

BACKSTAMPS

Researchers and collectors love it when china is dated or date coded for its time of manufacture, but unfortunately, with a few exceptions, china produced at the Lamberton Works was never dated, and date codes may only have been used experimentally for a short time.

Other hotel china makers did date code their china, but Maddock and Scammell chose not to do so. The main reason for date coding commercial china was not to help future researchers – as no thought was ever given to these utilitarian items ever lasting more than a few years under the intense daily usage they were subjected to – it was to help the maker’s salesmen explain to customers who complained about pieces needing replacement just how long they had actually lasted.

It may have been a financial consideration that caused the Lamberton Works not to date or date code their china. New date code decals would have had to be produced each month, quarter or year, depending on the type of code used. Decorators, who would have had to apply these decals to the backstamps in addition to the other marks, were paid by the piece, and any additional operations would slow down their production.

Even though the Lamberton Works did not date code their products, they did use a number of different style backstamps over the course of years. The differences in these marks provide some clues that can help to at least provide some idea about when a pattern was produced.

Backstamp information was usually incorporated into the engraving plates used for transfer patterns so that they could be printed at the same time that the patterns were being done, and transferred while the ink was still wet.

Multicolor decals were produced in large quantities and stored for future reorders and orders from new customers. The one-color backstamps used with these decals may have been included on one of their color separation litho stones, or may have been produced separately. One celery tray has turned up with part of a second mark on it that might indicate that these decals were printed in strips that were cut apart before being applied.

In any case it may have been years between the time a backstamp was printed and when it was applied to the china. Impressed backstamps used on Trenton bisque could also have spent a long time in storage before being decorated and glazed. About the only thing we can tell for sure from a backstamp is that it was not made before a certain date.

Only one form of the name “Lamberton China” was registered as a trademark. It was registered as Reg. No. 114,790 on January 2, 1917, by the Maddock Pottery Company. At that time the company claimed that the name had been in continuous use since 1893. The trademark registration protected the name Lamberton China, not just the design of the trademark. The trademark was renewed on January 2, 1937 by the Scammell China Company, and again on January 22, 1974 (Reg. No. 977,271), by the Sterling China Company.

It is always dangerous to guess, but I am going to go out on a limb and make a few guesses about the time periods that some of the Lamberton Works backstamps were used. These guesses are based on an unscientific sampling of several hundred pieces of Maddock and Scammell china.

I have attempted to compare the backstamps on patterns that are dated in some manner and to come up with a date that a particular backstamp was known to have been in use. Because there were over 30 different backstamps used, I have, in some cases, seen only one or two pieces with a particular backstamp – far too small a sample to be very positive about exactly when it was used.

Many more examples will have to be studied before a definite theory can be presented, but at least this is a start. You may find pieces that will make you dispute my guesses or even prove them wrong.

Keep in mind that backstamps were placed on hotel china to identify the maker and to promote reorders. They were not placed there with any thought of their ever being used by researchers or collectors, so there was no attempt made to mark the china as a help to future generations.

As with everything else done by humans, mistakes were bound to be made. I have a piece of Platinum Blue marked with a nice “Ivory China” backstamp, which points out that you can’t always believe what you read on the back of a piece of china. If you find a piece with a backstamp that is printed in a different color from any of the colors used in the design on the front, it is possible that the backstamp may not go with the front design.

I have limited the backstamps shown to those used by the Lamberton Works and to those later used by Sterling China. Backstamps used on pieces made by other Maddock potteries can be found in books dealing with marks by American and English makers. I have also not shown all of the special “Made Especially For” and “Furnished By” backstamps that usually incorporate one of the regular Maddock or Scammell backstamps into their design.

To make it easier for researchers and collectors to describe a particular backstamp, each one has been assigned an identification letters-number combination. The letters used, and their meanings are:

M – Maddock;

S – Scammell;

L – Lamberton China body;

T – Trenton China body;

A – American China body (same as Trenton, except earlier);

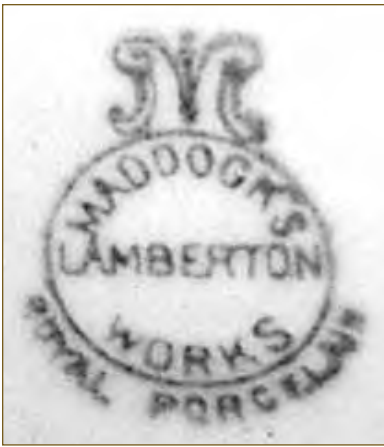
P – Platinum Blue body;

LE – Lenape tan body;

I – Ivory body; and

SG – Sterling (made after close of Lamberton Works).

