

## *Report of the Librarian*

EVERY librarian spends a portion of his time explaining what seems to others to be the peculiarities of his institution and its policies. Our library particularly is subject to misconceptions. The word "Antiquarian" in our corporate name brings us floods of inquiries about things other than books, and even brings us visits from small boys who wish to see our fish. Indeed since the meat shortage we have had telephone calls from adults who hopefully ask whether we have fish to sell. It is hard to convince these people that we are not keeping something from them, and it is sometimes hard to convince our bookish friends that our library policies are determined by necessity tempered by love and our best judgment. For example, authors who give copies of their books to Mr. Brigham or to me for our private libraries are sometimes irritated that we pass along these copies to the library of the Society instead of buying copies from the book funds. The fact is, of course, that no library ever had sufficient book funds, and that for a century and a quarter those men who have been close enough to the work of this institution to realize its significance could no more keep in their private libraries a book which the Society needed than they could keep a secret from their wives.

On the other hand, we sometimes alienate friends by declining proffered material which would take shelf space and cataloguing time needed for volumes more important for our work.<sup>1</sup> Actually, of course, we could no more keep all American newspapers than an art museum could collect every work of art; we must exercise careful choice to obtain

<sup>1</sup> During the year 1945-46 we have accessioned 2,262 bound volumes and 1,910 pamphlets, bringing our total library count to 267,873 volumes and 411,230 pamphlets.

representative and important files. We were pleased this year to pick up the New York *Weekly Journal of Commerce* for 1863 to 1882 which filled a gap in our file and is the only recorded run for these years. Thirty years ago we ceased taking the *Boston Herald* because the Worcester Public Library was keeping it, but when this year they decided to get rid of all but the last few years we took the opportunity to complete our file from theirs so that there will be a complete run available in this part of the State. Incidentally, since the wooden bookstack in our former coalbin is now full we were obliged to pile the *Herald* on the floor of the cold air room. A very important accession of modern papers came as a result of an exchange with the New York Historical Society by which we obtained a remarkable collection of Richmond papers running from 1824 to 1870. In this lot the semi-weekly *Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser* is nearly complete from 1840 through 1870, and the *Daily Richmond Whig* from 1854 through 1870.

On the other hand, early American newspapers constitute a field in which we must strive for completeness not merely because of collectors' pride but for reasons of sound bibliographical utility. We acquired by purchase a file of the Lancaster, Pennsylvania, *Hive* for 1797-98, and by trading binding service for duplicates we earned a fair file of the *Norfolk Gazette* for 1804-20 and an almost perfect run of the daily *Norfolk American Beacon* for 1815-20. We also acquired from a northern regional library which had no use for it an unique file of the *Petersburg Daily Courier* from vol. 1, no. 14 (Oct. 3, 1814) to vol. 1, no. 147 (Mar. 10, 1815). This particular volume was rescued from a deserted house on the battle line at Petersburg in 1864 by a Yankee officer who deposited it, with a meticulous record of the transaction, in a library where it would be safe. This is an example of the "emancipation" of Southern goods which could hardly be called theft.

When Roland Clarke returned to the Library from foreign service, we were obliged to shift him from our newspaper collection to the bindery department, which has left us so short-handed in the stacks that when visiting librarians, who are the only people who can be trusted to put books back in the right place, ask to use our newspapers we have to tell them to go into the stacks and serve themselves. If there develops next summer a heavy run on our newspaper collection we shall find ourselves in difficulties.

Our collection of literary periodicals was strengthened by the purchase of volumes 3 through 12 of *The Weekly Novellette*, a magazine which, before and during the Civil War, printed much popular fiction in its first form. With our previous holdings we have now the only reported file of the first twelve volumes.

In my last report I presented a list of our early pictorial comic books and asked for supplementary information regarding them. The most detailed answer was published in *American Notes and Queries*, volume 5, pp. 148-51. This article proves what we had suspected, that several of these books were direct thefts from European originals. We have now to add three others. One was "Written and Engraved by S. P. Avery," the well-known American humorist. It is *My Friend Wriggles, a (Laughter) Moving Panorama, of his Fortunes and Misfortunes, Illustrated with over 200 Engravings*. Various allusions in the text suggest that this book was published about 1850. Another, *The Laughable Adventures of Messrs. Brown, Jones, and Robinson*, is by Richard Doyle, the comic artist of *Punch*, and the third, *The Sad Tale of the Courtship of the Chevalier*, is also of British origin.

