

Genealogy and Silver

By MARTHA GANDY FALES

THE value of genealogy in the identification of unknown silversmiths' marks and the proper dating of silver, can not be overestimated. Several cases in point might be cited to illustrate how useful this method is and, at the same time, put into print some previously unknown facts concerning a few New England silversmiths. Such an example was published in the *Essex Institute*

S. Berwick 1831" on the handles. All the other silver owned by this church was duly recorded in E. Alfred Jones's monumental work on American church silver published in 1913, but these two spoons were not; nor was Mr. Nutter listed in any of the standard compilations of silversmiths' names and marks.

Thinking that E. H. Nutter might possibly be an unidentified Maine silver-



BACK OF SPOON BY ENOCH H. NUTTER

Courtesy of Mr. Charles S. Parsons.

Historical Collections, January, 1965, pages 40-49, whereby genealogy was shown to have played a significant role in proving that the mark D · ROGERS in a rectangle belonged to Daniel Rogers of Ipswich, Massachusetts, not to Daniel Rogers of Newport, Rhode Island, as had been thought for decades.

Another instance of the usefulness of genealogy developed from a visit to the First Congregational Church in South Berwick, Maine, several years ago. In looking over that church's silver, two fiddle-handled spoons marked E. H. NUTTER in a deekled rectangle were found with the engraving "First Cong. Church

smith, I tried the obvious sources of information on Maine craftsmen with no results. A similar search was made in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, which would have been convenient for South Berwick patrons, but this proved equally futile.

However, within a year I saw another fiddle-handled spoon with the same mark, inherited by Miss Joan Nelson of Beverly, Massachusetts, who, because of her interest in family genealogy, was able to identify the initials engraved on the handle as those of an ancestor, C. D. Curtis of Dover, New Hampshire. There was also a slightly later spoon owned by C. D.

Hodgdon, also of Dover, which was marked EHN in a rectangle.

It was this history of ownership which led to the proper location of Nutter in New Hampshire instead of Maine, and to the discovery that he was a clockmaker who, like many of his fellow craftsmen, made silver spoons. Brooks Palmer, in his *Book of American Clocks*, lists a striking banjo clock made by him about 1825 as being in the Donald K. Packard Collection. The Dover, New Hampshire, Directory for 1833 lists Enoch H. Nutter as a watch and clockmaker, and jeweler, at 6 Main Street with a house on the corner of School and Mechanics. By 1859, however, the directory lists him only as a watchmaker on Washington Square.

Notes and an article by Thomas C.

Dunnington, generously supplied to me by Mr. Charles S. Parsons of Goffstown, New Hampshire, revealed that Enoch Hoyt Nutter was born in Rochester, New Hampshire, apprenticed to James C. Cole, and had opened a shop in Dover by 1826 when he bought a house and lot, and married Miss Tabitha M. Gunnison, a Portland, Maine, girl. Eventually he was operating Dover's best jewelry store and was an important citizen, owning considerable real estate and holding town office before his death in 1880.

In this case genealogy helped not only to place an unidentified silversmith in his proper locale, but also to identify the initial mark of EHN through the spoon in the same family which had silver bearing his full-name touchmark.