Great manuscript repositories, like great museums, are often defined by their great collections. The Clements Library is no exception. Mr. Clements, whose first passion had been for rare books, not one-of-a-kind manuscripts, used his fortune to take advantage of a unique opportunity after the First World War to acquire family-owned major British collections documenting the American Revolution. The Shelburne, Gage, and Clinton Papers constitute a priceless record of the breakaway of the American colonies from the eighteenth-century British Empire. Supplemented by later acquisition of other large collections — Germain and Knox Papers on the British side, the papers of Nathanael Greene and Anthony Wayne on the American — the manuscript holdings of the Clements quickly established the Library as a center for research on the origins of the United States. Of course Mr. Clements and the Library’s leadership through the next fifty years missed few chances to add major manuscript collections in other areas of American history: notably, the James G. Birney and Weld-Grinnell Papers on the antislavery movement, and the James S. Choff Collection for the Civil War. But the period of the Revolution continues to be identified with the Clements Library, drawing researchers from all over the nation and world, and shaping the priorities of those who spend the limited Library funds available for new acquisitions.

What can be lost in the sheer mass and international reputation of the largest Clements collections are the existence and value of the Library’s small manuscript holdings — sometimes no more than a letter or two, or a diary — historical fragments that, especially when placed in context, can cast bright light into corners of the past that otherwise remain dim or dark. Most of these fragmentary collections were produced by ordinary men and women. Critics who have questioned the recent rise of interest among historians in the lives of ordinary people often miss the importance of knowing more about how and why such people responded to major historical events; for example, we know less than we should for the American Revolution about what ordinary Americans thought and did, far below the level at which the Founding Fathers were making crucial decisions. We all know that those decisions were indeed crucial because they elicited a strong response, but until recently historians have been content to let vague general statements take the place of careful study of this popular response. Examples drawn from the smaller Clements collections for the period of the American Revolution illustrate their exceptional potential.

Robert Rogers is one of the legendary figures of American military history. Lionezd by Kenneth Roberts in the historical novel Northwest Passage, he was immortalized for older readers of The Quarto by Spencer Tracy in a film based on the novel. Younger readers may recall a television series more loosely linked to the historical record of the exploits of Rogers and his Rangers. But equally famous in the pre-Revolutionary years, and more highly regarded by senior British officers, was Joseph Gorham. Like Rogers, Gorham was from New England, and recruited his soldiers from Yankee frontiersmen and Indians friendly to the Anglo-American cause. During the climactic struggle between Britain and France, the British Army used American Rangers to locate the enemy (no easy task in the vast wilderness of North America) and to screen British forces against infiltration and surprise attack, like the one that had destroyed General Braddock’s army in 1755. Generals Abercromby and Amherst relied on Rogers’ Rangers during the Lake Champlain campaigns of 1758-59, while General James Wolfe, commanding the British attack on Quebec in 1759, depended heavily on the Rangers commanded by Joseph Gorham.
Not long ago, the Clements acquired a small cache of Gorham letters, though not of Joseph, but of John, his older brother. John also commanded a Ranger unit, in which he had enlisted his little brother Joseph, who learned the Ranger trade in the 1740s as John’s second-in-command. When French resistance before Quebec foiled General Wolfe in the summer of 1759, he sent Joseph Gorham and his Rangers to make the Canadians pay for his frustration. In a month-long campaign that foreshadowed what General Sherman would do to Georgia in 1864, Captain Joseph Gorham and his men brought fire and sword to the St. Lawrence valley in August 1759. Burning houses, barns, and crops, killing or carrying off livestock, but sparing lives except where they met armed resistance, Gorham’s Rangers laid waste the parishes of New France.

Quarto readers know that the Clements owns and proudly displays the finest of four versions painted by Benjamin West of “The Death of General Wolfe.” Art historians credit the picture with being a landmark breakthrough in historical painting to realism, but other historians have struggled to identify key figures in the scene. Leaning toward the dying general from the left side of the picture is a Ranger, who with the seated Indian is one of only two Americans depicted by the American-born painter in this climactic moment of North American history. No positive evidence exists, but circumstances strongly suggest that the Ranger in West’s painting is Captain Joseph Gorham. Like Rogers, Joseph Gorham remained loyal to the Crown during the American Revolution. He died in 1790.

