ne of the hardest things to explain to visitors is the fact that the Clements is a national, even international library in its focus and in its collections. Most of the historical libraries and museums with which people are familiar document a particular locale—a state, county, or town—and the presence of source materials on colonial Virginia or the War of 1812 in New England initially seems out of place in Michigan. Until visitors know better, they assume that any historical library in Ann Arbor would be dedicated to Michigan history!

To understand the reasons for this seeming peculiarity, one has to know something about William L. Clements, the models he used to create his library, and the way he and his successors have built the collections. Clements’s initial interests were the age of discovery and colonization of the North American continent, the colonial period, the American Revolution, and the Old Northwest in the frontier period. He did his collecting with dealers and auction houses in London, New York, and Boston, and his models were the collections of John Carter Brown of Providence, Robert Lenox of New York, and E. Dwight Church (a collection that wound up at the Huntington Library in California). These were comprehensive assemblages of primary source material documenting larger developments in international history: European exploration and settlement of the American continent; the exploitation of indigenous peoples; wars for empire; the march of democracy; the international transmission of ideas, technology, and culture.

From the beginnings of William L. Clements’s collecting until the present day, the rationale for acquiring any individual map, book, or manuscript has been the degree to which it documents these larger themes of historical change. The Clements does not collect “local history” per se, but of course most occurrences, although shaped by larger forces, play themselves out on a local stage. John Smith’s explorations of the Chesapeake region or New England, documented in contemporary maps and publications that are treasured parts of the Library’s holdings, were events of both international and local importance. The papers of British Revolutionary War commander Sir Henry Clinton contain detailed maps and spy reports that allow historians to study the nature of eighteenth-century espionage while also describing parts of Connecticut, Pennsylvania, or South Carolina. A Clinton spy map, for example, helped the National Park Service identify headquarters buildings at Valley Forge.

There are many trees hidden within our forests of source material. In this issue of the Quarto, Brian Dunnigan delves into Revolutionary War military maps and describes exceptionally rich sources on Rhode Island topography and local history. Barbara DeWolfe shows how miscellaneous collections of letters and documents bring nineteenth-century New Orleans back to life in the mind’s eye. Clayton Lewis describes how tenacious and informed acquisitions, stretching over more than a decade, can bring together materials on a particular locality—in this case Fitchburg, Massachusetts—while continuing to document larger stories relating to nineteenth-century art and lithography. John Dann displays a few pictorial records that illuminate both micro-history and macro-history, depending on the questions being asked of them. Jan Longone points us to the imminent Second Symposium on American Culinary History, suggesting that regional and ethnic traditions, in their vast complexity, are the essence of our national heritage.

— John C. Dann
Director
MAPPING LOCAL HISTORY

Documentation of American locales may be found in all divisions of the Clements Library. City directories, county histories, atlases, and travel books contain details about people and places. Manuscript letters, documents, and diaries hold unique information about sites and the events that took place in them. Graphics and ephemera provide snapshots of daily life and culture or show a town or countryside as it appeared at one moment in time.

To understand the physical nature of a locality, however, there is nothing more useful than a map. The collection abounds with local cartography, from property surveys to city, fortification, and cemetery plans and from detailed studies of topography to maps showing how battles or events unfolded on the ground.

The usefulness of any of these sources for the study of local history is, of course, dependent upon whether relevant documentation exists in the Library's collections. Not every place in early America is well represented, or even represented at all, but the Map Division offers cartography of all the states and provinces and detailed maps or atlases of many counties as well. City plans have long been a collecting priority, so larger urban areas are well covered and many smaller towns as well. Certain places are represented in even greater detail because manuscript collections include maps drawn for reasons of local military planning or property ownership. The Gage and Clinton papers, for example, have many fortification plans and topographical maps of places where the British Army was active before and during the American Revolution. The Baldwin Papers brought to the Library...
numerous New England property maps and engineering plans. Family papers often include local maps and surveys. The extent of cartographic information just depends on where the family was based.

The papers of General Sir Henry Clinton brought nearly four hundred maps to the Library. These include much of local interest for many places along the Atlantic seaboard. Among them are more than forty maps and plans documenting Newport, Rhode Island, during the British occupation of 1776-79. A close look at a few examples reveals some of the wonderful types of details available in maps for the study of local history.

