

# *The Report of the Council*

*October 20, 1982*

ON SATURDAY, August 2, 1834, the entire staff of this Society—namely, librarian Christopher Columbus Baldwin—went into the fourth-story garret of an oil store in India Street, Boston, to pack up the books, pamphlets, and newspapers that the remarkable Thomas Walcott had given to AAS. Our librarian was so overwhelmed by what he found that he could hardly persuade himself to believe ‘that it was not all a dream.’ On Monday morning Baldwin arose at four but found the oil store closed, so could not return to his furious work until seven. He finished packing up the collection in ninety-degree heat on Thursday, the seventh, and helped load 4,476 pounds of books into a wagon which, much to the relief of Baldwin, arrived safely at Antiquarian Hall on Saturday.

I recite this tale to call to mind a less complicated time. It was an age when our Council, although burdened by a staff that, then as now, collected great quantities of materials, did not have a staff that makes life confusing by tinkering with computers in which to keep accounts or to record research materials. But, as always, the Council is faced with finding the wherewithal to match new ambitions with the price of the ticket. In 1981–82 all expenses amounted to \$1,237,000 and receipts to cover them were \$1,195,000, resulting in a deficit of \$42,000. This unexpected result is due to increased costs of financial management, of cataloguing and other operational expenses, and our (not unusually) high acquisitions activity.

But 1982, our 170th year, was unquestionably a year of accomplishment. For example, after twenty-seven years of effort,

we have brought to a close, for all intents and purposes, the AAS-Readex Microprint microform reprinting of every available item, excepting serials, that issued from American presses from 1640 through 1819—some 100,000 units. This enormous work, which was edited by the late C. K. Shipton, James E. Mooney, and John B. Hench, is located in libraries around the world and has proven to be a vitally important research tool for all scholars interested in our nation's past. We congratulate the people who had the courage and determination to undertake the task—the editors, and their assistants on our staff, Mary E. Brown and Margaret A. Donoghue; the late Albert Boni and his son, William F. Boni, of the Readex Microprint Corporation, and their assistants, the late Nathan Cohen and Stanley Shapiro.

Our efforts to make our catalogue of research materials more useful have met with considerable success. Although we need more personnel to deal with current acquisitions and uncatalogued collections, the methods that we have developed for machine-readable recording of data to be incorporated into an AAS retrieval system have proven to be sound and very effective. We are beginning to plan with our colleagues at Infonics the next step toward the implementation of a retrieval system that eventually will provide our staff and readers with rapid and flexible access to the records of our library holdings. Our connection with the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) has been helpful (but expensive) to us as a means of obtaining ready-made cataloguing from libraries belonging to the Research Libraries Group (RLG) and as a way of sharing knowledge of our holdings with scholars in those institutions.

To the cataloguing projects that are currently funded by grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities—the North American Imprints Program, American Broad-sides 1640–1830, and the Catalogue of American Engravings—we have added a fourth, American Newspapers, 1690–1876. One

of six institutions funded by NEH to establish a national data base of American newspapers, AAS was awarded \$201,978, with which we shall add another four project members. During the two-year grant they are to catalogue 14,000 titles into the OCLC interlibrary computer system. The Council commends Carol R. Kanis, Alan Degutis, Judy L. Larson, and Joyce Tracy for their leadership in these significant activities.

We have experienced a considerable turnover in personnel this past year, chiefly among assistants in the Readers' Services Department and in the funded cataloguing projects. Frederick E. Bauer, our associate librarian, has found twelve excellent replacements for the fine people who, for one reason or another, have left our staff. A new position on our table of organization is that of chief conservator. The incumbent is Richard C. Baker, who arrived on July 1 following several years of outstanding preparation at the Smithsonian Institution library and elsewhere. We look forward with pleasure to working with him and to profiting from his knowledge of conservation policy and techniques. Mr. Baker reports that he has found our practices to be in reasonably good order, again owing to Mr. Bauer's leadership and to the work of our long-time and continuing technician, Kenneth R. Desautels. The work of the Conservation Laboratory is being supported, for the time being, by a generous grant from the Pew Memorial Trust.

Readership in the library increased 14 percent above the 1981 level, to 4,073 visits. Scholars came from every state in the Union, except Minnesota, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming, and from eleven foreign countries. About a third of our visitors work with local and family histories. The Readers' Services staff, led by Nancy H. Burkett and aided by several faithful volunteers, have built a number of finding aids to large, unindexed publications and to such uncatalogued collections as nineteenth-century institutional reports and secular and sacred music book collections. They have assisted the keeper of manuscripts, Kathleen A. Major, by organizing new

manuscript collections. They take on such tasks in addition to serving our visiting fellows and other readers in an outstanding manner.

As in past years, Georgia B. Bumgardner acts as our designated pinch hitter in any number of situations besides carrying on as the Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Graphic Arts. She sits on committees of the Research Libraries Group, plans our exhibitions, directs the work of the staff of the Catalogue of American Engravings (which is making excellent progress toward a machine-readable record and resulting publication), and advises the librarian on acquisitions for the graphic arts department.

