

Swann Galleries, New York City

Latin American Imprints, Including Poet-Nun's Songbook, Lead Printed and Manuscript Sale

by Jeanne Schinto

Photos courtesy Swann Galleries

Swann's printed and manuscript Americana department set several price records on April 16 in the auction house's New York City gallery. On its way to doing so, the department posted its third straight sale that finished over \$1 million (including buyers' premiums). The streak is a record of its own.

A third of the 356 offerings were Latin American and Caribbean lots consigned by more than a dozen sources. Many of the sale's standouts came from this group. One was a first edition of an early work by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz that brought \$45,000, a record for any publication by the famed 17th-century Mexican poet-nun. According to Swann's research, the previous record, set in 2014 by Morton Subastas, Mexico City, was 278,000 pesos or about \$13,000.

Mythologized in her time and place as "The Tenth Muse," Sor Juana (1648/51-1695) is currently revered as an early feminist—a defender of women's rights in Latin America. As the stories go, while still a preteenager, she asked her mother if she could disguise herself in men's clothes in order to attend the then all-male university in Mexico City. Her written response to a bishop who thought that women seeking knowledge were sinful has become a classic defense of the education of women. But she has far more than women-centric facets. One of them is her musicality, and reflecting that was the item offered at this sale, *Villancicos, que se cantaron en los maitines del gloriosissimo Padre S. Pedro Nolasco*, an eight-page imprint of songs to be sung in honor of the 13th-century saint Pedro Nolasco. Only one institutional copy is listed in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), at the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. Swann said the buyer of the copy on April 16 was an institution. Of the top 20 lots, eight went into institutional collections, according to Swann's post-auction report. Institutions, in fact, made up the bulk of buyers of lots in all price ranges, the report said. None were named.

Besides the Sor Juana songbook, there were several other Mexican imprint highlights: Vasco de Puga's important 1563 legal tract *Philippus Hispaniarum et Indiarum Rex*, detailing New Spain legislation, including laws concerning indigenous people (\$16,500, paid by an institution); a first edition of Alonso de Molina's 1565 bilingual *Confessionario mayor*, a manual for priests serving indigenous people, with parallel texts in Spanish and Nahuatl (a collector's purchase at \$21,250); Juan Navarro's 1604 *Liber in quo quatuor passiones Christi Domini continentur*, the first music by a New World composer printed in the New World (\$32,500, to an institution); and an illustrated file—dozens of documents, approximately 350 pages, most dating from between 1563 and 1786—that pertain to a protracted dispute between the successive owners of a ranch (now part of the borough of Tlalpan in Mexico City) and their Nahua neighbors (\$30,000, institution).

Of Latin American imprints from outside of Mexico, the first full-length book printed in Guatemala, the 1663 *Explicatio apologetica nonnullarum propositionum*—i.e., explanations of and arguments used to defend the Christian faith—sold for \$11,250. Swann could locate no earlier Guatemalan imprint at auction.

Latin Americana is not new territory for Swann. The auction house has been handling large collections of it since at least the monumental sale of the 1414-lot Alberto Parreño library, which was split into three sessions in 1978. Parreño, a longstanding member of the Grolier Club who had died five years earlier, was a collector of material relating to Spain and all of its colonies in the New World.

Longtime observers know that Latin Americana consignments generally come to Swann from a mix of devoted collectors such as Parreño and, more recently, W. Michael Mathes (1936-2012), whose library was sold on November 6, 2014, as well as estates, institutions, and dealers. They also know that the buyers are based



A first edition of *Villancicos, que se cantaron en los maitines del gloriosissimo Padre S. Pedro Nolasco* by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz sold for \$45,000 (est. \$30,000/40,000). Published in Mexico in 1677, these *villancicos* are a type of Spanish folk ballad meant both to be sung and danced to. Especially significant to those who champion Sor Juana for fighting against injustice (sexism, racism, classism) throughout her life—and those ranks are growing—is the fact that she, the illegitimate daughter of a Creole mother and Spanish father, intertwined the languages and speech styles of both indigenous Mexicans and colonial Spaniards in these works. For more information, see the new translation by Edith Grossman, *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Selected Works*, published by W. W. Norton in 2015.



