

## "Hey, Carl"

by Jeanne Schinto

"Carl! Carl! Hey, Carl!" Phone-bid takers were trying to get auctioneer Carl Nordblom's attention. On the block was an early 20th-century Florida scene by Anthony Thieme that Nordblom said had come out of a house on the south shore of Boston. The artist's *Spring in St. Augustine, Fla.* depicted people visiting on front porches and a horse pulling a wagon down an unpaved street in an African-American neighborhood in the city. Estimated at \$10,000 to \$12,000, the signed 20" x 30" oil on panel had sparked a bidding war between the phones and room bidders--too many to count. The top-dollar lot of the approximately 425 offered by CRN Auctions, Inc., on November 28, it brought \$73,600 from one of the phones, and a round of applause from everybody. (All prices include the buyer's premium.)

By custom, Nordblom begins his major sales by offering art. These lots are the only ones that carry official estimates. This time there were 79 works by both American and European artists, including signed paintings by Charles Herbert Woodbury, Lester Stevens, Jane Peterson, Alexander Pope, Charles Theodore Frere, Eugene Henri Cauchois, and Antoine Blanchard. There were American, British, Dutch, German, and Italian school examples. There were two ship portraits for the China trade. There was also a bronze of George Washington shaking hands with Lafayette by Frederic-Auguste Bartholdi. Only two of the artworks were passed; the rest brought almost uniformly strong prices. A few others besides the Thieme made many times their estimates.

Dealers flock to these fast-paced sales at the Cambridge Armory in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They come from all over New England as well as New York State. As usual, the best pieces, the ones that make the highest prices, go to the phones or else to savvy retail buyers in the audience.

One phone bidder, in a shoot-out with others, bought the item that Nordblom said received more interest than any other item in the sale: a German polychromed papier-mâché, and wood pull-toy in the form of a cat. Riding in the cat's hollowed-out back were a band of nine feline musicians and dancers in human dress. They could be removed and placed in arrangements alongside the main cat. In excellent condition, especially for a toy, it brought \$31,050. During the final preview, in the hours before the sale, two dealers were huddled around the piece of furniture that would bring the most in that category later in the day. A Queen Anne mahogany block-front chest, it was small, just 31 1/2" by 32 1/2" by 19", and had letters impressed on its backboard spelling out "Henshaw." When its turn on the block came, five phone bidders vied. One took it for \$54,050. The audience started to applaud, but Nordblom didn't wait for it to finish before he was on to the next lot.

For more highlights, see the pictures and captions below. For more information about CRN Auctions, Inc., call (617) 661-9582 or see the web site ([www.crnauctions.com](http://www.crnauctions.com)).