

Rare Clocks & Watches Combine To Exceed \$1 Million At Schmitt Horan

Auction Action In Candia, N.H.

CANDIA, N.H. — The June 11-12 auction was Schmitt Horan & Company's first sale in its new permanent facility in Candia. It was also the firm's first sale with a "live" audience in more than two years. The new facility includes multiple large buildings, plenty of parking space and is just a short distance from major highways, about 20 minutes from Manchester, N.H. Since 2017, the company, founded by Bob Schmitt in 1979, has been owned by Dan Horan. Although primarily thought of as selling clocks, watches and scientific instruments, there's much more to the company's offerings. This sale included a selection of decorative arts, including art glass, needlework, paintings, Asian items and more. It's Dan Horan's intention to include more of this material in future sales.

A 145-page catalog was produced for this sale, with color photos, detailed descriptions and condition reports by John Kovacic; many lots merit full-page descriptions. Few items have reserves, perhaps five percent of the lots in this sale did. The first day of the sale, offering 600 lots, required that buyers be present at the gallery; no internet bidding was available, and these items were not included in the printed catalog. These lots included boxes of repair parts, cases, works, clockmaker's tools, etc. There were more than 100 bid-

ders in the audience for this portion of the sale — more than have been seen at other live sales.

The cataloged portion of the sale, about 250 lots, as one might expect, included numerous clocks: wall clocks, mantel clocks, musical clocks, carriage clocks, tall case clocks, watches, marine navigation instruments, a collection of music boxes, a collection of automata, decorative arts and more. The live sales utilize four online bidding platforms, including a proprietary one, and each site has multiple photographs, in some cases more than a

dozen, of most items. As many as eight phone lines were active throughout the sale and absentee bids were processed. Two cataloged sales are conducted annually, plus three to four online-only sales. As has been noted before, there's no longer any such thing as a "regional" auction house. Dan Horan said that in 2021 sales were made to more than 35 countries.

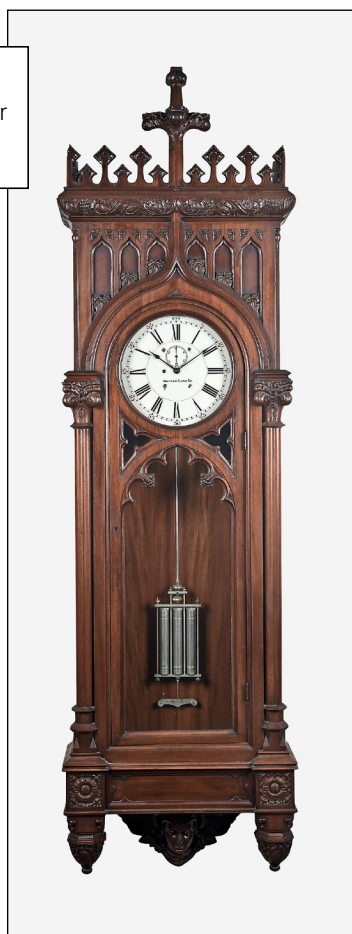
Perhaps the most unusual item in the sale — bringing \$180,000, the highest price — was a signed, circa 1830 gilt-bronze orrery clock made by Raingo Freres, Paris, with a complicated movement and a music box. Below a 30-inch glass dome, it had two fusee movements; an eight-day one for the clock and rotation of the orrery and a four-year one for the orrery and leap-year disc.



Review and Onsite Photos
by Rick Russack, Contributing Editor
Additional Photos Courtesy
Schmitt Horan & Company



There were several fine watches in the sale. Most popular of the wristwatches was this circa 1963 Rolex Submariner, Reference 5513 with 26 jewels. In running condition, it sold for \$18,000.



