

Christmas in July? You Bet!

Submitted by IWC Members

The 2010 IWC Convention was a wonderful holiday weekend, filled with friendships – old and new – and, of course, lots of willow. Convention chairs Scot and Nancee Rogers themed the four-day celebration “Silver Bells – Christmas in July” and it truly lived up to its name.



Attendees, who came from as far as Alaska, New Zealand and Australia, were greeted by a large decorated tree in the hotel lobby, thanks to our wonderful hotel staff. Nearby was the registration table with Helen Daniels and Jean Hull ready to help, and a hospitality room full of willow items for the raffle. Al & Edie Cronk organized the hospitality room where we found dozens of homemade cookies (brought by attendees, tasty idea Edie and Al), an aluminum silver tree decorated with blue willow ornaments made by Jennifer Cather, and a table-top tree filled with Cardew willow ornaments courtesy of Brenda and Allen Nottingham. The room served as a gathering point throughout the weekend for everyone to have a cookie, a cup of coffee, and enjoy the company of other collectors.

Many events were planned to make this weekend special in celebration of IWC’s 25th convention. The infamous raffle was coordinated by Allen Nottingham, with dozens of attendees donating items. Holiday songs filled the air played by our own talented musicians. Scot and Nancee asked members to pick one of the 25 years and



make an ornament that represented that particular convention. Throughout the weekend, we remembered each year by placing ornaments on a large advent wreath. As Nancee said, “How nice...24 days and then Christmas on an advent calendar, and we have 24 prior conventions and then this year! It couldn't have been better!” On Sunday, the wreath and its ornaments were auctioned off. What a nice souvenir of the weekend.



Attendees entered three contests that showcased their creative skills. The ever-popular place setting event featured visions of holidays with willow as the centerpiece. There was an art show, new for this year, where members could share their talents and enter their willow-related art. And there was a holiday lyric competition, where members took Christmas songs and altered the lyrics to reflect willow (look for the all the winners elsewhere in this issue)

So what else happened during our wintry willow weekend? Ask no more, as a few members have offered to fill you in! - *Jeff Siptak*

IWC Pre-Convention Tour – Rose Gray

Bright and early (8:30 a.m) on a hot, Thursday morning in Cincinnati, 27 people met to board a bus to take us to a tour to ride the WWII amphibious vehicle named "The Duck". We were all excited, talking, catching up with old friends, meeting new ones. Nancee and Scot Rogers were our tour guides. They gave us interesting stories of Cincinnati along the way as we headed for Newport on the Levy for our tour. We left the bus, walked to the place to load The Duck, only to find out that because of a tragic accident in another city the previous day, all "Duck" tours across the country had been cancelled.



Being the great guides that they are, Nancee and Scot quickly arranged for us to instead tour the Newport Aquarium. What a great place!! We walked under sharks and other fish, watched penguins being fed, and spent the next hour walking through the aquarium. Scot (affectionately known to us by then as "Mr. Rogers") gathered us back onto the bus, and we went to the Montgomery Inn Boathouse, across the river in Cincinnati to dine on BBQ ribs (Bob Hope's favorite) and Sarasota chips (thick chips – not French fries) while looking at a fantastic view of the river.



After pausing for a picture with "The Pig" outside the restaurant, we boarded the bus again for a stop at Graeter's Ice Cream on Fountain Square. One of the favorite ice creams was Black Raspberry Chip – full of chocolate chunks and blackberries – YUM!! We sat outside on the square and raced against the heat to eat our ice cream before it melted.

We then took a leisurely stroll to the hotel where our first willow convention was held 25 years ago. It is a beautifully restored Art Deco hotel, known then as the Omni Netherland Plaza Hotel.

A tired, but happy group of willow collectors returned to the hotel – looking forward to the next few days of willow fun. Thank you Nancee and Mr. Rogers for a wonderful tour. It was the best!!

Show & Tell – Suzie Crist

Show & Tell opened on Thursday night with a special welcome to all our first timers, where they were presented a blue willow mug by Jennifer Cather. First timers traveled some far distances this year, with some from Alaska, Washington, New Zealand and Australia.





Following their welcome, Show & Tell set the stage for a weekend of willow excitement! I have divided my observations into four categories as I remember them.

1. Items reflecting our Silver Anniversary theme - a beautiful willow silverware service (B. Nottingham), a tiny silver dish (E. Cronk), a silver and willow toaster (T. Hamm), and silver knives etched on the blades with the willow design.



