Stately Signatures
Presidential autograph album spans centuries

When an album of 190 Civil War-era signatures, including those of Abraham Lincoln and his cabinet, turned up in a Boston bookshop in 1954, the question the new owner had to answer was whether or not to simply preserve the album or to add to it.

The album was purchased by Herbert Klingelhofer, the president of the Manuscript Society, who became the most recent of at least three owners who added to the collection. “The person who first owned this autograph album is unknown, but they arranged for the book to be signed by some of the most important figures during the Civil War, suggesting that this person was either extremely persistent or well-connected or both,” says Marco Tomaschett, autograph specialist for Swann Auction Galleries. “Through inheritance or purchase, a later collector got the book and continued to pest the subsequent presidents for their signatures.”

Klingelhofer continued the chain, gathering the signatures of modern presidents. The album now contains eighteen presidential signatures, including John F. Kennedy and both Roosevelts—fourteen of which are on a single page.

“As an avid collector and resident of Washington, D.C., Klingelhofer continued the mission of the album’s first owner by securing the signatures of every president since he obtained the book, including Barack Obama,” Tomaschett says.

After Klingelhofer’s death a few years ago, says Tomaschett, “We hope that this will encourage people to continue collecting current autographs.”

Still noting that these albums make excellent entry points for new and casual collectors who are interested in learning more about history, Tomaschett predicts that the value of such a collection can only continue to rise with the move to electronic communications. Due to the significance of this album, the auction is expected to influence the political autograph collection market for the next ten years.

in 2015, the album will find a new collector at auction. In honor of the 2016 presidential elections, Swann Galleries will hold a November 1 auction including the album, which has an estimated value of $60,000 to $90,000.

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“Autographs provide a window into the past for even the most casual collector,” he says. Owning a primary document such as an autograph puts one instantly in touch with history. As the collector revisits her collection over the years, she might find that she has been inspired to learn more about the circumstances surrounding the items in her collection. Collecting autographs is a gentle path to becoming an amateur historian.”

Tomaschett and the team at Swann are prepared to help new and veteran collectors as they search for and sell historical documents, manuscripts, autographs, and more.

“Established in 1954, Swann Galleries is the oldest continually operating major auction house specializing in works on paper,” Tomaschett says. “We pride ourselves on being more approachable than what people expect of an auction house.”

From presidential autographs to other paper collectibles, Swann’s history of expertise lends support to the most recent generation in a long line of stewards of historical memorabilia.

Peggy Caruthers lives in North Carolina and is the editor of custom comment at JewelryUsInc.com.
A Life in Letters

A collection of documents illuminates the life of George Washington and founding fathers.

The history of the Revolutionary War and the year that followed are taught in every American school, but textbooks do not often teach students about the human dramas that played out around these iconic events.

The weekend of the ABSA Book Fair in Boston this fall, Skinner Inc. will auction a unique collection documenting the life of George Washington. Amassed by the late David Spinney of Chicago, the collection includes twenty-three documents that bring out a human dimension of the life of the nation's first president.

To emphasize the arc of his story, the documents will be presented in chronological order, beginning with his early work as a surveyor and running through the Revolutionary War and his presidency.

“T’s unusual to have this many George Washington letters all together,” says Devon Eastland, director of fine books and manuscripts for Skinner. “There’s a finite number of documents that have survived, and every day one more goes into an institution forever, and they aren’t going to come out,” she says.

The collection contains letters and documents from key historical moments, such as the Revolutionary War and the transition of presidential power between Washington and John Adams. Yet, in many ways, it is the documents describing life outside of these events that are most fascinating. Included in the sale is an invitation to the swearing in of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson as president and vice president, addressed to New York Senator John Laurence. This is paired with a copy of the Connecticut Journal newspaper describing what happened at the inauguration, as well as the subsequent banquet held in honor of Washington. This lot is estimated at $15,000 to $20,000.

An especially rare Martha Washington letter estimated at $15,000 to $20,000 is also featured, highlighting familial drama. The letter asks Fanny Bassett, Martha Washington’s niece, if she will host Ralph Izard, president pro tempore of the senate, and his wife while they visit Mount Vernon. However, as other documents reveal, the guests were left alone with the butler for a night in her absence, and Martha Washington was unhappy with Bassett.

Also for sale is a contract between Washington and a carpenter for work at Washington’s home, valued at $15,000 to $20,000. This contract includes a request for the man to train the slave carpenters at Mount Vernon, which Eastland notes is particularly meaningful today as historians research details around slavery to better understand slave lives.

“These documents make history very human and very real,” Eastland says. “Once you start digging into them, you start uncovering all these layers, and it brings it to life.”

