

Hammered Down

Experts discuss recent auction highlights

Judy Penz Sheluk

All prices are inclusive of buyer's premium.

Copley Fine Art Auctions

The Winter Sale 2011: Jan. 17, New York, NY



This is a rare and exceptional decoy by the famous maker Joseph W. Lincoln (1859-1938) from Accord, Mass. This decoy, created c. 1925, was found several decades ago in an antiques shop in Pennsylvania. It is believed to be the only full-size Lincoln mallard drake decoy in original paint that has come to light. During Lincoln's lifetime, wild mallard ducks were rare, and as such working mallard decoys are extremely scarce in any condition. This is without question one of the very best duck decoys by this maker to ever be offered for sale and may very well be his finest puddle duck to have survived. The Lincoln mallard sold for \$86,250 on a \$20,000-\$30,000 estimate.

Copley Fine Art Auctions LLC, 268 Newbury Street, Boston MA, 02116. 617-536-0030. www.copleyart.com.

About our expert: Stephen O'Brien, Jr.'s initial interest in sporting art grew out of an early introduction to the world of waterfowling and fly-fishing. O'Brien comes from a collecting family that spans four generations. Both his father, Stephen B. O'Brien, Sr., and his uncle, Donald C. O'Brien, Jr., are avid environmentalists and collectors of sporting paintings, antique decoys and folk art.

Over the past 20 years O'Brien has orchestrated two thriving businesses in the heart of Boston's Back Bay. Stephen O'Brien Jr. Fine Arts opened in 1997 and today is recognized as one of the finest sporting art galleries specializing in antique decoys and nineteenth- and twentieth-century American, sporting and wildlife paintings. In 2005, O'Brien founded Copley Fine Art Auctions, which quickly established itself as leading auction house for sporting art.



John Tax, Minnesota's most revered carver, is known foremost for his stick-up geese decoys. Designed to be placed in a field to attract passing Canada geese, the carver made stick-ups in three distinct poses: Feeding, nestling and sentinel. Only six of these rare forms were feeding, and each had different head, neck and body angles. Put together as a rig, the group had a truly lifelike appearance. The authentic and dynamic poses of Tax's geese are an important part of decoy history. This remarkably natural carving sold for \$115,000 on a \$40,000-\$60,000 estimate.



This pair of goldeneyes was commissioned by John Ware Willard, who, along with other eminent patrons such as Dr. John C. Phillips, Jr. and Harry V. Long, challenged the maker, A. Elmer Crowell, to reach new heights of artistry with his bird carvings. This hen and drake are early full-bodied hollow-carved decoys in a rare content, or tucked, head posture. They display raised and carved primary feathers, fluted tails, as well as soft stippled feather paint that places them among Crowell's finest working decoys. The pair passed into the collection of Dr. James M. McCleery, a noted decoy collector whose ink stamp can be seen as a stamp of approval for many carvings. The pair sold for \$109,250 on a \$40,000-\$60,000 estimate.

Keno Auctions

Sale 1003: Jan. 18, New York, NY



Descended directly in the family of Captain Adrian Post (d. 1677) of Bergen County, N.J., to the consignor, this painted tulip poplar spoon rack, probably Bergen County, c. 1737, is inscribed 'Ano 1737' and 'MDP' and measures h. 24 3/4 in., w. 8 3/4 in., d. 2 1/4 in. It sold for \$51,240 on a \$10,000 - \$20,000 estimate.

Since the carvings are based on Germanic and Dutch traditional forest carvings, Keno sent the spoon rack to Dr. Harry Alden, Alden Identification Service, for microanalysis to ensure the wood was American. The intricate carving would have spoken of the Post family's worth.

Previously unknown, and one of the most wonderfully carved spoon racks that has turned up, other fabulous details included the rose head nails "never moved since carved" and under the very old brown paint, vermilion red, true to the period.

"You wouldn't take off the brown paint, it has been on there so long," said Keno, "it is part of the spoon rack's archeology."

Five Boys at the Shore was purchased Dec. 22, 1880 during the first exhibition of Winslow Homer's (American 1836-1910) watercolors at Doll and Richards Gallery, Boston. A handwritten annotated copy of the original sale records - dated Dec. 1880 - still survives. An entry in the sales listing for Dec. 22, 1880 records Mrs. Henry Lee's purchase of "# 91," a watercolor for \$50. On the same day, her husband, Colonel Henry Lee, also purchased another watercolor, "#3," for \$50, and two pencil drawings for \$25 each. *Five Boys* remained in the family, by descent, and has not been exhibited since 1880. It sold for \$414,500.

