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Rare Double Eagle Historical Flask Realizes \$53,820 At Heckler Auction



The top lot of the sale was this rare and early double eagle historical flask, circa 1820–1840, which realized \$53,820.

WOODSTOCK, CONN. — A rare and early double eagle historical flask made in Pittsburgh, circa 1820–40, and boasting a deep yellow olive color, sold for \$53,820 in an Internet and catalog auction conducted May 16–30 by Norman C. Heckler & Company. The flask was the top lot in an auction dedicated mainly to antique bottles, flasks, pottery, antiques and Americana.

The early Pittsburgh district was a hotbed of glass and bottle manufacturing in the Nineteenth Century. The exceptional pint flask, in the great GII-1 mold with crisp embossing, had a sheared mouth and pontil scar. It sailed past its presale estimate of \$15/30,000, mainly due to its very rare color. It is quite possibly the only known specimen of this bottle in the deep yellow olive color.

Just as exciting to collectors was the selection of fresh-to-the-market finds that had never before been offered at auction. Five rarities in particular piqued bidder interest. One was a GI-44 Washington-Taylor portrait flask, made in Philadelphia but only recently found at a dig in Savannah, Ga. The flask was recovered from a privy in the city's historic district that dated to around 1820 and was in use until the turn of the century. The bottle was recovered from a cleanout pit 8 feet deep, adjacent to the privy.

But as impressive as the flask's back story was, its rare brilliant yellow color had an unusual gradation, from yellow to almost clear in the middle of the body. It also had particularly strong embossing. These elements combined for a presale estimate of \$5/10,000, and by



The so-called "Snake of Corruption" flask has an eagle with a snake in its beak. The GII-9 example drew \$10,530.



The Washington-Taylor portrait flask (GI-44), made in Philadelphia and dug up in Savannah, Ga., hit \$14,040.

the time the dust had settled following an intense battle of determined bidders, the final price reached \$14,040.

A Dr J.S. Woods Elixir medicine bottle, originally found under a porch in New York state and consigned from a pawn shop in the Southeast, hammered for \$11,700. The bottle — probably from Albany, N.Y. — was tombstone-shaped and colored emerald green. It was expected to fetch \$2,5/5,000, but the bottle's extreme rarity combined with its fine condition and color drove the price up.

A rare and popular "Snake of Corruption" flask (so-named because of the obverse motif of a snake or serpent being held in the beak of an eagle) was another fresh find that wowed the crowd. Discovered at an estate sale outside of Columbus, Ohio, the bottle was rushed to Heckler's just in time for the sale. The early Pittsburgh district flask, light green in color and strongly embossed, hit \$10,530.

An early shaft and globe wine bottle from England, also recently uncovered, fetched \$5,850. It was found in Narragansett Bay, R.I., by a diver and consigned by the Rhode Island businessman he sold it to. The small globular, half-size bottle, with a long neck, sheared mouth with string rim and yellowish olive green color, was rare in color and form.

A P&U.S. Spring Co., Saratoga, N.Y., emerald green mineral

water bottle, consigned by a construction worker who found it while part of the excavation team at Boston's "Big Dig" breezed to \$4,680.

A big, early and rare B.F. & Co./N.Y. applied seal pattern molded whiskey jug, probably made in Midwest America, circa 1840–60, hammered for \$5,265. The golden amber jug had an inverted conical form with applied handle and seal applied to the lower handle attachment. It also had an applied double collared mouth with spout and pontil scar. The bottle stood 9½ inches tall.

A D. (Five Dots) Brechva sealed wine bottle from England, made circa 1774, cylindrical in shape with an applied seal at the mid-body and colored a medium to deep yellow olive, changed hands for \$1,989. The bottle, with a strongly embossed seal, had a sheared mouth with string rim and pontil scar. It stood 9 inches tall and was 4½ inches in diameter at the base.

A pressed lamp, possibly made by the Boston and Sandwich Glass Works, Sandwich, Mass., circa 1850–80, topped out at \$1,404. This cobalt blue example was of single-piece construction, with a circle and ellipse pattern and a simple hexagonal stepped base.

Prices reported include the buyer's premium. For information, 860-974-1634 or www.hecklerauction.com.

Flask Made In Pittsburgh Circa 1820–40 Is Sale's Top Lot

Auction Action In Woodstock, Conn.



Fetching \$11,700 was this Dr J.S. Woods Elixir medicine bottle (Albany, N.Y.), emerald green with tombstone shape.

