

Early Manheim Craftsmen

The Historic Manheim Preservation Foundation had the good fortune to acquire an important and informative article on the early craftsmen of Manheim written by William S. Rice and we are herewith publishing the information. William S. Rice was a local artist who today is known throughout this nation for his block prints.

EARLY MANHEIM CRAFTSMEN

By
William S. Rice

Several years ago I ran across an illustration in the School Arts Magazine, a publication devoted to arts and crafts in the Public Schools. It interested me very much because I was unaware of such beautiful craft work being done in Manheim by our neighbor Michael Schwartz. It was an illustration of a coverlet beautiful in design (perhaps not original, but nevertheless an artistic creation.) Mr. Schwartz wove beautiful rag carpets, I knew, because we had some of his work on our living room floor. His work was lovely in color and pattern. Where he received his training, I never knew. He reminded me of the lines in Gray's Elegy that ran thus:

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomable caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

Judge of my surprise on seeing this example of Michael Schwartz's weaving in a magazine years after his demise and never having known of such lovely work being produced just across the Square in my own neighbor hood!

Down on South Charlotte St., corner of Ferdinand, known to us as "Bull Alley", was a log-built structure on the Danner property, known as Daniel Danner's Spinning Wheel Factory. In my childhood spinning flax was practiced by a few old ladies. Jonas White, Lizzie White's Mother, my grandmother and several others. In later years the spinning wheels were used either for parlor ornaments or for converting into such monstrosities as rocking chairs.

I bought for a small sum, a wheel at a country sale 50 years ago. It happened to be one of Daniel Danner's make and was a conscientious bit of craftsmanship. The wheel is now in the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland California.

The Danner family had an Uncle who produced a remarkable school globe and decorated it with a quill and ink in beautiful hand lettering. The late Mr. George Danner's mother was also a gifted craft woman and made graceful shaped vase forms of pasteboard and covered them with dainty calico or chintz. In those days calico sold for one dollar the yard, according to Mr. Danner.

A number of elderly ladies in our town were clever at quilt patchwork and rug making among them was my Grandmother and Mrs. C. J. Snavely, who was gifted in many other ways. We had a quilting frame in our attic which was frequently brought out when Grandmother would invite her friends to the house; and the ladies would labor industriously on the patchwork with minute stitches, meanwhile broadcasting local news

similar to the radio of the present day. I used to listen in occasionally as a youngster and would get some bit of choice gossip --- who was going to be married, who was expecting a baby, or who was very ill and was not expected to recover. I was not expected to be interested in the local gossip but you know "Little pitchers have long ears" Was a common saying at that time.

Many and varied were the patterns of quilts – Star of Bethlehem, Log Cabin and Autograph quilts in which each white patch was inscribed with the autograph of the participant, in indelible ink. It is now very interesting to me to look at one of these autograph quilts and recall all of the dear old-timers who took part in the undertaking. All are gone now but "not forgotten" after glimpsing at this patchwork of theirs.

Potteries flourished too, years ago. There was Singley's pottery on North Charlotte St. where a crude form of undecorated earthen ware was produced. These "crocks" were eagerly sought after for storing apple butter and milk. Milk in those days was cooled in spring houses the forerunners of "frigidaires". Most all farmhouses originally were located near springs and some were built over springs before wells and pumps were installed.

Speaking previously of the fine penmanship of Mr. Danner's uncle on a school globe, I recall the decorative pen and ink drawing of a nearby resident of our town, a Miss Martha Hernley who decorated a page of Grandmother's autograph album. I never knew what Martha Hernley's background was; but she was deaf and dumb and this was her chief talent. Her work was done with quill and red and black inks. It was similar to the work of the monks at Ephrata Cloister, examples of which may be seen in the books from the Cloister now in the Hershey Museum. Miss Hernley's work was superbly done and I regret that Grandma's album is no longer in existence but is "gone where the woodbine twineth".

The motifs in this aforementioned illustrated penmanship were typical Pennsylvania "Dutch" ones – the distelfink a mythical bird, pomegranates, tulips, daisies, etc. Miss Hernley has long ago gone to her reward but her form still lingers in my memory. She was an occasional visitor to our home and we kids always thought her a remarkably talented woman. Other talented craft workers were several members of the Henry Kopp family on Market Square. Henry himself was quite a character, a cabinet maker and furniture dealer by profession. He displayed a sign on his porch, a perennial one, "Our spring opening takes place today".

