

Sugar Bowl (I)

Role of Buyer

By Gaylen D. Paulson

While browsing at a local artisan and antique fair, you spotted *the item* for which you have spent years searching! As a child, a distant relative bequeathed to you a silver tea service that, in its complete 4-piece setting, today may be valued as high as \$10,000-\$12,000. Unfortunately, your set is not complete. You have the tea pot, the coffee pot, the “creamer”, and some spoons, but NO SUGAR BOWL. You have had this (incomplete) setting appraised, and though the appraiser was excited and rated your tea service as “superior”, he suggested that the best value was in the full set, and that individual items and incomplete sets were perhaps 20-25% less valuable. He indicated that you might be able to sell your items through an antique consignment shop for \$4000-5000, and through an auction house for perhaps \$6000 (though they tend to be less interested in showcasing incomplete sets). With the sugar bowl, you might be looking at netting \$8000 to \$8500 at auction.

You examined the sugar bowl very carefully, and are absolutely certain that this is YOUR piece! It clearly states, “Langlands – Newcastle -- Reginald” on the bottom, which matches the artist, the location, and the setting style of the piece (circa the late 1750’s). Paul Langlands was reputed to be a highly skilled English craftsman, and this was a part of his Reginald collection. You are absolutely certain that this is the piece you need.

You’ve searched for this bowl on the internet, and in specialty magazines. As luck would have it, the sugar bowl seems to be the hardest piece to find. You’ve seen wide-ranging appraisals listing the sugar bowl individually at \$300 to \$1000. But until now it has been impossible to find the item for sale on its own. Buying the item as part of a larger set makes no sense to you since you already have the other three pieces.

As you scan this vendor’s tables, it appears that this is not part of a set, and is indeed on its own! You realize that you must seize this opportunity. Based upon the appraisal, you could pay up to \$2500 for the piece and still show a net gain, and your completed set would be much easier to sell. You realize that it may be many years (if ever) before you might happen upon this individual piece again, and you’d ideally like to complete your four-piece set so you can put it up for sale as soon as possible. You have \$3000 in your checking account, and if necessary you could get a certified check drawn up this afternoon.

This vendor has seen your interest in the piece, and will likely be coming to speak with you about it. It’s undoubtedly for sale, but on its own, or only as a part of a set? And at what price? You know that prices at antique shows are generally negotiable. So how much difference will there be between the seller’s initial price and the “true” price!?