



STAFFORDSHIRE
CHIMNEY ORNAMENTS
FROM THE
NINETEENTH CENTURY
IN THE COLLECTION OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS MUSEUM OF ART

Staffordshire is an area in the north of England which has been famous since the eighteenth century as a center for pottery and ceramics of all types, from fine hand-painted dishes to molded figurines. In that region, chimney ornaments were produced in vast numbers in the last half of the nineteenth century as decorations for the homes of the lower middle classes. The subjects included persons or events which appealed to the popular imagination or which played an important role in the political fortunes of England. Queen Victoria and the royal family were especially attractive subjects from the 1840s until production of these Staffordshire figurines died out in the early years of this century. The figures often purported to be "portraits" of famous people, such as the statesmen Gladstone and Disraeli, and even the Americans Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. Crime provided another source of subjects for the figurines, as did theater personalities, characters from popular novels, songs and plays. The most consistent inspiration for the figures was war; figures of Lord Ragland, Lord Nelson, Napoleon III, Garibaldi and other military men found places on many English mantels. Many of the subjects can also be found in penny prints from the Victorian period.

Because of the demand for Staffordshire wares, they were produced in enormous quantities under conditions much like those described in Charles Dickens' novels of the period. A report of 1842 gives the account of a nine-year-old boy who testified that he painted forty-two figures an hour, thus producing 145,000 figures each year, for which he was paid two shillings a week. The ornaments are made of clay, molded in one piece, and designed to be simple enough to avoid hand-modeling any part of the figure. The only necessary handwork was a few strokes of paint. Before the 1870s, most of the figure was painted in a variety of colors and sometimes decorated with clay chippings. After that time, the figure was left almost entirely white; the only painted parts were the hair and shoes, the flesh tones, and a few highlights brushed

with gold. The entire process was directed towards rapid mass production. With no pretensions toward serious art, these figures were produced for the entertainment and enjoyment of the middle class at a price within the means of all but the least prosperous segments of society.

LEA ROSSON
Assistant Curator

Certain pieces of earlier Staffordshire work show a desire to imitate costlier and more finely-made figures such as Derby or Chelsea. The firm of Ralph Wood and his family produced figures in which the entire figure—back and front—was modeled and painted. Certain parts were hand-modeled. By the early 19th century, such figures were still being produced, but the painting in particular shows a decline in quality. As the century advanced, fewer figures were made which required hand-modeling, or were completely painted. These pieces provide one link between the 18th century traditions of craftsmanship and the 19th century demands for mass production.

1. FALSTAFF, late 18th century

8¾ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1705

The popular figure of Falstaff was inspired by his portrayal by the Shakespearean actor James Quin. Quin played Falstaff in the 1750s, but one hundred years later, the character was still being used as a subject for figures. This piece, probably in imitation of Derby figures, shows the Staffordshire potters' concern with producing work as close as possible to costlier pieces.

2. "ROMAN CHARITY," after 1770

7¾ inches

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Justin L. Mooney, 65.6

This piece is a type found in works by the Wood family, and it displays the enamel overglaze technique used by that firm after ca. 1770. Figures of a woman, a young child, an infant, and an old man make up the group which is identified as "Roman Charity" by a small label near the back. The roundish, broad-based piece is hollow.

3. DIANA, early 19th century

11¾ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1655

Displaying the attributes of the goddess Diana, this figure is completely modeled and painted in the round. Certain parts were certainly hand-modeled. The floral decorations of the robe are especially well-done. Lacking any identifying marks, this piece, like the others in this group, is probably a copy after Ralph Wood.

4. "MINERVA," early 19th century, 28.1656

12¼ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial

The identification "Minerva" is described in black on the base of this figure. The right arm is held upward while the left grasps a shield with a gorgon head painted on it. Black floral designs decorate the lavender skirt. The figure is modeled and painted in the round, and is probably copied after an eighteenth century example from the Wood family.

5. VENUS, early 19th century

8¾ inches

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Justin L. Mooney, 65.5

This group, consisting of a female figure accompanied by a child and a green dolphin, displays overglaze enamel colors. Such colors were produced by applying enamel colors mixed with a substance which caused them to adhere to a glazed surface during a

second firing. Although probably not the work of Ralph Wood, this piece was undoubtedly modeled after one of his figures.

6. WOMAN WITH A PITCHER, early 19th century

9 inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1657

An example of the enamel overglaze technique, this yellow-robed figure has much in common with the Venus figure. It too is likely a copy of an earlier Wood piece.

