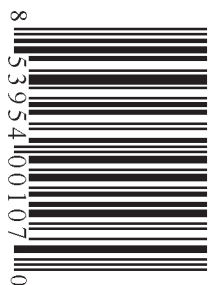


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Holt-Howard Pixieware is on fire

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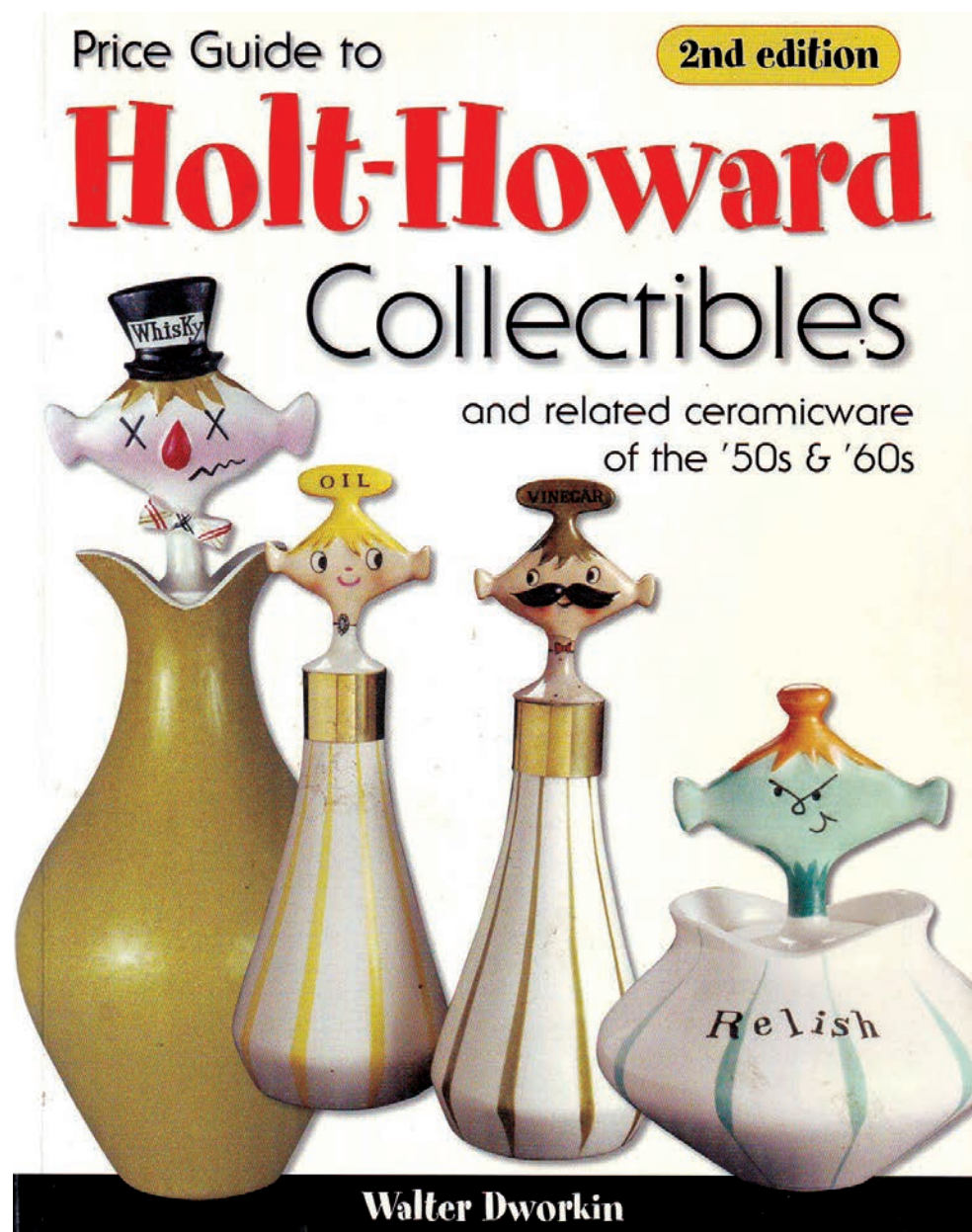
Considered one of the hottest collecting trends today, Holt-Howard Pixieware continues to delight and attract collectors. Introduced in 1958 by the Howard brothers; John and Robert and Grant Holt, Pixieware combines whimsy with functionality resulting in one very desirable line of ceramic kitchen, gift, and bar ware.

The three young men who started Holt-Howard did so with the help of their parents who loaned the trio \$9,000 to go into business for themselves. That was in 1949 when \$9,000 was a tidy sum! The industrious young men created the Holt-Howard Company in an apartment on East 34th Street in Manhattan, later moving their office to 126 E. 28th St. Manhattan and adding a showroom in Manhattan's Gift Center Building on 225 Fifth Avenue.

