

new venue new dealers new future

Flamboro moves forward in 2008

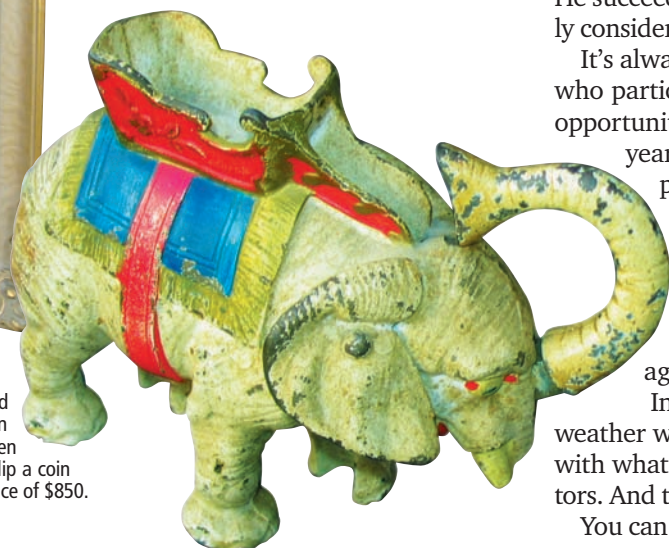
by J. Herbert Bond

In from Toronto, Robert Suriano and his son buy and sell antiques but also repair or refinish as needed. Shown here, a 1920s dresser, with original mirror and original hardware, untouched condition, \$1,700.

Allan Goudie of Touched by Time Antiques in Fergus hadn't done Flamboro in a while and decided to come back, particularly for the indoor space. Amongst many interesting things, he featured numerous pieces of fine art including, above, this oil-on-canvas by Joseph Paulmann, an English painter, active at the end of the 19th century into the first quarter of 20th century. It was \$950.



Locke & MacKenzie of Renfrew, Ontario displayed this American made cast iron mechanical bank in the form of an elephant. Manufactured between 1880 and 1900, the tail and trunk operated to flip a coin into the slot. Good original paint with asking price of \$850.



SOMETIMES SHAKING THINGS UP IS just what a business needs. And making the change proactively, even if it involves a lot of work, gives you control over both the plan and the outcome.

That's just what Bill Hogan and recent partner Jon Medley of Flamboro Antique Shows did starting with their July 5, 2008 event. By moving their southern Ontario show venue from the Aberfoyle Antique Market fields to the Milton Fairgrounds, they added both focus and indoor space to their outdoor setting. This allowed them to attract a significant number of new dealers, some of which had not exhibited for years – for example, Allan Goudie of Touched by Time Antiques in Fergus hadn't done Flamboro in a while yet decided to come back to experience the new venue – and others who had never participated in this annual event. The promoters, the dealers (the total seemed like 110-120 by my count), and the folks who came to buy benefited from an easy-to-find location, a little bit country yet a little bit urban setting, betwixt major highways, well-signed along all major thoroughfares, and also just that little bit closer to Toronto.

From my perspective walking through the show, it seemed that both the quantity and quality had not just improved, but changed along with the venue. To me, it separated the event from the confusion sometimes attached due to the previous location: were you at the show or the market? Don't get me wrong – I like the Aberfoyle Antiques Market, visiting and buying often from various vendors. I'm just saying that with Flamboro's move, this year's show managed to remain low-key and friendly like the market, yet it also had focus and gravitas – you will see some serious pieces, at serious prices, in the photos. This, to me, is a major shift.

The most significant physical change was the mix of indoor and outdoor display space. Stepping out of the hot sun and into the shade was indeed a plus, and the cool breezes blowing gently through the buildings brought a welcome respite. Taken together, the inside/outside flow seemed to make a mark with everyone. While many of the outdoor stands featured large pieces of Canadiana, along with much more of course, the freestanding buildings dotting the grounds showcased numerous new dealers with offerings not typically seen at Flamboro in recent history. Silver, formal furniture, serious fine art, glass, china and ceramics, toys, decorative items, fragile smalls and more were on display inside. Childhood Memories from Halton Hills was just one of the 'first timers' at the show, commenting that it was "a good event", with "a good selection of product" overall, and they were very impressed and pleased to be among such company. Ross Morrow Antiques of Toronto, Ontario – also a first timer for the show – displayed the variety of excellent carriage-trade silver for which they are well regarded. Ross was attracted by the indoor booth space he grabbed, but also commented that he liked the set up of the show outside too, because "it was not on a rigid grid," explaining that when you turned a corner, you were often surprised by a booth or interesting item right in front of you. Other inside vendors included Brewster's, offering a huge display of sterling silver flatware in sets and individual pieces with prices starting at just \$20; Walt Leminski with his depression glass; and Wray Martin, who does not do outdoor shows, came specifically because of the indoor availability.

It's been said that you make your own luck. Often, it comes from seeing an opportunity and executing through simple hard work. A consistent unsolicited comment we heard from many dealers was that the reason they came to the show was due to the diligent recruitment efforts of Jon Medley. A young guy – but one who has, as an auctioneer, been around for more than a few years before adding shows to his repertoire through this recent partnership with Bill Hogan – Jon made a point of bumping into dealers at other shows, making cold calls, and sending letters inviting dealers to participate in, and benefit from, this year's changes. He succeeded – we heard it from the dealers, many of whom had never previously considered an outdoor show.

It's always a risk to change a long-time venue – Bill and Jon, and every dealer who participated, deserve recognition for taking that risk, and managing their opportunity well. People were buying, yet as many dealers mentioned, in the first year you expect to work a bit harder, and, in fact, at any show it's not simply what you sell on the day that counts, but the relationships you build, which come back in subsequent phone calls or visits to the shop. Shows are not just about what you sell on the day, it's how you expand the exposure of your face-to-face advertising. (In my marketing consulting practice, I would be asking dealers if they had considered a bounce-back promotion – like major marketers do – to encourage post-show sales.)

In any case, the outside stands had the benefit of welcoming summer weather while the dealers with inside spaces highly valued being out of the sun with what were, often, objects more sensitive to exposure. Great buys for collectors. And the dealers we specifically asked said they would be back.

You can check out this new venue again at the fall show October 4.