

Button Gwinnett Signatures: A Census

RYAN SPEER

Button Gwinnett's autograph, necessary to complete a set of autographs of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, has been one of the great prizes of American autograph collecting for more than 100 years. The reasons for its popularity may seem obscure. Other signers' autographs, most notably South Carolina's Thomas Lynch, Jr., are just as scarce as the Gwinnett but are less celebrated. However, Button Gwinnett has had the benefit of better publicity!

Well-heeled collectors and dealers competing for the notably scarce signature have often made headlines, particularly during the signers craze of the 1920s. The high prices paid at auction for Gwinnett signatures make good copy, especially when juxtaposed with his relative obscurity as a historical figure. In short, Button Gwinnett has managed to cross over from the collecting world into the realm of public awareness. While nowadays the prospects for completing a signers set are remote for even the most resourceful collectors, Gwinnett items which do come to auction today still bring exorbitant sums.

The steady interest in Gwinnett autographs has tended to encourage a periodic accounting of their whereabouts. This is the third census of known Button Gwinnett signatures, excluding the general enumerations of signers sets produced by Charles

Sir
 Philad^a. July 19th 1776
 The Marine Committee having considered
 how necessary your attendance is, in the Yard
 taking care of the materials, and the Brigate
 of which you are Cook; think proper to
 request that you will not go on the proposed
 expedition to the Jersey, but that you
 remain to do your very necessary business.
 You may shew this to your commanding
 Officer to whom, it is hoped, it will prove
 a satisfactory reason for your stay.

We are Sir
 Your obed^t serv^t.

Agreed in Council
 John Hancock

Robt Morris
 Button Guinness
 George Lewis
 J. A. Smith
 Nathan M. Dutton

Jo
 W. John Adams

A letter signed by Gwinnett and other members of the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress which includes five other signatures of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Courtesy of The James S. Copley Library Collection.

De F. Burns in 1870 and Lyman Draper in 1889. Charles Jenkins compiled the first Gwinnett census, which he attached as an appendix to his 1926 biography of the Georgia signer; he listed thirty-six autographs. Joseph Fields, a founder of the Manuscript Society and its first president, published the second census in 1950; he identified forty-seven.¹ This census updates the Jenkins' and Fields' lists and brings the total to fifty-one items. Hopefully it will be useful to autograph collectors as well as scholars seeking access to this very widely dispersed body of records.

The outlines of Gwinnett's life are well-enough established.² He was born in Gloucester England in 1735, the son of Reverend Samuel Gwinnett. He had emigrated to Georgia by 1765 and, after a brief stint operating a dry goods store in Savannah, became a planter. Gwinnett purchased St. Catherine's Island, a large property directly adjacent to Sunbury, Georgia's second port of entry. Gwinnett was appointed justice of the peace for St. John's Parish in 1767, and served briefly in the colonial assembly during 1769. In 1773, Gwinnett was forced to sell St. Catherine's to his creditors. He arranged to keep his home on the island, and began his political career in earnest.

St. John's Parish represented the vanguard of the revolutionary impulse in Georgia and Gwinnett ultimately emerged as a leader of what was known as the Popular Party, the more radical and popular Whig faction in the colony. In 1776 the provincial congress chose Gwinnett as commander of the state's Continental Army force. This proved to be a premature move, and the conservative Christ Church Whigs refused to accept his appointment. A subsequent agreement between the factions installed Lachlan McIntosh in his place. Gwinnett was offered a seat in the Continental Congress as consolation, and in that capacity he voted in favor of and signed the Declaration of Independence.

Upon his return from Philadelphia, Gwinnett played a significant role in the drafting of Georgia's newest state constitution. He was elected speaker of the provincial assembly and, in early 1777, was chosen by the council of safety to succeed Georgia president Archibald Bulloch. At the height of his influence, Gwinnett turned his attention and resources to the harassment of his chief rival, Lachlan McIntosh. Gwinnett's disagreements with the McIntosh family, rooted in their competition for military power and exacerbated by Gwinnett's imprisonment of

Lachlan's brother George McIntosh on charges of treason, ultimately led to a duel with Lachlan in May 1777. Both men were wounded. Gwinnett died three days later from complications resulting from a bullet wound to his thigh.

Button Gwinnett would have remained a curiosity, familiar only to Georgia historians and specialists on the colonial and revolutionary South, if not for William Buell Sprague. Sprague, the prototypical American autograph collector, is generally considered to have originated the concept of the signers set, and to have assembled the first such set of autographs of all signers of the Declaration of Independence sometime in the years before 1834.³ The genesis of Sprague's autograph collection, the first great collection in the United States, is a notable story in and of itself.

