired some distinctive features. Whereas early American silver is seldom marked with the place of origin, the city's makers habitually added a 'UTICA' stamp to their own mark. The Cuttens' taxonomic study revealed that like some isolated animal species, the region's designs had evolved independently of the American mainstream.

One type of early spoon seems to have been made almost exclusively in Utica.

Dr Cutten has described it as a late coffin type handle with semi-circular cut corners.⁴⁷ [Fig 6]

He also mentioned the elongated coffin tip [Fig 10, no 3], the small pointed fins found on early fiddle pattern



Fig 6 Cut corners on late coffin-type handles: teaspoon, 1802-1810, maker's mark of Joseph Barton [Museum Purchase 56.174.1-4]; dessert spoon, maker's mark of Shubael Storrs [Museum Purchase 76.20]; teaspoon, 1810-19, maker's mark of Charles J J DeBerard [Museum Purchase 73.159.1-3] (Courtesy of Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute, Museum of Art, Utica, NY)



Fig 7 Small pointed fins on early fiddle pattern teaspoon Lansingburgh, New York, circa 1790, maker's mark of David Smith (Courtesy of Replacement Sterling 925)

spoons [Fig 7], and the 'sugar-loaf' shoulders (or fins) peculiar to Utica and nearby towns [Fig 8]. Perhaps the latter imitated a common French pattern of the time which could have come into northern New York from Canada.

There is a stark contrast between the almost two hundred Utica silversmiths recorded, and the thirty-six whose marks could be reproduced from actual specimens. Cutten knew as well as anyone what happens when silver articles become unfashionable, but he disapproved of melting pots of any kind:

Might it not be classed as a sin, if not a crime, to melt down grandmother's tea spoons to make a flapper's compact?⁴⁸

More devastating was the effect of the Depression in which, as he described, literally tons of nineteenth-century silver was bought door-to-door and melted. Consequently the majority of silversmiths live on in name only until the occasional rare piece is found.

Studying the Utica silversmiths soon expanded to those of the surrounding region. The next year, 1937, Cutten read a paper to the New York State Historical Society on 'The Silversmiths of Central New York', from which I have already quoted. It introduced characters such as Sanford Boon of Hamilton who not only made silver but advertised a perpetual motion machine, exhibited at Temperance Hall, "admittance 25 cents, ladies free". The tangible remains were, however, scanty. Cutten admitted that he knew of only three large pieces in the whole region, all Utica made: a porringer by John Osborn in the New York Historical Society, a teaset by James and Lynott Bloodgood now in Missouri, and a large soup ladle by Nathaniel Butler in his own collection. Years later, in 1972, the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute in Utica held an exhibition in Cutten's memory. Even then they could only find half a dozen specimens of Utica-made hollow ware (along with 159 pieces of



Fig 8 Sugar-loaf fins on sauce ladle, circa 1850, retailed by Lane, Bailey & Co, Madison, New York, and marked 'PURE COIN' (Author's photograph)

41 John M Phillips, *Early Connecticut Silver, 1700-1830*, New Haven, 1935.

42 George Munson Curtis, *Early Silver of Connecticut and Its Makers*, Meriden, CT, 1913. This sets a terminal date of 1830.

43 An unsourced clipping of November 1950 in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 10, mentions her expertise in this.

44 Cutten and Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1938, p 5.

45 *New York: A Guide to the Empire State*. Compiled by workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of New York, New York, 1940, p 355.

46 Cutten and Cutten, op cit, see note 1, p 29.

47 *Utica Silver*, exhibition at Fountain Elms, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, 5 November 1972 - 4 February 1973, catalogue, Utica, 1973, p 5.

48 Cutten, 'Silversmiths of Central New York', unpaginated.



Fig 9 Letterhead of the St Dunstan Society
 (Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Colgate University Library)

flatware), of which the prize exhibit was Osborn's tea service in Federal period style, with ball feet, domed lids and finials.⁴⁹ These showed that the city's silversmiths could rise to the occasion when required, while their scarcity explains why Cutten's collecting necessarily focused on flatware.

