

Crocker Farm's Stoneware Sale Is A 'White Glove' Affair

Auction Action In Sparks, Md.

Setting an auction record for its form, this rare 3-gallon alkaline-glazed stoneware jug by the African American enslaved potter Dave from the Edgefield District, S.C., led the summer stoneware auction, selling for \$96,000.

SPARKS, MD. — Crocker Farm continued its success with stoneware vessels of the African American enslaved potter Dave from the Edgefield District, S.C. Out of public offer for 168 years, a rare 3-gallon alkaline-glazed stoneware jug signed "Lm/Aug. 17, 1852/Dave" led Crocker Farm's August 21 summer stoneware auction. Selling for \$96,000, the highly ovoid jug was closely followed by another Dave piece, a rare 4-gallon double-handled stoneware jug with alkaline glaze, also from 1852. It finished at \$72,000. Crocker Farm holds the record for Dave stoneware, having sold a 16-inch-high, 8-gallon stoneware jar by Dave for \$216,000 to a private collector earlier this year.

The sale, totaling \$1,102,560, was a "white glove" event, meaning not a pottery shard was left on the copious shelves inside the firm's historic Gorsuch Barn; every one of the 440 lots offered was sold. "It was our second 'white glove' sale in a row," said an obviously pleased Tony Zipp, patriarch of the family enterprise. "Everything met reserve. This online format is working really well for us. In less than four months, we've sold more than \$2.4 million worth of stoneware and redware. We've got lots of new customers — at all levels. After being in business for 16 years, you think you know the people who are going to bid on things, but we're getting a lot of new people and it's really refreshing."

Case in point, the successful bidder for three Dave the Potter jugs in the sale, including the top two lots, was a new customer from the West Coast. "He's very excited about his purchases," said Zipp.

David Drake aka Dave the Potter was an enslaved worker at Lewis Miles' Stony Bluff Manufactory. The ovoid Dave 3-gallon jug that led this sale had a distinctive tooled spout and applied strap handle. It was decorated with an opaque, gray-green alkaline glaze, streaked over a reddish-brown ground. Incised diagonally were large letters "Lm / Aug 17. 1852 / Dave." Crocker Farm in its catalog listing said its highly ovoid form was "characteristic of



Dave's best jugs," and its condition, with just a chip on the spout and coupled with its large signature and fine glaze, rank it among the best examples of the form by Dave to come to auction. Certainly, its buyer, a private collector, believed so too, taking it past its \$50,000 high estimate.

Remarkably, this 15½-inch-high piece was made exactly two weeks before the Dave double-handled jug that was the second highest selling lot in this auction. It was a recently surfaced example, having been purchased by the consignor in the 1990s. Before that it had descended in a family from an old community near Savannah, Ga.

Following behind was a rare 4-gallon double-handled stoneware jug with incised inscription, "Lm / August 31. 1852 / Dave." It, too, featured a highly ovoid shape with two applied strap handles, the surface covered in an attractive, light-green alkaline glaze. The double-handled jug form, according to catalog notes, is among the rarest and most desirable Edgefield stoneware forms produced with any regularity, and the known survivors of Dave's output indicate that he rarely produced this form. The 16-inch-high jug went to the same private collector.

Also bringing \$72,000 and more than doubling its \$35,000 high expectation was a rare Anna Pottery stoneware temperance jug, 12 inches high, attributed to Wallace and Cornwall Kirkpatrick, Anna, Ill., circa 1862. The firm's temperance jugs are regarded among the most iconic and visually striking works in all of American-made ceramics. Like the works of the enslaved potter Dave, the Kirkpatrick's temperance jugs transcend the medium, and this example was a tour de force and fresh to the market, having surfaced in California in the early 1980s and acquired by the consignor at that time. Alive with all the horrors that are the hallmark of the category, this ovoid jug with tall neck, squared spout and profuse cross-hatched incising featured three hand-modeled snakes, one forming the handle and extending through the neck of the jug and about to devour a man whose head, arms and legs protrude through the body of the vessel. A second snake extended through the neck of the jug, coiling itself around the larger snake handle and peering beside the spout of the jug, a gaping mouth bearing incised teeth. The third snake extends through the base of the jug, exiting the opposite side. Oh, and there are frogs — two of them with bug eyes — adding to the commotion and emotion expressed by the jug's makers.

