

Report of the Council

APRIL 21, 2007

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE and pride that I come before you, assembled members and numerous guests, to present this report on the current state of the American Antiquarian Society and to share with you some thoughts about where I *think* we are along our institutional trajectory, as we hurtle toward the future and our two-hundredth year, now a mere half-decade away. Things move at such a breakneck pace in our world today that I find it salutary to be mandated, by long-standing institutional tradition, to sit down twice each year to reflect with some deliberation upon our progress as an organization. In each of my reports—this being my twenty-ninth, I am astonished to realize—I have attempted to give a candid assessment of the Society at a particular point in time: of our successes and shortfalls, of our hopes and worries, of our continuities with the past as well as our attempts to blaze new trails. Distilling six months of solid work by a dedicated staff and forward-thinking Council into just twenty minutes is always a challenge for me: there are always so many accomplishments to cite and so many individuals who deserve to be acknowledged, thanked, and praised. So, as in past reports, I must rely again today on some narrative device by which a few specifics can imply and impart a larger and far richer tale. Taking my cue from those who practice microhistory—delving deeply into, say, the life of an individual of minor importance to gain an understanding of an entire cultural movement, geographical region, or period in time—I decided to tell the story of AAS in April 2007 from the point of view of just one staff member.

While logic might recommend that the best voice and perspective for me to utilize would be my own, I have not done so. In fact, and somewhat uncharacteristically, I am a bit stifled right now when it comes to talking about the immediate future plans of the Society. As I announced in my report last October, with guidance from a Council task force on digitization and with assistance from a business development consultant who is very experienced in the ways of the world of the online information industry, the Society has embarked on something of a crusade. To repeat what I said in my previous report, 'I feel strongly that if the Society does not continue to move aggressively toward the replication and sharing of its collection in the form of digital surrogates we run the risk of a form of cultural obsolescence when the advantage of having the largest collection of originals (from and about pre-1876 America) in one physical place is trumped by having once-disparate collections aggregated together virtually via the Internet. Having already digitized our earliest American imprints (through 1820) and a large body of our ephemera, and having commenced in earnest on a partnership to start digitizing our vast newspaper holdings, we are now seeking to extend the scope and number of our digital publishing partnerships in order to maximize the financial return to the Society for the sharing of its content holdings in the online world.' The mapping of a cogent strategy to get this done has taken up the lion's share of my time since our last meeting, and while we are making great progress toward that end, right now I am under so many non-disclosure agreements and other information embargoes that there is little I can say publicly except, 'Stay tuned. It will be exciting.' Announcements on our new partnerships and digital products will be forthcoming over the next few months.

So, instead of speaking in my own voice for this 'let the example of one stand for that of many' recitation, I am going to adopt the persona of a staff member who does not yet exist, except in the minds of those on the search committee for a new position we have called Director of Academic Programs. We have conducted

an initial round of interviews and are hoping to make an appointment to start on September 1, if not earlier. With your indulgence, however, I am going to pretend that we have already made our hire and that he or she started work this week. Oh, look, our new colleague keeps a diary and has left it here on the table, conveniently opened to the most recent entries. What does it say?

