

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

KEY TERMS

- President Rutherford B. Hayes and First Lady Lucy Hayes
- Flora and Fauna
- Post-Civil War
- Presidential Porcelain
- Unification



CLOSE LOOKING

THE PORCELAIN HAYES STATE DINNER SERVICE is unique among presidential china services. Designed by artist Theodore Davis and produced by Haviland & Co. in Limoges, France, in 1879, the service for fifty guests boasts 562 pieces and 130 different designs. Various plates, bowls, cups, and service pieces for each course are decorated with flora and fauna of the United States. The service includes: dinner, fish, and game plates and related platters; salad and oyster plates; soup plates; fruit, dessert, and ice cream plates; after-dinner coffee cups and saucers, and teacups; sauce boats, butter plates, and other serving pieces.

Each plate is uniquely shaped and painted to reflect the theme of the course at dinner. A set of ice cream plates and trays was designed to represent snowshoes (above, left). The plate shape is distinctively turned up and gilded at the corners displaying bright white “snow.” The effect of the central image is that of a snowshoe on a bed of snow rendered deep pink by the reflection of early evening light.¹

Decorated with a willow switch bent in a circle and thin strips of woven reed across it, the *Indian Plate* (above, right) was intended

HAYES PRESIDENTIAL SERVICE

Designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886

Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration

Designer: Theodore Russell Davis

Born: Boston, Massachusetts 1840

Died: Asbury Park, New Jersey 1894

Manufacturer: Haviland & Company, Limoges, France, 1842–present

‘SNOWSHOE’ ICE CREAM PLATE

(left) Gift of Jonathan W. Kolker, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker
BMA 1999.134

OYSTER PLATE (middle)

Gift of Jonathan W. Kolker, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker
BMA 1999.135

‘INDIAN’ PLATE (right)

Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker
BMA 1999.141



'SMELT FISH' PLATE

Friends of the American Wing Fund
BMA 1998.22

Among the twelve designs for the fish course was the smelt. Considered at the time “a choice breakfast fish,” smelt is native to America’s Atlantic coast from New Jersey to Maine. It is often fished through the ice during the winter months. Smelts decorate the top of the plate, and the bottom is shaped like a scallop shell.



'POMPANO' FISH PLATE

Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in
Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker, BMA 1999.140

This fish plate is painted with the image of a pompano, a Florida salt-water delicacy that was dropped on the sand by a fish hawk that couldn't carry its weight. Pompano, weighing five to six pounds, are seldom caught north of Delaware.

to look like a Native American basket, perhaps reminiscent of those sketched by Davis on his travels west as correspondent for *Harper's Weekly*. Davis described the porcelain as a post-dinner “‘after-coffee’ plate designed to serve ‘crackers and cheese and cigars,’ if, as was frequently the case, the dinner ended ‘in smoke.’” He created the basket design to evoke a “breezy Western whiff from the Plains to an Eastern dinner.”²

One of the most admired pieces in the service was the *Oyster Plate* (previous page, center). During the Victorian period, raw oysters were the first course served at most formal dinners. Responding to the popularity of the shellfish, various manufacturers created plates in a myriad of beautiful shapes using materials such as glass, silver, and porcelain. On this plate the iridescent white oyster shells create an eye-catching contrast to the royal blue ocean behind. Under the oysters are green seaweed and smaller dark raccoon oysters, native to the Southern Atlantic states. Gilt highlights the edges of the plate, seaweed, and shellfish creating the illusion of an underwater scene.

ART IN CONTEXT

RUTHERFORD HAYES assumed the office of president in 1877, at a time when the nation was marked by transition and bitter political and popular discord following the Civil War. While Hayes may have aspired to foster equality and harmony in American society, the realities of American life were complex and often divisive. Cities were growing and farmland was disappearing. Industry was booming, and labor strikes were erupting. With the return of Southern home rule—the ability of local governments in the South to exercise their own power—and the federal government’s retreat from involvement in civil rights protection, African-Americans entered a period of renewed repression and violence, and many migrated north. Native Americans were subject to federal land policies that resulted in further loss of their lands. Chinese immigrant laborers were targets of rioters in the West.

In early 1879, First Lady Lucy Hayes was in the White House Conservatory choosing fern clippings for Haviland & Co. to use as inspiration for a decorated dessert service. The service was meant to hint at the stroll guests would take through the Conservatory after meals. The stroll served as a substitute for the traditional presentation of after dinner liqueurs, which were banned from the White House due to the First Lady’s strong support of the Women’s Temperance Movement.

