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# *Creative Montgomery: A Sampling of Uncommon Decoration by Montgomery Artists & Artisans Past & Present*

## *Illumination*

*Titus Livius - History of Rome (circa 1990s) by Carl Tcherny*

*Lion (circa 1980) by Carl Tcherny*

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## *Early American Decoration*

*Award Winning Theorem Reproduction by Parma Jewett (2012)  
Based on a circa 1740s original.*

*Victorian Flower Painting Covered Bridge Mail Box (2006) by Parma Jewett*

*Reverse Glass Painted Game Table (circa 1900) by Savanard Jewett*

*Stenciled Linens (circa 1950) by Marion Towle*

*Theorem Painting Demonstration by Parma Jewett*

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## *Sewing & Quilts*

*“Montgomery Flower Garden” (2014) by members of the Franklin County Quilters Guild*

*Nine Patch on Point with Sashing (circa 1890) maker unknown hand pieced and hand quilted.  
(acquired at Pratt Family Auction in Montgomery)*

*Quilt Block Decorated Covered Bridge Mail Box by Montgomery Quilting Circle (2006)*

*Hand Quilting Demonstration by Sharon Perry*

## The MHS Exhibit

A recent national survey ranks Vermont third in the nation with the number people who self-identify as artists. Some would say you can't drive down a dirt road in Vermont without bumping into one (or more), so it's no surprise that some pretty interesting stuff can be found in almost every nook and cranny of the State.

The Montgomery Historical Society exhibit focuses on decoration, whether by artist, artisan, or Everyman. In choosing our objects we hoped to display memorable **things the viewer would not see anywhere else**, and one might be surprised to discover coming out of rural Vermont. It includes the centuries old Illumination technique, early American decoration, quilting and contemporary examples of each.

### Illumination and Carl Tcherny

The photograph on display (Titus Livius) is of a traditional Illumination done by Carl and presented to the Town of Montgomery. Carl was also known for his unique, stylized work in non-traditional forms, like initials, snowflakes and animals. This Lion was donated to the MHS by the estate of his neighbor on the Hazen's Notch Road, Jon "Zack" Zachadnyk, and sold as a fund raiser to benefit the MHS. Why were manuscripts illuminated? (see below).

Carl and his wife Peggie were both accomplished masters of this form and were famous in those circles for both original pieces and their restoration work on ancient manuscripts. Their patrons included Queen Elizabeth, Tiffany's, The Vatican, Thor Heyerdahl, and Jacques Cousteau.

### Background

Illuminated Manuscripts from Wikipedia ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illuminated\\_manuscript](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illuminated_manuscript) accessed 5/23/14)



An illuminated manuscript is a manuscript in which the text is supplemented by the **addition of decoration**, such as decorated initials, borders (marginalia) and miniature illustrations. In the most strict definition of the term, an illuminated manuscript only refers to manuscripts decorated with gold or silver, but in both common usage and modern scholarship, the term is now used to refer to any decorated or illustrated manuscript from the Western traditions. Comparable Far Eastern works are always described as painted, as are Mesoamerican works. Islamic manuscripts may be referred to as illuminated, illustrated or painted, though using essentially the same techniques as Western works.

The **earliest surviving substantive illuminated manuscripts are from the period AD 400 to 600**, initially produced in Italy and the Eastern Roman Empire. The significance of these works lies not only in their inherent art historical value, but in the maintenance of a link of literacy offered by non-illuminated texts as well. Had it not been for the monastic scribes of Late Antiquity, most literature of Greece and Rome would have perished in Europe; as it was, the patterns of textual survivals were shaped by their usefulness to the severely constricted literate group of Christians. **Illumination of manuscripts, as a way of aggrandizing ancient documents, aided their preservation and informative value in an era when new ruling classes were no longer literate.**

