

H.A. Jan 5/1994 p.13 Bus. Mining-1994 (Bog)

# Store also a Tobacco Items Museum

By Jerry Barney

Anyone who shops at M&J's Market in Ottertail also has opportunity to look through something of a museum of tobacco containers and products.

Jim Wippering--the "J" of M&J's--has a sizeable collection of vintage and unusual tobacco and cigarette cans, packs, boxes and bags.

He has, for instance, old square-cornered tobacco cans that were used before about 1895 (and plenty of the round-cornered cans that were used thereafter). Canadian

"flat fifties" (flat boxes that hold 50 cigarettes each), a twin oaks humidor ("you put your tobacco in to keep it moist"), and round cigarette cans ("they were short lived").

He also has Lucky Strike Pipe Tobacco, which was sold in green cans until World War II, when all green paint was requisitioned for military use.

He has a cigar tin for the "662" brand of cigars, which were rolled by Hunt Brothers of Fergus Falls. "There used to be a number of cigar makers around Fergus Falls,

around 1915," he explained.

Another state brand represented in his collection is a can of H. C. Tickner Co. Smoking Tobacco, from Anoka. He has no idea how old that one is.

He has a snuff pouch made out of birch bark.

"My rarest one is a Canadian flat fifties put out in 1937 or '39 in honor of the royal couple," he said, explaining that the Players brand commemorative packs represents a limited edition.

Also rare is a can of U.S. Marine Tobacco, from between 1910 and 1920. "Only 100 are known to be in existence," he commented.

The oldest brands in his collection are Yale, Matador and Dixie, from about 1880. He also has Yankee Boy, Twin Oaks and Four Roses, from about 1900.

He also has brands like Sweet Capone, Winchester, De Reszke Minors, Kentucky Club, Harmony, Golden Grain, Green Brier, Sugar Barrel, Denniford, White Hall and Holiday.

And of course, old reliable brands like Prince Albert and Bull Durham.

"They had all kinds of flavors," he said.

He has Union Workman and Yankee Girl Chewing Tobacco.

He has the George Washington brand. "You get a pipe full of that and it'll just raise your hair," he said. "They used the whole leaf, instead of the just the tobacco between the ribs. George Washington used the ribs and the stem and the whole works."

He has an Old Boyd can, found, while remodeling, underneath the crawl space of the part of his building that was built in 1904. (The other part was built in 1902.)

He has a World War II brand called Hi Plane, which was made



## Cans and Boxes

JIM WIPPERLING displays part of his collection of tobacco-related items. They're on display at M&J's in Ottertail. He's holding his rarest item, a

Canadian "flat fifties" cigarette pack made in limited edition to commemorate a visit by the King and Queen of England in the thirties.

(Continued from page 1)

with both two-engine and four-engine planes on the can.

How many items does Jim Wippering have in his collection? "I don't know," he said. "There's a lot of 'em."

He's been collecting for six or seven years. His own collection is a spinoff of one accumulated previously by his son, Craig. (Craig sold his own collection to a museum in Moosejaw, Canada, where it is now being shown.)

Assisting Jim in his collecting efforts is his wife, Marlys (the "M" in M&J's). "She's my finder," he said. "We get to flea markets and she'll find what I've missed."

"Collecting is something you just fall into and it grows from there," she said. "It's kind of a fun thing."

She said they spend on the average of an hour a week looking in antique shops and flea markets for items for the collection. Otherwise,

she commented, "we're here (in the store) all the time." (The Wipperlings have run the store for the past 11 years. The business itself dates back to 1903.)

Jim said he has obtained most of the items for his collection in the area, but he got at least one item as far away as Carson City, Nev.

As with many collections of vintage items, the value of Jim Wippering's collection is unspecific.

There are, he explained, quite a few collectors of vintage and unusual tobacco-related items in the United States, but none that he knows of in the immediate area. The collectors of such items are networked by a nationally-distributed magazine called *Tin Type*, published in San Francisco.

Is there any special item that Jim is looking for in particular?

"Lucky Strike White--in mint condition--is my dream," he said. "It's the craziness of collecting."