

# *The Report of the Council*

*April 16, 1975*

ONCE each six months for the past several years I have proclaimed the glories of the work of the American Antiquarian Society in preserving part of the historical record of our country and in broadcasting the fruits of scholarship which result from the use of that record. The theme of my remarks has not varied to any great degree as I have tried to describe the actions of the Council in setting policy, the diligence of the staff in pursuing their duties, and the generosity of the members and other friends of the Society in supporting the work of AAS. In spite of changing circumstances, the Council and the Director remain optimistic and enthusiastic about our Society, its goals, and our ability to meet and to expand them.

The *Ad Hoc* committee on the future of the Society, chaired by Vice-President Jeppson, met a month ago and discussed at length problems of the Society relating to membership, to funding, to publications, and to programs which advance historical scholarship, as well as the matter of access to historical learning. Consensus was reached in some of these topics but the committee still has much to do. Written communications from members with views on any of the above heads or others will be welcomed by the committee.

The Council has addressed itself to the continuing problem of securing sufficient annual income to fund the Society's work. There is no comfort in the thought that services can be curtailed to reduce costs, especially at a time when increasing reliance upon AAS collections indicates that the Society is reaching a wider clientele. The Council concluded that service

should not be reduced and that additional annual funds must be raised to meet those costs. Readers are now encouraged to make donations for the support of the library. More importantly, members of the Society are being asked to respond more generously than ever to the President's annual appeal.

We are members of AAS because we believe, more than others, that our Society makes a unique contribution to American life. It would be impossible to duplicate either the collections or the services for scholarship which past members and staff of the Society have built here. Each generation, for more than 162 years, has had a share in the burden and the responsibility of collecting, preserving, and using the record of the American experience. Our share provides us with some individual benefits and honors, but primarily our share is to provide services to the nation and to those who continue to interpret its history. Thus, our share carries with it costs, and it would be irony of the worst kind to discover that at this time of national anniversary the members of the Society are unwilling to make the personal and corporate commitment so that the Society and its collections may endure.

In the area of capital giving, the Society's development fund now stands at \$2,698,900. To complete the \$100,000 fund for support of the fellowship program which is being matched by the Fred Harris Daniels Foundation we need but \$13,475. Mr. Steele's committee, which is working toward an endowment of \$500,000 for the support of the work of the newspaper and serials department, has raised \$277,400 from newspaper publishers. Two bequests have been received: one of \$1,000 from the estate of Earl T. Harper and another of \$10,000 from our late member Russell M. Stobbs.

Work, beyond the norm, which has been completed during the past six months includes the reconditioning of Isaiah Thomas's press. The work was planned and supervised by Frederick Bauer and Ralph Hodgkinson, the latter until recently director of craft demonstrations at Old Sturbridge Vil-

lage. Donald Strader, our maintenance engineer, executed much of the work, but the major part was done by various craftsmen of the region. The Worcester Telegram & Gazette, Inc., supplied the Society with \$2,000 to pay for whatever work was involved.

Again a number of portraits have been restored, a process which has gone on over the past several years. There now remains only a handful of pictures which have not been cleaned and repaired. Of particular interest among the recently restored pictures is the portrait of John Moore II, a free black merchant of Boston. The handsome portrait was painted in 1826 by William P. Codman. It was given to the Society by Miss Martha J. Brown and her sister, Mrs. John J. Goldsberry, Sr., both of Worcester. Matching funds for all restoration work have come from the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities.

Still another gift of substance has been received from the Stoddard Charitable Trust. With it we purchased the first four volumes of *Modern Chivalry: Continuing the Adventures of Captain John Farrago and Teague O Regan* (Philadelphia: John McCulloch, 1792-1797; Pittsburgh: John Scull, 1793), I Wright 354, BAL 1301. The novel, by Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816), is very uncommon. We have had for some years another copy of the first volume which, fortunately, varies from the new example which is a duplicate from the Library Company of Philadelphia. The book is an important landmark in American literature. It is the first extended work of fiction to have been produced in the western country, but even more significant is the quality of Brackenridge's prose in evoking the political and social foibles of the frontier. The overweening ambitions of politicians, particularly those of Aaron Burr, a Princeton college mate of the author, are satirized in a vein of heavy irony.

The trustees of the Newberry Library have informed us that they have authorized their director and librarian, Law-

rence W. Towner, to present to the American Antiquarian Society a collection of eighteenth-century newspapers in honor of the two-hundredth anniversary of Isaiah Thomas's removal from Boston to Worcester. We thank our colleagues in Chicago for this most thoughtful and generous act.

Turning to the activities of the library and staff, we can report a great deal of activity although much of it is routine. Miss Brown reports that recently the number of readers has fallen off somewhat from previous levels, but that a very considerable amount of research has been pursued on the history of nearby localities in preparation for bicentennial activities.

The computer terminal which connects AAS through the New England Library Network to the Ohio College Library Center is now operational. As our cataloguing staff becomes more skillful in its use, our cataloguing capabilities measurably increase. We are confident that this system which permits us to share cataloguing with three hundred libraries will be of very great assistance to AAS. In essence, other libraries do the cataloguing for us of our modern, secondary books. For eighteenth- and nineteenth-century materials we benefit through the card production capabilities of the system, as well as the creation of a machine-readable record of those materials.

The newspaper curatorial staff has processed gifts of large numbers of nineteenth-century newspapers from the Bell & Howell Corporation, Mr. Roger Welles, and from Franklin and Marshall College. In addition, the officers of *Town and Country Magazine* gave the Society the office file of *The Home Journal*, 1848-1899. The run is all but complete and contains considerable literary material.