By 1939 his researches had covered the entire state of New York, excluding the metropolis. He published his findings in a booklet that remains a first port of call for collectors with access to one of the three hundred copies.⁵⁰ Minnie was no longer co-author; the torrent of data left no room for biographies or anecdotes and the work is simply a checklist of makers listed by place, and indicates the nature and date of the source: usually a



Fig 10 Evolution of spoon patterns: photograph made for Cutten's study of the coffin-head design
 (Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

directory or a newspaper advertisement. A few names carry birth and death dates; a very few are taken from Currier's or Ensko's compilations.⁵¹

Cutten's papers from this period reveal the existence of a short-lived silver society in New York: the St Dunstan Society, named after the tenth-century Archbishop of Canterbury and patron saint of goldsmiths. The society's letterhead [Fig 9] pictures the saint with his crozier and the tongs with which he pulled the Devil's nose. Its only known publication is a compilation of biblical references to the goldsmith's craft by Maud Stoutenburgh Eliot (died 1944), a New York socialite with an interest in genealogy and New York history.⁵² She was probably the moving force behind the society, founding it on St Dunstan's day, 19 May 1940. This was also the day on which Winston Churchill ordered the evacuation from Dunkirk, after which Americans could no longer pretend that Europe's war was not their concern.

Upon retiring from the presidency of Colgate University in 1942, Cutten served for two years as interim acting President of the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, New York. His cause now was not immigration or eugenics, but temperance. Ever since the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, he had wished it back, and told his Colgate students so with self-deprecating humour:

I have never found myself under any disadvantage because I did not drink, but some of my friends have found themselves under considerable disadvantage because they did. The truth of the matter is that I have no intellectual ability to spare; in fact, hardly enough to get along on comfortably, at times; of course, those who have intelligence plus can, perhaps, afford to dissipate it.⁵³

Now in wartime he was more serious, even provocative:

One wonders whether 77 days of prohibition at Pearl Harbor before December 7 [1941] instead of 77 days afterward might have saved us from the worst naval defeat in our history.⁵⁴

But the war did not keep Cutten from pursuing his avocation. His studies of New York State silversmiths became more and more specialised. Some of them, published in periodicals and reissued in pamphlet form, are remarkable pieces of archival research and detective work.⁵⁵ His shorter, journalistic articles are no less scholarly in content but are aimed at the more casual reader.⁵⁶ For instance, he wrote about the coffin-head pattern that was in vogue from 1800 to a little after 1810. Always the evolutionist, he demonstrated how it fitted into the transition from Old English to fiddle pattern [Fig 10]. As for the name, some said that it was subsequent to the design;

others, that the shape was deliberate because such spoons were given at funerals to the pall-bearers and chief mourners. Moreover, it was thought lucky for babies to teethe on them, and they were tied to cribs for that purpose: hence the expression 'born with a silver spoon in his/her mouth'. Another article treated an essential of the elegant tea-party, sugar tongs. Francis M Rosenfeld, an inventor of electrical devices, had collected over eighty specimens, of which the article illustrated about a third.⁵⁷ Cutten again took a taxonomic approach, sorting them into categories and comparing the invention of the one-piece tong, as opposed to the scissor type, to the evolution of the thumb. He writes about shanks and bows, and of how the shanks were sometimes cast, but the bows must always have been wrought, because cast silver is too brittle to withstand frequent bending.

Early in 1944, the Rochester Divinity School chose a new permanent President, and Cutten was freed from his temporary post.⁵⁸ It may have been with retirement in mind that he cashed in some (or all?) of his non-American silver.⁵⁹ In a sale of 14-15 April 1944, at the Parke Bernet galleries in New York City, he consigned anonymously an impressive little collection: a Danish repoussé peg tankard with lion supports, circa 1680; a cylindrical caster by George Jones, 1731-32; a sugar caster by James Goodwin, 1729-30; a repoussé-decorated tripod cream jug by William Kersill, 1761-62, once bought by Charles Dickens and engraved to this effect; a pair of octagonal candlesticks by William Gould, 1735-36; a caddy by John Newton, 1728-29, with the arms of Lord Byron, later owned by Thackeray, then by Dickens; and a William III tankard by Alice Sheen,

engraved with all its owners' names from 1699 to 1876. These items together realised \$1,020.