The most spectacular increase in our American literature collection came at the completion of the Bemis trust. The late Frank B. Bemis, who died in 1935, owned one of the notable libraries of the country. Ten years before his death he turned over his library to trustees, with instructions that

it should be sold for the benefit of the Children's Hospital in Boston. The first trustees were Harold Murdock and John Woodbury. Mr. Murdock, who died in 1934, was succeeded by Francis R. Hart, who upon his death in 1938, was succeeded by Clarence S. Brigham. Mr. Brigham served as trustee with Mr. Woodbury until the latter's death in 1940, and then continued as sole trustee. Mr. Bemis stipulated that his library should be sold under the supervision and direction of Dr. Rosenbach, who sold most of the rare titles in English literature in 1937 and the next few years. The last sale was made by Mr. Brigham in 1945 and the final installment of the Bemis bequest turned over to the Children's Hospital.

Although the more noted portion of the Bemis library consisted of outstanding rare editions of early English authors, his collection of American literature was remarkable, particularly for the works of Bryant, Emerson, Field, Harte, Hawthorne, Holmes, Longfellow, Lowell, Poe, Thoreau, and Whittier. Mr. Brigham, who was seeking strenuously to build up the Society's collection of American literature, often visited Mr. Bemis and told him of the desire of the Society to obtain the comparatively few first editions in the Bemis collection which it lacked. Mr. Bemis accordingly promised to leave to the Society a bequest which would enable it to purchase the titles which it lacked, with the exception of three books by Poe. As a result, the Society has now received 195 volumes, much needed to fill in the gaps in its collection. Some of the notable titles are the first edition of Bret Harte's *Pliocene Skull*, Hawthorne's *Fanshawe* and *The Celestial Rail-road*, Lowell's *Commemoration Ode*, and presentation copies of Joaquin Miller's *Pacific Poems*, and James Whitcomb Riley's *Old Swimmin' Hole*. Thus eleven years after Mr. Bemis death the Society is gratefully reminded of his long-continued interest in the Library.

Few people can have the satisfaction of expressing their approval of an institution's work after the manner of Mr. Bemis, or can by such magnificent donations extend a helping hand to the future generations of scholars who will work in our institutional libraries, but neither do many book people realize how useful an accumulation of small gifts can be. This year I have devoted much of my time to exchanging with other libraries a great accumulation of duplicates and works outside of our field, the more valuable of them having been given to us with the express stipulation that we might exchange or sell them. By this means we have acquired books and newspapers worth several thousand dollars, much of it material which the libraries involved would not have felt free to sell, and much of it material which we could never have acquired in the book market. Among the items which we thus obtained was long the only known copy of what was until recently supposed to be the first work printed in America, the *Doctrina Christiana* of Pedro de Cordova, which was printed in Mexico City in 1544. We also obtained a copy of *A Letter from New England Concerning their Customs, Manners, and Religion*, London, 1682, that outrageous libel of New England by the famous and jovial J. W. who would be delighted to know that his stories are still being seriously quoted in some quarters. By the same exchange we acquired a copy of the correctly paged issue (we had neither) of *The Present State of New England with Respect to the Indian War*, London, 1675. This is the volume which contains the account of the Harvard College Indian, Sosoman, who was sent on a mission to King Philip's tribe where, "they not liking his Discourse, immediately Murthered him after a most Barbarous manner." Possibly this is the earliest reference to irritation caused by a Harvard accent.

By purchase we acquired a copy of the ten page edition of Henry Neville's *Isle of Pines*, London, 1668, which has the

distinction of being the first book banned in Boston for indecency. Not even a bookseller with a shelf full of copies could claim that this is literature. Much more edifying are four Mather items which we obtained this year. One of them is a copy of Increase Mather's *The Order of the Gospel*, Boston, 1700, with the imprint reading, "Printed . . . for Nicholas Buttolph at his Shop at the Corner of Gutteridges Office-House." Considering that "house of office" was seventeenth-century New England slang for privy, we may here have evidence of a printer's devil who had a grudge against Gutteridge's coffee house, a well-known Boston institution. The other new Mathers were Richard's *Answer to the Question*, Boston, 1712, and Cotton's *Life Swiftly Passing*, Boston, 1716, and *Some Seasonable Advice to the Poor*, Boston, 1726. Mr. Frederic Melcher gave us a copy of that very rare little tract, *Two Letters from the Reverend Mr. Williams & Mr. Wheelock . . . to the Rev. Mr. Davenport*, Boston, 1744.