Dear Diary: Today is Monday, April 16, a holiday in Massachusetts—called Patriots' Day by most and Marathon Monday by others—and so I have to wait another whole day to begin my new job at AAS. I feel as if this new position, Director of Academic Programs, was designed uniquely for me—it fits so perfectly with my doctoral work in early American culture, my research experience at other institutions, my hands-on work in online and traditional publishing, and my proven track record in just rolling up my sleeves and getting projects done. They made it clear in my interviews that they were looking for someone with academic credentials who wasn't a frustrated or failed academic and clearly they've found that in me. I just know this job is going to keep me engaged and challenged intellectually while also keeping me busy organizing conferences and seminars, leading the fellowship program, and overseeing Common-place, the Society's online journal. I gather that AAS is the kind of place where one does one's own photocopying and licks one's own envelopes, but even with that the AAS job promises to be much more rewarding—at least for me—than the academic rat-race some of my friends from graduate school are now running. As I understand it, the job I'll be doing is just part of what John Hench used to do before his recent retirement after thirty-something years. There will be a number of us working collaboratively to cover the territory he once—earlier in his career, before the AAS programs grew so large—managed single-handedly, and I like that aspect of the job, having others with whom to work. Also, I've been told that Hench started at the lowest rung of the organizational ladder and kept moving steadily upward, and I'm certainly hoping for the same. I'd love to stay at AAS the rest of my days; it seems to be the norm that people stay there forever. One aspect of the job is a bit daunting, however: folks keep telling me I'm expected to be the face of the Society in reaching out not only to academic members and fellows

past and present, but also in enlarging the circle—across the nation and around the globe—of those who know and appreciate AAS as an unparalleled research center. Much to do; I can't wait to start.

Tuesday, April 17: My first day at AAS seemed pretty typical, with lots of standard HR forms to complete, until Ed Harris, v.p. for administration, gave me one he characterized as the most important form of all. He called it the 'statement of our ideal institutional culture' and said that I should be prepared to take it to heart, sort of like taking the AAS oath. With phrases such as 'striving for excellence,' 'openness to change,' and 'achieving consensus,' leavened with words such as 'collegiality,' 'generosity,' and 'hospitality,' I was more than happy to sign on. Hospitality was quickly demonstrated: at 10:30, Librarian Tom Knoles hosted a party for the entire staff in honor of National Library Week, at which I was introduced to a number of my new colleagues. It's a friendly, welcoming place. As the party wound down, I met with Jim Moran, whose title is director of outreach but who largely does for the nonacademic constituencies of the Society (such as teachers, artists/writers, and the general public) what I'll be doing for the academic. Jim helped me move into my new office at the Goddard-Daniels House, but warned me not to get too settled, as there are plans afoot to do much-needed work to the house in the near future to get it ready for the Society's bicentennial in 2012. I gather from Jim that the Society—I guess I should start using the first-person plural—that we are already at work with architects and contractors to fashion a plan to move the fellows' accommodations into a residence of their own and to create offices and workrooms in the unused carriage house behind the Goddard-Daniels House, which will get a much-needed revamping and fix-up. As for an office, I don't much care where mine is as long as the computer is working, and Nick Conti, the network administrator, had me up and running on the system in no time flat. Right away I started getting the announcements that are sent regularly to 'All Staff.' This morning, the receipt of three NEH grant renewals was announced: \$350,000 for two years of Shaw-Shoemaker cataloguing; \$240,000 for the next phase of 'A New Nation Votes,' the Lampi electoral data project; and—dearest to my heart—\$252,000 for continuation of the long-term fellows program. A subsequent post included the reviewers' comments on

the fellowship application, which gave me a few suggestions for improving the program but were more generally filled with glowing commendations, like this: 'Fellows praised the extensive range of the opportunities for informal intellectual exchange, calling the Society "a vibrant and supportive intellectual community," and noting that the entire staff ("phenomenally knowledgeable, highly professional, and incredibly competent") works closely with the fellows on their projects.' Hard to find room for improvement there, but I'll try. The next e-mail I read brought news that our current Hench Post-Dissertation Fellow, Jennifer Anderson, has won the 2007 Nevins Prize, awarded by the Society of American Historians for the best-written dissertation of the year, and included with the award is an offer of publication from one of its sponsor presses. And shortly after Jenny's news we got word that the 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Biography has been awarded to Debby Applegate—an alum of our summer seminar program—for her new work on Henry Ward Beecher. Great timing for AAS: Debby will be speaking here next week on the book, about which she has said, 'Frankly, it wouldn't have been much of a book without AAS. For a historian the Society is like Aladdin's cave; here I discovered Henry Ward Beecher's college essays, a picture of his long-burned-down high school, and one-hundred-and-fifty-year-old gossip magazines, just the kind of details that make a biography come alive.' And as if that weren't enough for my first day, Diary, the best was saved for last: Jeff Sklansky, the ACLS-Burkhardt Fellow in residence at the Society this year, gave a tremendous seminar paper tonight on 'Nicholas Biddle and the Romance of Banking.' We had a great discussion, led by Philip Gura, who is our Mellon Distinguished Scholar in residence this year, and I was struck by how civil and truly constructive the comments were from the fellows and other academics around the table, so unlike the sniping and showboating I've seen in other academic gatherings. And the same level of discourse extended all through dinner, as well. Those who are residents at the Goddard-Daniels House are probably talking still, but it's been a long first day for me, Diary, so lights out here.