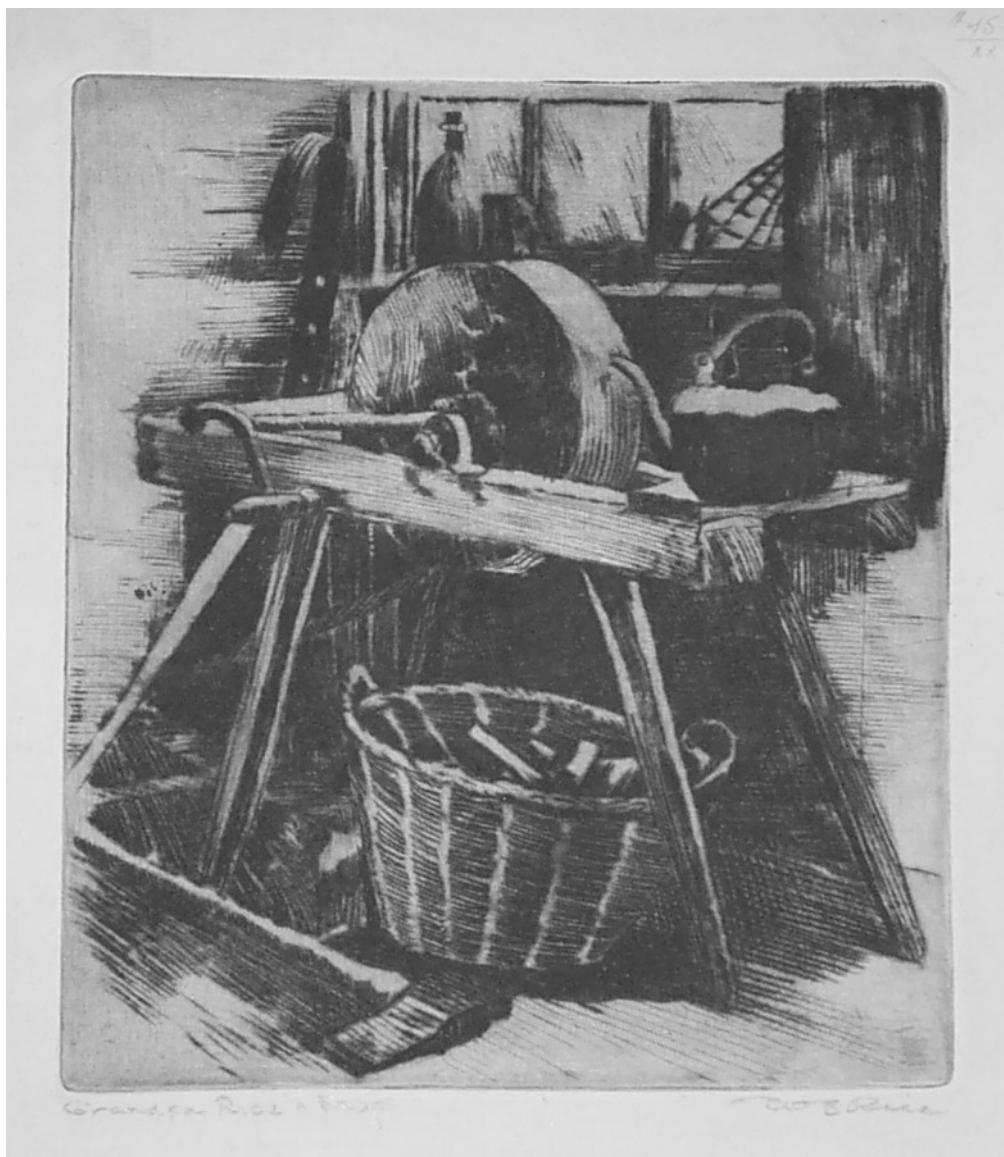
I can see him yet, a man past middle age with a white chin beard and trickles of tobacco juice down his chin, when he came out to talk to me and invite me in to see the wonderful paper owls his granddaughter Minnie Apple made. They were curious creations of crushed brown tissue paper with shoe buttons and yellow paper discs for eyes. They were perched on real branches of trees similar to stuffed birds; but that was not all, Minnie and her mother, Lizzie Apple created a sensation when they crocheted dresses for themselves. They were the wonder of the town when they stepped out to attend local camp meetings and picnics.

Their cleverest and most original creations were their imitation Japanese lanterns they displayed on an election parade night. They were nothing more than discarded hoopskirts covered with tissue paper. They made quite a hit and were the subject of much admiration and comment on the part of the town's people.

I always respected their indifference to public criticism in their endeavors to be unique and original. Minnie had a boy friend named Adam Frey and some of her facetious schoolmates called her Adam's Apple, which was not fair to Minnie, since she was rather pretty and it was a mean trick anyway.

