

## Spoons Of Silver Or Pewter Once Denoted Quality Folks

by Juliet Shelby  
I remember childhood fascination with the spoon tray brought to the family table for ordinary breakfasts, dinners (then the midday meals), suppers. It had compartments for

servicing spoons, soup spoons, and smaller spoons of varied use. A handle rose from brackets screwed to middle partitions. This arrangement suggested to my younger brother's imagination a ship's masts, and mother

was accustomed to finding the tray on the floor, with spoons arranged like guns on prow, port, starboard, and stern, to repel attacks by phantom pirates. She never complained about picking up the spoons

and rewashing them before father took his position as carver, server, and ex-officio dispenser of spoons as needed. Naturally, Tommy's playing with the spoon tray was not tolerated when my sister or I was a substitute for mother.

Spoons were the most used of tableware both by adults and younger folk in earlier times, when hearty meals included porridge, soup, stew, side dishes of vegetables, puddings or desserts flowing with cream. There were no forks in common use until persons abroad followed a fashion among effete descendants of the Romans in the 17th century (such people were dubbed 'macaronis').

Elsewhere, it was common for a diner to hack for himself a piece of roast and spear it to his plate, or dip fingers into a salver for food that could be managed with a spoon or without drip on clothes.

Spoons and ladles were commonly of shell, carved wood or hollowed burl. Families "better fixed" had some of horn, tin, copper, brass, pottery, pewter. There were those, of course, who had wealth in silver spoons, and royalty whose

exactions in taxes exhibited in spoons of the century, a silversmith an investment auxiliary was given an individual spoon, teapots, saltcellars, candlesticks, etc., that were both impressive and utilitarian until the needed silver for commercial transactions was low.

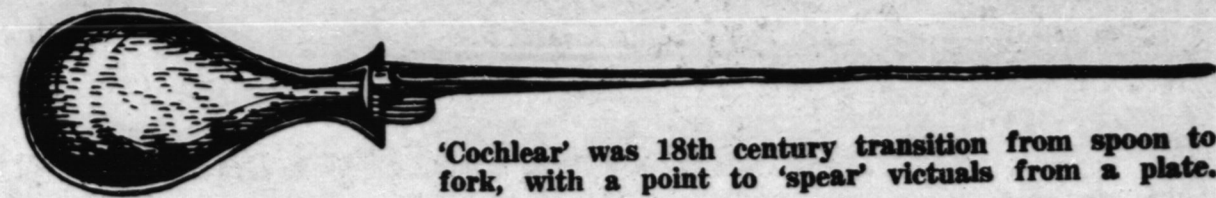
The phrase "Born with a silver spoon in his mouth" came from a proverb, "The man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, another with a wooden ladle." This became progressively less apt as wealth underwent redistribution under reform in the 19th century. Silver and silver plate was a possession of many families, and some spoons had their inception - always when there were invited guests - drawn from the "sideboard" unlocked, a velvet-lined box brought forth. We children were excited anew by mother's "Christmas spoons" and "souvenir spoons." A devoted friend of mother's adhered to not unusual custom among families of European derivation. Each Christmas and wedding anniversary she sent mother two more silver spoons of the ornate pattern she had chosen for that purpose years ago.

Mother herself started collecting "souvenir spoons" at a world's fair; she was among an original group of hobbyist collectors of these who multiplied into thousands internationally. Father and older family members brought contributions from their travels. Thus, when dinner was served we children could choose a spoon that signified some historical person, place, or tour. The handle of one was surmounted by Eiffel Tower, another by St. Peter's of Rome, several with festive motifs, such as weddings. Like the distinctive plates distributed each Yuletide in Scandinavia, there were annual editions of spoons inspired by Christmas motifs or by other serious religious occasions, such as Easter.

