

New England Auctions, Branford, Connecticut

Form and Color at Americana Sales

by Frances McQueeney-Jones Mascolo
Photos courtesy New England Auctions

Fred Giampietro's New England Auctions featured the second part of the sale of the collections of Steve and Pat Center October 22 in its Branford, Connecticut, gallery. The 390-lot sale, with some additions, was noteworthy for the artistic eyes that had assembled it. The Centers ran Centervale Farm Antiques in Scarborough, Maine, for over three decades. Form and color—and sometimes plain old quirkiness—marked their collections.

The auction began with 40 lots of carvings by Capeville, Virginia, artist Frank S. Finney (b. 1947). His tree featuring 13 birds perched on its branches far exceeded its \$3000/6000 estimate and realized \$21,080 (including buyer's premium). It was the top lot of the sale.

Form and color also prevailed in the October 23 auction of 404 lots of antiques, Americana, fine and modern art, and Asian and European works from an array of area estates, capped by 26 lots of woodworking planes. The top lot was a countertop cigar-store Indian figure by New York carver Samuel Anderson Robb that sold for \$12,400 (est. \$4000/6000).

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In carved wood and original paint, Frank Finney's 17¼" tall bird tree with 13 birds perching on its branches realized \$21,080 (est. \$3000/6000). The tree is signed on the base with a single calligraphic "F" and "Frank Finney."



Frank Finney's carved and painted birds are identified as "Northern Cardinal" on the bottom of the base and bear a calligraphic double "F." The 7" x 15⅝" x 7⅞" work brought \$11,160 against the \$600/1200 estimate.



This drummer boy whirligig by Frank Finney (b. 1947), 22½" high, is carved in fine detail, which endows the figure with a pronounced humanity. It bears a calligraphic "F" on the bottom of the stand along with the handwritten Psalm 56:11, "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." Estimated at \$5000/10,000, the whirligig sold for \$19,840.

This self-satisfied carved and painted cat by Frank Finney, 18¼" tall, appears pleased to have vanquished a mouse. The cat sold for \$16,120 (est. \$4000/8000). It bears an "FF" signature on the bottom of the base along with the initials "M • H • F."



From the 19th century this 36" tall wash stick is handsomely carved and retains its original paint. With only minor wear, it brought \$744 against the \$150/250 estimate.



Three decoys, each with light wear, brought \$4340 (est. \$200/400). The smallest example is inscribed on the bottom "Mason Bufflehead #2"; the medium-size duck bears the labels "330" and "July 76" and the brand "WW"; and the largest has a single label, "#13."



Two cats on a carved and painted side chair seem to jockey for position as the white one poses majestically and the black seems to skulk in the background. The unframed 24" x 20" oil on canvas, circa 1930, brought \$2604 (est. \$1000/2000). The painting is signed "D D" below the front rail.



Blue items from the collection of a noted New England dealer included 22 lots of blue firkins, cheese boxes, and spice boxes. The highlight was this early 19th-century round cheese box, 6½" x 11", in original blue paint and in original condition that sold for \$1736 (est. \$500/1000). The box is constructed with hidden laps.



The celebrated Morgan stallion Black Hawk is depicted on this circa 1875 molded copper weathervane with cast zinc ears that sold for \$5580 (est. \$1200/2000). The 27¼" long weathervane retains some chrome-yellow sizing and gold leaf. Black Hawk (1833-1856) sired some 1772 foals in his lifetime.



This distinctive mid-19th-century apple tray in salmon and blue paint with forged nail construction, 23 $\frac{3}{4}$ " wide, brought \$3472 against the \$400/600 estimate.

Mount Vernon, a sandpaper and watercolor image, 20 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", depicts George Washington's residence as it appeared around 1840. It sold for \$3472 (est. \$800/1500). The picture is unsigned, and according to a label on the back it came from the collection of Mimi and Robert Laurent of Brooklyn, New York. Laurent (1890-1970) was a prominent sculptor, active in New York and Maine.



