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Volume 48, Number 4



From our Archives

## The Easter Lily Brings Peace and Happiness

By Mary Helen Crain, April 1980

"Spring is the sound through an open window, of children playing, laughing, of roller skates and bikes. Spring is baby animals in the fields, mother birds building nests and a sun that grows warm. Spring is pussy willows and bumble bees, robins and daffodils. Spring is sudden rain and a fresh green haze in the woods across the meadow. Spring is Easter..."

Isn't that a nice quotation? I found it a long time ago in "Living With Flowers," a delightful little booklet that many florists mail to their customers. Maybe Easter doesn't always come in that particular kind of weather where you live but it is something nice to think about, isn't it? This time we need flowers. We have been thinking snow and looking at it for a long time.

One of the earliest flowers of civilization will arrive early before Easter and florists will bring it to people's mind with beautiful new flowers, but never will they forget the Easter lily.

Lilies have grown wild all over the globe for as long as anyone knows. For years it has been an intricate part of the Christian festival of Easter. The legends concerning them are legion. Some say they sprang from the tears of Eve when she was expelled from the Garden of Eden. But lilies are said to bring happiness to everyone and to have miraculous healing powers. Once in the days of old there was a knight who was always sad of heart until one day his wife found a lily of purest white and she pressed it to his brow. The knight smiled and was happy forever after.

When lilies were first cultivated they were produced for medical purposes. The roots were ground and mixed with honey to give a substance of "glue-ing" severed muscles. Mixed with olive oil, they made the healing ointment for burns. The juice was used for poisonous bites.

The lily came to America from Japan. A missionary from England took some bulbs with him when he returned home. Ill winds blew his ship off its course and he found himself on the island of Bermuda. A Rector befriended him. In gratitude the missionary gave him lily bulbs for his garden. The climate was perfect for them and within a generation lilies became a feature of the island. In 1876, a horticulturist from Philadelphia saw the flowers and appreciated their possibilities from a commercial standpoint. He imported them and forced them into full bloom for Easter.

Other lilies came to our country by other missionaries and traders from Asia, China and Korea. Oriental lilies from Korea brought a legend. A hermit once removed an arrow from a tiger and the tiger became his devoted friend. Later when the tiger was about to die he begged his friend to hold him close. Miraculously the tiger's body turned into a beautiful orange and black lily.

The Regal lily, waxen white, was discovered in 1903 by the head of the Arnold Arboretum of Massachusetts. It was a hard process but by 1910 these bulbs were the basis of all the hybrid lilies we enjoy today.

"Lilies never sleep," says one grower of the stately blooms. They have no dormant period. They bring peace and happiness to everyone. It is said that the sun dances for joy as it rises on Easter morning and all who wear flowers will carry this happy spirit throughout the year.

Many other flowers all seem to burst into bloom to greet the joyous Eastertide. They, too, gladden our hearts and make us feel alive again. But the Easter lily is the one pure white, calm and dignified flower that brings the true meaning of Easter to us. It has become an inseparable part of the day of the resurrection of the Lord. Easter is coming. April 12th this year. Let the beautifully grown lily help you celebrate!



## May Postcard Show Moved to September

# Hold-to-the-light Postcards

By Carol Mobley

Have you heard of hold-to-the-light postcards and wondered just what is that? You wouldn't be the first person to ask. A hold-to-the-light postcard is a postcard with 3 layers a front with a pattern cut out of it, a lighter color layer, and the back so when you hold it up you can see the light through the lighter color of paper.

Hold-to-the-light (HTL) postcards were first produced in 1894 and have been collected ever since. Dennis Mallory of Glens Falls, NY published a set of HTL cards that you can still find available today. Dennis formed the Avis Stamp Company in 1967 and was primarily interested in stamps and first day covers. In 1972 he purchased a postcard collection that included an HTL card which inspired him to consider producing one to commemorate the U.S. Bicentennial. For his first card he created Independence Hall which he sold for \$1.25 each. There were 6 cards produced between 1976 and 1986, each numbered on the back and credit is given to artist who helped in the design of each card.

| Number | Title             | Number Published |
|--------|-------------------|------------------|
| HTL-1  | Independence Hall | 2336             |
| HTL-2  | "1976"            | 1176             |
| HTL-3  | 1984 Christmas    | 1575             |
| HTL-4  | 1985 Christmas    | 1632             |
| HTL-5  | Statue of Liberty | 2150             |
| HTL-6  | 1986 Christmas    | 1536             |



Each card was mailed with a letter from Dennis detailing the design of the card and other details about the

*Continued on page 6*



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## Inside this Issue



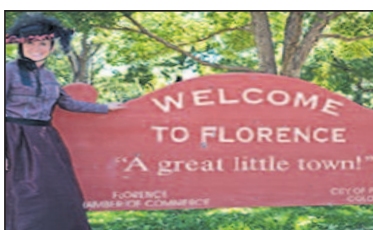
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CONNECTEDNESS IN  
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The St. Vrain Historical Society Presents:

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SHOW CALENDAR

April Events

APR 01: **COLORADO MINING TREASURES** Discussion led by Leo Stambaugh at 2:00 p.m. in the L&M Cafe at the Brass Armadillo, 11301 West I-70, Wheat Ridge, CO. More info, or if you would be interested in doing a presentation in your area of expertise, call Dixie or Charlotte at 303-403-1677.

