

Anthony Comegna ([00:20](#)):

All right everyone. Today, we have something very different for you and I'll admit, maybe a bit self-serving. About a year and a half ago, I was working at the Cato Institute in [libertarianism.org](#) and I received an invitation from IHS's Josh Ammons to deliver one of the speak-for-a-sandwich lectures here at the office. Well now, I mean, not here since I'm still at home but you all know what I mean. Little did I know that just a month or so later, I would receive another invitation in my inbox to apply for an open position as IHS's academic programs design manager. Loving IHS, as I always have, I applied, interviewed and fortunately, I got the job.

About two weeks later, I actually gave my lecture which was a weird sort of makeshift after-the-fact job talk since I'd already gotten the job. I took the opportunity to give the best overview of my work, my ideas, my inspirations and my perspective that I possibly could. And now I hand it over to all of you in the hopes that you, number one, will appreciate learning a bit more about your humble host here, which always helps an audience understand the show and its purposes at least a little bit better. And number two, inspiring my new colleagues toward reviving the lost history of radical classical liberalism and doing the essential work of memory to do the history, the mainstream profession simply refuses to do.

With that in mind then, let's turn to my first appearance at IHS, at least, as something more than a student. A fairly freewheeling history of five heroes in the secret history of radical liberalism. The daring Stephen Hopkins, the fearless Benjamin Lay, the Locofoco Moses Jakes, the fierce Ann Parlin and the profound Frances Whipple.

Thank you all so much for having me here. It is a thrill. It's very exciting, especially, given that I'll be starting here April 1st. So, I just could not be happier and I could not have been more excited to come here today and to give this talk. And the subject is going to be, *Building a Libertarian History from Below*. And in large part, that's what I'm sort of making the purpose of my career. To create a genuine, authentic libertarian history from below. And we'll get into exactly what that means.

But I want to start with a sort of fundamental bedrock premise and this is just my idea. I don't think there's any way to prove this but I'll submit that we radical libertarians have always been there, everywhere, always, all the time. We've always been there. There's not a society that's existed where there has not been someone who favors greater liberty over greater tyranny, you just have to look for them.

Now, Murray Rothbard once argued that the real core of a radical libertarian is the question, do you hate the state? And if you take that sense, we have definitely been everywhere all the time. You can imagine ancient Chinese peasants barely scratching out a living from the earth. They must have hated the emperor secretly, but they must have hated him, not everybody, surely. I'm sure plenty of people bought into the idea that the emperor is the son of heaven and makes the rain fall. But I'm sure also that there were plenty of people who hated his guts for stealing their children and sending them to fight some other warlord often God knows where. They must have hated him for going poor every year because of his takings.

I just don't accept this idea that libertarianism is an invention of the 21st century or 1776 or something like that. It has a much, much deeper, richer, fuller history than pretty much anyone who's given it credit for. And I think it's about time we do the work of reviving that. And all that is to say that there's nothing special about libertarianism in the modern world. It's not necessarily better or worse than other libertarianisms in other societies in other times.

We can definitely succeed in creating a freer world than the one we have now. But we can also fail like so many others have done in the past in different contexts. And worse than failing, we can

positively contribute to making the world worse by making our own mistakes. Most of the time, I think, it's a mixed bag and the result is that libertarianism goes forgotten for entire ages. It gets buried in the problems, the mistakes and more than anything else, the anonymity of the people who support these ideas.

So this is a major problem because clearly, we have had major impacts on civilization. In fact, for my podcast, I interviewed a historian, Nima Sanandaji, who argues that every civilization only becomes complex and civilized, precisely because of the elements of libertarianism that it has operating in that society. Some concept of private property. Some measure of free trade. Something that actually lets complex society develop and flourish.

So it's a big problem that this story goes untold then, because we struggle to understand how the world has become the way it is if we forget about these bedrock elements of civilization that we call libertarianism. So I, again, want to do the work of uncovering this sort of hidden history of libertarianism. But the important thing to remember is that nobody gets remembered unless we do the work of remembering them. We have to do the work of memory to make sure that the stories, not only don't go forgotten but that we can actually make something meaningful of them today. So, I would say, that libertarian history is certainly one of the world's great untold stories and it's definitely due for not even just a revival but an actual thorough telling for once.

So, that's sort of what I'm going to try to do. And as I said, that's kind of what I've been trying to make my career about. And I see a lot of power then in some of the methods and ideas coming out of mainstream history in the 1960s and '70s, especially what's called history from below or history from the bottom up. And before I get to defining that, I want to talk about history from above, which is essentially the kind of history that we've all learned, that we're all familiar with.

The stories of great and powerful people doing great big things. Great philosophers and other thinkers writing the big books and passing big laws and starting wars and winning victories and things like that. Usually, it's powerful men and especially white men, the further you go in history. That's history from above, the idea that all important change is the result of people who exercise great amounts of power or influence.