At the war's end the Cuttens migrated to the warmer climate of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, living first in an apartment, then at 416 Pittsboro Street, a newly-built three-bedroom house near the University of North Carolina campus. They lost no time in resuming their favourite activity. Within two years they had compiled an inventory of the state's silversmiths up to 1850. The State Department of Archives and History in Raleigh was so impressed that it agreed to publish the work, and printed 5,000 copies which it gave away free.⁶⁰ The preface is dated 15 January 1948. One effect of the book was to dispel the myth that North Carolina was too poor and backward to have supported silversmiths. The Cuttens' researches turned up documentation on 187 of them, working in twenty-three centres between 1739 and 1850. Unlike the studies of the Utica and New York State silversmiths, this one gives sources for all the data, showing a diligence in working through newspapers, deeds and wills that had surely never been applied to the subject before. As always, Cutten added perceptive remarks about the problems facing silversmiths in their particular location. For example, while the northern colonies got most of their raw material from British coins, North Carolina traded with the West Indies, whose coinage was

often of Spanish and Mexican origin, containing impurities which made it brittle and unfavorable for raising large and important pieces of silver plate.⁶¹

49 Photograph in *Utica Silver*, op cit, see note 47, p 11.

50 Cutten, *The Silversmiths Watchmakers and Jewelers of the State of New York Outside of New York City*, Hamilton, NY, 1939.

51 Ernest M Currier, *Marks of Early American Silversmiths, with Notes on Silver, Spoon Types & List of New York City Silversmiths 1815-1841*, Portland, ME, 1938; Stephen G C Ensko, *American Silversmiths and Their Marks*, 2 vols, New York, 1927 and 1937.

52 *Biblical References to the Work of Ancient Goldsmiths and Silversmiths and the Precious Metals in which They Worked*, "compiled and arranged by Maud

Stoutenburgh Eliot (Mrs Walter Graeme Eliot), keeper of the rolls", [New York], St Dunstan Society, 1942.

A private edition was issued in 1940 to a few of the author's friends among the society's members. Information from a letter in the Cutten Papers from Harold E Gillingham, 8 May 1944, informing Cutten of Mrs Eliot's death.

53 Cutten, 'Meet a Prohibitionist!' convocation address delivered at Colgate University, September 20, 1939, unpaginated.

54 Speech to the Genesee Conference in Rochester, reported in *Geneva Daily Times*, 5 June 1943.

55 In this category are 'The Ten Eyck Silversmiths', *The Magazine Antiques*, December 1942; 'More Ten Eyck Silversmiths', *The Magazine Antiques*, April 1944; with Amy Pearce Ver Nooy, 'The Silversmiths of Poughkeepsie, New York', *Dutchess County Historical Society Year Book*, 30 (1945); 'Ten Silversmith Families of New York State', *New York History*, January 1946; foreword and list of silversmiths in Joan Lynn Schild, *The Silversmiths of Rochester*, Rochester, NY, 1944; 'Additional Notes Concerning Andrew Billings', *New York History*, April 1945. From Cutten's typed list, circa 1951, of his sixteen publications on old American silver and silversmiths, in Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 28.

56 From the same list: 'Coffin-Head Design American', *New York Sun*, 20 March 1942; 'Seven Silversmiths Wrought in Northampton', *New York Sun*, 21 May 1943; 'American Silver Sugar Tongs from the Collection of Francis M Rosenfeld', *The Magazine Antiques*, February 1946; 'Reverend Mr Silversmith', *The Biblical Recorder*, 19 June 1946; 'Richmond's Eighteenth-Century Silversmiths', *Times-Dispatch*, 1 June 1947; 'Petersburg Silversmiths', *The Progress-Index*, 1 June 1947.

57 There are photographs of almost the whole Rosenfeld collection in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 21. It is now part of the extensive silver holdings of

the Newark Museum, New Jersey.

