

# THE FRENCH PORCELAIN SOCIETY

## THE SÈVRES PORCELAIN SERVICE FOR MARIE-ANTOINETTE'S DAIRY AT RAMBOUILLET: AN EXERCISE IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEO-CLASSICISM

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the foot, but clearly showing the two points at which each handle was attached to the body.<sup>84</sup> The divided handles, resembling split leather straps, gave the shape its alternate designation "*à anses de cuire refendu*." The working drawing also shows that the bowl had the coiled foot characteristic of Rambouillet shapes. Boizot may have been the designer, as an "*écuelle Boizot anses fendu*" was recorded in the hard-paste records in June 1791.<sup>85</sup>

Although two "*jattes à anses relevées*" were delivered in 1787 (decorated in "*fond grès, ornements Etrusques seulement*") and are depicted on the *Profile des pièces*, the delivery list signed by Deshayes does not include this shape.

b. *Jatte à anses étrusques* (fig. 2b, "c")

*Jatte à anses botte*

*Jatte à anses étrusques allongées*

height: 7.4 cm., diameter: 19.6 cm

The bowl is similar in profile to the *grande terrine basse*, with flaring concave sides. It has two bracket-shaped handles and a bell-shaped foot. A plaster model, without handles and with a different foot but with flaring concave sides is labeled "*1780-1800, No. 1, Jatte de la Laiterie 1786*." It may have been incorrectly numbered as the 1814 inventory corresponding to no. 1 is simply "Lagrenée," while the entry for no. 10 is: "*jatte à lait la Grenée laiterie*." Lagrenée was the designer of both, but it is uncertain which entry corresponds to the plaster model.

The term *botte* derives from the eighteenth-century meaning for the bracket hung by straps from the side of a carriage to form a step.<sup>86</sup> In the factory's records, *botte* is synonymous with "*anse étrusque*," although the former appears mostly in the hard-paste records. The handle is commonly found on various classical pottery shapes, with numerous examples represented in the Denon collection. It is likely, however, that the handle was copied from engraved sources as the first instance of a shape with *botte* handles predates the arrival of the Denon collection at Sèvres.<sup>87</sup> The handle became a common feature of classically inspired shapes in the Sèvres repertory through the early nineteenth century.

Two "*jattes à anses étrusques alongés fond petit violet ornement étrusque et deux têtes de femmes*" were delivered in 1787, and a further two in 1788. The decoration corresponds to one of the Lagrenée watercolors for Rambouillet bowls.

c. *Jatte à bandeau* (fig. 2b, "d")

*Jatte anses à baguette*

?*Jatte anses à rouleaux de la Laiterie*

height: 7.4 cm., diameter: 18.9 cm.

The shape is characterized by the distinct s-shaped rim above the swelling convex curve of the body, and the two raised, s-shaped handles terminating in tight scrolls. The use of a contrasting rim (giving the shape its title "*à bandeau*") is commonly found on the Greek *kylix* shape, and had already been designated *étrusque* by the factory as early as 1781.<sup>88</sup> The handle, whose s-shaped sides are connected by a horizontal bar ("*baguette*"), is not

derived from classical examples.

Two "*jattes à bandeau*" decorated with "*fond étrusque, ornements étrusque*," were delivered in 1787, although one was broken. According to the final delivery list signed by Deshayes, four examples were represented in the service.

#### 9. *Gobelets*

Four cup shapes were designed for the Rambouillet service, all of which have elements in common with the small bowls and use similar terminology in their titles. Once again, different titles are applied to the shapes in the hard-paste records from those in the other Rambouillet documents. The quantity of cups required for the service was very small in comparison to the numbers made: a total of 354 *gobelets* were in the Kiln List, forty-eight were originally planned for the dairy, and twenty-eight were ultimately delivered. Of small size and more widely applicable use than the other Rambouillet shapes, the cups were a simple and profitable means of propagating the *étrusque* style. In 1788 the shapes began to be made in soft-paste.<sup>89</sup> The shapes are often generically referred to as "*gobelets de la Laiterie*" in the factory's records, and many examples survive with Revolutionary decoration.<sup>90</sup>

a. *Gobelet à anses relevées* (fig. 2b, "f")

*Gobelet forme crachoir*

?*Gobelet forme egruchoir*

*Gobelet evasé à anses relevées*

*Gobelet à grandes anses*

height of cup: 8.1 cm., diameter of saucer: 19.6 cm.

