## 60th Papermania Plus Show:

## Collecting Fine Print by Jeanne Schinto

October 28th, 2011

by Jeanne Schinto Some collector clubs are

Hartford, Connecticut

new blood, and virtually all truly need it, but don't always act as welcoming as they should to would-be recruits. The opposite is true of the loyal base of dealers and serious collectors from New England, New York, and beyond who meet twice a year for Papermania Plus, held each January and August at the XL Center in Hartford, Connecticut. Maybe it's because they like words in all their forms —written, printed, spoken. Whatever the reason, it's easy to

exclusive. They claim to want

engage these people in conversation about the things they love. The book-and-paper people have a couple of other advantages too. First, the objects

of their affection offer more

accessible entry points to newcomers than, say, decoys or delft. There's always to be spied a children's book remembered from childhood; the poster from a loved movie; a bit of humor in a vintage advertisement; or a political message from the distant past that still resonates today. A second thing in their favor is their price tags. At the show I saw a number of items that cost thousands of dollars, but also plenty priced at \$25 or below. Cofounded by Arlene Shea and her husband, Paul Gipstein

Hillcrest Promotions, based in Wethersfield, Connecticut. On the weekend of August 20 and 21 they passed a milestone. It was their 60th show. Traditionally, August's Papermania Plus is a smaller event than January's. This time it was slightly smaller still, with approximately 100 dealers, some sharing booths. One reason for dealer absenteeism was the

the show is carried on by Shea

and her son, Gary Gipstein, of

show's date, a week earlier than usual. That created a conflict for those who annually do shows in Maine and New York state on that weekend. Notably, DeWolfe & Wood Rare Books, Alfred, Maine, was at the Ellsworth Antiques Show at Woodlawn in their home state. With dealer attendance down, buying was necessarily down too, since there is a significant amount of dealer-to-dealer action at book-and-paper shows generally. The items are so specific, and customer interests are so precise, the trade heavily depends on knowing the perfect

person to offer something.

In any case, although it was

dealer Papermania Plus I

certainly quieter than the 160-

attended a few Januarys ago, it

was still a stimulating way to spend a Saturday, looking at the tiny print of historical documents, gaping at some of the great eye-catchers of advertising ages past, and sifting through bins of vernacular photographs, trade catalogs, and the like. I defy anyone to walk into the show and fail to be amazed at humankind and what it has produced, sometimes in its finest hours, sometimes in its weirdest. One of the best items I saw at the show belonged to James Arsenault of Arrowsic, Maine. He had bought it at one of the

New Hampshire shows of the

previous week and had yet to

reflection," he quipped.)

price it. ("Put P.O.R.—price on

Executed by David Davidson, it

in preternaturally minuscule colored-ink writing—letters smaller than poppy seeds—that was copied from the *Boston Journal* of May 27, 1861, and "Respectfully Dedicated" to its editor, James A. Dix. Its design incorporates the "Address to the Troops at Fort Warren, by Rev. G.H. Hepworth" as well as a "Touching Tribute to Col. Ellsworth by W.R. Alger." A very strong magnifying glass would be needed to decipher the rest—after figuring out where the text begins, since it wraps around itself. But the words themselves may be beside the point, said Arsenault, who has

owned only one other piece of

wrote me in an e-mail after the

about the astonishing nature of

moment—the commemoration

virtuosic calligraphy. As he

show, "Of course, it's more

the art, and the historical

of the onset of the Civil War in the city that served as the seat of the abolitionist movement." One of the earliest pieces I saw was in the booth of Stephen P. Hanly of Bickerstaff's Books, Maps, &c., Scarborough, Maine. It was the first printed map of Washington, D.C., from the March 1792 issue of The Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine. Engraved by Thackara & Vallance, it shows Pierre Charles L'Enfant's

ingenious design—a series of

along with the usual grids—as

Hanly, who had the map priced

at \$9500, wrote in a post-show

e-mail that he'd had a "decent"

show, "both buying and selling,

despite the continuing

economic uncertainty." He

circles and diagonal streets,

revised by Andrew Ellicott.

"picked up a very nice small wall map of Cape Arundel, Maine, as well as a few eighteenthcentury magazines," he said. In a similar vein, Peter Masi of Montague, Massachusetts, who has been exhibiting at Papermania Plus since "about the second show," told me he made about 20 sales, "all modest, half to other dealers, spending "as much as I sold, and enjoyed the shopping."

Bob for \$20 total) and came with their price lists. well before Julia Child. A Descriptive Catalogue of the William S. Burroughs Archive, one of 26 lettered copies with a full leather binding stamped with a Brion Gysin design. It was signed by Burroughs, Gysin, and Barry Miles, Burroughs'

biographer.

many little things."