Newport was an active and important seaport during the war years. The British occupied the place in December 1776 and held it until 1779. Their troops constructed numerous fortifications during those years, and they served the defenders well when an American army and a French fleet besieged the garrison from July 29 to August 31, 1778. The allied attack collapsed, and, by the time the British departed, most of the strategic spots around Newport and along the shores of the island of "Rhode Island" had been fortified. The presence of so many Newport plans in the Clinton Papers attests to its importance during the British occupation. The French also found the harbor useful, and in 1780 the Duc de Rochambeau's army made Newport its base.

Captain Edward Fage’s manuscript "Plan of Rhode-Island surveyed and drawn…in the years 1777, 78 & 79" provides an overview of the entire island, a vivid sense of its topography, and a neat summary of the military construction and events of the British occupation. Only the area around the town of Newport is shown here, but the level of detail is consistent throughout the map. Fage included elevations, watercourses, and soundings. Individual farmhouses, mills, and orchards appear, many bearing the names of their owners. The engineer carefully recorded the shape of each of the fortifications, and individual plans of many of them are represented among the Clinton maps. Fage even identified the American siege lines and the locations of vessels scuttled during the fighting in 1778. His map provides a clear and useable guide to the surroundings in which the campaign for Rhode Island was fought.

Details of Newport itself are clearly rendered in a “Plan of the Town of Newport…” by Charles Blaskowitz, published in 1777 by William Faden of London. Although not one of Clinton’s maps, copies of this printed plan were readily available to his officers. Here is the layout of an important colonial seaport showing how the town was organized and giving the names of its streets and a sense of the density of its buildings and wharves. Important public structures, including nine churches or
meetinghouses, the “Jews Synagogue,” and the Redwoods Library, are identified in a table of references. Many of these buildings stand today. Blaskowitz conducted his survey before the war, but current events made publication of the town plan commercially viable by 1777. His careful composition places the urban area within the surrounding topography and includes nearby fields, mills, and other features.

Among the details in Blaskowitz’s plan is a fortification at the north end of the town, which the publisher identified as having been built by the Americans. The British pressed this “North Battery” into service following their arrival, and an engineer drew a fine, colored plan and section of it that survives among the Clinton maps as one of twenty-six renderings of fortifications on Rhode Island. Cannon in the North Battery commanded the harbor, and the little fort saw action when the French fleet fought its way up Narragansett Bay in the summer of 1778.

Other maps in the Clinton collection reveal how troops were positioned during the British defense of Newport. Such documentary cartography often displays details of topography and architecture too, but the primary purpose was to show how military forces were deployed. The French prepared similar plans when Rochambeau’s army appeared at Newport in July 1780. One of its engineers drafted a vivid map showing the encampments and fortifications of the troops and the anchorages of transports and naval vessels. A detailed table of references increases the utility of this composition by identifying fortifications constructed or restored by the French, the ruins of some of the former British forts, and the positions of individual regiments and vessels.

Newport during the Revolution is particularly well documented in the collections of the Clements Library, but similar details may be found on cartography of Boston, Philadelphia, and many other places as well. Maps are critical documents for the study of local history, and information of all sorts can be teased from them to complement the details preserved in printed, manuscript, and graphic sources.

—Brian Leigh Dunnigan
Curator of Maps and Head of Research & Publications

This “Plan of the North Battery, near Newport” is typical of the dozens of fortification drawings among the Clinton Maps.

The extremely high quality of French mapping is evident in Edouard Colbert’s plan of Newport after the arrival of a French fleet and army in 1780. The map combines topographical and architectural details with information on the encampments of the French units that would later share in the victory at Yorktown.
BURIED IN THE PAST

The Charity Hospital of New Orleans, as depicted in Gibson’s Guide and Directory to the city and the state of Louisiana of 1838.

