

Editor's Mail

Note: Hector Bolduc of Gilford in the following letter supplies information concerning a scroll presented to the State in 1885 by Stilson Hutchins of Laconia. Hutchins, who at the time was owner and publisher of the Washington Post, which he founded, resided on the former Messer estate, located at what is now the corner of Opechee and Messer Sts., which he purchased about 1880 and remodelled. Later, as owner of Governor's Island, he became a legal resident of Gilford.

He was one of three members of the legislature from the town of Laconia in 1885.

Edward J. Gallagher's biography of Hutchins, published in 1965, suggests the possibility Hutchins proposed to his fellow legislator, Major Napoleon B. Gale, the gift of a public library for Laconia, which Gale included in his will.

Dear Mr. Gallagher:

I was much interested in the recent editorial which appeared in the Laconia Evening Citizen concerning the scroll which contains the signatures of members of the officers of the Federal Government of July 4, 1876. Several points I feel should be clarified.

First, although several individuals or groups of individuals have approached me concerning the purchase of my scroll, no offer has been made by the National Archives directly. The archives have little

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or no funds to augment their collections and depend mainly on donations to make additions to National collection. Offers were made to purchase the document for the National Archives, that is with the intent of presenting the document to the archives and or the Bi-Centennial Committee.

Secondly, there was no intent on my part whatever to suggest that there had been any "misrepresentation" on the part of Mr. Hutchins when he presented the scroll now in Concord to the legislature. Unless new documentation comes to light, it is not likely that we shall ever know what Mr. Hutchins meant when he said: "... there being, as I believe, but one other copy in existence..." The word "copy" when used in a general sense can be quite ambiguous.

My only interest has been to clarify an historical

come to Laconia for a personal examination. I think he would be much interested in seeing the scroll that his great grandfather presented to the state legislature in 1885.

I might add here, that the most significant point of interest concerning the Concord scroll is the magnificent frame in which it is housed. This frame is of superb workmanship and quality, and greatly enhances the scroll it supports. It is I believe, a fine work of art.

I shall continue to conduct research concerning the scrolls in hopes that new information will come to light. At present it appears that when the original (I mean here the scroll in my collection) was sent for display in Philadelphia, a copy was made and framed and remained there for display for the duration of the exhibit. This is undoubtedly the scroll which Mr. Hutchins acquired. The original scroll remained in General McBride's collection and eventually ended up in my collection. It has been mentioned that General McBride intended that the original be deposited with the national collection which was then under the direction of the Department of State. It would seem then, that this is the document referred to by Mr. Hutchins in his address to the state legislature, "... there being, I believe, but one other copy in existence, which is preserved, along with the Declaration of Independence adopted just one hundred years previously, in the State Department of the United States."

There can be no question that General McBride held the document in high esteem and certainly did not intend that it be haphazardly sold at auction as it was. This was perhaps due to the fact that his business affairs were obviously not in good order at the time of his death.

I hesitate to comment on paintings (water or oil) as they are in a completely different category. But I do understand and sympathize with Mr. Penn's problem in authenticating his Goya. It is frequently very difficult to authenticate a painting especially when there is a chance that it was produced by a student or school which is associated with the artist. Three years ago I found a canvas at a Washington university under a heap of refuse where it had been discarded as junk. The subject was five American Indians painted in the style of Charles Bird King. I recognized it as being identical to one attributed to King which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. After having the painting cleaned and restored at the National Gallery, a question arose as to which painting was the original work of the artist. It was most unlikely that an artist would have painted two identical paintings. Several months ago the National Gallery discovered that their painting had been displayed in N.Y. in 1834 by a student of the artist. It is unlikely that Mr. King would have allowed a student to display his work. The National Gallery was quick to point out that the authenticity of their painting was very questionable. A few weeks ago, after many months of searching, I discovered in the university records, a small inventory card stating that the painting had been a gift from Mr. King to the president of the university in 1860. The university

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event. I have spent considerable time and effort in the pursuit of this goal, both in regards to these scrolls and in other areas as well. Let us make a comparison of the two scrolls.

