

Auctioned letter leads to artifact ring

by UPI

ALBANY, N.Y. -- A letter by a 19th-century U.S. vice president sold on an Internet auction site led to the discovery of a larcenous artifact scheme, The New York Times said. Amateur historian Joseph Romito notified New York officials of an obscure handwritten letter by the John C. Calhoun, who was vice president under U.S. Presidents John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson from 1825-32, listed on eBay. Romito said records indicated the letter belonged to the New York State Library, the Times said. The New York state attorney's office Monday filed grand larceny, fraud and other charges against the seller, Daniel Lorello, who worked for the New York State Archives for 29 years. Lorello reportedly issued a handwritten confession Thursday saying he illegally sold historic documents beginning in 2002. "I estimate that I've taken more than 300 or 400 items in 2007 alone," Lorello wrote. The attorney general's office said Lorello sold the items on eBay and at trade shows and investigators found "more than a dozen boxes of stolen items" at his home. Romito said he overbid on the Calhoun letter to compensate for government bureaucracy should the notification to authorities stall but the government won the auction, paying \$1,802.77 for the letter.

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