But what connection, if any, is there between Joseph Gorham’s career and the small Clements collection of the papers of his older brother John, who died in 1751? We know that John had turned command of his Rangers over to young Joseph by 1751. John’s letters document what the Gorham brothers and their Rangers had been doing since 1743. They were policing Nova Scotia’s French-speaking settlers, suspected by the Gorhams and British authorities of collaborating in Indian attacks on British garrisons and settlements. Not only did the Rangers deal roughly with these French Catholic civilians, who had become British subjects when France ceded Nova Scotia in 1713, but the Gorhams were also actively lobbying to displace them in favor of loyal Protestant subjects. Captain John Gorham was a land speculator and merchant as well as a soldier; the French, in his view, were both traitors and an obstacle to his own economic ambitions. In 1755, four years after his death, British authorities actually removed thousands of these French colonists — men and women, children and the aged — dispersing them far from their Nova Scotian homes in unhealthy, overcrowded ships; the “Cajuns” (Acadians) of modern Louisiana are among the descendants of those who survived. The cruel campaign waged by John’s brother Joseph during late summer of 1759 among the French settlers of the St. Lawrence thus appears as a logical continuation of the Gorham family’s crusade against French settlers more than a decade earlier in Nova Scotia. Like Ireland or Bosnia today, war in pre-Revolutionary America involved deep ethnic and religious hatred, long memories, and avarice.

The conquest of New France by British arms led directly to postwar British policies that were a major cause of the American Revolution. When the Revolution came in 1775, Joseph Gorham and Robert Rogers were not unusual in adhering to the British side. An estimated one American in five, including most Indians and many African-American slaves, did likewise. Today we may find it difficult to understand how so many Americans could reject the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, and risk their lives and property in opposition to what was often called, on the other side, This Glorious Cause.

John André is best known for his collaboration with the most notorious American Loyalist of them all, the quintessential villain of United States history, Major General Benedict Arnold of the Continental Army. It was the young British Army officer, André, not Arnold, who paid with his life when caught in civilian clothes behind enemy lines while Arnold slipped away to safety. Most of the written record for this unhappy affair is in the Clements Library, part of the massive Clinton Papers. Sixty years ago Carl Van Doren used those papers to write what remains

This naive but charming sketch by John André depicts a raucous scene in or near the British garrison-town of Quebec, probably in early 1775.
the definitive account of Arnold’s
treason in *The Secret War of American
Independence*. Washington and many
other Americans wished that it had been
Arnold dangling at the end of the rope
when the unlucky Major André was
hanged in October 1780.

Less known is André’s career before
he became the chief victim of Arnold’s
treason. In 1778, the Clements acquired
a small collection of André letters
written during his regimental service in
the British garrison of Canada. Among
these letters is a sketch by André of a
wild party, probably outside the city of
Quebec. The sketch is reproduced on
page 2. André was hardly an accom-
plished artist, but he gave us a rare
glimpse of the reality of the North
American colonial frontier. At the party,
for trappers, traders, Indians, British
soldiers, and a bare-breasted woman are
having fun, smoking, drinking, and
dancing: only the landlady, candle in
hand, appears to be unhappy. Though
none of André’s letters mention the
specific incident, making it impossible
for us to know whether the evening
ended peacefully or in a brawl, André
wrote his sister in England that he was
preparing an illustrated journal of his life
in Canada for her amusement. And in
one letter, he described sleighing out of
Quebec with a lady companion: “We
dine, dance rondes, toss pancakes, make
a noise and return, sometimes over turn
and sometimes are frost bit.” It sounds
like the party in the sketch.

The heavy financial cost of support-
ing the garrison in which André served,
which the British government claimed
was established in 1763 to defend the
older American colonies as well as to
secure the newly expanded Empire,
would be a proximate cause of the
Parliamentary attempt to tax the
colonies, and thus of the American
Revolution. Many Americans were at
first prepared to share the logic that
equated the interest of the British
Empire with the best interests of the
American colonies. How many of
these loyal colonists in time became
rebels is one of the enduring questions
about the revolution that gave birth to
the United States.