More than doubling its high estimate at \$42,000 was a monumental cobalt-decorated stoneware urn intended for outdoor use with chicken pecking corn, bird and foliate motifs, attributed to New York Stoneware Co., Fort Edward, N.Y., circa 1875. It stood 34 inches tall, ranking among the tallest examples of American stoneware that Crocker Farm has ever offered. With ovoid form with flared rim, applied ring handles and concave molding to midsection, it



Featuring what is among the largest J.&E. Norton urn design motifs known, the 6-gallon stoneware water cooler stamped "J.&E. Norton / Bennington, Vt.," circa 1855, provided a canvas for an extravagant design measuring roughly 15 inches tall by 14 inches wide. It sold for \$10,800.



A 2-gallon jug with cobalt reclining deer scene, stamped "J.&E. Norton / Bennington, Vt.," circa 1855, sold for \$25,200.



In the age of Covid, Crocker Farm does everything it can to help prospective buyers preview its sale offerings, including this video tour by Mark Zipp taking viewers through the firm's summer auction of American stoneware and redware pottery — a remote-only online, absentee and phone auction.

Dave The Potter Vessels Lead Firm's Summer Offering

sat atop a narrow pedestal base with flared and tooled foot.

A rare 6-gallon lidded stoneware presentation jar with cobalt floral decoration, dated 1874, finished at \$36,000. According to the piece's history as outlined in Crocker Farm's catalog notes, the 17½-inch jar was made by Strasburg, Va., potter Solomon Bell on New Year's Day 1874 while visiting his brother, John, in Waynesboro, Penn. He inscribed the piece as a gift for his niece, Tillie Bell, the youngest daughter of John and Mary Elizabeth Bell to survive into adulthood. Born on January 14, 1838, Matilda Catharine "Tillie" Bell lived her whole life in the family home on the southwest corner of West Main Street, near her father's shop. As Tillie's birthday was less than two weeks after the jar's date, the piece may have been made as a birthday present by her uncle, who incised its bottom with "January th / 1 1874 / Made by Solomon Bell / for Tillie Bell / Waynesboro, Pa.," paying homage to his brother's shop.

Yet another Dave jar, this one a 6-gallon, 13½-inch-high stoneware example, incised "Lm / Feb 2. 1852," was bid to \$27,600. Of rotund form with semi-rounded rim and arched lug handles, decorated with an olive-green alkaline glaze featuring streaks of white and blue rutile to the shoulder and handles, it is one of a small number of Dave pieces known with rutile (titanium dioxide) decoration.

There were a styful of Anna Pottery pigs in this sale. The pick of the litter at \$20,400 was a salt-glazed stoneware pig flask, signed "By Anna Pottery /



Review By
W. A. Demers, Senior Editor
Photos Courtesy Crocker Farm



A rare J.&E. Norton 4-gallon churn with cobalt double-pheasant decoration, circa 1855, fetched \$20,400.



One of only a few known Dave the Potter pieces with rutile (titanium dioxide) decoration, this 6-gallon, 13½-inch-high alkaline-glazed stoneware example was bid to \$27,600.



Intended for outdoor use, a monumental cobalt-decorated stoneware urn with chicken pecking corn, bird and foliate motifs, attributed to New York Stoneware Co., Fort Edward, N.Y., circa 1875, stood 34 inches tall, ranking it among the tallest examples of American stoneware that Crocker Farm has ever offered. It more than doubled its high estimate at \$42,000.



Also bringing \$72,000 and more than doubling its \$35,000 high expectation was a rare Anna Pottery stoneware temperance jug, 12 inches high, attributed to Wallace and Cornwall Kirkpatrick, Anna, Ill., circa 1862.

Crocker Farm

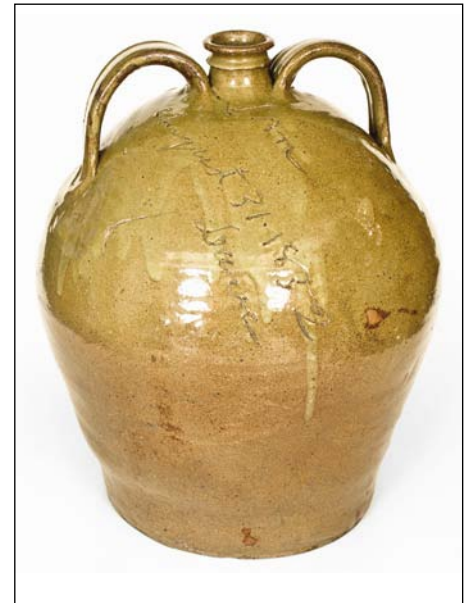
1882,” a molded flask in the form of a reclining pig, 7 inches long, with hole at rear, incised details to face and hooves and anatomically correct underside, incised on one side with the cobalt-highlighted inscription, “Railroad & River Guide / By Anna Pottery / 1882.” The remainder of pig was incised with a cobalt-highlighted map of the Midwest with the usual landmarks. The penmanship on the flask made it one of the finest the firm has ever offered.