History from below is about marginalized people, average people, working people. People who occupy different marginal groups like racial minorities, ethnic minorities, religious minorities, let's say, political minorities, sexual and identity minority groups. Whatever group is out of political power, they have stories that tend to be suppressed and go for centuries and millennia sometimes never being told, never being discovered even because for the most part, they don't leave nearly as many documents behind. It's a lot harder to do this kind of research and there tends not to be much institutional support for it.

If you think about the writing of history in the grand scale of history, most of it is commissioned by royal courts to one degree or another or some powerful institution that has an interest in promoting this sort of understanding of the world. In the 1960s and '70s, historians started seriously challenging that notion and arguing that really, the most important kinds of changes come about from below, from people without power, without influence. And you can put an Austrian sort of spin on it by pointing out that change happens spontaneously without being planned from above. And there are all sorts of directions you can take. I think, history from below is fundamentally an Austro-libertarian sort of idea. It's just that good luck trying to explain that to the historians who came up with it, right?

So what I really want to do today, given that backdrop, is present five biographies of people that I consider libertarian heroes from below that probably nobody here knows about, although I'd be thrilled and delighted if you did and that's really just because not many people have ever bothered to

tell these stories. So I don't hold it against you if you've never heard of Stephen Hopkins, even though he invented self-government in the Americas. But these are tremendously, titanically important stories. So, I hope that just by hearing them, you'll be able to piece together just how meaningful these biographies can be in our own world today.

And how they, when put together over the 350, 400 years that I'm going to cover, they add up to the modern libertarian movement that we know and presumably love today. And it's really important to actually do that work of memory and figure out how we got here. Because for the most part, I think, people tend to think of libertarianism or classical liberalism even as springing out of Adam Smith's head, like Athena from the brow of Zeus or Thomas Jefferson or somebody else like that and it simply doesn't work that way.

So let's get to Stephen Hopkins, America's real founding father. Stephen Hopkins was born somewhere between the abject commoners of England and the sort of skilled workers of England. His father was a farmer and Hopkins was lucky enough to learn to read and write because he worked at the local church. He was an Anglican and he helped the, not priest but the, whatever, the Anglican ministers, I suppose. He helped the minister write his sermons and so he learned to read and write and he had much better prospects than your average Englishman simply because of that, although he's always poor and he was always a marginalized person in English society. Born in the late 1500s.

Now, Stephen Hopkins winds up being one of the people on what's called the third supply to Jamestown in 1609. Jamestown had been around for a couple years and just barely, it was a hellhole. It was a horrible, horrible place to be and you were only there if you absolutely had to be or if you were trying to exploit all the other people there because you were a part of the company's leadership.

But people in Virginia were starving and the biggest problem for the colony was that everybody wanted to escape to live with the Native Americans because they actually had food and they were pretty pleasant. Their societies were much more free than English society. So when people came into contact with them, they immediately wanted to escape from Jamestown. It took death penalties and terrorism to scare people away from that option.

Now, Jamestown is about to totally collapse from starvation until the third supply arrives. That's Stephen Hopkins' caravan of ships, convoy. He signs up as an indentured servant, which is sort of a sticky situation itself because though it is a contract that you explicitly sign and agree to, the terms of the contract that you're given in England are not at all what you actually get once you arrive in Virginia. And there was no real way for people in England to know that until they got into contact with the sailors actually aboard the ship because the company kept very close watch on any news coming to England from Virginia. They certainly didn't want you to know that you were signing up to go starve.

But Stephen Hopkins signs up, he doesn't have many prospects but he can take his ability to read and write to Virginia and suddenly become a very important person. So that's what he does. He signs up, as I said, on the third supply in 1609 and he goes aboard the flagship of the convoy called the Sea Venture. Now the Sea Venture has aboard a new charter for the colony of Virginia that changes the government around, including putting John Smith on the leadership council. It includes a new governor for the colony and the fleet's admiral, all aboard the main flagship.

They go across the Atlantic and they ran into a hurricane. It separates the Sea Venture from the rest of the fleet. The rest of the fleet make it to Virginia just fine. But the hurricane smashes into the Sea Venture, breaks it apart and for days, the entire crew gentlemen from way up above in the social hierarchy and your most average person from below all have to join in the common labor of bailing water out of the ship just to keep it afloat for as long as possible in the hopes that they might get to land. And by miracle of all miracles, they do. The ship survives and not a single person dies and they

crash on Bermuda. Bermuda was considered an isle of devils because of all the ships that crashed there. And it was very rocky shoals and other navigational things that I don't understand. But it was not a place you would want to go if you were a sailor in the early 17th century.

