

Swann Galleries, New York City

"Gold Rush" at Printed Manuscript and Americana Sale

by Jeanne Schinto
Photos courtesy Swann Galleries

When Nicholas D. Lowry, president and principal auctioneer of Swann Galleries, got to the podium for the start of the printed and manuscript Americana auction in New York City on November 25, 2014, he explained why he was a few minutes late. "We've had a gold rush of interest—and we try to accommodate as many bidders as possible."

The metaphor was apt. Bids came in apace from the room, phones, order book, and Internet—sometimes all at once—on many of the most important lots. "This is getting out of control—in a great way," Lowry commented in the middle of one bidding war. "Ah, the double-handed paddle raise," he noted in another instance, speaking of someone in the gallery trying to get his attention.

"This was one of the best general Americana sales in Swann's history," noted Swann Americana specialist Richard "Rick" Stattler a few days later. "In fact, it was topped only by a big blockbuster we had back in March 2007," before the crash. "We've had a couple of bigger single-owner sales, but this was the best general one."

On expectations of \$590,000/878,530, the auction realized \$1,160,125 (including buyers' premiums) with an 88% sell-through rate. The 384 lots had come from 100 different consignors.

The top seller, a first edition of Thomas Paine's *The American Crisis, Parts I, II, and III*, went at \$125,000 to Stephan Loewentheil of the 19th Century Rare Book and Photograph Shop, Stevenson, Maryland, and Brooklyn, New York. Bound together, the 56 pages were published in Philadelphia in 1776-77.

"These are the times that try men's souls," Part I famously begins. Originally issued as a pamphlet, it is considered to be among the greatest political essays in the modern English language. Paine's biographer John Keane called it "an ode to fearlessness" and "a literary cannon on the battlefield of independence." Meant to inspire the men to be courageous in circumstances that looked to be pretty dire, rather than be a "summer soldier" or "sunshine patriot," Paine's words were meant for speaking aloud to people unaccustomed to reading. Indeed, the essay was read on Christmas 1776 to men who, on the following day, waged the Battle of Trenton after George Washington's crossing of the Delaware River.

Paine wrote Part II in an entirely different vein. It was cast in the form of an open letter to a British official, Lord Richard Howe. The letter was a taunt, a threat, and a bold prediction that the British would lose. Part III was altogether different from the other two, published on the anniversary of the Battle of Lexington. Its language was designed to smoke out remaining Loyalists.

Only one other copy of this extremely rare volume has been at auction since 1955, when a copy sold at Sotheby's on December 11, 2008, for \$158,500. The one at this sale almost didn't make it to market. It had belonged to a man from upstate New York. While his estate was being sorted, the pamphlet got put into a box marked for the trash bin. His daughter Peggy Labarr spotted it and retrieved it as something worth saving. She brought it to a local antiques dealer, Mark Lawson of Saratoga Springs and

Colonie, New York. Lawson suggested she bring it to Swann. Labarr and her sister were in the audience when the book sold, as was a film crew from Channel 10 news in Albany.

"I just closed my eyes when the bidding was going on, thinking this isn't real," Labarr told the TV reporter. "I'm not here.... I'm dreaming." Earlier in the day, however, while walking around Lower Manhattan, she had found herself in Thomas Paine Park, where she looked up and read signage that mentions *The American Crisis*. As she told the reporter, "That to me was a sign that good things were going to happen today."

Stephan Loewentheil paid \$70,000—nearly four times the high

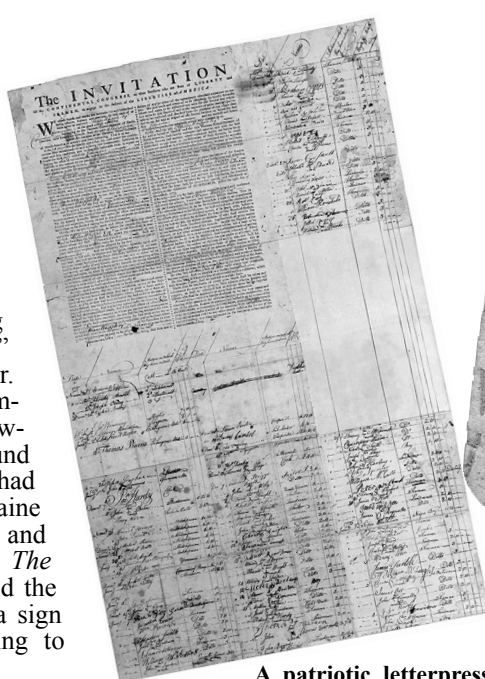
"This was one of the best general Americana sales in Swann's history."

