

Report of the Council

April 15, 1987

A QUARTER CENTURY roughly marks the passing of a generation. As the generations increase of the men and women to whom we are indebted for our present benefactions, so must expressions of our gratitude to them become more significant. In this year we citizens of the United States rightly celebrate the completion of two centuries of governance under a written constitution that was devised to provide a rational, just, and stable environment in which our forebears, ourselves, and our descendants might enjoy life and prosper. Last evening we were fortunate, indeed, to have had the privilege of receiving the measured thoughts of a distinguished student and interpreter of that constitution, Mr. Justice Blackmun; to whom, all honor and gratitude.

1987 is an important year for another reason. Seven generations of members of the American Antiquarian Society have striven to nurture its life that it ever may be useful to the people of the nation that uniquely encourages the establishment of independent organizations that work to enlarge the common weal. We now are half-way through our one hundred and seventy-fifth year. Isaiah Thomas wrote then of the reason for our existence:

The great benefits arising to the civilized world from associations of individuals for promoting knowledge, industry, or virtue, are universally acknowledged. . . . We cannot obtain a knowledge of those who come after us, nor are we certain what will be the events of future times; as it is in our power, so it should be our duty, to bestow on posterity that, which they cannot give to us, but which they may enlarge and improve, and transmit to those, who shall succeed them. It is but paying a debt we owe to our forefathers.

So, we are preparing to pay a portion of that debt and are

anxiously looking forward to the grand celebration at the conclusion of this signal year.

But today we meet in Boston, the site of our earliest meetings, and enjoy the encouragement of our friends of the even more ancient Massachusetts Historical Society and the kind hospitality of our colleagues of the Boston Public Library. MHS celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in October 1840, when we had passed only our twenty-eighth. Their celebration occasioned a congratulatory address by the historian John Gorham Palfrey, who said, 'To our founders belongs the credit of example which has been followed to similar good results. . . . The Antiquarian Society at Worcester . . . possesses a collection of rare interest, which we contemplate with such gratification as could be increased only by seeing it united to our own, so that the student might have access at once to the rich stores of both.'¹ Well, we have not yet merged our collections (although there has been desultory talk of it), but over the years we have attempted to cooperate with one another and to coordinate our activities so that historical knowledge and appreciation of it may be enriched.

For our own part, we are six months older, if no wiser, than at our last report. Nancy H. Burkett, assistant librarian, informs us that two important milestones have been achieved. At the end of February we completed a four-year commitment to the United States Newspaper Project. Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the project is designed to bring all of the nation's files of newspapers under bibliographical and preservational control. AAS was appointed an initial participant, with five other important repositories, in order to build a database on which succeeding efforts could build. Our curator of newspapers, Joyce Ann Tracy, was our project leader. She was ably seconded by Joseph E. Macmanus, now of the U.S. State Department, who was day-to-day manager until February of 1986; by her assistant, Dennis R. Laurie; and by cataloguers Martha Gunnarson, Anne C. Moore,

1. Courtesy of Malcolm Freiberg, from *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 9 (1846): 170.

and Susan J. W. Gordon. During the life of the project, they catalogued nearly 14,000 newspaper titles, many extant for many years, dating from 1704 until the late nineteenth century. This invaluable historical tool is embedded in CONSER, part of a computer system (OCLC) located in Columbus, Ohio, and in RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network), our interlibrary network.

The other significant accomplishment has to do with computers also. After seven years of detailed work, AAS transmitted to RLIN machine-readable catalogue records of 32,000 seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century American printed materials. The records pertain to 22,400 books, pamphlets, and broadsides printed before 1801; 3,850 broadsides printed in the period 1801-30; 2,550 books for children for the years 1821-76; and about a thousand other nineteenth-century imprints. These records are available nationally to scholars by name, title, subject, and genre, and they form the basis of our own nascent online system that will provide even more points of access to inquirers. The work still proceeds at a steady pace with Alan N. Degutis as head of the cataloguing department.

Ms. Laura Wasowicz has joined the library staff as senior cataloguer of the children's literature project. She graduated, Phi Beta Kappa, from Rockford College and from the library school of the University of Chicago. She succeeds Richard C. Fyffe who left us to become librarian of the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts. Another important staff change is forthcoming. Margaret A. Donoghue has been on our staff in various cataloguing and secretarial positions since 1967. She will retire on June 30, and we shall greatly miss her faithful assistance.

The Society is participating in two exhibitions that draw almost entirely on our graphic arts holdings. 'Curiosities and Wonders: Evolution of the Modern American Circus' is on view until August 16 at the Museum of Our National Heritage in Lexington. The exhibition was organized by Joanne D. Chaison with the assistance of Georgia B. Bumgardner, both of our staff. 'Renderings from

Worcester's Past: Nineteenth-Century Architectural Drawings from the American Antiquarian Society' opened this week at the Worcester Art Museum and will be on view until June 21. This exhibition was organized by Lisa Koenigsberg, a former Samuel Foster Haven Fellow at AAS, who was helped by Mrs. Bumgardner and members of the art museum staff. An essay and catalogue on the exhibition, both prepared by Ms. Koenigsberg, has just been published.

Activities within the areas of research, education, and publication, under the leadership of John B. Hench, are at flood tide and are extremely important means of encouraging historical scholarship. The Council has appointed the following visiting fellows, on recommendation of the Fellowship Committee—William H. Bond (chairman), Linda K. Kerber, Leo Marx, and James A. Henretta:

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellows

Jonathan M. Chu, associate professor of history, University of Massachusetts-Boston, 'Where's Mine? Debt Litigation in Post-Revolutionary Massachusetts'; Patricia Cline Cohen, associate professor of history, University of California, Santa Barbara, 'Safety and Danger: Women in Public'; Thomas L. Purvis, assistant professor of history, Auburn University at Montgomery, 'The Military Burdens and Social Impact of the Seven Years' War upon the British Colonies, 1755-1763.'