The body of the cup spreads out from its foot in a convex curve to a sharp ridge which distinctly separates the flared upper section from the lower portion. Two curved handles rise from the ridge, attaching at the rim. The foot is formed by a stack of coils.

The shape is documented in a working drawing inscribed "*gobelet et soucoupe de la laiterie de la reine qui l'on nomme forme Crachoir et dont le pied a été relargie par ordre de Monsieur Regnier le mois d'octobre 1788.*"<sup>91</sup> The drawing corresponds exactly to a Lagrenée watercolor. (fig. 6) It is unclear why the drawing of the shape on the *Profile de pièces* differs. No model survives, although an example was registered in the 1814 inventory.<sup>92</sup>

The shape, whose title "*crachoir*" refers to its resemblance to a spittoon, is derived from the classical *kantharos* (drinking cup) shape, also represented in the Denon collection. Classical examples, however, do not have a coiled foot.

At the time of the first delivery, the cup was intended to be without a saucer. Saucers were first made in the hard-paste workshop in August 1787.<sup>93</sup> In 1789 the shape of the foot was slightly altered, removing most of the coils to form a flared foot ending in two progressively larger coils, with a single coil at the base of the bowl.<sup>94</sup>

Six "gobelets à grandes anses" were delivered in 1787, decorated with "deux groupes composé d'une figure et d'un vache ou d'une chevre ... decorations Etrusque," with *fond* colors of "petit gris," "petit bleu," and "jonquille." The description of the decoration matches Lagrenée's watercolor of the shape. Inexplicably, only four saucers were delivered in 1788. One, in *fond jonquille* (now incorrectly paired with a *gobelet cornet* in the Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres), can be identified because of the correspondence of its decoration to the watercolor.

b. *Gobelet cornet* (fig. 2b, "e")

*Grand gobelet*

height: 10.8 cm.

The slightly curved, flared sides of the tall cup rise from two coils above a domed foot, and two curved handles are attached to the middle of each side.

This shape was made to stand within the small *jattes* and did not have a saucer. The working drawing for the shape indicates that Boizot was its designer and that the shape, as made for the Rambouillet service, originally did not have a saucer.<sup>95</sup> (fig. 7) Lagrenée's watercolor for this shape depicts a slightly different foot from the one which was actually produced. Saucers were first made in September/October 1787.<sup>96</sup> The plaster model, no longer extant, of a "*tasse à lait laiterie*" in the 1814 inventory may have corresponded to this shape as the factory's traditional "*gobelet à lait*" was a tall conical cup, often two-handled.

The shape derives from the classical *kalathos*, a flared beaker. The *gobelet cornet* is much closer to *kalathoi* executed in silver than to pottery examples. A silver example from the museum of excavated objects at Portici was engraved in both Caylus and Saint-Non.<sup>97</sup>

Eight examples were delivered to the dairy, six in 1787 and two in 1788. The 1787 delivery list describes the decoration as "*guirlande de pampre, vases [vaches?], chevres et leur petit,*" in *fonds* "gris de lin," "gris," and "grès," corresponding to Lagrenée's watercolor. The surviving example, in *gris de lin*, follows Lagrenée's design.

c. *Gobelet à anses étrusques* (fig. 2b, "G")

*Gobelet à anses botte*

*Gobelet à anses étrusques allongées*

height of cup: 8.1 cm., diameter of saucer: 18.3 cm.

