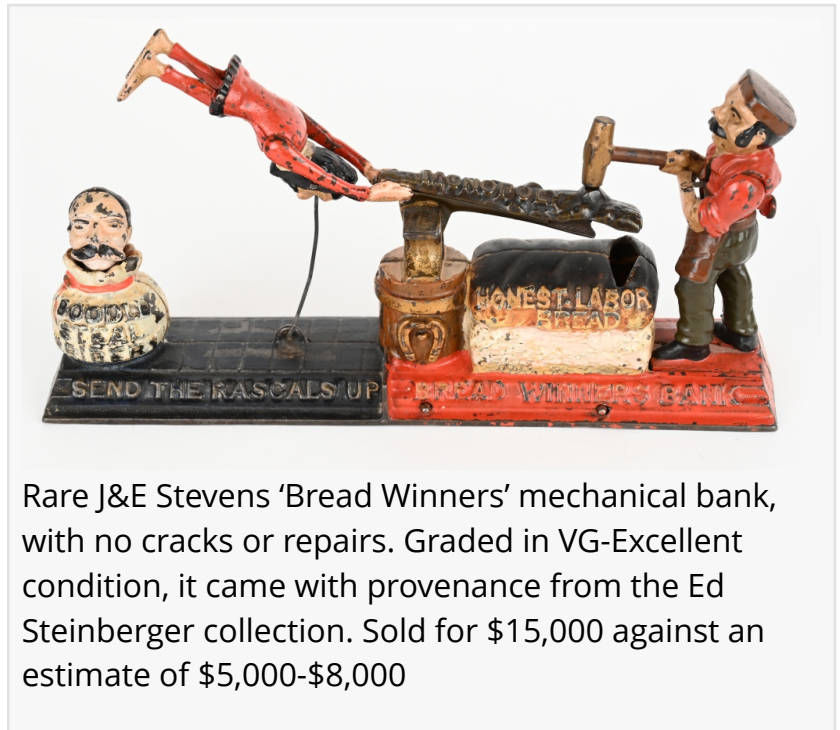


Antique bell toys, rare banks and Victorian Christmas cards were the big winners at Milestone's Dec. 6 auction

19th-C. pop-up Christmas cards, an antique Bread Winners mechanical bank, Clown with Crooked Hat still bank, and Drummer Boy bell toy were crowd favorites

WILLOUGHBY, OH, UNITED STATES, January 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Anything can happen at an auction, and the latest case to prove that point was Milestone's December 6 Winter Premier sale featuring antique toys, banks and high-quality vintage collectibles. The 633-lot selection chalked up \$670,000 in sales, with several pieces well surpassing expectations and one "sleeper" rising from its "long winter's nap" to command a price that was a staggering 51 times its high estimate.



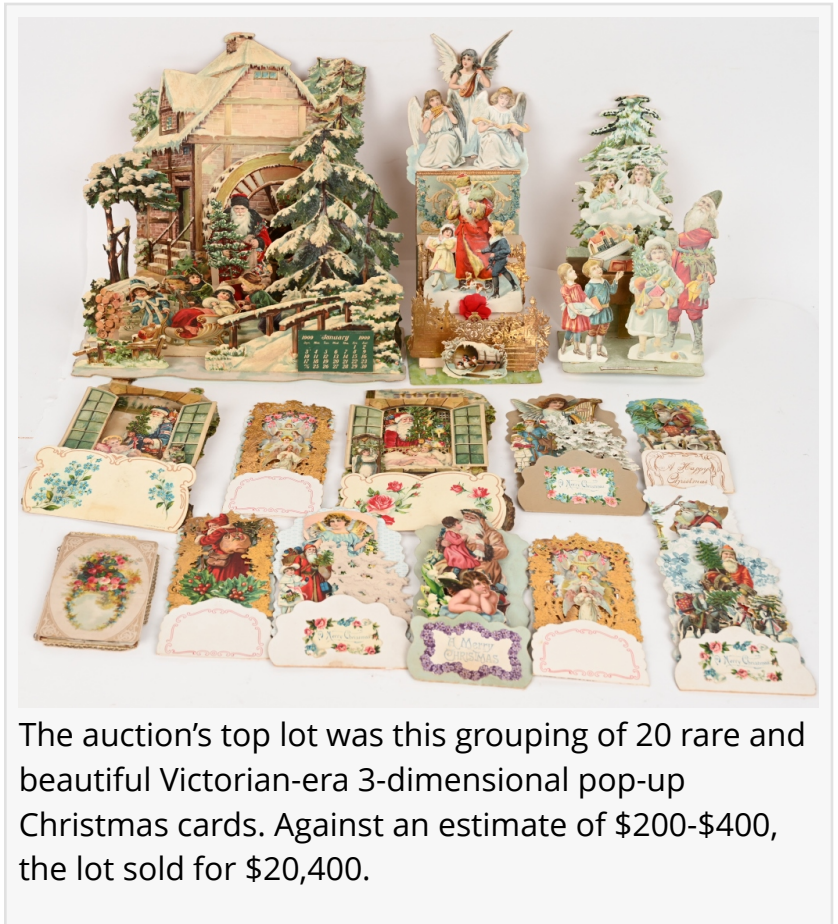
Rare J&E Stevens 'Bread Winners' mechanical bank, with no cracks or repairs. Graded in VG-Excellent condition, it came with provenance from the Ed Steinberger collection. Sold for \$15,000 against an estimate of \$5,000-\$8,000

