

The Stained Finger

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SOCIETY OF INKWELL COLLECTORS

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Summer 2012

Cloisonné: Enameled Jewels of the Orient

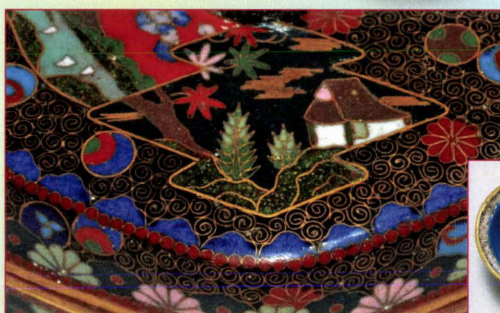
By Barbara Bureker

Hold a cloisonné inkwell in your hands and you can't help but be amazed at the detail of fine wire and enamel. Learn a little more about the process of creating the piece, and you will realize just how precious your jewel-like inkwell really is.

The art of enameling goes way back, although the process people took to develop it is not completely known. What is known is that a couple of thousand years ago, humans began decorating metal objects with precious stones. When glass was developed, probably by the ancient Egyptians, craftsmen began using colored glass in place of the gemstones. The challenge they faced was combining two very different materials so they would remain fused. The most common method of doing this was by melting the glass in order to "stick" it onto the metal. Over time, craftsmen experimented with powdering the glass, creating enamel. This enamel could be applied to the metal and heated to high temperatures in order to fuse the two together.

Because the properties of metal and glass are so different, this fusion was not terribly secure. One method that was used to eliminate (or limit) cracking and separation of the enamel from the metal was to create small cells in the metal in which the enamel was enclosed. These cells were created in a variety of ways; the most common were by carving them out (this method is now called *champlevé*) or by placing fine metal wire onto the base metal. This is *cloisonné*. The making of enameled items using both of these methods spread from the Middle East into and throughout Europe. In Great Britain, the Celts were making enameled pieces in the third century. In Germany and Austria, pieces of *cloisonné* and *champlevé* have been found dating to a period between the tenth and fourteenth centuries.

It is not certain quite when the art of glassmaking and enameling reached China and Japan, but at some point by the thirteenth century, Chinese artists were working with glass, metal and enamel. It was not until



This is an exceptional and probably one-of-a-kind inkstand. It is Japanese and features a variety of interesting and beautiful design elements, including short strips of cloisons (wire) that become part of the picture. This can be seen in the close-up; the wires are used to create clouds. The lid lifts off to reveal three enameled inserts. The amazing thing here is that even the rims of the inserts are decorated. I never get tired of looking at this beauty.

See Cloisonné, page 8

Editors' Note

We're happy to present this long-anticipated issue of *The Stained Finger*. We've heard from several SOIC members who tell us there is still much enthusiasm for receiving this publication, and we feel the same way!

The co-editors of this issue, **George Grauer** and **Anne Oslund**, would like to thank their predecessor, **Barbara Bureker**, not only for all of the wonderful issues we enjoyed under her reign as editor since 2003 but also for her helpful coaching. We've retained Barbara's format for this issue—why change a good thing? We also thank **Amy Bahr**, graphic designer extraordinaire, for creating this lovely issue.

Barbara Bureker contributed our cover article on cloisonné inkwells. We'll all want to add a beautiful cloisonné specimen to our collections after reading about this special art form.

In this issue's "Dip into History" article, **Tamara Marasco** describes the history of several types of inkwells. This informative article would be great to share with friends and family who ask about our inkwells.


What would an issue of *The Stained Finger* be without the deep knowledge and investigative spirit of **Gordon True**? He has shared more interesting inkwell stories and photos.

Several of you heeded the call (or rather, the email) from the SOIC to share your favorite inkwell in this publication. You'll enjoy seeing these special inkwells that adorn the homes

of other collectors, and you may recognize names of members who have contributed to this organization and publication in the past. Co-editors George and Anne have written about their collecting experiences. And don't miss **Jeff Pisetznier's** article about his discovery of a special inkwell of the equine kind.

Perhaps receiving this issue of *The Stained Finger* will inspire you to expand your knowledge of inkwells and related items. You'll want to visit our website at www.SOIC.com and check out the Resources section. You'll find links to inkwell collectors' sites, organizations for collectors of other writing items, museums and commercial sites that offer inkwells and other items for sale. A library of information is also available to you; see the Librarian's Corner in this issue for how to get in touch with our librarian, **Sam Fiorella**. If you have a Facebook account and are interested in networking online with other members, visit our Facebook page by searching for Society of Inkwell Collectors.

Be sure to read the message from our Executive Director, **Jeff Pisetznier**. He shares important information about the future of this publication and our organization.

Summer is here! Antique shows, flea markets and garage sales abound. Enjoy the season and the search for your next inkwell! 



The Society of Inkwell Collectors

Founded by Vincent McGraw

Web site: soic.com

Membership:

Open Position

To volunteer for this position,
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Shoptalk questions are open for responses from any reader. When information can be located, a response will be published

with the question; additional information is always welcome. If you know anything about the questions presented in Shoptalk, please send them to *The Stained Finger*. Our purpose is to broaden our wealth of inkwell information by sharing everyone's knowledge!

Question 1: I'm curious about where and when this inkwell was made. She's a simple wooden inkwell with painted hair, facial features and arms. A prim bow is tied at her neck. She's about 3-1/4 inches tall and 2-1/2 inches across the base. Has anyone seen another like her? A full-length photo is shown on page 14.

— Anne Oslund

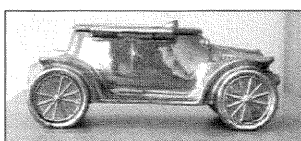
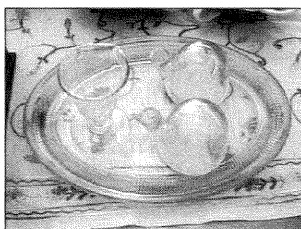


Question 2: Hello, collectors. I am not an inkwell collector but have come across inkwells belonging to my grandfather and would be interested in some information about them.

The first is a pair of glass inkwells and a glass measure on a glass tray/sign/base.

The second is an inkwell in the shape of a vintage car. Should imagine early 1900s. Any info about this or the glass inkwell set would be greatly appreciated. Thanks in advance.

— Bev Sof (from SOIC on Facebook)



Counting on You

The lifeblood of every organization is its members, and this is true for the Society of Inkwell Collectors. To be successful, we need members, and we rely on them to volunteer. Participation makes your membership more valuable and fun, and it's a great way to meet other inkwell collectors. Volunteering does not have to be a full-time job. You can contribute the amount of time that works for you.

Share some of your time by volunteering! We're particularly in need of a Membership Coordinator. Please contact Jeff Pisetzner, Executive Director of our organization, at jpisetzner@msn.com for details about this position and other opportunities. Thank you!

Meet the Editors

George Grauer

The benefits of the Society of Inkwell Collectors, and in particular *The Stained Finger* publication, are exceptional. Anne Oslund and I are delighted to be able to contribute to the continuation of our publication. I have been a volunteer for numerous boards and committees over the years, and the sense of volunteering is old hat for me.

I am Chairman of the Board-President of Able Patrol & Guard, a family-owned physical security service company with headquarters in San Diego, California. We have been in existence since 1964 and currently have a third-generation family member on staff. Our family is very proud of the fact our company was selected as the Family-Owned Business of the Year 2012, for the San Diego and Imperial counties, by the US Small Business Administration. Our middle grandson is the editor of our company newsletter that is produced quarterly. I co-write a homeowners newsletter about twice a year.

The Stained Finger is a most attractive and informative publication, and we hope we meet the standards that Barbara Bureker established over the years when she was Editor of *The Stained Finger*.