The sale will also include color plate books from the nineteenth century about travel and Native American Indians, including Indian Tribes of North America by Thomas McKenney, estimated at $35,000 to $55,000; Connecticut and is the editor of custom portfolio, a folio of illustrated plates by George Catlin, estimated at $40,000 to $45,000; and The Aboriginal Port Folio by James Otto Lewis, estimated at $5,000 to $15,000.

Together, the items in this sale offer collectors and historians an inside look into the lives of prominent figures in America’s early history, painting a deeper picture of the times and giving modern Americans unique insight into the country’s origins that one simply cannot find in history books.

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Fantastic Finds
A science fiction and fantasy collection traces the development of the genres

The collection at auction this November exemplifies the ways the science fiction and fantasy genres have evolved. Hosted by Leslie Hindman Auctioneers, the Kurtz Collection of Science Fiction and Fantasy spans from the late nineteenth century through the 1970s, with a few items of earlier origins. The selection covers much of the genres’ development, and most of the items have remarkably preserved jackets and many have signatures.

“My taste was very universal, so I began to buy not just current fiction authors,” says collector Ron Kurtz of the Chicago area, “but I started buying early twentieth century, late nineteenth century, as a few books) going into earlier times.”

Though the collection includes diverse pieces, as a whole, it paints a clear picture of the trajectory of science fiction and fantasy literature.

Early items in the collection include a first American printing of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and an early state of John William Polidori’s The Vampyre served jackets and many fiction and fantasy literature.

Frankenstein, which includes a first edition of H.G. Wells’ The Time Machine and The Invisible Man and a first edition of Food of the Gods with a dedication doodle on the front endpaper are also part of the sale.

A first-state copy of J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Hobbit with hand correction on the rear flap and a near-fine jacket is included in the sale, as well as the Lord of the Rings trilogy in first states and jackets and a first-state copy of J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Hobbit.

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Invisible Man with script annotations of ray Bradbury’s short stories, “At Midnight in the Month of June” and “Way in the Middle of the Air,” which includes an original sketch by artist Joseph Mugnaini of Dr. Moundshroud from The Hallowe’en Tree.

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A strong concentration of Robert Heinlein’s works are included, many of them signed, with near fine jackets from Stranger in a Strange Land, The Man Who Sold the World and The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress.

Numerous copies of Edgar Rice Burroughs’ The Man Who Sold the Moon and Space Cadet, and Rocket Ship Galileo.

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Of course, it’s possible to use the consignment process to create pairings that tell new stories and paint broader pictures of the evolution of literature, making for truly unique collections.

Peggy Caruthers lives in North Carolina and is a former editor at Journalistic Inc.
Addison & Sarova@Auction

Trump Politics
How one auction house accounts for every detail of a sale

Though it may seem counterintuitive, modern day presidential elections have a large impact on historic documents and manuscripts when they go to auction because post-election worries affect buyer confidence.

“Prior to the election, 100 percent of the population has some hope that things are going to go their way,” says Michael Addison, owner of Addison and Sarova Auctioneers. “After Election Day, roughly 50 percent of your potential bidders will be disappointed, panicked, stuffing their money into mattresses, and buying survival gear.”

Though he jokes, post-election depression does significantly decrease buyer participation, and this year’s post-election day depression may be more pronounced than most given the tumultuous sentiments surrounding the candidates from both camps.

“I’m no political expert, but it seems neither side is very enthusiastic about their candidate, and both sides are terrified by the opposing candidate,” Addison says. “Many will be voting against the other candidate as much as they are voting for their candidate.”

To minimize the impact on sales, Addison and Sarova schedule November auctions for dates before the general election in order to offer the best possible sales participation.

But this is just one factor Addison considers when planning a sale. Other factors, such as holidays, time of day, presentation, cataloguing, lotting, and advertising are also considered for each auction in order to reach the largest number of buyers.

“By choosing the best time for auctions, Addison seeks to maximize the participation of bidders and ensure the best possible sale. “There are many little details that may not appear in the catalogue, but they are details that happen to know about the book simply from having worked with them personally,” Addison says.

Further, Addison is able to help individual bidders by calling them out by name when an item is up for sale that he knows is perfect for their collections. “That comes from an auctioneer who not only knows the material but knows his bidders’ tastes as well,” he says.

Much like elections, auction results are ultimately up to the individuals participating on the day of the event, but also like elections, there are many steps that can be taken by the auction house team to ensure a favorable outcome. In the case of Addison & Sarova Auctioneers, no detail, no matter how small, escapes consideration.

Peggy Carouthers lives in North Carolina and is the editor of custom content at Journalistic Inc.
In the morning of September 16, 1810, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla rallied the locals of the town of Dolores, sparking the conflict that would come to be known as the Guerra de Independencia de México, or the Mexican War of Independence. This long-fought struggle culminated in 1821 with the establishment of the independent nation known today as the United States of Mexico.

