Don't Throw These Out

Twelve things to look at twice before the dumpster comes. Every number is a real sale, with the place and the date.

Coffee cans and jars of coins — $159

Pour hardware cans out on a sheet. Coins go in an envelope, uncleaned. One sold: Group of more than 2500 circulated wheat cents, along with two 1909-VDB cents, two 1911-D ce... (Everything But The House, Online, November 2022)

A machinist's chest, even a greasy one — $525

Felt-lined drawers, a nameplate. Open every drawer. One sold: H. Gerstner & Sons personalized oak machinist tool box with tools, circa 1930s (Everything But The House, Online, January 2019)

Tools with a maker's name in the steel — $225

Starrett, Brown & Sharpe, Stanley. Read the stamp. One sold: Lot of Starrett machinist tools and gauges: dial indicators, calipers, depth micrometer set,... (Schmitt Horan & Co., May 2019)

Old cast iron with a name on the bottom — $650

Griswold and Wagner. Don't scrub it first. One sold: Griswold number 14 large block logo EPU cast iron skillet with heat ring, pattern number 718 (Air Works Consignment Auction, Millersburg, OH, February 2025)

Signs, oil cans, anything from a filling station — $650

Even with areas of loss. One sold: Skelly Products porcelain enamel sign, self-framed, 12 x 102.5 inches (Soulis Auctions, Lone Jack, MO, May 2020)

A railroad lantern with letters on it — $2,800

The letters are the first thing to read. One sold: Tall globe railroad lantern marked COLO. MID R.R., Handlan Buck Mfg Co., St. Louis (Soulis Auctions, Lone Jack, MO, March 2021)

Pocket watches, running or not — $450

Don't wind or open it. Read the dial. One sold: Hamilton model 992 railroad grade pocket watch, double sunk porcelain enamel dial (Soulis Auctions, Lone Jack, MO, June 2022)

Sterling flatware, even with a monogram — $4,270

Look for the word on the back of the handle. One sold: 128 piece Towle sterling silver flatware set (Nadeau's Auction Gallery, Windsor, CT, June 2025)

Old class rings and broken gold — $375

A ring in a drawer is still gold by the stamp. One sold: Two vintage 10k gold class rings: gent's Sanford Prep School dated 70 (Balfour) and ladies' ... (Soulis Auctions, Lone Jack, MO, April 2021)

A crock with blue on it — $540

Chips and all. Don't wash it. One sold: Three Cincinnati, Ohio stoneware crocks, circa 1880, stenciled cobalt inscription (Crocker Farm, Sparks, MD, April 2022)

Old quilts, torn or not — $590

Don't wash it. Fold it and set it aside. One sold: Antique circa 1870 indigo Pinwheel quilt (Dana Auctions, Princeton, NJ, July 2023)

Records, as a whole collection — $3,250

Don't split them yet. Keep them upright. One sold: Rock and Pop LP record and boxed set assortment, approximately 225 vinyl albums of various a... (Leonard Auction, Addison, IL, December 2024)

These are single sales, not what yours will bring. Plenty of the same things bring little. This is not an appraisal.

Eight things with no price at all

Nobody will ever bid on these, and you can’t get them back. Keep them out of the dumpster until somebody in the family has seen them.

- [ ] Anything in Dad’s handwriting: notebooks, letters, labels on jars
- [ ] The family Bible, with the record pages
- [ ] Photographs, with or without names on the back
- [ ] Savings bonds, deeds, titles and insurance policies
- [ ] Discharge papers and service records
- [ ] Keys, until you know what they open
- [ ] The recipe cards
- [ ] Tax papers, until the person in charge says they can go

Three things never to do

1. **Don’t clean it first.** Not a coin, not a crock, not a tool.
2. **Don’t take the first offer.** Sleep on it, and look up what the same thing sold for.
3. **Don’t let anything leave before the person with the legal right says so.** If you don’t know who that is, ask the estate’s attorney.

STOP

A gun: don’t handle it if you don’t know how. Assume it’s loaded, lock the room, call a licensed dealer and ask the estate’s attorney about the rules in your state. Ammunition, old fireworks, blasting caps: leave them, keep people away and call the local non-emergency police line. Old pills: use a take-back site.

THE REST OF IT

This list comes from **Clearing Dad’s House**, three digital books on the order to clear a house in, real sold prices, and dividing things fairly. It’s at clearhouse.org.