Wednesday, April 18: My goal for today was to work on getting all the AAS acronyms straight in my head. I was already familiar with

PHBAC, the legendary Program in the History of the Book in American Culture, but Graphic Arts Curator Gigi Barnhill has just launched a new program called CHAViC—Center for Historic American Visual Culture—which has as one of its goals to train traditional historians to see prints, illustrations, ephemera, and graphics of all sorts as important sources of historical information, rather than relying for evidence on texts alone. She's already done a great job of engaging academics from a variety of disciplines, collectors, and curators, and I'm told she and Jim put on a fantastic conference last fall for K-12 teachers, who were hungry for images to use in teaching kids raised on a steady diet of TV, video, and camera phones. I'll be working closely with Gigi in the months ahead to help get out the word about a visual culture conference she's organizing for November with the Colonial Society of Massachusetts—they've already picked a great group of presenters—and on a 2008 conference that will bring PHBAC- and CHAViC-types together to look afresh at the visual world of childhood in early America. Organizing conferences is supposed to be one of my chief responsibilities, but everything at AAS is so collaborative, my colleagues have already given me a great leg up on the assignment. The CHAViC program has been further advanced this week by a marvelous new issue of *Common-place*, which now comes under my administrative care. Editor Ed Gray left the crafting of the issue, called 'Revolution in Print: Graphics in Nineteenth-Century America,' in the capable hands of guest editors Gigi Barnhill, Josh Brown, and Ian Gordon, who commissioned twelve great essays and wrote an introduction, and Administrative Editor Trudy Powers, who wrangled with the complexities of the copious illustrations and attendant permission headaches. It being Wednesday, I took advantage of the evening hours to explore the reading room in a bit more detail than I had been able to do on my previous visits. Great resources, generous staff—AAS really does live up to its reputation. While it may take me years to gain even a fraction of the collection knowledge held by folks such as Tom Knoles, Laura Wasowicz, Vince Golden, and Marie Lamoureux, I'm certainly going to enjoy the learning process.

Thursday, April 19: Another great day in my new job. I spent the morning with Research Librarian Joanne Chaison, from whom I'm

going to be inheriting many of my key responsibilities—the management of the summer seminars in the history of the book and the research seminar that is offered each fall for selected undergraduates at Worcester area colleges. Joanne makes it look so easy—she has everything planned out to a T, weeks if not months or even years in advance—but I know what hard work Joanne and the entire staff put into making these programs run smoothly. Wayne Franklin's summer seminar coming up in June, 'Re-reading the Early Republic: From Crèvecoeur to Cooper,' has attracted an amazing array of first-rate participants and will be topped off by Franklin's delivery of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Wiggins Lecture to coincide with the publication of the first volume of his new biography of James Fenimore Cooper. The Wiggins lecturer for 2008 is already in place, and Joanne is eager to issue an invitation for 2008 leaders for the summer seminar and undergraduate seminar too. What a privilege is mine to work along with Joanne as I begin to shoulder the responsibilities for these traditions of great AAS program offerings. That sense of honor was doubled and redoubled this afternoon as I worked with Caroline Sloat for the first time to begin the transition of the fellowship program from off her too-crowded plate. With a slew of publication projects on her horizon—including four volumes of *A History of the Book in America* and a growing number of important works scheduled for the AAS bicentennial in 2012, I'm glad to be able to assume the mantle of fellowship program administrator from her. Since she inherited it from John Hench, the fellowship programs have grown tremendously, she explained, as she reviewed with me the list of seven long-term and thirty-nine short-term fellows who have been selected for 2007–8 in seventeen different categories, requiring four separate selection processes. I'm certainly glad I have a year to work with Caroline to prepare for the selection of the next group of fellows again next spring; I'll need the benefit of her long experience with it all. After meeting with Joanne and Caroline today, the full scope of my responsibilities is beginning to sink in and my head is spinning with ideas—theirs and mine—of ways we might make these strong offerings even better.

