

Evolution of dining habits, modes of entertaining and marketing methods as revealed by American silver makers’ “etiquette booklets”.

By Dorothea Burstyn

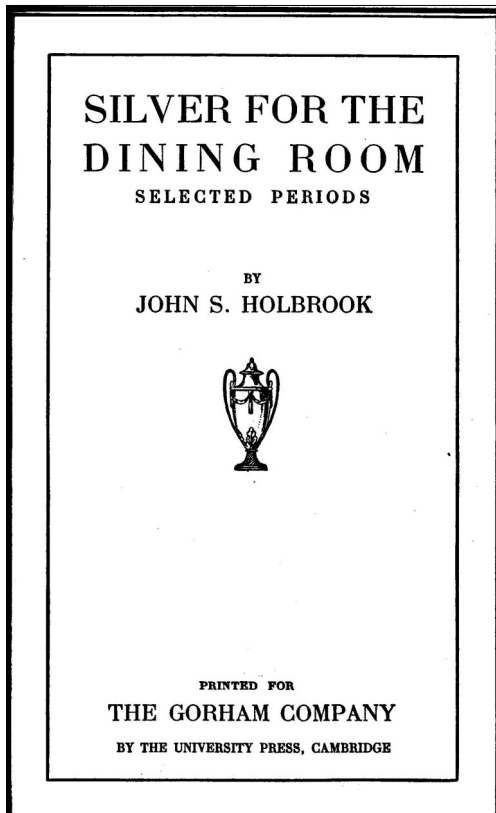
“There was something more in the development of table service than convenience or utility, for in this process came handsomer living and nicer and finer service. No longer did we feed as ravening wolves or hungry animals, but rather as humans of greater refinement.”

Claudia Quigley Murphy, 1921

The really big American fortunes were made after the Civil War and amazing opportunities in mining, manufacturing, railroading, and banking created a new class of wealth. It was the time of the copper and oil barons, silver and steel kings, merchant princes and railroad magnates.¹ The new riches demanded a new way of living, which was mostly found in imitation of the lifestyles and customs of the European hereditary leisure class. It goes without saying that the spouses of these new millionaires were the most creative and ambitious in setting a new pace of the social scene. The story of Louise Mackay, the wife of silver king John Mackay and owner of Virginia Consolidated Mines, who convinced her husband after a visit to the Comstock Lode to send half a ton of ore to Tiffany to make “something useful out of it”, is well known. The outcome was a sumptuous 1250 piece dinner service which had kept 200 Tiffany craftsmen busy two years.²



And indeed it was the gala dinner with its array of costly silver, glittering glasses, an opulent succession of dishes of wonderful and sometimes exotic foods, which became the scene of pretentiousness and conspicuous consumption. Not knowing what to use or do at such a dinner stamped one right away as inferior outsider; faux pas of diners were noticed and com-



mented about as the story of presidential candidate Grover Cleveland shows. He had mishandled a knife at a dinner in 1884, an occurrence which immediately made the press. Even after his election he refused to shake the hands of the editor responsible for reporting the incident.³ The two generations of money aristocracy between Civil War and WWI had built up a complicated structure of etiquette and it was exactly this audience which John S. Holbrook, the chairman of Gorham Company, addressed when he suggested styles which were suitable “for large banquet halls, great entertainments, and the magnificent homes of wealth”.⁴ Most of the introduced styles in Holbrook’s book lean heavily on French ones from Louis XIV to XVI, as French elegance and way of living were all the rage. But he states:” In looking through these pages, the reader must remember that the original styles as described did not by any means, contain all the articles illustrated. Our upward progress has involved far greater complications of living, and hardly a month goes by that some new utensil for the dining room is not brought out, for some new need, real or fancied.”⁵

1 Matthew Josephson *The Robber Barons*, NY 1934, p.315

2 Ellin Berlin *Silver Platter*, Doubleday & Comp. Inc. Garden City, NY 1957, p. 243, for more information on the Mackay service, see also W. P. Hood Jr. et al; *Tiffany Silver Flatware 1845 – 1905, When Dining Was an Art*, Suffolk 1999, p.292

3 Arthur Schlesinger *Learning How to behave, A Historical Study of American Etiquette Books*, The MacMillan Company, NY 1946, p.41

4 John S. Holbrook *Silver for the Dining Room, Selected Periods*, printed for The Gorham Company, University Press, Cambridge, 1912, p.18

5 Ibid page xiii

6 Mrs. Rorer, *How to set the table*, 1901, page 25

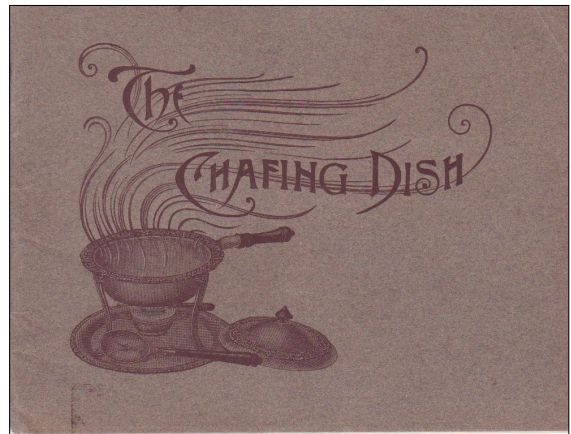
7 Ibid p. 24/25

8 *Every Day Service and the Etiquette of Entertaining*, R. Wallace & Sons Manufacturing Company, Wallingford, Conn. 1925, p. 18-19

9 Mrs. Rorer, p.25 Co., 1898

The age of elegance was in full swing. Mrs. Rorer, an often consulted authority on etiquette and dining, describes what is necessary for a successful dinner, which would consist from five to ten courses and be served from 5 to 8 o’clock. Knives and forks for every course, three different sizes of carving sets (to cut turkey, roast or birds), butter picks, cheese knives, asparagus tongs, cake knives, pie and ice cream servers, Saratoga chip server, jelly and nut spoons, cold meat forks and salad sets were needed as far as flatware was concerned and a whole slew of hollowware completed just the basic requirements.⁶ The hostess who wanted to observe a more rigorous regime knew that a plain lettuce should be dressed by her at the table first using a long lettuce fork for tearing up the leaves, after which she would place a salad fork and spoon for serving next to the bowl and that if asparagus was served as a salad, the service will consist of a silver asparagus platter, mayonnaise could of course never be served without a silver bowl and ladle and if a pudding was given instead of ice cream, it would be brought to the table in a large round pudding dish with large sauce boat and ladle to correspond.⁷ These are only a few examples of a myriad of other rules which were to be observed.

