

California Gold Rush sunken treasure artifacts from the S.S. Central America bring nearly \$1 million at Dec. 3rd auction

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RENO, NV, UNITED STATES, December 8, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- An auction of 270 never-before-offered historic [California Gold Rush](#) sunken treasure artifacts attracted nearly \$1 million in sales from more than 7,500 registered bidders from across the United States and in six other countries. The recovered jewelry, mid-1800s clothing, glassware, and other items were retrieved from the legendary "[Ship of Gold](#)," the [S.S. Central America](#) that sank during a voyage to New York in 1857.



The lid to the oldest known Wells Fargo treasure shipment box, recovered from the fabled "Ship of Gold," the S.S. Central America that sank in 1857, was sold at auction for \$99,600 by Holabird Western Americana Collections in Reno, Nevada on December 3, 2022.

"There has never been anything like the scope of these recovered artifacts which represented a time capsule of daily life during the Gold Rush. The auction took over eight hours for only 270 lots because of the exceptionally large number of bids," said Fred Holabird, president of Holabird Western Americana Collections (www.HolabirdAmericana.com), the auction company that conducted the sale in Reno, Nevada and online on December 3, 2022.

Holabird advised there will be only one more opportunity to acquire previously unavailable S.S. Central America artifacts when the last items recovered from the fabled ship are offered in a public auction on February 25, 2023.

Highlights of the December auction included the unique wooden lid to a Wells Fargo & Co. treasure box that that sold for \$99,600; the purser's keys to the ship's treasure room where tons of Gold Rush coins and assayers' ingots were stored brought \$103,200; and the oldest known

pair of miner's heavy-duty work pants sold for \$114,000, the highest price ever paid for jeans.

"Those miner's jeans are like the first flag on the moon, a historic moment in history. We can precisely date them because we know the Central America sank during a hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean on September 12, 1857. There are no earlier five-button fly jeans in existence," said Dwight Manley, managing partner of the California Gold Marketing Group, consignee of the recovered artifacts.

The auction catalog contained an extensive explanation of why the jeans may have been made by or for Levi Strauss Company. The miner's pants and early Brooks Brothers undershirts with the company's famous emblem were discovered in 1991 in the first-class passenger trunk of merchant and Mexican-American War military veteran John Dement of Oregon.

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gloves.

Winning bids on those items ranged from \$100 to \$200 for pairs of socks to \$4,800 for a shirt made for the Easton's friend, William C. Ralston, co-founder of the Bank of California, which was also found in the Easton's trunk. It apparently was being taken to New York to have more shirts made for Ralston.



The winning bidder paid \$102,300 on December 3, 2022 for this historic brass name tag and keys recovered from the legendary SS Central America that sank in 1857. Holabird Western Americana Collections in Reno, Nevada indicated the keys of the ship's Purse

Two of the three recovered Brooks Brothers shirts were offered in the auction and sold for \$3,240 and \$1,320 respectively. A third shirt will be in the February auction. An 1849 edition of the novel, "The Count of Monte Cristo," also found in Dement's trunk, sold for \$3,720.

A treasure trove of 1850s high fashion, recovered from the trunk of first-class passengers Ansel and Adeline Easton of San Francisco, included men's scarves, bow ties, cravats, collars, dress shirts, vests, jackets, dress pants, and socks, as well as women's bloomers, dresses, evening gowns, and

"Ansel and Adeline Easton were San Francisco 'royalty' on their honeymoon trip to New York when the legendary S.S. Central America sank in a hurricane in September 1857. Adeline survived in a lifeboat; Ansel clung to debris in the water for hours after the ship sank until he was rescued by the crew from another ship," said Holabird.

"Ansel was a wealthy maritime provisions supplier and Adeline's brother, D.O. Mills, was a co-founder of the Bank of California," he explained.

Bidders also paid \$26,400 for a circa 1851 gold watch cover depicting a miner and Yerba Buena which later became San Francisco; \$14,400 for a ring made with a large gold-in-quartz gemstone; a stick pin with two gold nuggets went for \$12,000; the winning bidder paid \$3,360 for a white ceramic coffee cup decorated with gold lettering "To My Mother."

An 1849 Colt pocket pistol sold for \$30,000; and three sets of matched, brass luggage tags indicating the bags were going from San Francisco to New York via Panama sold for \$5,640.

Four black glass beer bottles, some with the remaining dregs of their original contents, were sold for \$1,200 to \$1,680 each, and a whiskey bottle from the ship's saloon brought \$1,920. A rare medal of the order of Saint Maurice and Saint Lazarus, one of the world's oldest orders of knighthood, sold for \$13,200.

A \$20 denomination gold coin struck at the San Francisco Mint in 1856 and later stamped with an advertising message by Sacramento, California drug store owner J. Polhemus set a record for one of his counter-stamped coins at \$43,200.

The Central America was carrying tons of Gold Rush treasure from San Francisco and the northern California area when she sank 7,200 feet deep in the Atlantic off the North Carolina coast while on a voyage from Panama to New York City. Recovery missions were made in 1988 to 1991 and again in 2014.

Most of the recovered coins and gold bars were sold starting in 2000. The unique items in this auction and the one scheduled for February were kept in secure storage since their recovery.

Insurance claims for the loss were paid in the 1850s and the company that discovered and



These miner's work pants with a five-button fly, recovered from the 1857 sinking of the S.S. Central America, are the oldest known California Gold Rush-era jeans of their kind and may have been made by or for Levi Strauss. They sold for \$114,000 in an auc

retrieved the treasure starting in 1988 settled with the insurers and their successors in 1998. With court approval, California Gold Marketing Group subsequently acquired clear title to all of that remaining treasure as well as all the items recovered in 2014.

All prices include a 20 percent buyer's fee added to all winning bids.

For additional information about the auction and the upcoming February 2023 auction of S.S. Central America artifacts, visit Holabird Western Americana Collections of Reno, Nevada at www.HolabirdAmericana.com, call 775-851-1859, or email info@holabirdamericana.com.

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