

# Convention 2014: Indy Goes International

Submitted by Jeff Siptak

For a pattern known around the world, this year's convention was a natural. "An International Tea Party" was the theme for the 29th Annual Willow Collectors Convention, held in Indianapolis, from June 12-14. Chairs Daisy Eden, Marianne Elsmann (both of whom wore mini hats themed for different countries throughout the weekend) and Tom Eden welcomed collectors from across the country, and as far away as New Zealand, for the much-anticipated willow event.

All the things planned by the chairs throughout the weekend highlighted different countries...from delicious meals to games and decorations and, of course, to the Willow pattern itself. The weekend truly captured the fun and excitement of collecting willow, a pattern whose popularity is most certainly worldwide. At one point during the weekend, attendees were even asked to raise their hand when they heard a country mentioned that they had willow from in their collection.

Upon entering the hotel, attendees received registration packet folders, made by the Ohio Willow Society members, that were crafted from past IWC convention posters...a great idea and a wonderful way to repurpose some of things that have been a part of our past.

By that evening, the convention got off to a great start with Show & Tell on Thursday night. Here collectors had the chance to show their newest pieces or their favorites. The tables were filled with a variety of pattern designs and colors and everyone enjoyed hearing about what was on display.

Friday morning began with a lecture by Jeff Siptak titled: "A World Expedition: Tea and the Willow Pattern." Jeff took attendees around the world to learn about the history of tea, the early vessels made to serve it and the Willow Pattern ware that was later created to enjoy it. His slide presentation featured over 55 unique examples of teapots, plus he brought many teapots from his personal collection to display. (cont'd)







Following Jeff's lecture was the Bargain Bazaar, which featured items for sale that were priced under \$25. A great time was had by everyone trying to find a unique bargain!

A Decal Workshop followed, led by Rosita and Jon Simmons. Here everyone had a chance to try their hands at decaling and making their own unique piece of willow. This type of event always draws a crowd and was enjoyed by those who participated.

Then it was Fiesta Time!...a great Mexican lunch buffet was served and featured just about anything you could want...from fajitas and burritos to chips and salsa, right down to trays of warm sugary cinnamon churros, Mexico's "twisted" version of the donut. Atop the lunch tables were small decorated cans that held candy and tea bags. These souvenir cans (and all the table decorations and gifts) were made by the chairs with the help of the children at Happy Hands Childcare, which chair Marianne Elsmann owns. They all did a wonderful job and the children loved being a part of the convention by lending their small hands to these crafty projects.



With little time for a siesta, it was time to get ready for the auction. Attendees brought their items to the auction room and the auction crew jumped into action getting everything ready. This year's auction had its first...the first female auctioneer—Nancee Rogers stepped up to the podium first, followed by Tom Eden and Dottie Day. The auction began at 5:00 and everyone enjoyed an American boxed dinner of fried chicken before resuming the second half. After more than 350



item lots later the auction came to an end.

Saturday morning willow collectors were ready for more! It began with a place setting competition where a good handful of tables were decorated with willow to represent different countries. It's always amazing to see the creativity our members bring to the table with their willow ideas. The best table display was awarded to Michael Curtner, which featured an England theme. (cont'd)





Later that morning everyone lined up for the Willow Sale, where dozens of table were set up with a large variety of willow ware. Collectors had plenty of time to shop and find the perfect willow items to add to their collections.

It was a busy morning and some relaxation was in order. The afternoon was devoted to free time, and some members did get in that siesta, while others explored Indy— from its museums to numerous antique shops and malls.

By Saturday evening everyone was back together for a wonderful dinner themed around Italy. Again, special handmade paper pockets were at everyone's tables filled with mints, and dinner featured some wonderful Italian favorites. Music was played while dinner was enjoyed and a few games were played afterward, with attendees as participants.

After dinner, everyone signed a special album for out-going IWC President Carol Cordle. It was made by Marianne Elsman and contained great willow convention photos.

Everyone said their good-byes and made plans for Texas next year. A special thanks to our chairs and everyone who joined in to make this 29th annual convention a great success.