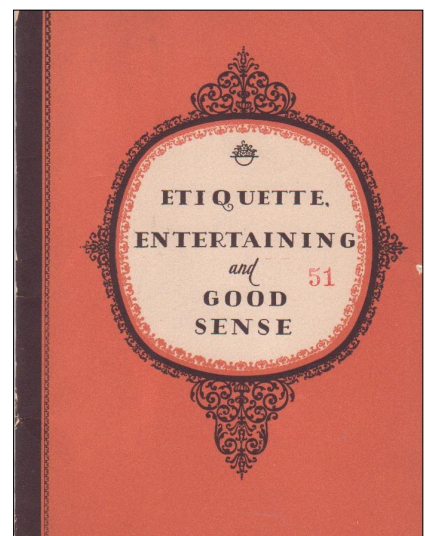
Hospitality was the mark of civilization and elegant service was recognized as a mark of good breeding. Here one could even outdo the Europeans. In *Every Day Service and the Etiquette of Entertaining* published by Wallace & Sons, one reads that “many new table pieces have come into being in America.... and are as yet unborn in the older countries” and this statement is followed up with:” But it is in the invention of silver for serving that American ingenuity has especially asserted itself. Cake-servers, tomato-servers, egg-servers, jelly-knives, cold meat forks, etc. are rarely seen in Europe, but they add to the beauty and aid in the service and they can be used on every suitable occasion.”⁸ The fork, introduced relatively late on the average American table, began its way of triumph and everything which had been eaten in former times with a spoon required now the fashionable fork, as for instance ice cream. The apparent motto seemed to be – never use a knife or spoon, when a fork will suffice.

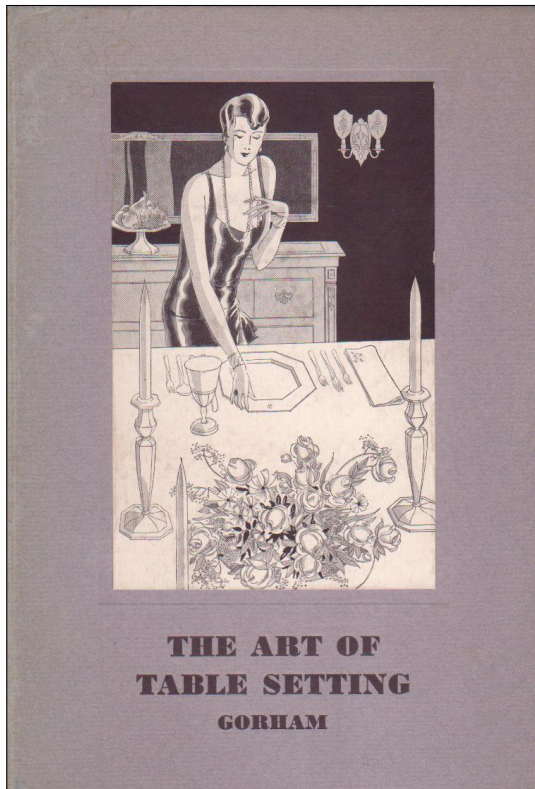


A slight yearning for simpler entertaining might be seen in the popularity of chafing dishes, which were introduced by various firms in the 1890s. Even Mrs. Rorer admits that a chafing dish “is a great convenience”.⁹ Gorham even printed a booklet with one hundred recipes for the chafing dish in 1894 with various pedestrian recipes of warming over cooked string beans, boiled chicken, scrambling eggs, etc. at the table. The chafing dish is called here “the woman’s friend” which allows for easy entertaining on the evening the maid has off. Women and men can share in the cooking responsibilities, the chafing dish not “only makes possible the sincerest expression of the most perfect hospitality, but it seems the true symbol of good fellowship. It develops a spirit of royal camaraderie.”¹⁰



After WWI the time for the grand dinner was definitely over and entertaining became less elaborate. Winnifred S. Fales’ statement:”The use of soup plates at luncheon, or of bouillon cups at dinner, stamps the hostess as ill informed”¹¹ shows that strict rules for the use of utensils were still observed, but she openly mocks the formal dinner of yesteryear. “In place of the twenty-course banquets beneath which tables, and doubtless the guests, of our grandmothers’ day literally groaned, to-day’s hostess





10 H. M. Kinsley *One hundred recipes for the Chafing Dish*, published by Gorham Manufacturing Co., Silversmiths, New York, 1894, p. 22. Another booklet about this implement is *The Chafing Dish, Recipes for the Chafing Dish* Manning, Bowman & Co., 1898

11 W. S. Fales: *The Wallace Hostess Book*, R. Wallace & Sons, Wallingford, Conn. 1920, p. 6

12 Ibid p.7

13 Lilian M. Gunn, *The Art of Table setting*, The Gorham Company, Providence, R.I.1929, p.11

14 W. P. Hood Jr. et al, page 40,

According to *The Story of Sterling*, published by The Sterling Silversmiths Guild of America, 1947, the guild was formed in 1917 and represented – The Alvin Corporation, The Gorham Company, International Silver Company, Lunt Silversmiths, Reed & Barton, The Towle Silversmiths, R. Wallace & Sons, Mfg.Co.

15 *Correct Table Setting*, International Silver Company, Sterling Silver Division, Wallingford, Conn. 1934, p. 15. The Viande Knife and fork were available in the following patterns Continental, Empress, Gadroon, Minuet, Orchid, Trousseau and Wedgwood designs in International Sterling. The Knife, but not the fork, was available in Pine Tree.

