



A George III sterling silver epergne, maker's mark of Emick Romer, London, circa 1763

Silver

is FOREVER

By Donna Brousseau

Some people say the best way to look forward is to remember the past and, along the way, you'll reconnect with the present. When you push open the door leading into the magical world of Beverly Bremer's Silver Shop, all three are waiting for you.

Within this tiny shop's shelves, the past, present and future exist harmoniously in the most spectacular way, providing a dazzling visual documentation of our country's history with one of the world's most durable and recyclable natural resources – silver.

A stunning cup, dated Dec. 18, 1903, given to principal Gilbert B. Morrison, by his teachers, is inscribed with the poignant words, "Wisdom is knowing what to do next, virtue is doing it." Nearby sits a delightful child's rattle, patiently waiting for tiny fingers to reach out, grab it, and give it a shake.

Begging to be filled with fruits or flowers, an elegant Erick Romer epergne dating back to 1763, foreshadows exquisite present-day designs by Grainger McKoy fashioned into the shape of soaring birds. Stunning English arts and crafts bowls – a particularly beautiful one studded with moonstones – share the shelves with an array of future heirlooms: delicate Mint Julep cups, elegant card cases, fancy perfume bottles, tiny baby giraffe spoons and a silver-topped Bible, just waiting for new generations to welcome them into their homes.

A keeper of memories long after its owner has passed, silver is one of the last affordable precious metals currently valued at about 1/50th the price of gold by mass. Silver also retains its intrinsic value as a precious metal no matter what shape it takes.

Silver has a lengthy, practical history. Used as currency and molded into coins, and used in photography and electronics, silver has the highest electrical conductivity of any element and the highest thermal conductivity of any metal. In dentistry, who



A sterling silver oyster platter, maker's mark of the Whiting Manufacturing Co., New York, Charles Osbourne design, in the "Fantasy" pattern, circa 1890



A sterling silver water pitcher, mark of Howard & Co., New York, circa 1905



Buccellati Italian Silversmiths porringer and baby cup (Villa Palladio design) and Salisbury baby rattle

A parcel gilt sterling silver wine cooler/presentation cup, maker's mark of George W. Shiebler, New York, circa 1903
Inscription: "Wisdom is knowing what to do next, virtue is doing it."



A sterling silver centerpiece bowl set with 27 semi-precious stones, mark of Liberty & Co., Birmingham, circa 1900

among us hasn't had silver fillings at one time or another? Silver has even been used in medicine: Silver has a toxic effect on some bacteria and viruses and was used successfully to prevent infection in World War I.

Silver also has a more fashionable side. It was this aspect that flourished during the industrial revolution of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. As industrialists accumulated riches, their demand for silver objects grew. Ornate styles flourished everywhere as everyone tried to outdo one another in the quest to display their affluence. Dinner tables became a dizzying, and sometimes confusing, showcase for this newfound wealth. Tea sets, trays, goblets, knives, spoons and forks were fashioned for every possible eating use – even an ice cream fork appeared on tables.

In stark contrast, the 20th century brought a greater emphasis on the artistic side of silver. The Arts and Crafts Movement, which started in England, spread quickly throughout the United States, putting emphasis on the craft itself. During this period, artisan silversmiths had great influence and stylistic changes abounded – Modernism, later termed the "Art Deco" style, became the rage.

It was also during this period, in 1910, that the U.S. Federal Trade Commission regulated the amount of silver in an object, 92.5% with .075 % other metals. Silver, in its pure form is quite soft – much too soft for jewelry and other items, so it's mixed with other metals called alloys, (usually copper), to make it more durable. This silver mixture is what is now known as sterling silver and is often marked 925.

Today silver has found its rightful place in museums and private collections throughout the world. Pieces that once, sadly, were melted and refashioned are now collected as an important part of our history. Exciting new pieces also are being crafted. A growing awareness by many people of the intrinsic value of silver and its everlasting properties is steering a revival of this natural resource as a gift from the earth to pass on to generations to come.

Silver also has a much more dramatic side steeped in lore: Thought to repel vampires, it was used in mirrors to block their reflections and fashioned into bullets to slay werewolves.

Beverly Bremer's Tips on How to Care for Silver

Use it!

Frequently used silver pieces require the least amount of care. Wash and dry silver pieces immediately after their use with a mild non-citrus detergent, hot water and a soft cloth. Never use abrasive pads or steel wool.

Most sterling flatware, even knives made after 1950, may be placed in the dishwasher. For best results, remove flatware before the drying cycle begins and dry with a soft, cotton cloth. Do not overcrowd the flatware baskets, and take care not to place sterling in direct contact with stainless steel as it can scratch or dent more delicate pieces.

Polishing

Always follow manufacturer's instructions. Apply a top grade silver polish in a gentle, circular motion, using a soft cloth or sponge. Avoid using "dip" polish and electrolytic cleaners, because they contain harsh chemicals. Wash and dry each piece thoroughly to remove any excess polish.

Storage

Sterling should be stored in a silver chest that has a tarnish resistant lining, or in felt bags. Do not wrap silver in plastic food wrap or use rubber bands to secure the silver since plastic wrap and rubber bands can permanently bond to and discolor sterling silver.

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