# Collectors Seek Antique Butter Prints

Antique butter molds are surging in popularity among collectors, and for good reason. They make beautiful, functional décor in a traditional kitchen. Used as early as the Tudor era, butter molds gradually became more prevalent during the Renaissance, but the 19th century put them on the map for use in both private kitchens and by farmers as an early form of trademark.

The tradition of homemade butter prints owes its legacy in part to long Midwest winters that forced settlers to spend weeks isolated indoors. Carving ornate butter molds helped stave off cabin fever by providing a creative outlet with practical utility.

Molds were traditionally made from close-grained hardwoods like holly, lime and sycamore. All decorations were carved in reverse so they appeared correctly oriented on butter pats. The molds vary in execution. Some are single-piece flat stamps, while others are two-piece "ejector" stamps that push together, rolling pins with carvings etched into the cylinder, and cup or brick molds that produce blocks of patterned butter.

Unique molds served as household marketing. Butter was sold in small stoneware crocks, which were stored in wooden containers with a dozen or more interior shelves. Women could distinguish their butter from a neighbor's by the impression pressed into the surface by her hand-carved mold. Because most market shoppers would have struggled to read, the impressions worked better than printed labels.

The popularity of butter prints eventually led to their mass production by woodenware factories, with the unintended consequence of eliminating the personal touches that made them special to shoppers. As a result, butter prints fell out of fashion.

Today, homemade butter prints are popular finds in antique marketplaces. The molds make great collectibles that never look out of place on a fancy table spread. Common designs include flowers, cows, lovebirds, acorns, strawberries, thistles, eagles and even geometric patterns. Many bear the farm or butter maker's initials, and quirky or unusual designs like swans or reindeer can fetch a premium at auction. Factory-made models may cost $50, while rarer, hand-carved models can fetch thousands.

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To make a molded butter pat, soak the mold in cold water for 30 min. Set the butter on the counter for an hour, or until softened. Then spoon the butter into the mold, pressing it into the crevices and smoothing the surface with a knife. Chill in the freezer for 30 min., then remove and store in the refrigerator until needed.

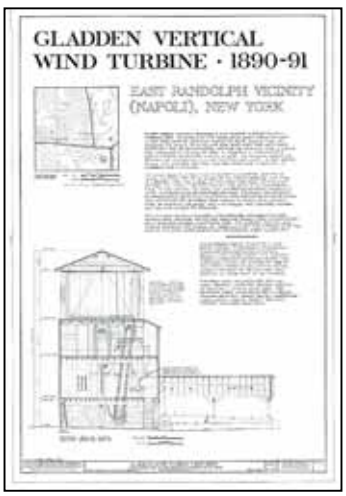
Keep any molds with cracks strictly as décor to avoid exposure to trapped bacteria. Vintage butter molds can be cleaned with mild soap and water, using a brush or sponge to loosen residue. If the mold needs revitalization, apply a thin layer of mineral oil to the surface with a paper towel and let it soak in. Avoid vegetable or olive oil because of the risk of rancidity.

# Wooden Model Replicates Vertical Windmill

Retired farmer Ray Milks says that using a large windmill to produce useful energy is nothing new. In fact, he says, it began more than 130 years ago in his area around Napoli in western New York. He can verify this because his father, John, had a large, powerful vertical windmill on the farm John bought in 1940. The wooden-framed windmill, built in 1890, was 60 ft. square and 90 ft. tall, and it was the only one of its type ever built east of the Mississippi River. Milks owns a 6-ft. tall replica of the original windmill, built in the 1970s. The only other full-size version in the U.S. was built near Lincoln, Neb.

Milks says his model accurately depicts the Gladden vertical wind turbine. Instead of vanes on a circular wheel attached to a horizontal shaft, the Gladden windmill had 16 large wooden vanes attached to a power cylinder 18 ft. in diameter and 14 ft. tall. The device was mounted in a 60-ft. tower. Adjustable shutters opened to direct wind into the 44-in. tall vanes, which drove a long vertical shaft. In a strong wind, the wheel would rotate at nearly 20 rpm, producing about 20 hp for the mill.

