

Equal in Goodness: Ohio Decorative Arts 1788-1860

January 29 through June 5, 2011

Decorative Arts Center of Ohio
Reese-Peters House
145 East Main Street
Lancaster, Ohio

Foreword

The concept for the exhibition *Equal in Goodness: Ohio Decorative Arts 1788-1860* first was proposed by Barbara Hunzicker, Exhibitions Chairperson at the Decorative Arts Center of Ohio. Soon the exhibitions team began exploring the project with friends and supporters of the museum, particularly individuals and institutions with early Ohio collections. The enthusiasm unveiled by these initial inquiries was infectious, and excitement soon spread.

This exhibition is an overdue celebration of the courage and creativity of the pioneers who settled Ohio - their willingness to leave behind all that was familiar and to undertake a supremely arduous journey in the hope the new territory would offer more opportunity. Within a single decade, a scattered, multi-ethnic population was erecting fine homes and public buildings and creating a material culture - furniture, textiles, paintings, glass, ceramics, silver and other metals.

Some early Ohio decorative arts closely resembled the design and workmanship of New England and the Mid-Atlantic states, where pioneer Ohio craftsmen had trained. Inaccurate regional attribution often credited the East for objects made on the Ohio frontier. With this exhibition and catalog, we hope to challenge the attitude frequently expressed, that Ohio decorative arts are in any way inferior to other areas of the country.

Equal in Goodness is groundbreaking in its examination of Ohio's early artistic legacy. While most prior exhibitions have had a single focus - for example furniture or quilts - this project includes all important decorative art forms and examines how design was influenced by the cultural diversity of the state's early settlers.

The Decorative Arts Center is housed in the 1835 Reese-Peters House, itself, an artistic triumph and an historic treasure. The museum, now in its second decade, is committed to fostering knowledge and appreciation of the decorative arts, making it uniquely situated to present this study of the creative genius and superb craftsmanship of Ohio's early artisans.

Many talented and generous people made this exhibition possible, and they are recognized in the acknowledgements. The Board of Directors, led by President Sheila Heath, joins us in thanking Julie Johns and the Johns family for underwriting this catalog in memory of David L. Johns. We also wish to recognize Andrew Richmond, guest curator for *Equal in Goodness*. Through his scholarship, building on the work of so many dedicated researchers, it is our sincere hope that *Equal in Goodness*, both the exhibition and the catalog, will prove to be an invaluable new foundation for the study of Ohio decorative arts for years to come.

Julia C. Parke, Executive Director
Barbara Hunzicker, Exhibitions Chairperson