

THE BOOK

MARCH 2008, NUMBER 74

St. Louis Mercantile Library Prize for HBA 3

At the annual meeting of the Bibliographical Society of America (BSA) in January 2008, the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) was awarded the St. Louis Mercantile Library Prize in Bibliography “in recognition of its work in preparing and publishing *A History of the Book in America*, volume 3: *The Industrial Book: 1840–1880*, ed. Scott Casper, Jeffrey Groves, Stephen W. Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship.” This is the first time that the Mercantile Library Prize has been awarded. It was established by the St. Louis Mercantile Library at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, which plans to sponsor a series of prizes every third year in a continuing effort to encourage scholarship in the bibliography of American history and literature.

In his letter to Ellen S. Dunlap, president of AAS, announcing the award, John Bidwell, president of BSA and coincidentally a contributor to Volume 1 in the series, wrote: The Mercantile Library Prize committee chaired by George Miles (curator, Western Americana Collection, Beinecke Library) noted in their citation that *The Industrial Book* “provides an extraordinary overview of how American ideas and words were created, shaped, and turned into physical objects ... broad in scope but nuanced and precise in its detailed exploration of important figures and trends; it challenges us all to think creatively and thoroughly about the book in American history.”

A review by Beth Luey (founding director emerita, Scholarly Publishing Program, Arizona State University) will appear in the summer issue of *Media History*. Volume 4, *Print in Motion: The Expansion of Publishing and Reading in the United States, 1880–1940*, edited by Carl F. Kaestle and Jan Radway, is scheduled for publication at the end of 2008.

2008 Wiggins Lecture to Keynote Conference on Childhood in Text and Visual Culture

“*Babes in the Wood: Print, Orality, and Children’s Literature in the Nineteenth-Century United States*” is Patricia Crain’s title for the 2008 James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture. She will deliver this lecture on Friday, November 14, 2008, at 6:00 p.m., as part of the conference, “Home, School, Play, Work: The Visual and Textual Worlds of Children.” This conference is a collaborative venture of the Program in the History of the Book and the AAS Center for Historic American Visual Culture. Conference registration is not required for those who wish to attend the lecture only.

Originating as a broadside ballad at the end of the sixteenth century, the artifact variously known as “The Norfolk Gentle-man’s Last Will and Testament,” “The Children in the



The Tragical History of the Children in the Wood (*Philadelphia: Morgan and Sons, ca. 1828-1834*). *American Antiquarian Society*.

Wood,” and “Babes in the Wood” (among others) has a long afterlife in the United States as a staple of the nineteenth-century juvenile market, in poetry, in prose, and in a range of printed formats. Framed as a warning to parents and executors of wills to provide for their charges, the ballad’s plot hinges on the abandonment and starvation of two small children by a wicked uncle and his henchmen, who suffer legal and divine punishments (conflagration, poverty, imprisonment, execution). The lecture explores the striking resilience of this text and its illustrations in order to reflect on the role of “the death of childhood” in the creation of modern children’s literature, and on the role of nostalgia for “traditional” orality in the promotion of children’s print literacy.

Crain, associate professor of English at New York University, is author of *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from The New England Primer to The Scarlet*

Letter (Stanford University Press, 2000). She held an AAS-NEH fellowship in 2005–2006 to work on her current project, “Spectral Literacy: Children, Property, and Media in the Nineteenth-Century United States.”

Because the call for papers elicited more than seventy proposals, AAS will collaborate with the Cotsen Children’s Library at Princeton University to offer a second conference on February 13–14, 2009. Among the genres of print that will be discussed at the conferences are games, maps, ephemera, paintings, prints, books, periodicals, and educational materials. Further information about both conferences, including the programs listing speakers and their topics, information on accommodations, and registration forms, will be posted on the AAS website: www.americanantiquarian.org.