The sides of the cup taper in a continuous curve toward the foot which is composed of two stacked coils above a round plinth. Two bracket-shaped handles, consisting of two upwardly curved pieces connected by a horizontal bar, are attached to either side. The saucer has a small shallow well in the center and gently curving sides. The foot ring is separated from the body of the saucer by a sharp indentation marked with a coil. The shape is documented by a working drawing and a plaster model.<sup>98</sup> (fig. 8) On later examples of the shape the foot does not have coiled rings.

Reference to "gobelet Boizot de la laiterie à botte" in the hard-paste records indicates that he was the designer of this shape.<sup>99</sup> The shape is modeled on the most common form of classical drinking cup, the *skyphos*. Classical examples, however, have horizontal looped handles attached at the rim and a tapered foot without coils. Lagrenée's watercolor of the shape copies the classical form, suggesting that his proposals were refined or altered by Boizot, while retaining the proposed decoration.

Six cups of this shape, with their saucers, were delivered in 1787. Four were to be placed on the console tables and two were included in the group of six cups "de deux formes" which accompanied the *grande terrine basse* on the central table. They were decorated with "décorations Etrusques sous arcades sur les bordures, peints de même des deux animaux et attributs," with "gris," "jonquille," and "vert anglais" fond colors. The decoration and color of the surviving example in the Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres, corresponds to the 1787 description and to Lagrenée's design.

d. *Gobelet à bandeau* (fig. 2b, "H")

*Gobelet à bordure*

*Gobelet anses à rouleaux*

height of cup: 8.1 cm., diameter of saucer: 18.3 cm.

The cup has a round plinth for a foot and curved sides which bulge slightly before returning to a waisted indentation below a flared rim. Two raised handles, composed of two s-shaped elements terminating in scrolls joined by a cylindrical bar, are attached at its widest point. The saucer is the same one used with the *gobelet à anses étrusques*. The shape is a combination of the body of a classical *skyphos* and the distinctive rim of the *kylix*.

The plaster model, lacking handles but with evidence of where they were attached, is labeled "1780-1800, No. 8, Gobelet à bandeau de la Laiterie 1786." The corresponding entry in the 1814 inventory attributes the design of the shape to Boizot.<sup>100</sup> Later examples are often generically referred to as "*gobelet étrusque*" in the factory's records.

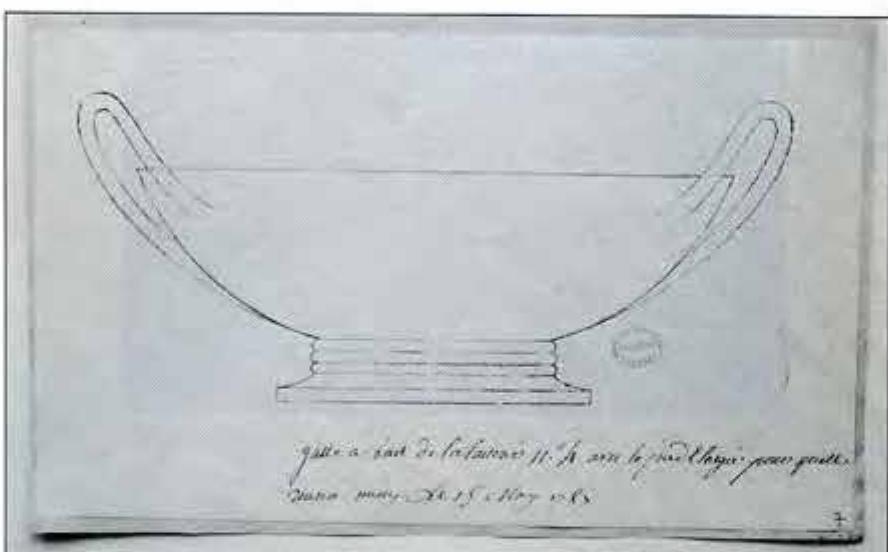
According to the delivery documents six examples were delivered in 1787 and a further two in 1788, although only six are noted on the *Profile des pièces*. As with the *gobelets à anses étrusques*, some were placed on the console tables, and others on the central table. They were decorated with "décorations Etrusques et deux animaux sur le gobelet, chevre et vache; et Sur la Soucoupe des plantes, les bordures en arcades," with fond colors of "étrusque," "violet tendre," and "Dauphine."