Baird specializes in early valentines and love tokens, watercolors, schoolgirl art, botanicals, prints, and books related to her specialties, as well as toys and textiles. The Sunwatch sale happened because, hearing of Frishman's horological interests, she dug the item out of one of her boxes. "It's always interesting to talk to people about what they collect," she said. "You learn by talking to your customers."

Baird was one dealer who had an unqualified "very good" show. "I was

positive spin on the diminished dealer population: "I think when there

are few dealers, the ones who are there get more business. Plus, I have so

Indeed, Baird sold several 1940's valentines for just \$2 or \$3, along with

also sold such things as a scrapbook of mostly trade cards for \$200 and a

about \$400 worth of 19th-century Christmas cards to a collector. She

busy all day Saturday, and it continued on Sunday," she said, offering this

decorate the bedrooms that their grandchildren stay in when they visit. It's impossible for most dealers to bring even a fraction of their inventory to every show. "So I think a good suggestion for dealers is to do followup," said Baird. "I've done it a little bit, but not as much as I should." She laughed. "There was a couple looking for McLoughlin children's books

assistant, Jason Savedoff, were indicted by a federal grand jury later that month, accused of stealing and selling historical documents worth millions of dollars. The two men were arrested after a Maryland Historical Society employee reported that Savedoff purloined a document from the society's Baltimore library. When police arrived, investigators found not only that document but 59 others inside a locker that Savedoff was using.

minute video from his 2008 book tour, in which he speaks glibly and without notes about his collecting origins and habits. He also name drops everyone from Mamie Eisenhower to Bill Clinton. It's on the Web site for the University of Arkansas's speakers series (www.clintonschoolspeakers.com/lecture/view/presidents-table-200years-dining-and-diplomacy). Federal prosecutors said the pair is also accused of stealing and selling

Museum and the New-York Historical Society, both in New York City. If the charges are true, this adds a new twist to the idea of older collectors encouraging younger ones. Landau is 63; Savedoff, 24. (For further details, see "Major Figure in Historic Document Field Charged with \$6 Million Theft," M.A.D., September 2011, p. 10-A.) The next Papermania Plus is scheduled for the weekend of January 7 and 8, 2012. For more information, contact Hillcrest Promotions at (860)

(www.papermaniaplus.com). Apparently it was not considered a bad idea in the 19th century to be portrayed as a pig on St. Valentine's Day. The



greeting card was \$35 from Gary Welker of Waterloo, Ontario. This Ansonia Sunwatch—a pocket sundial for hikers in the original box with owner's manual, was \$125 from Elizabeth Baird of Falmouth, Maine. It sold to



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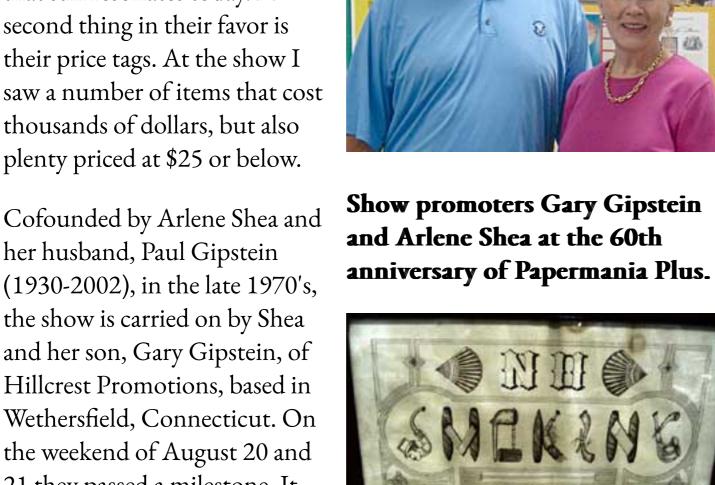
my husband. The first printed map of Washington, D.C., from the March 1792 issue of The Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine, was

\$9500 from Bickerstaff's Books, Maps &c.,



New York, he introduced me to

Philip Mead. "We met at the Hartford military show"—i.e., the show sponsored by the New **England Antique Arms Society,** said Caren. "Phil was eleven or twelve. I always give kids something free to encourage them to collect. I gave Phil a piece of paper from the eighteenth century. He became a collector. He has even sold me things." The dealer laughed. Mead, who is now 34, has gone so far as to make a career of studying the past. He has recently earned his doctorate in history at Harvard University and is now teaching there.



The price was \$975. Photographs of New York by HELEN LEVITT with an estay by JAMES AGEE

Massachusetts, brought this 1889

out in images of pipes and cigars.