This mid-19th-century marriage sewing chest is carved and finely painted like a confection, with floral elements, swags, and shields. Supported on turned feet and measuring 16" x 10" x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", it is likely from Maine. Estimated at \$2500/5000, it realized \$3596. A somewhat illegible pencil inscription on the backboard refers to members of the Simpson family.



This mid-20th-century New England carved wood and tin sign in the shape of a fish with tiny sharp teeth, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", reads "MINNOWS" and is in fine original condition. Estimated at \$200/400, it realized \$2480.



In mustard grain paint, this small circa 1840 New England jelly cupboard with three interior shelves, 36" x 13" x 36 $\frac{5}{8}$ ", on a well-defined base realized \$1612 (est. \$500/1000).



Bidders liked this rare 23" high circa 1875 rooster weathervane in molded copper with cast zinc legs so much that they bid it to \$8680 against the \$2000/3000 estimate.

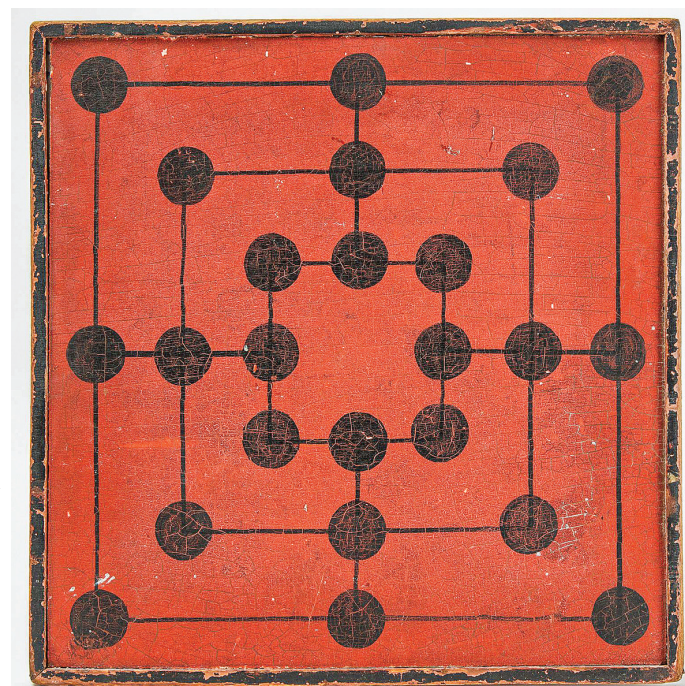


This 19th-century dollhouse door panel in oil paint on a wood board with breadboard ends, 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", realized \$2232 (est. \$200/400).



The Rhode Island or Connecticut Queen Anne walnut candlestand with a dish top, circa 1780, in fine original condition, brought \$2480 (est. \$500/1000).

In original red and black paint, this 15 $\frac{1}{4}$ " square mid-19th-century game board has a game with dots on one side and a checkerboard on the other. It realized \$2232 (est. \$300/600).





Lady in Blue, a watercolor portrait by German/American artist Jacob Maentel (1763-1863), 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ ", depicts a woman in a blue dress wearing an elaborate bonnet and showing her ankles. An inscription on the back reads "Sarah Burkholder / 29 years 3 months old / taken Dec 15 1831." Estimated at \$600/1200, it realized \$1736.



Likely a Native American work, the carved burl drinking cup, 2 $\frac{5}{8}$ " x 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", circa 1800, sold for \$1364 against the \$250/500 estimate.



This late 18th-century New England Windsor armchair has a complex history. With an unusual pierced crest, it seems to have started life as a green rocking chair. It was later given a coat of red paint over the green and the rockers were removed, leaving a neat notch repair. Estimated at \$800/1500, it realized \$806 after 18 bids.



Two 19th-century Pennsylvania folk-art miniature pincushion birds, a rooster and a peacock, 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " and 4" tall, realized \$2728 (est. \$250/500), while a group of eight 19th-century Pennsylvania pincushions (not shown), including pincushion balls, sold for \$2852 (est. \$100/200).



