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Author is now in a real bind

BY BILL BLEYER
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Until now, Edward Renehan Jr. has been known as the author of six highly regarded history books and former head of the Theodore Roosevelt Association.

Yesterday, in a Garden City courtroom, he found himself cast in a new role: accused thief.

Renehan was charged in Nassau County Court with stealing an important Roosevelt letter owned by the association and possessing a forged document designed to cover up the theft.

Prosecutors say that between March 2005 and July 2006 Renehan stole, from the association's headquarters in Muttontown, a letter written in 1918 by TR about the death of his son Quentin in World War I. The letter has since been returned to the association.

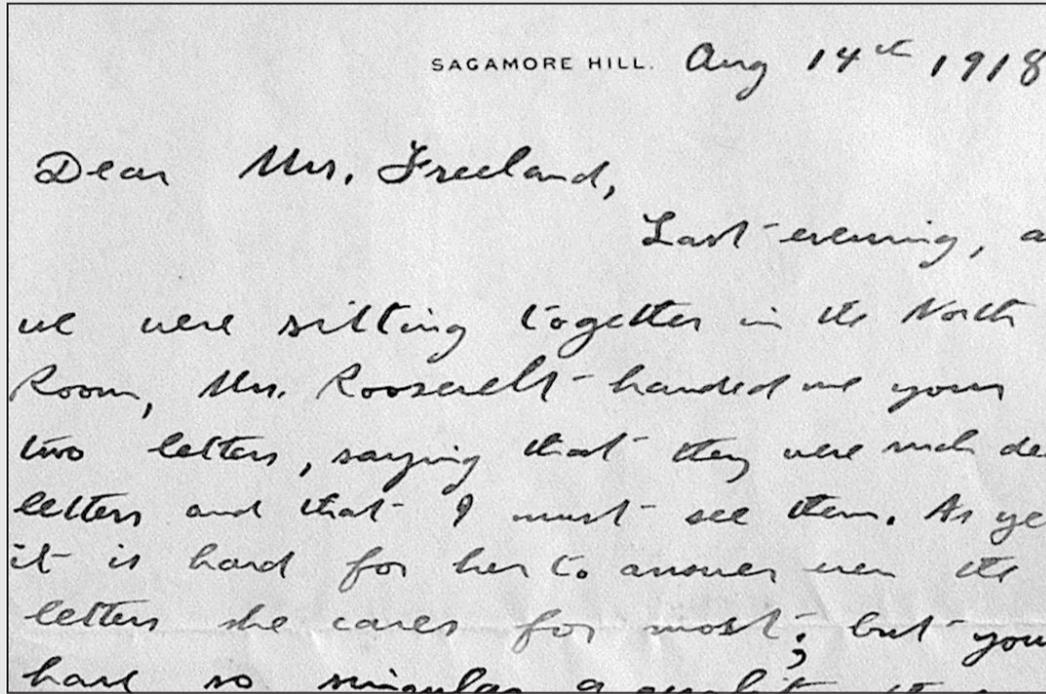
Prosecutors say Renehan tried to sell it through the Swann Galleries auction house in Manhattan. At the time, he was the association's acting executive director.

Renehan's attorney, Peter Brill, of Manhattan, provided a glimpse of his defense, saying Renehan was diagnosed last summer with bipolar disorder about the same time his mother died. News of his indictment shocked historians and some Roosevelt family members.

"He has my sympathy," said TR biographer Edmund Morris. "And the Theodore Roosevelt Association has my congratulations on regaining something irreplaceable."

Tweed Roosevelt, a great grandson of TR, said that if the charges are found to be true, they would amount to "a major betrayal of trust. Theft of important historical documents by a trusted employee is disgraceful."

New York-based magazine editor Philip Roosevelt, a first cousin three times removed



Historian and ex-Theodore Roosevelt Association head Edward Renehan Jr., below, was charged yesterday with stealing a TR letter, above, and possessing forged documents.

of the 26th president and TRA board member, said "it sounds completely at odds with the Ed that I have known."

