

Notes and Miscellania

THROUGH the kindness of a member of the Society OLD-TIME NEW ENGLAND is privileged to illustrate an unusually well-doc-

ily history as 1801 or 1802. The writers, then traveling in Europe, were Martha Derby (Mrs. Richard) and Mr. Thomas Coffin, bother and sister of Mrs. Jesse



umented heirloom tea service. The original letter of transmittal accompanying the china survives, from which the following pertinent extracts have been made. The letter was written from Paris (where the porcelain was presumably purchased) and while undated can be fixed in time on the basis of factual fam-

Sumner the recipient. Harriot (Coffin) Sumner had been born in 1775 in Portland, Maine, where she was married in 1799, and died in Boston in 1862.

Dear Sister

. . . Tom sends you a beautiful Tea Set of Porcelain, thank me for not having a plain gilt



PORCELAIN TEA SERVICE ACQUIRED IN PARIS FOR
HARRIOT (COFFIN) SUMNER
Photograph by Richard Merrill.

edge, the truth is they are so common in America and so insignificant here, whereas such as we have chosen, I have seen in nobleman's houses in England over the fireplace as ornaments, they are so handsome and thought so much of, There is hardly any such thing here as sending a great waiter of tea round, the few who drink it go out to the table and take a sup—a french lady dont know how to make tea—it is a laughable scene, to see half a dozen gentlemen round the table all assisting and they hand it to the ladies themselves.

We are just looking at the china and find it

is just come in time. . . . The two large cups are for breakfast.

. . . M. Derby

Dear Sis The box for you contains an old coat of mine with pantaloons and doz cups and saucers which please accept. This I hope will suffice for the Custom Ho. officers.

In haster Yrs T. C.

1 doz cups and saucers [of which seven only appear in the photograph]

2 single coffee [shown at rear right]

Teapot Sugar etc.