

New Haven Auctions, New Haven, Connecticut

Two-Day Auction of Folk Art, Fine Art, and Antiques

by Frances McQueeney-Jones Mascolo
Photos courtesy New Haven Auctions

The gallery at New Haven Auctions was fitted out with the collection of Susie and Richie Burmann for the January 11 auction. The mellow brick walls of the former Erector set factory in New Haven, Connecticut, made an ideal setting for the collection of folk art, and the objects on display drew a smile from most observers.

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Previews began four days earlier and culminated in a well-attended reception on Friday for the Burmanns attended by dealers and fellow collectors. Speaking some days after the sale, New Haven Auctions' principal Fred Giampietro described the collectors as having an affinity for the material, particularly New England objects. The Burmanns had gathered their collection meticulously. The provenance of the objects was included, and for most items no restoration was apparent. They began collecting half a century ago as teachers in Indiana. Susie taught for a short while and turned to restoring old houses. Richie retired from teaching at age 52 and began dealing full time. They moved east and continued buying—and selling—around New England. The couple agreed: "Buy what makes you smile." For them every piece had a story. They both love heart-in-hand imagery, which has been used by fraternal organizations, the Shakers, the Amish, and John Calvin. They also favor tramp art, with which their collection is replete, and admit to a taste for objects that haven't been touched. Bidders were seemingly oblivious to estimates and bid most lots well above them. Over 50% of the 196 lots in the Burmann collection lots sold to collectors.

The sale was actually a two-day event, with the Burmann collection on Saturday and a wide-ranging and highly eclectic sale of material from other collections and estates on Sunday, January 12. The highlight of day two was a New York Chippendale mahogany kneehole desk from about 1760 that had belonged to the New Hampshire-born New Yorker John Adams Dix (1798-1879) and sold for \$26,250 (includes buyer's premium). Dix was a major general in the Civil War, secretary of the treasury, U.S. senator, governor of New York, and ambassador to France. In civilian life, Dix was president of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad and later of the Union Pacific Railroad. At some point in its life the desk made its way to England, where it was in use for over a century. It was only recently repatriated to the U.S.

For information, visit (www.newhavenauctions.com) or call (475) 234-5120.



This untitled 1982 oil stick drawing on paper by Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960-1988), 10¼" x 8" (framed), sold for \$24,375 (est. \$30,000/50,000). The artist incorporated his graffiti tag "SAMO" into the picture. The work has a label on the reverse from the Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York City.



This New York Chippendale mahogany kneehole desk, circa 1760, with a shell- and scroll-carved blind drawer above a recessed cubby and striking ball-and-claw feet, unrestored, sold on day two for \$26,250 (est. \$8000/12,000). It had belonged to John Adams Dix (1798-1879).



The fanciful and robust carving on this circa 1770 Queen Anne mirror renders it highly distinctive. It appears to retain its original Spanish brown paint and went for \$7500 (est. \$1500/2500). Exhibited in the 1984 exhibit *A Keene Eye: Selections from the American Folk Art Collection of Mr. and Mrs. James O. Keene* at the American Folk Art Museum, it had sold at Sotheby's in 1996 and had passed through dealers Elliott and Grace Snyder. Burmann collection.



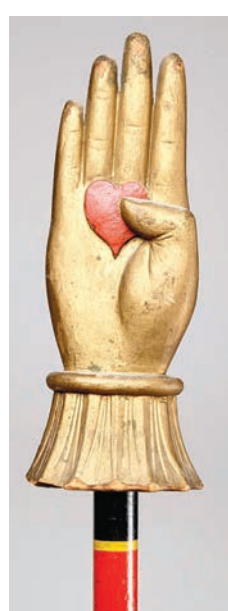
This figured maple miniature blanket chest, 6¼" x 10⅞" x 6¼", with a molded walnut or butternut lid and till lid dates from about 1840 and is dovetailed. Ultraviolet light revealed no restoration. Estimated at \$500/1000, it brought \$3125. Burmann collection.



