

**A FEW GOOD MEN: Three Passionate Pipe Collectors, Their 15 Minutes of Fame,
and Then Some**

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by

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It has often been said that pipe collecting enriches one's life, but this hobby is not for everyone. It may appear that such a hobby is the playground of only the rich and famous, because history records, for example, that notables such as the Duc de Richelieu, Armand-Emmanuel du Plessis (1766-1822), French nobleman, soldier, statesman, and premier was an avid pipe collector; the Duke of Sussex, Prince Augustus Frederick (1773-1843), had an immense collection of pipes that drew a large audience to the Christie and Manson auction when he died; "Old Hickory," Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), the seventh President of the United States, was an inveterate pipe smoker and collector, and a few of his pipes can be seen at his home, The Hermitage, near Nashville, Tennessee; the Baroness Alice de Rothschild (1847-1922) of the renowned financier family, was famous not only for her gardens and grounds near Grasse, France—a hybrid violet bears her name, while several Cuban and Dominican cigars bear the family name—but also for her superior collection of Meissen, wood, and meerschaum pipes; and the last king of Egypt, the notorious playboy Farouk I (1921-1965), had an comprehensive collection of antiquities, scarabs, amulets, bronzes, vases, erotica, numismatic coins, and small sculptures that, by definition, also included some exquisite meerschaum pipes.

Pipe collectors, whether they fancy modern-day briars, vintage corncobs, or antique meerschaums, can best be described as an amorphous group of individuals. Many are unpredictable, fading in and out of the hobby at their pleasure and pace. Others figuratively dip their toe into the (pipe-collecting) water, discover that it's either too cold or too hot, and move on to other pastimes. Then there are those who stay the course for a lifetime, as did three not so-rich-and-famous, but consummate, collectors who came under the spell of the antique pipe and remained devoted aficionados throughout their

lives. This is the saga of three very passionate collectors, and why their names continue to resonate and echo in the annals of pipe lore: William Bragge and Baron Oscar Amadeus de Watteville who lived in 19th century Europe, and John F. H. Heide, an American, who lived in the 20th century.¹ (Another noted American collector, George Arents, Jr., a contemporary of Heide, is excluded because he collected tobacco books, manuscripts, engravings, and ephemera, not the utensils of smoke.)

Cutler-Collector-Cataloguer

William Bragge (1823-1884), F.S.A., F.G.S., of Shirle Hill, Handsworth, Birmingham, (**Illustration 1**) was a master cutler of Sheffield, England, a member of the Birmingham Natural History and Microscopical Society, a well-known art lover, and a bibliophile.² He had a varied career, at a time, civil engineer, railway supervisor, managing director of a steel foundry, and principal owner of a watch-making factory. As a smoker, Bragge's fascination with its implements nurtured his initial love for, and his later aggressive pursuit of, the literature, manuscripts, drawings, and the artifacts associated with tobacco. Business travel and a fluency in several foreign languages combined to facilitate the rapid growth of a collection that literally spanned the globe with more than 7,000 artifacts acquired in one brief and energetic period of 20 years. The artifact collection included pipes from around the world; tobacco boxes and jars; pipe tampers; cigar cases; fire strikers; snuff boxes, rasps, mills, spoons and bottles; and much, much more.

¹ These three personages are well known in America. Giuseppe "Epe" Ramazzotti of Milan, Italy (1898-1987), an engineer and university professor, began collecting in earnest after 1940, and amassed an impressive collection of antique pipes, but he was less known in the United States. Other European collectors whose names have been added recently to the international tobacciana elite are: J. Trevor Barton of England; István Bárczy (1866-1943), once Lord Mayor of Budapest, whose collection is now ensconced in the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest; the brothers János and György Blaskovich, whose collection, started by their grandfather, can be seen at the Blaskovich Mansion at Tápíószele, Hungary; and Walter Vanden Bulcke of Kortrijk, Belgium, who went public when much of his extensive tobacco antiquarian collection appeared in Alice Orhant's color-illustrated book, *Up in Smoke* (L'Aventurine, Paris, 2000).

² F.S.A., Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and F.G.S., Fellow of the Geographical Society.