For some years we have said that of Pelham's sixteen American engravings we owned all but the William Hooper, the Shirley, and the Louisbourg. However, Mr. Brigham made the embarrassing discovery that our copy of the Cotton Mather was a restrike made about 1860 by Joseph Sabin from the original copper. It is on an early paper with a large watermark of a fleur-de-lis surmounted by a crown and having ten vertical chain lines, with the first and tenth lines 24.2 cm. apart. We were rescued from our predicament by the fortunate opportunity to purchase an original copy which is, like that at the Massachusetts Historical Society, on a very heavy, crude, paper with no watermark other than twelve faint horizontal chain lines which measure 26.7 cm. between the first and the tenth. The lettering corresponds with the first state of the plate as described by Charles E. Russell in his supplement to John Chaloner Smith's catalogue. Apparently the second state of the original as described by Russell was on a different paper.

Valuable to us, but not important enough to be listed in detail here, are a number of hitherto unreported variants of minor works. Among the more interesting variants is a London, 1657, issue of Peter Bulkley's *The Gospel Covenant* which was created when the printer, Matthew Simmons, removed the title page of some copies of his 1651 edition and substituted another title page bearing the name of the bookseller Andrew Kembe and the date 1657.

Our largest single accession of early imprints came as a result of an exchange with Harvard which brought 148 pre-1821 schoolbooks. Our accessions in the field of juveniles were less numerous than usual, but we purchased one good item, a New England Primer printed by John Perkins at Boston in 1773. It has its original covers and a frontispiece portrait of George III. The first two pages of "The Shorter Catechism" are worn, but fortunately the original owner's interest did not carry him beyond that point. We acquired by purchase the collection of *Sacred Hymns for the Use of the Catholic Church in Kentucky*, Bardstown, 1815. Another early western item is a copy of David Zeisberger, *Essay of a Delaware-Indian and English Spelling-Book for the Use of the Schools of the Christian Indians on Muskingum River*, Philadelphia, 1776. This is a beautiful copy in its original marble-covered boards. Our later western material was much strengthened by Mr. Frost's gift of rare Hall J. Kelley pamphlets covering both his Oregon period and his later days. Many of the items are Kelley's own copies which were obtained from his descendants. This patron saint of the Oregon movement was so generally regarded as a fanatic when a youth, and was such a queer recluse in his later years, that his writings must have been published in very small editions, and so must really be as rare as they seem.

Several years ago Mr. Albert C. Bates of Hartford, a member of this Society since 1910, deposited on loan in our library his personal collection of early Connecticut Laws.

Two years ago and again last year he made an outright gift of parts of the collection. Now he has made a final gift to the Society of the remainder of the books. Therefore it is a proper time to record the gift and to emphasize its importance to this Library. A summary of the collection follows:

- Acts and Laws, 1715, with Session Laws, 1716-1748
- Acts and Laws, 1750 (second edition), with Acts and Laws, 1752-1768, and Session Laws, 1768-1769
- Acts and Laws, 1754, with Session Laws, 1768-1782
- Acts and Laws, 1784, with Session Laws to 1795
- Acts and Laws, 1786, with Session Laws of 1786-1787
- Acts and Laws, 1796
- Acts and Laws, 1805 (edition of 1796 with new title-page and added Session Laws)
- Public Statute Laws of 1808 and 1821
- Public Statute Laws, Book II, 1818 (made up of Session Acts of Oct. 1808-Oct. 1818, with a new titlepage)
- Session Laws, 1822-1836
- Public Statute Laws of 1824, 1835, and 1839
- Revised Statutes, 1849
- Resolves and Private Laws, 1857

This remarkable collection constitutes a notable addition to our early files of New England laws. It is especially important to us because we already have the other New England States so well covered. Naturally our Massachusetts and Maine files have always been notable. In recent years we have acquired the Raymond collection of Rhode Island laws, the James B. Wilbur collection of New Hampshire laws, and the Matt B. Jones collection of Vermont laws. Popular historians would perpetrate much less nonsense if they would go back to such sources as these instead of repeating old wives' lore. We frequently have reason to consult the colonial laws, so Mr. Bates could hardly have found a better way to strengthen our collections both historically and bibliographically.