10. *Pots à lait*

As the ewer shapes were larger than the factory's usual *pot à lait*, they were interchangeably known as *pot à lait*, *pot à l'eau*, or *vase* in the records. Four types were made for the dairy in the hard-paste workshop ("pot à peau et tête de bouc," "vase à trois anses," "pot à l'eau nouvelle forme de M. Boizot," and "pot à l'eau anse à baguette") and four types are recorded in the list of dairy pieces to be fired in 1787 ("vase à tête et peau de bouc," "vase



**Figure 1**



**Figure 5**

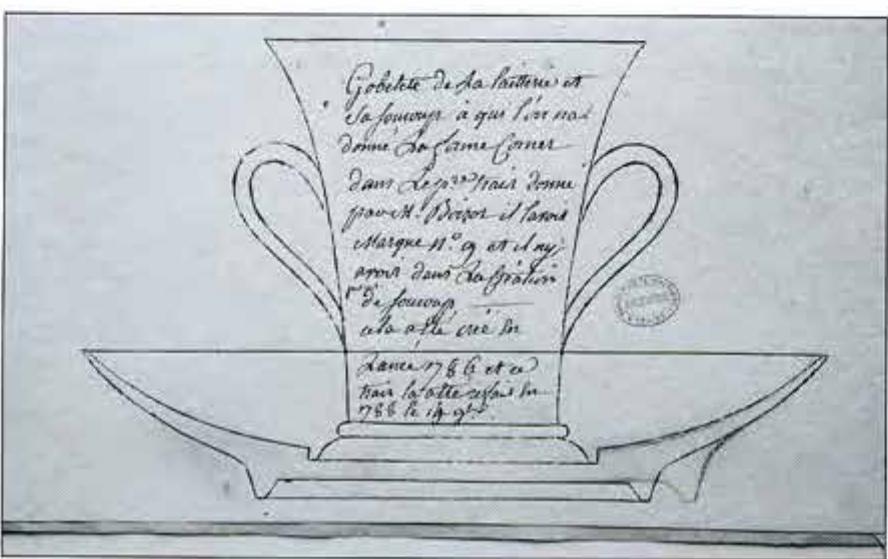


Figure 7



Figure 2a



Figure 4



Figure 2b



Figure 6

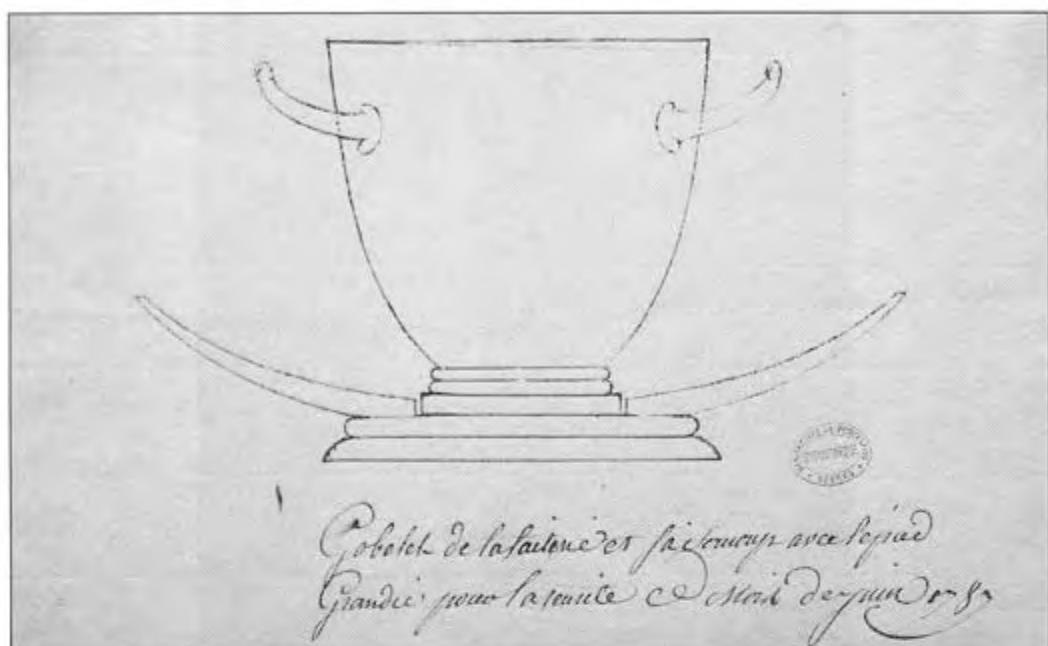


Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

*à trois anses," "pot à l'eau Boizot forme hune," and "vase forme burette" ).<sup>101</sup>*

Only three types, however, are referred to in all the subsequent Rambouillet documents and only two types were represented in the final composition of the service. Boizot was clearly the designer of at least one of the shapes, but it is not one which can be identified.

a. **Pot à anse tête de chèvre** (fig. 2b)

*Pot à anse tête et peau de bouc*

*Vase à tête et peau de bouc*

height: 24.4 cm.

The jug has a high, wide neck with an undulating rim which curves downward at the front to form a spout. The front part of a goat's body, in relief, is attached to one side, its head and horns forming the handle. The foot is composed of a stack of coils above a rounded pad.

The plaster model for this shape is labeled "*1780-1800, No. (?), pot à l'eau de la laiterie.*"<sup>102</sup> (fig. 10) Although the horns are missing there is evidence of where they were attached to the top of the goat's head and to points just below the rim.

An ewer in the Portici museum, the handle formed by the front half of a swan's body facing outward with raised wings attached to the rim, may have been the inspiration for this shape. It was engraved in both Caylus and Saint-Non.<sup>103</sup> On the Rambouillet example the animal was changed to one more suitable to the dairy's theme.

