

**Report on the
alleged Adolf Hitler's
black formal coat and
top hat
to be auctioned by Alexander
Historical Auctions, Chesapeake City,
MD, USA, July 14, 2020**

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by Jaap van den Born and Bart FM Droog
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Introduction

On July 14, 2020, Bill Panagopulos, the owner of Alexander Historical Auctions, Chesapeake City, MD, USA plans to auction "Adolf Hitler's black formal frock coat and top hat." These objects form lot 647¹ at their 'Historical Militaria and Autographs' auction. The starting bid is 40,000 US dollars; the selling price is estimated at 80,000 to 100,000 dollars.



Hitler's alleged top hat, frock coat and labels, offered by Alexander Historical Auctions in 2020

This auction takes place some eight months after an auction in Germany, where another alleged Hitler's top hat was sold for 50,000 euros.² Alleged, as there was no solid evidence that the particular hat was once owned by the Nazi dictator.

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1 https://www.alexautographs.com/auction-lot/adolf-hitlers-black-formal-frock-coat-and-top-hat_FAC4972915
Archived on: https://web.archive.org/web/20200706123713/https://www.alexautographs.com/auction-lot/adolf-hitlers-black-formal-frock-coat-and-top-hat_FAC4972915

2 Bart FM Droog. Stompin on Hitler's top hat. *Droog Magazine*, Eenrum, 19-11-2019. <http://www.droog-mag.nl/hitler/2019/hitlers-top-hat.html>

Sven Felix Kellerhoff. Ein Zylinder, der angeblich Hitler gehörte, bringt 50.000 Euro. *Welt*, Berlin, 20-11-2019. <https://www.welt.de/geschichte/article203673792/NS-Schund-Zylinder-der-angeblich-Hitler-gehorte-bringt-50-000-Euro.html>

Leonid Bershidsky. Nazi memorabilia is selling, but who is buying. *Bloomberg*, New York, 21-11-2019. <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-11-21/who-bought-hitler-s-top-hat-the-public-has-a-right-to-know>

David D'Arcy. As Nazi objects and fakes enter collector's market, should museums show them? *The Art Newspaper*, London / New York, 26-12-2019. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/as-nazi-objects-and-fakes-enter-collectors-market-should-museums-show-them>

The auctioneer's description

“ADOLF HITLER'S BLACK FORMAL FROCK COAT AND TOP HAT

A superb pair of historic relics, including a fine formal wool and sateen diplomatic dress frock coat with full tails, satin lapels, and satin lining, owned and worn at the most important and prestigious state and formal functions by Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler.

The coat bears three black Bakelite buttons at the end of each sleeve, and two of the original three fixing buttons on the front (one missing). The left breast bears a slanted slash pocket beneath which appear four professionally-sewn loops to accommodate Hitler's Iron Cross, First Class. Beneath these loops is a small thread reinforced opening, made to accommodate the Wound Badge Hitler received for a shrapnel injury at the Battle of the Somme. These were the only awards Hitler would wear.

The coat is fully lined in black satin in the chest area with white satin within the sleeves. There is significant fraying at the neckline and in the armpit area, this due to original light wear further deteriorating over the years. The collar bears the label of the maker "Kuhn & Nupnau Munchen", a top Munich tailor located at Maximilianplatz 12, in front of the Schiller monument who also made private-purchase military uniforms. There are two interior pockets as well, one bearing a pre-printed Kuhn & Nupnau cloth label bearing details of the coat, reading: "Herrn Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler Nr. 12581 S den 17.7.37"

In excellent condition, with no damage beyond the missing button. Offered in addition to the frock coat is Hitler's matching long-haired (melusine) beaver felt top hat with black moire hat band and brim. The hat, 6 inches tall and 12 inches front-to-back along the brim, bears a 2.25 in. medium brown leather sweatband withing, interwoven with a decorative beige ribbon. An inspector has signed "Schmid 275" on the inside of the band. Behind the sweatband is a paper label naming the maker and tying the hat to Hitler. It reads: "Hutfabrik Jul. Thannhauser Munchen Lieferjahr 1936 Herrn. Reichskanzler Adolf Hitler Nr. 827 Modell: 'Wien' Kopfweite: 58". The hat is lined in white silk and also bears the maker's name, address and insignia. Excellent condition.

The hat is contained within a fitted hat box with the maker's name, and it rests upon a silk pad to hold the hat above the bottom of the box. A

lid with wire handle is also present, and it is secured with two wire latches. The lid shows a negligible water stain, and a few dents, as does the hat box.

These two relics are accompanied by a good deal of provenance. Included is a letter from the wife of Major Frank M. Sinclair, formerly a commanding officer of the 328th (Glider) Infantry Division, 101st Airborne. In her 1964 letter, Mrs. Sinclair states that her husband had found the hat and coat "...in the ruins of Hitler's mountain home at Berchtesgaden/Obersalzberg. Given my personal knowledge of my husband's acquisition of this [sic] two items, I can state with certainty that they once belonged to Adolf Hitler and were taken from his mountain home..."

