

Sugar Bowl

Role of Buyer

By Gaylen D. Paulson, with modifications by Jon Atwell

While browsing online antique silver dealers, you find 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 images of the sugar bowl very carefully and are absolutely certain that this is YOUR piece! The stamp on the bottom clearly matches the other pieces in your set. You are absolutely certain that this is the piece you need to complete the set. While this seller has prices for many items on her site, she has not listed a price for this piece. In place of the price is a request to email for further information.

You've searched for this bowl for a long time and 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 actual 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 look through this seller's other items on the site, it appears that the bowl is not part of a set and is indeed on its own! You realize that you must seize this opportunity. Based upon the appraisal of the rest of the set, 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 could pay immediately.

You are thinking about how to approach your email to the seller. Rather than starting to compose an email right away, you decide to take some time to think through your approach to this negotiation. You'll come back and get the email address later.