That said, once you actually get there on land, it's a paradise. It's an amazing place that's just bursting with food, for example. All you can pick and wild pigs running everywhere, fish all over the place. It was worlds better than Virginia. And these people knew by now what was waiting for them in Virginia, the absolute abject hell that was the Virginia colony. So they said, "You know what, all right, let's stay here in Bermuda instead. Our ship is destroyed. We're going to stay here."

And Stephen Hopkins actually starts to argue, "You know what, the salt water of the ocean dissolved the contract that we all signed and it dissolved the new charter on board this ship. And suddenly, we're all without rulers here on Bermuda. Time for us to actually construct our own government and our own society, just like we were signing up to do in Virginia but for real this time, for ourselves, under rules that we make of our own."

The company officials were not having it at all. They again use terrorism to try to keep many... It was about a dozen different conspiracies popped up at one point or another on Bermuda. Stephen Hopkins barely escaped execution by making an impassioned speech but others were executed for trying to lead their own mutinies. And eventually, the company was able to terrorize enough people into building another ship that they made off of Bermuda and back to Virginia.

Now, when they got to Virginia, they still were starving there so the admiral went back to Bermuda on a supply mission just to gather food. But while he was there back in Bermuda, he literally ate so much pork that he died from it and they couldn't resupply Virginia anymore. Again, the colony almost starves to death until the fourth supply comes from England. And finally, they put enough military rule in the colony to keep it going.

And Stephen Hopkins kind of disappears from the story until November 11th 1620, he resurfaces, November 11th 1620. He is probably the main author. He's certainly one of the signatories, but he's probably the lead author of the Mayflower Compact, which is just an astonishing thing to me. This man on Bermuda made argument after argument and convinced his fellow prisoners on their way to Virginia that self-government is what they should actually be doing. And then he signs what's considered the founding document of self-government in the Americas, the Mayflower Compact. Because that ship was facing its own storms and in a plea with God to save them, they agreed to abide by certain rules and regulations that they would come to on their own.

Stephen Hopkins is the founder of self-government in the Americas and we barely remember his name even though he did all of this a good 40 years before John Locke wrote anything of importance. Aside from, I suppose, the colonial charter for the Carolinas, thank you for that. This is America's real founding father. The real founder of liberalism and self-government that we should remember and what a powerful story.

And it takes me to my next biography, Benjamin Lay, who's probably my favorite figure in history right now. There's a biography out about Benjamin Lay by Marcus Rediker, who was on my dissertation committee at Pitt. And he calls Benjamin Lay the Quaker Dwarf who became the first revolutionary abolitionist. Amazing, amazing.

Benjamin Lay was born in 1682 in Essex, also in England. He worked as a sailor and traveled all around the world. He worked as a glove maker which is an especially nasty business that I'll talk a little more about in a minute. And he worked a bunch of other odd jobs throughout his lifetime. He lived in Barbados in the 1710s and 1720s. He moved to Pennsylvania in the late '20s and he stayed there the rest of his life. I think he lived into the 1740s, if memory serves.

He was, without a doubt, one of the first and certainly one of the loudest anti-slavery voices in the world at the time. In fact, Marcus calls him the most radical person on the planet at the time, which is quite a claim, but I think it sticks for Benjamin Lay. And let me try to make that case briefly for you here.

This is even when the Quaker church... He was a Quaker, by the way. And this is at a time when even the Quaker church was deeply embedded in the system of Atlantic slavery, both owning slaves themselves and in Pennsylvania, especially and very heavily engaged in financing the slave trade. And he was a member of the Quaker church and the Quaker church is especially important because it was the world's first institution to advocate abolition or to require it of its members.

So by 1776, you could not be a member of the Quaker church and either own slaves or support or involve yourself in the slave trade. Benjamin Lay laid the groundwork for that. And it was one of the more revolutionary moments in world history up to that point when the Quaker church adopted those prescriptions against slavery.

And the important thing to note about Benjamin Lay and how he made this breakthrough to become the first revolutionary abolitionists is that he learned from the labor that he did. He took something from every job that he had and it gave him some profound extra bit of understanding about the world. Some extra perspective that he took when thinking about his fellow creatures.

And so, Benjamin Lay, for example, saw how terribly sailors were treated all around the world. Not just treated terribly but tortured by their captains and virtually treated like slaves by the shipping companies that owned and insured merchant captain vessels.

So he was a glove maker, as I mentioned. This is a nasty, nasty business. You spend all day working with animal skin, burning the hair off of it, cleaning it thoroughly, treating it with chemicals, drying it and then cutting it and shaping it into gloves, stitching it together and all that. Not pleasant work whatsoever. It made Benjamin Lay a vegetarian. In fact, he became a vegan about 200 years before the term was even in use. So he refused his time in Barbados. He spent living with slaves, visiting their homes, having them visit his, talking with him, visiting them in the fields while they do their work, helping them in any way that he could, him and his wife Sarah, who was also a little person. And he emerged from that experience an abolitionist. And these two things were connected to him, vegetarianism and abolitionism.

