

**"I don't want more choices,
I just want nicer things!"**

- Edina Monsoon,
Absolutely Fabulous

Pittsburgh Estate Sale Diary

8/11/2011 - 3/9/2013

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Pittsburgh Estate Sales 3/9/2013

This was our first estate sale of 2013. It was also the first warm, pleasant day we'd had in a long time, and Jan and I were very glad to finally be able to get out to some estate sales. Last year was rather disappointing overall – neither of us found very much that really sparked our interest, which is one reason there's such a long gap between these estate sale posts. We've also become much more discriminating about what we buy, because we're both running out of room for our stuff – I promised Don I'd never rent a storage locker behind his back like Peg Bundy in *Married With Children*.

I found two nice things on Saturday:

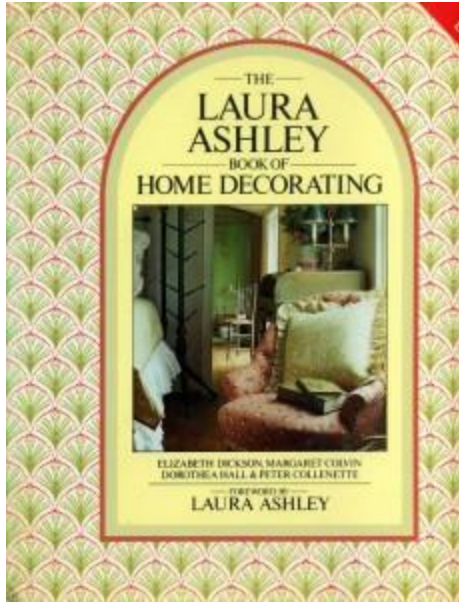
- Mexican Watercolor Painting – \$2
- *The Laura Ashley Book of Home Decorating* – \$1



Mexican Watercolor Painting

This watercolor is about 8×10". I found it on a fireplace mantle tucked behind some other objects. The glass was so dirty I didn't even see the volcano in the background, but I could see some of the colors and the composition, and I could tell it wasn't a print. Once I got it home and cleaned it up I could see that I found a real gem. There is a signature in the lower-left corner, which I can't make out, and there's no date. The house was located in Pleasant Hills.

Estate Sales



The Laura Ashley Book of Home Decorating

When I asked the estate sale person how much the book was, she said \$2. Well, it was early in the morning and I wanted to hang onto my cash, so I set it aside. However, when we discovered during our chitchat over change that she is also a Coldwell Banker real estate agent (from the South Hills office I believe), and I told her I'd just received my Pennsylvania Real Estate salesperson license on Thursday, she gave me the book for \$1 as a souvenir. I love Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 6/16/2012

It was another perfect Saturday morning to be driving around in Munhall and West Mifflin to estate sales. I bought a 50' garden hose for \$2, and 2 lamps. One is a small table lamp with a wrought iron base and a dark brown square shade that I bought for Don for \$8. The other is this vintage cranberry glass lamp I bought for \$18:



Pittsburgh Estate Sale Find 2012-06-16

The base is heavy bronze, with small cut crystals. The shade glass is a deep, cranberry pink, with a swirling design. I don't know how the design was added – there are no print “dots” on it.

This was actually the second sale at this same house, which was really **packed** with beautiful old things. There were beautiful table lamps in almost every room in the house. In one bedroom alone we counted over two dozen. They were so many, and they were all so beautiful – most were crystal with cut crystal shades – that Jan and I had a very hard time picking one out.

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Base Detail with Crystals



Cranberry Glass Boudoir Lampshade Detail

I couldn't pass up this beautiful pink shade! The glass top of my vintage mahogany dressing table (bought for about \$120, including the mirror, at an estate sale in 2008), is rose-colored, and this lamp goes with it perfectly. I put it on the corner that's out of the way of traffic through the room.

Estate Sales



My Dressing Table

Don's a big man and I try to keep my breakable, delicate things out of his way because I know he'd feel terrible if he broke something. As you can imagine, he avoids this part of the room like the plague... @:)

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 6/30/2012

The morning was overcast, hot and muggy. The first sale was located in Pleasant Hills, and the house was absolutely packed with things and people. The house didn't have a front porch, and the estate sale people had set up the payment table in the living room by the front door, instead of doing the rational thing and putting it in the garage, or under a shelter on the front lawn. Maybe they had a good reason, but what a nightmare! The sale had started about 1/2-hour before we got there, and the first-arrivers were now standing in line to pay. It was a small house, and the line snaked all the way through the front living room, past the stairs leading up to the kitchen and upper floors, through the back recreation room, and into the laundry room.



Estate Sale Finds June 20, 2012

We couldn't even reach the tables in the front room that were loaded with beautiful glass and china and crystal, because they were blocked by the line. As we struggled to squeeze our way through the doorway to head upstairs, I grabbed a small piece of amethyst carnival glass – like a toothpick holder with two small handles on either side – from the corner of the end table.

We managed to make our way upstairs. On the dining room table was a hand-blown glass conch shell like nothing I've ever seen before. Jan was closest and picked it up first. I held my breath as she turned it over and then set it back down again, saying she didn't know where she'd put it. (Her house is getting really full!) So I asked her to hand it to me.

Last night I told Don that I was going to start building up the subject of fashion and the history of clothing in my personal library. There's nothing like looking for finding things – and sure enough, in an upstairs office I found two books on fashion that were absolutely perfect.

Estate Sales

If it hadn't been for the glass shell, I would have walked away from the carnival glass and the books, because I had to wait in that line downstairs. Jan and I both have claustrophobia, but she was a good sport and stuck with me while I waited. Then we were saved! One of the estate sale people came through asking if anyone had exact change — and I did! So I was able to hand her a \$20 while we were still back in the laundry room (the end of the line now extended into the garage), and Jan and I made our escape.

As we walked out, we saw several police cars arriving — the neighbors must have called the cops because of all the cars. One of the officers asked us what was going on. We said it was a really crowded estate sale, and we were glad to see them because the house was so full of people it wasn't safe. I don't know what happened next because we got the heck out of there — Jan had parked on a corner the better to make a quick get-away.

It rained, which cancelled our plans to go look at Subaru Foresters, which Don and I have been looking at online. There is a large dealership out there in West Mifflin not too far from the first sale, but the rain made it impossible to casually wander around a car sales lot.