Friday, April 20: As an 'end-of-the-week' treat, I indulged myself today by spending a couple of hours with David Whitesell, curator of

books, who came to the Society last year. (I gather we'll be considered 'new' by some of our colleagues for approximately ten years, if not forever; but David and I agreed that if 'new' is a synonym for 'enthusiastic' and 'eager' we'll wear the label proudly.) He spent the time just showing me some of the things he's been buying lately with an acquisitions budget fattened up a bit by generous cash gifts made in honor of Nancy Burkett, who retired as head of acquisitions last year with the same number of years of continuous AAS service as John Hench. I can hardly begin to recount, dear Diary, the fascinating treasures he showed me—a 1799 Pennsylvania edition of Aristotle's *Masterpiece* translated into German, the only known copy of the second American edition of the first Baptist catechism printed in the United States, a hitherto unknown second volume of Isaiah Thomas's Albany edition of Fanny Burney's *Evelina*—what an amazing eye for bibliographical detail David has. And what an appreciation of the wide variety of obscure imprints for which the Society is so justly famous: an 1800 tax list for the state of Vermont, an 1871 credit rating book from Kansas, an 1862 college class report, a previously unrecorded 1824 book auction catalogue, a rare and curious play on the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, a guidebook to Coopers-town illustrated with albumen photographic prints; the list goes on and on. The prices paid for some of the items are equally stunning to me, but I was heartened when David showed me several items we had picked up on eBay that cost less than the standard postage for shipping it to us. Having learned the research interests of each fellow as he or she arrived at the Society, David and the other curators are frequently able to put new acquisitions directly into the hands of researchers before the latter even has a suspicion that the item exists. This sort of generosity and partnering with readers is also part of the legendary reputation of AAS, and yet another reason I'm thrilled to have this new job. But I'll have little time for smug self-satisfaction around here, that's for sure. I see that my calendar is already filling up for next week: a planning confab concerning the Society's forthcoming bicentennial programs; a local-arrangements meeting about the 300+ members of SHEAR—the Society of Historians of the Early American Republic—who are expected to

descend upon Worcester and AAS in late July; a work session to review and update the long list of academic scholars proposed for elected membership in the Society; and even another staff party. Yes, this has been a great first week, and next week promises to be equally engaging and challenging. Three of the people on the search committee who hired me—President Ellen Dunlap, Vice President John Keenum, and Head Librarian Tom Knoles, are all away today, along with Gigi Barnhill—attending the Society's semiannual meeting in Williamsburg. In their talks with Councillors, members, and friends of the Society assembled there, I hope they manage somehow to convey my thanks—not only as a new employee, but also on behalf of all my new-found friends on the staff and among the fellows and the readers—for all that their leadership and generous support have made possible. This really is a great institution, and I'm going to work hard to make it even better. Although only the new kid on the block, I know I speak for everyone else here at AAS when I say: working hard for AAS is both an honor and a rewarding responsibility.

P.S.: I'm going to start a blog next week so I can tell the whole world about my amazing new job at AAS. You, dear Diary, are history.

