Shown are the title page and list

of convention delegates from

Constitutional Convention of

1787, and Lansing's transcription

of the Virginia Plan, drafted by

Committee of the Whole. The

two notebooks sold for \$902,500

(est. \$600,000/900,000) to Roger

Hertog, who is donating them to

the New-York Historical Society.

"If you love American history,

ask yourself how often (if ever)

firsthand account of one of the

most important events in that

New-York Historical Society.

are a rare such account, an

into the creation of the U.S.

vice-chairman emeritus of

AllianceBernstein. Photos

courtesy Sotheby's.

prepared statement issued by the

"John Lansing's notebooks from

the Constitutional Convention

eyewitness report of what went

Constitution." Hertog, president

of the Hertog Foundation and

chairman of the Tikvah Fund, is

you get the chance to see a

history," Hertog said in a

John Lansing Jr.'s second

notebook from the

James Madison, with

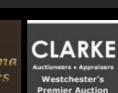
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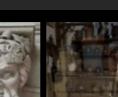




















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June 10th, 2011

## Rare Constitutional Convention Notebooks Acquired for New-York Historical Society

by Jeanne Schinto

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At Sotheby's fourth and final sale of the James S. Copley Library on May 20, Roger Hertog, chairman of the New-York Historical Society's board of trustees, paid \$902,500 (including buyer's premium) for the two Constitutional Convention notebooks of John Lansing Jr. Hertog, a philanthropist and former investment banker, has announced that he will donate the exceptionally rare documents to the institution's

Dealer Seth Kaller of White Plains, New York, advised Hertog about the purchase of the material handwritten by John Lansing (1754-1829), who was a New York delegate to the 1787 meeting in Philadelphia. Dealer William S. Reese of New Haven, Connecticut, was the underbidder.

library.

"I was against one phone bidder to around seven hundred thousand and thought I had it," said Reese. "But another phone came in at that point." Reese, who had planned to buy the notebooks for stock, went to \$740,000. The historical society took the lot on its next bid. The notebooks had been estimated at \$600,000/900,000.

The historical society has stated that it plans to digitize the Lansing notebooks in their original format to share with

scholars everywhere. They will also be displayed in an exhibit when its galleries, located on Manhattan's Central Park West, reopen in November 2011. The galleries are currently undergoing renovations.

"With this magnificent gift, Roger Hertog has secured the New-York Historical Society's place of privilege as one of the most important repositories in the world for scholarship and teaching around constitutional history," said Louise Mirrer, president and CEO of the institution. "Together with the notes on the convention written by South Carolinian Pierce Butler—part of the Gilder Lehrman collection on deposit at the historical society—and other extraordinary original resources of both Gilder Lehrman and historical society collections, Lansing's Constitutional Convention notebooks establish our institution as a principal site for understanding that the Constitution was a product of compromise, negotiation, and brilliant thinking, an accomplishment nearly without parallel in modern history."

Primary sources for the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention are "famously scarce," in the words of Sotheby's 32-page catalog devoted to this single lot. Since the delegates' vow of secrecy banned them from taking notes for publication, only a limited amount of material was created. Even less survives. The original notes of another New York delegate, Robert Yates, for example, have been lost. James Madison's notes are part of the James Madison papers at the Library of Congress, but the fourth president of the United States revised them over several decades, adding, deleting, inserting, revising-obscuring their immediacy and arguably impairing their value.

Seth Kaller, likewise, stressed the "unedited" nature of the Lansing notebooks, which comprise transcribed speeches, discussions, and the give-and-take of the delegates' debates. Those debates were between those favoring adoption of the new Constitution (Federalists) and those opposed (Anti-Federalists). Ironically, Lansing was an Anti-Federalist, who wanted simply to amend the Articles of Confederation rather than replace it with an entirely new document. In fact, Lansing and his colleague Yates walked out of the proceedings, but not before Lansing had created this illuminating and highly significant record.

The Lansing notebooks, a total of 155 pages, were discovered by his descendants at the turn of the 20th century and handed down in the family. An edited version was published in 1939 by Princeton University professor Joseph Reese Strayer. The James S. Copley Library in La Jolla, California, acquired the notebooks after 1965, when the library's namesake decided to take up rare-book and manuscript collecting.

Starting in 2010, the Copley Library was sold off in four sales, now completed. A final report on the final sale will appear in a future issue of M.A.D.

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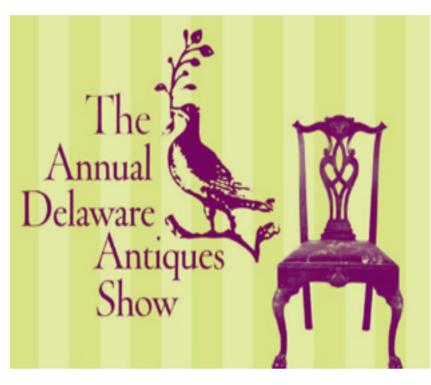


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