7. ANDROMACHE WEeping OVER THE ASHES OF HECTOR, early 19th century

9¼ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1658

A female figure dressed in a white garment decorated with red-orange floral designs leans against a pedestal on which rests an urn. The piece appears to be directly modeled after a Ralph Wood figure, and may be the work of Enoch Wood (1759-1840). It is less carefully painted than earlier works of the Wood family.

8. GEORGE WASHINGTON, early 19th century

8½ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1704

This brightly colored portrait bust is very similar to pieces produced by Enoch Wood (1759-1840) in ca. 1818. Small green, yellow and black brush strokes give the effect of marble on the base.

From the 1840s to the early 1870s, one distinguishing characteristic of Staffordshire chimney ornaments was the use of a blue underglaze. This color was applied after the first firing, and then fired again at a high temperature. It was thus a more permanent color and less liable to chip. The overglaze colors were then applied and fired at a lower temperature. By ca. 1870, this process had been largely abandoned in favor of a speedier one which left most of the piece a glazed white.

9. QUEEN VICTORIA, 1840-1850

10 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1659

Except for gold, the only colors in this piece are black for the hair and eyes, and pinkish flesh tones—the rest of the figure is left entirely white. It is modeled in the round, and is inscribed in gold at the bottom "Queen Victoria." It dates from early in the Queen's reign and may have been one of a pair of Victoria and Albert.

10. a. PRINCE ALBERT, 1841

11. b. QUEEN VICTORIA WITH THE PRINCESS ROYAL,
1841

a. 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches

b. 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches

Gift of Mrs. E. M. Hopkins, 30.70a,b

The marriage of Victoria and Albert and the birth of their first child Victoria, the Princess Royal, provided the inspiration for a number of chimney ornaments. For three-quarters of a century the royal family was a popular subject, and certain important events of their lives can be traced through the Staffordshire pieces. By 1857, figures of Princess Victoria and her husband, Prince Frederick William of Prussia, were being produced.

12. MUSICIAN, 1840-1860

6 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1684

This lively figure of a young musician displays the blue underglaze used on many Staffordshire figures from ca. 1840 to the early 1870s.

13. TWO DANCERS, 1840-1850

14. TWO DANCERS, 1840-1850

a. 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

b. 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

Acc. no. 00.107a,b

These two pieces share certain characteristics with figures made in the 1840s of the Prince and Princess Royal. Both have pointed hats, plaid skirts with blue underglaze shirts, a sash drawn through one arm, and crossed legs. The backs are unpainted and almost flat. A tube for holding flowers separates the two figures.

15. FORTUNE-TELLER, 1840-1860

12 inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1701

Casting figure groups with many spaces, such as this one, required molds of more than one piece, a process which demanded extra time and work. After the early 1870s, elaborate pieces were seldom made because of the emphasis on increased speed and cheapness in production.

16. GOATHERD, 1850-1860

9 inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 29.1689

This figure may represent Jules Perrot as Gringoire, a character in the ballet "Esmeralda," written by Perrot and based on Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*. The Staffordshire figures often reflected popular interest in current theatrical productions. Figures of famous actresses such as Jenny Lind, Mrs. Siddons, or the Cushman sisters were also frequently produced.

17. GIRL WITH A CAT, 1840-1860

18. BOY WITH A DOG, 1840-1860

a. 7½ inches

b. 7½ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1678a,b

In this pair of figures, both the boy and the girl are seated beside a beehive behind which rises a hollow tulip probably used to hold flowers. The dog which sits at the feet of the boy is the spaniel's gentle type. Both pieces are extensively painted with enamel overglaze colors; the boy's vest is blue underglaze.

19. AUTUMN (?), 1850-1860

9 inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1290

The rake and the basket of grapes suggest that this female figure may be a representation of Autumn. The back is unpainted except for the shirt.

20. GIRL PICKING GRAPES, 1850-1860

11 inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1699

A girl with a bunch of grapes in her hand stands to the left of a twining grape arbor. The piece is mostly white, and the back is unpainted and almost flat. Small flowers are painted on the skirt.

21. THE GREAT GATE, Trinity College, Cambridge (?), 1850-1870

7½ inches

22. COTTAGE, 1850-1870

3½ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1677; 28.1683

The Staffordshire potters produced a variety of castles and cottages. Sometimes they represented famous buildings, such as Balmoral Castle or Trinity College, and sometimes houses which had been the scene of crimes. More often, they were simply homey, rustic cottages. The rough trim around the houses is made by pressing clay through a sieve and then applying it to the piece.

23. COTTAGE, 1830-1870

5½ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1681

This brownish-grey house is hollow and rests on a white base which is decorated with a gold line and two yellow flowers. The windows and doors are outlined in gold, and clay pressings have been applied to the edges of the roof.

