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Friday, 05/18/07

## Know Your Stuff: Yesterday's junk is today's shabby chic

By CONNIE SUE DAVENPORT  
For *Williamson A.M.*

Hey Connie Sue,

I have always been interested in antiques. Twenty or 30 years ago, my girlfriend and I used to go into antique stores and muse about how it was all old junk and when were folks going to realize this? But we kept collecting it anyway! I am sending you photos of my McCoy pieces; can you give me some information about them?



enlarge

These pottery pieces were proba 1960 by the Nelson McCoy Co. in PHOTOS)

**Marsha Rusk**

Hendersonville

Dear Marsha,

Yes, 30 years ago these vases weren't worth the space they occupied in a shop. But, today, I often take a flashlight to the basement corners of estates to locate the neglected pottery worth far more than the silver plate pieces carefully stored upstairs. Although pottery pieces like these have increased in value, they are



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"Shakespeare" Ansonia clocks w 1929 and are worth about \$1,00

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still plentiful enough to allow the new wave of shabby-chic buyers to build an affordable collection. These three pieces might sell for more than \$20 each in a nice shop. I'm sure you paid closer to the \$5 range.

The marks on your pieces were used by the Nelson McCoy Co. from 1940 to 1960. Various companies used a McCoy mark beginning in 1899, but pieces as modern as the "smiley face" were a McCoy product as well. The highest values for McCoy are for the

Contact Connie Sue Davenport your antiques and collectibles, & Send to [conniesue@conniesueir.com](mailto:conniesue@conniesueir.com) Williamson A.M.

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larger porch planters on pedestals, and their pottery wall pockets. I have lately seen large collections of 1970s and '80s cookie jars sell for far less than the owners hoped. Cookie jars are cumbersome to store and fattening to fill. Violet planters, though, can bring more than \$30 each!

McCoy made mostly utilitarian pieces such as food storage jars and some commercial wares until 1930, when they began producing art wares and figural pieces. They were in Roseville, Ohio, where there was plenty of clay and experienced potters. In fact, McCoy Pottery also brokered clay to other factories in the area while producing wares.

**Mrs. Davenport,**

We have an Ansonia clock found in our uncle's house after he passed away. On the back it reads: "Ansonia Clock Co June 14, 81 N.Y. U.S.A. Patented June 13, 1881." The clock works and is in very good condition. It is very heavy and made of some type of metal. From research I have tried to do online, the statue could possibly be of William Shakespeare. Can you help me find any information on our clock and/or the value of it? Thank you for any information you are able to provide.

**Karen**

Brentwood

**Dear Karen,**

The Ansonia Clock Co. was started by Anson C. Phelps in 1851. Phelps already owned a brass company that supplied the many clock companies in the Naugatuck River Valley. Cast brass had long been used for clock parts. But when rolled brass was introduced, the clock pieces could be quickly die-cut to increase production. The clock company flourished, burned, rebuilt, flourished again and finally floundered fatally before World War II. The machinery from the plant was sold to assorted companies in Russia. The name "Ansonia" was purchased by a group in Lynnwood, Wash., and may appear on products today. Through the years, Ansonia Clock Co. tried to roll with the tide, so to speak, by offering high-end clocks and more affordable models. Your clock was pricey for its time. Your "Shakespeare" clock was made between 1878 and 1929. The same cast brass figure, complete with quill pen, is used on various bases. It is a figural shelf clock and might sell from \$950 to \$1,300. Figures representing classical styling were produced for the middle class and expressed or implied that the owners were educated.

Surprisingly, I have never met a woman who has a clock collection (more than 10) or repairs clocks. Men usually collect one style of clocks, such as mantel, walnut, Ansonia, German, weighted, tall-case, etc. You are fortunate to have a family clock in good working condition. It is both functional and sturdy and makes a great focal point for a home.

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