MARKET WATCH

Love for Sail

It’s hammer time! Maine’s ships once carried the future with them, from London to Canton to the turquoise waters of the Caribbean. At a recent auction, the trade winds were high, with oil paintings snapped up by collectors for up to $30,000. BY COLIN W. SARGENT

Back when “reaching out” was a more sincere term, Maine’s ships seized the world as their canvas. It’s one thing to reminisce and quite another to happen upon a window to see what these exotic vessels actually looked like with wind in their sails.
Glowing oil paintings of no fewer than 14 Maine-built ships were auctioned recently at Northeast Auctions' Annual Marine, China Trade, and Historical Americana Auction in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Here they are, with captions verbatim from the catalog. Actual auction prices come courtesy of Denise Douglas of Northeast.

In some cases, the provenance is extraordinary. In the twilight of her life, the Llewellyn J. Morse, built 1877 (Lot 716), “was outfitted to play the part of USS Constitution in the 1926 silent film epic Old Ironsides.” To see the Morse strut her stuff, you can rent the film in VHS from Northeast Historic Film. See http://oldfilm.org/content/old-ironsides. Borrow up to three videos at a time and pay only $5 for postage.

Nicholas Cammillieri (Maltese, c.1780-1855). Bark Reindeer of Scarborough, James Walker Master, 1853. Watercolor on paper, 16” x 22”, sight. Signed “Nicola Cammillieri” l.r. Estimate: $6,000-$8,000. Did not sell.

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SOLD: $30,000

$7,500

From Top: DUNCAN McFARLANE (BRITISH 1818-1865). THE AMERICAN SHIP ESMERALDA. Built at Brunswick, Maine in 1849 by Robert McManus, her first Master, she served in Williams & Guion’s Black Star Line and later, the Blue Ball Line of packets running between New York and Liverpool. Oil on canvas, 24” x 36”. Estimate: $10,000-$15,000. Sold for: $30,000.


JOSEPH SEMPLE (IRISH/AMERICAN, ACT. 1860-1880). THE AMERICAN BRIG PROTEUS OFF THE IRISH COAST. Built at Bucksport, Maine in 1857, the Proteus was owned by C.H. Chase; her captain was T. Hall. Oil on canvas, 22” x 32”. Signed “J. Semple. Belfast” and dated 1861, l.r. Estimate: $5,000-$8,000. Sold for: $7,250.

CHARLES J. WALDRON (BRITISH 1836-1891). THE AMERICAN CLIPPER SHIP KENDRICK FISH APPROACHING FASTNET ROCK. Built in 1867 at Thomaston, Maine by Samuel Watts, the Kendrick Fish operated in the transatlantic trade, although she made one trip from Liverpool to Singapore. When this portrait was painted in 1872, she was commanded by Capt. Alex McClay. In 1880 the Kendrick Fish was sold to J.D. Bischoff of Bremerhaven. Oil on canvas, 30” x 42”. Signed and dated “C.J. Waldron/’72” l.r. Estimate: $8,000-$12,000. Sold for: $7,000.
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ELISHA TAYLOR BAKER (AMERICAN 1827–1890). PORTRAIT OF THE BARK IRIS OFF GAY HEAD. Built at Newcastle, Maine in 1860, the Iris’s home port was New York. Oil on canvas, 24” x 32”. Estimate: $7,000-$9,000. Sold for: $7,500.


THE CLIPPER SHIP RED JACKET. AMERICAN SCHOOL, MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY. Built at Rockland, Maine by George Thomas and launched in 1853, the Red Jacket became the first ship purchased for the British White Star Line in 1854. Oil on canvas, 32” x 48”. Estimate: $3,000-$5,000. Sold for: $5,000.


PORTRAIT OF THE AMERICAN THREE-MASTED SHIP LLEWELLYN J. MORSE. Built at Brewer, Maine and launched in 1877, the ship was named for a Commander of the Coast Guard Unit at Fort McClary in Kittery. In her last significant role, the Morse was outfitted to play the part of the USS Constitution in the 1926 silent film epic Old Ironsides. Oil on canvas, 25 1/4” x 39”. In a period walnut frame. Estimate: $5,000-$8,000. Sold for: $12,000.

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