Bragge was very public about his collection. From press releases of that day, one can read that he frequently loaned the collection. His first exhibition was in 1870 at the Midland Institute in his hometown of Birmingham; on December 16, 1870, The *Birmingham Daily Post* drew attention to this exhibition with a feature article, “The Pipes of All Peoples.” (The entire text of this article was reprinted as “The Pipes of Various Races” in *Cope’s Tobacco Plant*, January 1871.) In April 1873, he participated in the International Exhibition at South Kensington, organized and designed by Her Majesty’s Commissioners to illustratively traverse several continents of habit, taste and art by examining “...specimens of all kinds of Tobacco-pipes, Tobacco-grinders, &c., made before 1800.”³ The exhibit included 2,378 specimens from Bragge and artifacts from other private collections and museums. *The Illustrated London News*, September 20, 1873, detailed the audience’s warm reception, and included a full-page illustration of many of Bragge’s newest pipe acquisitions. In 1874, he displayed his burgeoning library of tobacco books at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in London.⁴ In 1878, a portion of his collection was on the road again, this time, to Liverpool.⁵ And, in 1880, his collection of some 7,000 objects—crammed into 89 compartments and cases—was exhibited at the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art.⁶

Beyond assembling scrapbooks filled with articles, drawings, pen and ink illustrations, printers’ proofs of various engraved tobacco papers and wrappers, photographs of various pipe collections, unpublished manuscripts, and lectures on tobacco, Bragge kept formal records of his accessions, further testimony to his enthusiasm, zeal, and attention to detail:

³ “Tobacco-Pipes: With Special Reference to the Collection in the London International Exhibition, 1873,” *Cope’s Tobacco Plant*, No. 43, Vol. I, October 1873, 510.

⁴ Burlington Fine Arts Club, *Exhibition Catalog of Illuminated Manuscripts Lent by Various Collectors to the Club, the Largest Group Being the Property of William Bragge*, London, 1874.

⁵ Liverpool Art Club, *Catalogue of Specimens of Art Work in Chinese Snuff Bottles, and Other Articles, in Enamel, Porcelain, Ivory, &c., Connected With the Use of Tobacco*, Liverpool, 1878.

⁶ The Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, *Guide to the Loan Collection of Objects Connected With The Use of Tobacco and Other Narcotics*, Edinburgh, 1880.

- For the South Kensington exhibition, he prepared a manuscript, *Catalogue of Pipes and Other Objects Connected With the Use of Tobacco, lent to the International Exhibition of 1873*.
- He assembled a notebook containing pen and ink drawings of 260 English clay tobacco pipe maker's marks. He then convinced the Secretary of the Gouda (Netherlands) Guild of Pipe Makers to create for him a similar set of drawings of 310 Dutch clay tobacco pipe maker's marks granted by the Guild for the period 1683-1826. All 570 maker's marks represented clay pipes in his collection."⁷
- He commissioned George Catlin, the self-taught American artist whose primary subject matter was Indians and their culture, to produce an elaborate manuscript showing the forms and uses of pipes in North America between 1864-1886, based on pipes that were the property of the British Museum, the India Museum, the Christie Collection, the Blackmore Collection, and other English museums. Catlin created 232 hand-colored "to-scale" drawings accompanied by a written description and history of each object. (I believe that this set of uniform drawings was the stimulus for another major undertaking, described next.)
- He commissioned another artist to create *Illustrations of the Catalogue* of his collection, a "to-scale" set of about 1,200 line drawings on specially prepared paper of uniform size representing all his accessions, each drawing accompanied by a calligraphic-style descriptive-historic précis. These line drawings were catalogued by type object and provenance and placed into 20 custom-fitted boxes made in the likeness of books; the spine of each box was embossed in gold "Drawings of The Tobacco Collection of W. Bragge, F.S.A.," and, subordinate to this title, appeared the name of the country or region whose contents were contained in that box, e.g., "England."⁸ (**Illustration 2**)
- In 1874, he privately printed 50 hand-numbered and signed copies of *Bibliotheca Nicotiana; A First Catalogue of Books About Tobacco*; it contained a précis of 169 of his books and manuscripts.
- Last, in 1880, having achieved considerable public recognition, he privately printed 200 hand-numbered and -signed copies of *Bibliotheca Nicotiana; A*

⁷ William Bragge, F.S.A., *Bibliotheca Nicotiana; A Catalogue of Books About Tobacco, Together With A Catalogue of Objects Connected With The Use of Tobacco in All Its Forms*, Birmingham, 1880, 57.

