

# Rolex Oyster Perpetual Air-King Stainless Steel Wristwatch.

One of the most well-known brands in the world today, Rolex got its start making time-keepers popular with soldiers and airmen during the World Wars. It's fitting then, that the Air-King, a tribute to the brave airmen of the British Royal Air Force, became one of the company's most popular and longest-lasting models. Michaan's Auctions is proud to offer a **Rolex Oyster Perpetual Air-King Stainless Steel Wristwatch**

(\$1,5/2,500) for sale in our May Gallery Auction, held on Friday, May 17th.

Rolex was founded by Hans Wilsdorf and his brother-in-law Alfred Davis in 1905. Originally named Wilsdorf and Davis, the company got its start in London importing Swiss



movements to be placed in the company's watch cases. These watches were then sold to many different jewelers, who branded them with their names. It was only in 1908 that the company took on its now iconic name and began to produce watches under its own name. During World War I Rolex

---

**Michaan's Auctions**

2701 Monarch Street, Alameda, CA 94501  
1-800-380-9822 | (510) 740-0220

made trench watches in support of the Allied powers, but the U.K.'s economic recession in the years following the war led the company to move its headquarters to Geneva, where it has remained ever since.

Attempting to solve the problem of damage to the movements caused by exposure to dust and moisture, Rolex introduced the Oyster watch in 1926. Featuring a hermetically sealed case, the watch provided optimal protection to the delicate working parts and was strongly promoted internationally. The Oyster was commonly displayed in an aquarium within Rolex's stores, and in 1927 Mercedes Gleitze swam across the English Channel with the watch around her neck, further popularizing the model and brand. In 1931, the company patented a self-winding mechanism called a Perpetual rotor, and thereafter

the model would be called the Oyster Perpetual.

Rolex introduced several "Air" models during World War II, however, it was the Air-King that was by far the most successful. Named in honor of the British Royal Air Force, which had a particular affinity for Rolex watches, the model featured the "King" label due to its 34mm case, which was large for the time. The iconic Air-King – Ref. No. 5500 was the second model in the line, introduced in 1957, and was the first to include the features that now make the model so desired. Featuring a clean bezel, simple dial and marker, pencil hands, and no complications, the model would remain unchanged for over thirty-seven years, a testament to its enduring popularity, reliability, and prestige. In the thirty-five years since its retirement, the company has introduced five new Air-King models, however for many

---

**Michaan's Auctions**

2701 Monarch Street, Alameda, CA 94501  
1-800-380-9822 | (510) 740-0220

watch aficionados, none match the classic design of the 5500.



The **Rolex Oyster Perpetual Air-King Stainless Steel Wristwatch** (\$1,5/2,500) offered for sale at Michaan’s Auctions features a cream face with silver index hour markers and silver luminous dauphine hands. The case is 34mm made from stainless steel, with four lugs and an unopened screw back. The watch features Rolex’s caliber 1530 movement and thus carries the “Super Precision” label, the highest quality movement offered with this model. The serial number is 418744, meaning it was produced in 1959, the inaugural year of

the Air-King Ref. No. 5500 model line. The watch includes a handsome stainless steel metal band, with yellow gold accents to the exterior links.

### A Rolex Oyster Perpetual Air-King Stainless Steel

**Wristwatch** (\$1,5/2,500) will be offered in Michaan’s Auctions May Gallery Auction on Friday, May 17th features excellent furniture, lighting, and decorative pieces from the Furniture & Decorations Department, in addition to important works from notable artists in the Asian Art Department, and a number of fine pieces from the Jewelry departments. The auction is led by the Furniture & Decorations Department, which will be offering a salon set, chandeliers, and tables in prominent French and Italian styles, while the Asian Art Department offers works of calligraphy and painting by important Chinese artists. Also

---

#### Michaan’s Auctions

2701 Monarch Street, Alameda, CA 94501  
1-800-380-9822 | (510) 740-0220

included in the sale are platinum, diamond, and gold items, including works by Eric De Kolb, presented by the Jewelry Department.

Michaan's Auctions catalogs can be viewed on our website:

[www.michaans.com](http://www.michaans.com), LiveAuctioneers, and on our Michaan's Live site. Bid live in our gallery or remotely via absentee, phone, or online.

---

**Michaan's Auctions**

2701 Monarch Street, Alameda, CA 94501  
1-800-380-9822 | (510) 740-0220