APR 15: **VINTAGE CLOTHING** Discussion led by Stephanie Davidson at 2:00 p.m. in the L&M Cafe at the Brass Armadillo, 11301 West I-70, Wheat Ridge, CO. More info, or if you would be interested in doing a presentation in your area of expertise, call Dixie or Charlotte at 303-403-1677.

APR 24-26: **HERITAGE EVENT COMPANY ANTIQUE VINTAGE COLLECTIBLE SHOWS & EVENTS**, Castle Rock, Colorado, Douglas County Fairgrounds, 500 Fairgrounds Drive, Castle Rock, Colorado, more information, Gail Kinney, 918-619-2875

Upcoming  
Events

MAY 16 & 17: **50TH ANNIVERSARY STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL** presented by The St. Vrain Historical Society. Sat. 10-5, Sun. 11-4, Boulder County Fairgrounds, Exhibit Building, 9595 Nelson Rd, Longmont, CO. For more information, call 303-776-1870 or go to www.stvrainhistoricalsociety.com

MAY 23: **HOTEL DE PARIS TOUR SEASON OPENS**. Then on Saturday, July 11 celebrate Bastille Day; on Saturday Aug. 1 enjoy Colorado Day, Future events will be listed in the calendar.

MAY 27: **PENMANSHIP** Discussion led by Cheryl Miller at 2:00 p.m. in the L&M Cafe at the Brass Armadillo, 11301 West I-70, Wheat Ridge, CO. More info, or if you would be interested in doing a presentation in your area of expertise, call Dixie or Charlotte at 303-403-1677.

JUNE 10: **THE STORY BEHIND FAIRY TALES** Discussion led by Cheryl Miller at 2:00 p.m. in the L&M Cafe at the Brass Armadillo, 11301 West I-70, Wheat Ridge, CO. More info, or if you would be interested in doing a presentation in your area of expertise, call Dixie or Charlotte at 303-403-1677.

JUNE 12-14: **WORLD WIDE ANTIQUE AND VINTAGE SHOW** Denver Mart Expo Building, I-25 & 58th Ave., Fri.-Sat. 10 am - 6 pm, Sunday 11 am - 4 pm. Get tickets at www.FINDYOURANTIQU.com

JUNE 24: **DEPRESSION ERA QUILTS** Discussion led by Marcie Wright at 2:00 p.m. in the L&M Cafe at the Brass Armadillo, 11301 West I-70, Wheat Ridge, CO. More info, or if you would be interested in doing a presentation in your area of expertise, call Dixie or Charlotte at 303-403-1677.

JULY 17 & 18: **DENVER POSTCARD AND PAPER EPHEMERA SHOW** three massive showrooms, Jeffco Fairgrounds 15200 West 6th Ave., Golden, Colorado. For more information, call Carol Mobley at 720-308-1516 or go to camobley@ephemeranet.com.

SEPT. 18 & 19: **DENVER POSTCARD AND PAPER EPHEMERA SHOW** three massive showrooms, Jeffco Fairgrounds, 15200 West 6th Ave., Golden, Colorado. For more information, call Carol Mobley at 720-308-1516 or go to camobley@ephemeranet.com.

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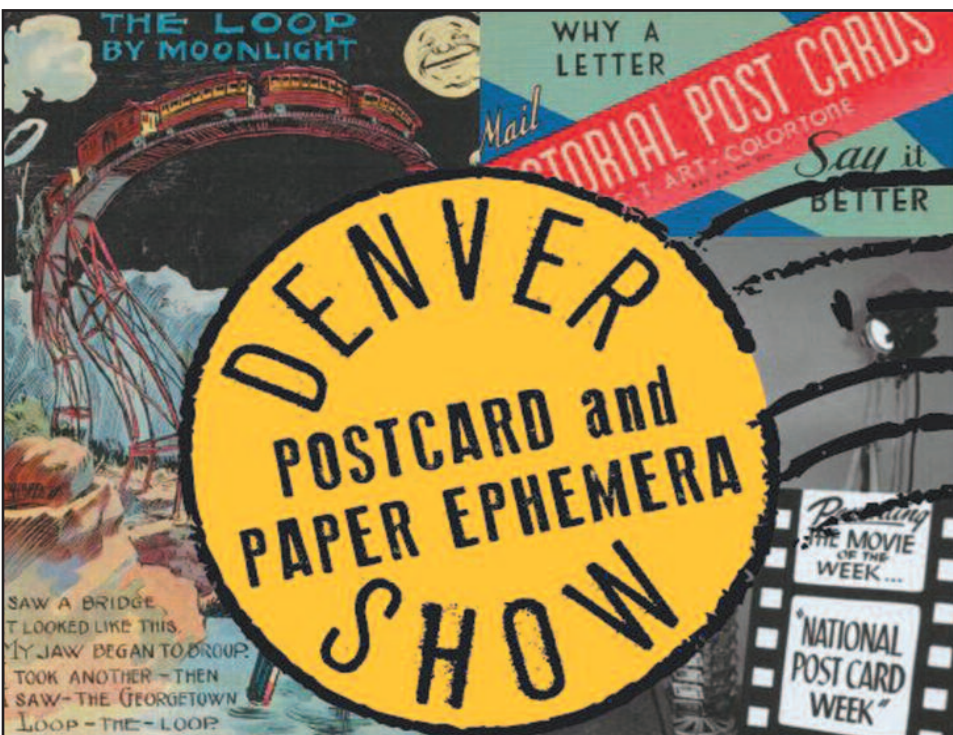
# Hold-to-the-Light Postcards