58 Reported in *The Weston Herald*, Webster, NY, 16 February 1945.

59 Sale catalogue and auction house statement in Cutten Papers, box 2.

60 History of the work as reported by Charles Messer Stow, 'Tarheel Silversmiths Listed', *Time*, 24 April 1948; number of copies listed in Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 1.

61 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1948, p 2.

Again the paper evidence dwarfs the material evidence. The book illustrates only thirty-five makers' marks and seventeen and a half items (the half is a bowl-less spoon) from various collections, none of them identified as Cutten's own. The grandest of them is an urn-shaped cream jug on a square foot and a matching sugar bowl with a flamboyant pineapple finial by Freeman Woods, who had worked in New York in the 1790s. The biographies are more expansive than those of the Utica book, and give a more vivid sense of the times and the versatility of the southern silversmiths. John Vogler (1783-1881), from whom the most silver survives, was a member of the Moravian community, which still preserves his tools in its museum. He had started as a gunsmith, and also made a 'silhouette machine'. The house he built in 1819 introduced Federalist architecture into the mainly Germanic environment of Old Salem.⁶² John Gill (born 1798) invented the first percussion revolver in 1829 which preceded the more famous Colt revolver. In his advertisements he offered to "alter common guns into percussion guns" and also to mend tortoiseshell combs with silver.⁶³ Three silversmiths were also Baptist ministers and another ran a daguerrotype gallery which probably put the silhouette-makers out of business. Until 1865 North Carolina was a slave-owning state and, while slaves were not trained as silversmiths, free blacks and orphans were occasionally taken on as apprentices.⁶⁴



Fig 11 Cutten as silversmith, from the *Hobby Reporter*, 1947
(Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

The following advertisement placed by Priscilla Caps in the *Raleigh Star* seems straight out of *Huckleberry Finn*:

John Killingsworth ran away and carried with him a son of mine, a free mulatto boy. I apprehend he will try to sell him. Said Killingsworth is a plausible hypocrite about 45 years of age, he is a mill wright, a silversmith, a counterfeiter, a great Liar and occasionally tries to preach.⁶⁵

By 1947 our ex-preacher was occasionally trying to be a silversmith himself. In the *Hobby Reporter*, alongside an article that only mentions Cutten as collecting silver, is a photograph of him in apron, shirtsleeves and his signature bow tie, holding up a new-forged spoon with a pair of pincers.⁶⁶ [Fig 11]

For eight consecutive years George and Minnie Cutten left the sultry summers of North Carolina to vacation in Maine, the northernmost state of the east coast.⁶⁷ There they headed for the antique shops, county archives and libraries, gradually compiling a list of Maine silversmiths which remains unpublished. Meanwhile, with their work on North Carolina in print, they turned to the adjacent state of Virginia. They had been there before, over the Easter recess of 1940, and investigated Richmond's antique shops and museums.⁶⁸ Now the investigation was in earnest and yielded a book three times the length of the one on North Carolina; it included what is now the separate state of West Virginia. On 1 September 1951 Cutten signed the preface to *The Silversmiths of Virginia*, published by the Dietz Press of Richmond. The silver cloth bound volume lists 450 silversmiths and reproduces 150 marks, with thirty photographic plates. The *Richmond News Leader* called it

that seldom seen phenomenon: a first and authoritative final work in its field⁶⁹

and so it would prove for the rest of the century.

The state named for the Virgin Queen probably had the earliest silversmiths and refiners of any colony in America (except, Cutten patriotically adds, Annapolis Royal in Nova Scotia), but their remit was to prospect for gold and silver mines.⁷⁰ From the start, Virginia was a treasury of British plate. Lord Delaware, who arrived in 1609 and lived in grand style, surely brought a service with him.⁷¹ St John's Episcopal church in Hampton boasts the oldest continuously used church plate in America: a communion service with London marks for 1618-19.⁷² In New England the great majority of early church plate is American rather than British whereas in Virginia the ratio is reversed.⁷³ Among the reasons for this were that settlers in the northern states had encouraged their own craftsmen from the start, and went on to

develop a substantial middle class that was not connected with Great Britain or its church.⁷⁴ The southern colony had closer relations with the mother country through the tobacco trade and its shared Episcopalian allegiance. As for where all the English domestic silver had gone, Cutten reminded the reader that priceless pieces were returned to London or Baltimore to be re-made in the latest fashion.⁷⁵ The Maryland historian J Hall Pleasants (1873-1957) confirmed this, writing to Cutten in 1950 with an important, if anecdotal memory:

