

Majolica Matters!

THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MAJOLICA SOCIETY

WINTER 1999



THE NASHVILLE SKYLINE AT DUSK

1999 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION NASHVILLE, APRIL 30 – MAY 2, 1999

By Philip D. English

Nashville, the home of Country Music, will be the home of Majolica Heaven '99. The Capital of Tennessee will host our annual meeting at the Nashville Airport Marriott. The meeting will commence Friday evening April 30 with MajoliCake and Coffee. Dr. Howard Silby, the first editor of the Society's newsletter, will discuss his challenging experiences as a collector of Majolica as Howard is colorblind. Saturday morning at 8:30 am breakfast, Barter and Buy will kick off events. Several authors of books on Majolica will also be available for autographs. MajoliCollege will start at 10:15 am with a lecture on "appraising Majolica" by Robert Goldberg. Mr. Goldberg is an accredited senior appraiser from New Orleans. Buses will depart for the Antiques Fair at the Tennessee fairgrounds at 11:30 am.

For those exploring Nashville, The Heritage, residence of Andrew Jackson, the Parthenon, Belle Meade, Grand Ole Opry and Opryland USA await you. Many churches and colleges, including Vanderbilt University, make Nashville the "Athens of

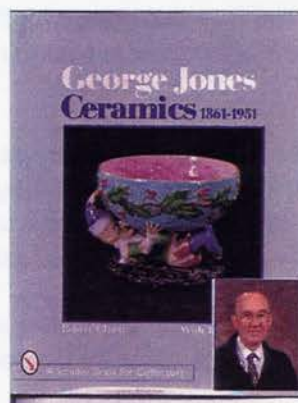
NO TIME FOR THINKIN'

"The Smell of 'Jelly'"

By Marcia Singman

Sometimes things happen so fast, there is no time for thinkin'. A dear, dear friend – who shall remain nameless – has taken this title to the test. In one particular antique shop, which she haunts often, my friend smelled "jelly," (her affectionate term for Majolica). So, she stayed an extra hour conversing about the shopkeeper's interests, (smart move), until finally he said those heart palpitating words "Would you care to step into my back room?" Fortunately, her husband was with her at the time.

the South." Saturday evening buses will depart the Marriott at 5:45 pm to go to downtown Nashville for cocktails and dinner at the Westin Hermitage Hotel, built in 1910 in the Beaux Arts style. Robert Cluett, (pictured in inset) who is from Warwickshire, England and the author of George Jones Ceramics 1861-1951, will be the guest speaker. He will be insightful in describing the life of George Jones and his pottery.



Sunday morning a continental breakfast will be served prior to the Society's business meeting at the Marriott. Majolica Heaven opens at 10:30 am to members only and at noon to the general public. We anticipate over a dozen dealers exhibiting this year. So Nashville awaits Majolica Heaven '99 and it should be the best ever. Education stimulates the mind and friendships renew the spirit. See you in Nashville!



Both jaws dropped as they witnessed the rare George Jones Beehive cheese dome. Thinking the price would be close to \$15,000, they had no time for thinkin' when the shopkeeper, who knew the real value, said, "For you, \$1,000." Now on display, the rare beauty sits with pride in the front room for all to admire, (yes, my friend also sits there, but I meant the cheese dome).

It was difficult to get the breathless voice mail message, "George Jones...Sotheby's...rare...number 241". I am envious, but very happy that such a deserving person now has it in her home.

So, the attitude I've taken is, she is definitely the "Queen of the Deal," so I'd better treasure her friendship and hang a little closer on her heels. Next time you're in an antique shop, open up all your senses and flare your nostrils for you may get the scent of "jelly" too!

NASHVILLE'S BARTER AND BUY

By Marilyn Price

Bartering is one of the oldest forms of trade, dating back to the beginning of civilization where trade was done on a local level. In this computer age, bartering is experiencing resurgence in the business world. According to CFO Magazine World, "Barter is winning new respect. The ancient technique's popularity is greater than ever..." I admire my Majolica collection, I recall the time, place and circumstance under which each piece was acquired. Somehow, there is a certain little "rush" when I note those pieces bartered for at past conventions. Memories of laughter and newfound friends are conjured up with each treasure, whether large or small.

Recently I discussed Barter and Buy activities with Phyllis Ann Hays, the real authority on the program conducted at each annual meeting of MIS. She followed-up our conversation by sending me this explanation of its "whys and wherefores."

"The purpose of Barter and Buy at the annual meeting is to enable members attending to barter and/or sell Majolica items among themselves. It is an opportunity for all members to pick up the pieces that are not only collectible, but also affordable. To be a 'treasure' not all Majolica has to have a hefty price tag.