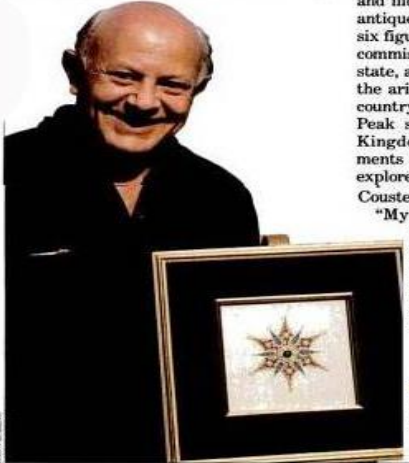
The majority of surviving manuscripts are from the Middle Ages, although many illuminated manuscripts survive from the Renaissance, along with a very limited number from Late Antiquity. The majority of these manuscripts are of a religious nature. However, especially from the 13th century onward, an increasing number of secular texts were illuminated. Most illuminated manuscripts were created as codices, which had superseded scrolls. A very few illuminated manuscript fragments survive on papyrus, which does not last nearly as long as vellum or parchment. Most medieval manuscripts, illuminated or not, were written on parchment (most commonly of calf, sheep, or goat skin), but most manuscripts important enough to illuminate were written on the best quality of parchment, called vellum.

Beginning in the late Middle Ages manuscripts began to be produced on paper. Very early printed books were sometimes produced with spaces left for rubrics and miniatures, or were given illuminated initials, or decorations in the margin, but the introduction of printing rapidly led to the decline of illumination. Illuminated manuscripts continued to be produced in the early 16th century, but in much smaller numbers, mostly for the very wealthy.

Manuscripts are among the most common items to survive from the Middle Ages; many thousands survive. They are also the best surviving specimens of medieval painting, and the best preserved. Indeed, for many areas and time periods, they are the only surviving examples of painting.

### MEDIEVAL ART IN THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM

Like the monks he emulates, master illuminator Carl Tcherny wears a long, brown, hooded robe, caught by a rope looped around his waist. The light in the gallery gleams on his head. Tcherny



chuckles as he shows a prospective client one of his more controversial works. The illumination depicts three elaborately decorated shoes and a key. Although they don't match, two of the shoes are decidedly feminine. The third is masculine. The piece is titled *Ménage à Trois*.

Visual puns were common when the monks of the Middle Ages hand-lettered and illustrated manuscripts that art and antique collectors now value at upward of six figures. Illuminators like Tcherny are commissioned by corporations, heads-of-state, and the rich and famous, not unlike the aristocratic patrons of old. From his country home in the shadow of the Jay Peak ski area in Vermont's Northeast Kingdom, Tcherny illuminates documents for Tiffany's, Queen Elizabeth II, explorers Thor Heyerdahl and Jacques Cousteau, and others.

"My work is similar to the ancient works in that I use much the same type of instruments and skins (parchment made of calfskin, for example) that they did, but I've become known for doing contemporary pieces," Tcherny says.

His illuminated works of birds,

*Carl Tcherny emulates ancient art from his modern house and studio near Jay Peak.*



animals and visual puns are accentuated by real jewels, emphasizing the delicacy of the fine-lined work. A recent abstract of a large cat sports topaz eyes; a newly completed frog on a lily pad awaits either a ruby or a topaz for its beady eye.

Usually made to order, Tcherny's smaller pieces are priced around \$500; more elaborate works may cost up to \$10,000. For more information, contact: Tcherny Illuminations, Box 386, Montgomery Center, VT 05471; (802) 326-4428.

—Dawn E. Reno

## Early American Decoration Items

Our examples of Early American Decoration include:

Award Winning **Theorem** Reproduction by Parma Jewett (2012) Based on a circa 1740s Original.

**Stenciled linens** by Marion Towle of Montgomery made in the 50s. Marion's work almost always featured the covered bridges of Montgomery and took the form of table linens, linen calendars, napkins and place mats. Some were monochromatic, some multicolored. They were sought after by family and locals.