We went to a second sale, but after that we decided to call it quits and have breakfast. Pittsburgh is doing a ton of roadwork this summer, which is desperately needed, but it's making it difficult to get around. We've stopped going to sales that are on the other side of the road projects.

Even though we only went to 2 sales, it was one of the better estate saling days of the season.

- [Amethyst Carnival Glass](#) — \$5
- [Glass Conch Shell](#) — \$12
- [“Erte’s Fashion Designs”](#) — \$1
- [“Mirror, Mirror — a Social History of Fashion”](#) — \$2
- [Vintage Milk Glass Deviled Egg Plate](#) — \$3
- [Oil Painting of a Mountain Stream](#) — \$5
- [Small Japanese Porcelain Vase](#) — \$0.50



Amethyst Carnival Glass

Estate Sales

I don't know very much about carnival glass, but I think this is an older piece. Toothpick holder? Salt cellar? I'm not even sure what it is. I filled it with Q-tips and put it into the makeup drawer of my vanity.

Finding things like this glass conch shell is one of the reasons I love going to estate sales. I've never seen anything else like it. It combines hand-blown glass with details made of fused glass that were then added to the main body:



Hand Blown and Fused Glass Conch Shell



Glass Seashell Detail

Estate Sales



Glass Seashell Detail – Other Side



Erte's Fashion Designs Harpers Bazar

This is a wonderful book! It contains 218 illustrations from "Harper's Bazar" by the great fashion designer, [Erté](#) (Romain de Tirtoff), from 1918 – 1932, including 8 covers in full color.

Estate Sales



Erté's Harpers Bazar Cover – June 1921



Vintage Milk Glass Deviled Egg Plate Back Detail

This is one of the prettiest deviled egg serving plates I've ever seen. I didn't have one, and it was one of the things I've been looking for this summer. A special holiday treat like deviled eggs deserves a nice plate!

Estate Sales



Small Japanese Floral Vase in 1950s Colors

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 6/9/2012

It was a perfect Saturday morning for going to estate sales in Pittsburgh – a sunny summer day but not too hot. Jan and I both practiced our policy of restraint at the first 2 or 3 sales we attended; we didn't see anything that would make us happy that we didn't already have. The policy paid off later in the morning, when we came to a couple of houses, one in McKeesport and one in Squirrel Hill, which were *packed* with beautiful, vintage and unusual things at very reasonable prices. And we still had most of our money.

- Small Agate Dish – \$2
- Small Japanese Ginger Jar Painted with Butterflies and Flowers- \$1.50
- 1950's Snack Tray with Teal and Gold Googie Designs –
- Pink Glass Tray – \$3
- Japanese Plaster Tiger Sachet by Richard – \$1
- Vintage Green Glass Cookie Serving Dish – \$3
- Butter/Cheese Dish and Knife Sets in Blue and White “Delft” Porcelain Painted with Oriental Scenes, Made in Japan. – \$5
- Small Japanese Floral-Painted Porcelain Box with Gilt Legs – \$1
- Amateur Movie Titles by Besbee – \$3 (see below)



Pittsburgh Estate Sales June 9, 2012



Second Butterfly Detail

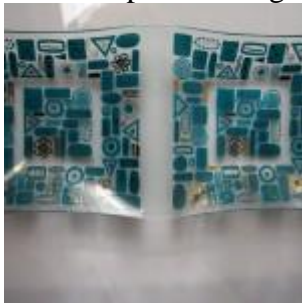
Estate Sales



Ginger Jar Butterfly Detail



Japanese Ginger Jar with Butterfly Motif

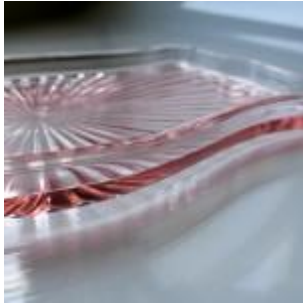


Vintage 1950s Glass Snack Tray Teal Gold Gogie Designs



Pink Green Vintage Glass Serving Dishes

Estate Sales



Pink Vintage Glass Tray Detail



Green Vintage Glass Dessert Tray



Richard Japan Vintage Plaster Tiger Sachet



Back View



Estate Sales

Label Detail



Blue White Oriental Porcelain Dishes and Knives



Small Floral Porcelain Box Japanese



Lid Detail



Small Floral Porcelain Jewelry Box and Ginger Jar

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Besbee Seasonal Title Backgrounds



Besbee Titles No 20 Locomotive



Besbee Titles No 20 Manhattan



Besbee Titles No 20 Manhattan

Estate Sales



Besbee Titles No 20 Times Square

I love the tiny ginger jar because the decorations confused me at first; I thought they were lobsters! They're actually butterflies.

I picked up most of the vintage glass items at a single sale – one of the best so far this year. The place was stuffed to the rafters with beautiful vintage china and glass, and all of it was priced low. I tried not to go berserk, and just picked up a few things to use for late-afternoon tea once the weather cools down again. (Don and I always take a break around 4:30 when the weather's cool, to have tea and a little snack like a couple of ginger snaps, some cheese and crackers, etc., so we have energy to finish the workday and make dinner. I'm looking forward to using the things I bought today!)

The colorful little tiger is a sachet! Once I got it home I realized it had been stuffed with cloves, which were disintegrating into dust. I bought it because it's one of those light plaster figurines that were produced in Japan in the late 60's – early 70's. Most of them were piggy banks, but I also have a Christmas angel my grandmother gave me. I don't know much about these things, except that they were made in Japan by several manufacturers from light plaster, and most of them are painted in the neon bright psychedelic colors that formed the palette of our childhood.

Our grandmother gave each of us one of those piggy banks for Christmas one year. Mine was a blue owl sprinkled with small, neon-pink and orange flowers, which unfortunately didn't make it through my childhood. (He got knocked off his shelf by a ball or something and that was that.) I've been looking for one like it ever since, and I've bought about 1/2 dozen piggy banks at estate sales over the years. I'll have to take pictures of the others in my collection and post them here sometime.

The small Japanese porcelain box was originally part of a vanity set – Jan and I saw an intact set one time, but someone else grabbed it before we could reach it. There was originally a small tray and I think 2 or 3 small boxes in different sizes, all hand-painted with the same design. Lovely. I have two boxes, which I keep on the mirrored sunken shelf below the rose-colored glass on my dressing table.

