

Report of the Council

APRIL 19, 1991

FIRST OF ALL, we must pay tribute to the Patriot Band who met the British regulars on Lexington Green at the North Bridge in Concord early on this morning, 216 years ago. Although Isaiah Thomas did not, as popularly supposed, take part in either momentous event on that day (having gone to Watertown with Dr. Joseph Warren on other revolutionary business), our founder *was* a patriotic newspaper editor, publisher, and collector, as well as the first American historian of his profession. So, we may take pleasure in recording here that the American Society of Newspaper Editors, meeting in solemn conclave at their annual meeting a week ago in Boston, conferred upon the American Antiquarian Society its Isaiah Thomas Newspaper History Preservation Prize. The award recognized the Society's commitment, of 180 years standing, to collect and preserve American newspapers, all the while making them available for scholarly research. The ASNE commended staff members of the Society for their expertise and dedication in ensuring that American newspapers will be available to those who seek to learn at first hand about our national past.

The Council spent considerable time during its February meeting considering changing strategies for research in the humanities, as well as the developing technical environment in which AAS is now positioned (and in future shall be increasingly) and how those trends will influence the nature of the Society's programs. The Council took note, also, of the changing conditions in our local community that have and will continue to affect our ability to recruit leadership and financial support. These matters are of no small moment as the Society prepares itself for the arrival of a new chief executive a year and a half hence. The next several meetings of the Council will be given over to a continuing discussion of these and other factors that will influence our future.

Following a successful fiscal year that ended last August with a modest surplus, the first half of the current year has been fraught with anxiety over the current state of finances in general and of those of the Society in particular. In anticipation that gifts to the annual fund will not reach the level of a year ago, nor that budgeted for f.y. 1991, staff has reduced expenditures in a number of line items in an effort to obtain a balanced budget. However, our present condition is none too healthy because of uncontrolled costs for acquisitions that have outstripped our sources of restricted income. The treasurer is adamant, and your president (and acquirer) is hopeful, that year-end goals will be met over the four and one-half months left in this year.

Despite financial worries, the Council can report significant achievements among our activities and programs. Within the library, the quality of our services to readers continues at a very high level and I am proud of the letters of commendation that our staff members receive from satisfied customers. Members of the cataloguing department continue to prepare means of effective (dare I say unique?) means of access to our research materials, as do those who are engaged in grant-funded projects to catalogue collections on slavery, general nineteenth-century materials, and our great collection of literature for American children; all constituting portions of our program to build machine-readable files of North American imprints (NAIP). In addition, work continues in another portion of the field, the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue. During the past few months our NAIP staff has received from their ESTC colleagues in California two large cartons containing copies of American-printed broadsides and official forms found among the papers of the British Public Record Office. A considerable number of those several thousand items are unrecorded and not a few of them are of considerable interest. The historical and printed record will be significantly enhanced when this material is catalogued and entered into the ESTC file.

Barbara Trippel Simmons, formerly our curator of manuscripts and the mother of a young son named Benjamin, has returned to

the Society on a part time basis to enter into the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) records of our manuscript collections. This project is underwritten by a grant from the Research Libraries Group.

Lest one think that this is all work and no pay, we are proud to announce that AAS has entered the lists as a publisher of machine-readable data! We announced in January that the Society was prepared to issue to research libraries tapes bearing the records of some 36,300 records of the contents of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century portions of the AAS-Readex sets of microforms of American printed works. Offered in January at a pre-publication price of \$5,750 (\$6,950 after June 30, 1991), we have already received seven orders from college and university libraries. So, after all our years of tedious work in preparing the microforms for publication, and still more years of detailed cataloguing to provide access to this corpus of early American printed matter, it is possible that AAS may actually derive some monetary benefit. Don't you believe it when someone tells you that scholarship doesn't pay!

During the past six months the Society has received several exceptionally valuable gifts of research materials. Amongst the printed materials was a copy of the 1712 New York edition of *The Husband-man's Guide*, not only a rare and very early New York imprint, but a book that constitutes useful instruction to householders of the time. It and a collection of twenty-nine volumes of the *Library of Humorous American Works* (in beautiful condition), published in the mid-1850s by Peterson & Bros. in Philadelphia, were the gift of the James J. Colt Foundation. An anonymous donor gave the Society a copy of Karl Marx's *Defense of the Paris Commune* (Washington, 1871) in honor of John B. Hench. Many friends of the late Thelma Strader gave funds with which we purchased two books: the unique copy of *The Sacred Minstrel* (Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 1821) by Bushnell B. Downs, a local musician whose compositions were written in shape notes, and *The Zoological Garden*, a beautiful children's book. Although the book was pub-

lished in Philadelphia by Wieck and Weik in 1859, its stunning lithographic illustrations of animals were printed in Germany, as were many other publications of this firm who catered to the Pennsylvania-German population.

