When I volunteered to make a chocolate cheesecake for a church supper last month, I knew I would need help with the presentation.

At home, the bottom of the springform pan works for serving but I thought the rich and creamy dessert deserved much better dressing for this occasion.

What I wanted was a pretty glass platter with a dome. What I found was a precious piece of family history.

On a whim, I asked my mother if she had a cake plate I could borrow. I don't remember ever seeing such a thing in our house when I was growing up but I thought there was an outside chance she might know where to find one.

Actually, she didn't have to look far.

The next week, she delivered to my kitchen a very heavy, quite stunning cut-glass plate and dome. She said I could keep it because she hadn't used it in years.

I didn't put much thought into the serving set at the time. It was just a pretty way to deliver my dessert.

But since then, I've been thinking about the incredible journey the two pieces must have had.

My great-grandmother Lulu White was born in Cozad in September 1890. Her parents moved to

Nebraska from Pennsylvania sometime before that but the story of their emigration has vanished with my ancestors. The cake plate may or may not have belonged to her parents.

Lulu married Arthur Callahan in Cozad in 1909. My mother remembers seeing the plate and dome sitting on her grandmother's dining room sideboard in a little house somewhere here in Gothenburg.

Mom said as kids, she and her siblings could often see something hidden under the dome, but her grandma never used it to serve dessert.

At some point before Lulu's death in November 1976, the plate and dome were passed down to my grandmother Ima Mae (Callahan) Roberts, who also never used the duo for dessert. Grandma Ima kept the pieces wrapped together in an old white sheet, mom said, tucked away but always with her.

When Grandma moved from her Maxwell home to assisted living in Cozad, the serving pieces became my mom's. That was somewhere around the mid-1980s.

I look at the plate and dome now and wonder if they traveled from Pennsylvania on a train and had been handed down through the family. Or maybe the set was a wedding gift to Lulu and Arthur from a dear friend. Unfortunately, I will likely never know.

The tiny bit of history I have learned, though, has prompted me to move the plate and dome from the bottom cupboard in my kitchen to inside another family heirloom. It is now proudly displayed in an antique oak buffet in my dining room.

Someday, my grandchildren will wonder what's hidden inside.