

Pewter Communion Service of the Rocky Hill Meetinghouse

By WILLIAM C. BLANEY

THE Fall of 1966 issue of *OLD-TIME NEW ENGLAND* featured the Rocky Hill Meetinghouse of Amesbury, Massachusetts, and included was a photograph of part of the pewter communion set belonging to said Meetinghouse. Through the kindness of the officers of The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities and the

in 1936, it is obviously not a complete communion service.

A look at the accompanying photograph will show that the set now consists of two patens (or dishes), one baptismal bowl (or basin), and seven chalices (in the form of tulip-shaped pint mugs). Not shown is a small silver beaker used solely by the minister; and

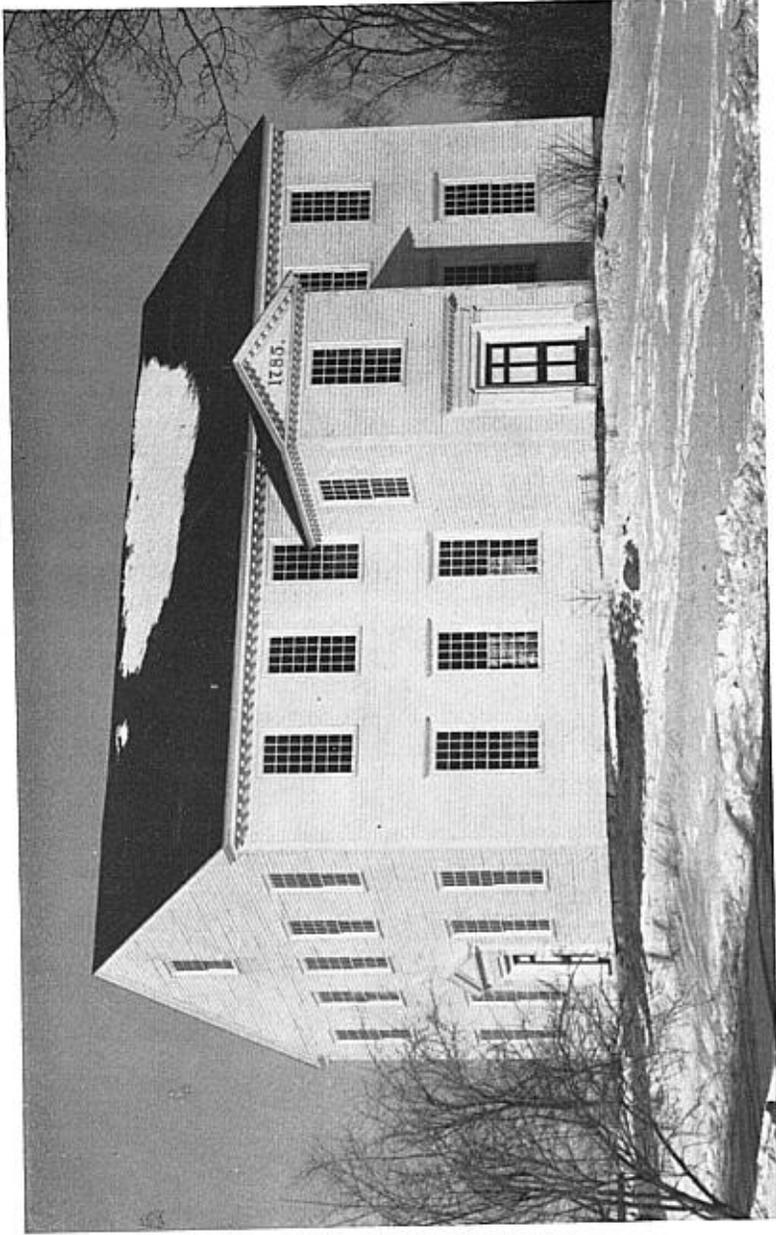


PEWTER COMMUNION SERVICE OF THE ROCKY HILL MEETINGHOUSE
AS IT EXISTS TODAY

Chief Steward of the Meetinghouse, the author was privileged recently to examine closely and photograph these pieces. The word "remains" is used because, while the set examined consists of all the pewter pieces turned over to the Society when the Meetinghouse property was acquired

EDITORIAL NOTE: The author is President of the Pewter Collectors' Club of America.

one should note also the curious absence of a flagon, one of the most important pieces in any communion service. All of the pewter pieces, with one or two possible exceptions, are of English manufacture—a not uncommon occurrence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when English pewterers were still offering substantial compe-



ROCKY HILL MEETINGHOUSE, SOUTH AND WEST ELEVATIONS

Photograph taken February 12, 1967.

tion to their American counterparts. A more detailed description of each piece is given below.

One of the patens or dishes is $12\frac{1}{8}$ inches in diameter. Its maker cannot be identified, although what appears to be a crowned rose touch mark (very worn) on the bottom indicates the probability it is of English make.

The other paten is $12\frac{1}{8}$ inches in diameter and bears the touch marks of John Shorey, Jr., who worked in London *ca.* 1708-1725.

The baptismal bowl or basin is approximately $9\frac{1}{4}$ inches in diameter and lacks any identification marks. It therefore could be either English or American.

One of the chalices (or pint mugs) bears no maker's mark, but is stamped on the side with a crowned "WR" (for "William Rex")—a mark indicating the mug had been inspected somewhere in England for true capacity and found satisfactory.

Another chalice is marked on the inside bottom with the touch of Townsend & Compton, a firm who worked in London *ca.* 1801-1811. Townsend & Compton were prolific exporters of pewter to the United States.

The other five chalices bear the touch mark (also on the inside bottom) of Edgar, Curtis & Co. of Bristol, England

ca. 1793-1801. This was a partnership of Preston Edgar and James Curtis, and their touch containing figures of Neptune and a Dolphin was based on an old statue that stood at the time near Temple Church in Bristol, but which has since been moved to Victoria Street.

The silver beaker (not shown) is $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height and is marked on the outside bottom with the touch "W. MOULTON," the letters being in relief within a depressed rectangle. This is the mark of either William Moulton of Newburyport, Massachusetts (1720-1793) or his grandson of the same name, also of Newburyport (1772-1862), the probability being the latter, as Gebelein Silversmiths of Boston have told me the grandfather's mark was usually "MOULTON," with the "w" being omitted. It is likely this silver beaker is of much greater value than any other single piece in the communion service.

Apparently the records of the Meetinghouse do not contain any information as to when or how the communion set was acquired, or whether by purchase or gift(s). Based strictly on the known working dates of most of the makers, it would seem probable the set was acquired at, or shortly after, the time the present Meetinghouse was built in 1785.