The scroll in my possession contains pen and ink signatures and statements. Besides this, it contains authentic seals of the various branches of the U.S. Government including the Great Seal of the United States.

The scroll in Concord at the state archives is not a pen and ink copy. It does not have authentic seals. It is rather a printed copy made from an engraved plate or other similar process of reproduction which was in use at that time. It is very much like a zerox copy. The seals are not actual seals but like the rest of the document, are facsimile reproductions. As a matter of fact, the name of the company that reproduced it is printed on the Concord scroll.

I have examined both scrolls and it is apparent that the scroll in Concord was engraved and that it was made directly from the one in my possession. This is evident when the characteristics of individual signatures are examined and compared. It is a known fact from existing documents that the "original" document was signed in person by all individuals involved, and that it was signed in pen and ink.

I don't know if Mr. John Rogers Penn has examined the Concord document, I know he has not examined mine. I will state however, that even an amateur could tell that the Concord scroll is not a pen and ink copy but a facsimile. Mr. Lauze at Concord quickly determined this when he examined it closely just as I did.

The National Archives certainly can and does make mistakes. They are nevertheless experts in their field and have many on their staff, who are recognized as world experts. Their opinion is certainly not to be taken lightly. I will however, state that my scroll will be made available at any time for examination by any competent authority for comparison with the Concord scroll, and that I shall be happy to accept the results of any future examinations.

I further suggest that for the coming July 4 celebrations in Laconia, that a request be made to the state archives to have their scroll loaned for display at a prominent business establishment in Laconia (perhaps a bank) and that my document be displayed with it so that all interested parties may compare for themselves, these two interesting and much discussed documents. On returning to Laconia in June, I will look into this possibility.

I would in particular invite Mr. John Rogers Penn to

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painting is now being considered for sale at about \$50,000. A very thorough, painstaking check into all of the personal papers of Mr. Hutchins may prove fruitful to Mr. Penn in authenticating his Goya.

It sometimes takes many years of research to authenticate a certain historical item or work of art. This is a task necessary for any serious historically minded individual. In particular historians must be relentless in their task of authenticating documents which pertain to our nation's history. The two scrolls which are the subject of this article are of special interest because of their connection with Mr. Stilson Hutchins who made a tremendous contribution to the political, social and cultural life of our state; and for the fact that the original of this document has the honor of having been instrumental in the celebration of our nation's 100th year of independence. Also because it has the distinction of being one of only two documents in our nation's history to have been signed (personally in pen and ink) by the entire administration of the Federal Government.

Because of the historical significance of the document it is important that its originality be established if at all possible. It would certainly be disturbing to find, for instance, that the Declaration of Independence which is displayed at the National Archives was really a "copy" and that the original was elsewhere.

In conclusion I will state that all research and examination conducted thus far points to the document in my collection as the original. More than that it has been positively identified as such. That the document that reposes in the N.H. State Archives is not the original is of no discredit to Mr. Stilson Hutchins. I find no evidence that he ever claimed that the signatures on his document were authentic. He referred to them as "a framed exhibit of the signatures . . ." A question did arise later when the document was rediscovered in about 1966 and a newspaper article (I believe it was a Concord paper) claimed that the signatures on that document were "authentic" and "genuine." These terms again are used ambiguously and do not represent what is usually reflected by the use of those terms. I can state as a matter of fact having examined the Concord document that the signatures and the entire document is a facsimile reproduction. I invite anyone to examine both documents and prove otherwise.

In the pursuit of the goal of responsible, authentic historicity, I shall make my document and all material pertaining to it, available to all interested persons.

Because both of these unique documents have been so seldom seen, it might be possible to make them the nucleus of a July Fourth celebration in Laconia. I am sure that Stilson Hutchins, a fine patriot and historically minded as he was, would be very pleased with such an effort.

Very sincerely,
Hector L. Bolduc

Mr. St. Mary's Seminary,
Emmitsburg, Maryland

EDITORIAL COMMENT

What's All the Shooting About?

When Stilson Hutchins of Laconia in 1885 presented a certain scroll in a gold frame to the State of New Hampshire he told the Legislature "but one other copy is in existence."