He did not want to spend any of his energy, any of his influence, any of his power in life, supporting a system that exploited another creature. So he had nothing to do with any crops produced by slave labor. He grew his own food in a garden. He refused to ride a horse around the countryside because it would exploit the horse. He made his own clothing from flax. The only non-vegan things he did toward the end of his life was he kept bees. So he had an apiary and he ate honey. And he drank a little bit of milk. And I don't know where he got the milk. But that was the only non-vegan elements of his life. And the best thing about Benjamin Lay, aside from that kind of consistency in your principles, which I love, is that he was a devotee of the Cynics, as in Diogenes of Sinope.

And like I said, he denied himself any products made by exploitation, either of man or animal and he took great pleasure and pride in that. But he was also kicked out of polite society over and over again. Every Quaker meeting that he went to eventually expelled him from its membership. And in fact, one of the things that Marcus has been doing is traveling around the country into England, systematically having Quaker meetings, readmit Benjamin Lay to their roster or rolls and embracing him once again as a member of the circle of friends.

Benjamin got himself kicked out of the Quaker church over and over by doing the most amazing kinds of street theater. So, in one example, he stood outside a Quaker meeting house, I think, in

Abington outside of Philadelphia, with snow piled all around him and he went barelegged and stood in a snowdrift and when people would come by into the meeting house, they would aghast say, "Get out of the snow, Benjamin. You're going to catch cold and kill yourself." And he'd say, "Oh, look at you, look at you, pretending to care so much for me while you go and buy slaves and your slaves are at home also in the wintertime, barely clad. They might have half the clothes on their backs that you do and you pretend to care so much about me. Give me a break."

His whiteness didn't matter at all to him. I mean, he's marginalized enough as a little person, right? He has a profound amount of empathy with other people. And he routinely put his own body in the way to try to advocate for those who definitely had it worse off than him and he knew that from again, personal experience.

In another example, which is my favorite, a Quaker, pacifist, he dresses up for the meeting one night with a sword at his belt and he prepares a special Bible. The special thing about this Bible is that he's hollowed it out so the center is open. He's filled it with a bladder, I guess an animal bladder, but I don't know where he would have gotten that and that might be a problem. But let's say it's not an animal bladder. It's just some kind of vessel for liquid. He fills it with poke berry juice. And God knows what a poke berry is, but apparently, it's very red.

So this specially prepared Bible, sword at his belt, red juice stuffed in the Bible, he goes into the Quaker meeting and when it's his turn to stand and address the audience, he rails at them all for their support of slavery in Pennsylvania and slavery on the Atlantic Ocean. He says, "You're all complicit. You're all guilty somehow unless this meeting denounces slavery right here, right now, you all give up your slaves. You all give up your businesses that are invested in this industry. You have to stop it now or you're going to have the blood of generations on your hands."

And he tears his sword from its scabbard and stabs through the Bible and blood spills out of it and he runs around the meeting hall, sprinkling it on the slaveholders called wealthy friends because of their money and influence in the church. Covered in the blood of slaves, Benjamin Lay. And they kicked him out over and over. And then it's fair to say that almost nobody liked him.

Today, historian Gary Nash called him a living stick of dynamite, which I think is just a lovely descriptor that probably we should all aspire to so wonderful a description. But on the other hand, the leading historian of slavery and abolition David Brion Davis, called Lay a demented little hunchback. So there's the state of respect and regard for somebody like this in the mainstream discipline. That's shameful.

I say, he's a patron saint of libertarianism and we have formally adopted him as the patron saint of my podcast very early on. He's a wonderful part of our heritage and I absolutely love Benjamin Lay. It's a safe thing to say that slavery may not have been abolished in so many New England states, for example, so early, if not for the influence of the friends and if not for people like Benjamin Lay. That would not have happened when it did.

Next is Moses Jakes, which I'm fairly sure nobody would have heard of. He's very, very, very little known, even among historians of the Jacksonian period. But Moses Jakes in his day was called the boy hero of the revolution. Even though he played almost no role in the American Revolution, he at like 12 years old or something delivered a couple of messages to General Washington while he was in New Jersey. But for that, 40, 50, 60 years later in the Jacksonian period, he's remembered as the boy hero of the revolution just because he had something to do with it. That's how large this event looms in American history that for generations anybody who had any connection to the American Revolution was seen as just an amazing, special, titanic figure of a person.

See, in my first version of this talk, I was going to talk about how there were two coalitions of the American Revolution. On the one hand, there's the coalition from below, what historians called the first Patriot coalition of average people, everyday people just rising up in rebellion in the streets of New York City or Boston protesting this sort of that latest British aggression against American liberties. And then that movement, which is pretty spontaneous and very radical, decentralist, localist, that revolution is almost immediately co-opted from above by what's called the second Patriot coalition. People like The Sons of Liberty, the more genteel, slightly aristocratic presentation of the revolution that we're much more familiar with because that's the side that wins in 1789 with the Constitution. That's the federalist wing of the revolution.