⁸ Today, of the 20 boxes of drawings, the British Museum owns seven, a British collector owns 12, and one box (Volume 14 containing drawings of pipe stoppers and pipe prickers) was unintentionally destroyed. In 1991, J. Trevor Barton, a Bragge devotee, compiled and privately published *A Portfolio of William Bragge and His Pipes of All Peoples*, a premier reference, in a limited edition of 25 numbered copies. It contains: (a) the article that appeared in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, December 16, 1870; (b) "Brief List of the Tobacco Collection Formed by Mr. W^m. Bragge, F.S.A., F.G.S., &c.," Birmingham, January 1880; (c) Bragge's own 83-page notebook of his hand-drawn illustrations and handwritten notes about each acquisition; and (d) facsimile illustrations of 450 pipes as they appeared in the "Drawings of The Tobacco Collection of W. Bragge, F.S.A."

*Catalogue of Books About Tobacco, Together With A Catalogue of Objects Connected With The Use of Tobacco in All Its Forms.*⁹ (Illustrations 3 and 4).

The Preface of the 1880 catalog reflects his emotional involvement with collecting:

It was begun as the recreation of a busy life to a large extent spent in traveling, thus affording special opportunities for collecting, and has been continued to the present time with increasing pleasure and success—the collection growing rapidly, while the field for exploration has opened out far more widely than had been expected.

The results of these twenty years of labour though large, are yet necessarily incomplete; but it is hoped that they may become the nucleus of a collection as nearly perfect as is possible, and thus extend our knowledge of a curious and interesting practice which, beginning in very early ages, has become common in every country of the world.

Someone very familiar with the Bragge collection thought long and hard about its possible future disposition:

A collection so peculiar is, we repeat, scarcely a fitting one to be in private hands, even when they are so liberal as those of Mr. Bragge. It would be a distinct loss to history and to science if this Nicotian Museum and Library were ever to be dispersed. It should be secured for some centre of the Tobacco trade. Such a record of the past and present of the use of Tobacco, well housed in Liverpool or New York, would be an eighth wonder of the world.¹⁰

On February 25, 1882, two years before Bragge died, *The Illustrated London News* reprinted the December 16, 1870 article that had appeared in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, “The Pipes of All Peoples,” along with a half-page illustration of an assortment of his pipes. Sadly, all things come to an end, because sometime later in 1882, the entire pipe collection was consigned for sale to W. Wareham, an art dealer in London. About 160 of Bragge’s North American, African, Southeast Asian, and Asiatic ethnographic pipes were purchased for the H. Christy Collection, and these are now in the British Museum; the Edinburgh Museum purchased a significant quantity of his artifacts; and the balance was

⁹ This volume contains 409 bibliographic citations and a detailed descriptive list of 3,886 artifacts and utensils pertaining to tobacco use, catalogued by medium and provenance.

¹⁰ “The Bragge Collection,” *Cope’s Tobacco Plant*, No. 129, Vol. II, December 1880, 558.

sold to various individuals.¹¹ Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge, the London auction house, had sold a small fraction of Bragge's library in 1880 and, in 1882, in the year that Wareham purchased Bragge's artifacts, Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge auctioned the balance of the Bragge library.¹² Handwritten notes in the 1882 auction catalog's margins indicate that both Wareham and Bragge purchased several of the 256 book lots, and that the entire sale yielded a mere 180 British pounds. However much 180 pounds were then worth, it speaks *volumes* for the evident lack of interest in tobacco literature, at least on that day!

In 1883, a magazine feature article about Bragge stated: "...it is a matter for lasting regret that a collection, so singular, and so instructive, should have been sacrificed..."¹³ Now and then, a Bragge pipe appears at auction, but without any of the several records Bragge created, the buyer is not able to attribute any specific artifact to him.