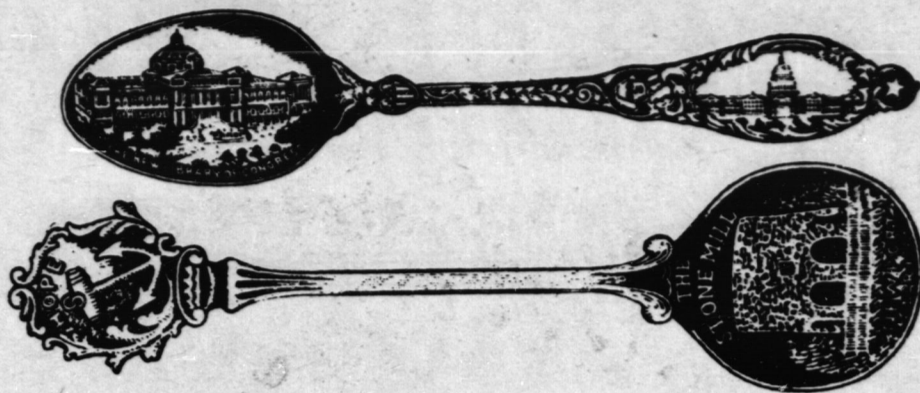
After a dinner, when the spoons were displayed discreetly. Not that she suspected the guests of appropriating any; she was apprehensive that one might have been disposed of with the table scraps of dishwashing. She may also have had subconscious memory of a confession for many Robert W. Chapman put into an essay, Silver Spoons: "When I dine out and find my soup embellished by a notable spoon, as may happen... my manners are seldom proof against temptations." T. B. Macaulay had remarked earlier of "Ye diners out from whom we guard our spoons."

In earlier times, I was to learn, travelers were accustomed to carrying spoons and knives of their own, either because of cautious city hotels, country inns, or boarding

See Page 19, Col. 1



'Cochlear' was 18th century transition from spoon to fork, with a point to 'spear' victuals from a plate.



At right: Two examples of souvenirs of national monuments sold to early tourists: Library of Congress spoon; memento of stone mill at Newport of reputed Viking age.



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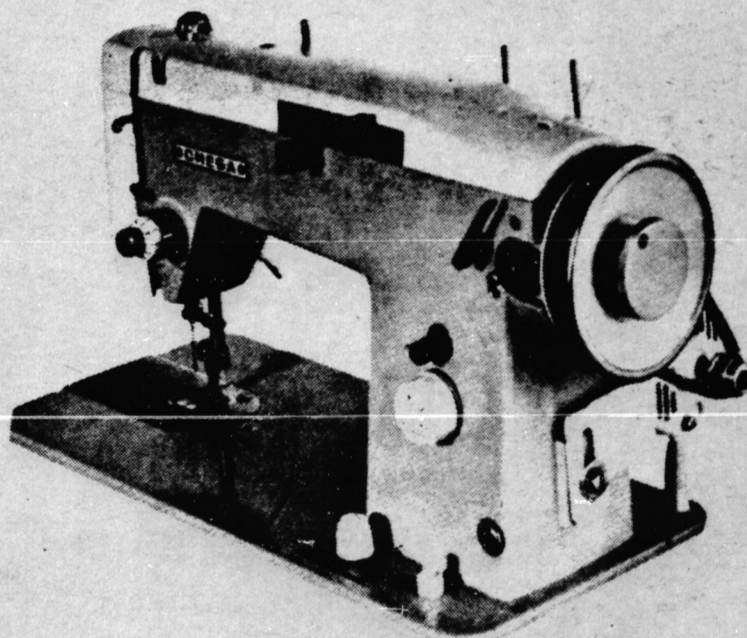
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## Spoons