She transfers the items to Douglas Finey, and her letter is on Finey's "American Airborne Center" letterhead - probably a small museum. The 325th through 328th Glider Infantry Regiments were combined under the name of the 327th (Glider) Infantry Regiment, which was originally attached to the 82nd Airborne, before being reassigned to the 101st Airborne in August, 1942. Part of the regiment landed on Utah Beach on D-Day due to the scarcity of air transport, and the regiment fought its way inland to Carentan. The regiment played a pivotal role in Operation Market Garden, with 30% of its gliders lost and some companies taking over 65% casualties. At Bastogne, the 327th held half of the perimeter, fending off determined attacks by Volksgrenadiers and the elite Panzer Lehr. Finally, elements of the 327th (and Major Sinclair) occupied Berchtesgaden for several days from May 5, 1945, forward, arriving only hours after the first Americans took over control of the town.

At some point in time, noted German militaria dealer Helmut Weize in Hamburg obtained these pieces from Finey or another owner thereafter, and Weitze sold them to Ron Manion in 2001, as attested to in a 2005 letter from Manion.

Also included are condition reports for each item and an assessment of the grouping by noted militaria expert and dealer Donald J. Boyle. Boyle's certificates set forth his belief that both items predate 1945 and "have not been altered in any way", and he further opines that Mrs. Sinclair's letter was written ca. 1964 as well.

There are dozens of images of Hitler wearing top hats and coats

identical to the apparel offered here, most commonly while attending the opera in Berlin or Nuremberg, and certainly while at the Wagner festivals at Bayreuth which he would attend with Winifred Wagner. Such apparel would also be called for at other formal events, including diplomatic affairs, state dinners, and so on.

In November, 2019 another of Hitler's formal top hats sold in Germany for \$55,000. ”

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A critical view of the auctioneer's description

The description given by Alexander Historical Auctions is partially the same as the description given previously by the owner of 'Germania International', a Lakemont (Georgia, USA) based webshop specializing in 'Hitler Thirds Reich Collectibles'.³

From circa 2007 until quite recently the same frock coat and top hat could be bought via this webshop.⁴ However, at the bottom of the description at Germania International is written, in bold red letters:

(...) “Also, there is some controversy over the originality of the items.” (...)

We have asked the owners of Germania International for details of this controversy. They didn't respond.

These two fragments are the most important and betray that the provenance is built on thin ice:

Germania International

“All items are in excellent condition with 100-percent named provenance! The letter of provenance signed by the widow of a Major Frank M. Sinclair, who was commander of the Co. D, 328th Glider Inf. Regt. 101st Airborne Div., who recovered both the coat and hat at Hitler’s home at Berchtesgaden/Obersalzberg. Letter is dated 1 June 1964, and made out to Douglas P. Finey.”

Alexander Historical Auctions

“These two relics are accompanied by a good deal of provenance. Included is a letter from the wife of Major Frank M. Sinclair, formerly a commanding officer of the 328th (Glider) Infantry Division, 101st Airborne. In her 1964 letter, Mrs. Sinclair states that her husband had found the hat and coat "...in the ruins of Hitler's mountain home at Berchtesgaden/Obersalzberg. Given my personal knowledge of my husband's acquisition of this [sic] two items, I can state with certainty that they once belonged to Adolf Hitler and were taken from his mountain home..."

She transfers the items to Douglas Finey, and her letter is on Finey's "American Airborne Center" letterhead - probably a small museum.”

3 The owners of Germania International are Lana Cantrell and her husband Robert (Bob) Johnson. According to sources from the Nazi militaria circuit, both are ardent neo-Nazis.

4 See: <http://www.germaniainternational.com/hitler19.html>
Text 2007: <https://web.archive.org/web/20070630191430/http://www.germaniainternational.com/hitler19.html>
Somewhere between 2011 and 2013 the warning in red bold text was added:
<https://web.archive.org/web/20130129082237/http://www.germaniainternational.com/hitler19.html>

1. The 328th Glider Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, as mentioned by Germania International, never existed.
2. The 328th (Glider) Infantry Division, as at first mentioned by Alexander Historical Auctions, never existed. After we contacted the auctioneer, the 'Division' was changed in 'Regiment'.
3. No trace of Major Frank M. Sinclair can be found. See: [No Major Frank S. Sinclair in 101st Airborne Division](#)

Then, Alexander Historical Auctions states:

“The 325th through 328th Glider Infantry Regiments were combined under the name of the 327th (Glider) Infantry Regiment, which was originally attached to the 82nd Airborne, before being reassigned to the 101st Airborne in August, 1942.”