"No Smoking Allowed" sign,

with the word smoking spelled

Rex Stark of Gardner,



**Steven Schuyler of North** 

Reading, Massachusetts, asked

color charts from Prince Paint

Company of Boston. Great

cultural information. For

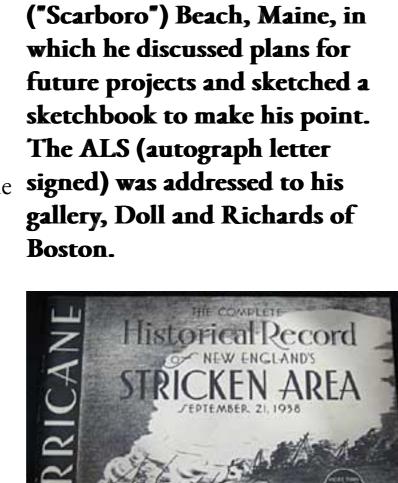
colors from that period—

\$300 for two early 20th-century

visually, they are also a wealth of

example, the names of the paint

Edelweiss White, Scotch Gray, Maple Leaf Red—are a sharp contrast to contemporary paint color choices, such as Valspar's Blue Whisper, Hello Dolly, and Daydream Haze. was a Civil War commemorative Resser-Thorner Antiques, Manchester, New Hampshire,



Relevant to our weather-disaster

plagued age, The Complete

England's Hurricane Stricken

compendium of more than 700

Historical Record of New

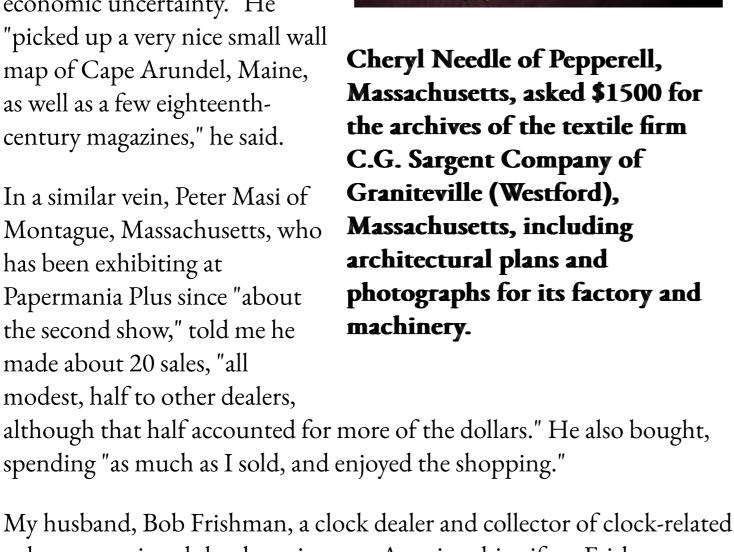
Area, a 9" x 12", 96-page

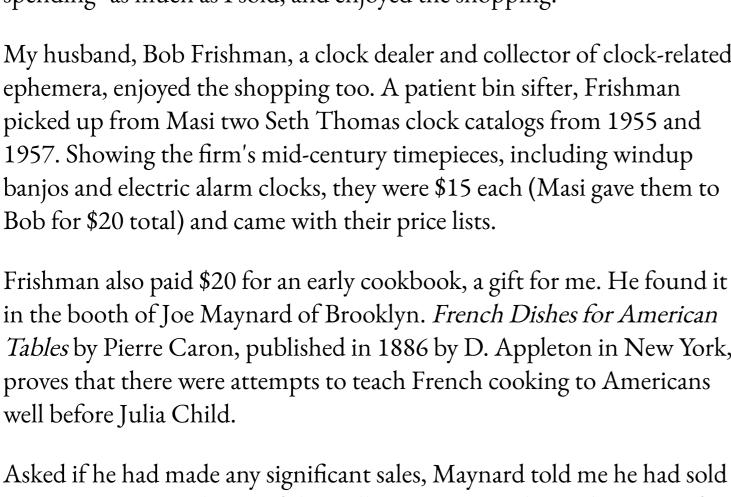
asked \$5500 for a two-page letter

by Winslow Homer on August

26, 1904, from Scarborough







the day, an Ansonia Sunwatch—a pocket sundial for hikers. It was \$125. In the mid-1990's he and I bought one at Brimfield for \$50. Unlike that one, this was in fine condition, with its original box and owner's manual.

