

Treasure Chest Thursday: Mary Theresa Helbling's Salt & Pepper Shakers



Dutch-style salt & pepper shakers with tray, owned by Mary Helbling.

[Helbling Family](#) *(Click for Family Tree)*

Collecting salt and pepper shakers was a big thing in the 1950s and even before and after. One collector written about has over 55,000! (And those are pairs, so 110,000 individual shakers!)

The above S&P shakers belonged to Mary Theresa (Helbling) McMurray, who thankfully did not have that large of a collection. These were always favorites, though.

Mary was the daughter of William Gerard Helbling and Anna May Beerbower.

These S&P shakers are called 'lusterware,' and one antique dealer stated they were from the 1940s.

The tray is about 2-1/2" long and 1-1/2" wide; the houses are each about 1-3/4" high, 1" deep, and 3/4" wide. Each roof on this set is actually a soft gray-blue, and the tray is an iridescent white. These shakers came in other colors as well.

Their value on one website was only \$11.50, so truly, it is sentimental value that is important here. These are objects Mary loved, and part of the treasure chest of items she left to those who loved her.

Little Dutch girls and boys and windmills were popular images at various points during the 20th century. These S&P shakers suggest a stylized bit of a Dutch influence, being tall, narrow, and having a steep roof. Mary liked the cute Dutch items available, including a pitcher and mug set she had. She would be SO amazed to learn that her Springsteen family was really Dutch, and lived in New Netherlands!

New Netherlands= Dutch New York City- Manhattan and Long Island! The first-born Springsteen of her line was born in Bushwick, a neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, in 1664! (They would be amazed to know how much their land would be worth today.) We will have some of this exciting research coming up on the blog in the near future.

DNA and some wonderful sharing- including a post from this blog detailing an obituary shared by Mary's brother, Edgar Helbling- broke open the whole mystery of the Springsteen family. So please share your family heirlooms, and get your DNA tested! The results can lead to wonderful family stories, and new cousins.

And sentimental feelings about salt & pepper shakers. Especially today, on the anniversary of Mary Theresa's birth.

Notes, Sources, and References:

1. Family heirloom.
2. Mary apparently did not know that she was named for her German paternal great-grandmother, Mary Theresa (Knipshield) Helbling (1810-1891). Sure wish we had been able to learn about her heritage while she was still with us.

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We would love to read your thoughts and comments about this post (see form below), and thank you for your time! All comments are moderated, however, due to the high intelligence and persistence of spammers/hackers who really should be putting their smarts to use for the public good instead of spamming our little blog.

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