



The Mystery of the Lost Scroll

William M. Gardner

In 1973 I met Leon (Andy) Anderson who was the editor of *The Brown Book of the New Hampshire Legislature*. He was compiling biographical information about house and senate members to include in the 46th biennial issue dedicated to the 350th anniversary of New Hampshire's settlement in 1623.

Andy was a retired *Concord Monitor* political reporter who was also working on a history of the New Hampshire legislature. During the last 10 years of his life, I got to know him quite well, and he wrote some historical essays for earlier editions of the "Red Book."

When I became Secretary of State in 1976 he would visit me at the state house, sometimes weekly, sometimes monthly. I learned a great deal about New Hampshire history from him, and he arranged for me to purchase his collection of history books about New Hampshire before his death in 1983.

During one of his visits to the state house, he told me about something he called the "Centennial Scroll." It had been hanging in the state house for many years, but had been taken out of the building by someone who remains a mystery. He believed it had been stolen and had been placed in a bank vault in Laconia. He told me it was too big to be easily concealed and believed that someday it would be found. He wanted me to be on the lookout for it, hoping this treasure would someday return to the State House.



In the early 1960s, the state archives building was constructed on the state hospital grounds. All the artifacts, journals, court records and old state papers that had been in the state house basement, where the cafeteria is now, were removed to the new archives. It was an improvement for the storage of state documents to have them in a new facility for their safe-keeping and preservation. There was no record that the 1876 centennial scroll was ever moved to the archives building.

For 30 years Frank Mevers, Ph.D., was the state archivist, and I told him about the missing scroll and to be on the lookout for it. Dr. Mevers retired a few years ago without solving the mystery.

Then, earlier this spring I received a call from Gary Gilmore of Dover at the archives telling me that while removing over 30,000 boxes in an area of the stacks where the shelving was beginning to fail, he noticed a large wooden box that no one had noticed before with dimensions that made me think this might be the long lost scroll. Sure enough it was.

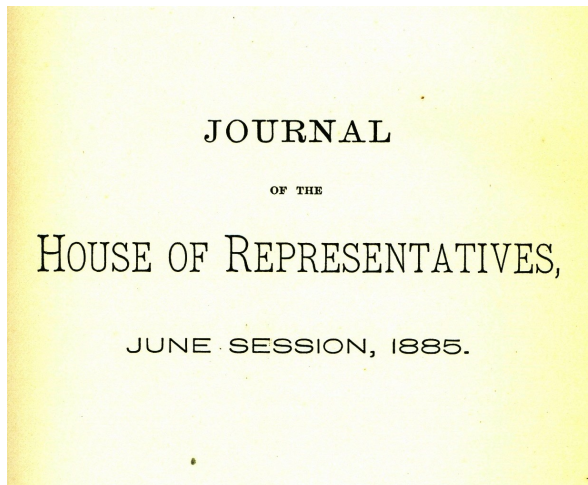
There was no record of it in the archives, so it's possible the perpetrator found a way to get it there over a half century ago and place it in an area where no one would find it for a long time. But my question is, how could that happen? Perhaps we will never know.

There's a maple tree that Andy's family planted not long after his death on the grounds outside the archives building. It is much taller now and is able to look down over the building, a fitting reminder of Andy's connection.

Leon W. "Andy" Anderson (1902—1983) covered the State House for forty-one years as a reporter and columnist for the *Concord Monitor*, and served as a member of the House of Representatives in the 1943-1944 session. He is the author of *To This Day* — *The 300 years of the New Hampshire Legislature*, published in 1981.



Scroll Donated to State in 1885



Official record of "Centennial Scroll" gift from Laconia Rep. Stilson Hutchins.

LETTER OF PRESENTATION.

The following communication was read and ordered to be spread upon the record : —

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 autograph signature of the lately 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.



1876 Scroll Moved to State House



House Speaker Shawn Jasper and *Union Leader* Publisher Joseph W. McQuaid, above right, assist in opening a crate containing the historic 1876 scroll at the state archives on April 14, 2015. The crate was re-sealed and taken to the State House for a public unveiling and later placed there on permanent display. The donor of the document, Stilson Hutchins, who served his first and only term as a state representative from Laconia in 1885, donated the scroll to the state that year. He once owned the *Manchester Union*, now the *NH Union Leader*, and founded the *Washington Post* in 1877.