That Sprague, a graduate of Yale and a notable churchman in his later years, found himself in the employ of George Washington's family as a tutor during 1815 and 1816, and subsequently gained access to the late president's correspondence, greatly aided his cause. He was allowed to take any letters that he wanted, provided that he replaced them with copies. In this manner he was able to assemble an unparalleled collection, containing the signatures of most of the leading men of the colonial, revolutionary, and federal periods. When Sprague's emulators set out to assemble their own collections, without the same advantages that Sprague enjoyed, it became evident early on that records of many signers, often the most obscure among them, were difficult to come by. Of course, Button Gwinnett was numbered among the most difficult autographs to acquire.

Joseph Fields' examination of the physical circumstances contributing to the signature's rarity, which is included in his own census of the known signatures, remains unsurpassed. Fields notes that, while Gwinnett did meet an abrupt and unexpected end, and he was indeed one of the first signers to pass away, he had lived a relatively long life. Gwinnett was forty-two years old at his death, and had enjoyed ample time to write letters and sign papers. Fields cites the destruction in Savannah accompanying the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, and the abandonment of the port city of Sunbury as further factors contributing to the shortage of Gwinnett papers. He also notes the significant gap between Gwinnett's death and the years in which mementos of

the signers in general became desirable objects. Perhaps most importantly, Fields notes that Gwinnett's family line died out before 1800.⁴ That final circumstance probably has as much to do with the scarcity of Gwinnett's written remains as anything else.

In any event, there are few remaining personal papers of Button Gwinnett. Furthermore, we are left with a body of records which is, unfortunately, almost as devoid of human interest as it is limited in size. Receipts, bonds, mortgages, and other routine business and land records predominate. Records from Gwinnett's public career, also largely consisting of receipts and routine paperwork, are also fairly well represented, but there are no significant letters on state affairs. The Pierpont Morgan Library holds the only known Gwinnett A.L.S, which is a two-sentence letter of reply addressed to Savannah lawyer John Houstoun. Perhaps the most spectacular surviving document, with the exception of the Continental Congress agreement sometimes known as the "Secret Pact," which was signed by all members of that body, or the Declaration of Independence itself, is Gwinnett's holograph will, which can also found at the Morgan Library.

One of the most spectacular purchases of a Gwinnett autograph, if not the most spectacular, was made by Philadelphia bookseller Dr. A.S.W. Rosenbach in 1927, when he paid \$51,000 for autograph Number 36 in the census below—a 1776 letter of the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress bearing the signatures of Gwinnett and five other signers of the Declaration of Independence. Rosenbach, now a somewhat obscure figure, played an under-appreciated role in increasing the visibility and inflating the market value of signers' signatures and other manuscript Americana. "The Doctor," a biographer noted, "felt that he had to be known as the buyer of all great items which came on the market."⁵ Gwinnett signatures have always brought high prices at auction, but they did not reach consistently exceptional, headline-grabbing heights until the 1920s, when a strong economy, national pride associated with the sesquicentennial, and grandiose salesmanship in the person of Rosenbach combined to generate a craze for collecting the signers.⁶ No less than twelve Gwinnett signatures changed hands at public auctions during the 1920s. Rosenbach himself purchased eight

of them between 1926 and 1934, both as an agent and as an outright buyer, and at prices ranging from \$18,000 to \$51,000. He also served as an agent in the sales of three other Gwinnett autographs (examples 46, 31, and 32 below).⁷ “During the last six months,” Rosenbach crowed, “quotations on Button Gwinnett Preferred have jumped sixty-five percent.”⁸ However, this bull market in Gwinnett signatures was little more than an unsustainable parallel of the more general national atmosphere of frenzied speculation. A severe correction in values followed the stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression. Public sales of Gwinnett items dwindled to almost nothing. In fact, the market for Gwinnett autographs did not fully recover until the mid-1970s, when the national bicentennial once again generated intense interest in the Declaration signers.⁹ This interest was reflected in, or fueled by, the large number of signers sets that appeared at auction during the 1970s and 1980s. The most recent Gwinnett auction took place in 2002, when an unknown buyer paid \$240,000 for a fine D.S. (see Number 4 below).

As noted above, this is the third census of known Button Gwinnett signatures. It represents a distillation of the most current and accurate information available to the author. Various changes in ownership of the older known items are noted, and entries are included for each of the four signatures that have surfaced since the compilation of the old lists. The Fields’ and Jenkins’ lists remain invaluable resources: all ownership provenance data included in the following entries without any accompanying formal citation can be assumed to come from one or both lists, and previous appearances in the old lists also lends vicarious authority to the inclusion of those few signatures for which the author has not been able to examine reproductions.¹⁰ “Unknown Collection” is substituted in place of an owner or institution’s name in those cases where buyers at auction have remained anonymous, or where private transactions have obscured the known provenance of an item. The signatures are arranged chronologically, beginning with the earliest papers. Finally, the old Jenkins’ and Fields’ numbers have been included in parentheses for the reader’s convenience.

