

Press Release

## **Oscar Peterson Fish Decoys and Carvings Set World Auction Records in Cadillac, Michigan**

Dennis Kubesh, auctioneer and President of Century Asset Management, Inc. of Maple City, Michigan, announced today the results of the sale of the John Warner fish decoy collection held in Cadillac, Michigan on Oct. 3, 2010. As expected, fish decoys and other carvings by Cadillac's own world renown folk carver, Oscar W. Peterson (1887-1951), were the stars of the sale and numerous world auction records were set. A downloadable catalog and prices realized list are available at <http://www.centuryassets.com/>.

This was the greatest number (77) of carvings by Peterson ever to be auctioned in a single sale. All of them came from the estate of the late pioneer fish decoy collector, John Warner of Newark, Ohio, who had collected in the late 1970s and early '80s. Many of them had an impressive provenance, having been part of the groundbreaking exhibit, "'Hooked On Carving: Oscar W. Peterson'" at Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing, Michigan (October 24, 1982 through April 10, 1983). Others had been shown at "Fishing for Art, an Exhibition of the Implements and Art of Angling" organized in conjunction with the American Museum of Fly Fishing at the Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts (March 17 - April 15, 1984). Still others had been exhibited in "Gone Fishin'... an Exhibition of the Art & Artifacts of Angling" at the Leelanau Historical Museum in Leland, Michigan from June 11, 1989 through January 29, 1990. Some of the pieces were also illustrated in Ron Fritz's book, "Michigan's Master Carver, Oscar W. Peterson, 1887-1951", in the articles, "Oscar Peterson" that appeared in Michigan Natural Resources Magazine, Vol. 51, No. 6, (November-December, 1982) and "Peterson Plugs" that appeared in The NFLCC Gazette, Vol. 27, No. 94, (September, 2002).

The top lot was a 23" early signed pike plaque at \$18,700 (including 10% buyers premium). Two other plaques, a 14" brook trout and a 11.5" bluegill both made \$16,500 and a 17" rainbow trout plaque was knocked down at \$12,650. All four of these are believed to be world auction records for their species and size ranges. Another record top lot was the 12.5" pincushion canoe with carved fish at \$9,900. A pair of full sized Wood Duck decoys by Peterson, believed to be the finest of his bird decoys set a world auction record of \$8,800.

Other highlights of the sale were: Peterson lures from \$1,210 to \$2,420, Peterson fish decoys from \$110 to \$5,500, Geo Aho 6" Rainbow Trout fish decoy at \$192, Dave Forton fish decoys at \$687 & \$880, Herter's fish decoy \$192, Bear Creek wooden Pikie fish decoy at \$220, Delbert Edwards 8.25" Brook Trout at \$275, 3" Peterson turtle at \$1,870, 6" miniature Peterson boat at \$2,475, 3.25" miniature Peterson alligator at \$1,375, 5.75" miniature Peterson duck at \$1,870, Wm Faue jig sticks at \$357 & \$302, Jess Ramey fish decoys from \$550 to \$1,100, Russ Van Houzen Brook Trout decoy at \$247, Hans Janner, Jr. perch decoy at \$1,870, Isaac Goulette perch at \$770, and Andrew Trombley perch at \$1,760.

Auctioneer Kubesh attributed the sale's success to Century Assets' "excellence in marketing" program and to the hard work of fish decoy historian and Peterson expert, Gary L. Miller. Miller had been engaged by the auction company to research provenance, photograph the collection, write the catalog descriptions and assist with marketing. Miller's vetting expertise made it possible for Century to offer an authenticity guarantee which gave absentee bidders additional confidence in the accuracy of the catalog's descriptions. Both Miller and Kubesh felt that the results were particularly gratifying especially in light of current economic conditions. "People will be referencing this auction for years to come", said Kubesh.

Another contributing factor to the sale's great success was undoubtedly siting the sale in Peterson's home town of Cadillac, Michigan. There was an air of excitement with many of the Cadillac area's fish decoy carvers turning out for the sale including Al Williams, Ross Willis, Mike Seeley, Dave Kober, Al Nelson and Delbert Edwards. Edwards confirmed for the crowd the attribution of the two decoys by him in the sale. "The guy who originally carved these two decoys back in the 1960s shows up and says, 'Yup, I carved those and they are earlier than what you said'. You just can't buy that kind of validation", said Miller.