And that first coalition of patriots, the from below coalition of patriots, had an awful lot of goals in mind for their revolution that the second coalition would not accept. And so in the constitutional settlement, we get a government that in many ways really models European governments a lot more than these radical earlier patriots would have liked. And we're all sort of familiar with this story as it plays out with Jefferson and Hamilton and other political factions down the line. But by the time you get to the Jacksonian era, in my wheelhouse of research, this kind of takes the form of radical Jacksonians and the Whig Party or conservative Jacksonians too are often lumped in with the Whigs.

So, in Jackson's administration, his big program is the Bank War. He wants to kill the Bank of the United States because he thinks it's a nest of corruption, that it wrecks the economy. It causes boom and bust cycles. And it perverts the government into budding aristocracy. And he's going to kill the National Bank. He does kill the National Bank when it's put up for recharter in 1832. But the radical people in his party want him to go several steps further.

They say, "We need to kill state banks at the state level. They're no different than the National Bank. They're just at a different level of government. Wherever they exist, they are beds of corruption. They twist the government into an engine for private profits at public expense. They cause boom and bust cycles and distort the economies of their states. So we need to carry Jackson's bank war down to the States. And we need to really enforce the Jeffersonian vision of the kind of government the United States should have. No monopolies, no special privileges granted by government, no special powers that are not open to everybody else in the public at large."

And it used to be the case that to open a bank, you had to specifically petition the state legislature for articles of incorporation. The legislature had to take a vote on every single act of incorporation. And in 1835, in New York City, these divisions between the Democratic Party started to become very apparent that there were democrats who were on the radical end of things and wanted almost all banks destroyed or they wanted a true free-market in banking and the production of currency. So they even said, "Forget this thing about the government coining money. Yeah, it's in the Constitution but we should get rid of that and have private money everywhere like they do with free banking and private money like essentially in Scotland."

Now the Democratic Party didn't like this element. This radical element of their politics because as it happened, many democrats were in charge of those state banks. And those state banks had an awful lot to do with the success of the Democratic Party at the state level. So that was a terrible fear that these radicals would gain control of our party, gain control of our movement, use... Andrew Jackson is like their standard bearer and continue the fight down to destroy all of our power too? No way are we going to allow that.

So the party itself was firm. Jackson's bank war against the US Bank is fine, in fact, good because once we kill the National Bank, our state banks will be free to do whatever we want without the constraining powers of a national bank. The radicals want to get rid of the whole thing. It spills over into

open conflict within the party in New York City in 1835. Tammany Hall is controlled by the conservative democrats, the bank democrats, and the radicals decide they're going to try to take over their party.

So in secret, several months ahead of time, they plan to storm the 1835 nominating conventions, take over the process from the party and put radical democrats in power, and they do. There are far more people than Tammany Hall can account for storming into the nominating convention. The conservatives freak out. They turn off the lights and declare the nomination's closed. But the radicals were prepared for that already. They had come with matches in their pockets and they went down to the basement once the lights were off. And they broke out boxes of candles and they lit their Locofofo matches, that's what they were called. Newly invented friction matches from the Italian words for moving fire.

So they lit their Locofofo matches and candles and they held their own nominating convention in Tammany Hall and they nominated radicals. And that was the birth of what we call the Locofofo party or the Equal Rights party. And that's what I wrote my dissertation on. Now, the amazing thing about the Locofofos is that they fused Jacksonian anti-corporatism, anti-monopoly economics and politics with anti-slavery. And a deep respect for the words of Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal, with equal rights, universal equal rights. So slavery was out for them. So were any special powers and privileges created and granted by government.

And Moses Jakes was one of the most important early leaders, perhaps the most important early leader in this movement. He attended the Equal Rights party county convention in New York in 1836. He was president of that convention. He wrote the party's declaration of principles. And I just want to read, this is from the first historian of the Locofofo party, the party's recording secretary wrote a short history of the party in 1842.

He says, "The declaration of principles was drawn up by Moses Jakes, the president of the convention, who is now introduced to the reader as the man venerated by the little band of equal rights democrats as something more than their leader, their patriarch, mild, yet immovably fixed in his views and principles. Whatever were his convictions, they were the workings of his own mind and rather incitements from within than excitements from without.

"Consequently, such a man would be more of a thinker and a reasoner than an impassioned speaker. Yet, he always spoke lucidly and with effect. His age, his qualifications and his connection with the Revolution of 1776 combined to make him the man to lead a body of democrats who thought and reasoned and who had love of principle and country at heart. His father had been a colonel commandant of the New Jersey line during the Revolutionary War and such was the confidence reposed in the thoughtfulness and firmness of his son.