Button Gwinnett Census

1 D.S. - April 11, 1757 - Lambeth Palace Library, London

A signed application for a marriage license found in the records of the vicar general of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, the chief archives of the Church of England.

(J36) (F26)

2 D.S. - April 19, 1757 - Staffordshire Records Office, Stafford, UK

A signature affixed to the Church of St. Peter's parish marriage registry book. The church attempted to sell this document in 1953, but diocesan authorities halted the attempt.¹¹

(J32) (F25)

3 D.S. - August 6, 1761 - St. Mary's of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, IL

Gerald Mander, a historian and native of Wolverhampton, UK, discovered at least four Gwinnett signatures in an account book of the Wolverhampton Bluecoat School in 1927. Gwinnett had signed his name as a subscriber several times during the latter portion of 1761. The school sold the signatures, using the funds to endow a scholarship.¹² See also entries 4, 5, and 6.

(F27)

Ex: George Mundelein¹³

4 D.S. - September 3, 1761 - Office of the Historian General, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Washington, D.C.

The September page of the Wolverhampton Charity School account book was not known to Joseph Fields at the time of his own census.

Ex: Philip Sang; Malcolm Forbes¹⁴

5 D.S. - November 5, 1761 - Unknown Collection

The November page of the Wolverhampton Charity School account book.¹⁵

(F39)

Ex: Frederick Peck; Joseph Fields

6 D.S. - December 3, 1761 - Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, OH

The December page of the Wolverhampton Charity School account book.

(F37)

Ex: Robert C. Norton

7 A.D.S. - October 12, 1762 - Yale University, New Haven, CT

A receipt for payment of debt from one Ben Davies. Gwinnett traded in the colonies for several years prior to his emigration. He was owner or part owner of several ships, and must have traveled to New York, where he transacted business with Mr. Davies, at least once. An archivist spotted this document in a gift to the university in 1956. The donor, previously unaware of the Gwinnett signature's rarity and value, generously declined Yale's offer to return the item.¹⁶

8 A.D.S. - September 14, 1765 - Cornell University, Ithaca, NY

A bill of sale for the boat "Dolphin" in the port of Savannah, owned by William Berfield and transferred to Henry Medscar. Gwinnett drafted this document and signed as a witness to the transaction.

(F47)

Ex: Charles C. Jones; Telamon Cuyler; Thomas Madigan; Mrs. Nicholas H. Noyes

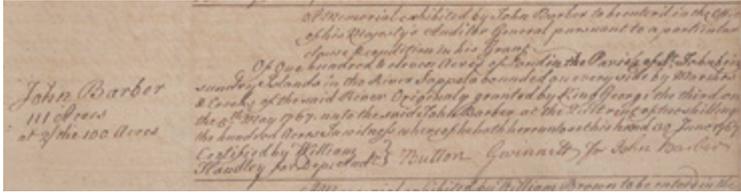
9 D.S. - June 30, 1767 - Georgia Archives, Morrow, GA

This signature is found in a volume of auditor general's records documenting land grants and related rates of quit rent. Gwinnett has signed one entry in the place of John Barber. The excitement surrounding Gwinnett and the signers during the 1920s prompted the state of Georgia's suit to recover the will of Joseph Stanley (see signature 18), as well as a renewed search through the colonial archives, resulting in state archivist Ruth Blair's discovery of this signature in 1926.¹⁷

(J35) (F24)

10 D.S. - January 6, 1768 - New York State Library, Albany, NY

A bond given to Noble Jones. A story once in wide circulation had Israel Tefft discovering this paper, the final piece necessary



Gwinnett signature found in a volume of Auditor General’s records documenting land grants and related rates of quit rent. *Courtesy of the Georgia Archives*

to complete his signers set, on the lawn of a Savannah gentleman (an unsuspecting relative of the document’s author whose servants had been cleaning out a garret full of old papers). In reality the Gwinnett was a gift to Tefft from George Wymberley Jones De Renne,” who was himself a noted collector of Georgiana and extremely unlikely to allow his family papers to blow around in the yard.¹⁸

(J15)(F17)

Ex: George Wymberley Jones DeRenne; Israel Tefft; E. French

11 A.D.S. - October 4, 1768 - New York Public Library, New York, NY

A bill for merchandise written and signed by Gwinnett during the brief period in which he operated a Savannah dry goods store.

(J3)(F4)

Ex: Thomas Addis Emmet¹⁹

12 D.S. - January 2, 1769 - Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

Signature affixed to a printed form from the council of the colony of Georgia granting 250 acres of plantation land and 250 acres of pine land to Samuel Farley of Savannah. Gwinnett appears to be a co-signer. Charles Jenkins and Joseph Fields both dated this item March 5, 1765. However, that date as used on the form refers to the date of an order in the council of the colony regarding the guidelines for headright grants, and not to the actual date of the transaction itself.