Ellen S. Dunlap

LIST OF FELLOWS, 2007–2008

Mellon Distinguished Scholar

Margaretta Lovell, professor of history of art, University of California, Berkeley, 'Painting the Inhabited Landscape: Fitz H. Lane and Winslow Homer.'

John B. Hench Post-Dissertation Fellowship

Kyle Roberts, Ph.D. candidate, University of Pennsylvania, 'Evangelical Gotham: Popular Religious Belief in New York City, 1783–1845.'

AAS-National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships

Richard J. Bell, assistant professor of history, University of Maryland, College Park, 'Indian Removal and Literary Suicide'; Daniel A. Cohen, associate professor of history, Case Western Reserve University, 'Burning the Charlestown Convent: Private Lives, Public Outrage, and Contested Memory in Nineteenth-Century America'; Jeannine DeLombard, associate professor of English, University of Toronto, 'Ebony Idols: Famous Fugitive Slaves in Britain before the Civil War'; Peter Leavenworth, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of New Hampshire, 'Accounting for Taste: The American Music Business in the Early Republic and Confrontations in Music Aesthetics, 1770-1825'; Stephen A. Marini, professor of religion, Wellesley College, 'Migrants and Itinerants, Schools and Psalmody: Neglected Networks of Religious Culture in Revolutionary America.'

American Historical Print Collectors Fellowship

Kathryn T. Morse, associate professor of history and environmental studies, Middlebury College, 'The View from Here: American Environmental History through Images.'

AAS-American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Fellowship

Peter Messer, assistant professor of history, Mississippi State University, 'Revolution by Committee: Law, Language, and Ritual in Revolutionary America.'

Stephen Botein Fellowships

Joseph M. Adelman, Ph.D. candidate in history, Johns Hopkins University, 'The Business of Politics: Printers and the Emergence of Political Communications Networks, 1765-1789'; Lynda Yankaskas, Ph.D. candidate in history, Brandeis University, 'Borrowing Culture: Social Libraries and the Shaping of American Civil Life, 1731-1851.'

Drawn to Art Fellowship

Maura D'Amore, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of North Carolina, 'Suburban Men: Masculine Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America.'

Christoph Daniel Ebeling Fellowship

Nicole Waller, junior professor of English, and linguistics, American studies, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität (Mainz), 'American Encounters with Islam in the Atlantic World.'

Jay and Deborah Last Fellowships

Sarah Anne Carter, Ph.D. candidate in the history of American civilization, Harvard University, 'Object Lessons in Nineteenth-Century America'; Joanna Cohen, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Pennsylvania, 'Millions of Luxurious Citizens: Consumption and Citizenship in New York and Philadelphia, 1815-1876'; Joanna Frang, Ph.D. candidate in American history, Brandeis University, 'Becoming American on the Grand Tour'; Angela Susan George, Ph.D. candidate in art history and archaeology, University of Maryland, 'The Old New World: Unearthing Mesoamerican Antiquity in the Art and Culture of the United States, 1839-1893'; Lisa Gitelman, associate professor of media studies, Catholic University, 'Early Photographs of Words Backwards'; Jennifer A. Hughes, Ph.D. candidate in English, Emory University, 'Telling Laughter: A Cultural History of American Humor, 1830-1900'; Patricia Johnston, professor of art history, Salem State College, 'Martyrs, Riots, Nuns, and Peasants'; Michael K. Komanecky, independent curator and art historian, Exton, Pennsylvania, 'Carleton Watkins' Photographs of the California Missions'; Jo-Ann Morgan, assistant professor of visual arts, Coastal Carolina University, 'Mammies, Mulattos, and Matriarchs: African American Women in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture'; Mary Elizabeth Peterson Zundo, Ph.D. candidate in fine and

applied arts and art history, University of Illinois, 'Mapping Destiny: Cartography and Nineteenth-Century American Art of the Frontier.'

