A circa-1866 Kyser & Rex Mikado bank cashes out at $38,400 in Bertoia's Mechanical Banks & Cast-Iron Toys Auction

Other Highlights: Mechanical Alphabet Man (or Yankee Schoolmaster), $20,400; Butting Ram – Man Thumbs Up bank, $14,400; J&E Stevens Milking Cow bank, $12,000



The Butting Ram – Man Thumbs Up, one of few known examples of the only mechanical bank model produced by Wagner & Zwiebel Mfg of Wisconsin, very desirable and in all-original condition. Sold for $14,400

VINELAND, NJ, UNITED STATES, October 2, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A Mikado mechanical bank, made circa-1866 by Kyser & Rex and one of only a few known, sold for $38,400; and a scarce mechanical Alphabet Man (or Yankee Schoolmaster), part toy and part 19th-century schoolmaster's educational aid, knocked down $20,400 at Bertoia Auctions' Mechanical Banks & Cast-Iron Toys Auction held September 25, online and at the gallery.

The auction was headlined by the outstanding mechanical bank collection of the late Dr Robert E Booth, Jr (1945-2026). Dr Booth was renowned for assembling one of America's finest private collections of Americana and folk art. His extraordinary home – which was featured in the pages of both Architectural Digest and The Magazine Antiques – reflected a lifetime of collecting at the highest level.

While Dr Booth amassed collections in numerous categories, only his mechanical banks were featured in the auction. Additional highlights included cast-iron toys from the collections of Tony LaSala and Ira Bernstein, along with the exceptional doorstop collection of Bob Brady, and Max Berry's collection of Charlie Reynolds banks. The auction totaled more than $515,000, and consignors were very pleased with the results.

The Mikado mechanical bank was a rare blue-table version. It exhibited a fascinating action: when a coin was deposited under the illusionist's hat and the rear crank was turned, the man

would raise and lower the two magician's cones on the table. The coin appeared to disappear and reappear under the left cone, then inexplicably drop into the bank. The $38,400 selling price was within the pre-sale estimate range.

The mechanical Alphabet Man, or Yankee Schoolmaster, was masterfully designed in such a way as to give this distinctive toy a powerful folk-art presence. There has long been a debate about whether the Alphabet Man was created as a toy or a 19th-century schoolmaster's educational aid. Pressing the lever caused the finely dressed gentleman to point to his chest, which was embedded with a revolving alphabet wheel. Against a high estimate of $12,000, the rare example offered by Bertoia's earned "extra credit" in selling for $20,400.



Kyser & Rex Mikado mechanical bank, circa 1886, blue-table version, very rare and one of only a few known, 5in long, in excellent condition. Sold within estimate for $38,400

The Butting Ram – Man Thumbs Up was the only mechanical bank model ever produced by Wagner & Zwiebel Mfg of Wisconsin. Few exist in any condition, and it would be a challenge to find another as nice as the example entered in the auction. It presented in all-original condition and boasted a strong pedigree from having been part of the Booth collection. It rose to $14,400 against an $8,000 high estimate.

A J&E Stevens Milking Cow mechanical bank, the scarcer thin-base version from the Connecticut manufacturer's desirable pedestal series of banks, realized $12,000, besting the $8,000 high estimate. Facilitated by its many moving parts, the bank's entertaining action depicted a man being kicked backwards while attempting to milk a cow. Hard to find, all original and free of repairs, the bank was assessed to be in excellent to pristine condition.

Hubley Mfg (Lancaster, Pa) doorstops were a big hit with bidders. A few of the top-selling lots were:

- A Hubley Bathing Beauties doorstop, one of a series of six designed and signed "© FISH 250," a popular Art Deco design depicting two young ladies in bathing gear sharing a parasol, 11½ inches tall, in near mint condition. Sold for $3,900, against a $1,500 high estimate
- A Hubley Messenger Boy doorstop, one of a series of six designed and signed "© FISH 249," with classic Art Deco molding, depicting a boy holding bouquet of flowers on a red and black base, 10 inches tall, in near mint condition. Sold for $3,600, against a $1,800 high estimate

Also, from Hubley, but not a doorstop, was a Santa still bank, an exceptional example that hardly showed any handling wear or evidence of use. The 6-inch-tall bank, in near mint condition, came to auction with a modest $1,200-$2,000 estimate, but ended up changing hands for $3,300.

A small Uncle Sam mechanical bank, one of only 99 produced in 1970 by the Sears, Roebuck & Co Research & Engineering Department as a limited-edition special presentation piece for members of a campaign committee, swept past the $400 high estimate to finish at $3,600. This example, just 10½ inches tall, was #60 of the 99 produced. It was marked "60 99 1970" and was in near mint condition.

A Reynolds Uncle Sam Lawyer mechanical bank, a pre-production model from 2003 and one of only two made, topped its $2,000 high estimate with a final price of $3,000. The bank was 7½ inches long and in near mint condition.

In the toy cars category, an Arcade REO Royale Coupe, 9 inches in length and in pristine condition, sped away for $3,600 against a $2,000 high estimate; while a rare Kenton 1934 Chrysler Airflow, 5½ inches long and in very good condition, found a new home for $2,700, surpassing the $1,000 high estimate.



Cast-iron Alphabet Man (or, The Yankee Schoolmaster), manufacturer unknown. Masterful casting rendering an appealing folk-art appearance. Sold for $20,400 against a high estimate of $12,000



J&E Stevens Milking Cow mechanical bank, scarcer thin-base version from the manufacturer's desirable series of pedestal banks. All original. Sold for $12,000

Those who attended a previous mechanical bank convention were able to experience a sampling of Dr Booth's treasured collection firsthand at his home. Bertoia's was proud to present his amazing collection at auction, offering collectors an excellent opportunity to vie for prized pieces acquired by one of America's most respected collectors.

Bertoia Auctions is currently accepting high-quality toys, banks, holiday antiques and collectibles for their future sales. Bertoia Auctions' president, Michael Bertoia, welcomes the opportunity to discuss the consignment process with collectors, whether they have a single piece or an entire collection. All enquiries are kept strictly confidential and there is never any obligation to consign. Tel. 856-692-1881 or email toys@bertoiaauctions.com. Keep up with Bertoia's via their website: www.bertoiaauctions.com.

¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬¬

All prices quoted in this report are inclusive of buyer's premium as stated on Bertoia's website https://www.bertoiaauctions.com. To view the catalog and prices realized for Bertoia's September 25, 2026 auction, visit https://bid.bertoiaauctions.com/auctions/1-DBZJ33/cast-iron-september-2026

Michael Bertoia
Bertoia Auctions
+ + 1 856-692-1881



Hubley Bathing Beauties doorstop, one of a series of six designed and signed "© FISH 250," Art Deco design depicting two young ladies in bathing gear sharing a parasol, 11½in tall. Sold for $3,900

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/947042476

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.
© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.