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Conquistadors & Mormons Lead Swann Galleries' Spring Auction

New York— On Thursday, April 27, Swann Galleries offered their tenth consecutive auction of Printed & Manuscript Americana to exceed \$700,000. Much of the top material was unique or extremely rare, including diaries, letters and archives, many of which had never previously been seen at auction.

Swann Galleries has gained a reputation as the leading source for quality material relating to the foundation of Mormonism. A first edition Book of Mormon, 1830—the only edition to list Joseph Smith as the "author and proprietor" rather than as the translator—led the sale at \$52,500*. Other stand-out lots included a pair of legal documents, 1842, signed by Smith while he was the Mayor and Justice of the Peace in Nauvoo, Illinois, in a case against the postmaster of the town, which flew past its high estimate of \$3,500 to \$23,750, as well as a recognizance document from the following year, ordering a nurse to pay \$100, which reached \$15,000, above a high estimate of \$1,800. Each of the seven offered lots related to Mormonism sold above their estimates.

The top five lots all went to private collectors. A rare letter by Hernán Cortés to his property manager, instructing him to be hospitable to a visiting bishop, was purchased for \$32,500; no other letters from the conquistador have appeared at auction in the last 30 years.

Further highlights included a Force printing by William J. Stone of the Declaration of Independence, 1833, a cornerstone of Americana collecting, at \$21,250, and a large archive of Milwaukee sculptor John Severinus Conway that reached \$12,500, above a high estimate of \$3,000. A circa 1811 manuscript speech on the formation of New York's College of Physicians and Surgeons by Samuel Bard sold for \$8,750.

Journals included the accounts of a diary by missionary Edward W. Syle in Shanghai and San Francisco's Chinatown in the 1850s at \$7,250, as well as the translated manuscript of a Japanese soldier's last days in World War II (\$3500). The bound diary of a wealthy Manhattan orphan in the mid-nineteenth century reached \$2,250.

Among the records set was \$1,375 for the iconic *San Francisco Call-Chronicle-Examiner* on the 1906 earthquake; the previous record of \$840 was set in 2008. Additionally, the first complete set of Amos Doolittle's engravings of the *Prodigal Son* parable to be sold at auction in nearly 30 years sold for \$6,500.

Institutions acquired important material, including an archive of a Mexican pulque bar that spanned nearly a century, which was purchased by the University of Notre Dame. A different institution purchased the first edition of Esther Levy's *Jewish Cookery Book*, 1871, the first Jewish cookbook published in the United States, for \$11,250.

Specialist Rick Stattler noted, "The market remains strong for good, interesting material. That this was our tenth consecutive sale to surpass \$700,000 demonstrates a strong foundation in the market."

The next sale of Printed & Manuscript Americana at Swann Galleries will be held September 28, 2017. For more information or consign quality materials, contact Rick Stattler at rstattler@swannalleries.com.

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