

# FineBooks & COLLECTIONS

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SOLD @ AUCTION

## LUNAR PHOTOGRAPHY

FB & C

### AUCTION GUIDE

SPRING 2026

POTTER & POTTER

### Rare Hemingway Letter Heads to Auction

SWANN GALLERIES

### Signed Photographs Lead the Charge

FREEMAN'S

### Major Literature and Americana Collections Offered



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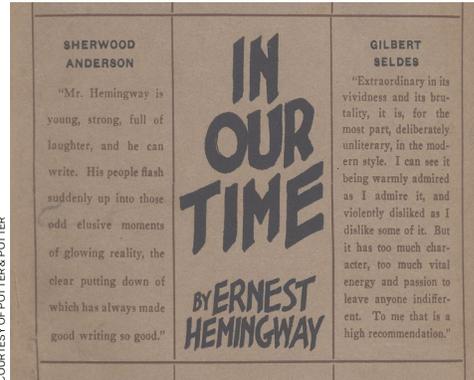
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# Auction Guide

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# Potter & Potter @ Auction

## Rare Hemingway Letter Heads to Auction

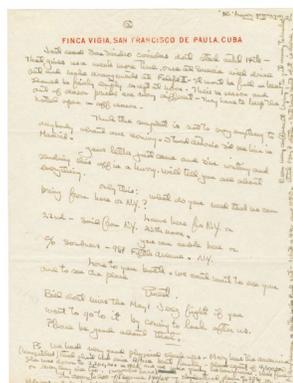
Letter from Finca Vigía leads literary rarities in May sale at Potter & Potter

**E**d Hotchner and I just drove her 4094 miles from Ketchum to Key West ...” writes a legend of American literature in a letter offered at Potter & Potter’s Fine Books & Manuscripts auction in May. Even if the letter was not signed, it would be clear to many collectors that the author driving from Ketchum to Key West, two places permanently associated with his name, was none other than Ernest Hemingway.

The letter to Bill Smith, Hemingway’s lifelong best friend, is one of several Hemingway highlights in the May auction at Potter & Potter. Hemingway wrote the letter in 1959 on stationery from Finca Vigía, his house in Cuba, where he resided at the time.

In the letter Hemingway discusses logistical details for an upcoming trip to see Smith, “If this is ok with you let’s go direct to your house. About car: we should certainly have one. Could you hire a Mercedes with pretty good baggage room and good visibility, and a chauffeur for when we arrive. Then we can see how it works out and whether buying is better. Take it for a week, say, with option of monthly sale if we decide to keep it on.”

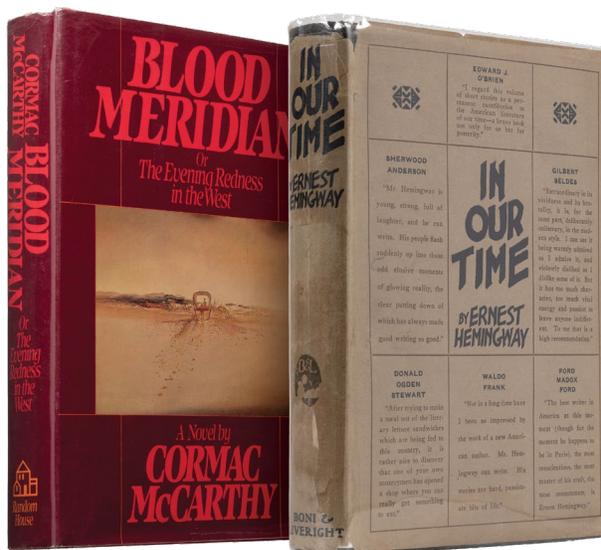
Hemingway also refer-



Finca Vigía letter from Ernest Hemingway.

ences the recent long road trip with Ed Hotchner and his wife Mary’s recovery from anemia. “PS we had very good physical check ups—Mary has the anemia that she’d had since Africa beat finally ...”