This circa 1780 Queen Anne tiger maple highboy, likely from New Hampshire, retains its original brasses, although the drops are old replacements. It sold for \$16,250 (est. \$20,000/40,000). George Samaha had bought it for Judge Garrett in 1953 at the auction of the Francis Mireau collection in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, and it was sold at Garth's in 1999. Burmann collection.



This 72" long heart-in-hand staff with a carved, oversized hand, 11¼" long, in original paint, circa 1880, realized \$7188 (est. \$2000/4000). Provenance includes David Good. Burmann collection.



The Burmann collection was replete with heart-in-hand staffs and other hand objects. This 65½" long example with a 9¾" hand and cuff, circa 1880, sold on the phone for \$3250 (est. \$1000/2000).



Primitive heart-in-hand staff, 39¾" long, in the original brown and silver paint with varnish, with a carved heart and a turned staff, sold online for \$5000 (est. \$500/1000). Burmann collection.



This watercolor drawing of General Messena, 8¼" x 6½" (sight size), is signed "F Peirson, Sculpture" for Massachusetts artist Franklin Peirson (1787-1802) and dates from around 1800. The subject is likely General André Messena (1758-1817), a leading French military commander. Estimated at \$600/1000, the picture is in original condition and sold online for \$5625. Burmann collection.



This 4⅞" x 4⅝" (sight size) example by Mary S. Hall of Gilmanton, New Hampshire, was the highlight of a group of heart-and-hand watercolors when it sold for \$7188 (est. \$300/500). The image is hinged at the top and has handwritten prose on the back that appears to be original to the work. Burmann collection.



This Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, fraktur, 15½" x 12⅞" (sight size), dated 1808 and attributed to John Van Minian (active 1791-1835), commemorates the birth to Peter Heckart and his wife, Elizabetha Umberger Heckart, of Margaretha Heckart on August 13, 1808. Estimated at \$4000/6000, it sold for \$5875. Provenance includes David Wheatcroft. Burmann collection.



The 43½" high Queen Anne armchair with Spanish feet, rolled arms, and an early painted surface sold for \$5750 (est. \$1500/2500). The Burmanns had acquired it from Gaglio and Molnar, Inc., in 1990. Burmann collection.



Miniature blanket chest with two drawers, 11¼" x 17½" x 9¾", on a well-carved ogee bracket base, Pennsylvania, circa 1800, in original condition, with provenance of Elliott and Grace Snyder and Barbara Pollack. It was a very good buy when it sold on the phone for \$8750 (est. \$10,000/15,000). Burmann collection.



It struck some as irresistible: a pincushion supported by carved and painted shoes, 4¼" by 13", that sold for \$1063 (est. \$200/400). Mascolo photo.

AUCTION



This folky oil on panel view of a farm with a passing locomotive, figures, horses, and cattle, 12½" x 19½" (sight size), is inscribed on the reverse "painted by Major Hershburger Fall of 1877." It was acquired by the collectors at Skinner. Estimated at \$4000/6000, it brought \$5000 online. Burmann collection. Mascolo photo.



The 49½" long spice bin, likely from a country store, is testimony to the maker's fancy. Made with square nails and in as-found condition, the bin blasted past the \$200/300 estimate to a resounding \$7188. Each bin is lettered carefully in script. Burmann collection. Mascolo photo.

This 51" long sheet-iron weathervane in the form of an exuberant flying horse, with interesting bracing on both sides, came from David Good. Estimated at \$1500/2500, it garnered \$4500. Burmann collection. Mascolo photo.



This 74½" long copper banner weathervane with original gilding and its original standard brought \$10,938 (est. \$3000/5000). The circa 1875 vane was on view at Benson's Wild Animal Farm in Hudson, New Hampshire, and the Burmanns had acquired it from John Sidel. Burmann collection.



