

## Are Your Old Photos Valuable?

If there's something about an old photo that makes it stand out, it could be worth more than just sentimental value in your family scrapbook.

Recently, when more than 100 old photos — mostly portraits — were auctioned through Cowan's in Cincinnati, about a third sold for less than \$100, but the rest brought in higher prices. One ambrotype (positive image on glass plate) of 14 people in a touring wagon in front of a hotel sold for \$881.

Photos of nationally known people — such as Abraham Lincoln — are always of interest to collectors, says Katie Landrigan, an American history specialist and assistant in Cowan's Early Photography division.

"The sky's the limit when it's someone you can identify," she says. The type of photo also adds value from the oldest Daguerreotype (silver-coated metal plate) to ambrotype and tintype (iron metal plate), and even old paper photos.

Portrait shots that include a person such as a police officer or fireman holding a tool of their trade have value, but so can an extremely artful shot of a mother holding a child.

The more information that's known about a photo, the more value it has. Was it taken by a well-known photographer? Does the background or the clothing have historical significance?

For example, Cowan's recently auctioned off a photo of a railroad car taken in the mid 1800's. They anticipated it would sell for \$5,000, but it sold for almost twice that much, because the railroad car was identified.

Likewise, rural-themed photos such as buffalo being herded on the Santa Fe Trail attract collectors.

"Condition of the photo is very important, Landrigan says, noting that faded, water damage and tears decrease the value greatly.

People who believe they have valuable photos should contact antique dealers or auction houses for appraisals. Cowan often does informal appraisals for free — with the hopes of being able to auction them off. There is a fee for appraising photos for insurance purposes.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Cowan's Auctions, Inc., 6270 Este Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio 45232 (ph 513 871-1670; www.cowanauctions.com).



Sixth Plate Ambrotype of Gentleman Holding Opossum in His Lap. Price Realized \$382.



Quarter Plate Daguerreotype of a Steam Locomotive, N.Y. & E.R.R. Price Realized \$10,575.



Ninth Plate Daguerreotype of a Girl and Her Kitten. Price Realized \$881.25.



Photos Courtesy of Cowan Auctions  
Allard Herd, 1892 Montana Photograph. Price Realized \$1,645.



Dave Dam turns old artillery shells of various sizes into steam whistles. Air goes up through the bottom, and a plate forces the air to move up the sides which causes the shell's upper chamber to vibrate.

## Artillery Shell Steam Whistles

Artillery shells make a different sound than originally intended when Dave Dam gets a hold of them. The Eau Claire, Wis., collector turns them into steam whistles. They run the gamut from 5-in. to 21-in. tall 105 mm Howitzer shells to 3-ft. tall Naval shells.

"Someone has to wake everyone up," Dam laughs. "Someone has to have some fun."

He's known for building unique items, such as his motorized bar stool featured in a past issue of FARM SHOW (Vol. 32, No. 5).

Dam first built his steam (or compressed air) whistles out of copper pipe, brass and aluminum. Then he saw an artillery shell whistle and started watching for shells at thrift and antique stores. He has about 30 in his collection now, and has another half dozen 21-in. tall, 105 mm Howitzer shells

on hand. He made a four-chime whistle for the Eau Claire Express baseball team, and it's sounded every time the team gets a home run.

Air goes up through the bottom, and a plate forces the air to move up the sides, causing the upper chamber to vibrate.

"It's the same principle as blowing over the top of a bottle," Dam says. "The bigger the upper area, the lower the tone."

He uses a 130-gal. propane tank for an air tank and sets it at 100 to 150 lbs. pressure. The biggest whistles can be heard a mile or more away. He takes them to antique engine shows to blow for the noon whistle.

Dam adds he has some smaller whistles that he can just blow into. One is made of 4 oz. of pure silver. He has the silver whistle in his pocket for good luck.

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## Tools Make Garlic Growing Easier

A homemade planter and a modified fertilizer spreader save time and labor for first-time garlic grower Bob Sterling.

The retired Andover, Ill., mechanic, who was raised on a dairy farm, first experimented to find the best crop to grow on his 3 acres. He decided on garlic last year and prepared the field to plant in October.

He used one of his old tractors, a Deere L with disc hillers on the cultivator, to make raised rows 30 in. apart. He made a planter out of square aluminum with 8 wooden points bolted on every 6 in. To make the points Sterling cut up an old hoe handle and turned the pieces on a lathe. They're mounted so they make 4-in. deep holes in the ground. He simply walked along and pushed it into the ground, placing the end point in the last hole to keep the row in line.

"I made the planter to make planting go as fast as I could, and it saved quite a bit of time. The holes are all even and the same depth," Sterling says. "Where the soil was hard I just stepped on the planter."

Sterling's wife, Sonja, followed behind planting the garlic and kicking dirt in the hole. They planted 1,400 garlic cloves in seven 100-ft. rows.

Sterling modified the axle and put 20-in. wheels on a fertilizer spreader to get over the raised rows to spread soybean meal, which decomposes slowly and is a good source of nitrogen. He followed up with a 4 to 5 in. layer of straw to prevent freezing and to serve as mulch. In April, he used a backpack sprayer to spray a blend of seaweed and fish



Garlic grower Bob Sterling made this planter out of square aluminum, with 8 wooden points bolted on every 6 in.



He uses this 2-wheeled fertilizer spreader to spread soybean meal, which decomposes slowly and is a good source of nitrogen.

emulsion fertilizer. He harvested in mid-July.

"Some were almost as big as baseballs," Sterling says. "I grew 7 varieties, mostly hardnecks, and some softnecks."

He tied them in bunches of 10 to dry and plans to market them locally.

"If they sell well, I would like to plant twice as much next year," Sterling says.

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Planter's wooden points make 4-in. deep holes in the ground. Sterling's wife, Sonja, follows behind planting the garlic cloves and kicking dirt in the holes.