

## ALERT FOR ALL ANTIQUE DEALERS AND FIREARMS COLLECTORS

# 3 STOLEN CANNONS

Three cannons from the collection of Hampton P. Howell jr. (1904-1999) were stolen from his family on Long Island, on May 31, 2013, on the same night his widow Katharine, 100, passed away in Providence RI. The cannons were stored in the basement of his son's home in Riverhead, NY, and may have been immediately sold on. The family is offering a reward for information leading to the recovery of the cannons and/or the arrest and conviction of the thieves. Riverhead Town Police detectives are actively investigating.

There were photos and detailed descriptions of the stolen cannons in the late collector's catalogues and scrapbooks, but these have not yet been located. However, all three can be positively identified, from memory and from the dimensions of the wooden stands left behind in the basement. *The photos below are NOT these actual cannons, but similar ones from the internet.* More details on each cannon available in pdf booklet.



**1. Muzzle-loading solid brass signal (yacht) cannon, circa 1885-1900, about 22" long**, stolen with its home-made wooden stand (wheels were not attached and were left behind). The shape of the barrel is based on the Confederate version of the Civil War Napoleon Gun (unflared muzzle, straight barrel tapering from thicker rear end). The majority of brass signal cannons are breech-loaders (powder and shot inserted via hinged rear end) so this one is rare.



**2. Bronze mortar, barrel only, very heavy, probably about 25-28" long**, rear trunions extending about 10" (plus or minus 1/2"). This may be orphaned from a pair of very high quality reproductions made about 50-80 years ago, but more likely dates from the late 1600s.



**3. Antique miniature model of muzzle-loading naval cannon, barrel only, about 10-12" long. Civil War or earlier.** The home-made wooden stand indicates a width of slightly over 3 inches from the outer end of one trunion to the other—most likely 3 1/16" to 3 3/16". 3 1/4" would have been a too-tight fit. The stand was almost certainly custom-made by Howell to fit this particular barrel, so a trunion-wingspan less than 3" seems unlikely, although possible.

The family's primary concern is the return of these cannons, almost the last remnants of what was once probably the largest collection of its kind in the world—400-plus weapons, almost all made between 1550 and 1865, all capable of firing (and often fired, to the dismay of the neighbors).

Contact Van Howell at (631) 591-2688 or [vanhowell@hush.com](mailto:vanhowell@hush.com)

# Stolen Cannon No. 1

contact: vanhowell@hush.com

ITEM | Fontaine's Auction Gallery / Civil War, Antique Firearms & Military Auction / Muzzle Loading Br

## 651 Muzzle Loading Brass Signal Cannon

Currency: USD Category: Collectibles / Knives, Swords & Blades Start Price: 1,000.00 USD

*The stolen cannon had a home-made stand, making it less valuable than the one shown here..*



SOLD  
**3,250.00** USD to floor  
+ (585.00) buyer's premium + taxes, fees, etc...

This item SOLD at 2010 Jan 16 @ 18:24 UTC-5 : E



**Color and muzzle-shape are exactly like this one above, unless recently polished to disguise its identity.**

*This auction web page describes a cannon like one stolen on May 31, 2013 from Howell collection—another rare muzzle-loader, with similar dimensions. Differences: (a) the stolen cannon does not have this flared muzzle, (b) it lacks the original wooden stand, and (c) its patina is (or was) a bit deeper. It very likely came from Wm. Read & Sons (its first owner lived in Boston) but may not have the maker's inscription, or it may be worn down and hard to see.*

Item Description

Location & Preview

BP, Taxes & Fees

Shipping & Payment

Terms

Muzzle Loading Brass Signal Cannon. 22" brass barrel has a 1.4" bore that is 2 5/6" accross at the muzzle. The breech end of the tube is marked "Wm. Read & Sons" over "Boston" over "6". The cannon is mounted on a heavy wooden carriage of naval design with two wooden wheels at the front. There is a mounting bracket on the right side for a sponge or rammer, which is missing. All of the fittings, including lifting hooks at back, trunnion straps, nuts, bolts, wheel waqshers and retaining pins are uncleaned brass with a mellow patina. This is a high quality, very heavy little cannon that would fit in and look great in any gunroom.