16 *Table Ways of Today*, prepared by Community Plate, Oneida Community Ltd., 1930, p.19

offers a few cunningly chosen dishes perfectly cooked and exquisitely served.”¹²

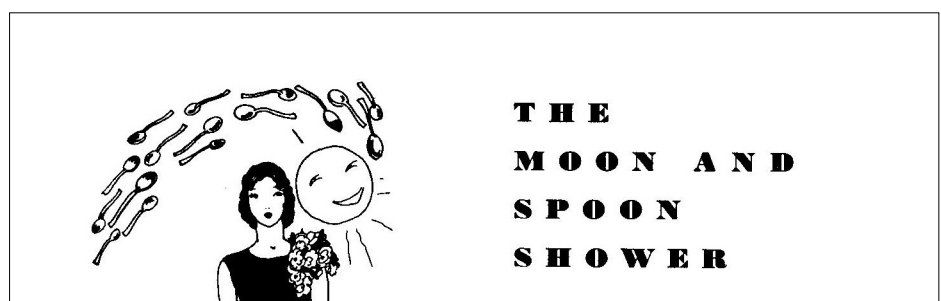
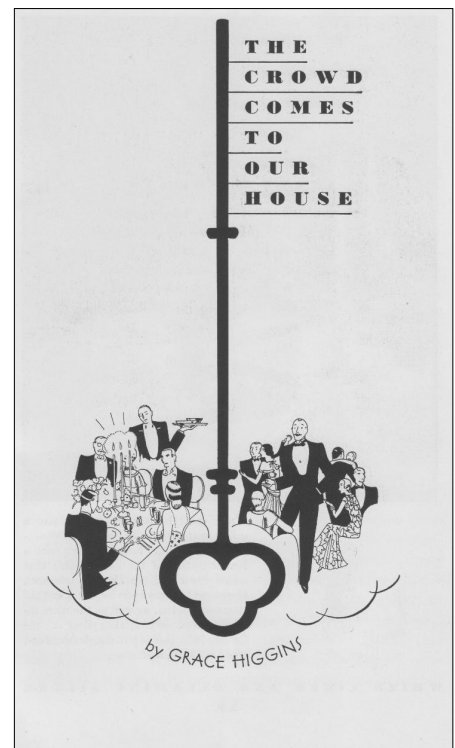
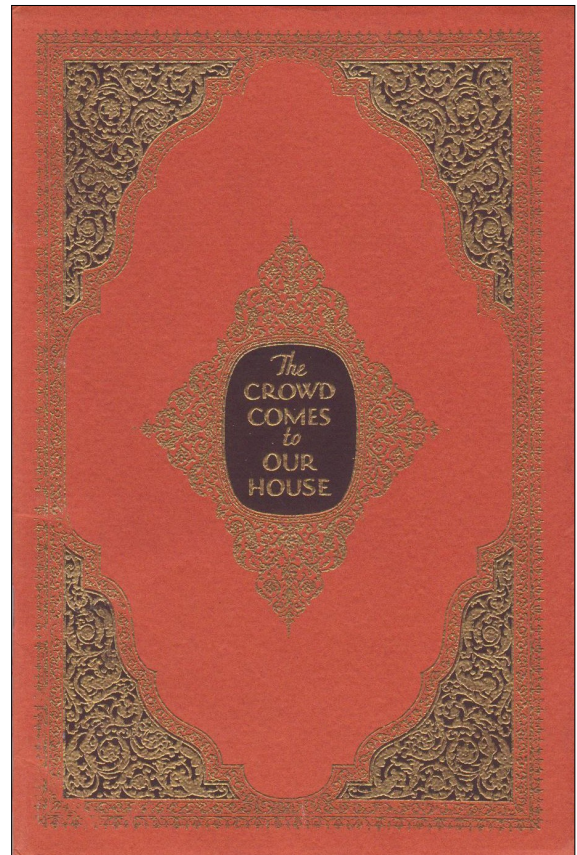
Table settings also became simpler now, a proper cover did not consist of more than three knives and three forks – not counting the oyster fork and the butter spreader –rules re the various serving utensils were also relaxed. Lilian M. Gunn conveyed the new trends of the industry when declaring that a pie server maybe used for cakes, various gelatin molds – in fact for any food where a flat, wide blade is of assistance. Cream ladles can be also used for mayonnaise, any sauce, jelly and marmalade. The fried egg server is “invaluable” in serving food which has been put on toast, but also for tomato and cucumbers. An orange spoon can do double service for nuts and small bonbons, the oyster fork may be used for pickles, the bonbon spoon for salted nuts and the cheese server for jellies.¹³

The reduction of serving and place pieces – in former time a tool to ever increasing the market – was now recommended by the silver manufacturers, for whom the cost of storing such large varieties of old dies and cutting new ones had become prohibitive. In the late 1925 the Sterling Silversmiths Guild of America prepared a “simplification program” of production for the industry limiting the number of piece types in each pattern to 57, and restricting the number of newly introduced patterns to one every two years.¹⁴ It took until 1934 that a new type of flatware was introduced – the Viande knife and fork, a longer handled table knife and fork with shortened functional ends. It was hailed by the International Silver Company as “the first idea in table silver in years” and said to be “enthusiastically received by style authorities, magazine etiquette writers and the public at large”.¹⁵

Since the grand dinner was passé, and despite “the kaleidoscopic changes which have overtaken entertaining in America, one custom remains unaltered and serene: afternoon tea.”¹⁶ The afternoon or 5 o’clock tea was the ideal form of entertaining to push for in the “etiquette” booklets, since it allowed for a large amount of silver to be shown off and required

relatively little work on part of the housewife – often now leading a household with only a part-time maid, or without any servants at all. “But very little is required for tea, and so little more is necessary for a dozen guests than for two or three, that it becomes merely a matter of adding a few more cups and saucers. It is always surprising to find how little is eaten even of the thin bread and butter sandwiches and cookies and cakes that are practically all that is required to provide.”¹⁷ The same formula was also valid for the buffet supper, another favorite for the servant-less household and the silver industry alike.

