

AUCTION

THE
Unbelievable

ESTATE OF RICHARD I. POTTER

Saturday December, 1st 2012
Grandville, Michigan



Just the facts...

- **Total time and effort for initial write-up:**

5 people - 10 hours a day - 4.5 days

- **The family alerted to a possible bomb - 4 county officers, 2 FBI agents and a Bomb Squad truck showed up. The "Bomb" found its way to a military installation in Aberdeen, MD.**

- **The auction was the most viewed auction in Michigan for 2 weeks and 6 days nationally**

- **Golden Gavel was the Michigan 'Auctioneer of the Week' 3 straight weeks, Number 7 most viewed auctioneer nationally for 7 days and the 2nd most viewed auctioneer nationally for 7 days.**

- **Total set-up**

4 1/2 weeks - 2 skid loaders - 1 dumpster - 4-6 people per day - 6 days a week

- **30 bidders were registered at the open house for real estate**

- **213 bidders pre-registered for the auction preview.**

- **In total 1050 people were registered from Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, New York, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky and Canada.**

- **7 auctioneers worked the auction.**

- **21 total people were on staff auction day.**

- **In all we sold 1874 lots in 3 rings from 10 am to 4:30 pm with a 30 minute recess for real estate. Approximately 300 lots an hour.**

- **As an afterthought, \$17,000 worth of scrap iron was sold**

- **The Real Estate was auctioned in a multi-parcel format in 3 lots - The high bid was held at one time or another by 4 separate combinations.**

- **After buyer's premium the auction totaled approximately \$165,000.00**

- **After buyer's premium the real estate totaled approximately \$235,000.00**

- **We quadrupled the seller expectations on the personal property.**

- **Our company expectations were almost doubled...and I'm usually a pretty good estimator.**

- **We exceeded the seller expectations on the real estate by about 30%**

- **Our pre-auction estimate was exceeded by 10% in regards to real estate.**

AUCTION

The *Unbelievable* Estate of Richard I. Potter

We were contacted In Mid-October by the Potter family for the possibility of conducting an estate auction for their late father. After the initial visit and a few days for the family to make a decision we signed the contract and went immediately to work.

The Write-up & Discovery

On the 19th of October preliminary photos were taken to get the auction online immediately. Originally 151 photos were taken, yet they did not portray the enormity of the situation...it just looked like a lot of stuff!

On October 22nd we went about the monumental task of photographing and cataloging the merchandise for advertising purposes. The items were collected in 2 large barns that consisted of 9 large rooms, one 24x40 chicken coop, a grainary, a well house, two 24' trailers, 2 campers, the house and 5 small sheds built for storage purposes. In addition to the items stored inside and under cover, the grounds consisted of approximately 4 acres with rows of merchandise...much of it covered and intertwined with vegetation.

Many items had to be excavated from beneath piles of more items.

**Total time and effort for initial write-up:
5 people - 10 hours a day - 4.5 days**



Removing a 1956 Triumph custom 600



This 1931 Ford Model A hadn't left the barn in over 40 years!



Clean items take the best pictures...over 150 items were washed before pictured

The BOMB!

At the end of the second day of write-up, one of the family members posed a question:

“Do you know how to take care of a bomb?”

The story was shared with us and the family member produced a funny looking container labeled ‘Mustard Gas bomb’. The next morning one of our staff members was asked if his son, who is a policeman, could be asked a question “off the record”. He said he thought so and made the phone call, within 20 minutes 2 county cruisers and 4 officers were on scene...the FBI arrived 10 minutes later.

After several phone calls with the State Police, who were in contact with the Navy, the Bomb Squad arrived.

The canister was X-rayed and sent to Aberdeen, Maryland for educational purposes, it was empty but had been a storage container for Mustard Gas.



Employee Barb posing in front of the Bomb Squad truck.



The culprit. This small container once held mustard gas chemicals, it now resides in Aberdeen, MD

Lots of merchandise...Richard I. Potter had a good eye!

During the time spent on the Potter estate we were under constant “attack” from people interested in the auction. Almost from day one people were stopping by to take an early peak. Each and every person that stopped in could scarcely contain their sheer amazement of the volume of items in many categories.

For advertisement and set-up we broke the auction into several categories:

81 Vintage motorcycles

75 Vintage snowmobiles

10 Vintage Automobiles

10 Vintage Tractors

134 Outboard Motors

15 pieces of Horse drawn Equipment

14 Trailers

25 Firearms

6 ATV's

40 Lawnmowers

12 Boats

42 Engine blocks

14 tables of Motorcycle parts

12 tables of Antiques

8 Wagons of Tools

Large amount of Scrap Iron

And let's not forget:

22 acres of prime Real Estate in a GREAT market!

Advertising

Having such a range of items and volume of items is a great blessing...it also creates a unique opportunity:

Marketing to so many groups

Circulated print advertising

Still a staple of our ad campaigns is good old newspaper advertising: Ads ran 2 weeks prior and 1 week prior in The Grand Rapids Press, Advance Newspapers, Flashes Publishers and of course The Auction Exchange.