On first look, a few letters written
1775-77 by an elderly Boston merchant,
Edmund Quincy, may not seem a
promising place to seek an answer to the
question, especially because his cramped
handwriting is virtually illegible. But
Quincy, a conservative old gentleman
and a staunch admirer of the British
Empire, was the father-in-law of both
the radical leader John Hancock and one of
New England’s most prominent Loyalists, Attorney General Jonathan Sewall.
Quincy’s letters to his son Henry, when
deciphered and studied alongside his
other letters held by the Massachusetts
Historical Society, tell us something
important about the causes of the
American Revolution. Quincy regarded
the whole conflict as a terrible mistake,
from which only the detested French
were likely to reap any advantage. But
once Quincy became convinced from his
personal experience as a local magistrate
that British authorities had no respect for
the American claim of certain rights, he
became as radical as his son-in-law
Hancock. Just after reading Thomas
Paine’s *Common Sense*, he wrote Henry
that the British can “have no hope of
conquest” in America and “are sure of
the loss of these Colonies,” while he
praised “General Washington’s skill and
prudence.” British leaders, in old
Edmund Quincy’s view, were either
corrupt or had lost their senses, although
he never gave up hope that out of the
fratricidal war would come a British
decision to form “a Commercial Alliance
at least (if not more) with these Ameri-
\-can Independent States.” For those
without time or patience to decipher
Quincy’s letters, the Clements has edited
and published a selection of them.

Edmund Quincy saw the outbreak of
war in the Boston area, but by 1776
the war had moved to the more strategic
site of New York and the Hudson Valley.
Washington’s attempt to defend New
York led to catastrophic defeat in August
at the battle of Long Island, from which
the American cause barely recovered.
Not long ago, the Clements acquired an
orderly book kept primarily by a company
of New York milita in 1776. Orderly
books record the orders issued by senior
commanders, usually at a daily meeting,
and they often include anything else
deemed important, like unit rosters
and supply receipts. Because the battle
of Long Island was so chaotic on the
American side, with good record-
keeping a low priority, that even
Washington confessed he did not know
how many troops had taken part, it is not
surprising that historians are still puzzled
by exactly what happened at the battle,
and why. The chance to learn whether,
and if so how, our New York milita
comp any took part in the battle made
its acquisition exciting.

Unfortunately for this question,
the orderly book of Captain Abraham
Schenck’s company covers only a few
months after the battle, when New York
troops were trying to guard the Hudson
while the rest of the Continental Army
seemed to be disintegrating west of the
river, in New Jersey. But at the back of
the orderly book are company rosters,
and we can use these lists of names to
consult one of the Clements largest
collections, almost a thousand rolls of
microfilm, acquired with funds granted
for the American Revolution Bicenten-
\-nial by the Eli Lilly Foundation. On the
microfilm, arranged alphabetically, are
thousands of rolls of American Revolu-
tionary veterans and their widows who
lived long enough after the war to apply
for a Federal military service pension.
Each applicant was asked to submit an
affidavit with the details of his wartime
service. Checking Captain Schenck’s
rosters against the pension microfilm, we
naturally find no file for some names,
but we also find others whose affidavits
tell the same incredible story about what
happened in August 1776. As Schenck’s
company marched toward Long Island,
its men were asked to volunteer to
join the battle; some accepted the call,
others declined. In effect, this New York
militia company was allowed to vote on
personally going into combat. Once
the Schenck orderly book is examined in
the context of other evidence, the spirit
of ’76, along with the confusion and
uncertainties of that tumultuous year,
become almost palpable.

Two full boxes of documents in the
Clements, one of the larger “small”
collections, the papers of Edward
Freeman, offer an extraordinary picture
of the American Revolution as seen
from Cape Cod, especially the towns of
Barnstable and Sandwich. School-book
versions of the Revolution indicate that
once the British evacuated Boston in
March 1776, taking with them several
hundred royal office-holders, ambitious
lawyers, and venal merchants, New
England was not much troubled by
Americans who stayed loyal to Britain.
And indeed, in many parts of New
England support for the Revolution
was very solid. But not on Cape Cod.
Edward Freeman, who headed the
Barnstable committee of safety, spent
much of the war trying to detect,
interrogate, intimidate, and if necessary
arrest and punish neighbors who would not give up their allegiance to King George III. Freeman kept a careful record of the committee’s work, and it clearly shows that Cape Cod was swarming with active Tories and pro-British sympathizers. Not only were men suspected of Loyalist activity brought before the committee for close questioning, but women petitioned it asking permission to join their husbands who had fled to British-held Newport, Rhode Island. Some of these Loyalist petitions list members of the family as well as a “squaw”—probably a woman from the nearby Mashpee tribe who looked after the children. Among these Loyalists are some of the Cape’s most prominent families, like the Bournes.

