

Report of the Council

DURING the past summer the Library has been increasingly used by researchers and scholars. Through our various publications of a bibliographical nature and the expansion of our historical and literary collections the Library has become better known as a place where large amounts of research material can be consulted conveniently. This matter of convenience is a notable feature of our Library. Its entire collection of three-quarters of a million titles, not to mention the manuscripts, maps, prints, and broadsides, is all located within two hundred feet of the main reading-room desk instead of scattered in different buildings or far distant from the inquiring student. Whatever the reason, the Library has been much used during the past few months, especially after the beginning of college vacations. Most of the visitors come from outside of New England and many from distant parts of the country. At least five students from North Carolina have passed several days here in their researches; perhaps the colleges in that State are putting on a special literary drive.

The newspaper files have been continually used. One researcher working on early Virginia silversmiths consulted over a hundred different Virginia newspapers in the search for advertisements of that trade. Other prospective authors have sought material on such varied subjects as Shays's Rebellion, the Northwest Passage, the Catholic Church in New York, the Western Book Trade, Prang's art work, Western Frontier Art, the Women's Rights Movement, and the California Gold Rush. Our outstanding collection

of American literature has been used for the study of Herman Melville, Philip Freneau, Henry James, and many other authors. This is only a small selection of the subjects for which readers have inquired.

Our chief present need, referred to in previous reports, is to obtain more room for the expanding collections. Only by providing temporary wooden bookcases and by constant reshifting of the various collections can space be found for current accessions. And a large accession, such as the Frost collection, throws several sections of the Library out of gear. But until prices of labor and building material go down, we cannot even think of constructing an addition to the book-stack. It is surprising how one can make room for one more book, or a thousand, or even ten thousand. The other need, also previously mentioned, is the repainting of the interior walls of the building which have remained without renewal for thirty-seven years.

A slight change in the appearance of the grounds has been the removal of the shrubbery along the Park Avenue front. Constantly trimmed back for over thirty-five years these bushes had become straggly and unsightly. They have been removed and the grass lawn carried to the street. If we desire to replant, we can do so in the future. Incidentally, it took more time to care for these few shrubs than it did to keep up the lawn on the entire property.

Because of the success of our appeal to members for funds and the fortunate sale of duplicate material, the Society has been enabled to purchase scores of books and imprints of great rarity. Never in my memory have so many books been purchased which glory in the doubtful attribution of being called unique. Some of these books we have sought for years, scarcely thinking that they would ever come to the Library. The Librarian's Report records many of these

purchases. The collection of Western books forming the library of Donald McKay Frost has been generously donated to the Library by our Council member. Supplemented by our own collection of Western titles, it will constitute one of the great half dozen collections in the country relating to the field of early Western expansion. It is referred to in more detail in the Librarian's Report, but it will be another year before it can be described properly. Even the appraising of the thousands of books in the collection is no small task. Unquestionably it is one of the finest gifts which the Library has ever received in its entire history.

The *History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820*, in two large quarto volumes, was finally printed and distributed to subscribers late in May. A work of 1508 pages, with over 300 pages of indexes, it was published in an edition of 1500 copies. Nearly 1300 copies had been subscribed for at the original subscription price of \$8.00 for the two volumes, a price set absurdly low because of the desire to allow smaller libraries to have the Bibliography. The remaining copies, raised in price to \$15.00, are rapidly being sold and the work will soon be out of print. The many reviews which have already been printed have been kind and laudatory, probably because the critics rejoiced that this long awaited and promised work was published at last. The generosity of two of our members, George F. Booth and Harry G. Stoddard, in helping us to meet the expense of publication, is again here gratefully acknowledged.

The Society is always aiding in bibliographical projects in the field of Americana. Mr. Shipton, as he finds time, is compiling the final volume of Evans's *American Bibliography*, covering the last part of 1799 and the year 1800, although it will be a long while yet before we will be ready for publication. In no library could the spadework be

done so well as here because of our preponderant collection of early American printing. But the task of searching the other great libraries of the country to fill in the gaps and obtain the missing titles will be no small undertaking. Another important bibliography upon which we are constantly working is the Checklist of American Psalmody before 1880. This is based upon the late Frank J. Metcalf's initial bibliography, but since Mr. Metcalf had not included the largest private collection in the country and four of the largest public collections, this meant that his checklist had to be doubled if not trebled. The new compilation is being made by Valmore X. Gaucher under our supervision, through financial aid generously given by Mrs. Homer Gage.