While the facts of this struggle for independence are known, it is the underlying ideology that drove Hidalgo and his compatriots and allowed the insurgent leaders of the revolution to accomplish this feat.

“No war is without its nuances,” says Jesús Cruz, a specialist in fine books and documents at Morton. “No war is waged without an ideology to drive it.”

That ideology driving the revolution is harder to grasp, but the firsthand documents of the participants can paint a clearer picture of the impetus behind the war.

“Ideas are both the trigger and a fundamental piece in every case of armed conflict,” Cruz says. “It is exactly here where documents provide us with insight on the opposing version of realities of a single occurrence.”

Several of these documents have come to auction through the years at Morton Subastas, including documents signed by insurgent leaders, such as Miguel Hidalgo, José María Morelos, José Dominguez, Anastasio Bustamante, Nicolás Bravo, Guadalupe Victoria, and Agustín Iturbide.

The collection includes government and inquisitorial edicts against insurgence threatening revolutionary chieftains with imprison- ment or excommunication or promising pardons in return for resignation. Satirical pas- quinades and pamphlets written under pseudonyms to criticize civil and secular pow- ers have also been included. One such item is a letter dated September 18, 1813 from Morelos, “generalísimo” of the independence move- ment. In this letter, Morelos communicated to Carlos María de Bustamante that he had been assigned as “generalísimo” and asked him to accept the deputy position at the Congress of Chilpancingo so they would not need to hold another election. Bustamante also served that year as editor of the newspaper Correo Americano del Sur. This letter was sold at auction this year for $26,250.

“These documents transport us to the affairs of the moment and the plight of the hero, politician, journalist, and the pop- ular,” says Cruz. “Having a document of the era is not only owning an impor- tant piece of history, but of our entire national identity.”

These documents not only make for interesting collectible pieces, they speak to the ideologies and beliefs of the figures of the Mexican quest for independence, influencing the modern understanding of these events.

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A s the twentieth century becomes ever more distant, collector interest in memorabilia from that time period is growing. This December, Bonhams auction house will host two sales that highlight substantial pieces of American history in the twentieth century.

The Voices of the Twentieth Century sale on December 7 brings together a variety of items from historic events in that timeframe. “As we get further away from the twentieth century, we’re starting to make sense of what happened and the defining key moments in art, literature, politics, and culture,” says Catherine Williamson, vice president and director of fine books and manuscripts at Bonhams. “Those are the kind of items collectors look for to try to build collections around. The auction helps to canonize the twentieth century as a legitimate area of collecting.”

The David Meeker Collection of Ernest Hemingway will be auctioned in one session of the sale and includes an inscribed first edition in dust jacket of The Torrents of Spring estimated at $25,000 to $35,000. An inscribed letter from Jackie Kennedy to John for $15,000 to $25,000 and an autographed letter from Jackie Kennedy to John for $3,000 to $5,000; and a signed copy of Kennedy’s inaugural address for $5,000 to $7,000.

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The Kennedy session will host items brought to auction by staffers from the administration, including an annotated manuscript of Kennedy’s dedication speech for the Robert Frost Library for $5,000 to $7,000; a signed copy of Kennedy’s inaugural address for $5,000 to $7,000; and a signed letter from Jackie Kennedy to John for $3,000 to $5,000; a signed letter from Jackie Kennedy to her neighbors, as a thank you for scaring away some would-be burglars from Fleming’s house, “It comes with a letter from Alexander Fleming, written just three days before his death, thanking Mr. Bax for his great service.” Also included is a letter from Fleming’s housekeeper, which states the sample should not be confused with “Gorgonzola cheese.” Though collectors have long reached back further into history, interest in the twentieth century continues to grow, and as time moves forward, more items will find their way to auction and become increasingly valuable.

An inscribed copy of Hemingway’s The Torrents of the Spring, first edition with jacket. Estimate: $25,000 to $35,000.

An annotated draft of “Marlin off the Maris” estimated at $10,000 to $15,000, and two postcards from Hemingway’s childhood sent to his father estimated at $12,000 to $18,000. An annotated first copy of the World War II-era poster, “Keep Calm and Carry On,” estimated at $1,500 to $2,500, and letters of J.D. Salinger from the late 1970s to early 1980s. The Kennedy session will host items brought to auction by staffers from the administration, including an annotated manuscript of Kennedy’s dedication speech for the Robert Frost Library for $5,000 to $7,000; a signed copy of Kennedy’s inaugural address for $5,000 to $7,000; and an autographed letter from Jackie Kennedy to John for $3,000 to $5,000; and a signed copy of Kennedy’s inaugural address for $5,000 to $7,000.

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