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IPL Question #3

Needed by: 11/25/2009

Question:

I have a typed version of Theodore Roosevelt's acceptance speech for nomination of vice president of the United States given in Oyster Bay, New York in 1900. Document #140. It is an actual piece from that period which I am looking to put up for an auction or for sale in other ways.

location: New York
area: Biography
reason: reference
school: No

Greetings from the IPL! Your question about possible sale or auction venues for an original Theodore Roosevelt document was very interesting to follow up on. I hope that these resources give you plenty of options!

When I thought about your historical document, the first organization that came to mind was the Manuscript Society, a group that I was already familiar with who support the preservation and collecting of historical documents.

<http://www.manuscript.org/>

I already knew their website, but you can find it by using Google:

<http://www.google.com/>

and entering the keywords "manuscript society" (without the quotes). It should be the first link provided. On their site, they provide a useful list of recommended, reputable companies that sell historical documents, and also include auction locations:

<http://www.manuscript.org/2009advertisers.html>

Many of these companies are based in New York. The Manuscript Society is a club founded by collectors, but it now has many academic connections and has been around for a very long time. I would count the information found on their site as reliable.

Another organization I was already familiar with was the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America:

<http://www.abaa.org/>

This is another reputable, long-standing organization that lists sellers of historical books and documents. You can also find their website by going to Google:

<http://www.google.com/>

and entering the keywords "antiquarian booksellers association of America" (without the quotes). The site should be the first link. By clicking on the link 'Find Member Booksellers' at the top of the main page, I found their dealer search page:

http://hq.abaa.org/books/antiquarian/databases/bookseller_search.html

This link is very long, and may break. For your convenience, here is a shortened version:

<http://tinyurl.com/yz8qmst>

On this page, I selected the Specialization 'American Historical Manuscripts' from the drop-down menu and selected find. This gave me a list of 12 possible sellers, two of which are fairly close to you and sound promising: Catherine Barnes Autographs, whose specialties include "Letters & Documents in the Fields of Americana, [and] Presidents":

<http://hq.abaa.org/books/antiquarian/bookseller/1781.html>

and Ian Brabner, who specializes in “19th Century Americana, Ephemera, [and] Manuscripts”:

http://www.abaa.org/bookseller_info.php?d=806432

These sellers are located in Philadelphia, PA and Wilmington, DE, respectively. Because they are listed as members on the Antiquarian Booksellers Association website, they should be assumed to be reputable dealers.

Another possible resource for listings of potential sellers is a printed directory. To find one, I went to WorldCat, which is a catalog for many public and academic libraries:

<http://www.worldcat.org/>

I entered the keywords “autograph dealers directory” (without the quotes). I have seen on the previous sites that that is the name most likely to be associated with appropriate dealers, even though your document may not have a signature. This search gave me two useful results, which may be available to you through interlibrary loan at your local public library. The first is “The autograph dealers directory: where to buy, sell & trade autographs : a collector's guide to autograph dealers throughout the U.S. & Europe.”

http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/38845032&referer=brief_results

This was published in 1997, so the information in it will not be current for web auction sites, but many of the sellers that are reputable have been established for a long time. This book could provide you with the names of reputable dealers, which you could use as a basis for web searches in order to locate current contact information. The next possibility that I found was the “UACC international dealers’ directory for buying and selling autographs.”

http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/20411132&referer=brief_results

This is a journal, published regularly by the Universal Autograph Collectors Club, which lists up-to-date information on dealers and auction sites.

I hope you find this information useful in your search for a way to sell your historical document. Thank you for using the IPL, and please don't hesitate to come back and ask more questions in the future!