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VOLUME 31 • 1

COLLECTOR'S NEWS

SPRING 2011

Welcome to the spring edition of Collector's News. After what was an unseasonably long, cold winter, it's great to see the crocuses and daffodils in profusion in the garden again. Even saw some blossoms slowly blooming on a downtown street this week.

In this issue we feature part 1 (of 3) of our history as we celebrate our thirtieth anniversary in business. Hope you enjoy the read. Parts 2 & 3 will follow shortly as I didn't want to overload one issue. It is quite amazing, to me anyway, how we have ridden the ups and downs and are still around to tell this tale. What is fascinating is how the market has changed in what people really fork out big bucks for in the early 21st century. According to Christies, who saw sales in the low billions last year, the major categories which comprised some seventy per cent of the total were modern, contemporary & impressionist art, Chinese antiques and jewellery. Not many real antiques in that lot. Tastes have moved very far forward in time.



JUST ARRIVED!

Georgian Silver Snuff Box London, 1825.

Viniagrette B'ham, 1820 & a Vintage Birks Sterling Silver Ring Box.

Silver & Gold

With silver and gold often in the headlines these days, we have devoted our picture section to mainly items made from these precious metals. Prices for some of our stock are not that much more than the melt price and yet we are not seeing buyers lined up at our door. This is quite a switch since the last major boom back in 1980 when it was on many people minds and demand was exceedingly brisk for both of them. Current prices so far have, adjusted for inflation, yet to reach those recorded back then.

TWO PAIRS OF STERLING SILVER CANDELABRA.

11.5" high & 12.5" high. USA. c.1950s

\$1100 & \$1250.



Thirty Years On. A brief history of Hampshire Antiques 1981-2011.

It was thirty years ago in February 1981 that Jack & Robin of the newly incorporated Hampshire Antiques Ltd. first opened its doors at 2233 Granville Street in Vancouver. We have operated through some very changing times. First off was the severe early 1980s recession with 22 per cent interest rates, the Japanese invasion and crash, the trend away from scholarship to purely decorative items, the GST, the huge rise in painting prices, Asian invasion part 2, Vancouver's movie making boom, the decline of the American buyer after 9/11, the dotcom crash, the powerful rise of the internet, the decline in collecting as expressed through fashion and slumping book sales, exorbitant commercial rents & taxes, the massive influx of new wealthy buyers from China, the world financial market meltdown of 2008-9 with now the Great Recession & HST. Throughout everything has been the constant change in fashion always altering or fine tuning the antiques and art landscape. In hindsight, it was not the time to open a retail adventure as we were just entering the worst economic slump since the great depression.. However, time and tide wait for no man and it was a great struggle for three or four years until interest rates slowly abated downward and with that happening confidence slowly oozed back into the economy. Expo 86 propelled Vancouver onto the world stage and this international event really was the catalyst for the great Asian invasion which was to come, always gaining momentum to where we are now, Beijing West.

The general antiques trade has changed dramatically in thirty years from one of a vibrant collecting scene to one that has seen the decimation of nearly all the antique shops that flourished back then leaving just a handful of dealers extant. It's hard to believe now but then there were two antiques store chains Dealers & Royal City who had several branches scattered around the lower mainland. But then came along the big 1981 crash which pretty well changed the old order of things. Devastingly, the early 1980s recession, saw, for the first time since the war, chiefs lose their jobs as well as the always compulsory Indians. This was hitherto unheard of, created great anxiety in the workforce and set the pattern for the future. No job was now safe and this along with companies actively producing offshore with cheap labour depriving Canadians of good paying; largely union jobs set the tone for what was to come. We all know what has happened since then with the switch from a manufacturing economy to an ill balanced service oriented one.



AMERICAN WALTHAM 14K HUNTER POCKET WATCH

A 14 carat gold cased Hunter American Waltham Pocket Watch with sweep seconds on a an enamel dial. The case profusely engraved with floral & vegetable decoration with a house in the background. USA. 1891.
\$ 1,200.