Cape Cod’s vulnerability to British seapower partly explains the strength of Loyalism on the peninsula. Rhode Island, a British base for much of the war, was not far away, while Freeman’s committee uncovered recurrent rumors of an imminent British landing, which was to be the signal for an armed Tory uprising. But the British landing never came, and the little civil war between Freeman’s committee men and their Tory neighbors was marked by anxiety, harsh words, and assorted hardships rather than by bloodshed. Cape Cod’s civil war even had its lighter moments, as when an agent sent Tory-hunting to Marshfield, a town up the coast notorious as a center of Loyalism, was given a secret letter explaining his mission addressed to the sheriff of Essex County. Those directing the mission had overlooked the small geographical fact that Marshfield is in Plymouth County, not Essex, so their agent came home empty-handed and doubtful red-faced and indignant.

How did the deep and bitter divisions on Cape Cod play out once the war was over and American independence achieved? From other records we know that few of the Barnstable Loyalists emigrated. Most stayed where they had always lived; some, Bournes among them, held public office in postwar Massachusetts. The American Revolution, when seen from Cape Cod, was a more complex process than that depicted by tradition.

The roots of Loyalism in the American revolution can be glimpsed in other manuscript items scattered among the Clements collections. John Randolph, the last royal attorney general of Virginia and a kinsman of Thomas Jefferson, left the colony for England well before independence was declared. Today, Randolph is suspected by historians of being the author of several spurious letters, widely published in 1778 as being from General George Washington, letters in which Washington opposed the Declaration of Independence. In the Clements is a single, long letter of April 1778 from Randolph in London to an unnamed American correspondent in which he explains his own opposition to the Revolution. Not unlike Edmund Quincy, Randolph deplored the harm being done by the war as destructive of the true interests of both sides. While hoping for a “Reunion of the two countries,” he thought that only France could profit by a continuation of the conflict. Britain, he warned his American friend, would concede every point at issue except American independence, and he urged the Americans to negotiate a new constitution for the colonies within the Empire while the chance was still open to them. Reading his long, coolly argued letter, we can be sure that Randolph saw himself as the voice of reasoned analysis and common sense.

Radically different in its expression of Loyalism is a much shorter Clements document by another Virginian. Dinah Archey had been a slave who had gained her freedom by heeding the British call early in the war for African-Americans to leave their rebel masters. At the very
end of the war, as the British Army prepared to evacuate New York in August 1783. "Dinah Arche Negro" petitioned the British commander-in-chief against an attempt to re-enslave her, a not uncommon experience for African-Americans who had sought their freedom under British protection. A certain William Fanay had taken her passport and gone before the police to claim her as his property, "which she firmly believes he cannot." The outcome of the case is unknown.

France never materialized as quite the threat to an independent United States that both the rebel Edmund Quincy and the Tory John Randolph had feared it would be. Part of the explanation lies in their shared Francophobia, typical of Americans of their generation, which kept them from seeing that French war aims were limited by a desire to hurt Britain, not to recreate an empire in North America. Moreover, if Britain had lost the War of American Independence, France did not win it. In 1782, after the decisive Franco-American victory at Yorktown that started peace negotiations, French forces suffered major setbacks, notably at the naval battle of The Saints in the Caribbean.

The Papers of the Maréchal de Castries, French naval minister in 1782, are a recently acquired, small Clements collection. Not only do the Castries Papers contain detailed documents arising from the inquiry into the French defeat at The Saints (a group of small islands just south of the island of Guadeloupe), but as well a plan that, had it been known, would have confirmed the worst fears of John Randolph and Edmund Quincy about French war aims. Dated November 1782, and signed by the French admiral, Comte d’Estaing, this lengthy memorandum proposed to continue the war in 1783. In close alliance with Spain, France would embark on a campaign of imperial reconquest. D’Estaing hoped to catch the British off guard while they were evacuating their forces from the American war. Massing at Brest, a Franco-Spanish expedition would seize Jamaica, and then, with the approach of the hurricane season in the West Indies, attack the British naval base at Halifax, Nova Scotia, which would be turned over to Spain, who had no treaty obligations to the United States.