Two valuable contributions indexing the Society's material were published during the year. In the *Proceedings* for April, 1946, we published Frederick L. Weis's "Checklist of the Portraits in the Library of the American Antiquarian Society." Although compiled in 1947, and hence containing accessions of that year, it was printed in the *Proceedings* of the previous year since that volume was of smaller than average size and needed additional material. The last list of the Society's portraits was compiled by Waldo Lincoln in 1923 and has long been out of date. It contained sixty-two works of art, and since then the Society has received thirty-eight additional portraits and thirty-three miniatures. The Weis list contains one hundred and fifty-one portraits, busts, and miniatures, each carefully described as to subject, painter, and record of acquisition. Excellent indexes of artists, subjects, and donors are appended and eight of the more interesting portraits are reproduced as illustrations. Two hundred reprints of the monograph have been made for circulation among museums and collectors. The Society is much indebted to Mr. Weis for his generous aid in exploiting our possessions.

Two small portraits which we own were purposely omitted from the Checklist, and for the sake of the record the reason for their omission is noted in this Report. In 1932 a small crayon portrait of George Washington, allegedly by Thomas Sully, was purchased by a member and presented to the Society. It was a charming drawing, showing Washington in buff and blue uniform. It was drawn on early paper, was reinforced on the back of the frame by some fragments of an original newspaper of 1800, and on the reverse bore the following inscription: "My dear Sir, I have much pleasure in presenting you with this drawing. Sincerely your friend, Tho. Sully. Oct. 23, 1800." It bore every evidence of being authentic and as such was reproduced in the Librarian's Report in the *Proceedings* of October, 1932. Nearly two years later John Hill Morgan, the expert on early American painting, questioned it, and as a result an extensive inquiry into the picture and its antecedents was started. It was finally found that the Sully autograph was a forgery and that the former ownership of the picture was fictitious. It was also determined that the artist was a certain "Doc" Shepard, whose real name was George J. Shepard, but who also rejoiced in several aliases. He had "landed" several pictures on American museums and probably some of them are there today. In 1935 the law caught up with him when he attempted to defraud the son of Grover Cleveland, and he spent a year and a half in jail in Washington. The late John Hill Morgan uncovered a mass of material regarding his activities, which records are now in the Yale Gallery of Fine Arts. Therefore this attractive picture of Washington was not included in our Checklist.

The second picture omitted was a so-called portrait of Martha Washington. This is a small oval picture of an elderly woman, painted in pastel, which came to us in 1943 from the estate of the late A. Lawrence Lowell. On the back

of the picture was pencilled, although in a modern hand: "Martha Washington, 1787." On the lower right-hand side of the picture is apparently the date 1787 and, above, the lettering "Du," but the remainder of the word after those two letters is illegible. Who drew this pastel? Also, is it surely a picture of Martha Washington? No member of the Lowell family can give any information regarding it except that it was for many years in the possession of Mrs. Lowell. An article on this portrait was printed in *Antiques* for November, 1943, page 237, with a reproduction of the portrait. Also an enlarged photograph was made of the signature, plainly showing the letters "Du" with the date 1787, but the remainder of the signature unintelligible. The above article brought only two replies, one from R. W. G. Vail, suggesting that the painter was DuSimitière, although it does not seem as if there is space for so long a signature. The other suggestion was from William Sawitzky, that the signature might be Duvivier who was advertising his Academy of Painting at Philadelphia in 1797. Duvivier drew pastel portraits of Ebenezer Hazard in 1789 and of Mrs. Hazard in 1796, reproduced in Bowen's *Centennial of Washington*, pp. 51 and 156. The unintelligible signature might well be Duvivier. The problem of the signature is not solved, however, nor is it even sure that the portrait is that of Martha Washington. Because the identity of the portrait is in decided doubt, the picture was omitted from our Checklist.

