

# JUSTICE SERVED

## Box of rare books returned to government agency

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**WINCHESTER-** Some rare books were given back to the Justice Department Saturday, thanks to an observant bookseller and a man who likes to buy and sell items on e-Bay.

The story began earlier this summer when Patrick Saine of Blue Plate Books on Valley Avenue was brought a box of old books to

sell.

"I buy books for cash," Saine said. "It's an option for people in these hard times, and it helps circulate books. They don't go bad after one reading."

Saine's shop sells recent best sellers to old tomes. The oldest book in his shop right now dates to 1641, he said.

Robert Cole, 43, of Cross Junction had given Saine the box of old books to sell. He was hoping to raise some cash to help fund an upcoming \$2,200 missionary trip to Romania.

But this was a particularly exceptional box of old books. Saine found a history of the Confederate government by Jefferson Davis from 1881 and a life of George Washington by John Marshall published in

1832.

"The oldest book was dated 1614," Saine said.

Older law books in the box might be worth over a thousand dollars, Saine said. Others might bring \$150 or more.

All the books were stamped as the property of the U.S. Department of Justice and, in some cases, labeled "rare."

There was no notation that the volumes had been withdrawn from the Department of Justice library, so Saine contacted the Library of Congress for assistance. He was routed to the Department of Justice librarian.

"We corresponded back and forth, and I provided details concerning what the books were and how they were marked."

It took until last week to get an answer back.

Supervisory Librarian Janet Oberla wrote that the books didn't appear in the library's current catalog.

A new catalog was put in place earlier this year, Oberla reported. The new catalog had been cross-checked with actual volumes and anything missing was purged from the new system.

However, Oberla said, another check with an old inventory list showed the books should have been in the library. They had never been withdrawn.

The Justice Department's usual procedure for withdrawing books from circulation includes marking them withdrawn because they are government property. Usually,

Oberla wrote Saine, books that are no longer needed at DOJ are sent to the Gift and Exchange office of the Library of Congress.

"We do not permit giving government property away to others," she wrote.

Books that are withdrawn are either recycled or disposed of, but they are not put out in the trash for people to find.

But that's what Cole was told happened to this set of books.

Earlier in the summer, the Cross Junction resident - a business accountant who is studying for the ministry - was contacted by a woman in Leesburg who had seen his name on e-Bay. He buys and sells on the Internet to supplement his income.

The woman had four boxes of books from

her late husband, who had been a construction worker on the Rayburn House Office Building project in Washington, D.C., which was completed in 1965.

"According to her, they were thrown in a dustbin. He got permission from his supervisor" to rescue them, Cole said.

The woman wanted Cole to sell the books for her.

He told her didn't have the time, because he is scheduled to leave for Romania this month with a group from Winchester Church of God.

Church members will be providing humanitarian aid and supplies. They also will work at hospitals and hold services in prisons and nursing homes.

When the woman heard about the trip, she

offered him the books and told him to sell them to raise money to help with travel expenses.

But after Saine's research, Cole contacted Oberla and arranged to give the books back to the Justice Department.

On Saturday, Cole and Oberla met at Blue Plate Books to transfer the volumes for the trip back to Washington.

"It looks like these rare books will be going home where they belong," Saine said, "and our historical record will be preserved."