A dealer in the room bought Benson Lossing's three-volume (in nine books) *Pictorial History of the Civil War of the United States* for \$18,750 (est. \$3000/4000). The 1866-68 classic, published in Philadelphia and illustrated with more than 380 plates and manuscripts, came with material that extensively sweetened the deal: autograph letters and signatures by many important personages of the era, including Robert E. Lee, Charles Sumner, Jefferson Davis, and Sam Houston.

throughout the world and that, thanks to remote bidding modes, these participants need not be, and rarely are, in the salesroom on auction day. Most important, they know Americana is a broader term than is generally realized and that as such it has a long tradition.

Rick Stattler, not only Swann's book department director but also its Americana expert, noted in this regard that the 29-volume *A Dictionary of Books Relating to America* by Joseph Sabin (1821-1881)—known simply as Sabin's—covers the entire hemisphere. "Sabin's was the first comprehensive Americana reference book and is possibly still the most important," he wrote in an e-mail of the opus that the British-born bibliographer and bookseller began producing in 1867. "Some of the great nineteenth-century collectors, such as John Carter



Rick Stattler is pictured with posters from the 1904 U.S. presidential campaign for Theodore Roosevelt and his running mate, Charles W. Fairbanks. The pair sold in one lot for \$3000 (est. \$1500/2500). The 58" x 38" lithographs are rare. Only one Roosevelt example was traced by Swann at auction, in 2016, and only one institutional copy, at Boston University, of the same is known. Stattler said no Fairbanks example is listed in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). In his hands is a Teddy Roosevelt-themed presentation cane that brought \$3250 (est. \$400/600). An engraved inscription, following an inscrutable couplet, identifies its maker: "Thrice I've herd [sic] the coyote bark / Thrice I've herd the bob cat cry / Made by Dr. T. S. Hitchcock, Oswego, N.Y., for President Theo. Roosevelt / Oak from the old ship New Orleans at Sackett's Harbor, 1813." Made of carved wood, bone, and brass by Theron Sylvester Hitchcock (1830-1918), an Oswego dentist, it bears the date "1907" and Hitchcock's intent for his creation, "President Roosevelt's Mace." Whether he actually put it into Roosevelt's hands is unknown. The cane came to the sale from a collector. Photo courtesy Bob Frishman.



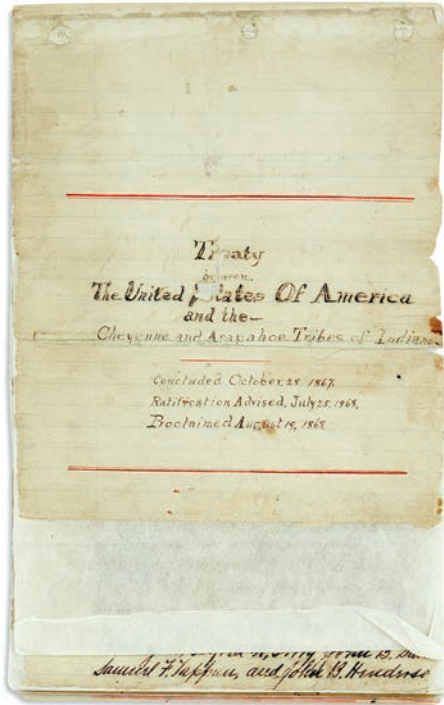
This 26½" x 21½" oil on canvas portrait of Abraham Lincoln—an artist's copy by Matthew Henry Wilson (1814-1892)—made \$55,000 (est. \$25,000/35,000).

Brown, had the same approach. His namesake library [at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island] continues in that tradition. What is perhaps new is that Atlantic history has become an important specialty among academic historians who focus on connections between the Americas, Europe and Africa in the early modern period."

There are more reasons to bear in mind that Americana as a term should not be limited to *The Bay Psalm Book*, let alone furniture carved in New England. As Stattler remarked, "Large portions of what is the United States spent time as part of the Spanish Empire or Mexico, including Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, and Puerto Rico, areas which include a large and growing percentage of



A 42-leaf scrapbook containing 15 photos, ephemera, letters, and newspaper clippings devoted to the cause of women’s suffrage sold to an institution for \$10,625 (est. \$3000/4000). The compiler was Florence Harmon, secretary to Alva Vanderbilt Belmont (1853-1933), a multimillionaire socialite who became a prominent movement member and funder of suffragist activities. Many of the letters are from suffrage notables, including the artist Katherine Sophie Dreier and historian Mary Ritter Beard. Shown is a detail of a 1915 photograph from the scrapbook. On the back a typed paper label says: “The suffragists intended to hold their tableaux in Central Park but Commissioner Ward said that it was against the Park regulations and he would not permit it.”