This is simply not true, as we will show – see [328th Infantry Regiment](#).

In the First World War the 328th Infantry Regiment was subordinated to the 82nd Infantry Division.⁵ In the Second World War the Regiment was subordinated to the 26th Infantry Division.⁶

This makes all Alexander Historical Auctions writes about the deeds of the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, subordinated to the 101st Airborne Division, pointless.

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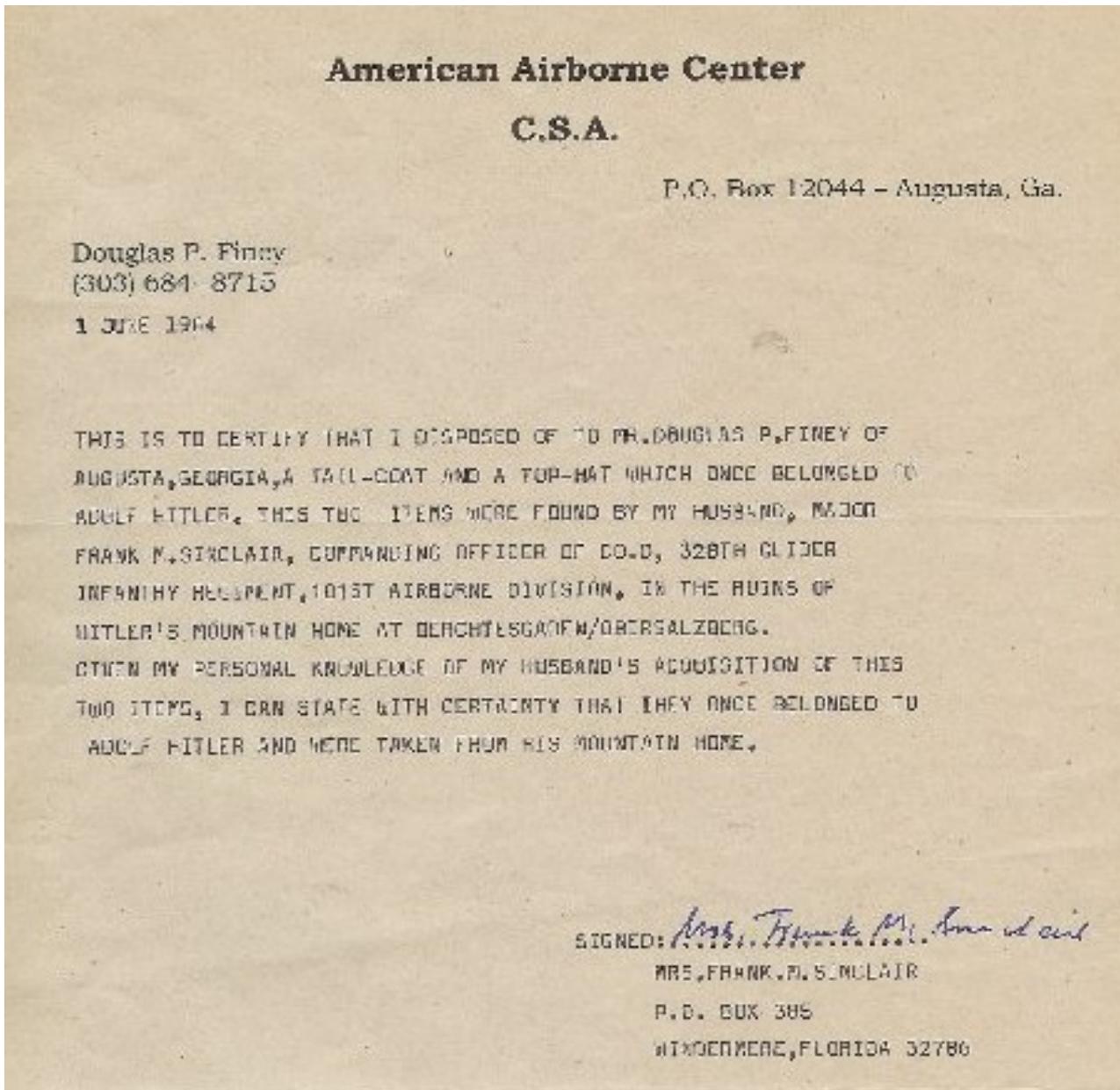
5 Historical Committee. History of Three Hundred and Twenty-Eight Regiment of Infantry. Eighty-Second Division American expeditionary Forces United States Army. [Foote & Davis], [Atlanta, GA], [1920].