The black and white photos were intended to be used as amateur movie titles, but the photos show an iconic America from the 1930's, and I think they're beautiful just as photos.

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 6/2/2012

- Basket Pin with Green and Coral Stones – \$1
- Goldfish “piggy bank” by Holiday Fair Inc., Japan 1972 – \$3
- White and Yellow Daisy Cookie Jar, Brinn’s 1965- \$3
- Antique Hat Pins – \$10
- Western cookie cutters – \$0.50 each



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Holiday Fair Bank, Japan 1972



Vintage Cookie Jar Daisy Brinns 1965 TV-1368



Western Cookie Cutters



Antique Hat Pins
(Maybe. Or maybe just "beads on a stick". They're pretty whatever they are.)

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Flower basket pin

(2017 Update. I gave this pin to my mother, who discovered that the green stones are genuine peridot; the orange flower petals are coral. She gave it to my niece, Alexandra, whose birthstone is peridot.)

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 5/12/2012

Jan and I went to several estate sales during April, but I didn't find very much to buy or to show here. We've been doing this for so long that we're running out of places to display our treasures, and we have become much more discerning and disciplined about our estate sale purchases over the past year or two. I didn't find much this day either, but I like what I found.

- Glass food storage/baking dish by Westinghouse – \$3
- Old Las Vegas roulette wheel ashtray – \$2
- Pair of 1950's earrings (bakelite?) – \$2



Estate Sale Finds Pittsburgh May 12, 2012



Vintage 1950's Earrings with Rhinestone Flowers



1978 Las Vegas Roulette Wheel Ashtray

Estate Sales

Glass food storage containers like this one made by Westinghouse can be used to store food in the frig or freezer, and also bake it. The best part is that the glass won't stain or pick up odors the way plastic food containers do.

The roulette wheel ashtray still works. There's a little lever underneath that you can push, and the roulette wheel spins around. It's metal. It has a mark: © 1978 Karol Western Corp. It looks as if it originally included little BBs or other type of small ball – there are depressions on the roulette wheel to catch them, but they're long gone.

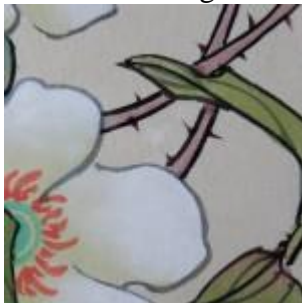
Pittsburgh Estate Sales 3/31/2012

- Oriental silk painting of wild roses – \$3
- Two birds in a tree Chinese soapstone carving with orange accents – \$10
- Note holder with enameled butterflies and dragonfly – \$5
- 1970's-era Tall Kitchen Trashcan – \$2

There were only 3 estate sales within our range, but we were dying to get out. I bought everything but the trashcan from the same house. It was a plain modern townhouse condo located in South Park, but we walked in and it was full of beautiful things: lovely antiques, neo-classical bronze and marble statues, paintings, china, crystal, and oriental art. The place was packed with people!



Pittsburgh Estate Sale Finds March 31, 2012



Silk Painting Detail



Soapstone Carving – 6Hx3-1/2Wx1-5/8D

Estate Sales



Enamel Note Holder



Enamel Blue Dragonfly Detail

There were several soapstone carvings, but I liked this one of two birds in a tree because of the way the artist used the orange color as a highlight in the design. I can't tell if the very tip of the tail on the bird at the top has been chipped, or if it was left slightly rough by the carver because it's in a spot behind everything else and not visible.

Jan and I see a lot of oriental pieces that depict two birds in a tree, but I don't know what the iconography might be. I should probably look it up. "*When in doubt, look it up.*" – Conan the Librarian

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 3/17/2012

Jan and I took a long break from estate sales over the Christmas holidays. I was intensely busy with work in January and February, and there were almost no sales. This was our first estate sale of the season. I was so disorganized I can't even find my printout notes about it, so I don't remember what I paid for anything except the Murano glass dish, which cost me \$20.

I have a weakness for these mid-20th century glass pieces, usually ashtrays, that were made in Murano, Italy, near Venice. I've never seen one this large. I'm not even sure what it's for, but I couldn't pass it by. I've tried to show the incredible design created with metallic glitter within the glass, but thick glass is hard to photograph. Focus is always a problem because the lens has a difficult time finding the right focal plane.



Pittsburgh Estate Sale Finds March 17, 2012



Large White Murano Glass Footed Bowl – Gold Fleck Swirl Pattern



Center Detail

Estate Sales



Pattern Detail

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 11/19/2011

- \$1 each. 3 photo albums
- \$1 Set of 5 small bread pans
- \$1 White plastic kitchen bin for onions or potatoes
- \$1 each. 2 stainless steel flasks
- \$2 Vintage Cloisonné Bead Necklace, 18-inches
- \$1 Note card box set
- \$1 Fluted porcelain bowl, Made in Japan, painted with Mt. Fuji in the Spring



Estate Sale Finds 11/19/2011

I bake a lot of pumpkin bread to give away as small gifts for the mailman, the trash men, the delivery men, friends, and family. I've always those flimsy small bread pans from the grocery store, but those have become prohibitively expensive! I think a set of 5, with plastic lids, is around \$7.99. So I was pleased to find a set of 5 small breadpans for \$1. I never have enough photo albums, and I'll fill these 3 up quickly. I bought the small bin to hold bags of potatoes in one of the food cabinets in the basement, and I thought the flasks would make nice presents for someone or other.

I didn't realize the similarity in the colors in Japanese bowl and the stationery set until I started working on these photos.

Estate Sales



Floral stationery box set

This is almost too pretty to use, but I always need note cards.



Painted Japanese Porcelain Bowl - Mt. Fuji and Cherry Trees

Estate Sales



Hand-painted Japanese Porcelain Bowl – Detail



Hand-Knotted Vintage Cloisonne Bead Necklace, 18-inches
Hand-knotted Vintage Cloisonne Bead Necklace - Detail

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 11/5/2011

- \$0.50 Jar opener
- \$1 Two cheese and cracker knives with grape design on the handles
- \$1 Vintage feather duster
- \$0.50 *The Fabulous Girl's Guide to Decorum*
- \$1 *The Bombshell Manual of Style*
- \$1 *What Should I Wear?*
- \$2 Amethyst Crystal in a Brass Display Stand



Estate Sale Finds 11/5/2011

There were only a couple of sales today, and I bought all my things from the same house in Mt. Lebanon. Jan borrowed the book, "The Bombshell Manual of Style" before I could take this photo. The feather duster was made in the USA from Asian Ostrich, with a wooden handle. The text on the plastic cover says it's been "Treated to Attract Dust", and it's washable. I bought it because some things are too delicate to be dusted even by a Swiffer Duster, and I thought real feathers might work better.

