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Evidence of historical scandal found at Belfast library

By Tom Groening

BELFAST — Imagine America unfettered by a national debt, because the private banking system is prohibited from making high-interest loans to the government.

Imagine a country where lawyers do not have preeminence in governmental and judicial circles, and courts are speedy executors of justice, for the rich and the poor alike.

Imagine a truly egalitarian people, whose guiding principles are enshrined in a Constitution that guarantees no group will be exalted over another.

David Dodge and Tom Dunn don't have to imagine — they've found it. Or at least a piece of it.

"I've always been interested in puzzles," says Dodge, who hails from Florida, though he has ties to Maine. He

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Tom Dunn, left, and David Dodge AT THE BELFAST, MAINE LIBRARY

— WITHIN A MONTH AFTER THIS STORY BROKE, AN EVENT OCCURRED, THE NATURE OF WHICH HAS PLAGUED THE XIIITH AMENDMENT SINCE ITS 1810 CONCEPTION — THE EVIDENCE OF THE PRINTING OF THIS 1825 PUBLICATION BY THE STATE MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED FROM THE LIBRARY'S "CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC" TOP FLOOR. THE OLD BOOK HAD BEEN LOCKED WITHIN A CLOSET IN A BOLTED ROOM TO SECURE AND PRESERVE IT, ONLY AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF THE CONTENT OF THIS HISTORIC DOCUMENT.

SCANDAL

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and Dunn, a retired police investigator from Baltimore who has settled in Winslow, discovered what they are convinced is the key to unlocking America's greatest political scandal, found in the Belfast Free Library in 1983 — which in comparison would make Watergate look like a politician caught pilfering paper clips.

Dodge and Dunn were conducting a historical investigation into another governmental issue when they came across a copy of the United States Constitution, published in 1825. The library still has the document in its rare books storage area, a "pamphlet" of about 4 inches by 7 inches, its hard wooden jacket covered by decaying cloth.

From further research, the two men found that the newly convened state legislature (Maine became a state in 1820) had commissioned the publication of 10,000 of these pamphlets, which contain the texts of both the state and U.S. Constitutions, along with the Declaration of Independence, apparently for use in schools.

As they flipped through the yellowed, stiff pages of the section that contained the U.S. Constitution, they were astounded to find a 13th amendment. Remember, our history books tell us that the 13th amendment was the one which freed the slaves after the Civil War.

More astonishing still, say the two, was the content of that amendment, and its ramifications for modern America.

THE AMENDMENT

In the library's circa 1825 pamphlet, and in over 40 subsequently discovered Constitutional publications in 17 different states covering a period up to 1869, the amendment reads:

"If any citizen of the United States shall accept, claim, receive, or retain any title of nobility or honour, or shall, without the consent of Congress, accept and retain any present, pension, office or emolument of any kind whatever, from any emperor, king, prince, or foreign power, such a person shall cease to be a citizen of the United States, and shall be incapable of holding any office of trust or profit under them, or either of them."

The words seem innocuous enough, and almost self-evident, at first reading. But Dodge and Dunn explain the amendment in historical context, which they believe accounts for its ultimately being removed in 1869 in the martial law

When the nation was founded, many were still loyal to the crown of England, or to business interests in Europe. The early government and its people struggled over these divided loyalties, the two men say.

The election of 1800 was a referendum on the philosophical and economic conflict, they say, as the Federalists, or Tories, were swept out of office. Thomas Jefferson and the Democrats-Republicans took control, and ushered in a new era, free from the class trappings of the Old World.

The early days of the nation were far from harmonious, Dodge and Dunn say, and cite such familiar history books references as the Alien and Sedition Act of 1798, the Whiskey Rebellion, and the Jay Treaty which sent 600,000 pounds sterling to England for war reparations.

Of the latter, Dunn says the treaty was ratified in secret session, and "The people almost rose up in revolt again." He explains that the people felt they had been betrayed by the Federalists.

Presidents Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and Jackson presided over what Dodge and Dunn characterize as the flowering of American democracy. But early in those years, Congress apparently became concerned that the Federalist interests could again take hold of the government and install what Dodge and Dunn say is a society based on privilege, and so a Constitutional amendment was proposed.

The 13th amendment was drafted in 1810, and, as was the process at that time, sent to state legislatures to ratify. Dodge and Dunn have evidence that 12 of the necessary 13 states ratified the amendment. But late, in the form of the War of 1812, intervened.

One of the tragedies of that war was that the Library of Congress, and in fact most of Washington, was burned by the British, leaving the government without many of its key documents. Dodge and Dunn say the government had to essentially recreate itself on paper, following the war.

