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\$1,000 Bill, Diamonds and Other Lost Treasures Up for Auction

OLYMPIA, Wash., Dec. 8, 2008 — The “Mrs. Bixby” letter supposedly signed by Abraham Lincoln turned out to be a fake, but the \$1,000 bill and two-carat diamond in a platinum setting are real. They are among thousands of items found in abandoned safe deposit boxes, up for auction to the highest bidder.

Jewelry, stacks of gold and silver coins and other currency, collectables such as baseball cards and Superman comics, and assorted medals are among more than 3,000 lots of unclaimed property treasures up for auction at James G. Murphy, Inc., 18226 - 68th Ave. NE, Kenmore beginning at 9 a.m. on Dec. 18 and 19. The auction will continue each day until all lots for that day are auctioned off. Interested parties can preview items from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Dec. 16 and 17, or online at www.murphyauction.com. Online bids can be made during the auction.

Pocket watches, bars of silver and assorted souvenirs are samples of other items turned over to the Department of Revenue after banks and credit unions lost contact with owners who rented safe deposit boxes and held the boxes without rental payment for at least five years. The Department has sought out owners of the safe deposit contents, but by law, must auction off the property within five years of receipt.

“We’ve had some success in reuniting rightful owners with their personal valuables, but many items have gone unclaimed despite our best efforts,” Department Director Cindi Holmstrom said. “We invite people to make claims right up to the start of the auction.”

One example involves two brothers who finally claimed a baseball signed by Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and other sports notables after the Department advised them it was headed to the auction block.

The state now holds \$650 million in unclaimed property, belonging to 3 million people, accumulated since the 1950s. In addition to safe deposit contents, unclaimed property includes uncashed payroll checks, savings and checking accounts, and stocks and bonds. Each year more unclaimed property is turned over to the Department. An online searchable database and claims system makes it easy to check for property - a system that has enabled the Department to return more than \$112 million to about 240,000 rightful owners over the past three years. The database is available at ClaimYourCash.org

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