"A lad not 10 years old, that he was mounted on horseback and employed to carry dispatches to General George Washington. The boy did his errands faithfully and well. And since then, the whole life of the man morally and politically has been worthy of the patriot boy of the revolution. Such is Moses Jakes, the patriarchal leader of the Locofofos, for they never had in fact any other visible leader among them."

Historians dropped the story of the Equal Rights party pretty much then and there. The normal story you get is that after two or three years, the party collapses because of internal conflict. They rejoined the Democratic Party. Most people like Van Buren anyways, things are cool now, and that's that. What I showed in my dissertation is that these people were still alive. They were still around. They still called themselves Locofofos. They still had these radical ideas going back to somebody like Stephen Hopkins 200 years at that point and they weren't going anywhere. They took those ideas further with them in American history. And for another 50 years, almost.

This is a movement that really matters a lot. And by the time you get to the end of that time period, somebody like Benjamin Tucker is describing the points of view that are Locofocoism. He is a Locofoco but he doesn't have this word to use anymore. So he calls himself a libertarian instead. He adopts that word from Europe but it meant the same thing. It's the same essential package of ideas and it's worth remembering that and building out that history back, further and further and further. These things are definitely connected.

And I want to then shift from the Equal Rights party to one of the main movements that they inspired in Rhode Island. A very strange event called the Dorr War in 1842. A little backdrop for it is that by 1842, Rhode Island had the oldest existing written constitution in the world. It had been issued by King Charles II in 1663 and had not changed a single letter since then.

In fact, it didn't have any provision for amendment and when every other state adopted a constitution after the revolution or during the war. And then after as they added new states of the union and just had constitutional conventions like a normal thing because that's how government works here in America, Rhode Island didn't do anything like that. They kept the same document issued by King Charles II.

So, that would have been fine if things had stayed pretty much like they were in, say, the 1690s. In the 1690s, in some towns in Rhode Island, more than 90% of the town's white men could vote. But Rhode Island was also the epicenter of industrialization in North America starting in the 1790s. At that point, for the next 40 years or so, the landless population was growing much faster than the landed population. That's a problem because the Rhode Island charter said, "To vote, you have to own a certain amount of land." Earlier in the colonial period, everybody owned land, you were all farmers.

But by the 1840s, so many people are immigrants, recently arrived, they don't own land. They're industrial workers living in cities. Why would they own land? They might have small plots that don't meet the freehold requirement of land value. So by 1840, in Rhode Island, even most of the state's white males could no longer vote. It was below 50%, about 40 to 45%, which led New York Locofocos to start arguing Rhode Island is not a republic anymore. And the Constitution guarantees the citizens of each state a republican form of government. So something must be done in Rhode Island.

Rhode Islanders themselves started to line up behind a man named Thomas W. Dorr, D-O-R-R, and that's where the term Dorr War comes from. Dorr was organizing suffragists together, trying to get a constitutional convention organized for Rhode Island. But again, there was no provision for amendment, there's no provision for a constitutional convention. So, what do you do? How do you do this legally? Dorr said, "We don't need to worry about anything. The people are sovereign. That's what the revolution was all about. The people can spontaneously create new governments whenever they want. You don't need to ask permission of the legislature to change their own governing document. That's our right to do that."

So the Suffrage Association in Rhode Island calls for what was titled The People's Convention in October of 1841. They draft a People's Constitution, which does away with the freehold requirement. It reapportioned representation across the state, a couple of other things. It positively excludes black voters, for example. But the people make it themselves in convention, just like all the other states during the Revolutionary War. Just like every time a state changes its constitution. Well, the existing government in Rhode Island refused to give way and recognize the new government in Rhode Island, which shouldn't be surprising. So by May of 1842, there are actually two state governments in Rhode Island standing off against each other.

The People's Government tries to take the State Arsenal in Providence and there, it is quickly shown that this is a farce. These people don't know what they're doing militarily, certainly. And they're

basically boys who were there to impress girls back at their village or that their parents shamed them into going and so that's why they're there but at the first sign of resistance from the state militia, Dorr's army evaporates and disappears.

They regroup again a couple months later at Chepachet, Rhode Island, and they try to take another State Arsenal, same thing happens. Most of them then get mopped up by the state government. The leaders are put in prison or they go into voluntary exile. Voluntary exile. They leave before they catch heat, including Thomas W. Dorr, who goes to live for a little bit with Locofocos in New York City.

In the meantime, while all these suffragist male leaders are imprisoned or exiled, women take care control of the movement. And they move it in very interesting, compelling, powerful directions. And they have the kinds of accomplishments with it that Dorr could have only dreamed of. And all the while, he's of course saying, "Oh, you aren't doing enough," because he's a jerk.

