

A SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT NORTHEAST: AN AUCTION AND A MURDER STORY



Previous Page; Ron Bourgeault's favorite lot in the sale was this set of ceramic circus elephants made by Andrea Spadini. They were 10 to 12 inches tall, and the set sold to an absentee bidder for \$3,120.

Review by Rick Russack,

Photos Courtesy of Northeast Auctions

PORTSMOUTH, N.H. — Northeast's March 22 auction offered a wide and interesting assortment of material. It brought out a salesroom full of bidders and, in turn, strong prices. The sale at Northeast's Treadwell Mansion included medals and commemorative jewelry from the Martha Gandy Fales collection, antiquities from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, folk art from the collection of Patty and Serge Gagarin, a



A very fine, large Regency carved, painted and parcel-gilt mirror went for \$10,200. The carved eagle finial topped a pair of dolphins. It measured 59 by 32¾ inches.



Leading the furniture pieces in the sale was a circa 1725 Regence pewter-inlaid bureau plat with silvered metal mounts. Signed by R. Simoneaux, it brought a strong \$24,000.

quantity of Rockingham glazed pottery, mocha and more. The auction included about a dozen Stennes clocks and that's where the murder story

comes in. There were about 100 bidders in the salesroom, several phone lines were in use, and there was active Internet bidding. Auctioneer



Ron Bourgeault kept things moving quickly. The sale began with the Fales collection, which included a grouping of mourning rings that attracted much attention. A George Washington mourning ring with an engraved oval portrait by St Memin, circa 1800, had several phone bidders competing for the ring, with one holding on to take it for \$15,600. Another mourning ring, this one for Thomas Norton of Ipswich, Mass., sold for \$3,840, and a lot of six mourning rings went in the room for \$2,400.

There were about a dozen clocks made by Elmer O. Stennes of Weymouth, Mass. Stennes may be the only American clockmaker who murdered his wife, served time in prison for the murder and was himself murdered a few years after getting out of prison. This large Aurora girandole banjo clock was more than 44 inches tall, and it brought \$6,000.



Also from the Fales collection was this unusual "lover's eye" miniature mounted as a ring that made \$7,680. Lover's eye miniatures were popular from about 1790 to 1820. The Prince of Wales, later George IV, sent one to his clandestine lover as a token of his affection.

One lot in particular had strong local interest. It was a mourning ring for Captain Gregory Purcell of Portsmouth. Purcell was the first owner of the John Paul Jones House, which is now the museum and headquarters of the Portsmouth Historical Society. Jones lived in the house while his ship, The Ranger, was being built in Portsmouth. Gerald Ward, who is now the society's consulting curator paid \$3,360 for the ring on behalf of the society. Ward, a well-known furniture scholar and formerly the senior curator of American



The varied sale attracted several museum curators. From left are Richard Nylander, curator emeritus of Historic New England; Richard Candee, president of the Portsmouth Historical Society; Christine Ritok, the recently appointed associate curator at Historic Deerfield; Gerald Ward, consulting curator, Portsmouth Historical Society, and his wife, Barbara, director/curator of Moffat-Ladd House and Garden in Portsmouth. How often can you get a picture of five smiling curators?—Rick Russack photo

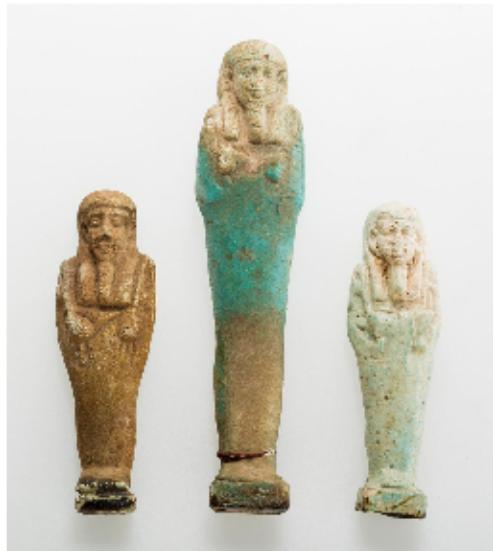
decorative arts at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, told *Antiques and The Arts Weekly* that the ring was an important artifact for the historical society and that he was glad to have been able to purchase it. Several lots of silver drew interest and active phone bidding. A Gorham Art Nouveau, eight-piece tea

and coffee service, circa 1891–94, finished at \$6,960. A George II Irish silver paten, circa 1730, went for \$2,280 to a determined phone bidder. Drawing the most interest was a pair of George III cast silver beaded columnar candlesticks made by Jonathan Alleine, Alleine, London,

circa 1774–75. Two phone bidders competed with a bidder in the room, and a phone bidder won it at \$3,120. During the preview, Bourgeault was asked for his favorite lot in the sale. He pointed to a set of four ceramic figures of circus elephants by Andrea Spadini (Italian, 1912–1983). The set of four was bought by an absentee bidder and earned \$3,120. A Galle sleeping cat seemed like a bargain at...

(Continued on page 16 inside the E-edition)

*Several lots ►
of Egyptian
antiquities,
consigned by
the Museum
of Fine Arts,
did well. The
group of three
mummiform
figures, late
period, went to
a left bid for
\$6,000.*



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