The 1930s brought an even more pronounced concentration on easy home entertaining, brought on no doubt by the recession and to a certain degree also by the prohibition. Grace Higgins writes in a booklet for The Alvin Corporation: “At any rate, the whole world is all agog to rediscover the home, so we are, you are and they are rediscovering that good talk, laughter and the tintinnabulation of silverware in the hands of friends make the most enjoyable sort of music in the home.” She goes on saying that everybody except the long lost uncle just returned from Alaska and the recently burned out, entertain at home and comes up with a number of original and easy home entertaining ideas. There is “The debutante discovers the kitchen”, “The rollicking He-man supper”, “The Bachelor’s Sunday”, “The Peacock Chair tea”, “Your roof is your night club” and many more. “The Pirate Silver Shower” on which occasion only knives are given to the young couple and “The Moon and Spoon shower” when the young couple receives spoons of all kinds sound very self-serving for the silver industry and it is doubtful that they ever found general acceptance.¹⁸



17 *Every Day service*, p. 11

18 Grace Higgins *The crowd comes to our house*, The Alvin Corporation, Silversmiths, 1930, p. 6 and p.8ff.

19 *Correct Service For the Formal and Informal Table*, Oneida Community ,Lts. Oneida, NY, 1923

20 *Vogue presents The correctly set table*, published by the Makers of Heirloom Plate, Wm. A. Rogers, Ltd. Niagara Falls, NY, 1922

21 *Setting the table correctly by Oscar of the Waldorf*, published by The Alvin Manufacturing Co., of Sag Harbor, NY. 1917

22 *Silverware, the Autocrat of every table*, Reed & Barton, 1926. Louis Sherry was an established provider of high-range confectionary items and catering on both sides of the Atlantic and later on owner of an apartment hotel "The Sherry Netherland Hotel" at 781 Fifth Avenue, NYC. Other people called upon were Kathleen Howard of Harper's Bazaar, Helen Koues of Good Housekeeping, Anna Steese Richardson of Women's Home Companion, and others all for *Table Ways of Today*, prepared by Community Plate, Oneida Community Ltd., 1930. Mrs. Frances T. Heard/House Beautiful, Miss Margret McElroy/House and Garden, Mrs. Augusta Owen Patterson/Town and Country and Miss Bertina Foltz/Vogue worked on table settings for *Correct Table Setting*, International Silver Company, Sterling Silver Division, Wallingford, Conn. 1934.

23 *The Dining Room, Its Decoration and Entertaining, A treatise on good taste. It shows you the little finer points of hospitality and home culture, and inexpensive ways of getting effects. With which is included Mrs. Rorer's "How to Set the Table"*, 1912, the first printing of Mrs. Rorer's treatise was 1901.

24 Winnifred S. Fales: *The Wallace Hostess Book*, R. Wallace & Sons Mfg.Co, Wallingford, Conn. 1920

25 *Every Day Service and the Etiquette of Entertaining*, R. Wallace & Sons Manufacturing Company, Wallingford, Conn. 1925 represents a reprint of the latest edition of the original book on the etiquette of table settings by Diane Beningfield.

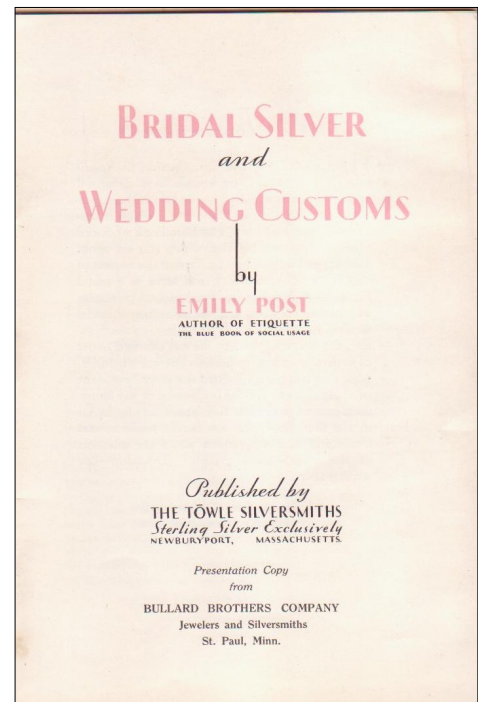
To fortify their message silver companies enlisted the support of celebrities from various fields. In "Correct service for the formal and informal table"¹⁹ the Oneida Community Ltd. thanks Miss Louise Galvin, social secretary to Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, and Ms. Frances O'Connor, social secretary to Mrs. Oliver Hariman, for their suggestions in preparing the booklet, while other high society members starting with Princess Margrethe of Denmark, Marchioness of Dufferin, the Princess Troubethkoy, the Duchess of Rutland as well as members of American money aristocracy such as Mrs. Alexander Morton and Mrs. Reginald C. Vanderbilt are listed as "distinguished patrons of community plate". Photos of smart dining rooms and luxurious settings complete the picture here. These endorsements probably leaned heavily on snob appeal and stand in odd contrast with advice given in this booklet tailored for women who were unable to get domestic help and had to serve their own table. A similar impression is gained by a book²⁰ written by "authorities from Vogue", published by Wm. A. Rogers, Ltd and promoting Heirloom Plate. Here the arrangement for dinners for up to forty guests - the service includes silver or gold soup plates - with the help of footmen for arranging the high vases on the table are described, while buffet suppers are thought more suitable for country homes. We can just imagine how useful these instructions would have been to purchasers of Heirloom Plate. Other companies were of course more in sync with their customers. Celebrities from the hospitality industry like Oscar of the Waldorf²¹ and Louis Sherry²² presented beautiful table settings which could be copied in the average home. The most productive and useful advice came from specialists in home economics. Mrs. Rorer, a constant contributor to Ladies Home Journal, saw 23 consecutive unchanged publishing of her "How to set the table"²³, for Wallace Silversmiths, in which she set out strict rules for using silver at the elegant table. Wallace also employed Winnifred Fales²⁴, known for her rigid views on housekeeping and her tireless campaigns against any kind of modern design. Diane Beningfield,²⁵ "formerly social secretary to the Viscountess Astor, Mrs. Cornelia Vanderbilt and other women of social prominence" was another Wallace author, who had snob appeal but presented just like Eileen Cummings/ International Silver Co.²⁶ a more relaxed view on hospitality in general and table settings specifically. The Gorham Company secured Lilian

M. Gunn²⁷ as writer for their promotional booklets. Gorham also sponsored the first class for table settings held by an American university. This was part of a Domestic Science course in Teacher's College, Columbia University which enjoyed the participation of 323 teachers from 183 different cities in the US and five foreign countries and was held at the Gorham Building at 36th Street/Fifth Avenue in the fall of 1921. The companion booklet²⁸ written by home economics consultant Claudia Quigley Murphy and richly illustrated with examples of Gorham silverware was given to all participants and also sent upon request to women's clubs all over the country.

