

# KENO AUCTIONS

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## **LEIGH KENO TO AUCTION A NEWLY DISCOVERED DRAFT OF AMERICA'S LAST ATTEMPT AT RECONCILIATION WITH BRITAIN, JUST AFTER THE START OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR**

**JANUARY 26, 2014, 1 PM EST  
127 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street**

Keno Auctions is honored to announce the upcoming sale of a long-missing manuscript related to America's independence. Discovered in the archives of the Morris-Jumel Mansion, a New York City museum, the manuscript is a final, urgent plea for reconciliation by the Continental Congress directly to the people of Great Britain. The intention was for the manuscript to be printed and disseminated in Britain in the hopes of gaining popular support, thus persuading the King and his Ministry to redress Colonial grievances. When the final version was published in Philadelphia in the summer of 1775, James Madison sought to find the author, writing that for "true eloquence," this letter "may vie with the most applauded oration of Tully himself." The answer to Madison's question was unknown to historians until now.

Leigh Keno, the president of Keno Auctions, says that seeing the manuscript for the first time "was one of the most exciting moments of my career." Though he has handled some of the most historically important and valuable pieces of Americana in the world, "Nothing that I have ever had the privilege of working with equals this recently discovered manuscript in terms of historical importance to our nation."

Keno Auctions was asked by the Morris-Jumel Mansion to help find the manuscript a new home. The manuscript will be auctioned at Keno Auctions' New York Headquarters, 127 East 69<sup>th</sup> Street, at 1 p.m. on Sunday, January 26, 2014, during New York's bustling Americana Week. Because of the singular importance of the manuscript, it will be auctioned in a single-object sale. The pre-sale auction estimate is \$100,000- 400,000.00.

The document, entitled "The Twelve United Colonies, by their Delegates in Congress, to the Inhabitants of Great Britain," was written by Robert R. Livingston, who on June 3, 1775, was appointed by Congress, along with Richard Henry Lee and Edmund Pendleton, to compose an eleventh-hour petition directly to the people, not the government, of Great Britain. Because the manuscript's changes and additions are intact, the dignified, proud, passionate and conflicting state of mind of the Colonists at the brink of the Revolutionary War is revealed.

Until two months ago, the document was known only from its final printed version, done in Philadelphia in the summer of 1775. Emilie Gruchow, archivist at the Morris-Jumel Mansion Museum, found the twelve-page original manuscript this past summer, hidden away in a folder with various 18<sup>th</sup>-century doctor bills. She recognized its importance from its stirring opening lines, as well as the date, July, 1775, and excitedly told the Museum's Director, Carol S. Ward, about her discovery. Museum records indicate the document had been buried in the archives for at least 100 years, and it was thanks to the museum's recent plan to catalog and digitalize its collections that the manuscript has come to light.

Ward is thrilled about the discovery of a founding document at the Morris-Jumel Mansion, which was George Washington's headquarters during the battle for New York in the fall of 1776, and a place he visited later as president, "This document is such a vital part of the shaping of the United States. Finding the original draft at the Morris-Jumel Mansion truly shows how this renowned home has been a witness to history."

Prospective buyers can examine the document by appointment or during the preview several days prior to the sale at Leigh Keno's turn-of-the-century Georgian-style townhouse showroom on East 69<sup>th</sup> Street, just steps from Park Avenue. In the days before the auction, Keno Auctions will host a reception for prospective buyers and the media.

Michael Hattem, a teaching fellow at Yale University who is an expert on the Continental Congress and Livingston, says, "The address was part of a last-gasp attempt at reconciliation through redress with Britain, as military conflict had already broken out in Massachusetts a few months earlier at Lexington and Concord." According to Hattem, the discovery of this document "effectively solves a 230-year old mystery regarding the authorship of the document, which can now be conclusively attributed to Robert R. Livingston." Richard Henry Lee's handwritten notes and edits are also present on the manuscript.

Almost a year after the manuscript was composed, the Continental Congress appointed a committee of five men to draft the Declaration of Independence. Among them was Livingston. The discovery of this document and the verification of its authorship help explain why Livingston was chosen—along with Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania and Roger Sherman of Connecticut - to help draft the Declaration a year later.

Dr. Karen N. Barzilay, former assistant editor of the Adams Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society, notes that "Even a subtle change in the first paragraph is revealing—the authors changed the original wording 'We entreat your serious attention to this our *last* attempt to prevent their dissolution' to the less final 'this our *second* attempt'" Edited drafts of congressional documents from this time, after the revolution had begun but still a year away from independence, lend fascinating insight into the minds of its authors."

Leigh Keno is thrilled to part of the sale to help the museum. "We are truly humbled to offer this manuscript for sale," he says. "It is extremely rare in the field of historical American Colonial documents for new discoveries of this importance to turn up. When reading the draft,

with its many changes in place, one gets a sense of what was going through the minds of our Founding Fathers. It really is a national treasure.”