

Report of the Council

APRIL 11, 2008

Have you heard the news? The American Antiquarian Society is almost two hundred years old, and I'm here to report that she's pretty spry for such an old lady. Our digitization activities are booming; our research fellowships and educational programs are in great demand; and every day we acquire important, interesting, and curious items as we inch ever closer to our lofty goal of a comprehensive collection to document America's first one hundred years of nationhood. Six months ago, at the time of the annual meeting, we faced public protests from neighbors angry at our proposal to expand further into the local historic districts; this morning the Society's Council ratified a compromise agreement among the Society, the city, and the neighbors that will enable us to meet all our goals for expanded facilities and parking by utilizing properties we already own within the historic districts. And thus it is again our hope—indeed, our goal—to have the renovated and expanded Goddard-Daniel House, the centerpiece of our real estate plans, ready to welcome members from around the country when they arrive at the 2012 annual meeting to celebrate the culmination of the Society's bicentennial year.

There are many parts to our planned celebration, but in working recently on one small piece of it, I was struck by an archival omission that I hope to redress, at least in part, in this Council report today. We wanted to see if we could create a list of all employees of the Society since 1812. For the most recent forty years this was fairly easily done, so I signed up for *that* part of the task, going through the personnel files and double-checking names

against the list published annually in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*. That left the harder part of the task to AAS member and faithful volunteer Jane Dewey, who not only carefully read decades of published reports but also combed through ancient financial records for payment histories. She created a card file of names and dates, peppered throughout with anecdotes, ironic observations, and puzzlements. Together we identified 367 individual employees by name, 60 of whom are on the payroll today. For the first sixty-eight years of its existence, the Society's sole employee was its librarian. By 1935, the staff had grown to eight full-time and four part-time professional and clerical workers, two bookbinders, and a janitor. The following year they were joined by a cadre of WPA workers, who accomplished much in the way of organizing and indexing collections during their four-year stint at AAS. The legendary long tenures of many employees are apparent on the staff list: more than twenty individuals have served thirty years or more, and Mary Reynolds served actively for sixty years. But except for the account that she wrote of life at the Society in the first twenty of those years, the public record of this institution reveals little more than the basic facts: names, titles, and key responsibilities. Some of these descriptions are almost comical in their understatement. Of Avis Clarke, who served the Society from 1927 to 1970, it was noted that she 'worked on the collection of nearly 20,000 almanacs in the intervals of her regular duties,' which we know included the single-handed creation of the hundreds of thousands of cards in our imprints catalogue and printers' files. Except for noting that 1959 had been a bad year for staff—Albert Waite cut his leg on a drawer, Emma Waite tripped on a mat and broke one of hers, and Louise Trowbridge was hit by a car while crossing the street—little is revealed that fleshes out or animates the spirit of these individuals for us today. Personally, I'm curious to know more about the employees, about their personalities, and about their relationship to the Society as well as to each other. One

of the few quips that have survived is one about why Avis Clarke was so efficient in her work: 'She spoke to no one but herself.'

Most likely our successors, when faced with the challenge of collecting evidence for the Society's tercentennial history in 2112, will be dealing not with a dearth of daily facts but, rather, with a paralyzing plethora of them, provided that the thousands of e-mails that we exchange among ourselves each day survive the vicissitudes of constant technological change. From matters mighty to miniscule, the e-mail archive of today captures it all, for better or worse. At AAS we use it as a forum to work out differences of opinion, to share news and perspectives, and to ask colleagues for help in finding a lost earring (perhaps the best use of all). As an antidote for the possible 'too much information' problem that our tercentennial historian may face, I want to offer in this report the kind of a snapshot overview of the AAS staff in 2008 that I would love to have found for 1958, 1908, or 1858.

From my vantage point, I see an incredibly dedicated group of individuals, deeply committed to an organization that they love, but gnawingly uneasy about the unknowns that lurk on the horizon. These days, it is a given that digitization is changing everything, but many at AAS are rightly concerned about how those changes will affect our jobs and our institution. Through partnerships with five leading information companies thus far, we are developing a diversified portfolio of approaches to the market, much as one does with an investment portfolio by avoiding the risks of having one's eggs in too few baskets. If we are correct in our selection of partners and products, and if the winds of change in the information markets do not blow too strongly or abruptly in the 'information should be free' direction, the Society stands to reap a nice windfall in the near and mid-term. The challenge for staff and Council alike is to develop an optimal plan for plowing those resources back into collections, services, programs, and staff as we prepare for whatever our post digital future might hold.