But my next figure is Ann Parlin. Ann Parlin is a suffragist that we know almost nothing about. She only pops up into the record because of these events. But she had been a suffragist for a long time and she'd been in support of the movement. Her husband was a homeopath in Rhode Island, Lewis Parlin, who was elected, I think, an assemblyman under the people's charter and then thrown in prison after the attacks on the State Arsenal.

He was charged with treason against the state for holding office in an illegal government. And Ann visits her husband in jail on a daily basis to give him extra food to supplement the prison's poor diet and she visits all sorts of other suffragists while she's there too. She and plenty of people like her, other women like her, are leading the movement now. So it's their job to connect all these people together and to do something for the suffragists' cause.

So she decides to pick up an old Narragansett Indian tradition of a clambake which is you dig a hole in the ground, you fill it with coals and clams and lobsters and stuff. You cook it and you have a big party. And she said, "Let's do this and make it a grand political fair. We'll sell tickets and we'll relieve the families of suffragists who've been imprisoned and we'll help them out. And at the same time, we'll make a bigger and bigger political issue of this cause. We're not going to let it go. We're not going to let it die."

And throughout the fall of 1842, they hold clambake after clambake throughout New England. Thousands of people turn out from all around the area for these and over the next couple of years, they keep going. Ann Parlin is temporarily such a hero across the country that she even gets invited to New York City to make the first speech ever by a woman at the Shakespeare Hotel. And she's a celebrity among radical circles for a brief time.

But by the next time clam-baking season comes around and the weather's right for it again, there are more clambakes, they're bigger than ever. One of them turns out 25,000 people from across New England. But these are clearly different events at this point. The Democratic Party has now taken charge. They are stocking them with speakers who just want to promote each other for office and it becomes a scramble for partisan advancement rather than a vehicle for radical ideas. And again, it's a mixed bag of successes and failures. And it results in erasure of figures like Ann Parlin.

She disappears from the record shortly after. Her and her husband are basically driven from Providence by all the Whigs in town who refuse to be any sort of polite to them anymore. And they end up in New York City where Lewis sets up a free homeopathy clinic. He gives free treatment to the poor which as a homeopath, probably wasn't too good for the poor.

But he had his heart in the right place, I presume. He wasn't charging. And unfortunately, there are reports that while Ann was involved in the suffragist movement, she spent a little too much time

with New York Locofoco men, for Lewis's taste. He considered it indecent and there's speculation at least that Ann was the victim of spousal abuse and they got divorced. And that's the last time she's in the historical record. But other people carried on the torch like my favorite 19th century libertarian at the moment, Frances Whipple.

Whipple was the first historian of the Dorr War, again a woman. And she wrote really, the first serious historical treatment of the Dorr War, only a good two or three years after the events while Dorr was being held prisoner on trial for treason against Rhode Island. Fanny Whipple was born in 1805 to a very prominent family. Her, I think, was her grandfather, Abraham Whipple, was one of the people who burned the British ship, *Gaspee*, one of the big events leading up to the revolution.

She was in a very respectable family that ran into considerable bad luck in the war of 1812 and it was essentially ruined. And so, she had to make her own way, earning extra money for her household and making her own life as an independent writer. And she did other odd jobs for a while first and she was able to start catching on as an independent writer in the 1820s, as did many other women of her era. And she became very quickly a sort of reform addict.

Every kind of reform movement swirling around the country, she adopted at one point or another, it seems. In fact, she called the period, the New Age of Reform. That was her idea of what this period in world history could be if people animated by the ideas of individual liberty could seize it and make it their own. She saw a new age of reform stretching out into infinity in front of her.

So, at one point or another, she was a labor activist. She really started her career writing for labor-oriented news sheets. She was a Locofoco. She was a Dorrite, very active in the Dorr War. She was like a correspondent for New York newspapers from Rhode Island. So she was, in again, connective tissue, keeping this movement together across state lines throughout New England.

She was an important early feminist. She was an abolitionist. And eventually, she became a spiritualist, which was the sort of one of the new Victorian religions of the era.

So this was her new age of reform. And she really lived her life in this way that we can reform society in whatever way we see fit if we really put our minds to it. As I said, she was the first historian of the Dorr War. And she was also, like Ann Parlin, probably a victim of spousal abuse. She got divorced several times through her life so she had several names. You might see her full name listed out now and then as, I think it was... Let me see if I can get it all right, Frances Harriet Whipple Green McDougall. So, keep an eye out for that long name and you'll know who they're talking about.

She was a visceral opponent of the Mexican war and President Polk, and the extension of slave territory. And this is important because those clambakes that Ann Parlin was running, when they became co-opted by the Democratic Party, what they were used for, was electing President Polk. In one of the closest elections the country's ever had, about 5,000 New York votes made the difference between Henry Clay as president and James Polk as President.