Legacy Fellowship

James Kabala, Ph.D. candidate in history, Brown University, 'A Christian Nation? Religion and the State in the Early American Republic, 1787-1844.'

Northeast Modern Language Association Fellowship

Peter P. Reed, instructor of English, Florida State University, 'Captivating Performances: Staging Atlantic Underclasses, 1777-1852.'

Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellowships

Edward E. Andrews, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of New Hampshire, 'Saints Out of Savages: Native American and African Missionaries, 1750-1755'; Amanda Elise Herbert Bilby, Ph.D. candidate in history, Johns Hopkins University, 'Letters, Recipes, and Gifts: Exploring Transatlantic Female Alliances within the Pollard and Salisbury Families'; Linford D. Fisher, Ph.D. candidate in the study of religion, Harvard University, 'The Politics of Conversion: Indian Agency, Religious Change, and Race in Southern New England, 1736-1775'; Jonathan Gross, professor of English, DePaul University, 'Thomas Jefferson's Scrapbooks: Prose Clippings'; Nancy Isenberg, associate professor of history, University of Tulsa, 'Dirty Politics in Early America'; Paul Christian Jones, assistant professor of English, Ohio University, 'The Newgate Novel Comes to America: Antebellum Crime Fiction and the Anti-Gallows Movement'; Daniel Kilbride, associate professor of history, John Carroll University, 'The Grand Tour: European Travelers and American National Identities, 1750-1870'; Valerie H. McKito, Ph.D. candidate in history, Texas Tech University, 'In the Shadow of Victory: Economics and Citizenship in the Aftermath of the Revolution';

Adam R. Nelson, associate professor of educational policy studies and history, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 'Nationalism, Internationalism, and the Origins of the American University'; Sarah J. Purcell, associate professor of history, Grinnell College, 'The Politics of Mourning and the U.S. Civil War'; Aaron Sachs, assistant professor of history, Cornell University, 'Death and Life in the American Environment: Radical Arcadias of the Nineteenth Century'; Lily Santoro, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Delaware, 'The Science of God's Creation: Popular Science and Christianity in the Early Republic'; Lisa Tetrault, assistant professor of history, Carnegie Mellon University, 'Memory of a Movement: Re-Imagining Woman Suffrage in Reconstruction America, 1865-1895'; Maurizio Valsania, associate professor of history of philosophy, University of Torino, 'The Curse of History: Leaders' Distrust of American History, 1783-1828.'

Reese Fellowships

Nikos Pappas, Ph.D. candidate in musicology, University of Kentucky, 'Sacred Music Tune Index of Southern and Western Source Material, 1760-1870'; Elizabeth A. Petrino, associate professor of English, Fairfield University, "'Kitchen in Parnassus": Lydia Sigourney as Poet, Activist, and Historian.'

Joyce Tracy Fellowship

Stacey Robertson, associate professor of history and women's studies, Bradley University, "'Hearts Beating for Liberty": Women Abolitionists and the Old Northwest.'

William Randolph Hearst Foundation Fellowships

Laurie Block, Conway, Massachusetts, documentary filmmaker, 'Becoming Helen Keller,' a documentary film and digital online museum project; Kimberly Elkins, New York City, fiction writer, a novel about the lives of Laura Bridgman, Julia Ward Howe, and Sarah Wight set between 1829 and 1876.

*American Antiquarian Society**Robert and Charlotte Baron Fellows*

Gino DiIorio, New York City, playwright, to research the life of Southern politician, Edmund Ross; Heidi W. Durrow, Los Angeles, California, fiction writer, research for a novel-in-progress about Miss Lala, a mulatta strongwoman of the Victorian era.

Jay and Deborah Last Fellowship for Creative and Performing Artists

Sarah McCoubrey, Fayetteville, New York, painter, research to create 'Hannah Morse: Landscape Painter,' a fictive archive.

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