

Report of the Council

DURING the past winter the use of the library by visiting researchers has returned to normal, evidently the result of the relief in restrictions on travel. Many scholars and aspirants for advanced degrees journeyed to use our various collections. A considerable number of writers who had been in the armed services, some still in uniform, resumed studies interrupted by the war. In a large reference library such as ours, as one would naturally expect, the subjects of inquiry were decidedly varied. West Indies newspapers, stage-coaching in New England, counterfeit detector magazines for a history of banking, covered bridges, references to Mormonism in early newspapers, Charles Dickens' tour in the United States, the history of the calliope, early American cook books, the life of John Adams, and satire of the American Revolution are only a few of the topics which interested the researchers and writers.

Our several large collections relating to the graphic history of the country have been increasingly used as they have become more widely known. The vast collection of 55,000 stereoscopic views, arranged geographically by States and towns, and also by subject, portray the American scene in the 1860's and 1870's as it is shown in no other way. The several collections of American caricatures have been frequently examined, both for political history and for social life, especially for the period from 1812 to the Civil War. Exhibitions at various museums have begun to emphasize such illustrative material and we are often called upon to loan interesting lithographs and drawings. We enjoyed a long visit from Marshall B. Davidson, on a leave of absence

from the Metropolitan Museum to prepare a pictorial history of American life, who spent several days in an examination of our different collections, to find about fifty illustrations of interest to him. Mr. Davidson will use nearly a thousand pictures in his two volumes, and is the only student of the subject who has taken the time himself to visit the libraries and museums of the country to locate material.

Much work has been done in recent weeks to aid Mr. James C. Wheat and the William L. Clements Library in its endeavor to obtain reproductions of all maps engraved in this country before 1800. Although wood-cut maps were published in the seventeenth century, it was at Boston in 1717 that Francis Dewing engraved the Southack Chart, the first map engraved on metal in this country. From then to 1800 about a hundred maps were separately printed or issued in Atlases, and they are mostly very rare. The Society has a large proportion of these maps and furnished the Clements Library with fifteen examples, several of them unique.

Another venture which has been carried on during the past year has been a complete checklist of the portraits in the Library, including miniatures. This long needed compilation has been made by Frederick L. Weis and should be ready soon for publication. Although the Society has no highly important collection of eighteenth century portraiture, compared with the larger American museums, it has several portraits of outstanding interest, all of which have come to the Society by gift. The earliest gift came in 1815 from Mrs. Hannah Crocker, Cotton Mather's granddaughter, who presented the five Mather family portraits. In later years came the Governor Winthrop portrait and miniature, the portraits of several New England divines from the will of William Bentley, the seventeenth century portraits of Captain Thomas Smith and his daughter, and in

1923 the five Byles family portraits from Mrs. Frederick L. Gay. We have little wall space for pictures, and our present policy is to accept only portraits of national importance or of officers of the Society.

There have been some notable accessions of rare Americana in the last few months, including titles which we have sought for years. But description of such items should await the Librarian's annual report in October.

The Director's Bibliography of American Newspapers has been unavoidably delayed for various reasons. The initial difficulty in obtaining proper rag paper was finally surmounted. Then followed delays in printing, chiefly the inability of the printers to obtain the necessary linotype compositors. At the present time galley proof has been read through South Carolina, and page proof through Pennsylvania. The comprehensive index of titles and of printers, with over 20,000 references, is already prepared. There is every hope that the work will be finally issued during the coming summer.

Five deaths of members have occurred since the annual meeting last October. Charles T. Tatman, long-time Worcester lawyer and well known as a numismatist and collector of the works of Edgar Allan Poe, elected to the Society in 1932, died December 23, 1945. Thomas Barbour, one of America's leading natural scientists and explorers and beloved member of the Harvard faculty, elected in 1935, died January 8, 1946. Shepherd Knapp, Congregational pastor in Worcester for thirty years, poet and historian, elected in 1909, died January 11, 1946. Samuel B. Woodward, Worcester physician for half a century and the oldest member of the Society, elected in 1908, died January 29, 1946, at the age of 92. Albert Matthews, noted as a bibliographer and historian, and one of the senior members of the Society, elected in 1901, died April 13, 1946. Obituary

sketches of these members will appear in the printed *Proceedings* of this meeting.

The need of funds, chiefly for the purpose of buying books to fill in the several collections in which the Library is already strong or preponderant, is more felt than ever. Even with the gaps in our collections increasingly few, there always seem to be books offered to us which we unquestionably need to obtain. Administrative expenses have been kept to a minimum and the staff has not been increased. But the decrease in income from endowment, due to the lessening of dividends, has made it necessary to trim our already small income devoted to book purchase. Therefore, as usual, we will send out an appeal to members and friends to help us remedy the situation. In an honorary society such as ours, without dues or fees, we cannot properly call on members for financial help. Accordingly all gifts to the Society must be purely voluntary, and no member is requested, or even expected, to contribute. But at least there is no impropriety in informing our friends of our wants and if they wish to contribute, such gifts will be all the more acceptable.

CLARENCE S. BRIGHAM,
For the Council

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.