

Epping (N. H.) July 5, 1821.

Sir,

I have received your letter of the 25th ultimo, in which you request I would furnish you with a copy of the first constitution adopted by New Hampshire.

Our first constitution was formed January 5, 1776. Enclosed is a manuscript copy of it.

In 1781 a law was passed by the legislature authorizing the several towns to elect delegates to meet in convention & form a constitution to be submitted to the decision of the people. The convention met in June of that year - they held several sessions; but the constitution they made was not ratified by the people until the 31st of October 1783, to take effect the first Wednesday of June 1784. Many copies of it were then printed, but those I have are bound either with the subsequent edition of our laws, or in volumes containing the constitutions of this ~~State~~ & other States in the Union. The one bound with my laws I have cut out, & herewith enclose it to you.

The constitution of 1783 provided that a convention should meet every seventh year to revise it. A convention met in 1791, & very considerable amendments were made as you will see by comparing the two constitutions,

constitutions, to wit, those of 1783 & 1792, to the last of which you refer in your letter. The last, & which is the present constitution, instead of requiring a convention every seventh year, requires the question, then to be submitted to the people in their primary assemblies, whether it is necessary to revise the constitution. This question has, since 1792, been four times submitted to the people, & at each of those periods a large majority voted against a revision.

The convention which formed the constitution of 1783 had a difficult task to devise such a system as would give sufficient energy to government without alarming the fears of their constituents. This arose from the great jealousy which the Revolution had excited against rulers - & from that diversity of opinion that necessarily exists on such a subject, as well as from the interested views of obdurate men. Peace with Great Britain had dissolved that bond of union which arose from the idea of danger from a common enemy, & which had a powerful influence upon the public mind during the revolutionary war; but peace left the spirit of jealousy, respecting the government, in full force, & without the check which fear ^{formerly} imposed upon it.

I am very respectfully

Sir

your obedient

William Plumer

Hon. Theodorick Bland

Waltham, N.H.