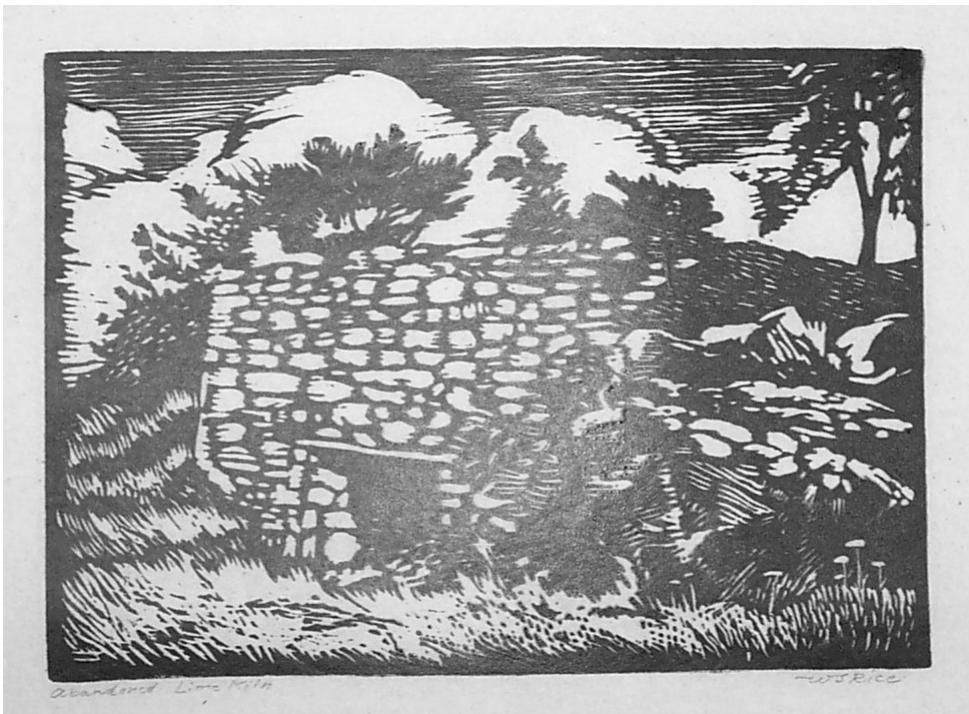
We liked Minnie because she made wreaths of autumn leaves from our school campus and her Grandpa varnished them; and later on they were hung on the walls of our school room reminding us of past autumn grandeur.

The Danner Museum contained many notable examples of local craft work that the owner collected during his lifetime and the pity of it was that it was not permanently left in Manheim and housed in a fireproof building, where as the years went by, it would have increased in value and would have been a great tourist attraction as well.



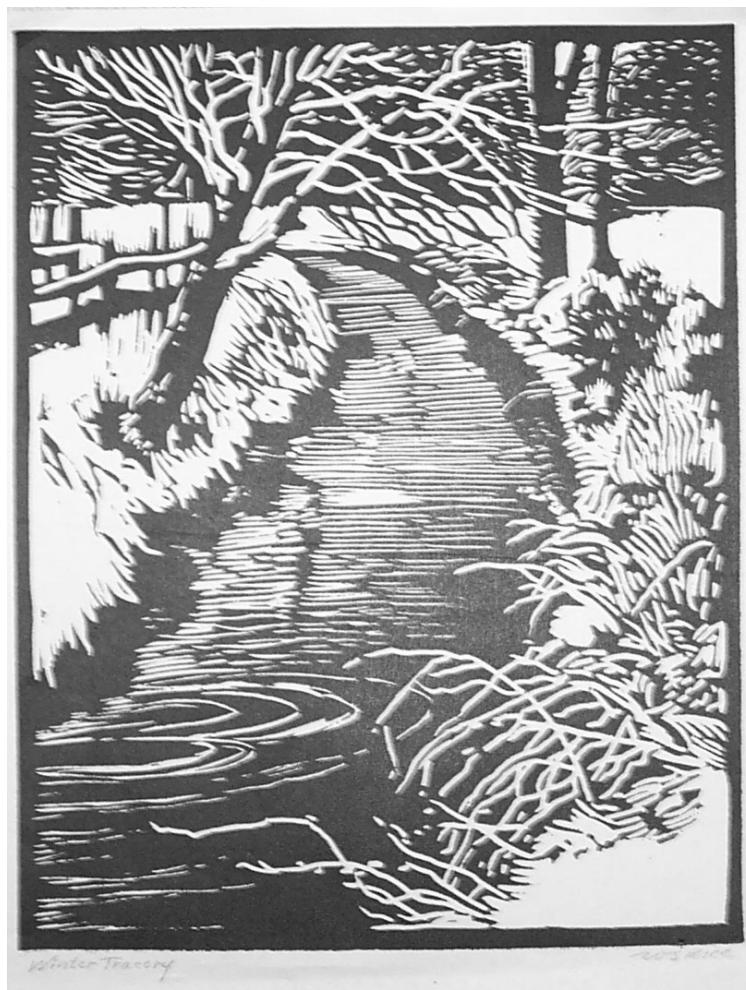
Grandpa Rice's Shop

W. S. Rice



Abandoned Lime Kiln

W. S. Rice



Winter Tracery

W. S. Rice