

## *Report of the Council*

OCTOBER 16, 1996

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE that I come before the members and friends of the Society to present this Report of the Council. In looking back over the events and accomplishments of the past six months, I am reminded yet again of a simple fact: the American Antiquarian Society is not only a great institution and an extraordinarily fine library, it is also a wonderful community. And it is that sense of community—a place defined by common goals and activities and marked by generosity and vitality—that I wish to explore with you briefly today. Our community includes a dedicated staff, a devoted cadre of supporters, and an ever-broadening population of visitors and readers. AAS has become common ground for a wide variety of folks who seek out this library in search of answers and insights and find here—sometimes unexpectedly—others with whom to share their interests and their experiences. Indeed, they find true partners.

To cite but one example, let me tell you about Robert Shalhope, professor of history at the University of Oklahoma and a recent AAS-NEH fellow. Bob was studying the transcript of a remarkable series of diaries written from 1806 to 1837 by Hiram Harwood and his family, yeoman farmers of Vermont. The Harwoods were everyman-type folks, but in their diaries Shalhope has found significant testimony to the broader social, political, and cultural history of the early republic. Bob had chosen AAS at which to study because only here could he have such ready access to the newspapers of the day and to practically every one of the hundreds of books that Hiram mentioned having read. Even though the diaries themselves do not belong to AAS, we adopted Hiram—and Bob Shalhope—as our own. All the staff and other fellows were interested to hear the latest from Hiram and his fam-

ily and were pleased to be able to help track down obscure references for Bob and to offer relevant tidbits from their own research. And then, just days before the end of Shalhope's fellowship stay, he—and we—were unnerved to discover facts that were not recorded in the diary: Hiram Harwood, our friend, had been committed to the Brattleboro Retreat and had taken his own life. It affected us all profoundly. Why had he done it?, we asked each other. How had we missed the signs? Never mind that the tragedy happened 159 years ago, I think some of us wondered if we couldn't have done something to prevent it! Bob Shalhope is now seeking professional psychiatric advice—only for Hiram's problems, I hasten to add. The way people at AAS get involved in the research projects of our readers is hardly 'normal'—if by that you mean 'typical at other institutions'—but it seems wonderfully healthy to me.

The borders of the AAS community are not restricted to this building, however, for the work that begins here often extends around the world, through libraries, museums, classrooms, bookstores, radio stations, to everywhere that the history of America is examined and celebrated. Each book and article, every film and performance, all the teaching units and exhibitions that draw upon materials in our collections, are like grandchildren to us. We can't rightly claim credit for their existence, but we're sure proud of them nonetheless. We were especially proud this year when our former fellow Alan Taylor was awarded both the Bancroft and Pulitzer prizes for his study of William Cooper, father of James Fenimore Cooper, a book researched in part at AAS. The second Bancroft prize winner this year, David S. Reynolds's cultural biography of Walt Whitman, was also born of an AAS fellowship. Indeed, the role that AAS has played in the creation and development of entire academic fields was brought home powerfully this summer when our research librarian Joanne Chaison mounted a special exhibition of books drawn from our collections. The occasion was the international conference of SHARP, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing, that at-

tracted almost 300 registrants to Worcester. Entitled 'Footnotes as Footprints,' the exhibit featured the works of six seminal contributions to the recent development of the field of American book history with examples of primary materials used by each of the authors at AAS. And now that our fellowship programs include classroom teachers, novelists, poets, playwrights, dancers, and other artists and writers, the fruits of research conducted at AAS are being multiplied to an even greater public audience, a wider AAS community. To cite but one more example, the community of those who have now heard one of two pilot programs for *The History Show* (which we created and produced in partnership with Jim Moran) now stretches over forty-seven states via broadcasts on more than 150 public radio stations. People who know the radio business tell us that this a phenomenal market response, especially for a first-time program offering. People who know what they like—such as the farmer who called from Kansas and the lady who phoned from Pennsylvania—tell us simply 'these programs were great and we want more like them.'

And what of our efforts to serve the community closer to home? This year we have joined forces with Old Sturbridge Village, the Worcester Public Schools, and the Worcester Historical Museum, in a curriculum development initiative entitled 'Coming of Age in 1830,' that is bringing to eighth-grade students and teachers an exciting interdisciplinary unit that addresses the new teaching requirements mandated by state educational reform. Recognizing that thirteen-year-olds are most interested in the concept of being thirteen-year-olds, the program is designed to allow them to see and explore the 1830's through the eyes of teenagers growing up in Worcester at that time, and to contrast the issues and concerns of that time with those that they are facing today. Each of the collaborating organizations brings complementary skills and resources to the project: AAS is providing primary source materials—newspapers, advice manuals, popular literature, diaries, and letters—a modest selection at first to get the process rolling, but we have assured all participants that we

can supply more, and more, and more. Unfortunately, however, I don't have more time to mention all the other public educational programs we are now offering. May it suffice to say, however, that in recognition of the many fine services that AAS is now providing to a broad public community—in addition to maintaining its great strengths as a research library serving academics and other scholars—the Massachusetts Cultural Council has included us on the list of institutions to receive general operating support from the Commonwealth, more than \$25,000 annually for the next three years. We are proud of this distinction and grateful for this support. It comes propitiously as we approach the end of the generous grant from the Lila Wallace-Readers' Digest Fund under which many of these new public programs were begun.