estimate—for another market rarity, an anti-Federalist's eyewitness account of the Constitutional Convention. Published in Philadel-

phia in 1788, it was written by delegate Luther Martin, one of our Founding Fathers, who feared that the Constitution violated states' rights. *The Genuine Information, Delivered to the Legislature of the State of Maryland* was bound with other pamphlets. According to Swann, only two other copies have been at auction since 1933. One, a bound copy like this one, sold on June 21, 2005, at the Snider collection sale at Christie's, for \$156,000; a second, incomplete copy made \$18,000 at Swann on March 26, 2009.

A rich document from the earliest days of the Continental Navy and Marines inspired another good fight. A letterpress broadside with completions in manuscript, it went to the William Reese Company, New Haven, Connecticut, for \$62,500 (est. \$8000/12,000). Used both as a recruitment contract and a signup sheet for the U.S.S. *Columbus*, one of the Continental Navy's first ships, it was headlined "The Invitation of the Continental Congress, to their Brethren who are Sons of Liberty and Seamen, to Engage in the Defence of the Liberties of America." Printed in Philadelphia on November 15, 1775, it was signed by the ship's commander, Abraham Whipple. Twenty-one officers, mates, surgeons, and midshipmen, plus 92 seamen, landmen, craftsmen, gunners, along with one "Negro Boy," also signed. Next to each man's signature was date of enlistment, rank, and rate of pay. Those who signed agreed to the stated conditions of employment and their incentives. The first man to spot a prized British vessel, for example, was to get a double share of proceeds if the vessel got captured. The first to board it was promised a triple share.

A unique piece was among other fresh-to-the-market items that got bidders' competitive juices flowing. Estimated at \$12,000/18,000, a letter book by 18th-century Boston merchant Thomas Russell was sold to benefit Historic Deerfield. It went to an unidentified collector on the phone for \$75,000. The 637 manuscript letters were written in 557 pages over the period December 8, 1777, to October 4, 1781, during a time when, as the catalog states, Russell was active in running the British blockade, sending ships up and down the Atlantic coast, though he did not

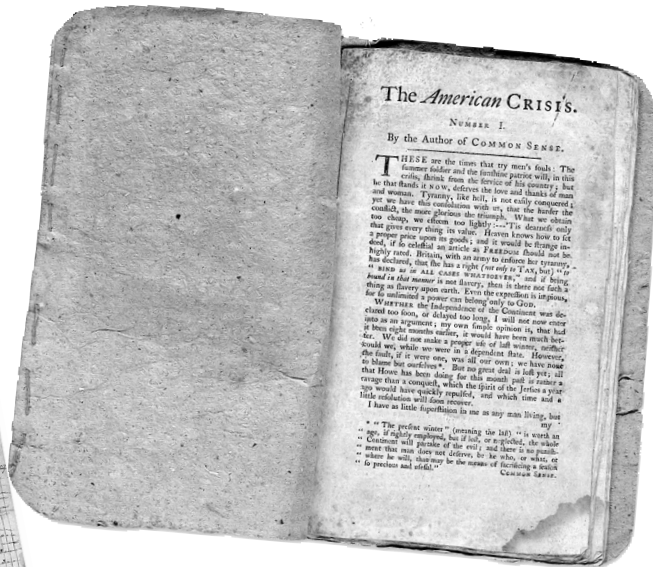


A patriotic letterpress broadside stating the articles of agreement for the Continental Navy's U.S.S. *Columbus*, with attached manuscript signature lists, sold for \$62,500. The broadside proper, printed in Philadelphia on November 15, 1775, is 18" x 14". With the list attachments, dating through January 19, 1776, the whole measures 36½" x 22½". Missing pieces include a 12" x 8" section of signatures.

directly engage in privateering. A big plus for this lot was the fact that Russell's most frequent correspondent was Robert Morris Jr. (1734-1806), a fellow merchant who financed the American Revolution and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence. According to Morris biographer Charles Rappleye, next to Washington, Morris was "the most powerful man in America." (For more information on Morris, see Rappleye's *Robert Morris: Financier of the American Revolution*, published in 2010.)

This sale also was notable for its many good diaries. Asked about their number, Stattler said, "Diaries are a particular favorite of mine, and I try to get into the sales as many as possible." Summarizing them well is a labor-intensive job. Stattler managed to do his usual impressive job this time, despite having had to catalog simultaneously a Latin Americana sale.