Some years ago the Library acquired the Bishop Peach collection of hymnology, then much the largest collection of hymn books in private hands. The Bishop had used the collection to make a profound study of American church music, planning to determine the most popular hymns and tunes, and to bring out hymnals of different sizes containing those most frequently used. His widow, Mrs. Harriet B. Peach, this year turned over to us the notes which he had prepared, thinking that they might be preserved here for the use of some future scholar. They consist of hymns pasted individually on large sheets on which are annotations regarding the frequency of the appearance in hymnals, variations in wording, and similar data.

We have received through the bequest of Judge John M. Woolsey, our former member, an unusually fine and interesting grandfather clock made by Simon Willard, America's most noted clockmaker, when he was but seventeen years old. According to family tradition, as stated by his great grandson, John Ware Willard, Simon made his first clock at the age of thirteen. Our case is of cherry and the face of brass engraved with elaborate scrolls in the corners and with "Simon Willard, Grafton" in a flowing script. On the dial is cut "No. 187." The most interesting feature is the pendulum of lead faced with brass which hangs on the original wooden rod. These wooden rods, which were invariably used by Willard, are seldom found today, because they were easily broken and usually replaced by a metal rod. On the back of the pendulum in concentric rings appear the names of S. Willard and John Morris, with the words "clock pendulum" and the date 1770. This information would seem to identify the mysterious "Englishman named Morris" who, according to the Willard family, was supposed to have taught Simon, and perhaps his older brother Benjamin, the art of clock-making, but who could never be traced in local records. Morris was apparently a journeyman clockmaker,

and Willard, showing every evidence of remarkable workmanship, soon became superior to his master.

In 1857 William Piper built Worcester's first theatre in which, under his management and that of his successors, the town enjoyed a fairly regular dramatic fare. His grandson, Mr. William S. Piper, has given us the cash book and the day book of this enterprise for the years 1857-1861. Some of the actors and actresses of the period signed receipts in one of these volumes.

From Mr. Francis Minot of New York the Library has received a collection of sixty-one letters written to Isaiah Thomas between 1785 and 1829 from such individuals as Timothy Alden, Caleb Alexander, Mathew Carey, Silas Deane, Hugh Gaine, William Goddard, and Levi Lincoln. There are also twenty letters written by various members of the Thomas family. Mr. Minot is a direct descendant of Isaiah Thomas, in the sixth generation, and he inherited the papers after the recent death of his mother, Mrs. George R. Minot. His great-grandfather was Benjamin F. Thomas, who married Mary, daughter of Dr. John Park of Worcester. Accompanying the Thomas papers were several manuscripts relating to the Park family, including Mrs. John Park's journal of her life at Salisbury, Massachusetts, in 1800-01, and silhouettes of Dr. Park's father, Andrew, and his mother Mary Cochran. The Thomas manuscripts were particularly welcome because they came just as I was completing a biography of Isaiah Thomas which will appear in the Great American Printers series which is to be published by Horace Hart. From another direct descendant of Isaiah Thomas, Mrs. William Sloane of New York, we received the gift of the miniature of Thomas by W. M. S. Doyle, and pastel portraits of Thomas and his wife. Mr. Brigham will print in the *Proceedings* an article on the very confusing subject of the Thomas family portraits.

Isaiah Thomas founded this Society as a cooperative association to further bibliographical research. With rare constancy his successors and our predecessors have held to this course. The Society has been involved in some way in every major undertaking in the field of American bibliography. Mr. Vail while librarian here finished Sabin. Mr. Brigham labored to assist Charles Evans who in 1912 dedicated his seventh volume to us as the "institution whose collections are more nearly representative of the objects and purposes of this work than any other," and formally expressed his gratitude to the Society "in recognition of the service rendered the literary interests of the country by an association of scholars in the collection and preservation of the monuments of American literature." At the time of Mr. Evans' death his great work had been carried through the letter M in the bibliography of the year 1799. He left us his notes and we agreed to carry his work through the year 1800, which was the goal of his later years. His notes are quite full; it would have been a bibliographical crime not to complete the work. Taking advantage of the fact that Mr. Brigham is still carrying a large part of the work of the librarian, I have undertaken the pleasant task of bringing out a final volume of the Evans series. With the aid provided by our imprint catalogue, the task will be a much easier one than that which Mr. Evans faced.

So, in rendering an account of our stewardship for the past year, we, the staff of the library, can say that we are with some success carrying on the avowed purposes of the Society and meeting the standards of service set by our predecessors.

Respectfully submitted,

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON,  
*Librarian*

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