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# THE Pen & Quill MAGAZINE

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## NOBEL Peace Prize Winners



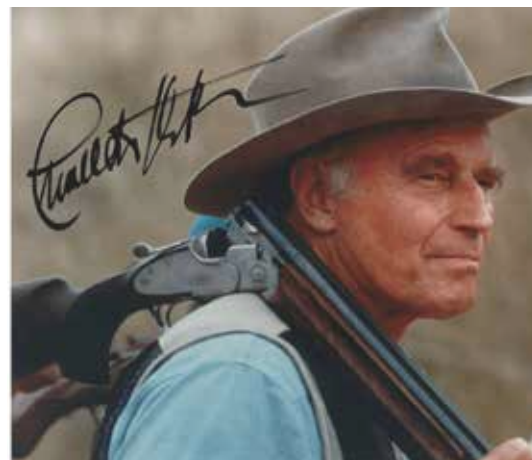
## STEVIE NICKS

## Charlton Heston



# Charlton Heston

By: Steve Zarelli



“ The Charlton Heston autograph in your collection was probably signed by a secretary. ”

This is how I started my blog entry at [www.MrZipper.com](http://www.MrZipper.com) in February 2011. It's been almost two years since I wrote that blog article and set off a firestorm that rattled the reality of many entertainment dealers and collectors. After all, it was conventional wisdom for decades that Charlton Heston signed everything sent to him through the mail.

But, I am a skeptic, and the fact that for so many years a star as big as Charlton Heston quickly signed everything sent to him just didn't sit well with me. It seemed just too good to be true.

For several years, a handful of collectors and dealers speculated that Charlton Heston used a secretary for through-the-mail requests. This was met with

doubt. The analysis I saw was less than convincing because it primarily compared old signatures to new, and it focused on differences in “Heston,” which were difficult to clearly discern and inconsistent. The doubt was also fueled by Mr. Heston himself who claimed on several occasions to personally respond to mail requests.

But, these suspicious collectors and dealers were onto something.

## *The First Hints*

I first noticed something was amiss when looking through my collection and realizing the signatures in books I had sent to Mr. Heston seemed different than signatures on photos. There was a different flow and baseline. I asked friends to send me images of their Heston signatures, and for months, I looked at all the signatures I could find. The pattern I first noticed in my own collection continued.

Books, checks and other items signed under supervision all seemed to have a

different feel than most signed photos. Once I grouped books, checks and items signed under supervision together and signed photos into another grouping and compared them, it didn't take long to find a definitive “tell.” It is in the first name. And once you see it, it is as clear as a bell.

## *The Primary Tells: Real vs. Secretary*

In authentic signatures, the “r” in “Charlton” is distinctly a lowercase “r” and less than half the height of the following “l.” The first four letters are clearly “Char.”

In secretarial signatures, the “r” looks much more like a lowercase “l” and is about the same height as the following “l.” So, the first five letters appear to be “Chall.”

Baseline: In authentic exemplars, the baseline is often ragged, bowed slightly and the “ton” drops down in “Charlton.”

In secretarial, the baseline of “Charlton” is straight.

Flow: In authentic exemplars, the feel is somewhat “jerky” with uneven pressure. Secretarial tend to be much smoother with even pressure.

### *What Did Heston Sign?*

Photographs and other memorabilia sent to Mr. Heston’s office were usually signed by a secretary. However, typically, Mr. Heston did sign books through-the-mail. I will note that, out hundreds of exemplars, I found a handful of books that appeared to be signed by the secretary. The reason for this could be that Mr. Heston’s schedule did not allow for signing at that time or, once his illness took hold, the secretary began signing books through the mail as well as photos.

### *The Heston Autograph Market Today*

I shared my findings with collectors, dealers and third party authenticators. Now many dealers as well as JSA and PSA recognize the Heston secretarial style. However, there are still thousands of secretorially signed Charlton Heston items sitting in dealer inventories and probably tens of thousands more in collections. Unfortunately, some of them may have COAs that were issued before the Heston secretarial style was recognized.

After my initial study was released, a number of discussions ensued on autograph-related message boards such as Autograph Magazine Live. The evidence produced in these discussions only reinforces the secretarial findings. There has been speculation that Mr. Heston’s longtime assistant, Carol M. Lanning, was the proxy signer. Ms. Lanning has not responded to requests for verification.

So why couldn’t a proxy signer who was relatively skilled at replicating Heston’s signature get the “r” right and signed “Chall” instead of “Char”? It seems as if only the proxy can answer that ques-

tion. Some have speculated it was an intentional tell left so the office could distinguish between real and proxy if they ever had to.

With the exposure of the secretarial signature, authentically signed Heston photos are much less common than previously thought. What was once a \$15 signed photo is now around \$40 or more for an example with an authentic signature. And, this has attracted forgers; Heston forgeries have entered the market in some volume, where previously they were virtually non-existent.

For years Mr. Heston stated that he signed mail requests. Well, he was telling a half-truth. He was signing books sent to him, but his secretary was signing the photos and everything else.

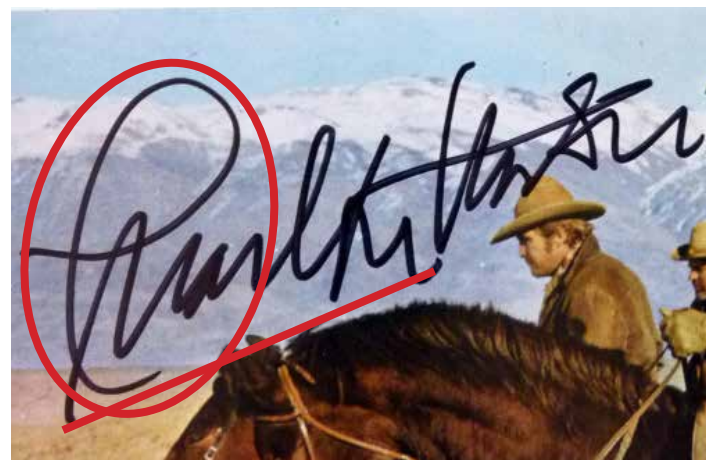
### *Secretarial Examples*

Note: The “Chall” Beginning



### *Secretarial Example*

Note:  
Steady Baseline  
“Chall” Beginning



### *Authentic Example*

Note:  
Ragged Baseline  
“Char” Beginning