

Dallas, Texas

# Ralph Willard's Tower Antique Show

by David Anderson

Ralph Willard's Tower Antique Show was held on December 1-3, 2006, at Fair Park in Dallas, Texas. At the show we found many fine examples of vintage clothing, jewelry, books, antique tools, toys, furniture, old books, and more.

An oil on canvas framed portrait offered by vendor Peggy McClard of Houston, Texas, showed a child holding a silver rattle with coral and bells. This childhood artifact of the 18th century usually consisted of a sterling silver tubular body terminating in a whistle (maybe to summon the nursemaid), decorated with four, six, or eight small bells. A small polished piece of red or orange coral for teething would be fixed at the end opposite the whistle. They are seldom seen in nurseries today, although they were well known in Colonial America.

Evidently, these rattles had a mixed purpose, partly as a toy for the child's amusement, partly as a teething device, and partly as a superstitious amulet intended to ward off illness or evil spirits. Often a silver loop on the side was available for a ribbon to hang the rattle around the child's neck. Because of their intricate sterling silver construction, such rattles were probably limited to wealthy families who could afford them, and they were often chosen as christening gifts. Some were additionally embellished with gold overlay on the silver.

While few early references in either print or the graphic arts survive today to recall those childhood rattles, the following four lines from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "To a Child" will forever validate their place in history:

With what a look of proud command  
Thou shakest in thy little hand  
The coral rattle with its silver bells  
Making a merry tune!

We later chatted with Bill Starr, a vendor from Ellinwood, Kansas, and a regular at this show. His Bennington Rockingham bowl brought back memories of this writer's Vermont childhood years, during which his mother once purchased a similar Bennington bowl for 50¢. As one writer bewailed, "Oh, for a time machine."

While the town of Bennington, Vermont, was an important 19th-century center for earthenware, Rockingham ware was also made in New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere. According to the *Treasury of American Design*, Captain John Norton's United States Pottery Company exhibited Rockingham ware at London's Crystal Palace exhibition in 1851 and again in the New York City Crystal Palace exhibition of 1853. Ever since, it has been a durable and highly collectible item of lasting utility.

Vendor Wayne Burnette of Shreveport, Louisiana, good-naturedly demonstrated for this writer a vintage ear trumpet that he was offering for sale. Because of its debatable utility, the ear trumpet has a mixed history, partly because of its sometimes bizarre (and unfair) comic association with the hard of hearing.

Evelyn Waugh, the eccentric English satirist, once appeared at a public event with a giant ear trumpet that he used to display his displeasure at a speaker. He unscrewed the device and laid it on the table publicly to signify his disrespect. Another character, this one fictional, was Horatio Alger's Aunt Jane, who pretended to need an ear trumpet in order to discover her relatives' true feelings about her.

The next Ralph Willard Antique Show at Fair Park will be June 1-3. For more information, call (214) 826-2584.



Oil on canvas portrait of a young girl holding a silver rattle with coral and bells, 1800-10, 31½" x 26¾" (frame size). Coral necklaces like the one the baby is wearing were believed to ward off evil. The portrait was priced at \$2800 from Peggy McClard of Houston, Texas.



Two Cowboys, oil on canvas, 34" x 42", showing a scene suggestive of west Texas, by California artist Henry Goode (1882-1966), in its original frame, priced at \$3800 from Woody Straub.



Candle snuffer and wick trimmer, hand-forged iron, circa 1750, \$185 from Peggy McClard.

Indian bolo tie from Arizona or New Mexico, about 8" long, turquoise and coin silver, circa 1930, priced at \$875 from Woody Straub of Umatilla, Florida.



Rockingham bowl, 13" in diameter, from Bennington, Vermont, with brown speckled glaze. In good condition, it was tagged \$187.50 from Bill Starr Antiques, Ellinwood, Kansas.



Victorian kerosene table lamp with round wick burner, never electrified, decorated with flowers, tagged \$1495 from Larry Baker Antiques, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.



Tall-case clock, eight-day time-and-strike movement, in good working order, white dial, mahogany case of the George III period, \$6800 from Tammy Strop of The Cheeky Mare, Georgetown, Texas.



Joseph and Mary carved wood mannequins (undressed), with articulated arms and legs, from Spanish Colonial Mexico, early 19th century. The feet of Joseph have been cut off. Christina Seikin of Goose in the Garden, Fort Worth, Texas, priced the pair at \$1250.



Nicho, Spanish Colonial period, late 18th or early 19th century, \$1200 for both the nicho and the santo inside, from Christina Seikin of Goose in the Garden.