Continued from page 1  
production, design, variations, etc. Each card had its own difficulties such as paint that wouldn't dry or glue that caused the cards to curl. Each card is hand created. The process included 9 printings through the press, cutting of the holes, and finally gluing and pressing each card – labor intensive to say the least.

Here is an example – the year, star, Christmas and dots on the tree are all cut out so a light shining behind the card illuminates the card.

These cards represent the dedication of one person to keep the art of the HTL postcard alive and collectible. All 6 cards can be found in Postcard dealers' inventory or online.

Postcard collectors will be glad to know that the May Denver Postcard & Paper Show has been rescheduled to September 18-19, 2020 at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. The summer show is still planned for July 17-18, 2020, also at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds. Updates will be posted to [www.DenverPostcard-Show.com](http://www.DenverPostcard-Show.com).



May Denver Postcard & Paper Show has been rescheduled to Sept. 18-19



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# Who Started Earth Day?

*Did you know? A highlight of the United Nations' Earth Day celebration in New York City is the ringing of the Peace Bell, a gift from Japan, at the exact moment of the vernal equinox.*

**Who Started Earth Day?**

Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1962, Senator Gaylord Nelson, a Democrat from Wisconsin, was determined to convince the federal government that the planet was at risk. In 1969, Nelson, considered one of the leaders of the modern environmental movement, developed the idea for Earth Day after being inspired by the anti-Vietnam War “teach-ins” that were taking place on college campuses around the United States. According to Nelson, he envisioned a large-scale, grassroots environmental demonstration “to shake up the political establishment and force this issue onto the national agenda.”

Nelson announced the Earth Day concept at a conference in Seattle in the fall of 1969 and invited the entire nation to get involved. He later recalled:

“The wire services carried the story from coast to coast. The response was electric. It took off like gang-busters. Telegrams, letters and telephone inquiries poured in from all across the country. The American people finally had a forum to express its concern about what was hap-

pening to the land, rivers, lakes and air—and they did so with spectacular exuberance.”

Dennis Hayes, a young activist who had served as student president at Stanford University, was selected as Earth Day’s national coordinator, and he worked with an army of student volunteers and several staff members from Nelson’s Senate office to organize the project. According to Nelson, “Earth Day worked because of the spontaneous response at the grassroots level. We had neither the time nor resources to organize 20 million demonstrators and the thousands of schools and local communities that participated. That was the remarkable thing about Earth Day. It organized itself.”

**The First Earth Day: April 22, 1970**

On the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, rallies were held in Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles and most other American cities, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. In New York City, Mayor John Lindsay closed off a portion of Fifth Avenue to traffic for several hours and spoke at a rally in Union Square with actors Paul Newman and Ali McGraw. In Washington, D.C., thousands of people listened to speeches and performances by singer Pete Seeger and others, and Congress went into recess so its members could speak to their constituents at Earth Day events.

The first Earth Day was effective at raising awareness about environmental issues and transforming public attitudes. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, “Public opinion polls indicate that a permanent change in national priorities followed Earth Day 1970. When polled in May 1971, 25 percent of the U.S. public declared protecting the environment to be an important goal, a 2,500 percent increase over 1969.” Earth Day kicked off the “Environmental decade with a bang,” as Senator Nelson later put it. During the 1970s, a number of important pieces of environmental legislation were passed, among them the Clean Air Act, the Water Quality Improvement Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act and the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. Another key development was the establishment in December 1970 of the Environmental Protection Agency, which was tasked with protecting human health and safeguarding the natural environment—air, water and land.



**What Do You Do For Earth Day?**

Since 1970, Earth Day celebrations have grown. In 1990, Earth Day went global, with 200 million people in over 140 nations participating, according to the Earth Day Network (EDN), a nonprofit organization that coordinates Earth Day activities. In 2000, Earth Day focused on clean energy and involved hundreds of millions of people in 184 countries and 5,000 environmental groups, according to EDN. Activities ranged from a traveling, talking drum chain in Gabon, Africa, to a gathering of hundreds of thousands of people at the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Today, the Earth Day Network collaborates with more than 17,000 partners and organizations in 174 countries. According to EDN, more than 1 billion people are involved in Earth Day activities, making it “the largest secular civic event in the world.”