In addition to the letter to Smith, the May auction includes a 1925 first printing in dust jacket of the Boni & Liveright edition of *In Our Time*, Hemingway’s first collection of short stories, and a postcard that a very young Hemingway sent to his father, possibly the earliest confirmed Hemingway letter. The postcard reads in part, “Dear papa, I saw a mother duck with seven little babies,” offering a small detail of life at Windemere, the Hemingway summer home on Walloon Lake in Michigan. The boy’s early fascination with nature



LEFT: First edition of *Blood Meridian*. RIGHT: First edition of *In Our Time*.



Early postcard from Ernest Hemingway.

would continue into his adulthood, when Hemingway would gain notoriety as a big game hunter.

“These items are significant because they are not only exceedingly rare, they reflect fascinating personal and professional information about Hemingway,” said Chad Reingold, Director of the Rare Book Department at Potter & Potter.

While the Hemingway items are a major highlight, the Fine Books & Manuscripts auction contains plenty of other items to tempt collectors. “We are also proud to offer firsts of Cormac McCarthy in

dust jacket, a rare modern astronomy atlas with original photographs, incredible large format illustrated books by Rubens and others, rare newspapers, scarce photographs, beautifully-bound books by Easton Press (including many signed editions), and much more,” said Reingold.

Potter & Potter’s Fine Books & Manuscripts auction is scheduled for May 14th. ●

**Nate Pedersen** is a writer in Mankato, Minnesota. His most recent book is *Pseudoscience: An Amusing History of Crackpot Ideas and Why We Love Them*. His website is [natepedersen.com](http://natepedersen.com).



## Signed Photographs Lead the Charge at Swann

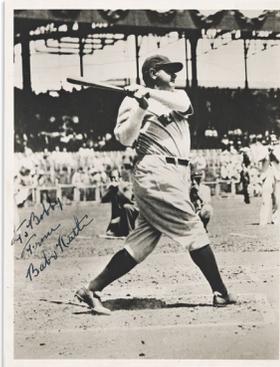
Signed presidential, Civil War, and sports photographs offered from a California collection



Theodore Roosevelt and his Cabinet, photograph signed by the president and his 9 cabinet members, photographic collage by George Prince. Estimate: \$12,000 to \$18,000.

**S**igned photographs of President Abraham Lincoln are exceedingly scarce, in part because the president's life was cut dramatically short when he was assassinated in 1865, mere decades after the advent of photography as a medium. A signed photograph of Lincoln—and an uncommon, signed photograph of his assassin, John Wilkes Booth—will both be offered as individual lots at the May 7th auction at Swann Galleries. Swann expects the Lincoln photograph to realize \$60,000 or higher.

The sale of signed photographs from a Califor-



Babe Ruth, photograph signed and inscribed, "To Bobby / From / Babe Ruth," full-length portrait showing him in uniform in mid-swing. Estimate: \$8,000 to \$12,000.

nia family collection will include other individual lot highlights from a broad section of American his-

tory, such as a signed photograph of Theodore Roosevelt and his entire cabinet in 1907, a signed photograph of Martin Luther King, Jr., and a signed photograph of Babe Ruth.

The principal compiler of this remarkable collection was an investment counselor and entrepreneur who died in 2017. Passionate about United States political and business history, the California native built an extensive collection of signed photographs, which his son added to as well, before consigning it to Swann.

"What is striking about



Martin Luther King, Jr., photograph signed and inscribed, "To Bill / With Best Wishes / Martin Luther King Jr.," bust portrait showing him in profile. Estimate: \$6,000 to \$9,000.

this collection is the evidence of the effort to obtain the best or the most uncommon," said Marco Tomaschett, Autographs Specialist at Swann. "There are, for example, a number of cartes-de-visite and cabinet cards in the collection, and in those cases where signed examples are not extraordinarily uncommon, such as those signed

by the suffragist Susan B. Anthony, the collection contains an example that is extraordinary in some other respect, for instance, a signed cabinet card that also has an uncommonly arresting image."