The diary that bidders competed most heavily for was kept by a lieutenant who served during the French and Indian War. Josiah Goodrich of Wethersfield, Connecticut, titled these pages "A Journal [sic] of my March from Albany." They included a dramatic account of the 1759 Battle of Ticonderoga. ("This day I went to view ye fort which was a very strong one. The enemy blew off near one quarter of it.") He didn't fail to smell the roses, however. ("This after noon [sic] went to ye point of ye lake...,

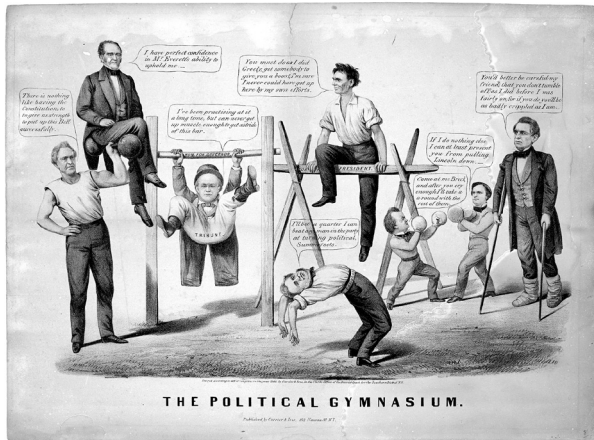


Saved from the trash bin, a first edition of Thomas Paine's *The American Crisis, Parts I, II, and III* sold for \$125,000. Credited with helping to turn the tide of the American Revolution, these 56 pages were bound together and published in Philadelphia in 1776-77. "I bring reason to your ears, and, in language as plain as A,B,C, hold up truth to your eyes," Paine wrote in Part I. His phrasing reminded me of the declaration of a great 20th-century American wordsmith, Marianne Moore, who, in a 1920 poem called "England," characterized our nation as a place where "letters are written/ not in Spanish, not in Greek, not in Latin, not in shorthand/ but in plain American which cats and dogs can read!"

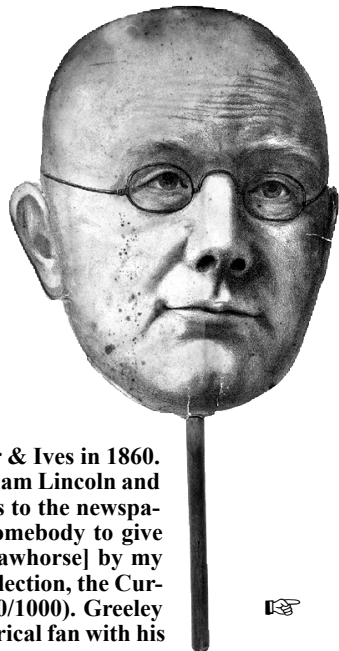
where I had a fair prospect of it, which appears to be ye most pleasant [sic] place that ever I saw." Consigned by the estate of collector Milton R. Slater (1918-2014) of Sleepy Hollow, New York, the diary went to a collector on the phone for \$47,500 (est. \$8000/12,000).

Also of great interest in the diary category was one written out west in 1859 by a writer believed to be Lieutenant Milton Cogswell, a member of the so-called Macomb expedition. The Smithsonian Institution arranged the expedition of Captain John N. Macomb, who was charged with surveying and mapping the route from Santa Fe to the junction of the Green and Grand Rivers in Utah. The 87 manuscript pages, plus 35 pages of memoranda, sold to a dealer for \$18,750 (est. \$8000/12,000).

When Stattler took the diary in, neither he nor the consignor knew how special it was. "But some research showed that this guy had been on this very important expedition," he said. "To have a completely new perspective on it was quite a spectacular find." In addition, as described in the catalog, this has "almost everything you might hope for in a Western diary: friendly Indians, hostile Indians, Mormons, Mexican sheep herders, breathtaking mountain scenery, and even some affectionate frontier ladies."



This 13½" x 18" political lithograph was published by Currier & Ives in 1860. Titled *The Political Gymnasium*, it shows, among others, Abraham Lincoln and Horace Greeley. "You must do as I did, Greeley," Lincoln says to the newspaper editor and reformer struggling to do a chin-up. "[G]et somebody to give you a boost. I never could have got up here [balanced on a sawhorse] by my own efforts." One of many nice Lincoln items in the Forbes collection, the Currier & Ives print sold to an on-line bidder for \$2215 (est. \$700/1000). Greeley was an unsuccessful candidate for president in 1872, and a satirical fan with his picture on it went for \$406 (est. \$300/400).