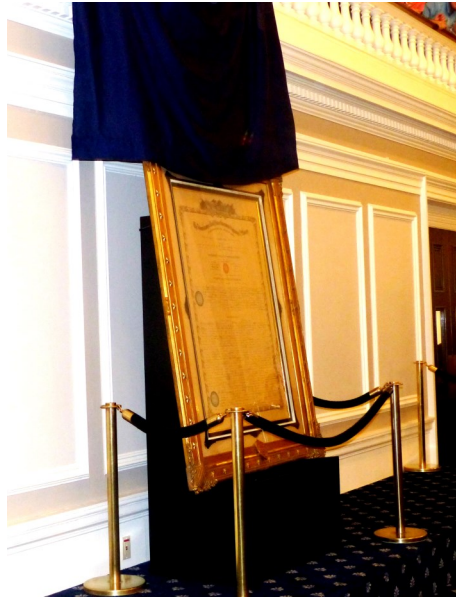


In the Doors, Up the Stairs





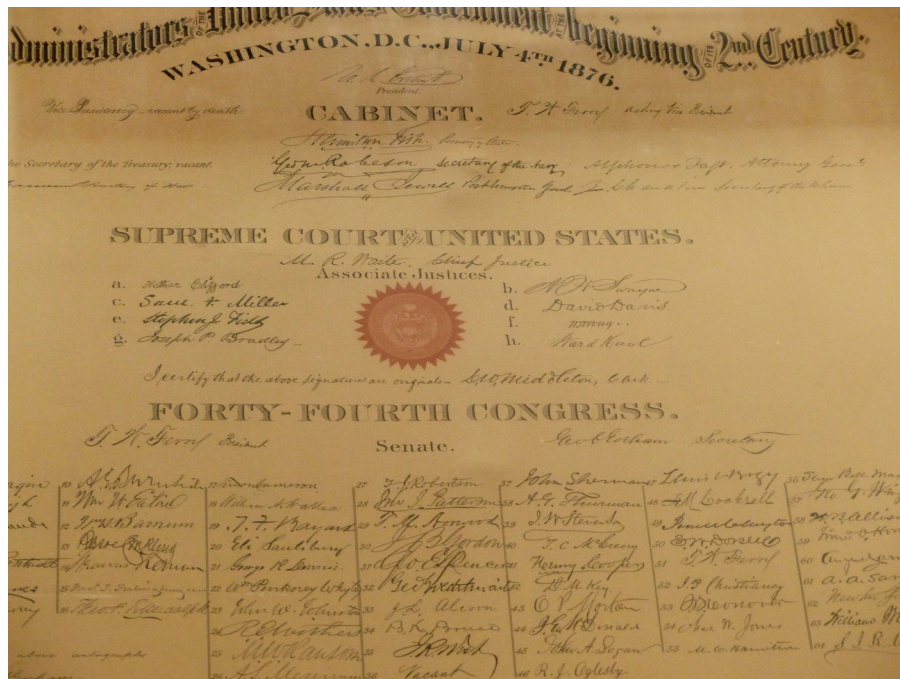
Scroll Unveiled May 6, 2015



At the speakers podium during the unveiling ceremony of the 1876 Centennial Scroll in Representative's Hall are Governor Maggie Hassan, Senate President *Pro Tempore* Sharon Carson, House Speaker Shawn Jasper, Secretary of State William Gardner, and The Rev. Dr. F. Daniel Osgood of Greenfield, guest chaplain.



House Chamber After Unveiling



Governor Maggie Hassan and House Speaker Shawn Jasper with members and guests of the House examine the 1876 scroll, or broadside, following its unveiling moments before. The signatures of those from New Hampshire appearing on the document are the state's two U.S. Senators, Aaron H. Cragin, R-Lebanon, and Bainbridge Wadleigh, R-Milford; The state's three members of the House: Frank Jones, D-Portsmouth; Samuel N. Bell, D-Manchester, and Henry W. Blair, R-Plymouth.

Rumney native Nathan Clifford, a graduate of what is now New Hampton School, signed as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, and Zachariah Chandler, born in Bedford, signed as Secretary of the Interior. The signature of the Vice President is missing because Henry Wilson, born Jeremiah Jones Colbath in Farmington, died in office at age 63 the year before after suffering a stroke.



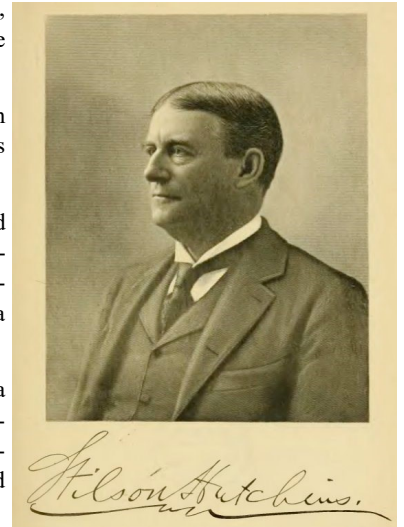
Who Was Stilson Hutchins?