The theme of Earth Day 2020 is “climate action.” It will be celebrated with The Great Global Cleanup, a day dedicated to removing trash from green spaces and urban centers alike. EarthDay.org hopes will be the largest volunteer event in history.



This Day In History: 04/22/1970 - The First Earth Day





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# Arbor Day Celebrated April 24th This Year

By Bobbie Sweeney

In the United States, we have a tradition which is still recognized but not as widely celebrated as it was in the late 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. Years ago, Arbor Day was given tremendous thought by schools and organizations in cities and towns across the country. It was celebrated in the spring of the year in northern states and in winter in areas further south.

Arbor Day was initiated by a man named Julius Sterling Morton in Nebraska in the year 1872. Morton was Secretary of Agriculture of the United States at the time. He realized that the planting of trees would enrich the soil and help keep the moisture in the soil. He was concerned about the lack of trees in Nebraska. Before he settled there, most of the trees had been cut down by earlier settlers who needed the wood to build their houses and furniture.

Morton urged the residents of Nebraska to follow his example by planting fruit trees and shade trees. The trees also served as windbreakers on the flat prairie countryside. At his suggestion, a special day was set aside, by the state legislature, to plant trees. It was called Arbor Day "Arbor" is the Latin word for trees.



When the first tree-planting day was held in 1872, there were more than a million trees planted. The day became an annual event and was celebrated across the nation. Arbor Day soon became a legal holiday on the 22nd day of April in honor of Morton's birthday. Today April 22 is Earth Day and Arbor Day is celebrated two

days later. This year Arbor Day is on April 24.

Arbor Day is not only celebrated throughout the United States but in Canada and other countries as well. Thanks to people with vision, like Julius Morton, our country has maintained one of our nation's most valuable resources — our forests.



## April Fool's Day

April Fool's Day started in France, where before France adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1564, New Year's was celebrated from March 21st to April 1st. And when they changed New Year's Day to January 1st, many French people continued to celebrate New Year's on April 1st.

The French people who wouldn't change became known as April fools. The idea of fooling one's friends and family on that day became a popular custom with the French and rapidly spread to other parts of Europe and eventually to America.

The jokes played on people were all harmless and the victims were called "April fish" in France. In Scotland they were called "April gowks." Both names mean the same, a fool.



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# Taper Jacks, Bougie-Boxes, & Wax Jack

By Jack HT Chang, MD

Prior to the advent of sealed envelopes, confidentiality of missives was provided by folding the letter sheet multiple times than applying melted wax to an edge. A personal seal was then impressed upon the wax. Any tampering would break the wax seal which could not be repaired. The sealing wax was generally in the form of a stick which was melted by a candle. By the 17th century, the candle used to melt the wax had its own holder. There are four forms of candle holders with individual elaborations. Until the third quarter of the 18th century such candle receptacles or taper jacks were usually unpaired miniature candlesticks approximately 10 cm in height. As these were used for correspondence, small taper candle holders were commonly found as a component of inkstands (figure 1). The shorter taper jacks with a plate may have a handle as well as a conical snuffer attached by a chain. Over the ensuing half century three additional forms developed. The bougie-boxes were cylindrical containers with a short spout on the cap (figure 2). The ribbon candle was coiled in the container exiting through the spout. These were particularly advantageous for use during travel. Some were quite decorative with perforated walls and colored glass. The wax jacks were of two forms. In the first, the ribbon candle was vertically or horizontally wrapped around the stem or a bar, respectively, with its tip exiting through a perforation (figure 3, 4). In a second form, the tip of the candle was held in place by a spring plate (figure 5). This had the advantage of catching any dripping from the candle.

Sterling silver and silver plate were most common although gold, brass, pewter, and iron were also used. These devices were employed for other purposes as tobacco lighters or if adapted with a glass shield, as a small chamber lamp.

Interestingly, taper jacks, bougie-boxes and wax jacks are not in great demand by collectors. This is rather puzzling as they represent a unique article and are esthetically quite pleasing. Modern forms are easily distinguished and there is little financial incentive for forgeries. Cost of silver plated pieces range in the hundreds and sterling sil-



Figure 1. Sterling silver taper jack with snuffer as a component of an inkstand. Hallmark William Stroud, London, 1801.



Figure 2. Silver plated bougie-box with snuffer.



Figure 3. Exeter silver plated wax jack with vertical stem for ribbon candle

ver examples near a thousand dollars. As with any antique, price is greatly influenced by date, maker, esthetics and provenance. For further reading: Charles R Beard "Taper-sticks. The Wright Bemrose Collection" in *The Connoisseur*, November 1931.



Figure 4. Sterling silver wax jack with horizontal bar for ribbon candle. Hallmarked William Hutton & Sons, Sheffield, 1908.



