

Bit of Camelot brings in bit of cash

Hammersmith Farm contents fetch more than \$200,000

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NEWPORT — Fame has its price. And yesterday in New York, it was marked up 32 percent.

The end-of-an-era auction of the furniture and furnishings of Hammersmith Farm, put up for sale by the Auchincloss family, fetched \$233,620, far more than Christie's highest projection of \$176,800.

"There was a great deal of interest," said Hugh D. Auchincloss III. "It wasn't just in what was being auctioned, but people who wanted bits of history."

Call it the Kennedy connection. Whatever was associated with President John F. Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy Onassis garnered great interest and a high price.

"This was one of those cases where you had the family X factor," said Anne C. Igelbrink, Christie's assistant vice president of European decorative arts. "Our quotes on items were based on what similar items had sold for. But family associations played a role."

A nine-foot walnut Dutch clock, built in 1765, which is featured in a famous photo of Jackie Bouvier Kennedy at her wedding reception at Hammersmith Farm, was valued at a high of \$12,000. It sold for \$25,000.

A Regency-style glass chandelier, which Christie's assessed for a high of \$2,500, sold for \$12,000.

A silver epergne (centerpiece for fruits and sweet meats) was assessed for a high of \$3,000, and sold for \$21,000.

And a 1952 pastel portrait of Jackie Bouvier, which was appraised for a maximum of \$2,500, sold for \$6,500.

"If that was my face on it, it wouldn't have sold for \$6,500," Igelbrink said. "Bidders were bidding on the subject, not the artist [Guido Fulignot]."

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AT CHRISTIE'S: This nine-foot Dutch clock, valued at \$12,000, sold for \$25,000 at yesterday's auction.

Christie's Images Ltd.



Auction

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A George II-style mahogany desk — from which Kennedy signed several bills into law — brought \$9,000, in the range of the \$8,000 to \$12,000 that Christie's had predicted.

Hammersmith Farm, known as the summer White House while Kennedy was president and a popular Newport attraction since it was opened to the public in 1978, closed its doors to tourists last November to become a private residence again. And what was once inside the house, where Auchincloss grew up with his stepsister Jackie Bouvier, had to find new homes.

"There are things members of the family could not put any place," Auchincloss said. "It's sad to have everything that was in Hammersmith leave Hammersmith, but that's the way it had to be."

Members of the Auchincloss family did set some things aside for themselves. For instance, Hugh Auchincloss kept his father's bed, his grandmother's portrait and a needlepoint firescreen that his grandmother made.

But still, at the auction, family members bought back some items. Auchincloss's distant cousin bought the piano. And Auchincloss's brother-in-law, Lewis Rutherford, of Hong Kong, purchased furniture, china and a dress that his late wife Janet

once wore.

Auchincloss would have liked to buy some photographs and a painting of the garden at Hammersmith Farm. But he didn't.

"It was in with 20 other paintings that I didn't want," Auchincloss said.

Smaller items were sold in groups, or, as Christie's calls them, lots, of which there were 87, all of which sold.

About 100 people attended the auction, while an unknown number bid by phone.

"You know when people are serious about bidding and when they're there to see what's happening," Igelbrink said. "I saw people who wanted to bid."

"There was a lot of anticipation. There was a definite air of excitement."

The auction was over in an hour and a half, paced by an affable Englishman auctioneer, leaving Auchincloss with mixed emotions. He was glad items generally sold for more than was expected. But he was sad to see some of them go.

However, Auchincloss believed the nine-foot clock would be returning to Rhode Island, purchased by a Newport couple. But, generally, Auchincloss was relieved at the auction's end.

"It's nice to have this in the past," he said. "It's good to get it over with."

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