A Map of the Most Inhabited Part of New England, containing the Provinces of Massachusetts Bay and New Hampshire, with the Colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island... published by Thomas Jefferys (London 1755). Note the towns of Barnstable and Sandwich, where Edward Freeman's committee of safety did most of its business, and also the town of Marshfield, up the coast in Plymouth county, where the committee sent a Tory-hunting agent.
Woodcuts on this rare American Revolution broadside depict a common soldier and the Battle of Lexington, April 18, 1775. A Short account of the troubles and dangers our forefathers met with to obtain this land; shewing the right their children have to it at this day. Now published as highly necessary, and is recommended to be preserved in the house of every true friend to the rights and privileges of America. Danvers. Printed by E. Russell, at the house late the Bell Tavern, [1776].

ATTEND all you that stand around, and you shall hear a doleful sound; enough to make your blood to shake, enough to make you burst to break. Look back about two Hundred Years, and to your eyes shall flow with Tears. About that time a King arose, which did his Subjects much oppose; He did Command them to leave, Their Treasures, Houses, and Goods, They fought for Peace, but found it not; O how unhappy was their Lot! Their Troubles knew not end, Till they must either Rise or die; They thought it best to leave the land, And to Refuge from their Foes. But the Place where they then should go, There was not one of them did know; Still they were left to toil and try, Till some new Land they could try, They longed to seat upon the Sea, To settle Hope and little Dale, Till they were driven on the Way, That led them to America. The Land far off, that did they view, A Land their Fathers never knew; They thought the Land they would possess, Though but a howling Wilderness; There could be found sad Men, ONE and Twenty that went them; They were like a band of Thieves, and many did it the same; In Day they were obliged to fight, And lay an Early Body Night. One Day they did fight with awful Dread, And on the next Day their Dead. What Scareys got their Items good? O who can think of their Death? Some were in guilty Beds asleep, While others for their Friends did weep. Their Enemies which did them cause, Were men as base as the Bees; And their Spite it was as great As against Wriers do relate. They gave no Time for Rest nor Ease, But always tasting round like Bees; They had no Time to teach their Sonst, No Time for Work could they afford. Their Blood in Streams did meet the Ground, Which sought now in our Ears to sound, Since Strangers strive to take away, What they bought at so dear a Lay. They found the Climate very cold, Their Leaders they like wise grew cold; Their Blood did greatly exceeding flow, And they did suffer much with Want. Their Comrades they did wear old, They suffer'd much with pressing Cold, Hunger and Cold did both strike, And join their戴iful Enemies. They who came not how to put in Lists, The Fruits this Land did then produce, Or what Hardships did they endure, Before this Land they could manage. Now unto who belongs this Land? It was gained by our Fathers Hands; This Land did their Children gain, That they a free birth might live. This Land they won themselves alone, The Blood shed for it was their own. They speak not of their dwellings round, Help from them they never found, Now let us keep it as our own, If it belongs to us alone. They be not like Thieves, or like a Thief, It never can removed be. Or if we now should once retreat? And our Fore-fathers could but speak, What would their Language to us be? In this Manner they'd speak to thee: What is the Number of your Friends? Compared with them which gain'd us so much! What is their Arts? What is their Power? What is your Blood better than ours? Then let us strive and let us stand, And guard this our most dear bought Land. Let us join when Blood is cut, And guard this the Land did run Streams.
taken first to Upper Sandusky, then to the British post at Detroit. While he was incarcerated, unable to do anything to protect his Moravian flock, American troops swooped down on the Indian settlement at Gnadenhütten, destroying it and killing almost a hundred Indians. Heckewelder, a wartime Loyalist of sorts, went on to a respected career, dying in 1830 after publishing important accounts of American Indian culture. His life bears comparison with that of an earlier German-American Indian "expert," Conrad Weiser (d. 1760), who is noticed elsewhere in this issue of The Quarto.

