

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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The Story of The Statham's Abridgement  
By Harvey Doane Eaton, Jr.

12 May 1954

Several years ago I asked my father to tell me the story of this rather rare book. He said most of the story is contained in the letters concerning it. I made copies of them, and they are reproduced below in full.

He told me two additional items. One was his belief that the book has been rebound and is not now in its original binding. The other was his belief that the binder made an error in placing the date on the binding. That date shows as 1470.

Father had a volume of legal bibliography edited by Joseph Beale which I do not now find in his library, and have not seen for several years. In it the date for the publication of the Statham is given as 1490, which father felt to be correct.

The text of the four letters follows.

Waterville, Maine, September 26, 1917.

Mr. Richard Ames,  
Langdell Hall,  
Cambridge, Mass.

My dear Mr. Ames:

Please let me mention the Statham again. It was bought at Libbie's June 5, 1891. Mr. Arnold and I each had copies of the catalogue in advance of the sale. I had been wanting a copy and finding this one catalogued, though marked "imperfect" I told Mr. Arnold of my intention to bid on it.

A day or two later he said to me, "Mr. Ames wants that Statham." I said at once that of course in that case I would not bid on it. On the day of the sale, or a day before, Mr. Arnold said, "Mr. Ames finds it inconvenient to attend the auction, and as he is interested in nothing else, would you bid on the Statham for him?" I said, "Certainly," and bid it off for \$3.00, which your father paid to me when I came back with the book.

I have always wanted on, but have never seen one for sale since. From what you said in regard to the matter yesterday, I wondered whether this was at all prized or treasured by your people. If so, I have nothing further to say. If not, I should be extremely glad to purchase it, if you are willing to sell it for say \$10.00. As I remember its condition, I think I would not want to pay above that.

Trusting you will not think me presumptuous, I am,

HDE/W

Yours very truly,

(Harvey D. Eaton)

(Pen written)

My dear Mr. Eaton:

I have asked Richard to let me answer your letter of September 26 about the Statham. Mr. Ames prized the book very highly, and I too prize it on that account. When I showed it to Richard yesterday he remembered it as one of his Father's treasures.

I have hesitated a little about parting with it, but taking everything into consideration I am sure it is best that you should have it. I hope to send it tomorrow by parcel post, insured. Do not hesitate to accept it for you may be sure I shall be happier to know it is safe with you than here among Mr. Ames' books which will probably be scattered some day. I am glad to know just how Mr. Ames came to own the book, and was much interested in your letter.

Yours sincerely

(Sarah R. Ames)

(Mrs. James Barr Ames)

11 Frisbie Place  
Cambridge  
Oct. 1, 1917

(Pen written copy)

Waterville, Maine, October 12, 1917

Dear Mrs. Ames:

Your letter and the Statham were duly received. I hesitated to reply hardly knowing what to do but have decided to accept the book as you ask. I wish you could realize how deeply I appreciate your letter and what you have done. The letter has been put in the book and both are in the safe with my choicest treasures. They will be cherished by myself, my sons and I hope by many future generations not only for their own sake but in memory of James Barr Ames and of your kindness.

Mrs. Sarah R. Ames  
11 Frisbie Place  
Cambridge, Mass.

Yours very truly,  
(Harvey D. Eaton)

(Pen written)

My dear Mr. Eaton:

I am sorry I did not make my meaning clear as to the nature of my gift. Under no circumstances could I accept any money for the book that Mr. Ames cared for. I am glad to get your letter and glad you have the book.

Yours sincerely,  
(Sarah R. Ames)

Cambridge  
October 13

Over the fireplace in his private office father had framed portraits of three of his Harvard Law School Instructors. They were Dean Langdell, James Barr Ames and John Chipman Gray.

North

Harvey D. Eaton was born at Cornville, Maine, on 20 September 1862. He died at Waterville, Maine, on 17 October 1953. He was admitted to the bar in 1889, and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1891.

His law office was opened at Waterville on 15 July 1891 and the practice still is being carried on by his son Arthur Eaton. He himself was active in that practice until just a few days before he died. During the first year of his practice he earned \$315.00, as he relates in an address given before The Maine Bar Association on 22 January 1953. In later years his income increased.

In that address he outlines his invention of the water district method of financing a pure water supply. Many communities since have adopted it. For his work on The Kennebec Water District, which used most of his time for a decade, he received a fee of \$25,000.

I once asked him if he received anything from any of the several hundred other water districts which had adopted his invention. He said, "Oh yes! One of them once asked me to read a draft of a new bond they thought of issuing, and paid me twenty-five dollars for reading it."

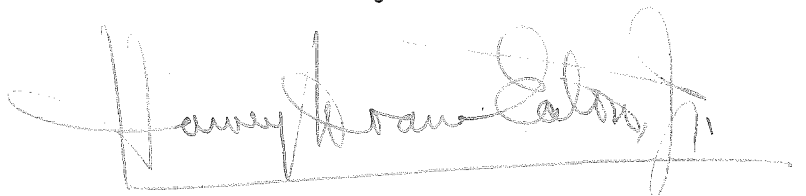
In the address mentioned he said, "I think there is pretty nearly a hundred million dollars invested in district securities that rest for their security on those words that are in that first, original Kennebec Water District charter."

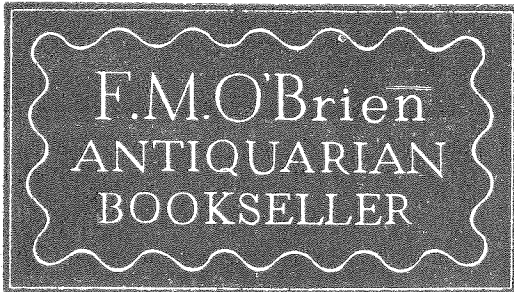
Probably his major work, however, was in the electric industry, for he founded The Central Maine Power Company and put most of his life into the work of financing its expansion. It serves customers in fifteen of the sixteen counties of The State of Maine.

Yet he told me that if he had to select one bit of work of which he could be most contented it would be what he did in the Sprague Trust matter. It is outlined in his address, a copy of which is attached to this statement. There he says of the action of The United States Government, "I could not believe that a doctrine of equity which had been built up over about three hundred years had all been wiped out." To the confusion of The United States Government The Supreme Court agreed - completely.

In his law library father had approximately four thousand volumes. He claimed that he also borrowed more law books than any other lawyer he knew but that, "----I never have kept a borrowed law book over night. If I cannot get out of a book what I want in one day I want to buy and own a copy." --- That is the man who presented his copy of Statham to The Law Library of The State of Maine.

North Cornville, Maine





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February 15, 1954

Miss Marion Stubbs  
Maine State Library  
Augusta, Maine

Dear Miss Stubbs:

I was interested to read in last Saturday's Press-Herald that the law department of the State Library had acquired a copy of Statham's Abridgment.

The information given was somewhat nebulous. The Short Title Catalogue (British Museum) entry for this is as follows:

Statham, Nicolas. (Abridgment of Cases to the end of Henry VI). 4<sup>o</sup>. (Rouen, G. Le Talleur f. R. Pynson, 1490). (Location of copies in England follows). Bishop, in his Checklist of American Short Title Books, locates 13 copies in the U. S., including three copies at Harvard.

Actually a copy of this sold for as little as \$270.00 fairly recently.

Sincerely,