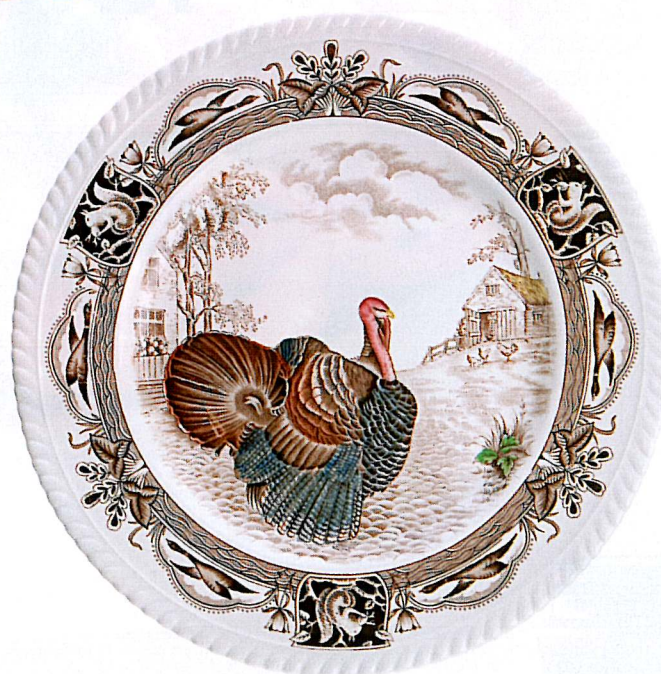
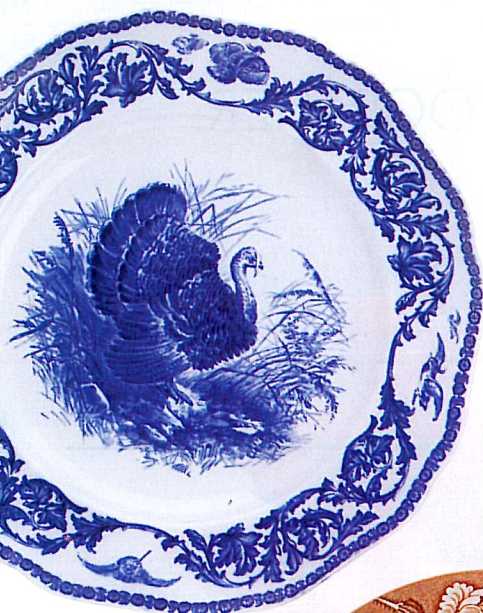


# Birds of a Feather

Holiday and other celebratory meals have long called for their own sets of special dishes. In researching my book *Dish: 813 Colorful, Wonderful Dinner Plates* (Artisan Books, 2011), I was first charmed, then fascinated, by the history behind the turkey china produced for Thanksgiving Day feasts. Though the original all-American meal wasn't made a national holiday until 1863, the savvy potters of Staffordshire, England, who were particularly adept at identifying the tastes of the U.S. market, wasted no time afterward in providing their American cousins with special pieces festooned with the bounties of the season: borders ringed in grapevines, acorns, garlands of autumnal flowers, and plump, showy turkeys. They were an instant hit in the States, where china enthusiasts have been collecting them ever since. —*Shax Riegler*



The smeared effect on this 1910 “flow blue” plate from Stoke-on-Trent’s Cauldon results from the cobalt pigment running during firing. While this flaw rendered the pieces unsalable in England, it caught on across the Atlantic. Such plates were big sellers here from the 1820s into the 1900s.

Creating turkey plates was often just a matter of tweaking an existing design. For Thanksgiving, Enoch Woods and Sons replaced the pastoral scene in their standard English Scenery plate with this puffed-up tom turkey. Produced from 1917 until the early 1960s, the pattern also came in blue and red.

At formal Victorian dinners, it was customary to serve fish and game courses on separate china services. This circa 1930 Copeland Spode design was adapted from a set meant for game. The transfer-printed blue-and-white pattern has been dressed up with hand-colored enamels.

Johnson Brothers’ Barnyard King (above), made from about 1950 until the early ’70s, was marketed to Americans hungry to celebrate in style after the dreary years of World War II. Like most turkey patterns, it was part of a “short set,” which the hostess mixed in with her regular china.

American potters also entered the market. Founded in 1873, West Virginia’s Homer Laughlin China is now famous for its Fiesta ware. In the 20th century, nearly half of the company’s dishes were sold through stores such as Woolworth’s, including this Bountiful Harvest set. —S.R.