The older members of the firm of Samuel Kirk & Sons told me many years ago how much old silver was brought to them from the South and even from Maryland to be melted down and fabricated into newer fashions.⁷⁶

The fashions in question were probably those of the all-over decoration with repoussé work for which the Baltimore firm of Kirk was famous,⁷⁷ and which the American historian Graham Hood excoriates as “monument[s] of repulsiveness”.⁷⁸

After the colonists’ resistance to the Stamp Act in 1765, followed by the revolution of 1776 and the war of 1812, the pipeline to British products was stopped. Yet Virginia-made silver continued to be as scarce as its old newspapers, some of which the Cuttens could only find in Massachusetts, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and even Wisconsin. When they asked Virginians about this the standard reply was that the Northerners had stolen it all during the Civil War.⁷⁹ Then what became of it there? Cutten had seen no trace of it:

I have examined tons of silver spoons, and I have recognized only two spoons made by Southern smiths who had not also worked in the North, and I am not positive about one of them.⁸⁰

He would return to this question in his last book. *The Silversmiths of Virginia* documents the Virginia craftsmen with portraits, marks, photographs and biographies of up to a page in length. There are many interesting details. One maker, John Adam (born 1780), was a cousin of the Scottish Adam brothers and was represented by a cream jug in appropriate style (p 4). At the other end of the scale some skilled blacksmiths worked in silver (p xxi), but no women or black silversmiths are known (pp xxi-xxii). Any silversmith could set up as a dentist without a diploma or training, while many of them gave up the craft to profit from the real estate boom of the early nineteenth century (p xxiii). Among the rarer articles illustrated are a skippet (container for a wax seal) and a gorget, a military adornment hung around the neck, often made for trading with the Indians (pp 6 and 8).

Cutten had always been an avid collector. To the *Hobby Reporter* he confessed to owning 1,200 spoons, and the Winterthur Library has his list of 1,100 of them, dating from 1699 to 1810.⁸¹ He did not mention his many pieces of hollow-ware, including five splendid tankards by eighteenth-century American makers.⁸² The extent of his collection was revealed after the Cuttens moved to North Carolina and began their generous patronage of the state’s Museum of History. In 1945 Cutten donated two pieces to the museum; in 1947

62 See http://www.city-ofws.org/Portals/0/pdf/Planning/HRC/Local_Landmarks/LHL_Sheets/52_JohnVoglerHouse.pdf

63 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1948, pp 41-3.

64 Ibid, p 10.

65 Ibid, p 54.

66 ‘Amateur Silversmith Makes a Hobby of Spoons’, *The Hobby Reporter*, October 1947.

67 Preface to unpublished manuscript, *The Silversmiths of Maine*, Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 29. To judge from relevant correspondence (folder 26), the years in question were 1947-55,

68 Statement in ‘The Yankee Soldier and Southern Silver’, unpublished manuscript in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 24.

69 Review in *Richmond News Leader*, 9 February 1953. Cutten’s work on Virginia was not superseded until Catherine B Hollan published *Virginia Silversmiths, Jewelers, Clock & Watchmakers 1607-1861. Their Lives and Marks*. McLean, VA, 2010.

70 The point had already been made in Francis Hill Bigelow, *Historic Silver of the Colonies and Its Makers*, New York, 1941, p 17 (first ed, 1917).

71 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1952, p xiv.

72 From the church’s Altar Guild handbook, via

Wikipedia article ‘St. John’s Episcopal Church (Hampton, Virginia)’.

73 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1952, p xv.

74 Ibid, p xviii.

75 Ibid, p xvi.

76 Letter from J Hall Pleasants, 2 October 1950, Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 7.

77 See also J Hall Pleasants, review of *The Silversmiths of Virginia* in *Virginia Historical Magazine*, 61/1 (1953), pp 101-4.