2. There was a wide range of items showing our Christmas in July theme. A handmade and working train made from several willow items (S. Rogers), two ceramic blue willow Santas (K. Kowen & H. Hall), A Norman Rockwell plate "Dreaming of Santa" (H. Hall) and a miniature tree in a 2T2 double-handle mug, with 17 Joseph Gillott willow-papered pen nib boxes (J. Siptak).

3. What could be more elegant and old than an Allerton soup tureen (M. Hillard), a framed print "Breakfast With Teddy" by Jessie Wilcox Smith (M. Curtner), and unusual Japan soup tureen (B. Meyer), and a collection of Worcestershire relish bottles (D. LaFont).

4. Finally a few items were definitely unusual! A large willow stove cover (A. Harland), a wooden "brown betty" teapot with willow finial on lid (S. Crist) and the MOST unusual item – a full willow tattoo on the back of Jo Wilson, a first-timer, complete with the willow birds on her ankle!

We all retired for the evening with visions of "willowplums" dancing in our heads!

Jeff Siptak's Lecture: Silver & The Willow Pattern – Jo Wilson



As a convention first-timer, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that I would be taking a "sleigh ride" on Friday morning to the North Pole—Oh, what fun! With my official North Pole Sleigh Company "Silver Willow Sleigh Ride" ticket in hand, I could actually feel a chill

in the air as we began our magical trip to Santa's Village at the North Pole. With Jeff Siptak as our expert guide and his trusty assistant, Agnes, we were off in a flash—with the help of his special "On Dasher, On-Star" communications system!

During our flight, we were treated with a brief history of silver, going as far back as 3000 B.C., when it may have been first refined by man. Since then, silver has not only been adored as a thing of beauty, it has been used for currency as well as for its antibacterial properties. We also learned

about silver's "dark side," as the poisonous lead found in the silver ore often caused early deaths for the miners—usually within two or three years.

Once we arrived at the North Pole, we headed to different areas of Santa's Village to learn more about the various ways silver is used with the willow pattern—as an accent, or with the pattern either engraved, embossed, or impressed into the silver. Each stop in the village was filled with wonderful examples of willow and silver, along with interesting tidbits of information about each piece.

Once back in the sleigh for the return flight to our hotel, I couldn't help but leave Santa's Village with a greater appreciation of silver and how it has been used for centuries to not only accent and complement the willow pattern, but how it is such a beautiful medium to present the pattern itself.

As a side note, Jeff mentioned several people asking if the photo shown at the end of his talk was of him as a child with Santa. It was...circa 1968!



Christmas Craft Workshops – Jennifer Cather



IWC convention attendees were treated to two craft sessions lead by Marianne Evans and assisted by Daisy Eden. The first class was well attended and it was discovered that Willow lovers are very artistic and creative! Each participant received a willow plate stamp and of course their completed projects to take home with them. In the second crafting session, a snowflake ornament, complete with a willow 'snow globe' center and silver bell on the bottom, was made. In addition, we created a magnetic recipe holder that looked like a Willow holiday apron. Our final project was a folder to hold papers and the design was left up to each

individual's imagination.

We learned several special stamping and cutting techniques and how to create a mini snow globe. Everyone also found out how well (or not) they could follow instructions. The results gave the participants quite a chuckle and a good time was had by all. Thanks to Marianne for the supplies, ideas, instruction and patience. Without her and Daisy's help, we would not have festive handcrafted ornaments and items to remember Convention 2010 by.

Place Setting & Art Show Competitions – Charles Hollingsworth

The table setting competition has come to be one of the favorite events of any IWC convention. This year we had seven beautiful entries, each with a different theme. After the settings were complete a group of independent judges selected this years winners.

First place went to Marianne Evans from Indianapolis, Indiana, for her blue and white setting called "Willow in Toyland". Flat soup bowls with under plates and a coffee service with a delightful centerpiece of miniature toys. It put a real smile on the faces of





everyone when they remembered their own childhood and toys from Christmases past.

The red second place ribbon fittingly went to Mary Lou Piepergerdes from Lamoni, Iowa. Mary Lou's theme was "Christmas Eve Supper on Grandma's Red Willow". As you might guess, her setting was a lovely set of red Willow with a ruby glass desert plate, goblet and votive light, two silver miniature Christmas trees and a copy of the old Clement Moore favorite "The Night Before Christmas" to bring home the theme. What wonderful memories came with such a simple setting.



