

Treasures & Heirlooms

By Rob Reid

A sunny and dry September to all!

This is a great little plate that was made in Japan and is in a style of wares often referred to as Nippon China.

In 1891 the United States passed the McKinley Tariff Act requiring that all items of foreign manufacture be identified with their country of origin. From then on, manufacturers generally adopted the practice of labelling all their wares with a country of origin regardless of the intended market. Identification of a country mark is therefore an easy first step towards determining the approximate age of many objects.

The Japanese elected to use the word Nippon, as this was their word for Japan, to mark their items for import to the USA. Japan continued to use the name until 1921 when the United States decided that "Nippon" was no longer acceptable and required all Japanese products be labelled "Japan."

There are more than 200 recorded Nippon back stamps for pottery. The most popular and therefore the most easily recognized are the wreath, maple leaf and the rising sun. Many of the marks are accompanied with the maker's name and after 1921 many makers continued to use variations on these marks.

What many people do not realize is that the majority of hand painted Nippon china falls into three basic grades or qualities. The use of colour for the back stamp indicates the quality, or fineness, of porcelain used. Green was used for first grade porcelain, blue for second grade and magenta for third.

The marks were applied in two ways. The first was a decal sticker applied under the glaze and the second was imprinted directly onto the porcelain. While this grading applied to the porcelain itself it does not necessarily apply

to the decoration. I have seen many magenta marked pieces with high quality decorations while some blue marked items are poorly executed.

This plate is approximately 7.5 inches across and has an unusual design. A cigar and matches are painted on the surface. The attention to detail makes this depiction very realistic. The match closest to the cigar is burnt and there is even a shadow from the match that rests on top of another.

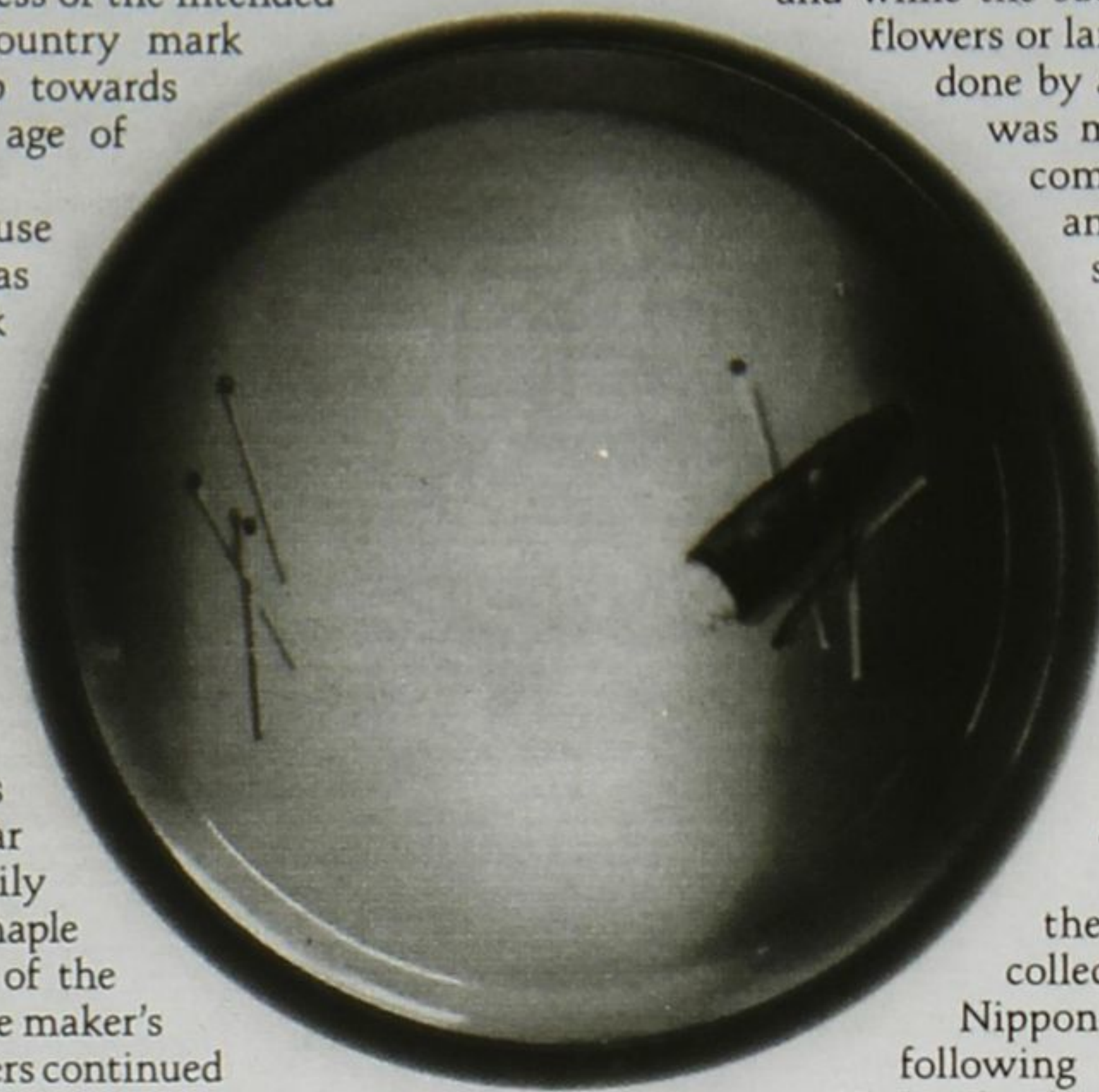
The back stamp is green denoting first grade porcelain and while the subject matter is not your typical flowers or landscape, I would say that it was done by a skilled artist. When this plate was made, circa 1900, smoking was common and socially acceptable and many items were created to support this activity.