Besides rarities (especially early ones) and unique material from any period and lots such as the Cogswell diary with research potential, buyers were also willing to pay big for scarce images of significant subjects. An albumen print of a photograph made in Shanghai in 1879, for example, went to the dealer Loewentheil for \$18,750 (est. \$2500/3500). It was a double portrait of former U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant and Li Hongzhang, China's leading military figure of the late 19th century. The two met while Grant was on a diplomatic tour of Asia, during which he was asked to intercede on China's behalf after Japan declared its intention to annex the Ryukyu Islands. Mounted with a letter presenting the photo to a judge in 1931, it sparked such a competition that Nicholas Lowry remarked afterward, "An epic battle, fitting for two generals."

In the same category of visual material, a small (3½" x 7¼") watercolor and ink, *The Omaha and Ottoo Mission at Bellevue from the East*, painted but unsigned by frontier artist Stanislas W.Y. Schimonsky, made \$16,250 (est. \$4000/6000). The circa 1855 image depicts a Presbyterian mission that served two tribes of Native Americans. Schimonsky painted five Indians into the foreground. The building, at the fork of the Missouri River and Papillion Creek, was later used as a district court and then a hotel. A steamboat is part of the scene. It's possibly the *Nebraska*, which employed Samuel L. Clemens, a.k.a. Mark Twain, in 1861.

"Very little of Schimonsky's art is known to have survived," said Stattler. "I couldn't find any of his work at auction and very few examples in institutions." The picture came from a dealer, and the buyer went to the Museum of Nebraska Art, Kearney, Nebraska.

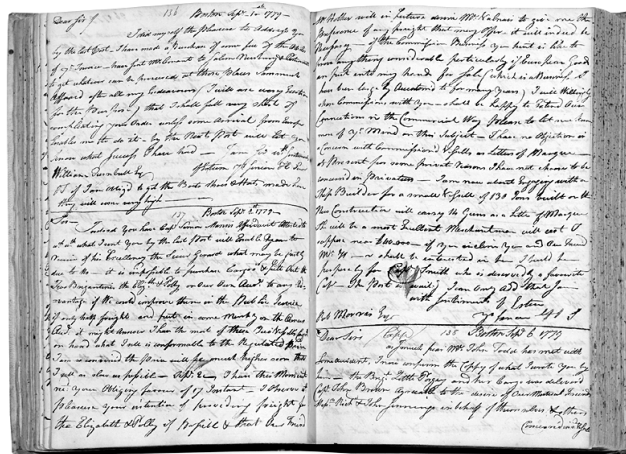
Bidders made a clean sweep of the Mormon material on offer at this sale. A first edition of *The Book of Mormon* sold to a collector for \$62,500 (est. \$40,000/60,000). Published in Palmyra, New York, in 1830, this edition is the only one that lists Joseph Smith as "author and proprietor" rather than "translator." It also includes Smith's two-page preface. These come to auction fairly often, and a spate of others have gone unsold at other auction houses in the last couple of years. According to Stattler, this was the highest auction price realized for one since 2008. A second edition, published in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1837, fetched \$18,750 (est. \$4000/6000).

A first American edition of *The Pearl of Great Price* by Joseph Smith went for \$2080 (est. \$500/750). An unpublished letter on the subject of Smith's search for a printer for *The Book of Mormon* was a hit, going at \$13,750 (est. \$4000/6000). It was written by a New York newspaper publisher involved with politics, Thurlow Weed, who himself refused to publish the book. The letter was originally laid into *The Book of Mormon* owned by one of America's greatest bibliophiles, Thomas W. Streeter. It came to this sale from the Forbes collection and went into another private collection.

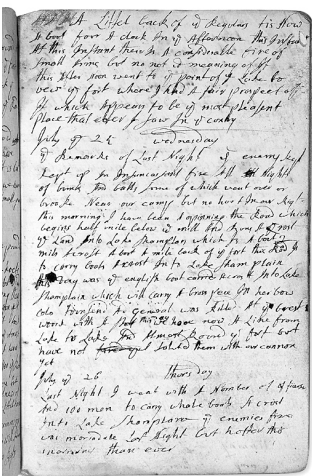
A second, juicy Mormon letter, written by one of Brigham Young's ex-wives, sold to a collector for \$16,250 (est. \$3000/4000). It is 13 pages long and describes at length Ann Eliza Young's five-year marriage to the Latter Day Saint movement's leader. For the record, she was Mrs. Young number 19. There were umpteen to follow. She wrote the 13-page letter on May 20, 1881, to Jennie Froiseth, who was writing a book titled *The Women of Mormonism; or The Story of Polygamy as Told by the Victims Themselves*. According to the catalog, the letter included discussions of the other wives and their internal politics, as well as the declaration that marriage 19 was never consummated.

