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Know Your Stuff: Great aunt's gifts are early examples of multitasking furniture

BY CONNIE SUE DAVENPORT • FOR WILLIAMSON A.M. • MARCH 28, 2008

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Dear Connie Sue:

I am attaching a picture of two pieces of furniture I have inherited and am curious if you have any idea as to their age and origins. I have not seen any markings on either piece, though they may be underneath and not easily visible.

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The smaller piece I inherited from my great aunt. She called it her "kitchen cabinet."

The larger piece is a cabinet my mother has had for several years. I understand this had a "Murphy bed" on the back of it which was removed when mother bought it.

Thank you for any information you may have regarding these two cabinets.

— Andrea, Brentwood

Dear Andrea,

Both pieces are predominately oak and were made around 1890. The smaller piece is a mixture of light woods, and the larger, Murphy bed piece is predominately oak. Built-in cabinets were more prevalent after World War II when the suburbs blossomed all over the U.S. Before this time, ladies needed a



This larger piece of furniture that a reader inherited is worth around \$1,100. It has added drawers to hold linens and flatware.

(SUBMITTED)

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place to keep food staples and dishes. This is why there are glass doors (to display our pretty things) and blind doors (can't see through them) to hide the foods and less attractive pans and implements. Your great aunt was correct to call the smaller piece her kitchen cabinet. It's now worth \$850.

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The larger piece has added drawers to hold linens and flatware. If this piece had a Murphy bed on the back, there should be evidence of such. Look for holes in the wood from previous hardware. Although I've never known a Murphy bed to have a dual-purpose cupboard on the back, it's quite possible. There were great ideas aplenty in the late 1800s. Sleeping on a bed attached to the china cabinet does seem a bit troublesome, though. Murphy or not, this big cupboard is worth \$1,100.

Both pieces have incised florets for decoration and machine stamped pulls and escutcheons (the piece behind the pull). My clients are moving these large pieces from the kitchen and dining room to their dens and bedrooms so they can be used to store collections, toys, clothes and more.

Both pieces were made in America.

Contact **Connie Sue Davenport** with questions about your antiques and collectibles, as well as photos, and we'll discuss them here. Send to curios@connie.sueinc.com or by mail in care of **Williamson A.M.**

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