The Baron-Bureaucrat

Whereas the Bragge name continues to have cachet among the more serious antique pipe collectors today, Baron de Watteville also made a great contribution to pipe legendry although, perhaps, unwittingly. And whereas Bragge's collection was entirely dispersed along with its attendant documentation, through a quirk of fate, luck, or coincidence, not only is the de Watteville collection still intact, it can also be traced through two other avenues, word and picture.

¹¹ In 1974, the U.S. Tobacco Company, Greenwich, Connecticut, purchased a substantial private collection in England that included several Bragge's antique pipes and five of the 20 book-boxes of his drawings.

¹² Sotheby, Wilkinson and Hodge, *Catalogue of a Portion of the Extensive and Valuable Library of William Bragge, ESQ., F.S.A., Comprising Early Printed Works with Woodcuts; Splendid Books of Prints, Important Manuscripts; Rare Bibles and Liturgies...* November 10, 1880; and *Catalogue of Books Relating to Tobacco, Collected by W. Bragge...Being a Most Extensive Assemblage of Works Upon Its Growth and Manufacture, Also Its Use and Abuse, Forming a Library of the Whole Literature of Tobacco, Comprising Many Rare and Curious Books, Pamphlets, &c...* June 1, 1882.

¹³ Harry V. Barnett, "The Pipes of All Peoples," *The Magazine of Art*, Vol. VI, 1883, 103.

De Watteville (1824-1901), Chief of France's *Depôt des Livres*, was also the Director of Sciences and Letters in the French Ministry of Public Instruction and, concurrently, the Government's commissioner to two international exhibitions held in Paris, the *Exposition Universelle* of 1867 and of 1878. At the time of the 1873 Kensington Exhibition in which Bragge participated, the English press mentioned de Watteville as a pipe collector of some repute, but it noted that he was not invited to London to participate in or attend this exhibition. Little is known about his personal life, but ample evidence survives to illuminate his rather unique pipe influence.

First, a portion of his collection appears as graphic art. Albert Charles August Racinet (1825-1893), a lithographer and draftsman, was the creator of two master works: *L'Ornement Polychrome* (1869), an historic encyclopedia of ornamental design, and *Le Costume Historique* (1877 and 1888), a six-volume portfolio illustrating costumes of Europe and the Near East in ancient, medieval, and modern periods. *Le Costume Historique* contains 500 plates: 300 richly colored chromolithographs and 200 monochromes. Of these 500 plates that exhibit the dress, utensils, jewelry, weapons of war, and myriad other artifacts of the various ages of Man, six illustrate various smoking pipes by region: three of Asia, two of Africa, and one of Europe (**Illustration 5**). The pipes illustrated in each plate are numbered and keyed to an accompanying legend that attributed the pipes to de Watteville.

The second bit of evidence is a book published in 1891, Spire Blondel's *Le Tabac. Le Livre des Fumeurs et des Priseurs* (Tobacco. The Book of Smokers and Snuff Takers), which is a handsome volume about the history and use of tobacco in all its forms. de Watteville has a significant presence in this book. First, he wrote the Preface in which he posits seven maxims not found elsewhere in tobacco literature. These maxims reflect a unique French perspective with which, no doubt, other European pipe smokers of that era, particularly Germans, probably took issue. I offer a literal translation of these seven maxims:

- ❑ The pipe is characteristic of a race, while the cigar and the cigarette are cosmopolitan.
- ❑ The activity of a race is proportional to the length of the pipe stem.
- ❑ The shorter the pipe, the more industrious the race.
- ❑ Conversely, the longer the pipe, the lazier the race.
- ❑ The more economical the race, the smaller the pipe.
- ❑ Conversely, the more prodigal the race, the more they smoke, and the more gluttonous the race, the larger the pipe bowl.
- ❑ Finally, by the manner (or custom) of smoking, one can judge the spirit of a race.