The Anna pig flasks are notoriously political, so an 1872 example in the

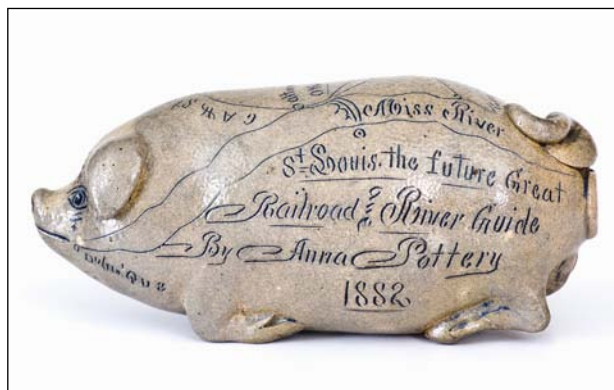
form of a reclining porker was incised on one side with a political cartoon depicting a bearded and spectacled Horace Greeley (1811-1872) facing a trap made from his signature broadbrimmed hat, inscribed “Whoever says this is a trap is a liar.” A trigger underneath the hat reads “Presidency.” The Kirkpatrick brothers were said to be enamored of *Harper’s Weekly* political cartoonist Thomas Nast and were likely inspired by Nast’s depictions of Greeley in creating this special flask. According to the *Jonesboro Gazette*, on August 31, 1872, this flask was pre-



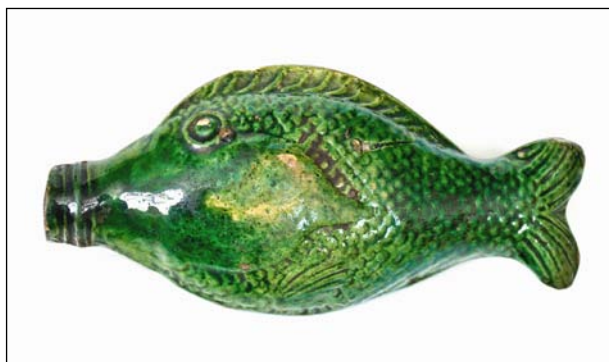
Finishing at \$36,000, this rare 6-gallon lidded stoneware presentation jar with cobalt floral decoration and dated 1874 was made by Strasburg, Va., potter Solomon Bell on New Year’s Day 1874 while visiting his brother, John, in Waynesboro, Penn. He inscribed the piece as a gift for his niece, Tillie Bell, the youngest daughter of John and Mary Elizabeth Bell to survive into adulthood.



The Zippis like to start their sales off with a bang, and so it was that this 16-inch-high piece by Dave the Potter that had descended in a family from an old community near Savannah, Ga., was first across the block and fetched the second highest price in the sale. The rare 4-gallon double-handled stoneware jug with alkaline glaze with two applied strap handles brought \$72,000.



Pick of the litter among a styful of Anna Pottery pigs in the sale was a salt-glazed stoneware flask, signed “By Anna Pottery / 1882.” At 7 inches long, it exhibited exquisite penmanship in its inscription and realized \$20,400.



Both its size and color made this 5-inch-long Moravian copper-glazed redware fish bottle of Salem, N.C., origin, circa 1801-29, highly desirable. Molded in the form of a detailed fish with large eyes, fins and elaborate scales, it commanded \$19,200.



Finding a buyer at \$19,200, this Anna Pottery pig flask from 1872 featured a political cartoon depicting a bearded and spectacled Horace Greeley (1811-1872) and had been presented that year by Anna’s newly elected mayor, Cornwall Kirkpatrick, to the town’s recently founded Horace Greeley Club, which supported Kirkpatrick’s candidacy.



This rare Remmey ovoid presentation bank, circa 1855, with game bird finial and decorated with brushed tulips took \$18,000.



This piece may have been unique, said Crocker Farm. It is a 3-gallon stoneware jar with exuberant slip-trailed cobalt floral and chainlink decoration, stamped “B.C. Milburn / Alexa,” Alexandria, Va., origin, circa 1850. Lavishly decorated on the front with slip-trailed vine extending from handle to handle, it brought \$13,200.



Used as a subject by Pennsylvania folk artist Bill Rank, this 4-gallon stoneware jug with cobalt bird and grapes motif, stamped “Cowden & Wilcox / Harrisburg, Pa.,” circa 1865, was bid to \$15,600.