A very different marriage began on November 25, 1913, exactly 101 years prior to this sale. It was the wedding of Woodrow Wilson's daughter Jessie at the White House. An archive was kept by one of the wedding guests, Dr. DeWitt Scoville Clark Jr., an old friend of the groom, Francis Bowes Sayre Sr. Clark also served as an usher. The lot included Clark's invitations to the rehearsal dinner and wedding, along with the gloves, tie, stickpin, and boutonniere he wore on these occasions. From the Forbes collection, the archive sold within estimate for \$3250 to an unidentified institution.

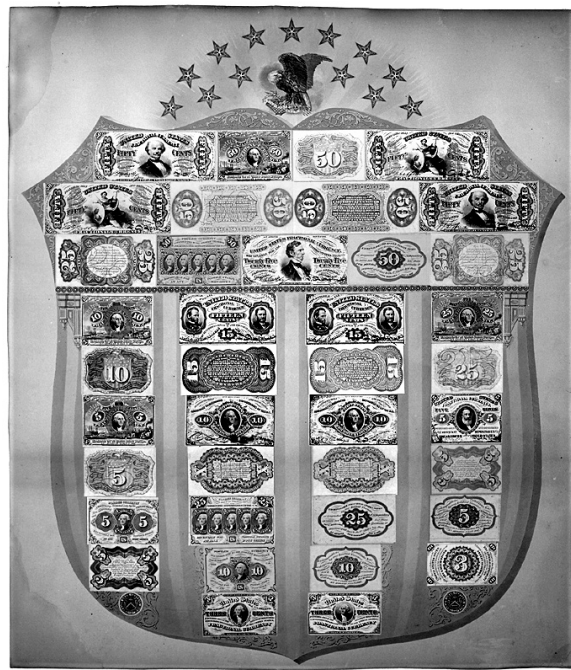
The next Swann sale will be on April 14, right after the New York Antiquarian Book Fair on April 9-12. For more information, phone Swann at (212) 254-4710 or see the Web site (www.swanngalleries.com).



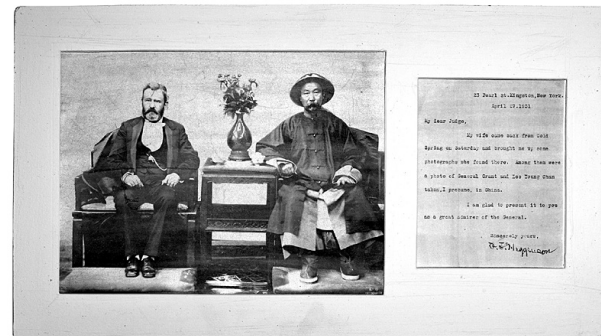
The 557-page letter book of 18th-century Boston merchant Thomas Russell fetched \$75,000 (est. \$12,000/18,000). Sold to benefit Historic Deerfield, it covered the period December 8, 1777, to October 4, 1781, during which time the merchant wrote 90 letters to the American Revolution's financier, Robert Morris Jr.



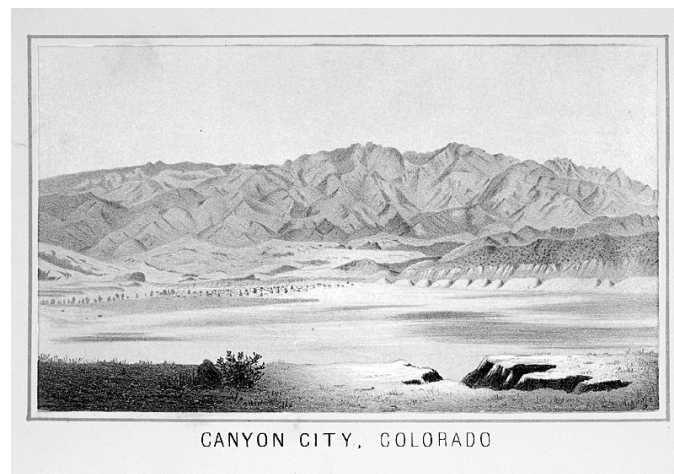
The 41-page manuscript diary of Josiah Goodrich (1731-1764), a lieutenant in the French and Indian War, sold for \$47,500. It includes an account of the Battle of Ticonderoga, in which Goodrich fought as part of the 5th Company of Connecticut Militia. The diary covers the period June 2 to November 30, 1759.



