

SILVER

continued from page 3

Coatings Polishing exposes fresh, reactive metal to the atmosphere and therefore to further tarnishing. Objects that will not be used can be lacquered for protection. This process involves the use of solvents to clean the metal properly (acetone or tri-chloroethane). It also requires spraying on the lacquer. Spray lacquering is a task best left to qualified individuals with the background and equipment necessary to do a good job. Poorly applied lacquers can actually cause more severe corrosion if small areas are left exposed. It is not advisable to wax polished silver, because the effect is too variable, and it is difficult to achieve a continuous, even coat. Most people who do not have access to professional services must accept the fact that they will have to polish their silver as needed.

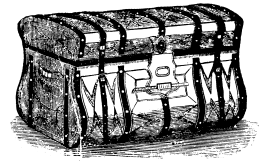
Handling Polished antique silver should not be handled with bare hands. Salts and oils from your skin can etch into any polished metal and may even cause permanent

damage. Soft cotton gloves, or any clean glove or rag may be employed for this purpose.

Storage A simple way to preserve fine silver, and to reduce the necessity for polishing, is to store silver properly. Maintaining an even, low humidity where metal objects are kept below 50% humidity will help. In most homes, this is difficult to ensure, but generally speaking, basements are often damp in the summer and, therefore, should not be used for silver storage. Humidity sensors are available. Silver Tarnish inhibiting cloth (not the polishing kind) is available from better fabric stores for storing silver. It should be wrapped around the silver piece; it protects the object by absorbing tarnishing pollutants. The wrapped silver may then be placed in a clear bag, preferably made of Mylar (turkey baking bags are good) or polyethylene clear plastic. Never use polyvinyl chloride plastic bags to store your good silver. Silver kept wrapped and stored properly can be taken out and enjoyed as often as you like with the minimum amount of polishing and trouble.

This article was contributed by Hank Prebys

Seeking Items for Traveling Trunks



The Heritage Foundation will take the past into the classroom by recreating traveling trunks. These trunks will include clothing and personal items such as hairbrushes and combs and other, more unusual pieces that an 1800s family might have owned.

Kids will get the opportunity to see and touch the items illustrating the differences—and similarities—between families from the past and those in the present.

If anyone has items they feel are appropriate to the project and are interested in donating or loaning them, please call Megan McCann at 484-6548.



The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

Heritage News

c/o Don Randazzo
6101 Hitchingham Road
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

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Heritage NEWS

JANUARY 2001

January
Meeting

Tuesday, January 30
at 7:30 at the
Ypsilanti Automotive
Heritage Collection Museum
100-112 East Cross Street

More about

by Grace Cornish

Now that most of us have put away the holiday decorations, and the stream of Christmas cards in the mail has been reduced to a trickle, it's time to start thinking about the next "greeting card holiday"—Valentine's Day. The guest speaker at our January general meeting will be Grace Cornish, who will tell us about the origin and evolution of Valentine's Day cards.

Even though St. Valentine lived centuries earlier, the custom of exchanging valentines on February 14 can be traced to Geoffrey Chaucer, who mentioned that birds began to pair off on that day. The commercial printing of valentines themselves did not begin until approximately 1850. Germany, a leader in the art of printing, led the way in the production of valentine cards. Then, according to Grace, a woman in New York began making her own, and valentines began to be produced commercially. By the 20th century, valentines were much cheaper and easier to obtain, but



not nearly as fancy as their predecessors.

Grace has "dozens" of valentines and will show us some samples of several types from different eras. She became interested in valentines because, as she says, "They're pretty, and I just liked them." She is also known locally for her collection of fans, hats, and vintage

clothing. Her husband, Herb, a former professor at the University of Michigan, is a collector himself and has given talks on the many clocks he owns and displays.

The Cornishes are originally from Ohio, where Grace earned her bachelor's degree from Bowling Green State University. She taught junior high school in Toledo before her marriage. The couple lived in St. Louis, Chicago, and Florida before settling in Michigan after World War II so that Herb could earn his doctorate at the U of M. They have lived in Ypsilanti for 50 years, where Grace has been active with the Ypsilanti Historical Society and the Presbyterian Church, serving as the latter's Director of Education for many years and teaching Bible Studies.

We hope you will join us, Tuesday, January 30 at 7:30, for what promises to be an interesting discussion. As always, refreshments will be served. Bring a friend!



This article was contributed by Lisa Walters



GHOSTS of the Past

by James Mann

One morning in October, between 8:45 and 9:00, Tom Dodd and I were walking east on Cross St.. We were just west of Olde Town Coin & Gold, when I happened to glance toward Aubree's Saloon. At that moment, I saw a sight that made me gasp, "Oh my God!" There, above the second floor windows, in letters so clear and white they could have been painted on that morning, where the words: THE OLIVER HOUSE.