All the while, we must cope with the immediate realities of digitizing itself, which we are taking on in addition to everything else we do. Five vendors, five contract negotiations, five teams of product managers, five sets of equipment, and five cadres of staff to be successfully integrated into the AAS community. (I find myself wondering whether it was stressful to AAS culture in 1936 when the WPA moved in.) Today every department is affected. Curators devote expertise and time to ensuring the bibliographic integrity of each product; conservators give hands-on training to every camera operator before turning over a single book for scanning; cataloguers are challenged to provide (for product planning and support) huge amounts of meaningful data about our collections, not all of which are fully catalogued. Paging materials, installing more work cubicles, providing network bandwidth, maintaining security, helping to build bridges between vendors and the academic community—it all has to be done, and done in a ‘time is money’ context that can be challenging for a institution that has long been driven more by its mission than by its bottom line.

Our growing pains are not limited to digitizing alone. The volume of volumes being processed by our acquisitions staff (and being paid for by our business office) has increased dramatically as curators have turned more and more to online sellers such as eBay and to old-fashioned book scouting rather than simply waiting for beautifully described books to be offered to us at highly marked-up prices. To the library staff in the reading room, every newly acquired item has the potential to be the very thing a reader next week or next year will be wanting; to cataloguers it has the potential of languishing inaccessible in a backlog if resources for processing and description do not keep better pace with acquisitions, and the same goes for conservation. Moreover, we are challenging ourselves at this time to bring to successful completion a number of special projects, from the Lampi database of early electoral data to an innovative online catalogue of newspaper holdings data that we call ‘Clarence’ in honor of Mr.

Brigham; from launching a blog feature for our online journal <*Common-place.org*> to pushing ahead with the remaining volumes of our collaborative *A History of the Book in America* series; and from a new 'adopt-a-book' evening on April 29 to the completion of another round of workshops, courses, and seminars for American history teachers in Worcester public schools. Add to this mix the politicized hullabaloo over our expansion plans (which has certainly kept my stomach in knots for months and has also taken its toll on staff who were pained to see the Society unfairly vilified without having a means to defend her), and you can appreciate that I might well change my opening description of the Society to read 'slightly stressed, but still spry old lady.'

So to what tonic or remedy does she turn for relief and rejuvenation? An elixir of one part delegation, two parts communication, and a heaping helping of transparency. We try to keep our organizational structure pretty flat: the vice presidents and I stay in close touch with each other from day to day and meet formally at least twice a month to respond to policy recommendations and budget requests, but if a project or department is humming along, we leave well enough alone. Quarterly reports from the managers of those projects and departments are shared online with all staff, who are encouraged to keep abreast of progress and issues throughout the organization. Likewise, all staff members have access to the documents prepared for quarterly meetings of our Council and are encouraged to ask questions during a quarterly staff update that immediately follows each Council meeting. The open sharing of such information has gone a long way, in my opinion, toward keeping us all on the same page as we move through these challenging times. To open further lines of communication, for more than six years now we have had in place an institutional culture committee, elected annually by the staff, that works well with senior managers on matters of common concern, such as staff evaluation procedures, the 'greening' of the Society, and even such seemingly inconsequential things as Halloween decorations in the staff room. This has given the staff a forum for

bringing hidden issues to light and working toward collaborative resolution of them. The institutional culture committee has contributed greatly, for example, to my own understanding of the anxiety that digitizing and 'monetization of the collections' causes for some of my colleagues. I don't happen to share these concerns, but I hope that I'm better able to lead the Society as a result of recognizing them.

Indeed, it is my firm belief—often repeated in my previous reports to you—that the staff of the Society is among its greatest assets, but today I want to go beyond that mere assertion and present for your consideration a simple model of four attributes of the AAS staff that contribute to their strength.