Five Boys shows Homer at his best in portraying children, with a group of boys sitting on a seaside rock outcrop on a warm summer's day. But while *Five Boys* remains a familiar subject, it also represents a shift in his working process: He experimented with new colors, pigments and techniques during the summer of 1880. Here one can see the application of wide bands of color to create reductive, almost abstract spaces of rocks, sea and sky.

Also during 1880, Homer began painting transparent watercolor onto rough white paper, which can clearly be seen in *Five Boys*. His brushstrokes only came in contact with the raised portions of the sheet, allowing the white of the paper to shine through and suggest the shimmering effects of sunlight.



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This previously undocumented William and Mary veneered high chest of drawers, Boston, c. 1705-1720, is a rare and wonderful survival. It and one other example are the most fully developed veneered examples known. Only two other examples with veneered walnut moldings exist: A high chest at Bayou Bend and a high chest at Winterthur.

The main things that distinguish this high chest are that the cornice moldings and drawer surrounds are veneered (walnut) and that the piece has veneered figured panels (maple) not only on the drawer fronts but also on the sides. The veneered panels are enclosed by walnut-veneered herringbone and other banding. The base, primarily maple, is stained dark to look like ebony. "If the legs were cleaned up to reveal the creamy maple, the piece would have sold for about half of the \$317,200 realized...Surface is so important."

Where things turn up and the journey they take is also part of the magic. An apparently 19th-century inscription on the bottom of the bottom board reads 'hanover st.' (illegible). The top of the upper section is inscribed 'A. H. Wethey/ 312 Quartz St/ Butte Montana.' Keno discovered that Wethey was a mining engineer in Butte, c. 1900-1908. The chest of drawers, however, turned up at a small auction in Honolulu, Hawaii about 15 years ago. The consigner had a vacation home there, and recognized the piece as 'something good.' The underbidder was a local Hawaiian looking for a piece to decorate their home ...

Keno Auctions, 127 East 69th Street New York, NY 10021.
212-734-2381.
www.kenoauctions.com.

About our expert: Leigh Keno is president of Keno Auctions, a full-service auction house based in Manhattan. During the past 25 plus years, he has helped build some of the top institutional and private collections of American furniture, paintings and decorative arts in the world.

Leigh Keno's lifelong immersion in the world of art and decorative arts has made him one of the foremost experts in the field. He holds a B.A. in the history of art from Hamilton College, was a graduate fellow at Historic Deerfield and a visiting scholar at Winterthur Museum.

Leigh lectures throughout the country and appears regularly on the popular PBS television program *Antiques Roadshow*. In 1986, Leigh opened his gallery specializing in eighteenth to twentieth-century American furniture and decorative arts which he continued to operate until he founded Keno Auctions in 2009.

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Swann Auction Galleries

Sale 2235, Ocean Liner and Transportation Memorabilia: Feb. 3, New York, NY



Swann Auction Galleries, 104 East 25th Street, New York NY 10010. 212-254-4710. www.swannalleries.com.

About our expert: John G. Sayers has been a keen collector of ocean liner memorabilia for many years, particularly of Transatlantic travel. He has spoken frequently on this favorite topic to groups of collectors and historians in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, and also writes regularly about ocean liner and other ephemera for major antique and collector publications in these three countries.

John is a long-time member of the Ocean Liner Society, has just completed the maximum 6-year term on the Board of The Ephemera Society of America, and is on the Council of the British Ephemera Society and the Executive of The Toronto Postcard Club.

For More Hammered Down Highlights, visit Online Exclusive at www.antiques-journal.com.

When an auction house renowned for its leadership in poster auctions has an Ocean Liner auction, it's not surprising that the top lot would be an iconic ocean liner poster - one of the gorgeous Cassandre posters of French Line's legendary 1930s liner S.S. Normandie. Selling for \$16,800 on a \$15,000 - \$20,000 estimate, the delight of a trophy such as this 39 1/2 x 24 1/2-inch Cassandre Art Déco 1938 poster is that you can display it on your wall for all to see and even a person who is not an ocean liner aficionado will be blown away by it. That could be the reason why two other Normandie treasures - a Maiden Voyage certificate presented to the then-president of the French Line (estimated at \$5,000 - \$7,500) and a presentation book of 37 photos, silver prints in 8x11 inch format by Byron (estimated at \$8,000 to \$12,000), did not sell. They were purely for collectors rather than decorators, and the Normandie is an increasingly distant memory.



