

Evitt Bottle Collection And Americana—

Western Bottles Ride High At Jeffrey S. Evans

Auction Action In Mount Crawford, Va.



The weekend’s highest selling lot was this 1912 Cadillac Model 30 touring car that realized \$22,230. It is one of the oldest Cadillacs in the state of Virginia.



Rising to \$3,802 was the second day’s first lot, a Colt model 1849 Civil War-era pocket revolver. It was reportedly owned by John Conrad Davis (1834-1908) of Brandywine, Pendleton Co., Va., now W.Va. It was used during his service as sergeant in the Franklin Guards, Co. F, Virginia 25th Infantry Regiment, which would become the 62nd Regiment, Virginia Mounted Infantry.



Some dogs luck out in life, like this Jack Russell Terrier whose owner commissioned its portrait lying on a bed of luxury. The oil on canvas sold for \$3,042 above a \$200 estimate, and it may be because there are at least two other Jack Russell Terriers living similar lives with owners whose kids flew the coup.



Two small dice are concealed in the brass pommel cup handle of this gambler’s bowie knife. Aggressive bidding (betting?) pushed it to \$819.

MOUNT CRAWFORD, VA.— More than 1,500 lots crossed the block at Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates’ two-day sale February 28-29, totaling \$585,362. The auction dispersed 572 lots of bottles on the first day, approximately 500 of which were from the estate of California dealers Russell and Doris Evitt, who operated the Columbian Lady in Sutter Creek. The second day followed with 988 lots of Americana, including country furni-

ture, folk and outsider art, advertising and country store material, Breweriana, political Americana, Native American material, Civil War and other militaria, dolls and toys, ceramics, silver and more. Evans’ vice president and department head of Americana, fine and decorative arts Will Kimbrough told us that he sees strength in fresh collections. “We’re seeing more and more of these long-term collections,

amassed over 30 to 50 years, and if you can combine that kind of freshness with high quality, then you’ll have success at auction. People pay a premium for fresh material,” he said. The top lot of the sale was a 1912 Cadillac Model 30 touring car that brought \$22,230. It was from the Virginia estate of Delbert Frey, whose family bought the car from the family that had originally purchased it new. The engine was rebuilt in 2002 and it



A Willington Cathedral/Gothic pickle jar doubled estimate when it was bid to \$16,380. Amber with yellow tone. Evitt collection, ex Gardner collection.

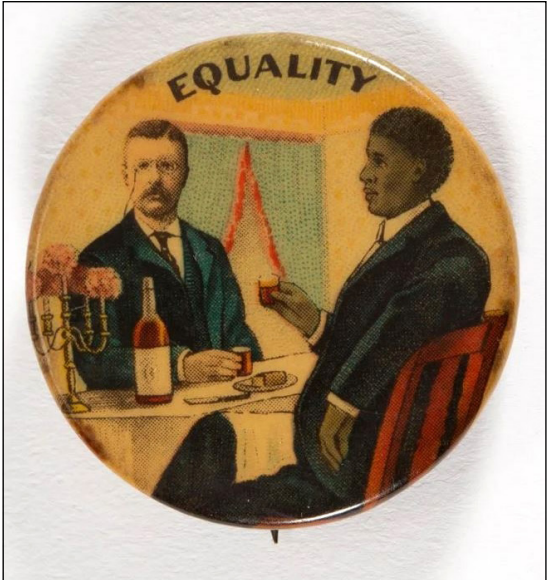


This California pictorial fire grenade tied for the top of the Evitt bottle collection, selling at \$16,380. In a medium amber color, it featured its original contents, cork, hanging wire and label to the back. The auction house found only one other record of this bottle and Evans’ result sold for twice the previous amount, making it the record.

Review by
Antiques and The Arts Weekly
Greg Smith, Editor
Catalog Photos Courtesy
Jeffrey S. Evans & Associates



Evans notes that only 12 of these bottles are known, embossed “Nonpareil / Trade Mark / Kolb & Denhard / San Francisco.” He said this one represents the best possible example in undamaged condition. Bidders agreed, as it sold for \$3,393.



Theodore Roosevelt and Booker T. Washington share a drink on this “Equality” pinback button. Roosevelt invited Washington to dinner and drinks at the White House in 1901. The button sold for \$1,638.



Bidders love temptation, and the \$120 estimate on this assorted alcohol salesman’s sample case guaranteed an exponential result, which landed at \$2,340.



A Chalmer's Bitters bottle in strong bluish aquamarine reached \$7,020. Evans believes only 12-15 of these bottles have survived, and called it "the only true Western commemorative/historical bottle as it celebrates the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848."



Bidders swam to this fish figural bitters bottle embossed "The / Fish Bitters," which took \$5,557. The 11-5/8-inch-tall bottle was made by Ware & Schmitz, Philadelphia, between 1866 and 1880.



Dr Henley's bitters bottle in a brilliant yellow olive green took \$10,530. It was a unique color variation. Another example in a medium moss green brought \$2,223.



In brilliant emerald green, this Dr Renz's Bitters bottle broke out to \$8,190 over a \$1,000 estimate. A medium yellow green example brought \$2,691 and a bright yellow olive green example took \$2,574.



A Lacour's Bitters bottle in brilliant yellow green reached \$15,210. Evans called it "arguably the most desirable California Bitters in a brilliant color and outstanding condition."

was in good shape with some older restorations to paint and the interior. The vehicle holds the title of being one of the oldest Cadillacs in the state of Virginia, and in that state it will remain with its new owner.