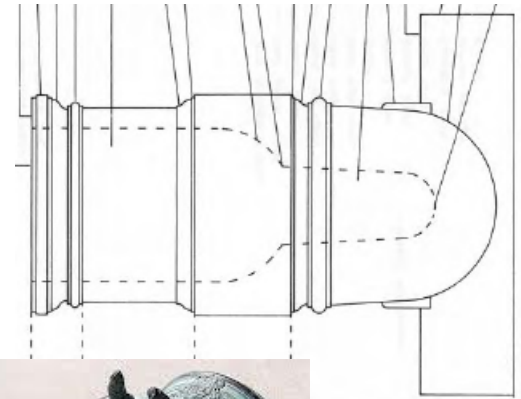
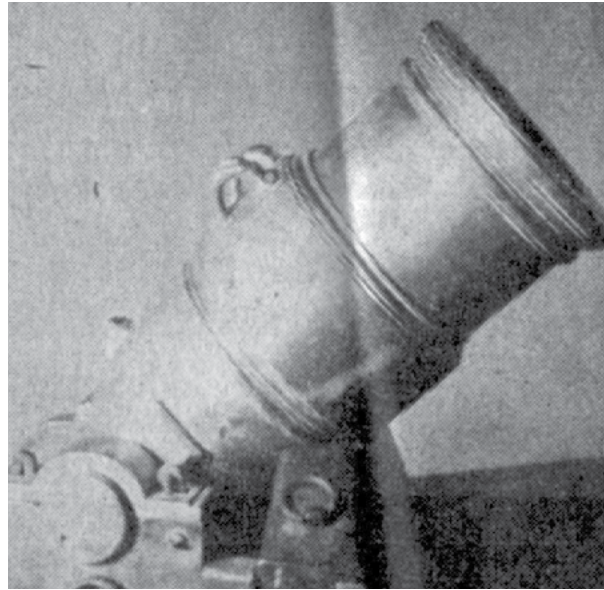
Estimated Value\$2,000 - 3,000.





# Stolen Cannon No. 2

contact: vanhowell@hush.com



**APPROX. DIMENSIONS:** See above. Overall length of barrel about 24 inches,. Width (ends of trunions) about 10 inches. Very heavy. An old wooden carrying stand was left behind. *Barrel only was stolen.*



**SHAPE:** These pictures all show mortars (or short howitzers) with rear trunions, but none of them are exactly like the one stolen in Riverhead NY on May 31, 2013. *The top 3 B+W pictures give a pretty good idea of the size and shape.* There's some sort of crest on the barrel, but no big looping handle. It's not too fancy, not too plain—this handsome design suggests a date circa 1690., and it's probably that old.

**COLOR** is NOT as dull, uneven or grayish as the left photo, but it's NOT as coppery as those on the right. These are made of alloys with lots of copper, orangy-reddish when polished, blue-green when oxidized—the stolen cannon was also an alloy (brass or bronze) but with less copper in the mix.



# Stolen Cannon No. 3



Barrel only, dark bronze, 11-13" long, width to trunion ends probably 3 1/8", give or take 1/16" (no wider than that).



### Westhampton Cannon Collection

Ever since his maternal grandfather, Charles Densmore, of Boston, who fought with Farragut, used to take him around the historic battle sites of the Civil War, Hampton P. Howell, Jr., of Westhampton Beach, has been interested in cannons. Things came to a head in 1951 when Mr. Howell began to form what is now either the largest or one of the largest collections of model muzzle-loading cannons in the United States. Besides haunting antique shops and poking into corners of old houses, he maintains an active correspondence with gun collectors thruout the country. His earliest model is dated 1517, but cannon came into common use when the British installed them on their ships to fight the Spanish Armada in 1588, before which time it had been the custom to board the opposition and attempt to annihilate them by other means. Mr. Howell is primarily interested in the Civil War and most of his models are from that era. He also collects prints and books dealing with the War Between the States, some of which are reproduced in the following pages.