This 19th-century tanware figure of a seated spaniel, 7¾" high, with slip decoration, acquired by the collectors from David Good, brought \$3125 (est. \$250/500). Burmann collection.

The 36" high tramp art wall mirror with drawers is carved with applied birds and hearts and the year 1911. In chrome-yellow paint, it was estimated at \$500/1000, and sold for \$5875. Burmann collection. Mascolo photo.



This circa 1840 Pennsylvania two-part cherry Dutch cupboard, 88" high x 67¾" wide (upper case), dates from about 1840 and drew attention for its form and beautiful mellow surface. It was in the 1965 Pennypacker Auction Centre sale of the estate of Dr. C.E. Lane of Lititz, Pennsylvania. It sold for \$9063 (est. \$3000/5000). Burmann collection.



Cast-iron mechanical bank in the form of a pig in a high chair, J. & E. Stevens, Cromwell, Connecticut, dated 1897, sold for \$3750 (est. \$1000/1500). In excellent condition, it retains its original box.



Mid-19th-century pine or butternut sailor's box with wax-inlaid hearts, stars, and a star in a circle, sold for \$2500 (est. \$600/1200). It came from David Wheatcroft. Burmann collection.



Ohio Sheraton walnut stand, 29 7/8" high, with one dovetailed drawer and elaborately turned legs, retaining its original finish, sold for \$3500 (est. \$200/400). The Burmanns acquired it from Betty Berdan.



Several lots of 19th-century decorated spruce gum boxes were offered. This lot of four, the largest 5" high, sold for \$1313 (est. \$300/500). Burmann collection.



The 19th-century life-size cast-iron Dalmatian was attributed to the Gray Foundry in Poultney, Vermont. A handwritten note contains the names and locations of the owners up until the 1930s. Estimated at \$2000/4000, the dog brought \$5750.



Pair of eider decoys, circa 1925, attributed to Samuel Smith Toothaker (1903-1974) of Brunswick, Maine, sold for \$13,125 (est. \$6000/10,000). One of the ducks retains a label from the French Broad River Decoy Company and a paper with penciled notes.



Circa 1830 Indiana child's three-drawer chest, 30 1/2" x 24" x 14", with a pretty bracket base and dovetailed drawers, likely in the original brown paint, sold for \$3000 (est. \$300/600). Burmann collection. Mascolo photo.



New England blanket chest, 26 1/2" high, likely from Maine, with red and black decorative paint sold for \$1125 (est. \$400/800). The Burmanns acquired it from Paul and Margaret Weld in 2000.



Kathy and Fred Giampietro run New Haven Auctions like clockwork. Kathy is the chief auctioneer, and Fred manages the rest of the auction. They spell each other at the podium. Mascolo photo.



This 19th-century child's slant-front desk, 25" x 22 1/4" x 14", in old red paint, brought \$2188 (est. \$400/500). The case and drawers are dovetailed. Burmann collection.



This Mayan carved stone mask, 5 5/8" x 7 5/8" x 2 1/4", appears to be early. Catalog notes indicate that the auction house did not have the expertise to date the mask. Estimated at \$2000/4000, it sold for \$13,750.



This 96" long harvest table, circa 1830, in a thin red wash with a scrubbed top was acquired from Joe Martin, who found it in Vermont. It had casters at one time. It sold for \$6875 (est. \$1000/2000). Burmann collection.

This late 18th-century Windsor chair with a writing arm, used by the New Haven-born Presbyterian minister and firebrand Lyman Beecher (1775-1863), was made by premier Windsor chair maker Ebenezer B. Tracy (1744-1803) of Lisbon, Connecticut. It sold for \$13,125 (est. \$10,000/15,000). The Bible support was added in the early 19th century. Beecher, the father of Harriet Beecher Stowe and 12 other children, moved his family to Cincinnati in 1832. A shipping label from that move is attached to the chair. Beecher was the minister at the Presbyterian church in East Hampton, New York, between 1799 and 1810. The chair is headed to the historical society there.