Robert headed up product development. John was in charge of sales management, and Grant was responsible for the financial affairs and office operations. The beginning years saw Holt-Howard delving into Christmas related items, and not necessarily ceramic pieces. Their first "win" was their "Angel-Abra" also called "Angel Chimes" — a metal piece featuring a trumpeting angel with candles that when lit, caused the contraption to spin.

The success of this item launched the success of Holt-Howard's Christmas line, but the group knew they could not rely on holiday items alone and soon ventured into creating ceramic kitchen items. It was the success of their kitchen pieces that is now the catalyst for the current-day collecting frenzy.

According to avid collector, Kevin McDonald of Chicago, and the man behind the Facebook page Kevin's Pixieware Palace (www.facebook.com/KevinsPixiewarePalace) Holt-Howard manufactured



new designs of Pixieware only in 1958 and 1959. However, the designs from both years were made through the early 1960s.

The items were made in Japan and are marked with an ink signature and often a

sticker, or just a sticker depending on the space available.

Pixieware pieces are easy to identify because each food or liquid vessel has an impish pixie head as its finial or topper. For



Above: This is the entire line of Pixieware shallow snack bowls introduced in 1959, except for Onion Annie which still eludes the collector. Shown are Mustard Max, Ketchup Katie, Pickle Pete, Olive Oscar, Tartar Tom and Peanut Butter Pat. The sundae bowls are labeled, "Nuts", "Berries," and "Goo."

Left: Highly desired in its own right, this 2nd edition of "Price Guide to Holt-Howard Collectibles and Related Ceramicware of the 50s and 60s" by Walter Dworkin (Krause Publications, 2007) is packed with Pixieware information. Know there is also a first edition, but collectors seem to gravitate to the more updated 2nd edition for reference.

many of the jars, a spoon was attached to the underside of the Pixie head lid.

Called "Spooky Spoons" by collectors, the Cocktail Onion spoon is curved to scoop up said onion and there is also a small drain hole in the base of the spoon so onion juice does not overwhelm your mixed drink.

Other Spooky Spoons are shaped so that

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spreading the contents of the jar, like mustard, is easier. Or the spoon does not have a hole so it can scoop up the contents, like jam. The olives Pixie jar’s lid features a metal fork to pierce the olive for serving.

The original Pixieware line created in the United States in the 1950s is made up of 64 items. It is doable to own an entire set; sort of. Some of the Pixieware pieces are very hard to find and command a premium price.

One example would be the ever elusive Honey jar with spoon/lid. An example sold in 2017 on eBay for \$545.99. One is currently for sale on eBay priced a whopping \$1,400!

The first Pixieware items released by Holt-Howard in 1958 were the Pixie condiment jars – Mustard, Ketchup, and Jam ‘n Jelly. These first three installments show the attention to detail Holt-Howard items were known for. Both the color schemes and the facial expressions of the Pixies represent the contents of the jars.

Mustard’s Pixie has a yellow face as does its stripes and the Pixie wears a spicy expression. Ketchup’s face is a tomato-orangish red with green hair, and its stripes have a reddish hue. Jam n’ Jelly has a sweet expression, pinkish cheeks, and similar colored stripes.

“These Pixieware condiments jars are such a reflection of the era,” McDonald said. “It would have been gauche back in the day to put a jar of Smucker’s jam on the table, or a bottle of Heinz ketchup. Instead, these condiments were served in decorative containers such as these Pixieware jars.”

Walter Dworkin, author of the “Price Guide to Holt-Howard Collectibles and Related Ceramicware of the 50s and 60s, 2nd Edition” (Krause Publications, 2007) states, “Since these three pieces were the very first pixies Holt-Howard created, more of these were produced than any other resulting from numerous annual manufacturing cycles of 100 dozen (1,200) per run from 1958 through 1962. As a result of this mass production, they are the most commonly found pieces today.”

Other Pixieware pieces produced in 1958 include “Lil’ Sugar” and “Cream Crock.” Not only is the head on the sugar slightly smaller than other Pixieware heads, the cream crock vessel is also a bit smaller. Dworkin notes, “Some color in the pixie’s head would always match the color of the condiment jar’s base. This color coordination assures the novice collector the heads and bases of these pieces correctly match.”

Some other Pixieware pieces produced in 1958 would include - “Instant Coffee” whose lid had a gasket to seal the jar keeping the coffee fresh; both “Cocktail Olives,” and simply “Olives – the only Pixieware pieces with a two-pronged fork attached to their lids. Then there is “Cocktail Onions,” and just “Onions”, both with pixie heads that look like an onion with the facial expressions to match. And similarly, “Cocktail Cherries” and “Cherries.”

The jars with the word “Cocktail” along with olives, onions, and cherries, originally sold together as a trio and were marketed as part of the “Happy Party Gremlins” liquor decanters and four-piece set of pixie liquor bottle bracelets grouping. Later ver-

Below: Pictured here are the liquor decanters created by Holt-Howard; the set with solid colored bodies were produced first, and then those with striped bodies came later.



