

Auction Action In Woodstock Valley, Conn.

\$299,520 For A Trio Of Flasks At Norman Heckler's 100th Sale



Auctioneer Norman Heckler with some of the top lots. The Jared Spencer flasks realized \$111,150, \$78,390, and \$109,980, and the concentric ring eagle flask, front, brought \$19,890.



Review and Photos by
Antiques and The Arts Weekly
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An eagle/cornucopia flask, GII-57, from the Pitkin Glass Works, further marked "JPF" on the front and "CONN" on the verso, was termed by the auctioneer, "One of those gutsy, rare, early and unusual forms." Doubling the low estimate, the rare bottle achieved \$25,740.



"Not much to look at, but it's rarer than heck," stated Norman Heckler in regard to this cornucopia flask, GIII-3. One of two known, it sold at \$17,550.



"It is one of a kind," stated Heckler in regard to the half-pint Lafayette with laurel leaves/Masonic arch flask, GI-89. Found in an outbuilding in South Carolina, the light apple green color flask was bid to \$47,970.



The American System flask, GX-21, depicting a steam vessel flying an American flag sold at \$30,420.



The Baltimore and Monument/Corn for the World flask in deep cobalt went out at \$9,360.



The top lots of the auction and the most coveted items from the Warren "Bud" Lane collection were the three Jared Spencer flasks. Prices from left: \$111,150, \$78,390 and \$109,980.

WOODSTOCK VALLEY, CONN. — A trio of perhaps the rarest and most desirable American historical flasks known, all from the Jared Spencer group, soared to just under the \$300,000 mark during the most recent absentee auction at Norman C. Heckler & Co. Sold during Heckler's 100th major cataloged auction that closed on October 17, the single-owner sale of early American flasks featured the collection of Warren C. "Bud" Lane Jr.

Lane's collection was touted by many as among the most important holdings of early American flasks known, and the prices achieved throughout the auction were witness. Aside from the three Jared Spencer flasks (listed by McKearin as second, third and fourth most desirable flasks to collect) were a trio of concentric ring eagle flasks, a crossed keys/Masonic flask that is one of the great rarities in Connecticut glass and several flasks that are believed to be the only known examples, such as the Lafayette with laurel leaves/Masonic arch made at the Mt Vernon Glass Works.

Lane's father was an early collector of bottles and flasks whose collection was said to have numbered into the thousands. That collection eventually was sold by Skinner, but not before the foundation of a new collection was formed by Warren Jr. Catalog notes indicate that at least one of the Jared Spencer flasks came from his father's collection as a provenance of the Dr Charles Osgood collection is listed. The Osgood collection was sold at auction by Pennypacker in the 1950s.

Several years ago, Lane downsized from a large home and at the same time he reduced the scope of his collection from a couple hundred bottles to just 48 of his favorites. Examples from the collection were sold at Heckler's over a period of time and they included several outstanding flasks that established record prices, such as the "firecracker" flask in a deep sapphire blue that sold for \$100,620 in April 2010.

Heckler commented that this past July 23 his telephone rang and "Bud said it was time to sell the rest of the collection." With a fall sale already scheduled, it did not take much con-

A Masonic arch and emblems/eagle flask, GIV-14, with unusual elongated neck was thought to have been made in Keene, N.H. The dark olive bottle with sloping collar mouth is the only known example. It finished at \$18,720.

vincing for that auction to be pushed back a month and for the single-owner offering to be scheduled for October. Word spread like wildfire throughout the glass collecting community, and Heckler's phone became quite active.

When the first ads hit the papers, the "Three Kings," the Jared Spencer flasks, were featured and major collectors started hashing things out among themselves. There are only a couple collections in the world that contain all three examples of the Jared Spencer flasks, including the one at the Corning Museum of Glass. There were at least a couple players trying to keep the set intact, but ultimately, as prices escalated, they all went their separate ways.

"It is one of a kind," stated Heckler in regard to the first of the bottles to bring a substantial price (in excess of \$20,000). "It popped out of the woodwork 30 years ago and no one has heard of another one since," said the auctioneer about the half-pint Lafayette and bust with semi wreath of laurel leaves/Masonic arch flask, GI-89a. Found in an outbuilding in South Carolina, the rare flask listed a provenance of Robert Hall and then Robert Mebane before making its way into Lane's collection. In a light apple green color, the flask was bid to \$47,970.

Early Connecticut glass was a favorite of Lane's, as evidenced by the superior collection he had compiled. An eagle/cornucopia flask, GII-57, from the Pitkin Glass Works, further marked "JPF" on the front and "CONN" on the verso, was termed by the auctioneer, "One of those gutsy, rare, early and unusual forms." Despite a large crack running from the mouth to the shoulder, the rare bottle achieved \$25,740.

An American System flask, GX-21, depicting a steam vessel flying an American flag sold at the high end of the estimate. Listing a provenance of the Osgood collection, this pint-sized flask was described as "exceptional with strong embossing, brilliant color and great condition." In a clear, light green color, the flask, believed to be manufactured at the Pittsburgh glasshouse Blakewell, Page and Blakewell Manufacturing, sold at \$30,420.

