

Majolica Matters

The Quarterly News of the
Majolica International Society
Summer 1998

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Majolica Matters New Editor

By Anne Mock

As your new, Majolica Matters editor, I thought you might like to know how I started collecting majolica.

A favorite pastime, while growing up in Australia, was antique shopping with my mother. Since most of the old homesteads there were furnished with gorgeous English antiques, there were many lovely things to choose from.

After Joe and I were married, we moved to California. To furnish our first home, we began to collect antique furniture and collected many wonderful things. Majolica came into my life in 1985 when a friend showed me a



Anne & Joe Mock and their
Massier Rooster

couple of green plates. I was instantly attracted to the brilliant color. From that moment, I started asking for majolica. However, when I went into antique shops, most people did not know what I was talking about. I was quite persistent and eventually found some majolica when I visited my parents in Australia.

Then, on a trip to London, we met Nic Boston at his place on Kings Road. He patiently began our majolica education that very day. Now, we realized there was more to majolica than green plates! Our first impulse was to buy everything in sight, but of course, that was impossible. After more than two hours, we did buy an impressed Hugues Protat ewer and an elephant humidior and the passion began. Now, whenever we travel, majolica shopping is a

"must". My husband and I have found fantastic pieces in many places - San Francisco, Spain, Sydney, the Outback in Australia, you name it.

We found a beautiful Minton "Pan" in Barcelona, during the Olympics. I did not want to buy "Pan" immediately, because I thought he was too expensive. Fortunately Joe talked me into it. When we returned, the next day to get our certificate of authenticity, the sales person said that he was not supposed to have sold the piece. However, it was too late. We had the piece!

In Australia we have found many fabulous pieces including a Lonitz candelabra, with two quail. In Tumburumba Australia, (the Outback) we found two Minton garden seats. The seats were "discovered" being used as planters - upside down and filled with dirt.

My mother told me her grandmother had the Minton Blackamoors (p. 61 of Marilyn Karmason and Joan Stacke's book). Unfortunately they were burned in a fire. I do have a Minton pedestal in cobalt blue, though, that belonged to my great grandparents. My mother also passed on to me a complete set of Sarreguemines fruit dishes.

More remembrances to relate as they come to mind. There is much to tell!

Our New Look...

After attending a few conventions and getting to know several members, it is apparent that we all share similar interests. Therefore, we developed some categories that can be used to organize our articles. You are encouraged to send in any and all copy to *Majolica Matters*

Editors note: (We would love to hear from you even if your story doesn't fit a category)

Letter from the Editor...

Polly "Your shoes are hard to fill!" Don't know how you did this for 6 years!

Anne

.....and special thanks to everyone who helped put out this edition of *Majolica Matters*,

especially Joe and Kim - I would not have been able to do this without you.

Decorating with Majolica...

It's always such fun to sit back with a favorite magazine in anticipation of running into a piece of majolica lying understated on a table. The thrill of finding a piece is worth the cost of the magazine. "Decorating with Majolica"

The ever popular curio cabinet- always good for displaying your pieces! Pictured, Marcia Singman at the English's house in Baltimore.



"How do you display your Majolica?"

No Time for Thinking About It...

A favorite topic we all secretly love to hear about is the greatest deal, or biggest regret a fellow collector has encountered. When we hear what "we" could have gotten IF we had only been there; or hear who missed out on a great piece, it brings the "human touch" to our mutual passion. I will rely upon you to send me your stories (anonymously if it's that bad!).

Wanted...

This is a section to help all members to find that missing lid or whatnot!!

On History...

This section is aimed at continuing to educate new and old members about our "passion". Educating oneself not only whets our interest, but , also, it's our best defense against deception. Dodie Lake's Article, Victorian Fantasy reviews....

Auction News...

This segment will inform you where the next auction is to be held and/or the results of the latest auction. - (as available)

A Note from a Charter Member...

This article will be dedicated to one of the Charter Members and will give a forum to discuss what ever they would like. Our Charter Member, Dodie Lake, is our first writer. Her article is featured in *the On History...* section of the newsletter.