The photo is deceptive but not deliberately so. The problem is that this gothic wall clock is more than 9 feet tall. It's in a heavily carved mahogany case, probably made by Irving and Casson, a Boston firm, and it has a Waltham movement. The size and quality justified the \$78,000 price

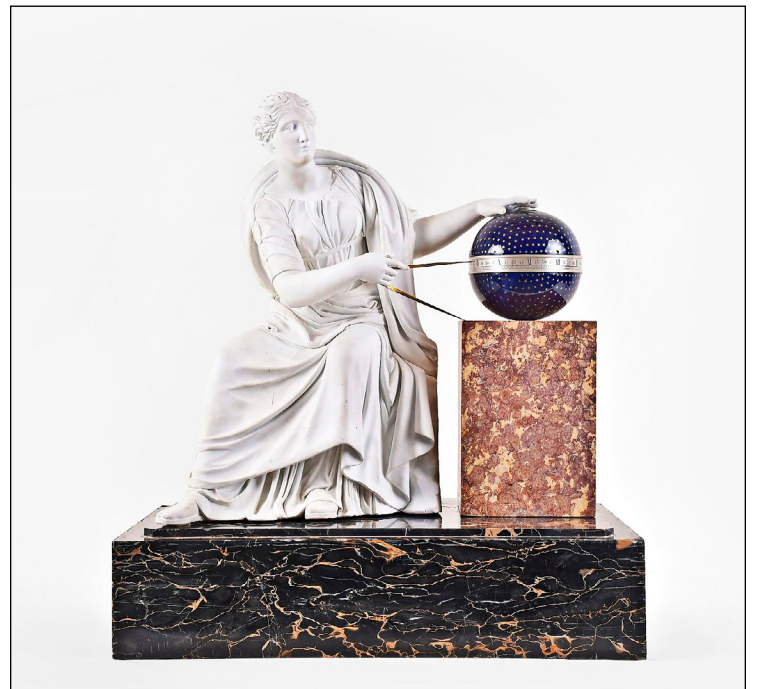


This photo indicates the size of the Irving and Casson 9-foot-tall wall clock.



The orrery shows the motion of the earth and moon in relation to the sun as time changes. It was veneered with burl and decorated with gilt-bronze figures of the zodiac along the edge.

At \$180,000 this was, deservedly, the highest priced item in the sale. Perhaps fewer than two dozen of these orrery clocks were produced, and it's estimated that only four had music boxes. Just how many survive is not known. It was made by Raingo Freres of Paris, circa 1830. It had two fusee movements; one controls the clock and rate of rotation of the orrery, and the other controls the orrery and four-year leap-year dial.



A large French mantel clock, one of several in the sale, brought \$4,320. It was 27 inches tall, with a bisque figure of a woman in ancient Greek dress. She points to the blue sphere with a silvered ring, which tells the time.



The buyer of the Bellamy eagle came to the sale just for that and left immediately after it sold. It was 25½ inches long and reached \$22,800.



About 100 lots of coins started the cataloged portion of the sale. Bringing the highest price of the selection was a 1986 \$50 gold American Eagle proof coin in original packaging. It earned \$2,400.



Charles Frodsham, London, produced this mid-Nineteenth Century two-day marine chronometer. It was one of several navigating instruments in the sale. It had a fusee movement and a silvered dial with wind indicator. It earned \$3,120.



One row in the large gallery may give readers an indication of the number and assortment of clocks in the sale.



A small portion of the wall clocks set up for the preview.

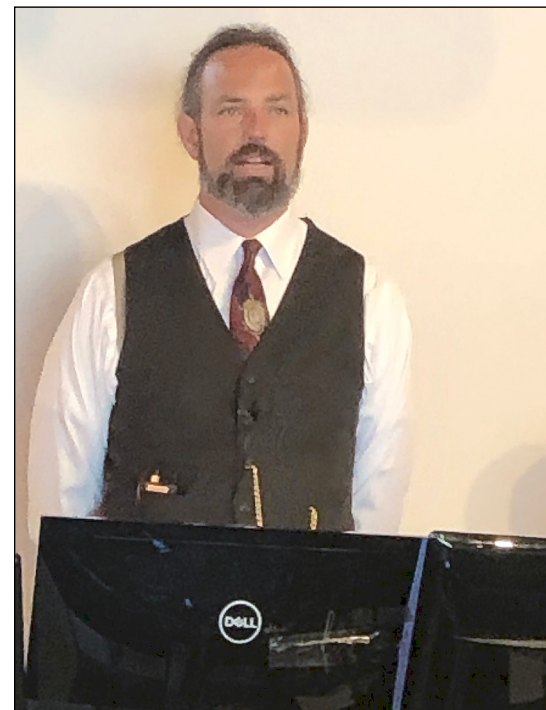


John Kovacik writes the descriptions and condition reports that are printed in the catalog and online. In this photo, he's talking about the highlight of the sale, the French orrery clock.

