



Rare and Early American Naval Flags Achieve Auction Records At Freeman's

May 8th, 2012



Shown standing in the gallery during preview of the H. Richard Dietrich Jr Collection, Freeman's chairman Samuel M. "Beau" Freeman II described this sale as "one of the — if not the — most historic sale Freeman's has ever hosted" in the 50 years he has worked in the company. —R. Scudder Smith photo

PHILADELPHIA, PENN.:Freeman's marathon day of auctions on April 30 — American furniture, silver, folk and decorative arts followed by the Historic USS *Constitution* Colors from the collection of H. Richard Dietrich Jr — was a resounding success, realizing a combined total of \$2.5 million. Provenance, uniqueness and overall high-quality generated excitement and interest from new and veteran collectors as well as institutions at home and abroad. The 11 flags and cannonball from the USS *Constitution* realized \$784,500, were 100 percent sold and established 12 auction records.

Freeman's chairman, Samuel M. "Beau" Freeman II commenting on the sale, "In my 50 years here at Freeman's, this is one of the — if not the — most historic sale Freeman's has ever hosted. We are proud that the American public recognized the historic significance of these flags from 'Old Ironsides' and stepped forward to protect our nation's treasures into the future."

[Click Here](#)

 To View The Full Edition of
 Antiques and The Arts Weekly

[Auctions](#)
[Shows](#)

for 7/21/2012

Special Show Sections:

[Antiques in Manchester - August 8 & 9](#)
[The Vermont Show - July 28 & 29](#)
[Saratoga Springs Antiques Show, July 27-29](#)
[2012 Calendar of Antique Shows & Flea Markets](#)

Featured Dealers (more...)



Just Folk



Antiquario Villas & Cottage

Free Antiques News

 - Our list is private -
 Email:

Dealer Associations

**Antiques Dealers
 Associations**

Special Sections



Highlights of the collection traveled to invitation-only events in Annapolis and Newport earlier in April. They came home to Freeman's for the public exhibition which opened with a champagne reception attended by the Dietrich family. After a week-long exhibition, the auction started at 6 pm to a full room of seated and phone bidders.



Left, this 31-star United States flag, \$158,000, of 1851 may be the last ensign flown on the USS Constitution before it was decommissioned in 1855 at the Portsmouth Navy Yard. The arrangement of the stars is the same pattern as on the ensign used by Commodore Perry on his trip to Japan in 1853. Center, this English red ensign, \$43,750, was used from 1801 to 1854 and was flown as a courtesy by American ships when visiting British ports or returning a salute from a Royal Navy warship. Right, this circa 1846 ensign, \$134,500, of the USS Constitution has 26 stars commemorating the admission of Texas with two additional stars for Iowa and Texas. Freeman's, Collection of H. Richard Dietrich, Jr. —Laura Beach photo

The auction kicked off with the English red ensign, which achieved \$43,750, and the rare imperial Brazilian ensign that fetched \$50,000. The French Republic

commissioning pennant that later achieved \$18,750 was eclipsed by lot No. 4, the 3-pound projectile "cannonball" removed from 'Old Ironsides' hull, which rocketed passed its estimate of \$300/500 to its final price of \$22,500.

"Interesting to know that an English cannonball does better than a French flag," said auctioneer and vice chairman Alasdair Nichol light-heartedly from the rostrum. An equally competitive situation arose for a US Commodore's broad pennant estimated at \$4/6,000 that sailed up to its final price of \$32,500.

H. Richard Dietrich, III, said, "We were pleased with the auction. It was a very special collection of naval flags. It has been an honor as a family to have had these flags over so many years, and we are excited that they have found new stewards to enjoy and care for them. Working with Freeman's throughout this whole effort has been a pleasure. Freeman's

did a great job showcasing the inspiring story of the flags, their hard work was evident at every stage."

The top two lots achieved \$158,500 each.

The first was a rare 31-star United States

ensign of

the USS *Constitution* (1851–1858) and is most likely her last ensign prior to the ship being laid up in ordinary at the Portsmouth Navy Yard in 1855. Inscribed on the hoist is "Constitution No. 1" which refers to the size of the flag. In the US Navy the No. 1 ensign was the vessel's largest.



A rare commodore's broad pennant from the USS *Constitution*, circa 1837, performed within estimate at \$158,500 for an auction record.

Tying for top lot status was a rare and early US Commodore's broad pennant from the USS *Constitution*, the oldest known representation of a US Commodore's "broad pennant," in use from 1837 to 1845 and inscribed on the hoist "Constitution Bradd pendend." This broad pennant dates from the period when the *Constitution* served as the flagship of both the Mediterranean Squadron (1837–1838) and the Pacific Squadron (1839–1842) under Commodores Jesse Duncan Elliot and Daniel Turner.



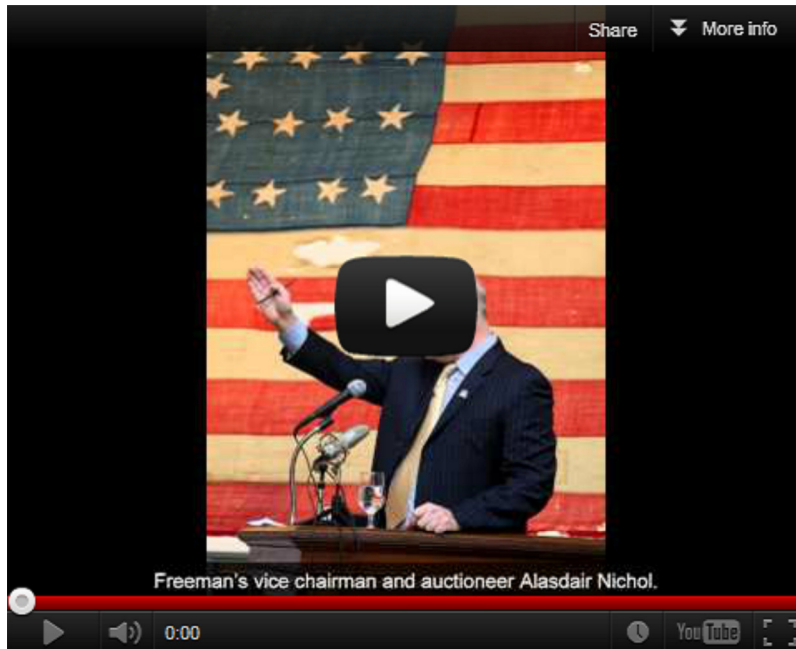
Rare 28-star United States ensign from the USS *Constitution*, Texas flag, circa 1846, comprised of wool bunting, with 28 appliqued cotton stars. It brought \$134,500.

It was fitting that

America's oldest auction house, founded in 1805, sold historic naval colors from America's oldest war ship, the USS *Constitution*.

All prices reported include the buyer's premium.

For more information, www.freemansauction.com or contact 267-414-1240.



Antiques and the Arts Editorial Content

[◀ Back](#) | Copyright © 2012 Bee Publishing Company | [Top ▶](#)