In 2006 the MHS purchased a dozen wooden covered bridge mailboxes and asked area artists/artisans to decorate them. They were then auctioned off as a fundraiser. One was decorated in **Victorian Flower Painting** by Parma Jewett.

Also on display is an example of **Reverse Glass Painting** by Montgomery Covered Bridge Builder, Savanard Jewett. This circa 1900 game table features fish and water lilies bordering a game board for checkers or chess. **This is one of the only known surviving items made by Savanard smaller than a covered bridge!**

## Background

From Historical Society of Early American Decoration  
(<http://www.hsead.org/MORE/ABOUT/ABOUT.HTM>) accessed 5/23/14

**The term Early American Decoration is applied to all decorated articles that adorned the homes of our forefathers:**

Furniture, cornice boards, painted tin trunks, coffee pots, trays, bellows, glass panels in clocks and gilded looking glasses, as well as painted and stenciled walls and floors.



**Members** paint and work in many techniques individually, or in classes and workshops. They are taught by certified teachers in stenciling, Pontypool painting, gold leafing, Victorian flower painting, reverse glass painting, clock dials, Country painting, free hand bronzing and theorem painting. The society has a program of awards for outstanding crafts-persons and teachers in the various fields.

## Historical Society of Early American Decoration



# Glossary of Early American Crafts

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**Painting on Glass.** The skills used in this craft may include painting, stenciling, or metal leaf work. Patterns are found on clocks and looking glasses. The design is often done on the back of the glass, thus it appears in reverse from the front. The objects to appear in the foreground are applied first, and the backgrounds last. In metal leaf painting, the metal is laid on a size made of gelatin and water. The design is then etched into the metal. This is backed with black or asphaltum paint to complete the effect.

**Stenciling.** In stenciling, one must first cut out the stencils of design parts. The object to be decorated is varnished. When the varnish is tacky, the stencil is applied in position, sticking to the varnish. Colored bronze powders are then applied with a cloth to the space left by the stencil. By working from edge to center, more powder is deposited near the stencil edge, thus giving shading and dimension to the design. The stencil is then removed before it sticks permanently. It may take several stencils to complete a design. “Piano” stenciling is a combination of stenciled and free hand bronze, using the same powders. Stenciling is applied to tin objects such as trays and trunks; or wood objects, such as boxes or chairs.

**Theorem Painting.** In theorem painting, a combination of several stencils is used to produce a painted design on paper, velvet, and sometimes linen or silk. The medium is oil paint or water color, applied with a stiff brush or a wad of cloth. Common between 1800-1860, it reached its height of popularity around 1825. It was a fashionable craft/ pastime for young ladies. The best original designs are the later ones, from about 1820-1860. Common subjects were still-lives with flowers or fruit, as well as mourning scenes.

**Victorian Flower Painting.** This is a style of decorative painting named for its period, the reign of Queen Victoria, 1837 - 1901. Realistic flowers and leaves form the base coat. This is tinted

with transparent (“floating”) colors, then accented with white. The painting is often framed with gold or other metal leaf and drips, and the background may be bronzed. The effect is translucent or iridescent. Other common subjects were birds such as peacocks and birds of paradise, and fountains, sometimes painted over gold or metal leaf. It is found on metal, papier maché, or wooden objects - fans, trays, bread baskets, lap desks, boxes, and furniture for example.

### **Sewing and Quilting**

**Pratt Family quilt** circa 1870, maker unknown. Monochromatic nine patch quilt set on point with sashing.

**“Montgomery Flower Garden”** A bed quilt handcrafted and donated to the MHS by the Franklin County Quilters Guild in 2014. It is based on a design called "Flower Garden" by Julie Golimowski, which was selected by the quilters and inspired by the many floral motifs, and the many colors, of the stained glass windows of Pratt Hall. The design was modified based on Pratt Hall's, windows with each block having a multicolored border like our windows. There is also a block with a church with stained glass windows added. It's sized for a queen sized bed, 93 1/2 X 95 1/2 inches. It would also make a spectacular wall hanging. This quilt has been appraised at \$3,100 by American Quilters Society (AQS) Certified Appraiser, Sandra Palmer.

