

New William H. Taft Secretary Discovered

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Not many autograph collectors and dealers realize that William H. Taft (1857-1930) occasionally used a secretary to sign for him. Taft is quite common in autograph material of all kinds. Only handwritten letters as President can be considered rare. The content of Taft letters are usually routine and seldom do those with fine content appear in the market. Recently we were a little bit surprised. We got an offer of a William Taft signed letter written as President of the League of Enforced Peace – an important organisation especially for Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations. The letter was written to William G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury and had fine content. Fine content, famous recipient – the signature should be authentic, but in this case – NO. This short study will help to tell the differences between an authentic and secretarial signature of Taft.

Following are two examples of authentic signatures by William H. Taft:

authentic – July 10, 1908 authentic – signed as President

The next two signatures are written by two different secretaries:

secretary I (example from the book *Forging History* by Kenneth W. Rendell, page 96) - 1918
 secretary II - as president of the League to Enforce Peace – May 25, 1916

Here are the differences:

- The "m" is loosely written
- The "H" is misshaped - too wide and when the center comes across back to the left it goes to the middle of the "H" and not towards to top of the "H"
- The crossing of the "middle of the "H" rises and on a genuine Taft it's usually straight across.
- The bottom of the "T" in Taft ends. On genuine ones the bottom of the "T" comes around and crosses the "T" in the center
- The "a" ends halfway down to the baseline. In a genuine Taft signature the "a" finishes at the bottom of the baseline then continues to the "f"
- The "f" is simply mis-shaped
- The "t" ends too short - it usually ends down at the baseline sometimes it will even drop below the "a"

The "Taft secretaries" weren't as good as Bruce Thomas was for Lyndon B. Johnson or George B. Christian for Warren G. Harding. Unfortunately there are dealers who don't rely on reference material and would sell these secretarial signatures of Taft as genuine. It is fascinating that nearly 80 years after the passing of William H. Taft, new information about his signing habits come to the light. This short study will follow our strategy – continue to educate yourself and always share the knowledge.