

Freeman's to sell historic rare US naval flags

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The 1846 28-star Texas Flag from the USS Constitution

Freeman's auction house, Philadelphia, have announced that their April 30th American Furniture, Silver, and Decorative Arts auction will be followed by the sale of twelve incredible naval flags from the collection of the late H. Richard Dietrich Jr.

Dietrich Jr.'s twelve flags, never before sold on the open market, represent six decades of naval ensigns, and include some very early and noteworthy examples from the oldest commissioned naval vessel: the three mast 44 gun frigate, the USS Constitution.

Dietrich Jr., who passed away in 2007, was a respected collector and patron of American art, with a passion for preserving American history through collecting, and an interest in the navy. His son remembers growing up surrounded by his father's ensign collection, the flags displayed over tables or rolled up in cupboards.

The flags were previously owned by the family of Virgil D. Parris, who had acquired them after they were declared unfit for further service on the USS Constitution in the mid 1800s and publicly auctioned off. They have been repaired and patched up in places, a testament to the history of their naval use, and care they were given in the early 19th century.

This group of ensigns are quite unique in coming to auction, in terms of the breadth of American nautical history and culture that they represent. Highlights include a rare 31-star United States flag circa 1851, which may have been the last flag flown on the USS Constitution before its decommission in 1855, valued at \$150,000-\$250,000, a rare commodores' broad pennant flag circa 1837, also valued at \$150,000-\$250,000, and a rare 28-star United States 'Texas flag' circa 1846, estimated to fetch \$100,000-\$200,000.

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The whole collection is expected to fetch up to \$2 million.

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