"Money begets money," said Nicholas Lowry when this fractional currency shield sold to an absentee bidder for \$4000 (est. \$2000/3000). The 24" x 20½" engraving has 39 mounted specimen notes. Produced by the Treasury Department around 1867 or 1868, it was designed as an aid in the detection of counterfeits among the fractionals issued during the Civil War. "Those are well known to currency collectors, but they don't turn up much here," said Rick Stattler. "I think we got a currency-collector price."

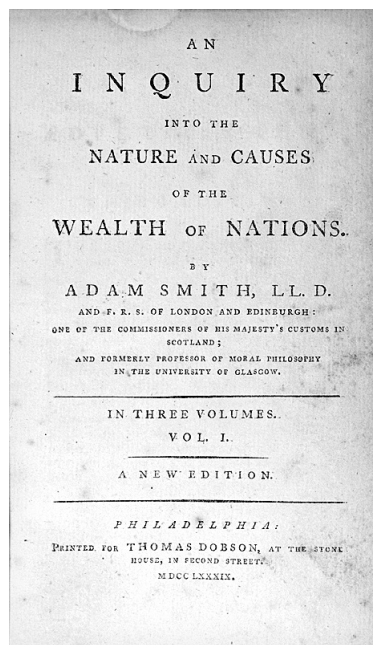


This 9" x 11½" albumen print of former U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant and Chinese General Li Hongzhang at a meeting in Shanghai in 1879 sold for \$18,750. The photographer was Liang Shitai (a.k.a. See Tay), who signed it in the negative. The photo, with a long scratch in the image area and retouching, was mounted with a letter presenting the photo to an American judge in 1931.



A dealer on the phone paid \$13,750 (est. \$3000/4000) for *Canyon City, Colorado, and Surroundings* by Alfred E. Mathews. Published in New York in 1870, it is a rarity. The great American bibliophile Thomas W. Streeter had one; it was sold at Parke-Bernet in 1968, during the series of four auctions held after his death in 1965. Only one has been known at auction since.

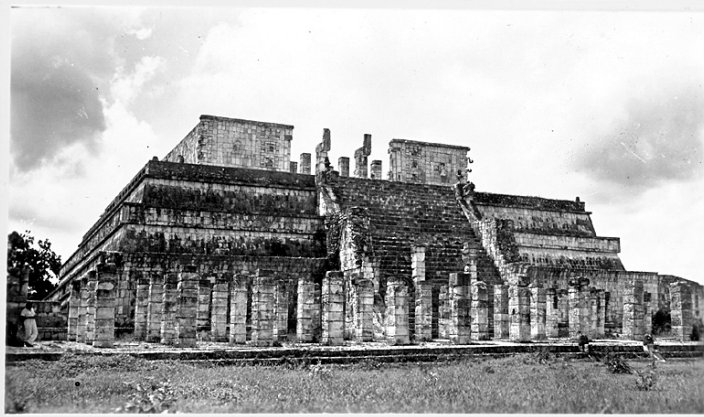
The Forbes collection's first American edition of Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, in three volumes, sold on line for a within-estimate \$8450. "I imagine that was partly on the strength of the provenance—for a wealthy man's copy of *The Wealth of Nations*," Rick Stattler observed. Published in Philadelphia in 1789, the book was previously owned by Robert Lowther, who dated and inscribed it on August 16, 1791, "Steal not this book for fear of shame for underneath is the owner's name." A little looking on the Internet did not turn up anything about Lowther. Stattler's more thorough search didn't either.



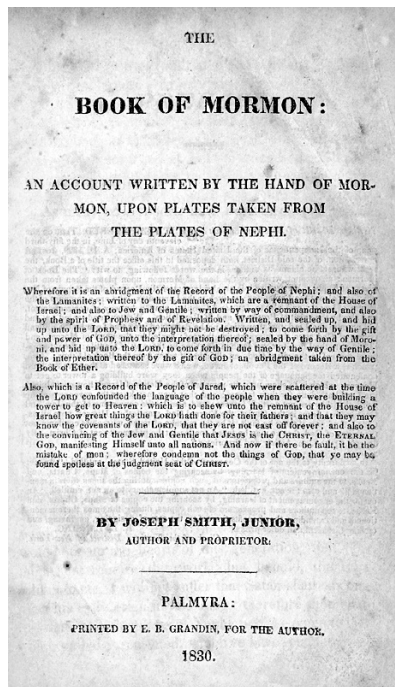
The Omaha and Ottoo Mission at Bellevue from the East, Stanislas W.Y. Schimonsky (b. circa 1824), \$16,250 (est. \$4000/6000). The Wyoming State Library Web site says that Schimonsky immigrated to the United States in 1848 after graduating from the Polytechnique School in Berlin and serving in the engineering corps of the Prussian Army. He was a surveyor in Nebraska as well as an artist. A bit of an inventor, he received a patent for an improved railway car brake while working as an assistant engineer on the Transcontinental Railroad.