Stilson Hutchins, best known as the founder of the *Washington Post*, was born of modest means in Whitefield, New Hampshire on November 14, 1838. At his death at age 73 in Washington, D. C. on April 23, 1912, he left an estate estimated at between 95 and 98 million dollars, valued in 2015 currency.

Founding his first newspaper at the age of 19 in Iowa, Hutchins would not only have several newspapers in Washington, besides the *Post*, but owned two newspapers in New Hampshire: the *Manchester Union*, today's *NH Union Leader*, and the *Concord Daily Patriot*, which eventually merged with the *Concord Monitor*.

In 1883 Hutchins leased the 600 acre Governor's Island on Lake Winnepesaukee where he built a mansion and numerous outbuildings. Here he engaged in farming and hosted business associates, entertainers, and politicians, including President Grover Cleveland and chocolate magnate Milton Hershey, who discussed purchasing the island. In 1903 Hutchins leased the island to German Ambassador Baron Speck von Sternburg for a "summer embassy." The mansion burned in 1935.

An energetic editor and staunch Democrat, it was his talent for business, not journalism, that led Hutchins to a colorful career, gaining him both wealth and influence at the highest levels of national politics. When his second wife died in 1884 at the age of 35, President Chester A. Arthur attended her funeral held at their Washington home. President William McKinley and his cabinet were present when a statue of Daniel Webster donated by Hutchins was dedicated in Washington in 1900.



Although he made money buying and selling newspapers and investing in real estate, banks and railroads in Washington and New Hampshire, the major source of Hutchins' fortune lay in his early investment in the Mergenthaler Linotype, which revolutionized the publishing industry, setting the standard for commercial typesetting world-wide from the late 1800s to the 1970s.

Hutchins' father had died several months before his birth, after which mother and son moved from Whitefield to her family's home in Contoocook. When his mother remarried they moved to Cambridge, where Hutchins studied at a prep school and spent a year at Harvard, also contributing occasionally to Boston newspapers. In 1856, the family moved to Osage, Iowa, where they knew the state's third governor James W. Grimes, born in Deering, New Hampshire in 1816. Here Hutchins began editing the local paper at age 17. He also encountered ex-New Hampshire Governor Nathaniel B. Baker, then Iowa's Civil War Adjutant General.

At 19, Hutchins founded *The North Iowan* in 1857. At 28 he established the *St. Louis Times*. Here he gave a young German-speaking Joseph Pulitzer his first job writing in English. Both Pulitzer and Hutchins later served together in the Missouri Legislature. In 1877, he sold the *Times*, and headed for Washington.

Hutchins founded the *Washington Post*, publishing the first edition on December 6, 1877 because he believed the nation's capital lacked a strong Democratic Party voice. Later he purchased three other papers there, including the *National Republican* with the help of New Hampshire GOP Senator William E. Chandler, a close friend.

In 1879, Hutchins leased a house in Laconia, New Hampshire near Lake Opechee, which still stands at this writing. Here he established legal residency, despite maintaining his long-time home in Washington at 1603 Massachusetts Avenue. He was elected to the House from Laconia, serving one term beginning in June, 1885. His biographer, Laconia publisher Edward J. Gallagher, believed Hutchins planned to eventually run for governor and U.S. senator. He was mentioned for a seat in congress at the 1880 Democratic state convention in Dover, and chaired the 1882 party convention at Concord.

During the 1885 session he overcame strong opposition from the "Old Guard" by sponsoring and ushering through a "purity of elections" bill to address apparent fraud and bribery taking place in town elections. The law permitted any voter to challenge any other voter's right to vote, and provided for due process and penalties.

Hutchins' social skills were well displayed that session when he hosted fellow legislators for a day at Governor's Island. As his colleagues arrived by morning train at Weirs Station and ferried to the island by the steamboat *Mineola*, they brought news that his *Washington Post* plant had been destroyed by fire along with two other dailies. Gallagher writes: "Hutchins was game to the core. He went through with the complete program for a day of great sociability as if nothing untoward had occurred."



Following the death of former President Ulysses S. Grant in July 1885, and after 30 days of national mourning, Rep. Hutchins formally presented to the state a handsomely framed scroll, or broadside, featuring the signatures of Grant, his cabinet, and the senators and representatives then in office from each state, a copy of an original created on the occasion of the nation's centennial, July 4, 1876.

The nameplate on the frame reads: "Presented by Stilson Hutchins to the State of New Hampshire, August 8, 1885," the date of Grant's state funeral. – Dean Dexter



Missing for Years, Found by Chance



The long lost Stilson Hutchins Centennial Scroll was discovered hidden in an unmarked crate behind a row of stacks at the NH State Archives in April of 2015 by Gary Gilmore of Dover, above. After restoration, the scroll now hangs near the Speaker's Rooms on the third floor of the State House.

