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Notes on American Bookbindings

A MAYO BINDING OF BARLOW'S 'COLUMBIAD'

A binding of a copy of Joel Barlow's *Columbiad* bearing the ticket of the binder Fred. A. Mayo of Richmond, Virginia, was one of the last acquisitions of Michael Papantonio for his collection of American bindings. It came soon afterwards to the American Antiquarian Society as a bequest. The book in question, printed in Philadelphia in 1807, was noted by Updike as 'an important quarto' and 'an early instance of an American edition de luxe.'¹ It lent itself to fine binding, as Michael clearly recognized. The Papantonio collection contained six copies: two ticketed by the Philadelphia binder Robert De Silver, one attributed to the New York binder William Swaim, two the work of unknown binders, and this one ticketed by Mayo.

Collector Papantonio found it all but impossible to resist a signed binding. A New Yorker, he confessed to a predilection for the work of New York binders but desired a representative collection. Mayo's binding not only filled a gap in work executed in the South, but it had an added attraction. Frederick August Mayo was Thomas Jefferson's last bookbinder, a fact of which Michael was fully aware.

Although the Papantonio volume bears no indication of ownership, it was *not* Jefferson's copy. That was a presentation copy from the author, bound by Jefferson's Georgetown binder, Joseph Milligan. The bill from Milligan, dated April 30, 1808, was for a binding 'in calf, gilt, cost \$4.00.'²

1. Daniel Berkeley Updike, *Printing Types: Their History, Forms, and Use*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1937), 2:154.

2. *Catalogue of the Library of Thomas Jefferson*, compiled by E. M. Sowerby, 5 vols. (Washington, 1952-59), 4:4301.

Mayo's binding, shown opposite page 369, was executed some twelve to sixteen years after the book was printed, as evidenced by its ticket. Mayo was possibly unique in having used as many as seven different tickets. The one in this book, reading 'Bound by Fred. A. Mayo, Richmond, Va.,' within an ellipse bordered by a sunburst, is identical with one used for Jefferson bindings between 1819 and 1825. It was done in calf, in the style of the day, a combination of gold and blind tooling, with marbled endpapers and page edges marbled to match. Restrained in taste and style, it would have thoroughly satisfied Mayo's most important patron and would have graced Thomas Jefferson's shelves had he owned it.

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