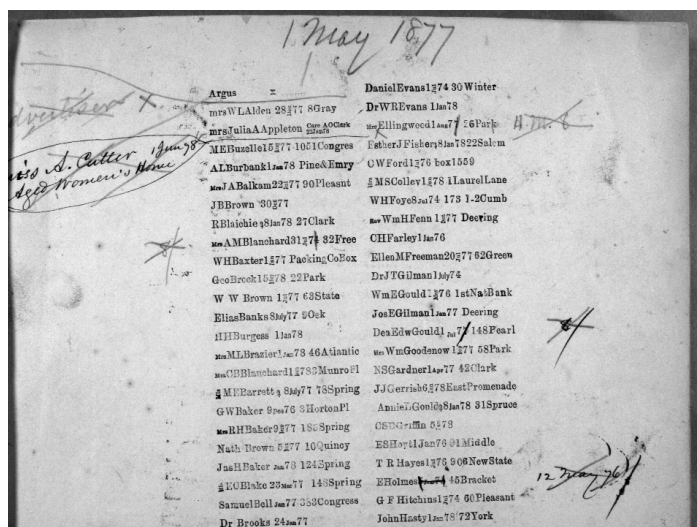
Research Notes

Clues in the Collections: A List of Subscribers to the Christian Mirror

Anyone who has worked with nineteenth-century newspapers or periodicals will be familiar with a curious feature: the presence of a name, sometimes hand-written, but often on a printed slip, at the top of the first page of each issue. Recently Vincent Golden, curator of newspapers and periodicals, discovered a bound volume made up of galley proofs printed with the subscriber list for the *Christian Mirror*. Vince surmised, and several scholars whom he consulted agreed, that it was likely that such lists were used to cut into these slips in order to ensure their proper delivery to subscribers. This past March, Michael Winship had the opportunity to inspect this volume, and our preliminary investigations not only confirm this hypothesis but also suggest that the volume, an extraordinary document, has much to teach us about how the distribution of nineteenth-century American newspapers worked.

The *Christian Mirror* was a Congregational-Trinitarian religious weekly newspaper based in Portland, Maine, that was published from 1822 to 1899. The AAS catalogue record reports, however, that it was published in Lewiston from October 30, 1875, to March 31, 1877, and its return to Portland in April 1877 may help explain the survival of this volume of bound subscription lists, covering the period from May 1877 to December 1878. The volume itself is identified on the verso of the front free end paper as the “Subscription List of Christian Mirror of Portland, Me” and comprises multiple sets, each consisting of nineteen galleys, of the subscription list. These were prepared monthly (for example, the first is docketed at the top of the first galley “1 May 1877”), but none is included for September, November, and December 1877, or for February, April, and August through November 1878. Each set is heavily marked up with corrections, with subscribers’ names deleted and added or their subscriptions extended, and these corrections have been incorporated in what must have been standing type that was then used to produce the set of galleys for the following month.

Interestingly, two sets of galleys are included for January 1878, the second of which is annotated “Rearranged List Jan. 1, 1878.” This second set represents a considerable reorganization of the earlier lists and permits a better understanding of its arrangement and use in distributing copies to subscribers. The basic entry, which is printed in two columns on each galley, gives



Entries from the *Christian Mirror* subscription list for May 1, 1877, listing the names of subscribers in Portland, Maine, many with street addresses. Note that the first entry, *Argus* (Eastern Argus), is followed by an ‘x.’

the name of the subscriber, followed by the date that his or her subscription expires. These entries are grouped by town or city, the name of which is printed in bold type, centered in the column, following the list of subscribers in that place. The list of subscribers for each town or city ranges from a single name to over one hundred and seems in some cases to show evidence of having once been arranged alphabetically, although this ordering is often imperfect. The geographical ordering of places is clearly alphabetical, however, and the “rearranged” set of galleys for January 1878 is organized into seven separate alphabetical sequences of place names. The fifth sequence contains subscribers in locations outside of Maine (including those in Nevada and California!); the sixth, subscribers in Portland with their street addresses; and the seventh, subscribers in cities and towns in the nearby Casco Bay area. In total, the list contains the names of roughly 2,150 subscribers, which closely matches the number given for the *Christian Mirror* (2,200) in *N. W. Ayer & Son’s Newspaper Annual* for 1880.

Further research will be required before we can properly interpret and understand the evidence in this intriguing document.

Certain of the names of subscribers, newspapers in all cases, are followed by an “x”; we surmise these are subscribers that received complimentary copies on exchange. Others, often ministers but also seminaries and the advertising agencies S. N. Pettingill & Co. and N. W. Ayer & Son, are followed by a “z”; we suspect this signifies that the recipients were sent free subscriptions. More important, we believe that the separate alphabetical lists of place names represent distribution routes or, more practically, how groups of copies of each issue were bundled, after the subscribers’ labels had been attached, for delivery to express companies or other distribution agents. Comparison of the lists with information contained in gazetteers, local histories, and census records will likely confirm or disprove our initial interpretations, but we feel quite confident that this extraordinary document, when fully analyzed, will shed important light on the poorly understood details of just how the numerous newspapers and periodicals published in the nineteenth-century United States were distributed.