Quilted block fabric covered bridge mailbox 2006 by Montgomery Quilters Circle.

### **Background**

From Quilting in America. (<http://www.quilting-in-america.com/History-of-Quilts.html> accessed 5/23/14)

The history of quilts began long before European settlers arrived in the New World. People in nearly every part of the world had used padded fabrics for clothing, bedding, and even armor. With the arrival of the English and Dutch settlers in North America, quilting took on a new life and flourished.

The term "quilt" comes from the Latin “culcita”, meaning a stuffed sack. The word has come to have 2 meanings. It is used as noun, meaning the 3-layer stitched bedcovering. It is also used as a verb, meaning the act of stitching through the 3 layers to hold them together.

**A quilt is a cloth sandwich, with a top, which is usually the decorated part, a back, and a filler in the middle. Under the general term of *patchwork* are of 3 different types of quilts: (1) the plain or whole cloth quilt, (2) applique quilts, and (3) pieced or patchwork quilts.**

The quilt, as we know it in America, was originally a strictly utilitarian article, born of the necessity of providing warm covers for beds. Quilts were also used as hangings for doors and windows that were not sealed well enough to keep out the cold. The earliest American quilts, made by English and Dutch settlers, were so intimately connected to everyday life of the early colonists that no record of them exists.

During the early years of American colonization, most Colonial women were busy spinning, weaving and sewing the clothes for their family, so had little time for artistic quilting. Commercial blankets or woven coverlets were more likely to be used, but during difficult times, when money was scarce or imported textiles limited, many Colonial women had to become creative in their use of materials on hand to keep their families warm during the cold seasons.

Those early settlers could not afford to simply discard things when they wore out; necessity required they carefully use their resources. Therefore, when blankets became worn, they were patched, combined with other blankets, or used as filler between other blankets. These were not carefully constructed heirlooms, rather they were functional items for the sole purpose of keeping people warm. Only in later years, when fabrics were being manufactured in America and were more affordable, freeing women from the work of making their own yarns and fabrics, did the more artistic type of quilting become more widespread.

In the 100 years between 1750 and 1850 thousands of quilts were pieced and patched, and many of them are preserved. Many of these quilts were so elaborate that years were spent making and quilting them. It is no wonder they are cherished as precious heirlooms and occupy honored places in homes and museums. Those early quilts provide a glimpse into the history of quilting as well as the history of the United States.

Whole cloth quilts, broderie perse and medallion quilts were popular styles of quilts made during the early 1800s. The whole cloth quilt, also known as counterpane, is usually made of single pieces of material on the top and back, and the decoration is obtained by means of padded or corded quilting in more or less elaborate design.

The applique quilt, or "laid-on" quilt, usually has a top made of whole cloth with smaller pieces of contrasting fabrics cut into shapes or forms that are applied or stitched down. These quilts were considered more elegant than the humble pieced type. Applique for quilting came into favor around the mid-1700s and reached its climax about 1850. Only the wealthy could afford the expensive imported fabric and had the leisure time for this type of quilt making that displayed the fine needlework of the maker.

The earliest settlers had no labor or materials to spare so they typically found the simplest, most expedient solutions to problems. This focus on functionality was exhibited in their architecture, tools and household furnishings, as well as political and social institutions. **The block-style pieced quilt was an example of this functional approach to design.** Once again, the history of quilts mirrored that of the developing country.

In the early 1700s Amish colonists began settling in the rich farmlands of Pennsylvania and the Midwest. They emigrated from Europe with the hope that they would be able to have the freedom to live according to the principles of their religion. Those early Amish women did not quilt, rather using the featherbeds traditionally used in Europe. Over time, contact with outsiders combined with necessity, Amish women began creating quilts with the characteristic beauty and craftsmanship that are the hallmark of Amish quilts.