Anne Oslund

I discovered the Society of Inkwell Collectors at about the same time that I discovered inkwells. I've been enjoying *The Stained Finger* since 2001 and always look forward to receiving the next issue. George Grauer and I hope that SOIC members enjoy this issue, too!

I've worked as a copy editor at General Mills for about 25 years, editing Betty Crocker cookbooks and recipe magazines for most of those years (as well as sampling delicious creations in the Test Kitchens). Currently I help create package directions for several General Mills products.

In addition to searching for the next inkwell, I enjoy reading, gardening, photography and walking with my little collie, Kenna, in our Minneapolis, Minnesota, neighborhood.

Network with other collectors!

We often hear that SOIC members want to do more communicating and networking with other inkwell collectors. Here are two options.

Our website, www.soic.com, has a section called Members Only. In this section of the site, we have a discussion board that allows you to post pictures, ask questions and discuss (through threaded discussions) any aspect of inkwells, other writing accessories and our society that you would like. Our webmaster, Fritz Wirth, is also open to suggestions for improving the site, perhaps making it easier to use, more informative or more appealing to new visitors. Just send an email with your thoughts and ideas to fritz.wirth@att.net.

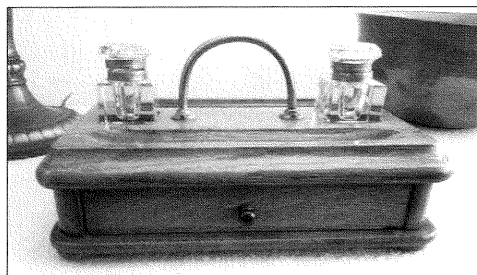
If you have a Facebook account, take a few minutes to find our Society of Inkwell Collectors page. Just open up Facebook and search for Society of Inkwell Collectors. This is a perfect place for talking to others with your same inkwell passion. You can post pictures, start discussions, comment on other people's posts and pictures and even post a video. Take a minute now and visit there. Be sure to click the "Like" button, or add it to your page's favorites. Visit often and post comments. We can make this a terrific, informative and fun place for sharing stories, photos, knowledge and research and to ask questions.

Love at First Sight

By George Grauer

Diane and I have been collectors of many things over the years. Our collection has grown through purchases at antique shows, auctions and galleries throughout the world. We collect Aladdin oil lamps, wash basins with matching pitchers and chamber pots, Native American memorabilia and California plein-air art.

Our introduction to collecting inkwells began in May 2008. We were window shopping in the village of Westport, Ireland, and happened to walk into a small, attractive, well-organized antique shop called The Treasure Trove. The owner was a pleasant, friendly lady that had done an excellent job of displaying her wares. No Aladdin oil lamps, pitcher, bowl and chamber pot sets or Indian material, but she had a couple small, single glass inkwells that caught our eye. They were quite plain, and we had no idea how old they may have been. She said she had an old, well-kept wooden double inkstand at home that was for sale. She lived close to her shop and would be happy to fetch it for our inspection. We agreed to return to her shop within the hour, which we did. She showed us a very attractive wooden inkstand with two inkwells, a small drawer, a brass handle and two pen scoop-outs on the top of the stand. The inkwells fit snugly into the recessed padded carve-outs on top of the stand. It had four small, round donut-style feet. There were no identifying marks on




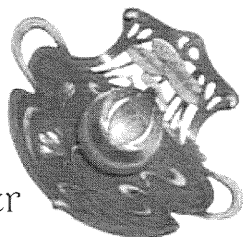
the piece, and it was in excellent condition. It was love at first sight. Her asking price was \$125 (U.S. currency), which included packing and shipping to the U.S. This was the beginning of our quest for inkwells.

We have added to our collection, which now totals a meager twelve inkwells. We have made purchases in Copenhagen, Denmark; Munich, Germany; and Stockholm, Sweden, as well as Arizona, Utah and of course California. We have been unsuccessful in our inkwell search while in Bordeaux, France. We were there on the weekend and the antique galleries were closed. We struck out while in Barcelona, Spain, although there was a large antique mall with fifteen or twenty shops that were never open. No luck in

Rome, Italy or Southampton, England. We saw a few inkwells but nothing as exciting as the first wooden inkstand we bought.

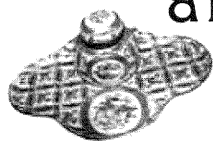
There is an antique show once a quarter in Del Mar, California, that is just outside San Diego, and we have found two Loetz inkwells at this show. We have had very good luck at Antiques on Central in Phoenix, Arizona. There is an antique gallery in Palm Springs, California, called Robert Kaplan, Inc., that had several very high-priced inkwells.

Wherever we go now during our travels, we make it a requirement to a stop at antique galleries or antique shows to ask for inkstands or inkwells. 



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and Phil Lepley,
invite you to visit us at:

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lots to enjoy!



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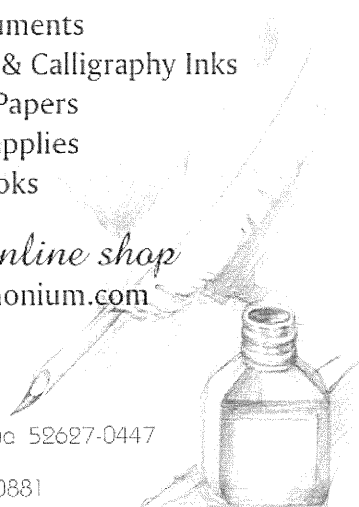
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More Interesting and Unusual Inkwell Stories

By Gordon True



Lock Well

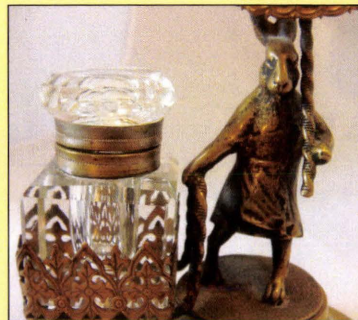
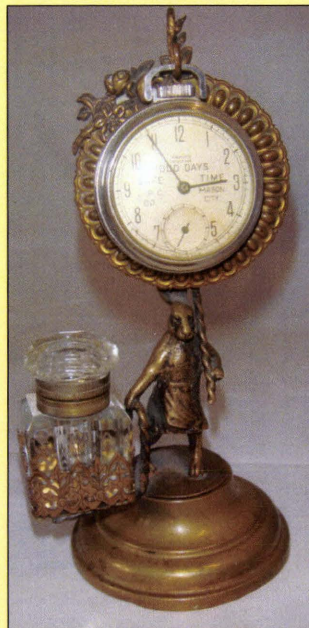
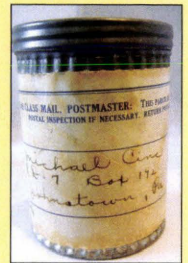
I had never heard of a Lock Well until I found this one on eBay. This is a Post Office Sengbusch Self-Closing Inkstand with a lock and key. I wasn't sure how it worked until I received it. The fact this inkstand came with the original box and instructions helps to understand how it works. Without the instructions, you would never guess the two metal pieces are actually a lock and key. If you study the pictures, you can see how it works.



1932 Shipping Container

Since I look for inkwells everywhere, I found a site in France called 1001 Ink Bottles. This is Max Davis's site. One day while checking items he had for sale, I found a shipping container that had a label indicating it was shipped from The Carter's Ink Company, Boston, Mass. It was addressed "Michael Cine Johnstown, PA," and it had a date of Feb 26, 1932. Of course I wondered how this container ended up in France.