While undeniably beautiful, the group lot consisting of 20 Victorian-era 3-dimensional pop-up Christmas cards harbored additional hidden value that probably would not have been recognized except by bidders with a deep involvement in Christmas antiques, ephemera in particular. The selection included a number of extremely beautiful designs, and the fact that they were three-dimensional pop-ups as opposed to standard-format cards, set them apart from the get-go. But within the small specialty collection, there were also some very rare examples, which did not evade the eyes of seasoned aficionados of Christmas goods. Estimated at \$200-\$400, the lot was bid to \$20,400 – a stunning 51 times the high estimate, equating to an average price of \$1,020 per card.

"This was a classic case of crossover-shopping success," said Miles King, co-owner of Milestone Auctions. "Collectors of toys, banks, pop culture items and holiday antiques are very smart about scouring auctions that aren't specific to what they collect. They always have an eye out for

something great that might appear in an auction that isn't focused solely on the specialty they collect. We were delighted to see how much interest there was in this lot and also to be able to deliver the good news about the selling price to the consignor."

Two banks, in particular, had a big day at the auction. A rare J&E Stevens "Bread Winners" mechanical bank, with no cracks or repairs, presented in VG-Excellent condition and came with provenance from the Ed Steinberger collection. It conveyed to the winning bidder for \$15,000 against an estimate of \$5,000-\$8,000. Amongst the still (non-mechanical) banks, an Ober (Chagrin Falls, Ohio) nickel-plated 6½-inch-tall "[Clown with Crooked Hat](#)" bank, known to be uncommon, was graded Excellent to Near Mint and entered with an estimate of \$400-\$800. It delivered an auction-day surprise, matching the Bread Winners bank dollar for dollar and achieving \$15,000.



The auction's top lot was this grouping of 20 rare and beautiful Victorian-era 3-dimensional pop-up Christmas cards. Against an estimate of \$200-\$400, the lot sold for \$20,400.

“

Collectors of toys, banks, pop culture items and holiday antiques are very smart about scouring auctions that aren't specific to what they collect. They're always on the lookout for unexpected finds.”

*Miles King - Co-Owner,
Milestone Auctions*

The bells were ringing cheerfully as nearly five dozen rare antique cast-iron bell toys from the James Fetzner collection paraded cross the auction block. An extremely appealing "Drummer Boy Chariot" made circa 1895 by Gong Bell (East Hampton, Conn) showed off crisp casting and well-executed details as well as bright original paint and no cracks or repairs. In Excellent-NM condition, it sold for \$12,000 against a \$4,000-\$8,000 estimate.

An endearing Gong Bell "[Mary & Her Little Lamb](#)" bell toy with no condition problems whatsoever claimed a strong winning bid of \$9,300 against an estimate of \$1,500-\$2,000; and from Gong Bell's crosstown rival, N N Hill, a

charming bell toy depicting early comic-strip superstars "Buster Brown and Tige" swept past its \$1,200-\$1,500 estimate to settle confidently at \$4,680.

A fleet of high-quality pressed-steel vehicles gave collectors a taste of what was to come in

Milestone's January 10-11, 2026 New Year's Toy Truck Spectacular. Two super-clean favorites made by Sturditoy (Pawtucket, R.I.) led the way for the popular subcategory, starting with a 35-inch-long [Tractor Trailer Oil Tanker](#). Graded Excellent, with all-original paint and decals, it rumbled off to a new owner for \$11,700 against an estimate of \$6,000-\$8,000. Not far behind it was a 30-inch-long Sturditoy Wrecker. Also in outstanding all-original condition, with exceptional paint and decals, it even retained its original towing hook. Estimated at \$2,000-\$3,000, it raced to an impressive \$8,700.

The auction catalog can be viewed in full on Milestone's website:

<https://www.milestoneauctions.com>.

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Rare cast-iron Drummer Boy Chariot bell toy made circa 1895 by Gong Bell. Wonderful design and colors with excellent detail and casting. Superb original paint. In Excellent-NM condition, it sold for \$12,000 against an estimate of \$4,

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