Kate B. and Hall James Peterson Fellows

Paula R. Backscheider, associate professor of English, University of Rochester, 'Biography of Daniel Defoe'; Bradley P. Dean, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of Connecticut, 'Henry David Thoreau as a Lecturer'; Wendy Greenhouse, Ph.D. candidate in art history, Yale University, 'The British are Coming: Tudors and Stuarts in Antebellum America'; Nancy L. Hagedorn, Ph.D. candidate in history, College of William and Mary, 'Mediating the Exchange of Cultures: Indian Interpreters among the Iroquois,

1664-1775'; Catherine E. Kelly, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Rochester, 'Mothers and Daughters: Intergenerational Conflict & Continuity, 1820-1930'; Karl Kroeger, associate professor and music librarian, University of Colorado, 'Complete Works of William Billings, Vol. IV'; Jean M. O'Brien, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Chicago, 'Community Dynamics in the Indian-English Town of Natick, Mass., 1650-1790'; Mary F. Rhineland, Ph.D. candidate in history, Boston University, 'More Confessions of Thomas Shepard's Cambridge Parishioners, 1648-1649'; William R. Ward, professor emeritus of history, University of Durham, 'An International History of the Great Awakening in the 18th Century'; Julie P. Winch, assistant professor of history and black studies, University of Massachusetts, Boston, 'American Free Blacks and Emigration to Haiti in the 1820s.'

Albert Boni Fellows

Menahem Blondheim, Ph.D. candidate in history, Harvard University, 'The News Frontier'; Sherry Sullivan, assistant professor of English, University of Alabama, Birmingham, 'Noble Savage: Iconography in American Periodicals and Gift Books, 1820-1850.'

Frances Hiatt Fellows

Saul Cornell, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Pennsylvania, 'The Political Thought & Culture of the Antifederalists'; Nancy Gale Isenberg, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Wisconsin, 'The "Co-Equality of the Sexes": The Feminist and Religious Discourse of the 19th-Century Woman's Rights Movement in America, 1848-1860'; Mark S. Schantz, Ph.D. candidate in history, Emory University, 'Piety in Providence: The Class Dimensions of Religious Experience in Providence, R.I., 1790-1860.'

With the advice of the steering committee of our Program in the History of the Book in American Culture, which is chaired by G. Thomas Tanselle, the James Russell Wiggins Lecturer has been appointed for 1987. Roger Chartier, maitre assistant at l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, will deliver his paper

at the Society on September 30. John Bidwell of the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library at the University of California, Los Angeles, has accepted our invitation for 1988.

A conference, with about fifty participants, on 'Teaching the History of the Book: Methods and Concepts' will take place at the Goddard-Daniels House on June 12-13. The sessions have been organized with our co-sponsor, The Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, John Y. Cole, director, and are funded in part by a grant from the Exxon Education Foundation.

Mr. Hench reports that we have received two subventions to assist in funding the tunebook bibliography that is now in press. Both the American Musicological Society and the National Endowment for the Humanities have been helpful in this regard. And, with sorrow, we note that the issue now in the mail of the *Proceedings* is the last to be printed by letterpress. Future issues will be composed on Mergenthaler Linotronic computers and printed offset. What would Isaiah Thomas think of that?

On our public lecture circuit, the series 'American Appetites: Food, Drink, and Sex in America's Past' met with resounding success. A total of some 250 auditors attended lectures given by William J. Rorabaugh of the University of Washington, Roger Thompson of the University of East Anglia, and Sarah F. McMahon of Bowdoin College during March and April.

Plans are well advanced for the 175th-anniversary celebration to be held during the week of October 18-24, 1987. Ann-Cathrine Rapp serves as coordinator, with ample assistance from many members of the staff. An ad hoc committee of the Society, chaired by Robert C. Achorn, has general oversight of the preparations. We are very pleased to announce that the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, of Menlo Park, California, has provided funding for the celebration. Included among the projects is the publication of a guidebook to our collections and services, the first since R. W. G. Vail's 1937 volume. The chapters have been written by members of the staff and will be illustrated with evocative photographs. We will also publish a listing of all persons who have been

members of the Society since the founding in 1812. We believe that we have all of the speakers for the celebration signed up, hotel rooms reserved, food service planned, music commissioned, etc. What will go wrong between now and October!

Mary V. C. Callahan continues her diligent ways in the development office as we come to the final months of the Isaiah Thomas Fund campaign, the purpose of which is to increase our endowment income for acquisitions, staffing needs, preservation work, and programs in our research, publication, and education area. We are still shy \$700,000 of the \$7,000,000 needed to reach our immediate goal in cash and pledges for endowment. One hundred eighty-nine members of the Society, 39 percent, have contributed \$1,395,000 for this purpose. We earnestly ask the remaining 61 percent to join their compatriots in making their Society a more effective agent for historical research. The Council is especially grateful to the 667 friends of AAS, both individuals and officers in the foundations, who have responded generously to our needs as we reach out to the future.

In closing this half-year report, the Council records its profound thanks to all who help make the American Antiquarian Society a lively, useful place—now, in the past, and in the future: staff and members of the Society, friends, and members of the Worcester Association of Mutual Aid in Detecting Thieves.

Marcus A. McCorison

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