Selling for \$16,380 above an \$800 estimate was a set of two stained glass windows that were originally housed in the Eureka Hotel in Sutter Creek, Calif. Built in 1852, the hotel served travelers to the Gold-Rush mining town and still stands today. A California phone bidder prevailed and the windows are headed back to that state.

A pair of figural eagle cast iron apothecary trade signs with hanging show globes hung in the Evitts' shop for many years. They brought above estimate at \$7,020. Circa 1870, the globes hung from chains which were held in each eagle's beak.

"I've seen a few of them sell, often you'll see an individual or just the eagle and not the globe, but I've never seen a better pair in terms of condition. They were very good; I think they were a good buy at what they went for," Kimbrough said.

Surprising many, a folk art painting of a much-loved Jack Russell Terrier went out at \$3,042 above a \$200 estimate. The painting was cataloged as American and featured the artist initials "M.L.R."

In Breweriana and alcohol-related material, a reverse painted sign for the Geo Günther Jr Brewing Company, 19 by 36 inches, sold for \$4,680 above a \$500 estimate. The company operated out of Baltimore and the sign dated to 1910. An assorted alcohol salesman's sample case fitted with 18 compartments brought \$2,340 — all of the compartments were filled with old sample bottles and 13 of them were whiskey. A sign for I.W. Harper Whiskey features the entryway of a hunting cabin with a dog at the ready, the words "Here's Happy Days" written below, which brought \$1,755.

Dovetailing with the saloon material were some gambling accoutrements. An antique roulette gaming table by Chicago company H.C. Evans would sell for \$2,223. A circa 1850 bowie knife went out at \$819, it featured a turned ebony wood grip and a screw-off brass pommel cup concealing a pair of small bone playing dice.

In political Americana, a circa 1901 Teddy Roosevelt "Equality"

pinback button climbed to \$1,638. The button features an image of the president and Booker T. Washington sharing a glass of whiskey. Just behind at \$1,521 was a Centennial banner featuring George Washington next to his horse in an oval cartouche.

The Evitts' bottle collection was a personal endeavor, Kimbrough told us, noting the collection was kept in their house and away from their inventory in the shop. "Russell was one of the pioneer collectors of Western bottles," he said. "I think a lot of people in the bottle collecting community knew them quite well." The couple had amassed a sizable collection since the 1970s, with nearly half of it taking the form of historical flasks. But that wasn't the area that caught the most interest.

"What was the strongest by far was the Western material," Kimbrough said. "It could be a whiskey or a bitters bottle, a fire grenade. That's the hottest area right now in the bottle market and it definitely showed. We had people coming in from California, Texas and Ohio and all over."

Many of the western bottles found the top of the sale.

Two lots led the pack at \$16,380. The first was an 8-3/8-inch-tall blown-molded Willington Cathedral/Gothic pickle jar in an amber color with yellow tone. The bottle is attrib-



This deep amber with red tone Carhart handled whiskey bottle brought \$5,850 on a \$600 estimate.

uted to the Willington Glassworks, circa 1850, and was once in the Charles Gardner collection.

The Evitts' attended the Gardner sale, produced by Heckler and Skinner in 1975, and came away with about 50 lots, which all appeared in this auction.

A medium amber California pictorial fire grenade in chestnut form with horizontal rings brought the same price. The front featured an image of a walking bear and the back retained its original label, in addition to its original cork, contents and hanging wire. The auction house found only one other result for this bottle and it lacked the cork, contents, wire and label. Kimbrough believes this lot to be a record for the

example.

A Lacour's Bitters bottle in a brilliant yellow green color doubled its estimate when it brought \$15,210. Evans called it "arguably the most desirable California Bitters in a brilliant color and outstanding condition." The 9-inch-high bottle was circa 1868 and of lighthouse form.

"That is a super rare bottle," Kimbrough said. "The market is so strong right now that a couple of them have shown up in the last year, whereas the decade before we saw only one or two."

Not too far behind at \$8,190 was a Dr Renz's Herb Bitters bottle in brilliant emerald green.

"It was an honor to work with the Evitt Collection, and it was encouraging to see so many new faces in the audience over the

weekend," Kimbrough said. "We had a great crowd in house for both days, which helped to drive the bidding, and were pleased with the strength of prices across multiple categories. Additionally, online participation in the February Americana Auction was at an all-time high for us, another indication of strong demand, and we hope that trend continues. We have several fine collections in house for our Premier Americana Auction in June, including a number of other items from the Evitt Collection, so there is much more to look forward to at JSE & Associates."

The firm's next sale will feature Nineteenth and Twentieth Century lighting on March 28. For information, 540-434-3939 or www.jeffreysevans.com.



The top piece of breweriana throughout the sale was this reverse-painted sign for the Baltimore-based George Gunther Jr Brewing Co. It dated to 1910 and sold for \$4,680.



The Evitts had this pair of apothecary trade signs hanging in their shop. The painted cast iron eagles hold the chain for the globes in their beaks and swivel on the bracket. They were in excellent condition and brought \$7,020.



The Evitts' gallery is located in Sutter Creek, Calif., the same town these stained glass windows came from. They were originally hung in the Eureka Hotel, a building that still stands from 1852. And back home to California they go, as a bidder from that state nabbed them for \$16,380.