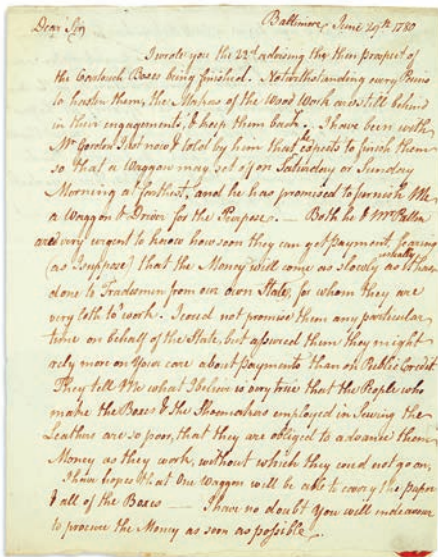


A collector on the phone paid \$22,500 (est. \$4000/6000) for 21 manuscript pages of one of the three treaties that together constitute the so-called Medicine Lodge Treaty made between the United States and Plains Indian tribes in 1867. The treaties were designed to restrict the tribes to Indian Territory, but they were never ratified by the required 75% of tribal members, and they prompted decades of legal challenges. Dated August 19, 1868, the 12½" x 8" disbound leaves from this certified transcript of the third printed treaty were, according to their provenance, the personal copy of one of the original signatories, Spotted Wolf of the Arapahoes.



A dealer in the room paid \$12,500 (est. \$12,000/18,000) for the May 6, 1775, issue of the *Virginia Gazette* that features three firsthand accounts of the Battle of Lexington & Concord on its 17¾" x 11" front page. This first substantial report in Virginia of the first battle of the War for Independence, fought on April 19, 1775, was published in Williamsburg, Virginia.

This June 29, 1780, autograph letter signed by Samuel Purviance Jr. of Baltimore to John Fitzgerald of Alexandria, Virginia, during the American Revolution proved attractive to bidders. The three pages written by Purviance (1728-1788), a prominent merchant, to George Washington’s former aide-de-camp describe the progress being made on a shipment of leather and wood cartouche boxes that soldiers used for carrying powder and ammunition. Purviance goes on to discuss the war efforts of Baltimore’s women, who were going around “on foot to collect beef, pork, bacon, flour, bread, corn, shad, rum &c for the army....” He opines about the plan being implemented elsewhere, but concludes, “alas liberality of sentiment seems not the general growth of the country soil.” Estimated at \$500/750, the letter opened with an absentee bid of \$1200 and sold to a phone bidder for \$3250. Rick Stattler said reenactors in particular prize letters that discuss aspects of the war’s “material culture.”



the nation’s population. The histories of the United States and Mexico could hardly be more intertwined. Mexico has been in the news here for the past couple of years because of the immigration issue, but the connections run several centuries deeper.”

Speaking of *The Bay Psalm Book*, while it was published in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1640, thereby becoming the first book published in British North America, book production in Mexico superseded it by nearly a century, having begun in 1539. And speaking of the intertwining of Mexico and the United States, a first edition of Bartholomé Garcia’s *Manual para Administrar los Santos Sacramentos*, the only work ever published in the Pakawan language of Texas, sold to an institution for \$13,000. It was published in Mexico in 1760.

Lots that pertain to later eras in United States history had their own significant standouts. One was a letterpress broadside issued on April 15, 1865, as an “Extra” by the *Advertiser & Tribune* of Detroit, Michigan, to announce the name of Abraham Lincoln’s assassin as “J. Wilkes Booth.” Inscribed with the name and location of the subscriber, “James E. Davis / Detroit” and the year twice, the item sold on the phone to an institution for \$15,000. Swann declared it the highest price ever paid for “any Lincoln assassination newspaper,” having found none selling for more than the \$3250 that Heritage Auctions got for one in 2013.