But it was the authors of various etiquette books which seemed to have the most influence, especially after WWI when large parts of the population were presented with deep social changes. From 1918 to 1929 68 different works on etiquette were published in America and 1930 to 1945 brought another 78 books on the subject. Numbers speak volumes here, the various versions of Lillian Eichler's *Book of Etiquette*, first issued in 1921 had over a million buyers by 1945 and Emily Post's book sold nearly a million of its successive editions in 1922.²⁹

Statements like: "A large amount of silver is neither so desirable nor as fashionable as it used to be. In fact, many brides request that they be given pewter or stainless steel platters, serving dishes, or any such items, rather than silver, as they require little care and are more durable."³⁰ by Emily Post must have driven cold shivers down the spines of jewelers and silver companies who saw the bridal business as their domain and considered sterling or fine silver plate as the only possible choice for the distinguished bride.

The Towle Silversmiths company knew what to do about this threat and quickly hired Emily Post to write the booklet *Bridal Silver and wedding customs*³¹. The foreword of this booklet states that Emily Post needs no introduction as she was a well known authority of etiquette and states: "While full details may be found in the Blue Book, she (*Emily Post*) has herein made several interesting new suggestions about the selection of the bride's most precious possession – her sterling silver." Views presented now were any silver manufacturer's and retailer's dream. One reads here that to choose sterling silver is "of first importance" to



26 Eileen Cummings: *Etiquette, Entertaining and Good Sense, Table settings arranged and approved by the good housekeeping studio of furnishings and decorations*, International Silver Co., Meriden, Conn. 1923

27 Lilian M. Gunn: *The art of tablesetting*, The Gorham Company, Providence, R.I. 1929 and Lilian M. Gunn: *The Art of table settings and a visit to the Home of the Gorham Master Craftsmen*, The Gorham Company, 1929. Lilian Miranda Gunn was the also the author of "Table Service and decoration", published by Lippincott Co., 1928, 1935, 1950.

28 Claudia Quigley Murphy: *The History of the Art of Table setting, Ancient and Modern*, Gorham Company, copyright Murphy, 1921

29 Arthur Schlesinger, p. 50

30 Emily Post *Etiquette, The Book of Social Usage*, 1927, p. 323.

Emily Post's book was first published in 1922, with many reprints, then 1927, 1931, 1934. Emily Post born to wealth and position, started her etiquette books after a failed marriage to a banker and an only moderate successful career as writer of romantic novels, see also: Laura Claridge: *Emily Post, Daughter of the gilded age, Mistress of American Manners*, Random House, NY, 2008

31 Emily Post: *Bridal silver and wedding customs*, published by The Towle Silversmiths, 1930



the bride-to-be, flatware should be matched to appropriate hollowware, which included a useful bowl, a wide-rimmed dish for fruit or flowers, other ornamental centerpieces, two to four compotieres or other dishes and never less than four candlesticks. To give a tea-service and tray to the bride is seen as a “traditional silver obligation” which falls either to the bride’s family or intimate friends. A centerfold photo shows the bridal presents neatly arranged on a large table – here every silver item imaginable is displayed, accompanied with the statement: “Perhaps the most treasured portion of the bride’s wedding gifts are those which perpetuate the thoughtfulness of the giver in genuine, beautiful, enduring Sterling.”³² Slogans like: “Rice, old shoes, and silverware, The Three Inseparables at Every Wedding”³³ and “Wedding bells have a silvery tone”³⁴ to name just two examples, further illustrate the importance of the bridal business for the silver industry. Silver was generally portrayed as the only present worth giving to celebrate important occasions:” And yet there is one day that silver – the Gift Metal – has almost entirely claimed as its own – the day of high hopes and unconfined joys – the day of fulfillment of plans that have been years in the making – the wedding day!”³⁵ The underlying thought here was of course that the bride of today was the hostess of tomorrow and securing this specific market could not be made early enough. Eileen Cummings gives the sensitive advice that a girl starting out cannot have everything and should never be tempted to sacrifice quality for quantity, but she warns:” Each year, however, the service should be added to; for while the world may look leniently on the shortcomings in the service of the bride, it expects the hostess of standing to entertain with dignity and distinction.”³⁶

32 Ibid, centerfold

33 *Silverware, The Autocrat of every table*, Reed & Barton, 1926

34 Grace Higgins: The crowd comes to our house, The Alvin Corporation, Silversmiths, 1930, page 32

35 *Silverware, The Autocrat*, page 3

36 Eileen Cummings: *Etiquette, Entertaining and Good Sense*, 1923, International Silver Co., Meriden, Conn. Page 4

37 *Table Ways of Today*, prepared by Community Plate, Oneida Community Ltd. 1930, page 3

Hospitality was one of the *raison d'être* for all etiquette booklets - one of their missions was to be an aid and guidance to the hostess. The role of the hostess was seen as a glorified one. She is invariably described as a person showing her artistry and individuality while entertaining. The table is seen as:”a sort of altar to the gods of hospitality, is the special and appropriate place where a woman may show her taste and her sophistication – where she can make a picture with candles and flowers and linen, and china and silver and glass, that will make the simplest dinner a source of deep pleasure to her guests – of deep pride to herself.”³⁷ And further along in the text, describing a tea party,

the author gushes:” And among them all the mistress of the house in the alluring hostess gown of the hour, provocative, exquisite, a queen for an hour at least.”³⁸ In short one would be able to judge a woman’s taste, her sense of beauty, her poise, even her background by the way she organizes a party and therefore – “The art of entertaining, the art of being the perfect hostess, is thoroughly worth cultivating. Assurance and ease come from the knowledge, not only that the table is correctly set but that the silver itself is correct in design and spirit.”³⁹

