

Kelbaugh's collections enhance history

"Every object has a story to tell," explains Ross Kelbaugh, history teacher at Catonsville Junior and an avid col-

lector of Americana.

Ross first caught the collecting bug as a sixth grader when he began

amassing Civil War materials. Over the ensuing 20 years, his interest has broadened to include the entire nineteenth century with special emphasis on collecting Maryland memorabilia.

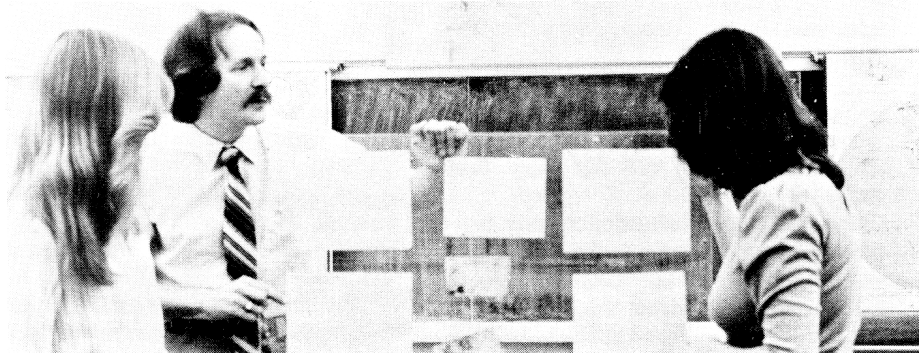
Currently, Mr. Kelbaugh boasts the only collection of Maryland coverlets, fancy woven bedspreads popular between 1830—1850. In September, the collector displayed examples of his collection and conducted a seminar on Maryland coverlets in conjunction with the textile department of the University of Maryland. A recognized expert in the field, Mr. Kelbaugh is often sought as an appraiser of coverlets.

Perhaps overshadowing his coverlet collection is his collection of antique photographs which includes the earliest known photograph of the Washington Monument and what may be the last photograph of Robert E. Lee taken before his death. He is currently at work on a book which will document the work of the over 300 photographers operating in Baltimore between 1840—1899. He will illustrate the book using selections from the thousands of period photographs he has collected and exhibited in various museums.

Admitting that he is a compulsive buyer, Mr. Kelbaugh has also become a seller in order to "support my collecting habit." The addiction to flea markets and auctions is strong, and Mr. Kelbaugh spends much of his spare time haunting such events in "the pursuit of the unknown."

Because he believes that history can best be studied through culture interpretation, Mr. Kelbaugh uses many objects he has collected to enrich his American history classes. For example a series of letters from two brothers fighting for the Union Army personalize the students' study of the Civil War. The letters will become part of the gifted and talented social studies curriculum which is currently being developed by a committee on which Mr. Kelbaugh serves.

Although he is always busy with research, writing, teaching and collecting, Ross Kelbaugh feels he is a lucky man. "My life is history. I can completely immerse myself in it and never be bored."



Ross Kelbaugh uses original Civil War letters in history class.