

SPITTOONS

IRONSTONE SPITTOONS & CUSPIDORS

Tobacco was commonly chewed in the mid 18th century and spittoons or cuspidors were provided. Before 1840 spitting was done on the floor, streets and sidewalks. The spittoon was created to stop that unsanitary habit. Between 1800 and the 1920's spittoons or cuspidors were a common feature in all saloons, hotels, stores, banks and every public place where people, especially men, gathered.

A spittoon or cuspidor is a receptacle made for spitting into. Today the terms are interchangeable. Spittoon is the more usual term and has been said the name was in part onomatopoeia. A page from an 1890's catalog shows their difference in form. The two at the top are spittoons and the one below with a pinched neck and a wide funnel-shaped opening - is a cuspidor. Cuspidors were more often made in brass or even iron. Spittoons were designed with flat-bottoms to minimize tipping over. They sometimes had an interior lip to prevent spilling. Some have holes with a plug to aid in draining and cleaning. They could be found made in fine cut glass or even porcelain for fancy hotels.

Advocates of hygiene and etiquette organized to ban public use of spittoons. Chewing tobacco went out of fashion when cigarettes and chewing gum were introduced in the 1920's. They were considered more hygienic than spit-inducing chewing tobacco. Also, the public disdain for spitting (even in spittoons) during the great flu and TB epidemics that were a serious health problem in the early 1900s brought an end to the use of spittoons.

The Justices of the Supreme Court each has one next to his or her seat in the present-day courtroom. (How's that for tradition?) The only remaining modern use of spittoons is by wine tasters who must use them between tastings to avoid getting drunk.



A cuspidor registered February 9, 1873 by Bodley & Co.



A cuspidor was registered July 9, 1881 by Wardle & Co. potters. A fancier pot than most of our American versions.



Spittoon with a fancy leaf spout, unmarked.



Leaf spout spittoon marked J. H. M.



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Two versions of Gothic Octagon design of a spittoon. Neither of them was marked.



Anchor and Chain
by E. B.



Unmarked 7" diameter spittoon in the
manner of Wrapped Sydenham.

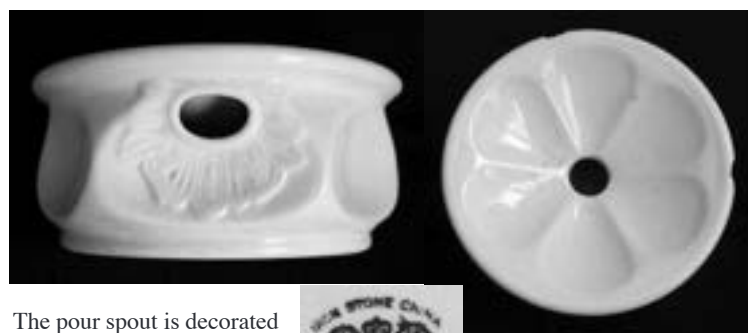


This pour hole seems to be a long-haired
dog face.

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The pour holes of many spittoons are creatively decorated, possibly to make the chore of emptying them less onerous.



The pour spout is decorated the same as the spittoon at left, but the body is very different.



Above: A choice collection of four spittoons reside in a hallway in upstate New York. None of them are marked.



This shape was made by John Moses, Trenton, N.J., 7 1/4" diameter. Also by Dale & Davis.



Lady's spittoon by John Moses, Trenton, N.J.



Cameo Lady's spittoon with a rope frame.

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A personal-sized spittoon to be carried to such places as church.



This pour spout is a fish head. Very whimsical.



Another personal-sized spittoon. The face pour spout is very unusual.



Steubenville, OH, cuspidor.



Knowles, Taylor & Knowles cuspidor.



This cuspidor is decorated on two sides with a devil's head and horns.

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American mark with two deer instead of lion & unicorn.



Three small lady's spittoons.



This one is just plain strange.



Lion's head spittoon, 8 1/2" diameter. Detail below.



J. & G. Meakin 2-piece spittoon. Because the top was removable, a hole on the side was unnecessary.



Plain 9 1/2" diameter spittoon or cuspidor by Alfred Meakin.



Plain 7 1/2" diameter cuspidor.