

*The Magazine*

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

# ANTIQUES



## What's in the Box?

A LOOK AT CURRENT AND  
UPCOMING EPISODES OF  
OUR PODCAST



The mystery box under discussion in the December 2020 episode of *Curious Objects*. Photograph by Benjamin Davidson.

Readers who've enjoyed Pippa Biddle and Benjamin Davidson's "Object Lesson" column in our pages—which has taken a close look at subjects like the history of the Windsor chair, the virtues of William Lightfoot Price's utopian designs, and, in this issue, the peculiar typology known as "campaign furniture"—will appreciate the current episode of our podcast *Curious Objects*, which features the couple as guests. They're as articulate and insightful in person as they are in print, and—in what's one of two surprises the episode has to offer—also turn out to be a pair of jokesters.

The object lesson they lay out for podcast host Benjamin Miller revolves around what is, if not the humblest of items, certainly kissing cousins with

it, at least at first glance. It's a simple wooden box, nondescript except for iron banding on its corners and along its edges. Biddle and Davidson encountered it at auction in an unheated warehouse in wintry New England, either before or after—they disagree on the chronology—sitting through a parade of GI Joe and Barbie lots. "This is a kind of nice box, locked, no key, may have \$1000 in it, but probably not" was all the auctioneer could muster—but Davidson was intrigued. After the price dropped from \$50 to \$25, the couple made their bid, fingers thoroughly frozen. Back in his workshop, Davidson wrestled the box open to find keys inside... and a bolt from the blue. To find out what that was—and much more, including what it was like for Biddle to grow up surrounded



by antiques in her family home, the almost three-hundred-year-old Ridgely House in Delaware, and about Davidson's time as live-in caretaker at Thunderbird Lodge near Philadelphia—listen to the episode, which can be found by navigating to ANTIQUES' website, [themagazineantiques.com](http://themagazineantiques.com), and selecting the "Podcast" tab at the top of the page, as well as on iTunes, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts.

Looking ahead to our next episode, we're also looking back. At last year's Winter Show in New York, *Curious Objects*' Miller and our friend Michael Diaz-Griffith were joined in the Board of Officers Room at the Park Avenue Armory by a panel of young antiques dealers, including James Boening (of James Robinson, Inc.), Ria Murray (of Lillian Nassau), and Taylor Thistlethwaite (of Thistlethwaite Americana). Under discussion was a sextet of carefully chosen objects from each participant's area of expertise, including a pair of Scottish Highlands pistols, a Tiffany favrile glass pig, and a New York card table of about 1770. This year's Winter Show episode will be a bit different—different faces, different objects, and *maybe* a custom cocktail—but the same fun and sophisticated live conversation, though, of course, only virtually. Stay tuned for show dates.

**SAMMY DALATI** is the editor of the *Curious Objects* podcast.



Benjamin Davidson and Pippa Biddle in front of the Eden Hill Homestead, a 120-year-old orchard, house, and outbuildings in Germantown, New York, that the couple is restoring. Photograph by Ridgely Biddle, courtesy of Pippa Biddle and Benjamin Davidson.

Rear facade of the Ridgely House in Dover, Delaware, in a photograph of c. 1913–1930. Photograph courtesy of Pippa Biddle.