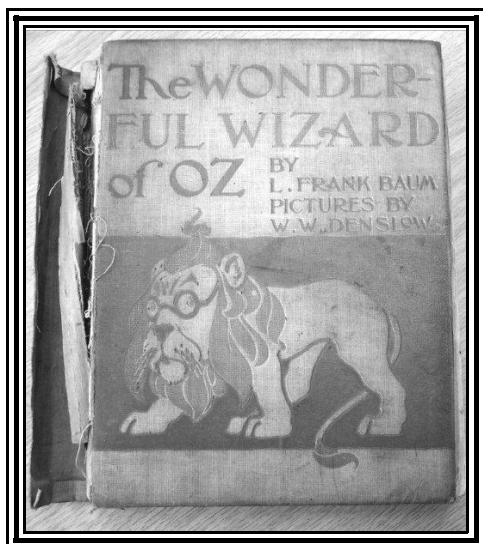


The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

by Beth Neel, Book Sleuth

The yellow brick road – what an adventure filled with many dips, twists and u-turns, not only for Dorothy and Toto, but also the Book Sleuths. Found nestled near the middle of a box of donated books from an estate collection, the *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was a spectacular find for any book sleuth. A careful study of the disbound copy of the book, written by L. Frank Baum in the year 1899, found that all the pages and colored plates were present and that the text block was clean and tight. The spine of the book was separated from the front cover, and it was evident that little hands had handled the covers of this children's favorite over the 110 years of its existence, but we knew we had something special. We just didn't know exactly how special it might be. The Book Sleuths then began a search of similar books that were for sale on the internet in an effort to evaluate this particular book. About that time the local hospice announced that it would sponsor an Antiques Road Show in the spring of 2006. We knew this was a good opportunity to get an expert evaluation of our find.



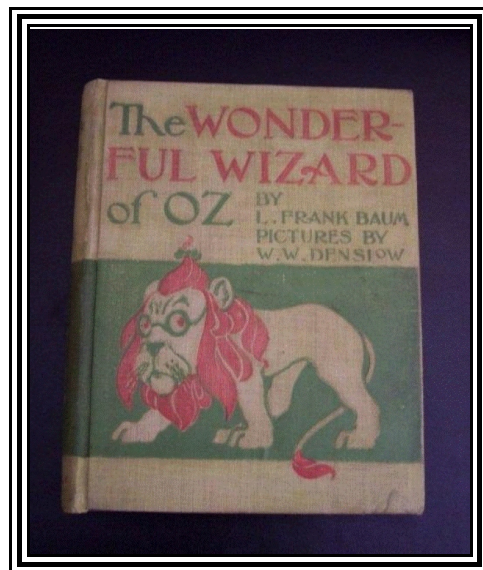
Before Professional Restoration

Three of us stood in long lines in the women's building at the Boone County Fairgrounds that day with the carefully wrapped book in our arms. We joined a crowd of excited people who were clutching paintings, glassware, musical instruments, a sword, and other items not readily identifiable. Daniel Buck Soules, a nationally known auctioneer and appraiser, provided an initial evaluation, made several suggestions to enhance the book's value, and offered to work with us. He recommended having the book cleaned, repaired and rebound to increase its value and improve its presentation. The book was shipped to him and these repairs made, after which Mr. Soules appraised the book. He offered to place the book in one of his auctions, and he sent us one of the catalogs that contained its picture and description. We were disappointed when the book did not sell in that auction, but book sleuths are not an easily discouraged group of people. Our next course of action was to place the book on our internet bookstore, Booksellers in the Ozarks, which is located at www.Abebooks.com. This was when things got really interesting.

We received many inquiries about *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. We corresponded with scam artists who spoke little English and made interesting proposals concerning separating us from our book. We received inquiries from the browsers who were not serious about

buying the book, but simply curious. We received e-mails from book collectors who assured us that our book was not worth what we were asking, but they sure would like to buy it for a ridiculously low price. A potential buyer let us know that we really didn't know what we were doing, so he was willing to take the book off our hands at about half the price we were asking. We became involved in a legitimate transaction with a book dealer whose buyer backed out on him at the last minute. Another potential buyer kept a Book Sleuth on the phone for 2 hours in a page-by-page evaluation of the text and each color plate only to back out on the sale. Pictures were taken of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* from every imaginable position that each inquirer requested and then e-mailed to that person. We spoke with one inquirer so many times that we began to think of him as a pen pal. The Book Sleuths remained confident that the book was priced correctly, and we didn't give up. We knew our buyer was out there somewhere. Finally, at long last, in the summer of 2009, we received an offer that matched our selling price of \$2500, and we began the procedure to finalize the transaction. We held our collective breaths until the money for the sale was actually in our hands. We could hardly believe that our quest was over. What an adventure!

Thank you anonymous donor, wherever you may be.



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