

# Important items recovered from the 1857 sinking of the S.S. Central America will be auctioned December 3rd in Reno, Nev.

*Nearly 300 1850s-era artifacts will be in the auction being conducted online and at the Reno, Nevada Convention Center by Holabird Western Americana Collections*

RENO, NV, UNITED STATES, November 15, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Decades after unique California Gold Rush sunken treasure artifacts were retrieved from the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, the exquisite gold jewelry, vintage clothing, Wells Fargo treasure shipment box and other historic items from the 1857 sinking of the fabled "[Ship of Gold,](#)" the [S.S. Central America](#), will be available for the first time in a public auction on December 3, 2022.

"Some collectors have been waiting for these extraordinary items to come on the market since the legendary, submerged ship was located in 1988 and Life magazine proclaimed it America's greatest treasure ever found," said Fred Holabird, President of [Holabird Western Americana Collections](#).



This rare medal presented by the Order of Saint Maurice and Saint Lazarus, the world's second oldest order of knighthood, is one of the highlights in the December 3, 2022 Holabird Western Americana Collections auction of recovered S.S. Central America sun

Nearly 300 never-before-offered 1850s-era artifacts will be in the auction that will be conducted at the Reno, Nevada Convention Center and online by Holabird Western Americana Collections ([www.HolabirdAmericana.com](#)) on Saturday, December 3. A second auction of hundreds of additional one-of-a-kind artifacts retrieved from the famous shipwreck will be offered in February 2023.

Clothing items include the important discovery of what is described as “the million-dollar jeans:” the oldest known Gold Rush-era heavy-duty work pants jeans with a button fly that may have been made by or for Levi Strauss in his early years in business. The pants and early Brooks Brothers undershirts with the company’s famous emblem

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*Fred Holabird*

that will also be in the auction were in the first-class passenger trunk of merchant and Mexican-American War military veteran John Dement of Oregon.

Men’s and women’s 1850s clothing items are also offered from the recovered trunk of maritime provisions supplier Ansel Easton of San Francisco.

“Ansel and Adeline Easton were San Francisco ‘royalty’ on their honeymoon trip to New York. She survived in a lifeboat; he clung to debris in the water for hours after the ship sank until he was rescued by the crew from another ship,” explained Holabird.

The auction also features recovered gold jewelry including dozens of rings, stickpins, and cufflinks, some of them from shipments that were intended for East Coast jewelers, as well as several recovered pocket watch cases and covers.

The jewelry from the S.S. Central America includes an extremely rare medal/badge presented by the Order of Saint Maurice and Saint Lazarus, the world’s second oldest order of knighthood. Bestowed by the House of Savoy in Italy, the medal is a white-enameled cross representing the Order of Saint Maurice and a green-enameled Maltese cross of the Order of Saint Lazarus. It was retrieved from the bottom of the ocean in 1991 and kept in secure storage for decades.

“The S.S. Central America was carrying tons of Gold Rush treasure from San Francisco and the northern California area when she sank 7,200 feet deep in the Atlantic off the North Carolina coast in a hurricane while on a voyage from Panama to New York City in September 1857. Recovery from the shipwreck site occurred in several stages between 1988-1991 and again in 2014,” said Holabird.

The auction also offers a recovered gold coin and 1850s paper money from the Purser’s safe; cargo treasure boxes including the lid from a Wells Fargo gold shipment box; gold miners’ pokes (small satchels or pouches usually made of buckskin); an 1849 Colt pocket pistol; and S.S. Central America bottles, tableware, and dining utensils.

Other intriguing artifacts include the Purser’s keys to the gold treasure room as well as other keys and locks; passenger luggage tags and ticket receipts; ship’s hardware; a navigational

sextant (octant); and daguerreotype photographs retrieved from the fabled ship during the scientific recovery missions.

“These incredible artifacts give us a glimpse of daily life for the passengers and crew in the 1850s,” said Dwight Manley, Managing Partner of the California Gold Marketing Group of Brea, California, which owns the recovered items. “They are a time capsule from the California Gold Rush.”

Some of the unusual, recovered artifacts in the auction include an illustrated 1849 edition of the famous novel, *The Count of Monte Cristo*; 1850s-era personal grooming items; a chastity belt; and a feminine hygiene kit.

