

# TONY ANNESE

THE GENTLEMAN'S COLLECTION  
AT AUCTION | OCTOBER 11, 2019



# Bertoia's presents The Gentleman's Collection: the lifetime antique toy, Marklin train and Christmas collection of Tony Annese, Oct. 11

Annese collection is absolutely fresh to the market, exhibits highest standards of condition throughout its various categories



VINELAND, N.J. – Year round, Bertoia Auctions brings an incredible selection of antique and vintage toys to the collector marketplace through their roster of sales ranging from Spring and Fall Toy Auctions to their very popular Bertoia Basics series. But the pinnacle of Bertoia's annual events calendar is their twice-yearly Signature Auction, which places the spotlight on a single prestigious collection worthy of VIP status. The next Signature Auction, slated for Friday, October 11, features "The Gentleman's Collection" – the lifetime antique toy, Marklin train and Christmas collection of former ATCA president and chairman of the board of the Golden Glow of Christmas Past, Tony Annese.



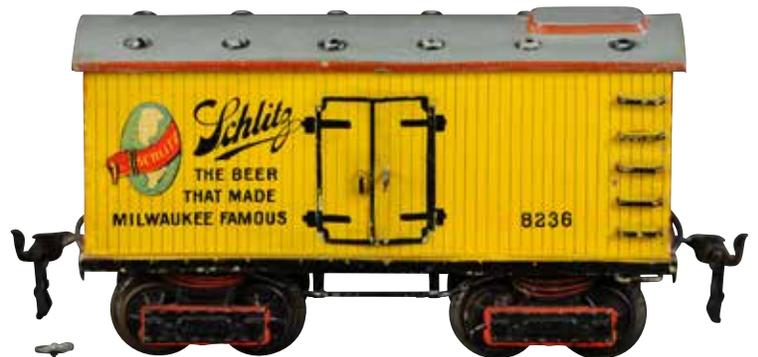
## Early Days of Collecting

Tony started collecting in the early 1970s. "My college roommate and his wife named their first child after me. I knew his wife liked antiques, so I poked around New Hope (N.J.) and found a little antique toy I liked, which I gave to them as a gift. That was what awakened my interest in toys," he said.





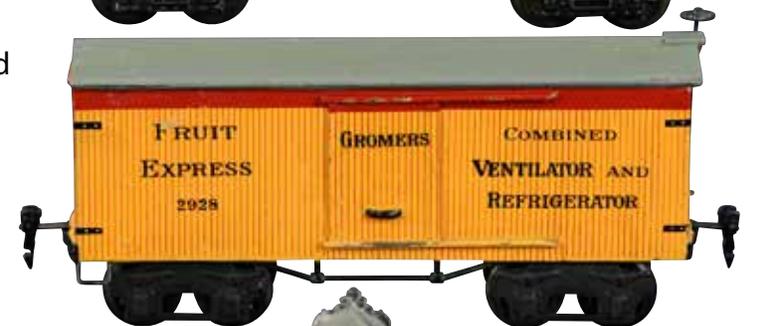
"The most difficult thing about collecting back then was getting information about the toys. There were one or two antique toy shows, Chicago being one of them, and no magazines except *Antique Toy World*," Tony recalled. "I would buy old toy catalogs – that was helpful. I also went to Brimfield and talked to everyone I could. You had to be gregarious to build relationships. Because I had been a salesman, I was a friendly type and enjoyed talking to people, so it came easily."

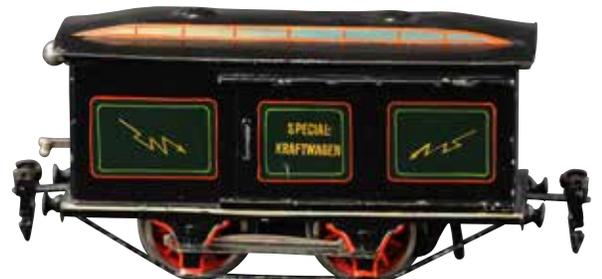


Tony made a proactive effort to meet the "big-time collectors" back in the day. "I knew them all – the Gottschalks, Bill Holland, Blair Whitten, Lloyd Ralston, Frank Whitson. I reached out to Barney Barenholtz and asked if I could meet up with him sometime. Eventually I did. I also got to know the Olsens [Roy and Grace], who became the source for many of the best paper-litho things in my collection. I didn't want to just buy a toy; I wanted for the seller to tell me about it, when it was made, who made it, and any other details that were important."



Tony said he would read any reference book he could get his hands on, a practice that actually began at an early age. "When I was around 10 years old, I saw an old car go by and became interested in learning more about it, so I bought a book about old cars. Later on when I became interested in toys, I read Louis Hertz's books. He was the king in those days."





