SOTHEBY'S TO OFFER PROPERTY FROM A PRIVATE AMERICAN COLLECTION

AN EXCEPTIONAL SELECTION OF AMERICAN ANTIQUES

HIGHLIGHTED BY AN ASSORTMENT OF PHILADELPHIA-MADE OBJECTS INCLUDING THE CHIPPELDALE MAHOGANY HAIRY PAW FOOT TEA TABLE

PRESIDENT MARTIN VAN BUREN’S FEDERAL DINING TABLE

Highlighting Sotheby's Americana Week this January is the sale of Property from a Private Collection, a remarkably diverse collection of American Furniture and Decorative objects reflecting the worldly tastes of an astute collector, on January 18th. This exceptional selection of 109 lots of American antiques is highlighted by an assortment of Philadelphia-made objects including the Chippendale Mahogany Hairy Paw Foot Tea Table and the immense New York dining table originally owned by Martin Van Buren. The collection carries a pre-sale estimate of $3/5 million.

John B.A. Nye, Director of Sotheby's American Furniture and Decorative Arts Department, noted: “The diversity and impeccable quality of this private collection is truly a testament to the discerning eye and rigorous scholarship of the collector, gathering disparate objects from around the world that shared historical ties or were related to his travels abroad.”

A Chippendale Carved Mahogany Hairy-Paw Foot Tea Table (pictured above and on page 2) is the only example of the form with hairy paw feet known to survive from colonial Philadelphia. The history of the table is unknown prior to the summer of 1994 when it surfaced at a New England auction house and was mistaken for an English table. It has since been recognized as the product of a highly-skilled and influential London-trained carver working in Philadelphia from the mid-1760s through the 70s whose hand is responsible for some of the finest furniture from the area. A feat of American craftsmanship, the table represents the fullest and most elaborate interpretation of the Rococo style in Philadelphia, features ribbon-and-flower carved moldings and is estimated to sell for $800,000/1.2 million.

Attributed to Thomas Tufft is a pair of Philadelphia Chippendale Carved Mahogany Side Chairs (pictured below left), circa 1770, which feature the original finish and a splat pattern taken from Chippendale's Director. The knee carving on the present chairs is comparable to a labeled high chest and dressing table by Tufft that have a history of descent in the Philadelphia family of Hannah Saunders Lewis and are now in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The pair is a set of least eight known chairs, two of which are
in the collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, and is estimated to sell for $200/300,000.

A Chippendale Carved Mahogany Tall-Case Clock, circa 1760-90, with works by Thomas Wagstaffe, the famous London Quaker clockmaker known to supply movements to American Quakers, is enclosed in an elaborate Philadelphia case. According to the label on the backboard, the case was made by Francis Gottier, a joiner working on Fourth Street in Philadelphia. Several other tall-case clocks with Wagstaffe works and Philadelphia-area cases are known, two of which are at Winterthur Museum. The present example is estimated to sell for $60/90,000.

Also Philadelphia-made is a Trompe L’Oeil Louvered Fireboard Depicting an Idyllic Landscape (pictured page 1), 1810-1840. This elegant fireboard features a picturesque landscape of the formal English school (possibly Belvoir Castle, Leicestershire) which is held in place by wooden turned buttons on the reverse of the panel. This light-filled scene is framed at the top and bottom with delicately rendered still-life details of trompe l’oeil louvers and shell-filled niches. Originally purchased by Joe Kindig, Jr., the fireboard was sold at Sotheby’s landmark sale of the Bertram K. and Nina Fletcher Little Collection in October of 1994 and is estimated to sell for $60/90,000.

History and provenance influenced the acquisition of an immense New York dining Table originally owned by President Martin Van Buren (pictured right). The Martin Van Buren Presidential Federal Mahogany Accordion-Action Dining Table, circa 1815, is a remarkably preserved extension dining table which expands to a length of 20 feet and stood for many years in the front hall of Lindenwald, Van Buren’s country house in Kinderhook, New York. It is believed to be the premier piece of extant furniture owned by Van Buren and is estimated to sell for $150/200,000.

Additional furniture highlights include two superior examples from Boston. A Queen Anne Inlaid and Figured Walnut Desk-and-Bookcase (1725-1735) reveals the exceptional cabinetmaking skills of a craftsman working in pre-Revolutionary Boston. Elegantly proportioned and rare in form, the desk is proof to the prosperity of its original owner, perhaps a member of the wealthy merchant class with a connection to the maritime industry. Only three other closely related desk-and-bookcases with bonnet tops, fielded paneled doors and compass inlays such as this one are known. The present example is estimated to sell for $150/200,000.

The “Salem Secretary”, A Federal Mahogany Veneered Gentleman’s Breakfront Secretary (pictured above left), represents a form which was a specialty amongst Salem, Massachusetts cabinetmakers. Made for both local and export use, they were often shipped as “venture cargo,” or as consignments to ship to captains who later sold them and used the proceeds to buy goods for the cabinetmakers. One example, now at Winterthur, was
discovered in Capetown, South Africa and another was found in the Bordeaux region of France. An identical example to this one, which is estimated to sell for $100/200,000, can be found at the Museum of Fine Art, Boston.

Included in the collection are superb examples of American Silver including the circa 1768 Rebecca Orne Coffee Pot by John Coburn of Boston with engraving attributed to Paul Revere, Jr. The eldest daughter of Timothy Orne, a prominent import merchant, and Rebecca Taylor of Salem, Rebecca Orne and her husband, Joseph Cabot, Jr. were the wealthiest young couple in Salem. The coffeepot is engraved with her contemporary arms of the Orne family in an elaborate rococo cartouche. In the family until its recent discovery, it is estimated to sell for $150/200,000.

The circa 1730 Tiebout Tankard by Simeon Soumaine of New York further distinguishes this private collection. John Tiebout was a New York landowner with property on Water Street and his son, Tunis, is recorded as one of the builders of the Reformed Dutch Church in Brooklyn. The massive silver Tankard features a wide cylindrical barrel boldly engraved with the Tiebout Family arms. It is estimated to sell for $200/300,000.

Equally important is the George Emlen Salver, a large silver salver by Richard Humphreys of Philadelphia with engraving attributed to James Smither. Circa 1775, the engraved portion features the monogram of George Emlen IV, the eldest child of George and Ann Emlen of Philadelphia, who owned several residences and whose family first arrived in Philadelphia in 1682. The present example is the largest known marked Philadelphia salver of the rococo period and is of a design comparable to two pairs engraved with the Washington crest at Mount Vernon. Several other items were purchased from Humphreys by Emlen, all en suite with the present lot, and are included in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Emlen Salver is estimated to sell for $200/300,000.

International influences are woven throughout the collection with examples that were carefully chosen and purchased for their individual merit including a Rare Pair of Chinese Export Porcelain ‘Urne Mystérieuse’ Pistol-Handled Urns and Covers, circa 1800. The ‘Urne Mystérieuse’ decoration was derived from an unsigned engraving, published in 1793 during the French Revolution as a memorial to the French Royal Family and feature “hidden” profile portraits of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. They are estimated at $15/25,000.

Additional porcelain highlights include a Very Rare Niderviller Biscuit Porcelain Figure Group of Benjamin Franklin and Louis XVI, circa 1780-85, commemorating the February 6, 1778 signing of two treaties between France and the United States, negotiated by Franklin. The group depicts King Louis XVI in armor and fur-lined cloak presenting a document to
Franklin. Examples of this figure group are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Winterthur Museum and in the Diplomatic Reception Rooms of the State Department in Washington, D.C. It is estimated to sell for $40/60,000.

For more information, please call the Press Office on 212 606 7176.