As fate would have it, Theodore Davis, well-known artist and reporter for *Harper's Weekly*, was at the White House supervising the photography

of Hayes' Cabinet for use in the magazine. Upon entering the Conservatory, Davis learned of the First Lady's project and suggested that she not limit herself to ferns and dessert plates. He told her, instead, that she had a fantastic opportunity to create something uniquely American and proposed a dinner service decorated with images of American flora and fauna. The idea so pleased Lucy that she asked Davis to assume personal direction of the project. The president agreed that it was a fine opportunity to create what would serve as a symbol of national unity. In 1879, a dinner service was commissioned from Haviland & Co.

Davis immediately prepared a studio from three dressing rooms in a bathhouse at Asbury Park on the New Jersey shore. From May to October 1879, the artist created designs from life in watercolor using specimens he collected or that were sent to him from across the United States. The collection, kept in six adjoining dressing rooms, included various plants, a basin of water lilies, a green turtle, frogs, specimens of beetles, dried fungus, a fishhawk suspended from the ceiling, a raccoon, and a tank full of fish that area fisherman frequently brought him.³

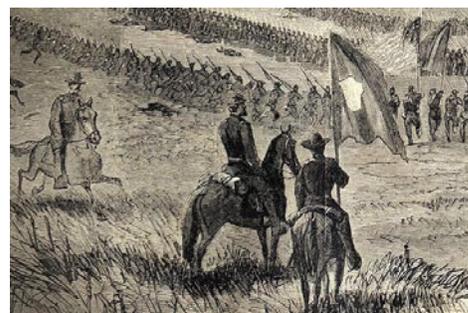
Each Saturday, Davis sent his completed watercolors to the Haviland factory in Limoges. There, etchings were made of the designs, and the outlines were transferred to plates. The artisans' work was difficult. For each course, Davis designed new plate shapes that had to be made and approved before the feat of decorating them could begin. Some were scalloped, had areas raised in relief, or had corners that curved upward. In addition, the service's colors needed to be intense so that they showed well in the dim gaslight of the White House.⁴ The service was delivered to the White House in two orders—the first in June 1880 and the second in December 1880. The entire set cost \$3,120, or \$72,300 in today's market.⁵

The service was first used in November 1880 at a dinner party for incoming President James A. Garfield and his wife. Its debut ignited a range of reactions from high praise to scathing condemnation. Some liked the unusual subject matter and strong colors. Others found the service garish. But the Hayeses loved the set, as did the Garfields, and it became the primary service used by both First Families. Davis patented the designs in July of 1880, assigning the right to Haviland & Co. to produce the service for seven years. The back of each piece includes Davis's initials, the presidential seal, the Haviland stamp, and the date. The service made for the White House carries the date 1879. Those with an 1880 mark were produced for public sale. Judging from the number of pieces bearing the 1880 patent number, the public clamored for the service.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

PRIOR TO DESIGNING the Hayes plates, Theodore Davis was known primarily as a Civil War correspondent and "Special Artist" for *Harper's Weekly*. He accompanied the Union Army in major battles, including Ulysses S. Grant's campaign at Vicksburg. While there, Davis was appointed regiment commander but refused the command because it interfered with his ability to record skirmishes. Staying close to the action, Davis was twice shot, once at Shiloh and later at Antietam.⁶ At the end of the war, Davis continued his illustrations covering the Reconstruction for *Harper's Weekly*.

For inspiration while making the Hayes dinner service, Davis drew on his knowledge of flowers, animals, birds, and fish that he acquired during his many years at *Harper's Weekly*. An 1879 Haviland publication accompanying the presidential service stated that Davis had "...fished in the rivers of the East and West and in the sea, hunted fowl and game in the forests, the swamps, and the mountains, shot the buffalo on the plains, visited the historic haunts of the Indians in the East... and studied their habits on the prairies of the far West."⁷ Davis's 1894 obituary lauds the Hayes plates, concluding, "The celebrated White House dinner service, from original American designs... was by far the best work done by Mr. Davis since the war."⁸



General Sherman's troops advance toward Marietta. Illustration by Theodore R. Davis, *Harper's Weekly*, July 30, 1864.

RELATED ARTWORK



'LOCUST' FRUIT PLATE (top)

Gift of Jonathan W. Kolker, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker
BMA 1999.133

The shape of this fruit and dessert plate is modeled on the leaf of the American wild apple. The plate shows a cluster of locust blossoms and an apple orchard reflected in the stream behind.



