

Brady collection of high-condition antique mechanical banks commands \$2M at Morphy's Feb. 27 auction

Extraordinarily rare 'Shoot the Chute' bank soars to \$156,000; European tin banks unexpectedly power their way into the top 10

DENVER, PENNSYLVANIA, USA, March 5, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The revered Bob and Judy Brady collection of antique mechanical banks attracted worldwide bidding and strong prices at Morphy's live gallery auction held February 27 in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The premier collection built over a 40-year period featured some of the most elusive, beautifully preserved banks known to exist. In total, the 184 banks realized \$2 million, inclusive of 20% buyer's premium.



J. & E. Stevens Shoot the Chute bank. Top lot of the sale at \$156,000

The top seller, a J & E Stevens "[Shoot the Chute](#)" bank featuring beloved early comic strip characters Buster Brown and his dog Tige, swept past its \$80,000-\$120,000 estimate to land at \$156,000. "That bank offered everything a mechanical bank collector could possibly want," said Dan Morphy,

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The Brady name carries great weight amongst bank collectors, and bidders responded exactly as we had hoped they would."

Dan Morphy, Founder and President of Morphy Auctions

president of [Morphy Auctions](#) and a bank authority in his own right. "It's in near-mint-plus condition, has its very rare original wood factory box, and came with provenance from the late Donal Markey, who was one of the most condition-focused collectors the hobby has ever known." The bank is also the very example depicted in Morphy's landmark 2007 reference book *The Official Price Guide to Mechanical Banks*.

A classic mechanical bank, Kyser & Rex's "[Mikado](#)" has the type of complex action bank enthusiasts find irresistible. An illusionist stands behind an ornately decorated table and makes a coin appear then disappear under a hat, only to reappear under a second hat, like a shell game. The Bradys' rare blue-base version in near-mint condition attracted 13 bids before settling within estimate at \$81,000.

Another outstanding Kyser & Rex production, a "Chimpanzee" bank depicts a stern-faced chimp "banker" seated before an open ledger. When a coin is deposited, the figure lowers his arm and head as though entering the deposit into the book, while a bell rings to acknowledge receipt. Formerly in the Stephen and Marilyn Steckbeck collection and one of the finest examples known, it sold above estimate for \$63,000.

Other cast-iron mechanicals finishing in the top 10 included three J & E Stevens banks: an extremely rare white-uniform version of J & E Stevens' "Darktown Battery," \$38,400; an exquisite "Boy Robbing Bird's Nest," \$33,600; and a near-mint-plus "Panorama," \$27,600. They were joined by one of Bob Brady's personal favorites, a "Mason" bank manufactured by Shepard Hardware Co., of Buffalo, New York. In near-mint-plus condition with its original printed wood box and provenance from the Donal Markey collection, it sold within estimate for \$32,400.



Kyser & Rex Mikado bank, rare blue-base version. Sold for \$81,000



Saalheimer & Strauss (Germany) Mickey Mouse Type 4 tin mechanical bank made for English-language markets. Sold for \$31,200

Saalheimer & Strauss (Germany) tin banks made in the 1920s/'30s for English-language markets

finished in surprisingly rich territory, perhaps signaling a new trend to watch. An example of the company's amusing Mickey Mouse Type 4 "Smile Please!" bank, which depicts the famous cartoon rodent playing a concertina on its front and assuming the role of a photographer on its reverse, rose to \$31,200 against an estimate of \$15,000-\$20,000. The manufacturer's unmistakable artistry could also be seen on the Bradys' colorful tin Tiger bank, which operates similarly to the Mickey bank, with a lever-activated tongue jutting out to accept a coin. Estimated at \$6,000-\$10,000, the "whiskered" feline with a piercing gaze leaped to a winning bid of \$18,600.

A private preview event was held on the Friday evening before the February 27 auction, allowing Bob and Judy Brady and approximately 15 invited bank collectors to admire and inspect the bank collection one last time before its sale. Auction participation was enthusiastic, with bids coming in over the phones, across multiple Internet platforms and in person at the gallery, with adherence to COVID guidelines.

"Each bank opened at half its low estimate, with no reserve. Some might have viewed this as a courageous move, but the banks were of very high quality and in superior condition from many years of careful upgrading. The Brady name carries great weight amongst bank collectors, and bidders responded exactly as we had hoped they would," Dan Morphy said.

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Kyser & Rex Chimpanzee bank. Sold for \$63,000



J. & E. Stevens Boy Robbing Bird's Nest bank. Sold for \$33,600

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