Mr. Howell holding a highly ornamented cannon barrel dated 1632, and a howitzer from the Prince of Hess collection



Model naval cannons, some of which are reproduced in the print, which depict the battle showing the USS Kearsarge sinking the Confederate cruiser, Alabama, in 1864



Model of a Dahlgren cannon is reproduction of Civil War cannon seen in print



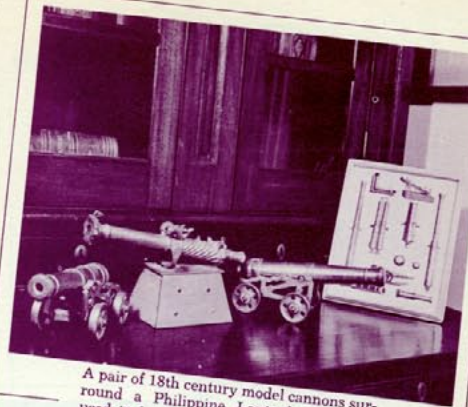
More of the Howell collection with 2 Civil War field piece models in foreground



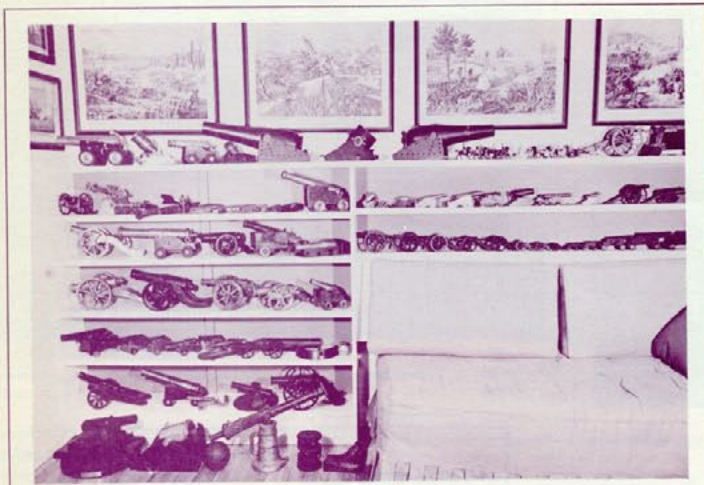
Mortar is exact reproduction of the 13 inch Civil War seige mortar depicted in the print above



Civil War six-pounder, with Battle of Gettysburg in background, a rare Carrier & Ives



A pair of 18th century model cannons surrond a Philippine Lantouka, actually and were stuck on trees small size



Some of the more than 150 model cannons collected by Hampton P. Howell, Jr. in his home in Westhampton Beach



Model of 17 century seige gun, dated 1651



Nineteenth century field piece from the William Randolph Hearst collection; notice the little tools on the side



# Hobby Is Collecting Models Of Cannon

By JOSEPH ADAMS

Hampton P Howell Jr, of Westhampton Beach, has the distinction of owning what is probably the largest known collection of a most unusual hobby-cannon collecting. Mr Howell, whose maternal grandfather, Charles Densmore of Boston, fought with Farragut and later took him to visit innumerable battle sites, quite appropriately took to a hobby that is art, metallurgy and history all rolled into one.

His cannon collection, nearly all models or replicas, date back before the date of the Spanish Armada and on through the various stages of world history. The heaviest concentration of any one era are pieces that are exact models of the Civil War field artillery and naval guns. All, with the exception of one piece, a howitzer, are muzzle loaders; all can be fired, and many have been.

Mr Howell, a mild mannered, quiet spoken man, lives with his wife Katharine, daughter Margaret, and two sons Van and Hampton III (Hampton, the oldest, is at Middlesex school). Since his graduation from Yale and then the Harvard business school in 1929 Mr Howell has spent his professional life in some phase of investments. He is now the eastern L I representative of the New York Stock Exchange member firm of G H Walker & Co, covering both forks of Eastern Long Island. He leaves to go into the New York office but once a week.

On the grounds surrounding the spacious Cape Cod home on Beach Road, there is but a modest indication of the tremendous collection of cannon within. A real naval cannon originating from a wrecked ship at Quogue ornates the base of the flag pole, while several larger pieces are in the back yard. A French field gun of about 1700 origin guards the front entrance.