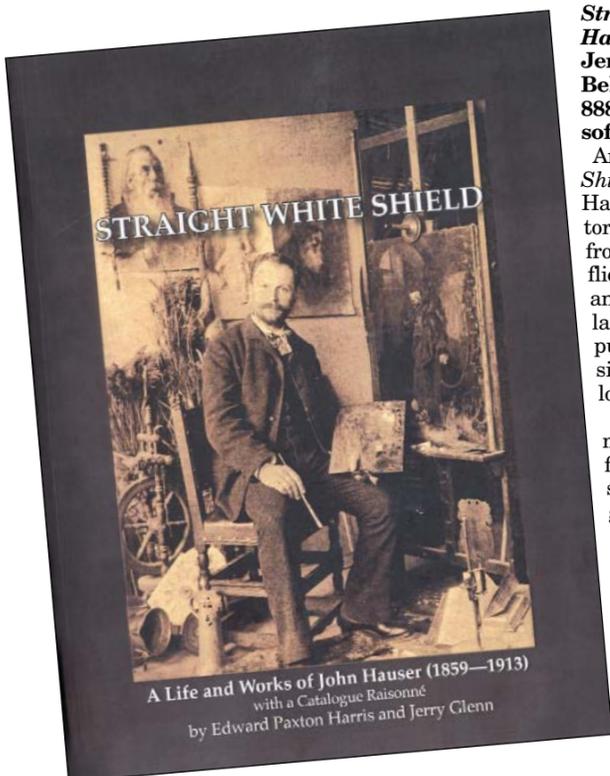


This P.&U.S. Spring Company (Saratoga, N.Y.) mineral water bottle, emerald green, in rare size finished at \$4,680.



An early shaft and globe wine bottle from England retrieved from Narragansett Bay, R.I., went out at \$5,850.

BOOKS...BOOKS...BOOKS...BOOKS...



Straight White Shield: A Life And Works of John Hauser (1859–1913) by Edward Paxton Harris and Jerry Glenn, Micropress Inc, 179 Fairfield Avenue, Bellevue KY 41073, www.micropressbooks.com or 888-769-4891; 2012, 310 pages, hardcover \$59.50 or softcover \$49.50, plus \$5 s/h.

An art book unlike most other art books, *Straight White Shield* tells the story of long-forgotten artist John Hauser, who has sold well in recent years with art collectors, but has gotten scant scholarly attention. Written from a smattering of biographical material, often conflicting, the authors, both scholars and not art historians, have done an enviable job of ferreting out and collating a wealth of information on the artist and publishing it succinctly. The John Hauser Project website (www.JohnHauserProject.com) contains a catalogue raisonné of the artist's works.

The scholarly book contains hundreds of illustrations, most never seen in print before, and is the product of five years of intensive research by the two dedicated scholars. It is the first book to analyze the artist's life growing up in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine section, studying at the McMicken College of Art, his struggles to earn money to travel to Germany and his later studies at the Munich Academy of Art.

Hauser's travels abroad are detailed here, as are his friendships within the Cincinnati Art Club, his travels to Santa Fe and the Pueblos with J.H. Sharp, and finally his forays to the South Dakota Badlands where his Sioux friends adopted him into their tribe. It was they who gave him his singular name which in turn lent the title to this volume.

The authors have sourced more than 500 of Hauser's works and have documented an illustrated and detailed catalog of them here, aiding study of Hauser's work created over his lifetime. Phyllis Weston, the doyenne of art dealers in Cincinnati, contributes a preface to the book and renowned Boston School artist Richard Lushek has also contributed an essay here.

From rare photographs of the artist at work in his studio and on the Plains to facsimiles of his signatures, a catalogue raisonné and artifacts from his collection, the book has much value-added content.

The catalogue raisonné in the book will continue to grow on the John Hauser Project website as new information about works continues to come in.

Pricing the book affordably, the authors have also pledged, after recouping their initial costs, to donate all book profits to the Lakota Children's School on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. No doubt, the Hausers would be pleased.

Beset by financial difficulties during his art studies and much of his life and his death coming at the young age of 54, Hauser continued to grow as an artist over the years as one can see by studying his oeuvre — and created many fine paintings — but one wonders what his later works might have been like, had circumstances been more favorable to him. Considered as a whole, his output of paintings of the Western and Indian culture that was changing rapidly in his lifetime are impressive.

Kudos for a book that was long overdue and goes miles towards shaping John Hauser's rightful place in the annals of American art history.

—AVV