

Experts keep crowd enthralled at historical society's antiques appraisal



People will brought their antiques to be appraised at the Howard County Historical Society's third annual Antique Appraisal Fair held at the Miller Library branch in Ellicott City on Sunday, Oct. 19, 2014. (Matt Hazlett for the Baltimore Sun Media Group photos)

By **Katie V. Jones**, kvjones@tribpub.com

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It turns out the woman in the print wasn't George Washington's wife after all. She was his mother.

And the print, since it was in its original frame, was valued around \$800.

"It is such a beautiful thing," said Dolores Dowling, who brought the print and one other to be appraised at the Howard County Historical Society's Antiques Appraisal Fair and Rare Book Sale on Sunday.

"I wonder if Mt. Vernon would be interested in something like that?" Dowling said. "I always thought it was his wife."

Close to 100 people attended the society's two sessions of appraisals held at the Miller Branch of the Howard County Public Library system. A fundraiser for the society, this is the third year that people have brought their

family treasures, heirlooms and junk to be appraised by professionals.

"We try to do events that are mission driven, either the history of Howard County or personal history," said Shawn Gladden, executive director of the Historical Society. "We're really happy with the appraisals."

This year, Todd Peenstra of Peenstra Appraisals, and Steven Gouterman, of Gouterman and Associates, did a quick routine of evaluating and sizing up what was brought before them, all the while keeping the crowd entertained by sharing their knowledge in an easy banter with the crowd.

"My kids call it 'The ugly piece,' " said one woman, as Peenstra held up a ceramic figure she brought. Another was surprised to learn she brought in a French ink well.

"I used to play with it," she admitted to the crowd. "I didn't know what it was until now."

Helping people discover what they have is one of the reasons Peenstra enjoys doing the appraisals.

"People are downsizing or inherited a bunch of stuff," Peenstra said, afterward. "Things they don't understand. Steve and I tell it like it is," Peenstra said. "Here's what it is. Here's what it's worth."

Bruce Copeland brought two of his own pieces and one of a friend's to be appraised. While he admits he learned only what he already knew about his objects, he found the morning to be informative.

"It was an absolutely delightful experience," Copeland said. "The humor. Their knowledge. It was helpful information. I would recommend it to anyone who has an interest in collectibles."

Peenstra and Gouterman took turns speaking to the crowd. While Peenstra appraised objects, Gouterman shared his knowledge of jewelry and money, telling stories along the way.

"I really liked it," said Brenda Morstein, who had a gold-tipped walking stick appraised. "I learned information about coins and the value of metal and jewelry."

Ruth Conway was pleased that she attended though her items, an older book and a complete collection of Grandma Moses' prints, had little value.

"I was glad I was able to make it here and take advantage of their knowledge," Conway said.

Several people throughout the event suggested that the society hold appraisals twice a year, Gladden said, and it is a possibility. Right now, the society is pleased with the success of its one day event that competed with church-goers and an upcoming Ravens' game.

"We had a really great turn out," Peenstra said. "It surprised me for a Sunday at 9:30 a.m. It was a very lively, very informative crowd."