The auction wasn't all shipping-related. A number of lots of Zeppelin china brought back images of the tragedy of the Hindenburg at Lakehurst, N.J., which marked the end of the Zeppelin era, and recalled the numerous previously safe trips aboard graceful airships such as the Graf Zeppelin. Zeppelin collectors are a serious bunch, and Zeppelin material, their quarry, is scarce, elusive and expensive. A 1928 china cup and saucer by Heinrich, with Graf Zeppelin marked on the bottom and done in striking blue and gold with an LZ logo, soared to the top end of the \$1,200 - \$1,800 estimate when it hit \$1,800.



A significant group of material related to Commodore Harry Manning, captain of the S.S. United States - including a Maiden Voyage scrapbook and a plaque for winning the Blue Ribbon for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic - steamed past estimates of \$3,000 - \$4,000 to sell for \$6,000. This was clearly material for the serious collector, representing 'one of one' that could not be replicated. Further, it represented a proud ship on which many living Americans sailed in the 1950s and 1960s. There's a strong group of collectors who can identify with this marvel of ship design and engineering, and have fond memories of her.

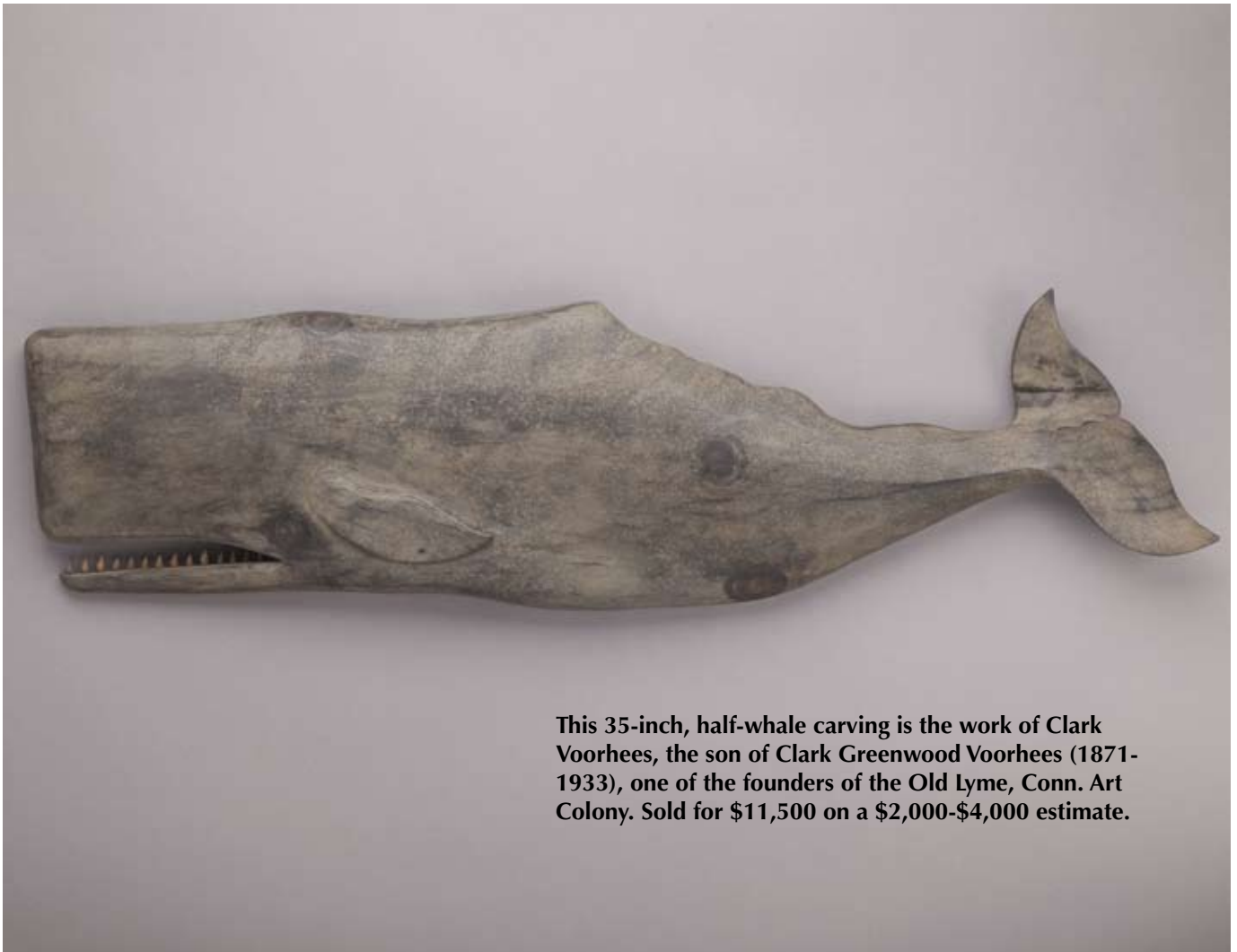
More Hammered Down Highlights

Judy Penz Sheluk

All prices are inclusive of buyer's premium

Copley Fine Art Auctions

The Winter Sale 2011: Jan. 17, New York, NY



This 35-inch, half-whale carving is the work of Clark Voorhees, the son of Clark Greenwood Voorhees (1871-1933), one of the founders of the Old Lyme, Conn. Art Colony. Sold for \$11,500 on a \$2,000-\$4,000 estimate.

Stephen O'Brien, Jr., Copley Fine Art Auctions, told us that Clark Voorhees enlisted the aid of Wildfowler decoy founder, Ted Mulliken, in nearby Old Saybrook, Conn. to initially aid in the carving of his whales. His whale carving business was later moved to its permanent home in Vermont. His marine mammal carvings are best known for being sold through the Four Winds Craft Guild on Nantucket. This sperm whale is signed on the back with his stylized "CV" incised signature.

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Keno Auctions

Sale 1003: Jan. 18, New York, NY



