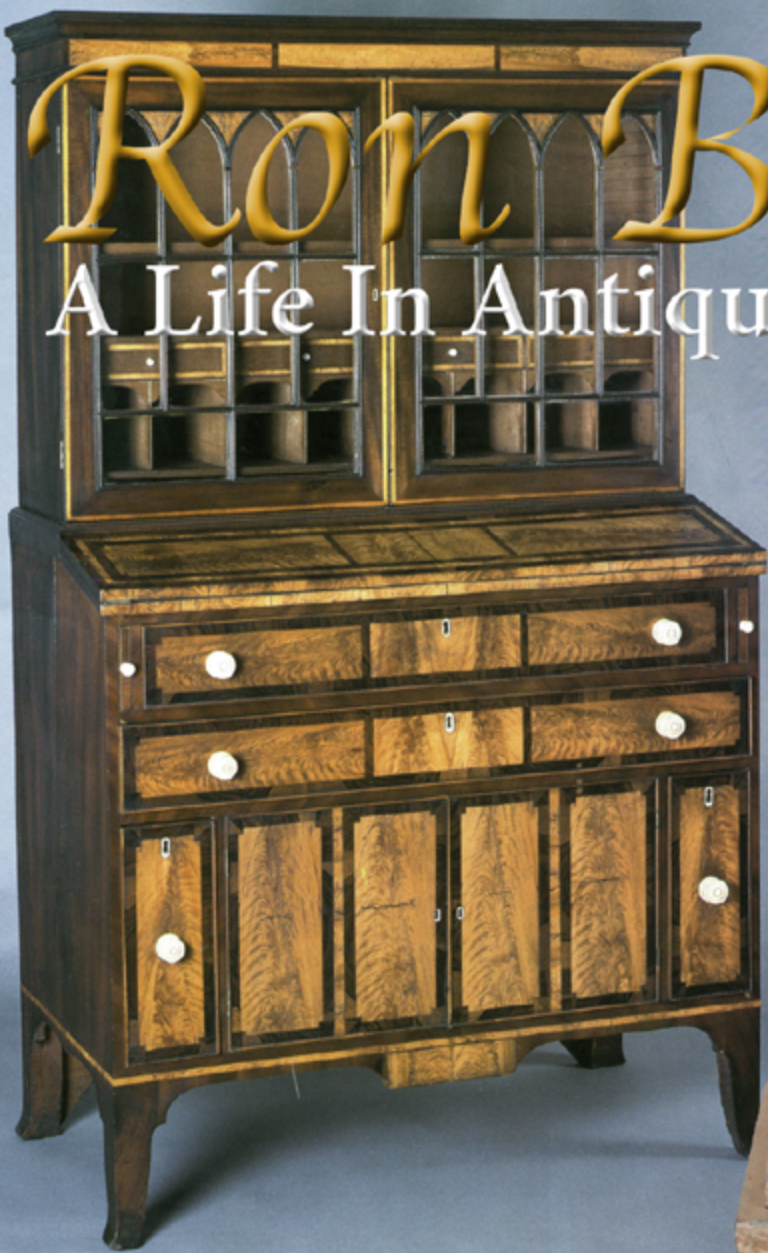


# Ron Bourgeault

A Life In Antiques





*By Rick Russack*

**PORTSMOUTH, N.H.** — Ron Bourgeault, founder and owner of Northeast Auctions, has built one of the most successful auction companies in the United States. He sells millions of dollars worth of antiques annually and has grossed almost one-third of a billion dollars since his first auction in 1970. How did he do it? The short answer: hard work. The long answer is both interesting and instructive. Bourgeault's attention to personal relations, a theme running throughout his career, has been essential.

If Bourgeault, who was born in 1946, were to say he was drawn to antiques all his life, it would be a fairly

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**Ron Bourgeault with his cat, Henry, who bonded with the auctioneer during a house call on Cape Cod and took up residence in the Wendell House.**





accurate statement. His parents supported his interest, though they were not into antiques themselves. When Bourgeault was just 7, a neighbor in North Hampton, N.H., gave him a group of Travelers Insurance Company calendars printed with images from Currier & Ives. He found the reproductions fascinating. After moving to a new home nearby, Bourgeault was given several boxes of “old stuff” that another neighbor’s late wife bought as box lots at local auctions. In first grade at the time, the budding dealer set up a toy antiques shop in his basement.

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**This Federal mahogany and birch desk and bookcase made in 1813 by Judkins and Senter of Portsmouth, N.H., achieved \$332,500 at Northeast in November 2000. It descended in the family of Jacob Wendell and is illustrated in *Portsmouth Furniture* by Brock W. Jobe. Bourgeault acquired and restored the 1789 Wendell House for use as his own home.**



At 8, Bourgeault walked into Hymie Webber's antiques shop in Hampton, N.H. and asked for a job. Webber hired him to dust furniture and do other simple tasks, instructing him, "You wait on old ladies. If dealers come in, then you come and get me." The salary was a dollar a day. Webber also conducted auctions, for which Bourgeault often worked as a runner. One day, Bourgeault, only 9, was told to finish selling the box lots. That was the beginning of Bourgeault's career as an auctioneer...

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J. Welles Henderson used this 7-foot-tall carved and painted figure on the dust jacket of his book *Marine Art and Antiques: Jack Tar, A Sailor's Life, 1750–1910*. Attributed to New York carver Jeremiah Dodge, the circa 1845 carving achieved \$337,000 at Northeast's August 2008 sale of Henderson's collection.



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