The numbers used have no meaning or chronological significance. They are used only for identification, thus S-L-14 would mean “Scammell Lamberton body china” in design style number 14. The backstamps are divided into Lamberton China body items and Trenton China (or American) body, to hopefully simplify the presentation of the chronological progression. For each backstamp I will try to explain the date that is given. As mentioned before, the date of use for any one of these backstamps could be years later than its original introduction.



M-L-1 – “Maddocks Lamberton Works” “Royal Porcelain.” My guess is that this is the earliest of the Lamberton Works backstamps, dating to the use of the Works by Maddock in 1893 or 1894.

This circular mark is very similar to the mark used by John Maddock & Sons of England around 1880-1896. (SOURCE #1) It was used on an early chamber pot.

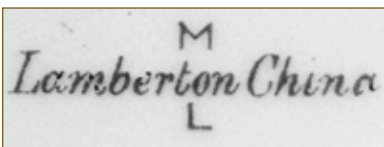


M-L-2 – This mark dates to about 1900, or possibly before, as it appears on a plate for the Stafford Hotel in Baltimore that opened in 1894. It

was still being used in 1911 on china made for the Hotel Kimball, which opened that year.¹

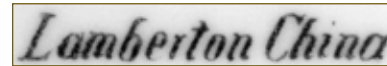


M-L-4 – This is the earliest of the crown-and-shield marks and was being used before 1910 when it appeared in a book published by the Maddock Pottery Company. (SOURCE #2)



M-L-3 – This mark adds the word “Lamberton” to “China,” which

leads me to think it is more recent than M-L-2. It appears on the Wallick’s service plate, so my guess is use about 1913 until 1917.



L-10 – This version, without the “M” and “L,” is the

design that appears on the Maddock Pottery trademark registration that was filed on September 30, 1916. The trademark was registered on January 2, 1917. It is used on Folies Bergere Theater service plates. This theater operated as a dinner theater for only four months, April 1911 until July 1911. It is also found on a piece decorated with the 1923 patented design #62,090, which would place its usage from around 1911 until at least 1923.



L-11 – This mark, in underglaze and overglaze decal

lettering, is usually found in connection with a supplier’s or distributor’s name. The lack of the “M” would indicate its use during the 1916 to 1924 time period. It appears on china for the Georgian Terrace Hotel in Atlanta, which opened in 1912. If this china was part of the hotel’s original order, then this backstamp could have been in use as early as 1912.



L-41 – “Lamberton China” in all capital letters with the

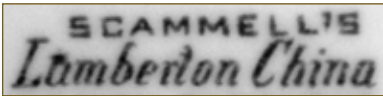
“L” & “C” slightly larger than the rest appears on a celery tray produced for the Seelbach Hotel in Louisville. There is a slight curvature in the design. The Seelbach opened in 1905, but the underglaze decal suggests a later production date, possibly around 1917.



M-L-5 – This crown-and-shield mark adds the laurel wreath to the M-L-4 mark. It was used on china made for the Emerson Hotel in Baltimore,

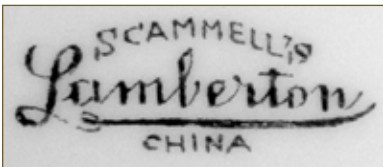
¹ Three pin trays for hotels that opened between 1885 and 1915 that had overglaze decorations contained backstamp M-L-2 underglaze and M-L-4 overglaze, suggesting both backstamps were being used during the same time period.

which opened in 1911, so it might have been used from around 1911 until 1924.



S-L-16 – The lettering style used for “Lamberton China” is identical to L-10.

The addition of “Scammell’s” would make it date to the takeover period. It appears on china decorated in design #62,090, patented in March of 1923, so it may have been used as early as 1923.



S-L-38 – This is another variation on L-10 with a curving “Scammell’s” added above

the earlier “Lamberton China” lettering. This mark would probably date to around 1924, and prior to 1926 when S-L-17 was used.



S-L-12 – An “S” replaces the former “M” in the shield on this mark. This mark was used on a service plate for the Francis Scott Key Hotel in Frederick, MD, which opened in 1923. It also appears on pieces

decorated with the 1927 issued patented design #73,104.