In 1818 in the aftermath of the war, Connecticut and Virginia, states which had not ratified the amendment, requested in writing the status of the amendment. According to the men, Virginia's legislature was prepared to ratify the amendment into the Constitution by ratifying it, but wanted to wait

and most politically powerful state at the time, was scheduled to recodify and reprint its laws and documents.

The other states agreed to wait, say Dodge and Dunn.

CONFUSION

What happened next is where Dodge and Dunn and the rest of America's historians part ways. The two men say Virginia did indeed ratify the amendment on March 12, 1819, thus making it part of the U.S. Constitution. They produce evidence which was laboriously unearthed in Virginia state archives that shows ratification did occur.

"It took me five trips to Richmond, Virginia, to get the original legislation," Dodge says.

And even more compelling, they produce document after document — over 40 in all — where the 13th amendment has been printed as part of the Constitution. The Belfast 1825 find was the first, which led the men to officially kick off an announcement here, though they have begun to approach others in the media and have spoken on radio talk shows around the country.

The find was covered in an article in *Anti-Slavery* magazine, a publication devoted to "a critical examination of the American legal system," according to its cover.

Since the publicity began, interested historical researchers all over the country have either located printed versions of the amendment, or put Dodge and Dunn on the trail where they have turned them up.

Those finds have come from as faraway places as Texas and Colorado, and span the period from 1819 to 1869 — and continue to trickle in almost weekly.

Those not inclined to accept Dodge and Dunn's view — who include Sen. George Mitchell (D-Maine), with whom they have corresponded on the matter — say the Belfast find is a typographical error, made when a printer incorrectly inserted the amendment had been ratified.

Dodge and Dunn retails that claim with such new, and chronologically later find. The smudged notes by federal officials on the matter, including archivists at the Library of Congress in Washington, point out what they claim is the scandalous nature of the saga of the 13th amendment.

THE MEANING

According to the two men, the

ing certain men from establishing themselves as a kind of nobility in America, in both political and business arenas. Those most threatened by the language of the 13th were lawyers, and later, bankers. Dodge and Dunn point out dozens of examples of the entrenchment of those professions in our government and society.

Lawyers, they point out, dominate Congress. Only lawyers can become judges and district attorneys, which was not always the case in this country, they claim. In the early decades of the 19th century, common law was the rule. When two parties disagreed on civil matters, they would find a judge, get a jury, and settle the matter.

"They have set themselves up as a class above everyone else," says Dunn.

Today's litigious society, where people need lawyers to represent them through a difficult to understand court system, is a manifestation of the demise of the 13th amendment, say the men.

They connect the reference to retaining "any title of nobility" in the amendment to the title of "esquire" which many lawyers use, even today. The term is traced to knighthood in England, they say.

Dodge claims that lawyers who serve as federal or state legislators are in a conflict of interest by interpreting laws in court which they as a profession have influenced in the making.

"A lawyer tells his allegiance for money," Dodge charges. The two recite a further litany of societal ills they blame on the legal system they hold in our society. The disproportionate number of lawyers in this country compared to others in the world, a number which keeps growing, they say is further proof of a country which strayed from its truly democratic impulses.

Dodge and Dunn say if the 13th amendment were in effect today, an accountable number of Constitutional challenges would be made against the subtle but influential leverage lawyers control.

The men similarly trace the establishment of the Federal Reserve Bank — a privately owned corporation which controls interest rates for consumer and government loans alike — to the 13th amendment. The Reserve Bank — an earlier version of which had been vetoed by President Andrew Jackson — was cre-

Dodge and Dunn claim is closely tied to Europe relationship that would be broken by the amendment to "emolument — from or, king."

Emolument is defined as "one who gain advantage."

They further claim that the 13th amendment had been in effect, the modern banking "system," the 18th century or notion that leading interest was a sin.

And as further proof that the amendment was in effect, they point to the American of the 1820s, '30s, '40s the time of Emerson when wholistic and true thought dominate they say.

GONE

The 13th amendment was seriously removed in chaotic days following the Civil War, Lincoln's assassination, Andrew Johnson's impeachment hearings, and the so-called Radical Republicanism of the 39th Congress, say Dunn.

The men are close to show, on the paper trail, its illegal repeal which follow they have hard evidence to the 13th amendment federal archives being deleted.

They have recent Mitchell a lesser democratic hearing on the 13th at — appropriately, the Belfast Free Library.

They also say a group may soon challenge the national court challenge Midwest based on amendment over the issue of farms.

Whether the men windmills or indeed found America's greatest scandal remains to be seen they have talked about book, they say it is a quest that keeps them quest for the whole story to get America "back Dunn say. "What it was." ■