Most historical accounts treat the final years of the Revolutionary War cursorily, leaving all but a few incidents obscure. Arnold's treason in 1780 and Continental Army mutinies in 1781 are well known, but after the U.S. alliance with France following the British defeat at Saratoga in 1777, little else gets serious attention until the decisive Franco-American victory at Yorktown in 1781. Neither the gradual slide of Revolutionary finances into bankruptcy, the squabbles wracking the Continental Congress, nor the desultory British campaign to conquer the South, offer a clear historical focus. But a national war effort continued after Saratoga, and even after Yorktown four years later, until the end in 1783. A small letterbook — a notebook used for keeping copies of outgoing letters — of a young officer from Brookfield, Massachusetts, gives Clements researchers a window on these obscure, later years of the long war of the American Revolution.

Benjamin Gilbert had joined the war on its first day, when he was still in his teens. Like so many others that day, he responded to reports of fighting at Lexington, well to the east of his Brookfield home. But unlike so many others, he never left the army, except on furlough, until the war's end. Not only did he copy his letters home into a small, bound blank notebook, now worn and wrinkled from its weeks and months of being carried on active duty, but Gilbert also kept a diary, owned today by the New York Historical Association at Cooperstown. While the Clements letter-book is full of interesting detail and opinions, it covers only the later years of the war, after Gilbert had been promoted to officer rank. The Cooperstown diary is a dry record of daily life, but it covers most of his military service and beyond, into the postwar years. When the two documents are studied together a fascinating picture of a Revolutionary patriot emerges. A few years ago the Clements published the Gilbert letter-book with explanatory notes using excerpts from his diary.

One of Gilbert's friends and wartime commanders was Captain Daniel Shays, who in 1786 gave him his name and leadership to the rebellion of western Massachusetts farmers that in part prompted the Philadelphia convention which drafted the Constitution of the United States. Gilbert endured all the wartime hardships, and more, that made Daniel Shays a rebel — little or no pay, runaway inflation, blatant neglect of the Continental Army by both State governments and the Congress while a few speculators and army contractors seemed to be getting rich from the war. Like his fellow officers, Gilbert complained bitterly and frequently, in letters to his father and to friends at home.

Yet we also sense from his letters and diary that his commitment to the cause and to Washington, his God-like commander, never wavered, and that there was much he actually enjoyed about wartime military service. For the troops guarding the key pass in the Hudson valley at West Point during these later years there was considerable time for recreation — swimming in the river, playing ball games, and Sunday excursions to the brothel not far from the New Windsor encampment. On one recreational journey down into Westchester County, an inebriated Gilbert, homeward bound, cracked his shin so hard on a rock that he was lame for a time. Reviewing this very personal record reminds us that Gilbert had literally grown up in the war, and we see a man more than a little apprehensive that his army rank and status will evaporate before he has found a niche in the postwar world.

Gilbert, while home on furlough, had impregnated a girl from the neighboring town of Spencer. Her father, a magistrate, actually got a warrant for Gilbert's arrest, so he did not return to the family farm in Brookfield after the war. Instead, he made his peace with the girl and her family by monetary payment, married instead a girl from Connecticut who he had met during the war, and set out for the New York frontier in Cherry Valley, near Lake Otsego. Unlike Daniel Shays, Gilbert eschewed rebellion and instead joined the Freemasons and the conservative Federalist Party. In time a mature Gilbert served as county sheriff and State assemblyman — a minor local politician flourishing under the patronage of William Cooper, founder of Cooperstown and the father of James Fenimore Cooper. For all the Loyalists who surface in this sampler of the small Clements collections, we suspect Benjamin Gilbert may have been the more typical veteran, and beneficiary, of the American struggle for independence.

The 10 examples just discussed are no more than a fraction of the Library's "minor" holdings on the American Revolution. In preparing this article, the Director compiled a list of about 40 such collections acquired in the last 25 years. Major collections, like the Papers of Charles Townshend (the British minister behind the provocative Townshend Acts of 1767), acquired not many years ago, are still sought, but since the heyday of Mr. Clements' great purchases such collections seldom appear on the market and then only at very high prices. But the Clements does not simply wait for these rare opportunities while passively caring for its existing treasures; the Library continues to seek new acquisitions which will enhance the research value of the larger collections, filling gaps, or occasionally acquiring a unique item of great intrinsic interest, like the petition of the ex-slave Dinah Archey. And since 1970, to take another example, aggressive acquisition has added 85 individual manuscript letters to the large collection of Nathanael Greene Papers, while about two dozen items were added to the Freeman Papers, further documenting the American Revolution on Cape Cod. Some items come by gift, others by purchase as funds are available. But the process of finding ways to cast more light into dark corners of American history never ends.