(J5)(F9)

Ex: Simon Gratz

13 D.S. - April 25, 1769 - Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, IL

A deed of gift for five acres, witnessed by Gwinnett, from Patrick Mackay to Henry Yonge.

(J6) (F45)

Ex: Thomas W. Best; Frederick S. Peck; Foreman Lebold

14 D.S. - March 16, 1770 - Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

A bond to pay Mordecai and Levi Sheftall, also signed by Joseph Wood, William Stephen, and David Montaight.

(F43)

Ex: William Randolph Hearst; Frederick Dearborn²⁰

15 D.S. - April 24, 1770 - Yale University, New Haven, CT

A mortgage on St. Catherine's Island to Edward Mease. Witnessed by Samuel Farley and Will Graeme.

(J24) (F20)

Ex: Augustin Daly; James W. Ellsworth; A.S.W. Rosenbach; Mrs. Edward Harkness²¹

16 D.S. - April 25, 1770 - Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

A bond given to Edward Mease; a partly printed form bearing Gwinnett's signature and seal.

(F11)

Ex: Robert Gilmore; Ferdinand J. Dreer

17 D.S. - April 25, 1770 - Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

Mortgage to Edward Mease.

(J29) (F28)

Ex: Charles C. Jones; Walter Benjamin; George C. Thomas; A.S.W. Rosenbach; Charles Francis Jenkins; A.S.W. Rosenbach; John W. Garrett²²

18 D.S. - May 29, 1770 - Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia, PA

Gwinnett witnessed the will of Joseph Stanley. Philadelphia bookseller A.S.W. Rosenbach, serving as an agent for Roderick Terry, purchased the will at the 1926 Manning auction. The state of Georgia, roused by newspaper accounts of the sale, unsus-

cessfully pursued its own claim to the document in a New York state court. Terry later sold the will back at a considerable loss to Rosenbach, who ultimately kept it.

(J25) (F41)

Ex: Lewis J. Cist; Elliot Danforth; James H. Manning; Roderick Terry; A.S.W. Rosenbach

19 D.S. - October 20, 1770 - Indiana University, Bloomington, IN

A receipt signed by Gwinnett regarding payment for one acre of cedar.

(J26) (F35)

Ex: William B. Sprague; John Boyd Thacher; George A. Ball²³

20 D.S. - February 5, 1773 - Library of Congress, Washington, DC

Gwinnett was a chronic debtor. A climactic meeting of his many creditors over the course of a few weeks in February and March 1773 generated a number of documents which have survived. This is one of six documents from that episode regarding Gwinnett's debts and his obligations to Alexander Rose and Robert Porteous. The document relates to the sale of St. Catherine's island and the settlement of other financial obligations. J.P. Morgan presented this item in a signers set to the Library of Congress in 1912.

(J17) (F3)

Ex: David McNeely Stauffer; John Pierpont Morgan²⁴

21 D.S. - February 5, 1773 - Maine Historical Society, Portland, ME

An article of agreement with Robert Porteous regarding the sale of St. Catherine's Island.

(J7) (F14)

Ex: John S.H. Fogg

22 D.S. - February 5, 1773 - Unknown Collection

An attestation of debt to Rose and Porteous. It appears to be a close copy of item 19, with Gwinnett's signature and other writing in a different hand found on the verso.

(J28) (F22)

Ex: Thomas Redfield Proctor; Philip Sang

23 D.S. - February 19, 1773 - Unknown Collection

Receipt for repayment of a debt owed by Levi Sheftall to Gwinnett. Includes some lines of text and figures in Gwinnett's hand.

(F34)

Ex: Alice Bemis Taylor; Colorado College; William Pyle Phillips; Haverford College; Paul Francis Webster²⁵

24 D.S. - February 22, 1773 - Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

A deed transferring livestock on St. Catherine's Island to Rose and Porteous.

(F29)

Ex: Thomas Madigan; Mrs. John Hubbard

25 D.S. - February 22, 1773 - Boston Public Library, Boston, MA

An indenture for the sale of St. Catherine's Island. This example is part of an unusual set of clipped signatures that were fastened onto an appropriately sized facsimile of the Declaration which itself was mounted on the wall of a "Room for Younger Readers" at the Boston Public Library. The signatures were from the collection of Mellen Chamberlain, a Boston judge and for many years chief librarian at that institution, and were "secured by cutting them from franks, deeds, commissions, and other papers of little or no importance."²⁶ The library still owns the document from which the signature was taken. Both Jenkins and Fields listed this item as a clipped signature, without identifying the source document.

(J30) (F21)

Ex: Mellen Chamberlain²⁷

26 D.S. - March 11, 1773 - Unknown Collection

A receipt for land sold to Rose and Porteous.