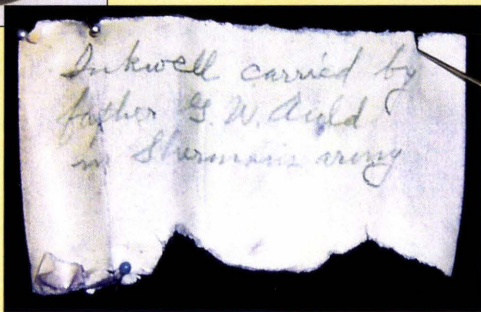
It is now back in the United States, sitting on my desk. I would have never guessed this is how they shipped ink bottles in 1932. The postage was 4-1/2 cents—how do you pay for the 1/2 cent? I also wonder if the small container was just for shipping or could it be a traveling container. The ink bottle is not marked Carter's Ink, so I am guessing it was made by Carter's Ink for Post Standard American. The ink bottle fits in the small container, and the small container fits in the larger shipping container.



Is the Hook on This Inkwell for a Pocket Watch?

When I bought this inkwell on eBay, I was intrigued with rabbit holding the inkwell basket plus the beveled mirror and hook.

The seller indicated the hook was for a pocket watch. Since I don't have an inkwell with a mirror, I knew I had to have this inkwell. I'm not sure the hook is for a pocket watch, but I can't think of any other thing that could go on the hook. It's easy to love this inkwell.



Was this Inkwell Carried by a Soldier in Sherman's Army?

I bought this inkwell for two reasons. First, it had a patent date of May 6, 1851, plus the word "Goodyear." Second, it had a note inside that read "Inkwell carried by father G. W. Auld in Sherman's army."

The patent date and the word "Goodyear" are so small I couldn't get a good picture. You have to see it with a loupe. The patent isn't for the inkwell; it is for the hard rubber it is made of. The person I bought the inkwell from thought it was a patent for Charles Goodyear who invented rubber; however, I discovered that Nelson Goodyear, Charles' brother, has this patent for processing hard rubber.

What confused me was this traveling inkwell did not have a glass insert and no way to seal water. Further research revealed this is an ink powder or pellet holder. A small amount of powder or pellets would make as much as a quart of writing ink when dissolved and mixed as needed, a little at a time. The little traveling inkwell could supply sufficient writing ink to last the average traveler or soldier for an indefinite period.

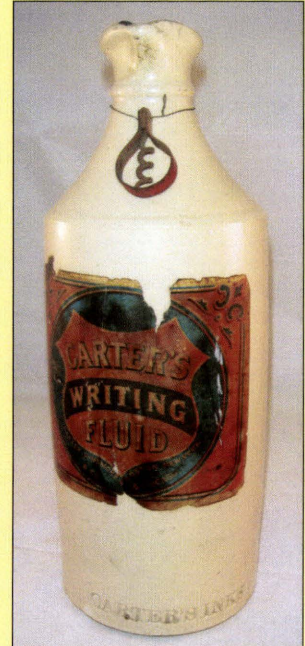
I have not yet researched G. W. Auld to see if he was in Sherman's Army.



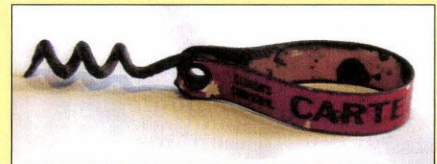
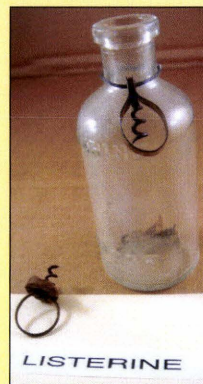
Super Treasure

When I bought this ink bottle, I was primarily interested in the corkscrew attached to the bottle. The corkscrew is marked "CLOUGH'S CORKSCREW PATENT JULY 22, 1884 CARTER'S INK." I wasn't aware that corkscrews were attached to bottles in the late 1800s. Further research revealed other companies also attached folding corkscrews to their bottles. A good example is Listerine (see photo). Each of the two different Listerine corkscrews are marked Listerine.

Of course I was also interested in the Carter's Writing Fluid label. It is marked "Carter's, Dinsmore & Co.," which helps date this bottle to between 1872 and 1895. The back of the bottle is marked "Stiff



& Sons Lambeth." My research revealed Stiff & Sons was located in Lambeth, England, between 1863 and 1913. The question I have is why was Carter's Ink using bottles made in England?



A Grace Before Writing

This is a sacrament, I think!
Holding the bottle toward the light,
As blue as lupin gleams the ink;
May Truth be with me as I write!

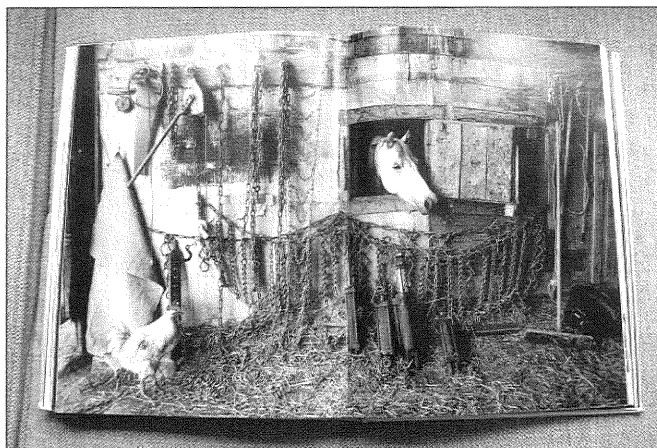
That small dark cistern may afford
Reunion with some vanished friend,--
And with this ink I have just poured
May none but honest words be penned!

Christopher Morley (1890-1957)

An Inkwell in Time and Space

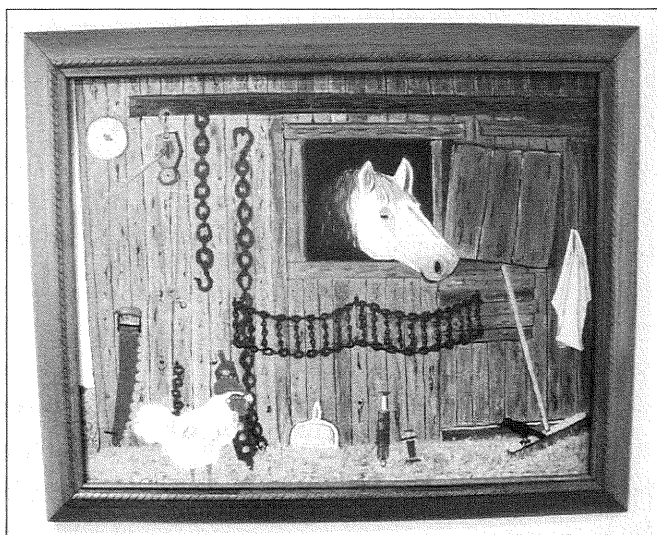
By Jeff Pisetzner, Executive Director, SOIC

I was living the life of a happy bachelor in 1981. This was the same year I purchased *Images of the World: Photography at the National Geographic*. It was a large coffee-table book that attracted my eye when its ad fell out of my monthly National Geographic issue. I wasn't quite in the habit yet of spending money on books instead of motorcycle parts, but being single then had its advantages: I could spend how much I wanted, when I wanted and on what I wanted, with impunity. Besides, it was time to start becoming a bit more civilized—a book on the coffee table was a better choice than a carburetor, if I was bringing home a date.



I still have that book, and it sure has great photographs in it, as you can imagine. One in particular captured my eye, and I would return to it year after year just to take that journey through the photographer's lens back into a world that I had briefly experienced and still longed for—an age of barns. All the smells—old hay, aged wood, animal essence; then the sights—massive beams, lofty ceilings, stalls filled with tack, old tools; and just about everything else the barn evokes in the memories of those fortunate enough to have discovered these divine structures.

Now I'll skip ahead twenty-five years. I'm living across the




country from when this all started. I'm married with a child. I already have one inkwell, an unanticipated gift from my Mom that just sat next to some photographs on an old baker's rack in the dining room. It wasn't collecting dust, mind you, but it also wasn't crying out for company. This was the year that I got a hankering to start painting. I went to an oil painting class lasting only a few weeks, but it was long enough to discover that I should start off working from images instead of making up my own subjects. That's when the first "Aha" moment occurred; I broke out my old favorite picture book. As you can see from the actual photograph and my oil-painted version, I took the liberty of eliminating some of the details, but the horse and his relationship with the chicken had to remain. I surprised myself with the result, and it hangs on the wall today, bringing me pleasure whenever I walk by.