Ashtrays and match holders were to be found in practically every home and business. Pipes, cigar and cigarette holders, advertising pieces and all sorts of other paraphernalia were produced in great quantities and today they form several different categories of collecting. Porcelain items depicting smoking, however, are somewhat unique.

This piece would fall both into the Nippon and tobacco related collector categories. Hand painted Nippon china has had a dedicated following of collectors for many years.

While the larger and better painted pieces continue to rise both in price and demand, this fun little plate is not terribly valuable. It is still possible to find items such as this one for well under \$50 if you have a sharp eye and the time to enjoy the hunt.

I welcome inquiries about any objects and look forward to seeing and perhaps writing about them. Please forward a photo and a description to me through Stouffville Free Press or drop them off at Reid's Antiques, 6397 Main St. Stouffville during regular business hours or via Robert@reidsantiques.com.



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Grenfell Mat circa 1935

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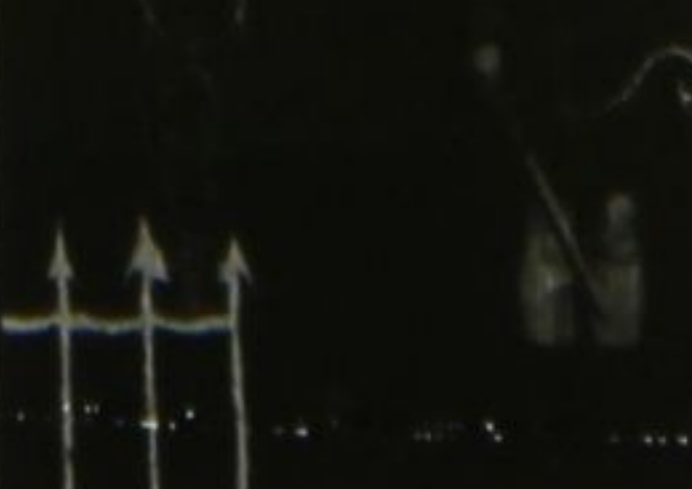
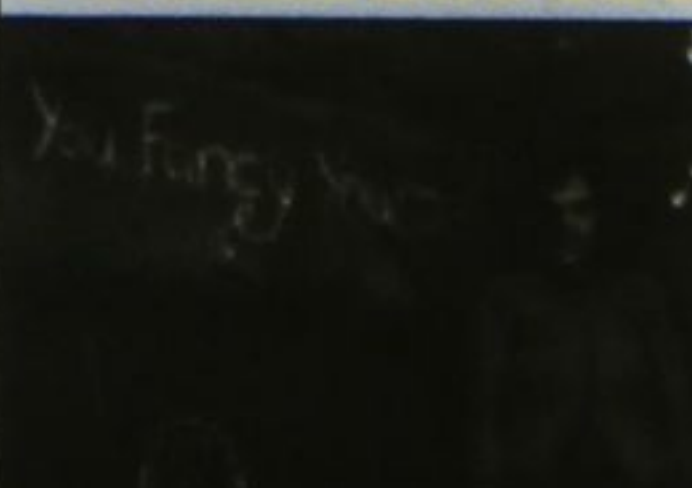


PERSPECTIVES

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PERSPECTIVES



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