78 Graham Hood, *American Silver*, New York, 1973, p 239.

79 ‘The Yankee Soldier and Southern Silver’, unpublished manuscript in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 24.

80 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1952, p xix.

81 E Richard McKinstry, ed, *Guide to the Winterthur Library, the Joseph Downs Collection and the Winterthur Archives*, Winterthur, DE, 2003, p 29, entry 102: ‘American silver teaspoons in the George Cutten Collection’, 15-page document with notes.

82 Anthony Simons, Philadelphia, 1797; William Cowell (1687-1736), Boston; Andrew Tyler (1692-1741), Boston; John Ball, Boston, 1765; Nicholas Roosevelt (1715-1769), New York. Data from photographs in Cutten papers, box 1, folders 11 and 12.



Fig 12 Representative pieces from Cutten's sale and gift to the Museum of History, Raleigh, North Carolina: (1) tankard, Boston, 1765, maker's mark of John Ball; (2) cream jug, Providence, circa 1790, maker's mark of William Burr (3) cream jug, Baltimore, early nineteenth-century, maker's mark of both Chaudrons & Rasch, Philadelphia, and Simon Wedge; (4) sugar bowl, New York, circa 1830, maker's mark of B Gardiner
(Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

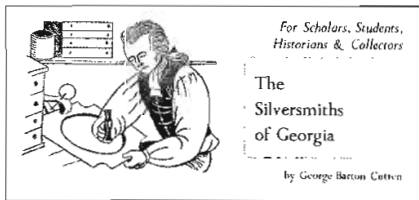


Fig 13 Flyer advertising The Silversmiths of Georgia, 1958
(Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

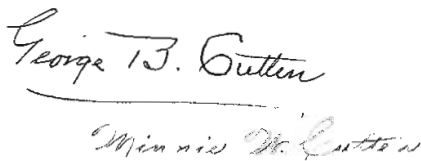


Fig 14 Signatures of George and Minnie Cutten in a copy of the Dutchess County Historical Society Yearbook, 1945
(Author's photograph)

he sold five more and in September 1957, 154 pieces "at a very low selling price".⁸³ About eighty of these had been loaned to the museum in 1947 and displayed in a special case as "Early American Silver from the collection assembled by George Barton Cutten and Minnie Warren Cutten".⁸⁴ The loan included the five tankards, three teapots of the period around 1800, a large New York jug of 1815, and other "representative pieces of silver for the period 1655 to 1868" [Fig 12].⁸⁵ Almost all were by silversmiths of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other northern centres. Cutten has been credited with a "vast collection of North Carolina silver"⁸⁶ but that appears to be a misunderstanding. There is no evidence that he had much success in collecting the work of southern silversmiths: the paucity of illustrations in his books proves it.

Utica was also a beneficiary of the Cuttens' de-accessioning. In 1956 the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute acquired from them 328 items of flatware, of which one third are by Utica silversmiths.⁸⁷ The rest came from twenty four other places in New York State, ranging from Watertown to the north, Binghamton to the south, Rochester to the west and Troy to the east. This collection included all the items illustrated in the Cuttens' 1936 book, and formed the basis for the memorial exhibition of 1972-73, already mentioned.

With their upstate New York collection in Utica, the representative American collection in Raleigh, and the English pieces sold, the rest of the Cuttens' collection probably went to their children. Muriel Hoitsma, the eldest, made her own contribution to the field with a pamphlet on *Early Cleveland Silversmiths*, prepared for the Ohio sesquicentennial in 1953.⁸⁸ Their younger daughter, Dr Claire Manwell, gave Amherst College a John Forbes tea and coffee set of 1805 that may have come from her parents.⁸⁹

In seeking his next field of research, Cutten skipped South Carolina, which had already been covered by the Charleston historian E Milby Burton.⁹⁰ Beyond that lay Georgia, the subject of his final book, published in July 1958. *The Silversmiths of Georgia* contained entries, some of them pages long, for 238 individual smiths or partnerships and thirty-eight watchmakers or jewellers as well as fifteen densely printed pages of source notes. The book was entrusted to the Pigeonhole Press, a Savannah press with fine printing aspirations and the printer and designer, Roy Dilley, included his own lino cut prints representing silversmiths at work [Fig 13]. Cutten was annoyed by the long delay in publication and disappointed that, after all his trouble, the book only had card covers.⁹¹