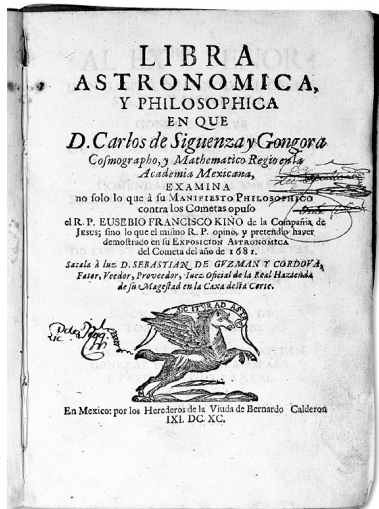
The Grant Album, in Memoriam: Mount MacGregor to Riverside Park, Edition de Luxe sold for \$7500. Included was its rare cast-iron spring-hinged display stand. The album consists of 161 albumen prints, each approximately 12" x 10", showing former U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant's family, career, and funeral procession in Manhattan. The album was published in Boston by the U.S. Instantaneous Photo Company in 1886. There are other versions. Formerly in the Forbes collection, this is one of the largest.



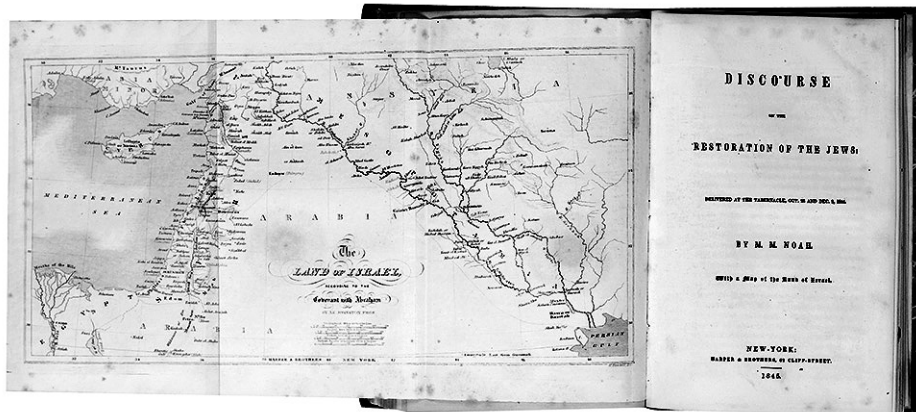
An archive of a commercial artist's two extended tours of Mayan ruins in 1940 sold for \$8125 (est. \$1500/2500). She was Elizabeth Turner Miller (1911-1985) of Baltimore. The lot includes four reels of film from the trip and eight scrapbooks of photographs. Also included are Miller's travel diaries and more. Miller traveled to Quiriguá, Guatemala; Copán in western Honduras; Chichen Itza in the Yucatán; and several other places. Her companions included photographer John Henry Coon, who likely took the professional photographs.



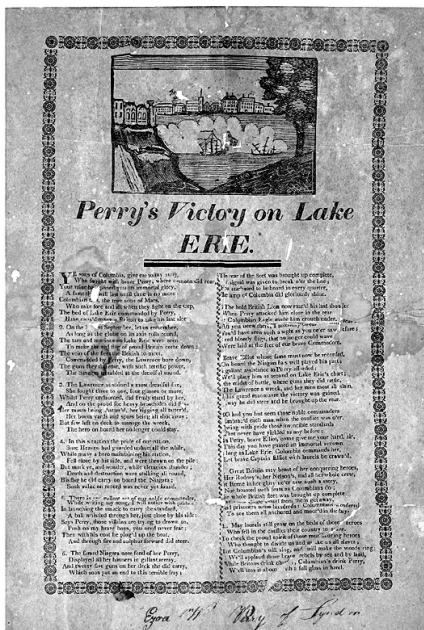
A first edition of *The Book of Mormon* sold for \$62,500. It was published in Palmyra, New York, just days before the official establishment of the church on April 6, 1830.