Tom and I were standing in just the right place, at just the right time and looking at just the right angle; when the angle of the sun and the condensation in the air was just right, to make the letters visible.

It has been a long time since that building was known as The Oliver House, a good fifty years, in fact. The building that is now Aubree's Saloon was built in the late 1870s, and for many years was known as the Neat House. Then in 1907 the building was purchased by Oliver Westfall, and

operated as a "European Hotel" by him and his son Clarence. The Westfalls were gone by 1920, but the name Oliver House remained through a number of owners. The name Oliver House remained into the mid-1940s. Today, when a patron questions an employee at Aubree's about the letters, the patron is told it is the work of the ghost. When the letters are visible, the patron is told, it means the ghost is active.

There are no further details to flesh out the story of the ghost, but the letters themselves are, in a sense, a ghost of the past. An apparition, so to speak, of a time long gone.

The Oliver House letters are not the only ghost of the past haunting Depot Town. There are other apparitions of times past to be found there. Two of these, are just around the corner.

On display in Cady's Grill is a photograph of the east wall of Aubree's Saloon, taken in 1919, when it was still the Oliver House. Painted on the wall, between, the windows, are the words BUFFET and LUNCH. These words have long since been covered over with red paint, but can still be seen through the layers.

Directly across River Street from Aubree's is the Thompson Block, a big green wreck of the building. This is called the Thompson Block, because the Thompson family operated many of their business interests here from

1869 to 1950. They even had the family name painted on the Cross St. side of the building in the 1880s. The building has been painted over many times since then, but the Thompson name can still be seen.

Some ghosts of the past are engraved in stone. The next time you go to the Sidetrack, look down as you are about to enter. There, in front of the door, are the words NICK MAX. This is from the 1890s, when the building was the Nick Max Saloon, owned by Nickolas Max.

Engraved into the step at the entrance of Hons Flowers are the words McPerson & House. This is where the grocery store of Alpheous McPerson and his son in law Arthur House was. The store opened in 1901. McPerson died in 1912, but the name remained until the business closed in 1937. Now, all that remains, are the words engraved into the step. These are not the only ghosts of the past to be found in Depot Town, there are many more. There are the fading ads on the west wall of the Follett House, and the sign now partly covered by the awning in front of Me 'N' My Sisters Country Store, and the Teacher's Shop.

Depot Town is not the only place in Ypsilanti where such ghosts of the past can be seen. These can be found throughout the city. To see these ghosts, all you have to do is look.

Study shows Historic Districts Attract Visitors

The National League of Cities (NLC) recently conducted a study seeking to find the key components of a successful city economy. Based upon a survey of 463 cities, city leaders ranked entertainment and tourism as one of the top three contributors to a successful city economy along with sales and manufacturing. More than half of the city leaders (54%) listed entertainment and tourism ahead of sales and manufacturing. The survey also revealed that a local restaurant district and a historic district are two of the top five contributors to attracting outside visitors to cities. In an effort to enhance entertainment and tourism, cities reported having or

developing the the following attractions:

Event	# of Cities	Percent
Historic District	439	76%
Museum	318	69%
Farmer,s Market	286	62%
Performing Arts Center	264	58%
Restaurant District	287	58%
Festivals	254	55%
Outdoor Concert Venue	225	49%
Nature Preserve	221	48%
Waterfront Development	187	41%
Convention Center	187	41%
Sports Stadium	178	39%

Ypsilanti is right on target with our Downtown restaurants, Depot Town restaurants, Riverside Arts Center,

Ypsilanti Historical Museum, Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Collection, Michigan Antique Fire Museum, R & M Classics, Orphan Car Show, Heritage Festival, Elvis Fest, Frog Island Jazz Concerts, New Year,s Eve Jubilee in the Historic District, Huron River parks, Farmer,s Market, Ypsilanti Historic District, EMU sports, and EMU convention facilities. Our future may see the Marriott and the Parish House Inn continually booked, additional bed & breakfasts in our Historic District, tourists visiting our attractions, and new businesses catering to their interests. The future looks exciting!

This article was contributed by Bill Nichols



Last issue I excerpted one of Henry Ford Museum's "Care and Preservation" articles which was prepared by the museum's Conservation Department. In the intervening weeks, no one told me that the article was a waste of space or uninteresting, so I thought that I would prepare a synopsis of another one of the conservation articles.

Remember that the complete documents may be downloaded from the Henry Ford Museum web site (www.hfmvgv.org <<http://www.hfmvgv.org>>) or for a nominal charge, the museum's Conservation Office can mail them to you.