24. THREE-STORY HOUSE, ca. 1850-1860

7 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1685

The three stories of this house are orange with white roofs decorated on the edges with greenish clay pressings. The back is quite flat.

25. UNCLE TOM AND LITTLE EVA, ca. 1852

8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1660

Staffordshire produced a number of figure groups with "Uncle Tom." There was much abolitionist sentiment in England during the 1850s, and Harriett Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a popular book. In 1852 it was produced as a play in London. The group of Little Eva and Uncle Tom is sometimes captioned with a line from the book: "Eva, gaily laughing, was hanging a wreath of roses around Tom's neck."

26. BOY AND GIRL BY A STREAM, 1860-1870

6 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1686

A large portion of this group is colored with blue underglaze: the entire garment of the boy and the shirt of the girl. Both stand with crossed legs. The boy holds a basket while the girl holds her wide-brimmed hat and a bouquet of flowers. The two figures are separated by an orange structure from which issues a stream; the top is hollow for holding flowers.

27. FEMALE FIGURE WITH DOGS, 1860-1870

9 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1661

This figure has not been positively identified, although it is likely a theater personality. It may be Esmeralda from the ballet of the same name (played by Carlotta Grisi), or it may be Nellie Chapman, the "Lion Queen" of the circus, both of whom were popular in the 1840s. Two spaniel's gentle dogs are included in the group.

28. "FOUNTAIN," 1861

15 inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1687

The "Fountain" group is composed of a young man and woman standing on either side of a pedestal on which stands a female figure who pours water from a pitcher. It represents the Temperance Society's policy of installing public drinking fountains as a reaction against Gladstone's bills allowing beer in eating places and reducing the duties on wine.

29. "THE RIVAL," 1870-1880

11¾ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1676

Two lovers sit on one side of a tree while a man with a knife lurks on the other side. The group is a good example of the style after 1870, in which the piece was left almost entirely white with brown, black, pinkish flesh tones, and gold the only colors.

30. GREYHOUNDS (pair), 1870-7880

11½ inches, a,b

31. SITTING GREYHOUND, 1870-1880

6 inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1693a,b; 28.1692

Dogs were a common subject for Staffordshire work. The greyhounds were modeled after prize-winners, and are often shown with hares in their mouths or at their feet. The pillar under the dog's chest prevents the figure from collapsing during firing.

32. SPANIEL'S GENTLE, 1870-1880

3¾ inches

33. SPANIEL'S GENTLE, 1870-1880

4½ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1682

Gift of Mrs. W. H. Sears, 30.71

Spaniel's gentle or "comforter," a breed now extinct, was a lap dog and a companion of Victorian ladies. Thousands of such dogs were produced in various sizes by Staffordshire industries; they were often incorporated into group pieces (such as #27). The dogs are characterized by long ears, usually painted a reddish-brown or black, spots scattered about their bodies, large solemn eyes, and a gold chain and padlock around their necks.

34. POODLE, 1870-1880

9¾ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1695b

Figures of sitting dogs such as this one were usually produced in pairs. They are of the same type as spaniel's gentle, but are left entirely white except for the nose and eyes. Grains of clay applied to the upper half of the dog imitate hair.

35. PORTRAIT FIGURE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON, 1870-1880

14¼ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1703

This figure is carried out in the late Staffordshire fashion of a white glazed figure only slightly painted with gold, black and pinkish flesh tones. Staffordshire produced figures of only three American statesmen: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.

36. "OR," 1870-1880

17¾ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1698

The letters "OR" are the only inscription on this large, mostly white piece. The meaning of the letters is not known for certain but it has been suggested that they may refer to Forester, or Orlando, from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, or Corin, a character from the same play.

37. IRISH NATIONAL FORESTER (?), ca. 1877

14¼ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1697

The horse and rider theme is frequently used for Staffordshire figures, and is often associated with military heroes. This piece, mostly white with a few touches of color, bears a close resemblance to those representing Irish National Foresters. Organized in Dublin in 1877, the INF was an Irish secret society which was suspected of having IRA connections. A peculiar feature of this piece is the body of a deer slung across the horse.

38. JUMBO, ca. 1882

6¼ inches

The William Bridges Thayer Memorial, 28.1680

In 1882 the sale of the London zoo favorite, Jumbo the elephant, to the American Barnum and Bailey Circus was a matter of great public concern. Jumbo's mate, Alice, was to be left behind at the zoo, and there was a public outcry against his leaving England. A popular song of the day was the "Jumbo and Alice Polka." Jumbo was killed in America after charging a locomotive.