

**00055958**

**Title**

Teaspoon

**Date**

1944

**Medium**

Metal

**Dimensions**

Overall: 140 × 28 × 8 mm, 20 g

**Name**

Spoon

**History**

When Russia invaded Estonia in 1944, Oskar and Magda Mihkelson fled on a merchant ship bound for Sweden, carrying their most cherished family possessions - the family silver, jewellery, monogrammed linen and photo albums. In Sweden they joined other Estonians who worked together to maintain a sense of community and nurture Estonian traditions and language. Magda gave birth to her only child, Anu, in Sweden, and contributed to the family income by knitting traditional Hapsaala scarves, weaving handbags, hats and decorations, sewing dolls clothes after traditional Swedish designs, and crafting glass Christmas tree decorations over a Primus stove. The Mihkelson family was sponsored to Australia by an Estonian family living in Sydney and embarked from Italy on the TOSCANA in 1948. When the Mihkelsons arrived in Australia, they were advised to head north to the cane-cutting communities in Queensland. Like many post-World War II migrants, Oskar was lured to the mines in Mount Isa, living in single men's barracks before sending for Magda and Anu. He worked as a carpenter for Mount Isa Mines and the family built a house with the assistance of other Estonian immigrants. Magda was a talented artist and often drew scenes from her past,



etching wooden photo album covers with scenes of Tallinn, and embroidering scenes of Estonian winters. She continued to create traditional Estonian embroidery, but incorporated images of the brilliantly coloured Australian parrots in her garden. Following Magda's death, Anu returned to Estonia for the first time, retracing her parents' lives and reuniting with old family friends. She collected souvenirs during this trip and was given material connected with her family's past. Her parents' neighbours offered her Magda and Oskar's complete dinner service, given to them for safekeeping before they fled to Sweden in 1944.