Michael Winship, University of Texas at Austin,
and Vincent Golden, AAS

AMERICAN ♦ ANTIQUARIAN ♦ SOCIETY

a national library of American history
185 Salisbury Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01609-1634
Telephone (508) 755-5221
E-Mail: csloat@mwa.org

Ellen Dunlap, President

The Book: Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture (ISSN 0740-8439) is published in March, July, and November by the American Antiquarian Society at the above address.

Editor: Caroline Sloat

The editor welcomes all news relevant to the interests of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture.

Copyright © 2008 by American Antiquarian Society

Images and Imagination: Consumers in Commercial Lithography

Starting in 1825, with the introduction of lithography into the United States, individual American consumers could see depictions of themselves in a recognizable cityscape in new formats. By glancing at or admiring one of the many commercial images of shops and stores that lithographers produced for clients as advertising, Americans saw a new vision of themselves and the world they lived in. But what did this visual panoply amount to? As artistic productions, these images were neither rare nor precious. They were common, disposable, and available everywhere. But perhaps it was their utter ubiquity that shaped the public’s imagination. Faced with this proliferation of commercial imagery, how did Americans alter their perceptions of themselves, both as consumers and as citizens?

The answers to these questions make up a part of my current project, “Millions of Luxurious Citizens’: Consumption and Citizenship in New York and Philadelphia, 1812–1876.” This work investigates the many ways in which the practices and understandings of consumption transformed American understandings of civic rights and obligations over the course of the nineteenth century. Looking at the sites and sources where ideas about consumption and citizenship connected and crystallized, the project maps out some of the moments where protean developments in the commercial world had an unexpected impact on civic and national identity. An example is the emerging genre of commercial lithography.

Of course, the lithographed advertisement was not the only innovative image available in the 1820s, when new ways of “seeing” competed for Americans’ attention. The lithographed “city

view” with its tonal depictions of urban landscapes, such as those printed by Anthony Imbert in New York, presented artistic and accurate renditions of familiar buildings, monuments, and edifices. As these views grew in popularity, Americans began to discover other representations of themselves and their world on sale. By 1840, dioramas and panoramic views vied with the daguerreotype in offering ever more intriguing visions of individuals and their landscape. Pictorial magazines such as *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated* and *Gleason’s Pictorial Magazine* flourished, surrounding Americans with reflections of themselves and their society.

But no single genre was more familiar or widespread than the commercial pictures that depicted stores and city streets. They were the images that most lithographers produced to sustain their business from week to week, appearing as bill heads or trade cards, among the pages of catalogues or in city directories, or even framed and displayed at train stations and city hotels. Yet despite the diversity of size and context, they were linked through their subject matter and style; they were distinctive renderings of retail stores that displayed shop, goods, and consumers in an elegant and orderly configuration—a genre that could perhaps be summed up as a “retailscape.”

The research I conducted at AAS in January 2008 as a Jay and Deborah Last Fellow enabled me to explore many forms of these distinctive prints, all rich in detail and difference, yet united by common visual themes. A typical “retailscape” displayed the store frontage, emphasizing the signage and the name of the business. Artists and lithographers chose to show off the large expanses of glass windows, through which the commodities on



Trade card of Macullar, Williams, and Parker, 194 Washington, Street, Boston (Lith Buff Macu).
American Antiquarian Society.

sale were clearly visible. Ranks of silverware, bundles of textiles, and rolls of wallpaper were all tantalizingly exhibited and abundantly available, both to the figures in the print and to the viewer of the image.

But the inclusion of shoppers in these images was perhaps their most notable innovation. Although advertising from the 1800s and 1810s most often included iconography—ranging from boxes and bales (perhaps containing luxury goods) to the more classical figure of “Liberty” or “America”—these later images stood apart through their inclusion of everyday shoppers, deliberately elegant figures, well-dressed and identifiably middle-class, yet nonetheless anonymous in their uniformity.

These consumers set these images apart from other lithographs of the day. Unlike the “city view” that portrayed the scene from a bird’s-eye vantage point, the perspective of the “retail-scene” placed the viewer entirely within the landscape. Collapsing the distance between the scene and the spectator erased any sense of detached observation and drew viewers in, placing them shoulder to shoulder with the other consumers depicted in the image. Thus these prints offered their observers a chance to identify directly with the scene and shoppers they saw, encouraging a connection between the viewer and the imagined scene.