Two examples were made for each delivery, resulting in a total of four. The pieces delivered in 1787 were decorated in "*fond grès peint de deux figures, deux chèvres et attribus et ornements Etrusques.*"

b. **Pot à lait à anse relevée** (fig. 2b, "a")

*Pot à lait à anse simple relevée*

*Pot à lait à anse droite*

height without handle: 23.7 cm.

The ovoid body stands on a domed foot and has a tall, narrow neck. The gracefully curved rim has a small indentation from which the spout projects. The handle rises vertically from the body, forming a loop above the rim before curving back on itself to attach to the rim.

The shape copies the characteristic trefoil mouth and high handle of Apulian *oenochoe* (wine jugs). As depicted on the *Profile des pièces*, it is quite similar to one of Lagrenée's watercolors which shows it with a bell-shaped foot. Examples of this shape were represented in the Denon collection and in engravings in d'Hancarville and Caylus.<sup>104</sup>

Two examples were delivered in 1787 decorated with "*fond étrusque peint de deux masques, guirlandes de pampres et de 4 chèvres*" which corresponds to Lagrenée's design for the decoration of another jug shape. Two more examples were delivered in 1788 to replace the

*pots à lait à trois anses.*

c. *Pot à lait à trois anses*

There is no drawing or plaster model for this shape, but its title suggests the appearance of a Greek *hydria* (water jug) which invariably had three handles: one vertical and two horizontal *botte* ones. These were repeatedly illustrated in Caylus and d'Hancarville, and several examples are also in the Denon collection.<sup>105</sup>

Two examples were delivered in 1787 with "*fond Etrusque peint d'une figure et deux animaux, ornements Etrusques.*" For some reason they were withdrawn and replaced by *pots à lait à anse relevée*.

11. *Vases*

Six "grands vases étrusques" were placed in the six wall niches above the console tables. Two shapes were made, with the larger one standing in the central niche on each side, flanked by two smaller ones.

