

*A Quarter Century
of Visiting Fellowships at the
American Antiquarian Society, 1972-97
Developing a Generation of Scholars*

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THE PROGRAM for this year's annual meeting marks a significant landmark in the life of this institution. This symposium celebrates a quarter century, from 1972 to 1997, of visiting fellowships at the American Antiquarian Society. In the history of the fellowship program we can trace the development of a generation of scholars and a second landmark in the progress of gaining greater understanding of the history of the American nation. Our three symposium speakers will each take a different perspective. Our first speaker will take the point of view of AAS; the second speaker will talk from the fellows' perspective; and the third will speak on behalf of the Academy, the world of scholarship. This evening Linda K. Kerber will extend that progression further when she delivers the annual lecture, 'Historical Research and the Public Good.' My role as moderator is to set the stage and the tone ('among friends'), to identify the players, and to engage the audience in discussion and comment. I will 'call the question' in case of debate.

Among those closest to the AAS fellowship program, however, there has been little debate. We agree that the program is among the signal components that have shaped the reputation of this

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great institution as 'the place to be to do research in pre-twentieth-century American history and culture.' But our purpose today is not only to self-congratulate but also to examine and understand the impact of this program. How has it worked best and how best can we improve upon it?

To set the stage properly, I need first to acknowledge the support of those who have made the fellowship program possible, our sponsors. John Hench will mention a number of these, but permit me to acknowledge them here. Grants in the past decades to the program include: in the 1970s, U.S. Steel (1972-73); The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (1973-74, funds that were later used to endow The Andrew W. Mellon curatorship in graphic arts, the position held by Georgia B. Barnhill); the Rockefeller Foundation (1973-76); and the Fred Harris Daniels Foundation (1974-82). Since 1982 and the bequest of the Goddard-Daniels House at 190 Salisbury Street to the Society, the Daniels Foundation funds have been directed to the building's upkeep. In the 1980s, gifts from the family of Albert Boni (1980-92), Jacob Hiatt (1980-92), Exxon Education Foundation (1982-85), and Northeast Modern Language Association (1988-92) supported fellowships. Continuing endowments include the Stephen Botein Fellowships funded with gifts from his friends and family since 1989; Kate Butler and Hall J. Peterson Fellowships funded since 1983 by the Petersons and the Butler Family Foundation; and since 1997, Joyce Tracy Fellowships funded by the gifts of friends and family in honor of our late curator of newspapers and periodicals, Joyce Ann Tracy. The first recipient of this new fellowship, Jennifer Hynes, is currently in residence and is here today. Currently grants from other sources are funding five other categories of fellowships. They are the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (since 1989), the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Fellowships for K-12 Teachers and Librarians (since 1994); the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Fellowships for Creative and Performing Artists and Writers (since 1995); the American Historical Print Collectors Society (since 1995); and from 1997, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation,

which is underwriting postdoctoral fellowships, post-dissertation fellowships, and distinguished scholars in residence. Our first Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow is in residence during 1997-98. She is Kathleen Brown, assistant professor of history at the University of Pennsylvania. Applications will shortly be due for the first post-dissertation fellowship to be held in 1998-99, and conversations are underway with potential senior scholars.

The mainstay of the Society's fellowship program has been the National Endowment for the Humanities Centers for Advanced Study program, of which AAS has been a beneficiary from 1976 to the present. We have received thirteen grants totaling \$1,175,931 and are up for renewal again this year. The Society is most grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities for this and other support.

Each of today's panelists—John Hench, Scott Casper, and Philip Gura—is uniquely qualified to speak to his subject. John is our first speaker, and I will introduce him after I speak of the two former fellows who are also today's panelists.

Scott Casper, whose name is not on the printed invitation for today's event, is filling in for Dale Cockrell, who has a very good reason for absence. Dale, professor of music at Middlebury College, the College of William and Mary, and now at Vanderbilt University, was an AAS-NEH fellow in 1983-84 and 1994-95. He is the author most recently of *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (1997). Dale is a great friend of AAS and also a wonderful husband to Lucinda, at whose hospital bedside he is sitting as she recuperates from surgery scheduled on short notice this week. We are especially grateful to Scott Casper—also a great friend of AAS—for taking part in today's program on very short notice. For five years now, I have heard my colleagues tell stories about how—in effect, not to brag or anything, but—a two-month fellowship at AAS in 1990 essentially made Scott into the scholar he is today. Scott, we have invited you here today to set this story straight once and for all.

