

March 15 New Jersey auction is led by famed private collection of antique American toys and banks

Also showcased: antique European toys and boats, English-outline trains; early Japanese toy autos; Lionel trains, trolleys and other brand rarities

VINELAND, NJ, UNITED STATES, March 3, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Any auction hosted by the Bertoia family goes above and beyond with the quality, rarity and condition of its contents, whether the holdings are antique toys, banks, trains or holiday treasures, but there's an extra level of prestige associated with their Signature Series. Those particular sales place the focus squarely on legacy collections with "name" recognition. On Saturday, March 15, Bertoia's will conduct its first Signature Sale of 2025, with 500 lots representing four spectacular collections, each steeped in provenance going back many decades. They are:



Althof Bergmann (American) Santa in Goat sleigh, hand-painted tin, clockwork, circa late 1800s, 20in long. One of few known. Provenance: Barenholtz Collection, Smith Collection. Estimate: \$70,000-\$140,000

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Headlining this auction is Part II of the renowned Curtis and Linda Smith collection, which was amassed over five decades and reflects their extensive travels across the United States and Europe.”

*Michael Bertoia, President,
Bertoia Auctions*

- The Curtis and Linda Smith Collection of American tin, squeak toys, mechanical banks, and primitives – Part II
- The Tony Cuff Collection of German and other European toys, including Radiguet boats and English-outline trains
- The Ira Bernstein Collection, featuring wonderful early Japanese autos
- The Brad Kaplan Collection of Lionel trains, trolleys and other rarities from the revered American brand

The auction's banner collection was amassed over five decades by Linda Smith and her late husband, Curtis. The Smiths were prominent figures in the toy-collecting

fraternity and active members of the Antique Toy Collectors of America. Their travels took them

to now-historic East Coast and European auctions, shows and markets, where they acquired extraordinarily rare pieces with gilt-edged provenance from collectors who were pioneers of the hobby.

The centerpiece of the Smith Collection Part II is a wonderful late-19th-century Althof Bergmann Santa in a Goat Sleigh. This great rarity is considered one of the finest pieces of American clockwork tin ever produced because of its impressive 20-inch size, bright colors, and whimsical, relatable Christmas theme. The toy is prominently showcased in the Barenholtz/McClintock book *American Tin Toys* as well as in *The Toy Collector* by Louis Hertz. When last seen at auction, it was hailed as the best of all known original examples. The auction estimate for this important American toy is \$70,000-\$140,000.

Also by Althof Bergmann, a horse-drawn tin [hook and ladder wagon](#) includes its original firemen figures and, to Bertoia's knowledge, is the only such example that has ever been offered for public sale. Measuring more than 2ft in length, this classic firefighting toy carries a presale estimate of \$12,000-\$25,000.

No collection of early American tin toys would be complete without the inclusion of at least one hand-painted George Brown production, and the Smith Collection brings forth one of the best: a clockwork toy version of the Civil War boat the USS Monitor. Made around 1870 – eight years after the original ironclad Monitor was launched – the toy offered by Bertoia's displays a fine state of preservation and is expected to sell in the \$15,000-\$30,000 range.

The Bridgeport, Connecticut, toymaking firm Ives was responsible for some of the most imaginative toys of its time. Several rare and outstanding Ives creations will be auctioned on March 15. Leading the group is one of few known examples of a Hippodrome Chariot, patented in 1875. It may very well be the most imaginatively designed of all Ives horse-drawn toys, and is expected to realize \$10,000-\$16,000.

A marvelous toy with a music theme is a 46-inch-long horse-drawn [Schoenhut Humpty Dumpty Circus Parade Wagon](#). This extravagant showpiece with six seated bandsmen figures, a driver and four horses could hit a high note in the \$8,000-\$14,000 range.

The Continental toy selection is sure to dazzle collectors on both sides of the Atlantic – and



Shepard Hardware Co. (American), Mason cast-iron mechanical bank with original wood factory box. Near-mint condition with extremely clean with bright original paint. Provenance: Brady Collection, Smith Collection. Estimate: \$20,000-\$35,000

beyond – but it will take a first-class bid to sail away with an early-20th-century Marklin (Germany) clockwork Oceanliner Lusitania made in the early 1900s. Liners from this particular Marklin series are admired for their character and artful detail. The 38-inch-long four-funnel Lusitania could glide off to a new owner for \$20,000-\$40,000.

Among the top highlights from the Tony Cuff collection are a Marklin hand-painted Gauge 1 [Churchbury train station](#), dating to 1913-1923, estimate \$8,000-\$16,000; and a rare 14-inch-long Marklin hand-painted Gauge 1 clockwork locomotive, \$3,000-\$6,000. The European lineup also includes a desirable Carette clockwork luxury limousine complete with its original hand-painted driver and three seated passenger figures, one of them a child. Estimate: \$7,000-\$11,000.

A small assortment of choice mechanical banks will be offered, including a Shepard Hardware Mason bank with gorgeous paint and its original wood box, estimated at \$20,000-\$35,000; and an elusive 1880s Sewing Machine bank that may have been produced as a giveaway. Estimate: \$10,000-\$18,000. Additionally, more than 40 still and “safe” banks will be auctioned.

Coveted post-WW II Japanese toys are led by two large and impressive cars: an ATC 1962 Chrysler estimated at \$8,000-\$16,000, and an Alps 1953 Packard Convertible Cabriolet, \$3,000-\$6,000. For Japanese superhero fans, there’s an ASC Aoshin friction-powered Batmobile with a swivel-headed Batman at the wheel. In pristine



Circa-1905 Steiff (German) apricot long mohair rod bear with elephant button. Length: 17in. One of the earliest teddies Steiff ever produced. Conveys with X-ray of the bear confirming its rod construction. Estimate: \$10,000-\$16,000



Rock and Graner (German) 'London' sailing ship, circa 1880, painted, simulated wood decking, two tall masts and sails. Length: 25.5in. Excellent condition. Provenance: Tony Cuff. Estimate: \$7,000-\$13,000

condition, this scarce toy is estimated at \$1,500-\$2,500, but it might deliver an auction-day surprise if the right collectors spot it zooming out of the Batcave, headed toward Bertoia's venue.

The March 15, 2025 Signature Auction will be held live at Bertoia's gallery located at 2141 DeMarco Drive, Vineland, NJ 08360, starting at 10AM ET. Toys may be previewed the week before the auction by appointment only. Other bidding options include absentee, by phone, or live online through Bertoia Live or LiveAuctioneers. For additional information on any item, to leave an absentee bid, schedule a private-preview appointment, reserve a telephone line for bidding, or discuss consigning to a future auction at Bertoia's, please call 856-692-1881, email toys@bertoiiauctions.com. Watch for auction updates on Bertoia's website: www.bertoiaauctions.com.

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ATC (Japanese) 1962 Chrysler Imperial, 15in long, beautiful near-mint condition, with original illustrated box in excellent condition. Toy appears nearly unplayed-with. Provenance: Ira Bernstein Collection. Estimate: \$8,000-\$16,000

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