What's happening in...

We will feature a human interest article from a region in the World. This quarter's newsletter will cover the International Conference.

The 10th Annual Conference

Conference Report

By Marcia Singman

Imagine strawberries and chocolate, friendly faces from Atlanta '97, and warm greetings from Polly, Joan, Marilyn, and Michael - What more could you ask? Believe it or not, the Baltimore '98 convention did contain more...more Knowledge about Palissy ware, decorating and restoration tips, computer skills and a FREE DISC, the Monet Exhibit, a lovely home filled with mouth-watering Majolica, a lecture on the creators of Victorian Majolica... and, oh yes, MAJOLICA HEAVEN!

The first treat was eating strawberries while listening to Susan Zises Green's very personal look at collecting and decorating with Majolica. I'm still envious of her \$60 "FIND" twenty -five years ago of a gorgeous (George Jones) bread tray. After the break Marshall Katz gave a very interesting talk about Palissy Ware. "Mafr make the best damn bugs, and the ugly bugs are the best"! exclaimed Mr. Katz, who shared his enthusiasm for his subject throughout his lecture and the slides on Palissy Wares. Mr. Katz wondered what the wives of the Palissy ceramists, with their snakes, moss and salamanders must have thought about their husbands, "Creative" jobs. "Oh well, it's a living"! Mr. Katz successfully and energetically peaked our interests in Palissy Ware and we look forward to his new book Portuguese Palissy Ware: A survey of Nineteenth - Twentieth -Century Ceramists from Caldas da Rainha, 1853 - 1920, which will be published in the Spring of 1999.

Since many of us are still not "Computer Literate," we attended MajoliCollege with Cheryl Smith and Charlie Washburne, who became our "Millennium professors." Cheryl armed us with a new language and Charlie with a disc to keep a record of our own collections. Thank you both!

Martine Boston, Randi Schwartz, and Fritz Mang gave us many tips and different approaches to the handling, caring, and restoration of majolica.

Martine informed us of the history of restoration, beginning with the Chinese, while Randi suggested three categories of restoration: 1) museum, 2) camouflage, and 3) invisible. Randi gained invaluable knowledge in the restoration department of Marshall Fields as well as in the dentist's office repairing dentures! Randi Schwartz has worked on everything from Picasso to a troglodyte!

Mr. Fritz Mang shared his experience in restoration and I have a large Wardle jug with a restored spout by Mr. Mang, which proves his worth!

After a healthy catered box lunch and a trip through Monet's "Waterlilies", we headed through a beautiful section of Baltimore to visit Phil and Deborah English's home. Friendly dogs in a lovely country setting greeted us. As we filed off the bus (which we almost had to push up the hill), Deborah and Phil English welcomed us to their beautiful home. They have amassed an amazing collection of pristine majolica in just a few years, and it all began with the famous Minton Monkey Garden seat from Nicolaus Boston.

Nicolaus Boston spoke on the "Creators of Victorian Majolica"? Mr. Boston is the ultimate professional - an eloquent speaker, knowledgeable historian, majolica enthusiast, and generally, "Mr. Nice Guy". He has been a collector since he was 16, so he must've been a nice teenager too! Several years ago, on his way to a Bruce Springsteen concert, Nicolaus popped into an antique shop. Later that evening, while sitting in the front row at the rock concert, Nicolaus sheltered his new acquisition, (a George Jones butterfly dresser tray), under his sport coat while trying to enjoy "The Boss"! His stories, slides, and invigorating presentation educated and intrigued us all. The speech was a perfect closing to a perfect day just before going to HEAVEN the next morning... "Majolica Heaven," that is. Armed with new acquisitions, new information, and new

friends, I boarded the plane a fulfilled, though tired, member of a wonderful group of collectors and dealers - The Majolica International Society.

A Spouse's Perspective

By Joe Mock

I accompanied my wife, Anne, to this the tenth annual Majolica International Society conference in Baltimore. Not having wild expectations, I am pleased to say, I came away with warm and wonderful feelings for all that I had seen and done. The attendees were interesting and fun. The events were well planned and extremely informative. I highly recommend that spouses of Majolica collectors make the effort to attend future conferences.