American Civil War collectors will want to closely watch this auction. In addition to the signed photographs of Lincoln and Booth, a Matthew Brady carte-de-visite of General William Tecumseh Sherman bearing the general's signature will be offered as an individual lot. The collection also includes a rare, signed carte-de-visite of U.S. President James A. Garfield in uniform as Major General of Volunteers and Chief of Staff to General William S. Rosecrans during the war.

"The photograph that interests me the most is the one showing Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy talking at the White House during the historic transition between their administrations," said Tomaschett. "Both presidents added their signature to this item, making it one of the few autographs to have been signed by both these presidents who served during the transition between two epochs that continue to resonate through U.S. history: the closing of the Second World War, and the beginning of the Cold War." ●

**Nate Pedersen** is a writer in Mankato, Minnesota. His most recent book is *Pseudoscience: An Amusing History of Crackpot Ideas and Why We Love Them*. His website is [natepedersen.com](http://natepedersen.com).



## Major Literature and Americana Collections Offered at Freeman's

First editions of literature highpoints and historic American paper featured in spring sales

Two major sales at Freeman's Chicago and Philadelphia locations this spring and summer will bring many highpoints of literature and Americana under the hammer.

The first offering, at Freeman's Chicago location on May 14th, is the library of Stephen J. Farber, a 300-lot collection formed over sixty years, spanning major collection categories but with a particular emphasis on literature in fine condition.

Included in the Farber sale are the first appearance of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* in near fine original wrappers, a first edition of Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in pristine condition with the rare printed wrap-around band, a first edition, first impression set of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, and the first English edition of Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*.

Christopher Brink, Senior Specialist in Books & Manuscripts at Freeman's, said of the Farber collection, "I am particularly excited to offer this library in its entirety, as it tells the story of one collector's lifelong passion—an almost sixty-

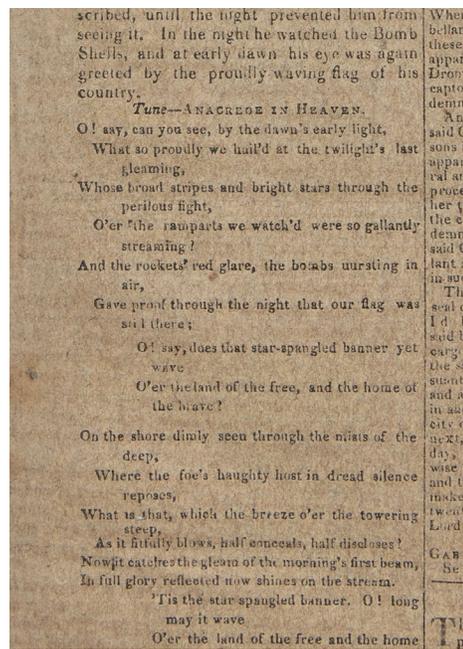
year pursuit of the books and manuscripts he most deeply loved—and of the new stewards who will, in

sary celebrations.

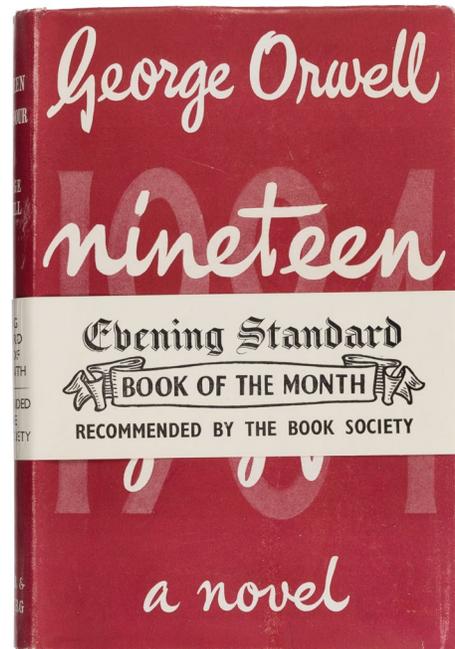
Caren has been called "The Babe Ruth of Historical Collecting," as he assembled a collection of one million original items, including rare newspapers, books and pamphlets, broadsides, manuscripts, early photographs, ephemera, and printed records documenting pivotal moments in American and world history. The collection tells a broad and compelling story of America, highlighting communities and individuals whose

national attention and strong institutional and private bidding.