Figure 5. Sterling silver wax jack with spring plate holder. Hallmarked Edward Bernard & Sons, London, 1910.

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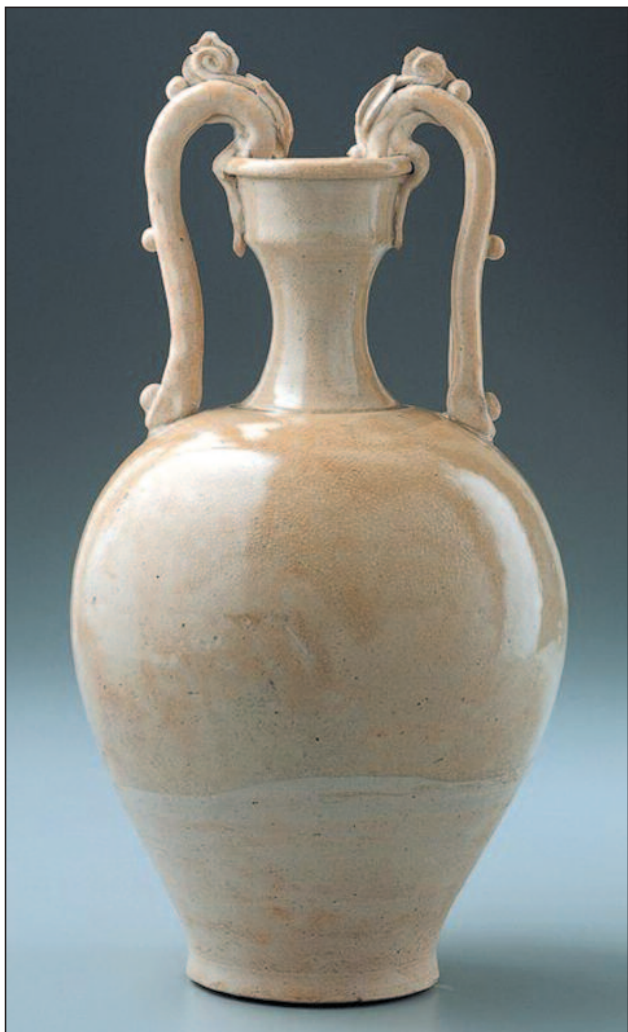
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# Too Many Chinese Porcelains Coming to Auction

By Anne Gilbert

When you see hundreds of items in the same category coming to auction you know something funny is going on. A case in point are Chinese porcelain objects, some supposedly antiques. Many labeled as “vintage.”



For the last three years the Chinese porcelain market was “hot.” The Chinese were spending big Yen, buying back old porcelains. American collectors were following. My research turned up the fact that Chinese potters were busily turning out not only “Tang” and “Ming” reprints along with many brand new porcelain “vintage” pieces. Nothing new about that.

My best advice, if you are a beginning collector, is to have the seller give you a written affidavit, money back guarantee of authenticity, if you are spending several hundred or more dollars.

Do your own research and scroll auctions on the internet. If you see too many so-called “Ming” or “Tang” pieces of the same form be suspicious.

A wonderful book by Otto Kurz, first written in 1948, details not only the faking of Chinese ceramics but many other faked categories, now out of print, but worth tracking down.

Tang tomb figures from horses to ladies arrived in Europe around 1909 when excavations brought them to the attention of collectors. By 1912 a factory in China was turning out hundreds.

In the 20th century several shipwrecks brought authentic Tang pieces to shore and when they showed up at auctions they fetched top dollar.

These days when an individual has what they think is a Tang, Sung, Ming or early Ching piece of porcelain, the dealer or auction house supposedly has to have a scientific test performed, and that costs hundreds of dollars. This is known as a “thermoluminescence” or TL test. Radiation is involved. If you wish to sell such a piece chances are the auction house will ask if you have had a TL test. Obviously many of these pieces never make it to the high end auction houses. They show up, as they now are, at mid-range auction galleries around the country.

CLUES: Should you take a chance? Maybe you’ll get lucky. But, if you don’t spend big bucks for a test how will you know?



PHOTO CAPTION: (1) Chinese Amphora shaped porcelain Tang style vase.

PHOTO CREDIT : Kimbell Art Museum, Ft. Worth, TX

PHOTO CAPTION: (2) Reproduction Tang horse figure

PHOTO CREDIT: Marks 4 Antiques Pricing Guides

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(Opinions of the writers contained herein are not necessarily the opinions of the publishers.)

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**Managing Editor** Margaret (Peg) DeStefano,  
NSCDA/Colorado, D.A.R.,  
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**Webmaster** Sam DeStefano  
[mrphone@central.com](mailto:mrphone@central.com)  
Shaleen Moore, Shaleen  
[@blackbirdmediainc.com](mailto:@blackbirdmediainc.com)

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# Chinese Painted Enamel Objects Colorful and Costly

By Anne Gilbert

The first thing that catches your eye are the vivid colors. Next, that even though the object appears to be porcelain it is entirely something else. A tap of your finger tells you it is metal with a painted enamel glaze. You are looking at an example of Chinese painted enamels. Back in the 1970s, 80s it was quite affordable and often went unrecognized in antique shops.