The late Twentieth Century singing bird music box was made in Germany. The silver-plated case was engraved and the final price was \$1,920.



Attributed to Leopold Lambert, this bisque-headed girl and cat automaton performed a variety of functions when its music box, which was in the base, was activated. It showed some minor wear but was in operating condition and went out at \$3,600.



Dan Horan at the podium. He's keeping track of the bidding on four screens in front of him.



Hamilton produced only about 44 of these "951" pendant setting watches. It brought \$7,800, one of the highest prices of the watch offerings.



The orrery, rotating anti-clockwise, shows the motions of the earth and moon in relation to the sun, with a silvered disc giving the age of the moon as it rotates around a globe of the earth, and a four-year leap-year disc. The music box was in the base, and the edge of the orrery was decorated with gilt-bronze figures of the zodiac. It was veneered with burl amboyna, an exotic wood. All, including the music box, was in working order, perhaps needing some minor restoration. John Kovacik, Horan's clock expert, discussed the clock, which was in a private viewing area. Kovacik estimated that perhaps only about two dozen of these clocks were made, with few surviving in private hands, and perhaps fewer than a half-dozen included the music box. He noted that it was believed that King George IV of England owned four examples, which a 1927 auction catalog states that one is in Windsor Castle.

There were numerous wall regulators made by such well-known companies as Howard, Waltham, Seth Thomas and others. To say that one being offered here was especially outstanding would be an understatement. It was a circa 1895 heavily carved mahogany gothic-style clock just shorter than 9 feet tall with a Waltham movement. It was attributed to Irving and Casson, Boston, a firm of interior designers and furniture makers founded in 1875. The firm executed a number of commissions for Gothic Revival churches, and it likely that this clock came from one of those churches. It sold for \$78,000. An eight-day astronomical regulator by D. Brown & Son, Providence, earned \$21,600. With an experimental escapement, possibly unique, the works dated to the second quarter of the Nineteenth Century and the carved cherry case was made for it, later in the century. A "commissioned" #10 Seth Thomas jeweler's regulator



A Nineteenth Century New Hampshire-style mirror clock made by James Cary, Brunswick, realized \$2,040. It had an eight-day movement and reverse painting surrounding the dial.



Dating to the early Twentieth Century, this German tall clock included a Symphonion 13-5/8-inch disc music box. The oak case had applied fretwork and carvings. The music box played but needed some minor adjustments. The clock realized \$11,400.



Known as a "Curtis Girandole," this clock was made by the Waltham Clock Co. Curtis originally designed this form in 1816, and several other makers have reproduced it over the years. This later example earned \$6,600. It has a reverse painted panel depicting Aurora mounted on a chariot and an iron dial with the Waltham signature.



One of the more unusual regulators was this Seth Thomas #6 double-dial example. One dial showed local time and the other dial showed "railroad time." It was nearly 4 feet tall and sold for \$14,400. In 2011, Horan sold a similar clock for \$39,100.



The inlaid mahogany case of this E. Taber, Roxbury, Mass., tall case clock had been refinished and it had some minor repairs. The setup instructions were still on the inside of the case door. With an eight-day brass movement, the clock sold for \$6,000.

in a walnut case with burl veneer, 6 feet tall, realized \$38,400. It came from a store in Astoria, Ore., and was dated October 11, 1881. Seth Thomas only dated clocks in this format that were made on "commission." An ever-popular E. Howard #8, figure 8 regulator, earned \$9,600.

This sale was organized by type of clock, and there were outstanding and unusual clocks in each category. Other categories were devoted to the music boxes, watches, automata and other items in the sale. One category included carriage and desk clocks. Going through these offerings is an example of connoisseurship. An outstanding example, bringing \$33,600 — one of the highest prices in the sale — had been made by James McCabe, London, circa 1855. The firm is well-known, but what separates this clock from others was the level of workmanship devoted to the case. The heavy brass case of this hour-repeating clock with a two-train fusee movement was heavily engraved with floral vines on all sides, and thick beveled glass panels allowed the works to be viewed. The brass face of the clock was also engraved with scrolls, and the handle was also decorated, as were the hands. There were more than two dozen other carriage clocks, but none came close to this one, and the highest priced of "the others," attractive though they were, was \$3,600.