5,000 Locofoco votes in New York, stole half of Mexico, annexed Texas and spread slavery across the west, preparing the way for the kinds of conflicts that led to the Civil War. That's what the clambake's got co-opted and twisted into. And somebody like Frances Whipple was well aware of what was going on.

And so she used all her energy to try to reunite Rhode Island factions behind anti-slavery. The kind of anti-slavery that the Dorrites were starting to get away from, the more they flirted with southern politicians who wanted to speak at their events.

It's hard to say which of these two threads was more important to her because by the late 1840s, she also adopted the new religion of spiritualism. Now abolitionism was tremendously important

throughout her entire lifetime. But spiritualism became the focus of her later career. Spiritualism is a weird set of beliefs. There's not really a religious dogma attached to it. But it essentially is the belief that the soul is a material thing that interacts with the material world. And we can, using science and our understanding of the laws of nature and forces like magnetism and electricity, we can communicate with the dead and perhaps even revive the body and spirit of the deceased here in the physical world.

So she took that and became a practicing spirit medium in Rhode Island, and eventually moved to California where she set up a mediumship. And this led to one of the strangest events in libertarian history. I just wish that we remembered it as part of libertarian history. On March 5th 1862, Frances Whipple, in a very weird way became the first prominent politician on the West Coast to advocate emancipation. How did that happen, given that she's a woman?

Well, she channeled the spirit of Colonel E.D. Baker, who was a California senator until he signed up to go fight the Civil War. This man was Lincoln's best friend. And some people said, during the campaign, that Baker baptized Lincoln personally. Baker is killed in October at Ball's Bluff, Virginia, and in December, his spirit travels to Fanny Whipple in San Francisco, where he visits her in her den and communicates his own funeral oration to her, including a powerful lambasting against slavery and a declaration that the war has to be fought over slavery starting now.

This is really what it's all about. This is really what it's been about for 30, 40, 50, 60 years since the Constitutional Convention, since the British saddled us with this horrible system. This is what it's all been about. We have to make our stand for liberty here because if the confederacy is allowed to go, they will set up a slaveholding empire that spreads the world over and uses America's power and genius to create a world full of slavery. And instead, we need to seize the new age of reform and create a bold new future for more liberties than we've ever conceived of before.

So Baker says, "look, I've..." Baker. Okay. Frances Whipple. Frances Whipple is the one giving the speech, right? She's not channeling his spirit. I feel pretty comfortable saying that. It's not for me to judge but that's not what's going on. This is a woman in 19th century America, making the most important argument a politician in California has ever made. It's incredibly powerful. And you know what? She is successful because slavery is abolished, at least in some half-assed sort of way.

We all know that prisoners all across the country are slaves today. And we have slave made products all over the place, all over this building. But Whipple absolutely ended or helped to end private slaveholding in America. And what's more, her Locofoco movement help do that because they founded the Free Soil Party and they founded the Republic Party. And they gave Lincoln those essential votes that he needed to push him over the top too. And they were the ones giving political support the whole way through the war for actual emancipation.

There are so many wonderful stories like this in libertarian history. I hope you agree that they're wonderful stories. But they go unknown, mainly because historians just don't care. Mainstream historians simply don't care. And we libertarian academics, generally speaking, get so wrapped up in traditional history from above, trying to make our own movement seem more respectable, more appropriate, more logical, scientific, practical, pragmatic, whatever nice sounding word. We get wrapped up in trying to make our history seem like it comes from above too. But it comes from below and it's so much more important because of that.

It's done so much to change the world and to make it a better one, that we deserve some knowledge of it. So we can take that and move forward. And these people definitely deserve to be remembered. I think, it's high time for the benefit both of mainstream academic history and certainly for libertarians, for both our benefits. We combine our strengths and start telling more of these stories and we'll understand so much better, we'll understand ourselves better at the very least. And I think if we

have a little more of this type of knowledge, we'll have many more avenues to make the world more like we would want it to be.

I really, really hope you all enjoyed that. And I just like to take a moment here to reiterate that last point. No one and nothing, no set of ideas and no individual gets remembered unless we do the work of memory. And in the case of these radical classical liberals that is even more true than usual because much as it pains me to say it, mainstream historians, political scientists, economists, historians of economic thought and everybody else, they simply don't care about us. To make matters worse, there have been plenty of academics who well know about these people because they can't help but have encountered their names and deeds in the record. It's right there staring them in the face and yet they have positively chosen to ignore them.

Now, I suspect that this happens largely because these historians, to single out my own tribe, definitely know how powerful these examples and messages could be in our world today. And there is no way they're going to allow those figures and those ideas to be remembered and that is shameful. For our history, historians have positively failed in this work of memory. And to put it directly, it really is up to us and only us. Each and every one of us to hold them to account and do the work ourselves. So until next week, lovely listeners, keep the progress coming, because in case after case, no one else will.