To facilitate the operation of Barter and Buy, members must mark their Majolica with their asking price plus their name, hotel room number and address.

Members are asked to bring their Majolica for set-up at least 30 minutes prior to the designated time of the event.

Members are asked to be present or available to negotiate on the pieces they wish to sell. It must be emphasized that persons in charge of B&B are there to assist with the setup and to keep an 'eye' on your property. They cannot negotiate for you...so be available.

You are asked to remove your Majolica from the table promptly at the end of Barter and Buy."

Plan to join in the fun of Barter and Buy at our annual meeting in Nashville. Approaching the table with "true bartering" in mind will only bring about more enthusiasm and enjoyment among our members. Phyllis Ann Hays, Karen Cox and I aim to make the 1999 Barter and Buy the most successful ever. Come, make some memories, feel the "rush!"

ON HISTORY...

Conditions in American Factories

By Brenda Wilson

Since the popularity explosion of Majolica collectors, there has been several books written on the subject. Sometimes I wonder if we ever actually take time to consider the men and women who worked so hard to create these beautiful pieces which adorn our shops, homes and offices.

Have we ever truly considered the impact the pottery industry had on the economic, political and social life of the towns in which they were located? Consider such towns as Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, home of Griffen, Smith and Hill; East Liverpool, Ohio, home of James Bennett; Jersey City, New Jersey, home of James Carr of the American Pottery Company; or Wellsville, Ohio, home of James Morley of the Pioneer Pottery Company.

I wonder if the men and women who went about their daily toil ever dreamed these pieces would become so precious to collectors of today. There is rich history to be told about these former potteries and the lives of the people whose talents and gifts helped create the Majolica that we treasure today. Upon considering the production of Majolica in the mid-1850's to 1900's, we find many socio-economic occurrences that are analogous to us today as we embark upon the twenty first century.

Many English men and women emigrated and readily found work setting up potteries or working as apprentice kilnmen, painters, gliders, jiggermen, (pressing and casting the clay into the molds) dippers (susceptible to the effects of the lead contained in the glaze) and laborers. Yet there seemed to be a shortage of labor at the height of pottery mania. Workers, including such ethnic backgrounds as Irish, Scottish, Swedish, Italian, Austrian and Russian, continued to immigrate to these American cities looking for work in the potteries. They faced prejudice in communities where they sought to raise families and work for honest wages.

Sanitary conditions and wages were two of the most common complaints from workers at the Majolica potteries. Sanitary conditions were often listed as fair in some of the newer potteries. However, amongst the older establishments, it was reported that only one toilet facility was available for as many as 200 female

employees. Frequently, the plumbing was out of order and, therefore, the bathrooms were closed.

Along with substandard working conditions, there was disparity between the sexes and between the age groups regarding wages. The most glaring prejudice occurred against women and children. Generally, it was reported that American potteries often paid average or above average wages compared to other factories. During 1894, male painters averaged about \$500 annually for about 300 days of work; female counterparts earned about \$225.

The abuse of child labor laws in some facilities was noted as rampant, such as in the case of East Liverpool, Ohio in 1894, with many workers under eleven years of age. The Ohio laws of that time cited that manufacturers were not legally liable for children employed by workers as helpers, so they were not hired directly by the firm.

The danger of disease was associated with the manufacture of Majolica pottery. Clay dust, dampness and the lead contained in the glaze affected the "dippers," who were women and girls. Heavy lifting by "batter-outs" (who slapped a piece of flattened clay onto a mold and handed it to a jiggerman) and mold runners (who were young boys), as well as excessive work hours, encouraged by the piece-rate system of wages, were among many health detriments. Male workers often brought in members of their own families to work with them. This increased the chance of disease that often ravaged family life, as well as family income.

I have touched on only a small portion of the rich history connected with the manufacture of Majolica pottery. Many of these aspects should affect us when we consider our love for collecting this wonderful pottery. No matter the type of collector you are, someone's descendants have spent a portion of their lives and livelihood to create the beautiful pieces of Majolica. Every time I admire my collection, I cannot help but take the time to sit back, reflect for a moment, and say a little thank you for our descendants' part in creating these wonderful Majolica pieces of yesterday's past, today's present, and tomorrow's future.

ON COLLECTING...

Why Do We Collect?

By Brenda Wilson

Have you ever spent time wondering why you collect this beautiful, vibrant earthenware called Majolica? Ralph and Terry Kovel have suggested that collectors can be divided into seven different categories: ego (collecting for the prestige); scholarly (interested in the history), cluster (has several collections of different kinds), decorating (collects for interior decoration), nostalgia (collects in remembrance of a special time or moment in one's past), and lastly, freebies (collects based on free merchandise such as McDonald's giveaways. Are you aware that Griffen, Smith and Hill Majolica was once used as a premium from the Jewel Tea Company and the Price Baking Company? Last but not least, the packrat collector (collects everything even of unimportant nature.)