The early etiquette booklets are quite rigorous what silver had to be possessed in order to give a dinner party or a worthwhile tea. Oscar of the Waldorf decreed that the hostess has to familiarize herself with the wide variety of special purpose serving pieces and novelties now offered , furthermore to be kept in mind was that for the formal dinner, wedding breakfast and all other functions in the city all silverware should be sterling, for country houses higher quality silver plate was permissible however.⁴⁰ Mrs. Rorer’s list of silverware is opulent to say the least and includes everything from fern stand and chocolate service to individual ice cream spoons⁴¹, in a booklet by R. Wallace & Sons of 1925 it is recognized that the modern tendency is for less elaborate forms of entertainment and it makes suggestions “ suitable for the daily life of those who live in the smaller homes of America.”⁴² These smaller homes however were still to be equipped with an extensive flatware service, finger bowls, salt cellars, pepper pots, silver centerpieces, a tea service and so on. But the trend to more simplicity was unstoppable and with it came a lessening of demand for table silver. Towle Silversmiths recognized this trend and cleverly suggested a new form of buying flatware. Instead of starting with dozens of the various flatware pieces, they advocated the buying of place settings. This way the silver could be used right away and as



38 Ibid page 19

39 C. Matlack Price: *Correctness in silver*, in Winnifred S. Fales: *The Wallace Hostess Book*, R. Wallace & Sons, Wallingford, Conn. 1920, page 36

40 Oscar of the Waldorf, page 4

41 *The Dining Room*, *ibid*, page 21

42 *Every Day Service and the Etiquette of Entertaining*, p. 4

43 *The book of solid silver*, p. 19
 44 *Correct Table Setting*, International Silver Company, Wallingford, Conn. 1934, page 9
 45 *Your Sterling and You*, R. Wallace & Sons of Canada, Ltd. Page 43
 46 Ibid, check page
 47 *Entertaining the Sterling Way*, The Gorham Company, Providence, no date but clearly written in wartime.
 48 *For gracious Living*, The Towle Silversmiths, ca. 1946, page 3,
 49 *The Story of Sterling*, p.18
 50 *For gracious living*, ibid page 16
 51 Emily Post, *Your reference book of Silver Etiquette*, published by Prestige Division of Home Decorators, Inc. Newark, 1952
 52 Nancy Prentiss *Your Dreams come true*, 1949 Westmoreland Sterling, also Nancy Prentiss *The perfect Hostess*, Westmoreland Fine Tableware, 1958, Wear Ever Aluminium Inc. New Kensington, Pa.
 53 Royal Crest Society Members Book, ca. 1940
 54 Emily Post, *Silver Etiquette*, published by Prestige, 1952, page 31
 55 *Royal Crest Society Members Book*, no page numbers.
 56 *Solid Silver in the American Home. Showing new trends in silver usage as developed by modern decorators*, The International Silver Company, Conn. 1923, page 9: "Solid silver has been, since Roman times, the symbol of family, of position, of high standard of living. Working in this precious metal has always been held a fine art. Creations out of it have survived centuries of use."
 57 *The book of solid silver*, 1926, p. 5
 58 Nancy Prentiss, p. 17
 59 Claudia Quigley Murphy, ibid p. 46
 60 Lilian M. Gunn, p. 30
 61 *Correct Table Settings*, p.5
 62 *How to be a successful Hostess*, Reed & Barton, 1961, "Easy Care"

the ability of a young woman as a hostess grew so would the number of her place settings.⁴³ The International Silver Co., also promoted the buying of flatware by place settings and told the story of "Elinor Ward", a young woman who got started off with place settings on her wedding day, then was given sterling flatware at every occasion, once in a while she would buy a serving piece from her own allowance, now after five years she has stopped wishing for flatware and is about to get a tea service. The example of this clever young woman – it is written here – should also encourage "older women bent upon replacing their unsatisfactory tableware with solid silver."⁴⁴ In "Your Sterling and You" the young hostess is advised that she can "stretch a limited service by a little ingenuity in planning menus, for instance, by serving juices for the opening course and fruit for dessert. Then as your needs grow greater, your entertaining more ambitious – you can add the remaining place settings and all lovely serving pieces."⁴⁵ Here a schedule is set out: Goal A – 6 place settings with 6 extra teaspoons, 2 table spoons, a butter knife and a sugar spoon, Goal B would be the enlargement to 8 place settings with a few more servers and finally Goal C a full 12 place settings with all necessary servers.⁴⁶

Wartime presented the silver industry with serious challenges, Gorham assured its customers⁴⁷ that during the war there are still 12 lovely period patterns offered and issued a guarantee that a customer would be able to add to these and also harmonize it with the appropriate matching hollowware such as tea- and coffee services, candlesticks, bowls and dishes – "Such items can be seriously anticipated as production limitations are lifted. And exquisite designs, still in model-form, await their creation when war-working facilities are released to peace-time products. Get Gorham Sterling, start your service soon, confident that you can complete it when their famous craftsmen again return full time to making its incomparable silver, which strangely enough costs no more than the ordinary kind." Another threat for the silver industry in a time of limited production was probably the buying of second-hand silver, large amounts of silver must have come on the market and was probably cheaper than the newly produced lines. Warnings against second-hand silver surface now in the silver companies' booklets: "True artistry is never on the auction block"⁴⁸ and "Remember, real artistry is never sold at bargain prices!"⁴⁹ The silver companies were definitely hurting, a new low was reached, when Towle Silversmiths declared: "Many girls start with a single place setting, with half a dozen teaspoons, or even with one teaspoon", and suggest that "A Penny Budget or a Dime Bank will make it come true" and finally pleaded: "By the Place Setting Plan you buy a Place Setting at a time – it costs no

more than a dress.”⁵⁰ “Ingenious” new marketing methods for silver were the new home buying clubs, which worked on a scheme that women could earn more sterling by suggesting new club members, they could order silver without giving a down-payment and were presented with tempting easy-payment schedules. One such venture was Prestige Division of Home Decorators, Inc.⁵¹ which secured the services of Emily Post, by now very matronly and old-fashioned, more hip were Nancy Prentiss who lead the advisory service for Westmoreland Sterling Division⁵² and Amy Vanderbilt who was the spokesperson for The Royal Crest Society⁵³.