Renehan was released without bail by County Court Judge John Kase. His next court date is April 21.

Renehan, 51, faces up to 7 years in prison after being charged with third-degree grand larceny, third-degree criminal possession of stolen property and second-degree criminal possession of a forged instrument: a letter purportedly signed by his predecessor, John A. Gable, transferring ownership of the letter to Renehan.

William Wallace, deputy bureau chief of the Nassau district attorney's Government and Consumer Frauds Bureau, said "the investigation is continuing" to determine whether other artifacts were stolen.

In a separate case, the National Park Service is probing the theft and sale of three letters, two written by



George Washington and one by Abraham Lincoln. They were apparently filched from the association's collection at the Theodore Roosevelt birthplace site in Manhattan. Renehan consigned those letters to Swann Galleries in Manhattan, where they were sold for almost \$100,000 over the past few years, according to sources familiar

with the case. After yesterday's arraignment, association president James Bruns said the association wants to retrieve the three letters sold by Swann "plus recovering other items that may be in the defendant's possession." Brill said he didn't think Renehan had any other items.

CORRECTIONS

Harbor Isle is a hamlet just to the west of the Village of Island Park. Its location in relation to the village was misidentified in a story yesterday. The story also mischaracterized the number of residents in support of the project. The majority of residents who commented at a public hearing in November supported the project. Lastly, the name of the site's former tenant was Cibro Oil.

The federal appeals court that struck down a New York State law on air passengers' rights is based in Manhattan. A story yesterday gave an incorrect location.

Newsday strives for the highest level of accuracy and fairness and is committed to promptly correcting errors. Readers can report problems or concerns about content in the paper or on Newsday.com through the Internet by logging onto www.newsday.com/corrections, or by telephone at 631-843-2700 or by mail at 235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY 11747, Attention: Corrections.

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

- 1513:** Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon sighted present-day Florida.
- 1836:** The first Mormon temple was dedicated, in Kirtland, Ohio.
- 1945:** During World War II, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower told reporters in Paris that German defenses on the Western Front had been broken.
- 1958:** Nikita Khrushchev became Soviet premier in addition to First Secretary of the Communist Party.
- 1977:** 583 people were killed when a KLM Boeing 747, attempting to take off, crashed into a Pan Am 747 on the Canary Island of Tenerife.
- 1998:** The Food and Drug Administration approved the drug Viagra, made by Pfizer, saying it had helped about two-thirds of impotent men improve their sexual function.

Spate of Nassau fires strains Red Cross

BY BRANDON BAIN
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Four fires in four days have added to the financial strain on the Nassau County chapter of the American Red Cross, officials said.

The latest fire yesterday morning left a Hempstead family homeless, requiring temporary shelter at a nearby motel for two adults and two teenagers. Clothes, food and the motel bill totaled \$1,450.

The American Red Cross in Nassau County has responded to 115 local emergencies since July 1, most of which were house fires. The organization responded to 81 emergencies the previous fiscal year.

Since July 1, the Nassau Red Cross has also provided nearly \$140,000 in relief to more than 600 residents.

"We've exceeded budgeted funds for disaster relief due to an increased number of disasters this year and we still have three

months remaining in our fiscal year," said Nassau's Red Cross spokesman Sam Kille.

The fiscal year ends on June 30. The Nassau Red Cross currently has a \$2.2 million annual budget, which is generated partly from resident donations and the health and safety courses they offer.

On Saturday at Eisenhower Park, the Red Cross will hold its first-ever Cross Walk for Disaster Relief, a 5-kilometer walkathon.

"We'll never shortchange those who need assistance, so if we don't replenish these funds we're going to have to look at shifting funds from one place to another," Kille said. "We really need Nassau residents to realize that we are not a government agency. We're the local chapter that helps people locally."

For more information on the American Red Cross in Nassau County go to nassaucross.org.