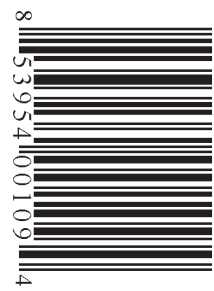


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Sugar bowl was sweet at Garth's event

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A tip of the hat to Toby jugs

BY MELODY AMSEL-ARIELI

Toby jugs are pitchers shaped like historical, fictional, or popular characters — often satirical or caricatured.

The first Toby, which resembled a merry old soul holding a foaming jug of ale, evidently originated sometime between 1760 and 1770 in Staffordshire, England. Some say it was inspired by Sir Toby Belch, a cheerful, carousing character in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Some trace it to a local boozier dubbed Toby Philpot, famed for his enormous consumption of home-brewed Yorkshire stingo — strong, bitter beer. Others cite *The Brown Jug*, a 1761 song celebrating a heavy tippler whose ashes were turned into a Toby:

*Dear Sir this brown jug, which now foams with mild ale,
Out of which I now drink to sweet Kate of the vale,
Was once Toby Philpot, a thirsty old soul,
As e'er crack'd a bottle or fathom'd a bowl.*

Yet vessels like these, featuring stylized, human-like characteristics, were known since ancient times. Scores, used for ritual, cooking, or storage, have been found around the Mediterranean Basin, in Africa, and South America. Like Tobies, their materials, shapes, styles, and subjects reflect their lives and times.

The earliest Toby jugs, known as "Ordinary Tobies," sport colorful 18th century frock coats, knee-length breeches, and broad-rimmed tricorne hats, perfect for pouring. Those featuring original stopper lids, or hollow, removable crowns, intact are especially collectible. These were generally molded in earthenware.

Since Tobies symbolized good times and high spirits, British inns and taverns often bore come-hither signs depicting plump, jolly Toby Philpots holding mugs of frothing ale. In their dark, smoky interiors, brew flowed not only from Toby jugs, but also from a family of related, vibrant pottery characters, including Hearty Good Fellow, Snuff Taker, Sailor, Sinner, Thin Man, Man on a Barrel, Collier, Drunken Parson, and Gin Woman.

Toby pottery styles also followed fashion. By the early 19th century, some of the finest Tobies known as "Yorkshires," featuring scalloped hats, an empty jug of ale, a hexagonal goblet, and sponge-decorated bases and crowns, became popular. Creamware ones, featuring light-colored, lead-glazed earthenware, thin bodies, and pearlware ones, creamware, featuring blue-tint glaze and whitening china clay inclusion, were often modeled with warty nose and missing teeth.

In time, Staffordshire potteries also produced rich, deep-brown earthenware Treacle Tobies featuring glazes resembling treacle, a syrupy byproduct of sugar refining. Surviving examples include Snuff Taker, Gin Woman, Lady's Head, Mustachioed Man with Beer Jug, and Martha Gunn, which memorializes a burly "dipper" who not only operated a seaside "bathing machine" for wealthy women, but reputedly staved off invading French soldiers with a mop.

Jugs produced in the mid-19th century, like Squat Toby Philpot, Hands-in-Pocket Toby, and Monkey Musician, are generally less well modeled and colored. (Unlike older ones, which typically took twelve to sixteen molds to produce, these might have taken four.) Later ones were often cruder still. Yet models of Punch, dating from 1860, and Ordinary Tobies by Davenport and Copeland Spode, created through the 1890s, are exceptions.

As Toby popularity spread, French potters created high quality, delicately detailed Faience Tobies from fine clay enhanced with glistening, tin-oxide glaze. When these fell from fashion, potters in Portugal, England, Germany, America, and Australia created majolica examples, by firing soft, porous clay to a biscuit stage, then lead-glazing and re-firing them. Majolica potters in Onnaing, Orchies, Fives-Lille, and Sarreguemines, in northern France, in addition to popular and political personages, designed droll, whimsical characters based on beloved stories or songs. In addition, they modeled realistic, Toby-like figural jugs, featuring just a person's head.