Over the centuries many enameling techniques were used. Among them cloisonné and champlevé. The technique of enamel painting used colored glass fluxes painted as on porcelain, but using copper, silver, gold or bronze surfaces. The result was a vivid color palette.

Over the centuries, going back to early Egypt, paintings of enamel on metal were used. During the Renaissance colored enamel designs were used like paint on metal objects.

Before the 1970s, the 19th century cups, saucer, vases and bowls that gathered dust in shops were all show staples. They were considered gaudy, commercial export pieces. There were few if any examples in museums and not much documentation. An exhibit in the 1970s organized by the China Institute in New York and the Ashmolean Museum of Oxford created a small awareness. However, it was a show of over 100 pieces at the E & J Frankel Gallery in New York, in 1991 that alerted collectors and dealers. The Frankel Gallery still offers a collection of Chinese enamel painting on metals.

CLUES: Because the enamel surface is fragile, many early pieces can have chips and scratches. This is especially true of the 19th century pieces. A clue to the older pieces is the quality of the design and decorative details.

Historically, pieces were thought to have been made first in the late 17th century, and by Jesuit missionaries schooled in the making of Limoges enamels.

By the late 18th century the technique had been perfected and delicate designs and forms were used. However, as the social order began its downward spiral in 19th century China and imperial patronage to the arts disappeared, so did the quality of workmanship.

A great variety of forms were used. One of the most charming were sea shell forms.



There were also figurals of animals.

These days when it is recognized and not mis-labeled as cloisonné, prices at auction can be in the thousands of dollars. A piece doesn't have to be old to be costly. Vintage vases are selling for thousands of dollars.

PHOTO CAPTION: (1) Chinese teapot, painted enamel of copper.

PHOTO CREDIT: Oriental Art Auctions



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- Hand sanitizer is available at the front counter; employees are encouraged to disinfect after handling money.
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May 23 Daily tours begin (Online tickets or walk-ups available)

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July 11 Fundraiser: Bastille Day Celebration & Silent Auction  
July 25 Experiential Tour: Wine, Charcuterie and Fine Cheeses (Reservations required)  
August 1 Special Event: Colorado Day  
August 22 Experiential Tour: Wine, Charcuterie and Fine Cheeses (Reservations required)

Fall—September, October, November  
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September 30 Daily tours end  
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# Shakespeare in Lockdown: *Did he write King Lear in Plague Quarantine?*

*Pestilence was rife in the Bard's time, closing theatres and ravaging life. Did Shakespeare write his bleak, desperate drama while self-isolating? We sift the evidence. . .*

By Andrew Dickson, *The Guardian*

While those of us stuck in self-isolation or working from home watch TikTok videos and refresh liveblogs, a meme has been going around that claims Shakespeare made use of being quarantined during the plague to write *King Lear*. The Bard supposedly took advantage of the Globe's lengthy closure to get on top of his writing in-tray – coming up with *Macbeth* and *Antony and Cleopatra* to boot. If you weren't panicky enough about how little you've achieved recently, this is surely a way to feel worse. Why aren't you finally dusting off that novel or screenplay you've been itching to write? It's what the Bard would do, surely.

Yet, is it actually true, the bit about Shakespeare? Well, maybe. Certainly it's fair to say that, like all Elizabethans, the playwright's career was affected by the bubonic plague in ways that are all but impossible to conceive now, even in the midst of Covid-19. As an infant, he was lucky to survive the disease: Stratford-upon-Avon was ravaged by a huge outbreak in the summer of 1564, a few months after he was born, and up to a quarter of the town's population died. Growing up, Shakespeare would have heard endless stories about this apocalyptic event and kneeled in church in solemn remembrance of townsfolk who were lost. His father, John, was closely involved in relief efforts and attended a meeting to help Stratford's poorest. It was held outdoors because of the risk.

When Shakespeare became a professional actor, then a playwright and shareholder in a London company, plague presented both a professional and existential threat. Elizabethan doctors had no inkling that the disease was transmitted by rat fleas, and the moment an outbreak flared up – often during the spring or summer months, peak seasons for theatres – the authorities scrambled to ban mass gatherings. Given that the authorities were naturally suspicious of theatre anyway, as being an incitement to lewdness and cross-dressing and God knows what else, playhouses were invariably the first to close. (Brothels and bear-baiting arenas, too, which some theatre owners relied on for income.) As a preacher of the time flatly put it: "The cause of plagues is sin, and the cause of sin is plays." Between 1603 and 1613, when Shakespeare's powers as a writer were at their height, the Globe and other London playhouses were shut for an astonishing total of 78 months – more than 60% of the time.

These were dark periods for theatres in more senses than one.



irony to the closures: Elizabethan theatregoers loved to snack on hazelnuts, which may have helped repel plague-carrying fleas.

