

Report of the Council

April 20, 1988

IT IS ENTIRELY APPROPRIATE that the American Antiquarian Society meet in Atlanta and that we conduct the Society's business in this great and beautiful city. As you know, a number of our valued members, some of whom have joined us, live in the area and, surely, it is past time that we focus our thoughts on America below Mason's and Dixon's Line.

The seed for scheduling a meeting in the South was planted by Vice-President Stinehour and member Mills Lane, preservationist, writer, and publisher, of Savannah. Mason Lowance, a native of Atlanta now resident in Amherst, Massachusetts, readily fell in with the idea and has been helpful in rallying assistance to make the arrangements for this gathering, arrangements that were forwarded by Judy L. Larson of the High Museum of Art, by John H. Ott and Misty Musser of the Atlanta Historical Society, and by Donald B. Schewe of the Jimmy Carter Library and Steven Hochman of the Carter Presidential Center. We are grateful to all persons who helped with getting us to Atlanta and locating us in such agreeable and interesting surroundings.

In the view of your reporter, the career of AAS during the past six months seems to have moved at breakneck speed. You are already aware of our exceptionally busy activities during the fall months as we got ready for what proved to be highly gratifying 175th-anniversary festivities. In particular, we celebrated the achievements of the Society's service to historical scholarship. We tried to thank adequately the multitude of generous people and institutions that made it possible to achieve the goals of our most recent (but not our last) endowment campaign, the Isaiah Thomas

Fund. The publication of *The Collections and Programs of the American Antiquarian Society*, a guide prepared by our staff, was a signal event of the anniversary, which, like the other celebratory activities, came to fruition by means of a generous grant from the William and Flora N. Hewlett Foundation and through the cooperation and very hard work of the committee members, our outstanding staff, and friends of AAS. We hope that each knows of our deep gratitude for his contribution to the success of the celebration.

The 175th annual meeting marked also a transition of leadership: from John Jeppson, who served the Society so well as president during a decade of remarkable achievement, to Jill Conway, our twentieth president. Important changes have occurred amongst the Society's personnel, also. After eleven years of superior work as our development officer, Mary V. C. Callahan retired. She has been succeeded in that position by Lynnette P. Sodha. Dorothy M. Beaudette retired as cataloguer at the end of January 1988. Mrs. Beaudette had served the Society faithfully since April 1965. To repair the void left by the retirement of Carolyn A. Allen, a new position was created, that of curator of printed books, which was filled by Sidney E. Berger, formerly of Champaign, Illinois, a bibliographer and historian of 'the book.'

While Mr. Berger is busily surveying the fields of Americana and the means of acquiring research materials from a multiplicity of sources, new accessions have gone on apace, as one might expect. A number of unusual pieces with Southern pasts have come our way. Mason Locke Weems's publications, designed to instruct and amuse, are always desirable. During his travels in Georgia at the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, Weems had a number of pamphlets printed in Augusta by Hobby & Bunce. The most famous of them is his life of George Washington, in which he included for the first time the apocryphal story of the cutting of the cherry tree. We still do not have that particular edition, but we did obtain on the Harry G. Stoddard Memorial Fund three others: *God's Revenge Against Murder* (1807); *The True*

American, Shewing the Beauties and Blessings of the American Republic (1807); and *God's Revenge against Gambling* (1810). A hymn book, *Hymns and Spiritual Songs Intended for the Use of the Churches of Christ*, published in Savannah by Henry P. Russell in 1822, is of particular interest because it was compiled locally for local use and thus far had escaped the notice of bibliographers. A writer addressed *Epitre au Roi de France* on matters in Santo Domingo; this was published in New Orleans by A. L. Broimare in 1829. This little work fell into our net courtesy of the George Washington Cole Fund. A. C. DeLorme's *Mercantile and General City Directory of Columbus, Miss. — 1873* was purchased on the Stoddard Memorial Fund. It is a rare survivor of Mississippi printing and a useful source for local history.