Third place went to another charming red and white Willow setting. Sweet Daisy Eden, also from Indianapolis, came forward with a double setting of red Double Phoenix plates, cups, saucers, teapot, cream & sugar and a platter of hard Christmas candy all set on a soft green Willow linen luncheon cloth. Her theme of a "Hard Candy Christmas" brought us Texans to remember a certain "house" in Texas and a song from my favorite Dolly Parton movie. What a fun setting, and from a Baptist preacher's wife too. We love ya, Daisy.

The other settings were beautiful as well. I can't imagine how difficult it must have been for the judges to select our winners.

When the 2011 theme is announced many more of us should begin to think of what we can do to be a part of this fun event.

Another event that ran along side the table setting competition was a showing of hand-made Willow crafts. The winners in this competition were diverse as well. There were a large number of items entered from needlework to rubber stamp art and woodworking.



First place went to Reeze Hanson from Ottawa, Kansas, for her wonderful quilted coverlet with a willow theme. Three blue and white tea pots at the top and bottom, above and below a square of various blue and white patterned fabrics. There was a corner trim of tea bags and a center square photo of her mother, Marge LaLonde, with a Willow coffee pot. It was a real hit with the crowd.

Second place went to Scot Rogers of Newtown, Ohio, for his hand-painted Willow nut cracker. The traditional Christmas drummer nut cracker with a Willow pattern jacket. So, so cute. Scot just runs over with talent.



Third place went to Kathy Sykes of Hamilton, New Zealand, for two examples of her handy work. A glossy little drawstring bag with a Willow Christmas tree trim and a set of four small wooden blocks with Willow items on each side that could be arranged to show a variety of designs as the blocks were rotated.

If you are a crafter plan to bring an example your Willow craft to the 2011 convention. We'd love to see what you do.

IWC Auction – Jeff Siptak (with quotes from “A Christmas Carol”)

'Twas the night of the auction and all through the room, not a creature was stirring, except for a Scrooge. Yes, It was a Dickens of a night with a cast of familiar characters opening the 2010 IWC Auction. First Tiny Tim (Joette Hightower Dedden) blessed us all with a walk around the room and photo ops. Following right behind her was the crotchety Scrooge (Harry Hall) dressed in his night shirt and cap. But little rest would be given, as the Ghost of Christmas Past (Brenda Nottingham), the Ghost of Christmas Present (Tom Eden) and the Ghost of Christmas Future (Allen Nottingham) were quick on his heels, as were members of the Cratchit family (Daisy Eden and Marianne Evans).

Soon it was heard from Scrooge, ***“Lead on...Lead on! The night is waning fast, and it is precious time to me, I know.”***

And so the auction began. A whopping 525 items lined the tables with dozens of attendees ready with bidding paddles in hand. The swirl of willow items filled the room like spirits in a dream, “Do I hear \$10...\$20...\$30,” Scrooge blurted out. “Sold, to the man in chains in the back.” No sooner than Scrooge saw the figure, ***“the door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the chains much louder, on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards him.”*** But it was not the apparition, but the hotel staff bringing in our salad and loaded potato bar, a break for weary-eyed bidders.

Once everyone was well-fed and reenergized, bidding resumed with Scrooge as auctioneer. Not long after, as the auction was coming to a close, the crowd yelled, “We want more willow!” To Scrooge, this was ***“...not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the perspiration from his brow.”***

“Bah! Humbug!” he exclaimed, as he waved and retreated to his bed chambers. ***“He did pause, with a moment’s irresolution, before he shut the door; and he did look cautiously behind it first...but there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he said ‘Pooh, pooh!’ and closed it with a bang.”*** With that, the auction night was over.

But by the time our story ends, dear readers, of Scrooge was noted ever afterwards, ***“It was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas [and auctions] well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and all of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every One!”***





Saturday Willow Dealer Sale – Jeff Siptak

No, this is not a typo, the traditional “Sunday Dealer Sale” was held on Saturday morning, much to the pleasure of both attendees and dealers alike. It was more relaxed and less rushed, as attendees could spend more time shopping and less time rushing to get out of the hotel and on the way home as in years past.

“We thought we’d try a few things differently this year,” said chair Scot Rogers. “We had special events planned for Sunday (Christmas) morning and thought we’d try the dealer sale on a different day.”



