

The Report of the Council

April 17, 1985

IT IS A PRIVILEGE and a delight for the members of the American Antiquarian Society to meet at the University of Virginia, a great institution of higher learning which by his own statement stands as Mr. Jefferson's proudest achievement. Our fellow members there and the officers of the university have done their utmost to make us welcome. We thank our local committee, led by Prof. Robert Rutland, for the not inconsiderable trouble to which they went to make our visit both enjoyable and educational.

Thomas Jefferson was, of course, keenly interested in the history of mankind and its records. Twenty years before AAS was established, he wrote to Ebenezer Hazzard of Philadelphia to encourage Hazzard in the publication of two volumes of documents pertaining to the founding of the nation: 'Time and accident are committing daily havoc on the originals of the valuable historical and State papers deposited in our public offices. The late war has done the work of centuries in this business. The lost cannot be recovered but let us save what remains; not by vaults and locks which fence them from the public eye and use in consigning them to the waste of time, but by the multiplication of copies, as shall place them beyond the reach of accident.'

In our day, we trust that the work of the American Antiquarian Society is such that Mr. Jefferson would approve of our efforts. To the best of our ability AAS has gathered, saved, and cherished historical documents that illuminate our common past. We have multiplied copies of them through our micro-publications and computerized cataloguing projects and have

welcomed readers and writers to our reading room, all on a scale that would be unimaginable to our founder, Isaiah Thomas, or to Mr. Jefferson.

So, when your reporter is asked how does the Society thrive, you can count on it that the returned answer is: AAS is not failing. Far from it—in fact, the Council believes that with luck we should be able to get through another year or two, at least!! Our usual response to the query is that every day we get older and older, and, we hope, better and better.

The recent changes in the composition of the staff, upon which we have previously reported, have settled out satisfactorily, while our effort to place more responsibility in the hands of our divisional chiefs and departmental heads is proving to be effective. The appointment of Keith Arbour early in September 1984 as head of readers' services was an inspired one. Frances G. Bernard joined the staff as our new accountant in November 1984. After an introduction from our auditors to our peculiarities and help from Vivian B. Schotte, Mrs. Bernard's predecessor, she is bringing order to our financial records.

It must be reiterated for the 'umpteenth' time, however, that our staff is just plain overburdened. They struggle to keep abreast of day-to-day responsibilities and have little or no opportunity to plan ahead, or to engage in scholarly activities, or to try out new ideas that literally sprout like weeds from the minds of our imaginative staff, helpful readers, and well-wishing members and friends.

Even so, in the past decade the number of staff members employed by AAS has increased dramatically (it is now 51). Thus it has become clear that we need to establish a sound program for their compensation. In March we asked the Central Massachusetts Employers Association to help us formulate such a plan. Ronald Mullett, a consultant for CMEA, has met to explain the process to all staff members, who have begun to compile individual job descriptions. The process should be completed during the summer. We look forward to operat-

ing within a program that provides an objective means of determining the relative value of one position to another within AAS. In this, as in so many details of our operations, Eleanor Adams, the executive assistant to the director, keeps everything under control.

In March the Society received notification of the award of an outright grant of \$180,000 from the National Endowment for the Humanities to catalogue our preeminent collection of American books for children. The grant will support two cataloguers who will create detailed, machine-readable records to approximately 6,000 non-pedagogical works published between 1821 and 1860. These records, created on our in-house computer, will be distributed nationally through the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN). The grant period extends from May 1985 through April 1988. Nancy H. Burkett, the assistant librarian, will serve as project director and Richard C. Fyffe, formerly cataloguer with the North American Imprints Program, has been selected to be the senior cataloguer.

Acquisitions during the past six months have been up to the par set in recent years, and some will be described in our annual report.

John B. Hench and David D. Hall, the promulgators of our Program in the History of the Book in American Culture, produced a highly successful conference which was held on November 1 and 2 at the Society. Its purpose was to examine research needs and opportunities in this area of scholarly inquiry which is so dear to the heart of AAS. The distinguished participants came from all parts of the United States and from Western Europe. A number of the formal papers and accompanying commentary will be published in our *Proceedings* before being issued as a book. The conference was made possible through generous grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Earhart Foundation. Another activity of the Program in the History of the Book is planned for June

23 through July 2. Stephen Botein of Michigan State University will lead a seminar on 'The Making of Literate America: Diffusion of Culture Based on Printing, 1759-1850.' Open to not more than twenty participants, more than thirty applications have been received, thus ensuring a full and excellent house. The Earhart Foundation, again, has helpfully provided funds to defray a portion of the costs of the seminar and to provide some scholarship monies.