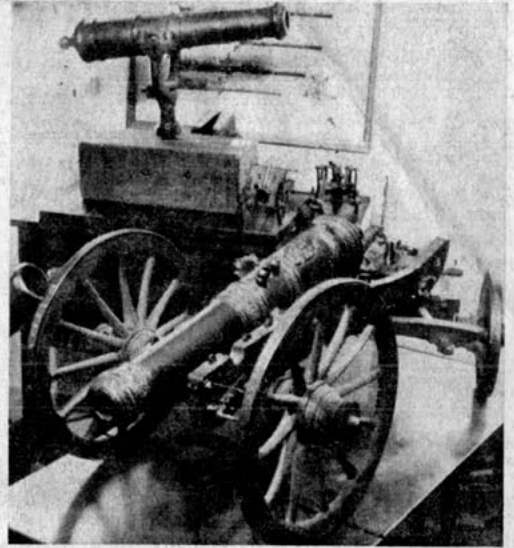
Throughout the house, however, there is a greater concentration of cannon than Alfred Lord Tennyson ever visualized at the Battle of Balaklava. Like the immortal poem—there are cannons everywhere. Several fine pieces fortify the fireplace; others enhance book shelves and mantles. Even the children practicing music lessons have a pair of highly polished little brass mortars looking down at them from atop the piano.

To avoid any possible confusion or conflict of thought, Mr Howell likes to point out that he is a cannon collector, mostly models, but does not collect pistols or rifles. Although he has a few antique firearms, he does not regard these as part of the collection; he just happened to have them.

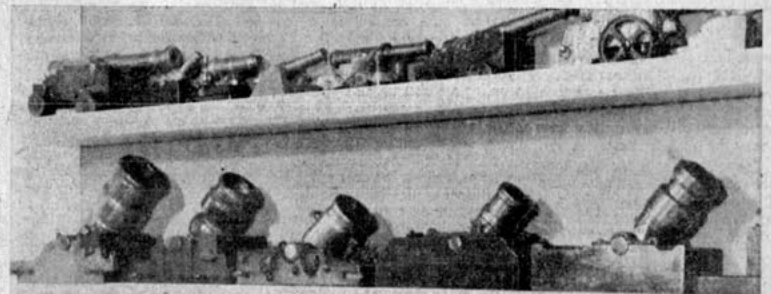
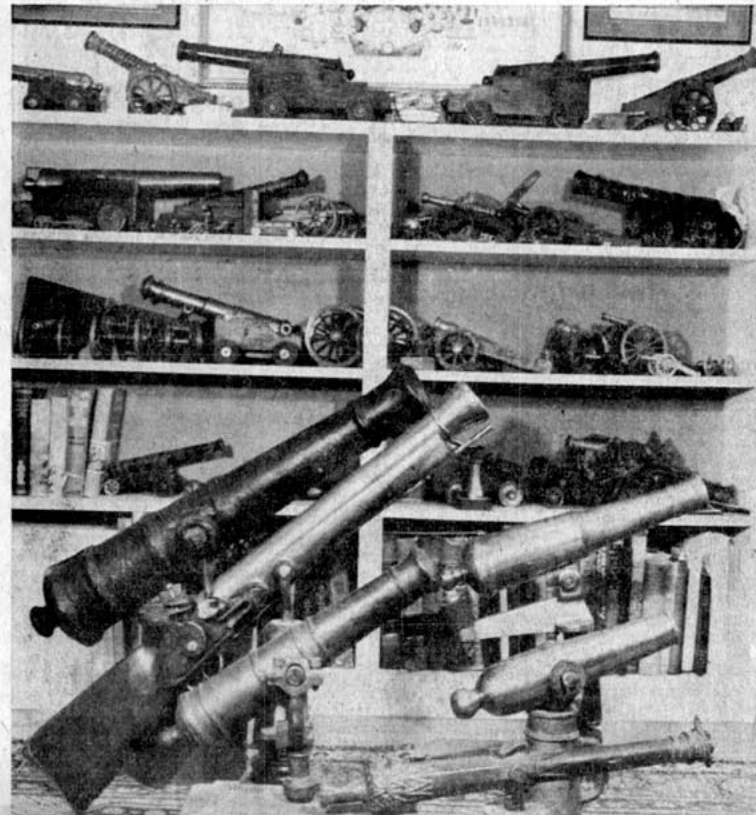
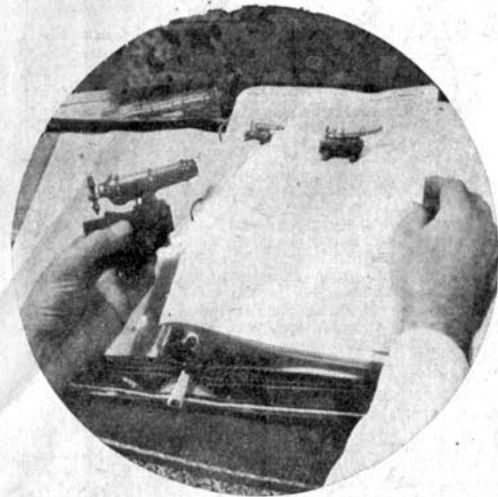
It has taken 10 years to amass a collection of some 300 cannon, which is probably the greatest number of cannon in any private collection (or any collection, for that matter) in the country. These have been acquired from countless sources. Junk shops, storage sheds, antique dealers are but a few. Correspondence with cannon fanciers in the U. S., France and England has enabled Mr Howell to track down a number of "priceless" pieces. Some of these are less than 3 inches overall; others actually shoot a six pound ball. There is no telling what will turn up next.