<https://archive.org/details/historyofthrechu00slsn/page/n5/mode/2up>

6 See Annex 1 of Department of the Army. Lineage and Honors. 181st Infantry Regiment (Sixth Massachusetts). 06-05-2015; <https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/lineages/branches/inf/0181in.htm>

The letter from Mrs. Frank M. Sinclair

Alexander Historical Auctions doesn't show this letter; Germania International does:



It's quite clear that the person who typed this letter made a very stupid mistake, by stating that "Major Frank M. Sinclair" had been the commanding officer of Co.D (D Company) 328th Glider Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division – as such an Regiment never existed.

What makes this letter conspicuous too is the absence of addresses, only 'P.O. Boxes.

No Major Frank S. Sinclair in 101st Airborne Division

Puzzled by this all we contacted the 101st Airborne Division Association and Screaming Eagles Foundation. We asked if a 328th Glider Infantry Regiment (GIR) was ever part of the division, and if a Major Frank M. Sinclair had ever been a member of this division.

We were answered by Randal Underhill, Executive Director of the division's Association and Foundation:

“That is an interesting question. First of all, you are correct that there was no 328th GIR in the 101st Airborne in WWII. It would be more likely it was a typo and meant to say the 327th GIR.

That being said, I checked the rosters from Screaming Eagles of WW2, compiled by the late P.M. Pulles and could find no Frank M. Sinclair among the names of the 327th or 401st Glider Infantry Regiments, nor among the Division Artillery who may also have had Glider Artillery.

Of course there is always room for error, but the late Mr. Pulles Rosters are the most complete a record in existence and there is not a record of Frank M. Sinclair in the 327th GIR.”⁷

AHA-Auctioneer Bill Panagopulos however e-mailed us:

“Your research into many of the statements in our catalog descriptions is faulty, if not entirely biased. For example, you are completely wrong re: the 328th (Glider) Infantry Regiment.”⁸

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7 E-mail from Randall Underhill to Bart FM Droog, 08-07-2020, 22:52 hrs (CET).

8 E-mail from Bill Panagopulos. E-mail to Bart FM Droog, 08-07-2020, 18:02 hrs (CET).

Douglas P. Finey

We couldn't trace a "Douglas P. Finey" from Augusta (Georgia), mentioned in the letter by "Mrs. Frank M. Sinclair" . That doesn't exclude the possibility that he did exist and possibly launched this alleged Hitler set in the 1960's. Maybe Mr. Finey wrote this letter himself and sold the coat and hat to a naive collector. Or maybe Mr. Finey is an concoction by a later forger – who's to say?

We also couldn't find any trace of a "American Airborne Center" anywhere, let alone in Augusta, Georgia. The suggestion by the auctioneer, that it was "probably a small museum", is rather odd – as a letter from a museum would certainly have an address printed on it.

Maybe such a center did exist – but given all other factors it's likely to be a concoction.

The provenance

As the 1964-story is uncheckable, we must look at the first time this set really surfaced. And, surprisingly, this was not in USA, but in Germany.

Germania International

“Later the outfit became a possession of the famous Weitze Company in Hamburg, Germany, and Ron Manion in Kansas City.”

Alexander Historical Auctions

“At some point in time, noted German militaria dealer Helmut Weitze in Hamburg obtained these pieces from Finey or another owner thereafter, and Weitze sold them to Ron Manion in 2001, as attested to in a 2005 letter from Manion.”

The “noted German militaria dealer” is Helmut Weitze from Hamburg.⁹ A militaria dealer who has an endless supply of 'authentic' Nazi militaria – something which raises a few eyebrows.

Ron Manion¹⁰ was an American militaria dealer, active from circa 1970 to 2007, when he sold his company, Manion's Auction House, to a man named Jody Tucker, who apparently was cheating his customers. The company, renamed 'Manions List It Yourself Auctions', went bankrupt in 2014.¹¹

We've asked Mr. Weitze if he can confirm his past ownership of the top hat and coat. He answered:

“Yes, it is correct, that we have sold the AH evening dress some 20 years ago to Ron Manion. It turned up by one of our contacts in the USA at that time. Unfortunately we don't have anymore records. By law we have to keep the records of the past 10 years, which is consuming a lot of space as you can imagine. So all records before the year 2010 are not existing anymore. I am sorry, that I cannot help you any further in this case.”¹²

As Mr. Manion is quite dead, he can't be asked to whom he sold the hat and coat.

9 Helmut Weitze Militärische Antiquitäten KG, Neuer Wall 18, 20354 Hamburg, Germany. <https://www.zeitze.net/>

10 Obituary of Norman Ronald Manion (1940-2019), 25-04-2019. <http://www.warrelics.eu/forum/wrf-gold-members/ron-manion-rip-730827/>

11 According to members of the Wehrmacht-Awards.com-forum, May 2014. <https://www.wehrmacht-awards.com/forums/forum/ken-jasper-international-militaria-forums/bundesrepublik-deutschland-1949-present/737889-manion-s-auction-site-out-of-business?t=738913>

12 E-mail by Helmut Weitze to Bart FM Droog, 10-07-2020, 18:19 hrs (CET).;

Donald J. Boyle

Alexander Historical Auctions throws in an extra 'expert', Donald J. Boyle, a.k.a. Don Boyle and Don B. He claims to be an expert on "SS Honor Rings, Hitler and Himmler artifacts and signatures and all SS objects" and also that he is "well versed on all Third Reich related subjects."¹³ For a mere 250 US dollars he writes out Certificates of Authenticity.¹⁴ All this raises a few eyebrows too.