As the frontier was conquered, living conditions improved. With prosperity and the availability of more materials, quilts became less austere. The patchwork quilt was a "utility" quilt, in contrast to the applique quilt which was a "best" or show quilt, upon which time and material was lavished.

A particularly popular style of quilt in the early days of quilting (through the early 1800s), was the Medallion quilt, which was made in a style that had actually been brought to America from Europe by the colonists. This type of quilt -- a central motif surrounded by multiple borders -- offered endless design possibilities for quilters, who could use patchwork, applique, embroidery, either alone or in combination.

**Though there are examples of elaborate patchwork quilts that took enormous amounts of time to make, pieced quilts were generally the everyday bedcover, and designed to be made**

**quickly. Since even small cloth remnants could be used in patchwork quilts, every scrap of fabric and usable portion of worn garments were saved and used in patchwork quilts. Pieced quilts became the most common type of quilt at that time.**

A variation of the utility quilt was the plain "tufted" quilt that is tied through in enough places to keep the filling from shifting and bunching. While a tufted quilt has no stitching holding the layers together, it does have the typical 3 layers seen in traditional quilts. Another variation of the quilt is the "summer" quilt, which does not have the middle filling, so is useful as a bedcover during the warmer months. The summer quilt does have the traditional stitching holding the 2 layers together.

Members of rural communities frequently joined together to help their neighbors with big projects, such as barn building or finishing quilts. The quilting bee was a social event that allowed the finishing of several quilts in a single day instead of weeks or months.

Naturally, early quilters did not limit themselves to designing only quilts of a single type or method. They used their imagination and ingenuity to combine patchwork, applique, and embroidery in endless combinations. One early variation was the Medallion quilt, a relatively simple design with dramatic impact that was particularly popular through the early 1800s.

During the 1800s in many parts of the country there was a custom that a young girl make a baker's dozen of quilt tops before she became engaged. This collection consisted of 12 utility quilts, undoubtedly pieced, and 1 great quilt, which was either a pieced or applique quilt, for her bridal bed. After her engagement, she would take final steps to turn her tops into finished quilts.

Another custom was for mothers to make several quilts for each of her children to have when they left home to start life as adults. A variation of this custom continues to this day as quilters continue to make heirloom quilts for their children or grandchildren.

In the mid-1800s the introduction of the sewing machine somewhat altered the dependence on hand-sewing. Long before electricity became common, quilters could power a sewing machine with a foot treadle or hand crank. The invention of a separate quilting attachment for the sewing machine by Henry Davis of Chicago did not seem to be widely used; hand quilting remained the favored method for nearly a century.

Much of the handwork involved in quilting may have been a form of relaxation for pioneer women, a relief from the drudgery and real labor of family life on the frontier. Additionally, fine handwork was a source of pride and status.

As the frontier was conquered, living conditions improved. With prosperity and the availability of more materials, quilts became less austere. Patchwork quilts were more likely to be made of new and finer fabrics. Appliqué quilts, which require more fabric, began to emerge and developed a body of traditional patterns. More and more women, particularly those in the upper-classes, had the time and resources to pursue more "genteel" arts. During this time the Victorian crazy quilt, became popular. By the early 1900s, quilting was transforming from a necessary art into a creative one.

When the United States entered World War 1 in 1917, quiltmaking became more important than ever. The U.S. government urged citizens to "Make Quilts – Save the Blankets for our Boys over There." Quilts were made for fundraising and awareness building. The government took all the wool produced for commercial use in 1918 and instituted "heatless Mondays." Following the war interest in quilting as an art was renewed.



During the Great Depression, people simply did not have the money to buy blankets so once again women relied on their own skills and resources to keep their families warm. Saving bits and pieces of material from clothing and other blankets, using material from feedsacks, and "making do" were common practices for frugal quilters during those difficult years.