Anne and I flew across the Country on the day before the conference. We were met in Baltimore by our daughter, Alex, and her boy friend, Will, who had come up from their home in Tampa. Seeing them added to the enjoyment of the week-end and we were able to share our Majolica passion with them. Alex accompanied Anne and me on Friday to the Horowitz' Tobacco Jar collection. It was not only fabulous to see but we were given a chance to visit a home in a beautiful part of Baltimore. Even with more than my share of the fabulous desserts, I was an attentive listener at the MajoliCake and Coffee talks on Friday night.

The Saturday, MajoliCollege sessions were great. I was fascinated by Cheryl and Charlie's computer "lesson." The computer is an amazing piece of machinery and I never ceased to be amazed at how I am able to use the computer in all my affairs. Thank you Charlie for the disk with your inventory program. Having waited and waited for pieces to come back from the restorers, I am now more appreciative of the skills which the restorers have and the patience they endure to restore our treasures.

In the afternoon, Anne and our daughter went to the Monet Exhibit and the English's home. I took Alex's friend, Will, Nic Boston and George Costa to Camden Yards to the baseball game. Camden Yards is the premier

baseball stadium in the US and I wanted to see what everyone is talking about. I was not disappointed even though the host team Orioles lost. The evening banquet and Nic Boston's talk were excellent.

At the business meeting on Sunday I felt that the discussions were meaningful and the group extremely well organized. Congratulations to the new officers especially, Anne. As I stated at the meeting I will try to help her by writing from the spouse's perspective.

Majolica Heaven gave me a chance to compare items for sale with those in our collection. I guess I shouldn't be surprised at the increase in value but, never the less, I was. At least, on paper, I was able to pay for a wonderful trip to Baltimore.

Statement of Principles

At the convention, the attendees unanimously approved the following Statement of Principles.

Majolica International Society A Statement of Principles

The functions and goals of the Society are to develop relationships among members who share an aesthetic and economic appreciation of majolica.

The Society provides a setting for the exchange and enhancement of knowledge concerning majolica.

MIS accomplishes this goal through its Newsletter, the educational aspects of its national and regional meetings, and through the continuing contacts among its members. It enables its members to meet with experts (including its own membership) to deal with all aspects of majolica collecting.

The society provides a mechanism for buying and selling of majolica.

This function is accomplished by bringing together dealers and other members who wish

to sell or barter pieces of majolica. This goal is accomplished through informal contacts, announcements of sales and auctions in the Newsletter, barter sessions at the annual meeting, and participation in Majolica Heaven.

The society sets standards for transactions carried out under its auspices.

- Members and those representing them will not knowingly misrepresent age, condition or authenticity of any object.
- All items placed for sale will be labeled as to price and particulars of the item.
- All restorations known to the seller will be made known to the buyer.
- All sales or exchanges will be documented by appropriate written sales records. These shall include name, address and phone number of the seller and necessary identification of the piece.
- Dealers are expected, when possible, to publicize their association with the Society and to publicize the activities of the organization.

While MIS cannot guarantee adherence to these standards nor can it adjudicate conflicts that arise from them, it has a strong expectation that all who sell, barter or buy majolica under its auspices will conduct themselves in full compliance with these principles.

No Time for Thinking About It...

Once Again, Judy Punched by Punch By Michael & Judy Taback

In September, 1991, after several years of living in London, and a few months before we returned to the States, we went to yet another antique show - The Decorative Antiques and Textiles Fair at Chelsea Harbour. We were hoping to find an antique French wedding armoire to ship home with

our household goods.....and we did at Stand 58. Just around the corner at Raffles, Stand 69, sitting on a table in a booth filled with furniture we found one lonely piece of majolica - a turquoise George Jones Punch Bowl - reg. mark, May 1887. The price was £3850 (\$6930) but we could purchase it right then for £3250 (\$5,850).

