

John Edgar Hoover

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Selling to the Highest Bidder

By Maxine Cheshire

Clyde A. Tolson, the lifelong friend who was J. Edgar Hoover's sole heir, has been quietly selling off the late FBI director's belongings at Sloan's auction gallery here.

One batch of valuable paintings and art objects was sold several weeks ago. Another 40 boxes of miscellany, including bar supplies and four pairs of binoculars, were unpacked for bids this past weekend.

The high-powered glasses, one pair of which bore Hoover's name, were presumably used for viewing horses at the racetrack, not spying on people.

There has been nothing in Sloan's catalog to associate either Hoover or Tolson with the items sold. Officials of the gallery refused to confirm the ownership of the items. The "consignee" had insisted on keeping the transaction private, one spokesman said.

Hoover's connection came to light after one group of paintings by American artist Lucien Powell, who died in 1930, was sold on March 3.

Two views of the Grand Canyon brought \$2,200 and \$1,500. Another, titled "Mountain of the Holy Cross," brought \$1,500.

A prominent journalist who purchased the canvases decided to find out more about the artist by contacting another famous painter of the Western scene, Peter Hurd.

According to Hurd, the two most prominent collectors of Lucien Powell paintings in the U.S. were J. Edgar Hoover and the late President Franklin Roosevelt.

All three of the paintings in the earlier Sloan auction this month are listed in the inventory of Hoover's estate, filed by Tolson with the District Court.

Also sold in that auction were a jade bowl of Hoover's which went for \$1,500 and a Pueblo Indian bowl by a well-known wife-and-husband team of potters, Maria and Julian Martinez. It brought \$600.

Hoover was a collector who regularly attended Sloan's auctions himself. The bibelots and artifacts in his household furnishings were valued for tax purposes at nearly \$70,000.

An unspecified amount has come on the market in recent months, but most buyers did not know what estate the items came from.