

VINELAND, N.J. – In toy-collecting circles, the term “top-shelf” is used to describe the upper reaches where a person might display his or her most treasured pieces – the ones that stay in their places for years, maybe decades. For their March 12 Select Toys Auction, Bertoia’s had the honor of presenting toys, trains, banks and figural cast-iron doorstops from the top shelves of some of America’s most important collections. Many pieces also came with distinguished pedigrees from historical collections, such as those of Bernard Barenholtz, William Gottschalk, Donald Kaufman, the Buddy ‘L’ corporate archive, and Philadelphia’s fabled Perelman Antique Toy Museum.

The synergy of a robust market and blue-chip toys in spectacular condition resulted in a raft of above-estimate prices and a \$1.3 million total for Bertoia’s at their well-attended one-day, 581-lot auction.



\$2,360



\$4,720



\$16,520



\$8,260



\$1,298



\$15,340



\$8,260



\$2,242



\$29,500



\$11,210

Antique and vintage trains were among the main attractions, with early American productions dominating the day's proceedings. Lot 561, a Voltamp #2220 train set, one of only four or five 8-wheel sets known to exist, swept past its \$12,000-\$15,000 estimate to reach \$26,550. It was followed by another Voltamp gem entered as Lot 562, a United Electric trolley and trailer, which rang its bell at \$9,440. Lot 556, one of only seven known examples of a circa 1906-1907 Ives #97 Swing Bridge had survived for more than a century in excellent condition and sold for \$9,440.

“There was so much interest in American trains, especially Jim Ferguson’s outstanding American Flyer collection,” said Bertoia Auctions associate Rich Bertoia. “Jim had some of the best sets American Flyer ever made, and his fellow collectors knew that. Whenever this is the case, even the most astute auction estimates can quickly become meaningless.”

Lot 521, a beautiful wide-gauge Presidential passenger set achieved \$8,260, while Lot 518, a #400 set with pre-war engine with cars, swept past its \$400-\$600 expectation to garner \$7,080. Lot 516, a handsome circa-1931 wide-gauge set with red roofs and blue-green bodies was entered with a \$700-\$1,000 estimate but went on to earn \$4,425.



\$5,900



\$2,124



\$2,006



\$4,425



\$4,425



\$1,770



\$3,540

Lot 48, a Buddy 'L' pressed-steel locomotive and tender with copper flashing was made for the revered Illinois manufacturer's Outdoor Railroad Series and is one of only three known examples having the special finish. A coveted factory display from the Jay Schoedinger collection, it benefited from its crossover appeal to both pressed steel and train enthusiasts, and chugged off to a new owner for \$7,670. Another Buddy 'L' highlight from Schoedinger's toy trove, a 28-inch-long Tugboat made around 1928, was soon on its way to a Midwestern collector who paid \$21,240, nearly twice the high estimate.

Cast-iron automotive was robust from start to finish. Lot 70, a sample Dent Bulldog Mack Supply Truck, ex Kaufman and Bob Brady collections, rolled out the door for \$8,850; while the very next lot, a Packard Straight Eight, commanded \$15,340. "The Straight Eight is one of only two or three known and came from the collection of Bob Brady, who has always been very particular about condition," Bertoia said.



\$1,003

\$22,420



\$6,490



\$5,310



\$8,260



\$5,015



\$11,210



\$21,240



\$5,605

Lot 162, a Dent Parcel Express Van, previously belonged to the late William “Bill” Gottschalk, a titan among toy collectors of a generation ago. It subsequently joined the Jay Schoedinger collection, the source of many superior toys entered in Bertoia’s March 12 sale. A Dent factory sample with identification tag, the sky-blue van with red-painted nickel wheels raced past its \$4,000-\$6,000 estimate to settle at \$9,440.



\$5,605

Cast-iron aviation toys from the Brady collection were airborne as soon as they were announced at the auctioneer’s podium. Lot 81, a Hubley DO-X Seaplane sold for \$11,210 against an estimate of \$6,000-\$8,000; while Lot 174, a 1929 Vindex sample Lockheed airplane, ex Kaufman collection, hit the top of its estimate range at \$12,980.



\$1,180

A specialty subcategory within cast iron, Hubley’s horse-drawn Royal Circus series was on parade and in demand. A curious giraffe peered out of the top of its circus caravan cage and proved to be a fan favorite, selling for \$16,500 against an estimate of \$7,000-\$9,000. Lot 55, a Royal Circus Bandwagon with musicians, hit a high note at \$11,800.



\$8,850

Cast-iron money boxes were led by Lot 223, a J. & E. Stevens Boy Scout Camp mechanical bank, \$12,980; and a circa-1907 J.M. Harper Basket of Corn still bank. Designed to replicate a bushel basket heaped with ears of golden corn, the example offered by Bertoia’s attracted multiple phone bidders, who pushed it to a world record auction price for its form: \$5,015.