During World War 2, quilting was used to raise money to support the Red Cross. The "signature quilt" was especially popular. In a signature quilt, business people, store owners, and citizens of a community would pay a small fee to have their names embroidered on quilt blocks. The blocks were sewn together and quilted, and the finished quilt was raffled off with all proceeds going to the Red Cross. These quilts are now fascinating community records.

Through the 1950s and 1960s, there was less general interest in quilting than at any other time in American history. To many, the quilt was associated with lean times and "making do" – quiltmaking was viewed as dated and old-fashioned. It was primarily older quilters, those who had always quilted, who kept the art of quiltmaking alive during this time.

Then in the 1970s and 1980s, the granddaughters of these older women began to revive interest in quiltmaking. The back-to-the-land movement, prompted by the anti-materialism of the late 1960s, generated a desire among many young people to learn hand skills that had been neglected in the postwar rush toward an automated society.

A milestone in American history, the Bicentennial celebration of 1976, was also a turning point in the history of quilts in America. The quilt became popular as a means of expressing national pride and achievement, and a powerful reminder of our past.

Now, in yet another century, quiltmaking in the early 2000s is still practiced as it always was, though now more for relaxation than out of necessity. Some quilters follow the craft in conventional form for leisure-time amusement or because it represents a tradition they find emotionally significant. Others have found in quiltmaking an artistic medium they can manipulate to their ends, and have ultimately created new styles and techniques.

The history of America can be seen in the history of quilts: in the rich heritage left us by those thrifty, self-sufficient women who helped settle this land, in the families whose history is sewn into quilts one patch at a time, and in the legacy of the quilting arts passed on to children and grandchildren so they may carry them forward to the future.



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## **THE TCHERNY STORY**

*Written in the early 1980s by a now unknown author for an unknown Canadian journal. This draft used by permission of Peggie Fagan, Daughter of Peggie Tcherny. Bolding added by MHS.*

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Peggie and Carl Tcherny are illuminators, the secular heirs to the legacy of those monkly scribes whose devoted copying and recopying of the Scriptures, with stylized embellishment and illustration, kept their message alive through the dark ages.

Until friends introduced them to the wooded slopes of northern Vermont, the Tchernys had been content to work from their studio in New York. But once they had experienced that unique sense of fulfillment which Vermont so readily imparts, they knew they'd not be happy until they could combine a home and studio there.

For seventeen years they looked for ways to realize that dream but, until four years ago, without success. "Our problem", explains Carl, "was that most of our work is commissioned, usually to exacting specifications." That meant often, protracted discussion between the artists and their clients and the exchange of working sketches and rough proofs before there could be final agreement on the finished work.

"We could do much of this by telephone," says Peggie, "but we are, after all, working in a visual medium and we had to find a quick way to deliver and receive a copy. We just couldn't see how that could be done from northern Vermont without one or the other of us being on the road when we should be in the studio."

One by one, suggestions for bridging the distance between a studio in northern Vermont and clients in New York were tested and dismissed as either impractical or too costly. The Tchernys were close to abandoning their dream when they discovered that a device for transmitting visual material by telephone could be adapted to their needs.

With that, they had only to arrange representation for themselves in New York -- someone, so to speak, at the other end of their line of communications -- and they were on their way. Now Grayce and Tom Gregg, the friends who so many year earlier had introduced them to northern Vermont, are their neighbors -- thanks to the availability of a technology as modern as their art is traditional.

The home and studio they built is upslope from the Hazen's Notch Road with superb views to the west of the Trout River valley and to the north of Jay Peak. They're not to be compared," says Carl with, obvious understatement, "to the view from our studio windows in New York. All we could see there were rooftop water tanks and acres of sooty brick. "

In their new environment, the Tchernys are closer now to the environment in which much of their chosen art evolved. It, too, was predominantly pastoral in its settings as is immediately evident from those early examples of the illuminators' art which have survived the passage of centuries.

