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JUNE 2008 \$4.50US \$5.50CAN



worthy contenders

The advice here can help you get an idea of an object's value, but for a true appraisal, you'll need a written estimate by an accredited expert (see Appraisal ABCs, following page), along with a detailed description of the methods used to determine the value.



Victorian lamp with hand-painted glass globe

■ **BACKSTORY:** Diane Winslow, 62, of Chevy Chase, Maryland, says her oil lamp, wired for electricity, sat in her grandmother's house for as long as she can remember. The globe is not original.

■ **WHAT THE PROS SAY:** "Known as a banquet lamp, this gilt-metal and onyx fixture was made in the U.S. around 1880 and is worth \$900," says George Evans (see The Experts, right). Sheryl Muzzillo and Jim Antone both put its value lower, from \$100 to \$350. "Because it was converted to electric, and since the globe isn't original, it wouldn't appeal to a serious collector," says Muzzillo.

■ **THE VERDICT:** Sell it. It's unlikely to appreciate in value.



crystal and brass chandelier

■ **BACKSTORY:** Julie Sadowski, 46, of Suffern, New York, sent in a picture of this late-1960s light fixture.

■ **WHAT THE PROS SAY:** "This is a reproduction of a Louis XV chandelier," says Karen Keane. "With many decorative objects, the value reflects the taste of the times, and since this fussy style is out of fashion, it would get only about \$500 to \$600 at auction."

"Lamps like this offered style without a big price tag and are better in quality than similar ones being produced today," says Evans. "It's worth holding on to."

■ **THE VERDICT:** Keep it. It might be a valuable antique someday.



Empire-style desk

■ **BACKSTORY:** This desk, submitted by Diane Herbsman, 62, of Independence, Missouri, was handed down to her mother from her grandmother. It has a top drawer that drops down to reveal a work surface.

■ **WHAT THE PROS SAY:** With its gracious curves, this 1890s mahogany butler's desk is a classic example of the Empire style. Says Antone, "It's probably from Philadelphia," which was a center of American furniture making from before the Revolutionary War to the end of the 19th century. "It is worth about \$750 to \$850 and should rise in value over the next 10 years," says Antone.

■ **THE VERDICT:** Keep it. Empire pieces will continue to be desirable and will probably appreciate.

THE EXPERTS

Jim Antone is an appraiser and the owner of Pleasant Cove Antiques, in Jacksonville, Florida.

George Evans, an antiques expert, owns Bond & Bowery, an antiques Web marketplace.

Karen Keane is the CEO of Skinner, an auction house in Boston.

Terry Kovel is a coauthor of *Kovels' Antiques & Collectibles Price List 2008* (\$28, www.kovels.com).

Susan Bednar Long and **Christina Sullivan** are the principals of Tocar Interior Design, in New York City.

Peggy Maraschiello owns River Wind Antiques and Appraisals, in Deep River, Connecticut.

Sheryl Muzzillo is an antiques dealer in Prospect, Connecticut.



tabletop pinball machine

■ **BACKSTORY:** This game, owned by Lisa Barnes, 46, of Upper Sandusky, Ohio, takes nickels and works like a charm.

■ **WHAT THE PROS SAY:** "You have a Lucky Strike game from the 1930s or 40s. Collectors would kill for it!" says Susan Bednar Long, who values the piece between \$600 and \$1,200. "Many bars and restaurants during this time period made extra money by offering games of chance for patrons," says Terry Kovel. "Although the item says, THIS IS NOT A GAMBLING MACHINE, stores and bars sometimes rewarded high scores with drinks, cigarettes, or money."

■ **THE VERDICT:** Keep it. It will probably gain in value over time.

appraisal ABCs

Do you have a hidden treasure? Find out by getting an appraisal, which will tell you more about an object and its origins. An auction house will often give a free verbal appraisal if you're interested in having the auction house sell the item (it typically takes a 10 to 25 percent cut). Independent appraisers offer written estimates and charge \$75 to \$250 an hour. A good appraiser will have a list of clients she has worked with (check references) and be certified by an accredited association. To find a pro, visit www.appraisers.org/findappraiser.



lover's knot

■ **BACKSTORY:** This hand-designed love letter, dated December 1801, was submitted by Meg Schultz, 49, of Mount Laurel, New Jersey, who says it was made for her great-great-great-grandmother by an admirer.

■ **WHAT THE PROS SAY:** "This is a lover's knot, a large, colorfully decorated sheet of paper that was the origins of today's valentine and often used as a marriage proposal," says Bednar Long. "It could be worth thousands, but it probably has more sentimental value." Antone disagrees, saying it "belongs in a museum." He estimates its worth at tens of thousands of dollars.

■ **THE VERDICT:** Keep it, as it has such a rich family history. Or consider lending it to a museum.

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Yard sale 101

We all have junk that needs to be unloaded. Learn how to host a tag sale at www.realsimple.com/tag-sale.