"It is an honor not only to put together an auction from the over one million items in Caren's collection, but also to be able to personally choose the material with him that illustrates American history shown through objects unrelated to one another, and that were typically never intended to survive," said Darren Winston, Senior Vice President, Head of Department, Books & Man-



LEFT: Early newspaper printing of "The Star Spangled Banner," September 27, 1814 from the Eric C. Caren Collection. RIGHT: George Orwell. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949. First edition, in a pristine dust jacket with printed wrap-around band from the Library of Stephen J. Farber.



turn, cherish them with the same care and devotion."

The Farber sale will be followed by a June 30th auction at Freeman's Philadelphia location, "How History Unfolds on Paper: Important Americana from the Eric C. Caren Collection, Part X," which will serve as the culminating event of Freeman's 250th anniversary

voices have too often been overlooked. What distinguishes this sale is not only its scale and rarity, but the distinctly American narrative it presents.

The Freeman's sale marks the tenth major auction of Caren's extensive and carefully curated holdings. The previous nine sales have attracted inter-

manuscripts, Philadelphia.

Both collections will be on view at Freeman's New York gallery, April 28th to May 1st, during the New York Antiquarian Book Fair. ●

**Nate Pedersen** is a writer in Mankato, Minnesota. His most recent book is *Pseudoscience: An Amusing History of Crackpot Ideas and Why We Love Them*. His website is [natepedersen.com](http://natepedersen.com).

