

Antiques

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H. REID, BROUWS/BURTON COLLECTION

gh the countryside outside Norfolk, Va., in this image from the whose focus is railroad pictures made by little-known photographers.

would help researchers digitally reunite families' dispersed paperwork, and trace recurring patterns to particular regions and calligraphers.

Through Sept. 22, three Pennsylvania fraktur are on view in a show of recent donations at the American Folk Art Museum in Manhattan. The name of the painter of a birth certificate decorated with winged women in striped gowns has not yet been discovered; he or she is known for now as the Flying Angel Artist and the Blowsy Angel Artist.

Heyday of Arts and Crafts

In the early 1900s, tourists descended on Deerfield, Mass., to watch embroiderers, weavers, ironworkers, carpenters and ceramists in action.

Entrepreneurs, mostly women, set up crafts workshops around town. A newspaper reported in 1907 that shoppers there had developed the "pernicious and annoying habit of flattening their noses against window panes of homes not open to the public."

One exasperated citizen finally nailed a sign to his 18th-century house that read, "Nothing on exhibition; nothing for sale."

Suzanne L. Flynt, the curator of Memorial Hall Museum in Deerfield, has analyzed the artisans' lives and customers for a new book, "Poetry to the Earth: The Arts & Crafts Movement in Deerfield" (Hard Press Editions/Hudson Hills Press). She also gathered about 175 objects for a related permanent exhibition.

The workshop founders, including Ellen Miller, Margaret C. Whiting and Madeline Yale Wynne, were a cosmopolitan, well-traveled group. They combined Art Nouveau flowing lines, Colonial American floral patterns and Middle Eastern arabesques for abalone jewelry, stoneware vases, raffia baskets, linen doilies, oak chests and iron candelabra. The buyers were as prominent as Rudyard Kipling and Eleanor Roosevelt.

For the mostly female staff, learning gritty trades was a form of self-empowerment. "There is no reason why a woman should not be a blacksmith," Mrs. Wynne, a divorced mother of two boys, would declare, and she advised single female friends to "marry your art" instead of men.

1829 Pennsylvania birth certificate, which the calligrapher Daniel Peterman painted with vines and gowned women, is one of the few records of the existence of Levi Gantz, a tinsmith who enlisted as a Union soldier.

Gantz died in 1864 in a vast brick Confederate prison in Richmond, Va., leaving behind a widow and a toddler daughter.

Lisa Minardi, a curator at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware, has been sifting through thousands of fraktur in the grow-

ing holdings of Winterthur and other institutions, including the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 2011 Winterthur spent about \$28,000 at Pook & Pook auction house in Downingtown, Pa., on a fraktur painted around 1800 with an early image of the Easter bunny.

Ms. Minardi envisions establishing a searchable central database for fraktur in private and public collections, "to really extract the information," she said. It



ART MUSEUMS OF COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG

A birth and baptismal certificate decorated in German-American fraktur style by Daniel Peterman of Pennsylvania.

The exhibition is drawn largely from the museum's own collection, including gifts from descendants of the makers and their patrons. The objects are hard to find elsewhere; many were not well marked, and labels have been lost.

"Much of what was produced in Deerfield remains unidentified once it left Deerfield," Ms. Flynt said in a phone interview.

Among the few significant recent sales of Deerfield material was a linen square stitched with blue flowers, which brought \$1,000 last year at Rago Arts and Auction Center in Lambertville, N.J.

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