## Hooked on Trains

"My method of collecting was always driven by aesthetics. I liked 19th-century paper-litho toys because the artwork added depth and dimension, and I found game box covers fascinating because they were so visual." Tony said. "I didn't like Lionel trains because I felt they looked too repetitive, with essentially the same train produced in different colors. Then one day at a Ralston auction I saw a Marklin train with its original box. I was mesmerized and stood there staring at it. I had never seen anything like it – the design, the colors, the quality and depth of paint – it was all there. Louis Hertz had always dismissed foreign trains, but I saw that one and was flabbergasted. I would continue to collect toys, but that's how the train collection started."

Tony would go on to build a world-class Marklin collection, but he didn't travel the world to do it. "I wasn't much of a traveler back then, so I never went to Europe to buy Marklins. Now that I'm semi-retired, I do travel. I go to Europe for the Christmas markets every December, and I've had the pleasure of visiting the Marklin factory and museum, but I still buy through clubs and organizations, and dealers I've gotten to know over the years. It's an American way of buying – to buy from those you know and trust."



A Collection on Display

A lifetime collection requires space, and Tony admits that prior to entrusting his prized pieces to Bertoià's, every room in his spacious home was "loaded." Marklin trains and stations, accented by railway civilian figures, were on display in bedroom showcases; toys filled the home office, folk art adorned the great room, and it even got to the point where the toy collection overflowed into the kitchen cabinets. "I eat out a lot," Tony explained with a chuckle. "When I first moved into the house, I had a housewarming party and hired caterers. The first thing they did was turn on the oven. I stopped them very quickly." Yes, there were toys inside – a very New York thing, the writer would suggest, as ovens are where women in small Manhattan apartments are known to stash their pricey handbags, for lack of another place to store them.

As for his phenomenal collection of Christmas antiques, displaying it was never a strictly seasonal thing for Tony. He enjoyed some of its artful "crossover" contents year round in virtually every room of his house – even bathrooms – as well as stairs, hallways and alcoves. But sometime after Labor Day of each year, Tony would ramp up the





holiday decorating effort with his pedal to the metal, ultimately transforming his home into a dazzling, beautifully illuminated, wall-to-wall Christmas extravaganza. Does it ever look “over the top?” With trademark candor, Tony replies, “I live my life with passion because a life full of moderation is for wimps.”

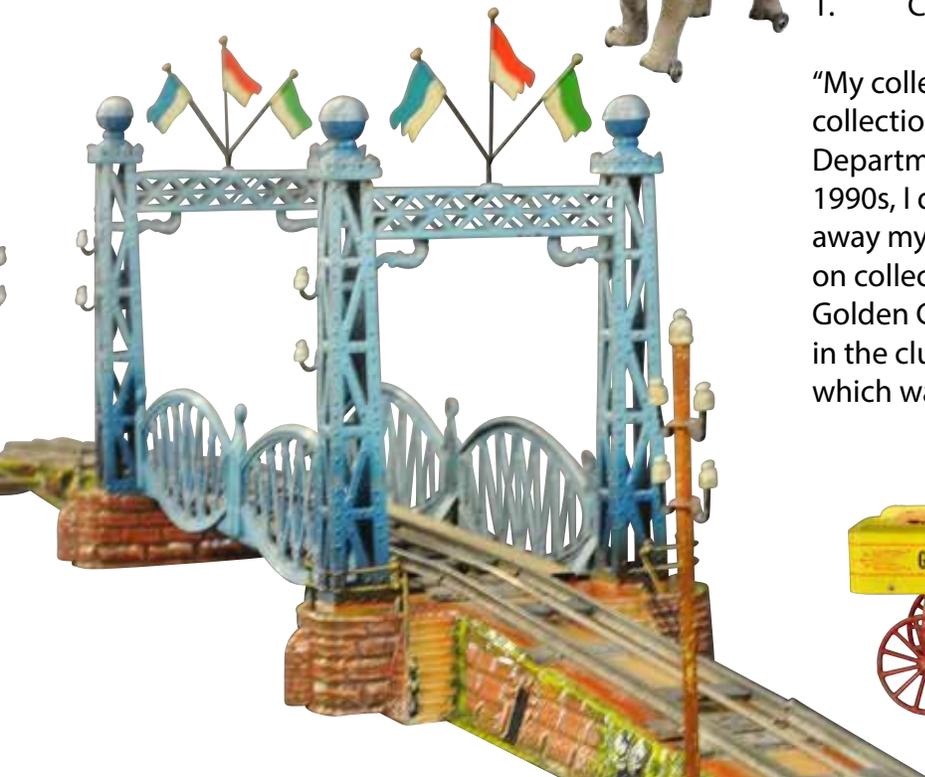


### Breaking Down Highlights of the Tony Annese Collection

Six main categories comprise Tony’s spectacular lifetime collection. Here they are, along with Tony’s observations:

#### 1. Christmas Antiques

“My collection started in the 1980s, after I saw a collection of Department 56 items. I bought a few Department 56 buildings, but then in the early 1990s, I discovered antique Christmas pieces. I gave away my newer things to relatives and concentrated on collecting just the older things. I also joined the Golden Glow of Christmas Past. I became very active in the club and was even elected chair of the board, which was a great honor,” Tony recalled.