(F38)

Ex: Gustav Oberlaender; Richard M. Lederer; Carnegie Book Store²⁸

27 A.L.S. - May 5, 1773 - Morgan Library and Museum, New York, NY

A brief letter of reply addressed to John Houstoun: "Not till

this Day, I rec'd y'rs concerning Mrs. Stevens's Demand. I am just going to Chas Town where I will Discharge it." The only known letter written and signed by Gwinnett.

(J16) (F13)

28 D.S. - October 18, 1773 - Amherst College, Amherst, MA

A note written by Gray Elliott and endorsed by Gwinnett.

(F31)

Ex: Mrs. J.F. Minis; Herbert L. Pratt

29 D.S. - March 16, 1774 - New York Public Library, New York, NY

Signature affixed to a receipt for repayment of a £500 loan from Gwinnett to Stephen Drayton.

(J13) (F7)

Ex: T. Bailey Myers

30 D.S. - July 8, 1774 - University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

One of three bonds given to John Neufville.

(J21) (F19)

Ex: D.E. Sprague; Lewis J. Cist; John Mills Hale

31 D.S. - July 8, 1774 - Princeton University, Princeton, NJ

Another bond to John Neufville.

(J22) (F23)

Ex: George C.F. Williams; John W. Garrett²⁹

32 D.S. - October 9, 1774 - Unknown Collection

Another bond to John Neufville, witnessed by Andrew Reid.

(F32)

Ex: Israel Tefft; Theodore Sedgwick; Louis Bamberger; New Jersey Historical Society³⁰

33 D.S. - June 24, 1775 - New York Public Library, New York, NY

The affidavit of David Rees, signed by Gwinnett in the capacity of Justice of the Peace.

(J14) (F6)

Ex: Thomas Addis Emmet

34 The Secret Pact - May 20, 1776 - National Archives, Washington, DC

A pledge by members of the Continental Congress not to divulge their proceedings. Fifty of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration also signed this document.³¹

(J2) (F2)

35 The Declaration of Independence - National Archives, Washington, DC

(J1) (F1)

36 L.S. - July 12, 1776 - J.S. Copley Library, La Jolla, CA

A letter signed by Gwinnett and other members of the Marine Committee of the Continental Congress. This very fine document includes the signatures of five other signers: John Hancock, Frances Lewis, George Read, Robert Morris, and Arthur Middleton.

(F42)

Ex: John Cecil Clay; A.S.W. Rosenbach; Estelle Doheny³²

37 D.S. - July 22, 1776 - Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

A petition to the Continental Congress on behalf of Joseph Rice. This document is also signed by George Walton and Lyman Hall, the other two Declaration signers from the state of Georgia.

(J4) (F8)

Ex: Simon Gratz

38 D.S. - November 26, 1776 - Pequot Library, Southport, CT

A fragmentary state of Georgia account paper relating to one Richard Austin. Signed by Gwinnett acting in the capacity of Speaker of the assembly. Yale University's Beinecke Library currently holds this document for safekeeping.

(F30)

Ex: Joshua Cohen³³

39 D.S. - December 6, 1776 - University of Virginia, Richmond, VA

A bill from William Connell to Georgia's provincial assembly for the mustering of troops. Signed by Gwinnett acting in the capacity of Speaker.

(F44)

Ex: John Gribbel; John Banker Gribbel; Justin Turner; Albert Small

40 Endorsement - December 11, 1776 - Unknown Collection

Endorsement of a letter addressed to Gwinnett from General Robert Howe.

(F46)

Ex: Thomas Addis Emmet; Summit (NJ) Public Library; Philip Sang³⁴

41 D.S. - December 18, 1776 - Haverford College, Haverford, PA

An order to pay James Maxwell for attendance at the Georgia constitutional convention. Signed by Gwinnett acting in the capacity of Speaker of the assembly.

(J9) (F16)

Ex: Israel K. Tefft; Robert C. Davis; Charles Roberts

42 D.S. - February 22, 1777 - Unknown Collection

A resolution of the Georgia president, signed by Gwinnett in that capacity, regarding the exercise of executive powers in the absence of a quorum of the executive council.

(J11) (F10)

Ex: William B. Sprague; Historical Society of Pennsylvania

43 D.S. - March 4, 1777 - Unknown Collection

An order to pay Jacob Linn, post rider. Signed by Gwinnett in the capacity of Georgia president.

(J19) (F40)

Ex: William B. Sprague; Thomas Raffles; T. Stamford Raffles; Zachary T. Hollingsworth; A.S.W. Rosenbach; Joseph Fields³⁵

44 A.D.S. - March 15, 1777 - Morgan Library and Museum, New York, NY

The holograph will of Button Gwinnett.³⁶

(J10) (F12)

Ex: Charles C. Jones

45 D.S. - March 16, 1777 - New York Public Library, New York, NY

Mortgage for St. Catherine's Island to Mordecai and Levi Sheftall.