Now the "other copy" has turned up. Hector Bolduc of Gilford has acquired it, and is keeping it in a safe deposit box in a Laconia bank. He has been advised, he says, by the National Archives at Washington and Mr. Lauze of the N.H. Archives at Concord that his is the "original" and what Hutchins presented to the state was merely a "copy." Hector further reports he has refused over \$100,000 for his, and that the National Archives has offered to buy it. He hopes it can be kept in New Hampshire.

On the basis of Hutchins' address to the Legislature we cannot see how the slightest inference of misrepresentation can be drawn.

Hector brought the scroll to our office and a picture showing him with the treasure appeared on the front page of the Evening Citizen April 13.

Stilson Hutchins' great grandson, John Rogers Penn, in a letter to the editor says "Robert J. Lauze and Mr. Bolduc should submit their sets of documents to a recognized authority for first hand simultaneous scientific comparison together. The National Archives should NOT make this study and certification as they, too, have a record of errors as well as unconfirmed and unacceptable authentications among their work. One example is that they examined my Goya water color, recently, from the Hutchins estate and said it was not a Goya and probably a Lucas, but that they agreed it was exactly the

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same as the oil water color in their National Gallery. We then pointed out that our other experts agree and that many experts have questioned their right and integrity of continuing to attribute their oil to Goya. We contend that if mine is not a Goya, and we agree it may well not be, then there is even more evidence that their oil is not and they ought to correct their claim as well. In a letter to my man Fred Anthon, signed by the head curator of the National Archives, he declines to remove their Goya attribution in the National Archives—at least for now. So you see, I think, that the Archives tend to stretch and authenticate when it is theirs or they have none but want one in their collection."

E. J. Gallagher's biography of Stilson Hutchins says on page 121:

In 1885 Mr. Hutchins was a member of the Legislature from Laconia. . (He had served two terms in the Missouri Legislature, 1870-72.) His selection as one of the legislators from the Lake City followed his presentation of a granite water fountain, erected in Bank Square, the subject of much heated discussion, in the press and at town meeting. While sitting at Concord on the hot afternoon of August 26, 1885, Hutchins arose to address the Speaker, and announced a surprise gift to the state. Not one of his paintings, it was nevertheless in a gold frame, the frame enclosing the signatures of the highest Federal government officials in office July 4, 1876. The country's centennial was still fresh in the public mind. Nine years before, New Hampshire had deputed a delegation to proceed to Philadelphia to participate in the centennial celebration. In fact, the Legislature seriously debated a resolution that all its members constitute the Granite state's official representation to the Quaker City to mark the close of the

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nation's first hundred years.

Explaining his gift, Rep. Hutchins read the following note as his fellow solons whom he had lately entertained as a body at Governor's Island listened attentively:

Concord, N.H., August 26, 1885.

To the Honorable Speaker of the House of Representatives:

I desire to present to the State, through the honorable body over which you preside, a framed exhibit of the signatures of the administrators of the Federal government, at the beginning of the second century July 4, 1876, there being, as I believe, but one other copy in existence, which is preserved, along with the Declaration of Independence adopted just one hundred years previously, in the State Department of the United States.

As this instrument contains the signatures of the recently deceased General Grant, then President of the United States, together with the autographs of his Cabinet, the Justices of the Supreme Court, and members of the Senate and House of Representatives at the beginning of our second century of independence, I have thought it would be a peculiarly appropriate addition to the historical treasures of the legislative chamber, where it has been placed by the sergeant-at-arms, and where I trust it will remain.

Respectfully,

Stilson Hutchins.

A joint resolution of thanks to Rep. Hutchins, introduced by Rep. Bell of Exeter, was adopted and sent to the Senate which promptly concurred.

Hector Bolduc is, of course, to be congratulated on his great find which is but one of many to his credit in research in this country and Europe. He has made fabulous acquisitions and we recall he supplied rare pictures of the stone mansion on Governor's Island to aid in our study of the life of Stilson Hutchins. Hector's experience as a student in Washington should be helpful in investigating what may have been the fate of the scroll Hutchins thought was preserved in the Department of State.