

For Immediate Release

June 25, 2008

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**TITANIC LIFE PRESERVER SELLS FOR \$68,500 AT
CHRISTIE'S**

At Christie's New York annual *Ocean Liner* sale that took place this evening at the Rockefeller Galleries, a life preserver from *R.M.S. Titanic* sold for \$68,500 to an anonymous bidder in the room. Never before seen in public, and one of only six known to be in existence, the life preserver had been in the safe keeping of a Nova Scotia family since being retrieved immediately after the 1912 disaster. The family traveled to New York for the auction, and were very happy with the result. It was the first life preserver from the doomed ship ever to be offered for sale in North America, and was estimated at \$60,000–80,000.

The cork-filled canvas life preserver was recovered in Nova Scotia by John James Dunbar, and had passed down within the family by descent since 1912. He traveled to Halifax to help with the cleanup after the disaster, and the preserver was most likely found on the shoreline after the sinking during an official beach-sweep recovery operation, although it is possible the preserver was recovered in Halifax from one of the rescue ships, *S.S. MacKay-Bennett* or *S.S. Minia*. They docked there after returning from assisting the rescue operation at the scene of sinking.

The preserver was in excellent condition, considering its age and time spent in the cold Atlantic waters, and had oil stains, along with a missing makers mark. The lack of cut shoulder rests or side straps indicate that this preserver was most likely retrieved from the shoreline or water alone – if the preserver had been recovered from a disaster victim, these would have been cut when the body was found.

The life-preserver is one of over 250 lots that featured in the *Ocean Liner* sale. This popular annual Christie's auction celebrates the golden age of ocean-going, featuring fittings, fixtures and related ephemera from some of the grandest ocean liners, along with memorabilia from their respective operating companies. Other lead Titanic lots included a rare second class passenger list carried off the ship by 12 year-old survivor Miss Bertha Watt, along with her high school essay describing the night of the sinking which sold for \$56,250; a Marconi Gram sent to her family by survivor Helen stating, 'Safe on Carpathia'

which sold for \$6,250; and a large display model of the ship, built circa 1990 that sold for \$1,875.