Andrew Wyeth (1917-2009). Sketch of the Olson house and farm, Cushing, Maine. Wyeth was introduced to Cushing, Maine, and to Christina Olson and her brother Alvaro by his future wife, Betsy, whom he married in 1940. This sketch may be one of the earliest images of this iconic site, which later appears in *Christina's World*. On verso: pen and ink sketch of a hunter in a dory. 8 3/4 by 12 in. Sold for \$41,480 on a \$20,000-\$40,000 estimate.

The sketchbook dates to c. 1939 - 1940. Only one sketch is dated - towards the end of the sketch book: It is titled 'Betsy' and dated 1940. The sketches of the second Baptist 'Ridge' Church, in Martinsville (actually Glenmere), Maine were done during the renovation project which dates to 1939. It is also in 1939 that Andrew Wyeth ventured to Cushing, Maine whereupon he sketched at Broad Cove.

Leigh Keno told us that this sketchbook has survived in the family of Forrest Lee Davis (1899-1987). Forrest Davis's cousin, Levi Hupper (1917-1991), was a close companion of Andrew Wyeth. According to the memories of family members, the sketchbook was housed in the Davis house on the bookshelf. Many pages of the sketchbook were removed in the 1950s when a member of the family returning from serving in World War II decided that some of the works could be framed and hung upon the walls in his first apartment.

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Swann Auction Galleries

Sale 2235, Ocean Liner and
Transportation Memorabilia: Feb. 3,
New York, NY

Ocean liner expert, John G. Sayers, noted the irony of Lot 382, a 36 3/4 x 23 1/2-inch framed poster - in German - featuring the S.S. Leviathan of the United States Lines. The irony is that the S.S. Leviathan was originally built in Germany as the German liner, Vaterland, which went into service in 1914. Before the year was out, war had broken out and she was interned in New York, later seized in 1917 and as the U.S.S. Leviathan served as an American First War troopship. At well over 50,000GRT, she vied for the title of largest ship in the world. She went into passenger service in 1923, and selling passage on her to German travelers with a memory of their country's prewar ocean giant should have been easy.

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212-254-4710. www.swanngalleries.com*

Color lithographed poster on board, "S.S. Leviathan. Der grösste dampfer der Welt." A fascinating poster, in German, of a German ship, taken as First War reparations by the United States, and sailing for United States Lines. Sold for \$1,140 on an \$800-\$1,200 estimate.