Our finances dictated that we could only purchase one of the items. So the dilemma began. We scrutinized the punch bowl. We walked back to Stand 58 and looked at the armoire. We came back to Stand 69 and picked up the punch bowl. We had collected many wonderful pieces of majolica while living in London BUT this piece was something we had only fantasized about. Here was a chance to purchase it ourselves. There was no time to think about it. Holding the punch bowl, we agonized over the decision. Discretion, at the time, said it was far too expensive to just "have" for our own. We assured ourselves that it was only a decoration - that the armoire was far more useful. As we placed the piece back on the table an American voice behind us said "I'll take it. Please wrap it for shipping and I'll pick it up tomorrow."

It was several months later, while reading an article in Antiques and The Arts Weekly that I recognized former Governor of Illinois, Jim Thompson, as the purchaser of that George Jones Punch Bowl. Yes, we did get that French armoire and it is lovely but a far better purchase, considering current majolica prices, would have been that piece of majolica.

On History...

A Victorian Fantasy

By *Dodie Lake*

(Editor's note - Dodie Lake is the proprietor of Ophelia Fine Arts in Sydney, Australia. This article appeared in Carter's Antiques and Collectables. Dodie's Web site is www.ophelia.aust.com/~majolica)

When Herbert Minton launched his majolica in 1851, he found instant success with a public who adored excess, adornment and originality. Majolica became a favored Victorian porcelain,

and although it lost favor in the more subdued Edwardian era, it is once again bustling its way back into popularity.

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In 1881, at London's great Crystal Palace Exhibition, Herbert Minton first introduced 'Majolica' - the name and the wares - to the public. It was an instant success and even given a special mention by the Exhibition judges. Fantastic it was then, and fantastic it is now!

Minton sought to give the public a product that would capture the imagination, decorate the home and have a useful purpose. To achieve this he borrowed techniques from the ancient past. The wonderful colored glazes that give majolica its appeal were being used by the Moors as early as the eighth century, and the Italians in the Middle Ages imported glazed pottery from Majorca (which they called Maiolica); the wares came to be known as maiolica.

Italy was soon to begin manufacture of its own maiolica, as was most of Europe. In France it was known as Faience, in Holland and England as Delft for delft. Because the wares were functional, robust and largely impervious to staining, much has survived intact to the present day.

In France, Bernard Palissy (1510-1590) experimentally changed the opaque glaze from tin to lead, and the concept from largely practical to largely ornamental. Fantastic is probably a better word to describe his creations, which bordered on the bizarre. In the nineteenth century Charles Avisseau revived both the name and the technique of Palissy, producing wares which he called 'Palissy' ware.

At least two potters in Portugal (Caldas) also began to produce 'Palissy'-type wares. These are often of green grassy grounds in high relief, covered in very naturalistic lizards, frogs, snakes and insects of all description, modeled as large ewers, small ewers (rare) and plaques. Other designs include oval and circular plaques decorated with lobsters, crabs, fish and various marine motifs.

These less-than-modest pieces appeal to the more intrepid collector, but nevertheless, at the time of the Great Exhibition of 1851, Plaissey prices were at a premium. Collectors needed quite substantial means in order to indulge their fantasies, and only the gentry could hope to afford the luxury of Plaissey.

Minton's timely release of his more affordable "Majolica" was considered a godsend to those of lesser means who wished to impress their dinner guests. Before long the home of Victorians were alive with the colorful product. As other factories began production the competition became fierce, and subsequently a huge range of wares became available. Wedgwood, George Jones, Holdcroft and many other jumped on the bandwagon to imitate each other and produce some outstanding original designs.

Some of the more popular items were - to name a few - covered game pie dishes, sardine boxes, vases, umbrella stands and garden seats. Teapots, milk jugs, sugar/honey pots, cheese bells and table centerpieces also tumbled onto the market in great profusion.

