

CHRISTIE'S

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THE PRIVATE COLLECTION OF WILLIAM S. REESE

THE FABLED PRIVATE LIBRARY OF THE MOST PROMINENT
ANTIQUARIAN BOOK DEALER OF HIS GENERATION



pictured: A rare, contemporary broadside edition of the Declaration of Independence and Paul Revere's engraving of *The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King Street, Boston, on March 5th 1770*. Also pictured are first editions of the *Journals of Congress*, *The Federalist*, and *The Travels of Lewis and Clark*, and an oil painting by Charles Bird King. Photo credit: Visko Hatfield

New York – Christie's is honored to present The Private Collection of William S. "Bill" Reese. The late Bill Reese was renowned as the foremost dealer-scholar of antiquarian books of his generation, and his private collection will be among the most valuable sales of printed Americana in over 50 years. With the rich combination of printed works, historic prints, fine art, and color-plate books, this stands as one of the most visually beautiful collections of Americana to ever come to auction. A series of themed live and online auctions will be held in New York beginning May 25 and September, and highlights of the collection will be unveiled to the public during Christie's Americana Week exhibition January 13-28. Christie's exhibitions mark the first time in over 30 years that any portion of the current collection has been publicly exhibited. With approximately 700 lots, the collection has a total pre-sale auction estimate of \$12 to \$18 million.

Christina Geiger, Head of Department, Books & Manuscripts, Christie's New York, "Seeing William Reese's private library for the first time was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life. The books and artwork so clearly embody Bill's passion for history, evidenced in both written and visual culture. The library was a special place of both sanctuary and adventure, of intellectual rigor and humor, of grandeur and approachability—all these elements held in exquisite balance with exceptional taste."

The collection is highlighted by one of only six recorded copies of one of the earliest contemporary broadside editions of the **Declaration of Independence**, and likely the first edition printed in New England: the Sang-Copley-Reese copy (estimate: \$1,000,000-1,500,000). The Continental Congress, after authorizing the writing of the Declaration and approving the text submitted by Thomas Jefferson and his committee, took steps to ensure the rapid dissemination of the historic document when it was approved on 4 July 1776. The quick dissemination of the Declaration may be vividly traced in newspapers and broadside editions from its birthplace in Philadelphia throughout the thirteen self-proclaimed states, as rapidly as express riders and the post could carry it. The text of the present copy matches almost exactly the typesetting used for the edition printed in the 16 July 1776 issue of the *American Gazette* published by John Rogers of Salem in partnership with Ezekiel Russel. Only six copies, including the present edition are recorded extant with four housed in institutional holdings including Georgetown University, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Peabody Essex Museum.

Illustrated and color illustrated books are also richly represented. Highlights include the *Illustrated Notes of an Expedition through Mexico and California* by John Woodhouse Audubon from 1852; Henry James Warre's *Sketches in North America and the Oregon Territory*; William Guy's Wall's *Hudson River Portfolio* (the first complete copy of the first issue to be at auction since 1948); **Hannah Millard's** even rarer chromolithograph work on the wine grapes of California—most copies of which seem to have been destroyed in the San Francisco's Great Earthquake and Fire of 1906; and natural history works of **John James Audubon, Mark Catesby, George Brookshaw, John Fisk Allen, and Daniel Giraud Eliot**, among others.

Rare historic documents include **Paul Revere's engraving** of *The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated In King Street, Boston, On March 5th 1770, By Party Of The 29th Reg. Boston* from March 1770 (estimate: \$250,000-350,000) and a special first edition copy of **Lewis and Clark's History of the Expedition** by Meriwether Lewis in 1814, which is the definitive account of the most important exploration of the North American continent. This copy is in a very handsome contemporary Boston binding, attributed to John Roulstone (estimate: \$100,000-150,000). **Daniel Bowen's A Front View of Yale-College and The College Chapel, New-Haven**, 1786, represents Reese's significant tie to his *alma mater* and is the first published view of Yale (estimate: \$70,000-100,000). Colonial and European-Americana is also particularly well-represented including superlative copies of works by **John Smith, Theodor de Bry, Joshua Scottow, Nathaniel Morton, Louis Hennepin**, among many others.

ABOUT WILLIAM S. REESE (1955-2018)

Few individuals contributed so greatly to the field of American rare books than the scholar, bookseller, and collector William Sherman Reese. The founder of the eponymous William Reese Company of New Haven, Connecticut, "Bill" Reese was a seminal figure in antiquarian Americana—a man whose expertise and intellect left an indelible impact on both his trade and the nation's most important rare book collections.