Milliner's child-size head, papier-mâché and leather, priced at \$1200 from Walter Waldie of Dallas, Texas.



Rocking horse, also called a shoofly rocker, in original paint, with two real horsehair tails, early 20th century, \$875 from Jean Compton of Wimberley, Texas.



Carousel horse believed to have been carved by the Herschell-Spillman Company of North Tonawanda, New York, circa 1930, with its original brass pole. It was tagged \$3500 from Jane and Jim Christian of Dallas, Texas.



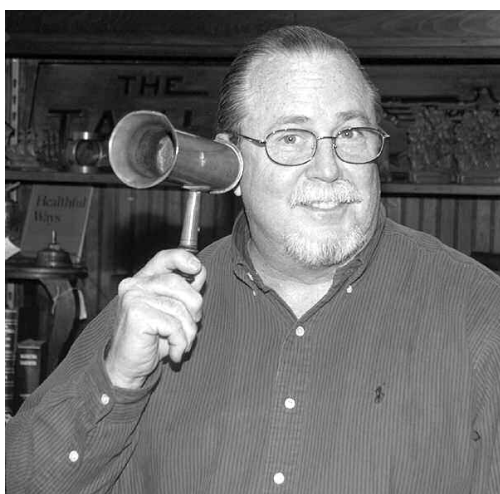
Royal Navy officer's hat with metal hatbox, 1820-30, all original, priced at \$795 from Reggie Yanuzzi of English Surrey Antiques, Houston, Texas.



Vintage phonograph with horn, labeled "His Master's Voice," the English affiliate of the Victor Talking Machine Company (1901-29). The trademark dog named Nipper is shown on the label. From about 1920 or earlier, the phonograph was priced at \$650 from Freda Briscoe of Dallas, Texas.



Fishnet floats, hand-blown glass from Japan, various sizes from 4" to 6" in diameter, tagged \$15 to \$20 from Johnson & Barrett Antiques, Molly's on Main, Johnson City, Texas.



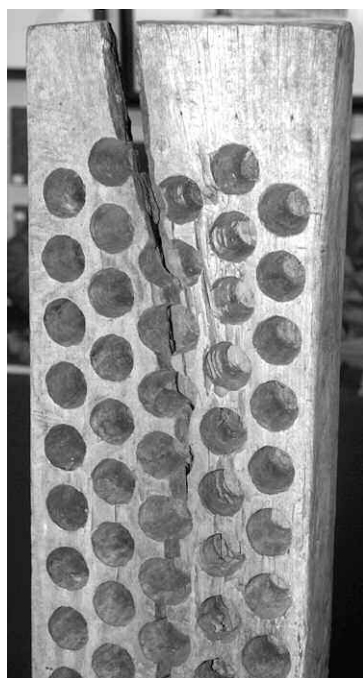
Ear trumpet of brass with wood handle, probably late 19th century. Vendor Wayne Burnette of Shreveport, Louisiana, is demonstrating its correct usage for the hard of hearing. He priced it at \$95 and said the cost is probably not reimbursable under Medicare.



Onion-shaped lantern with teal-colored blown glass globe. Inside there is a holder for one candle. Betty Bell of Dallas, Texas, named \$1100 as the price.



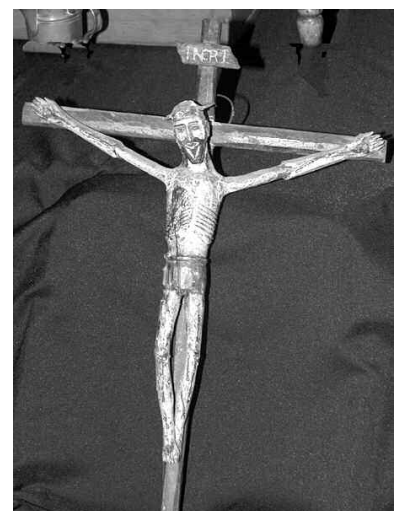
Pine cupboard, possibly Pennsylvania or Connecticut origin, 1810-20, 76" tall x 47" wide. Sandra Worrell of Houston, Texas, priced it at \$15,000.



Old hardwood sugar mold from the state of Veracruz, Mexico, circa 1870. Liquid from cane sugar would be poured in the tapered cavities to cool. The interior of the molds would have been waxed to facilitate removal of the sugar. Upon hardening, the cones known as *piloncillos* would be knocked out, wrapped in paper, and sold individually to the consumer. The mold was priced at \$675 from Abel Barron of Dallas, Texas.