It worked perfectly. Over one dozen dealers set up their wares and were ready to sell by 9:00 am. For two hours, attendees shopped for willow, carrying bags back to their room with special finds. Some even shopped for a special gift for Sunday (Christmas) morning’s gift exchange, and Nancee Rogers set up a table with free gift wrapping for those who did.

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Hugh Syke’s Lecture: Willow Around the World, A Christmas Theme (Of Sorts) – Brenda Nottingham



Hugh Sykes presented a view of advertising willow pieces as seen through the eyes of the Mount Morgan Scouts collectors and run-about scouts, Harry and Jeff. These seemingly ordinary scout willow collectors took us on a trip all over the world highlighting various willow advertising items as well as highlights of their (mis)adventures.

We saw far off places such as Zurich’s hotel “Baur Au Lac” where they obtained a willow

tip tray souvenir. We also saw them visit Folkstone where they obtained a butter dish. Various British pubs were visited to obtain items such as ashtrays (The Venture, Basingstoke) and Mitchell & Butler’s “Good Honest Beer pot.

In Hong Kong we were treated to a special preview of Rebecca Pan singing the “Willow Pattern” song and they boys then took her to the Kow & Son Chinese restaurant where we saw the red willow advertising plate with their logo.

We saw lots of unusual tip trays, Star Beers, Pedro Domeco Finest Sherry, Tennent’s Lager Beer and MacLennan’s Lemonade among others. We saw an Air New Zealand condiment tray with their

logo and the willow pattern on it. We learned that wherever you go around the world from Cape Ann (where they created a parody willow poster much like the Gladstone pottery plates) to Europe and back again willow was put on advertising for just about any product you can think of.

We saw a wonderful presentation of the Lennon sisters singing the “Story of the Willow Pattern Plate” in costume with willow backdrops. This film clip was from 1956.

All in all, it was a delightful lecture full of fun, laughter and lots of willow advertising features. So rush home and start searching for some of these pieces to add to your collection!



Connie Rogers’ Lecture: Willow Parodies – Imitation is the Sincerest Form of Flattery” – Jeff Siptak

Connie Rogers treated attendees to an interesting presentation on the many variations of the Willow Pattern that have been created over the years. Her talk opened where it all began for IWC...the 1986 Cincinnati convention. We saw a copy of the program cover, designed by Marge LaLonde for that first IWC convention. It combined the view of Cincinnati from the Kentucky side of the Ohio River and featured willow motifs, from the willow tree and birds to the boat on the river.

She spoke of the longevity of the Willow Pattern and how lucky we are to have a china pattern with so much history and universal appeal...as well something that looks beautiful on the table. To prove this point, she first showed a Minton plate from 1800, then one of the newest marks from a willow cup and saucer made in China. She mentioned how the Willow Legend, in its many forms, has added popularity to the pattern that no other china pattern can claim. In fact, she said that the many legends we hear may have brought the Willow Pattern to the consciousness of more people than any other factor. No doubt, the pattern has been a part of history and culture for a long time.



Connie then showed many examples of the variations given to the pattern. She had photos of all the Gladstone Pottery Museum plates, a series made by the museum featuring British cities and villages, substituting landmarks of the city with comparable motifs from the Willow Pattern. It was interesting to see that so many plates were made... and all based on our Willow Pattern!

The rest of the presentation was filled with dozens of other examples of the pattern used to advertise (Fry’s Chocolate, Johnston’s Corn Flour), to depict current events (1942 “New Yorker” cover), to train in aircraft recognition (1945 Royal Observer Corps Chinese Puzzle Plate...who would have thought?), to provide humor (Doulton’s Motoring Willow plate, Spode’s Christmas plates) and the list goes on.



As Connie pointed out, the Willow Pattern has more respect now because of its incredible long history and perseverance around the world. “It is so well known,” she said. “We need to keep willow alive.”

Christmas Eve Night Fun & Worship – Dave Broering



I would like to commend all who took part in the entertainment on Saturday night. While I don't get into all the Blue Willow stuff, I come to the convention to support Michael, to see our many friends, and to meet new friends. I do always enjoy the Saturday night entertainment - including this year.

The night began with A Christmas Gathering with Jennifer Cather, Rose Gray and Connie Rogers playing Christmas music in the hotel's atrium lobby. Nearby we could take pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus (Charles and Zeta Hollingsworth). We then had

another fabulous meal at the Christmas Eve Banquet. There is little chance to go hungry at a Willow Convention - you will notice I am always there for the meals!!