Brochures

We circulated 2000 printed brochures in an approximate 45 mile radius in local coffee shops, restaurants, gas stations and places of business. In addition approximately 400 brochures found their way through the mail, specifically targeted at vintage motorcycle and snowmobile shops.

We also delivered a number of flyers to Motorcycle shops in the Grand Rapids area...many times they already knew of the auction and planned on attending!

Standard Online

Our online presence started as every auctioneer's should, with Auctionzip. Our auction listings are hosted through auctionzip and our initial listing contained 380 photos, by the time of auction we exceed 450! We featured dozens of photos using the photo plus feature. To avoid confusion for people browsing the hundreds of photos, category markers were created and headed up each category.

We received several emails from prospective buyers thanking us for the comprehensive manner that the auction was listed.

We also specifically targeted vintage automobile buyers with an Old Cars Weekly online ad.

Networking and Social Media

There were several MSAA auctioneers assisting us on auction day that had auctionzip accounts, the Potter auction was shared with them through Auctionzip.

We used [FACEBOOK](#) extensively for this auction: ***Almost on a daily basis new items were added, especially new finds, and every individual involved with the auction was tagged, gaining a much wider group of people who saw the auction listing.***

The proof is in the pudding

As a direct result of the Richard Potter auction, our AuctionZip ranking were:

Auctioneer of the week - Michigan for 3 straight weeks

Our company was the most viewed in state for 21 days

Most viewed auction - Michigan for 2 straight weeks

Top 10 Most viewed auction company - Nationally (week before auction week)

Most viewed Auction and Auctioneer - Nationally 6 straight days before the auction

The screenshot shows the Michigan Auctions & Auctioneers website. The main content area is titled "With the following keyword(s):" and includes a search bar and a category dropdown set to "All Auction Categories". Below this is a "Top Five Most Viewed MI Auctions" section with four listings:

- Unbelievable Estate of Richard I. Potter**: Vander Kolk's Golden Gavel Auction Service, Sat Dec 1 - 10:00AM -- Grandville, MI. Auction items include vehicles, tractors, motorcycles, ATVs, guns, snowmobiles, trailers, tools, parts, and antiques.
- Large High End FARM TOY & TRUCK Auction**: Rollo A. Juckette & Brad Neuhart - Neuhart Auctioneering, Sat Dec 1 - 10:00AM -- Monroe, MI. A huge farm toy and truck auction at 10am in Monroe Co. Fairgrounds.
- Annual Braun and Helmer Auction Extravaganza**: Braun and Helmer Auction Service Inc., Sat Dec 1 - 10:00AM -- Ann Arbor, MI. A fantastic auction including vintage pinball, glass, coins, toys, airplane promos, and model collections.
- December Gallery Auction - Catalog now online**: Schmidt's Antiques Inc., Sat Dec 1 - 11:00AM -- Ypsilanti, MI. A catalog online for a Saturday auction at 11:00 a.m. featuring fine art, porcelain, and antiques.

On the right side, there are several promotional banners and a "This Weeks Top 10 Most Viewed MI Auctioneers" list:

- MI Auctioneer of the Week**: Vander Kolk's Golden Gavel Auction Service, 4229 34th St. Dorr, MI 49323 • ph. (616) 437-1047.
- This Weeks Top 10 Most Viewed MI Auctioneers**:
 - Vander Kolk's Golden Gavel Auction Service (Scott Vander Kolk Jr., Dorr, MI)
 - Braun and Helmer Auction Service Inc. (David Helmer, Saline, MI)
 - Tim Narhi Auctioneer & Associates (Tim Narhi, Byron, MI)
- CHINESE WORKS OF ART AUCTION**: LIVE! (Midwest Auction Galleries Inc., December 1st & 2nd - Oxford, MI)
- LARGE ASSORTMENT OF FARM & CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT**: Ron & Ray Tosch & Associates, Dec 1 - Marlette, MI.
- MICHIGAN STATE AUCTIONEERS ASSOCIATION** logo.

Set-up

The Potter estate presented many challenges in the way of set-up. Several buildings were full to the top with Merchandise. After our initial write-up phase we tackled the set-up.

The first thing we had to do was formulate a plan, after categorizing the different types of merchandise we decided where each group would go.

The outside: The property was 22 acres, but only about 4 were suited for setting up the auction. The first area we tackled was the outside. Two skid loaders were brought in to aid us in the clearing of about 2 acres of scrub trees, weeds, random crates and any miscellaneous items you can imagine. We removed approximately 15 large trees. After obtaining a burn permit, the fire never went out for 4 straight weeks.

Not only did we need to make room for merchandise, but the property needed to be made attractive for auction.

Buildings: We tackled the buildings, trailers and sheds one by one, identifying new merchandise, cleaning, categorizing and putting many items in easily accessible storage areas.