(J12) (F5)

Ex: Thomas Addis Emmet

46 D.S. - March 21, 1777 - Huntington Library, San Marino, CA

An order for currency exchange for Clement Nash. Signed by Gwinnett in the capacity of President and Commander-in-Chief of Georgia.

(J18) (F18)

Ex: Thomas Addis Emmet

47 D.S. - May 6, 1777 - Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI

An order to pay Samuel Stirk, Clerk for the Council of Georgia. Signed by Gwinnett in the capacity of Georgia president.³⁷

(J8) (F15)

48 Clipped Signature - Colonial Williamsburg

(J20) (F33)

Ex: Charles C. Jones; Zachary T. Hollingsworth; Thomas J. Watson/IBM Corporation; Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company; King V. Hostick; Jerry and Pat Epstein³⁷

49 Clipped Signature – Harlan Crow Library

This item is accompanied by a note from original owner Charles C. Jones claiming that the item was cut from a petition for the collector of the port of Savannah.

(J23) (F36)

Ex: Charles C. Jones; John D. Crimmins; Adrian Joline; George C.F. Williams; Kenyon V. Painter

50 Clipped Signature – April 7, 1763[?] - Unknown Collection

Chicago autograph dealer Ralph Newman discovered this signature in the early 1960s. Newman had come into ownership of a mutilated document or documents, which had been cut up into strips and pasted onto a sheet of paper. A Gwinnett signature appeared on one of these strips. Newman brought

the sheet to the conservators at the Donnelly Extra Bindery of Chicago. The bindery discovered a second Gwinnett signature on the reverse of one of the scraps of paper. One of the two signatures sold for \$95,000 at auction in 2001.³⁸

Ex: Ralph Newman; Marshall B. Coyne; Daniel Weinberg

51 Clipped Signature - Unknown Collection

The whereabouts of the second signature discovered by Ralph Newman are unknown.

Ex: Ralph Newman

NOTES

Ryan Speer is a Senior Archivist at the Georgia Archives in Morrow, GA. His research interests include the history of American manuscript collecting; history of archives in the Southeast; and legal issues involving records and manuscripts.

1 The figures from Charles De F. Burns' census are from Joseph Fields, "Known Signatures of Button Gwinnett," *New Colophon* 3 (1950): 134-35. Fields states that Burns published the list in *American Antiquarian*, but he does not provide further citation and that scarce periodical is not available to the author. Lyman Draper published his enumeration of signers sets in 1888 as "Autographs of Signers of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution," reprinted in Lyman Copeland Draper, ed., *Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1909), 373-447; and as Lyman C. Draper, *An Essay on the Autographic Collections of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution* (New York: J. J. Little and Son, 1889). Full text of the former is available online at <http://books.google.com/books?id=VzYUAAAYAAJ&output=html>. Charles Jenkins' list was also published twice: Joseph Fields cites the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 195 (July 1925): 231-49, and states that Jenkins identified twenty-nine Gwinnett signatures. Jenkins' *Button Gwinnett: Signer of the Declaration of Independence* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1926), published a year later, would seem to include the definitive list (as it enumerates thirty-six autographs). Joseph Fields' own census was published as a monograph and a journal article. The monograph was apparently self-published and/or a limited edition, was not available to this author. The article is Joseph Fields, "Known Signatures of Button Gwinnett," *New Colophon* 3 (1950): 132-45. It is available online at http://posner.library.cmu.edu/Posner/books/book.cgi?call=808_C71CA_VOL_3.

2 The biographical sketch of Gwinnett is drawn from Jenkins, *Button Gwinnett*, which, padded as it is with appendices, genealogical data,

and various minutiae, remains the only book about Gwinnett; Harvey H. Jackson, *Lachlan McIntosh and the Politics of Revolutionary Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979); Harvey Jackson's article on Gwinnett in Edwin C. Bridges, Harvey H. Jackson, Kenneth Thomas, Jr., and James Harvey Young *Georgia's Signers and the Declaration of Independence*, (Atlanta: Cherokee Publishing Company, 1981), 37-58; and the "Button Gwinnett" article in the *Dictionary of Georgia Biography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), 374-76. Harvey Jackson's unique assessment of Gwinnett's agency in Georgia politics is particularly noteworthy.

3 Lyman C. Draper, *An Essay on the Autographic Collections of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution* (New York: J. J. Little and Son, 1889), 14-15. See also Josh Lauer, "Traces of the Real: Autographomania and the Cult of the Signers in Nineteenth-Century America," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 27 (April 2007): 143-63.

4 Fields' discussion of the Gwinnett signature's rarity appears in "Known Signatures," 134.

5 Edwin Wolf and John F. Fleming, *Rosenbach: A Biography* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1960), 239.