Mr Howell owned his first cannon when he was 10 years old; it measured about 8 inches and boasted of a one-half inch bore. In those days fire works were obtainable on the 4th of July, and the enterprising youngster wasted no time in eviscerating some jumbo size firecrackers and stuff-

This is described as a perfect model museum piece with a 1672 date and boasts of a coat of arms inscribed on barrel. Probably French—heavy field siege gun with limber.



Forms have been typed so as to enable Mr Howell to keep a complete record of specifications and historic interest of each piece.



Bottom piece is a flint lock "grenade launcher." It is very unusual because of the hook and may possibly be of Dutch origin. Pieces on top shelves are small brass models mostly of Civil War mortars.



Mr Howell, wearing official Chaos jacket with emblem poses with three interesting



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Mr. Howell, wearing official Chaos jacket with emblem poses with three interesting model pieces. Center one is a double barrel miniature cannon.

Photos by Joseph Adams



Ship's swivel cannon, similar to those used in the movie "Buccaneer." The pieces are around 18th to early 19th centuries.

Many model pieces can be identified as a type that were used in famous battles. The Howell collection boasts of many Civil War guns.

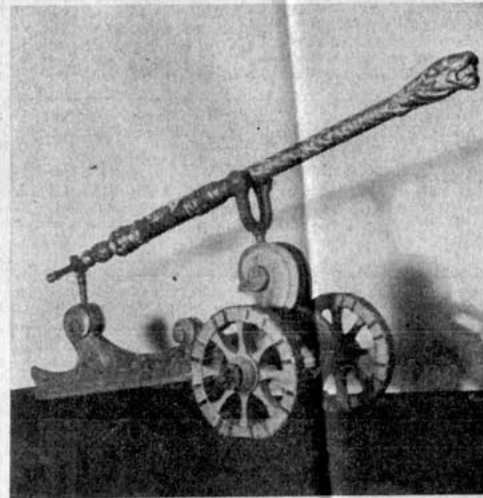
Mr. Howell holds an actual 15 inch cannon ball gauge. A "15 inch" ball had to pass through this gauge before it was placed into the cannon. In the background are models of Civil War guns.

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Traditionally every Fourth, Mr. Howell reloaded the miniature artillery piece, only in the meantime he acquired a mold for 44 cal. bullets. The product of the mold worked nicely in the small barrel. During the noisy holiday he was able to blaze away with the little cannon aiming it at trees, vacant barns and old sheds without anyone being the wiser. He might still have had this first member except for an overwhelmingly large charge of powder which virtually disintegrated the prized possession.

While Mr. Howell follows up his hobby of cannon col-

Continued on Page 36



Thirteen-inch mortar, probably English, dates back to 1778.

This model cannon with chariot-like wheels is venomously suggestive, with its serpent-like barrel. The piece is old, but actual date is unknown.

The barrel from a French gun dating back to 1700 guards the front entrance. The "carriage" is home-made, merely supporting the barrel.

Mr. Howell shows sister Margaret how a howitzer works. This is the only non-muzzle loading piece in the entire collection. The howitzer is a model of the famous World War I gun made by Skoda and used by the Germans to destroy the "impregnable" Belgian forts.