Four-gallon stoneware jug with elaborate cobalt floral decoration, stamped “M&T Miller / Newport, Pa.,” circa 1870, was fresh to the market from an old New Jersey collection and finished at \$10,800.



The other side of this crumpled form vase looks like a perfectly normal, utilitarian piece, while this side displays the whimsical, tortured clay manipulation that is the hallmark of George Ohr pieces. Standing 4-5/8 inches high, it went out at \$7,800.

left the gallery at \$10,800.

Although it's an American stoneware auction, the Zipps do not pass up any opportunity to add to our knowledge of stoneware-related items. In this case, it was a rare tintype portrait of an African American man holding a stoneware jug, circa 1865, which rose to \$9,000. The image depicts an elderly African American man, seated with jug on his thigh, embracing the jug with his right hand and holding the handle of the jug with his left. The jug he is holding is ovoid in form with a tooled spout and a corn cob stopper. Catalog notes describe the style of the jug as indicating it was made circa 1840-60 in the Southern or possibly Midwestern United States. There's a penciled signature on the paper mat — "Lew Cassell(?)" — but was that the sitter or the potter? We don't know. The tintype had recently surfaced in an album of 1860s-70s tintypes and cabinet cards.

An American stoneware sale would not be complete without some prime examples from George E. Ohr (1857-1918) aka the Mad Potter of Biloxi. This one had several and most notable was a pottery vase that was a shining example of Ohr's whimsical manipulation of clay. Stamped "G.E. OHR / Biloxi, Miss.,"



Bid to \$10,800 was a 3-gallon alkaline-glazed stoneware jar, stamped "J.S. Nash," for Jefferson S. Nash Pottery, Marion County, Texas, circa 1850-60.



the late Nineteenth Century ovoid-form vase with footed base and partially scalloped rim displayed a traditional form on one side and an abstractly tortured contour on the other. The effect is striking because viewed from one angle it looks like a perfectly normal, utilitarian vase, while from another angle it looks like an object from the Bizarro universe. Standing 4-5/8 inches high, it went out at \$7,800.

For traditionalist collectors there

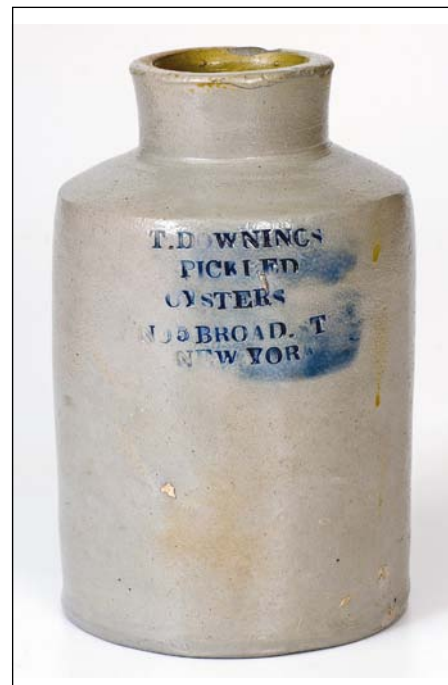


An oyster jar from a storied establishment, this one stamped "Thomas, M. Jackson / 47 Howard St / New York," probably Brooklyn, N.Y., origin, circa 1830s, also earned \$12,000, a record. Won by a collector, it was impressed with advertising for the oysterman, Thomas Jackson, who like Thomas Downing, was a prominent African American restaurateur, well regarded and known throughout New York City.

Not stoneware but stoneware-related, this rare tintype portrait of an African American man holding a stoneware jug, circa 1865, rose to \$9,000. A penciled signature on the paper mat reads "Lew Cassell(?)" but whether that's the name of the sitter or the potter is unknown.

were plenty of staple stoneware vessels on offer, including a 2-gallon jug with cobalt reclining deer scene, stamped "J.&E. Norton / Bennington, Vt.," circa 1855, that sold for \$25,200; a rare J.&E. Norton 4-gallon churn with cobalt double-pheasant decoration, circa 1855, that fetched \$20,400; and a rare Remmey ovoid presentation bank, circa 1855, with game bird finial and decorated with brushed tulips. It took \$18,000.

Prices given include the buyer's premium as stated by the auction house. Crocker Farm's next sale will be conducted in the fall, probably November. For more information, 410-472-2016 or www.crockerfarm.com



From a 40-year private collection, this rare cobalt-decorated stoneware oyster jar, circa 1840, stamped "T. Downing / Pickled Oysters / No*5 Broad St / New York," related to Thomas Downing (1791-1866), a prominent African American oysterman and owner of the most well-known oyster house in Nineteenth Century New York City. Downing was not only responsible for providing oysters that were shipped as far as London and Paris, presumably in jars of this type, but he was also heavily involved in the Abolitionist Movement. This jar sold for \$12,000, a world auction record, and was won by an institution.



