
The art of working iron, as almost everybody knows, is one of the oldest of the arts and one of the most notably interesting from a purely aesthetic angle. It has a natural affinity with glass. The base of both is the same — namely, the susceptibility of crude material to modeling. It might be said in truth that clay and ore are, in effect, the same substance and that each of them possesses a power to stir creative imagination. They inspire artistic enterprise.

In any case, the philosophic impact of historical writing about glass and iron, mud and metal, is similarly engaging.

What Henry J. Kauffman has done in this most recent of his five noble volumes, compiled in America and printed in Japan, is to document iron art for our current time. Other good writing about iron is available — for example in the 14th edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. But Early American Ironware: Cast and Wrought is especially gratifying in its class.

Mr. Kauffman has a genius for making collecting shine. He served copper, brass, tin and wood in previous publications and is an acknowledged authority on Dutch-American folk design and the Kentucky-Pennsylvania rifle. Now his work on ironware must be added to the list of his achievements as an authentic historian deserving of even a casual reader’s appreciation.

Persons who hitherto have not been aware of the fascination of iron art will be particularly intrigued. To them this picture show of transfigured earth and water will be a revelation of a whole department of human productivity. Mr. Kauffman relates his themes with antiquity, arguing:

The great iron pillar of Delhi is thought to have been made about 912 B.C., and the Chinese are known to have levied a tax on iron as early as 700 B.C. The remains of the Graeco-Roman cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii include iron grills for windows and other interesting artifacts made of this metal.

The American aspect of ironworking, Mr. Kauffman believes, was imported from Europe, not developed by the aborigines whom Major John Wesley Powell (1834-1902) preferred to call Amerinds. So hostile were the natives that they elected to destroy the first blast furnace in Virginia on the first day of its operation, March 22, 1622. But the pioneer furnace in Massachusetts was sponsored by John Winthrop, Junior, at Saugus in 1643, and aroused no opposition among
the Indians of that area. It is of record that it was producing eight tons of metal a week in 1648.

Fireplaces and stoves, it seems, were among the earliest iron articles of profitable manufacture. Other products made in New England in early colonial times were: cannon, fences, pipe, mill parts and grave markers. New York, New Jersey, Delaware followed the Saugus example; and Mr. Kauffman explains:

Despite a late start in the erecting of furnaces, Pennsylvania soon established itself as a leader in the production of iron in America. Its success doubtless could be attributed to a bountiful nature which had richly supplied the state with the required materials: iron-stone, limestone and charcoal. Colebrookdale is thought to have been the first furnace built in Pennsylvania. The Cornwall mine has been in continuous operation since its opening in 1742 and in recent times, since the depletion of rich ore beds in the Great Lakes region of the United States, new deposits have been staked out by producers where early deposits had been found in Pennsylvania. There was a quick succession of other furnaces in Pennsylvania, namely: Warwick, Reading, Keiths, Durham, David Jones, Mt. Pleasant, Elizabeth, Martic, Hopewell, Roxborough, Mary Ann, Carlisle, Codorus, Windsor, Pine Grove, and others in western Pennsylvania.

Blast furnaces, of course, were only the beginnings of Mr. Kauffman's study of American ironware. He moves on to consider forges and iron foundries, then specifically and in careful detail the craftsmen who labored in those plants — blacksmiths, whitesmiths, farriers, edge toolmakers, cutlers, locksmiths, gunsmiths, nailers, wheelwrights and tinsmiths. Many of these men, if not all of them, were artists in the best sense of the word. More than 200 illustrations are presented, many by the author himself, to prove the ironmen's concern for beauty as well as for utility. For example, his photograph of the graceful gate at Old Christ Church in Philadelphia is incontrovertibly a "portrait" of an effective gate, yet it is lovely to look at. Mr. Kauffman pridefully mentions: "It was made by (Samuel) Wheeler in 1785" — "One of the few signed and dated pieces of its kind in America." He provides a memorable view also of a section of the railing from Federal Hall in New York City "where George Washington stood during his inauguration in 1789" — maker unknown "but probably ... American."

A scientific instinct guides Mr. Kauffman when he deals with instruments and tools. For instance, he notices that:

The making of scissors involved problems similar to those in the making of a knife. Some handles were made by elongating the bar of metal and shaping it into the hand grip. Others were made by punching a hole in the sheet stock from which the blade was made and then enlarging the hole to a "hand-grip" shape and size. The anvil of the scissors maker was fitted with various appendages designed to shape the open handles of the scissors. Large scissors had blades made of steel and handles of iron to conserve the restricted supply of steel and
reduce the cost. The grinding and polishing was done on wheels similar to those used for knives and the final operation was riveting, or bolting, the two parts together.

Mr. Kauffman is possessed of a further qualification as a distinctively appealing writer. He cares about children and their toys, and he is concerned about what happened to helpless animals such as dogs and horses. His *Early American Ironware: Cast and Wrought* is a collector’s item in itself — a book to treasure with affection.

*Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania*

**Pennsylvania German Pioneers. By RA...**


Expensive reprints and limited subscription editions of secondary material have in recent years become an anathema to the bookselling business and the learned professions, but the publications of the Genealogical Publishing Company of Baltimore are a welcome exception. This publishing house is making available at very reasonable prices reprints of materials consistently searched for family data by the general public, genealogists, and local historians during the past fifty years or more. The company’s current list of books on Pennsylvania includes eleven reprints and six forthcoming publications whose original editions are basic historical, genealogical, and biographical reference works on the colonial and revolutionary period that are rarely offered at any price on the used book market today and have been jealously guarded by librarians.

*Pennsylvania German Pioneers* by Strassburger and Hinke is an excellent case in point. Originally published in 1934 as three volumes in the *Proceedings of the Pennsylvania German Society*, this work contains 506 ship lists, including approximately 38,000 names, of Germans who arrived in the port of Philadelphia between the years 1727 and 1808. Although the lists are not exhaustive and the historical introduction is spotty, *Pennsylvania German Pioneers* is the best single source for German arrivees in colonial Pennsylvania.

The reprinted edition omits the second volume of the original edition which consisted entirely of signatures in facsimile from the