Around the same time, that solitary inkwell on the baker's rack started calling my name. It's a beautiful, simple bronze Art Deco piece that many of you may remember from an earlier article in *The Stained Finger*. It told me it was ready to meet some new friends, and now it has seventy of them around the house. My painting days tapered off, and the age of my inkwell collecting days began.

Imagine my surprise when during our Atlanta convention in October of 2010, I came across this inkwell for sale. Not only does it have the barn and the horse, but the horse is sticking his head out in the same direction as in the photograph. It was if that photograph and my oil painting had materialized from time and space and now sat on the auction table, calling to me, and it was saying, "If you buy only one inkwell today, buy me, buy me." My heart had already begun its little thump, thump of excitement as I tried to look cool, calm and only semi-interested. Who else, I wondered, had an affinity for this particular inkwell? How much would they be willing to spend? Oh, the torment!

So now, thirty-one years from the time I first saw that photograph, I have the mementos of a journey that has spanned three decades. These artifacts are here today in my house to enjoy and treasure. As I think about that journey, I can only hope that all of your journeys will be as fruitful, and may you find that special inkwell that transcends time and space for you. 

quite a bit later, possibly the sixteenth century, that Japan began creating cloisonné items. Although both countries used similar techniques to begin with, they moved further apart as the Japanese in particular began to develop a style of their own.

In the mid and late nineteenth century, the Western desire for all things Oriental created a market for Chinese cloisonné as well as other items. Once the gates to trade were opened in Japan in 1854, Japanese cloisonné was also exported to the West. Most cloisonné inkwells were made at the end of the 1800s and possibly very early in the 1900s and were exclusively made for export, as writers in the East used brushes and hard blocks of ink, and did not use the type of inkwells used by Westerners.

The cloisonné made for export, including inkwells, were not always of the same quality as pieces made earlier for the highly critical and wealthy Japanese and Chinese. However, for those of us who love inkwells, even those of lesser quality have a sparkling, exotic beauty. And finding a high-quality inkwell of artistic merit is incredibly exciting!

So how exactly is a cloisonné inkwell made?

Both the Chinese and the Japanese followed similar steps, although there were some differences in materials and techniques. The first step was the design of the vessel and the ornamentation. This was often done first on paper or cloth. The vessel itself, in our case the inkwell, was then cut and formed by an artisan skilled in working with metal. This base was either copper, silver or gold—or in some cases bronze. Pieces created for export were for the most part made using copper.

Next, the enamels were prepared by grinding glass into fine powder. Each was kept in a separate dish. Chinese enamels were generally opaque, while the Japanese used a combination of opaque, translucent and transparent enamels to create different effects.


Thin wires, called cloisons, were carefully shaped to follow the details of the design and attached to the base using a temporary paste or glue. Once they were attached, they were soldered to be more permanent.

The powdered enamels, made into a paste with water, were then placed into the cells—the areas between the cloisons. Because the powdered enamels did not look the same as they would when fired, the artist had to be an expert in the enamels

and their properties, and also had to know exactly what the desired final colors were. Once the cells were filled, the inkwell was allowed to dry and then was fired. Because the enamel shrinks during the fusing process, the cells were filled and the inkwell fired many times until the surface of the cells were as high or higher than the cloison.

Finally, the enamel was ground carefully until the cloison design was revealed and the desired polish was reached. These various steps can be seen in the picture of the five vases, beginning with the bare metal base and ending with the ground surface of the final vase. Whether multiple pieces were made using the same designs and colors (as were most pieces meant for export), or whether a piece was made to be a unique piece of art, they all followed these same basic steps and were all hand made.

It is not always easy to know whether an inkwell was made in China or Japan, although there are a few clues that will indicate one or the other. The Chinese generally used heavier and thicker base material than the Japanese. The Chinese used opaque enamels almost exclusively. The Japanese used a variety of enamels that the Chinese did not use, including transparent and translucent. One technique the Japanese used was to place foil under translucent or transparent enamel, creating a shimmering effect. The Japanese also used “sparkle” in their enamels, which might include bits of goldstone or foil. While the Chinese covered the entire piece with cloisons, the Japanese developed ways of enameling large areas without the use of cloisons. Finally, while the Chinese and Japanese shared many design elements, there are others which are identified with one or the other. These are too many to go into detail about here, although there are a few that may be seen on inkwells. One is a pattern commonly known as the Greek key, which is Chinese. The ho-ho bird, which resembles a peacock with a long flowing tail, is Japanese. The lotus design is Chinese, and while butterflies were occasionally used by the Chinese, they were very common in Japanese designs.

Whether Chinese or Japanese, these jewels of the Orient are amazing in their detail and beauty. Every inkwell collection needs to include at least one cloisonné inkwell. Of course, once you've added one, you may not be able to stop. In fact, you may become so enamored of this beautiful art form that you find yourself with cloisonné pieces that are not inkwells, as we have! 

A few excellent cloisonné resources (starred items were used for this article):

*Chu, Arthur and Grace Chu. *Oriental Cloisonné and other Enamels: A Guide to Collecting and Repairing*. Crown Publishers, Inc. New York, 1975.

Coben, Lawrence A. and Dorothy C. Ferster. *Japanese Cloisonné: History, Technique and Appreciation*. Charles E. Tuttle Company. Tokyo, Japan, 1982.

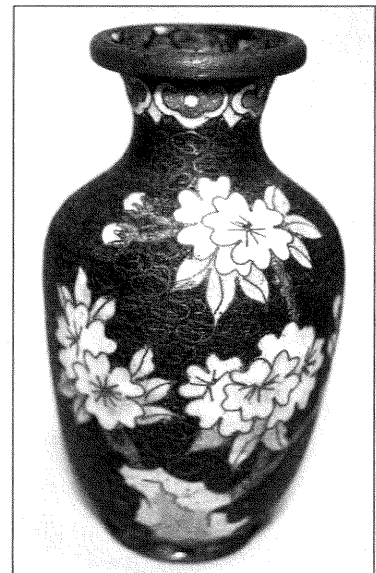
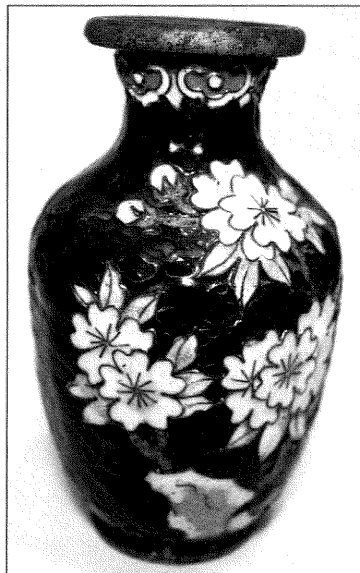
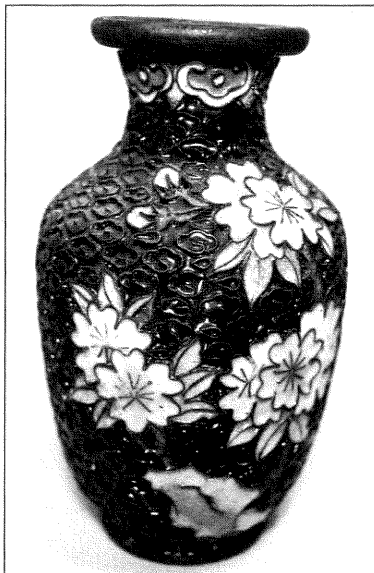
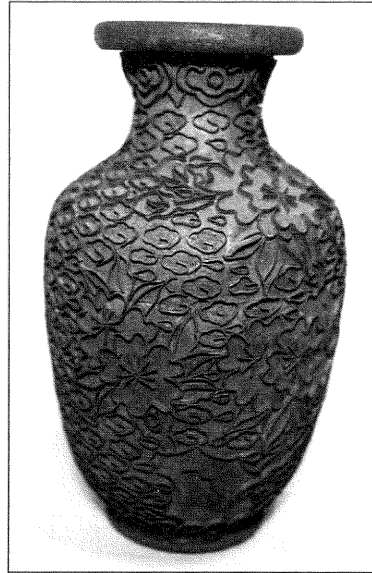
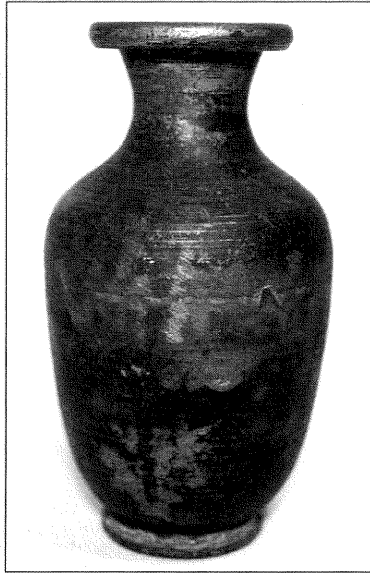
*Cosgrove, Maynard G. *The Enamels of China and Japan: Champlevé and Cloisonné*. Dodd, Mead and Company. New York, 1974.

