

Find Hidden Treasure In Farm Advertising Signs

Old farm advertising signs can be worth a small fortune, according to an article in a recent issue of "On Antiques & Collectibles", a newsletter for collectors, dealers and investors.

At an auction held last May in Iowa, farm advertising signs ranging from the 1880's to the 1960's were sold. Rich Penn, owner of Rich Penn Auctions in Iowa, had about 300 farm-related advertising signs up for sale. He says signs with eye-catching designs and graphics attracted lots of buyers and sold high.

The top seller was a J.I. Case "Eagle on a Globe" die-cut porcelain sign, which sold for \$11,550. Back in the 1930's and 40's, Case dealers used to display cast iron eagles like the one pictured in front of their dealerships. They're quite rare now.

A vintage Renk Dealer metal sign for Renk seed corn company sold for \$248. The sign features Kernel Renk, the cartoon mascot with a kernel-shaped head.

An embossed metal Wolverine Hybrids seed corn sign, made for Michigan Hybrid Seed Co., showed a wolverine walking on an ear of corn. It sold for \$495. An ad for Wilbur Seed Meal, showing a wooden feed store bin, sold for \$2,856.

Signs advertising pigs, sheep, and mules were popular, says Penn. For example, a 2-sided metal Chester Whites pig sign claiming "Large Meaty Litters" sold for \$330. An embossed porcelain sign advertising Elephant Brand fertilizer, showing an image of an elephant, sold for \$440. "The elephant sign has a cool look, and I think that's what attracts people," says Penn. "It's the feeling you get when you look at them. They make you smile. It has personality and that's what sells it."

Slight damage or wear didn't seem to affect prices too much. For example, there were BB-gun holes on one side of a Charolais beef cattle sign yet it still sold for \$880. A two-sided Brown Swiss Cattle sign, lightly scratched, sold for \$605.

"People are less bothered today about the condition of a piece of advertising," says Penn. "If there are dings, scuffs, scratches, or chips or bullet holes, it adds character. There are still collectors who won't buy anything unless it's near perfect, but a lot of people



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This bright yellow and red John Deere brand Waterloo Boy tractor dealership sign sold for \$2,090.

don't mind if a sign shows its wear. Most of these signs hung outside for a long time and they showed it."

Even without any illustrations, advertising signs for classic farm equipment manufacturers such as J.I. Case, John Deere or International Harvester attracted a lot of interest. For example, a bright yellow and red John Deere brand Waterloo Boy Tractor dealership sign sold for \$2,090.

Photos courtesy www.Kovels.com



Several years before he died, Floyd Axel Westling built his own wooden coffin to look like an old New York Central steam locomotive.

He Built His Own Train Engine Coffin

Floyd Axel Westling's passion for collecting and building trains and steam engine tractors is obvious. Several years before he died, he built his own wooden coffin to look like a train engine.

The detail was amazing, says Hugh McKinnon, a friend who was a pallbearer at Westling's funeral in Clive, Alberta, last summer.

The inside included real gauges and train parts and a window at the head of the coffin. The outside replicated a New York Central 3001 steam locomotive engine that was built in 1940.

For the graveside service, the casket was

pulled on a cart with a steam tractor that Westling had built and was driven by his son.

"It's truly a beautiful piece of workmanship. It was right up his alley to build the coffin," says McKinnon, who had seen the coffin stored in one of Westling's buildings. "He was a real train fanatic. He lived on a farm and had a well-equipped shop with big tools. He built a lot of stuff, including a John Deere tractor model and steam engines."

Westling, who worked as a locomotive fireman and boiler man in the oil fields, also built mini steam trains that was a popular attraction at Canadian shows.

FARM SHOW®



Heartland Assisted Living Center gives senior citizens a place to live in the country where they can enjoy animals and open spaces.

Assisted Living Facility Located On A Working Farm

When John Dubsky's grandfather, Bob, needed to move off his California ranch to an assisted living facility, he challenged John, a contractor, to build a place for senior citizens in the country where they could have animals and open spaces.

Though too late for Bob to enjoy, Dubsky took that wish to heart and opened Heartland Assisted Living Center in Roberts, Mont., in 2012.

"It's a working ranch," Dubsky says. "It's a whole different twist on assisted living."

A few head of Angus cattle, a couple of sows, a few horses, a flock of chickens, and other assorted animals share space with human clients on the 13-acre farm. Residents can gather eggs, feed calves, work in the garden and watch ranch chores as they choose. Or they can fish on the property's pond, golf on the mini course, swim in the lap pool, or work in the workshop. Some bring pets to live with them.

Heartland is a 10-bed, 10,000 sq. ft. facility. Many of the rooms have outside decks.

"The gratification is amazing," Dubsky says, noting that he finds satisfaction in being with residents in their last days, knowing he's helped to make the end of their lives better.

He would like to see similar facilities all over the country, but emphasizes that it is

costly to set up, and it's important to have a good team of attorneys. Much paperwork for certifications and licenses is involved.

The facility is certified for Medicare, insurance, Medicaid and self-pay.

"We take folks that need 24-hr. care and have Hospice services available," Dubsky says.

The business requires a lot of work. Dubsky has a few employees, but does much of the maintenance, caregiving and cooking himself in order to keep labor costs down and rates affordable. He emphasizes preparing good meals, including salmon, baby back ribs, and lobster, plus meats, eggs and vegetables grown on the farm.

Through recent media attention, Dubsky has had offers to buy the business. At 47, he may consider that in the future, but for now fulfilling his grandfather's desire is what he is meant to do, Dubsky says.

For ideas about what rural assisted living is all about, check out the website or Facebook page, Heartland Assisted Living, LLC.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Heartland Assisted Living Center, 8874 U.S. Hwy. 212, Roberts, Mont. 59070 (ph 406 861-9500; www.heartlandassistedliving.com; heartlandassistedliving@yahoo.com).



"It's a working ranch that offers a whole different twist on assisted living," says John Dubsky.