Mrs. Bumgardner has been busy in the Graphic Arts Department planning exhibits, arranging loans to museums for bicentennial shows, and in processing many photographic orders. She played an important part in assisting Elizabeth Gilmore Holt and Wheaton Galentine with the film *Pictures to Serve the People—American Lithography, 1830-1855*.

The production of this excellent film was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Following screenings at the Worcester Art Museum, the Friends of the Worcester Free Public Library and the local Exchange and Rotary Clubs requested showings of the movie for their respective groups. To encourage use in the community, AAS presented a print to the Public Library. The Addison Gallery at Andover, Massachusetts, borrowed the film to use in an exhibition on American music and art. A number of other institutions have shown interest in it and it may be rented from the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

AAS continues to receive support from the National Endowment for the Humanities for three current projects. The work of cataloguing the manuscript collections is now in its third year; the construction of an index of manuscripts sold at auction or through dealers' catalogues is about to complete the second year; and a project to catalogue nineteenth-century pamphlets has just completed the first year of work.

The curator of manuscripts, Mr. Joyce, reports that the Isaiah Thomas papers have been recatalogued and are now ready for use in an accessible format. Work is going forward in good fashion on the collection of manuscripts relating to the American Revolution. Although we purchase few acquisitions in the area of manuscripts, we did obtain more than one hundred letters dated 1850-1857 of R. Hoe and Company of New York City, the manufacturers of printing presses.

Mrs. Cripe and her staff have made excellent progress in the listing of manuscripts of Americans written during the period 1763-1815 which were sold at auction before 1895. That segment of the index is nearly completed. As a by-product of their work, a lengthy list of additions to McKay's *American Book Auction Catalogues* has been compiled. We plan to publish the addenda in an early issue of our *Proceedings*.

Mrs. Siles's work on nineteenth-century pamphlets is go-

ing ahead well. She has catalogued more than eight hundred pamphlets published in the years 1821-1830, A-E only. For this decade she estimates that she is about one-fourth through the collection.

The editor of publications has had his hands full with a number of projects. Mr. Hench continues to turn out copy for the Readex Microprint series of American imprints and to edit the *Proceedings*. We regret to report that the Committee on Publications, faced with the decision of the Davis Press to change printing methods, with attendant changes in format, concluded to transfer our contract for the printing of the *Proceedings* to The Stinehour Press. The decision to leave the Davis Press was a difficult one to make, for our relationship with the firm goes back to 1906. The late Rae Spencer, Warren Davis, Francis P. Dill, and their predecessors have been most attentive to our needs. Although the Press will continue to print the *News-Letter* and other things for us, we bid these friends farewell with regret and with gratitude.

The editor has spent considerable time with Francis G. Walett in preparing materials for two bicentennial projects. The first is a collection of facsimiles which will soon be published by the firm of Allyn & Bacon for the use of schools. The boxed set of about 150 items includes facsimiles of colonial and revolutionary period broadsides, pamphlets, newspapers, etc., with a teacher's guide. Secondly, a series of sixty-four articles with illustrations, prepared by Professor Walett, is now being distributed to more than 160 newspapers around the nation by the American Newspaper Publishers Association. This joint bicentennial project was conceived and planned by AAS staff and Professor Walett and was funded by a grant provided by the ANPA Foundation. We are pleased to report that it has received a citation of merit from the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration.

Plans are now complete and essayists have been engaged

for the Society's book *The Press and the American Revolution* which is being edited by Bernard Bailyn and James Russell Wiggins. Also, Mr. Hench has in train editorial work on Irving Lowens's *Bibliography of Songsters Printed in America before 1821* and Elizabeth C. Reilly's *Dictionary of Colonial American Printers' Ornaments and Illustrations*, both of which should be published in the autumn.

Howard P. Chudacoff is nearing the end of his term as visiting fellow, under a Rockefeller Foundation grant. He delivered a public lecture on March 20, before more than 160 persons. The subject of his lecture was that of his research project, 'A New Branch on the Tree: Marriage and Family Formation in Worcester, 1860-1880.'

The following persons have accepted appointment as visiting scholars for the year 1975-1976: Robert D. Arner, associate professor of English, University of Cincinnati, 'Comic Literature in Colonial America'; Joseph G. Gambone, archivist, Kansas State Historical Society, 'Biography of Clarina Nichols'; Michael G. Hall, professor of history, University of Texas, 'Increase Mather's Diaries, 1664-1721'; Henri V. H. André Mayer, Ph.D. candidate, University of California, Berkeley, 'American Views of Science, 1775-1810'; James Logan McElroy, assistant professor of history, SUNY / Plattsburg, 'Drink and the Workingman'; and Robert G. Pope, associate professor of history, SUNY / Buffalo, 'Society, Security, and Persecution.'

The selection of these few recipients was particularly difficult because there were sixty-five well-qualified applicants from which to choose. Of course, one of the chief criteria lay in the suitability of the applicant's project to AAS holdings. The committee, made up of W. Howard Adams, David Donald, and Gordon N. Ray, merits our gratitude.

The building is in good condition, thanks to the ministrations of our maintenance staff. Mr. Strader informs us that he has reduced oil consumption another four percent below that

of 1973 (which was, itself, thirty-two percent below 1972 usage) and electrical consumption was reduced eighteen percent below 1973, which in turn was twenty-five percent lower than the level of usage in 1972.

So, the work goes on. We trust that our performance merits your approval. To all members of the staff and to all members and friends of our Society who generously support the Society's work, the Council extends its profound gratitude.

Marcus A. McCorison

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