While on the subject of local interest, it is worth mentioning the purchase on the Stoddard Memorial Fund of [William Lyon] Mackenzie's *Own Narrative of the Late Rebellion, . . . the Memorable Siege of Toronto*, a scarce pamphlet printed in Toronto in 1838, only weeks after the events Mackenzie describes so vividly. James H. Carson described conditions in California in his *Early Recollections of the Mines, and a Description of the Great Tulare Valley*. This rare pamphlet by the 'discoverer of Carson's Creek, and one of the pioneers of the west' was published in Stockton in 1852. It was one of the treasures in the collection of the Countess Doheney, whose library was recently auctioned.

We obtained on the Michael Papantonio Memorial Fund one of the finest, most highly finished, nineteenth-century American bindings that has ever come this reporter's way. It appears on *A Manual of the Art of Bookbinding* that was written by a Philadelphia bookbinder, James B. Nicholson. It was published there by Henry Carey Baird in 1856. The binding is signed by Pawson & Nicholson and is dated 1869. In recent years we have made considerable efforts to obtain books illustrated with photographs. They include memorial volumes, books of poetry, trade catalogues, guides to expositions, and a variety of other genres. Thus, *The St.-Memin Collection of Portraits; consisting of seven hundred and sixty medallion*

portraits, principally of distinguished Americans, photographed by J. Gurney and Son, of New York (New York: Elias Dexter, 1862) is a highly appropriate volume for AAS collections. Charles B. J. Saint-Memin made the attractive profile portraits from life during the first decade of the nineteenth century, and he caught every important American figure of that period. The photographs are faithful copies and are pleasing in their own right. Finally, of surpassing interest in the area of the decorative arts is a large, stunningly printed catalogue of *Minton Tiles for Floors of Churches, Banks, and other Public Buildings, . . . as Laid in the Capitol at Washington* (ca. 1875). The tiles, English in manufacture, were sold by Miller & Coates in New York, and their illustrations are printed in oil colors nearly as vivid as the originals. The book was purchased as the gift of the Worcester Association of Mutual Aid in Detecting Thieves.

I am very pleased to report that in November the J. Paul Getty Trust awarded AAS a grant of \$50,000 that will enable us to complete the conversion to machine-readable format of the 16,500 records compiled by Judy Larson and her staff for the definitive 'Catalogue of Early American Engravings.' The project, funded in part by the H. W. Wilson Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Mrs. H. Dunscombe Colt, has been a very long time aborning. When completed and published, scholars will have access to engraved images issued before 1821 in what is now the United States. For each engraving, the catalogue provides information on techniques, the text of the inscription, the source of the engraving—if it appeared in a book or periodical, and the location of the impression examined. The catalogue includes indexing by subject.

Research, publication, education, and public programs all advanced at full tilt. Our *Proceedings* appeared in new guise, occasioned by the transition from real letterpress to computerized offset printing. A full complement of fellows was selected by the Society's fellowship committee that is made up of Pauline Maier, chairman, Joyce Appleby, James Henretta, and Leo Marx.

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellows

Stephen A. Marini, associate professor of religion, Wellesley College, 'Religion in the American Revolution'; Harvey J. Graff, professor of history and humanities, University of Texas, Dallas, 'Conflicting Paths: The Transformations of Growing Up, 1750-1920.'

Kate B. and Hall James Peterson Fellows

Burton J. Bledstein, associate professor of history, University of Illinois, Chicago, 'A Language Event: The Middle Classes in American History, 1828-1919'; Janet Farrell Brodie, lecturer in history, California State Polytechnic Institute, 'Women and Free Thought in the United States, 1820-60'; Suzanne L. Bunkers, associate professor of English, Mankato State University, 'The Civil War Diary of Caroline Seabury'; Rosalind Remer Burnam, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of California, Los Angeles, 'Philadelphia Publishers in the New Republic, 1790-1830'; Faye E. Dudden, assistant professor of history, Union College, 'Gender in Performance: Women in Theater, 1790-1870'; Karen V. Hansen, Ph.D. candidate in sociology, University of California, Berkeley, 'The Social Dimension of Laborers' Lives, 1810-60'; David P. Jaffee, assistant professor of history, City College of New York, 'The People of the Wachusett: Town Founders and Village Historians of New England, 1630-1860'; Carla Gardina Pestana, assistant professor of history, Ohio State University, 'Sectarianism in Colonial Massachusetts'; Lydia Cushman Schurman, professor of English, Northern Virginia Community College, 'The Dime Novel Publishing World, 1860-1915'; John R. Wolffe, lecturer in history, University of York, 'Aspects of Anti-Catholicism in the United States, 1830-60'; and Joseph S. Wood, associate professor of geography, George Mason University, 'Literary Origins of New England Village Symbolism.'