So how about the *Lear* theory? Not by any means impossible: we know the play was acted in front of King James I on Boxing Day 1606, the first performance on record, and it's a decent bet that it was scripted that year or the year before. As the theatre historian James Shapiro points out, there was a major plague event in London in summer 1606, which led to the Globe and all other London theatres being closed. The outbreak wasn't as bad as the one three years before that killed more than a 10th of London's population, but it raged through the summer and early autumn, and the City of London parish where Shakespeare lived was one of those affected. Indeed, the playwright's very house was touched: one of those who died that year was his landlady, Marie Mountjoy.

When you know this, it's hard not to hear the echoes in *Lear*, arguably the bleakest tragedy Shakespeare wrote. The mood in the city must have been ghastly – deserted streets and closed shops, dogs running free, carers carrying three-foot staffs painted red so everyone else kept their distance, church bells tolling endlessly for funerals – and something similar seems to be happening in the bleached-out world of the play.

The text is saturated by images of death, chaos, nihilism and desperation, and everyone seems to feel the chill. As Gloucester morosely observes: "Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father ... we have seen the best of our time." We don't know for certain that *Lear* was a plague text – it's nowhere near as explicit as Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*, or Thomas Dekker's ironically entitled journalistic pamphlet *The Wonderful Year*, which relates the grisly events of 1603 – but it certainly feels like it.

It's not the only Shakespeare play to make reference to plague or pestilence, an ever-present reality for the playwright and his contemporaries. Although there aren't many direct references to bubonic plague in his scripts, it shadows the edge of the frame, more felt than seen. Occasionally it's a plot device, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, where an outbreak catches the messenger sent by Friar Laurence and forces him into quarantine. This means the letter carrying news that Juliet has faked her death doesn't reach Romeo. Earlier in the play, Mercutio's line in Act Three: "A plague on both your houses!" might have raised a grim chuckle, even if it most likely referred to another deadly disease of the time, smallpox.

But in the plays written after that appalling outbreak of 1603, when even James I's coronation had to be postponed, disease metaphors seem to infect Shakespeare's work. The little-performed *Timon of Athens* culminates in a man sending himself into exile, where the word "plague" is barely off his lips: "Plagues ... Your potent and infectious fevers heap / On Athens!" ... "be crowned with plagues" ... "send them back the plague / Could I but catch it for them". *Measure for Measure*, which is as close as Shakespeare ever got to depicting the London of his own time, features brothels and bars abruptly shut down by an autocratic government, as they so often were in reality.

*Macbeth*, conceivably written during the 1606 epidemic, contains a short, knotty speech that would have struck fear into many spectators: "The dead man's knell / Is there scarce asked for who, and good men's lives / Expire before the flowers in their caps / Dying or ere they sicken." As Shapiro notes: "Though less than four lines long, there's probably not a better description of the terror and malaise plague carried with it." And *King Lear* is even more brutally direct. *Lear*'s right-hand man, Kent, yells at the servant Oswald: "A plague upon your epileptic visage!" *Lear* describes the "plagues that hang in this pendulous air," referencing the common theory that the disease could be spread by airborne transmission. And in one of his numerous rants, the King calls his daughter Goneril "a plague sore, an embossed carbuncle in my / Corrupted blood" – a nastily specific reference to enlarged lymph nodes, one of the symptoms of bubonic plague. Quite a thing to say to your daughter.

Whether the plague was a good thing for Shakespeare personally is more doubtful. For one thing, as a shareholder in two playhouses and a company, he will have been as anxious as any West End producer in 2020 about theatre closures, the effect on the bot-

*Continued on page 15*

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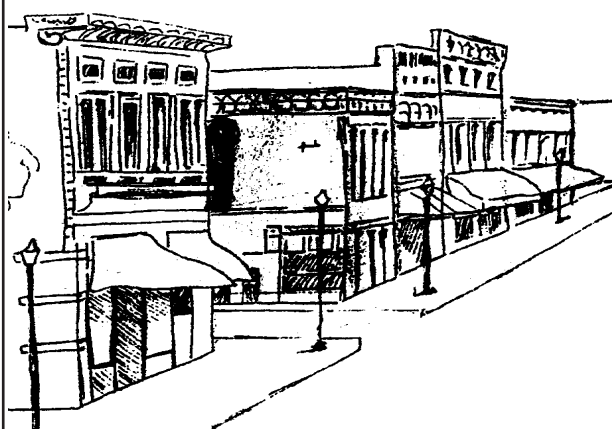




# Find It All in Florence

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## # Connectedness Florence

By Joen M. Elliott

After two years of soul searching and trying to find myself, I made a move to Florence. As a child, I spent many summers near this area when our family stayed at my Uncle Boyd's cabin in Rye. Years later, after several road trips to southern and southwestern Colorado, I fell in love with Florence and decided this was the place I wanted to live. I love Florence and feel this was a quality-of-life move for me. It's also a retirement destination for many. Hopefully, that will remain a hidden secret and Florence will keep its small-town qualities.

