

A 1969 presidential signature

Later, a change had begun

AP Wirephotos

A recent signature by the former President

The Value of A Nixon Name

New York

Because of his involvement in the Watergate scandal and his resignation, former President Nixon's autograph is worth much more than it was six years ago, autograph collector and auctioneer Charles Hamilton said yesterday.

"In general, the collector isn't nearly so interested in people of virtue as he is in rogues and rascals," Hamilton said. "For instance, letters of the famous spy Mata Hari are worth many times the price of letters written by Charlotte Kushman, a famous American actress who led a blameless life.

"It's always the off-beat thinking that commands the attention of the collector," he said. "Nixon graduated from a mundane, uninteresting president into a new position of being not only the first president to resign but a man of dubious integrity which entitles him to special consideration by collectors."

"The value of a handwritten letter by Nixon now would depend on what the signature is attached to," he said. "If it's a letter regarding his culpability or lack of culpability in the Watergate affair, it would be extremely valuable — up to about \$1500."

The Associated Press reported, meanwhile that a handwriting analyst claims that since Watergate Mr. Nixon's

signature has disintegrated markedly, evincing "a person sinking within himself."

Felix Lehmann, who runs a printing concern and is interested in graphology, studied three examples of Mr. Nixon's signature—the first written shortly after he took office in 1969, the second several months ago and the third very recently.

"Tremendous capitals," Lehmann said of the first signature, "shows pride, but the long thread at the end of his name shows he wants to leave room to maneuver. The striving for recognition and ambition are overpowering in his handwriting. I would say he came from a non-descript family and wanted to make good for himself. That is shown by the Richard being more clear than the family name."

Turning to the second signature, Lehmann contended:

"He goes from an appearance of clarity to being wishy-washy. He always has been hiding things . . . But in this signature there is still hope."

"There's nothing left," Lehmann continued, regarding the last of the three signatures. "Only a shadow. His ambitions are over. A shapeless stroke, ambiguity. A disintegration of personality, a person sinking within himself."

Associated Press