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# Conquistadors and Cowboys Sell at Swann

by Jeanne Schinto



Swann Galleries, New York City

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Photos courtesy Swann Galleries

The star lot of Swann Galleries' "Printed & Manuscript Americana" auction on March 26 in New York City was a partial copy of the first book published in South America, *Doctrina Christiana, y Catecismo para Instruccion de los Indios*. A compilation of sermons and catechism for use in converting the indigenous peoples of Peru to Catholicism (est. \$10,000/15,000), it sold to a dealer for \$72,000 (including buyer's premium).

It's easily a record price for the title, printed in 1584 in Lima in Spanish with translations in the native languages of Quichua and Aymara. The last copy offered at auction sold for £1100 at Sotheby's in London in 1964. What's even more impressive, the price is also a record for any South American imprint, according to research done by Rick Statler, Swann's Americana expert.

"That was an item difficult to estimate because the condition was so rough," Statler said. "It's also tremendously scarce and tremendously important, so you never know how those three factors will balance out." Nor was there "a broad-based interest in that lot before the sale," he added. "It was a pretty small number of people. So I really didn't have any suspicion that it would do as well as it did."

Additional Latin American rarities came to the sale from a single consignor and brought strong prices from the same circumscribed group of bidders. The dealer who walked away with the top lot paid \$28,800 for the second most successful one, a partial copy of another vernacular catechism, *Tercero Catecismo y Exposicion de la Doctrina Christiana, por Sermones*. Prized like the first for its information about languages and colonizers in the Andean region, it was published in 1585 in Lima on the same printing press as the first book, and it too is trilingual. Statler said a complete copy of *Tercero Catecismo*... has been offered at retail for more than \$300,000.

An even earlier book relating to the Spanish conquest of Peru brought the sale's third-highest price. Published in Venice in 1535, this first Italian edition of *Libro Primo de la Conquista del Peru & Provincia del Cuzco de le Indie Occidentali*, Pizarro's official report, written by his secretary, Francisco de Xerez, sold to a dealer for \$18,000 (est. \$7000/10,000).

A comparably successful portion of the sale was the material relating to the American West consigned by Roger Hollander, who owns the hunting lodge that once belonged to William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody (1846-1917) in Cody, Wyoming. The 47 lots that sold (out of 57 offered) brought a total of \$78,870.

An archive of 42 photographs of Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, circa 1886, was the top lot of that group, selling to a dealer for \$10,200 (est. \$15,000/25,000). Statler said it was difficult to put a presale number on the unique material. Besides showing views of the performances, the views provide a candid, behind-the-scenes glimpse of the show created by Cody in 1883. They include shots of Annie Oakley, Bronco Bill Irving, and Cody himself, taken while the troupe was on tour on Staten Island, New York, in the summer of 1886. According to Swann's research, the Cody show was the first major exhibition of Western riding, shooting, and Indian performers ever seen in the East, and it attracted huge crowds of spectators, among them Mark Twain and P.T. Barnum.

Hollander's manuscript ledger for Buffalo Bill's Wild West show sold for a mid-estimate \$9600 to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, founded in Cody, Wyoming, in 1917. Jointly purchased by the McCracken Research Library and the Buffalo Bill Museum, it contains the show's financial records for 1885, including payments to "S.B.," i.e., Sitting Bull.

That same institution bought a minor, related item for \$540 (est. \$500/750), a manuscript account book kept by Buffalo Bill's New York City lawyers in 1906 and 1907. Mentioned in its 171 pages is the lawsuit *Gould v. Cody*, in which Buffalo Bill was sued by Howard Gould, financier Jay Gould's son, for the breakup of the younger Gould's marriage to Katherine Clemmons, a member of Cody's Wild West troupe.

Swann's cover lot for this sale was one of five hand-colored platinum prints of Native Americans by photographer Frank A. Rinehart (1861-1928) during his most famous commission, the 1898 Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition in Omaha, Nebraska. The subject of this one, Sioux leader Afraid of Eagle, is shown in profile and wearing a dazzling, feathered headdress (est. \$1500/2500). The dealer who paid \$5280 set a new record price for a Rinehart photo, said Statler.

The four other photo portraits-of an Oglala Sioux, a Rosebud Sioux, a Sioux, and an Apache-realized \$4800, \$3120, \$2280, and \$1680 respectively, the prices descending with the artfulness of the poses and lavishness of the headdresses. A full selection of Rinehart's Trans-Mississippi photos is available to see on the Omaha Public Library's Web site ([www.omahapubliclibrary.org/transmiss/](http://www.omahapubliclibrary.org/transmiss/)).

The unsuccessful Hollander consignments, estimated at \$3000/4000 and \$4000/6000, included four silver prints by Adam Clark Vroman (1856-1916), a Pasadena, California, bookseller who became a noted amateur photographer of the West. These were distant views of landscapes and groups of unidentified Vroman friends who accompanied him on a trip to witness the Moqui snake dance in Arizona in 1895. Bidders also rejected a group of three 1891 photographs by George E. Trager showing the frozen dead after the Wounded Knee Massacre (est. \$2500/3500).