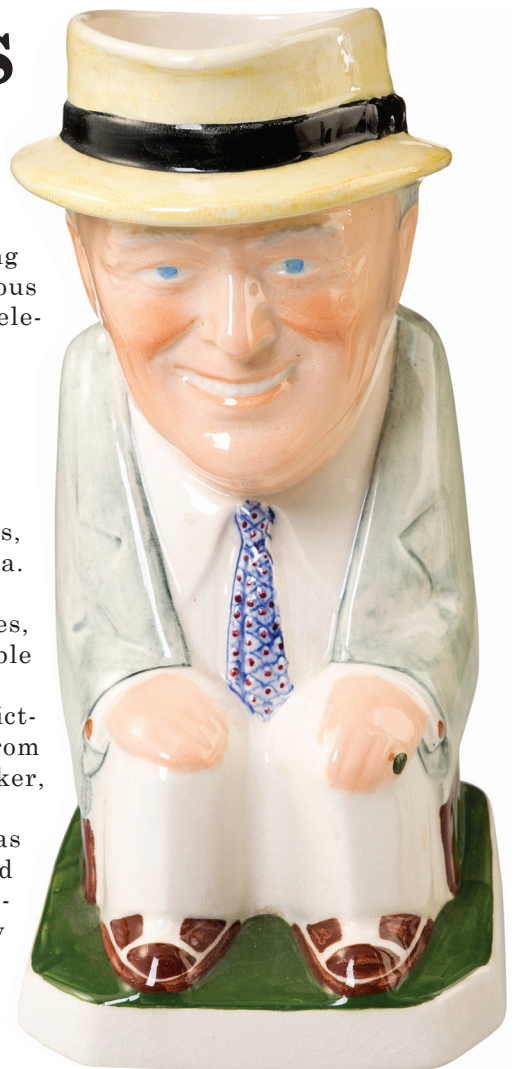
Although Toby quality lessened briefly, by the turn of the century, Staffordshire potteries began producing high quality pieces. Wilkinson Company, for example, created a memorable World War One Allied Leaders Series. Through the 1930s, Burgess & Leigh, Beswick, Wedgwood & Company, and others, in addition to political and historical Tobies produced popular characters from literary works. Around the same time, a number of Toby jug cottage industries, including Devonmoor, Dartmouth, and Devontors, arose in the Devon-Cornwall region of England.

After a pause during World War II, British potteries resumed production. Through the 1960s, Shorter & Son Ltd, for example, introduced over 100 novelty Toby jugs, including charmers like Old King Cole, Beefeater, Long John Silver, Old Father Neptune, and 14 costumed actors from Gilbert & Sullivan Operettas. After merging with Fieldings & Company in 1964, then closing in 1982, various potteries acquired Shorter molds. So these bear a selection of identifying back stamps.

Toby production flourished through the 1980s, with new potteries and independent artists in Britain and abroad introducing innovative lines of jugs. Models celebrating characters from Marilyn Monroe Winston Churchill, Paul McCartney, to Tweety Bird, Bugs Bunny, and Star Trek stars ushered in the next decade.

In the early 21st century, Bairstow Manor, Kevin Francis Ceramics, Fitz & Floyd, and others, in true Toby tradition, also produced images of historic figures and popular politicians. Royal Doulton, established in 1815, however, had proved the most venerable Toby pottery of all.

Royal Doulton's first character jug, portraying the naval hero, Lord Nelson, appeared in the 1840s. Within 20 years, the company was also producing not only brown-glaze traditional Tobies, but also amiable boozers sitting atop barrels marked XX.