Business card Don Boyle, 2015. For privacy reasons house address and telephone numbers are made illegible.

We first 'encountered' Mr. Boyle in 2018, when Alexander Historical Auctions sold a forger's contraption as a very rare item. An item which was previously sold by Boyle.¹⁵ Again, this raised some eyebrows.

Now, in 2020 Alexander Historical Auctions, owned by Bill Panagopulos, stated, in its description of the coat and top hat:

"Also included are condition reports for each item and an assessment of the grouping by noted militaria expert and dealer Donald J. Boyle. Boyle's certificates set forth his belief that both items predate 1945 and "have not been altered in any way", and he further opines that Mrs.

13 Donald J. Boyle. Mr. Don Boyle Authentication and Certification. SS Honroring.com, [seen 07-07-2020]. <https://www.sshonroring.com/authentication-and-certification>

14 See: https://www.mymilitaria.it/liste_03/tkr_hoffmann.htm
https://web.archive.org/web/20190825230638/https://www.mymilitaria.it/liste_03/tkr_hoffmann.htm

15 Ian Shapira. History or hatred? Selling Hitler's belongings and Nazi artifacts stirs a backlash. *Washington Post*, Washington, 01-01-2019.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/history-or-hatred-selling-hitlers-belongings-and-nazi-artifacts-stirs-a-backlash/2018/12/26/b0c21932-f27d-11e8-aece-b85fd44449f5_story.html

Jaap van den Born and Bart FM Droog. The Bernile Photos. *Droog Magazine*, Eenrum, 18-03-2019. <http://www.bartfmdroog.com/droog/niod/bernile.html>

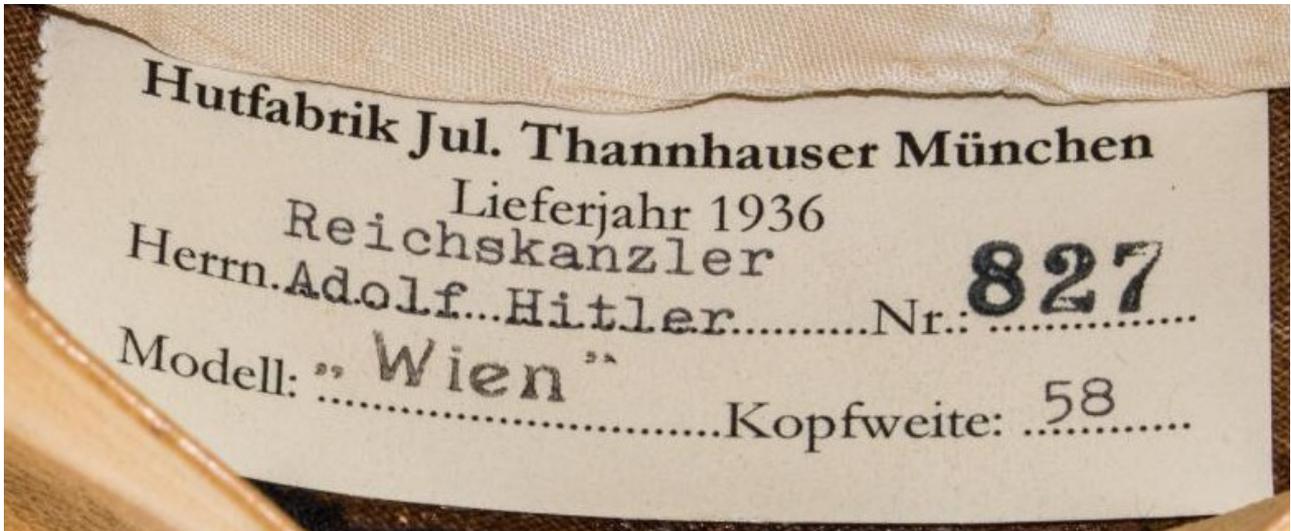
Sinclair's letter was written ca. 1964 as well.”

However, certificates only stating a belief do not prove anything.

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The top hat - from a Jewish hat maker?

The top hat to be auctioned is quite remarkable: it is, according to the label and the accompanying box made by "Hutfabrik Jul. Thannhauser München".