Our collection of the works of James Fenimore Cooper was enriched by the gift from the family of the late James F. Beard of Professor Beard's extensive holdings of nineteenth-century editions and printings of Fenimore Cooper. In addition, large amounts of research materials in the form of electrostatic copies and microfilm of contemporary reviews of Cooper's publications and similar material, were given to AAS by Professor Beard's family for the use of the editors of the Cooper edition and by other scholars. A gift from Pauline M. Nordhouse caused the Society to acquire the autograph edition of the *Works of James Fenimore Cooper*, published in sixty-three copies by George P. Putnam's Sons in thirty-three morocco-bound volumes—each bearing a leaf of manuscript, in our case one from *The Oak Openings*.

The heirs of Harold Peirce gave the Society an extraordinary gathering of rare books, prints, and manuscripts. The latter pertain to the family of Charles Peirce, a printer in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, of the early nineteenth century. Among the printed matter are two catalogues of books offered for sale by Peirce in about 1810 and 1812 and a folio volume of caricatures bound up by Charles Peirce at about the same time. This volume contains unrecorded caricatures by James Akin, an engraver in Portsmouth, such as 'The Philosophic Cock' (Thomas Jefferson as a rooster), and a wild ship scene entitled, 'Infuriated Despondency! A Confidential Intrigue!!! An Edict from Saint Peter, Sailors Glee,' which pertains to the impressment of American sailors during the maritime conflicts that led to the War of 1812. Materials of a scientific nature in this gift came from a collateral member of the Peirce family, Lardner Vanuxem, a natural historian who taught at the College of South Carolina and, later in the mid-nineteenth century, participated in various geologic surveys. Much of the material had been collected during the early years of this century by Harold

Peirce, a successful Philadelphia insurance salesman (in 1919 he sold a \$2,500,000 policy on the life of J. Pierpont Morgan, causing a mild sensation within the insurance world), who was a member of the Grolier Club and other bibliophilic organizations.

Amor Hollingsworth presented to the Society, through the agency of our friends at the Massachusetts Historical Society, a highly useful collection of manuscripts that originated in his family. Although deeds and other legal papers date from 1750 to 1915, the heart of the collection consists of papers and accounts pertaining to the papermaking business of Tileston and Hollingsworth, a firm established in 1801 on the Neponset River in Newton, Massachusetts. The collection consists of letters, accounts, receipts, bills of lading, and printed circulars dating from 1829 to 1854 and account books pertaining to the family business, 1819–1847, which reveal the considerable volume of the company's production. The letters (about 2,500 of them) present a detailed picture of the company's relations with customers, suppliers of rags, agents and wholesalers, and printers and publishers.

If the books, newspapers, and manuscripts have been pouring onto our shelves in astonishing numbers, other departments have been active also. We have published two books within these six months. *Prints of New England* was edited by Georgia B. Barnhill, our curator of graphic arts. The book consists of several essays presented some years ago at a meeting of American print historians held at the Society and at the Worcester Art Museum. The other book is entitled *The Judgment of Experts: Essays and Documents about the Investigation of the Forging of the "Oath of a Freeman."* This book was edited by James Gilreath of the Library of Congress and contains a series of narrations and documents intended to disclose the processes by which curators attempted to determine the nature and authenticity of the *Oath of a Freeman*, which had been offered for sale by the now infamous Mark Hofmann of Salt Lake City.

The fellowship program, now in its nineteenth year, brings talented scholars to the Society's library for periods of one to twelve months. The Committee on Fellowships is made up of

Professors Nancy Cott, Gerald Grob, and John Seelye (chair). They have selected the following people to hold tenures at AAS for the year 1991-92:

AAS-National Endowment for the Humanities Fellows

Stephen Nissenbaum, professor of history, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 'The Battle for Christmas in America, 1800-1870.'

Billy G. Smith, professor of history and philosophy, Montana State University, 'Fugitives from Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic Region.'