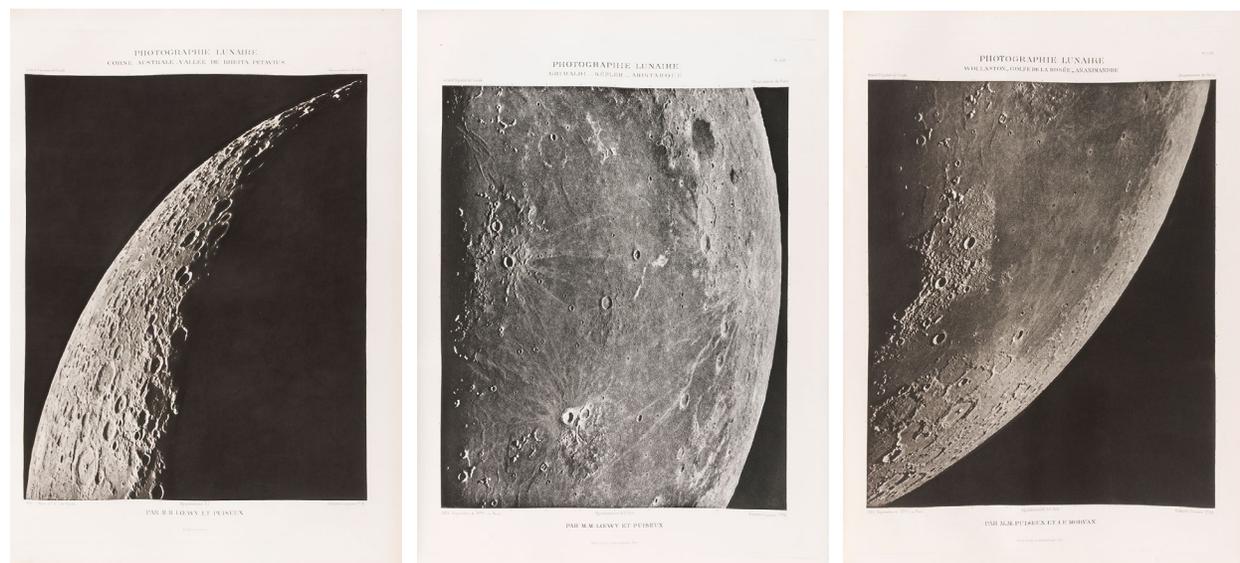


# Sold@Auction

BY JEREMY DIBBELL // A WIDE WORLD OF BOOKS, MANUSCRIPTS, EPHEMERA, AND FINE ART RECENTLY SOLD AT AUCTION

## Lunar Photography

Widely considered the first atlas of the moon on a major scale, this years-long effort visualized the topography of its rocky surface.



On December 16, the Ader auction house in Paris sold books from the library of the Société Géologique de France, including a copy of the *Atlas photographique de la Lune* published by the Paris Observatory between 1896 and 1910 in thirteen parts. The atlas was the brainchild of astronomers Maurice Lœwy and Pierre Puiseux, assisted by Charles le Morvan; the photographs ultimately included in the atlas were taken from among some 6,000 images made over more than 500 nights of observation. This is believed to be the first complete copy offered for sale in recent decades; it made €85,935 (\$101,859), better than doubling presale estimates.



## MIDDLEMARCH IN PIECES

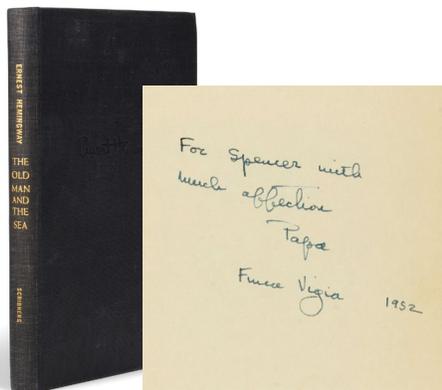
This rare serialized edition of a sprawling work of Victorian fiction recalls how it was released in installments to eager readers.

A first edition of George Eliot's monumental historical novel *Middlemarch* in the original eight parts, as published between December 1871 and December 1872, sold at Heritage Auctions in Dallas on December 15 for \$75,000. This copy includes all the inserted slips and advertisements, as well as the green printed wrappers. While published in a somewhat unconventional fashion, with the parts issued on a bimonthly basis instead of monthly, the novel was a success, selling 5,000 copies in parts and 3,000 more as four bound volumes.



## HIGH TIDE FOR HEMINGWAY

The American author's last major fictional work on an aging fisherman was a big catch in a sale from the collection of Hollywood Golden Age star Spencer Tracy.



COURTESY BONHAMS (2)

At Bonhams Los Angeles on December 11, a presentation copy of Ernest Hemingway's 1952 novella *The Old Man and the Sea*, inscribed by the author to actor Spencer Tracy, sold for \$83,050. Hemingway's inscription on the first free endpaper reads, "For Spencer with much affection / Papa / Finca Vigia 1952." Finca Vigia was Hemingway's house in Havana, Cuba. Tracy would later star in the 1958 adaptation of the book, though Hemingway called him a "terrible liability to the picture" because he felt that Tracy had not lost enough weight. (Nonetheless, he still received best actor nominations in both the Oscars and the Golden Globes for the role.)



COURTESY CHRISTIE'S IMAGES LTD. 2026

## Where Middle-Earth Was Made

At this sturdy desk, the master of high fantasy proofed his groundbreaking novels and crafted his daily scholarship as a professor of English language and literature.

J. R. R. Tolkien's mahogany and satinwood rolltop desk, used first in his office at Merton College, Oxford, and later at his home on Sandfield Road in Headington, England, sold at Christie's London on December 11, fetching £330,200 (\$454,371). This is one of only two desks known to have belonged to Tolkien; the other is at Wheaton College in Illinois.

Tolkien is known to have used this rolltop desk for editorial work and correspondence, though probably not for the composition of *The Lord of the Rings*, which he recalled typing at home, his typewriter balanced on his bed. He subsequently sold the desk to novelist Iris Murdoch and her husband, the literary critic John Bayley, presumably before relocating to Bournemouth on England's south coast in 1968.