STERLING SILVER TEA STRAINER AND PAN BY BIRKS

A Sterling Silver Tea Strainer and drip pan from Birks, Canada. Birks is the premier jewellery and silver store in Canada. These items are very hard to find with the accompanying drip pan. \$295



As Canadians retrenched and reeled from falling property prices, job losses and wage cutbacks, we just got lucky that the Japanese had arrived and liked what we had. From almost day one we encountered them on Granville Street and we were the first antiques shop in the city to hire Japanese assistants to help with the language barrier and to smooth sales along. In those days the Japanese economy was booming and they were excellent customers until the economy was ruined by their speculative, huge real estate crash in 1990 from which it has never recovered. Around Expo time we began to have another wave of Asian visitors many of whom put down roots in the city and, by doing so, revived the real estate market big-time. They were from Hong Kong, spoke English and gave us Caucasians our first real insight into the oriental ways of doing business.

Hampshire Antiques stock was pretty basic when we first opened the doors. I had an interest in antique furniture, clocks and paintings. In those days you bought what you liked and found kindred spirits to move it along to. It was becoming clear from demand that datelines were marching forward with even Canada Customs recognizing this and changing the deadline for antiques from 100 years old to 50. A concept that some old line dealers and collectors found difficult to adjust to. As we met more and more international visitors I tried to match the stock to requests from them. This was a wonderful, if somewhat fraught learning experience, which has continued to this day. When you put your money in something, you learn in a hurry! Then I experimented with porcelains, barometers, silver and just plain interesting and unusual objects to attract and gain business. The trick was then, and still is, is to keep up with what the guys want who are spending the serious money. Our cousins to the south were great to deal with and were always super buyers, probably the greatest buyers in the world given the rate they were importing in from Europe. One dealer in L.A. had a twenty foot container arriving from Brighton on each week day such was the demand for English antiques then. I've always envied the trade American dealers enjoy and still do relatively speaking. It was at this time we started on buying trips to the U.S. and Lina (a very long term employee) and I enjoyed some interesting trips to Oregon & California. Lina and I still enjoy being on the road and last year we sussed out a fair in Coburg, Oregon.



ANTIQUE MINIATURE STERLING SILVER

A very cute and collectable Miniature Sterling Silver Kettle on stand. Lobed design to kettle. Both kettle and stand are hallmarked. Hallmarked: Birmingham, England 1905. \$ 495.

The mid to late eighties saw markets recover and paintings both antique and modern started their meteoric rise. As with most everything there's been a big shakeout but the best and fashionable have been the safest investment, along with real estate, anyone could have ever made. It is no exaggeration to say that many artworks have appreciated 15-20 times plus in value along with a boom in contemporary art. Not all of us really understood these trends and I, for one, was very remiss in misreading the huge future potential of Canadian art. Nothing else today approaches this category for the highest art prices in the city.

SET OF TWELVE STERLING SILVER BUFFET FORKS

A good set of twelve double struck Sterling Silver Buffet Forks. The pattern is Lambeth Manor by International Sterling. Weight is 19.1 troy oz. United States. 1950s-60s. \$595.



Also at this time a less demanding, eclectic clientele wanted the look of fine old design and the world then was inundated with a spate of cheap reproductions of about just everything causing confusion in the marketplace. There was still some connoisseurship and, our sister company Williams Books, was still selling useful books on identification and collecting but the writing was definitely on the wall. The trouble was most of us didn't recognize this trend for what it was at the time. Many of us thought "Who would buy a repro made in China or Taiwan when with some diligent searching you could still find the real thing?" That's how wrong we were and it still continues to the present day for masses of people wanting to cheaply and quickly decorate their home with this type of look to the detriment of the trade. In fairness, it was the popular hard-to-find (thus expensive for the real thing) items which were reproduced the most so it was inevitable that people would settle for third best given the time and money needed to buy the real thing. On the financial front, interest rates were slowly coming down over these years and when our line of credit hit around twelve per cent, it was not only us that thought we must have died and gone to heaven!