*Garner, Sir Harry. *Chinese and Japanese Cloisonné Enamels*. Faber and Faber. London, 1970.

Irvine, Gregory. *Japanese Cloisonné. Victoria and Albert Museum-Far Eastern Series*. London, 2009.
(Mostly photographs of a very fine collection - no inkwells.)

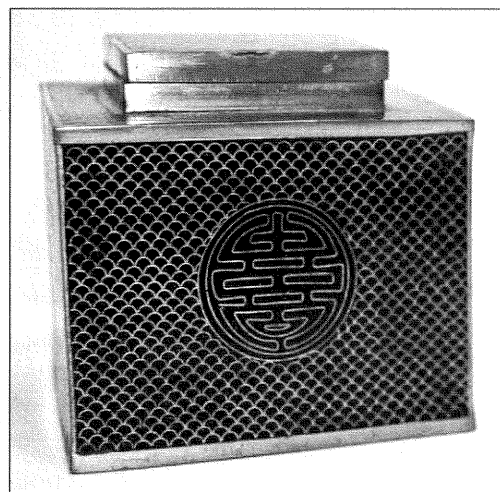
Yoshino, Gary H. *Japanese Cloisonné Enamels: A Private Collector's Notes and Reference Guide*. Gary Yoshino and Associates. Orange, CA, 2007.

Cloisonné: Enameled Jewels of the Orient

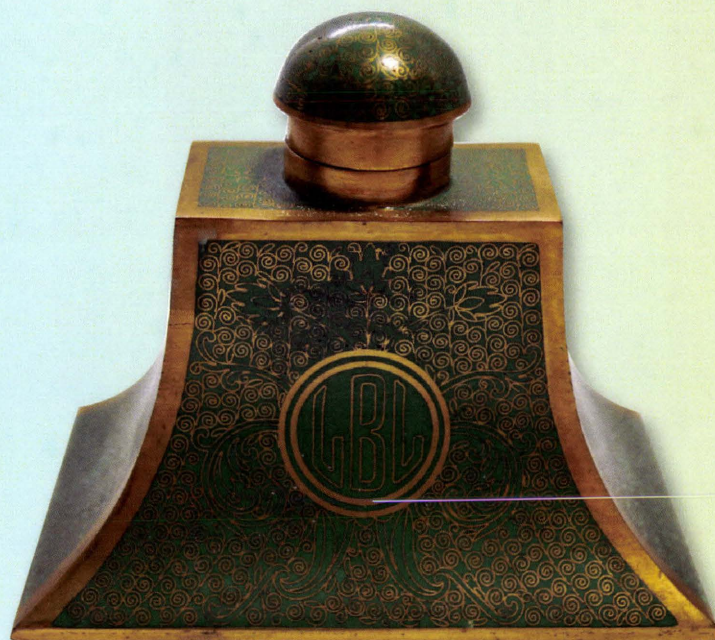


These vases show the process that all of the inkwells pictured here went through, beginning with the bare metal base, and ending with a finished cloisonné vase. This last vase is not yet completely polished; we are missing the final step.

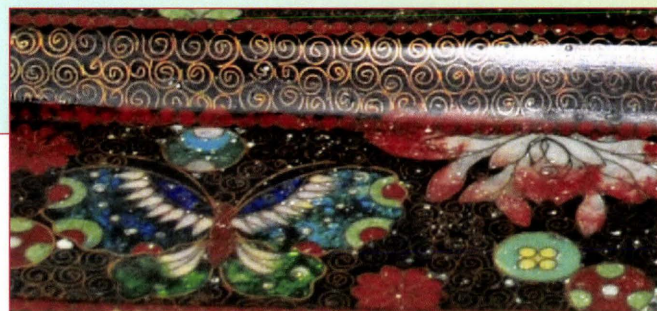
For those who like elegant and simple, this is the inkwell for you. Striking in black and brass, the background pattern (known as "diaper") looks like fish scales with a stylized medallion design in the middle. This is likely a Chinese inkwell, with a hinged lid and brass insert. I bought this inkwell along with four blotter corners; there were most likely other pieces that went with it at one point.



Cloisonné: Enameled



I think this shape is so elegant. The brass elements complement the cloisons nicely. It's fun to look for different colors of enamel; the blue one with the pink flowers makes me think of spring. These all have hinged lids and long brass inserts.



Many whole desk sets were made with cloisonné. This is a beautiful Japanese set featuring butterflies and flowers. Foil and translucent enamels make the butterflies really glow.

Jewels of the Orient



These inkwells are quite common, and are more crudely made than most of the other inkwells pictured here. Still, they are cheerful, and feature some nice Japanese elements such as foil and translucent enamels. Because this shape is a common one, it's fun to see how many you can find with different designs. The inkwell on the left has a replacement bakelite (or plastic) finial; generally the finials used on these cloisonné inkwells are bronze cast in the shape of a flower or lotus blossom. These lids lift off; the inserts are usually metal with green or turquoise enamel inside.



This is a fun floral inkwell. It is probably Chinese. The shape is unusual, and it features a hinged lid and metal insert.



This is probably a Chinese inkwell. It's different from the others in that it is basically a brass inkwell, with cloisonné panels used as decoration. It is missing the finial. It has a hinged lid and a brass insert.



Another desk set, this one features cherry blossoms, chrysanthemums and ho-ho birds. This set is also probably Japanese. The inkwell on the left is one that I purchased at an SOIC convention auction—it may have been my first cloisonné inkwell. I was fortunate to find the set on eBay, so this is now a “partner” set (with two inkwells)!

Merchandising Matters

SOIC Merchandise

Proudly wear SOIC apparel for that next antiquing trip!



Ball caps are 100% cotton twill in khaki with a navy bill.
Shirts are 100% cotton with the embroidered SOIC logo
on a blue background.



Tote bag is heavy cotton
with strong cotton handles.

Enameled pin is beautifully detailed;
1-1/4 inches high.



Great gifts for collectors and would-be collectors alike!

Visit our SOIC Store online at www.soic.com for great gift ideas. We have informative, intriguing and interesting books (many written by our own members), visually stunning DVDs, and a variety of fun and useful items for sale. Not only will your purchase help support the Society of Inkwell Collectors, but you may also inspire passion in a new inkwell collector!

