

One-Of-A-Kind Antique Seeder

Jimmy Smith, Winter Haven, Florida, recently sent FARM SHOW photos of a rare 3-pt. mounted, 1-row antique seeder and fertilizer unit he inherited from his dad. He wants to sell it, but says letting go won't be easy because of all the memories it brings back.

"This planter was built in the early 1960's by Covington Co. in Dothan, Alabama, and was designed to plant and fertilize at the same time. I think it was an ingenious piece of equipment, and I've never seen another one like it," says Smith. "Dad was constantly making minor modifications to the planter to get it to work right.

"We used the machine to plant our 5-acre market garden up until about 1990. Then it sat behind our shop for many years. It has a fiberglass fertilizer hopper on the front and a double metal seed hopper on the back.

There are 5 curved shanks on the front, 2 on each side and a flat blade, or harrow, in the middle followed by a pair of 12-in. dia. openers and a big steel closing wheel.

"The closing wheel was used to chain-drive a shaft and gearbox located between the double seed hoppers. The shaft continued forward to the fertilizer hopper and activated a rotating steel plate fitted with eight 1/2-in. dia. metal pins that stuck out to the side. As the plate rotated, the pins contact a spring-loaded metal bar which releases a slide gate at the bottom of the fertilizer hopper. A small amount of fertilizer would then drop down ahead of the double openers and just ahead of the seeds.

"We used the machine to plant several different crops including sweet corn, watermelons and muskmelons, cucumbers, okra, and squash. Dad would drive the



Jimmy Smith inherited this rare 3-pt. mounted, 1-row antique seeder and fertilizer unit from his dad.

planter, and my job was to walk behind it and make sure that everything was working right."

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At last year's National Threshers Reunion Mark LaFollette and his son, Kyle, lit 215 lanterns set up in their 80-ft. long vendor space.

Lantern Collection Lights Up The Night

As impressive as it is during the day, the LaFollette lantern collection is breathtaking at night. At last year's National Threshers Reunion in Wauseon, Ohio, Mark LaFollette and his son, Kyle, lit 215 lanterns set up among other collectables in their 80-ft. long vendor space.

"Our show starts at dark," Mark says. "With white canopies behind the lanterns, people are attracted from far away."

Setting up the lantern show is no small feat - each lantern is carefully wrapped and placed in totes in an enclosed trailer for transport. It takes a couple of days to unpack 215 lanterns and test and fuel them up with about ten gal. of tiki torch fuel that will burn over three

nights. After the event, it takes seven people all day to repack the lanterns and displays for the trip to their home in Michigan.

"We're a rarity in the collector world," Kyle adds. "Few collectors take lanterns to shows, and even fewer light them."

Kyle started the collection more than 18 years ago when he purchased a Massey Ferguson tractor to restore and the seller sweetened the deal with a couple of lanterns. That quickly led to more, providing an excuse to shop at antique stores, flea markets, etc.

The collection includes construction/utility lanterns, lanterns used for truck taillights, railroad lanterns, and even a lantern used specifically for voting booths. Most are barn-

style lanterns commonly used on homesteads.

Many manufacturers made them and came up with different ways of raising the globe and lighting the lanterns, in order to change the style enough not to infringe on patents by Dietz, the prominent lantern company.

Though they can find lanterns in their state, Michigan, New England offers the most variety; and Kyle is online everyday checking to see what is on eBay. He often buys groups of lanterns and hopes to get lucky.

A Dietz D-Lite lantern in one group is only worth about \$30, but it's Mark's favorite.

"I just like the look of it with 40 years of kerosene on it, a crusty patina, and it burns nice. I imagine the farmer milking cows with it every night - his friend in the barn," Mark says.

The LaFollettes believe in using the lanterns in their collections. In order to do that, they often need to repair the leaky or thin fuel tanks, using solder, resin, coffee can bottoms - whatever it takes.

Beyond that they do as little restoration as possible. Cleaning off the rust, oiling and buffing them usually results in an appealing patina.

Their collection includes some rare pieces - like the set of buggy lamps made as a prototype for Dietz. About 10 years ago, Kyle purchased the left side lamp for \$125 at an antique shop in northern Michigan. Five years ago he found the matching right-side lantern close to home on eBay. It was in bad shape and after finding another lantern for parts, the LaFollettes repaired it last winter.

Another Dietz lantern from 1900, was mounted on a horse-drawn fire rig and is valued at about \$750.

"We are always on the hunt for period glass to put with our lanterns, so that both pieces



Most of their lanterns are barn-style models commonly used on homesteads, but they also have some very rare ones like these.

represent the period of time of manufacture," Kyle says.

He explains that old glass is thicker, has seams and is imperfect, unlike modern glass replicas. Barn lanterns usually have clear glass or occasionally red glass. Colored globes don't provide as much light and were used for beacon and other types of lanterns.

Sharing the history of lanterns and lighting them is important to the LaFollettes, who have inspired new collectors - including many women - over the last decade that they have set up at events. For people interested in lanterns, they suggest that \$35 to \$40 is a reasonable price range for lanterns with globes. When sellers ask more than that, buyers should do some research. Go to www.lanternnet.com and contact lantern collector groups on Facebook for more information.

"When we get one and light it, we know it's the first time it's been lit in 60 years," Kyle says. "We wonder about the person who owned it before."

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Metal Mousetraps Worth Big Bucks

If you happen to come across a rare antique mousetrap, you might want to clean it up and put it away. It might be worth more than you think.

Tom Parr has about 400 mouse and rat traps in his Ohio museum, and many of the most valuable ones are metal.

"Some of the metal ones are hard to find," he says. "If you go to an antique store and ask if they have mousetraps, they often say they are still using them," he notes.

Over the years he's traded for and purchased some unusual ones such as the Cyclone, patented in 1883 by John and Thomas Morris. Bait is placed on a spring in the center of jaws that look like a teepee.

"Of this group, the cast iron trap is the most valuable, at about \$300," he says. Patented in 1897 by Streeter & Anstice, the base is cast iron and the company also made a rat trap version.

Though mousetraps were made of wood first, metal stamping companies likely started making traps to use up metal scraps and have another product to sell.

"The names are interesting," Parr says, pointing to one of his favorites, the Iron Cat, patented in 1917 by Myron Twitchell. Adding to its value \$200 to \$300 is the brightly covered box with a black cat that the trap came in. He adds another one with an interesting name - Kitty Gotcha - that looked like a cat face made in different colors. They were made in the 1930's out of plastic and are worth about \$150.

The OWL, 1906 by William Hooker, had an interesting name and unique mechanism with the kill bar inside a sheet metal housing (\$150). It's one of the many ways inventors created different varieties of triggers. In 1924 W.A. Gibbs designed a double trap to catch mice going in both directions. It's valued at



Photos show examples of antique metal mousetraps that can bring in good money at auctions.

about \$150.

It's getting more difficult to find traps at antique stores, Parr says. But if you find one in your attic or barn, there are collectors who might be interested. The more unusual traps are worth \$50 to \$300. You can sell them on eBay (list them under Trapping) or contact Parr for information about the North American Trap Collectors Association. Call for reservations for a free tour of his museum,



which has a room dedicated to small traps among the more than 4,000 traps on display.

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