- The first is expertise. I think, for example, of our five curators, Gigi Barnhill, Vince Golden, Tom Knoles, Laura Wasowicz, and David Whitesell, each widely recognized as an expert (if not as *the* expert) in his or her field, but all admitting with pleasure that they still learn new things every day. Regrettably, in life we have all encountered those who use their expertise as a cudgel against others. AAS experts, by contrast, share their learning graciously and actively with others through scholarly and popular writings, teaching and presenting, and mentoring. By bringing their expert knowledge to bear on their acquisitions work, our curators are also enhancing our great library for the benefit of readers in generations to come.
- Indeed, generosity is recognized as the hallmark of the AAS culture, and Tom Knoles has done a great job of keeping it front and center in his administration of the library. He has worked with reference librarian Elizabeth Pope and the rest of the reading room staff to ensure that all readers are welcomed warmly and served ably. That's a wonderful AAS tradition. But of course serving readers at AAS means nothing short of getting the material they need—often before they know they need it—into their hands or at their fingertips on a keyboard, a trick that Online Services Librarian Caroline

Stoffel has certainly managed to pull off. By insisting that AAS maintain high standards while we address the challenge of accessing uncatalogued collections, Alan Degutis, Doris O'Keefe, Su Wolfe, and others in the cataloguing enterprise help support the illusion of effortlessness in making collection items simply appear for readers. As collection manager, Marie Lamoureux works her own brand of magic to make elusive items materialize out of the darkest depths of the stacks, and Babette Gehnrich—unlike conservators at some other libraries—is committed to the novel idea that her first responsibility is to make materials accessible, not to lock them away.

- In giving careful thought to the strengths of our staff, I have also come to appreciate how much openness to the interests and concerns of others and worldliness in one's own activities make for a good colleague. Ed Harris, for example, has helped many of us have those difficult conversations that are endemic to supervising and being supervised. Peg Lewinski is simply a model listener; globe-trotting members of our staff always have interesting tales and photos to share from their travels; and, given the breadth of their backgrounds and current interests, conversations with Jim Moran (a playwright) and Paul Erickson (a collector of end tables) are always interesting, each in distinctively different ways.
- Last, though hardly least, among the defining attributes of our staff, is the great pride taken in continuing a long tradition of doing a job very, very well; of maintaining high standards; of being the benchmark to which others aspire. Every staff person I've named already could be cited here again, but instead I'll single out only a few: Andy Cariglia and Susan Forgit, who continue today in the posts established in the nineteenth century by long-serving building superintendents and treasurers; and, in positions that have been inaugurated only in the current generation, our IT director Nick Conti and information systems librarian Kathleen Haley. Every member of the staff

and all the constituents we serve depend on these four individuals in one way or another—to keep the facilities and computer systems running smoothly and to keep the money flowing smoothly as well, always a plus on payday. Our faith in them has always been well placed. By the same token, we share in the enthusiasm and path-breaking course being taken by young professionals such as Krista Ferrante, who manages our ‘A New Nation Votes’ project. This task has required both old-fashioned attention to detail and some ‘out-of-the-box’ problem solving with a ‘bleeding-edge’ database application. There’s a place for both at AAS, although we note that when it comes to our fundraising efforts, John Keenum’s firm faith in old-fashioned stewardship has served both AAS and our donors very well for a long time. Long may it continue to do so. Even development directors are long-tenured at AAS, a rare thing indeed in today’s nonprofit world.

I’ve now mentioned every member of the manager ranks at the Society save one. One who could have ranked at the top of any of the four categories that I mentioned: a widely respected expert, unfailingly generous and helpful, collegially interested in the lives and careers of her colleagues and constituents-turned-friends, and above all devoted to maintaining a standard of excellence that deepens the pride we all feel in sharing an AAS association with her. Of course, I’m referring to Joanne Chaison, our one-of-a-kind, thoroughly authentic, best-in-class research librarian. Joanne is retiring on May 1, and in the course of wishing her well, there will no doubt be much reminiscing about her twenty-six years at AAS, first as a cataloguer, then as the head of readers’ services, and for the past fourteen years as research librarian, a position we created uniquely for Joanne. Her knowledge of the collections is beyond compare; her capacity for keeping up with every fellow, every seminar participant, and every page who has spent time ‘under the generous dome’ is nothing short of remarkable. But I’ll save the looking back for the party. Today I choose

to look to the future. Simply put, AAS won't be the same without Joanne; it will in fact be better for the legacy that she leaves. Those of us who have had the honor of working with her will long be inspired by her example, and generations who come after us all will look with interest and pride at her name, listed among the pantheon of AAS greats.