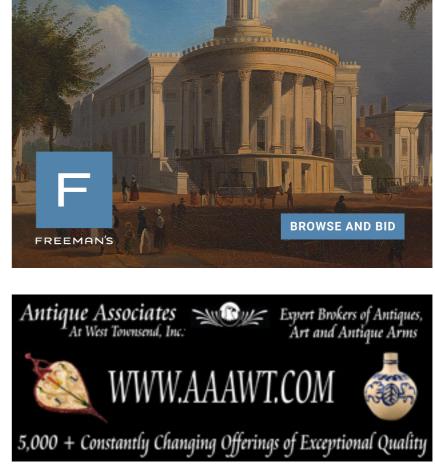
number of toys to a couple from Maine intending to use them to of a certain size. I need to go through my McLoughlins and see what I've

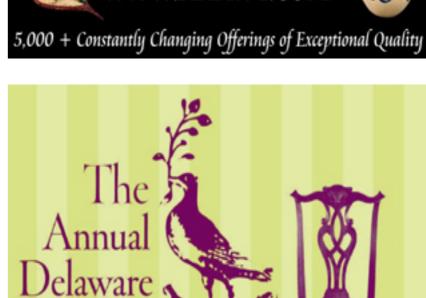
Reportedly among the items were papers signed by President Abraham Lincoln worth \$300,000 and presidential inaugural ball invitations and

documents from the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and

563-9975 or (860) 529-2234, or see the Web site





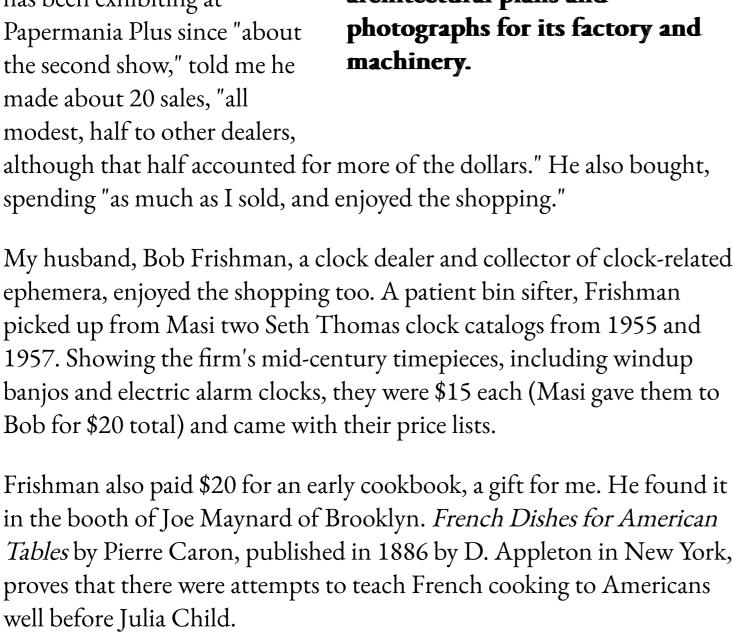


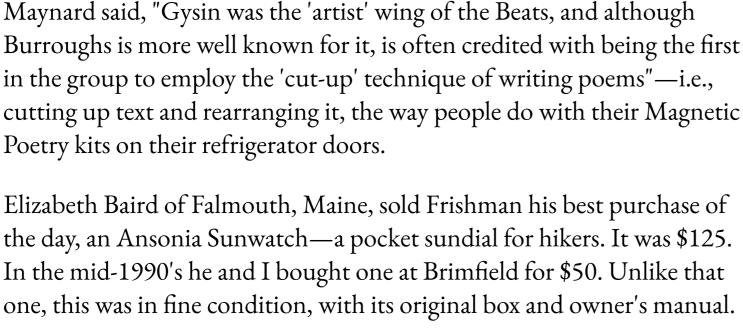


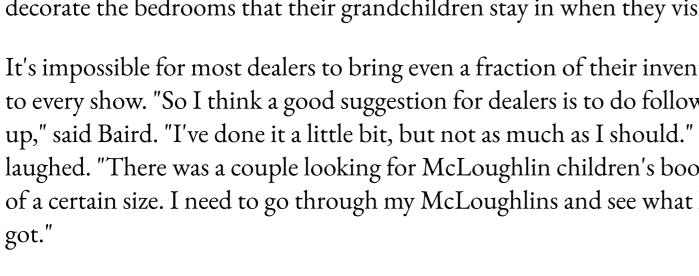












A handful of Papermania Plus dealers have had regular dealings with one

major collector who did not attend the show this time, Barry Landau of

New York City. The subject of many overheard conversations on the

Maryland Historical Society and charged with theft. Landau and his

floor, he wasn't on vacation. Rather, in July he was arrested at the

programs valued at \$500,000. Significantly, Landau is the author of *The President's Table: Two* Hundred Years of Dining and Diplomacy. You can see him in a 43-



Scarborough, Maine.

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