\$3,540



\$885



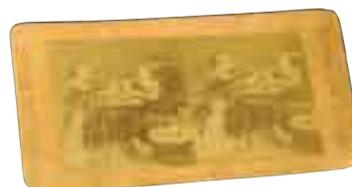
\$2,950



\$2,655



\$5,015



Clockwork toys, which had shown some softness of late, rebounded decisively, perhaps with the help of gilt-edged provenance. Lot 190, perhaps the finest known example of an Ives General Grant “smoker,” could be traced back to the Louis Hertz and Tom Anderson collections prior to joining the Bob Brady collection. It sold within estimate for \$15,340.

Lot 196, a boxed Mechanical Acrobats toy patented circa 1880s by Ives, Hotchkiss and formerly held in the Bernard “Barney” Barenholtz collection, somersaulted to a winning auction price of \$4,720. Lot 200, an Ives, Blakeslee & Williams Single Galloper was featured in the manufacturer’s 1876 sales catalog for a mere two dollars. With provenance that included Bertoia Auctions Co-Founder Bill Bertoia’s purchase of the toy in 1988, the 16-inch prancing horse and cart sold for \$5,900 (est. \$2,500-\$3,500).



\$4,425



\$4,720



\$7,670



\$6,490



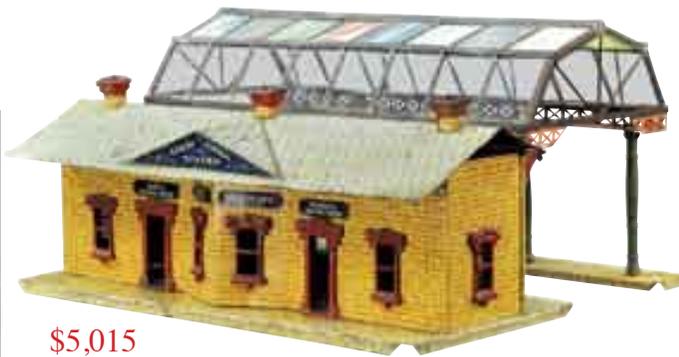
\$2,242



\$7,080



\$2,655



\$5,015



\$8,850

Cast-iron figural doorstop collectors were ready to bid to new highs, if need be, to acquire pristine rarities from the personal collection of Jeanne Bertoia, owner of Bertoia Auctions and a renowned expert in the doorstop field. The March 12 auction was the third and final opportunity to buy from her much-admired private collection.

“I had sold part of my collection in November 2013 and a second portion last year. I never intended to sell the last of my doorstops, as they were my most highly prized pieces. I thought I would always keep them, but because I was moving to a new house, it made sense to part with them and let other collectors enjoy them,” Jeanne said.

Because of that decision, doorstop collectors – who all knew of Jeanne’s unwavering emphasis on condition – realized that a unique opportunity to bid on elusive forms with beautiful original paint had arrived. “I was very surprised and pleased that even simple flower basket doorstops sold for much more than similar ones offered in other auctions. I think some collectors felt that if a particular doorstop was one of my favorites, it must be special. That was a real compliment to me,” Jeanne said.



\$15,340



\$9,440



\$11,800



\$6,490



\$23,600

\$7,080



\$940



\$5,900

In fact, the top lot of the entire sale was a Littco Halloween Girl doorstop depicting a young girl in her trick-or-treat costume, holding a jack-o-lantern. A book example and one of only four known in all-original condition, it was entered as Lot 326 and sold for \$29,500, just shy of its \$30,000 high estimate.



Phones buzzed with activity when bidding opened on Lot 424, a 16¼-inch Whistling Jim doorstop with a stunning natural patina. Against an estimate of \$5,000-\$7,000, the depiction of a boy with similarities to Huckleberry Finn quickly rose to a winning bid of \$22,420. Also, Lot 315, the nicest of all known examples of an Uncle Sam doorstop, showed off all its Stars-and-Stripes glory to attract an estimate-topping bid of \$21,240. Another excellent result was achieved by Lot 409, a doorstop depicting a football player in rushing stance, with a bold "V" emblazoned on his jersey. It crossed into the end zone at \$11,210 against an estimate of \$5,000-\$7,500.

\$12,980



“What this auction showed is that there is still a lot of strength in the toy hobby, especially when pieces in great condition come out of seasoned collections and into the marketplace,” said Rich Bertoia. “There was definitely some electricity in the room, and a lot of that had to do with the famous collectors of the past and present whose names were associated with the toys.”

Bertoia’s next auction will take place on May 20-21, 2016, and features antique toys, doorstops and Christmas antiques. To contact Bertoia Auctions, call 856-692-1881; email toys@bertoiiauctions.com. Visit Bertoia’s online at www.bertoiiauctions.com.

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