Ann Fairfax Withington, assistant professor of history, Michigan State University, 'Elite and Popular Culture in the Confederation and Early National Period.'

Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellows

Claudia L. Bushman, adjunct professor of general studies, Columbia University, 'America Discovers Columbus.'

Michel J. Fabre, professor of American studies, Sorbonne Nouvelles, 'The Creoles of Color: Cultural Production as a Basis of Group Identity.'

Geneviève E. Fabre Moreau, professor of American studies, Université Paris VII, 'Afro-American Feasts and Celebrations in the United States.'

Charles P. Hanson, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of California at Berkeley, 'From the Quebec Act to the French Alliance: Anti-Catholicism in Revolutionary New England.'

Nell Irvin Painter, professor of history, Princeton University, 'A Critical Biography of Sojourner Truth.'

Carol Sheriff, Ph.D. candidate in history, Yale University, 'The Social and Cultural Impact of the Erie Canal, 1790-1860.'

Frances Hiatt Fellows

Catherine A. Brekus, Ph.D. candidate in American studies, Yale University, 'Female Preaching and Evangelical Religion in America, 1740-1840.'

Alice E. Fahs, Ph.D. candidate in history, New York University, 'Publishing the Civil War: Northern Publishers and the Literary Marketplace of War, 1860-65.'

Lucy Rinehart, Ph.D. candidate in English and comparative literature, Columbia University, 'The Drama of Democracy: The Staging of America from the Revolution to the Civil War.'

AAS-Northeast Modern Language Association Fellow

Robert D. Arner, professor of English, University of Cincinnati, 'The Politics of Knowledge in the Early Republic: American Encyclopedias from the Federal Period to the Jacksonian Era.'

AAS-American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Fellow

Cornelia H. Dayton, assistant professor of history, University of California, Irvine, 'Madness, Dependency, and Gender in Early New England.'

Stephen Botein Fellow

Bernell Elizabeth Tripp, Ph.D. candidate in mass communications, University of Alabama, 'The Nineteenth-Century Black Press.'

Boni Fellows

Ronald Labuz, professor of advertising design, Mohawk Valley Community College, 'American Graphic Design, 1830-70.'

Gregory H. Nobles, associate professor of history, technology, and society, Georgia Tech, 'Straight Lines and Stability: The Imposition of Order on the Early American Frontier.'

Research Associates

Ronald P. Formisano, professor of history, University of Florida, 'American Populisms.'

Akira Kikuchi, professor of American culture, Otaru University of Commerce, Japan, 'The Development of American Society from the Colonial Period to the Early Nineteenth Century.'

Helena Markson, senior lecturer, University of Haifa, Israel, 'Early American Lithography and Allied Printing.'

Thus, the work of the Society proceeds, thanks to the generous encouragement of all kinds that we receive from many members and friends. For example, thus far this year we have received more than \$160,000 in gifts to the Annual Fund, as well as gifts of \$30,000 for the purchase of books and manuscripts. As truly gratifying as these figures are, we are concerned that we will be unable to meet the budgeted goal for annual giving of \$250,000. Chairman Conway has enlisted the help of several members to establish a challenge grant fund to encourage new gifts to the fund during the Spring solicitation of members. While considering the topic of financial support of AAS by its members, it must be noted that a third of our members fail to contribute. This very troublesome tendency in the life of the Society constitutes one element in the Council's deliberations about the future of AAS. Does the tradition of a learned society peopled by both scholars and amateurs retain currency in the late twentieth century? Given the response to the activities and needs of the Society by many of our academic members, apparently it does not. This frank statement must not be taken in any way to suggest that the Council is unmindful or ungrateful for the showering of open-handed generos-

ity that continues to sustain the unique work of the Society. On the contrary, it has become more and more apparent to the Council that without such free-will giving, the Society could not exist. The realities of today indicate that institutions such as our own are more and more dependent upon the generosity of fewer and fewer people and foundations. AAS commands no significant sources of income other than those of yield from endowed funds, from annual giving, and from categorical grants. These realities also indicate that former assumptions on how AAS sustains itself now and in the future must be seriously questioned. But enough of this. The Council extends their enthusiastic thanks to all who contribute to the well-being of the Society through gifts of money, work, and thought. Particularly, they wish to thank Eleanor S. Adams, Nancy H. Burkett, John B. Hench, Lynnette P. Sodha, and Donald K. Strader for their exceptionally effective leadership of our outstanding staff.

Marcus A. McCorison

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.