What turned out to be the day’s top lot was another choice piece of Lincolniana: an oil on canvas portrait of the president by Matthew Henry Wilson (1814-1892). Lincoln sat more than once for Wilson in February 1865, two months before his assassination. No one could have known it would be the last portrait painted of the president from life. The original painting, for which Wilson also made use of a photograph by Alexander Gardner (1821-1882), was commissioned by Gideon Welles (1802-1878), Lincoln’s secretary of the Navy. Today it resides in the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, jointly owned and managed by the Indiana State Museum in Indianapolis and the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne. It is unknown who commissioned the likeness that Swann sold—one of several copies by the artist—but it once belonged to textile magnate George S. Palmer (1855-1934) of New London, Connecticut. It then went in 1918 to William Carnill (1857-1925) of Rydal, Pennsylvania. It was subsequently bequeathed by his widow, Zelia Gross Carnill (1865-1940), to a grandson, William Carnill II (1919-1989), upon her death. It was consigned to this sale by the estate of the grandson’s widow, Elinor Carnill (1924-2018). The new owner, an absentee bidder who paid \$55,000 for it, was a collector, said Stattler. The price is a new auction record for artwork by Wilson.

Another Lincoln item, an uncut tintype sheet of 30 miniature photographs of the four 1860 U.S. presidential candidates—Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, John C. Breckinridge, and John Bell—went to a bidder on the phone for \$10,000. Each image is a photo of a Currier & Ives lithograph meant to be fashioned into a political campaign badge. The same

bidder paid \$4000 for an uncut sheet of six large-format tintypes of Lincoln meant for the same purpose during the same election.

There was more pertaining to Lincoln: a card printed with the Gettysburg Address, a campaign ribbon, song sheets of Lincoln-themed music, a Lincoln statuette, a rare Lincoln-Johnson campaign lithograph, the last known Lincoln photograph. These were not a continuation of the successful sale of the Holzer Lincolniana collection that Swann sold last fall; these consignments came in as a direct result of that success or were held over so they wouldn’t compete with the Holzer sale, said Stattler.

Swann always seems to attract consignments of exceptional manuscripts—journals and diaries—and there were several this time. A dealer paid \$47,500 for the original unpublished journal kept by William Farrar

Americana is a broader term than is generally realized.

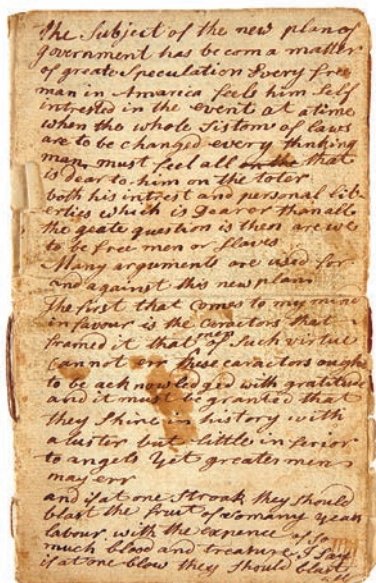
Smith (1824-1903) during his time on the so-called Whiting-Smith Expedition. Smith was on the trail in 1849 with a fellow U.S. Army engineer, William H.C. Whiting, in search of a passable wagon route along the Rio Grande between San Antonio and El Paso. Smith’s detailed observations on the geology and natural features of the region, along with his stories of encounters with local Mexicans and hostile Indians, constitute a narrative both vivid and useful to his contemporaries. The route that he and Whiting demarcated became the road heavily traveled by the military, stage coaches, and pioneer-settlers of later years. There is a published version of Whiting’s expedition diary; it can be found in Vol. IX, No. 6 (November 1905) of the *Publications of the Southern History Association*. But, unlike Smith’s, it doesn’t include the last month of the four-month expedition.

The diary of a mid-19th-century whaling captain’s wife was another of the record-breakers of the day, going to a dealer for \$15,000. According to Swann’s research, the previous record for a whaling captain’s wife’s words, set by Christie’s in London in 2015, was £6250 or about \$8123. Marie R.A. “Alida” Lehongre (c. 1832-1908), who was married to George Taber of Acushnet, Massachusetts, kept the diary on a voyage from Hawaii to Connecticut in 1853 when she was 21 years old; she wrote the second section while living in Acushnet for six months in 1859 while George was at sea. The final section records her time on a journey in 1860 aboard a whaling bark hunting for quarry in the Indian Ocean. It’s hard to decide which was worse for her, being onboard a whaler for months or staying home and wondering if her husband was safe. “Today I received a letter from my dear...& was the happy wife on earth to hear that he was well,” she wrote one day in Acushnet. “Mrs. Harris has not had any letters from her husband yet but we are all in hope she will next week.” A carte de visite of Alida was part of the lot.