STERLING SILVER BRACELET BY JOHN HARDY

This is a hammered sterling silver expanding bracelet fashioned by Canadian designer John Hardy. Signed and stamped 925. Canada/Hong Kong. Circa. 2006. \$ 850.



ENGLISH STERLING SILVER GEORGIAN STYLE TANKARD

An English, half pint, Sterling Silver Georgian style Tankard. Hallmarked: Sheffield, 1944. Weight: 8.2 troy oz. England. Circa. 1940s.
\$ 495.

The early nineties saw the introduction of the GST which was a massive tax grab by the federal government. It was a first in that it applied to services as well as goods with the idea being to ding the consumer hard every which way it could. It worked. A couple of years in the early nineties were very tough. We, along with all other businesses, had to process, unpaid of course, lots of new paper work connected with it. So not only did business fall off but we were saddled with the extra expense of handling this detestable tax for the government. The antiques trade lobbied hard to Parliament to exempt us from the tax as obviously taxes had already been paid many times over on old and antique items. This cogent argument fell on deaf ears. Now we are saddled with the equally detestable HST (combined PST & HST) which is not only taking huge amounts of cash away from consumer's pockets but, in turn, is also forcing businesses to either eat the tax or reduce prices just to marginally stay afloat.

The last decade of the twentieth century in Vancouver saw more and more Asian immigration from principally Korea & Taiwan. This changed the face of the city and our clientele. We moved into our busiest and best central location at 3007 Granville and by the mid nineties were starting to get on track again. The indefatigable Barbara K. joined us and recommended Nora to us with both of these ladies are still at H.A. . We also had Big Tomoko and Little Tomoko from Japan along with Akemi. Akemi was with me when we were visited in the shop by Jackie Chan. I hadn't a clue that he was until one Saturday afternoon he came into the shop and was followed in by a swarm of excited Chinese females. Akemi told me "That's Jackie Chan". My response was "Who the hell is Jackie Chan?" as the shop was turning into a melee. When explained to me by Akemi I caught on quick had our photograph taken with him and he became a good customer for porcelain.



STERLING SILVER CORONATION TANKARD FOR QUEEN ELIZABETH II

This is a solid Sterling Silver Tankard put out by the Birmingham, England Mint for Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee in 1977 with the cast figurehead of her on the handle. The Tankard weights 9.5 troy ounces. England. Hallmarked 1977.
\$ 950

Vancouver, by then, had become the third largest movie making centre in North American after L.A. and New York and opened a new door for us in renting props for sets and meeting the set decorators who, being the star struck individual that I am, find they must have one of the most interesting jobs in the world. Dominique F. Lemaitre, a top decorator and now a good friend, always and still finds interesting pieces to rent in the shop which happily vindicates my taste! Other individuals, smarter than myself, reinvented their businesses into prop houses and have since done very well indeed. I have great memories of meeting numerous personalities including Richard Gere and chatting several times to Goldie Hawn whose talent and charm I feel lies a lot in her being instantly able to tune into the person she is addressing. Gere is a sophisticated, great collector and we had nothing to entice him with at that time. Actually, I found it hard then to decide what to stock the shop with. I was poked fun at a bit by other members of the trade by stocking teacups but when you had wonderful customers popping in from Asia and dropping thousands of dollars at a time, you just went with the flow. Out of the blue one day we had a Taiwanese customer wanting a container of decorative furniture which I feverishly scoured the city for and in two weeks filled. *To be continued.....*



PAIR OF STERLING SILVER 'FISHING' CUFFLINKS

A great pair of 'Fishing' Cufflinks cast in Sterling Silver with easy flip stems for easing into cuffs. Free shipping on this item in North America. USA. Circ. 1950s.
\$ 175.