These new home buying clubs did cut out the retailer and could be more price-competitive, but they did not come up with any new concepts and resorted to the same old arguments for buying silver, heard for the last fifty years. When Emily Post is speaking about the permanent value of silver and praising it as priceless heirloom in her *Silver Etiquette*⁵⁴, or Amy Vanderbilt calls silver “the most treasured addition to the estate you are building”⁵⁵ it sounds just like views presented by the International Silver Co., in 1923⁵⁶ or Towle’s remark in their *Book of solid silver* -... “Fashion is fickle and temporary, solid silver is permanent.....silver, if solid, will endure, not only throughout your own lifetime, but also through succeeding generations.”⁵⁷ And many other examples repeating the same from various “etiquette booklets” could be given here.

Silver as an important educational tool in the correct upbringing of children is another often alluded to aspect in the “etiquette” booklets. Gracious daily living and constant observance of etiquette also in the family circle without guests present is an often praised course of action. Nancy Prentiss’ remark, 1958, that: “A slovenly set table with things thrown on any old way can only make for poor table manners. On the other hand, a correctly set table is a great aid to proper eating habits, especially if there are small children in the family.”⁵⁸ sounds almost identical to Claudia Quigley Murphy’s 1921 warning: “The value of correct table service for children cannot be overestimated.”⁵⁹



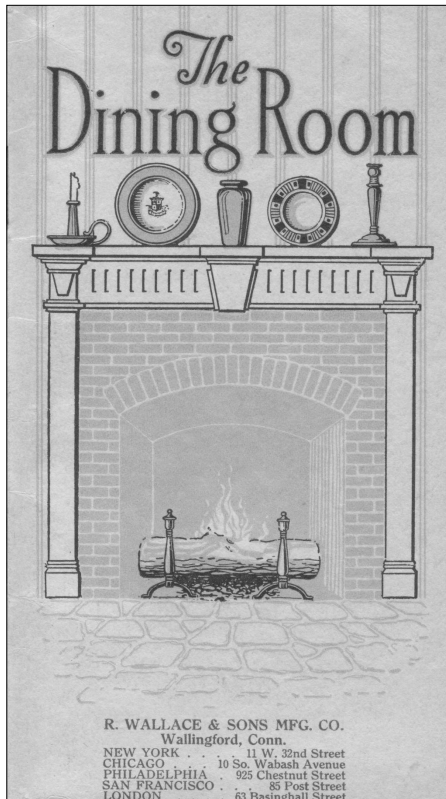
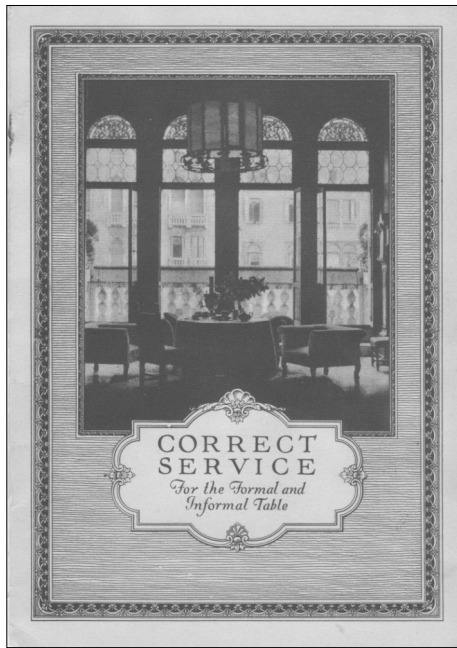
The earlier etiquette booklets pushed the purchase of children’s silver – a silver tray, a pretty silver porringer, a silver cup, a dainty bib-holder and special small flatware would give children a sense of ownership⁶⁰, and be of great cultural value:” Children, who are brought up to appreciate and treasure those things that are beautiful and genuine, have had training in taste that will influence their whole lives. All lovely domestic possessions play their part in this training, but none more surely than solid silver. Unchanging in beauty, imperishable and fine, its use sets the standard of appreciation you desire your children to have.”⁶¹ The later “etiquette” booklets put less emphasis on fine living and put more stress on the benefit of silver on good table manners.

While earlier booklets never even mention the cleaning of silver or only advertise silver cleaners – after all the cleaning was done by servants anyway and work connected with it was not much of a consideration – the later booklets abound with declarations, just how easy this task really is; daily use, the rotation of flatware and just once a month polishing was the standard advice. We can imagine how much assurance statements like “Your sterling silver actually requires less care than almost any possession in your home!”⁶² carried for a tired housewife, who had much rather spent her free time with sitting in the garden or reading a book. But this might have been only a minor aspect against silver buying. After WWII most entertaining was of the casual variety, and silver was not needed for tailgate or garden parties.

The “etiquette” booklets might not always have been a true mirror of social circumstances – after all they are promotional material to sell luxury goods. They do, however, show the enormous upswing of the silver industry as the wealth of the nation increased. The adoption of a more relaxed lifestyle and simpler forms of entertaining meant a decrease in demand for table silver; in fact it is possible to eat in a civilized manner without masses of silver. In this respect the “etiquette” booklets are a reflection of the change of customs and do paint an amazingly accurate picture of the downfall of a once proud industry.