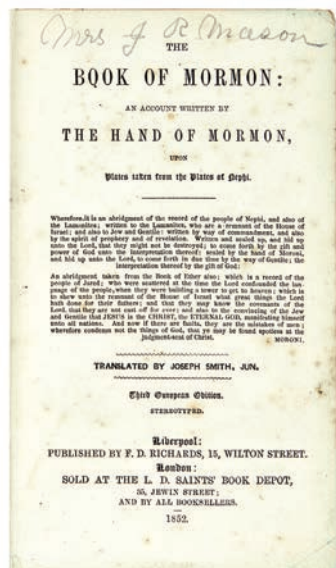
The sale, which was 89% sold by lot, opened with Alexandra Nelson, a Swann auctioneer and its communications director, announcing that there were no announcements—i.e., no addendum items denoting mistakes or typos in the catalog, quite a feat given its text-heavy nature. “This proves that Rick Stattler is infallible,” she told her audience with a smile.

For his part, Stattler said modestly afterward, “I’m just always glad to see that the market is still holding strong. One never knows how long the current positive cycle will last, and as far as the rare-book trade goes, it’s still with us, and I’m certainly grateful for that.”

Swann’s next printed and manuscript Americana sale is in September. For more information, contact Swann by phone at (212) 254-4710 or via its website (www.swanngalleries.com).



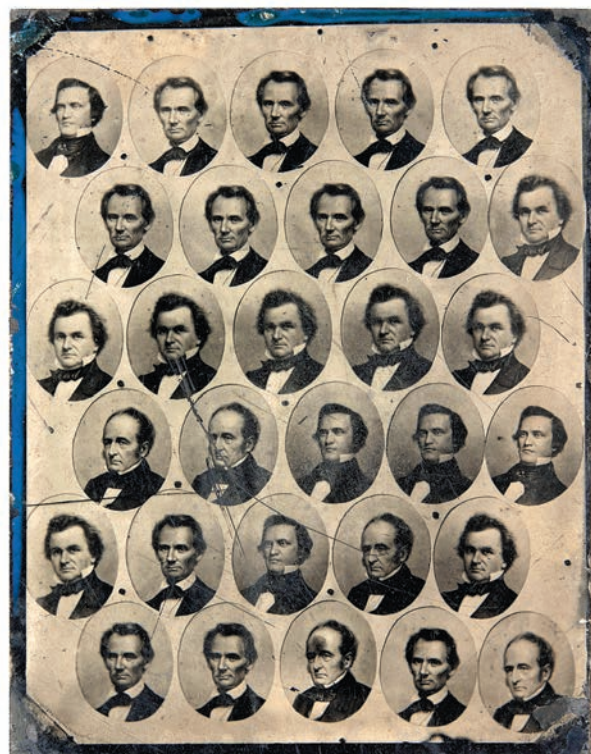
Fourteen manuscript pages of notes made from January 10 to 24, 1788, during the Massachusetts convention to ratify the Federal Constitution sold for \$16,250 (est. \$2000/3000) to an institution, bidding by phone. The words were written by an unknown hand, almost certainly that of a delegate, but which one? The catalog states confidently that the “distinctive handwriting” and “creative spelling”—i.e., “soveran (sovereign),” “nesicary (necessary),” “sum (some),” and “dun (done)” —“should make an identification possible.” Perhaps the institution already has?



A rare corrected variant of the third European edition of *The Book of Mormon*, published in Liverpool by F.D. Richards in 1852, sold to a collector bidding via the Internet for \$41,600 (est. \$4000/6000). The price is a record for any European Mormon publication, besting Swann’s own record set at \$23,000 in 2005.



Eight photos (a detail of one shown) and hundreds of newspaper clippings pertaining to Al Capone and his partners in Prohibition-era crime sold to an absentee bidder for \$4000 (est. \$5000/7500). Mounted in a loose-leaf scrapbook, they were apparently collected and assembled by Lyle B. Chapman (1890-1966), a member of Eliot Ness’s “Untouchables” team. Schinto photo.



An uncut 4¼" x 3¼" tintype sheet of 30 miniature photographs of the four 1860 U.S. presidential candidates—Abraham Lincoln, Stephen A. Douglas, John C. Breckinridge, and John Bell—went for a mid-estimate \$10,000.