Born in 1955, William S. Reese was the son of William Blaine Reese, a marketer for Coca-Cola, and Katherine Jackson Reese, whose family owned the *New Haven Register* newspaper. Raised on a family farm, the young Bill Reese was a keenly intellectual and intensely curious boy whose parents encouraged his passion for learning. Reese's father was an enthusiast for birds and the ornithological paintings of John James Audubon. Together, they traveled to Baltimore and Philadelphia to buy Audubon prints—a harbinger of Bill Reese's later expertise in the subject. In 1973, Reese entered Yale University, where he began his extraordinary trajectory in rare books and Americana.

In 1979, William S. Reese established the antiquarian books firm that would define his presence in the market: the William Reese Company, fittingly situated adjacent to the Yale University campus and its Beinecke Library. Reese's interests and expertise came to encompass fields such as natural history, government and politics, travel, exploration, literature, and color-plate books that reflected the rich historical diversity of the American experience.

A longtime member of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America, the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, the Grolier Club, the Club of Odd Volumes, and the Old Book Table, Walpole Society, Reese frequently lectured on his areas of expertise to fellow dealers, collectors, and American history enthusiasts. He was an especially ardent supporter of the American Antiquarian Society, where he became a member at just twenty-five years old, as well as his beloved Beinecke Library at Yale. In 1998, Reese earned widespread acclaim for his establishment of the Reese Fellowship in the Print Culture of the Americas, which has since awarded research grants to over 150 scholars—including high school students and teachers.

SELECT HIGHLIGHTS



Paul Revere
THE BLOODY MASSACRE PERPETRATED IN KING STREET, BOSTON, ON MARCH 5th 1770, BY PARTY OF THE 29th REG. Boston: Engrav'd Printed & Sold by Paul Revere, [March 1770].
 \$250,000-350,000



A rare, contemporary broadside edition of the Declaration of Independence
JOHN RODGERS, 15 OR 16 JULY 1776
 \$1,000,000-1,500,000



Daniel Bowen
A FRONT VIEW OF YALE-COLLEGE AND THE COLLEGE CHAPEL, NEW-HAVEN....
 New Haven, 1786.
 \$70,000-100,000



The first edition, first issue of **John Smith's Generall Historie of Virginia**, 1624. In a contemporary calf binding and with the frontispiece portrait printed on silk.



William G. Wall's Hudson River Port Folio, 1821-1825, with 20 hand-colored aquatint engravings, engraved by John Hill in New York.



Daniel Giraud Elliot's Birds of North America, New York, 1869. In the background are ornithological works by Alexander Wilson and George Edwards.
 Photo credit: Visko Hatfield

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About Christie's

Founded in 1766, Christie's is a world-leading art and luxury business. Renowned and trusted for its expert live and online auctions, as well as its bespoke private sales, Christie's offers a full portfolio of [global services](#) to its clients, including art appraisal, art financing, international real estate and education. Christie's has a physical presence in 46 countries, throughout the Americas, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, with flagship [international sales hubs](#) in New York, London, Hong Kong, Paris and Geneva. It also is the only international auction house authorized to hold sales in mainland China (Shanghai).

Christie's [auctions](#) span more than [80 art and luxury categories](#), at price points ranging from \$200 to over \$100 million. In recent years, Christie's has achieved the world record price for an artwork at auction (Leonardo da Vinci's *Salvador Mundi*, 2017), for a single collection sale (the Collection of Peggy and David Rockefeller, 2018), and for a work by a living artist (Jeff Koons' *Rabbit*, 2019).

Christie's [Private Sales](#) offers a seamless service for buying and selling art, jewellery and watches outside of the auction calendar, working exclusively with Christie's specialists at a client's individual pace.

Recent innovations at Christie's include the groundbreaking sale of the first NFT for a digital work of art ever offered at a major auction house (Beeple's *Everydays*, March 2021), with the unprecedented acceptance of cryptocurrency as a means of payment. As an industry leader in digital innovation, Christie's also continues to pioneer new technologies that are redefining the business of art, including the creation of viewing and bidding experiences that integrate augmented reality, global livestreaming, buy-now channels, and hybrid sales formats.

Christie's is dedicated to advancing [responsible culture](#) throughout its business and communities worldwide, including achieving sustainability through net zero carbon emissions by 2030, and actively using its platform in the art world to amplify under-represented voices and support positive change.

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