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Auctioneer Norman Heckler with many of the bottles and flasks sold.

Auction Action In Woodstock Valley, Conn.



"A gutsy looking bottle" in "beautiful color," the eagle/medallion flask, GI-8, in a brilliant yellow-olive coloration sold for \$64,350.



The "firecracker" flask, was termed by auctioneer Norman Heckler, "A great bottle in every way." Condition was exceptional, as was the color, a deep sapphire blue with an inward rolled mouth and a pontil scar. In a pint size, the "firecracker" flask carried an estimate of \$40/80,000. Bidding on the lot was brisk, bringing a record price of \$100,620, including premium.

*First Flask To Sell For \$100,000
Or More At Auction*

Review and Photos by
Antiques and The Arts Weekly
David S. Smith, Managing Editor

Firecracker Flask Explodes: Record Price At Heckler's



The Wheeler's Berlin Bitters bottle in a "brilliant yellowish grass green" went out at \$11,700.



The shaft and globe bottle realized \$6,435.



The free-blown Mt Vernon seal bottle in a deep green color brought \$26,910.



The Dr Wright's Tonic Bitters bottle in yellow/olive made \$14,040.

WOODSTOCK VALLEY, CONN. — A "firecracker" flask went out with a bang at the Norman Heckler Auction Company's March sale of fine bottles and flasks, bitters, free blown glass and much more as it sold for a record price paid at auction for any American flask, eclipsing the \$100,000 mark.

The auction was "very well received," commented Heckler in the days following the sale, "probably the most active auction that we have had in the past eight or nine years." The auctioneer commented that the "bottle collecting hobby is strong and there does not seem to be any shortness of funds to buy these good things when they cross the market. We saw a real desire from collectors and some people stepped right up to the plate."

Heckler's auction actually closed on March 31, although at

that point callbacks begin. Heckler's policy is that only the top three bidders for each item can continue bidding, a process that can sometimes go on for days. "We don't do Internet bidding," said Heckler. "We like the personal contact and the relationship that we have with our customers," he added. "We are just going to continue in our old-fashioned ways. It is important to be able to have a personal conversation with the customers, to be able to talk about the bottle, its condition and the color."

That policy pays off in spades for the auction house, especially with the offering of the "General Washington/eagle" flask, also marked TWD." Commonly referred to as the "firecracker" flask, this particular example was indeed a blockbuster as the impression was strong and the color was exceptional. Provenance listed the Willard Pollard collection and also the Warren C. Lane collection.

The Kensington Glass Works, Philadelphia, flask, GI-14, circa 1820, was cataloged as "A great bottle in every way." Condition was exceptional, as was the color, a deep sapphire blue with an inward rolled mouth and a pontil scar. In a pint size, the "firecracker" flask carried a \$40/80,000 estimate. Bidding on the lot was brisk, with it reaching a record price of \$100,620, including premium.

While Heckler would reveal little more than to confirm that it sold to an old-school private collector, he was quick to squash the rumor that it had gone to one of the "two new collectors that are spending crazy money," as one glass collector surmised.

Another flask to do well was an eagle/medallion flask, GI-8, in a brilliant yellow-olive coloration. The rare Pittsburgh flask was cataloged as "a gutsy looking bottle" in "beautiful color, fine condition and with a strong impression." A shallow bubble

burst on the left side of the medallion was noted and a small flake was also discovered. Also citing a provenance of the Lane collection, the rare bottle handily exceeded the \$20/40,000 estimates as it sold for \$64,350.

A Benjamin Franklin flask by Wheeling Glass Works, Wheeling, W.Va., in yellow-olive did well as it sold for \$37,440. Heckler termed the bottle "an extremely rare mold in an unlisted color."

Another bottle to attract a great deal of attention was a Stoddard 13-star flag flask, marked Granite Glass Works on the reverse. The rare half-pint flask was unusual with its smooth base and sloping collar neck. Another example from the Lane collection, the yellow-olive colored flask, far exceeded the \$12/14,000 estimate as it sold for \$35,100.

A Washington/eagle flask, Frederick Lorenz manufacturer, ex-Paul Richards collection and Lane collection, in a deep greenish-aquamarine did well as it sold for \$30,420. One of a few known, Heckler cataloged the flask as "The most sought-after and desirable of the early aqua Washington flasks."

A "T.W. Dyott, M.D." Benjamin Franklin portrait flask in a "medium tobacco amber with a puce tone," was actively bid. Termed "undoubtedly the best existing example" of the flask, it went out at the high estimate, selling at \$23,400.

One surprise of the sale was a free-blown seal bottle in a deep green color. "Possibly the only known whole example with these embossed initials" on the seal, the bottle was marked "J.H. / Mt Vernon / Glass Co." One of a handful of American seal bottles known, the rare bottle exceeded estimate as it sold for \$26,910.

Prices include the 17 percent buyer's premium charged. For further information, 860-974-1634 or www.hecklerauction.com.



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