All items can be ordered through the society website, or by sending an order to
9200 Stony Point Parkway, Suite 104, Richmond, VA 23235

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SOLD! For \$7,500!

On April 16, 2012, Bonhams Auction House in Los Angeles held sale number 19978, 20th Century Decorative Arts including Property from the Estate of Michael and Michelle Ertzan. Lot 2110 was an attractive Daum Nancy Applied Cameo Glass Oak Leaf and Insect Inkwell, circa 1900. It is signed Daum Nancy with the Cross of Lorraine. The inkwell measures 4-7/8 x 4 inches. The pre-auction estimated range was \$6,000 to \$9,000. The final sell price was \$7,500 including the auction premium. This was the only inkwell in the auction of 454 lots.



Daum Nancy Glass

Editors' Note: The Spring 2006 issue of The Stained Finger included the article "Dip into History: The Nancy Glass Artists." Photos of several Nancy glass inkwells accompanied the article, including one that looked as though it could be the auction inkwell above. Below is an excerpt from that article, most likely written by Barbara Bureker (no byline was included).

Question: Who was Nancy? Was she a glass maker? A maker of inkwells?

Answer: None of the above (it was a trick question). Although the signature Nancy appears on some very beautiful inkwells, she wasn't a person; she, or it, is a place. More specifically, it is a city in France, from where some of the most beautiful cameo glass came. Inkwell were among the fine art pieces created here. Two names are especially known from this area: Emile Gallé and Daum (the family).

Daum cameo glass differed from much of the cameo glass of the time [1880s-early 1900s], including that of Gallé, in that the raised decoration was typically enhanced or created with hydrofluoric-acid etching, which made a frosted background. After 1900, the Daum glassworks company "Verrerie de Nancy" led the art glass industry in its invention of new techniques which included working with color powders, acids, enamels and fluorine hydrogen. Numerous famous designers worked for Verrerie de Nancy over the years, including Salvadore Dali.

Librarian's Corner

By Sam Fiorella

SOIC members, I want to invite you to take advantage of the great resources the Society's library has to offer! This is an exclusive benefit of membership, and we invite your request for information. We have much information available for members via an inter-library loan.

For those of you who may be downsizing some of your collection, we hope you will consider donating any back issues of *The Stained Finger* or other inkwell-related documents to our library. Also, we're always accepting old catalogs, manufacturer information and published articles that would add to the body of knowledge concerning inkwells and inkstands.

I wish each of you well in your search for that elusive inkwell.

Share your research source information, donate time, money, books and other documents, or ask research questions by contacting:

Sam Fiorella
PO Box 447
Fort Madison, IA 52627
sam@pendemonium.com
319-372-0881



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DIP INTO HISTORY: The Inspiring World of Inkwell Collecting

By Tamara Marasco

Inkwells fascinated me at an early age. I acquired a roll-top desk, and my mother felt it fitting the desk come with an inkwell. I still have it, a delicate blue milk glass inkwell very dear to my heart. In this age of wireless, paperless communications, I find it amazing to think that before the advent of the fountain pen, everyone, whether rich or poor, needed an inkwell in order to write down their thoughts.

An inkwell, or inkstand as they are sometimes called, is simply the vessel used to store writing ink. Because of this, the inkwell is made from an almost unending list of materials in an equally varied number of designs, from forms functional to decorative. Whether they were made for royalty or the simplest of scribes, down through the ages inkwells have been made, modified, improved and patented. Designs can be found that simply don't work; the ink spills, dries up or overflows. But then, there are other designs or highly decorated inkwells made by some of the most famous designers in the decorating world—Tiffany, Loetz, Roycroft, Dresden, Wedgwood, etc.—with shapes and styles that are true works of art. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of collecting inkwells is the extensive variety of materials from which they were made. There are styles and types enough to please a wide variety of tastes. Just when you think you've seen it all, another inkwell will take your breath away.

The heyday of inkwell production was the middle of the nineteenth century, due to the rise of education and literacy for the common man. Because of an increase in demand for inkwells, manufacturers responded by creating inkwells out of wood, stone, pottery (examples have been dated to the first and second centuries), porcelain, crystal, china, pressed and cut glass, pewter, bronze, brass, silver and gold.

With the advent of the fountain pen, inkwell use declined. However, inkwells were still widely used up until the beginning of the twentieth century. The United States Post Offices were one of the last government facilities to provide inkwells for their patrons!



Wood

As one would expect, wood, a material widely used in everyday life, is a very common inkwell variety. Wood is a material available to most everyone across the world. And although it is a simple medium, it lends itself to be carved, decorated, painted or embellished in thousands of ways.

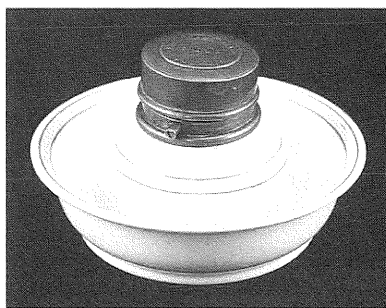
As wood is usually inexpensive, the most common of men might use a wooden inkwell. Fine-quality wooden types were

made also of maple, oak, mahogany, etc., and highly crafted with one, two or more wells set into the wood. Wood was used to make box-type traveling ink sets and writing desk sets to be taken along with the owner. If you left your ink at home, you couldn't communicate. Wooden wells are usually not marked by a maker.

Pottery

Another fairly common inkwell type is pottery. Pottery is a clay-based product. It can be glazed or unglazed. This group includes creamware, majolica, faience, redware, delft, salt-glazed and multicolored glazed pieces. The types and styles of pottery through the centuries are tied directly with the culture's craftsmanship and with the types of pottery they produced for both utilitarian and decorative uses. Pottery inkwells could be colorful and beautiful and still be considered affordable, compared to its fine china counterparts.

American pottery inkwells dating before 1700 are very rare, as pottery manufacturing was not yet common in the United States before that time. Pottery production became commonplace in the U.S. by the end of the eighteenth century. Pottery may or may not bear a maker's mark. Many good reference guides for particular



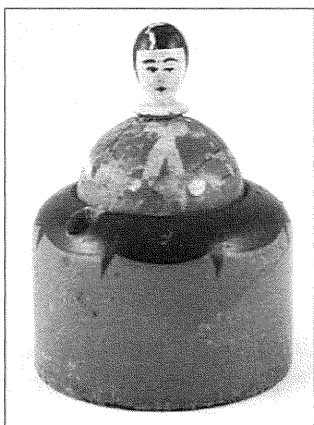
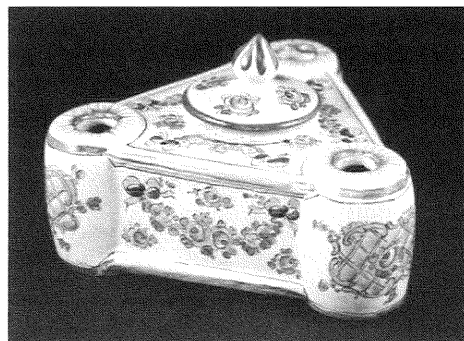
pottery makers include their inkwell products, such as the pottery houses of Bennington, Weller and Rookwood.

Porcelain

Porcelain, a fascinating subtype of inkwells, is unlike pottery or wooden inkwells in that it is

usually reserved for prestigious inkwells decorating the desks of the well-to-do consumers of the day. Many styles of porcelain inkwells are feminine. Bisque, an unglazed hard-paste porcelain, is included in this category.

