

## KOVELS: ANTIQUES & COLLECTING

### Pancake server or cheese stand? Who knows?

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Several museums have "What is it?" exhibits that display unusual items in the hope that someone will recognize a rarely used specialized tool or a pot for an ethnic dish unfamiliar to us today. Recently we saw a 12½-inch-diameter jasperware dish with an 8-inch-high cover sold at auction as a "pancake server." It looks very much like a 19th century English dish made to hold a round of stilton cheese. Or it could be a pottery cake dish and cover similar to the plastic cake carrying dishes made today. Research in books and online and conversations with experts have not provided a definitive answer. We are still not sure how the dish



**This jasperware covered dish is 12½ inches in diameter. The fern and cattail decoration was used on similar dishes made by Dudson Pottery, makers of pottery in England since about 1900. The dish sold for \$153 at Jackson's Auctioneers of Cedar Falls, Iowa.**

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was used, but perhaps it was used in several ways. Large ceramic covered cheese dishes that hold a full wheel of cheese are not popular for household use today. But they were produced in the 1800s by many English firms, including Wedgwood, Spode and Minton, as well as Dudson Pottery, which made a large number of cheese dishes. The dishes were called cheese stands in 19th century ads. The cheese was kept covered on the table to control its strong odor, stave off mold and keep insects away. A pancake server is similar in size and shape, but it has a small hole in the cover to let steam from the stack of hot pancakes escape. A cake might be kept under the cover of a similar dish, but cakes were usually kept on open pedestal-style cake stands. The covered jasperware dish we saw identified as a pancake server auctioned for \$153. It's the same size and shape as a cheese dish.

Ms. Kovel answers your questions:  
**Q:** I have a spoon with a mother-of-pearl bowl and handle and a metal piece connecting them. I would like to know what it was used for and what the approximate value might be.  
**A:** You have a caviar spoon. Caviar spoons are usually made of mother-of-pearl, although you can also find them made of bone, glass and other non-metallic materials. This is supposed to keep the caviar from picking up a metallic taste. Since caviar is packed in metal cans or in glass jars with metal tops, experts think metal spoons are actually OK (although caviar tarnishes silver). However, if you want to follow tradition and avoid using a metal spoon, a mother-of-pearl caviar spoon is a nice touch. New ones cost

about \$40. Old ones sell for a little less unless marked and made by a known artist.

**Q:** I have a green ceramic candy jar shaped like the Marshall Field's clock. Does it have any value?

**A:** When a Chicagoan says, "Meet me at the clock," everyone knows which one. The landmark 12-story Marshall Field's and Co. department store was built in downtown Chicago between 1892 and 1914. The Great Clock was installed on Nov. 26, 1914, on the corner of Randolph and State streets.

Norman Rockwell immortalized the clock when he painted it for the Nov. 3, 1945, cover of the Saturday Evening Post magazine. Your jar was originally sold containing chocolates. It's worth \$100 to \$300. Much to the chagrin of the residents of Chicago, Marshall Field's became "Macy's on State Street" in 2006.

**Q:** "Mitchell Vance and Co." is the name on the paper label on the back of my brass wall-sconce light fixtures. I

found them in the basement of the 1904 house I just moved into. The fixtures are wired for electricity, although they have cardboard "candles" that must have used a flame-shaped light bulb. Should I clean the fixtures? How old are they?

**A:** Mitchell Vance and Co. was in business in New York City by 1860. It made gas and electric light fixtures and chandeliers. Your fixtures with the fake candleholders are a type popular in the 1920s and 30s. Old fixtures, especially groups of two or more, sell easily to those restoring old houses. It was common to have one fixture on each side of the space above the fireplace. They can be cleaned, but it's probably best to have it done professionally. Then have them lacquered so they do not discolor again. A single wall sconce in usable condition sells for about \$150 in an antique shop.

**Q:** We are arguing. Who made the Little Red Riding Hood cookie jars?

**A:** Hull Pottery Co. of Crooksville, Ohio, made the Little Red Riding Hood line of dishes and accessories patented in 1943. But pieces were sent to the Royal China and Novelty Co. of Chicago to be decorated. Then they were sent back to Hull to be sold. Some experts argue that only a few of the Little Red Riding Hood shapes were made by Hull and that the rest were made by Regal China Corp., a subsidiary of Royal. These experts say the china from Royal was whiter, and some Red Riding Hood cookie jars have a white body rather than Hull's creamier body. At least 30 different decorations were applied on the cookie jars. A recent reproduction is marked "McCoy." ■

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