

Does it belong in an attic or museum?

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PETERSBURG — Some of those who visited Battersea yesterday brought what they might have believed was junk, but were surprised to learn they were actually valuable antiques. Appraisers looked at dozens of personal artifacts at the first Appraisal Fair on the lawn of 18th century mansion yesterday.

"We had more than 200 visitors, which was great for the first time," said historian and fair organizer Ben Greenbaum.

One of the most interesting items Greenbaum came across during the day was a collection of baseball cards. "They were from the early 1900s and extremely rare," he said. "We don't have an exact figure, but they are definitely worth many thousands of dollars."

Visitors brought many old collectibles like clocks, porcelain, stone and silver ware, dolls, sports memorabilia, pocket watches and military-related items from the Revolutionary War through World War II.

Chuck Maurer brought along some of the rarest items — a 1863 Sharps Carbine, which was used by federal cavalry in the Civil War, and a 1863 Springfield Musket. "My wife got them from her deceased uncle," he said. Greenbaum carefully mustered the guns. "They are in good condition," he said. "I'd estimate that they are worth between \$1,200 and \$1,500 a piece."

Appraiser Fred Schneider from Hanover County was surprised seeing a 1851 federal foot officer's sword. "This sword is the most interesting piece I have seen all day," he said. Schneider found a sign saying Hunt & Goodwin on the sword. "This was the salesman," he said. "I've seen thousands of swords in my lifetime, but never one sold by this guy. I'd say it's worth about \$1,100."

One of the most valuable collectables of the day was a hand-colored print by Mark Catesby, dating back to 1736. "This could sell for around \$25,000," said appraiser Amis Richardson.

A collection of furniture once owned by Gen. Robert E. Lee could bring even more. "If the current owner can prove that Lee really owned this set, it would be worth about \$40,000," Greenbaum said.

Battersea's first appraisal fair came to a close at 5 p.m. yesterday. "We'll do it again next year," said Greenbaum. "But we'll limit it to four hours instead of seven."

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