

Rare Historical Documents Valued at \$200,000

Student Owns Records

By EARL O. ANDERSON / GILFORD — Two historically priceless documents, the only ones of their kind in existence, relating to the early history of this country, are now in possession of a local man, Hector L. Bolduc.

Both of them bear the original signatures of the entire federal administration, 16 years apart.

The first was on the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence in 1876, and the second entering the 400th year of the discovery of America, in 1892.

They were displayed at the Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, the last time either has been publicly viewed.

Bolduc, an avid student of historical matters, now studying for the Catholic priesthood, has had the documents researched and authenticated by the National Archives in Washington.

Because of their extreme rarity, the Gilford man has been offered over \$100,000 each for them, but would not even consider it.

"I have been approached by persons wishing to purchase

them for use in connection with the bi-centennial of the U. S. in 1976," Bolduc revealed, "for the National Bi-Centennial Commission and also the National Archives.

"But I said that I would not sell, as I want to keep them for myself, as I know that if sold, they would leave New Hampshire. And I want them to remain here in the state which contributed so much to the early history of our great nation."

The documents are kept locked in a bank vault at Laconia, Bolduc revealed, except for certain instances when he may remove for special purposes.

"I have offered to loan them for display at any time to the National Bi-Centennial Commission," said Bolduc, "and the National Archives wants them back again for another exhibition."

"The Archives, you see, had the documents for several months, while researching them.

"They were really 'amazed' when they first saw them. I will never forget the look on the face of Mr. Burke (Frank G., director of educational programs), when he unwrapped the large package and saw what was inside."

Hector, as he is widely known here, because of his interest in all matters historic, gave the Archives permission to photostat them for their files, in return for repairing them. They were given a protective liquid coating, and rebacked with linen.

How they came into possession of the local man is most intriguing. It seems that a Gen. James McBride, retired after service in the Civil War, ran a printing establishment in the nation's capital.

He thought up the idea for both documents. Using large poster-size parchment, linen-backed, he printed the border and heading for each one, and

arranged for signing of all members of the federal administration in the two periods involved.

This was quite a task, for it included, besides the signature of the president at the time, all cabinet officers, Supreme Court members, the entire Senate and House of Representatives, and Territory delegates.

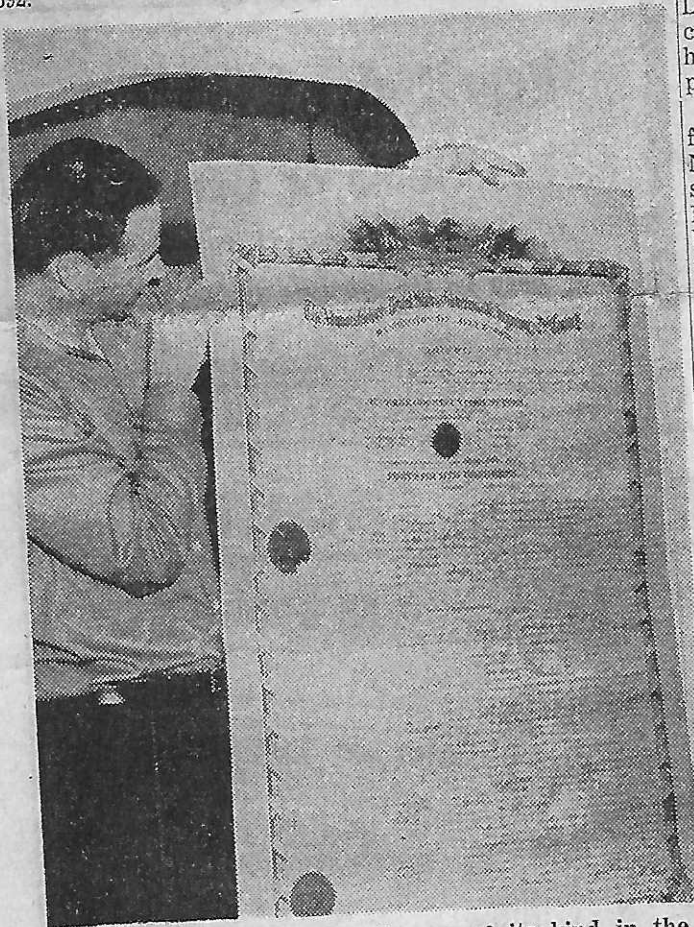
The names were arranged geographically, from Maine on through rest of the U.S., senators according to seniority, and representatives by numerical district.

The "Declaration" document measures 33 by 47 inches, and the "Discovery" one, 34 by 55 inches.

When General McBride died, the estate was inherited by a son, and when the son died, his estate was sold at auction. A man bought a lot of old maps, in which they were rolled, at the auction, and, being particularly interested in Civil War

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RARE DOCUMENT, only one of its kind in the world, is examined by its owner, Hector L. Bolduc of Gilford. The document bears names of the entire federal administration at the time of the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, in 1876. Bolduc came into possession of it about a year ago. He has turned down offers of more than \$100,000, and prefers to keep it for its historical value. (Five Star Photo)

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material only, traded the documents for a Civil War gun.

The purchaser, knowing of Bolduc's interest in historical matters, approached him and asked if the Gifford man wished to buy them.

"I did so, at a 'reasonable' price," Hector said. "Although he had a general idea of what they were, I don't think he realized their real 'significance!'"

New Hampshire had thought that it held one of the original documents, on the 'Declaration', Hector said, but found, on comparing it with the one owned by Bolduc, that it was but a copy. That was this past Friday in Concord, when Bolduc visited Robert A. Lauze, director of the Division of Records Management and Archives.

Bolduc is one of 13 living children of Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Bolduc, whose family lives at the old Jewett homestead, built in 1779.

Hector authored the history of Gifford, when the town celebrated its bicentennial a few years ago. And he got permission to hold a two day Open House at the famed Kimball's Castle here, nine years ago, during which 12,000 persons visited the place.

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