In the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, porcelain inkwells were painted under the clear glaze with a

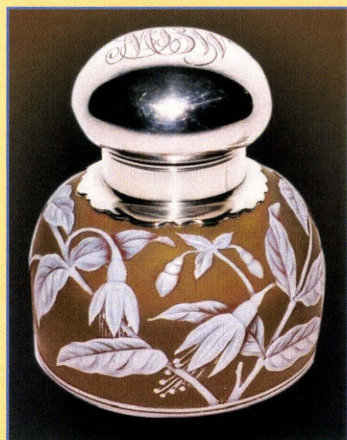


SOIC Members Share Their Inkwells



This is a pottery item, 2-1/2 by 2-1/2 by 2-1/2 inches, light blue with darker blue decorations. It is signed on its base "E. Gallé, Nancy," which means that it was made by the famous Gallé glass company in the town of Nancy, France. It was made about 1875. As you may know, there is extensive literature about the Gallé glass company and its output of art glass. What is not well-known is that Gallé made a very small number of pottery items, which is one reason why I bought this inkwell. I bought it during a visit to London, England, in 1978, when I attended an auction by Sotheby's on Bond Street. I paid 44 pounds, which was probably about \$100 at that time.

~Douglas Bates, St. Catharines, Ontario



This is one of my favorite inkwells (I have many favorites). It's a Webb Cameo Glass inkwell with hinged Gorham sterling silver top. English/American, circa 1900. Purchased in 2009 at a private sale, not on eBay. Very rare. Excellent condition. 3-3/4 inches tall x 3 inches diameter.

~Jane Betrus, Spencerport, New York



Here are my latest finds, not necessarily my favorites. The triple snail is pictured in the Covill book on page 347, figure 1461. It has a patent date Nov. 26, 1879. I paid about \$400 for it at an antique show in Cedar Falls, Iowa, in March 2012. The tri-corner hat was purchased at the same show for about \$100. It has a loose lid and a clear glass liner. The date on it is February 22, 1907. On the center medallion, there is a figure with a banner, and "1776-1883 Sons of the Revolution" is inscribed around the central figure. I would like to know more about this one; maybe a fellow collector can help.

~Joan Coonley, Hampton, Iowa



My favorite inkwells vary with my mood.



I have so many that it is difficult to choose. I recently got an inkwell on eBay, and I now think it is my favorite. It reminds me of my wonderful Grandmother in the colors in which she decorated the lake cottage. It also has a place for her antique watch to hang. I think it is French, and I am a Francophile so that is perfect. There are no markings. It is feminine and dainty, just like my Grandmother.

~Judith Walker, Huntersville, North Carolina

See Members Share, page 16

SOIC Members Share Their Inkwells



These pictures represent a collection within our collection: Dogs attired in sailor suits, smoking a pipe (or cigar). They are made of spelter metal, and then painted (presumably by hand). I don't know the origin, maybe Austrian because of their anthropomorphic whimsy. But with the bulldog and sailor theme, maybe English. I'd love it if anyone knows more about these pieces. They are unmarked. I did not keep a record of what we paid for each of them. Because I'm so fond of them, I wouldn't even think of selling them at a price below \$300 (which I realize is likely on the high side). In the group photo, there is another bulldog in a green jacket with a rifle slung around him; he is NOT an inkwell, but I added him to the group because he just seemed to fit.

~Bob McCormick, Westlake, Ohio



The tender family grouping and elaborate detail of this figural inkwell make it one of my favorites. Do you spy the cat curled up on the daughter's lap? The inkwell measures 7 inches tall. I purchased it for \$155 at an antique shop in Minneapolis in 2001.

~Anne Oslund, Minneapolis, Minnesota

blue glaze, or hand decorated after the glaze was fired onto the clay. Sometime after 1756, transfer prints were also applied to porcelain inkwell forms. Many porcelain inkwells do carry a maker's mark. Again, you can refer to a porcelain mark guide to identify some of the inkwells you run across.

Between 1750 and 1880, England was the number one porcelain-producing country, with Germany in second place. China and Japan also produced inkwells for export to the European and American markets. Usually these designs were Western versions of traditional Asian designs.

The variety of porcelain inkwells is astounding. Many porcelain inkwell body designs mocked metal forms but were highly decorated. Many are embellished with gold. Others were produced and fired with a plain white glaze so they could be hand-decorated in the home. This was an entertaining American Victorian-era hobby around 1900.

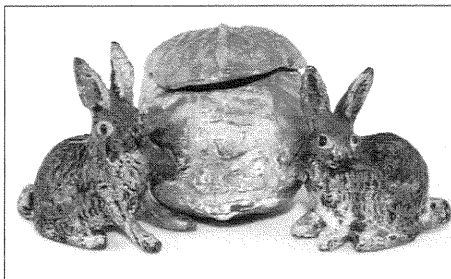
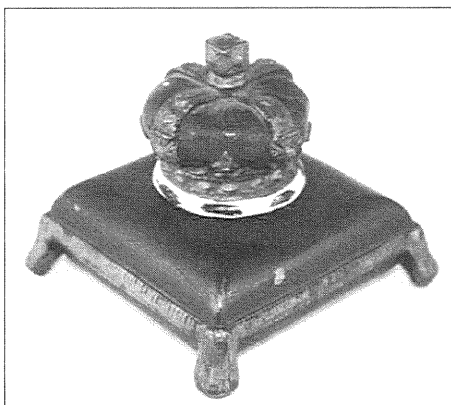
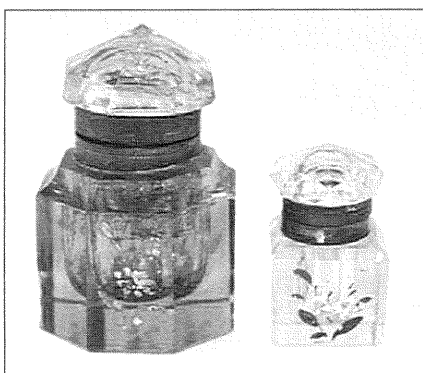
Glass

Like pottery and porcelain, glass inkwells run the gamut of inexpensive to rare and costly examples of crystal made by Lalique, Tiffany and other well-known art glass manufacturers.

Manmade glass owes its origins to the Venetians. Glassmaking diversified into various techniques as the knowledge spread around the world. Before 1825, most glass was hand blown. For inkwells in particular, many times the glass was blown into a mold. Later the glass was pressed into molds. The inkwells were decorated by etching, applying other pieces of glass, cutting, engraving and painting.

Some hard-to-find Victorian inkwell examples are of brilliantly cut glass. The glass comes in beautiful colors of amber, blue, vaseline, ruby, milk and green. These wells, many which are also made of clear glass, are sometimes capped with engraved sterling silver tops and hinges. The glass is cut into varied geometrical shapes, including spheres, squares, hexagons and other varieties.

An exquisite class of glass inkwells to search for is art glass. Tiffany made desk sets (12+ patterns) that included inkwells, along with stand-alone inkwells. The glass, his famous Favrite glass, stands out as smartly in his inkwells as in any of his lamps. The colors and hues are fascinating and absorbing. Loetz or Loetz-type inkwells are beautifully iridescent examples, which shimmer like jewels in the Art Nouveau style. Even wells of this caliber do not always carry a maker's mark. Sometimes if the well has a hinge or collar for the lid, identification can be found there.



Metal

Metal inkwells also abound in style and material makeup. These inkwells were made of everything from pot metals to precious metals; they are abundant. A metal inkwell is a practical inkwell, less likely to break or crack if dropped than the other types discussed. Plus, these metals are easy to work using techniques such as molding,

hammering, polishing, gilding and painting. These objects were produced the world over. Naturally, there is a large quantity of English and European brass and bronze inkwells, as well as American.

The subject matter for the design and form of these inkwells is nearly limitless. The subjects include nature, animals, birds, flowers, people, whimsical figures, mythological and ancient designs, presentation and trophy inkwells for sporting and governmental events, and objects from everyday life. The list goes on and on. Given the abundance of forms, there is usually a metal inkwell to be found in every price range.