Albert Boni Fellow

Isabelle Lehuu, Ph.D. candidate in history, Cornell University, 'The New Readers in Antebellum America.'

Frances Hiatt Fellows

Margaret E. Newell, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Virginia, 'Economic Ideology and Development in New England, 1629-1820'; Peter John Way, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Maryland, 'Rough Labor: The Digging of North America's Canals, 1780-1860'; and Steven R. Wilf, Ph.D. candidate in history, Yale University, 'Public Execution and the Rituals of Order in the Late Eighteenth Century: England.'

Northeast Modern Language Association Fellow

Shirley Samuels, assistant professor of English, Cornell University, 'Politics and the Family in the Early Republic.'

Research Associates

Karen Halttunen, associate professor of history, Northwestern University, 'Printed Accounts of Murders in America, 1650-1850'; Paula D. Kopacz, associate professor of English, Eastern Kentucky University, 'Women's Daily Life during the Seventeenth Century in New England'; and Sally McMurry, assistant professor of history, Pennsylvania State University, 'Cultural Change in the American Food System: The Case of Cheese, 1830-85.'

The annual fall American Studies Seminar, open to students of Worcester colleges, was conducted most satisfactorily by Charles E. Clark of the University of New Hampshire. His students dealt with the question of how the press, particularly the newspaper press, may have influenced the controversies surrounding the ratification of the federal Constitution. Public events, making up 'A Spring Miscellany,' included a concert by the Norumbega Harmony, led by Stephen Marini of Wellesley College, and lectures

by Robert Darnton on 'Toward a History of Reading' and Patricia Cline Cohen on 'Safety and Danger: Sexual Peril in Public, 1790-1850.'

Turning our attention from matters of the mind to physical and fiscal affairs, we have noted an escalation of maintenance problems within the past year or two. This is hardly unexpected. Our 'new' addition to Antiquarian Hall and the heating and air-handling equipment associated with the 1970-71 renovations have passed the normal life expectancy of ten to fifteen years. Arrangements for staff workspace were designed in 1970 on a ten-year projection of need. Now well past that mark, we have installed workstations in the stacks, have erected partitions to make new offices, and have otherwise made do. But time is running out. In preparation for the future, the staff is drawing up criteria and desiderata for construction of an addition to and renovation of Antiquarian Hall, raised up in 1910 and enlarged in 1924, 1950, and 1971.

At the moment our fiscal affairs are under somewhat less stress than the physical. Response to the treasurer's year-end reminder has been extremely heartening. Thus far, generous members and friends have contributed more than \$90,000 to the annual fund, while President Conway's annual appeal is about to be mailed. Other good news is that having fully qualified for our \$500,000 challenge grant from NEH in support of the Isaiah Thomas Fund, we received in February final payment of \$298,418 on the grant. However, we are concerned that income from invested funds is somewhat off the budgeted goal. This will be rectified by year's end, say our managers at Fidelity Management Trust. Similarly, we were hardly elated by the events of October 19, 1987, which caused a diminution in the market value of the portfolio from \$16,684,000 to \$13,996,000 at the end of December, a loss of 16 percent—which we are told was a better experience than the average. At the end of March, market value stood at \$14,561,294, with a yield of 7.2 percent.

Early in April we were visited by J. E. Traue, the librarian of the Alexander Turnbull Library of Wellington, New Zealand. He had

been at AAS last in 1980. When asked if he had detected changes here since then, he replied that it appeared to him that we were on the same course as formerly, with some important enhancements to program such as the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture (established in 1983); but, at bottom, he thought that things seemed to be going as they did eight years ago. That is a fair assessment of our affairs, we believe. He did not note, nor necessarily would he, the increased pace of our work, nor the modest increase in the number of staff members. Like the river, we just keep rolling along, trying to do best what we are best at doing. If we improve at all, it is because of the help and encouragement that our members and friends provide and for which your Council is forever grateful.

Marcus A. McCorison

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