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### **Copley's 2014 Sporting Sale Realizes \$2.3 Million**

PLYMOUTH, MA - For two days this July, Copley Fine Art Auctions successfully auctioned over five hundred and eighty items of American art, antique decoys, and sporting collectibles in Plymouth, Massachusetts. With a sell-through rate of 88% and a sale total of over \$2.3 million, the eighth annual Sporting Sale continued Copley's established history of strong sales results.

Copley's Owner and Principal Stephen B. O'Brien, Jr. commented, "Turnout for the two-day sale was impressive, with the decoy community out in full force for the preview and the first day of the sale. As the first stop on the summer decoy tour, we saw many happy reunions between old friends and colleagues. The auction saw spirited Internet bidding, and action on the phones was significant, especially during the painting portion of the sale."

Copley realized the top decoy lot of the summer with Maine carver Augustus Aaron "Gus" Wilson's red-breasted merganser drake with an open bill selling for \$330,000, shattering the previous record for the maker by over \$130,000. An eider hen by the same maker brought \$24,000, doubling its high estimate (\$8/12,000).

Copley sold the second-highest decoy lot of the summer as well, when a swimming brant by Nathan Cobb sold for \$168,000, near its high estimate (\$125/175,000). Once again, works by Massachusetts carver A. Elmer Crowell saw exceptional results in the summer sale, with the only known miniature white pelican by the maker selling for \$20,400, over four times its low estimate (\$5/7,000). Other miniatures found a strong market, with a woodcock bringing \$9,600 on its \$1/2,000 estimate, a quail bringing \$8,400 (also \$1/2,000), and a preening yellowlegs selling for \$12,000, well above its \$5/7,000 estimate.

Strong results by a variety of carvers include a working canvasback decoy by Charles E. "Shang" Wheeler, the most famous decoy maker from Connecticut, which fell squarely within its estimate (\$40/50,000), selling for \$48,000. A rare pintail drake by Illinois carver August Haas, with a high head, more than doubled its low estimate (\$15/20,000), reaching \$31,200. Copley once again found strong bidding for Mason Factory decoys with a mallard drake out of the G.K. Schmidt rig bringing \$18,000, doubling its low estimate (\$9/12,000).

An exceptional Canada goose (\$80/120,000) by noted carvers Lemuel and Stephen Ward sold for \$80,000, which is believed to be a record price for a Ward goose. Three top-of-the-line carvings by the Wards sold within their estimates, with an early goldeneye drake going for \$13,200, a 1936-model mallard hen selling for \$31,200, and a wigeon pair bringing \$22,800.

The shorebird market continued to display signs of transition during the sale. An iconic feeding yellowlegs by Massachusetts carver Fred Nichols sold for \$51,000, within its \$50/60,000 estimate, and a golden plover by the same maker brought \$14,400, also within its \$12/18,000 estimate. Additionally, a running sanderling by Long Island carver Obediah Verity dashed to \$24,000, nearly its high estimate (\$20/25,000).

Copley continued its strong performance in the Clark W. Voorhees market with an offering of seven whales, six of which went within or above estimate. A full-bodied sperm whale made a splash at \$12,000, well above its \$6/9,000 estimate, and weathered sperm whale sold for \$5,100, far exceeding its \$1/2,000 estimate. With these results, Copley now holds the auction record for the artist's full body and wall mount models. The contemporary decoy lots opened the sale well, with a Cameron McIntyre curlew selling well beyond its estimate of \$1,200/1,800 for \$3,300.

Headlining the notable painting results is the oil by Frank W. Benson (1862-1951) titled *Redheads In Flight* from 1916 (\$300/500,000). This classic work, which sold for \$360,000, is considered one of the finest waterfowl scenes by the noted American Impressionist and sportsman. A watercolor by the same artist, *Salmon Fishing* (\$25/35,000), sold for \$30,000. Additionally, prints by Benson continued to find eager buyers, with highlights including an etching of a dog titled *The Retriever* selling for \$9,600, above its estimate of \$6/9,000, and all thirteen prints by the artist sold within or above their estimates.

Ogden M. Pleissner's important and iconic oil painting, *The Visitors*, set a new world record for a non-sporting scene by the artist when it sold for \$198,000, well above its \$75/85,000 estimate. This exquisite oil painting, one of the artist's masterworks, depicts a southern cabin scene. It was accompanied by a print made after the original and signed by Pleissner's fellow members of New York's Salmagundi Club.

Among the items of classic sporting art offered by Copley, results were solid and consistent. A Roland Clark painting of Canvasbacks in Flight sold for \$9,000, at the high point of its \$6/9,000 estimate, and Aiden Lassell Ripley's watercolor of a pair of Pheasants sold within its estimate of \$20/40,000 for \$30,000. John Frost's oil painting titled *Maryland Marsh* (\$35/55,000), which was in The Derrydale Press founder Eugene V. Connett's personal collection, sold for a solid \$45,000.

Frank Stick's oil on canvas depicting a tense scene in the life of a trapper brought \$16,800 on a \$12/18,000 estimate. This painting was included in the book on the artist and was sold accompanied by a calendar from 1928 reproducing the image.

Following on Copley's strong results by the artist in the Winter Sale, a watercolor and gouache by ornithological artist Louis Agassiz Fuertes depicting puffins and birds of the Auk family sold for \$14,400, well above its \$3-5,000 estimate. A watercolor by William J. Schaldach of a leaping

brook trout found strong interest and sold for \$6,000, well above its \$2/4,000 estimate, and established a new world record for a watercolor by the artist.

Two paintings by Robert K. Abbett found eager bidding in the auction room and from the phone bank. Three Quail, an oil painting from 1974, sold for \$14,400 on its \$6/9,000 estimate, and Timberlake Turkeys, painted by the same artist circa 1970, reached its high estimate of \$9,000.

A pair of elephant bookends vastly exceeded expectations when they sold for \$8,700 to a bidder on the internet, far above their \$4/600 estimate. These bronze pieces, cast by Gorham in 1913, were sculpted by Mahonri M. Young, the grandson of Brigham Young, which likely added to the interest in the bookends.

Copley Fine Art Auctions, LLC is preparing for its 2015 Winter Sale, which returns to Charleston, South Carolina on February 12, with consignments accepted through the end of October or until full. For a free confidential auction estimate please call 617.536.0030 or email [info@copleyart.com](mailto:info@copleyart.com). A full list of official prices realized from Copley's 2014 Sporting Sale will be available at [www.copleyart.com](http://www.copleyart.com). All prices include a 20% buyer's premium.

Images to Include:

1. Frank W. Benson, *Redheads in Flight*, 1916, oil on canvas, 36.25 by 45 in., (\$300/500,000), Sold for \$360,000.
2. Augustus Aaron "Gus" Wilson, *Red-Breasted Merganser Drake With Open Bill*, c. 1900 (\$350/450,000), Sold for \$330,000.
3. Ogden M. Pleissner, *The Visitors*, oil on board, 16 by 20 in., (\$75/85,000), Sold for \$198,000.
4. Nathan Cobb, *Swimming Brant*, c. 1880 (\$125/175,000), Sold for \$168,000.
5. The Ward Brothers, Lemuel T. and Stephen, *Canada Goose*, 1940, (\$80/120,000), Sold for \$80,000.
6. Charles E. "Shang" Wheeler, *Preening Canvasback Drake*, c. 1920, (\$40/50,000), Sold for \$48,000.
7. John Frost, *Maryland Marsh*, oil on board, 20 by 24 in. (\$35/55,000), Sold for \$45,000.