Georgia was the scene of prolific silver production, especially in the old capital of Savannah. Yet Cutten could find few specimens to photograph, and all were in private collections. In accounting for this he reviewed the old rumour of the abduction of southern silver by northern soldiers. Not until 1954, after handling tens of thousands of pieces, did he find a southern silver item with probable Civil War involvement. One, an embossed mug, was in a farmhouse in Maine, the other in a lot of miscellaneous spoons. His research found that, despite their engraved legends to the effect, neither could have come from a returning northern soldier.⁹² He explained the scarcity of Georgia silver by (1) preference for British silver of sterling standard,

(2) burial, for safety, (3) remelting and refashioning, (4) destruction in war and the Savannah fires of 1796 and 1820. Among the losses in 1796 was the communion service given to Christ Church in 1733 by the Rev Samuel Wesley, brother of John Wesley the founder of Methodism (who visited Savannah two years later).

After his usual list of acknowledgments Cutten added these words:

My wife, Minnie W Cutten, can hardly be included in this listing, for she has contributed in every way.

I have noticed in several examples of George Cutten's books and pamphlets that she has added her signature underneath his, [Fig 14] and wondered about her contribution, always acknowledged but never recognised on a title page since their first book. Her careful hand is evident from the earliest list of American silversmiths in the Cutten Papers [Fig 15] to the maker's marks in his later books [Fig 16], and there is no doubt that George could not have accomplished his silver studies without her.

After the Georgia book came out, Cutten made a surprise return to the educational forum with an article in *School and Society*. He did not mince words:

A large number of persons on the faculties of our colleges and universities lack teaching ability and have no interest in the teaching function. Indeed, with the possible exception of Sunday schools, probably the poorest contemporary teaching is that to be found in our colleges⁸³.

The article was an attack on what would later be called the 'publish or perish' climate in academia, the over-estimation of the PhD and the irrelevance of most research to teaching; it must have ruffled some feathers. But as we know Cutten had a low regard for teachers as well; in 1934 he had told his Colgate students:

After all, no one can teach you anything. Nine-tenths of what a professor knows you can find in books, if you know what books to find it in, and the other tenth consists of deductions which he has made from his knowledge... The great teacher is not the one who unloads on you, but the one who inspires you with an insatiable passion to know, one in whose presence you determine to live a greater and higher life.⁸⁴

83 Information kindly supplied by John Campbell, Collections Manager, North Carolina Museum of History, 6 November 2013.

84 For a photograph of the case, from which many of the larger pieces are identifiable, see <http://collections.ncdcr.gov/dcr/NCD CRSearch.aspx>, Accession no H.1947.38.4.

85 George Barton Cutten and Mary Reynolds

Peacock, *Silversmiths of North Carolina, 1696-1860*, 2nd ed. Raleigh, NC, 1973, p. xi.

86 C Sylvester Green, 'Cutten, George Barton', in *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, William S. Powell, ed, Chapel Hill, 1979. Accessed online.

87 'Date on Cutten Collection of Silver', typescript kindly supplied by Anna D' Ambrosio, Director

and Chief Curator, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Arts. See also *Bulletin of the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute*, January 1957.

88 Muriel Cutten Hoitsma, 'Early Cleveland Silversmiths', Cleveland, OH, 1953. Copy in Cutten Papers, box 2.

89 Gift to Five Colleges and Historic Deerfield Consortium of a teaset by

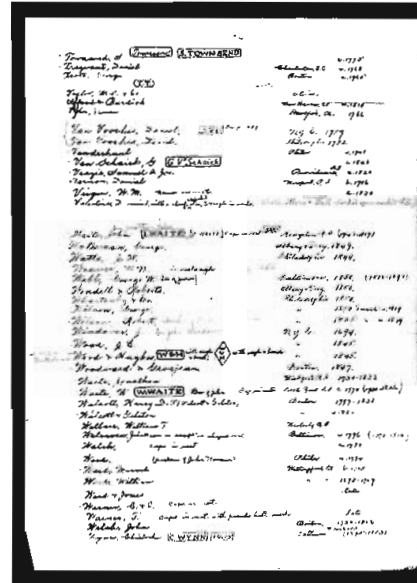


Fig 15 Manuscript catalogue of American silversmiths, probably written by Minnie Warren Cutten (Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

