AMERICANA: EVEN CLAY HAS ITS DAY

Want Local Pottery? Bring The Bucks

By PRESTON KNIGHT
Daily News Record (Harrisonburg, Virginia)
Thursday, May 2, 2013

MOUNT CRAWFORD — Rudolph Evers served a buffet at his family restaurant while compiling quite the potpourri of pottery at his home.

His collection of clay creations can be yours this summer for an estimated $75,000, or a tad more than a pair of redware cats that just sold for $73,000 at a Winchester auction.

In the business world of auctioning off Shenandoah Valley pottery, a piece of Americana doesn't come cheaply.

Jeffrey S. Evans, whose auction company on Green Valley Lane bears his name, specializes in pottery. Rockingham County-made pieces are always popular items, he said, and he thinks Evers' collection could fetch about $75,000 on June 22.

On that date, Evans will hold one of his biannual "Americana" sales, including the former restaurateur's pottery collection.

Evers, 82, once operated Evers Family Restaurant on U.S. 11 in Mount Crawford. He died in October.

The county had many high-quality clay sources and demand for pottery was high, making the area a hot spot for pottery in the 1800s, particularly after the Civil War, Evans said.

Collectors will travel from several states away — if bidding over the Internet doesn't suit them — to grab a piece of Americana at an auction, he said.

Evers' collection features more than 20 pieces from "prolific" local potter Emanuel Suter, Evans said. They include some "cream of the crop" decorative pieces, he said.

Still, Evans' estimate for the pieces would yield only slightly more than what Winchester auctioneer Joe Headley Jr. got out of a pair of clay cats during an auction April 11.

The cats were from noted Strasburg potter Solomon Bell. Strasburg once proudly labeled itself "Pot Town."

www.jeffreysevans.com
The cats, Headley said, are “certainly in the top two or three” prices paid for pieces of Strasburg pottery. They had been on display at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Winchester since 2005.

The pieces date to 1845.

They're kind of one of a kind," said Headley, whose family owned the pottery for about a century. “There may be other ones out there, but they’ve never come to public auction before. ... Nobody’s ever seen a pair like these before.”

Strasburg pottery "transcends" Rockingham County works because many potters moved to the town to perform their craft, Evans said.

“Collectors all want a piece,” he said.

But Rockingham County pieces aren't rubbish. The highest-priced local piece that Evans has sold went for $58,000 a decade ago, he said.

“It was a real community. There was a lot of going back and forth [among potters],” he said of pottery's heyday in the county. “Pieces still turn up that hadn't been seen before.”

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A registrar staffs the front desk Monday at Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates auction house in Mount Crawford, where pieces by Rockingham County potter Emanuel Suter are on display. A collection featuring Suter's pottery will be up for auction June 22.