Figures indicate that approximately one third of Americans are active collectors with over 31 million Americans claiming to be collectors. Most are between the ages of 35 and 64 years, spending nine to ten billion dollars annually for collectibles.

I have often considered what motivates me to collect Majolica. What category of collector am I? Studying the Kovel's suggested groups, I have selected a combination of the scholarly and nostalgia collector. My collections actually started out when I purchased six Sarreguemines plates at a garage sale. Knowing little about Majolica, with a passion for anything related to the Victorian era, I began to pursue an exhaustive study about its origins. Finding little information in print, I was delighted to happen upon an article in a major magazine about the Majolica International Society, in its first year of existence. And so the adventure began...

AUCTION NEWS

Auction Prices

- ☞ **Alderfer Auction Co.**, Hatfield, PA, September 17, 1998
 - Minton Lazy Susan Oyster Server, \$13,200
 - 2 Minton Turquoise Oyster Plates, \$1,430 each
 - 3 Minton Pink Plates, \$930 each
 - Minton Mottled Brown and Green Oyster Plate, \$605

- ☞ **David Rago**, Lambertville, NJ, September 20, 1998
 - Lot of 4 Platters, \$300
 - 3 Piece Sardine Dish and Cabbage and Rabbit Dish, \$1,700

- ☞ **Christie's**, London South Kensington, November 17, 1998
(Auction results in US dollars and exclusive of buyer's premium)
 - Minton Oval Game Pie Dish, minor chips, \$1,687, (#85)
 - George Jones Oviform Jug, damages and repairs, \$1,850, (#86)
 - English Majolica Comport, restored, \$1,336, (#87)
 - English Majolica-glazed Parian Group, damages, \$534, (#88)
 - Majolica Tazza Base, lacking bowl, restoration, \$482, (#89)
 - George Jones Punch Bowl, Orange, \$15,865
 - Egyptian Slave Girl Garden Seat, \$13,360
 - Copeland's Sloth and Mischief, \$8,350
 - Minton Performing Monkey Teapot, \$3,507



See Christie's Auction Results (left). These prices give us hope!

HALL OF SHAME

What Mama Bought at the Flea Market!

By David Johnson

The flea market can be a collector's best friend and worst enemy. The joy of finding a mint George Jones strawberry server for \$200.00 is quite an experience. However, if you are not careful you may get the same thing I received for Christmas. That's right -- mama gave me some fakes. My umbrella stand is styled to look like the piece depicted on the dustjacket of Majolica by Nicholas M. Dawes. It certainly didn't help matters as my wife, who knew immediately it was a fake, exclaimed, "Oh, it's Nikki's cover piece." My wife made good daughter-in-law points, as my mother beamed. Unfortunately my mama's self-proclaimed kudos is only good thing about this piece as it has some problems. However, I have not yet told mama -- and I will not send her a copy of this newsletter.



The first review is of the pieces themselves, (I must be a collector since I now refer to them as pieces), to determine if they are genuine. I classify these gifts (pictured) as fakes for the following reasons. The coloring of the grapes is wrong and the shade of green on the leaves is off. The umbrella stand's leaves do not match the palette of colors used on Victorian Majolica. Another flaw on the umbrella stand is the bottom, which is not glazed but rather painted dark brown. The general molding of the piece is quite sloppy and not reminiscent of the normal quality that goes into a piece this size, 14" x 7". The smaller piece has similar issues with coloring. The inside is partially glazed in a medium blue that is the wrong shade. This fake has the wrong heft for a piece of this size.

These pieces are not considered reproductions for two reasons. First, often a reproduction is marked to indicate that it is in fact a reproduction or is marked in such a way that it is obvious it is a reproduction (more on this topic next newsletter). Second, both pieces were sold as genuine articles.

These pieces do not qualify for the title of forgeries either. Typically, forgeries are fakes that are sold at the same market prices as originals. These pieces are not originals. They were not sold at the normal prices pieces of this caliber would command, if real. I know this because mama would never pay so much for a piece of "pottery."

Thus, the process of elimination has left only one category -- fakes. These items attempt to fake the originals. However, there was no attempt to charge full price for them.

Now do not get me wrong -- these two pieces will always be a part of my collection. The time and effort my mama spent to find and acquire these pieces makes them more valuable than the "genuine" articles, (*right*). Because of our inability to be honest with mama, we are fearful of my birthday, which is a few weeks off. We have bets going that I will certainly receive more "dodgy" Majolica. We'll keep you posted. In the next newsletter reproductions will be discussed further -- what are they and how do we recognize them. Hopefully we won't have more pictures from our personal collection.