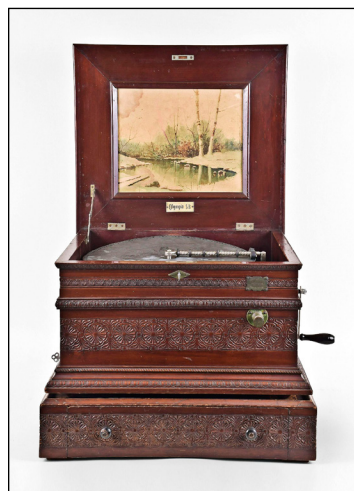
A circa 1963 Rolex Submariner

Reference 5513 with 26 jewels, a gilt underline dial and automatic winding sold for \$18,000. "Submariners" were dive watches, produced between the early 1960s and the late 1980s. This had an Oyster Reference 7260 bracelet. A Datejust lady's Rolex, Reference 39173, earned \$2,400. It had 29 jewels and automatic winding. Bidders pushed a rare Hamilton pendant setting grade 951 pocket watch to \$7,800, the second highest price of the watch selection. Only 44 of these watches were produced.

As mentioned above, the sale included a selection of automata and music boxes. There were some good buys to be had. Counterintuitively, the highest price achieved by a musical automaton, \$4,560, was earned by a circa 1985 example based upon the Roulet & Decamps "Clown on Full Moon," produced about 100 years earlier. A female figure with a bisque head, dressed in silk clothing, would perform a variety of movements when the single-tune music box was activated. A circa 1890 "Turkish Dancer" automaton with bisque

head, shoulder plate and arms, marked "Jumeau" was attributed to Roulet & Decamps and sold for \$3,120. In working condition, it also performed a variety of functions when the music box was activated. A circa 1920 bubble blowing bear attributed to Roulet & Decamps sold for \$1,680. Music boxes seemed reasonable, with a Polyphon floor standing disc music box, playing 15½-inch discs, reaching \$3,360 with one disc, and a mahogany Regina table model disc player, which sold for \$2,040, also with one disc.

After the sale, Dan Horan said he was pleased. "The two-day format really worked well," he said. "We had a good crowd in the building for the "live only," uncataloged portion on Saturday, and we hit our estimate for that. Overall, just a few lots failed to sell, and many of the exceptional items exceeded their estimates. Like other parts of the business, prices aren't where they were a few years ago, but results for this



An Olympia model 5B coin-operated disc music box with a matching mahogany base and 17 discs sold for \$2,640. The case and the top were chip-carved, and the interior lithograph was intact

sale show the market is recovering. And we're seeing lots of new buyers. Can't be unhappy with a million-dollar sale."

The next cataloged sale is scheduled for November 19-20.

Prices given include the buyer's premium as stated by the auction house. For information, 603-432-2237 or www.schmitt-horan.com



"Superb" or "exceptional" would be fitting words to describe this circa 1855 carriage clock made by James McCabe of London. The heavy brass case sets it apart from most other carriage clocks. It was heavily engraved with floral vines on all sides, and the face was also engraved. It sold for \$33,600, well above the estimate.



There was only one piece of needlework in the sale, but it was a good one. The silk painted and needlework mourning picture was dated 1818 and had been done by Mary Ann Bass, a relation of President John Adams. It brought \$2,400.



Did you know that turtles can tell time? When the pewter bowl was filled with water, the floating turtle, with a hidden magnetic mechanism, would indicate the time. An engraved plaque on the front was marked "Made in Paris for Chas. Frodsham & Co. London." It sold for \$2,280.



Charles Theodore Frere (1814-1888) was a French painter who did several paintings of Egypt. This one was signed and identified the scene as "Beni Souef Egypte." It realized \$16,800, from Rehs Galleries, Inc., New York City.