As these images proliferated, they moved further and further

away from their point of origin. Whereas traditional “city views” were often bought by the residents of a particular city, these “retailscapes” traveled far and wide. As trade cards and bill heads they passed from person to person, and as images in catalogues they traveled to small towns and country retail stores, ensuring that a wide audience viewed the scenes. And even though each street or business was rendered in such a way as to remain distinctive, the uniformity of style may have encouraged different responses from a widening circle of viewers.

Indeed, if the distinctive viewpoint helped individuals to identify themselves as consumers, I argue that the ubiquity of the image and the familiarity of the genre prompted Americans to imagine themselves as part of an expanding web of elegant yet anonymous consumers.

After all, if presented with a bill, they had already purchased more than a good; they owned proof of their place in that imagined scene! A trade card was a reminder that they were a part of this network of consumers. And as they browsed in catalogues or even pasted on their parlor walls the colored prints of Broadway, such as the one that *Gleason’s Pictorial* published in 1854, individuals might have found it easy to see themselves in those images and imagine other consumers, like themselves, doing the same, across the nation.

As a historian, I find that placing these images together raises the question of how this pastiche of the commercial environment shaped Americans’ perception of their world. Could it be that, confronted with similar images in a variety of places, individuals found it increasingly difficult to envision themselves outside of this enticing world? Did they begin to imagine that personal inclinations and individual taste in home furnishings linked them to a nation of strangers who, judging by the images they saw around them—felt and shopped in the same way? As we look at these images now, it seems possible that between 1840 and 1870, these pictures provided Americans with a reflection of their nation that consisted increasingly of an imagined community of consumers.

Joanna Cohen
University of Pennsylvania

Book Note

Barbara Lacey, *From Sacred to Secular: Visual Images in Early American Publications* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2007) \$69.50 hardcover ISBN-13: 978-08741-396-1-7

The field of American visual culture studies is certainly flourishing. The founding of the Center for Historic American Visual Culture (CHAViC) at AAS, the dedication of an entire issue (April 2007) of the online journal *Common-place* to graphics in nineteenth-century America, and the publication of groundbreaking works by David Morgan, Sally Promey, and Georgia Barnhill, among others, have attracted new interest to an overlooked field.¹ Add to this impressive list Barbara Lacey's new study, *From Sacred to Secular: Visual Images in Early American Publications* (2007). Lacey follows up her January 1996 *William and Mary Quarterly* article on images of blacks in early American imprints, unfortunately not included here, with a broader study of American religious and secular illustrations. As an AAS-National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow, Lacey searched thousands of titles in Charles Evans's bibliography of pre-1800 American imprints to locate hundreds of woodcuts and copper- and steelplate engravings. She then chose 112 as a representative window into ideas distinctly held by colonists and "not sufficiently expressed" in the more broadly available European imprints of the day (18). Some, such as the illustrated alphabet from the 1727 *New England Primer*, are familiar, whereas others, such as an image of an idealized Native American warrior courted by English and French officials, on the cover of the March 1758 *American Magazine*, are refreshingly new.

As Lacey's title suggests, she engages an old thesis, but with a new twist. She seeks to understand what other historians have seen as the secularization of American visual culture from the mid-seventeenth through the late-eighteenth century not as a simple shift from the "sacred" to the "secular," but as an ongoing negotiation between the two. "From Sacred to Secular," she argues, "refers not to two opposing views, nor to a complete transformation of imagery, but to a spectrum of religious, cultural, and political ideas that sometimes reinforce each other, occasionally coexist, and yet at other times are apparently in opposition" (15). In her first four chapters, Lacey traces changes in such explicitly religious texts as funeral sermons, primers and chapbooks, visionary tales, and Bibles. In each genre, publishers used religious imagery to ostensibly religious ends, whether indoctrination, individual expression, or biblical explication. In the next two chapters, Lacey focuses on how religious imagery was deployed to overtly political ends. When colonists sought to explain their relationship with Native Americans or their mother country, they turned to familiar religious imagery but invested it with new meanings. In the final three chapters, Lacey explores how illustrators blended specifically Christian imagery with the imagery of classical republics in the post-Revolutionary period to portray the citizenry and sites of the new nation. In Americans' use of religious imagery to promote reverence for the new republic, she finds the origins of a civil religion.