To be sure, Scott did not arrive on our doorstep without aca-

demetic credentials of his own. As a senior at Princeton, he was awarded in 1986 the Willard Thorp Prize for American Studies and the American Studies Thesis Prize. He then proceeded immediately to Yale, where he earned the M.Phil. in American studies in 1990 and was at work on his dissertation—‘The Cultural and Literary Contexts of American Biography, 1800–1865,’ awarded the Theoron Rockwell Field Prize for the outstanding dissertation in 1992—when he was named a Peterson Fellow at AAS. Scott is now associate professor of history at the University of Nevada, Reno, and has returned to Worcester frequently. In 1992 and 1994, for example, he took part in the Summer Seminars in the History of the Book in American Culture. When AAS hosted the international meeting of SHARP in 1996, Scott was here to present a paper entitled, ‘The Life and Death of an Early American Library.’ Although researched in Worcester, the topic of his paper was not this early American library but rather the Farmers and Mechanicks Library of Washington County, New York, 1817–47, whose papers are now at AAS. Last year, Scott also served as chair of the committee to select James Russell Wiggins Lecturers in the History of the Book in American Culture from 1997 to 1999. But since committee work today is, more often than not, conducted by E-mail, we didn’t have the pleasure of his company until he flew to Worcester ten days ago to attend Carla Peterson’s Wiggins Lecture. Since then, Scott has made the trip back to Reno and returned to Worcester for this occasion. Scott is currently active in presenting papers and articles in the field of book history, but the tale of how he came to be so—and the story of how the experience of holding an AAS fellowship has been a transforming one in the lives of other scholars—is one that I want Scott to tell for himself.

Philip F. Gura is a native of Ware, Massachusetts, but visits home are but one reason he keeps returning to central Massachusetts. He is the only member of this panel that I once pretended to be, about which I will say more in due course. Phil earned the A.B. and Ph.D. degrees from Harvard and taught at

the University of Colorado in Boulder before his move to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he is professor of English, adjunct professor of American studies, adjunct professor of religious studies, and editor of the prestigious journal *Early American Literature*. In addition to numerous essays and reviews, Phil is author of *The Wisdom of Words: Language, Theology, and Literature in the New England Renaissance* (1981), *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660* (1984), an edition of the *Memoirs of Stephen Burroughs* (1988), and *The Crossroads of American History and Literature: Essays in Cultural History* (1996). Phil's current research interests center more in antebellum history and literature, and he will give a paper in the AAS Seminar in American Music History, 'Documenting the Early Minstrel Banjo,' during this visit to Worcester.

Phil held the senior fellowship at the Institute of Early American History and Culture in Williamsburg in 1985-86 and has subsequently served on the national council of that colleague institution of ours. Since becoming a reader at AAS in the early '70s, his involvement has grown through election to membership in 1988; his 1989 Peterson Fellowship project, 'The Reverend Nathan Fiske and the Cultural Transformation of Central Massachusetts'; and his *Proceedings* essays, 'Early Nineteenth-Century Printing in Rural Massachusetts: John Howe of Greenwich and Enfield' (1991) and 'Manufacturing Guitars for the American Parlor: James Ashborn's Wolcottville, Connecticut, Factory 1851-56' (1994). He was appointed to the editorial board for *A History of the Book in America* in 1993 and has served a three-year term on the fellowship selection committee. We know that entails a lot of work, but when snow precluded his attending a meeting, he faxed his handwritten notes, which I used to enter his opinions into the discussion. Those notes revealed his passion for the research process and the role of AAS fellowships.

Let me now introduce our first speaker, John B. Hench. This is a particular pleasure, for—succinctly and most sincerely—'no finer colleague ever there was' than John. A Minnesota boy, a

graduate of Lafayette College, who earned his master's and Ph.D. at Clark University, he began work at AAS as a page in his early days at Clark. Following a stint of teaching at Mankato State College, he joined the professional staff of AAS in 1973 as editor of publications (including Shaw-Shoemaker). Since 1977, he has headed our research and publication efforts. His changing titles reflect his increasing responsibilities—and changing tastes in the use of prepositions: in 1977 research and publication officer; in 1981 assistant director *for* research and publication; three years later associate director *for*, but in 1989 director *of*; until in 1996 John was named vice-president *for* academic and public programs. John's much broader responsibilities with AAS now include oversight of publication programs of which Caroline Sloat is now editor, education programs, the undergraduate seminar, scholarly seminars and colloquia, academic fellowships, the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture (PHBAC), the annual James Russell Wiggins Lecture, and *A History of the Book in America*. In addition to these academic programs, John also oversees our public program offerings that are chiefly the responsibility of James David Moran, our director of outreach. These programs now include lectures, the music series, publicity, adult education, K-12 programs and fellowships for teachers, artists, writers, and others whose projects are directed toward public audiences. Author and editor of numerous works, John is most widely known for his work on three volumes. They are *The Press and the American Revolution* (1980), which he edited with Bud Bailyn; *Printing and Society in Early America* (1983), which he edited with Bill Joyce, Dick Brown, and David Hall; and *Under Its Generous Dome* (1992), which he edited with Nancy Burkett and is now known as the AAS Fellows' Bible.

Nationally, John has been active in the American Council of Learned Societies, the Bibliographical Society of America, the Sonneck Society for American Music, the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), and the American Printing History Association, of which he has served as

president. In his 'spare time' John is president of Music Worcester, the premier music-presenting organization in central Massachusetts, a sometime student of Japanese, and the official worrier (justifiably) about the fate of Worcester Regional Airport.

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