

Buried Treasure

by Pinkney Gage



Postal Stamp Investment Reaps Dividends Sixfold

Lenny, an old friend of mine, invited me to dinner. Receipt of a \$900 check that morning credited to having followed my advice 17 years before, made him quite voluble.

I had been urging Lenny to put \$100 into postage stamps. I had put a dinner that if he did, by the time his infant son was ready for college the stamps could be sold for at least six times the amount invested.

Well, Lenny had bought 10 sets of the Canal Zone postage

issue which the Post Office Department had brought out the month before to commemorate the first quarter century of service for the famous waterway. There were 16 stamps in the issue, and each of the 10 sets was made up of blocks of four. He had invested \$8.28 per set as against the \$90 which he finally received.

"The catalog value is \$120.95 per set," Lenny said, "but I'm satisfied. Best investment I ever made."

HOW TO GO ABOUT FINDING VALUE OF ANTIQUE

How much should an antique bring, and what's the best way to find out?

That is a question posed in a recent letter by M. M. Rosen, of Newark, N. J., apropos his having "come into possession of a hand-carved love seat with the date 1719 inscribed on it."

Mr. Rosen suspects that the piece is both "unique and valuable." Assuming it is as old as the date indicates and that it is in reasonably good condition, one must agree that his suspicions are quite justified.

How valuable, of course, is something that may vary from several hundred to several thousand dollars and depends on various factors. The history of the piece could have a very great influence on its value for obvious reasons—as for example, if the piece had belonged to Martha Washington, to the mother of Stephen Decatur, say.

If the history is unknown—and Rosen's letter indicated nothing on this point—the piece may still be established as having a very

substantial value despite that handicap.

Whether Rosen knows much or little of the history of his acquisition, I suggest that as a first step he go to the Newark Public Library and read all that he can find on the subject. Quite possibly he may come across a clue to the rarity of his piece in the works of Wallace Nutting, author of *Furniture Treasury* and one of the foremost authorities on furniture found in America during the 1700s.

Mr. Rosen should then visit various dealers to learn what kind of love seats they have—there are many kinds—and the prices asked. He should also consult the records of the leading auction houses.

By taking such steps he will get an idea of what his piece ought to bring. The time required to do so is not so very much. Librarians as a general rule are most helpful, and dealers are not going to conceal prices if they think they may make a sale.

PAPERWEIGHT IN UNUSUAL FORM OF GLASS VASE

An eye for the unusual and the willingness to take a modest gamble are two of the most important assets a man can have.

That is the contention of Paul, a collector friend of mine who feels those attributes are even more important than knowledge.

"The paperweight on the table behind you is partial proof," he said.

I turned to the table, but the only things on it were a book, a lamp and what appeared to be a glass vase.

"That's it," Paul said, "the glass. Take a good look at it."

I studied the piece closely before picking it up. Its appearance was decidedly that of a vase and a very graceful one. Certainly it didn't look like any paperweight I had seen. It was a good nine inches high and a little over six inches in diameter at the lip of what I took to be the bowl, which was a good inch deep. From the base of the bowl the sides tapered gracefully to where the waist was only about three inches thick and then flared out to about four at the base.

The color of the glass was a dark but very clear amber. Six green lilypad stems waved gracefully up through the amber depths to terminate a little below the glass surface of the bowl in two water lilies and four leaves.

They were so life-like, lying there just a little below the surface of the glass, that I involuntarily rubbed my fingers over the surface to see if I could detect a change in quality. I picked the piece up to look through it at the light. It was heavy in my hand.

"Take a look at the bottom," Paul said. In turning the piece over I spotted the signature "Tiffany."

"I paid \$10 for it," Paul resumed. "I had no idea what it might be worth. Didn't even know it was Tiffany's, but I liked the color and appearance of it. And just the other day I learned that one like this was advertised last year at \$150 and sold almost immediately."

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