Lacey has an art historian's eye for close reading, which she displays to full advantage. Much of the book is devoted to detailed and often insightful analysis of image and text. Disjunctures between the two provide some of the most exciting moments in her study. In a 1796 edition of John Bunyan's *Divine Emblems*, Lacey points out how Bunyan's seventeenth-century text refuses to accept Moses and his "Ethiopian" wife Zipporah as spiritual equals because of the color of her skin, while the corresponding illustration portrays them as an affectionate, perfectly balanced couple. We are left to wonder which message about the relations between the races young readers ultimately took away. In an analysis of the illustrations adorning Bibles published in the new nation, Lacey reveals a surprising divergence between those marketed to Protestant and those to Roman Catholic audiences. Isaiah Thomas's *Holy Bible* (1791) and Hodge and Campbell's Brown's *Self-Interpreting Folio Family Bible* (1792) both include engravings that draw on the dramatic framing devices of an Italian baroque tradition, whereas Matthew Carey's *The Holy Testament* (1805) privileges the rational ordering of space characteristic of the High Renaissance. Just as the texts of the Protestant (KJV) and Catholic Bibles (Douai), differ, Lacey comments, so too are religious differences discernible in their illustrations. Yet these illustrations seem the opposite of what we would expect. The ornate visual compositions in the Protestant Bibles, which include a representation of Christ on the Cross (an image still profane in orthodox circles), look far more Catholic than Carey's spare neoclassical images, which could easily be set in the stripped-down interiors of eighteenth-century Protestant meeting-houses. How should we understand this divergence? Lacey does not fully explain, but she does complicate matters further with the tantalizing observation that at least one engraver, Cornelius Tiebout, worked on both Protestant and Roman Catholic Bibles.

What makes Lacey's study so exciting also generates its fundamental, and unresolved, tension. At the same time that Lacey wants to eschew binarism for a sacred-secular spectrum, she is still committed to the idea of a demonstrable shift over time. This forces her to interpret some images as far more "sacred" than they actually were and results in her not thoroughly analyzing the implications of the persistence of—even an increasing adherence to—religion in American culture over time. This tension is most striking in the first chapter, an effort to provide a brief survey of explicitly religious imagery over the span of her study. The first image she analyzes is the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Company (1629, updated 1672), which she interprets as a "sacred image" that signified the settlers' mission to proselytize among Native Americans. Yet, as historians have made clear, although the Native American on the seal invited settlers to "come over and help him," the Massachusetts Bay Company encouraged those same settlers to come over and help *themselves* to the region's fish, timber, and fur.² More a commercial concern than a spiritual one, the Massachusetts Bay Company thus used a "sacred" image to mask secular motivations, complicating any interpretation of just how "sacred" an image it really was. Lacey's focus on the sacred connotations of

the Massachusetts Bay Company seal contrasts with the secular overtones she finds in her final image, the Great Seal of the United States—a disparity she believes “clearly demonstrates a radical change had taken place in the perceived mission and goals of the New World enterprise” (181). Over the past two decades, however, historians as diverse as Jon Butler, Nathan Hatch, and Roger Finke and Rodney Starke have challenged the declension narrative traditionally told, arguing that Americans became more religious, rather than less, over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³ With this in mind, how might we rethink the persistence of Christian imagery in the face of a process of secularization assumed to undermine “the value of Christian conviction”?

More illustrative than exhaustive, *From Sacred to Secular* reveals the richness of the field of early American visual culture and the opportunities for further work. Lacey has done a great service by providing an introduction to the surprising range of illustrations to be found in early American imprints and by offering a preliminary framework through which to interpret them. Future studies that return American visual culture to the broader context of contemporary European publications can help us gauge just how distinctly American a project it was to wrestle with a shift, or embrace a spectrum, “from sacred to secular.”

Kyle B. Roberts,
Hench Post-Dissertation Fellow, AAS

1. See David Morgan and Sally Promey, eds., *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Georgia B. Barnhill, *Bibliography on American Prints of the Seventeenth through the Nineteenth Centuries* (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2006); and Patricia Johnston, *Seeing High and Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).
2. See James E. McWilliams, *Building the Bay Colony: Local Economy and Culture in Early Massachusetts* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), chapter one.
3. Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Roger Finke and Rodney Starke, *The Churching of America: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

www.americanantiquarian.org

01609-1634
Massachusetts
Worcester
185 Salisbury Street

American
Antiquarian
Society



Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No 416
Worcester, Mass.
01609-1634