Perhaps no other event in recent history has reminded us so dramatically of the importance of the historical record as the destructive force of nature directed on the city of New Orleans and nearby coastal areas. In a matter of hours, part of the record of our past disappeared. Old buildings. Property deeds. Photographs. Personal papers. Books. Data stored on disks. Government records. Through valiant efforts, restoration services have saved much of it, but the rescue teams could not cope with the magnitude, and our loss was immeasurable. Though the Clements Library does not actively pursue the acquisition of local history materials, we have accumulated a considerable amount over the years, including sources related to New Orleans and the surrounding area. Some researchers want to know why manuscript collections pertaining to a particular place or person are not housed in one repository so that research would be more convenient. While this may be true, we are fortunate, in times of disaster, that the materials are scattered and that all sources pertaining to a particular locale are not vulnerable. The Clements has a small collection of manuscripts about early New Orleans, most of them from the nineteenth century. As a result of hurricane Katrina, they have become more valuable, not for monetary reasons, but as historical evidence.

Most of our Louisiana manuscripts are letters, though we hold one official record of New Orleans. It is an admission register for the Lunatic Asylum of the Charity Hospital from 1841 to 1848. The three-story Charity Hospital was finished in 1833 and had room for about 550 patients in the main building, with additional outbuildings on the grounds for “lunatics” and women who were lying-in. Approximately three thousand patients were admitted to the asylum during those eight years.

The register contains data on each patient’s arrival date, name, age, vocation, nativity, previous residence, length of residency in New Orleans, marital status, duration of illness, diagnosis, and disposition. For the first few years, the asylum accepted patients with diagnoses of either mania or delirium tremens but later admitted people with diseases common in the general population. Hence,

Although New Orleans had expanded beyond its original boundaries by 1832, the city was still concentrated on the high ground selected by its founders. This plan appeared in View of the Valley of the Mississippi, published by Henry S. Tanner.

The Charity Hospital of New Orleans, as depicted in Gibson’s Guide and Directory to the city and the state of Louisiana of 1838.
the ledger provides a representative sample of the inhabitants of New Orleans in the mid-nineteenth century.

The former residences show the diverse nature of the population. Patients had originated in France, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Latin America, Spain, and a wide variety of American states. Almost all observers remarked on this. In one of our earliest letters, dated 1807, Daniel Constable wrote that the people of New Orleans were the "most motly group of human beings ever assembled together," with perhaps one in ten who spoke English. At the end of the century, in 1890, Samuel Taylor commented: "There is a saying here—that if you will stand on the corner of Canal St. an hour, you can see the world, and I am convinced of its truth as far as seeing all sorts and kinds of people. This city appears to contain a representative from every part of the globe."

Such variety extended to occupations as well. Almost every type and economic status were noted. Some were

generated frequent comments about color of skin and the status associated with it. The quadroons were one quarter black and of a higher social status. Edward Fenno wrote, in 1819, that at auction they sold for "a very high price."

Some of the more common diseases listed in the asylum ledger include typhus, typhoid, measles, gastroenteritis, epilepsy, fever, paralysis, melancholy, skin infections, and yellow fever, a persistent scourge of nineteenth-century Louisiana. About twenty percent of admissions in 1847 were yellow-fever cases. That year 2,300 people died, and the hospital was in no doubt filled to capacity during the peak months of August, September, and October. The hospital frequently sent patients to the asylum and vice versa. Though cases appeared every year in New Orleans, this was one of the worst outbreaks.

Another bad year for yellow fever was 1819, when over two thousand people died. Edward Fenno documents this in his letters, especially the death of his business partner, a Mr. Burke. These epidemics were bonanzas for those who cared for the dead. Fenno was shocked to see "rascals" quick to take advantage of the epidemic by charging high prices. The doctor billed $50 for four days of care for Burke. The gravedigger made

$8,000-10,000 a year, and the hearse owner exceeded that. For thirty trips a day to the cemetery, at $5 each, he made $4,300 a month.

Another outbreak of yellow fever the following year took Fenno's other partner, Biddleman. Fenno declared that, if he met such a fate, he wanted to be hung high and dry at the mouth of the river, "as an eternal scarecrow to all the fools who may hereafter flock, to lay their bones, in its unhallowed soil." He added that any man who brought his family to New Orleans to settle was "almost guilty of murder."

"Died," "discharged," or "removed to Charity Hospital" were the dispositions listed for the patients in the asylum register. We do not know, from the ledger, what happened to them, but our letter writers give us some insight. During such widespread epidemics the dead were left to bury the dead. In December 1819, Fenno visited the church graveyard, called the "swamp," to look for the body of his partner Burke. The pile of mud and bones that once was Burke was indistinguishable from the thousands of others. With so many people to bury, hackmen often "dumped" coffins where they could, making them available for "monsters" to steal for resale.

