

LET'S TALK VALUE...

Over the past few years, I've enjoyed seeing postings on the MDHMA email platform of horse drawn vehicles for sale. I am very glad that folks know of us and are using our platform to advertise these items. I also feel that our membership, as they have done in the past, contribute well of information on said items and help spread the word about them; we all have experiences to share and sometimes know someone who knows someone who is in the market.

I am often asked about the value of horse drawn vehicles so I thought I'd share some of my experience in this arena.

Value of such items is variable and often a moving target. Value can be determined in different ways...

MARKET VALUE varies widely from region to region and whether the sale is a private, person-to-person sale or the item is sold at an auction. In my mind, the general economy at the moment and the socio-economic factors of a region are the variables that drive local market values.

NOSTALGIA and EMOTION tend to raise expectations of the seller which are rarely met by buyers.

COST of REPAIR and RESTORATION of a wagon is a real and fixed value...whether it's done by the seller prior to sale or to be done by the buyer post-sale, but is only met if the right buyer is in attendance at an auction or if it doesn't exceed market value of the region it's being advertised in.

I've seen many wagons with a set minimum auction price get pulled from the sale for failure of buyers to meet that minimum. It is my experience that beautifully restored and unique wagons generally only sell for their actual value of restoration costs plus perceived unique value if they are sold via person-to-person sales. These sales can take a very long time to achieve because the seller, through marketing, must find that one buyer who has both need, desire and the financial ability. The bottom line is...an item is only worth what someone is willing to pay. I've seen many beautiful wagons sell for vastly less than both perceived and real values because there simply wasn't the right buyer present and the seller had to accept what they were offered for what ever reason.

At the Small Farmer Journal Auction one year in Oregon, I witnessed a beautifully restored collection of antique John Deere tractors sell for a disastrous pittance because there simply were not the right buyers present and (for what ever reason) the seller had to sell no matter what bid he got. The buyers on the other hand were ecstatic at their good fortune.

Auction values in particular are a moving target as they can be affected by time of year, region, the economy and (simply stated) by marketing and whether or not they get attendance.

A single unique and perceived valuable item can bring in a premium price at auction IF it's the only one in the sale and IF more than one person is bidding on it. I've seen beautiful and unique wagons sell for very little because more than one of the same item was in the sale and because there was really only one interested buyer in attendance; i.e. supply exceeded demand. The other buyers simply took advantage of a great deal. Likewise, if you're attempting to sell a wagon in an area where horse ownership is not widespread, it'll be difficult to find that one motivated buyer.

I once attended an auction in California where three very nice Chuck Wagons were on the block. Many of us could see what was about to happen; too many Chuck Wagons and not enough motivated buyers.

All three sold for well under perceived value. Compare that situation to another Small Farmer Journal Auction where three Sheep Camp Wagons were on the block. Of the three, only one was in beautiful condition and the other two yet needed repair and restoration. The former sold for its perceived value but only a little over the minimum bid that was set...the latter two sold for very little. This means that only one motivated buyer was present to meet the minimum set bid amount. The other two Sheep Camp wagons sold for very little even though they were unique and antiques. I have seen so many antique wagons, buggies, carriages, carts and implements that needed some level of restoration languish because their perceived value was set much too high in a market that didn't support the price tag.

Recently, Susan and I attended a local estate sale...mostly tools, equipment, guns and household items. However we saw a nice Runabout buggy on the consignment list; it was virtually the only horse related item in the sale. So we went and watched. We got lucky. When it came up on the block, other buyers were not motivated and we ended up with a nice deal based on my experience in this market area.

Regarding value... in person-to-person sales, antique/market values, restoration real values, perceived and emotional values can only be realized if that one motivated buyer is found. In auctions, however, it takes more than one motivated buyer and an absence of comparable options.

What if YOU are interested in selling a horse drawn conveyance?

Ask yourself two questions: 1) Do I need to sell it for some reason? 2) Or, am I simply fishing for that one buyer who is motivated to buy it at a premium price.

In the first instance, I'd recommend you to first advertise it for a person-to-person sale. If that is not successful in the time allotted, then consider an auction. You may not have a choice on which auction to use...but if you do, research market values in your state and try to choose a specific horse equipment auction vs a general auction.

If you are simply fishing for a sale to match your perceived high-end value... I suggest that you not waste an auctioneer's time. I recommend you limit your attempts to on-line and social media marketing.

I enjoy seeing all the interesting horse drawn vehicles that are posted on our platform and I truly wish the best for every seller. Likewise, I love it when a smart shopper understands the variables in value, is patient and ends up getting a sweet deal on a vehicle that they'll enjoy greatly.

As I often relate to people, this passion for driving horses (for us) is a three-part hobby; 1) The horses. 2) The horse drawn vehicles. And 3) the history that binds it all together.

Happy Trails,
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