I found the chunk of amethyst crystal lying face-down on a shelf in the basement, covered with dust. It's held suspended between two threaded ends of a bronze display stand, and is already one of my favorite things.



Amethyst Crystals

Adrienne Collins 2011-12-02 at 11:37 pm:

When you discovered the beautiful amethyst crystal lying hidden down in the basement, perhaps for years, then brought it out to the light so that its beauty could be seen and appreciated, it reminded me of the biblical saying that we should not hide our candle under bushel basket, but let the light shine out for all to see and to light the way.

Mary Ecsedy 2011-12-03 at 5:26 am

I hadn't thought of that, but it fits. To me it was a reminder of the importance of looking beyond the surface of things, to see their hidden potential and beauty. It was a crowded sale and had been going on for two or three hours by the time Jan and I got there, so the crystal had been overlooked by a lot of people. It was so much a part of the background clutter on the basement shelf that even the estate people had missed it; there was no price tag on it. I offered \$2 for it at the table and they agreed without even looking at it. "Sure."

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 10/22/2011

- \$2 Japanese glass box
- \$3 Fluted white milk glass dish with clear blue glass edging
- \$1 Clay vase from Acoma Pueblo
- \$1 Chinese character necklace



Pittsburgh Estate Sale Finds 11/22/2011

All of these things came from the same house, located in South Park. It was a very eclectic collection of Western and Oriental art and kitsch. The Western pieces ranged in subject from cowboys to Eskimos, with lots of animal skins and hunting themes. The Oriental pieces were also quite varied: Chinese, Japanese, and Korean figurines and decorative pieces in all shapes and sizes. The house was packed with all kinds of things, and it was a very crowded sale.



Estate Sales

Vintage Fluted Milk Glass Candy Dish with Clear Blue Glass Trim



Acoma Pueblo Pottery by C. Vallo 1985

This little pottery piece is 3-1/2 inches tall. It is signed by the artist: “Pueblo of Acoma C. Vallo 85”. [Acoma Pueblo](#) is large community located on several mesa tops, about 60 miles west of Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Acoma people are thought to be descended from the Anasazi and the Mogollon, and the Pueblo emerged from the chaotic period of migration in the Anasazi culture around the 12th century. The people from Acoma Pueblo are famous for the high quality of their pottery, which is made from local clay using the same ancient coil techniques of their ancestors, rather than a potter’s wheel. The artists are often inspired by the beautiful geometric designs on ancient pottery sherds found in the desert. Although this pot was essentially made as a tourist souvenir, it was made by hand with love and care in the beautiful desert of northern New Mexico.



Vintage Japanese Glass Box

Estate Sales

When I picked up this unusual glass box, it was the color of light jade – a pale, bluish green. Although it bears no mark that I can find, I assume it's Japanese because of that color, and because of the chrysanthemum-like flower design on the lid.



Vintage Japanese Glass Box - Lid Detail

Unfortunately, when I got it home and started cleaning it up – it was covered in old dust – the color all washed away! It was evidently some kind of coating on the inside of the glass, very scratched, and the instant a drop of water touched it, the coating broke and pulled away. It reminded me of latex paint or something. So it's a shame, but the coating was not made to last. All that remains are a couple of stubborn streaks of green color, which I left to remind me of what it originally looked like.

Adrienne Collins 2011-12-02 at 11:50 pm

I love the design on the Acoma vase. From my experience as a quilter, I know that it is extremely difficult to draw a geometric design on a rounded surface and have it come out even. Wow!

Mary Ecsedy 2011-12-03 at 5:28 am

Thanks for pointing that out. I was impressed by the even spacing between the lines etc., but I hadn't thought of the additional challenge of maintaining that perfection on a rounded surface.

Pittsburgh Estate Sales 10/14/2011

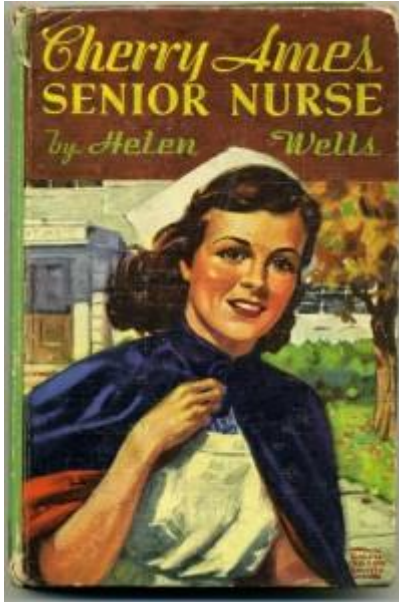
- \$5 White Porcelain Tray
- \$1 “Cherry Ames – Senior Nurse”



Cutout White Porcelain Tray

This tray is a beautiful thing and I don't think I've ever seen anything quite like it. There are no marks or signatures on it. The feet are hollow, and each one has a small hole at the base underneath, to allow steam to escape during firing. I can't tell if it was cut out by hand, or punched by machine.

I originally bought it for the bathroom, but it doesn't really fit, so I put it on top of the filing cabinet in my office, holding the cameras I'm currently using.



Cherry Ames Senior Nurse

I haven't read Cherry Ames since I was in the 5th grade at St. Wenceslaus in south St. Louis. Let's just say it's been awhile.

After I got home I settled into my comfy chair in our library, and spent the afternoon reading this book. I was astonished at how many details were still familiar to me after all these years, and how it transported me back to childhood.