MAJOLICA SIGHTINGS...

Here are a few places we have spotted Majolica. Let us know where you have spotted a piece or two!

- ☞ Veranda Magazine, Winter 1999, featuring MIS Members Cay and C.D. Gann's home (*Wow!*)
- ☞ The Antique Trader Weekly, January 20, 1999, Volume 43, Issue 3. An article featuring George Jones, Master Potter, (319) 588-2073
- ☞ House and Garden, January, 1999, page 67

DECORATING WITH MAJOLICA
Pictures From Members' Homes



Majolica partnered with Flow Blue & Meissen



GSH leaf dishes complement oil of bunnies munching on cabbage leaves



Dolores has run out of room, now she uses chairs as cheese dome thrones!

Photos at left and right of the home of Dolores Wecker, member from Dyersburg, TN. Majolica is paired with antiques inherited from her grandmother.



Is that the Temptations or the Humidors on that top row?



Majolica mixed with Pink Lustreware and Staffordshire. Photos here and top row of the home of David and Chana Johnson.



"My favorite part of 'playing Majolica' is mixing it with some of my favorite things"

C. Johnson

WANTED...

- ☞ Lid to George Jones covered jug. Molded on the front and reverse of the cylindrical body with two oval panels depicting a hunting dog catching a bird or a fox preying on a rabbit. This jug has a hinged pewter-mounted cover modeled with a recumbent fox. (see photo at right)



Contact Marcia Singman, (510) 339-1607, or email wsingman@aol.com

- ☞ Minton Mushroom Cover for Fox Chasing Duck Game Pie dish (see photo at right)
- ☞ George Jones Pineapple Cream Pitcher



Contact Gerry Leberfeld, (212) 371-1738

- ☞ Lid to blue sardine dish. Markings at bottom of box are H and c. Box measures 6" x 5" and is 2" deep

Contact Adrienne Ryder-Cook, (804) 693-7422

- ☞ Lid for cottage coffeepot and base for George Jones Daisy and Fence cheese dome. (see photo at right)

Contact Randi Schwartz, (847) 251-9550, or email at pttryprncs@aol.com



- ☞ Lid for Etruscan bamboo teapot and sugar bowl, approximately 4"d. Both lids are the same size.

Contact Dolores Wecker, (901) 287-1348

DO YOU KNOW WHAT I AM?



A member sent in this lovely Majolica clock for identification. Do you know what I am and who I belong to? If so, please contact:

*Chana Johnson, at (510) 635-5689
or email at fmagoo@ix.netcom.com.*

To the member who sent this in, sorry but I lost your accompanying letter. Please contact me so I can forward any information to you.

SMILING FACES...



Our President, Joan Stacke Graham



Chana Johnson, left, with "Grande Dame" Marilyn Karmason



Dealer John Weld with Moe Wizenberg



Dealer Charles Washburn entices Dr. Howard Silby with an excited kitty



Michael Strawser speaking with a fellow MIS member



Charlie's crooners at Majolica Heaven '98



Joe Horowitz with a few of his friends

JUST A FEW NOTES...

PLEASE SEND MATERIAL FOR THE NEWSLETTER TO:

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Voice (510) 635-5689
Fax (510) 636-0613
or email to:
fmagoo@ix.netcom.com

The deadline for submission for the Spring Newsletter is March 1, 1999.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED...

The Flow Blue International Collectors Club is honored to welcome Geoffrey A. Gooden, F.R.S.A., the foremost English authority on ceramics today as guest speaker at its 1999 Annual Convention in Rochester, New York, on Friday July 23, 1999. For more information contact:

Louise Mason, Convention Chairperson
1814 Glenn Lane
Merrick, NY 11566

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

We believe that the newsletter represents the entire society. Therefore, send pictures of how you decorate with Majolica, your best finds, your first piece, how you got started or an article on any of our regular features. We want to include YOU in the newsletter.

Thank you Polly Wilbert for the convention information.

WE NEED YOUR PICTURES!!!

For our Summer 1999 newsletter, we'd love to feature your specialized collections. Start taking pictures now to show at the convention and *give* to us to publish. Pictures of collections of teapots or oyster plates, for example, are welcomed. How do you live with Majolica?

DEALERS - MAJOLICA HEAVEN '99

Any dealer wishing to participate in Majolica Heaven must contact Randi Schwartz, Dealer Chairperson, as soon as possible.

(847) 251-9550 or email to:
pttryprncs@aol.com

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