**Milks stands by his replica of the rare Gladden Vertical Wind Turbine. The original windmill, built in 1890, stood next to the large 14-room house in New York where he grew up.**




**Because of its unique design, plans for the Gladden Vertical Wind Turbine are on display at the National Archives.**

"The structure had a grist mill on the main level to grind grain for cattle feed and flour for baking. Those products were elevated to an upper area for storage. A grater and press on the second level could produce 150 gal. of apple cider in one batch. Apples were harvested from numerous orchards in the area. A wood lathe and a shop for repairing farm equipment were built into the lowest level of the building. The windmill was used for nearly 40 years until a large gear failed."

Because of its unusual design, Milks says the original construction drawings for the aging mill were recreated in the early 1970s. Those plans are now stored in the National Archives, along with other documents depicting historically significant engineering and industrial projects in the United States. In 1973, the mill was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Milks family sold the farm, and the new owner dismantled and stored the windmill. Milks has the original grist mill and hopes someone might be interested in rebuilding the windmill.

"It would be quite a tourist attraction if it was restored," Milks says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ray Milks, Arcade Center Farm, 7298 NY-98, Arcade, N.Y 14009.

# Unique 'Vehicles' Built From Sewing Machines

"When I retired, I started making simple objects, like exotic birds, out of PVC pipe and metal. Eventually, I started working with old sewing machines," says Barry Golley. "I've made three different 'vehicles,' all of them with my trademark sign, 'Body by Golley.'"

Golley's tiny green-and-yellow sewing machine "tractor" might at first glance appear modeled after a Deere, but the decal says otherwise.

"Mine is a John Beer," says Golley with a laugh, "because I intend to make a small cart that will carry a 6-pack."

The body itself is an old Singer sewing machine, and the grill is made from an office paper holder. The seat is a small shovel with a coil spring, which Golley says adds a touch of realism. He made the footrest from an old coffee maker, and the neat, rounded sunroof is from an old, broken air fryer. Drawing on his experience as a collision repair specialist, Golley crafted the frame and axles and styled the radius fenders.

"I just started making parts and used any unusual piece that I thought might work," Golley says. "Friends give me different things and suggest that I use them. The tractor is definitely a work of art, a one-of-a-kind never to be duplicated."

Another of his sewing machine remakes has strong family ties. An old Singer treadle machine, which his grandmother bought at 16 in 1920 and used for many years, became the foundation for what Golley calls his "highway semi-tractor."

It's built on a stretch frame to accommodate the trailer plate and includes many features of an actual semi-tractor. Under the main Singer body lies the sewing machine's actual motor. Chromed fenders, front and back, the steps, bumpers and the trailer plate are formed from old coffee maker parts. The saddle tanks are made from tea cans and are secured with stainless metal straps. Twin air horns are mounted on the front fenders. The metal cab has an authentic "tough-looking stuffed driver" seated at the wheel. Straight-stack exhaust pipes extend high above the cab roof. His grandmother's name is artfully painted on the cab doors.

Golley transformed a 3rd Singer body into a high-powered pulling tractor. He built an extended "rail" frame, installed narrow lawn-mower wheels on the front, and mounted oversized wheels from an old walk-behind snowblower on the rear. The rear wheels are covered with carefully shaped radius fenders. Chrome straight pipes extend high along the sides of the bright orange engine. The seat was previously an egg turner.

**Golley transforms old sewing machines into works of art representing trucks or tractors.**

Golley says it's fun to use his imagination to build different things from sewing machines and other parts he can turn into interesting objects. One of his sewing machines even hangs on the wall of his house as a one-of-a-kind sconce lamp.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Barry Golley, 40356 Stone School Rd., Wingham, Ontario, Canada N0G 2W0.