

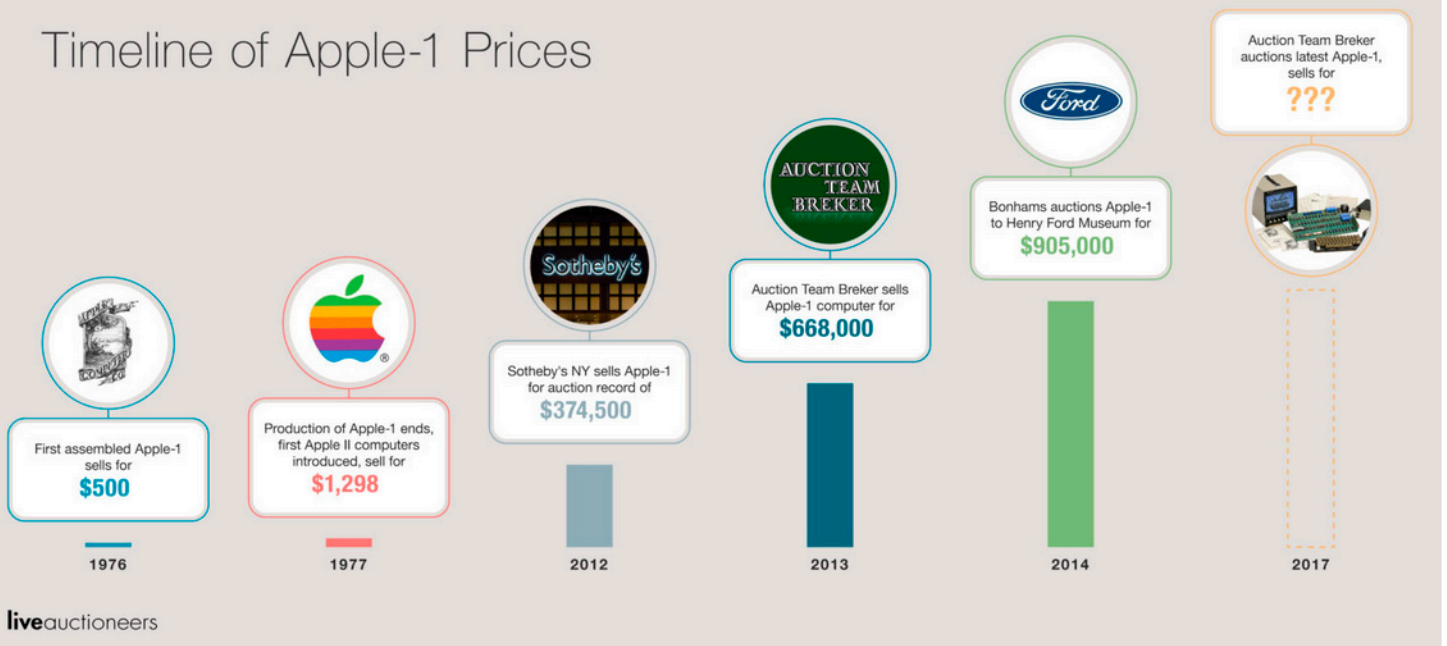
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Apple-1 still tops the list of most-wanted tech collectibles

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Timeline of Apple-1 Prices



NEW YORK – The allure of possessing No. 1 never grows old, whether it's attaining the top ranking in college basketball or owning the first issue of Action Comics. Ask just about any collector of late-20th-century electronics and they'll tell you the ultimate prize is a rare Apple-1, perhaps the most iconic of all devices to emerge during the personal computer revolution.

Introduced in 1976 by Steven P. Jobs and Stephen G. Wozniak, the Apple-1 was the first product produced by Apple Computer Inc., now Apple Inc. When Jobs and Wozniak pitched their kit-form computer to Paul Terrell, owner of The Byte Shop, the pioneer computer retailer quickly saw its potential.

"What I needed was an assembled and tested unit that could sell to people that really wanted to use them and not just to the technical audience," Terrell recalled in a 2015 interview.

Convinced, he bought the first assembled Apple-1 units for \$500 each and the ready-to-use personal computer was born. Today – 41 years later – the Apple-1 has never been in greater demand.

Vintage-tech aficionados seldom have the opportunity to vie for an original Apple-1, but they'll have a chance to do so on May 20, at a sale hosted by Auction Team Breker in Cologne, Germany. (No need to book an airline ticket, though – you can bid online.)

The groundbreaking computer is complemented by a white ceramic 6502 microprocessor and a complete set of time-correct chips. In full working condition, the rare computer was consigned to Auction Team Breker by its first and only owner, a software engineer from California's Silicon Valley.

Accompanying Apple-1 (No. 01-0073) is an archive of historical documents, including its purchase receipt from November 1976, the earliest provisional manual, correspondence with Apple Inc., and even notes from 1977 telephone conversations with Wozniak. The outfit is expected to sell for \$190,000-\$320,000.

Auction Team Breker, an early adopter of Internet live bidding and one of the world's first auction houses identifying and capitalizing on the demand for early relics of science and technology, has ample experience at selling Apple-1 computers for impressive prices. Breker sold an Apple-1 on May 25, 2013 for \$668,000. Uwe Breker, who owns Auction Team Breker, said the buyer was a wealthy entrepreneur from the Far East, who wished to remain anonymous.

That price surpassed the \$640,000 record for an Apple-1 set in November 2012, also at Auction Team Breker. The transaction represented a dramatic increase in value over the previous Apple-1 auction record of \$374,500, which was set in June 2012 at Sotheby's in New York.

The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation in Dearborn, Michigan, paid a staggering \$905,000 for an Apple-1 at a Bonhams auction on Oct. 22, 2014. However, three weeks later, Christie's New York sold an Apple-1 for the comparative bargain price of \$365,000, which fell short of the \$400,000-\$600,000 pre-auction estimate.

These six-figure prices have been attributed to the landmark status of the Apple-1 as the first fully assembled personal computer, its scarcity (it was discontinued in 1977), a fascination with the early history of the computer age, and the mystique of Apple and its founders Jobs and Wozniak.

As the few remaining undiscovered Apple-1 computers become available, it's anyone's guess as to which way prices will go. Auction Team Breker has estimated the Apple-1 in their May 20 auction (below) will sell for \$190,000-\$300,000, but that may be a conservative assessment.



An original Apple-1 computer, consigned by the original buyer in California, is the headliner in Auction Team Breker's Science & Technology sale May 20. Auction Team Breker image

By comparison, a first-generation Macintosh computer, introduced in 1984, with keyboard, mouse, power cord and carrying case, sold for \$687.50 at the auction dispersal of the storied Tekserve computer store in New York City last August. In the same auction, the Tekserve collection of 35 Apple computers sold as one lot for \$58,750 (inclusive of buyer's premium), about \$1,679 per machine. An Apple-1 was not included.

Commenting on the allure of the earliest Apple computer, Uwe Breker said in a 2013 interview: "It is a superb symbol of the American dream. You have two college dropouts from California who pursued an idea and a dream, and that dream becomes one of the most admired, successful and valuable companies in the world."