

Figure 1. Samovar.
Hand-hammered sterling silver.
Weight: 94 troy ozs.
Gift of the estate of Mrs. Samuel Bronfman
(McCord Museum of Canadian History)

Notes and Comments

Silverware Crafted by Carl Poul Petersen: Recent Donation in the Decorative Arts Collection, McCord Museum of Canadian History

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In September 1995 the McCord Museum of Canadian History became the recipient of a major donation of Canadian silver. Ninety pieces of silver from the workshop of C. Poul Petersen¹, a Canadian Dane, were donated to the permanent collection.

Carl Poul Petersen was born in Copenhagen on November 28, 1895 and died in Montreal on April 6, 1977.² Petersen immigrated to Montreal in 1929 and came as a master goldsmith. He had learned his trade as a silversmith under the internationally famous Danish silversmith Georg Jensen (1866-1935) and the "Jensen style" with its fluid modern lines can be seen in Petersen's work. Jensen opened his studio in 1904 and about 1908 Petersen began his apprenticeship which lasted the usual five years. On his arrival in Montreal, Petersen was able to find employment with the firm of Henry Birks and Sons and by 1931 he was able to bring his wife and three sons to Canada.³

A fellow Canadian Dane was the chauffeur to Samuel Bronfman and introduced Petersen to Bronfman who proceeded to commission him to produce a tea and coffee service. This set, illustrated here by the silver samovar (Fig. 1), was made before Petersen had registered a Canadian hallmark and is stamped P.P. Sterling Denmark, although it was made on McGill College Avenue. This became the first commissioned work executed by him in Montreal. This commission enabled him to open a shop at 2024 McGill College and according to *Lovell's Montreal Directory* he worked there from 1939 until 1944 where upon he moved his studio to 1221 Mackay Street where they stayed until the firm's demise in 1979.

Petersen operated his studio with his three sons and by the late 1940's employed over twenty assistants to aid in the manufacture of hand wrought flatware, hollowware, tableware and jewelry.⁴ Petersen created all his own designs and did not allow his assistants to vary from them.⁵ From advertising flyers it is possible to identify eleven patterns of flatware with three of the most popular illustrated here. These are from left to right "Dolphin, Wild Berrie, and Corn." The Dolphin pattern was the least expensive and Corn the most expensive, being double the price.

Petersen silver was very popular in the 1950's and 60's for gift giving purposes and the footed condiment dish illustrated here was one shape that has been seen in many Montreal households.

The firm of C.P. Petersen & Sons may best be known for their version of the Stanley Cup. In the late 1940's they received the contract for engraving the cup and making any necessary repairs. In 1962, then NHL president Clarence Campbell commissioned a traveling version of the cup which is the one still presented today and kept in the home town of the winning team.⁶

Mrs. Bronfman was a patron of Petersen for many years and the wide range of serving pieces represented in the recent donation (Figs. 2, 3) illustrate the complexity of the silversmith's craft and rightly place Petersen as one of the finest silversmiths to work in Canada in the twentieth century.