Game pie dishes were complete with a plain white removable liner, and decorated with game - rabbits, pheasant, duck, etc., as well as seafood. Lidded sardine boxes (which make great trinket/jewelry boxes) were literally works of art, with life-size sardines and other wonders of the sea adorning their colorfully glazed lids and bodies. Teapots emerged in the forms of monkeys, cockerels, coconuts, pineapples, cabbages and even three-legged men!

Many factories produced garden seats for the fashionable Victorian conservatories. These are absolutely lovely, decorative and useful, as either seats or side tables. In 1872, Minton released their beautiful "Passion Flower" design of garden seat onto the appreciative market. It was modeled on neoclassical lines, with deep cobalt blue body, yellow bands, guilloche border in yellow and white, and stylized green leaves topped with alternate passion flowers and lilies. Other garden seats were modeled in the form of monkeys squatting under a cushion atop their heads.

A pair of blackamoors, first produced by Minton in 1865, are (in my opinion) among the most dramatic and ambitious pieces ever made. They are life-sized male/female figures standing on satyr-decorated pedestals. The beautifully modeled black bodies are offset with pale green drapery. Bread, feathers and a striped turban complete the female figure, whilst the male is resplendent in a lion skin, quiver and arrows. Both support baskets decorated with fruit on their heads. They were designed to be used as jardinières.

Not all majolica is outrageously fantastic, and for many collectors, the smaller, more functional pieces are more appealing. Green plates, for instance, are always popular for their decorative value, and because of the many factories that produced them, a great variety of designs is available. They are like Ireland - they come in at least forty shades of green, and are fun to collect. Some people like to collect only one maker or only plates in mint condition, but I think an eclectic mix of patterns, shades and degrees of ware makes for a much more interesting collection which doesn't look too contrived.

The French Sarreguemines (pronounced - surra-gwem-inees) majolica is also delightful and very collectable. Established in Lorraine in 1788, they started producing their wares c 1876. Wonderful "trompe l'oeil" asparagus dishes and other major pieces are rare and exotic. Also hard to find in Australia are the very attractive and much sought after Sarreguemines wares of pale olive/mustard ground, decorated with various fruit, flowers, etc. Many collectors like the tea or dinner plates, as they look marvelous with their lovely mellow colored, almost real-looking cherries, damsons, strawberries and pears, and make a pleasing display on an old dresser.

As the highly ornate extravagance of the Victorian era gave way to the more subdued taste of the Edwardian, majolica fell into disfavor. Its revival some years ago has resulted in a steadily increased popularity to the point where today it enjoys a prestigious place as a highly collectable antique pottery. The fantasy and charm which made majolica

irresistible to the Victorians is again casting a spell over the collectors of today



A Fabulous Pair of WS & Sewers



Anne Mock with George Costa and Dodie Lake at Ophelia in Sydney.

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Wanted...

- Wanted by Gerry Leberfeld (212) 371-1738 - 25 Sutton Pl. South, New York, NY 10022

Minton Mushroom Cover for Fox Chasing Duck Game Pie Dish, Page 49 of Majolica Complete History - Karmason - Stacke

George Jones Pineapple Cream Pitcher, Page 89 Majolica Complete History - Karmason - Stacke

- Wanted by Doloris Wecker (901) 287-1348 - 370 Welch Rd., Dyersburg, TN 38024

Top to Etruscan Shell & Seaweed sugar bowl. Need large size 3" x 3 1/2"

- Wanted by Adrienne Ryder-Cook (804) 693-7422 - 7734 Goshen Ln., Gloucester, VA 23061

Lid to match blue box with fish design. Markings of bottom of box are H and c. Box measures 6" x 5" and is 2" deep.



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Thanks - Jerry

With the election of the new officers, it is fitting to say Thank You to Gerald Leberfeld for his years of untiring service to us all. Without Jerry's guidance and foresight the Majolica International Society would not be where it is today. We all owe you a heartfelt congratulations on a job very well done.



At the Annual Meeting
Clockwise from top right.
Joan Stack-Graham and Joseph
Howowitz, Marshall Katz and
Martine Boston, David and Mary
Fielding, Philip and Deborah
English, Gerald and Aviva
Leberfield.

