

Antique or Junque: Wooden tray serves up a profitable offering

by Anne_McCollam

Q: I hope you can provide some information on the pictured wooden tray. My dad bought it for me at a local historical museum rummage sale in Gilbert, Ariz. It measures 24 inches by 12 inches, including the handles, and is decorated with a scene of a mission church, homes and mountains. On the left side, the word "Mexico" is carved into the wood.

The wooden tray, created by Mexican artisans, would probably be in the \$50 to \$100 range. When was it made and does it have any value?

A: Your tray and similar items were made in Mexico by talented artisans for the tourist trade in the Southwest during the early 1900s. After years of being tossed out and languishing in secondhand stores, collectors are beginning to recognize the value in these crafts.

Your tray was made around 1930 and would probably be in the \$50 to \$100 range.

Q: This mark is on the bottom of my porcelain group figurine. In mint condition, the figurine is titled "Othello" and measures 15 inches long and 10 inches tall. There are two seated figures, a male and a female, and a standing male who is gesturing with his arm. All are wearing Renaissance clothes.

Since we plan to keep it in the family, we would like to know more about its history.

A: W. Fr. Kister Porcelain Manufactory made your group figurine. They have produced porcelain in Scheibe-Alsbach, Thuringia, Germany, since 1838. The figures are the three main characters in the play, "Othello," a tragedy written by Shakespeare. Othello was a Moor general in the Venetian army, Desdemona was his wife and Iago was his ensign.

Your figurine was made in the early 1900s and its value would probably be \$600 to \$900.

Q: Recently, I bought a "Mail Pouch Tobacco" blue tin thermometer at an antiques mall for \$50. Measuring 3 inches wide by 9 inches tall, it must have never been hung outside because it is in excellent condition. At the top are the words "Chew Mail Pouch Tobacco" in a circle and at the bottom "Treat Yourself to the Best." The dealer didn't seem to know much about it; he thought it was made in the 1960s or 1970s.

I don't know anything about collecting advertising items, and I would like to know if it is worth what I paid.

A: Your thermometer is worth not only what you paid for it, but a whole lot more. Advertising thermometers have crossover value â€” they appeal to collectors of advertising memorabilia, tobacco items and any type of thermometers. As far as the dealer's opinion of the thermometer's vintage, he was "close, but no cigar." It was made in the 1950s. Its value would probably be \$350 to \$400.

Q: We have an antique oak china cabinet that is in very good condition. It has curved glass sides and a glass door with a key, plus the original dark finish. There are four shelves with grooves for plates as well as casters on the curved legs. The overall height is 66 inches and the width is 37 inches.

What is its vintage and value?

A: Based on your good description, you have a late Victorian china cabinet that was made around the turn of the last century. It would probably fetch \$800 to \$1,200 in an antiques shop.

Address your questions to Anne McCollam, P.O. Box 247, Notre Dame, IN 46556. Items of a general interest will be answered in this column. Due to the volume of inquiries, she cannot answer individual letters.

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