

Eleanor and David Brand's handcrafted thimbles (Dayton Ohio)

I was first introduced to the thimbles of this talented pair in 1985. I was looking for a thimble exchange pen pal and being a member of Thimble Collectors International (TCI) I chose the Ohio Thimble Seekers. Their secretary, the late Myra Good, took up my appeal and sent me thimbles from her group. One was from Eleanor Brand, and I was intrigued that one of their members was able to create such an unusual brass thimble

With this in mind I have created a once-only topic on American thimble makers

The Brand's thimbles were made in small numbers, so I was fortunate to end up with four of their thimbles. The thimbles are made of brass and bronze, copper and sterling silver. Some of the copper thimbles have enamelling

They began making thimbles in 1977 but only marked them with their initials from 1979. When dated the year made is lettered alongside the initials. Latest date seen 1990

There are far more thimbles with Eleanor's maker's mark (ECB) than David's (DB) – so David's are featured at the end of each sequence

ECB



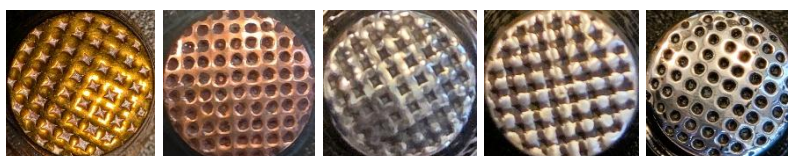
copper (in apex) – brass – sterling – handpainted enamelling

DB



brass – copper – sterling

The basic pattern of their apex indentations is a grid or waffle - sometimes these are diamond-shaped – others are round

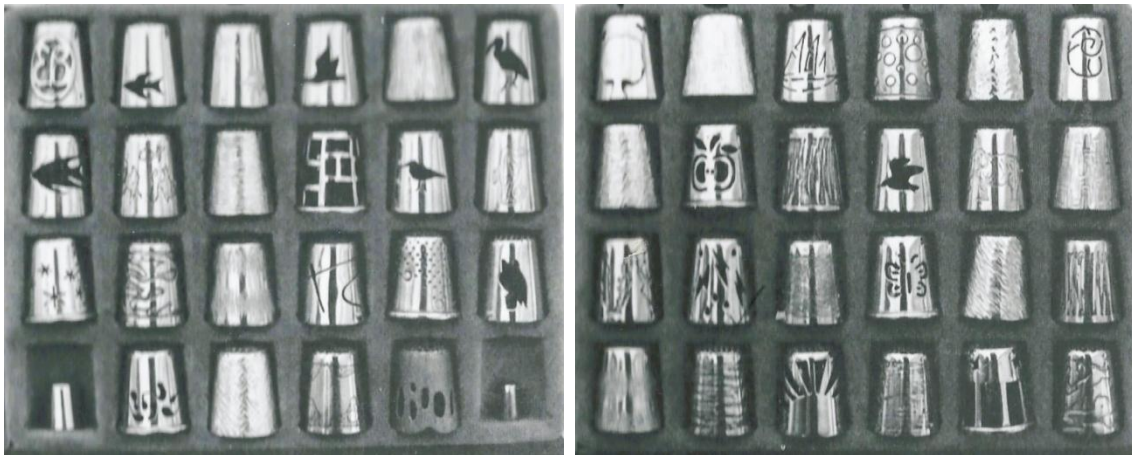


There is an additional mark for their sterling range



Once I saw this back and white photo in Matthis of the Eleanor and David Brand catalogue (the rows are lettered A-H, 1-6), I knew there would be at least 48 designs to look for, for this topic, to do justice to these handcrafted thimbles

From the photos below – there are no names allocated by the Brands to their designs – Gay Ann Rogers named FOUR silver thimble designs – Thimble, Thimble, Tadpoles, Flower and Monument Valley. Other names I've used were found in the References
Other thimble names I've allocated are purely descriptive



What led Eleanor into making thimbles? She was already a collector of thimbles and sewing tools, when she enrolled in a course of jewellery casting and created a thimble for her collection. Members of her thimble group encouraged her to make thimbles for them. From there they must have been available to other TCI members