S-L-13 – The word “Scammell” is added below the laurel wreath. This mark appears on a Masonic vase dated 1928, as well as the American Hotels Corporation service plate patented in 1928. It also appears

with a May 1926-issued patent border on a gravy boat crested for the Landlords Inn, which was in operation before 1928, so it could have been used as early as mid-year 1926.



S-L-14 – The initials “U.S.A.” are added below “Scammell.” During the Depression, people were urged to buy American-made products and give jobs to American workers. In 1930, Lenox, another Trenton pottery, added “Made in U.S.A.” to their backstamp. (SOURCE #3) It seems

reasonable that Scammell would add “U.S.A.” to their backstamp around this same date.



S-L-15 – “Made in America” is used in place of “U.S.A.” This mark appears on china produced for the Waldorf-Astoria. That hotel opened in 1931, so it might have been used as early as 1931. It also appears on The Netherlands Aid Society plate that was produced during the 1940s.

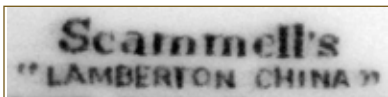


S-L-37 – The difference here is the way “Made in America” is on one line rather than two, as on S-L-15, and the absence of the word “Lamberton.”

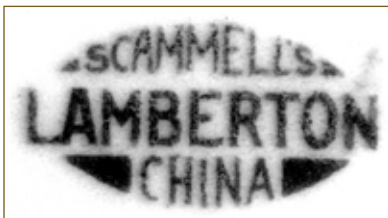
This mark is used on what appears to be a piece of Lambertton dinnerware, which was introduced in 1939.



china marked "Patent Applied for," which dates to around 1926. It was also used on B&O Centenary dinner plates made after 1937.



marked "Patent Applied for." The design, #69,312, was patented in 1926, so the mark was in use as early as 1925.



stamped "1926," as well as on an early 1930s piece made for the Paramount Hotel in New York City.



S-L-17 – This mark appears on a commemorative plate dated 1926, and on pieces of B&O Centenary

S-L-18 – This lettering style was used along with a patented design

S-L-19 – The Art Deco influence can be seen in this mark that uses the letters to form a curved design. It appears on pieces back-

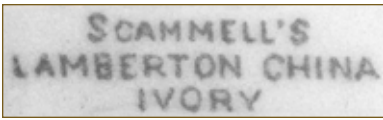
S-I-27 – This Ivory mark was probably used when the Ivory body was introduced in 1928. It was also used on a Savoy- Plaza plate dated 1936.



S-I-28 – "U.S.A." is added to the Ivory mark. This mark was used on a 1932-dated Lafayette College plate, and on 1938-dated Goucher College alumni plates.

S-I-29 – "Made in America" is used in place of "U.S.A." This mark was used on Waldorf-Astoria floral china, so a 1931 date of usage is possible.

S-I-34 – "Sterling" replaces "Scammell," which means this mark was used after December 1954.



“Gotham” pattern plate suggesting a late 1930s usage.



S-I-30 – This spelled-out mark appears on a Pennsylvania Railroad “Gotham” pattern plate suggesting a late 1930s usage.

S-P-32 – This Platinum Blue mark was introduced sometime between 1931 and 1934. It also appeared as a rubber stamped mark on some Rockefeller-shape pieces.



SG-P-35 – The addition of the “Sterling” name dates this mark to after December 1954.



S-I-31 – The lettering style used on this mark is similar to that used on the Lambertson dinnerware line introduced in 1939.

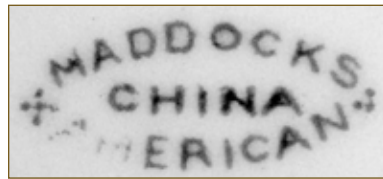


S-L-39 – A special mark used on the Rena ware produced by Scammell during the 1930s.



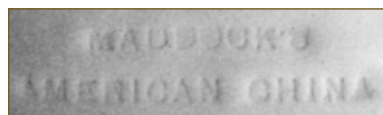
M-A-6 – This Maddock’s American China eagle logo that appears on a piece of Union Pacific Railroad “Hariman Blue” (shown in Fr. Sandknop’s “Nothing Could be

Finer” book) could date back to the 1890s. More examples would have to be studied to establish a more positive date.



M-A-7 – This American China mark appears on the John H. Murphy Co.’s patented design of 1912, as well

as on a footed compote decorated with the pre-1920s #164 Nippon border pattern.



M-A-8 – An impressed mark found on an undecorated piece that gives no

clues to its exact date. American China and Trenton China were the same china body. The “American” name was used until about 1913, with “Trenton” used after that. It appears on Vendig Hotel patterns patented in 1913.