Label in top hat



Thannhauser print in hat



The hat box

The top hat and the hat box might well be original Thannhauser products. Original Thannhauser top hats and the accompanying boxes (*Hutschachtel*) can anno 2020 be bought for circa 100 euros – as a quick search on Internet learns.¹⁶ If the label is original too? Very unlikely. Why? Because there's something very special with the *Hutfabrik* (hat factory) Jul. Thannhauser.

¹⁶ Search for Thannhauser + Zylinder, the German word for top hat. See also: <https://web.archive.org/web/20200708112222/https://www.ebay.de/itm/Zylinder-J-Thannhauser-Muenchen-in-OVP-Hutschachtel-/401744539530> (archived on July 8, 2020).

Hutfabrik Jul. Thannhauser

This company was a Jewish firm, founded by Julius Thannhauser, a well known and respected citizen of München.¹⁷ The factory had a shop in Munich where its products were sold. Because it was a Jewish firm, it had its windows smashed in by a Nazi mob during the Reichskristallnacht, November 9-10, 1938.¹⁸



Rindermarkt 7, Munich, Here the Thannhauser shop was once located. Google Street View, July 2008.

It's hardly conceivable that Adolf Hitler would have bought in 1936 a hat in a Jewish shop.

So again – whoever inserted the name Adolf Hitler in this particular hat, had either a very sick sense of humor, or simply didn't know these details.

17 Julius Thannhauser (Munich, 1860 – Munich, 1921). He owned a hat factory with a shop at the Rindermarkt; he was very popular as a *Büthenredner* (kind of comedian). He is buried at the Israelite graveyard in Munich. Source: Werner Ebnet. *Sie haben in München gelebt. Biografien aus acht Jahrhunderten*. Allitera Verlag, München, 2016. Pag. 599.

18 Thomas Goll. *Die inszenierte Empörung. Der 9. November 1938. Kapitel 2. Themen und Materialien*. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn 2010 Page 15. <https://www.bpb.de/system/files/pdf/NBW2Q2.pdf>
See also the index of all chapters: <https://www.bpb.de/shop/lernen/themen-und-materialien/37143/die-inszenierte-empörung-der-9-november-1938>

328th Infantry Regiment

In the '1964' letter and in the statements by the Nazi militaria dealers constantly the 328th Glider Infantry Regiment is mentioned. We have established that a US Army unit with this number and name never existed. What did exist was the 328th Infantry Regiment.

Could it be that the widow of Major Frank M. Sinclair made a mistake, by giving the wrong number? It's highly unlikely. Every American soldier and his or her partner know the number of the Regiment, as Regiments are the core of the US Army.

In the First World War the 328th Infantry Regiment was subordinated to the 82nd Infantry Division – reformed and renamed into the 82nd Airborne Division in the Second World War. The 328th Infantry Regiment was by then no longer part of that division; it was in 1943 assigned to the 26th Infantry Division.¹⁹

The 26th Infantry Division landed on September 7, 1944 in Normandy, France. On October 3rd, 1944 it was assigned to Patton's Third Army. On October 5, 1944 the 328th Regiment was committed into combat – and it remained so (with some resting periods) until May 5, 1945.



Cover of booklet

Shortly after VE Day, when the unit was stationed in Austria, the 328th published a booklet, which was a shortened version of its official war diary. Included are a roll of honor, listing all 533 killed/died of wounds and 20 missing personnel, a combat almanac, a 'battle route' map and some personal stories and a poem.

¹⁹ See Annex 1 of Department of the Army. Lineage and Honors. 181st Infantry Regiment (Sixth Massachusetts). 06-05-2015; <https://history.army.mil/html/forcestruc/lineages/branches/inf/0181in.htm>

In 2004 this booklet was digitalized. It's proper biographical description is:

Staff Sergeant Jerome J. Theise (editor). *History of the Three Hundred Twenty-Eight Infantry Regiment (Twenty-Sixth Infantry Division) from reactivation, 12 Feb, 1943 to VE day, 9 May 1945.* [Publisher 328th Infantry Regiment], [Austria], [1945].

Title on cover: *History of the 328th Infantry regiment.*

Online: <http://www.ibiblio.org/mtnivy/BAJ/328.htm>

From this booklet it becomes very clear that the unit was nowhere near Berchtesgaden begin May 1945, when Hitler's villa was looted by soldiers from the French Army and of the 101st (US) Airborne Division.



Red line is the battle route of the 328th. Berchtesgaden lies south of Salzburg, in the part of Germany that sticks into Austria.

The dealers and auctioneers claims regarding the alleged Hitler's top hat and coat tell a lot about their 'expertise.' But not only that – they are an insult to the brave men of the 328th Infantry Regiment.

Excerpts from the Regiment's Combat Almanac

September 7, 1944 – 26th Division lands in Normandy

October 3, 1944 – 26th Division assigned to Patton's Third Army

October 5, 1944 – 328th Regiment committed into combat.