Before I continue with other announcements—many of which have to do with fundraising accomplishments—I would like to introduce the newest member of the AAS staff community, John M. Keenum, who joined us in September as vice-president for development. John brings to AAS extensive experience in development and capital campaigns at Yale, the Tanglewood Music Center, Harvard, and Plimoth Plantation. And he arrives at AAS at a time when our fundraising momentum is continuing to build. This summer, for instance, we surpassed our original goal for creating an endowment for the readers' services department, the third component of the endowment challenge grant on which we have been advancing for the past few years. The two gifts that pushed us through the \$1.4 million level on the readers' services endowment are noteworthy as they both speak to the point of 'AAS as a community.' One was a \$100,000 gift established in honor of the late Jane Fulton Smith, who worked in the AAS collections many years ago as a student assistant to Jacob Blanck, compiler of the *Bibliography of American Literature*, and remembered fondly the warm welcome she received here. The gift was given so that others might continue to be welcomed and assisted here just as she was. The second is a \$250,000 grant made by the Greater Worcester Community Foundation from the Robert Booth

Fund, a fund that honors a family known by a long legacy of contributions to the Worcester community. This gift, too, was given so that AAS might continue to serve those in Worcester and beyond for generations to come.

The communities of scholars who come to AAS, especially those who come for extended visits, are clearly among our most significant constituents. Operating as we do without a standing faculty or an in-house staff of senior researchers, these fellows bring to our table a rich array of experience, perspective, and connections into the scholarly world that might otherwise be lacking here. Today I have the pleasure of announcing yet another major gift that will significantly enhance our ability to attract leading scholars to the Society and to support the dissemination of their work through publications. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation of New York, long a supporter of leading humanities institutions such as the Antiquarian Society, has just announced that we are one of nine institutions that they have selected for funding of postdoctoral research fellowships. In our case, the amount awarded is \$500,000, which, over the next four years, will more than double the number of long-term fellowships that we are able to offer, will make it possible for scholars from outside the United States to compete for long-term fellowships, will underwrite the funding for distinguished senior scholars to be invited to the Society, and will support opportunities for recently-minted Ph.D.'s to work at AAS to transform a promising dissertation into a monograph. These monographs we hope to see published, along with other volumes that are based on research in these collections, under a joint imprint that the Society has now established with the Cambridge University Press, one of the world's leading publishers of scholarly works. In addition to launching these new fellowships and the monograph series, we will also be using the Mellon grant to enhance staff services to our readers, most notably with the addition of a reference specialist to encourage and support use of our remarkable collections of children's literature and graphic arts. This new position will be ably

filled by Laura Wasowicz, longtime cataloguer of children's books at the Society.

The new Mellon fellowships are not the only additions to our growing list of fellowship offerings, however. Also appearing for the first time in our new fellowship brochure is the 'Joyce Ann Tracy Research Fellowship,' established in memory of our friend and colleague who served the Society and its readers for twenty-three years as curator of newspapers and periodicals. If ever there were a symbol of what 'community' means at AAS, this fellowship is it, albeit a bittersweet symbol. Joyce died this summer, after a brief struggle with brain cancer, and gifts in her memory have come from every corner of the country, from her colleagues, from her family, and from many, many readers whom Joyce helped and befriended over the years. With these gifts, we have established a permanent endowment fund that will bring to AAS each year at least one more fellow whose work will depend largely on the Society's collections of newspapers and periodicals. They, too, will be 'Joyce's readers,' and although they will not have the pleasure of working with Joyce herself, it will be our pleasure to help them in Joyce's honor and in her memory.

The sense of community here at AAS transcends and bridges the generations. Those of us on staff today follow in the footsteps of our predecessors. We are reminded of them each day when we read their reports in past volumes of the *Proceedings*, when we use their cataloguing records, when we see their annotations in bibliographies noting which items we hold and which we have yet to acquire. Our mission is the same as theirs was—to collect, to preserve, to catalogue, and to share our nation's history—and we make progress by building upon their accomplishments. Their portraits watch over our work, and their legacies inspire us. And we are now especially pleased to be able to add another portrait to our community gallery of AAS leaders, a portrait of Marcus McCorison, our president emeritus. The painting is rich in true-life detail. From the canvas, Marcus looks back at us from his work, from which we are clearly interrupting him. We recognize

the desk, the chair, the books, even the look on his face. It is as if he is about to speak to us, and we know him well enough to be certain what he is about to say: 'Be true to the great mission and purpose of this library.' 'Raise more money.' 'Buy more books!' And that is exactly what we intend to do. This portrait of Marcus McCorison will hang in a place of great honor—a place that until recently was reserved for the portrait of Isaiah Thomas himself—in the Council Room opposite the portrait of legendary Clarence Brigham. Their presence reminds us daily that the community that they helped to build here at AAS has a proud history and a bright future. We are grateful to them, to our many supporters, and to our community of readers and fellows for making it so.

Ellen S. Dunlap

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