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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Salt, Pepper Sets Are Unique Collection

By NEIL A. MATHESON

I FOUND a rare collection recently in the home of my friends, Bert and Laura Hickens, Alliston. Betty Carol and I visited the Hickens home before she returned to her home in Virginia, U.S.A. as I wanted my daughter to see the rare "salt and pepper shaker" collection which Laura has been gathering for some 15 years.

She had something like 150 different sets when I last saw her collection some four years ago. Now she has 600. If you want to split hairs, she had 597 sets when I visited Alliston late last week. I believe she must have 600 now, judging by the rate they have been piling up this summer.

There are all kinds, shapes and varieties of shakers. Two small bottles of Chianti wine are filled with the wine. When they are emptied they will be salt and pepper shakers. They came from an American tourist who visited the Hicken home last summer.

Laura has a great book with hundreds of names of tourists who dropped in last summer to view her collection. Many of them hunt up a set she hasn't got now and send it to her. How they find new and different ones, I find it difficult to imagine.

Goose And Golden Eggs

YOU KNOW the old nursery rhyme of the goose that laid the golden egg, well Laura has a salt and pepper shaker depicting it. The Goose is fairly large, the top half of the goose lifts off, as a cover, and underneath it is a nest with two golden eggs. The eggs are the shakers.

One pair is made from actual deer horns, they came from an Ontario visitor.

A wise old owl has eyes that move as you lift him, the salt and pepper comes out the top of the head.

Laura has a large, fancy tray, on it are a bull, a cow and two calves. The bull is the cream pitcher, the cow is the sugar bowl, the calves are the shakers.

It reminds me of an unusual cream pitcher a friend sent once to my Margaret and myself. It was in the shape and color of a Jersey cow. The cream went in the cow's back, her tail curled over her back was the handle, and the cream came out of her mouth. The effect as you poured cream out of the cow's mouth into a guest's cup of tea was often unusual to say the least.

Strawberry Shakers

A METAL tree has five large, life-like strawberries hanging on it. The berries are the shakers.

A pair of pheasants are an attractive pair; they came from an N.B. truck driver.

From the colorful Las Vegas, Nevada came a pair of ordinary shakers, but they're prettied up with an overlay of stone chips.

A pair of Island lobsters came from Burlington. A real looking Island red potato came from Japan. An attractive pair of Bird's Eye Maple came from Dorchester. They were made in the penitentiary there.

An unusual set is a washing machine. You pull off the wringer rollers and you have the shakers. The wash tub is for holding sugar.

There's a hot plate with two burners; two coffee pots are the shakers.

There's a pair of old fashioned street lights, they are stamped P.E.I.

An old pot-belly stove is made into a light, with a cute shade on top. Yes, it has shakers.

This Set Is Different

A NEW YORK visitor last summer said he would bring something different. He did. They were two old pickle dishes, with holes punched in the covers for shakers. They are different.

A Mont Joli man sent a set that's unusual. The streetlamp type has batteries in the bottom which light up the lamp on top. The shakers are in baskets hanging from the lamp, up high.

A Nova Scotia set is a pair of oxen. They come from Digby, Nova Scotia.

One set depicts a very old Ford car – sort of a Model T type. Just behind the windshield are a man and woman. They are the shakers.

There's a covered wagon. The hooped-cover part is in two parts, they're the shakers.

A totem pole from British Columbia houses another set.

There would have to be the odd off-beat type. Dr. Lorne Bonnell sent her a pair of statuesque nude models. The salt and pepper come out the most obvious places.

Even more daring is the fancy china set. The figure is of a reclining female. The over-size breasts come apart from the rest of the body, they are the shakers.

Naturally I asked Mrs. Hicken how she started this unusual hobby.

A little boy across the road, Herbie MacPherson was six at the time – he's 200 pounds and a married man now. "He started to bring me something from every place he went", Laura told me. His sister started to do the same, on birthdays and at Christmas time. Then neighbor children followed suit. That was more than 15 years ago and the hobby has grown and grown and grown.

New Rows Of Shelves

LAURA HAS the collection in a room which must have been a dining room once. I forgot to ask her. She has rows of shelves built around the walls, with the ordinary spacing. Now those shelves are filled and she is starting to put in the shelving at closer intervals. When all of these are filled I wonder what this unusual hobbyist will do for space.

The Hickens, Bert and Laura, and my Margaret and myself met many years ago. Our meeting developed into a warm friendship. You see we had the same wedding anniversary date, August 25. If you think of it, how about sending Laura some shakers for their next anniversary, or even a card would be nice.

We've had our last anniversary.

Laura also has a large collection of recipe books, she has tried some unusual ones.
I'll tell you that part of the story in a future column.