

For Immediate Release

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**A TALE OF TWO COLLECTORS
CHRISTIE'S TO SELL ONE OF THE FINEST COLLECTIONS OF
CHARLES DICKENS IN PRIVATE HANDS**

**The William E. Self Library Part I: The Kenyon Starling Library of Charles Dickens
April 2, 2008**



New York – On April 2, Christie's New York will offer the first portion of the William E. Self Family Collection: The Kenyon Starling Library of Charles Dickens. This superb Dickens library was gifted to Self's daughter, Barbara Self Malone, upon Starling's death in 1983—a remarkable act of generosity from a fellow-collector (and one-time collecting rival), who coincidentally also hailed from Dayton, Ohio. The sale offers remarkable manuscripts, presentation copies, playbills, and original drawings including *Oliver Twist* (illustrated left). The collection is expected to realize in excess of \$2,000,000.

Bill Self moved to Hollywood in 1944, and appeared in numerous films, including *The Thing, I Was a Male War Bride, Story of G.I. Joe, Red River* and *Sands of Iwo Jima*. He developed many close Hollywood friendships, among them Charlie Chaplin, Fred Astaire, Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. Following Tracy's advice that "unless you were a star, acting was a lousy job," Self changed career paths and became a highly successful producer for both television and motion pictures. As President of Twentieth Century-Fox Television Division he was responsible for some of the most memorable television of the 1960s-70s, among them *Peyton Place, Twelve O'Clock High, Batman, Lost in*

*Space, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, M*A*S*H* and many others. He also produced many films, including *The Shootist* (1976), John Wayne's last film.

On a quest for a first edition to give his daughter Barbara, Bill entered the world of rare books and was quickly consumed by it. Over the next forty years he formed one of the most important collections of English and American literature in private hands. He attended or participated in the most important auctions, often accompanied by his late wife Peggy, and represented by the pre-eminent New York bookseller, John F. Fleming.

In 1971 Bill and his wife Peggy traveled to London for the historic sale of Comte Alain de Suzannet's library, then one of the two finest privately owned collections of Dickensiana (the other, the Richard Gimbel Collection, is now at Yale University Library). To their frustration they were repeatedly outbid by the agent for an unknown bidder. They later discovered that it was Kenyon Starling (born in 1905), a fellow native of Dayton, Ohio. Fleming arranged a conversation between the two rivals, which quickly led to visits to see their respective collections, and a lasting friendship was soon born. On their mutual quest for Dickens they traveled the world, attending the important auctions, visiting the major bookshops, or following in Dickens's footsteps. Without heirs, and with most of his other collections of English and American literature going to Stanford University—where he received his bachelor of arts degree in 1927—Starling left his Dickens collection to Bill's family because of their mutual background, shared collecting interest and friendship.

The Kenyon Starling Library of Charles Dickens is among the finest in private hands, both in terms of its depth, breadth and quality. It includes many books from the legendary Dickens libraries formed over the last century. Starling was a connoisseur who sought the finest, rarest and most important copies for his collection. The superior condition is evident throughout the library. With estimates ranging from \$2,000 to \$250,000 some of the outstanding examples are the Bruton-Suzannet copy of *Sketches by Boz* with a proof of George Cruikshank's wrapper, the near-prime McCutcheon-Suzannet copy of *The Pickwick Papers*, and the superb copies of *Nicholas Nickleby* and *Great Expectations*.

The collection boasts a remarkable 13 presentation copies, inscribed by Dickens to some of his closest friends or literary associates. Among the most significant is a presentation copy of *Oliver Twist* (1838) in a special presentation binding to his friend and fellow-author, William Harrison Ainsworth, and a presentation copy of *The Uncommercial Traveller* (1861) to the novelist George Eliot. The collection includes important autograph and manuscript material, most notably an extremely rare manuscript page from the original manuscript of the *Pickwick Papers*, which constitutes a comedic scene between Sam Weller and John Smauker. The Starling library includes many rare

minor works by Dickens and related ephemeral items (or Dickensiana). *The Daily News No. 1*, the liberal newspaper that Dickens edited in 1846, is also among the rarest of the Dickens newspapers. A fine series of eight playbills advertising dramatic performances of Dickens's works, including *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, are also scarcely found.

Additionally, the Starling Collection contains a significant collection of original drawings by Dickens illustrators Hablot K. Browne (“Phiz”) and George Cruikshank. An early drawing by Browne of the discovery of Jingle in the Fleet is the only drawing from *Pickwick* to appear at auction in at least 30 years. George Cruikshank's illustrations for *Oliver Twist* are considered by many to be the finest in the Dickens canon, and the Starling Collection's original drawing of Bill Sikes threatening the murder of his dog is an exemplary example of Cruikshank's handling of the London underworld.

**Auction: The William E. Self Library Part I: The Kenyon
Starling Library of Charles Dickens**

April 2 at 10:00 AM

Viewing: Christie's Galleries at Rockefeller Center

March 28- April 1

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*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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