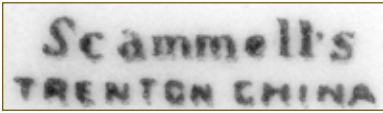


M-T-9 – An impressed mark with “Trenton” replacing the earlier “American” name, indicat-

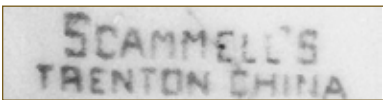
ing use from about 1913 until 1923.



S-T-20 – Scammell's impressed Trenton China mark that replaced M-T-9 in 1924. It was used until at least 1930, as it appeared on patented design 80,783, which was patented that year.



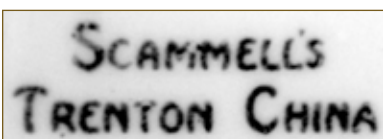
S-T-21 – The Scammell name on this mark uses lower case letters similar to the style of lettering on the Lamberton mark S-L-18. It could date to around 1925. It also appears with the impressed mark S-T-20 on a 1930 patented design. Remember that impressed marks were placed on the unfired clay as it was formed, and prior to the bisque firing. There could have been a considerable time between the bisque firing and the time when the decorating and glazing took place. This could result in different styles of impressed and transfer or decal marks appearing on a piece.



S-T-22 – Upper case, rather squared off letters are used to form this mark. It appears on a pattern patented in 1926 (69,312) and on a piece copyrighted in 1932.

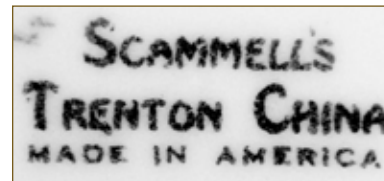


S-T-23 – This mark appears on china crested for The Baltimore Mail Line. This steamship line went out of business around 1940, so it was in use prior to that date. It was also used on some Union Pacific Railroad "Winged Streamliner" pieces, which was introduced in 1935.

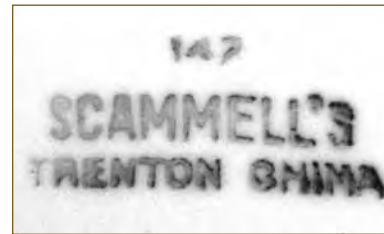


S-T-24 – This upper case lettering style uses the letters "M" and "N" with bowed sides. The same lettering style was used on the backstamp of

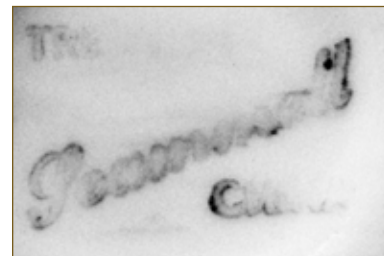
the Hotel Lexington that is dated 1929.



S-T-25 – "Made in America" has been added on this mark indicating an after-1930 usage. It was used on the 1935 "Winged Streamliner" pattern.



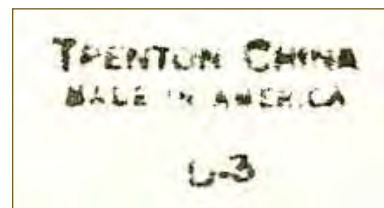
S-T-26 – A rubber stamp-applied mark appearing on cups made for Bickford's and Foster's restaurants.



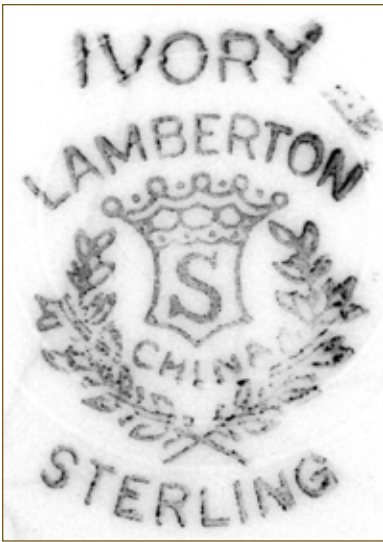
S-T-40 – This mark appears on a piece crested for Harry M. Stevens, Inc. It is another mark applied with a rubber stamp. The use of rubber stamps rather than transfers, or decals, may have been a postwar time-saving production shortcut.



S-LE-33 – Mark used on the Lenape China body introduced after March, 1935.