Finely crafted silver and gold inkwells began to appear in the seventeenth century. Obviously found in homes of royalty and the wealthy, these were elaborate inkstands with several wells, usually a handle, quill holder, sander (to dry the ink) and a holder for paste wafers for sealing letters. It is interesting to note that a sterling silver inkwell was used for the signing of the Declaration of Independence, designed in 1752 by silversmith Philip Syng, Jr. After 1742, silver Sheffield plating became available, and inkwells of this type were produced in large quantities. Sheffield plating was replaced by silverplating around 1840. This electroplating process allowed for, yet again, a broader variety of designs captured by companies such as Oneida, Gorham and Rice, to name a few American establishments. Sterling silver works usually bear a maker's mark, while Sheffield plate may not.

As a last note to inkwell types, solid gold inkwells do exist, but they are highly unobtainable. Gold-plated brass specimens are just as beautiful, and the cost is not always prohibitive.

The Society of Inkwell Collectors

My collecting interests in all types of inkwells led me to the Society of Inkwell Collectors, or SOIC. The SOIC, founded in 1981, is a nonprofit organization of collectors of inkwells and other writing accessories with members worldwide. The SOIC invites anyone to visit our website to learn more about the organization. Please visit www.soic.com for more information.

A Delightful Discovery

By Anne Oslund

Ah, the things we do for love. I was not a natural collector, unless you consider a full shoe closet a collection. Then I met my boyfriend, a veteran collector of antique cameras, stereo viewers and any item related to photography. I enjoyed accompanying him to antique shows (gee, I thought, a guy who shops!), but eventually I decided I needed a focus when knocking around in antique stores. So to eBay we went to look for ideas. Since I love words and books, reading and writing, we eventually came upon inkwells. What a discovery! The variety was remarkable. Delicate porcelain, brilliant glass, intricately carved wood. I was captivated and excited; I'd found my antiquing purpose.

My first inkwell purchase was in Stillwater, Minnesota, a scenic small town built along the St. Croix River that's home to several antique shops. I found the inkwell tucked in among a hodgepodge of trinkets, a simple square glass inkwell set in a brown leather base that included a stamp box and revolving calendar. The lid was missing, but I was delighted anyway. And so my collection began.



I now have about 75 inkwells in a variety of materials, styles and subject matter. My collection also includes ink bottles, postcards with inkwells, two travel writing desks and a few pens. My boyfriend also caught inkwell fever and has been a generous contributor.

The inkwell I've chosen to include here was a gift. It's among my favorites because of its charm. These three little darlings wear bonnets and long dresses. The middle girl is standing on a log. They're holding a basket that contains the inkwell and a pen holder. Some of the gold paint on the dresses has worn off, but only the tip of one tiny finger is missing. The inkwell is about 3-3/4 inches tall and 5 inches wide.

Photos of other inkwells from my collection are included with Tamara Marasco's article, *The Inspiring World of Inkwell Collecting*.

And yes, my boyfriend, Jim Weber, and I are still antiquing happily together, twelve years later. He's a recognized expert on the megaethoscope, a large viewing device with pictures that can be viewed as both day and night scenes. Intrigued? Visit his website at www.c-ponti-venezia.com.

Share your collection with our readers

Everyone loves a good story. And inkwell collectors love to look at inkwells. So make people happy by sending your stories and pictures to *The Stained Finger*! Here are a few pages waiting to be filled by you:

- **The Price Sheet:** Send photos of your inkwells along with a brief description, purchase price, and when and where purchased. Photos should be digital JPEG files and should be the original photos—please do not reduce the size. Preferred resolution is 300 dpi, at a minimum dimension of 2 x 2 inches.
- **Shop Talk:** Do you have a question about one of your inkwells? Where did it come from? How old is it? What is it worth? Send in your question with a photo, if possible, and ask our readers for help. Responses will appear in the next issue.
- **My Special Inkwell:** Send a story about one (or more) of your special inkwells. Photos always add to a story!
- **My First Inkwell:** Every collector started with one item. So tell us about that first one – and send a photo!
- **Letters to the Editor**
- **Feature stories:** Share your expertise with an informative article.
- **News about Exhibits or Shows or Fairs.**
- **Articles about your collection, interesting purchases, people you have met, inkwell books you have read.** The sky is the limit!

Send stories and photos to: StainedFinger@gmail.com

The Stained Finger welcomes submissions from SOIC members and non-members. *The Stained Finger* editors reserve the right to edit submissions for grammar, clarity, and length. Please submit a list of sources used when writing an informative article.

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Message from your Executive Director, Jeff Pisetzner

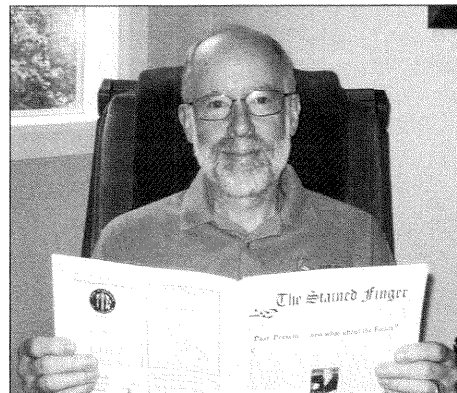
Dear SOIC Members: We are back thanks to George Grauer and Anne Oslund, who volunteered to put out this issue of *The Stained Finger*. You may have been wondering what is happening to our beloved Society. I hope I answered most of those questions in the letter you all received in February, and now the question of when the next issue of *The Stained Finger* will arrive has been answered as well—for this issue. It is time we moved to an electronic version of our publication, like so many other organizations have done. It is our plan to continue providing hard copies to members upon request for the cost of \$10.00 plus postage. As the SOIC continues to evolve under the factors of dwindling volunteerism, cost of operations, and just plain old lack of enthusiasm, decisions made today may have to be modified tomorrow, but an electronic version is an economic necessity.

Let's speak about tomorrow. What are the priorities of your Board of Trustees?

First, due to the aforementioned conditions, merging with a larger, more active organization has become a more attractive proposition. I won't mention who by name here, but we know about that organization, its publication, the consistent conventions and member benefits it provides. The feedback I have received from some of you has confirmed that we need to pursue a merger. As I mentioned in my personal letter to you, we have had conversations to that effect, and now we need to take that to the next level. Your Board feels that this is the best way to move forward while preserving what we love—collecting and learning about inkwells.

Until the future reveals itself, we are in desperate need of a new Membership Coordinator. David McCants has served us admirably and even came out of retirement to help out on a few occasions. But his replacement is another priority; without one, we have no way to collect and process your membership dues—good for you, but bad for the coffers! On this front, we will work toward collecting renewals and new memberships online. While we know some of our members are not online and their dues will have to be processed via mail, an online membership management system will save time, effort and expense. Please hold on to your membership renewals until we contact you with specific instructions.

Finally, this period of transition for the SOIC has been lasting much longer than anticipated. As I have been growing into the position of Executive Director, I've come to realize a few things. This is



a job for someone with time and commitment. It is a full-time job if we want the Society to flourish for years to come. There are many activities we all could be doing to raise awareness of the Society, which would lead to renewed interest and new members, but careers and family take precedence for many of us. I offer this as not an excuse but an explanation for why we are moving so slowly. The good news is you are reading this in *The Stained Finger*, the publication that shows we care, we share, and we will never forget our membership—you!

Thank you for your continued support...and your patience.

—Jeff Pisetzner



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An Inky Prank

This box contains the makings for a practical joke from the inkwell era. Place the ink bottle on its side with the metal "ink spill" flowing from the bottle neck. As the box directs, "Then just stand aside and watch the fun."

SOLD!

**See page 13 for details
about this inkwell ...
and the impressive
selling price.**

Photo courtesy of Bonhams.



**Exquisite Daum Nancy inkwells,
circa 1890s to 1915, sold at Christie's auctions.**



Sold for \$12,000
June 2007



Sold for \$3,120
December 2006



Sold for \$4,750
September 2007



Sold for \$4,800
June 2007