

wp Closer Inspection

This 1760 **Scottish snuff mull** is made from a hollowed and polished ram's horn. "That must have been a great-looking animal to have horns so beautifully curled," Sheary says. "Sometimes nature does a good job."

Some people carried their own **nutmeg graters**, such as this 1763 silver piece, "because food didn't always taste so great, or was stale or rancid," Graffam says. "It needed a little extra something."

Shaped like a fish, this 1800 **Dutch silver vinaigrette** can move, mimicking the wriggling of the real thing, and has garnet stones for eyes.

A 1770 porcelain **bonbonniere** held snacks such as sweet meats or dried fruit.

An 1830 **enamel patch** box bears a hand-painted reverse portrait. If you look at it from one direction, you see a young lady; if you turn it, you see an elderly woman.

A woman using this circa 1888 **silver snuffbox** could sniff powdered tobacco with a tiny spoon. "It was much more elegant than reaching in with your thumb," Graffam says.

Vinaigrettes such as this circa 1829 **gilt case** contained a sponge soaked in vinegar and lavender to ward off odors. "Baths weren't encouraged then," says Sheary, in part because people thought bathing was unhealthy.

Towle's grandmother gave her this 1790 **English patch box**, once containing pieces of black gummed taffeta. "If you had a pimple or a scar, you could put it on your face," Graffam says. "A little black spot."

'Little treasures'

At DAR, good things come in small packages

BY KRIS CORONADO
It's easy to get lost in the array of historic relics on display at the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum (1776 D St. NW, 202-628-1776, www.dar.org/museum). The building contains 31 period rooms depicting life in different states at various times in American history (the New Jersey room has a table made from wood salvaged from a Revolution-era

shipwreck). If visitors aren't careful, they could easily overlook an inconspicuous collection in a corner of the first floor. A glass case holds 40 tiny decorative boxes and containers, most more than a century old. "She called them 'little treasures,'" says museum collections curator Olive Graffam of the late Patience Ellwood Towle, who began collecting the trinkets as a child.

After serving as the DAR's curator

general in the late 1980s, Towle donated 220 pieces to the museum in 2002. A portion was added to the permanent collection in 2004, the same year Towle died. Here, Graffam and furnishings curator Patrick Sheary offer insight into Towle's treasures. "I think she was like everybody else who's a hobbyist," Graffam says. "You fall in love with something, and you can't resist."

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