The asylum ledger, brought to life by personal accounts, illuminates one tiny but important aspect of New Orleans history. Records of cold fact provide the names; the observers and witnesses draw the faces. One visitor to New Orleans in 1846 called it the variegated city, "in its colours, in its population, in its tongues, in its institutions, in its characters, in its amusements, in its modes of life, in its traffic, in its architecture...in all that pertains to it." The narrators of our letters would certainly agree, and offer much to illustrate this.

We are unfortunate in what we have lost, not only to Katrina but to disasters and destruction elsewhere. Such casualties make us grateful for the historical materials we have and underscore the vital importance of the investment we make in our future by safeguarding our past.

— Barbara DeWolfe
Curator of Manuscripts
CELEBRATING FITCHBURG

There is a familiar pattern to the history and development of many New England towns. Beginning as isolated agricultural communities, they became local industrial centers because their rivers provided power for mills. Railroads arrived in the mid-nineteenth century, allowing the mills to supply a larger regional market. Creaking old water wheels were replaced with massive steam power plants. The local industries grew, and the towns displayed their new affluence and wealth. Large, state-ly homes, new churches, schools, libraries, and vast industrial rows populated the built environment. But the global economy of the twentieth century reduced local industry. The towns are today a bit worn and paint peeled, with an abundance of graceful but empty nineteenth-century industrial architecture and prized Victorian mansions, but their citizens still feel closely tied to the past. Fitchburg, Massachusetts, is such a town.

Where the source materials of the Clements Library’s Graphics Division overlap, there is often an opportunity for local histories to emerge. The Library’s holdings relating to Fitchburg support research on important, national themes such as the impact of industrialization, transportation technology, and life in a medium-sized industrial town of nineteenth-century America. By chance, this overlapping information is also an excellent local history resource.

In the 1860s, when Fitchburg was well on its way to being a regional industrial center, a traveling artist passed through town. Edwin Whitefield (b. 1816) chose the highest point from which he could gaze down at the community in the valley of the Nashua River. From there, he sketched a detailed and carefully measured rendition of the streets, buildings, dams, and the all-important railroad running through the center of town. He was fortunate to have a high vantage point; otherwise, he would have been forced to concoct a view from what he could see at ground level. Creations of this type were his specialty—Whitefield was a bird’s-eye-view artist.

The genre of bird’s-eye-view prints, popular from the 1850s to the 1890s, is particularly expressive of the time. North Americans were pleased with the pace of their physical and economic expansion, and the typical bird’s-eye-view print celebrates this confident growth. The cultivated landscape, the new steeples and downtown

Edwin Whitefield’s bird’s-eye, lithographic view of Fitchburg was published in 1870. The railroad yards are at far right.
The rail road y ards appear in this late-nineteenth-century cyanotype photograph from the Fitchburg Railroad collection. Several of the buildings shown in the Whitefield images are still in use.

buildings, the thriving industries spewing smoke, and the network of fast, transcontinental trains and steamboats are repeating themes. The orderly grids of Midwestern towns and the picturesque eastern communities are devoid of squalor and strife. Everything is in its proper place. The view from high above suggests a connection of the local to a greater national or world evolution. The broad landscape with high horizon speaks to the expansive concept of the nation. Communities were pleased to see themselves at this stage, their town having developed into a larger, bustling, modern entity, connected with and contributing to the growth of the nation.

Whitefield was almost a one-man show. He solicited subscribers, made preliminary sketches, created the lithographic printing stones or supervised their production, distributed finished prints, and collected delinquent accounts. His travels took him across the northeastern United States and southern Canada (there are Whitefield drawings of Michigan, including Ann Arbor, in the Royal Ontario Museum), as far west as Illinois, and east into Maine. He was among the best and most productive in his specialized field.

In 1990 the Clements acquired a very rare set of Whitefield’s drawings from noted Americana dealers Rockwell and Avis Gardiner. Most of these were done on the spot, from careful observation. Whitefield’s style is precise, but there are indications that he valued his time and worked quickly. When it was expedient to describe with words rather than drawn line, he wrote—when not, he drew. Corrections to be made later were noted rather than done on the spot. Some of his drawings are carefully colored, while others have the colors keyed with a simple numerical system. Although very beautiful, these are working drawings as opposed to finished products.

