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10019
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KOVELS ANTIQUES AND COLLECTING

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By Terry and Kim Kovel

PHOTO CREDIT: Jeffrey S. Evans &
Associates

PHOTO CAPTION: The first “jump hour”
watch, which displayed the hour and minute
as discrete digits, was invented in 1883.

Jump Hour Watches

Take a moment and picture a pocket watch. Are you thinking of a hunting case watch with elaborate relief decorations and an engraved monogram? A minimalist open-faced watch with a 14K gold case? Maybe a chain and a fancy fob? One thing is safe to assume: The watch probably tells time with hands on a dial. “Jump hour” watches like the one pictured here show that isn’t always the case.

The jump hour, or jumping hour, watch movement was patented in 1883 by Josef Pallweber, an Austrian engineer. This new type of mechanism included rotating discs with the numerals for the hours and minutes. Windows in the watch face reveal the appropriate numeral. Instead of the familiar hand sweeping the watch’s face in one fluid movement, the hours appear to “jump” from one discrete number to the next, like today’s digital timekeepers.

The jump hour mechanism was extremely complicated, so not many were made. They experienced a resurgence in the 1920s, when their sleek look and nod to advancing technology fit in with the art deco movement. Jump hour watches from any time are still rare. Unsurprisingly, they sell for high prices at auctions. This one, a Swiss watch with a gunmetal case from about 1900, had a presale estimate of \$80 to \$120 at an auction by Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates. It sold for \$960, more than surpassing expectations.

Q: I have a small china doll. Its surface is rough and not glossy. The hair is sculpted with short curls and painted blond. The face is painted with blue eyes, and socks and shoes are painted on. The arms and legs are attached with wire. The only mark is the word “Germany” on the back. How old is it, and how much is it worth?

A: Your doll is made of bisque, an unglazed porcelain. Collectors call dolls like yours “all-bisque” to distinguish them from bisque-headed dolls, which are larger, mounted on



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bodies made of material like wood, leather, or composition, and usually have a maker’s mark. Sometimes small dolls like yours are called “penny dolls” or “dollhouse dolls.” Dolls were marked with the name of their country after 1891. All-bisque dolls were made up to the mid-20th century. Dolls like yours are usually worth about \$20 to \$30.

Unusual features, like a molded hat, or an identifiable maker can increase the value. For more information, look for books like “The Collector’s Encyclopedia of Dolls” by Dorothy S., Elizabeth A., and Evelyn J. Coleman or Patricia Smith’s “Album of All-Bisque Dolls” at your library, or contact a collector’s club like the United Federation of Doll Clubs Inc. (ufdc.org) or a doll auction.

TIP: Vintage watches should be cleaned regularly, probably once a year.

CURRENT PRICES

Toy, train set, Lionel, The Liberty Special, electric, 027 gauge, box, 20 x 30 inches, \$60.

Textile, panel, embroidered, center phoenix, corner spandrels, dark blue border, silk, frame, Chinese, c. 1900, 233 x 33 inches, \$125.

Quezal, vase, flared neck and foot, King Tut, iridescent, pulled swirls, label, drilled as lamp base, early 20th century, 12 1/2 inches, \$560.

For more collecting news, tips and resources, visit www.Kovels.com

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