Tony says he enjoys the Christmas category because the holiday is “such a strong part of American culture. Every manufacturer, no matter what they produced, had some sort of Christmas items. You might say it’s the ultimate crossover.”

Tony’s older Christmas antiques are included in the auction.

Tony’s favorites: “I love the clockwork Santa nodders, especially the ones with glass eyes and rosy-cheeked faces. Christmas store displays and lighting are also a big part of my collection, as are Christmas ornaments.”

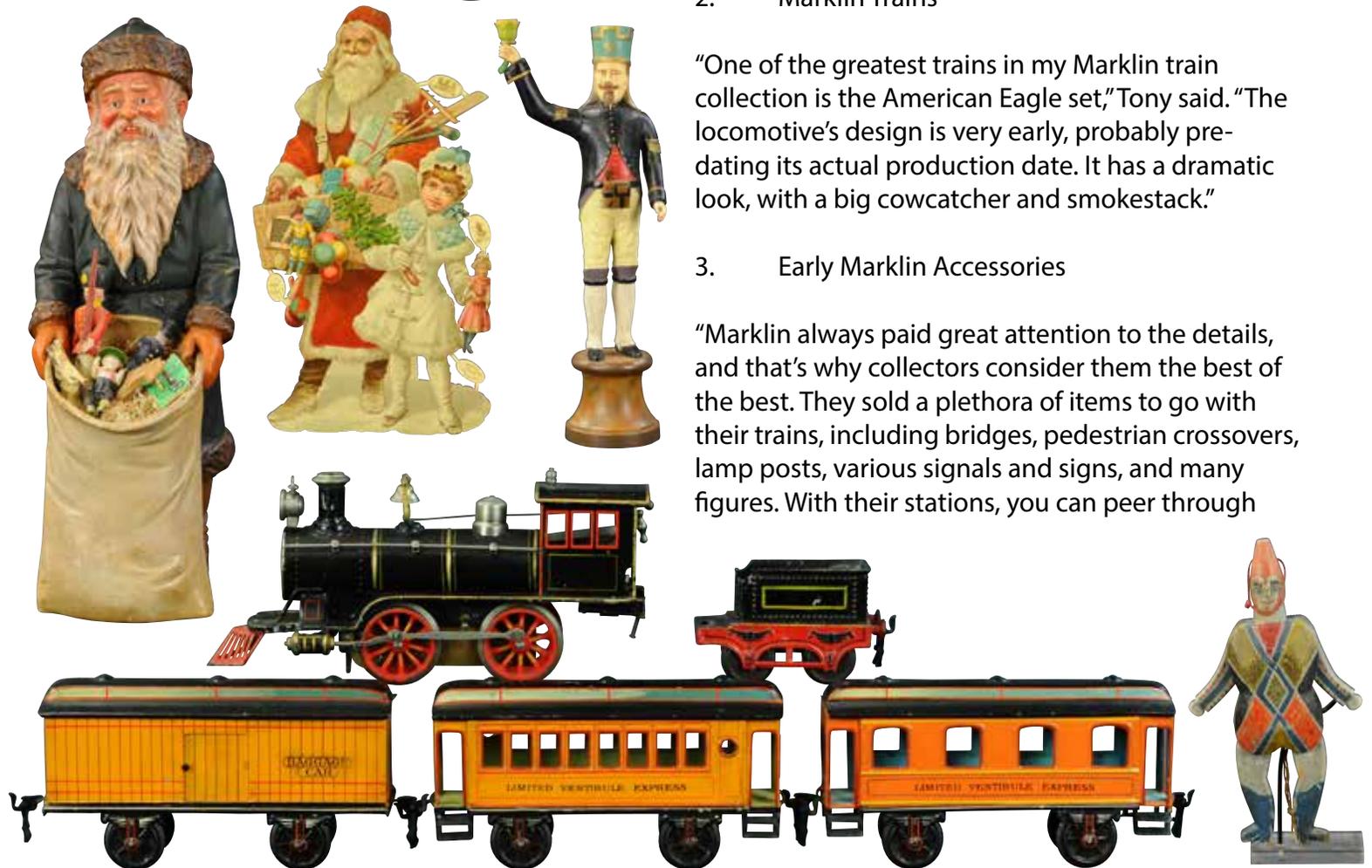


## 2. Marklin Trains

“One of the greatest trains in my Marklin train collection is the American Eagle set,” Tony said. “The locomotive’s design is very early, probably pre-dating its actual production date. It has a dramatic look, with a big cowcatcher and smokestack.”