Pittsburgh Estate Sale Treasures 9/24/2011

- \$5 Big round wicker laundry basket
- \$2 Orange carnival glass creamer
- \$1 Stove top Mongolian grill plate and collar
- \$1 Mickey/Minnie Mouse pot holders
- \$1 Screen food cover



Pittsburgh Estate Sale Finds September 24, 2011

Estate Sales



Marigold Carnival Glass Creamer

Pittsburgh Estate Sale Treasures 10/8/2011

- Watercolor painting – \$10
- Small metal office trash can – \$1
- Down blanket, Queen – \$12



Watercolor of a Portuguese Windmill and Donkeys (\$10)

Pittsburgh Estate Sale Treasures 10/1/2011

- Carnival Glass Bowl – \$6
- Tiny Vintage Japanese Teapot – \$1

We went to about a half a dozen estate sales on Saturday the 1st. The best was in a basic, mid-20th century suburban house in West Mifflin, near Century III Mall. It was the sort of house you'd never look at twice while driving down the road, but it was filled with old, beautiful, and interesting things, including many things from Japan. The owners had apparently spent time in Asia during the mid-20th century, and there were oriental objects throughout the house.

The sale was crowded, and Jan and I had a hard time working our way past one or two people who were trying to guard something they'd found, and they weren't yielding any ground while they examined their items and looked them up on eBay on their smart phones to see what they might be worth. It's really important to be polite at these sales, and most of the time people are pleasant. But sometimes you have to say "*Excuse me.*" with that edge in your voice that indicates you're coming through. Jan finally made it past the blockade in the back bedroom, and reached out and grabbed the carved Asian knickknack shelf hanging on the wall. Dang! It was lovely; the top was shaped like a temple roof. Wish I'd seen it first, but that's the way it goes.

I saw lots of nice things but nothing that moved me enough to reach out and grab it until we reached the living room and I spotted this glass bowl on the fireplace hearth. It was covered with such a thick layer of dust dust it was almost invisible. There was no iridescence shining through, but I knew what it was as soon as I saw it. After I got home and cleaned it up, I was still surprised at the beauty of the glass that emerged from the dust and grime:



Imperial Carnival Glass Bowl in Smoke Glass (\$6)

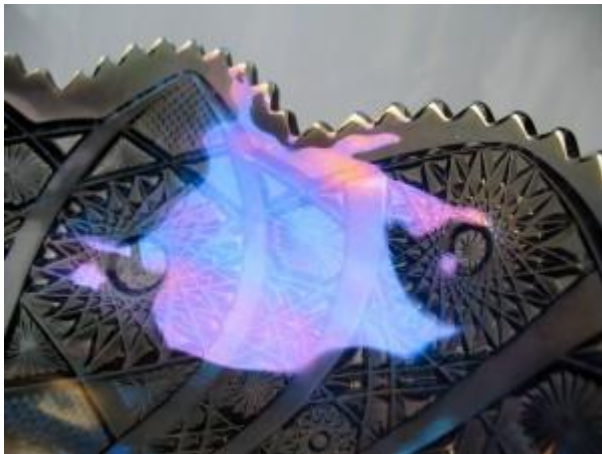
The bowl has a maker's mark inside, which I was able to identify on [Dave Doty's Carnival Glass Maker's Marks](#) page: it was made by Imperial between 1951 and 1972. The base glass is a light

Estate Sales

grey color called “smoke”. I think this is the first piece of smoke glass carnival glass I’ve ever seen.



Imperial Carnival Glass Mark 1951-1972



Smoke Glass Bowl Detail

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Smoke Glass Bowl from Above

There's not a chip on it.

While wandering through the rest of the house clutching my treasure close to keep it from being bumped, I also picked up this:



Japanese Porcelain Teapot, 2-inches high (\$1)

Estate Sales



Teapot Detail - Woman in a Blue Kimono

Earlier this year I collected over 3 dozen small teapots (with the help of Jan and my parents) as party favors for my sister Ann's wedding shower this past May. It took months, and I've been unable to even look at a teapot at an estate sale since then. But this tiny teapot caught my eye. It's so cute! It's only about 2-inches high, and I the loved the painting of the woman in the blue kimono and bright blue obi. The pattern on the kimono is made with a very thick blue glaze on a black ground, and the yellow outline is also thick and raised. Nice.

So I only bought 2 things, but they both make me very happy, and that's our standard of success.

Pittsburgh Estate Sale Treasures 9/17/2011

I've been so busy I haven't had a chance to add any more estate sale entries in three or four weeks. Now it's Friday 10/7/11; I just got off the phone with Jan after planning tomorrow's estate sale route, and I thought I'd better try to get caught up before I fall even farther behind.

Saturday September 17 was cool and rainy but we still went to several sales. Here are my finds for the day:



Wonderful Things

- Hand-embroidered Chinese silk pillow with corner tassels: \$5.



Estate Sales

Embroidered Chinese Silk Pillow

- Pretty ginger jar with hand-painted design of lilacs and roses. It was a production piece but still nice. \$5
- Vintage Clairol True-to-Light makeup mirror (behind the ginger jar). \$5. Heavy plastic and metal makeup mirror with 4 light settings: day, office, evening, home. No longer manufactured, these wonderful lighted makeup mirrors are still considered by many to be among the best mirrors ever made. Although covered with a thick layer of dust, the one I found was apparently never used: the electric cord was still in its original folds with the factory twist-tie. It works perfectly.
- The flapper with the blue cloche hat is made of that lightweight plaster/papier mache, like many things that were made in Japan in the late 1960s early 1970s. I bought this for \$1.



Blue Cloche Hat Mirror

1920s Revival in the 1970's:

There was a 1920s revival in the early 1970s, and I think this piece comes from that period. I'm not sure what started that revival, but my guess is the movie, *Bonnie and Clyde*, made in 1967, had a big influence. There was also an influential article about the [Marchesa Luisa Casati](#), "Extravagant Casati", by Philippe Jullian, published in the September 1970 issue of *Vogue*. Although the Marchesa was one of the most famous people in the world during the early decades of the 20th century, she had been largely forgotten until that article was published. Casati dyed her bobbed hair a flaming red, and I suspect this piece may have been inspired by images of her either directly or indirectly.



Flapper Vanity Set Mirror

Then in 1971 Joshua Rifkin recorded a beautiful collection of Scott Joplin's work, "[Piano Rags by Scott Joplin](#)" that was nominated for a Grammy. Rifkin based his playing style in these recordings based on Joplin's own original work, including his own piano rolls, with a steady tempo and without the usual flamboyant embellishments. (My great-Uncle Eddie Aguado gave me the LP for a Christmas present that year, which I still treasure. The "[Fig Leaf Rag](#)" is my favorite. I prefer Rifkin's recording to this one, but I can't find it online at the moment. The link goes to the piano roll version by Joplin on YouTube.)

