



What's Happening in British Ceramics

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by Kurt O'Hare

Of Eagles and Presidents

Reporting on the First of Two Sales of the Creutzburg & Martin Collection



I have a special place in my heart and in my life for Chet Creutzburg and David Martin who, in my early days of collecting American themed transferware, became friends and teachers. They, along with fellow collector Nick Routson, introduced me to Hayden Goldberg and Curtis Brown and explained their collection to me in some detail over dinners in Brooklyn. So when I learned they were preparing to pass on their collection to a new group of collectors, I had to be present for the sale.



I arrived at Northeast Auctions on Friday in time to preview, and quite the preview it was. Ron Bourgeault had the collection front and center and well displayed. Having observed the quality of the catalog the auction house had put together, I wasn't surprised but I was very happy. Laid out in front of me was rarity after rarity after beauty and seeing it in that venue made it easy to appreciate what two knowledgeable, dedicated collectors – with an eye for beauty, accomplished. Better yet, I knew that this was only half of a monumental collection and tour de force in American themed dark blue transferware.

Hayden Goldberg and Curtis Brown put together an encyclopedic collection that spanned the entire American Historical Staffordshire category – whereas Chet and David focused on items that incorporated eagles and presidents (their Four Medallions Jug, seen above, by Stevenson & Williams c. 1825-1827, sold \$8,400). That's not to say they didn't add pieces of Philadelphia and Erie Canal interest – with an occasional La Fayette gem thrown in for good measure – which they did with attention to form and pattern. It was clear to anyone viewing the display cases in the sales room on the day of the auction that this was one of the most important collections assembled in our time.

On sale day – I arrived early to take one more look at what felt like old friends having first enjoyed them at their home. And also to touch and hold rarities for the last time. I sat next to Bill and Terry Kurau, TCC members, friends and dealers specializing in American views – and well-known TCC member and dealer, Peg Sutor, who is also known to all of us, sat behind me, somehow managing to be seated on a very comfortable sofa. I knew Nick Routson would be on the phone and there was also someone attending to internet bidding.



Lafayette, An embossed cup plate by James & Ralph Clews, c. 1824-1837. Sold \$2,040

Mayer's Pennsylvania Platter Was the Winning Lot



Without counting noses, there appeared to be upwards of 50 people in the audience with catalogs, notes and condition reports. And Ron being Ron, began the sale with a bit of humor and dispensed with the legalities in no time.

And the auction began – fearing the worst in this post apocalyptic collecting market, I watched the early lots for signs of strength or not – and the results were mixed. Ron had set the sequence so that some of the less rare pieces came up first as a warmup, and warm it was. Behind me, Peg Sutor was so busy raising her number to bid that I was getting windburn and my hair looked like Donald Trump's – but prices were strong so she won some and lost some. Internet bidding was playing a role accounting for about 20% of the sales and this drove prices up on many other lots. Bill & Terry Kurau were paying strict attention and were glued to their battle plan leaving the sale with a couple of large boxes to keep them company on the ride back to Pennsylvania.

Over the next few hours a new record for Transferware may have been set when the collector's Arms of the States series, Pennsylvania platter by Mayer hammered to an anonymous phone bidder for \$26,500 bringing the total with commission to \$31,800.00. It was a beauty and had been one of their pride and joys for a long time – and we are lucky to have an image of it in our TCC database.

It was sad to see the hammer fall for the last time, and I was amazed how all the years of hunting, researching, learning and enjoying took only two hours to disburse. But I realized a long time ago that we are only the caretakers and guardians of this material. We enjoy and protect it for a period of time then pass it along to the next caretaker and guardian – and on the way, it enriches our souls.

Stay tuned for the second half – I have it on good authority that it's going to be even more spectacular. And I'm off to buy a Powerball ticket – and to dream.