Our Whitefield sketches of Fitchburg picture the town on the cusp of rapid industrialization. The railroad and the river thread through the pictures. At this time, the industry of Fitchburg included paper, machines, saws, chains, guns, bicycles, and shoes. Huge textile plants were in the near future. Rail connections to Boston and New York City provided distribution routes. The Berkshire Mountains barred the way to Albany, New York, and the West, but the excavation of the four-mile-long...
Hoosac Tunnel was underway. It was Fitchburg manufacturing that produced the machinery to cut through the rock.

An 1870 lithograph that corresponds to Whitefield’s sketches of Fitchburg was acquired separately in 2005. For the most part, the print is very close to his working drawings, and notes on the sketches were incorporated into the finished print. It is a fascinating comparative lesson in how Whitefield worked.

American railroads became corporate giants in the late nineteenth century. By 1875 the Fitchburg Railway was not an unimportant one, as it was the vital and difficult connection from Boston to Albany. Nearly one hundred trains a day traveled through Fitchburg. In 1993, the Clements acquired a group of 140 photographs of the railroad and surrounding landscape and structures. This wonderful collection allows us to look inside offices, view down the right of way, and examine railroad buildings and locomotives. Only a few of the pictures are of Fitchburg itself, but there is one that shares the same point of view as the Whitefield drawings and lithograph. In this image, we can measure the growth of the railroad yards at the east end of town, see the familiar curve of the river, the gas works, and two large and distinctive houses on the bluff.

It is now the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. It is summertime; white cotton dresses and straw boater hats are out in abundance. Fitchburg is celebrating. We are not sure of the event, but it includes a spectacular balloon ascension, made even more so by the presence of an onboard photographer. The view from high above is one that Whitefield surely would have enjoyed and used. Again, we see the familiar railroad yards, the bend of the river. The distinctive houses are blurred but they are there in the pictures taken on the ground. The gas works has expanded. Fitchburg is riding high. But the twentieth century will be a rougher journey as the industry that created this prosperity diminishes and the railroad fades in importance in the age of interstate highways. But, at the Clements, we can still study and celebrate Fitchburg in its prime.

— Clayton Lewis
Curator of Graphic Materials

The Fitchburg rail yards as viewed from on high in this balloon photograph. The white spots appear to be the summer dresses and straw boaters of a celebrating crowd. We do not know the occasion or the date.

An enthusiastic crowd watches as the photographer’s balloon is inflated for its flight.
AN A TO Z OF REGIONAL AND ETHNIC CULINARY TRADITIONS

Food has always been central to local identity, history, and culture, and the Clements Library exhibition accompanying next spring’s Second Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History will play to the Library’s strengths in those areas. “A to Z: An Alphabet of Regional and Ethnic Culinary Traditions” will showcase the diversity and depth of our holdings. Echoing the organization of M.F.K. Fisher’s An Alphabet for Gourmets, the exhibit will lead viewers on an alphabetical tour of foodways that have contributed to the American “melting pot.”

Where to begin? “A” presents an immediate dilemma. There are too many possibilities. African American? Alabaman? Alaskan? Albanian? Amish? Appalachian? Arab American? Armenian? Other letters present similar variety. With space at a premium, the brief sampling here includes three rare works by African American authors, a piece of ephemera advertising Alaskan salmon, and an Armenian American volume. We then jump to the end of the alphabet with a book documenting the food of the Zuni people of the Southwest.

The earliest culinary-related book by an African American author is Robert Roberts’s The House Servant’s Directory, first published in Boston in 1827. This is generally accepted to be the first book of any kind by an African American to be printed by a commercial publisher. Roberts was butler in the household of Christopher Gore, Senator and Governor of Massachusetts, and his book offers a detailed discussion on the management of a fine, upper class, New England household.

The volume is remarkable for several reasons. It gives advice to servants on how to behave, how to perform their work, and how to utilize the new household utensils and equipment then becoming available. Roberts comments on the responsibilities of the employer but is generally more interested in teaching servants how to act. His work was one of the first to encourage young African American men to become the finest professional house servants, offering specific, detailed suggestions for fostering their advancement and tenure. The author was active in organizations promoting African American interests, and his instructional book would help young men get ahead.