And finally, in 1973 the very popular motion picture [The Sting](#) brought the 20's and the sound of ragtime to a wide audience.

So flappers and gangsters were popular again there for awhile, and there were lots of products taking advantage of the moment, with lots of flapper designs and especially the cloche hat: diaries, desk sets, school supplies, etc. This is a vanity mirror; my guess is that it was originally part of a dressing table set for girls.

- Purple, grape-scented candle on a purple glass mosaic trivet. \$1

Don is sensitive to certain types of scents, especially the perfume of scented candles, which give him headaches. So I usually don't bring them into the house. But I bought this one for the mosaic stand, and the candle didn't have a strong scent – because it was still wrapped in plastic. That night before going to bed, I took the plastic off and put the candle on my dresser on the third floor. The next morning when I got up it was gone. Only the mosaic stand remained. That and the smell of artificial grape. I couldn't find the candle anywhere. I asked Don about it later.

He told me that after I went to bed, he was sitting in the living room and started smelling "something funny". His nose eventually led him all the way up to the third floor, which by that

Estate Sales

time reeked of artificial grape smell, like grape popsicles only sweeter. He took the candle down to the basement and tied it up in 3 plastic bags and threw it in the trash. LOL @:)

I Love Estate Sales!



Hand-blown and Fused Glass Seashell

Pittsburgh estate sales are a great way to explore the city's maze of neighborhoods, and I often go out running around to estate sales in Pittsburgh on Saturday mornings with my sister-in-law, Jan Darr.

I'm posting pictures of my estate sale finds on this website primarily to share my treasures with my mother and my sisters and my nieces, who all live in St. Louis, and also with anyone else who is interested in such things.

We Buy Things That Make Us Happy

Jan and I each have a list of things we're looking for every weekend, but we're also looking for "things that make us happy". Unusual things, preferably things that show the touch of a human hand. Over the years we have both accumulated an eclectic collection of beautiful and odd objects – to the point where we have become much more discerning. It was either that or rent a storage locker like Peg Bundy, and I promised Don I'd never let it get that out of control. Jan tends to collect masks and figurine carvings from African, Asian, and south Pacific cultures, while I'm a sucker for water color paintings and glass – especially Murano glass from the mid-20th century.

Estate Sales



Watercolor painting of a Portuguese Windmill

Estate Saling is a lot of fun and a great way to find things you need for a fraction of their retail cost. The older items that were made in America are often of much higher quality than the cheap knockoffs coming out of China. The best part of course is finding those unique and beautiful and interesting things that you can't find at Walmart or the mall.

Pittsburgh Estate Sale Treasures 9/10/2011

It was an interesting day of estate saling, although I didn't buy much. Jan picked me up around 8:00 as usual. It was overcast at first but gradually turned into a nicer day. The first house we stopped at was on a dead end road on a ridge, not too far from where she used to live in Lincoln Place. The house was really different from all the others around it. It was covered in stucco and done in a Mediterranean style, on a big, flat, double lot. There was a 3 foot high Tiki statue in the front yard. Inside, the house was *packed* with beautiful, old things. Glass, china, crystal, ebony, paintings, lamps. Oh, it was a wonderful house. Whoever had lived there had exquisite taste. And it was all priced too high.

Jan admired a beautiful African bust hand-carved in ebony. They wanted something like \$60 for it. I admired one pretty glass thing after another, but it was all priced about 35% higher than usual. We ooh'd and aah'd over a small table lamp with both base and shade made of millefiori glass (\$450, probably worth a lot more!). I also wanted the stained glass table lamp we found in the basement, which was also packed, in the shape of a life sized parrot on a branch, but I couldn't afford that either. I finally picked up a pair of tiny, matching, hand-painted Japanese ginger jars for \$6:



Japanese ginger jars (\$6)

They match. The one on the left shows the back design. I know from watching Antiques Roadshow that it's OK to clean glass and porcelain, which is good because these were pretty dirty. I was astonished at the brilliant colors that emerged when I cleaned them after I got home. While I was shooting them for this post, I realized that the woman's head is surrounded by a gold nimbus, or halo. It doesn't show up so well in the picture, but it's gold. She is wearing a blue mantle on her head, and appears to be holding something in her arms, round and gold. It suddenly occurred to me that it looks like the Holy family: Mary and Joseph and the infant Christ. On a Japanese ginger jar?

Estate Sales

On the bottom of each jar it says “Made in Japan FOREIGN”. There are no Christian symbols on it. Just a woman with a halo and a blue, star-studded mantle over her head, apparently holding a small child also with a halo, and a man at her side. I’m curious if anyone can tell me anything about these jars.

Everyone at the sale was griping about the high prices, which were too close to the retail prices that these things would bring in an antique shop or on eBay. You can’t do that at an estate sale. People were leaving without buying anything. The ginger jars were the only things I bought. Jan would have picked up several things but let them go. When I paid, I told the estate sale lady that we thought it was all a little high. She rolled her eyes and said that the family had been unhappy with her prices and made her increase many of them the night before. A tremendous effort, and she was not a happy camper. You can charge whatever you want, but people who are trying to sell their dead relatives’ things need to understand that the value of an object is what someone is willing to pay for it. So the lady said she raised the prices – but the result was that she sold much less.

The next house was in Port Vue. That’s the community between McKeesport and Glassport, on the bluffs high above the Youghiogheny and the Monongahela rivers. What a scene! The house was an old mansion that had belonged to a prominent family, full of antiques, and the sale had been heavily advertised. We drove up the steep hill on a very narrow street, and ran into traffic gridlock. Jan and I both have claustrophobia, and we got out of there as fast as we could and drove further up the hill to another sale. It was an old house built on a cliff; the main entrance was on the second floor. The views were stunning, but the people had been very poor, and there was very little of interest, forget value, inside.

On the way down we decided to give the mansion one more try, and approached it from a side street/alley we knew about from having been to an estate sale in the same neighborhood last year.

We found parking and plunged into the chaos of a giant sale. Mostly we wanted to see the house. It had been a gracious mansion at one time, but it was in such bad shape that the only thing holding it upright was the poison ivy vines that covered it. The sign at the door said: “Enter at Your Own Risk”.