The vibrant historic downtown offers many antique stores, an art community, nearby outdoor family activities, and event-filled summers. It's also an excellent place for foodies and boasts of many restaurants to accommodate all tastes. The incredible beauty of the area lures many visitors to enjoy the outdoors, rafting, zip lines, a winery, and this all contributes to "Find it in Florence."

When I moved here, I didn't know a soul. I volunteered at the Bell Tower Art Center and Senior Center, rented a booth in one of the antique shops, went church shopping, attended Open Mic at the Bell Tower, JAM at the Senior Center, and plays at the Rialto. I went to the local library and joined a book club. There was so much to do with all the local offerings of Florence. I walked around the town and met a lot of people and soon became familiar with many faces.

I realize the strength of Florence is the connectedness. The citizens of Florence provide many experiences for newcomers and visitors to the area. The friendliness and helpfulness of so many are impressive, and the culture of this small town is welcoming and engaging.

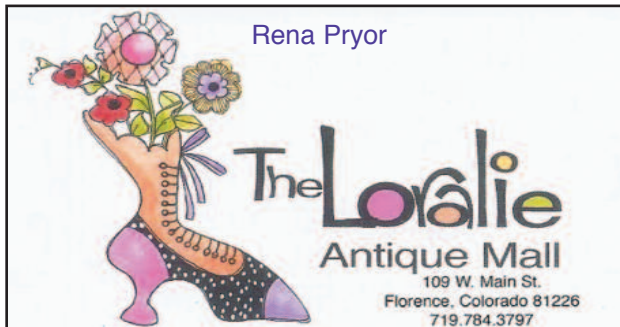
Florence is notorious for its checkered history. Everyone has a story. The architecture is beautiful, and the history is kept alive and vital. Of course, history and antiques go together well and the Pioneer Museum provides excellent resources for every age to understand the history of Florence, including the coal mining of years ago. Film companies find it a great place to shoot movies because of its unique architecture and location.

Florence has many distinctive qualities as a small town with much to offer. the antique business, robust art community, music, and connectedness all contribute to it being a great place to live and visit.

I made the right choice when I chose Florence for my home. I love my new lifestyle and feel connected and at home. I found not only myself but many new avenues for continued growth and prosperity.



Rena Pryor





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## Shakespeare's Writing Impacted

Continued from page 13

tom line, and whether there was even any point in him generating new scripts if no one could stage them. For another, we know he worked intimately with actors, his most trusted collaborators, and may even have written his plays in the theatre building; as a busy actor-writer-manager used to doing 17 things at once, isolation wasn't his preferred mode, as far as we can tell. And it's hardly as if plague

times were restful, particularly if you were trapped in the city. Shakespeare's house on Silver Street faced a church whose bells would have been constantly clanging for plague victims: no escape there.

It's worth observing another point, too. During a previous terrible plague outbreak in June 1592, when the theatres were closed for nearly six months, Shakespeare turned to poetry: his long narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* were both composed during this time, perhaps because their young author was desperate for a more reliable source of income. If the playhouses had stayed shut and his pandemic-forced career as a poet had taken off, there might have been no *Lear* – or *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, or any of Shakespeare's best works.

• Andrew Dickson is the author of *The Globe Guide to Shakespeare*.

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Mona of Loveland, Colorado, writes, "These are tools for making fake grain on wood. I lived in an 1880's mansion and all the original doors and baseboards (10") had been "grained" with stains. It was real wood, so I never understood why the grain was added. Style and design?" Mona is correct. One of 19th Century guides for decorating furniture is "The American Grainers' Hand-book" which contained details on pigments. Tools that were recommended included a horsehair brush, a blender brush, combs made of ivory, steel and wood, and a grooved rubber cylinder for imitating burl grain. This technique was popular in the 1800s during the heyday of imitative painting.

One of our contest guessers Cheryl Miller said that she also used similar tools to marble paper and bookend papers. Another contest winner Sam Taylor described the tools as a softening brush, roller rocker, graining brushes and graining tools. He said they were used to create a faux wood grain look using paint or glaze.

Congratulations to our winners. They include: Cheryl Miller, Ft. Collins, Colorado; Sam Taylor, Glenwood Springs, Colorado; and, Teresa Cobb, Cawker City, Kansas. You have won a year's subscription to *the Mountain States Collector*. Thank you for entering our contest.

**LAFAYETTE**



## April's What Is It?



Send your answers to the What Is It contest, postmarked by April 20, to *the Mountain States Collector*, P.O. Box 1003, Bailey, CO 80421. At least three winners will be drawn. Winners will receive a year's subscription to *the Mountain States Collector*.



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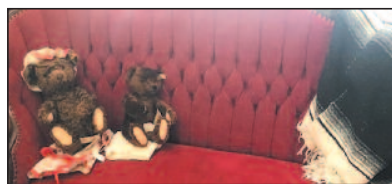
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