

ODD HISTORICAL FIND;
SEARCH FOR LOST OATH

Dr. Lincoln Discovers That Talleyrand, Famous Frenchman, Was an American Citizen—His Oath of Allegiance Now Lost

By GEORGE NOX MCCAIN

DR. GEORGE WILLIAM LINCOLN, of the Bibliophile Club, has made a most unusual discovery.

In the course of one of his numerous excursions into the realm of the little known in literature he has found that Talleyrand, famous French Bishop, statesman and agnostic, associate of Napoleon and Mirabeau, was a citizen of the United States.

Talleyrand was expelled from Great Britain in 1794 and came to the United States following certain episodes of the French Revolution.

He remained here for thirty months. During all that time, except for a few weeks, he lived in Philadelphia.

His biographers have accredited the brilliant Frenchman with the statement:

"I have sworn allegiance to thirteen countries in the course of my political career."

Twelve of these countries have been identified by his biographers. The thirteenth has always been a mystery.

Dr. Lincoln has discovered it:

It is the United States of America.

THROUGH all the devious windings of the documentary evidence of 125 years, Dr. Lincoln, like the trained librarian that he is, has followed the trail of Talleyrand in this country to a definite end.

There is only one missing link.

It is the original copy of the oath of allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania and the United States, to which Talleyrand subscribed here in Philadelphia.

It was shortly after he landed at the wharf on the Delaware not more than a few months at most.

He took the oath before the then Mayor of Philadelphia, Matthew Clarkson.

So carefully has Dr. Lincoln investigated the life of Talleyrand in Philadelphia that nothing historically valuable is missing except the original oath of allegiance.

TALLEYRAND, brilliant, subtle and unscrupulous, was one of the luminaries of the French Revolution.

He was intended for the army, but in childhood he permanently injured one of his feet in a fall, and that barred him from a military career.

Reluctantly he turned to the Church. At thirty-five he was a Bishop. At forty he was an agnostic.

Later he was excommunicated by the Pope, after he had sided with the populace in the Revolution.

Napoleon told him after his return from Moscow and when Talleyrand was still a member of the council:

"You are a coward, a traitor and a thief. You do not even believe in God. You have outraged and deceived everybody. You would sell your own father."

While in England trying to patch up a peace news came of the execution of Louis XVI.

As an emissary of France he was expelled. He then sailed for the United States, afraid to return to his native land.

SHORTLY after his arrival in Philadelphia he was elected a member of the American Philosophical Society.

He was greatly courted by the leading people of this city.

Washington, however, as President of the United States, declined to receive him.

The French Minister to the United States called on President Washington and informed him that Talleyrand was regarded as an enemy to France.

If the President recognized, or received him, it would be considered an affront to the King and Government of France.

FOR many years there existed the impression that Talleyrand had made an address before the Philosophical Society in the occasion of his election.

Dr. Lincoln's examination of the ancient manuscripts and minutes of that body shows no record of any address made by the brilliant Frenchman.

In Samuel Breck's "Recollections of My Acquaintance and Association with Deceased Members of the American Philosophical Society" he says:

"I saw in Peale's Museum in March, 1808, the original oath, under gilt frame and glass, which this distinguished exile (Talleyrand) took when he swore fidelity as a citizen of true allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania, signed with his own hand—Charles Maurice Talleyrand de Perigord."

This is the elusive document which Dr. Lincoln seeks.

All trace of it has been lost since the curios and relics of the museum were sold under the hammer in 1846.

DR. CHALMERS DA COSTA, distinguished physician and member of the faculty of Jefferson Medical College, recalls that his grandfather, who at the time resided on Front street, the leading residential thoroughfare of Philadelphia, told him that Talleyrand's first abiding place when he arrived in Philadelphia was at the Harley Sheaf Hotel, on Second street above Vine.

Later, when he returned from his trip to the West and as far north as Maine, he hired a house in Broad street.

He sailed for France in a Danish ship on the 10th of June, 1796, and never returned to this country.

CHARLES MAURICE TALLEYRAND DE PERIGORD as an American citizen is one of the novelties of American history.

There can be no doubt of the fact, however.

Dr. Lincoln's researches have located the copy of the oath of allegiance I have given above in Bernhard La Combe's private life of Talleyrand.

How it came to Peale's Museum is one of the mysteries of this time.

Where it went is a greater mystery.

DR. LINCOLN'S search for the lost oath of allegiance is not an unusual thing. All over the world today men are hunting for lost manuscripts, books and documents.

A collector of ancient manuscripts bought some fish in the old Hungerford market in Yarmouth, England, several years ago. He noticed that the dealer wrapped the fish in some stiff paper torn from a book at his side.

The antiquarian went home and on unwrapping the fish discovered the paper bore the signatures of four Ministers of James II.

He hurried back to the fish market and by judicious and careful inquiry found that the dealer had more than ten tons of these manuscripts which he had bought from the Government for use as wrapping paper.

They were state papers of the reigns of Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward IV and Queen Elizabeth.

Among them were a treatise on the Eucharist by Edward IV and another on the Order of the Garter in the handwriting of Queen Elizabeth.

When the British Government woke up to a sense of what it had lost, it was too late to recover the precious documents.

An inquiry was instituted, but the papers had been irretrievably scattered.