So let me conclude with a note of thanks—not only to Joanne for her contributions, but also to our members, councillors, donors, and friends for theirs. Our present is hectic, but with your continued support our future is bright, dimmed only by the loss of Joanne, our friend and great true colleague. She will be so missed.

Ellen S. Dunlap

LIST OF FELLOWS, 2008–2009

Mellon Distinguished Scholar

David Paul Nord, professor of journalism and adjunct professor of history, Indiana University, 'Newspapers and Cities in Early America.'

*American Antiquarian Society–National
Endowment for the Humanities Fellowships*

Sean Kelley, associate professor of history, Hartwick College, 'Gone to Affrica: A Rhode Island Slave Ship and the Making of a Diaspora'; Adam Nelson, associate professor of educational policy studies and history, University of Wisconsin–Madison, 'Nationalism, Internationalism, and the Origins of the American University'; Meredith Neuman, assistant professor of English, Clark University, 'Letter and Spirit: Theories of Sermon Literature in Puritan New England'; Beth Barton Schweiger, associate professor of history, University of Arkansas, 'Reading before Literacy: The Uses of English Grammar in the Early Nineteenth Century.'

*American Antiquarian Society**Hench Post-Dissertation Fellowship*

Jessica Lepler, assistant professor of history, University of New Hampshire, '1837: Anatomy of a Panic.'

American Historical Print Collectors Fellowship

Jennifer Van Horn, Ph.D. candidate in art history, University of Virginia, 'The Object of Civility and the Art of Politeness in British America, 1740-1780.'

*American Antiquarian Society-**American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies Fellowship*

Natasha Hurley, postdoctoral fellow, University of Alberta, 'The Child of Circulation in American Literature: The Case of Robinson Crusoe.'

Stephen Botein Fellowships

Lara Cohen, assistant professor of English, Wayne State University, 'Counterfeit Presentments: Fraud and the Production of Nineteenth-Century American Literature'; Betsy Klimasmith, associate professor of English, University of Massachusetts-Boston, 'Cities and Seductions: Sex and Early American Urban Fiction.'

Drawn to Art Fellowship

Laura Smith, lecturer in English, University of New Hampshire, 'Material Domesticity: Textiles in Elizabeth Stoddard's *Morgesons*.'

Christoph Daniel Ebeling Fellowships

Juliane Braun, Ph.D. candidate in English and linguistics, Johannes Gutenberg University, 'Petit Paris en Amerique?—French Theatrical Culture in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana'; Sabine Schindler, assistant professor of American studies, Martin Luther University, 'Talk of the Nation: Public Speaking, Cultural Performance and the Negotiation of National Identity in Nineteenth-Century America, 1840-1880.'

Jay and Deborah Last Fellowships

Robin Bernstein, assistant professor of women's studies, Harvard University, 'Racial Innocence: The Uses of Childhood in United States Racial Formation, 1852-1930'; Carolyn Eastman, assistant professor of history, University of Texas at Austin, 'Learning to See: Gender in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World'; Sarah Gould, Ph.D. candidate in American culture, University of Michigan, 'Seeing American: The Visual Representation of Race in Early American Children's Literature and Games'; Wendy Katz, associate professor of art history, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 'The Politics of Art Criticism in the Penny Press, 1833-1862'; Kevin Muller, lecturer in the history of art, University of California at Berkeley, preparation of an undergraduate course on 'Visual Culture in American Life, 1600-1900'; Megan Kate Nelson, assistant professor of history, California State University, Fullerton, 'Flesh and Stone: Ruins and the Civil War'; Cynthia Patterson, assistant professor of English, University of South Florida, Lakeland, "'Exclusively from Original Designs": The Philadelphia Pictorials and the Graphic Arts'; Patricia Roylance, assistant professor of English, Syracuse University, 'Eclipse of Empire'; Nancy Siegel, assistant professor of art history, Juniata College, 'Bodily Functions as Body Politic: Scenes of Protest in Eighteenth-Century Prints'; Joseph Stubenrauch, Ph.D. candidate in history, Indiana University, 'Faith in Goods: Religion and the Consumer Revolution.'