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List of “etiquette” booklets:

Alvin Corporation:

Grace Higgins: *The Crowd comes to our House*, **The Alvin Corporation**, Silversmiths, copyright 1930

Setting the Table correctly, by Oscar of the Waldorf, **The Alvin Manufacturing Co.**, of Sag Harbor, N.Y. 1917

Colonial Silver Company:

Arranging your table and points of etiquette, **Colonial Silver Company**, 247 Hurt Building, Atlanta, GA, With ad of International Silver Co, Meriden, Conn. Ca. 1930

Gorham Manufacturing Company:

H.M.Kinsley of Hollandhouse New York and Kinsley's – Chicago: *One Hundred Recipes for the Chafing Dish*, published by the **Gorham Manufacturing Company**, Silversmiths, New York, 1894

John S. Holbrook: *Silver for the Dining Room, selected periods*, **The Gorham Co.**, Panama Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco, copyright 1912

Lilian M. Gunn: *The Art of table setting*, **The Gorham Company**, Providence, RI, copyright 1929

Lilian Gunn: *The Art of Tablesetting and a visit to the Home of the Gorham Master Craftsmen*, 3rd edition of the Art of table setting, 1929 (distributed by Rank & Motteram Co., E. Wisconsin Ave, Cor.N. Water)

Gorham Co., 1929

A Fitting Tribute to Skill, **Gorham Silver Co for Shreve, Crump and Low Company**, ca. 1930

When Her Motor Waits, **Gorham Silver Co for Shreve, Crump & Low Company**, ca. 1930

Entertaining the Sterling Way, **The Gorham Company**, 1946 (distributed by Geo.T.Hitch, Jeweler, 90 Main Street, Pulaski, Virginia)

The International Silver Co;

Eileen Cumming: *Etiquette, Entertaining and good sense – Table settings arranged and approved by the Good Housekeeping Studio of Furnishings and Decorations*, copyright 1923, **International Silver Co.**, Meriden, Conn. On the back-cover 1847 Rogers Bros. Silverplate –

booklet stamped with No.51

Solid Silver in the modern American Home – showing new trends in silver usage as developed by modern decorators, **International Silver Company**, Meriden, Conn. Copyright 1923

What to serve and How to serve it, A Guide for correct Table usage, 1927, **International Silver Co.**, (The Holmes & Edwards Silver Company, International Silver Co., Successor)

Northumbria Sterling Silver:

Marie Holmes: *Glamour and the Hostess, A guide to Canadian table setting*, **Northumbria Sterling Silver**, 158 Sterling Road, Toronto **Oneida Community Ltd.**

Table Ways of Today, **Oneida Community Ltd.**, 1930, contains various essays of prominent journalists of Harper Bazaar, Good Housekeeping, etc.

Correct Service for the Formal and Informal Table, **Oneida Community Ltd.**, Oneida, NY, copyright 1923

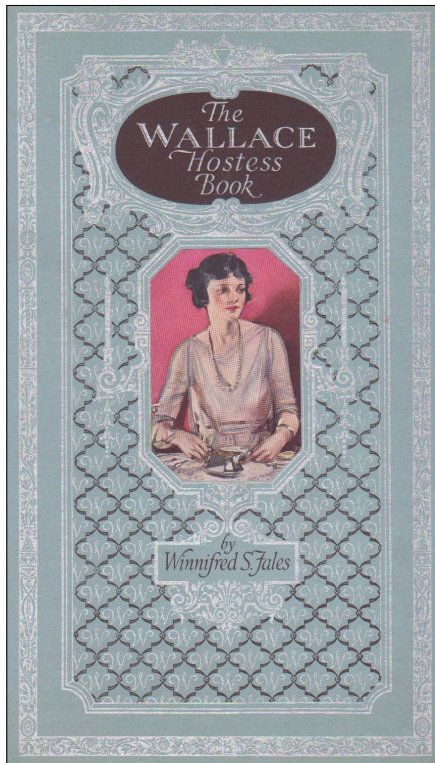
Reed & Barton:

Silverware, The Autocrat of every table, **Reed & Barton**, 1926

Sandra Bruce: *How to Be A Successful Hostess*, **Reed & Barton**, 1961 printed for Henebrys (reg.Jeweler American Gem Society, Fayetteville)

The History of the Spoon, Knife and Fork Down Through the Ages, By **Reed & Barton** and **Dominick & Haff**, copyright 1930

A century of silversmithing 1824-1924, **Reed & Barton**, 1924



Rogers:

Vogue presents: The correctly set table, published by the makers of Heirloom Plate – from generation to generation, Wm.A. Rogers, Ltd. Niagara Falls, N.Y., copyright 1922

The Bride Book, published in principal cities and all rights reserved by William E. Rogers, ca. 1920

Towle Silversmiths:

The Book of solid Silver, The Towle Silversmiths, Newburyport, Mass. Copyright 1926, The Towle Mfg. Co.

For Gracious Living, Towle Sterling Newburyport, Mass. Enclosed is a personal letter, dated July 17, 1946 by Brides Personal Service and signed by Priscilla Towle

Emily Post: Bridal Silver and wedding customs, The Towle Silversmiths, Newburyport, copyright 1930

R. Wallace & Sons, Wallace Silversmiths

The Dining Room, R. Wallace & Sons, Mfg. Co, Wallingford, Conn. Copyright 1912 with which is included Mrs. Rorer: How to set the table (this is the 23rd edition of "How to Set the Table" since the first copyright in 1901 by R. Wallace & Sons)

Every Day Service and the Etiquette of Entertaining. The latest edition of the original book on The Etiquette of Table setting by Diane Beningfield, formerly social secretary to the Viscountess Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt and other women of social prominence, published by R. Wallace & Sons, Wallingford, 1925

Beauty moods in Silver, Wallace Silversmiths, Wallingford, Conn, 1943

Your Sterling and You, published by R. Wallace & Sons of Canada, Ltd

Winnifred S. Fales: The Wallace Hostess Book, R. Wallace & Sons Manufacturing Co., Wallingford 1920

Westmoreland Sterling

Nancy Prentiss: Your dreams come true, published Westmorland Sterling, 1949

Nancy Prentiss: The perfect Hostess, Westmoreland Sterling, 1958

Prestige Div. of Home Decorators, Inc.

Emily Post: Your reference book on silver etiquette, published by Prestige, Div. of Home decorators, Inc. Newark, NY State, first edition 1952, Price \$ 25.00 includes lifetime membership in Emily Post's consultation services)

Silver Etiquette – a quick guide to correct table settings by Emily Post for Prestige, the loveliest of Silver Plate