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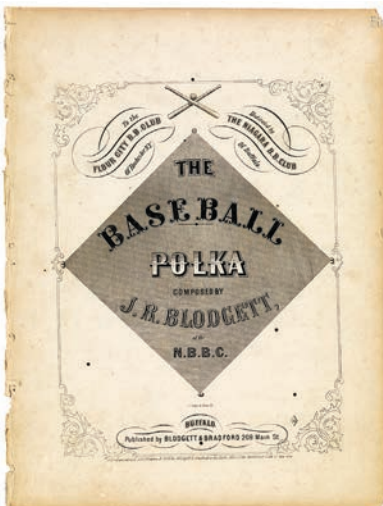

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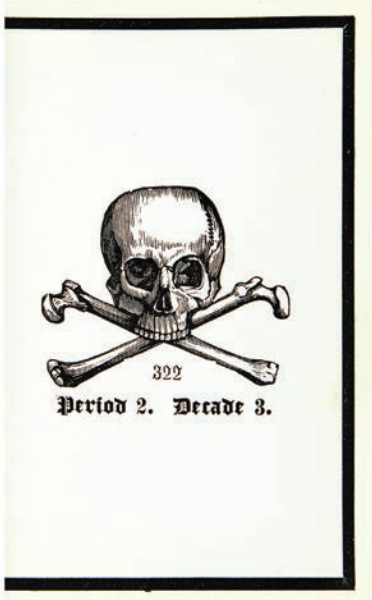
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An archive of 101 autograph letters by Corporal John P. Staples (1833-1918) of the 115th New York Infantry, written to his mother, sister, and brother back home in Saratoga County, New York, went to a phone bidder for \$9375 (est. \$5000/7000). The writing style is impressive, as is the careful handwriting. Some of the letters describe important battles. One was the Battle of Fort Fisher on January 27, 1865, at the start of which, as he told it, “There was a tremendous shock, and I was enveloped in midnight darkness surrounded with falling masses of timbers, dirt and rubbish... which it seemed to me would never cease to fall....” The lot was accompanied by several photos. The one pictured shows a postwar reunion of Staples and men from his regiment. An inscription on the back says: “G.A.R. / Grand Army Republic / Civil War / Uncle John P. Staples at end right.” Schinto photo.

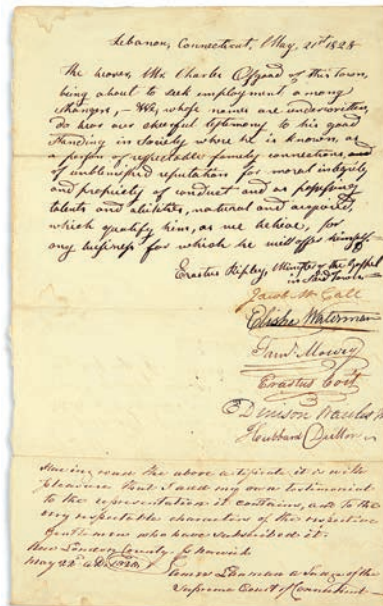
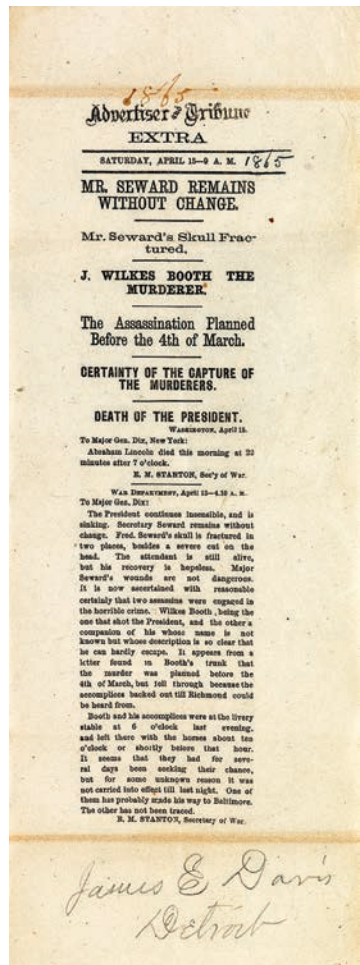


Five pages of sheet music (cover shown) for “The Baseball Polka,” published in Buffalo, New York, in 1858, fetched \$4000 (est. \$1000/1500). There are only three copies in the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), and none traced at auction, according to Swann’s research. Dedicated to the Flour City Base Ball Club of Rochester, New York, by its Buffalo rivals, the Niagara Base Ball Club, the work was composed by J.R. Blodgett, a member of the latter. Peter Morris’s *Base Ball Pioneers: 1850-1870: The Clubs and Players Who Spread the Sport Nationwide* (2012) gives the back story. It was tradition for a home team to treat its visiting team with an elaborate reception, banquet, orchestral music, and the like. This song was composed for one of those occasions. Who can imagine the Yankees and the Red Sox doing the same today?