Here and there in the book's margins appear black and white line drawings of various pipes attributed to de Watteville (**Illustration 6**). The volume is further subdivided into books and chapters, and Book II, *La Pipe*, Chapter V, "Collections de Pipes," explains how de Watteville's spirited collecting enthusiasm was engendered. He began collecting pipes at age 10, as a result of a visit that he and his father made to a certain Prince Elim Metchersky, a Russian general who owned an assortment of antique pipes.

The final and most lasting piece of evidence is his pipe collection. In 1912, the Baron donated it to Chateau Oberhofen, the Historic Museum of Berne, Switzerland where it remained in storage for 60 years. In 1972, the Chateau brought the collection to light in a public exhibition. Today, the collection may be seen there by special appointment.

The Windy City Hobbyist

The third legend is John F.H. Heide of Chicago, Illinois, who preferred to smoke a briar, but collected pipe specimens from everywhere. Beginning around 1900, he traveled abroad frequently. On a trip to Munich, he saw some old pipes, and caught the collecting bug. When he was at home, he used a network of agents and spotters who did his bidding. He also purchased pipes from antique shops, private parties and auction houses across the country, deaccessioned U.S. and foreign museum collections, American ministers in

China, Japan, and Korea, and schoolmasters and missionaries in Southern Rhodesia, among others. In the next 40 years, Heide amassed an extensive collection of pipes and associated utensils—1,344 smoking artifacts to be exact—because he recorded each acquisition in a neatly typewritten catalog that was discovered sometime after his death in November 1946. Heide had also assembled a substantial tobacco library, but no formal record of his book collection has ever been located.¹⁴

A few factoids regarding Heide's collection are noteworthy. The first was that some of his better pipes were featured on the cover of the October 1946 issue of *Hobbies. The Magazine-for-Collectors* (**Illustration 7**). George Revilo Carter, a Chicago auctioneer, placed a full-page advertisement in it headlined: "To Museums, Ethnologists, Anthroponomists, Botanists, and Their Friends. The Heide Collection of Pipes and Other Tobacco Using Implements and Accessories." Carter offered Heide's 47-year collection "...for sale as a whole, at inventoried cost." To quote further: "While American Indians are amply represented, from the Queen Charlotte islands of the Northwest to Florida, the collection is richest in its unmatched material from the Eskimos and the Mongolians: China, Manchuria, Korea, Indo China, Siam, Japan and Formosa."¹⁵ Included were a 4,000-year-old stone pipe from Boonville, Missouri, Aztec silver pipes, meerschaums, opium pipes, shishas, pipes of Catlinite, boxwood, jadeite, walrus ivory and more, an exceptionally diversified collection, yet its formal valuation was a mere \$30,000.¹⁶

¹⁴The Carter advertisement in *Hobbies*, October 1946 states: "A corollary library of some 1300 titles, practically all 'first editions,' constitutes a select nucleus of the 4,000 titles listed in the Arents bibliography."

¹⁵ Heide's sub-collection of Japanese pipes was so extensive and of such remarkable quality that in 1936 the Government of Japan made a formal, but unsuccessful, request to repurchase them.

¹⁶ In February 1947, the Williams, Barker & Severn Auction Company, Chicago, sold the antique pipe collection of George Ellis Gary, a former vice president of the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation. It was reported that Gary spent nearly a half million dollars traveling the world in search of rare and unusual pipes. Heide and Gary notwithstanding, today, three of our most prominent antique pipe collectors live in the vicinity of Chicago, so either something in the air or the water around Lake Michigan compels some of its residents to collect antique pipes, or Chicago was, is, and will always be the U.S. epicenter of antique pipe collecting.

Some 30 years later, a fraction of his pipes reappeared at auction when Sotheby Parke Bernet Eighty-Four, New York, conducted Sale 615, "Pipes," on April 4, 1978. I was at this event. To my surprise, the auction catalog contained a separate section: "A Large and Extensive Selection of African, European and Oriental Pipes from the John F.H. Heide Collection." The story does not end there, because in the early 1990s, the owner of a Chicago-area rooming house sold the personal property of a deceased boarder. Among the boarder's belongings was an old leather suitcase containing about 20 high-grade Japanese *kiseru* (tobacco pipes) and *kiseru-zutsu* (pipe cases) that were offered to an area pipe collector. Each item bore a tag in Heide's handwriting—an accession number and a brief description—and these accession numbers and descriptions matched the typewritten entries in Heide's catalog. More interesting, each tag also bore a list price from the Carter sale. I can only conclude that the boarder must have retained these items for almost 50 years, hoping, perchance, to sell them at some future date that never materialized. (Today, the present value of these *kiseru* and *zutsu* could be as much as, if not more than, the 1946 valuation of the entire Heide collection.) Many other Heide pipes are found in private U.S. collections today; they are easily identified, because each bore a discrete, large-font, typewritten number on paper covered by cellophane tape.

