

What is a Salvage “teardown” Auction?

Written by Auctioneer Lyn Liechty – September 4, 2006

Simply put, a home or building salvage auction is nothing more than a form of recycling. Like anything else, man made structures have a life span. There comes a time they have outlived their usefulness and become obsolete. While the building may come down, there can be many components of the building that can and should be saved. Many times an older home will have been updated with new windows, siding, doors, heating systems, cupboards, and many other features. There may be beautiful architectural features, such as ornate fireplaces, solid wood doors with antique knobs & hinges, woodwork with the original finish or many other features, all with a rich history. Using the landfill for these items is the wrong solution!

Who Benefits?

Everyone benefits! The owner who decides to have a home salvage auction will reduce his landfill costs and put some cash in his pocket. It is normal for owners to have an emotional attachment and they often draw comfort from knowing the “character, heart and soul” of the home will be used and enjoyed by a new owner. A much better solution than taking up space and rotting in a landfill.

The builder or contractor has less work when it comes time for final demolition and can pass his savings on to the seller. Mr. Contractor; you have some great selling points here when securing that next builder’s contract. You can reduce Mr. Owner’s landfill costs and show him how he can put some cash in his pocket! Those are two powerful messages that are sure to help secure that contract!

The buyer of salvage material benefits by having the opportunity to purchase quality architectural features at a price he can ill afford to ignore. Some salvage buyers will buy in quantities and resell for a tidy profit. An added bonus is the fact that home salvage auctions are exciting to watch and participate in and just plain fun!

The general public benefits because anytime landfill usage can be reduced it is of positive benefit to the environment which is a positive thing for all of us. A win-win situation for everyone!

What can I buy?

Virtually whatever is available and whatever you have the ability to safely remove. This can be anything from copper piping and the furnace in the basement on up to insulation in the attic. Don’t be afraid to ask. We will be happy to tell you what can be sold.

Who will be bidding against me?

Landlords, salvage resellers, and people just like you who have a planned remodeling project to their home, cottage or cabin!

How do I participate?

Come prepared. It is not just your checkbook that the auctioneer is going to want to see. He wants to see a person; man or woman that comes prepared with the proper tools to remove his purchased items. He wants to see a person participating who is knowledgeable and has the ability to safely remove the items that are purchased. If you cannot safely remove the items you wish to buy, either do not participate or find yourself a qualified handyman that you can hire to assist you. Some items are easily removed while other items require a certain level of skill. Make sure you understand what is required prior to participating. Remember, all sales are final and there are no refunds.

Rules of the Road!

Make friends and enjoy the benefits of teamwork. After you have paid for your salvage purchases, here are some tips to make the process of removing your items.

Introduce yourself to the other buyers. This is an opportunity to meet new friends. People who may be willing to assist you if you can help them. Enjoy the camaraderie!

Take only what you purchased. Do not assume that just because an item remains unclaimed or unsold that it is yours for the taking. That other buyer will be back to get it or if it wasn't sold, that means the seller still has a need and has chosen to retain ownership.

Don't be afraid to ask. Conducting a home salvage auction is a very fast paced and intense event. We go from room to room and it is usually crowded and can be a bit noisy. It is not unusual for the auctioneer to walk right past an item you want that he didn't even think about. If you wish to bid on all of the wall outlets, get his attention and ask. Or if you are interested in bidding on all the copper piping in the crawl space, again, get the auctioneer's attention and ask. He probably didn't even think about it and will appreciate your bringing this to his attention.

Be Courteous and thoughtful. Basically what this means is if you need to shut the power off in order to remove that light fixture you just bought, check and make sure the other guy isn't deeply involved in removing the window he just bought and needs to have his power tools operating. Advise him of your needs and wait for your turn. It goes much smoother when we all work together.

Or another example; If you bought the oak flooring upstairs and perhaps the stair steps, you might want to wait until the people who bought the bedroom doors or the windows upstairs are done before you start to rip the floor and the stair steps out. Now that's courteous! It's also smart!

What do I need?

Proper tools for the tasks at hand, and the knowledge, talent and ability necessary to do remove your purchased items safely and efficiently. If this is not you, then you may not want to participate in a salvage auction or hire someone who does have the tools and the ability to safely remove your purchased items.

What Else?

Do not ask to buy or remove the electrical panel. I do not sell those for a specific purpose. You may need electricity available to remove your purchased salvage items.

Take your time; exercise care and caution. Cooperate and work with the other buyers. Be careful not to damage what someone else just bought. You would not want it done to you.

If you participate in a salvage auction, any risk or liability must be assumed by you. It is your responsibility to be careful, exercise due diligence and remove your purchases in a safe manner. If you cannot do this or are not willing to do so, then a salvage auction is not an option that you should even consider.

Lastly; enjoy the experience, the new and renewed friendships and feel good with the thought that not only have you picked up some real bargains, but you have done your part in preserving the environment we all live in and share. Say hello to my staff and me when you arrive and plan on an enjoyable auction! We will be glad to see you.

This and other published articles written by Auctioneer Lyn Liechty may be found at www.lynliechty.com and www.arealauction.com