Swann traced no copies of this printed membership list for Yale’s Skull and Bones Society. The little (size of a playing card) circa 1890 booklet of names and home-towns from the membership rolls of the secret club, from 1833 to 1886, was taken by an absentee bidder for \$2125 (est. \$800/1200).

A 12" x 4½" letterpress broadside issued on April 15, 1865, as an “Extra” by the *Advertiser & Tribune* of Detroit, Michigan, to announce the name of Lincoln’s assassin as “J. Wilkes Booth” achieved \$15,000 (est. \$5000/7500).



A more than 900-piece archive of physician, land speculator, and patent-medicine marketer Charles H. Osgood (1808-1881) sold to an institution bidding absentee for \$13,750 (est. \$3000/4000). Most of the letters, receipts, stock certificates, and legal papers derive from the Connecticut native’s time in Michigan, 1823-43, during which he did his speculating on lands in the West. His correspondents were mostly family members, but a portion of the letters are to and from a notable friend and business partner in the land speculating, Charles H. Dabney (1807-1879), who later founded Dabney, Morgan & Co. with J.P. Morgan.



The Asa Munger Clock Case Mystery

by Bob Frishman



Asa Munger flat-top case.
Photo courtesy Russ Oechsle.

Swann’s keyword alert system flagged “clock” for me in the description of lot 150 of this Americana sale. According to Swann’s Rick Stattler, it was lucky for me that he happened to mention clock cases in his description of this 1826-54 handwritten account book kept by cabinetmaker Peter Prine of Auburn, New York. Even more fortunate, or coincidental, were the few pages Stattler used to illustrate the lot; one had two ledger entries for clock cases amongst the coffins, bedsteads, workstands, and other wooden items.

The cake’s icing was the name “Munger” on the March 5, 1830, entry for six clock cases, price 9.00 dollars. According to Russ Oechsle, the recognized expert on early American clocks from that New York region, “Asa Munger has long been the most recognizable upstate New York, early 1800s clock maker. His movements were absolutely unique; his cases oversized and often extravagant, all of which have attracted collectors and researchers over the years. While many facts are known, many are not,

including how he sourced his cases.”

Oechsle understandably was excited to hear from me about this lot, consigned by a New England dealer, and even more so when I shared with him an image of the book’s inside rear cover. It revealed a dimensioned line drawing of Munger’s most popular style of clock case, an 1820s large Empire-style flat-topped model that housed the maker’s distinctive eight-day weight-driven brass movement. Oechsle suggested that we may have answered the question of who made Munger’s estimated few thousand cases, and our expectations were high before my previewing the book in person. On that single ledger page alone we spotted Prine’s charges for 17 cases, and there were no other known clockmakers in that local area in those early years.

Now for the sad news. A week later as I carefully paged through the book at Swann, I discovered that entries for clock cases appeared only on two other pages. One page showed a dozen for Munger, plus more unattributed cheaper ones in cherry (not Munger’s usual wood); the other page listed only a single \$5 case without a customer

name. I spotted Munger’s name once more within the 87 pages; on April 20, 1833, Munger hired Prine’s wagon.

We thus can assume that Munger employed Prine only sporadically for case making and not later in Munger’s career. We do know that Asa Munger in subsequent years employed workers at the New York State Prison in Auburn, a source of cheap labor that drew complaints from his clockmaking competitors.

Several articles about Munger have appeared over the years in the *NAWCC Bulletin*, the publication of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors. The NAWCC also published in 2003 *An Empire in Time: Clocks & Clock Makers of Upstate New York*, coauthored by Russ Oechsle, which includes pages about Munger.

Selling on April 16 for \$2375 (est. \$1500/2500), the book went to an active telephone buyer, a dealer who outbid us. Although a wonderful source of local craftsman history, like all such early American account books discovered and investigated by scholars, the book did not solve the Munger case mystery for us. If we continue to be vigilant and alert, we may spot future opportunities.