The delivery documents only describe the vases as "*peints en l'huile*" (painted in oils). It is unclear whether the vases were cold-painted or whether the description refers to a different process. It is possible that the vases were painted in encaustic in order to make them appear authentically "Etruscan." This was a process Wedgwood employed on classical shapes, priding himself on "re-discovering" the application of encaustic colors, as true "Etruscan color being without any glassy lustre."<sup>106</sup>

a. *Vase* (fig. 2b, "1")

*Vase Étrusque de la Laiterie 1<sup>e</sup> grandeur*

height to rim: 74 cm., diameter at rim: 40 cm.

The vase has an ovoid body surmounted by a very wide neck with a stepped rim. The foot is bell-shaped and stands on a plinth. Two ribbed handles extend vertically from just below the widest point of the body to the rim, terminating in scrolls. The base of each handle is marked by a projecting swan's(?) head.

The shape copies Greek volute *kraters* which, due to their impressive size, were prized possessions in eighteenth-century collections. Three examples are still preserved in the Denon collection, but none has ribbed handles. In the 1780s Wedgwood produced a copy of the one in the Hamilton collection, and at the same time the shape was made at the Polish Bielino factory.<sup>107</sup>

A plaster model corresponding to this shape but in a smaller size (49.5 cm. to the rim) suggests that this shape was designed by Lagrenée. It is labeled "*vase Étrusque Lagrenée, imité de l'antique, dit Étrusque Lagrenée.*" Although the inventory number is illegible it probably corresponds to no. 82 in the 1814 inventory for vases dating to 1780-1800 as that is the only *Vase Étrusque Lagrenée* which is listed in more than one size. Unlike the

drawing on the *Profile des pièces* the model has female masks in the scrolls, and lacks swan heads.

b. *Vase* (fig. 2b, "m")

*Vase de côté de la Laiterie à soleil*

*Vase Étrusque de côté de la Laiterie*

height: 59.6 cm, diameter of rim: 21.7 cm.

The shape has an ovoid body which appears to be attached to its bell-shaped foot by a coiled section. The body narrows considerably at the neck, then flares out again to the molded rim. Wing-like handles spring from the shoulders of the vase, ending in scrolls.

The plaster model listed in the 1814 inventory is no longer extant and there is very little other information regarding this shape.<sup>108</sup> In the hard-paste records, the shape is recorded as "*Vase de côté de la Laiterie à soleil*" and sometimes "*sans Soleil*." Possibly the vase had sun motifs in relief on the scrolled handles, in a manner similar to those on classical volute *kraters*.

### Dispersal of the Service

There was not much opportunity for Marie-Antoinette to enjoy her elaborate pleasure pavilion. During the Revolution the *Commission Conservatrice des Monuments* was responsible for inventorying the contents of royal residences and deciding which items were to be retained for the *Muséum* or for use by the government, and which were to be auctioned off. With the imminent sale of the contents of Rambouillet (which took place in October 1793), the *Commission* sent a delegation to the *château*. Their report, dated 1 September 1793, almost exclusively lists the furnishings of the dairy - perhaps these were the only items which they considered worth preserving.<sup>109</sup> The sculpture was still in place in the dairy, but the furniture and porcelain had been moved to a room in the *château*. Some pilfering or breakage had already occurred: all the cups and saucers and the sugar bowls were already missing. The report mentions only:

*six grands vases de porcelaine, forme étrusque, avec leurs socles et deux autres en forme de seaux;*  
*cinq coupes en trépied;*  
*huit vases en aiguyères, forme étrusque, et*  
*huit coupes à anses, forme étrusque.*

The "*cinq coupes en trépied*" are confusing as no single tripod stand was delivered in five examples. This most likely refers to four *jattes téton* and the *grande terrine basse* (see below). The *Commission* recommended that all the items in the report were to be set aside from the sales and transported to the appropriate depot.