6 For contemporary accounts of market conditions in the 1920s, see Evans Clark, "Signers' Autographs Soar in Price," *New York Times*, 28 June 1925, p. XX3; and "Obscure Gwinnett Flickers into Fame," *New York Times*, 31 January 1926. See also Guy Lesser, "Browsing for Gold: Adventures in the Rare-Book Trade," *Harper's Magazine* (January 2002): 39-52; R. Wernick and J. McGrail, "The Bookseller Who Couldn't Stand to Sell his Books," *Smithsonian* (April 1992): 106-13; and "A Library Where Rare is Common," *New York Times*, 23 April 1989, sec. 5, p. 12 for general accounts of Rosenbach's career.

7 Wolf and Fleming, *Rosenbach*, 257, 264-65, and 268 provides details of the purchases Rosenbach made as an agent. Those sales made directly to Rosenbach are identified as such in the body of this article. See autographs 15, 41, 36, 43, and 17.

8 A.S.W. Rosenbach, *Books and Bidders* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1927), 286.

9 Mary A. Benjamin discussed the post-Depression lull in sales in *Autographs: A Key to Collecting* (New York: R.R. Bowker Co., 1946), 39-40, 81. Rita Reif of the *New York Times* wrote regularly about the bicentennial and its effects on the autograph market. See "Antiques: Autographs – Prices Rising for Documents Penned by Declaration Signers" *New York Times*, 6 September 1975, p. 16; "Bicentennial Stirs the Spirit for Collecting Americana," *New York Times*, 27 September 1975, p. 31; and "The Fascination of Handwritten History," *New York Times*, 23 April 1978, p. D26.

10 Charles Francis Jenkins' research files include quality photostatic

reproductions of the various Gwinnett documents included in his own census. See the "Button Gwinnett" and "Charles Jenkins" folders in File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. Florida dealer Joe Rubinfine generously provided photocopies of other signatures not found in Jenkins' research files.

11 For an account of the discovery of the signature, see "Find Button Gwinnett Records in Church in Old English Home," *New York Times*, 30 September 1926, p. 25. "Gwinnett Signature Held," *New York Times*, 30 July, 1953, p. 4, relates to later attempts to sell the signature. At some point after 1953, the register was moved to the Staffordshire record office.

12 "Three Gwinnett Signature Found in Britain; Gabriel Wells Buys Them in School Records," *New York Times*, 7 July 1927, p. 6.

13 "Bigger Plans for Seminary Treasures," *Chicago Daily Herald*, 9 May 2003, p. 1.

14 Florida dealer Joe Rubinfine purchased this document representing the Office of the Historian General of the NSDAR.

15 It is not known if this document remains a part of the estate of its last known owner, Joseph Fields.

16 "Yale Acquires Prized Autograph of 1762," *New York Times*, 24 June 1956, p. 45.

17 "Second Button Gwinnett Signature Found; Georgia Sues for \$22,500 Paid for the First," *New York Times*, 2 May 1926, p. E1.

18 The New York State Library purchased the Tefft set for \$800. See Fields, "Known Signatures," 138. The spurious story is repeated in Draper, *Autographic Collections*, 12-13, and Jenkins, *Button Gwinnett*, 187. See also "The Wymberley Jones De Renne Georgia Library," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 2 (June 1918): 66; and E. Merton Coulter, *Wormsloe: Two Centuries of a Georgia Family* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1955), 229.

19 "The splendid American collections formed by Dr. Thomas Addis Emmet, of New York, were purchased from him at a very large price- said to have been not less than \$200,000 by Mr. John S. Kennedy, a New York banker, in 1896; who then presented them to the New York Public Library. The several series of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence in this collection are, and must ever remain, unequalled." Simon Gratz, *A Book About Autographs* (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1920), 180.

20 An unknown collector purchased this item for \$4,700 dollars at the final William Randolph Hearst sale at Parke-Bernet Galleries in 1938. See "Gwinnett Script Bought for \$7,500," *New York Times*, 18 November 1938, p. 18. Fields did not identify the buyer, who may have been Frederick Dearborn, who later donated the signature to Harvard.

21 "Madison's Journal Presented to Yale," *New York Times*, 28 February

His Excellency the President hereby desired to take
 upon himself the whole executive Powers of Government
 calling to his Assistance, not less than five ^{or more} of his own
 choosing, to consult & advise with, on every urgent
 occasion, when a sufficient Number of Councillors
 cannot be convened to make a board.
 This Power to continue for the space of one
 Month from the date hereof, Feb^r 22^d 1777.

Signed -
 Bolton, Gwinnett
 Jonⁿ Bryan
 Kethum
 John B. Gwynne
 William B. Gwynne
 William Bryan

Charles Francis Jenkins' research files include quality photostatic reproductions of the various Gwinnett documents included in his own census. This document of February 22, 1777, is now in an unknown collection. *Photostat courtesy of the Georgia Archives.*

1926, p. 21. Wolf and Fleming, *Rosenbach*, 237-38 contains an account of Mrs. Harkness' purchase of the signers set from Dr. Rosenbach.