December 23-26, 1944 - Fighting in the Battle of the Bulge, region Arlon / Eschdorf.

December 26, 1944 - Relieved by 101st Infantry Regiment (not to be confused with 101st Airborne Division). (page 13)

January 3, 1945 – 3rd Battalion attached to 101st Infantry Regiment.

January 4, 1945 – Regiment relieves 101st on line. 3rd Bn. Reverts to Regimental control.

March 26, 1945 – Regiment attached to 4th Armoured Division. Lines established on the east bank of Main river.

April 16, 1945 – First day since breakthrough at Metlach (16 masrch) that the Regiment was not attacking (page 16)

April 25, 1945 – “L” Company captures Field marshal Ewald von Kleist, one of the four most important personalities taken to date.

April 26, 1945 – Resistance steadily increasing. 3rd Bn. Takes town of Egg after bitter battle with SS troops.

April 27, 1945 – 2nd Bn. Clears Deggendorf after 4 hour battle against heavy artillery and sniper fire.

April 28, 1945 – Hengersberg, Schaufling and Scholbach captured

April 29, 1945 – Aicha, Nukirching, Windorf and Hofkirchen taken.

April 30, 1945 – Stiff small arms resistance met north of Passau. The towns of Patrishing, Reiss and Tiefenbach fall.

May 2, 1945 – 3rd Bn. Clears Lellberg and Griesbach.

May 5, 1945 – Regiment attached to 11th Armored Division. Urfahr taken and city of Linz cleared.

May 7, 1945 – Regiment reverts to the 26th Infantry Division.

May 8, 1945. VE Day, unconditional surrender of Germany.

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'Hitler' top hats with a Konrad Kujau provenance

The alleged Hitler top hats that surfaced in 2019 and 2020 had at least one predecessor, that originated from Konrad Kujau, the forger who produced the fake Hitler diaries in the late 1970s/early 1980s.

This doesn't mean that the recent Hitler top hats with labels stating they were once owned by Hitler, originate from Kujau's workshop. The present sets could well be the work of copycats. Or, also possible, more forgers, independently from each other, got the idea to insert fake labels into original top hats from the 1920s and 1930s.

The Kujau 'Hitler' top hat

“What is clear is that in the 1970s Kujau began introducing forgeries into the genuine material he was smuggling out of East Germany. The Hamburg police later filled two rooms at their headquarters with examples of his handiwork. To an authentic First World War helmet he attached a fake note, supposedly signed by Rudolff Hess, stating that it had been worn by Hitler in 1917. **To an ancient jacket, waistcoat and top hat he added an ‘authentication’** stating that it was the dress suit Hitler wore to the opening of the Reichstag in 1933. (...)

The forgeries themselves were invariably crude. Kujau used modern paper. He created headed stationery simply by using Letraset. He aged documents by pouring tea over them. But he guessed, rightly, that his customers would never take them to experts to check. Public display of Nazi memorabilia was illegal and collections were generally kept, a guilty secret, behind locked doors.”

Robert Harris. *Selling Hitler*. Faber & Faber, London, 1986, (in chapter 9, in Kobo e-book version)

Unknown if the following top hat is the same as the one described by Harris:

January 1981 – “General Mohnke led Heidemann²⁰ to a Dr. Fischer, an antique dealer in the Stuttgart area, who had sold some extraordinary items to one of Mohnke’s rich friends: watercolors from the Führer’s hand, **Hitler’s top hat** and the swastika flag that flew over the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch. (...)

20 Gerd Heidemann, the *Stern* reporter involved in the Hitler diaries scam.

Later, all these treasures turned out to be fake, as did the pistol that Heidemann acquired, the weapon with which Hitler was supposed to have shot himself. But these revelations were still some time in coming. For the present, Heidemann had picked up a rumor that Dr. Fischer possessed long-lost Hitler diaries. Diaries! Intimate thoughts from the Führer's hand! The report left Heidemann quivering before the antique dealer, who turned out to be Konrad Kujau, only in his mid-forties at the time but certainly one of the most gifted and industrious forgers of all time."

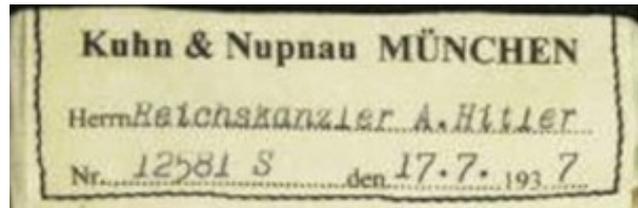
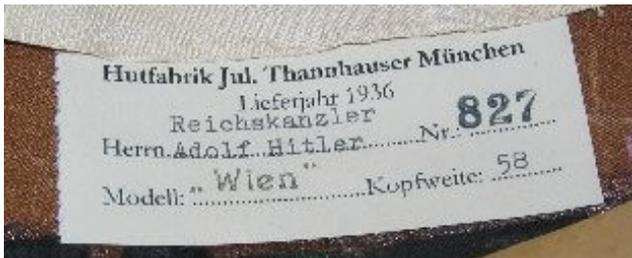
Peter Wyden, *The Hitler Virus: the insidious legacy of Adolf Hitler*. Arcade Publishing, New York, 2001. Page 176.

