

The World's First Outboard Motor is up for auction next week...

Accepted among boating historians as the world's first production outboard motor, one of only two known Salisbury's Electric Boat Propellers is up for auction on ebay. (<http://www.ebay.com/itm/162503643213>)

Discovered last year in an outbuilding of a Hudson Valley riverside community, south of Albany NY, this early electric motor dates from between 1892 and 1895. While Ole Evinrude and Cameron B. Waterman often vie for the credit as the inventor of the first commercially produced outboard, that is only true when talking about gasoline-powered motors (see a concise historical account here <http://www.laingsoutboards.com/History.html>). Some 15 years earlier in 1892, Chicago inventor Wilbur S. Salisbury patented his "Boat-Propelling Apparatus" and shortly thereafter began to produce his motor in very limited quantities for a couple years. In 1895 he sold the patent and manufacturing rights to New Yorker Frank S. Allen, who continued to manufacture the motors in Chicago as The Electric Boat Company of New York under his own Allen labeling. Salisbury went on to make innovations in gas outboards, motorcycles, and even in early automobiling.

Although several of the later Allen machines have been reported, there is only one other example of the original Salisbury labeled machines that have been located to

date. (see this link: <http://www.cailleoutboards.com/rowboat/Salisbury/Salisbury-index.html>) The newly discovered motor now up for auction is a bit more complete than this privately-owned extant example, having its original fin, mounting bracket, and battery connection insulating block. The outboard has the serial number "113" stamped on the bottom of the motor, and it is thought by some that Salisbury may have started his numbering at 100, and produced no more than 50 of the motors.

The motor's discovery was shared this past October on the Antique Outboard Motor Club website's discussion board ((<http://www.AOMCI.org/forum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=9204>), where it elicited some enthusiastic comments including:

"A beautiful thing it is. An unmolested example of what actually IS a 'motor' that is indeed RARE! ... they were quite the thing in their day, I'm sure, but one of the drawbacks was that the battery pack required to run them was huge and HEAVY! Some reports were that the batteries alone were good for 100 pounds by themselves!"

"I'll just add that from an antique motor and historical perspective, in my tiny little mind this would rank as one of the most important and significant discoveries for a member of the AOMCI in many many years..."

"You probably will never see another one of those. I would not let anyone restore or paint that motor. Wipe off the

dust and leave it be. Congratulations on finding and preserving a rare piece of history!”

“The value of such a rare and well preserved example from the dawn of outboarding can only be ‘Priceless.’ It definitely belongs in the Smithsonian.”

This is likely to be the last discovery of a Salisbury-labeled outboard motor to be made, and it is truly the world’s first outboard motor. It has attracted the attention of potential buyers from across the US, Canada, and even Australia prior to the announcement of this auction, which is being conducted as part of an estate settlement. Bidding for the motor starts at \$3600, and the auction ends on Mother’s Day, May 14th at 11:00 pm EST.

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Additional links:

<http://www.postcardprints.com/170504/> Directory containing photographs of the outboard motor, patents, and historical images.

<http://aomci.org/forum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=11918>

Announcement of the auction on the AOMCI website.

<http://www.cailleoutboards.com/rowboat/Salisbury/Salisbury-lit/1895-Salisbury-elec-article-Electrical>

%20Engineer-V0I-19.JPG 1895 article from The
Electrical Engineer on the later Allen outboard motor.
<http://www.cailleoutboards.com/rowboat/Allen/index.html>
Information and examples of the later Allen outboard
motor, which was based on Salisbury's patent