

The Magazine ANTIQUES, September, 1944, a review

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When we are consumed by our passions, as so many Wedgwoodians are, we often concentrate on specifics - the breadth of our collection, the current market for our collections, the minute details of items in our collections, and all manner of other aspects which fill our minds and our daily lives. Many study the sources of design, the history of the faces illustrated on medallions or simply the history of an individual piece, its provenance, its design source, perhaps other versions of the same piece. Elizabeth Chellis is well known to us all as an authority on Wedgwood design sources. She amassed a world-class library in her unrelenting quest for design sources and history to enhance her collecting experience. And aren't we lucky she did?! By sharing her library she has allowed others to learn for themselves what she learned, or what she might have missed! I was lucky to have been born into a bookworm family and my library, from childhood, has always been graced with magazines. My fascination with them began in grade school and has never waned thus my Wedgwood library contains many items besides books. Ron Frazier has described it as "every scrip and scrap" of Wedgwood knowledge found in print, or words to that effect anyway! He's right. A two inch square ad catches my attention in the oddest places! Obviously, an issue as stunning as the September, 1944 *ANTIQUES* would not escape my notice. The dark blue and white cover would be enough, but add "The Infant Academy" and we have a stunning treasure.

When I was thinking about reviewing Elizabeth Chellis' article in this issue, entitled "Sources of Wedgwood's Child Motifs", I naturally considered how to approach the subject. I certainly needn't retell Elizabeth's story! As I stared at the cover the date jumped out at me with a loud OH MY GOSH. In the drawing rooms of 1944 America perhaps some WSB members of the time, but certainly people just like us today, sat reading this beautifully illustrated treatise on Elizabeth's research in the midst of the most devastating world conflict in the history of mankind! Automatically I was transported into a different mind-set. Recalled to my mind were the words of Winston Churchill admonishing the world to be involved - the political isolationism which had been broken down just in time. The archive photo my brother sent me less than 24 hours ago of the *Queen Mary* chugging into New York Harbor in June, 1945 carrying our father's brother among many hundreds of young men home from War. How difficult it is a generation later for us to put into proper perspective the world events taking place in September of 1944 while perusing a lush silky-paged magazine full of beautiful images of furniture, porcelains, advertisements for antique portraits, cherry Rhode Island secretaries and an article on "Dolls as Purveyors of Fashion". The way I deal with this phenomenon is to remember that while the Battle of Midway was being waged in June of 1942 my southern belle mother and Mayflower descendant father were being married in the beautiful white-columned First Baptist Church amidst friends, family, flowers, cakes and the prospect of a wedding trip to the Great Smoky Mountains! How could they do that with all those men "over there" dying? We know historically of course that magazine articles were

published and weddings were carried off during those trying times - the people had to continue to live despite The War raging “over there”.

In September of 1944 Elizabeth’s informative article relating famous Jasper Reliefs to their source illustrations and documents was probably a welcome break from the torturous daily press in which WSB members and other Wedgwoodians read about 95 tons of explosives being dropped by one bombardment squad in 7 missions from 40 planes in one month. Strange sounding places such as The Balkans, the Gothic Line, Po Valley, Ljubljana Gap, Arno River and others were daily pulp in the *Boston Globe*; but Elizabeth could transport her readers to such romantic sounding places as Stabia, Etruria, Rome in its glory days not under siege, Guisachon House in northern Scotland, and Il Campidoglio. And she familiarized her readers with names so well known in the Wedgwood world - Lady Elizabeth Templeton, Miss Emma Crew, Lady Diana Beauclerk, Flaxman, Thomas Bentley and more. Can you not just imagine yourself lying on a *chaise longue* in a sunny room reading a refined, well-written* article by an articulate, educated lady of style on a subject very close to your heart and being totally transported away from your kitchen window which might have sported a Mother’s Star, a constant reminder of your son’s status as an active soldier?

There is only one reference to the War in this issue; in the ads in the back a quarter page shows Uncle Sam with a caped nurse, arms out-stretched in a welcoming gesture, the caption a simple YOUR RED CROSS NEEDS YOU!

It’s difficult to imagine history. It’s easy to read it in a book, or watch it on PBS, but we tend to isolate the subjects. We think of World War II as a “happening”, Pearl Harbor a place, Charles Lindbergh a pilot. We think of Wedgwood as a hobby or a collection, an avocation, an activity within the microcosm of our lives. But maybe we need to see some of these old magazines and books with Wedgwood references we love to search for, bid on, and scrounge shops for, in a different light. A light that enhances our knowledge of our collections, of course, but also as an element of what was going on in the world of the collectors of the day.

In summation we might say “What were those publishers thinking?” Publishing this spectacular Wedgwood article in the midst of global calamity? What does Sir Joshua Reynolds’ painting *The Infant Academy* as a design source for so many pots matter in the grand scheme of things? Well, it matters a lot in the grand scheme of Wedgwood *things*. *Things* which go on during, over, under, within and without the other aspects of our lives. As a diversion, an escape from the drudgery of daily living, a mental exercise, a hobby is important. Wars do end, lives do fall back into place, and that place is enhanced greatly by people such as Elizabeth Chellis who share their knowledge, experience and belongings. If only those pots could talk!

*There is one typo in the article, guess what word one time has an extra letter?

And here is an ad from the issue.

Glass and china buttons
WEDGWOOD BUTTONS
Illustrated in blue.
1150 buttons shown in color and
half tone.
BUTTON HAND BOOK.
Price \$3.85.



1944 supplement — 400 additional
buttons. Beautifully illustrated.
Price \$2.00.
Florence Zachaire Ellis Nicholls
114 Overlook Road, Ithaca, N. Y.