Perhaps the most disappointing result at the sale was the failure of a Thomas A. Edison archive (est. \$50,000/ 70,000). Kept by the inventor's last assistant, Claude Azell Prince Jr. (1913-2005), it included masses of paper as well as some early light bulbs. The detailed inventory provided by Swann mentioned autograph letters, snapshots, laboratory notes in Edison's hand, as well as the Edison-related clippings that Prince saved until the end of his life.

Another lot that bidders let slip away was a family photograph album (est. \$3000/4000) that contained snapshots of Nancy Reagan (born 1921) in her girlhood. It belonged to the former first lady's father, Kenneth Seymour Robbins (1894-1972) of Montclair, New Jersey. The consignor had bought it at a New Jersey flea market shortly after Robbins's death. Unlike the Edison archive, this one will be reoffered in a different Swann sale, said Statler.

A 19th-century archive of papers relating to the Massachusetts family of Emory Washburn (1800-1877) did not go unnoticed. The 16 volumes and thousands of loose sheets, mostly dating from 1822 to 1895, sold for \$14,400 (est. \$3000/ 4000). The buyer was a dealer who may have been bidding for a public collection, Statler said, considering Washburn's many ties to Massachusetts institutions. Among other things, Washburn was the state's governor from 1854 to 1855, after which he taught at Harvard Law School for 20 years.

The Winterthur Museum purchased an archive of correspondence written by an unsuccessful candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, said Statler. The letters' writer, Henry Augustus Philip Muhlenberg (1782-1844), was a member of the Pennsylvania German family dynasty that included a Revolutionary War general, a signer of the Bill of Rights, legislators, ambassadors, scientists, and religious leaders. The family patriarch, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787), was a founding father of the American Lutheran Church. The 47 letters, almost half of which discussed major political events of the time, sold to the Winterthur, Delaware, institution for \$2400 (est. \$1000/1500).

The sale as a whole fetched \$484,410 (est. \$352,600/525,350), and 319 (79%) of the 401 lots offered were sold. "I've noticed that people are feeling a little better with each sale," said Statler. "So I feel encouraged that people are feeling a little more comfortable about the economy, thinking that it may be nearing the bottom."

All the shoes have finally dropped, it was suggested to Statler, who laughed. "That could be. I sense some cautious optimism, which is really nice to see."

For more information, contact Swann Galleries at (212) 254-4710; Web site ([www.swann Galleries.com](http://www.swann Galleries.com)).

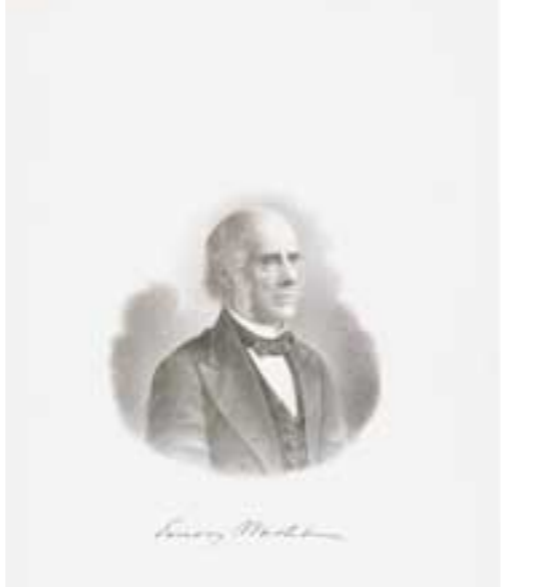
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**A partial copy of Tercero Catecismo y Exposicion de la Doctrina Christiana, por Sermones, published in Lima in 1585, sold for \$28,800 (est. \$5000/7500). According to the catalog notes, it was either the third or fourth book published on the continent and was printed on the same press as the first book.**



**A partial copy of the first book published in South America sold for \$72,000. The 1584 imprint, Doctrina Christiana, y Catecismo para Instruccion de los Indios, illustrated with four woodcuts, was printed in Lima by Antonio Ricardi on South America's first printing press. Ricardi of Piedmonte had recently relocated to Peru from Mexico with the hope of capitalizing on the growing market for religious material in the Spanish colony. Usually Latin Americana is a minor part of these Swann sales, but this time it accounted for three of the five top lots.**



**This portrait of Emory Washburn (1800-1877), Massachusetts governor and Harvard Law School professor, was among the eight linear feet of boxed papers that comprised three generations of Washburn family archives. The lot sold to the Winterthur Museum for \$14,400 (est. \$3000/4000) and included several hundred letters to Washburn from Louis Agassiz, William H. Seward, and other prominent people of the period, his lengthy European travel journals from 1852, an 1861 diary, and even paid bills.**

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