The three Jared Spencer flasks, thought to be made at the Pitkin Glass Works, were next in the catalog, and, as Heckler was quick to point out, each of the examples was not only exceptional from the aspect of color and mold quality, each was undamaged.

The first of the lots, a medallion and diamond diapering example,



The North Bend/Tippecanoe cabin-form flask, GVII-1, realized \$38,610.

GX-25, was in a medium yellow olive color and it listed a provenance of the Paul Richards collection. Heckler sold this bottle previously in 1993 during the first absentee auction his firm conducted. "This is probably the finest example of this bottle known," commented Heckler. "The embossing, mold impression, the clear green color... it is the clearest one out there and is considered to be an exceptional Jared Spencer flask." Apparently bidders concurred with the auctioneer as it became the top lot of the auction, selling at \$111,150, a record price paid for the mold.

The beads and pearls with diapering pattern Jared Spencer flask, GX-26, was next in the lineup and this example, too, was considered to be one of the finest examples known. This bottle had been purchased by Lane at the Edmund Blasko collection auction at Skinner in 1983, ironically an auction conducted by Skinner's ex-department head of American glass, Norman Heckler. "This is certainly one of the prettiest of the Jared Spencer flasks in a very light yellow with olive tone and very strong embossing," stated the auctioneer. Estimated the lowest of the three examples at \$40/80,000, the rare flask realized \$78,390.

"This flask has been coveted by collectors of American glass for more than a century," said Heckler in regard to the flask impressed "Jared Spencer" in the central medallion, GX-24. "This is an exceptional one." Listing a provenance of the Osgood collection and having been through two generations of Lane collections, the rare flask has remained in private hands for at least the past 60-plus years. While there are several known examples of the flask, this one was also considered to be the finest known. Bidding on the lot was active, with it selling at \$109,980.

A double eagle flask with vertical ribbing, GII-144, in a bright light green was one of only two examples known; the other is in the collection of the Corning Museum of Glass. Thought to have been made at Keene Marlboro Street Glassworks, circa 1815, the rare pint-sized bottle with a tooled round collared mouth sold at \$43,290.

Three concentric ring eagle flasks, produced at the New England Glass Company, Cambridge, Mass., circa 1820-1830, were also sold. An example in brilliant yellowish green, GII-76a, sold at the low estimate, \$4,972. A similar flask marked with "NG/Co" on the verso, GII-77, sold at

\$22,230, while a similar example, GII-77a, in light green with an amber mouth brought \$19,890.

A Masonic arch and emblems/eagle flask, GIV-14, with unusual elongated neck was thought to have been made in Keene, N.H. The dark olive bottle with sloping collar mouth is the only known example; it brought \$18,720.

"This is one of the great Coventry bottles," stated Heckler of the crossed keys/Masonic flask, GIV-30, in an olive yellow with a sheared lip, although the auctioneer related he was somewhat disappointed with the price realized. With exceptional embossing and a good light olive yellow color, this flask listed impressive provenance of both Sam Laidacker and Blasko. Thought to be in perfect condition, a small fissure was discovered prior to cataloging, surely directly related to the less than stellar price achieved. "It's still a heck of a bottle, there are darn few of them," he said. The rare flask realized \$22,230.

A flask with tremendous lore, and even some controversy, attached to it is the North Bend/Tippecanoe cabin-form flask GVII-1. Virtually all of the examples of this rare bottle have the corners broken out, which lore relates to prohibitionists having knocked the corners out



The pint-sized double eagle flask with vertical ribbing, GII-144, in a bright light green was one of only two examples known; the other is in the collection of the Corning Museum of Glass. It made \$43,290.



The hour glass Masonic flask, Coventry Glassworks, GIV-29, did well at \$21,060.

to drain the alcoholic contents from the campaign favors. Heckler actually cites a flaw in the mold as the cause of the "hole." The bottle is controversial because it falls somewhere between the category of a flask and that of a figural bottle. Nonetheless, the rare and highly desirable example realized \$38,610.

While this was Heckler's 100th major catalogued auction, Norman was not celebrating all that much as he was quick to point

out that he has actually conducted well over 300 auctions, including monthly Americana auctions at his Bradford Corner Road barn.

Heckler's now holds the records for the highest prices paid at auction for the top four American historical flasks. A General Jackson/eagle portrait flask sold in November 2010 leads the record prices paid at auction at \$176,600; the two Jared Spencer flasks sold during this auction occupy the next two slots at

\$111,150 and \$109,980; and fourth is the pint-size General Washington/eagle flask, also marked "TWD," more commonly known as the "firecracker" flask, that sold in April 2010 for \$100,620.

Prices reported include the buyer's premium.

The next absentee auction at Heckler's closes November 14. A January auction is also scheduled. For additional information 860-974-1634 or www.heckler-auction.com.



The hard cider with flag and cider barrel/flower and log cabin flask, GX-22, brought \$23,400.



"This is one of the great Coventry bottles," stated Heckler of the crossed keys/Masonic flask, GIV-30 in an olive yellow with a sheared lip. The rare flask realized \$22,230.



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