“Seemingly ordinary items from the passengers and crew today give us extraordinary insight into the everyday lives of the people who traveled on the steamship,” said scientist Bob Evans who was on each of the recovery missions.

The tragedy of the S.S. *Central America* sinking took the lives of 425 of the ship’s 578 passengers and crewmembers, and the loss of the gold cargo was a major factor in the economically devastating financial Panic of 1857 in the United States.

Insurance claims for the loss were paid in the 1850s and the company that discovered and retrieved the treasure starting in 1988 settled with the insurers and their successors in 1992. With court approval, California Gold Marketing Group acquired clear title to all of that remaining treasure in 1999 as well as all the items recovered in 2014.

Holabird Western Americana Collections has prepared an extensive, limited edition 280-page catalog with dozens of previously unpublished illustrations of the S.S. *Central America* recovery operations, some reproduced in 3-D as shot during the discovery missions with a remote-controlled submersible nicknamed “Nemo.” Copies of the catalog are available while supplies last for \$100 each with the price refundable with any purchase from the auction. Auction lots can also be viewed online.

For additional information about the recovered artifacts auctions planned for December 2022 and February 2023 and to obtain a printed catalog, visit Holabird Western Americana Collections of Reno, Nevada at [www.HolabirdAmericana.com](http://www.HolabirdAmericana.com), call 775-851-1859, or email [info@holabirdamericana.com](mailto:info@holabirdamericana.com).



These miner’s work pants with a button fly, recovered from the 1857 sinking of the S.S. *Central America*, are the oldest known California Gold Rush-era jeans of their kind and may have been made by or for Levi Strauss. (Photo credit: Holabird Western Ameri

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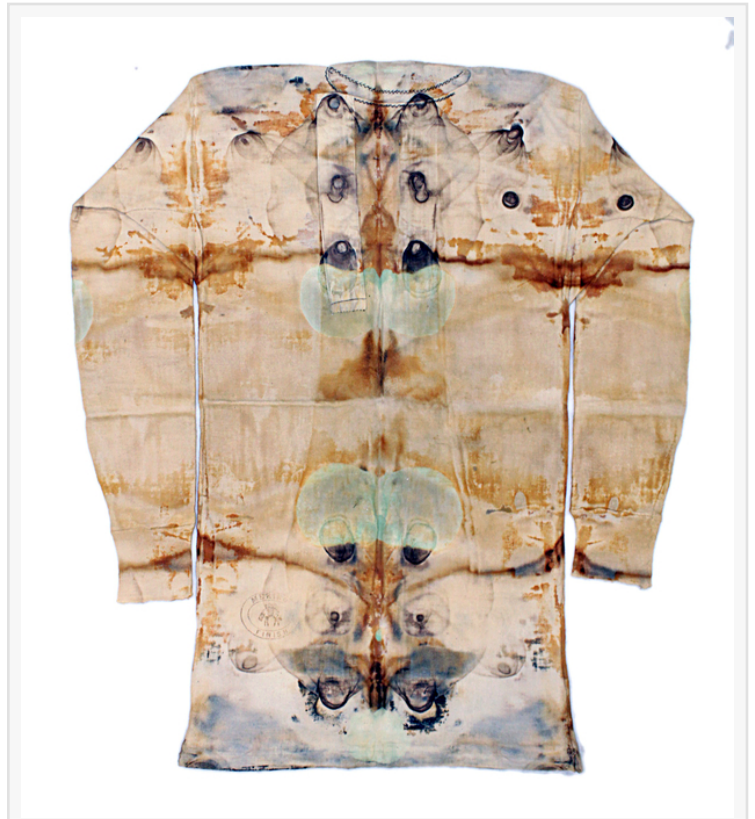


A daguerreotype of an elegantly dressed, unidentified woman was among the photographs recovered from the fabled "Ship of Gold," the S.S. Central America that sank in 1857. (Image courtesy of Holabird Western Americana Collections.)



One of the many historic items recovered from the fabled "Ship of Gold," the S.S. Central America that sank in 1857, is the lid to the oldest known Wells Fargo treasure shipment box. (Photo credit: Holabird Western Americana Collections.)





Early Brooks Brothers shirts with the company's famous emblem are among California Gold Rush-era clothing items and unique artifacts recovered from the 1857 sinking of the fabled "Ship of Gold," the S.S. Central America, that will be in the December 3, 20

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