A highly interesting American portrait has recently come to us as a gift from Mrs. Charles T. Tatman. This is the well-known daguerreotype of Edgar Allan Poe which for many years was owned by her husband, a Worcester collector and a member of this Society. Mr. Tatman acquired the daguerreotype in 1904 from Mrs. James M. Lewin then living in Milton. Although the story of its acquisition was

told in the obituary sketch of Mr. Tatman a year ago, it is here repeated in the Council Report because of the importance of the gift. The daguerreotype was presumably made by S. W. Hartshorn in Providence in November, 1848, at the time of Poe's visit to Sarah Helen Whitman. Mrs. Lewin, according to the story which she told to Mr. Tatman, had been an intimate friend of Mrs. Whitman, and this daguerreotype had been given by Poe to the poetess, and had subsequently been given by her to Mr. and Mrs. Lewin. It was from this daguerreotype that the late Timothy Cole, the noted wood engraver, engraved his portrait of Poe for *Scribner's Monthly* in May, 1880, according to his statement made personally to Mr. Tatman in 1924. Mrs. Lewin also owned an envelope, with a New York postmark, directed in Poe's handwriting to "Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman, Providence, R. I.," on the lower left corner of which was written in Mrs. Whitman's hand "This contained the Ms. of the Lines to Helen." Both the daguerreotype and the envelope are now presented to the Society by Mrs. Tatman in memory of her husband. The Society appreciates her generosity.

Another contribution by Mr. Weis, whose efficient and scholarly aid the Society deeply values, is his "List of Officers and Members of the American Antiquarian Society, 1812-1947." The last list was published in 1912 and since that time 331 new names have been added to our rolls. The new list comprises a total of 1407 names, and in each instance the date of election is given, and in the case of deceased members the exact date of death. The obtaining of these facts is a monument to Mr. Weis's industry and knowledge. I know of no membership list of any Society in the country which is so complete and so accurate, and in our case the task was doubly difficult because of the 135 years of the Society's existence. This list also, although compiled in 1947, was printed in the *Proceedings* for October,

1946, now in proof and soon to be distributed to members. Mr. Weis's next task is to make an Index to the entire series of the Society's *Proceedings*, upon which he has already begun. This Index is so vast an undertaking that only so indefatigable an enthusiast as Mr. Weis could even dare to assume it.

There has been an unusually large number of deaths in our membership during the past six months. Horace A. Moses, of Springfield, Massachusetts, a leader in civic and philanthropic movements in his home city, elected in 1925, died April 22, 1947. Milton Ellis, of Orono, Maine, author of works on American literature, elected in 1947, died a month after his election, May 18. William M. Elkins, of Philadelphia, collector of American and English literature, elected in 1939, died June 5. Evarts B. Greene, of New York, historian, elected in 1928, died June 24. Albert Shaw, of New York, editor and author, elected in 1893 and the second senior member of the Society, died June 25. Carroll A. Wilson, of New York, bibliophile and collector, elected in 1942, died June 27. Lawrence S. Mayo, of West Newton, Massachusetts, educator and author, elected in 1928, died July 23. Andrew C. McLaughlin, of Chicago, professor of American history at the University of Chicago for over half a century, elected in 1908, died September 24.

Following our custom of recent years an appeal for funds was sent out in the late spring. Fifty-seven members responded before the fiscal year ended in September, although several others sent in later contributions which can be credited to the following year. A total of \$9352 was contributed, of which \$1650 was for the regular expense of salaried assistants and \$7702 was for book purchase and current expenses. The donors are listed in the Treasurer's Report. The Council recognizes the generosity of the members of the Society, realizing that only in this way can we take up the slack caused by the insufficiency of income.

This is one of the methods by which the Society can function financially, and we have been highly successful in this regard during the past few years, ever since we have seen increased expenses over-matched by a diminution of investment income. Of course the more permanent and satisfactory method would be to have a much larger endowment, which would obviate the annual appeal. But unless some concentrated drive is made for increasing our permanent funds, we must keep on as we have in recent years. A member of the Council recently suggested that a stronger effort should be made to acquaint members of the Society, and also friends outside of the membership, with our financial needs and the importance of large gifts and bequests, if only to aid American scholarship. I have been urging this in Reports for the last forty years, and with some results, for we have had sizable gifts in recent years. Perhaps I haven't emphasized sufficiently the permanency of large gifts to this particular organization. Our first bequest was the sum of \$23,000 from Isaiah Thomas in 1832. Since that time several large gifts and bequests have been made, especially during the past two decades. Without mentioning names it is a fact that some of these donors will go down to posterity chiefly because of their gifts to this Society upon whose books their names will be enshrined forever. There is a sense of permanency in this Society, which has been in existence for one hundred and thirty-five years. Recently I noticed the will of a woman, made about ninety years ago, and of the eight organizations listed in her will, seven have passed completely out of existence. Although there is nothing secure in these trying days, it would seem evident that no organization could be guaranteed a certainty of continued life more than the American Antiquarian Society.

Respectfully submitted,

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For the Council

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