



VIE DOWNARD

CHARTER MEMBER

I guess I first became interested in thimbles when a family friend's grandmother gave me my first one as a gift. I was about 7 years old. It was put away for safety. I wasn't much interested in sewing at that time. I grew up, married, had children, and moved to Chicago when my husband was transferred. In fixing up the family room, I saw an ad in a magazine for a shelf with thimbles on it.

I bought the shelf and found a few more thimbles. Then, at a garage sale, I struck up a conversation with Jerry Baker, who was also looking for thimbles. She mentioned a group of thimble collectors getting together for the first convention at the Ramada Hotel in Toledo and suggested I come too -- and I did. Had such a good time, learned about thimbles, bought a few, and made new friends. I was hooked!



**American. Sterling silver thimble
with enameled band.**



Halley Altman and Vi Downard.

I have attended many conventions since then. This is Halley Altman and me at one of the banquets. Note the glasses. Halle and I, along with Patty Martin, were best thimble friends for many years, writing, sharing, trading and getting together. We even started collecting old Cracker Jack toys as a second collection.

For many years I ate, slept and thought thimbles. The whole family was involved. I received many thimbles as gifts. My five-year old grandson was asked in school about thimbles. He had no idea what they were used for, but he knew Grandma had a lot of them. Even my husband got carried away and wrote a poem (posted below). I was fascinated by all the different thimbles, but probably my favorite were the gold and silver with fancy bands. I had one with a dog's head on it that was unusual.



Iris Woolley.

As the years crept up on me, it was hard to get out to enjoy the conventions, meet with others from the Ohio group, or look for thimbles. I thought it was the best time to sell, hopefully to another collector who would appreciate them -- and I did (I have visiting rights). The Cracker Jack toys are also gone.

I met Iris Woolley of Australia at one of the conventions a while back, and we still correspond.

Now, as I approach ninety-three, I am down to one hobby. I enjoy making greeting cards. That, and attending our Senior Center, keeps me busy. The thimble days were fun and left me with many happy memories and good friends.

Think Thimbles (by Roy Downard)

I wandered in on the Thimble Convention
To join such collectors I had no intention
They'd dote over thimbles as I would my car
To find a stranger hobby you'd have to go far.

Think Thimbles !!!! Was their battle cry
Those zany collectors with a thimble eye
But not once among them did I note
A thimble working at making a coat --

Or quilting a quilt to help keep warm
The man who, for thimbles, had surely worn
His blue jeans to holes and hocked his shirt
For all those pretty thimbles that do not work.

Wish my mother could have seen the sight.
She knew for thimbles it was surely right
To use them for sewing her children's clothes
So they could go stepping in ribbons and bows.

Her thimbles could sew a patch on my knee
Yet some of her uses would cause me to flee
Like a tap on the noggin when I was bad
Or a thimble of castor oil for whatever I had.

I s'pose it's all right to just sit and look
At pretty thimbles in a thimble nook
But shouldn't a thimble know how to work
Like sewing a button on jacket or shirt?