

## A Report on the Sale of the Joe Fitzsimmons Collection

Bonhams, New York City  
September 25, 2018

The sale was held on the second floor of Bonhams at 580 Madison Avenue, New York City. The area around there was in turmoil because of President Trump speaking at the UN. Talk about police presence.

I've never experienced a book auction or any auction quite like this one. At the start of the sale at 1 p.m. there were six people in the audience: Joe and Beth Fitzsimmons and myself plus three persons I didn't recognize. Nearly all the bidding was being done by phone or over the internet. Even so, the bidding was lackadaisical at best. Only 23 of the 80 Fitzsimmons' lots were sold, a startlingly low 29%. The three major highlights—the Cook voyages, the *Aurora Australis* and the *South Polar Times*—all sold. The *Aurora* made \$97,500, the highest in the entire sale. Not a single lot reached the high estimate.

Following the sale one Bonham employee remarked that Antarcticana appears to have hit the wall which I interpreted as meaning that the heady days of high prices for Antarctic material has come to an end—at least for the time being.

This sale could be described as a good and reasonably comprehensive single collection. What it lacked were unique items. There were very few association items, no manuscripts or journals, nothing particularly remarkable. The *Aurora* was a nice copy and the first two volumes of the *South Polar Times* were from the library of Michael Barne, a member of the Discovery expedition, and sported dustwrappers.

Robert Stephenson