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Friday, 12/28/07

## Know Your Stuff: Arts and Crafts originals retain value *Style is 'breath of fresh air'*

By CONNIE SUE DAVENPORT  
For Williamson A.M.

**Dear Connie:** Could you help me price my Mission Oak Desk? I've seen it called a Library Desk on some online sites. The dimensions are 50½" left to right, 32" front to back and 29" tall. She is a beautiful desk, but it's time for someone else to enjoy her. I want to price it so it is fair to me and the buyer.

There are some "character marks." The right drawer handle is damaged. It does have some scratches. The bottom of one of the drawers is damaged. It isn't visible and it functions fine.

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The drawers and drawer

Contact Connie Sue Davenport with questions about your antiques and collectibles, and we'll discuss them here. Send to [curios@conniesueinc.com](mailto:curios@conniesueinc.com) or by mail in care of Williamson A.M.

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opening are numbered. I took a picture, but it isn't visible. It is a number imprinted onto the wood. — **Tim**

**Dear Tim:** You've sent great pictures to examine for the many factors that determine the value of a piece of furniture.

This appears to be a circa 1910 library table made in the Arts and Crafts style that includes furniture often described as Mission or Stickley. Quarter-sawn oak like your library table was the favored wood of the period, and the massive but simple look is further softened by stylized copper and brass pulls.

As you described, I can see the damage and repair of drawers, and this will likely lower the value considerably. The patina issues you mention are minimal and could be restored. Having the original finish with a few dents and scratches is preferable to a "refinished" piece. If the table is stable without any loose joints, I would offer it at \$2,000.

Many furniture collectors and decorators today consider the Arts and Crafts styles to be a breath of fresh air. They maintain the clean lines and adherence to basic workmanship is decoration enough and

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quite soothing to the eye. Louis Sullivan, the late 19th century architect of Chicago's tall steel skyscrapers, put into words the need to allow a building's purpose to dictate its design. Here is his original statement regarding what is now known as "form follows function."

"It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic,

Of all things physical and metaphysical,

Of all things human and all things super-human,

Of all true manifestations of the head,

Of the heart, of the soul,

That the life is recognizable in its expression,

That form ever follows function. This is the law."

This philosophy oozed into furniture styles as Arts and Crafts designers turned their back on unnecessary decoration and to celebrate the clean architectural forms of the 20th century. Two Englishmen, William Morris and Charles Locke Eastlake, introduced the need for restraint in decoration with an emphasis on medieval forms in furniture.

Frank Lloyd Wright took up the cause for proper form in architecture and interior design in U.S. cities. Gustav Stickley and

his brothers, Charles, Albert, John George and Leopold, led the way in designing furniture like your library table. Marked and perfect Gustav Stickley furniture sells in the tens of thousands. Pieces by other producers of the period including Lifetime, Limbert and Onondaga furniture sells from a few hundred to \$7,000.

This style is still being made with great pride or, sadly, very poorly. Prices for these reproductions should reflect their particular quality at estate sales and antique malls.

**Dear Connie:** We saw the articles in the Williamson A.M. concerning old telephones and just wanted to let you know that we have been dealing with old phones for over 30 years. We sell, re-wire and restore them. Our number is 790-1220. The wood wall phone you recently pictured is a Western Electric model 317. It has been modified for use in a railroad yard — hence the headset and the wood piece across the top where the bells were. It was used only for outgoing calls in the 1920s and 30s. — **Sincerely, Laurel Aita, Franklin**

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