

GEBELEIN

Silversmith

79 CHESTNUT STREET

BOSTON 8, MASS.

October 15, 1952

Mr. Cornelius C. Moore
179 Thames Street
Newport, Rhode Island

Dear Mr. Moore:

It occurs to me before current sales activity resulting from our September Antiques adv. affecting our collection of early American pewter reduces the element that might interest you, to ask whether you have gathered in any early Newport pewter or would be interested in such an unusual representation as we have in a lot of six (6) David Melville plates.

Four of these are in near "mint" state, all from the same mould, and bearing the "MADE IN PEWPORT" Melville touches Figs. 322 and 318a in Laughlin's "Pewter in America", Plate XLVIII.

A copy of a list of the six plates is enclosed. While the prices add up to \$255.00, I would offer them as a group at \$200.00 including cleaning of the two that have seen the more use. If you would like only the four unusually preserved ones, I would price them as a group \$160.00.

The Newport Historical Society has preserved in its files David Melville's discharge from army service as an ensign in Captain Bailey's Company of Colonel Lippitt's Rhode Island regiment, and from the Society's magazines and an unpublished family history compiled by a later David Melville in 1840, Mr. Laughlin derived data for his summary, further to that provided by J. B. Kerfoot in his previous "American Pewter".

Incidentally lately we have had correspondence with an elderly Melville descendant Benjamin Finch who has sent in his notes which are a little at variance with Laughlin's transcription in that Mr. Finch has a generation earlier David who came to Newport 1731 becoming a "Pewterer" and Merchant which business was continued by his son David whose dates Mr. Finch gives as 1742-1804 whereas Mr. Laughlin gives us 1755-1793, presumably there having been contemporary David Melvilles, perhaps cousins, or one of these sets of dates is in error. Mr. Finch mentions the Historical Society Records report of a fire in David Melville's shop in 1780, and that his son David #4 was one of the incorporators of the very successful Savings Bank of Newport and one of its Directors its first offices in his house. More about this David's pioneering in gaslighting, with a light outside his house on Pelham Street near Thames in 1805 twelve years before London, England, and "burning gaily until blackouts in last war". This David made lighthouses for

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the government, and later experimented with electricity.

On the other hand Mr. Laughlin indicates that David Jr, son of the pewterer lived but a short time after his parents, whereas Mr. Finch's line dates David #4, 1772-1856.

Yours very truly,

GEBELEIN SILVERSMITHS, INC.

By *H. Herbert Gebelein*

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