

KENO AUCTIONS

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KENO AUCTIONS SELLS IMPORTANT CONTINENTAL CONGRESS DOCUMENT FOR \$912,500 – HIGHEST PRICE FOR ANY AUCTION LOT SOLD DURING 2014 AMERICANA WEEK

On January 26th, Keno Auctions of New York City sold a highly important and historically significant document entitled *Letter from the Twelve United States Colonies, by their delegates in Congress to the Inhabitants of Great Britain*. After heated competition between several phone bidders in a packed salesroom, the gavel dropped at \$912,500 (including Buyer's Premium), well above its presale auction estimate of \$100,000 to \$400,000. The winning bid of \$912,500 was by private collector Brian Hendelson who, shortly after the auction, said "I am very excited about adding this amazing piece of history to my collection. To be able to buy any original manuscript relating to our independence is an extremely rare opportunity. To have the opportunity to own the original draft of the final plea to Great Britain is even more extraordinary. The only thing I can compare this to would be to own the original draft of the Declaration of Independence". The price is the highest for any lot sold at auction during Americana week 2014 in New York.

This document was long thought to be lost, but in July 2013 archivist Emilie Gruchow discovered it in the attic of the Morris-Jumel Mansion inside a folder of colonial doctor's bills tucked away in a drawer. The document, penned by Robert R. Livingston, was a final plea for peace by the Continental Congress to the people of Great Britain to avoid the Revolutionary War. It was also a prelude to the Declaration of Independence, which Livingston helped draft with Thomas

Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin less than a year later. This working draft fundamentally changes our understanding of the final document which was printed in July 1775 and is complete with fascinating edits, including entire paragraphs crossed out and rewritten in the margins. Scholar Michael Hattem of Yale University stated, the document is "... the missing piece from the culminating moments in which the colonists began to think of themselves not as British subjects, but as American citizens."

Leigh Keno, President of Keno Auctions, said, "I am elated that the manuscript did so well. All of the proceeds benefit one of the finest house museums in New York City. The fact that the buyer is a public minded individual accustomed to lending to public institutions is the best news of all "

Carol Ward, President of The Morris-Jumel Mansion, said after the sale, "I am still in a state of shock. It was so beyond our expectations. This auction quadruples the size of our endowment and ensures that the mansion can serve the public for generations to come."

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