Total set-up

4 1/2 weeks - 2 skid loaders - 1 dumpster - 4-6 people per day - 6 days a week



Some things were easy to line-up, but a few tractors, including these were a part of the landscape...in all 6 tractors were pulled from the deep brush.



This area contained 4 cars, 5 motorcycles and misc. Note the depth of the wheels in the dirt...40 years worth



This may not look like much, but underneath this pile is 17 motorcycles...about \$22,000 worth



This building contained 2 cars, 15 motorcycles, 2 snowmobiles, 2 lawnmowers, 3 wagons of tools... and that was just the first floor!



The inside of a typical trailer...12 motorcycles and lots of tools.



Hard to exactly say what's in here!



This mower was in the chicken coop, probably the first thing put in there. All the way to the back and buried under furniture...a squirt of ether and it started up!



Another dozen or so motorcycles.



In the basement of the barn, through a 36" doorway is where 27 snowmobiles were housed...along with tons of other stuff.



Farm fresh...free of it's 20 year resting place.



This upper deck (no stairs) contained 67 outboard motors!



Early on I received a phone call asking if we had boat gas tanks...umm yup!



Everywhere you looked were piles of things.



Vegetation had covered most of the outside items.



Top view of the middle of the large barn.

Open House & Auction Preview

On the Wednesday before the auction a real estate open house was held. 30 bidders were registered and approximately 50 people attended.

The day before the auction an auction preview took place, 213 bidders were registered...it was a madhouse! Most of the people in attendance to the preview thought the auction was that day.

AUCTION DAY

The auction took place on December 1st on an abnormally warm and beautiful day...conditions were perfect.

The Crowd

It seemed as though everyone who had heard about the auction came. Lines were long, tents were packed and people were everywhere.

In total 1050 people were registered from Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Missouri, New York, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky and Canada.

Parking - we had a 12 acre field to park in, it remained mostly full all day.

According to the person hired to document the auction for us there were cars along the road on both sides for 1.1 miles

3 enterprising neighbors were charging \$5 per car to park in their yard...all full!



3 Rings...No waiting

A special thanks to MSAA members: Kenny Lindsay, Lee Smittendorf, Joe Phillips and Doug Merritt for their assistance in conducting the auction.

Ring 1 - Scott Vander Kolk Jr. & Sr. - sold Snowmobiles, Motorcycles, ATV's, Automobiles, Tractors, Farm Equipment, Lawnmowers, Trailers, Campers, Boats, and Scrap Iron.

Ring 2 - Kenny Lindsay - sold guns and related, antiques, boat motors, books, parts and more parts.

Ring 3 - Joe Phillips and Doug Merritt - sold 8 wagons of tools

In all we sold 1874 lots in 3 rings from 10 am to 4:30 pm with a 30 minute recess for real estate. Approximately 300 lots an hour.



Scott Vander Kolk Jr.



Ken Lindsay & John Susland



Joe Phillips and Doug Merritt



Scott Vander Kolk Sr.

Prices

Prices were strong throughout the auction, from beginning to end. The items with the most interest was motorcycles...many went out-of-state. While selling the motorcycles, the auctioneer could not see the lot.

An after-thought was the scrap iron, but it was everywhere. The iron was arranged in piles during set-up and brought approximately \$17,000.00.

After buyer's premium the auction totaled approximately \$165,000.00

After buyer's premium the real estate totaled approximately \$235,000.00



We didn't know what to expect from this 40's custom camper... the floor was rotted through and so was the rest of it...it brought \$1210.00



The top selling motorcycle a 1956 Triumph custom bobber, it hadn't run in 20+ years, final price: \$4125.00



A NSU Quickly from the 50's, one can be purchased running and restored for around \$800...this one with seized engine realized \$1210.00



Lull Cutter with tag: Pre-sale estimate \$1000.00 Final price \$1540.00



It's hard to tell from the photo, but this Hudson Hornet had most of it's parts in the trunk, not to mention a raccoon had destroyed the interior. Pre-sale estimate \$4500.00 Final price\$5610.00



They don't exactly grow on trees. This ScatMobile made in Grand Rapids, MI realized a final bid of \$1430.00

Expectations

Expectations on such a large and diverse auction can be all over the place.

***We quadrupled the seller expectations on the personal property.
Our company expectations were almost doubled...and I'm usually a pretty good estimator.***

***We exceeded the seller expectations on the real estate by about 30%
Our pre-auction estimate was exceeded by 10% in regards to real estate.***

The potter family was helpful and gracious and very easy to work with, after the auction, family members thanked me and my staff...sometimes on multiple occasions.

"Thanks Again Scott and your whole crew! You have gone above and beyond what other auctioneers would have done! Too many to name but can't thank you enough for everyone's hard work!!! Dad was 88 and had let things run down. You have/are making it better than it has looked in years! Come the December 1st auction, I will again be proud to say I grew up there."

***On behalf of the entire Richard Potter Family
Many Thanks!
Tom Potter***



Before & After



Before & After



Before & After

