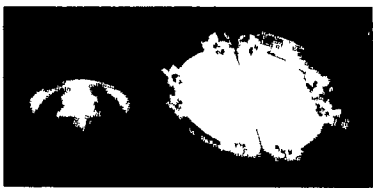


# Lancaster Farming *Antiques Center*

## *Sentimental Value Counts For Keller Family*

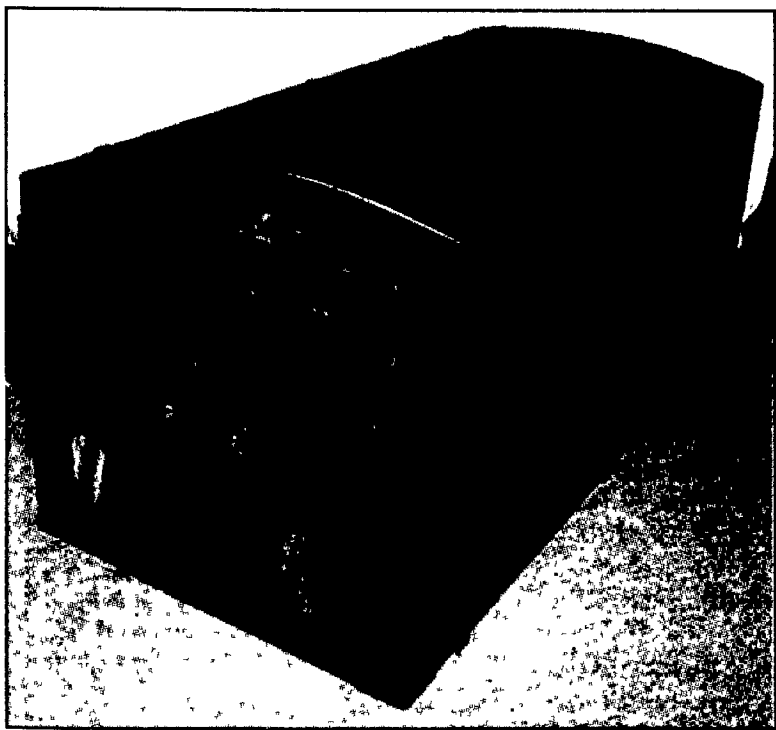
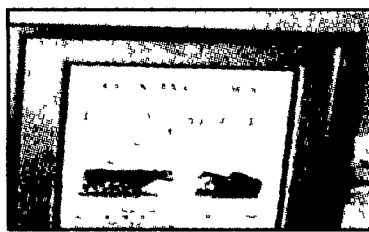


Although many people tend to collect what others want, Harold and Helen Keller, Mount Joy, said that as they grow older, pieces that attract them are those that hold nostalgia, such as Helen's great grandmother's coin purse made with a metal chain, a coal oil light from the church she attended as a child, a Little Jack Horner baby dish, and Minnie Mouse aluminum cookie cutters from her home.



Pickard china was made in Edgerton, Wis. Established in 1893, Pickard specialized in hand-painted art pieces.

Keller also collects sale bills, such as this one dated 1887 (right). When translated from Pennsylvania Dutch, it reads "Look here. If you come early enough, we can start early, then perhaps we can send the stock home the same day...."



If only this chest could tell of its travels. It crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a sailing vessel in the 1700s. In September 1865, as the Rebel Army marched north during the Civil War, the chest was filled with valuables such as cloth, coffee, money, sugar, flour, and legal documents, and buried beneath a wood shed in Center Square. The handwrought nails, bindings, and lock have never rusted — evidence of fine workmanship, according to Harold Keller.

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
*Food And Family*  
*Features Editor*

**MOUNT JOY (Lancaster Co.)** — Those who spend time with Auctioneer Harold Keller and his wife Helen are more likely to hear about the couple's eight children, spouses, and 17 grandchildren than the antiques they have collected over the years.

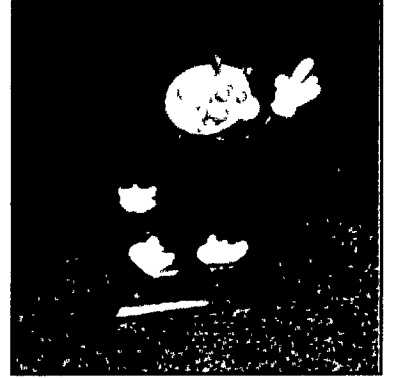
But after 42 years as an auctioneer, Keller knows quite a bit about the antiques that people collect and the importance of documentation. For this reason, the Kellers try to compile a bit of "life" history on the pieces they collect.

One of their most cherished pieces is a large chest purchased from a retired school teacher. Keller requested that the teacher write the history of the family heirloom to document the piece. The strong wooden chest with metal bindings and hand wrought lock was filled with necessities to help the owners establish life in a new land.

The chest crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a sailing vessel. In September 1865, the chest was again filled with useful and precious articles such as cloth, coffee, money, sugar, flour, legal documents, and other items.

During the Civil War, the Rebel Army marched northward, and its owners feared the Mount Joy and Marietta area would be destroyed. The chest was buried beneath a woodshed at the northeast corner of Center Square. Several cords of wood were stacked on top of the earth to conceal the stash.

Although the bridge at Columbia was burned by the Rebels, the



**Reddy Kilowatt, corporate symbol of electrical power, was a promotional giveaway in the early 1930s. Sometime during the 1950s-1960s, electrical companies stopped using him, but his collectability continues to increase.**

army advanced no farther. The chest, property of Joseph and Anna Mary Shaeffer Strauss, was given a place of honor in their home until their death.

The most satisfying experience in his 42 years as an auctioneer, Keller said, "is discovering goodies that the owners didn't know they had and getting a fair price for them."

A discerning eye is needed to differentiate between "the real thing" and the reproductions that come up for bid.

Handling the "real thing" helps Keller spot a reproduction that doesn't quite have the same feel or look. He holds up a hand-painted plate and pointed out that it is translucent, evidenced by the slight shadow when a hand held in back of the plate is discernible.

"It's a Pickard," Keller said.

Pickard China was established in Edgerton, Wis. in 1893 by Wilder Austin Pickard. The company moved to Chicago in 1897. The decorating company specialized in hand-painted pieces by renowned artists from Europe and America. Dessert, tea sets, and occasional pieces are highly collectible especially if signed by an artist.

Keller grew up in Lebanon County and lived in Lancaster County most of his life. For this reason, he has a fondness for collecting items from both counties. These included a half-pint milk bottle from Spicklers Dairy, Elizabethtown, and a spoon used for pouring off cream in a cream-top bottle.

Keller said that he was inspired to become an auctioneer when he was nine years old and attended a Lebanon County sale. The auctioneer-pilot flew into the site and purchased lunch for the young boys who hovered around his plane.

"But I was very shy and nervous. A lot of calamities happened in my family, and I was too scared to tell anyone that I wanted to become an auctioneer until after I was married and we had three children," Keller said.

His wife encouraged him to attend auctioneer school. She served as clerk and headed the food stand until recently, when her daughters took over.



These spoons were used to extract the cream from cream-top milk bottles.



Roseville china from Ohio, strawberry creamers by Royal Bayruth-Bavaria, a chintz-patterned creamer, Pickard etched china, and an Italian vase are among some of the different items the Kellers have attained.