Legacy Fellowship

Allison Malcom, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Illinois at Chicago, 'A Protestant Patriotism: Anti-Catholicism and the Rise of Nationhood in North America, 1830-1870.'

Northeast Modern Language Association Fellowship

Lloyd Pratt, assistant professor of English, Michigan State University, 'The Freedoms of a Stranger, 1830-1860.'

Kate B. and Hall J. Peterson Fellowships

Brian Carroll, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Connecticut, 'Military Masculinities in New England: Anglo-American and Native American Soldiers, 1689-1763'; Sari Edelstein, Ph.D. candidate in English, Brandeis University, 'The Novel and the News: Women and the Politics of United States Print Culture before 1900'; Nicole Eustace, assistant professor of history, New York University, 'War Ardor: Sex and Sentiment in the War of 1812'; Erin Forbes, Ph.D. candidate in English, Princeton University, 'Popular Crime Writing and the Publications of David Walker and Edgar Allan Poe'; Ellen Gruber Garvey, associate professor of English, New Jersey City University, 'Book, Paper, Scissors: Scrapbooks Remake American Print Culture'; Robert Gunn, assistant professor of English, University of Texas at El Paso, 'Ethnology and Empire: John Russell Bartlett and the United States-Mexico Borderlands'; Jeffrey Kaja, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Michigan, 'From Rivers to Roads: Economic Development and the Evolution of Transportation Systems in Early Pennsylvania, 1675-1800'; April Masten, associate professor of history, SUNY-Stony Brook, 'The Challenge Dance: Transatlantic Exchange in Early American Popular Culture'; Tanya Mears, assistant professor of history, Norfolk State University, '"To Lawless Rapine Bred": Early New England Execution Literature Featuring People of African Descent'; Jane Merritt, associate professor of history, Old Dominion University, 'The Trouble with Tea: Consumption, Politics, and the Making of a Global Colonial Economy'; Monique Patenaude, Ph.D. candidate in history, University of Rochester, 'Comparative History of Black Communities in Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, New York, 1840-1870'; Kelly Sisson, Ph.D. candidate in American culture, University of Michigan, 'King Corn in American Culture, 1862-1936'; Derrick Spires, Ph.D. candidate in English, Vanderbilt University, 'Reimagining a "Beautiful but Baneful Object": Black Writers' Theories of Citizenship and Nation in the Antebellum United States.'

The Reese Fellowships

Catherine Parisian, independent scholar, Nellysford, Virginia, 'A Publication History of the Works of Frances Burney'; Courtney Weikle-Mills, assistant professor of English, University of Pittsburgh, 'Imaginary Citizens: Child Readers and the Making of a United States Literary Public, 1700-1852.'

Joyce Tracy Fellowship

Benjamin Fagan, Ph.D. candidate in English, University of Virginia, "'Righteousness Exalteth a Nation": Practices of Black Nationalism, 1827-1860.'

William Randolph Hearst Foundation Fellowships

Sandra Jackson-Opoku, novelist, Chicago, Illinois, research for a novel entitled 'God's Gift to the Natives' that charts the history and movement of the African diaspora; Celeste Roberge, sculptor, Gainesville, Florida, research on American furniture, in particular its fabrication, use, history, and depiction in American painting, photography, and sculpture.

Robert and Charlotte Baron Fellowships

Martha Carlson-Bradley, poet, Hillsborough, New Hampshire, research for a collection of poems based on the *New England Primer*; Debra Gwartney, nonfiction writer, Eugene, Oregon, research for a book on Narcissa Prentiss Whitman, the first European woman to cross the Rocky Mountains.

Jay and Deborah Last Fellowship for Creative Artists and Writers

Janet Pritchard, photographer, Mansfield Center, Connecticut, research for a photographic project entitled 'Views from Wonderland,' which explores the making of Yellowstone National Park from the 1870s to the 1890s.

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