

SHARDS OF WISDOM

“Heard it Through the Grapevine”



Candy is Dandy for this Collector

And, by gum, Ralph can't help but tell you how sweet it is.

Ralph Finch found the following article, edited from the *Smithsonian Magazine*, thought it was...sweet, and added his own two cents of “wisdom” about this once penny product:

Darlene Lacey wrote (edited): *“I’m the curator of the Candy Wrapper Museum, my online ‘roadside attraction.’ Here I share my 50-year collection of little slips of paper designed to be torn and thrown away. Why? Because these ephemeral objects serve as time machines, opening an emotional portal to the past.*

“I was 15 years old when I started collecting, inspired by friends with cool collections like beer bottles from around the world. I wanted to start one of my own, but of what? I usually spent my few coins on candy at the 7-Eleven. The candy shelves were a wonderland of tasty treats with colorful wrappers and names, all clamoring: Pick me! Big Hunks, Milk Duds, Jujufruits, Choco’Lite, Lemonhead...how could a girl decide?

“Then inspiration struck. Instead of throwing away those wrappers, I would save them. I would create the Candy Wrapper Museum, where I envisioned that the wrappers would one day be enjoyed as art, nostalgia and humor. It was 1977, and teenage me had a plan: I would collect these wrappers throughout my lifetime, then open up the museum as a roadside attraction in my old age. I chose my first pieces, Nice Mice and Cinnamon Teddy Bears, and so began this journey.

“Friends caught the spirit of fun and donated pieces. Collecting became an affordable, novel way to explore the world around me, one that could turn even a mundane shopping trip into a treasure hunt.

“In 2002, inspiration struck again. Why wait until retirement? Why

not open the museum right now on the Internet, the ultimate ‘superhighway’?

“Building the online museum was a massive six-month, one-person project. First, I curated roughly 650 of my favorite wrappers into themes such as Celebrities, Classics, Holidays, Big Eats, No Fun and Vices. I scanned everything that was flat, photographed the rest, scanned the prints, cleaned all the now-digital images, then wrote lighthearted commentary to provide each visitor with my personal tour. Then, I bought a book on how to write HTML and built the site myself.”

And Ralph adds (even though we tried to stop him). Darlene’s story has a personal connection to the Finch family.

A: When my sweet wife was around seven—a mere 69 years ago—and her grandfather owned a neighborhood “family store” called Smitty’s Market that sold milk, bread, the basics, plus penny candy. To help her granddad, Janet (then Janet Smith) would stand up on a wood box and at the candy counter would sell candy to little kids.

To this day, she can list all the penny candies that were popular seven decades ago. Her then favorites were Squirrel, Black Jacks, Mary Janes (originally made in 1914), Snaps and Fan Tan’s.

B: Why don’t I take a leaf from Darlene Lacey’s scrapbook and create my own personal Finch family roadside attraction: Even now, every time we pass (pardon the pun) one of those porta-potties along the highway, why don’t I rent one and build The Finch Museum Dedicated to Toilet Paper and Related Ephemera? Toilet paper is a natural flush with art, nostalgia and humor!

Now, I will need several things: No. 1, Encouragement, and No. 2, (pardon the expression) Lots of money and, appropriately, a national movement. (Have I no shame?)

If you think this is a good idea, or another lame-brain idea down the drain, write rfinch@twmi.rr.com.

I Relished this Rare Ketchup Jug! Cheers and Tears

by Ralph Finch

First, the good news and a little serving of background. Those who know me—and Janet—are aware that we collect a LOT of stuff (emphasis on “a lot”). Janet likes snuff bottles, utilities, demijohns, and another item or two, while me?

For me? The list goes on...and on. Strange—and not so strange—things, like spittoons, 100-year-old rolls of toilet paper, pre-1900 chamber pots, salesmen’s trample toilets, and children’s musical toilet paper holders (one, from the 1940s, plays *Whistle While You Work*).

Antique Bottle & Glass Collector

SHARDS OF WISDOM

"Heard it Through the Grapevine"



And—pew—pre-1900 travel books on Japan, old hair bottles, clothespins, children's aprons, museum-quality demijohns with historic ship battles painted on them, and other major collections that have come—and gone—like GIX-10 scrolls, Sandwich colognes, and of course my once-great accumulation of 250-different glass target balls and related ephemera.

Another collection that still warms my heart and (hamburger) buns is Ketchup stuff. In fact, my ketchups have been mentioned in books and featured in at least three documentaries—one done by a TV show in Moscow.

While there are common bottles and a few jewels, part of my "ketchup klutter" is the world's best assortment of ketchup crocks and jugs. Is there a better display? I've never heard of one.

One wall holds about 29 crocks and jugs emblazoned with the magic word, the nectar of the gods: KETCHUP or "catsup." (I would accept or k-e-chap—it's Chinese—or...whatever. You say tomato, and I say tomahto (part of a 1937 Gershwin song).

And, recently, I came across what would be No. 30, and the big apple of my ketchup collection (Mixing fruit and vegetables here.) It was the auction's star (in my opinion), Lot 491, described (edited) as:

"... large Bristol-slip-glazed jug with bail handle, featuring "MY MARYLAND / HIGH GRADE / CATSUP / VAN LILL PRESERVING CO / BALTIMORE MD" on the front and reverse... and 18."

Eighteen inches high? I have two other large ones, but not that large.

Lot 491 was estimated at \$100-\$200 but sold for \$950 plus a reasonable 20 percent buyer's premium, plus shipping.

I found little on the ketchup; Van Lill was a preserver, but I guess not a really successful one. The Van Lill name was a prominent one in Baltimore, but...

I was so excited when the ketchup from Crocker Farm came to my front door in a really big box, and in it was another box, and in that was my wonderful ketchup jug.

We carefully unpacked it and found my ketchup had...multiplied. It was now in at least eight pieces!

I have no idea what happened (nor does Crocker). The outside box looked well-packed, but the inner box had a four-inch bite out of one corner. Strange, and so, so, so very sad.



Looking rather dejected, Ralph inspects his recently delivered large Bristol-slipglazed jug with a bail handle. Marked "Maryland High Grade Catsup Van Lill Preserving Co Baltimore Md."

And a couple of weeks later, Crocker returned our money. I'd rather have catsup than lettuce...(bad joke).

FYI: Crocker Farm says: "We are a family business owned and operated by Anthony, Barbara, Brandt, Luke, and Mark Zipp. We have been selling stoneware and redware since 1983 and possess an unsurpassed knowledge of the art form. Our company is the industry leader in selling antique American stoneware and redware pottery, and our auctions have transformed the marketplace, realizing numerous major world auction records and achieving over \$40 million sold. We are based out of our historic gallery, the 1841 Gorsuch Barn, in Sparks, Maryland."

The firm once sold a jug for a record-setting \$1,560,000!