SG-T-36 – The absence of the "Scammell" name and the introduction of a date code in black (D-3) means this mark was used on Trenton China made by Sterling China Co. after December 1954. The Trenton China mark was used by Sterling until at least December of 1962 (date code D-4).



SG-I-41 – A Sterling mark used after January 1955. It is the same as SG-I-34, but without “Made in America.”

the customer’s name. These words seem to cause some confusion with the word “exclusively.”

The dictionary definition of “expressly” is: “for the express purpose; particularly.” “Especially” is “not general; special,” while “exclusively” means: “limited to possession, control or use in a single individual, organization, etc.”

The translation of all this is that while many patterns were produced as special orders for particular customers, the majority were not produced for just that one customer and not available to anyone else. Most patterns were made available for any customer that wanted to order them.



SG-L-42 – A Sterling rubber stamp-applied mark. The date code (“E-2”) indicates production in July to September of 1964.

This means that pieces lacking an “Especially” or “Expressly” backstamp may not have been used by the same customer as pieces with those backstamps. The only real “exclusive” patterns were those that were design patented by a customer for their use only. The best example of an “exclusive” pattern was the “Centenary Blue” pattern produced for the B&O Railroad.

Some pieces of china, particularly sauceboats, creamers and some footed comports, are hardly ever backstamped. This is due to the difficulty of turning these pieces

You may notice, in addition to the usual backstamps, some funny little marks on the back of pieces. They may be dots, lines, letters or combinations of lines and dots. These were identifying marks of the various decorators or liners, used as a means of quality control in the Lamberton Works.

over to apply the backstamps when applying the decoration to the top of the piece.

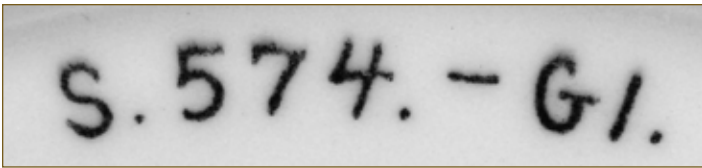
Each decorator and liner had their own mark, and if a piece was found to be defective in decoration, the inspectors knew who was to blame for the flaw. These marks may also have been used as a record of the quantity of production and may only have been applied to the top piece in a stack of finished pieces, for example.

In 1936, Scammell started charging 5¢ per dozen for special backstamps on their Trenton China line. This policy probably eliminated the use of a great many of the “Made expressly for ...” and “Supplied by ...” backstamps on Trenton China. I have found no indication of this charge having been placed on the more expensive Lamberton China, but I would suspect that this special backstamp practice was discouraged in the last years of the Scammell operation to increase productivity.

Some marks were applied by the decorator’s brush, and some by a rubber stamp. In some cases where there was an underglaze design plus an overglaze-applied coin gold decoration, two marks – a decorator’s mark and a liner’s mark – may have appeared, one for each step in the production.

“Made Expressly For ...” or “Made Especially For ...” appear on some backstamps along with

I have seen at least 26 different decorator’s or liner’s marks used. If a list identifying the



decorators' and liners' names with their marks could be found, we would know who decorated the china we find, but it is highly unlikely such a list is still in existence.

A few Scammell pieces can be found with a letter-number combination written parallel to the foot ridge of the base. Several numbers that have been found are: S.574-G1 (shown above), S.564-G1, and S.705.

S.705 appears on the bottom of an Ivory plate with backstamp S-I-27. The other two numbers are on plates decorated in red with S-L-13 backstamps. The exact meaning of these markings is not known, but here are a few possibilities.

The G1 appears on two plates decorated with the same red color, so G1 could indicate the color red, and the numbers could indicate the patterns. They could also indicate different production runs or firing temperatures. Another possibility is some kind of date code system.

All of three of these pieces appear to have been made around 1928-1930. Because the code numbers are handpainted on each, it is obvious that not every piece produced at that time was to be so marked. For whatever the purpose, these codes do not appear on very many pieces, and were probably not used very long.

Mr. Robert W. Scammell said that date codes might have been used for a short period to prove how long Lamberton China would last in daily use. There was never any attempt however, to date code each piece as Syracuse China did.

SOURCES

#1 "Encyclopaedia of British Pottery and Porcelain Marks," Geoffrey A. Godden, Bonanza Books, page 406.

#2 Sanitary Pottery in the United States, Thomas Maddocks Sons Co., 1910.

#3 "The Official Price Guide to American Pottery & Porcelain," Dorothy Robinson and Bill Feeny, 1980, page 80.