Acquisitions continue as a major element in the yearly activities of the Society. In 1982 we added 4,670 items to the collections. This number includes almost 1,400 gifts, valued at \$79,256, received from 269 donors. We purchased 3,270 pieces, the bulk—nearly 2,000 titles—falling in the 1831–76 period. In addition to the above statistics, we can add the 600 periodicals to which we currently subscribe. These materials are handled by Carolyn A. Allen, our assistant for acquisitions, and by Audrey T. Zook, who deals with incoming serials.

The rise of the pace of business affairs at AAS has paralleled the increase in library and other programs, a situation that has resulted in severe strain on our office staff, who work under Eleanor S. Adams's able supervision. We have enlarged the staff and computerized our accounts but it is clear that our office systems need further alteration. The shift from an old-model learned society to a twentieth-century variety does not come easily. In fact, AAS is experiencing a shock not unlike that which society in general faces when attempting to bridge the gap between headlong technological change and ingrained cultural perceptions. We know what we can do and what we want to do to fulfill the potentials that exist within AAS, but are brought up short at the edge of our available energies and finances. Fortunately, President Jeppson understood that such

a danger existed and urged us to make the plans that will mitigate the effects of those real limits. We believe that we can control the consequences of technological and other changes at AAS and that we have the abilities and patience to bring things right.

The Goddard-Daniels House, across Salisbury Street, the gift of Eleanor Goddard Daniels, presented us with a great challenge and opportunity. We successfully met the challenge of renovating that beautiful house for its planned new uses through the skill and hard work of Donald K. Strader, our superintendent of buildings and grounds. The trustees of the George F. and Sybil H. Fuller Foundation generously gave the Society the funds to pay for the work. The R. L. Whipple Company and other contractors carefully performed their tasks. Mr. Bauer and John B. Hench of our staff also had a good deal to do with the job. For that matter, so did Mary V. C. Callahan, our development officer, and Rosamond B. Rockwell, the interior decorator, and, seemingly, most of the rest of the staff. In short, the effort absorbed a great deal of energy and not a little money. But it has been well worth it for we now have a superb facility that has already demonstrated its usefulness as a comfortable and convenient residence for visiting scholars, as a meeting place for the Society's 'non-library' and educational activities, and as a pleasant place for Society social activities.

John B. Hench, the assistant director for research and publication, has moved with his staff to the Goddard-Daniels House. Mr. Hench's duties are varied, indeed, including publications, fellowships, and (following the departure of William L. Joyce in 1981) the education and public programs. He also coordinates research grants and has been in conversation with his counterparts at three other independent research libraries on the possibilities for joint activities. The American Studies Seminar for Worcester undergraduates is off to a good start under the tutelage of Prof. Donald M. Scott of Brown University, with the topic, 'High Culture, Low Culture: Recreation and

Entertainment in Nineteenth-Century America.' Our seminar on American Social and Political History meets five or six times a year, while lunchtime colloquia bring together staff, fellows, local scholars, and visitors at frequent intervals. Last winter and spring, Mr. Hench supervised an NEH-funded series of five lectures and discussions on 'Literature and Society in the Early Republic, 1820-1860,' with a second series to follow this coming year; this program is undertaken in conjunction with the Worcester Public Library. To help lighten Mr. Hench's load we appointed Jeri L. Stolk as assistant editor of publications in mid-March.

The Society's work is supported by the extraordinary generosity—past and present—of our members and friends, corporations, foundations, and by the general citizenry through federal and state grants. Financial support in fiscal year 1981-82 amounted to the astonishing total of \$1,538,552 in the form of new contributions or pledges from 700 donors. Of that great amount, \$97,500 was given for current expenditures. The Isaiah Thomas Fund, our 175th anniversary fund, was enlarged by \$1,281,573, and a number of other gifts or grants were received for particular projects. Mary V. C. Callahan, our development officer, coordinates the Society's fundraising activities. A consultant, William A. McClelland, assists us with the Isaiah Thomas Fund. Various of our members and friends have undertaken the tasks of directing appeals to selected groups of possible donors. The chairmen of those committees are Donald R. Melville for corporations, Harold T. Miller for publishers and printers, Kenneth Nebenzahl for antiquarian booksellers, and Robert P. Hallock, Jr. for his fellow members—669 strong—of the Worcester Association of Mutual Aid in Detecting Thieves. WAMADT members contributed \$68,347 to the AAS coffers last year. We received a number of gifts of furnishings for the Goddard-Daniels House, including a grand piano.

Such untrammelled generosity is difficult to comprehend and

impossible to acknowledge adequately. However, the Council wishes to make known, on behalf of ourselves and all who value the American Antiquarian Society, our overflowing sense of gratitude to all who, year after year, make this work possible.

Finally, the director is deeply appreciative of the time, thought, effort, and devotion given to our Society by our President, John Jeppson, by other members of the Council and the Society, and by each member of our splendid staff.

Marcus A. McCorison

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