

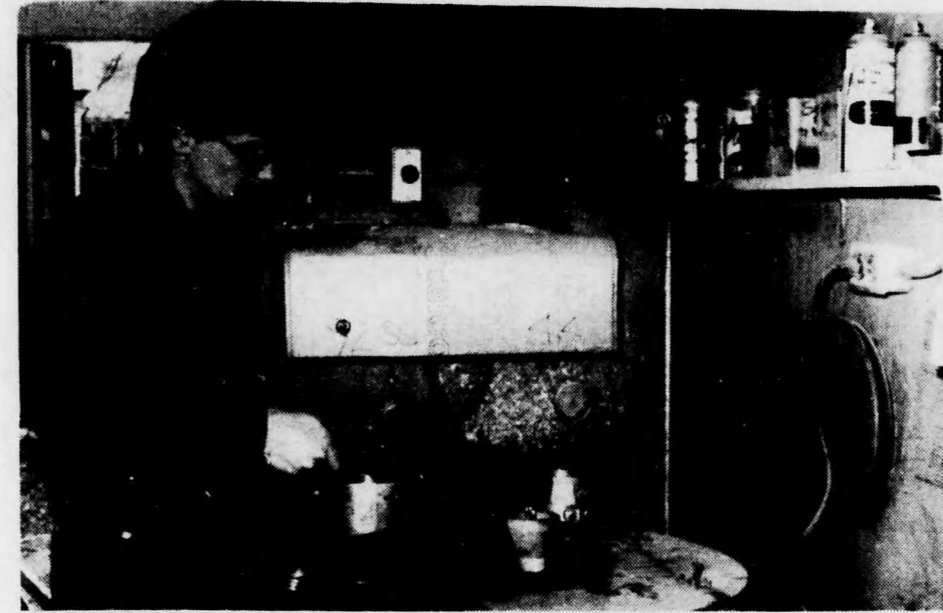
A look at the ancient craft of pewtering



Martin Aitken prepares the mold for casting of a candle holder...



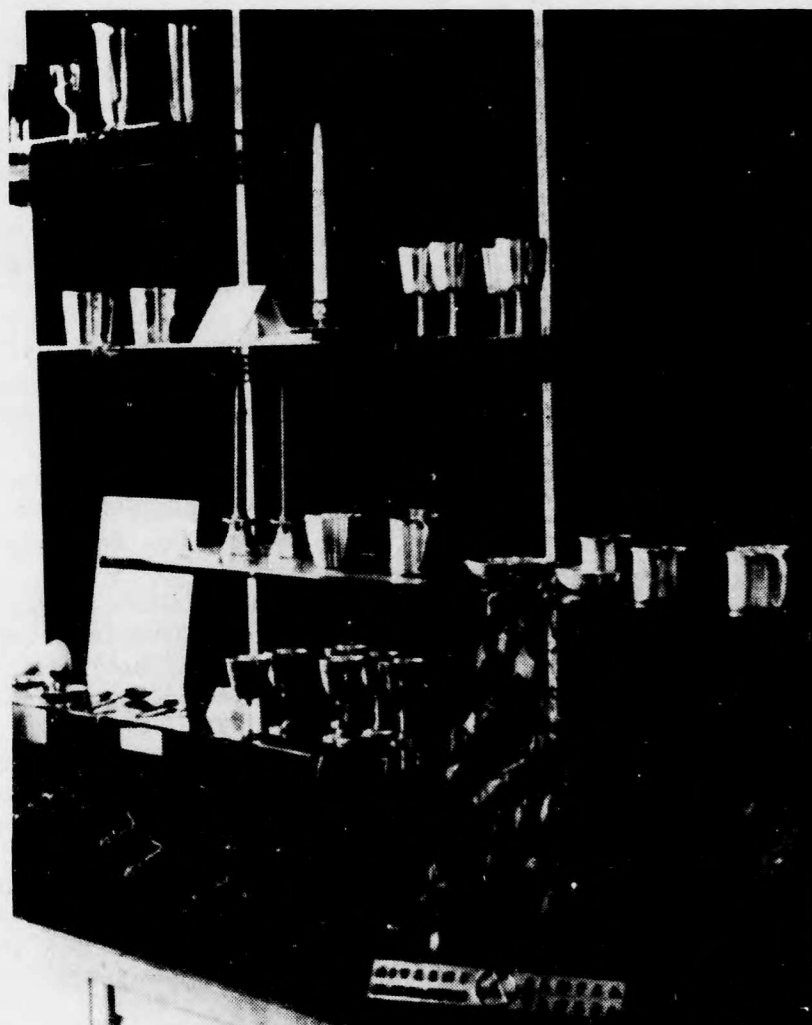
...the mold is set....



...the pewter is poured in....



...a success!



A wide variety of pewter products.

Making pewter ware is an ancient craft. Pewter pieces have been discovered that were made before 1000 a.d. and plates have survived from the time of the Roman occupation of Britain. This ancient craft is alive and flourishing here in Fredericton. Bill Crowell is the originator of pewtering in the Fredericton area and today the beautiful pieces produced by his former apprentices are sold all over Canada.

Pewter is an alloy of tin, antimony and copper. It does not tarnish like silver and it is not as strong as silver so pewter pieces are heavier. There are a number of ways of working with pewter. The Romans cast pewter in stone molds, molds made of clay mixed with calves' hair or of plaster. In the sixteenth century molds were made of brass or copper and relief decorations were made either by chiselling or etching on the mold. Another method for working with pewter is spinning which was developed early in the nineteenth century. Rolling and

Feature by ANNA SUNDIN
Photos by ANNE KILFOIL

casting in rubber molds developed in this century.

A combination of methods is used to produce a piece of pewter. To make a tankard, mug or goblet is a process that involves more than one method. The stem and handle are cast in rubber molds. The very first step is to make the mold. The mold is made from a pattern. The pattern has to be very carefully made as the mold will repeat any imperfections of the pattern. The pattern is then placed between two pieces of uncured rubber which is then subjected to heat and pressure. This melts the rubber around the pattern so that the pattern leaves an impression in the rubber. This process also vulcanizes the rubber.

When the rubber mold is used it is first dusted with powder and then placed in a machine which spins the mold very fast. Then pewter is poured into the mold through a hole in the top and the centrifugal

force makes the pewter fill up the mold evenly. The resulting pieces have to be filed and then polished before they can be soldered onto the rest of the piece.

The cup itself is made by spinning. A disc of pewter is formed around a chuck which is the shape of the inside of the required piece. The chuck is mounted on a lathe that is spinning at 2,000 rpm.

The stem and/or the handle are soldered onto the cup and then the entire piece is polished and finished. Finishes can range from dull to bright.

Fredericton is known for the number and excellence of its pewterers and at any craft festival in New Brunswick their work can be admired. Pewtering is a craft that has a long history and a proud tradition behind it and it has found a home here in Fredericton, New Brunswick.



Rocky Jones polishes pewter spoons