Among dozens of topics, Robert’s book offers advice and instruction on the benefit to servants of early rising and on techniques for cleaning everything from boots to coffee urns. There are sections on rules for the dinner table, laying the cloth, and “placing the desserts.” Household recipes (receipts) are given for furniture oil, mastic for mending China, and shampoo. Culinary recipes include currant jam, raspberry vinegar, and leg of mutton. An indication of the influence of The House Servant’s Directory was its inclusion as one of the handful of cookbooks in the library of the Hermitage, President Andrew Jackson’s home in Tennessee.

Roberts’s book is generally classified as a household manual. To our knowledge, the earliest African American-authored cookbook is Malinda Russell’s A Domestic Cook Book: Containing a Careful Selection of Useful Receipts for the Kitchen, published by the author in Paw Paw, Michigan, in 1866. The Library’s copy is the only one extant and is otherwise unrecorded in culinary compilations.

This work offers a fascinating, first person chronicle of the life of a free woman of color in mid-nineteenth-century America. Russell was born free and raised in eastern Tennessee. She set out for Liberia at the age of nineteen, but a member of the party stole her money, forcing her to remain in Lynchburg, Virginia. There she worked as a cook, washerwoman, and companion. She was married and widowed before returning to Tennessee to keep a boarding house and pastry shop. Her Union sympathies forced her to leave the South in 1864 and move to Michigan, “the Garden of the West.”

We have been unable to uncover information on Russell’s life after the publication of her book. Most of

This colorful and fanciful image advertised Argo, Salmon while promoting the virtues of its modern canny.
her recipes could have come from any part of the contemporary eastern United States, although there are some southern touches, such as sweet potato baked pudding and fricasseed catfish. Many of the recipes are for sweets, desserts, and baked items, reflecting the years in her pastry shop.

Until our discovery of Russell’s cookbook, Abby Fisher’s What Mrs. Fisher Knows About Old Southern Cooking was thought to be the earliest such work by an African American. Although printed in San Francisco in 1881, it features cuisine with origins in pre-Civil War southern plantation kitchens. Fisher was born a slave in South Carolina but achieved fame in San Francisco with a business making pickles and preserves. Her cookery was awarded medals at several California fairs, including two in 1880 for “best pickles and sauces and best assortment of jellies and preserves.” Her book is perhaps the earliest California culinary imprint of importance beyond the state.

“A” is also for Alaska, represented by an early twentieth-century advertising pamphlet by the Alaska Packers Association, “the largest Salmon canning company in the world.” Much of the booklet promotes “Argo,” the “highest type” of Alaska red salmon. “The fish are caught in the icy waters of picturesque Alaska,” it states. Awards received at national and international fairs and expositions between 1894 and 1904 confirm the quality of the product. Modern scientific methods and purity are discussed at length. “The Alaska Packers Association has always packed its Salmon with the most cleanly and hygienic methods,” the text proclaims.

The Armenian culinary contribution is represented by a rare and fragile
copy of [The Armenian Cook Book], published in Boston in 1926. It is an example of the elusive and significant American imprint, foreign-language (and/or bilingual) culinary works in the Clements. More than two-dozen languages and cultures are represented for the period from the late-nineteenth century to World War II. This 187-page book contains advertisements for Armenian merchants in the Boston area, hundreds of recipes in Armenian, and about five dozen in English, from Ajem Pilaf to Yaprk Dolma.

The letters “B” to “Y” display a similar diversity, but we must skip to “Z,” which takes us to the arid Southwest. Native American contributions to American culinary history are ubiquitous and important. Unfortunately, they have not been adequately recognized or documented, especially in the popular literature, until more recent times.

Anthropologists have helped chronicle native food traditions, and few books have done as thorough a study as Frank Cushing’s Zuni Breadstuff (New York, 1920). The author lived as an adopted member of the tribe from 1879 to 1884. He recorded information respecting the foods of the Zuni as well as their methods of food preparation and the myths, ceremonies, and customs pertaining thereto. Cushing also explores the practical matters of growing, harvesting, brewing, and preparing food, particularly the all-important corn.

Pick a letter. Pick a locale. You will find it all in the Longone Culinary Archive of the Clements Library.

