Article: Autograph Collectors Find Hard Knocks Their Lot -- Aften

Christman, Henry E.

http://hdl.handle.net/10456/27366

This item is in the public domain.

All materials in the Allegheny College DSpace Repository are subject to college policies and Title 17 of the U.S. Code.
Autograph Collectors Find Hard Knocks Their Lot—Aften

This is the second of a series of six articles on the hobby of collecting. They will take you behind the scenes with the book, stamp, coin, autograph collectors and others, and will give intimate glimpses of some of the best known collections in Albany.

BY HENRY E. CHRISTMAN

AUTOGRAF-collecting is no path of roses.

It requires stubborn persistance, and broad shoulders that can bear sharp, stinging blows from the great.

Even the gruff admonition of Admiral William Sims failed to shake John E. Boos, probably Albany’s most famous contemporary collector, from the trail of the great.

Advised Admiral Sims, with sharp military precision: “I think that you could be much better employed than by writing to very busy men asking them to take of their time as you suggest.”

Collector Elated

And thereat the admiral signed his name, and John Boos had the autograph he sought.

Far from being defeated, Mr. Boos was elated.

“That’s the kind of an autograph we like,” he said: “It’s different; it’s distinctive. I wish I could get more like it.”

An afternoon with Mr. Boos in his study, amid his books and his papers, is a delightful excursion among the great—men and women from all walks of life—presidents, statesmen, educators, cartoonists, poets, authors and 15,000 admirers of Lincoln.

As he spreads a bound volume of autographs before your eyes, you see more than the bold strokes of the autographer’s pen, for Mr. Boos is a rare conversationist. As he talks the people of his autograph come to life in the room. He speaks with authority on people and history and fills his talk with all sorts of anecdotes.

Admires Wilson’s Statement

Although Mr. Boos has piled up a library of 25,000 autographs—a collection considered by many one of the most important in the state, he has his favorites.

There is Woodrow Wilson’s statement on the Gettysburg address at the end of a copy of Lincoln’s famous message. Wilson wrote:

“An incomparable example of sincere eloquence.”

There is a volume in that sentence,” said Mr. Boos.

“Alongside this, he places Franklin D. Roosevelt’s comment on the same Lincoln message, written by the President while Mr. Boos stood beside his desk.

“We are in the battle of the 20th Century, sometimes as remote as the days of Greece and of Rome are to us.”

When our civilization of the 20th Century bestrides the earth, Lincoln’s words will still ring out and serve as an inspiration to men and women throughout the world.”

Mr. Roosevelt wrote this when he was Governor, and did it in five minutes Mr. Boos said.

But Mr. Roosevelt has changed, at least so far as the autograph hunter is concerned.

“He ignores our requests now,” Mr. Boos said.

Another Roosevelt, T. A., wrote at the bottom of the Gettysburg address for Mr. Boos:

“I believe this was the greatest speech ever made.”

Wrote Taft to Mr. Boos:

“This is one of the greatest speeches in any language.”

And Mrs. Herbert Lehman on the Lincoln speech:

“It is an honor to be able to write one’s name on the page where this thought rests.”

Of Mr. Boos’ 25,000 collection, about 15,000 of them are Lincolnia. Some 200 are comments from famous people on what they thought of the Gettysburg address. Thousands are from people who knew and saw Lincoln. He has collected them with design and purpose, some are from people who knew him in Springfield, others who saw him on the battlefield and at Gettysburg.

President Roosevelt, in five minutes, wrote this tribute to Lincoln’s Gettysburg address. While he penned the comment, John E. Boos, collector, waited at his side.

Cartoonists have their own individual way of autographing letters. At the left is one of Karl K. Moon Mullens forms a part of the autograph of Artist Willard who app