

Fig. 1: Delftware punch bowl with William Hogarth's *A Midnight Modern Conversation* scene, probably Liverpool, England, 1750-1770. H: 6, Diam. 10 1/2 in. Winterthur museum purchase with funds provided by Mr. and Mrs. John Mayer and Mrs. Lammot du Pont Copeland (1984.30).



Mirth & Friendship

A Celebration of Humor and Alcoholic Beverages

Among the most entertaining objects associated with alcohol consumption are those showing the humor often associated with drinking. As production costs for ceramics, glass, prints, and other objects gradually lowered during the 1700s, such items made “purely for fun” became more widely available.

William Hogarth's famous print *A Midnight Modern Conversation* (London, 1732/33), portrays a raucous group of men sharing wine and punch. The scene is reproduced here in painted form inside a rare English delft punch bowl (Fig. 1). Hogarth's print, possibly a satire on drinking clubs, was for sale in 1750s Philadelphia and reappeared painted on elegant Meissen (German) porcelain and even as life-sized wax figures that could

be viewed for the cost of an entrance ticket.

Punch, introduced from India to Northern Europe in the early seventeenth century, usually featured five ingredients: alcohol, water, sugar, lemon, and spices. Rum was a popular base for punch, though wine, gin, and other alcoholic beverages were also used. Although punch bowls were in use in the Netherlands in the early 1600s, they were rare in England until the late 1660s, and



Fig. 2, left:
Mirth and Friendship by Carington Bowles (1724-93), London, England, 1750-1775. Mezzotint (print), 6½ x 5 inches, Winterthur, gift of George H. Blackshire (1987.42.2a,b).



Fig. 3, right:
"Champagne Charlie" sheet music published by Oliver Ditson & Co, Boston, Mass., in 1867. 13¼ x 9½ inches. Winterthur Library, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera Col. (240 73x171).

Fig. 4: Earthenware (dipped ware) frog mug, Staffordshire, England, 1775-1800. H: 5½, L: 5½, Diam: 3½ in. Winterthur, gift of Osborne R. and Mary M. Soverel, given in memory of Lillian Wilkinson Boschen (1992.40).





LEFT

Fig. 5: Lusterware puzzle jug, probably Staffordshire, England, dated 1814 and inscribed "George, Hadder / ton, Acton Mill / 1814." H. 15, W. 11 in. Winterthur, gift in recognition of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Gutman (1996.23.2)

BELOW

Fig. 6: "Toby Fillpot" stoneware pitcher by W. T. Copeland & Sons, Ltd., Staffordshire, England, 1890-1894. H. 7½, W. 5½ in. Winterthur museum purchase (2005.516).



within a few years, also gained popularity in America.

One of a pair of popular English prints produced in the 1770s, *Mirth and Friendship* (Fig. 2) is thought to portray Edward Bamfield, "The Staffordshire Giant," who performed at London's Covent Garden in the mid-1700s. In this scene, Bamfield and his friends share wine and punch.

Humorous drinking scenes continued to be a popular subject in the 1800s. In 1867, London music hall entertainer George Leybourne wrote the lyrics for and performed the song "Champagne Charlie," which satirized the upper class for its affection for champagne. The subject of the song was a foppish young man who spent many an evening drinking champagne with a variety of companions. As evidenced by the song sheet published in Boston (Fig. 3) in the same year, the music's popularity quickly spread to America, where it eventually inspired other songs, plays and, in the 1940s, even a movie.

Glass and ceramic "trick" drinking vessels, perennial favorites through the ages, were no less popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In some examples (Fig. 4) a three-dimensional figure slowly emerges as the vessel is drained. (Some frogs are pierced, presumably to make a whistling sound). Earthenware, stoneware and porcelain puzzle jugs feature a

pierced neck (making pouring impossible), a nozzled hollow rim, and a tubular handle with additional holes (Fig. 5). The game was to successfully cover the appropriate openings to get suction; the liquid could then be drawn up to a nozzle through the handle.

Some of the subjects appearing on ceramics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries fall under the category of satire. One popular character portrayed in eighteenth and nineteenth-century ceramics was "Toby Fillpot—a thirsty old soul," which originated as a drawing by Robert Dighton, published in London in 1786. According to an associated rhyme, Fillpot died of overdrinking and smoking. Cheerful portrayals of this doomed figure typically show him raising an overflowing mug of ale or beer (Fig. 6).

The taste for drinking humor and games survives today. Although we may not always feel like joining in, it is hard not to relish the many windows into the past that survive in the forms of imagery and objects celebrating the history of alcoholic beverages. **AFA**

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