'SOUTHWARD FLIGHT' SOUP PLATE (middle)

Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker
BMA 1999.139

Molded after the flower of the mountain laurel, the soup plate is decorated with a flight of canvasbacks, redheads, widgeons, and sheldrakes that fly low, above the Atlantic Ocean. Migratory geese fly at a higher elevation, closer to the "hunter's moon." canvasback ducks were such a popular Victorian delicacy that they came close to extinction.



SEAFOOD SALAD PLATE (bottom)

Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker
BMA 1999.138

Decorated with a lobster, crab, and shell, the seafood salad plate stands on gilded feet shaped like lobster claws. The design was never used in the White House. Rather, it was patented by Theodore Davis for sale to the public in response to the excitement generated by the Hayes presidential service.

¹ Margaret Brown Klapthor, *Official White House China 1789 to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), 117.

² Klapthor, *Official White House China 1789 to the Present*, 117.

³ *The White House Porcelain Service* (Haviland & Co., 1879), 83–84.

⁴ Klapthor, *Official White House China 1789 to the Present*, 114.

⁵ <http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/relativevalue.php> This answer is obtained by multiplying \$3120 by the percentage increase of the Consumer Price Index.

⁶ "The Obituary Record: Theodore Davis," *The New York Times*, November 11, 1894.

⁷ *The White House Porcelain Service*, 4.

⁸ "The Obituary Record: Theodore Davis."

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 1:

Making plates that reflect unity and diversity

Grades: K–2, 3–5

**Subjects: English Language Arts, History/
Social Studies, Visual Arts**

Students will look closely at all the plates in “Unity in Diversity.” They will discuss the images on the plates using the following questions to guide the discussion. Teacher will record student thoughts on a black/white board.

- What kinds of lines, shapes, colors, textures, space, and forms do you see in these plates?
- What things do you recognize in the plates? What is unfamiliar?
- What differences do you notice among the plates?
- What kind of person do you think used these plates? Explain your response.

Teacher will share the historical context and how the plates were intended to represent unity for the nation, highlighting the role of the president in creating a unified vision for the country.

The following plate design activities can be used to further explore ideas. Students may use paper plates with crayons, markers, pastels, or watercolors or plain white ceramic plates with ceramic paint (which will dry upon baking).

- In teams of four, students will share thoughts about conflicts that arise in school and ways to support respect among a diverse student body. They will then generate a list of words that embody what respectful and positive interactions look like in a school environment. Selecting two to three of these words as inspiration, student teams will create plates illustrating the ideas in visual form. Students will share their plates with the class and explain the subjects and the artistic choices they made. These will then be displayed in the classroom or school hallways to reflect the “unity in diversity” of the school.
- As a class, students will look carefully at plants and wildlife in their local neighborhoods, recording their observations in notes, sketches and photographs. Individual students will then design plates depicting plants and wildlife that they feel represents something important about the area. Students will share their plates with the class and explain the subjects and the artistic choices they made. These plates can be displayed together to reflect the diverse natural world around the neighborhood.

ACTIVITY 2:

Comparing and contrasting images and ideals in the Hayes administration

Grades: 9–12

**Subjects: English Language Arts, History/Social
Studies, Visual Arts**

Within a unit on the United States in the late 19th century, students will look carefully at the seven plates in the BMA collection designed for the White House included in this resource, using the following questions for guidance. Teacher will record all student responses on the white/black board.

- Describe the art elements—line, color, shape, texture, form, and space—that you see in these works.
- What things do you recognize in the plates? What is unfamiliar?
- What differences do you notice among the plates?
- What kind of person do you think used these plates? Explain your response.

Teacher will share with students information on the plates and what the decoration represents. Students will use their previous knowledge about the period to compare and contrast the ideals that were being expressed in the plates and the realities of life during the Hayes administration. Teacher will divide students into teams of four and start with the following questions for discussion. Student teams will record their responses to the second question using a two-column chart.

- Was the United States unified during this period? Why or why not?
- How do the images engage with or avoid the realities of American society during the late 19th century?
- What is the purpose of creating visual images that reflect ideals?

Following the team conversations, students will discuss the above questions as a class. Teacher will record student responses on a black/white board. Individual students will then develop research questions that address one important event or issue of the Hayes administration and can be investigated through texts and images.

STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

English Language Arts

Grade 1

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.SL.1.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

Grade 2

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.SL.2.1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

Grade 3

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.SL.3.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Grade 11–12

CCSS.ELA—Literacy.RH.11–12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g. visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

MARYLAND STATE CURRICULUM

History/Social Studies

Grades 9–12

Topic: Reconstruction and an Expanding America (Reconstruction–1897)

1.f. Analyze the economic, political, and social factors that influenced the end of Reconstruction, such as northern reluctance to advocate for African-American equality, corruption in government, the Panic of 1873, and the election of 1876.

Grade 1

2.C.1 a. Describe, discuss, and demonstrate appropriate social skills necessary for working in a cooperative group, such as sharing concern, care, and respect among group members

3.B.1.a. Identify and describe physical characteristics of a place (physical features, climate, vegetation, and animal life)

Grade 2

2.C.1.a. Identify and demonstrate appropriate social skills necessary for working in a cooperative group, such as sharing concern, care, and respect among group members
2.C.1.b. Analyze how different points of view in school situations may result in compromise or conflict

Grade 3

2.C.1.a. Identify and demonstrate appropriate social skills necessary for working in a cooperative group, such as using concern, compassion, and respect among group members
2.C.1.b. Explain how different points of view in school and community situations may result in compromise or conflict

Visual Arts

Grade 1

1.1.a. Describe colors, lines, shapes, textures, and forms found in observed objects and the environment.

1.2.b. Use color, line, shape, texture, and form to represent ideas visually from observation, memory, and imagination.

1.2.a. Explore and discuss the qualities of color, line, shape, texture, and form in artworks.

2.2.a. Observe works of art and describe how artists express ideas about people, places, and events.

2.2.b. Identify reasons artists create artworks, including personal reasons.

Grade 2

1.1.a. Describe colors, lines, shapes, textures, forms, and space found in observed objects and the environment.

1.2.b. Use color, line, shape, texture, form, and space to represent ideas visually from observation, memory, and imagination.

1.2.a. Describe how artists use color, line, shape, texture, form, and space to represent what people see, know, feel, and imagine.

2.1.a. Observe works of art and describe how artists express ideas about people, places, and events.

2.2.b. Communicate a variety of reasons for creating artworks, such as feelings, experiences, events, places, and ideas.

Grade 3

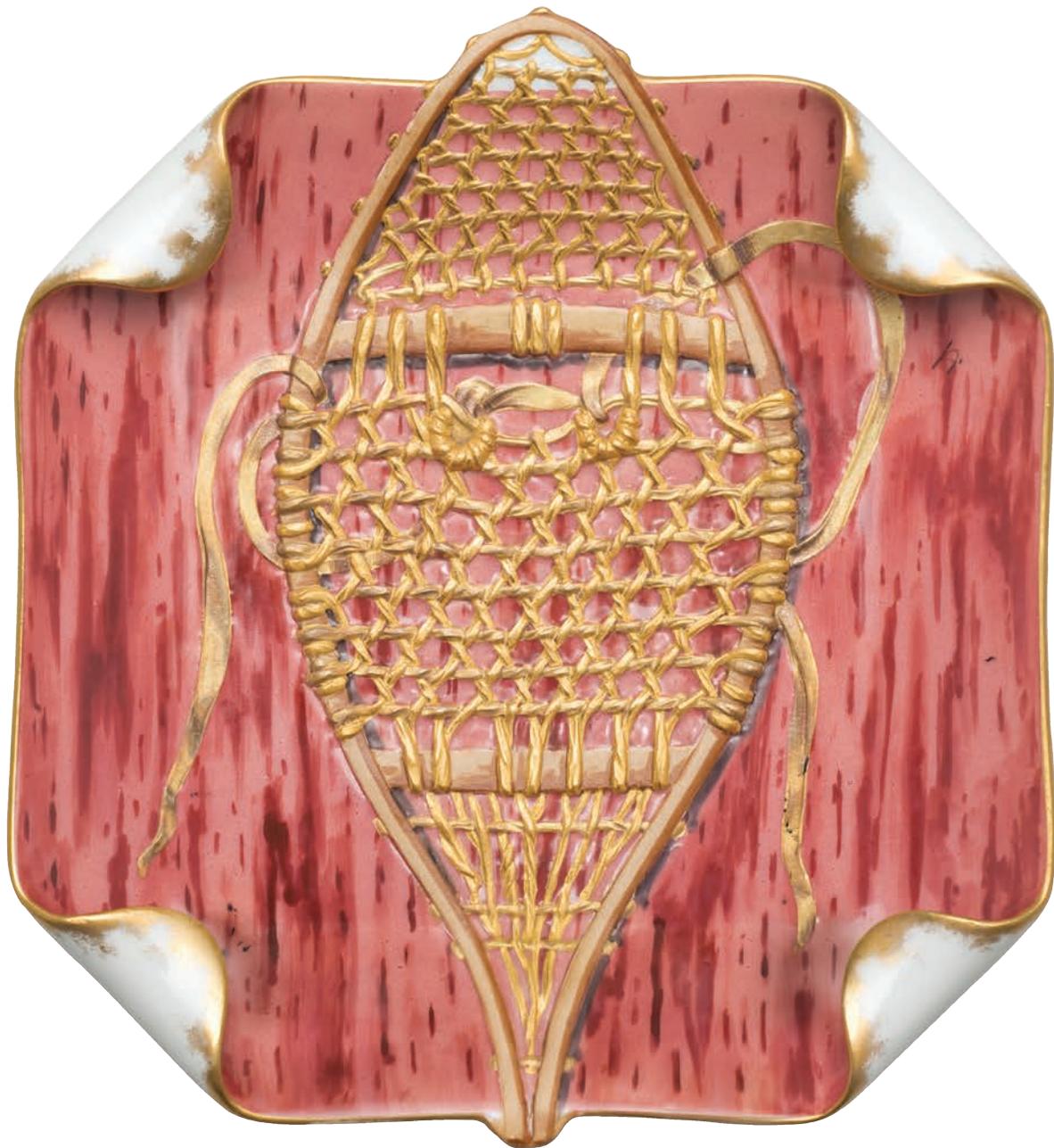
1.1.a. Describe similarities and difference between the elements of art in observed forms.