A copy of *Libra Astronomica* by Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora sold to a dealer for \$12,500 (est. \$8000/12,000). Published in Mexico in 1690, it is one of the first scientific books written by a native Latin American. Mexican-born Sigüenza was professor of mathematics at the Universidad de Mexico. According to Swann, only one other copy has come to auction since 1981.



An interesting piece of American Judaica, *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews* by Noah Mordecai sold for \$13,750 (est. \$2000/3000) to a collector bidding in the room. Published in New York in 1845, it consists of an address given at the New York Tabernacle to an audience of both Christians and Jews on the subject of the nascent Zionist movement. The speech was bound with other pamphlets, and a folding map of Israel was intact.



Perry's Victory on Lake Erie, a 16" x 10 3/4" letterpress broadside with a woodcut illustration, sold for \$4000 (est. \$500/750). The text is the lyrics to a song about the battle. Published circa 1813, it is extremely rare, with no other copies traced by Swann. This copy came from the Milton R. Slater collection.

"The Only Copy for Sale"

The price fetched by Thomas Paine's *The American Crisis* may have amazed its consignor, but it wasn't a surprise to the trade and others who follow the market. Material from the American Revolution has a lot of firepower these days, comparable to the market heat that, for example, natural history color-plate books were generating 20 years ago, when Mrs. Paul Mellon was bashing heads with a few other collectors in the field.

Aside from the collecting fashions that come and go, there have been more permanent, well-documented changes that the age of the Internet has ushered in. In a clever phrase that may recall for *M.A.D.* readers the "good, better, best" furniture comparisons of Albert Sack, the longtime rare-book dealer William S. Reese has observed that in order to make a sale in the current market, a seller needs to proffer "the best, the cheapest, or the only copy" of the book in question.

Hence, the title of one of the William Reese Company's latest catalogs is "The Only Copy for Sale."

Reese told *M.A.D.* that he and his staff verified the "only" status of the entries by checking the Web site for *viaLibri* (www.vialibri.net), which advertises itself as "the world's largest marketplace for old, rare, and out-of-print books." It's the place that many dealers consult in order to price books accurately. Reese said he has no doubt that other copies will come to the fore as the catalog circulates, but, as of its publication in late 2014, the 148 items featured were verifiable "only's," a sampling of which follows.

♦ A good copy of the first edition of the first book by the first poet of New England, Anne Bradstreet. "No perfect copy has appeared at auction since 1949," the catalog states of *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*, published in London in 1650. \$20,000.

♦ Thomas W. Streeter's first edition of John Trumbull's *The Adventures of Daniel Boon* [sic]. One of only four copies total that the William Reese Company has been able to locate, it was printed by Trumbull in Norwich, Connecticut, in 1786. The text is said to have been dictated by Boone. The same copy sold at auction in 1888 for \$8.50. As Streeter (1883-1965) often said, "Those were the days to buy rare Americana." \$150,000.

♦ A first edition of Samuel de Champlain's *Voyages et Descouvertes Faites en La Nouvelle France* has the first reports of his explorations of New France in 1615-18. Published in Paris in 1619 with four full-page plates plus two folding plates, it describes Champlain's experiences with the Iroquois, the Hurons, and other native American tribes of the St. Lawrence Valley. \$85,000.

♦ The first American road atlas, Christopher Colles's *A Survey of the Roads of the United States of America* was published in New York in 1789, the year George Washington took office as our first president. This 83-page work features 17 engraved, very accurate maps created by Colles through the use of a perambulator. His own invention, it measured mileage by adding up the revolutions of a wheel trailed behind a carriage. \$28,000.

♦ A first edition of Robert Harcourt's *A Relation of a Voyage to Guiana* was published in London in 1613. A narrative of the attempt by the British to establish a colony in South America during the time of Jamestown, it was Americana collector Frank C. Deering's copy. Only collector Boies Penrose's former copy has appeared for sale in recent times. \$30,000.

♦ A copy of the first true printing of Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, published in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1894. (An offprint was issued by the Wisconsin Historical Society later in the same year.) As expressed in this essay, Turner's epoch-making idea was that the openness of the American frontier shaped American character and that its closing would have an equal impact on the national identity. As Reese notes in his catalog, "To this cataloguer's mind the impact of Turner's thesis on the field of American history was not unlike that of Einstein's theory of relativity on the field of physics—all subsequent historians would have to deal with" its implications. \$12,500.

For more information, contact William Reese Company at (203) 789-8081 or see the Web site (www.williamreesecompany.com).