## 3. Early Marklin Accessories

“Marklin always paid great attention to the details, and that’s why collectors consider them the best of the best. They sold a plethora of items to go with their trains, including bridges, pedestrian crossings, lamp posts, various signals and signs, and many figures. With their stations, you can peer through





windows and see typical train station waiting room furnishings inside. Their stations can be dressed up with all sorts of accessories – street lamps and signs for the roadside. You can create an entire European village around a Marklin train station. I have an elaborate Marklin bridge reminiscent of the metal architecture seen in the Eiffel Tower and, to a lesser extent, the Brooklyn Bridge. To my eye, it appears that they were influenced that way, and they're very appealing to me," Tony said.

Tony always had a lot of open houses for the friends he met in collecting. He has so many Marklin buildings, accessories, and figures, that a collector walked into his train room, looked around, and said, "Oh, I thought you collected trains."



#### 4. Railway & Civilian Figures

"I've always loved these sorts of figures. They bring any diorama or display to life, especially the European ones," Tony said. "The figures show people in activities you would see at a typical train station – someone walking with a newspaper under their arm or holding flowers, a mother holding a child, or a person running to catch a train."

Tony's favorites: "Heyde figures are the ones I liked best, both the boxed sets and individual figures. I would always put their figures around the trains displayed in my home."





5. Cast-Iron Transportation Toys

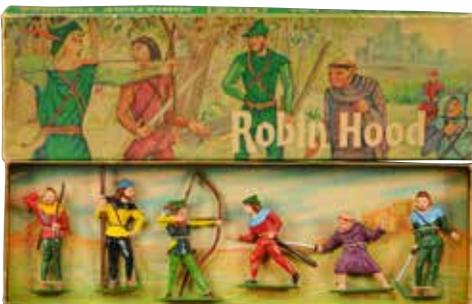
"Fire toys from the 1880s and 1890s – the spectacular hook and ladders, hose reels, with all the things going on inside and outside of the vehicles – have such a feeling of movement to them. Pratt & Letchworth toys, especially, have this quality with their galloping horses and firemen holding onto ladders for dear life."

Tony's favorites: "Anything with movement. In addition to the early fire toys, I like a lot of the construction toys of the 1920s and '30s, and the lighter cast-iron pieces."



6. Lithographed Paper-on-Wood Toys and Games

"For me, the big brand was always McLoughlin. The colors on their toys had a quality and depth of color that was unmatched. They were special in that they portrayed everyday life. A McLoughlin game might portray people at Coney Island – Gibson Girls, and men in straw boaters. Their toys weren't about governors or generals; they were about the regular people who might hop on a horse-drawn trolley and ride it to an amusement park at the end of the line."



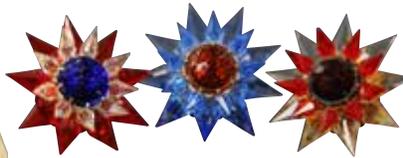
Examples in the collection: Horse-drawn fire wagons, stagecoaches and trolleys; circus cages, battleships, boats, buildings.

Tony's favorites: "McLoughlin Christmas games rank very high on my list."

### Tony's Honors

Tony served as president of the Antique Toy Collectors of America (ATCA) from 1992-1994. He was also chairman of the board of the Golden Glow of Christmas Past for one year, from 2007-2008.

Jeanne Bertoia, of Bertoia Auctions, observed that Tony Annese has always been a collector, but never a dealer. "He didn't want his hobby to become his business. Occasionally, he would deaccession a piece, but that was rare. He always bought the way a collector would buy, focusing on condition and selecting toys that 'spoke' to him. He was patient and would wait for the right toy to come along, in the best possible condition. His methods have certainly paid off. Collectors are going to be thrilled when they see how beautiful his toys are. No upgrades will ever be required, because they're already at the top of the condition ladder."





Bertoia's Fall Auction, The Gentleman's Collection, featuring the Lifetime Toy, Train and Christmas Collection of Tony Annese, will be held on Friday, October 11, 2019 at Bertoia's gallery located at 2141 DeMarco Dr., Vineland, NJ 08360. All additional forms of bidding will be available, including absentee, phone, and live online through Bertoia Live and LiveAuctioneers. For additional information on any item in the auction, call Bertoia Auctions 856-692-1881 or email [toys@bertoiiauctions.com](mailto:toys@bertoiiauctions.com). Online: [www.bertoiiauctions.com](http://www.bertoiiauctions.com)