— Janice B. Longone
Curator of American Culinary History

GREEK AND ORIENTAL GROCERY AND MEAT MARKET
297—303 HARRISON AVE., BOSTON, MASS.

Zuni corn production combined religious ceremony, tradition, and practical agriculture, as expressed in this map from Frank Cushing’s 1920 book.
When authors and publishers search for illustrations of historical events of the period between the Civil War and the early twentieth century, the great weeklies, Harper's, Leslie's, and the London Illustrated News, are the most frequently used resources. The Clements has fine sets of each. Less well known but equally useful are Scientific American, the National Police Gazette, and the New York Daily Graphic. The first of these emphasized mechanical subjects and technology, but it contains a surprising wealth of general “views.” The Police

Ransom Olds poses on the streets of Lansing with his recently invented gasoline steam carriage in this picture from the May 21, 1892, issue of Scientific American. According to the text of the accompanying article, “Mr. Olds states that its great advantages are that it never kicks or bites, tires on long runs, and during hot weather...can ride fast enough to make a breeze without sweating the horse.”

Members of the Tramps Social Club of New Orleans at their 1521 Gasquet Street clubhouse in 1908. National Police Gazette.
Riley Clark’s “sporting” barber shop in Fort Worth, Texas, was, ironically, restricted to “whites only.” A 1901 picture from the National Police Gazette.

Gazette emphasized sports and crime, but since it was militantly “democratic” in its character, it also accepted and printed pictures of almost any “sport” or sporting group that sent them in! In the period from the 1880s until the First World War, the periodical contains thousands of views of barbershops, saloons, and sporting clubs. It provides a truly remarkable, uncensored glimpse of average “working stiffs” in their own zones of comfort!

The New York Daily Graphic was another particularly interesting publication. There were usually four folio pages of general pictures every day, requiring the newspaper to be proactive in its search for images. Sensational events, such as fires, collapsed buildings, and train wrecks, were captured within twenty-four to forty-eight hours of their occurrences. Commonplace activities of everyday life, rarely pictured before, were provided for human interest and essentially as “filler.” To boost national circulation, the Graphic ran hundreds of “spreads” of towns and cities throughout the country.

Anyone who used to frequent William Allen & Son’s shop in Philadelphia will remember books for sale that once belonged to the long-defunct Mercantile Library of that city. They were an interesting lot of titles, but they were also notable for being in relatively poor condition—dry paper and blackened bindings, water damage, and soot between the pages. If you bought one, you generally had it rebound. The Graphic illustration and accompanying article, dated February 28, 1877, tell why! On Sunday morning, February 25, fire broke out at Fox’s American Theater on Chestnut Street, burning it essentially to the ground. The Mercantile Library was next door. Although the structure survived, there was extensive smoke and water damage, captured pictorially and perhaps surprisingly by a special artist for a New York daily newspaper!

— John C. Dann
Director
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 2 – December 22, 2006: Exhibit, “Shakespeare’s Worlds in Maps.” Weekdays, 1:00–4:45 p.m.

January 8 – March 20, 2007: Exhibit, “Elegant to Eccentric: Bindings from the Main Room of the William L. Clements Library.” Weekdays, 1:00–4:45 p.m.

March 26 – June 1, 2007: Exhibit, “A to Z: An Alphabet of Regional and Ethnic Culinary Traditions.” Weekdays, 1:00–4:45 p.m.

May 18 – 20, 2007: Second Biennial Symposium on American Culinary History: “Regional and Ethnic Traditions.” Registration information will be available on the Clements Library web site.

June 11 – September 28, 2007: An exhibit by John Dann highlighting the most significant acquisitions in the history of the Clements Library. Weekdays, 1:00–4:45 p.m.

June 11, 2007: Events in honor of the retirement of Clements Library director John Dann. Lecture by award-winning historian David McCullough at Rackham Auditorium followed by a reception at the Clements Library. Further details to be announced.

The first electric “torchlight procession” in the history of the world was held in New York City on October 31, 1884. “Lit up” by a 40-horsepower steam engine, two 950-gallon water tanks, and a 200-amp dynamo drawn by six horses, a group of political stalwarts march in military formation. The light bulbs on their hats were connected to the power source by wires running through their jacket sleeves. It may have been a shocking experience! Scientific American.