What processes were used to create these thimbles? They were always experimenting and trying new techniques. I don't understand the technical terms, but I have seen the following terms used:

- pierced metal – this could be a series of holes or images cut out
- applied where they inlaid metal over the surface – both abstract designs and images - images could be applied – first having cut out pieces of the metal, they were then inlaid over the image
 - enamelled thimbles were hand illustrated with all round designs
 - unpierced surfaces were either engraved with the design – or etched
 - David etched and then filled with black fusible alloy creating niello
 - surfaces were hand-punched
 - others of his thimbles were created by the lost wax casting
- David heated the bronze and placed in acid. The copper colour remains in the recesses, creating a two-colour effect

Their thimbles all have flat apexes and raised rims are not common

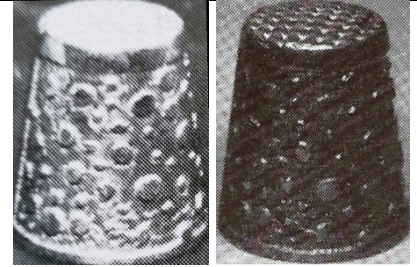
I have no evidence as to whether David brought the technical know-how to the business, with Eleanor the creative partner. All thimbles below were made by Eleanor unless stated otherwise. David may have turned his hand to creating his own designs at a later date

Eleanor died in 2008

BRASS and BRONZE THIMBLES



apple
no date



bubbles
b&w photos



dove
also made in sterling



ship



OHIO THIMBLE SEEKERS
1986
made for their Mini convention



David Brand
copper shows thru after acid bath
signature on solder seam
1983

COPPER THIMBLES



basketry
no date
ECB mark up in apex



RL: brushed finish
1983
also made in sterling



fish



lightning and rain
1985



THIMBLE THIMBLE
applied
unusual to have indented sides
1982
also made in sterling



David Brand

COPPER THIMBLES WITH ENAMELLING



autumn leaves
applied leaves
no enamelled lining



fish
applied
royal blue enamelled lining



matching enameled lining



rainbow
royal blue enameled lining



trees
1985
b&w photo



snowflakes
hand-illustrated
matching enameled lining



trees
1988
white enameled lining

STERLING SILVER THIMBLES



bulrushes and birds
1990
different rims



CS
commissioned by Clara Sennheim



EB
Eleanor Brand
b&w photo



dove
also made in brass



brushed
also made in brushed copper



tree and birds



1985
with matching needle threader
b&w photos



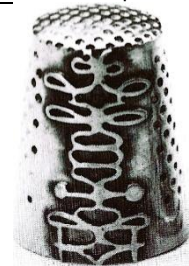
MOON FLIGHT
1985
copper and bronze applique
b&w photo



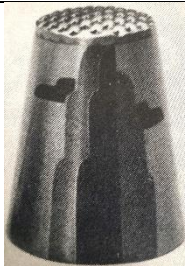
sawn and soldered



TADPOLES
1980



THIMBLE THIMBLE
1982
appliqued with copper and brass
insets
also made in copper
b&w photo



MONUMENT VALLEY
1983
copper and brass applique
b&w photo



fish
1980
handpainted
enamelling over silver



David Brand
niello



David Brand
FLOWERS
1982
b&w photo



trees
David Brand



David Brand
lost wax casting
b&w photo

References

- Eleanor Brand. TCI Bulletin October 1989*
Christina Bertrand Brass thimbles. 1986
Averill Mathis Antique & collectible thimbles. 1986
Meg Owen Handcrafted sewing tools for connoisseur collectors. Thimbletter October 1985
Gay Ann Rogers American silver thimbles. 1995
Jean Shoup Thimbles Only catalogue. 1983
Thimbles exhibited. TCI Bulletin January 1985

Contributors

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This listing of Eleanor and David Brand's handcrafted thimbles does not purport to be complete or accurate in all aspects.

Rather it invites comments and contributions to add to our knowledge. My thanks to the contributors.

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