Neither Peggie nor Carl will concede a conscious desire to move closer to the origins of their art. "We simply wanted out of the city, away from the pressures," says Peggie. But each is too well schooled in the precepts and traditions of illumination to entirely dismiss the suggestion that there was more to their move than their desire to flee the city.

In their mid-fifties, and with a solid thirty-five years of professional practice behind them, they'll agree if pressed, that since making their move, they've found that the quality of their work to have been subtly enriched, its colors deep end, the departures from the rigid conventions of tradition more imaginative.

"Just possibly we have tried, without being aware of it, to recreate the setting in which illuminators worked centuries ago, when the world was a much simpler place. "But," continues Carl, glancing about their sunny studio, "I doubt those early illuminators would feel at home here. They did most of their work in monastery cells and our life here is anything but monastic."

Illumination is defined as the embellishment of letters and manuscripts with precious metals, mostly gold, and colors. It began to evolve into an art when the monkly scribes started to relieve the tedium of hand copying by working capital letters into progressively more elaborate designs. The more talented among them went further, reproducing in miniature scenes from the Scriptures.

As an art, illumination attained its most glorious flowering in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, before the invention of movable type. By then, its practice

was no longer confined to the monasteries. Of the 15,200 taxpayers on the rolls of Paris in 1292, thirteen listed their occupation as illumination. "We're closer to those Parisians than to the monks," says Peggie with a twinkle. Nonetheless, their Vermont license plate is MONKS. "I really am a traditionalist," Carl insists.

Much of the work the Tchernys do is similar in form, if not in content, to that of the earliest illuminators. In their time, they've illuminated addresses of welcome for presentation to such distinguished visitors as the Queen of England and, most recently, Pope John Paul II. They've illuminated ceremonial testaments to individual accomplishment for other artists, as different in their choice of medium as Pablo Casals and Bob Hope.

"How beautiful, how beautiful," Casals exclaimed on receiving his before the General Assembly of the United Nations. The Tchernys were still waiting for Hope's reaction as this was written. The presentation to him hadn't yet been made.

There is no substitute for the hand-illuminated scroll, certainly not in machine-made reproductions. Each piece of work is as distinctively the skilled illuminator's own as is the work of any other artist. Each has his own preferences in design, his own mix of coloring, his own style as certain an indication of authorship as his signature would be.

"Some of our colleagues now claim they've another way of recognizing our work," says Peggie. "They say the miniature figures incorporated into our designs are unmistakably Vermont in their derivation."

Illuminated texts, as demanding in design and as exciting-in their artistic content as they may be, scarcely prepare one for the effects achieved by application of the illuminator's talent to the portrayal of figures and landscapes. The Apocalypse, Last Supper and other scenes from the Bible done in the thirteenth-and fourteenth centuries are astonishingly vivid in their coloring, vigorous in their form, presaging the work of such masters as Titian and Michelangelo.

Unlike so many of the artists who followed them, the medieval illuminators painstakingly reproduced every detail of their subject matter. Carl's illustrations of wild birds are in the same genre. Yet they show little resemblance to the work of contemporary realists, in some part because of his rendering of form, in some part because of his choice of coloring.

"Those medieval illuminators enclosed a space and then filled it with traditional designs and miniature figures," says Carl. "They didn't reach for the horizon as later artists did. They didn't know about perspective. Everything was flat, no

depth, no perspective. They didn't try for textural values either. None of the figures in medieval manuscripts that I have seen ever cast a shadow."

**Probably the closest analogy to the illustrations done in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are the stained glass windows which, in many of their aspects, succeeded medieval illumination as a medium of religious devotion.** The Tchernys illustrations lie somewhere between the work of a Roualt and a Wyatt.

They're still using essentially the same palette as the medieval illuminators although with a few of the inconveniences experienced by the latter. Take inks, for example. The Tchernys use stick ink from China which they grind in a slate well, adding water until the ink has the right consistency. The smoother the surface, the thicker the ink.