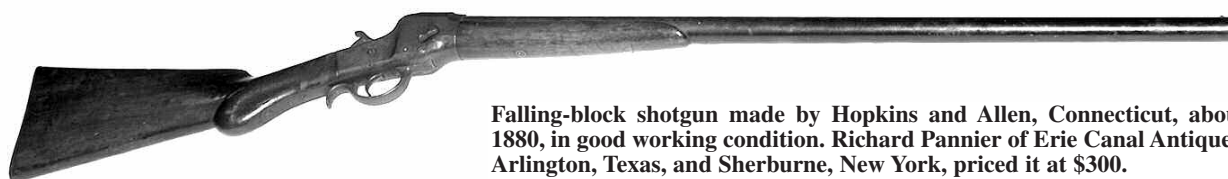
Victoria! (victory), a two-color linoleum block print, 28" x 18", from a Mexico City workshop, celebrating victory at the end of World War II. Adolf Hitler and a German iron cross are shown on the ground. Flags of the United States and the United Kingdom are seen, along with a larger red star symbolizing communism. The poster was offered at \$750 by Michael Ricker of Garland, Texas.



Crucifix, painted gesso over carved cottonwood, circa 1840, about 24" high, from a New Mexico morada, the meeting house of a religious group known as Los Penitentes. At top of the cross appear the letters "INRI" (standing for the Latin phrase that means Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews). Michael McKissick of Waterbird Traders, Dallas, Texas, asked \$7500 for this extraordinary artifact.



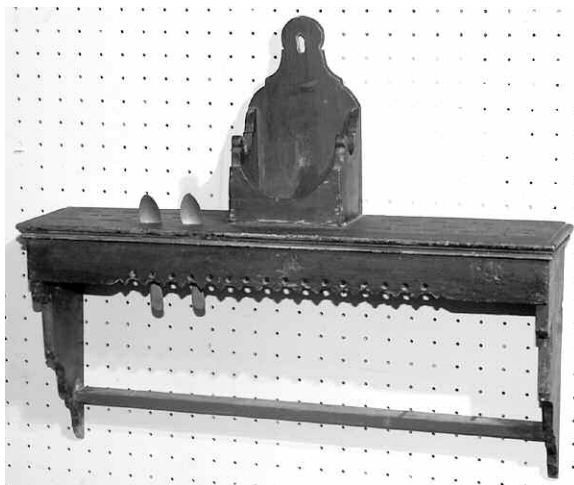
Framed hand-colored lithograph of a seated young woman by the seaside, thought to be by Spanish artist Juan Gonzales, priced at \$225 from Anne Blomeyer of Annie's Song, Dallas, Texas.



Falling-block shotgun made by Hopkins and Allen, Connecticut, about 1880, in good working condition. Richard Pannier of Erie Canal Antiques, Arlington, Texas, and Sherburne, New York, priced it at \$300.



Nodding donkey, heavy cast iron, painted brown, from the late 1800's. When the counterweighted head is put into motion, the tail also wags. About 1' long, it could serve as a doorstop. It was priced at \$850 from Gloria Jordan of Dealers Choice, Kansas City, Kansas.



Spoon rack from Cape Cod, early 18th century. On the top shelf is a container for a mortar and pestle. Two pewter spoons are shown in the photograph but were not included in the purchase price of \$1500 from Jacqueline Hagar of Plano, Texas.



This political art from the late 18th century is a hand-colored copperplate engraving by British caricaturist James Gillray (1757-1815), whose target was often Charles James Fox. Fox is shown here as "Guy Vaux," alluding to Guy Fawkes and his plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament. In the background can be seen several barrels of gunpowder. Note that the specular reflections in the photograph are due to the transparent plastic protective cover and are not present in the actual print. It was priced at \$185 from Joan R. Kickham of Dallas, Texas.



A pair of elegant silver-plated and mother-of-pearl Victorian knife rests for the formal dining table, to hold the carving knives. In their original presentation case, probably dating from about 1880, they were priced at \$150 by Jan Leach of Clifton House Antiques, Houston, Texas.



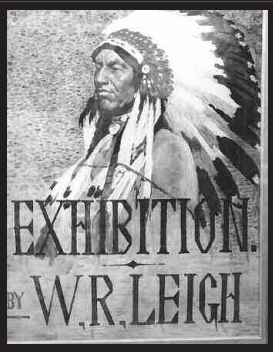
Chinese jewelry box with hidden drawers, dating from about 1850, jumu wood (southern elm) construction with brass and pierced ivory applied ornamentation, tagged \$1100 from Bill Cheeseman of Antiques & Collectibles, Austin, Texas.



Pine stepstool, early 20th century, with square nails, priced at \$125 from Lana Fraser of Collectors' Collections, Rapid City, Michigan.

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