Figure 2. Condiment or Bonbon dish.
Hand-hammered sterling silver.
Gift of the estate of Mrs. Samuel Bronfman
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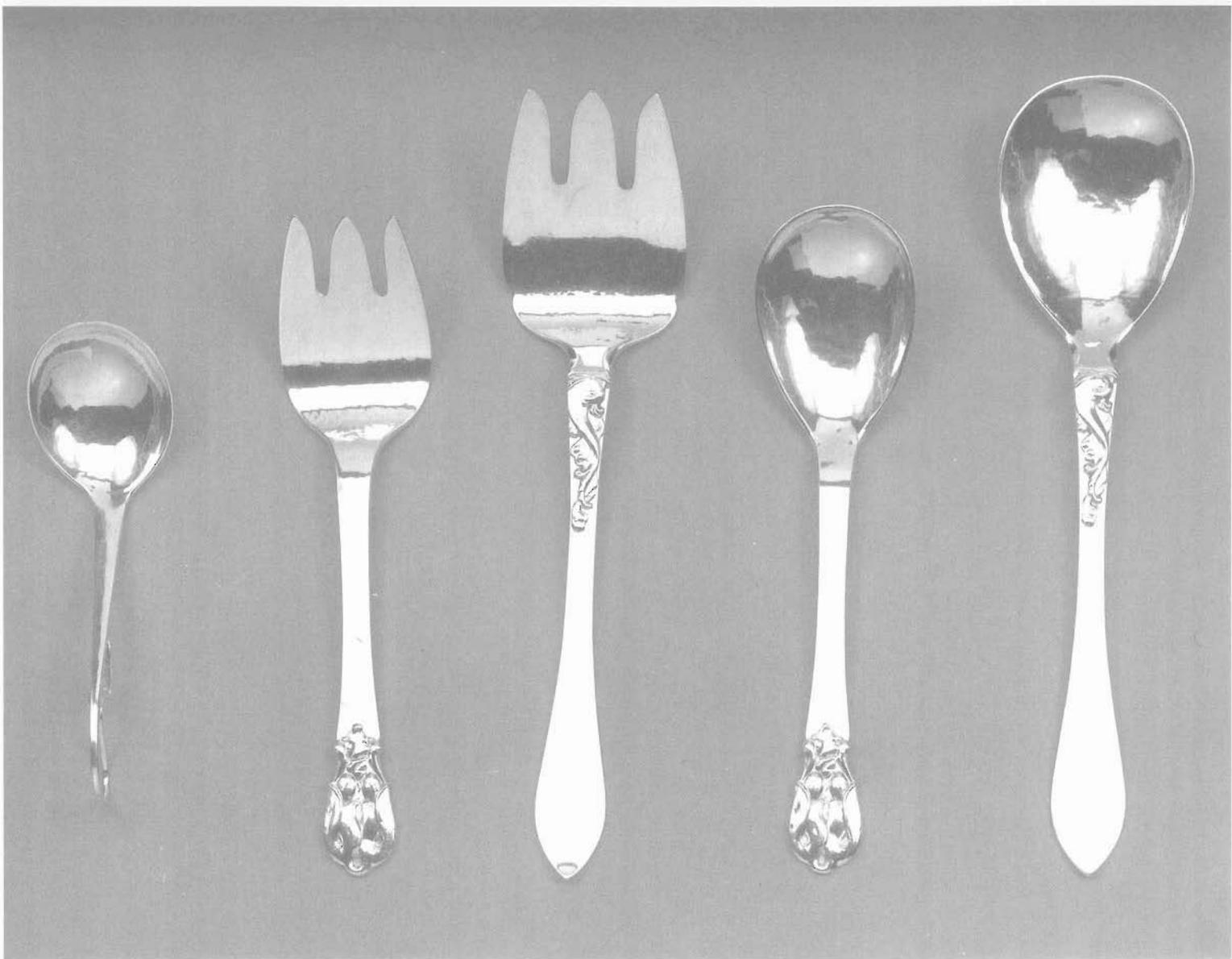


Figure 3. Serving Spoons and Forks
Hand-hammered sterling silver.
Gift of the estate of Mrs. Samuel Bronfman
(McCord Museum of Canadian History)

Notes

1. C. Paul Petersen is the form of listing found for all his entries in *Lovell's Montreal Directory*.
2. Biographical information supplied by his son Ole Petersen from an interview on February 13, 1996.
3. *Idem*.
4. Information supplied by former Vice-Principal (Academic) Eigil Pedersen, October 15, 1995.
5. *Idem*.
6. *Montreal Gazette*, July 5, 1994.

In Their Own Write: An Exhibition Celebrating 175 Years of McGill Authorship

By David McKnight

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In her 1991 essay "A Torch for All Time" Carol Martin remarks: "Study, analysis, and research—the desire to push back, bit by bit, the frontiers of knowledge. These are the forces that lie at the heart of every great university."¹ Although it was not apparent 175 years ago that McGill would, in time, evolve into a great university, history has judged otherwise.

Indeed, as the 19th century drew to a close, McGill had emerged as an institution with great promise due to the efforts of the "Three Williams:" William Dawson, Sir William Osler, and Sir William Peterson. Each in their own way played key roles in laying the foundation of McGill as a world-class university. As the second Millennium draws to a close the record of scholarly achievement is now secure. And yet, one thing is constant since James McGill set in motion the founding of the Royal Institution for the Advancement of Learning in 1821, then as now, the institution now known as McGill University is beset with new challenges which strike to the very core of its existence.

One of the current key issues is how McGill will adapt to the global information revolution which is manifestly changing the essence of scholarly communication. Scholarly communication is, of course, the matrix of print documents—learned journals, proceedings, and the books, which have served as the primary media of expression for researchers and scholars since the rise of the modern research university at the end of the last century.

Certainly it is too early to judge what the long term effects of electronic publishing will have upon the university community. Just as the spread of printing throughout Europe at the end of the 15th century gradually replaced hand-lettered books, electronic books and journals may in time become the primary medium for the transmission of knowledge rendering the printed word rarefied or quaintly antique. As for the immediate future, it is doubtful that scholars and researchers will soon abandon the ritual and necessity of scholarly publishing which is integral not only to the creation of new knowledge, but also the means of measuring and advancing academic careers.

This latter concern, the advancement of an academic career, is today commonly referred to as the 'publish or perish' syndrome. Since mid-century scholarly publication has been a major component in the tenure granting system and has been the proliferation of scholarly journals and monographs despite the appearance of counter-trends which include the high cost of journals and monographs, and the shrinkage of public funding for academic presses. The impact has been felt in the arts as well as the sciences.

On the occasion of McGill's 175th anniversary the Humanities and Social Sciences Library is going to celebrate the printed book. Drawing from its various collections, an exhibition will be held to highlight some of the great, enduring and curious books published by McGill professors, scholars and graduates during the university's long and distinguished history. The number and variety of works published by McGill authors is such that works of poetry