— John Shy, Professor Emeritus
Department of History
University of Michigan

THE QUARTO PAGE 7
CONRAD WEISER LETTERS SHED IMPORTANT LIGHT ON EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY INDIAN DIPLOMACY

The Clemens Library Associates Board at their May meeting purchased three letters written by Indian Agent Conrad Weiser (1696-1760), a man well trusted by settlers, Indians, and colonial officials living along the Ohio Valley in the late 1740s. Weiser’s letters offer important new insights into eighteenth-century diplomacy in this volatile “middle ground,” where white settlers and Native Americans needed to accommodate each other if they were to survive in peace.

In these letters Weiser, Pennsylvania’s official Indian Agent to the Iroquois Six Nations, was writing to Thomas Lee, member and later president of the Executive Council of Virginia. Dated from October 1745 to August 1750, they discuss political dealings between these two colonies and the Iroquois regarding Virginia’s attempts to establish settlements in the Ohio Valley. The letters provide striking evidence of the powerful influence of Native American peoples on the function and objectives of cross-cultural diplomacy in early America.

At first glance, Conrad Weiser and Thomas Lee seem unlikely correspondents. Weiser, a German Palatine who emigrated to America in 1710, made his living on Pennsylvania’s western frontier as a part-time farmer and Iroquois interpreter, having lived with the Mohawks for sixteen years and becoming an adopted member of their tribe. Thomas Lee, fifth son in the powerful Virginia family of Richard Lee II, managed the vast estate of Lord Fairfax. He became a member of Virginia’s Executive Council in 1732, where he pursued his ambitious plans of extending that colony’s western boundaries. Indeed, when Weiser and Lee first met at the Treaty of Lancaster in 1744, their contrasting backgrounds and assumptions regarding Indian affairs clashed. Weiser, upset by Lee’s haughty, assertive tone with the Indians, arranged for Onondaga Iroquois speaker Canasatego to give Lee a public reprimand in a preliminary council. Weiser earned Lee’s immediate respect. The two men would remain friendly correspondents until Lee’s death in 1750.

Weiser, in a letter dated 25 October 1745, reported to Lee on the Iroquois delegates from his home province, who professed religious scruples against engaging Indians in war. As Weiser reported, Canasatego, seeing the disunity among his prospective allies, “said as to the Hatchit Brethren we receive it into our Bosom and will there hide[ ] it from your Enemies for a Couple of Months. We can not immediately mak[ e] use of it.” Weiser added that Canasatego had to urge the English colonies to set aside their differences, “at which your brethren the 6 nations will be glad, and will think themselves save to be in league with you.”

The Iroquois remained aloof from the English war effort for the remainder of King George’s War in America (1744-48). Anticipating peace between England and France, Thomas Lee, then President of Virginia’s Executive Council, organized the Ohio Company of Virginia in late 1747 and petitioned the crown for a grant of a half million acres of land on Virginia’s western frontier. Again, Lee turned to his friend Weiser to help make the Ohio Company’s plans “agreeable to the Indians.”

Writing to Lee in letters dated June 12 and August 13, 1750, Weiser commented on Lee’s plan for an intercolonial conference with the Iroquois to be held at Fredericksburg, Virginia in September 1750. Lee needed Weiser’s expertise to help him make payment for Ohio lands to a recognized Iroquois authority before any settlement of the Ohio country could proceed with security. To that end, he called on Weiser for assistance in collecting proper Iroquois delegates to receive a large present of woolens, gunpowder, and cash valued at £500.

Weiser’s response to Lee’s request, written on 12 June 1750, demonstrates how much Lee had to learn in dealing with Indians. Weiser agreed to journey from his home in Heidelberg, Pennsylvania to Onondaga on Lee’s behalf, but could not promise to bring the Indians to

Portait of Mohawk chief Soi-en-ga-rah-ta (b.1680-90 - d.1755), an Iroquois ambassador, and British ally against the French on the New York frontier in the 1750s. Henry R. Schoolcraft, Notes on The Iroquois (Albany 1847), frontispiece.
Virginia that summer. He explained that the great distances involved would delay the required meeting of the Grand Council until August at best, "and then after they break up they must go home to their several towns and every nation must agree by themselves who shall go and as they always on such occasions go in great Number and travel very Slow it would certainly be October before they would reach John Harris' Ferry in Pensilvania." Weiser also advised Lee that it was very difficult to arrange a conference of the Iroquois Grand Council outside their normal meeting months of February and March unless a matter of war or peace required it; he suggested spring would likely be the earliest time that he could secure a proper delegation of Iroquois for Lee's purposes.

