

1959 Kennedy Letter Discussed Death of Presidents

John F. Kennedy wrote in a letter in May, 1959, that he found it "thought-provoking" that all Presidents elected since 1840 in years ending in zero had not lived out their time in the White House. He was a Senator at the time.

The letter was in response to one from Harry A. Squires, an author and editor in Lakewood, Calif. Mr. Squires was writing an article on the reaction to this fact from men who might run for President in 1960.

The letter was donated yesterday to the Library of Presidential Papers, 17 East 80th Street, by Representative Seymour Halpern from his own collection.

The letter, on United States Senate stationery, reads as follows:

Dear Mr. Squires:

The historical curiosity which you related in your letter of May 4th is, indeed, thought-provoking: "since 1840 every man who has entered the White House in a year ending with a zero has

not lived to leave the White House alive." Since you are writing an article on this topic and have asked for my view I'm afraid I can be of little help. I must, candidly, admit that I've really never reflected on this bit of Americana.

As to "what effect, if any, this will have on your presidential aspirations" I feel that the future will have to necessarily answer this for itself—both as to my aspirations and my fate should I have the privilege of occupying the White House.

On face value, I daresay, should anyone take this phenomenon to heart... anyone, that is, who aspires to change his address to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue... that most probably the landlord would be left from 1960-1964 with a "For Rent" sign hanging on the gatehouse door.

With every good wish, I am

Sincerely,

John F. Kennedy

Mr. Squires had given the

letter to the Parke-Bernet Galleries, where it was sold for \$175. Representative Halpern said he had acquired it from a dealer in exchange for some other letters and a "modest sum" of money.

According to the Parke-Bernet catalogue, the letter was signed by a secretary. However, Henry O. Dormann, executive director of the Library of Presidential Papers, said yesterday that there was no doubt that the letter had been signed by the then Senator.

Mr. Halpern gave to the library 12 other letters by Presidents.

The library, a private, non-

profit institution, will not open until the end of this year. Its sponsors hope to establish the most extensive collection of material on the Presidency in existence.

The institution was founded in 1965 by a group of prominent Government figures and businessmen, including Mr. Dormann.

The director said he hoped that the library, which exists on donations and grants from foundations, will be able to copy papers from Presidential collections on microfilm and send microfilms without charge to schools and universities.