Wyden's remark, that Kujau was one of the most gifted forgers of all time is an exaggeration. Handwritten texts forged or faked by Kujau are easy to identify. The same applies to his drawings and sketches. But he surely was productive.

Conclusion

Everything points to the fake nature of this set of a top hat and a frock coat, allegedly once worn by Adolf Hitler.

It is throughout possible that the hat and coat originate from Germany, 1920–1938, but the only 'evidence' linking it to Hitler are a fraudulent letter and some labels. Some of these labels might even be authentic, but that's no guarantee that what's typed on them, was typed before May 1945.



Labels from the hat (left) and the coat (above)

It is very significant that none of the 'experts' authenticating these items bothered to check the information given in the accompanying letter, or looked into the background of the hat supplier. The letter and the hat maker brand the hat and coat as a fake set, composed somewhere between 1964 and ca. 2000.

As the solid provenance goes no further back than Helmut Weitze, circa 2000, there's not a shred of evidence that the hat and coat were once worn by Hitler.

The actual value of the hat and handbox together is circa 100 euros – if they are indeed authentic Thannhauser products.

The coat has a value of a few euros, at the most.

Aftermath

Not surprisingly, the top hat and coat remained unsold at the July 14, 2020 AHA auction.

To [index](#).

Comment by auctioneer Bill Panagopulos

We've sent Bill Panagopulos, the owner of Alexander Historical Auctions, the first version of this report, as well as two other reports on suspect Hitler related lots at the same auction.²¹

He commented:

"Normally I would respond to you, but I find your qualifications somewhat lacking to comment on your claims. Your pieces are not credible for a number of reasons, not least of which are:

1.) You cite your own writings in your footnotes, a practice very much frowned-upon by investigative journalists.

2.) Your research into many of the statements in our catalog descriptions is faulty, if not entirely biased. For example, you are completely wrong re: the 328th (Glider) Infantry Regiment. I do, however, thank you for helping us identify our typo error in the description, where we in one instance wrote "Division" versus "Regiment". This has been corrected.

3.) You put forth your conjecture as fact. Therefore your pieces cannot be labeled as "investigative reporting" but instead should be sold as "opinion" pieces. Of course, you are entitled to your opinion.

4.) You question the autograph expertise of Messrs. Hamilton and Rendell, the top experts in the field of autographs, each with over 50 years of experience in the field. Clearly, you have no knowledge of their reputations.

5.) Germania International is not associated with this auction house, nor will we do business with that firm in any way, nor will we discuss that company in any manner.

There are any number of other claims and exhortations you make that again point to your writings as simply being your opinion. I do not know your motivation, nor do I care, but I would think it prudent to

21 Jaap van den Born and Bart FM Droog. Report on the alleged Hitler drawing to be auctioned by Alexander Historical Auctions, Chesapeake City, MD, USA, July 14, 2020. Droog Magazine, Eenrum, 09-07-2020.

<http://www.droog-mag.nl/hitler/2020/report-on-auction-of-%20hitler-drawing-july-2020.pdf>

Jaap van den Born and Bart FM Droog. Report on the alleged Maria Reiter letters to be auctioned by Alexander Historical Auctions, Chesapeake City, MD, USA, July 14, 2020. Droog Magazine, Eenrum, 09-07-2020.

<http://www.droog-mag.nl/hitler/2020/report-on-auction-of-alleged-maria-reiter-letters.pdf>

take care in assaulting the reputation of long-standing reputable auction houses and dealers, especially when you have little experience in the field.

As an aside, I do want to commend you for your work on exposing a number of fake Hitler artworks. They are spread throughout the market. Ours is completely as described.

As an aside, you might want to know that I have consulted with the Justice Department and FBI on a number of forgery and theft cases, and still consult with them today.

I appreciate your efforts, but self-promotion through the public denigration of reputable firms, especially with poorly-researched attack pieces, is no way to advance your career.

I wish I could rebut your answers more thoroughly, but you have only given me a few hours to respond. Since I am assisting in the auction held by an affiliate in a few minutes and that obligation obviously takes precedence, my comments above will have to suffice.”²²

22 E-mail from Bill Panagopoulos. E-mail to Bart FM Droog, 08-07-2020, 18:02 hrs (CET).