The early New England miniature blanket chest in original brown paint with tall bootjack ends, circa 1810, measures 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and sold for \$2356 (est. \$200/400).



This watercolor fraktur of a young gentleman wearing a tricorne hat with a message in German sold for \$4030 (est. \$400/800).



From New England, an apothecary chest with 36 dovetailed drawers in 19th-century blue paint over red, circa 1820, sold for \$5270 (est. \$1500/3000).



Vermont artist Thomas Ware (1803-1836) painted this 25 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ " oil on panel portrait of Huldah Edson Lake (1792-1860) holding a robin and wearing a green dress with lace ruching. Ware lived and worked mostly around Pomfret; many of his sitters are from local families. Estimated at \$1500/2500, the painting sold for \$6200. The painting is illustrated in "Thomas Ware: Vermont Portrait Painter" by Arthur B. and Sybil B. Kern in the winter 1983-84 edition of the American Folk Art Museum magazine *The Clarion* (p. 36), in which the sitter is identified as a spiritualist. The article dates the painting to 1822 and notes that the picture is from the collection of the authors. Its provenance includes the collection of Horace W. Davis, sold at Parke-Bernet Galleries in 1946; Bernard & S. Dean Levy; and the sale of the Richard W. Oliver collection in 1982. The picture was included in the August 2018 sale at Skinner of the Arthur and Sybil Kern collection of American folk art.



A cut-paper work with the name and year "Eliza Page 1832" in the center brought \$9920 against the \$200/400 estimate.



A late 19th-century child's delight would have been the Thomson Toy Store in an unknown location. The double-sided sign in the original small, paint, and gold leaf brought \$4960 (\$500/1000).



The countertop cigar-store Indian figure by New York carver Samuel Anderson Robb (1851-1928), 29½" x 14" x 14", circa 1880, in fine condition sold for \$12,400 (est. \$4000/6000). A later coat of paint has been removed to reveal traces of the original.

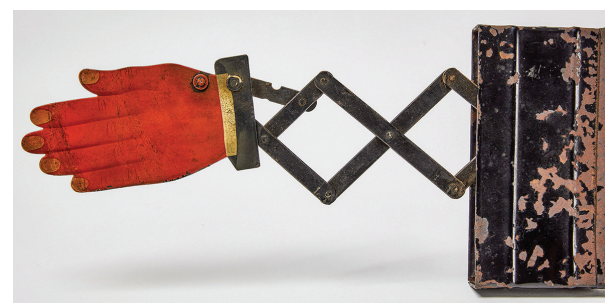


Prairie Fire, a watercolor and gouache on paper, 17½" x 14", by Oklahoma artist Rance Hood (b. 1941), depicts a warrior astride his galloping pinto as flames reach out toward them and sold for \$3100 (est. \$250/500). Hood, an Oklahoma artist who paints in the Comanche tradition, incorporates mystical elements in his work.

In excellent original condition, a paint-decorated light or candle shelf, circa 1830, likely from Maine, sold for \$8680 against the \$250/500 estimate. With forged nail construction, it has finely molded edges.



This early automobile hand signal retains the label of the Handy Signal Co. of New York City. Of painted steel and in fine condition except for some paint loss on the case, it measures 7" x 3" x 1½" (with the box closed) and realized \$3348 (est. \$300/400).



This copper mold used for making rubber pants, an item not normally seen at auction, 32" x 13" x 12", sold for \$2480 (est. \$500/1000).



The 18th-century New England Chippendale chest, circa 1790, has 19th-century paint decoration over the original red, dovetailing, and a chamfered backboard. Estimated at \$1000/2000, it brought \$4340.



This mid-18th-century New England blanket chest with double-arch molding is all original: red paint, hinges, and brasses, although some pulls are missing. Estimated at \$1000/2000, it sold for \$4650.