A public lecture series is planned for April and May on 'Popular Music in Nineteenth-Century America.' The lecturer/performers are Robert B. Winans of Wayne State University; William Brooks of Savoy, Illinois; Neely Bruce of Wesleyan University and the University of Michigan; Deane L. Root of the Stephen Foster Memorial at the University of Pittsburgh; and Raoul Camus of the City University of New York.

Research projects proceed apace. The staff of the North American Imprints Program have finished cataloguing more than 23,000 seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American imprints owned by AAS and are now embarked on the task of cataloguing in less detail a like number of items owned by other libraries, all records for which will be poured into two other data bases, the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue and a shared cataloguing file, both being elements of the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN).

Meanwhile, the project to catalogue in the computer system over 6,000 broadsides published before the year 1831 comes to a conclusion at the end of April 1985, and the United States Newspaper Project to catalogue all of our 14,000 newspaper titles proceeds at a steady pace under its second grant from NEH. The Catalogue of American Engravings—17,000 images—is moving toward completion under the direction of Georgia B. Bumgardner.

Fellows at AAS appointed by the Council for the 1985-86 season are:

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellows

Paul E. Johnson, Princeton University, 'From Yeoman to Factory Hand: Studies in Early Industrial Society'; John Seelye, University of Florida, 'The River in the Early American Republic.'

Samuel Foster Haven Fellows

Ralph Ketcham, Syracuse University, 'Executive Power in the United States, 1783-93'; Betty L. Mitchell, Southeastern Massachusetts University, 'Antebellum and Civil War Biography'; David S. Shields, The Citadel, 'Literary Neoclassicism in the 1740s and 1750s in Massachusetts'; Harry McKinley Williams, Ph.D. candidate, Brown University, 'Charles Lenox Remond and the Community of Female Abolitionists.'

Kate B. and Hall James Peterson Fellows

Gillian Avery, Oxford, England, 'The American Pattern of Childhood'; Elizabeth Rauh Bethel, Lander College, 'Afro-American Responses to the First Emancipation'; Jean E. Friedman, University of Georgia, 'Families at War: Northern and Southern Communities in the Civil War'; James R. Raven, Ph.D. candidate, Pembroke College, Cambridge University, 'Commercialization of the Booktrade'; Katherine K. Preston, Ph.D. candidate, City University of New York, 'Travelling Opera Troupes in the U.S., 1830-70'; Michael West, University of Pittsburgh, 'Thoreau and the Search for the Language of Nature, 1690-1865.'

Albert Boni Fellow

Charles E. Clark, University of New Hampshire, 'The Public Prints: An Essay in Anglo-American Journalistic Origins.'

Frances Hiatt Fellows

Ann Braude, Yale University, 'Women in American Spiritualism'; Elaine Kristine Swift, Harvard University, 'The Rise of the U.S. Senate, 1789-1836'; Patricia A. Watson, The

Johns Hopkins University, 'The Preacher Physicians of Colonial New England.'

Turning from the sublime to the ridiculous—from mind to matter, we encounter money. At the end of February our portfolio of invested funds stood at an all-time high of \$10,860,000 with a projected annual yield of nine percent. Budget performance is well within tolerable limits, with only the acquisitions budget showing any kind of excessive strain.

The Society's members and friends, including the members of the Worcester Association of Mutual Aid in Detecting Thieves, are the very personifications of generosity. The Annual Fund for general support has attracted gifts of \$70,000, compared to \$44,150 of a year ago. The Isaiah Thomas Fund has passed the half-way mark; gifts amounting to \$4,591,200 have been credited to that effort. The National Campaign, led by Robert Cushman, has a goal of \$2,000,000, and thus far has accrued \$752,000 of the above total.

The development officer, Mary V. C. Callahan, is already at work on plans for celebrating the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Society in October 1987, as well as dealing with many other institutional details. President Jeppson has established a committee to plan the events to be scheduled in 1987. Members are: John William Ward, chairman; Messrs. Jeppson, Cushman, Achorn, Bauer, Woolsey, McCorison, and Hench; and Mesdames Spear and Callahan.

At each meeting of the Society it is our custom, obligation, and our privilege to acknowledge our profound gratitude prompted by the contributions of enthusiastic encouragement, warm friendship, intellectual vitality, and financial sustenance that our members, staff, and friends provide to the Society. Without the presence of these freely given benefactions, the Society could not exist, much less thrive. We thank each of you—each one of whom is precious in the process of keeping and making our American Antiquarian Society a useful agent of civilization.

Marcus A. McCorison

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