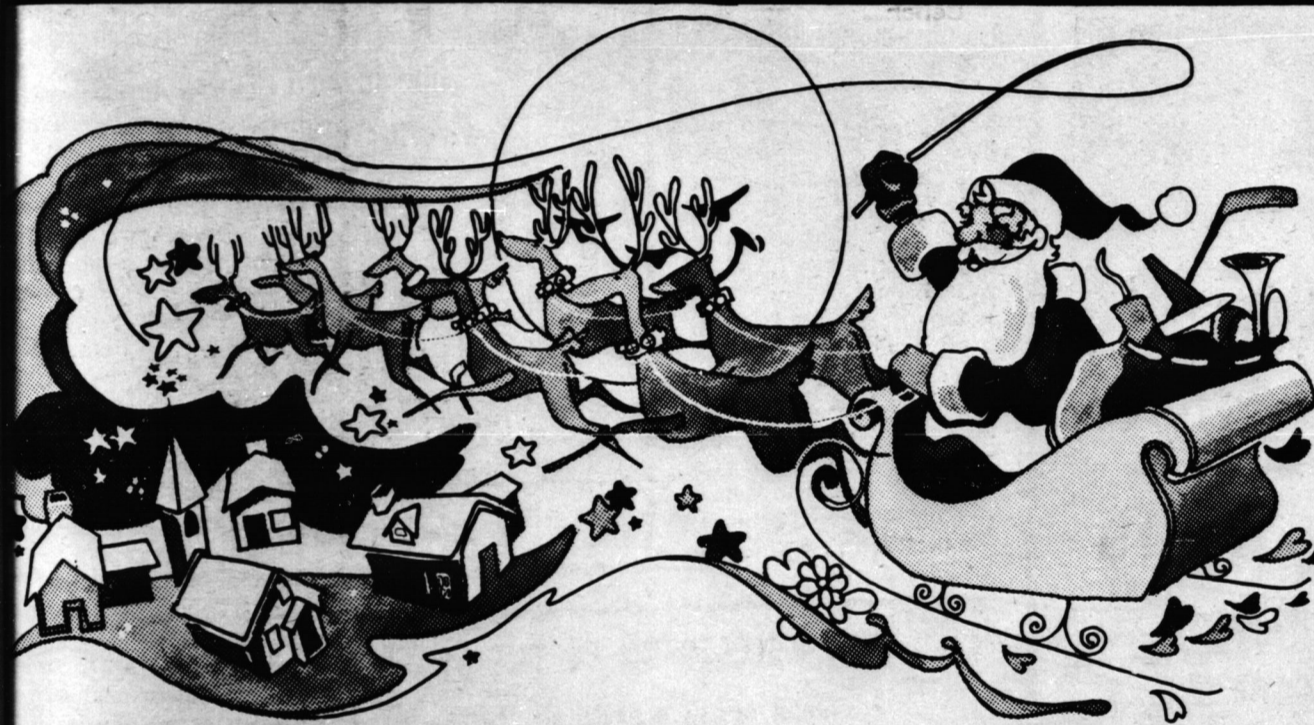
continued from Page 18  
uses did not supply them, for sanitary reasons. There was a popular assumption some of the Mayflower Pilgrims, etc., just as there are of Old World events, in an assortment of coffee, dessert, or ladle sizes.

Spoons have been among the souvenirs of many coronations. The interval between an accession to a kingship or queenship and the traditional coronation rites has favored production of such items. A rarity prized by a collector is one of spoons produced in anticipation of formal enthronement of Edward VIII at London, in 1937 - an event cancelled out by Edward's abdication in 1936.

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A caricature of big eater in days when traveler was accustomed to carrying implements with which to insure his helping himself from platters.

## Don't Mix Tires Safety Council Says

Oddly, there appear to be no corresponding number of souvenir forks.

A British historian asserted that forks were virtually unknown in England in 1611, when a venturesome Briton urged upon his countrymen adoption of the table implement referred to above. "An Italian cannot endure to have his dish touched with fingers, seeing that all men's fingers are not alike clean." He explained a gentleman provided himself with a miniature of the two-tined stable fork. The British historian referred to above remarked that his countrymen's reaction to the innovation was typically British. "Who would make hay of his food and pitch it into his mouth?" was one metaphorical question. There were contemptuous allusions to "miserable fork-bearers."

However, an English book of etiquette published in 1653 reflected a European-wide capitulation. Its author conceded it was "comely and decent to use a fork at the table." Thereafter, it was evident, penitential persons added silver forks to the encased eating implements they carried about as badges of gentility, or "status symbols," to use a modern phrase. They were recorded among possessions even of conservative Puritans in Massachusetts before 1650.

CAREFUL WITH COMMA!

That old carol really isn't "God Rest You, Merry Gentlemen," but "God Rest (Keep) You Merry, Gentlemen."

The Canada Safety Council warns motorists of the danger of mixing different types of automobile tires. This affects snow tires which many motorists are buying as the winter driving season approaches.

The danger of intermixing has increased sharply because of the large number of different new tire types and sizes.

The tires should not be mixed because they differ greatly in performance when supporting similar loads, in their side slippage and even in braking.

Because of these differences, the vehicle's handling characteristics may be seriously affected by intermixing the tires.

Tests show the most common effect of intermixing tires is a fishtailing, weaving condition.

The Canada Safety Council advises motorists to follow the recommendations in the Owner's Manual or of reputable tire dealers. New tires should be mounted on the rear for better traction and handling and should be broken in by limiting speed to 60 mph for the first 50 miles.

For the highest degree of safety, fit all four wheels with the same type of tire-bias, belted-bias or radial ply. This applies to snow tires - if your regular tires are bias, fit bias snow tires on the rear wheels.

It is exceptionally dangerous to intermix bias,

belted-bias or radial ply tires on wheels on the same axle. It is similarly most dangerous to intermix radial tires or the new "60 series" tires should not be applied to any vehicle unless they are approved by the tire or vehicle manufacturer.

IT'S LEGAL  
Alabama was the first U.S. state to make Christmas a legal holiday, in 1836.

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