Above: A cookie jar was never part of the Holt-Howard Pixieware offerings created in both 1958 and 1959. Many collectors bemoaned this error and in 2002 former employees of Holt-Howard made it happen by issuing the “Chuckie’s Cookie Jar” at left and the later Christmas example, “Rudy’s Cookie Jar” at right.

sions of the olives, onions, and cherries Pixieware jars saw the “Cocktail” word removed. It was felt by removing the alcohol associated word, the trio would be appealing to more consumers.

Speaking of the “Happy Party Gremlins” liquor decanters (labeled “Devil’s Brew”, “300 Proof” and “Whiskey”), know they originally had solid bases; the only solid color based Pixieware pieces made. Holt-Howard soon realized consumers wanted these decanters to match the other Pixieware offerings so later versions had striped bases. These decanters were also tall, standing 10 ½ inches high and hold 24 ounces of alcohol.

“Large Pixieware pieces such as these decanters were manufactured in limited production runs of 300 pieces each, compared to the condiment jars at 100 dozen (1,200) each. As a result, fewer liquor decanters were produced and are a rarer find today,” Dworkin wrote. Expect to pay upwards of \$500-plus for a decanter if you can find one.

Other items in the 1958 Pixieware line include “Bottle Bracelets” to label bottles of alcohol; “Stacking Seasons” consisting of two salts and two peppers that had notches to stack and sold in a wooden holder;

“Pixie Spoons” being stainless steel spoons with pixie heads that sold in packages of four, each with a different face and coloration, and the “Sam and Sally Cruet Set” being oil and vinegar bottles each standing 9 inches high.

Additions to the Pixieware line in 1959 include more condiment jars like “Relish”, “Mayonnaise,” “Honey,” and “Chili Sauce.” “Party Pixies Hors d’ Oeuvre” dishes with elongated pixie hairdos to hold pretzels and a larger attached saucer base where nibbles like chunks of cheese could sit were a hit.

Pixieware shallow snack bowls introduced in 1959 are a collecting venue in its own right. Ten bowls make up the set with seven being for serving snacks and three for sundaes. Holt-Howard gave each of its snack pixies a name to indicate its function: Mustard Max, Ketchup Katie, Pickle Pete, Onion Annie, Olive Oscar, Tartar Tom and Peanut Butter Pat. The sundae bowls are labeled, “Nuts”, “Berries,” and “Goo.” Each bowl’s “handle” is a pixie head representing what should be served in the bowl and again feature the Holt-Howard stripes.

There are salad dressing bottles for Russian, French, and Italian dressing. The one set of three has the tradition flat headed pixies as their toppers. Holt-Howard also

Below: These “Teapot Candleholder Hurricane Vases” are one of only two products made in the Holt-Howard Pixieware line that include full bodied pixies.



Above: These Pixieware condiment jars and “Party Pixies Hors d’ Oeuvre” dishes with elongated pixie hairdos were produced in 1959. All images courtesy of Kevin McDonald

Right: The 1958 Pixieware line included “Bottle Bracelets” used to label bottles of alcohol.

made the three with round-headed pixies as toppers; the only round-headed pixies made.

The giftware line pixies include a pair of “Teapot Candleholder Hurricane Vases” being shaped like a teapot, but acting as a vase and candleholder. “Table Favor” pixies were sold as a set of four and were called “Serviettes.” They were used as ashtrays, tea bag holders, for nuts or as a spoon rest. A “Hanging Pixie Planter” also exists and this item and the a fore-mentioned vases being the only Pixieware pieces that include a full bodied pixie and not just a pixie head.

In 1968, Holt-Howard was purchased by General Housewares Corporation making it part of their Giftware Group. By 1974, the three original partners had left the company.

In 2002, as Pixieware collecting surged, John Howard felt with the renewed interest in the line, it was time a retro Pixieware cookie jar be made available. Howard working with former Holt-Howard employee and designer, Curt Blanchard, designed and produced what they called a “second generation” Pixieware cookie jar that fit perfectly with the original line.

Blanchard went on to produce several other second generation Pixieware items. None of the second gen pieces duplicated any items from the original line, but were new designs and included six Pixie pots, a salt and pepper set, a salsa dish, a spoon rest, and another cookie jar – this being a Christmas design.

Loads of information and images of this impish ware can be found online and also by joining Facebook fan pages like “Holt-Howard Collectables” at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/358773545036766>

Below: Attention to detail is what delights collectors of Holt-Howard Pixieware. Notice the noses on the faces of these cocktail condiment jars match what each contains.



Above: From the 2nd edition of “Price Guide to Holt-Howard Collectibles and Related Ceramicware of the 50s and 60s” by Walter Dworkin (Krause Publications, 2007) comes this array of Holt-Howard ink stamps and foil labels used to mark and identify the Pixieware pieces.

Below: Holt-Howard Pixieware “Sam and Sally Cruet Set”.

