



- 20 **A CORK REPUBLICAN SILVER SHAPED CIRCULAR CARD TRAY**, Cork 1922, mark of William Egan, three marks: the underside struck with W.E. incised punch, two masted ship and a single towered castle, in the Georgian taste, with raised pie crust rim and shell border, on three claw and ball feet (c.14ozs). 22 cm diameter

Cork 'Republican' Silver:

The Civil War of 1922-23 followed the War of Independence and the 1921 Treaty with Britain and became one of the most hostile periods in the century's long struggle for Irish independence. The Civil War was essentially between those who accepted the Irish Free State, established after the Treaty with the consequent partition of the island of Ireland; and on the other side, those who rejected partition and who were prepared to fight for a republic. Between July and September 1922, Cork was occupied by the anti-treaty Republican forces, isolating the city, the road and rail connections to Dublin were cut-off. The general state of lawlessness and insecurity made it impossible for trade to take place between Cork and the outside world. This meant that firms, such as silversmiths William Egan and Sons, faced difficulties that threatened their very existence. As Egan's could not send their silverware to the Dublin Assay Office, it was suggested by Oliver St. John Gogarty, the Dublin writer and surgeon, that they create a special hallmark distinguishing their work of that particular period. Egan's then continued to produce their renowned high quality silverware and for that short period impressed special punches based on Cork's original town marks, of a ship between two single towered castles. However the 1922 ship had two masts as opposed to the original three. These unique pieces also had the old style maker's mark of W.E. in Celtic script. In all there are only about 60 to 80 pieces made by Egan and hallmarked with these marks, which go to make up the category known widely as 'Republican Silver'. After the Republican occupation ended in September 1922 Egan's destroyed the punches. Apparently Barry Egan, the firm's principal retained these pieces and gave them as gifts. Curiously a number of these pieces of 'Republican' silver have made their way into collections of senior members of the British royal family including HRH Princess Mary and the Marquis of Bute.

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