We were glad to see it though. It must have been a really stunning home at one time, but it was definitely showing the results of decades of neglect. The most unusual thing was the painting done as a frieze at the top of the dining room walls. It depicted scenes of people dressed like 18th century French aristocracy frolicking in the great outdoors. I didn’t get much chance to look, though, because the house was packed with people. We poked around a little and then decided we needed to breathe, and clawed our way out the door. The line of people waiting to pay was about 30 deep. They should have had 2 or 3 payment tables set up, but there was only 1.

We went to a couple more sales, and Jan bought a few things, but I didn’t see anything on my “need for house/garden” list, and nothing that caught my eye. Better luck next week.

Pittsburgh Estate Sale Treasures 9/3/2011

It definitely felt like the Last Day of Summer while Jan and I were running around to estate sales on Saturday morning. The weather forecast for Pittsburgh over the Labor Day weekend called for hot and muggy weather on Saturday, with rain and a temperature drop of over 20 degrees on Sunday. We enjoyed every minute of it. There weren't very many sales but the ones we went to were filled with interesting old things.

Here's the group photo:



Estate Sale Treasures, Pittsburgh, 9/3/2011

West Mifflin:

We went to several sales in West Mifflin. I picked up a set of violet-themed thank you cards and stationery, plus two blank journals with pretty floral covers. I paid \$0.50 for each one.

I'm going to give the journals to my clients, [William Penn Jewelers](#), to keep on the counters at their two retail stores, for customers to write down the nice things that they say as testimonials that we can use on their website. The hot orange, pink, and magenta cloth is a tablecloth that cost me \$1, and is now on our dining room table making our dining room very cheerful!

At the next place, Jan found this for me:

Estate Sales



Green Carnival Glass Creamer (\$1)



Front of Pitcher

I found these two delicate little porcelain cups on a shelf in the same house:

Estate Sales



Made in Occupied Japan (\$0.25 ea.)



Made in Occupied Japan

Little cups like these are perfect for holding the dipping sauces when you order out for Chinese delivery, or for salsa.



Estate Sales

Pewter Place Card Holders

Aren't these cute? They're incredibly heavy, and do a great job at holding a card, as you can see. I bought two sets of 6 place holders at \$0.50 per set. The original price tags on the boxes were \$2.99. I'm so glad I found these. Now I'll never have to worry about my dinner guests being confused about where to sit at the table!

Bethel Park:

There was an estate sale in an old barn behind a house in Bethel Park that we stopped at. It was filled with stuff. The poor guy said he'd thrown his back out on Thursday trying to drag it all down from the attic, and had tried to cancel the sale. But people kept showing up with money and he couldn't close. A nice neighbor lady had come over and was helping out. I never had the chance to ask where any of these things had come from, but evidently someone in the family had traveled to South America, or knew someone who did – or bought these things at a garage sale...



Peruvian Catholic Folk Art (\$0.50)

This was just a little Peruvian crucifix made out of plaster, for fifty cents. It wasn't until I got it home and cleaned off the dirt that I realized how bizarre it is. The crucifix only contains Christ's severed head, hands, and what appears to be the Sacred Heart. I can't interpret the iconography of objects stemming from where the feet should be (ladder to heaven? beams?). Kneeling at his feet is an Indian shepherd with his sheep or baby llama. The flowering plants may be "Moonflower", aka *Datura*, a powerful hallucinogen. It's a very strange object. Here's the reverse side:

Estate Sales



Colorful designs on the back of the crucifix.

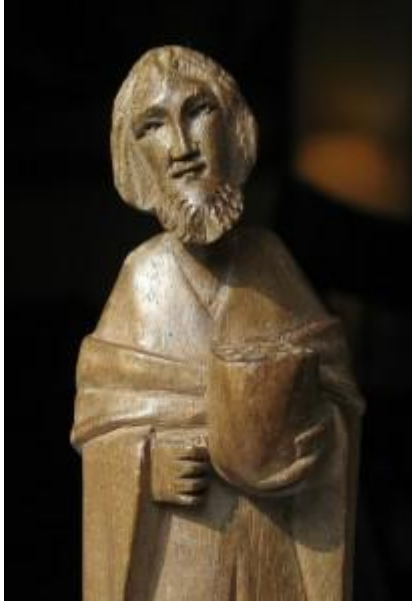
That hot pink and purple combination and overall condition makes me think this piece was made sometime during the late 1960's.



Hand-tooled Leather Cup from Peru (\$0.25)

The design on this leather cup from the Andes highlands includes mountains with an Agave plant, a kneeling llama, and a prickly pear cactus. It's a lovely thing. Look at the incredible detail of the leather tooling.

Estate Sales



"Tom. Ecuador 1974" (\$0.25)

I picked up this little wooden figurine for a quarter at the same sale. It's hand-carved and about 7-inches high. The bottom is marked: "Tom. Ecuador 1974". It's not very ornate, and its style is almost Modern, but I liked the calm gaze. I don't know what he's holding. It's like a big toothbrush holder or something. @:) Maybe a kind of tropical vegetable or fruit?

My total cash outlay for the day was \$6.

Pittsburgh Estate Sale Treasures 8/27/2011

Jan and I had a great time estate saling yesterday. The weather was humid, but cool and breezy from hurricane Irene. We went to estate sales in Munhall, Lincoln Place, Pleasant Hills, and Mount Lebanon. They were all interesting houses filled with interesting things, although none of them looked like much from the outside. There were no McMansions filled with new junk from Best Buy.

Here's a photo of all the things I bought yesterday:



Estate Sale Treasures, Pittsburgh, 8/27/2011

Munhall:

The owners of this house had elegant taste. Most of the furniture predated WWII, with nice china and crystal and interesting objects. Jan and I have really clamped down on the sheer amount of stuff we buy on the weekends, but I did find a couple of nice little things: a carved wooden statuette, a woven box with pink roses (\$1), and some ribbon (\$0.25).

Estate Sales



Detail of Carved Wooden Statuette signed by Rege Letzelter (\$1)



Detail. Figurine, 7.25-inches high.

I'm not sure what he is. Maybe a fisherman?