A remarkably preserved survivor, this rare Moravian redware bowl with three-color glaze from the late Eighteenth or early Nineteenth Century, with a diameter of 12 1/4 inches, left the gallery at \$10,800.

Clark Art Institute's New Podcast Series

WILLIAMSTOWN, Mass. — The Clark Art Institute's Research and Academic Program has launched a new podcast, *In the Foreground: Conversations on Art & Writing* considers art's role in society, how knowledge is shared, the way histories are made and the

personal stakes of scholarship.

Each of the 11 episodes offers a look into the life and mind of a scholar or artist working with art historical or visual material. Discussions touch on current research projects, career paths and significant texts, mentors and experiences that have

shaped their thinking.

Caroline Fowler, Starr director of the Research and Academic Program, said of the series, "The foundation of the Research and Academic Program at the Clark is to hold space for difficult and important conversations that move art history and museums

forward. With this podcast, we aim to make these conversations accessible to audiences beyond the walls of the Clark Art Institute, and to give a platform to feature the artists, critics, writers, curators and historians that we think are changing and challenging the world we

live in today."

For more information and to listen to episodes, www.clarkart.edu/rap/podcast, iTunes, Spotify, and anywhere else you listen to podcasts.

The Clark is at 225 South Street. For information, www.clarkart.edu or 413-458-2303.

Ice Age Musk Ox? Nevada Man Finds Bones In Backyard

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A northern Nevada man's backyard tree-planting project has turned up bones that he and a researcher think might be from the Ice Age.

The artifacts from Tom Gordon's yard near the Carson River also might be the first example of extinct helmeted musk ox ever found in the state, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported.

"I was the first person to see that thing in 11,000-plus years," Gordon marveled as he recounted the discovery for the newspaper. "Nobody else had messed with it."

Paleontologist and Las Vegas Natural History Museum lab chief Steve Rowland is using radiocarbon dating to determine the exact age of the fossils. Rowland, also emeritus geology professor at the University of

Nevada, plans to compare them with helmeted musk oxen bone specimens at the University of Utah.

Gordon said it all started when he dug up what looked like the bottom half of a horse jaw in early May.

He and his wife have found bones in their Carson City yard before, but assumed the land once was part of a ranch. However, their daughter thought the jaw might have come from a dinosaur.

After seeing photos, Rowland and a graduate student traveled north and started excavating — thinking they were unearthing a bison or maybe a camel.

The excavation became a family operation. Gordon's daughter, Brittaney Akel, brought her husband and children from Arkansas for a few weeks in May and June. They learned to

brush soil from the fossils and create plaster casts to gently lift them from the ground.

Gordon's land features soft soil deposited slowly over time. Less than 5 feet (1.5 meters) of sediment had accumulated atop the fossils over thousands of years.

"It's exciting, but it does take a lot out of you at the end of the day," Gordon said.

Rowland filled a trunk with fossils and left with a mystery about the discovery.

He said some remains were remarkably intact after close to 11,000 years.

Rowland is still working to confirm that the fossils are extinct Ice Age helmeted musk ox. He said he believes the bones came from at least four individual animals of the same species, and other Ice Age bones found nearby might be a type of deer. His research revealed that

musk oxen were widespread in the Midwest and once roamed the West, although no remains had been discovered in what is now Nevada.

The animals are believed to have been taller and more slender than modern musk ox, which can stand 5 feet (1.5 meters) at the shoulder. They may have weighed more than 900 pounds (408 kilograms).

Researchers think they became extinct because of climate-driven changes in vegetation. Moose and bison were better adapted to the new diet.

Rowland expects there are more fossils in Gordon's yard and possibly those of his neighbors. He plans to return to Carson City in September to try to find them.

Both Rowland and Gordon said they'd like to see the fossils end up in a museum, possibly

the Nevada State Museum in Carson City.

"That's where they belong because that's where these animals were living and dying," Rowland said.

Gordon called the discovery a great experience, but added that he's ready to finish his yard.

"It's really unique... being able to find something as rare as they're saying it is," Gordon told the *Review-Journal*. "But I'll tell you, the whole reason was to plant my trees, and my wife is still mad because I still haven't finished the trees."

ALBANY, N.Y. — The Albany Institute of History & Art is presenting "Fellow Citizens! DeWitt Clinton's Broadides of the Early Republic," on view through March 14 at 125 Washington Avenue. For information, www.albanyinstitute.org or 518-463-4478.