Above: Franklin D. Roosevelt: Copeland Spode Toby Mug. H. 8.5 inches, perhaps commemorating one of the: Big Three war-time conferences at Casablanca or Yalta. Realized \$4,000 in 2018 Image courtesy Heritage Auctions, HA.com



Left: George V, King of England character jug, signed FCG, by Sir Francis Carruthers Gould, Wilkinson, circa 1915: Staffordshire. H. 12 inches, realized \$507 in 2008. Image courtesy Heritage Auctions, HA.com

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Toby jugs

FROM FRONT PAGE

In the early 20th century, Leslie Harradine, Doulton's most famous modeler, created character jugs depicting Theodore Roosevelt, Mr. Pecksmith, a character synonymous with hypocrisy, and the notorious Highwayman of Beggar's Opera fame. Soon after, Harry Simeon fashioned not only a range of imaginative Tobies, but also a selection of related spinoffs like spirit decanters, tobacco jars, ashtrays, and candlesticks.

A decade later, Charles Noke, another Royal Doulton designer, created character jugs, Toby jug derivatives displaying only heads and shoulders. His John Barleycorn, the British personification of malt whiskey, and gnarly Old Charley, symbolizing watchmen who once maintained law and order, are classics. Henry Fenton followed with charming, full-bodies like Old King Cole, and Clown, as well as traditional favorites like Falstaff, Mr. Pickwick, and John Peel. Moreover, combining art with function, he created character jug derivatives like tobacco jars, match-stands, ash-bowls, tea pots, sugar bowls, and music boxes.

Subsequently, Royal Doulton introduced over 600 historical, legendary, and fictional character Toby jugs. The company also created a small number of very desirable, very collectible prototypes, samples never put into production.



Above: Pink Luster Toby Jug, England, 19th century, with splashed pink body, H. 5 1/2, W. 6, depth 4 3/4 inches. Realized \$98 in 2013. Image courtesy Skinner, Inc., www.skinnerinc.com

Since Toby and character jug production has now largely ceased, surviving pieces are becoming increasingly rare. Prices begin under \$100. Yet prototypes, limited editions, or rarities like an 18th century Ralph Wood pearlware or a Fiddler Toby from the 'Midshipman Family', typically command many times more. Most jugs are backstamped by the companies that made them, often indicating model and size number.

The American Toby Museum, located in Evanston, Ill., the largest in the world, boasts over 8,000 Toby Jugs and derivatives. Arranged chronologically, this amazing collection (assembled over a lifetime by enthusiast Stephen Mullins) traces the development of Toby and character jugs from their origins through the 21st century. Details may be found at www.tobyjugmuseum.com

The American Toby Museum Shop offers colorful ceramic replicas, mainly by Royal Doulton. It also offers related publications including *A Century of Royal Doulton Character & Toby Jugs* by Stephen M. Mullins, David C. Fastenau with Louise Irvine; *Toby & Character Jugs of the 20th Century and Their Makers*, by Stephen M. Mullins and David C. Fastenau; and *A World of Majolica Character Pitchers*, by David C. Fastenau and Stephen M. Mullins.



Left: French Ceramic Toby Jug. Realized \$47 in 2007. Image courtesy of Skinner, Inc., www.skinnerinc.com

Below: "Devonmoor Ordinary Tobies Collection, 1920s, courtesy American Toby Jug Museum



Above Left: Staffordshire Sailor Toby Jug, England, early 19th century, polychrome enamel decorated, the figure modeled seated on a sea chest inscribed "Dollars", holding a frothing ale jug inscribed "Success to our Wooden Walls", the remnants of a pipe in the other hand, ht. 10 1/4 in. Realized \$646 in 2006. Image courtesy of Skinner, Inc., www.skinnerinc.com



Above Right: Wedgwood & Co. Ltd. Ceramic Lord Mayor Toby Jug, brown stamped mark and raised 753/3, ht. 5 in. Realized \$37 in 2012. Image courtesy of Skinner, Inc., www.skinnerinc.com



Above: Pair of Minton Majolica Toby Jugs, England, late 19th century, peasant woman and gentleman, each with hair forming the handle to the back and a hat forming the spout, impressed marks to both, H. to 11 1/4 in. Realized \$660 in 2013. Image courtesy Skinner, Inc., www.skinnerinc.com

Below: "Toby Philpot." original Messotint by Bowles & Carver, illustrating the song "The Brown Jug" by Robert Fawkes, circa 1761, courtesy American Toby Jug Museum