COURTESY SOTHEBY'S

## Garden of Earthly Delights

English artist Kate Greenaway's drawings reveal the process behind her children's books and language of flowers publications.

At Sotheby's New York on December 16, an album containing eighty-two original drawings by artist, illustrator, and writer Kate Greenaway (1846–1901) sold for \$63,500, bettering the estimates of \$10,000–15,000. The images are mostly studies of children or botanical drawings, some with hand coloring. The album, bound by Riviere & Sons, bears the bookplates of Feodorovna Yorke Sturt, Lady Alington (1864–1934); French bibliophile Alain de Suzannet (1882–1950); and philanthropist and British literature scholar Doris L. Benz (1907–84). Benz's collection was sold at Christie's in 1984, with the proceeds going to the Dartmouth College Library.



COURTESY RR AUCTION

## Before the Bomb

A young Oppenheimer is preserved on this passport that dates to the early years of his academic career.

A US passport issued to future Manhattan Project director J. Robert Oppenheimer as a twenty-year-old student in 1924 sold for \$37,000 at Boston-based RR Auction on January 14. After his graduation from Harvard, Oppenheimer traveled to Europe in the summer of 1924 with his parents before taking up graduate work at Cambridge University. He struggled at Cambridge, disliking laboratory work as well as his tutor, Patrick Blackett. In 1926, he transferred to the University of Göttingen to finish his doctorate with physicist Max Born.

The passport, perhaps discarded when Oppenheimer left England for Germany, somehow ended up in the collection of Cambridge electrician Bert Reynolds (1894–1970); it was previously offered in November 2024 at Bonhams London, where it failed to sell.

## Black History in Baseball

Rare documents and photographs chronicle the pioneering careers of Black players in the early twentieth century.



COURTESY DOYLE [2]



On December 17 at Doyle in New York, a small group of signed documents and photographs documenting baseball’s Negro League era sold for \$9,600, greatly exceeding the estimates of \$500–800. The documents include two contracts signed by Percy “Pete” Wilson (1899–1979), one hiring Wilson to play for the Baltimore Black Sox for the 1924 season (for \$165), the other hiring him for Dixie League play in 1933. The photographs include team portraits of the New Orleans Caulfield Ads from around 1920 and of the Illinois Central Railroad Employees team. Another group of eight small photographs includes several posed “action shots.”

## A LANDMARK OF ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE

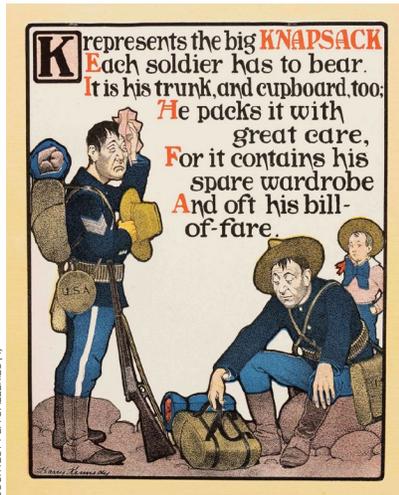
In an auction series from a major science library, a copy of Pliny’s massive compendium of knowledge from the Roman Empire was a standout.



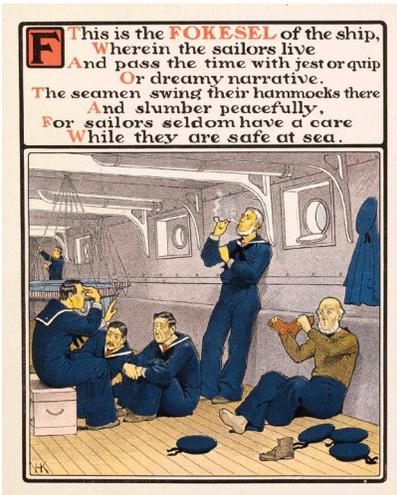
COURTESY SOTHEBY'S

On December 9 and 12, Sotheby’s New York held the first two sales of books from the library of Barry Yampol (1937–2023), a well-known collector and dealer of gemstone and mineral specimens. The two sales realized more than \$4.9 million. A particularly noteworthy incunabulum took top honors: a copy of Pliny the Elder’s *Historia naturalis* (The *Natural History*), published by Sweynheym and Pannartz in Rome in 1470, sold for \$1,270,000.