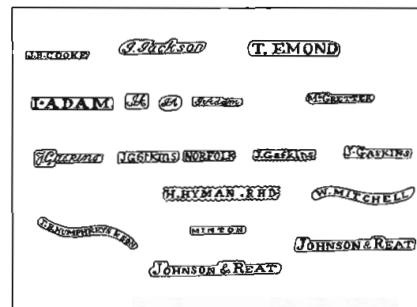


Fig 16 Marks of Virginia silversmiths, probably drawn by Minnie Warren Cutten (Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Colgate University Libraries)

John Wolfe Forbes, circa 1805: see <http://museums.fivecolleges.edu/>.

90 E Milby Burton, *South Carolina Silversmiths, 1690-1860*, Charleston, SC, 1942.

91 Correspondence in the Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 25. The edition was limited to 500 copies.

92 Cutten, op cit, see note 1, 1958, pp 4-6.

93 Cutten, 'The College Professor as Teacher', *School and Society*, 86 (1958), pp 372-75.

94 Cutten, 'Rugged Individualism'.

Cutten was now eighty four, and beginning to feel his age. He and Minnie left Chapel Hill for Northampton, Massachusetts, where their daughter Claire was practising as a physician. In 1962 he was invited to return to Colgate University for the alumni reunion; he replied that he hoped to do so, on condition that it was kept strictly secret.⁹⁵ One can imagine the fuss to which he would otherwise have been subjected and, as it happened, he did go, and spoke at the luncheon. That was his last appearance. He died in a Northampton hospital on 2 November 1962, leaving an estate of \$60,000 to provide a trust fund for Minnie; the residue was to be divided among his three children.⁹⁶

Cutten's opinions on religion, psychology, parapsychology, temperance, and education are forgotten today, while his statements on eugenics are not. It is, however, his silver studies that continue to be sought, consulted, and cited and many remain definitive for their area⁹⁷ and, even when they have been superseded, they have been responsible for launching a new wave of silver research and collecting. *The Silversmiths of North Carolina* was revised twice by Mary Reynolds Peacock, the last version (1984) being more than twice the length of Cutten's original. It is much more lavishly illustrated because a host of collectors had meanwhile appeared, some of them with North Carolina hollow-ware of unsuspected quality, and others who had just realised that their old spoons, even worn and dented, had historical significance. The whole idea of the disappearance of southern silver needed to be modified. As mentioned above the systematic study of the 'pseudo hallmarks', frequently found on flatware of the earlier nineteenth century, has revealed a network of suppliers and retailers rather different from Cutten's image of the village silversmith hammering "pieces of eight" into spoons. Both developments, however, only

serve to broaden and deepen the study of coin silver. Cutten had set an example of how much interest and pleasure could be had from these unpretentious links with the American past.

Acknowledgments

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Joscelyn Godwin, Professor of Music at Colgate University, was educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge and Cornell University. His writings include Robert Fludd: Hermetic Philosopher and Surveyor of Two Worlds, Harmonies of Heaven and Earth, The Pagan Dream of the Renaissance, Athanasius Kircher's Theatre of the World, and a translation of the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili of 1499 (all published by Thames & Hudson, London).

95 Correspondence in Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 4.

96 Obituary in *Schenectady Gazette*, 8 December 1962. Minnie Warren Cutten died on 9 March 1965 (Cutten Papers, box 1, folder 4).

97 The Georgia book has been reprinted (Savannah, 1998) with the addition of an article by Katharine G Farnham and Callie H Efird, 'Early Silversmiths and the Silver Trade in Georgia', *The Magazine Antiques*, March 1971. Catherine Hollan's book on Virginia silversmiths has been mentioned above.