

SIPPICAN HISTORICAL & PRESERVATION SOCIETY

PROGRAM - WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2005, 7:30pm

AT THE MUSIC HALL, Front Street – Admission is FREE

ALBERT “GUPPY” FORD will give a verbal and visual presentation of the “American Victorian Dining Habits at the Properly Laid Dinner Table”.

With the abundance of sterling silver flatware used for specific purposes, along with the need to use the “proper” serving utensil for each individual item of food, the wealthy American hostess of the late 19th Century went to absurd lengths to be socially acceptable and to set an adequate table. A gentleman’s social position was reflected by his wife’s ability to “lay it on” in the dining room, and he was doomed socially if she failed. No proper hostess would think of serving a butter ball without the correct butter ball pick. On an average night, she would need at least five various forks for each of her seven courses. Specific spoons, each designed for a specific purpose, would be required for soups and desserts. Nut spoons were necessary to place shelled and salted nuts into individual nut dishes. Grape shears were used only to cut grapes from a bunch. Skate slices were used for skate only! Tomato spades served only tomatoes. A mustard spoon could only serve mustard. An “accordion” of silver was needed for each person, often amounting to fourteen pieces or more per place setting. American society would dazzle dinner guests by setting dining standards that competed with and often far surpassed all the countries of the world.

From the 1870’s through the First World War, Marion’s summer colony brought to the village of Sippican and her shores an understanding that the “Season” in Marion would be little different in dining customs than their dining traditions back in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, or Chicago. At the “Bay House” and the “Sippican Hotel”, the sideboards groaned under the weight of endless silver plated serving and dining pieces used to gratify the guests’ sense of epicurean propriety.

Mr. Ford will have a “show and tell” of sterling silver flatware from his personal extensive collection, which was used by these “upper classes”

while dining in Marion. Each person attending the lecture will have the opportunity to view and handle the sterling silver flatware, learn about the factories, get to understand the weight, design and “hand” of each piece. Then, there will be a “test” that everyone will enjoy, where all will get to guess the correct usage of every specific piece presented. The winner will receive a 19th Century sterling silver flatware serving piece to take home.

Mr. Ford, a lifelong Marion resident, has been a Marion antiques dealer for over forty years, as well as an international generalist antiques appraiser. Widely traveled, he has studied and collected silver from all over the world and has placed thousands of pieces of antique silver into hundreds of private collections as well as museums and historical societies.

So please come and join us, share your stories and remembrances of times past, and spend a pleasant evening reminiscing on an era of dining excess.

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