SILVER

Historical silver can be maintained for years of use and enjoyment provided that some basic care and attention is given to its preservation. The first step in the care of silver is to understand and minimize or eliminate conditions that can cause damage. The second step is to follow basic guidelines for care, handling and cleaning.

How do you know if it's silver? Most people know that silver is a white lustrous metal. Pure or "fine" silver is called Sterling if it is not less than 925 parts silver to 75 parts alloy. Silver objects, especially coins and jewelry, contain copper as an alloying metal for added hardness and this copper can corrode to form dark brown or green deposits on the surface of the metal. Silver is usually easy to differentiate from lead or pewter which are generally dark gray and not very shiny. If your object forms a white powdery substance anywhere on the surface, it indicates lead corrosion. This proves that the object is either not silver, or that it is silver plated.

Silver is often plated (deposited) onto other metallic alloys, almost always with an intermediate layer of copper in between. The earliest plating process, "Sheffield Plate", was developed in England in 1742. By the mid-19th century the process was largely replaced by electroplating (which used less silver) and is still the process used today. The base metal in plated artifacts may consist of any of the following metals or alloys: copper, brass, "German silver" or "nickel silver" (50% copper, 30% nickel, 20% zinc), "Britannia metal" (97% tin, 7% antimony, 2% copper), or a "base" silver containing a high percentage of copper. Hallmarks or other stamped marks on the underside can often aid in determining the composition of silver plated artifacts.

Tarnish (silver sulfide) is a form of corrosion characterized as a dense, thin black layer which disfigures the surface of silver objects. Silver will tarnish on exposure to air containing sulfide gases. Humidity in the air is also required for the corrosion to progress. Since the Metro-Detroit area has heavy industry and elevated pollution levels, as well as hot, humid summers, both criteria for tarnish are met in Ypsilanti.

Tarnish does not itself pose a threat to objects. Most damage to silver occurs as a result of the polishing

required to remove the tarnish. Over time, heavy polishing results in a loss of detail in raised areas of design. On plated objects, frequent polishing can actually remove the silver plating, leaving dull areas of exposed base metal which may be mistaken for stubborn areas of tarnish.

In rare cases where the silver object has been exposed to high airborne salt concentrations, "horn silver" may develop on the surface. This corrosion, silver chloride, is characterized a dirty purple or slate gray. It is dense, compact and usually quite difficult to polish off.

Old lacquers, applied in the past to protect the piece, may wear or peel off in some areas. This leaves the exposed silver to tarnish, while the rest may remain bright.

Abrasion and Denting Objects made of silver, a relatively soft metal, can be damaged by rough handling. Raised areas and handles are especially susceptible to denting and joint failure, so display pieces should be handled with care, lifting from the center of gravity, never by the handle or lip. If silver serving pieces are being used, their owners should accept a certain amount of wear and tear from handling and more frequent cleaning.

Repairs to valuable silver, which may involve soldering or raising and reshaping dents, should be done by a qualified metalsmith familiar with historical techniques or an art conservator. In some cases jewelers may be willing to do small repairs on silver artifacts.

Cleaning (Hire a housekeeper?) Old lacquers must be removed prior to cleaning. This is best done with acetone preferably by immersion. Acetone is a volatile solvent that should never be used in poorly ventilated conditions.

Polishing (Now here is where you really need a housekeeper!) Polishing with a mild abrasive is the only safe cleaning method conservators can recommend for historic silver. Commercially available "silver dips" may contain undesirable components such as hydrochloric or sulfuric acid which act too quickly and remove more metal than simple polishing does. Dips are too aggressive and silver that has been dipped usually requires further buffing to restore luster to the surface. Some commercial paste polishes (i.e. Duragilt) are quite abrasive and may scratch your fine silver. Hagerty's Foam polish and Twinkle for silver are thought to be somewhat less abrasive than others. Light polishing may be done using jeweler's cloth containing rouge (i.e. Bark Cloth, Hagerty Glove). A museum proven, safe polishing method is as follows:

For most polishing the museum uses fine calcium carbonate, Chalk (whiting), worked into a slurry or runny paste with equal amounts of ethanol (denatured alcohol, ethyl alcohol) and distilled water. The paste is rubbed across the surface, working a small area at a time, with cotton balls or clean cotton rags. Detailed areas may be polished with Q-tips or cotton wadding at the end of a bamboo skewer. Depending on the design of your object, it may not be desirable to OVER-CLEAN every crevice, as this decreases the overall contrast of the detailing. It is important to remove all residual polish with distilled water. Drying may be accelerated by adding ethanol.

Continued on page 4