This was never properly carried out, probably because the *Commission* was dissolved in December 1793. In August 1803 (*4 Fructidor an 11*) the Minister of the Interior instructed Denon, by then *Directeur général des Musées*, to transfer the Rambouillet porcelain,

believed to be in storage, to Malmaison at the request of Madame Bonaparte.<sup>110</sup> It became evident that only a few pieces were in store at the *dépôt* of the Musée National de Versailles, and that others were still in place at Rambouillet. By remaining at Rambouillet for ten years beyond when they should have been transferred to the safety of the stores, the eight ewers and eights bowls had also gone missing. All the remaining pieces from both Versailles and Rambouillet were taken to Malmaison at the end of September 1803. The group from Rambouillet consisted of:

*cinq grands vases, forme Etrusque,*  
*deux grands Sceaux,*  
*une grande coupe sans trépied,*  
*trois socles;*

and the following pieces came from the Versailles store:

*un grand vase, forme Etrusque,*  
*quatre jattes (ou coupes), dont l'une avec son trépied.*<sup>111</sup>

The Rambouillet pieces cannot be identified in the inventory of Josephine's collection which was made in 1814-15, after her death. Much of the collection was dispersed through private or uncatalogued sales. The preface to one of the few extant catalogues states that only the most important pieces in each category were listed, making it impossible to ascertain what was sold.<sup>112</sup>

Very few pieces can be subsequently traced. The two milk pails were in the sale of the Dowager Duchess of Bedford from Campden Hill Lodge in 1853, where they were catalogued as "Dresden."<sup>113</sup> They are next documented in the Mayer Amschel de Rothschild collection at Mentmore from where they were sold in 1977.<sup>114</sup> The *grande terrine basse* was acquired locally by the Frankfurt Museum für Kunsthantwerk in 1940 with no indication of its provenance.<sup>115</sup> A *gobelet à anses étrusques* and its saucer, and a *gobelet cornet* married to a saucer belonging to a *gobelet à anses relevées* were acquired by the Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres in the nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> The same museum also possesses two *jattes téton*.<sup>117</sup> A third *jatte téton* is in the Museo duca di Martina alla Floridiana in Naples.<sup>118</sup> A fourth example was sold at Sotheby's in New York in 1985.<sup>119</sup> It has a replacement faience stand and a curious mark on the interior of the bowl which is not found on the other examples.

### Appendix 1

#### **Workers paid for "Ouvrages à la Laiterie"**

All references are to folio numbers in the painters' records (MNS, Vj 4) for 1787.

Reference	Artist	livres received
f. 1v	Armand <i>jeune</i>	345
f. 6v	Asselin	692
f. 40v	Bouillat <i>père</i>	12
f. 80r	Castel	205
f. 136v	Fumez	198
f. 162r	Le Guay	554
f. 170r	Méraud	54
f. 203r	Pfeiffer	294
f. 207r	Pithou <i>jeune</i>	100
f. 227v	Rosset	408
f. 233r	Sinnesson	711

#### **Workers paid for over-time and piecework "de la Laiterie" pieces**

All references are to MNS, F series, and include work up to May 1788. Not all "de la Laiterie" pieces are necessarily Rambouillet examples.

Date	Artist	Description	livres
<b>F 29 1787</b>			
April	Le Bel	2 Jattes, Laiterie	72
	Huré	2 Pieds, id. [Laiterie] all pieces "mis en fond" 2 Vases, Laiterie 3 Jattes, Laiterie	36
May	Le Guay	2 Gobelets, Laiterie 2 Tasses de la Laiterie 2 Soucoupes de la Laiterie, ensemble 2 pieces de 1 Vase de la Laiterie 1 Tasse id. [Laiterie]	10 66 21 10 24
	Le Bel	2 Jattes, de la Laiterie	72
June	Fumez	2 Tasses de la Laiterie	36
July	Asselin	2 Vases de la Laiterie	60
	Pithou	2 Gobelets de la Laiterie 3 Gobelets de la Laiterie	24 72
<b>F 30</b>			
December	Le Grand	1 Gobelet de la Laiterie	36
		1 Gobelet de la Laiterie	42
<b>1788</b>			
March	Le Grand	1 Gobelet de la Laiterie	42
May	Le Bel	3 Soucoupes de la Laiterie	63