One of three copies printed on vellum, this volume spent several centuries in France before being acquired by Thomas Parker, the first Earl of Macclesfield; it then passed down with the Macclesfield Library until being offered at Sotheby’s London in 2005. In that sale, it was described by Paul Quarrie of rare books dealer Maggs Bros. as “the grandest printed book in the Macclesfield Library,” certainly no mean feat. More of Yampol’s books will be sold at Sotheby’s in 2026.



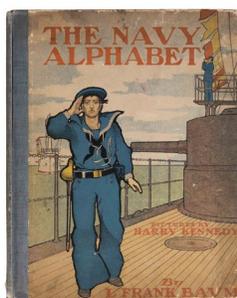
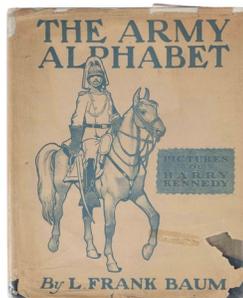
COURTESY PBA GALLERIES (4)



## Rarities from the Man Behind the Curtain

Illustrated by Harry Kennedy, these lesser-known children’s books by the Oz author playfully create alphabets of rhyme.

About fifty books from the collection of orthodontist and professor Richard R. Rutter (1932–2025) were sold at PBA Galleries in Berkeley, California, on January 22. Rutter was well known as a collector of L. Frank Baum and Oziana and also had a large collection of Sherlock Holmes material jointly with his son Jim.



It was not an Oz book that took top honors on sale day, though, with Baum’s 1900 books *The Army Alphabet* and *The Navy Alphabet* selling for \$28,125, over presale estimates of just \$1,000–1,500. The *Navy* volume is inscribed by Baum to his brother Harry.

## Art of a Cult Classic

Recognized for its foresight into our digital lives, *Snow Crash* debuted with innovative cover art mixing digital and traditional techniques.



COURTESY BONHAMS

Bonhams New York sold the original artwork for the dust jacket of Neal Stephenson’s 1992 novel *Snow Crash* on December 18 for \$89,400. Jean-Francois Podevin’s photomontage print, enhanced with gouache and acrylic paints, signed twice and dated by the artist, is accompanied by an autograph note from 2024 confirming this as the original. Podevin originally planned the piece as a fully digital composition, but found that enhancements by hand were needed to achieve the desired effect. Stephenson’s

novel, now something of a cult classic, is responsible for the term “metaverse” and for popularizing now-common concepts like “avatars” and cryptocurrency.

## Illustrated Cat-tastrophe

A drawing by a famed artist of black cats chronicles a day of feline mischief in Paris.



COURTESY SWANN GALLERIES



At the Swann Galleries sale of illustration art in New York on December 4, a pen and ink illustration by Théophile-Alexandre Steinlen (1859–1923) sold for \$35,560, surpassing estimates of just \$1,200–1,800. The comic-style drawing, “L’epouvantable sinistre du Quartier Latin” (“The terrible disaster in the Latin Quarter”), appeared in the June 14, 1884, issue of *Le Chat Noir*, the weekly magazine of the eponymous Paris bohemian cabaret. Cats were a frequent feature of Steinlen’s work, which includes the iconic 1896 poster advertising an upcoming tour by the *Chat Noir* troupe and *Dessins sans paroles des Chats* (1898), a book of wordless cat drawings. 🐱

Jeremy Dibbell is a special collections librarian at Binghamton University.