Lincoln Place:

Estate Sales

This was an old, tall, narrow frame house located on a narrow street in one of Jan's old neighborhoods. The house had belonged to the father of someone she knew, and she spent a most of the time there catching up with them and other friends and family she knew who were there.

The owner had been a stained glass artist. Their workshop was located in a small room in the attic. Sheets and sheets and sheets of stained glass were leaning up against the walls in the main attic. I think the price for the lot was \$99. The glass was beautiful, in all different shades and colors. There were tools and unfinished pieces lying on the workbench. The sloping ceiling of the workroom was hung with sketches and drawings and graph paper diagrams.

Pleasant Hills:

I'm not sure now, because Saturday morning saling is always such a blur, but I think this was the house all done in "Hollywood" glam style. All crystal chandeliers and sconces, with gold-flecked mirrors on the walls, and lots of mirrored furniture. It was all wonderful. There was a 1940s-era wedding gown hanging from the closet door in the central hallway that was simply stunning. It was a very basic style, with a square neckline and princess waist, with just the slightest dip in the back for a train, in that beautiful old ivory satin. It could easily have been made over into something you could wear on a dinner cruise on a pleasant summer evening.

I picked up the grey marble ashtray with a glass inset for Don here for \$1.

Mount Lebanon:

There were 2 estate sales in Mount Lebanon, and we had to drive through the central shopping district, which was really busy. There was a farmer's market and other fresh produce stands, and they all seemed to be doing a brisk business.

The first one was an old house that had been lived in by the same people for a very long time, and it was packed with stuff. I found this pretty pink and beige ceramic Chinese box in a pile of clutter on top of some filing cabinets in a man's office/den. I haven't bought any boxes since the epic we went through this spring of buying little vintage boxes as wedding shower party favors for my niece Alex's shower, but this one was too pretty to pass by. I knew I'd regret it.



Estate Sales

Pink and Beige Chinese Porcelain Box (\$1.50)



Detail

What I really love about this box are the colors, and the thickness of the glaze.

Our last sale of the day was in a house that had belonged to a dentist. We could hardly see the house when we pulled up; it was hidden behind so many trees and thick hanging ivy. According to the For Sale sign in front the house had sold in a day. Inside was filled with beautiful antiques and works of art. It was a very eclectic mix, ranging from oriental porcelain to framed, hand-painted Spanish tiles with bullfighting scenes.

In a back bedroom, lying on the floor, I found an artist's portfolio filled with dozens of watercolor sketches, some of which were very nice. In the middle of the pile I found 3 fashion design sketches. Two looked like they were from the 30's and the third looked like a dress from the 1950's. While Jan and I were admiring them, another woman spotted one of them and *grabbed it out of Jan's hand*, gushing about how much she loved it and asking if we were going to buy it because if we weren't she was going to. Jan grabbed it back and said no, we were buying all 3. It was one of the rudest encounters we've had in all the years we've been doing this. You just don't GRAB SOMETHING OUT OF SOMEONE'S HANDS at an estate sale. You can wait until they put it down, or ask: "Are you buying that?". But you don't grab. And this woman was old enough to know better.

This one was drawn on a heavy cardboard that has turned yellow with age:

Estate Sales



Pen and Pencil Sketch of 1930's Art Deco Dresses



Pencil and Ink Sketch of 3 Geometric, Art Deco Dresses from the 1930's

Estate Sales



1950's Glamour



Detail.

We had trouble with the rude woman again, when I was paying for the drawings. They're very old and fragile, and I set them carefully down on the table while I paid. The woman said again how much she liked it, and would have grabbed it again if Jan hadn't been in the way. So she hovered next to me as I negotiated the price with the estate sale lady like she was waiting for me to turn them down – at \$1 each.

You know, if she hadn't been so rude, I would probably have let her buy it.

Estate Sales

That was the last house on our list and we needed food. So we stopped and had lunch at Eat 'N Park, and came home and showed Don all our treasures. It was one of the best days of sales we've had all summer: Not a single dud in the bunch.

Estate Sale Treasures Found in Braddock PA

8/16/2011

My sister-in-law, Jan, and I have been going to estate sales every Saturday morning for the past three years. There's always a break in the winter, but otherwise we're out almost every weekend. It's one of our main forms of entertainment. We love the thrill of spotting something wonderful, and we just buy things that we need, and things that make us happy.

Jan has assembled a wonderful collection of masks, while I go in for glass. (Masks scare me.) A couple of weeks ago we went to an estate sale in a warehouse in Braddock, PA, which was filled to overflowing with an amazing personal collection of stuff. Including a ton of pink and purple glass objects. I spotted this carnival glass bowl on the table and gasped. I couldn't believe it hadn't been grabbed already.



Clear Carnival Glass Bowl with Pink Iridescence

I paid \$5.00 for this lovely thing. I'm not sure how old it is, but it's extremely thick and heavy glass. There's not a chip on it.

Estate Sales



Pink Carnival Glass Bowl Interior Detail

In the fall and winter, Don and I always end the work day with late-afternoon tea. It's a very pleasant little ritual, and I usually try to have a small snack like gingersnaps or other small cookies. I have a tea tray and teapots and nice little creamers and silver spoons, all of which I've acquired at estate sales and yard sales over the years. But I've been looking for something to hold the cookies; the table between us is not very big. At the same sale, I found this, also with a gasp:



Hand-Painted Enamel Desert Server

I paid \$3.00 for this.

At first I thought it was porcelain, but it's enameled. And it's apparently hand-painted:

Estate Sales



Enameled Dessert Server - Detail

What do you think? The design was not printed. It looks to me like it's been hand painted.

At any rate, it's just the right size for a couple of cookies, and every time I see it on the dining room table I feel happy.

That's Jan's and my measure of value: does it make us happy. We've thought about buying things to sell on eBay or whatever, but we finally decided that we'd rather buy things that make us happy. We're convinced that if we try to make money off of it we'll ruin our fun.

Who knew? Material possessions DO bring happiness...

Adrienne Collins 2011-08-30 at 6:13 pm

Thank you for sharing your saling adventures and treasured finds. I especially liked the pink carnival glass bowl and the elegant tiered china cookie server. The carved wood figurine is definitely nautical in style- looks like a sou'wester outfit with hat and boots. I hope you get comments from people who know more about these items and can give you some insight as to what they are.

Thanks for taking me along on your expedition of discovery.

Love, Mom