Compare that with an early recipe for ink, as translated from Latin: "Dry for two to four hours the wood of thorn trees picked in April or May; peel the bark by beating the wood with mallets, and soak it in water for eight days; boil the water, adding bits of bark at intervals for a short time, and cook it down until it thickens; then add wine and cook again. Place the liquid in pots in the sun, until the black ink purifies itself from the red dregs. Afterwards take small bags of parchment carefully sewn, and bladders, and, pouring in the pure ink, suspend them in the sun until all is quite dry. When dry, take from it as much as you wish, temper it with wine over the fire and, adding a little vitriol, write."

Their colors are the same primary colors of medieval times. They use the same sable brushes but steel nibbed pens instead of quills -- "not that they draw a finer line but because quills are not always at hand and, in any event need to be continually sharpened", says Carl. Gold is applied in much the same way as it has always been but illuminators today use palladium instead of silver. "Silver tarnishes in time," says Peggie.

Much of their work is done on parchment as was the work of the earliest illuminators. But illuminators today can, also obtain paper with a 99 year guarantee against yellowing. Along with colors that come in tubes, instead of having to be ground, papers that will retain their character over the years have been the greatest advances.

"If we could resurrect one of those early illuminators," says Carl, "I doubt that, once he became accustomed to his surroundings, he'd have any difficulty picking up his work with our tools and colors where he left off with his." Peggie thinks it might work better in reverse. "We could work just as well besides those early illuminators once we got our ink supply. But, oh I'd miss our electric heating."

There was never any doubt in Carl's mind about what he wanted to do with his life, not after a family friend introduced him as a twelve-year-old to the rudiments of lettering. He had begun his apprenticeship "in conditions reminiscent of those in which Bob Cratchit worked for Jacob Marley" – when the war intervened.

He served as a flight engineer in the Navy Air Force, returning to his original employer, one of the larger New York studios, following his discharge in 1945. As his talent for illumination-matured, he attained the distinction of master illuminator, one of the very few in North America and he adds, "certainly the only one in Vermont."

Peggie, like Carl, had been drawn to art as a child but her family discouraged her, at least as a young woman, from making a career of it. "Those were still the days when a woman's place was in the home," she remembers. Her first husband, a Naval pilot, was killed in action leaving Peggie with an infant daughter.

As soon after as she could, Peggie enrolled in the Art Students League, resuming her interrupted pursuit of a career in art. She was employed on graduation by the same studio that employed Carl and soon after their first meeting they were married. They've been collaborators ever since.

"We were both fairly well known in the profession," Carl says. "The quality of our work had developed to the point where the studio's clients frequently asked that we be assigned certain commissions. We often thought then of breaking away and establishing our own studio. But like the advertising business, from which we obtained many of our commissions, it was and still is a highly competitive business.

"We believed, and rightly I think, that we had to be in the heart of the market, that we had to be readily accessible, if we were to keep our share of the business. There's a sustaining demand for illuminated works but it's not a large demand and it's not enough just to be good at it. Others have to know your work."

And so, even with the means to transmit rough work by telephone (their finished work is usually hand delivered, carefully packaged), they were gambling when they moved to northern Vermont, gambling that their reputations as artists would prevail even if they were no longer on the scene. "And so far," says Peggie looking fondly at Carl, "the gamble has been a winning one." But not just because they're particularly good at what they do or because they've adapted modern technology to their requirements.

They're complementary in their respective temperaments, Peggie small, blonde and outgoing, Carl dark and thoughtful. Relieved of the pressures of the city, they've now the time to pursue other interests, Peggie in her kitchen, Carl outdoors where he seems to spend an inordinate amount of time stacking wood. "The wood pile is a great source of inspiration," he says.

They're active members of the community but they shy away from participation in community causes. "We came to Vermont to enjoy it," says Peggie, "not to change it."