22 The Rosenbach Company sold this autograph to Gwinnett biographer Charles Frances Jenkins in 1924 (and re-purchased it at the Jenkins sale of 1927 for \$18,600). Mr. Garrett donated it to Johns Hopkins. See "Gwinnett Relic is Sold for \$18,600," *New York Times*, 4 November 1927, p. 4.

23 Ownership provenance information is from "Signers of the Declaration of Independence MSS," at <http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/lilly/mss/html/signers.html>.

24 "J. P. Morgan Makes Gift to the Nation," *New York Times*, 21 November 1912, p. 1.

25 This document is unique in that it has entered institutional collections and reemerged onto the private market not once, but twice. A Denver autograph dealer assembled the set for Alice Bemis Taylor, who donated the collection to Colorado State College. William Pyle Phillips purchased the set from the college in 1946, and subsequently donated the set to Haverford College. Haverford (also owner of signature 39) auctioned the set at Swann Galleries, New York, in 1975, where it brought \$120,000. The set was purchased at that auction by a Philadelphia investment group, which sold it at auction four years later to Charles Hamilton (for Paul Francis Webster) for \$100,000. It is currently held by a private owner. See "56 Autographs Bring \$120,000 Bid," *New York Times*, 19 October 1975, p. 55.

26 *A Brief Description of the Chamberlain Collection of Autographs now Deposited in the Public Library of the City of Boston* (Boston: Public Library Trustees, 1897), p. 19.

27 "Valuable Autographs: Judge Mellen Chamberlain's Gift to Boston's Public Library," *New York Times* 7 April 1895, p. 9., and *Brief Description of the Chamberlain Collection*, 19.

28 The Carnegie Book Store of New York apparently purchased this item in the early 1960s. Information on subsequent owners has not been forthcoming. See "Rare Signature of Gwinnett Sold," *Atlanta Journal*, 12 April 1961. 29 "Historic Signature Sells for \$19,000," *New York Times*, 19 May 1926, p. 12, provides an account of the Williams sale.

30 "Record Price Paid for Rare Signature," *New York Times*, 27 November 1926, p. 17 covers the Sedgwick sale. "Antiques View; From Lincoln Letters to Indian Blankets," *New York Times*, 6 November 1983, covers the New Jersey Historical Society auction.

31 The agreement was drawn up in November 1775, with later signers adding their names as late as 1777. *Handbook of Manuscripts in the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1918): 89-90. Both Jenkins and Fields refer to the document as the "Secret Pact." It doesn't otherwise appear to be a commonly-used term.

32 “Gwinnett Letter of 1776 to be Sold,” *New York Times*, 13 March 1927, p. E4; “Gwinnett Letter is Sold for \$51,000,” *New York Times*, 17 March 1927, p. 9; and Rita Reif, “Auctions,” *New York Times*, 13 March 1987, p. C33. The story of this document’s discovery is related in Wolf and Fleming, *Rosenbach*, 265-66.

33 Cohen’s collection was auctioned in Philadelphia in November 1907. Gratz, *A Book About Autographs*, 196; and “The Market for Rare Books,” *New York Times*, 5 January 1907, p.BR7.

34 This signature is from that part of the Emmet collection that did not enter into the New York Public Library’s collection. It was included in his fifth signers set. It later passed to the Summit (New Jersey) Public Library and then to the private market. See “Dr. Emmet’s Books Go To Henry Malkan,” *New York Times*, 31 January 1912.

35 It is not known if this document remains a part of the estate of its last known owner, Joseph Fields, who purchased it from the Rosenbach Company in 1954, four years after the publication of his census. The 1954 purchase was revealed to this author through correspondence with the Rosenbach Museum and Library.

36 The details of Charles Jones’ acquisition of this unparalleled document are unknown. A note in Charles Jenkins’ research files states that Jones’ heirs sold the will to Joseph Sabin of New York City, who later sold it to Morgan. See “Button Gwinnett” folder in File II, RG 4-2-46, Georgia Archives. See also Gratz, *A Book About Autographs*, 196.

37 The signature is part of a signers set assembled by Lyman Draper for the Wisconsin Historical Society. See Draper, *Autographic Collections*, 45-46, 53.

38 “Lot for Lot, Auction Pays Homage to History,” *Chicago Tribune*, 15 April 1985, p.1.

39 *The Million Charms of Empress Shotoku And Other Stories: A Collection of Tales About the Preservation of Rare Books and Documents* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelly and Sons Company, 1966): 11-12. The Extra Bindery was the Donnelly Company’s in-house book conservation unit. *Empress Shotoku*, printed by Donnelly to promote the Bindery, consists of various stories about rare books and manuscript conservation.