

Apprentice furniture
Weekly Times Column
By Warren Joel

This refers to those small pieces of furniture that are an exact replica of a normal piece of furniture, but only a fraction of the size. Now there are two theories behind this type of furniture and both make sense to me. The first and the most logical is, as the name implies, apprentice items. As a young furniture maker in the 19th century, where most of these items come from, you were not allowed to use the large and expensive timbers until you could demonstrate that you could master the skills required.

So these miniature pieces of furniture have all the same features as the full size items, tongue and groove, dove tailing, turning and carving and French polish. The second theory of this style of furniture is as a trade model. Sales men could travel from town to town with these small models with them to demonstrate the furniture they could make. Remember this is well before the days of photography, gloss magazine printing or the Internet.

Now if you are lucky enough to have one of these items they are highly collectable. If an Australian cedar chest of drawers sells at the moment for about the \$600 / \$800 mark the same item as a apprentice piece will bring 2 or 3 times as much.

The news only gets better: if that apprentice piece is made from a rarer Australian timber like Huon Pine from Tasmania and is pre 1880's then the price could be as high as \$10,000.

These small apprentice furniture items get used for all sorts of things, from jewellery boxes to keeping small items in, but they are high value collect items.

Next week: movie posters

Free Valuation for Weekly Times readers.

Byjoel will do a free valuation of your collectables via email. If you send a photo and description of your item to valuations@byjoel.com.au I will access the item and respond.

Warren Joel

Warren is a third generation auctioneer and valuer specialising in Art, Antiques and Collectables, accredited by the Commonwealth in 2002 different areas of collectables.

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