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Thousands line up for 'Antiques Roadshow'

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ZACH BENOIT Of The Gazette Staff | Posted: Saturday, June 26, 2010 5:01 pm | (5) Comments

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People talk over their items with appraisers at the Antiques Roadshow at MetraPark Saturday, June 26, 2010.

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Details

The episodes of “Antiques Roadshow” taped in Billings will air on PBS sometime between January and May of 2011. Three episodes will be produced from the taping and will be part of the 20-episode 2011 season.

pbs.org/antiques

By the numbers

10,763 and 6,000 — The number of people who applied for tickets to Saturday’s taping and the number who received them

10,000 to 12,000 — The number of objects appraisers expected to see Saturday

\$1.07 million —The highest appraisal the show has ever seen, for a set of 300-year-old Chinese carved jade objects.

110 — The number of area volunteers who helped out with “Antiques Roadshow” in Billings.

Bob Murphy came away from Saturday’s “Antiques Roadshow” taping in Billings quite pleased with the results.

A folk art collector from Albion, Idaho, Murphy and his wife drove seven hours to Billings to have a few items appraised by experts at the traveling television show. Among those items was an old wooden birdcage, built in 1882, they picked up a few years ago at a used furniture store for \$175.

An appraiser at Saturday’s show told him the cage was worth between \$4,000 and \$5,000. The show’s producers also decided to tape the appraisal, which could be included in one of three episodes scheduled to air early next year.

“I was hoping it’s worth \$800,000,” Murphy joked. “But absolutely, I’m happy with how it turned out. Now, it’ll go back to its place in our house.”

“Antiques Roadshow” is PBS’s top-rated primetime show and draws about 10 million weekly viewers.

The popular TV show brings about 75 appraisers to cities around the country and people bring in their objects — including such items as old guns, jewelry, furniture and toys — to find out how much they're worth.

Billings was the second stop on a six-city tour for the show's 2011 season.

"This is a great, big country and people's stuff has feet," said Marsha Bemko, the show's executive producer. "People who settled this area came from back east and they brought a lot of these objects with them. It would be great to discover an American treasure that way."

The event was originally scheduled to start in the Rimrock Auto Arena at MetraPark, but when a June 20 tornado tore through the arena, the show's crew and Metra officials scrambled to make other arrangements.

Saturday morning, hundreds of people lined up at the Montana Pavilion, waiting for the chance to head over to the Expo Center and show off their goods to the appraisers. One of those people, Cindie Tenneson, of Helena, brought in an 1800s muzzleloader rifle owned by her father.

"We want to know the history of it," she said while waiting in line.

Once they got into the expo center, people brought their items into a large, brightly lit area set up with television cameras and areas for specific item types. The appraisers would take a look at people's items and, if something was interesting or valuable enough, they'd let producers know it would be good for taping before telling the owner its value.

Most of the items brought in by the thousands of people who attended throughout the day won't be worth much, but there are always a few gems, like Murphy's birdcage.

"Most that we see is worth well under \$500," Bemko said. "In about half of the cities we go to, we don't see any six-figure items."

Producers expected to tape about 90 of the appraisals, about 50 of which will probably be aired. In Montana, they expect to see plenty of Native American items, as well as old cowboy gear. And, of course, there are always surprises.

"You're always hoping for that priceless item," said tribal arts appraiser John Buxton. "That's the great thing about the 'Antiques Roadshow' — it's like going fishing and knowing you're going to catch something every time."

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