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A Cut Above

Arthur Stone silverware is both
a work of art and eminently useful. | BY CATHERINE RIEDEL



Arthur Stone designs:
TOP, bud vase, 1906;
ABOVE, bowl made
by Stone workshop
craftsman Herman
Glendenning, c. 1926;
LEFT, child's breakfast set
by David Carlson, c. 1913.

Great art requires talent and tenacity, but also time and space: time to learn and perfect, and to pass on knowledge; space to bloom and grow, think and rethink. At the turn of the 20th century, a talented and well-trained silversmith named Arthur J. Stone opened a workshop in South Gardner, Massachusetts. Nestled among rolling hills 50 miles northwest of Boston, Stone found the time and space he'd sought professionally for nearly 40 years. In doing so, he became an icon of the American Arts & Crafts movement and made his mark on the world of fine silver.

Arthur Stone is regarded by many as America's dean of the art of silversmithing. Born in Sheffield, England, in 1847, Stone became an apprentice silversmith at the age of 14 and furthered his knowledge of the craft by studying evenings at the National School of Design. Stone spent the next 23 years mastering the techniques of his trade—chasing, modeling, fluting, *réoussé*, and design—before emigrating to the U.S. in 1884 to escape the growing industrialization of silversmithing in England. Once here, he worked for various makers before finally opening his own shop in 1901. He joined the Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston and became an avid crusader for its cause.

Stone was also one of the last American silversmiths to train apprentices in the techniques of hand-wrought silver. He garnered great acclaim for his presentation and ecclesiastical pieces, but was most influential in the design of domestic items.

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Jane Prentiss, Skinner's expert on 20th-century design, counts herself among Stone devotees. "What set Arthur Stone apart from his contemporaries were his technical proficiency and the quality of his craftsmanship," she notes. "His flatware is superb—neither too big nor too small. The angle of a spoon or fork when lifted to the mouth is always natural. The weight, form, and balance of his flatware and hollowware are sublime. Simply put, Stone silver is a cut above."

Stephen Fletcher, Skinner's director of Americana, admires Stone's pieces for their lack of formality; rather, they feature subtle decoration, drawn from nature. He remembers buying a little bowl by Stone for only \$12 at a flea market in Amherst, New Hampshire, in the 1970s. "I didn't even know then what it was," he recalls. "I just knew it was something good."

Perhaps the greatest testament to Stone's silver is the simple fact that it was used, and used often, by its owners. It usually bears the scratches, dings, and soft luster of an item well worn yet well cared for. You may still find Stone silver in family dining rooms, attics, antiques stores, at auction, or online. Look for items bearing his signature mark: the word *Stone*, with a hammer making the *t*'s crossbar and extending all the way across the name. It might also feature the maker's initials. Prices range from a few hundred dollars for small bowls, tea strainers, baby cups, and flatware to thousands for plates, vases, covered bowls, tea sets, chafing dishes, and other serving pieces.

Examples of Stone's ceremonial pieces are rarely sold. But for most Stone seekers, it's his simpler domestic items that attract. Should you acquire one, I wish you the time and space to appreciate it. Remember to use it—often. ♻️

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