It is said that libraries endure and legends never die. Bragge and de Watteville were inveterate, arch, discriminating 19th century European collectors without parallel. It was reported that Heide, the most notable American antique pipe collector of this past century, had "one of the greatest pipe collections ever assembled in this country..."; some even considered it far more extensive than Bragge's.¹⁷ All three men may have had a degree of influence on other collectors in their respective day; they have also set an example to many American antique pipe collectors who are striving to amass a collection of tobacco implements that expresses the unique character and individual dimension of pipe smoking around the world. "With the ever increasing number of pipe collectors and the widening demand for these old and rare pieces, it is doubtful if one man will ever

¹⁷ H.C. Hale, Jr., "The Heide Collection," *Pipe Lovers*, Vol. III, No. 6, June 1948, 177.

possess as many pieces as once made up the famous collection of J.F.H. Heide.”¹⁸ Fifty years ago, this observation was probably accurate. In the last decade or so, several Americans, in a shorter span of time than 40 years, have accumulated handsome collections of antique and ethnographic pipes far exceeding the Heide Collection in breadth, depth, quantity and, most important, quality!

The Future Who’s Who

The destiny of any life-long collection is always a very personal and emotional decision. Often, finances dictate its future disposition. Family interest in the collection may determine if, when, and how it is to be dispersed. It is too soon to determine who might be the next American pipe legend, the next U.S. Prince of Pipes, from among those who have always made their collection conspicuous and accessible. (There are, no doubt, many pipe collectors who do not seek attention or adulation from their contemporaries, but to achieve prominence in any field, one must be in the public eye. Had the three luminaries been “closet-collectors,” they would not now have their place in pipe history.) Given the average age of the American collectors I know, one or more of these just might enter the Pipe Collector’s Heavenly Hall of Fame in this century *à la* Bragge, de Watteville, or Heide. Hopefully, each will leave an indelibly enduring and substantive mark on the pipe-collecting world. More, I hope that each will be long remembered and revered for extraordinary dedication and devotion to collecting these antiquarian utensils of smoke.

¹⁸ Ibid., 178.

Captions for Illustrations

Illustration 1: Unsigned original drawing of William Bragge and a montage of his pipes, the only portrait in existence, once belonging to Bragge's granddaughter. Drawing courtesy of J. Trevor Barton, photograph by Gary R. Coppage.

Illustration 2: One of the 1,200 to-scale line drawings with handwritten description, this of Bragge's pipe, A.g. (Section A, Europe, Germany) 81, an unusual, almost bizarre, mixed-medium pipe of bone, ivory, and wood. Photograph by Gary R. Coppage.

Illustration 3: Citation for the Bragge pipe, A.g. 81, *Bibliotheca Nicotiana* (1880), 78. Book is the property of the author, photograph by Gary R. Coppage.

Illustration 4: A.g. 81 today, *sans chapeau*, which must have disappeared sometime after 1880. Pipe and photograph courtesy of Dr. Sarunas Peckus.

Illustration 5: The six Racinet polychrome lithographic plates illustrating an assortment of de Watteville's pipes. The plates are the property of the author, photograph by Gary R. Coppage.

Illustration 6: Page 137, Blondel's *Le Tabac. Le Livre des Fumeurs et des Priseurs*, with illustrations of some of de Watteville's French clay tobacco pipes bordering the text. Book is the property of the author, photograph by Gary R. Coppage.

Illustration 7: The cover of *Hobbies*, October 1946. Photograph courtesy *Antiques & Collecting Magazine* (the successor to *Hobbies*).