1.2.a. Compare and describe how artists communicate what they see, know, feel, and imagine using art vocabulary.

1.2.b. Represent ideas and feelings visually that describe what is seen, felt, known, and imagined.

1.3.a. Describe how the elements of art and principles of design are organized to communicate personal meaning in visual compositions.

2.2.a. Discuss and compare how selected artworks from different times or cultures are similar or different (e.g. common themes, content, form, and style)



Piece from the Hayes Presidential Service, designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886,
 Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration
 Designer: Theodore Russell Davis
 Born: Boston, Massachusetts 1840, Died: Asbury Park, New Jersey 1894
 Manufacturer: Haviland & Company, Limoges, France, 1842–present

'Snowshoe' Ice Cream Plate
 Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker, BMA 1999.134



Piece from the Hayes Presidential Service, designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886,
Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration
Designer: Theodore Russell Davis
Born: Boston, Massachusetts 1840, Died: Asbury Park, New Jersey 1894
Manufacturer: Haviland & Company, Limoges, France, 1842–present

Oyster Plate

Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker, BMA 1999.135



Piece from the Hayes Presidential Service, designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886,
 Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration
 Designer: Theodore Russell Davis
 Born: Boston, Massachusetts 1840, Died: Asbury Park, New Jersey 1894
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'Indian' Plate

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Piece from the Hayes Presidential Service, designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886,
Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration
Designer: Theodore Russell Davis
Born: Boston, Massachusetts 1840, Died: Asbury Park, New Jersey 1894
Manufacturer: Haviland & Company, Limoges, France, 1842–present

'Smelt Fish' Plate

Friends of the American Wing Fund, BMA 1998.22



Piece from the Hayes Presidential Service, designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886,
 Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration
 Designer: Theodore Russell Davis
 Born: Boston, Massachusetts 1840, Died: Asbury Park, New Jersey 1894
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'Pompano' Fish Plate

Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker, BMA 1999.140



Piece from the Hayes Presidential Service, designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886,
Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration
Designer: Theodore Russell Davis
Born: Boston, Massachusetts 1840, Died: Asbury Park, New Jersey 1894
Manufacturer: Haviland & Company, Limoges, France, 1842–present

'Locust' Fruit Plate

Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker, BMA 1999.133



Piece from the Hayes Presidential Service, designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886,
 Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration
 Designer: Theodore Russell Davis
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'Southward Flight' Soup Plate
 Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker, BMA 1999.139



Piece from the Hayes Presidential Service, designed 1879–1880, in production 1880–1886,
Hard-paste porcelain with overglaze enamel and gilt decoration
Designer: Theodore Russell Davis
Born: Boston, Massachusetts 1840, Died: Asbury Park, New Jersey 1894
Manufacturer: Haviland & Company, Limoges, France, 1842–present

Seafood Salad Plate

Gift of Frederica Kolker Saxon, Baltimore, in Memory of Irving and Rosa Kolker, BMA 1999.138