

[Click here to subscribe to M.A.D.](#)

## **Engrossed Copy of 13th Amendment Signed by Lincoln Sells for Record Price**

by Lita Solis-Cohen

**One of 13 engrossed copies of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (abolishing slavery) signed by President Abraham Lincoln sold for \$1,868,750 (includes buyer's premium) on Thursday night, March 30 at Raynors' Historical Collectible Auctions (HCA), an absentee auction run by Bob Raynor and his two sons in Burlington, North Carolina. The buyer was White Plains, New York, autograph dealer Seth Kaller, who said he bought the document abolishing slavery in America for a private collector in New York.**

**Kaller said he was thrilled to get it. "The Thirteenth Amendment is a turning point in American history; it sets the country back on the path envisioned by Jefferson when he wrote the Declaration of Independence," said Kaller. "I have been looking for it since 1992 when I did a census of the copies of the Thirteenth Amendment with John Rhodehamel of the Huntington Library. We published it in Manuscripts, the journal of the Manuscript Society. We knew this copy existed because it was sold in the 1980's by Todd Axelrod's Gallery of History. It is pictured in his book, but we could not find out where it was," said Kaller on the phone.**

**Kaller said it was especially nice to have a copy signed by Lincoln and by his vice president, Hannibal Hamlin, as president of the Senate, and by Speaker of the House Schuyler Colfax as well as 36 senators and 110 representatives. (In all, 38 senators and 119 congressmen voted for the amendment. It passed the Senate on April 8, 1864, and the House of Representatives on January 31, 1865. It was signed by**

**Lincoln on February 1, 1865.)**

**"On February 7, 1865, Congress passed a resolution saying that the president should not have signed it because it was not a law, it was an amendment passed by Congress that must be approved by the states," Kaller recounted. "I believe that Lincoln stopped signing them, and that is why we know of a dozen copies with the signatures of various senators and congressmen and the vice president, and thirteen signed by Lincoln." Kaller admitted that he would not be surprised if another Lincoln-signed copy was eventually discovered.**

**The last copy offered publicly, at the Forbes sale at Christie's in 2002, sold on the phone for \$721,000. Kaller said it was a bargain. A year and a half ago, Kaller, acting for the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, Indiana, privately purchased another engrossed copy signed by Lincoln for more than \$1.25 million.**

**Who is the auctioneer who sold the copy that made the new record price? In 1995 Bob Raynor bought HCA (Holzman-Caren Associates) and continued its newspaper auctions under the banner HCA, for Historical Collectible Auctions. When the newspaper business waned a bit, he focused on documents and manuscripts, according to his son, Ryan, 29, the firm's business manager. He said his brother, Ethan, 32, does 75% of the cataloging and his father manages the Web site and is the business-getter. Ryan said his father found the 13th Amendment in a collection in northwestern Pennsylvania and convinced the owner to sell it.**

**Raynors' HCA holds five or six absentee auctions each year. Printed catalogs are sent to 2000 collectors, dealers, and institutions and are posted on the Web site ([www.hcauctions.com](http://www.hcauctions.com)) three weeks before the sales. HCA accepts bids by mail, fax, phone, and e-mail. This sale of 113 lots closed at 6:21 p.m. on March 30. Callbacks ended at 6:48 p.m. Kaller said he requested a callback and was told his bid bought the**

### **13th Amendment.**

**Ryan Raynor said there was competition for the 13th Amendment from private collectors and institutions. The auction house let good customers know about the amendment a few months before the sale and exhibited the one-page document on lined vellum at the Pearce Civil War Museum on the Navarro College campus, Corsicana, Texas; the Frederick Douglass Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, Atlanta, Georgia; the North Carolina Museum of History, Raleigh; and the Times-News building, Burlington, North Carolina.**

◆ 2006 by *Maine Antique Digest*

[Search M.A.D.](#) | [Comment](#) | [M.A.D. Home Page](#) | [Search Auction Prices Database](#) | [Subscribe](#) |

<http://www.maineantiquedigest.com/articles/may06/f-13thamend0506.htm>