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No treasure, but plenty of interesting finds at Brookfield antique event

By DOUG GRAHAM - msleditorial@shawmedia.com
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BROOKFIELD – The thought that their antiques could fetch the kind of high prices obtained by ordinary people on TV shows like Antiques Roadshow or American Pickers brought dozens of people to the Brookfield Public Library to have their cherished trinkets, family china and precious heirlooms given an auction price by an actual appraiser.



John Leonard, president and auctioneer for Addison-based Leonard Auction, discusses how his company appraises items during an antiques appraisals event at the Brookfield Public Library, 3609 Grand Blvd. on Aug. 14. (Matthew Piechalak - mpiechalak@shawmedia.com)

Sadly, according to John Leonard, of Addison-based Leonard Auction Auctioneers & Appraisers, very few antiques turn out to be worth their weight in gold.

"I would say we end up disappointing 90 percent of the people who bring something in," Leonard said.

While there were no million dollar treasures at the library's Antiques Appraisal Workshop, there were still many artifacts Leonard said were worth more than they seem.

Tim Arrington, of Brookfield, brought several antiques he'd acquired through his family. The finds, which included a fine glass bowl, a pocket watch given to returning Korean War soldiers, an American Legion medal and a miniature book-shaped coin bank from the early 1930s, Leonard assessed at around \$200 in total.

Arrington said much of the stuff came from his grandfather's basement.

"We threw out like two dumpsters full of stuff, but there was a lot of stuff we kept and there's still a lot of stuff down there," Arrington said with a laugh. "I'll be sure to check the next time I go."

Many of the antiques brought to the workshop dated back to the 1800s.

Karen Horvat brought in a 140-year-old picture made by Belgian artist Henri Holben.

Leonard said the artist's original works have sold in auctions for tens of thousands of dollars. However, Leonard identified Horvat's picture to be a print of one of Holben's other works and valued it at around \$300.

"I told my daughter I wanted to figure out if it's worth in the hundreds or in the thousands," Horvat said. "I want to get to the bottom of this because I'm getting old and my daughter would be happy if it was sold for ten dollars, or something."

Some of the finds at the workshop started out being just that: finds.

Ed Podlesak brought in a bracelet that his grandmother found in the 1890s.

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"My grandmother and grandfather bought a grocery store in the Pilsen neighborhood," Podlesak said. "They were cleaning the shelves and this was wrapped in a cloth behind some cans."

Leonard said the gems in the bracelet were real garnet stones, which were very popular in Victorian times. He estimated the piece to be worth \$100 to \$125.

Leonard said he has been hosting community antiques appraisal workshops in the area for about 18 months. He said the most valuable item he's appraised at a community event was in Oakbrook when a woman brought in a painting worth somewhere in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 range.

Leonard began the workshop by saying that market for antiques has come down in the last five to 10 years because of the economy and the success people have found selling items on the Internet.

He said despite the downturn, new TV shows are driving some new, younger people to the hobby of antiquing. Leonard said sometimes these people can make mistakes when taking advice from reality shows like Storage Wars, which he said are basically reality shows that are staged.

"We've had calls from somebody who says 'I've just spend \$2,000 on a storage unit' and we go out there and there's \$100 worth of stuff," Leonard said as the audience groaned their sympathy. "They've seen on the show that the more you spend the more it's gonna be worth, but most of the time that's not the case."

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