After eating, Tom Eden (with Daisy on the keyboard) led us in the singing of traditional Christmas carols that had a Blue Willow twist to them. What creative songs we heard. We sang about the Blue Willow story and antiquing through the melodies of Winter Wonderland, Twelve Days of Christmas, Silver Bells, and many others. I was amazed. The Willow group is filled with creative (imaginative) people. After all 19 songs were sung, we voted for our top

three. This was not an easy decision since all were so good. When taking a break from the singing of the "altered songs", Jen led everyone in playing wind instruments from our English Christmas Cracker. After getting "warmed up", we did not sound too bad - I was surprised. An added bonus was Lyn Nolan from Australia teaching everyone an Australian Christmas song. Thank you Tom, Daisy, Jen, and Lyn for your help in making the evening so fun.

The final part of the evening was a candlelight service. This was a nice touch offering it on Saturday night and not Sunday morning - there was a very nice turnout. Daisy on the keyboard, Connie playing the violin, and a choir of several members helped provide some wonderful music for the service. Tom so expertly again connected Blue Willow and faith. Through Tom's message, we learned we are all precious and important to God whether we are a plastic cup (for everyday use) or an expensive Willow piece (we set on a shelf to look at) - we all have a God-given purpose. This was a wonderful way to end the evening. Thank you Tom and Daisy and all who made the service so special.

Finally, I would like to send a Big Thank You to Scot and Nancee for all their time and planning for this evening.



Christmas Morning – Jeff Siptak

Christmas tradition held true as attendees woke up on Christmas morning (Sunday) to open gifts. Luckily, we didn't have to sneak down in our pajamas! More than 30 attendees participated in the fun exchange where everyone brought a willow gift wrapped in Christmas paper, naturally. Numbers were drawn, gifts were selected, and after a few "friendly steals" everyone was allowed to open their gifts.



Afterwards, we all gathered for closing remarks, where special thanks and recognitions were given. Out-going Immediate Past President, Hugh Sykes, recognized Jennifer Cather for her leadership as President with a certificate, and convention attendance pins were handed out by membership chairwoman Edie Cronk. Celebrating their 5th Convention: Arnold Cohen, Chrysoula Komis, Brenda Nottingham and Allen Nottingham; 10th Convention: Bob Prophet, Helen Swearingen and Dean Swearingen; Fifteenth Convention: Rita E. Cohen; 20th Convention: Michael Curtner and Scot Rogers (not pictured); and last, but in no way least, celebrating their attendance at all 25 conventions: Sandra Leonard, Terry Leonard and Connie Rogers. Thank you Sandra, Terry and Connie for your support and participation each and every year!



5th Convention



10th Convention



15th Convention



20th Convention



25th Convention

Before we knew it, it was time for Christmas Brunch. Tables were beautifully decorated for the holiday and at each person's place, sat a special gift: a custom-made red Burleigh willow plate, noting IWC's special 25th convention on the back. It was like children just discovering the gift they really

wanted under the tree! Nancee and Scot Rogers commissioned Rosemary and William Dorling, the Burleigh Factory owners in England, to make these one-of-a-kind plates just for the convention. The transfer pattern is in a red color never used before with Burleigh's willow. What a special gift for



everyone! We were also given our photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus taken the night before, just one more special keepsake of our 25th convention.

The last convention ornament was placed on the advent wreath and it was then auctioned off. Bidding was swift and Edie Cronk walked away with the winning bid and a unique souvenir of the convention.

The winners for the music competition were also announced. Look for the lyrics of these three songs elsewhere in the newsletter.

- 1st Tie: Scot Rogers, "You're a Blue One, Willow Plate" to the tune "You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch"
Nancee Rogers. "Soarin' on a Willow Pattern Plate" to the tune "Winter Wonderland"
2nd: Edie Cronk, "Walkin' Around the Antique Mall" to the tune "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"
3rd: Jo Wilson, "Willow Plates" to the tune "Silver Bells"

As the brunch drew to a close we said our goodbyes. Another great convention had come and gone. But as we each began our trip home...

*Our eyes how they twinkled, our smiles were so merry,
We clutched our willow plates colored like a cherry.*

*We sprang to our sleigh and to our engine gave a whistle,
And away we all flew like the down of a thistle.*

*But I heard one exclaim, ere I drove out of sight,
"Happy Willowing to all, see you next year, alright?"*

