

# Treasure recovered from the legendary "Ship of Gold" -- the S. S. Central America -- realizes \$1.1 million at auction

*The Gold Rush-era artifacts ranged from lumps of coal and crewmembers' keys to tableware and exquisite jewelry. The S.S. Central America sank in a storm in 1857*

RENO, NV, UNITED STATES, March 8, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- From lumps of coal and crewmembers' keys to tableware and exquisite jewelry, collectors bid \$1.1 million to acquire 422 lots of historic, sunken treasure California Gold Rush-era artifacts recovered from the 1857 sinking of the fabled "Ship of Gold," the [S.S. Central America](https://www.sscamerica.com/). The two-day auction, March 4 and 5, 2023, was conducted in Reno, Nevada and online by Holabird Western Americana Collections ([www.HolabirdaAmericana.com](https://www.HolabirdaAmericana.com)).

"We had about 7,000 registered bidders, including some from Canada, Europe, and South America. Many collectors were waiting for these extraordinary items to come on the market since the legendary, submerged ship was located in 1988 and Life magazine proclaimed it America's greatest treasure ever found," said Fred Holabird, President of Holabird Western Americana Collections. "This was an incredible time capsule of the California Gold Rush era."

One of the auction highlights was a massive 32.15-ounce gold bar created in San Francisco by prominent Gold Rush assayers John Glover Kellogg and Augustus Humbert. The two-pound gold ingot sold for \$138,000, far above its current gold content value of about \$59,000. The assayer's value at the time it was created was \$586.17.



19th-century daguerreotype photograph of an unidentified young woman that the S.S. Central America scientific mission recovery team nicknamed, "Mona Lisa of the Deep" (\$73,200). (Photo credit: Holabird Western Americana Collections.)

"The S.S. 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 in a hurricane while on a voyage from Panama to New York City in September 1857. Recovery from the shipwreck site occurred in several stages between 1988-1991 and again in 2014," explained scientist Bob Evans who was on each of the recovery missions and assisted with the auction.

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*Fred Holabird*

Among the recovered jewelry items was a large 18-karat gold quartz engraved brooch that prominent San Francisco businessman Samuel Brannan -- California's first millionaire -- was sending to his son in Geneva, Switzerland, as a gift to the son's teacher. It sold for \$49,200.

"Brannan was the Jeff Bezos of his day; a successful entrepreneur, newspaper owner, and California's first millionaire," said Dwight Manley, managing partner of

California Gold Marketing Group, consignor of the sunken treasure.

Among the 45 other recovered jewelry pieces in the auction was a REGARD ring, named for the first letter of each of the five gemstones it contains: ruby (missing from the ring), emerald, garnet, amethyst, ruby, and diamond. It sold for \$14,400.

Other highlights included:

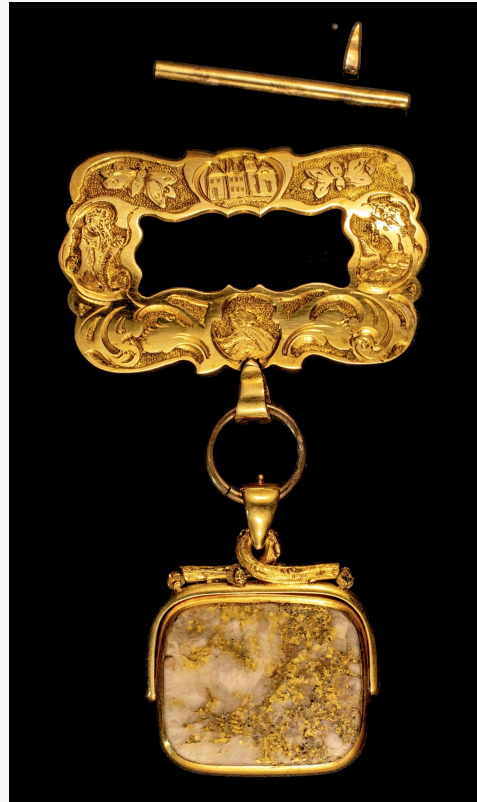
- A winning bid of \$73,200 for a superb resolution, 19th-century daguerreotype metal plate photograph of a young woman. The scientific mission recovery team nicknamed the unidentified woman, "[Mona Lisa of the Deep](#)," after retrieving the photo in 2014 from the seabed where it was discovered in a scattered pile of the ship's coal.
- The only known, complete treasure box from the 1850s California Gold Rush period brought \$6,300. An embossed wax seal on the box is still easily readable as "Alsop & Co.," renowned merchants and gold treasure shippers of the era.
- Among the recovered clothing items was an early Brooks Brothers shirt that sold for \$2,760.
- The specially-built, six-ton remotely operated underwater vehicle nicknamed "Nemo" that was used by scientists and engineers to locate and recover the S.S. Central America treasures deep on the Atlantic Ocean seabed four decades ago sold for \$43,200.
- A porthole from what is believed to be Captain William Lewis Herndon's topside cabin went for \$22,200.
- Gold wire-rim eyeglasses retrieved from the wreck site a mile-and-a-half below the Atlantic Ocean surface sold for \$13,800.
- A set of gold cufflinks brought \$12,000.

- The winning bidder paid \$2,760 for the remains of a recovered 1851 Colt Navy pistol.
- A contemporary counterfeit Mexican 8 Escudos “gold” coin dated 1853 discovered in the ship’s purser’s safe brought \$37,200.
- A small sign from the ship with the word SALOON went for \$13,200.
- The Steward’s key to the ship’s wine storage room sold for \$9,300.
- Lumps of recovered ship’s coal sold for hundreds to thousands of dollars each depending on size.
- Six applied-top beer bottles, some still with original beer contents, sold for an average of \$1,087 each.
- Thirty-six Cuban cigars apparently brought on board when the ship stopped in Havana on the voyage to New York were offered in 18 separate lots of two cigars per lot and sold for as much as \$720 per pair.
- A five-foot long scale model of the S.S. Central America created in 1991 sold for \$50,400.

This was the second and final auction of never-before-offered artifacts from the S.S. Central America. The first auction of 270 other items this past December attracted nearly \$1 million in winning bids, including \$114,000 for the oldest known pair of miner’s heavy-duty work pants that may have been made by or for the Levi Strauss Company.

For additional information, visit Holabird Western Americana Collections of Reno, Nevada at [www.HolabirdAmericana.com](http://www.HolabirdAmericana.com), call 775-851-1859, or email [info@HolabirdAmericana.com](mailto:info@HolabirdAmericana.com).

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Large 18-karat California Gold Rush gold quartz engraved brooch that California’s first millionaire, San Francisco businessman Sam Brannan, was sending in 1857 to his son in Geneva, Switzerland as a gift to his son’s teacher (\$49,200) (Photo credit: Holab



This saloon sign from the fabled “Ship of Gold,” the S.S. Central America that sank during a hurricane off the North Carolina coast in 1857, brought \$13,200 in the March 2023 auction conducted by Holabird Western Americana Collections. (Photo credit: HOLA



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This 32.15-ounce Kellogg & Humbert assayer's California Gold Rush ingot recovered from the 1857 sinking of the S.S. Central America sold for \$138,000 in the March 2023 auction by Holabird Western Americana Collections. (Photo credit: Holabird Western Amer

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