Lee, however, would not be put off. Fired with a grandiose dream to unite all the British colonies from Nova Scotia to Georgia with the Iroquois in his planned conference, he wrote back to Weiser on 21 June 1750, imploring him to induce the Iroquois to come down to Fredericksburg that summer. Writing on 13 August 1750, Weiser agreed — he would go to Onondaga on Lee's behalf. Alarmed by the French expedition to the Ohio country under Captain Pierre-Joseph Céloron de Blainville in 1749, Weiser also recommended that Lee make arrangements with the governors of Marynd and Pennsylvania to "keep the French off from Ohio, which might perhaps now be done with only the tenth part of the Trouble and Charges, then what will be 15 or 20 years hence, for if the French once establish themselves on that River, we will have an unwearied Enemy upon our Back, and our posterity will perhaps condemn our present neglect." Two days after writing this letter, Lee left for Onondaga.

Weiser's mission failed. En route to Onondaga, Weiser received the unfortunate news of Canasatego's death under suspicious circumstances, and his replacement by Tohashwuchdoony, an Onondaga convert to Catholicism known to be pro-French in his policies. When Weiser finally met with the Onondaga Council in a session abbreviated by the required mourning for Canasatego, they refused to go to Virginia, instead requesting that Lee come to Albany, the traditional location for Iroquois conferences with representatives from the British colonies. Writing to Lee on 4 October 1750, Weiser described his aborted mission. Lee, who had already sent Christopher Gist to begin surveying the Ohio country, then wrote to the Board of Trade, claiming (inaccurately) that the Six Nations at Onondaga had deserted the British alliance, and that he would try to secure a treaty with the assorted Iroquois, Delaware, and Shawnee Indians living in the Ohio Valley. Eight days later Lee died.

The Iroquois' negotiations with Thomas Lee demonstrate the Indians' ability to preserve their own interests with carefully conducted diplomacy. The three letters of Conrad Weiser, analyzed in conjunction with other contemporary sources, depict a world in which Native American conceptions of diplomatic protocol continued to hold sway over competing political interests in different British North American colonies. As previously missing pieces to an early American diplomatic puzzle, the Weiser-Lee letters are an important addition to the Library's Native American History Manuscript Collection.

— Jon W. Parmelee, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of History
University of Michigan

The ambience of an Indian conference at a council fire with British colonial officials, like Conrad Weiser, was captured by this engraving of a Benjamin West painting depicting a meeting in 1764 between Colonel Henry Bouquet and chieftains from Ohio Valley tribes.
When Joseph Priestley came to America in 1794, he was almost as famous as Benjamin Franklin. Best known today for his discovery of oxygen and solving the riddle of combustion, Dr. Priestley in his own time was a controversial figure, comparable perhaps to Dr. Linus Pauling in modern America. For both men science was mixed with provocative and well-publicized ideas about politics and society; and, in Priestley’s case, about religion as well. For Dr. Joseph Priestley was first of all a Doctor of Divinity.

He won recognition in England for his scientific work on optics and electricity in the 1760s just as he was publishing his first works in political philosophy. A Radical Dissenter from the established Church of England, he envisioned a society in which old religious prejudices were swept away, and all men, whatever their beliefs, would enjoy full civil rights, a society ruled by reason. The Earl of Shelburne, a young, wealthy, politically ambitious, liberal-minded peer who recruited progressive thinkers, became Priestley’s patron. From 1773 to 1780 Dr. Priestley served as Shelburne’s librarian and tutor to his son, while enjoying a house, a generous annuity, a laboratory, scientific apparatus, and ample leisure—all provided by Shelburne—to pursue his own work. Priestley’s best scientific work, including the discovery of oxygen, was done during these years with Shelburne.

With the outbreak of the American Revolution, Shelburne and Priestley were at the center of political opposition to the American War. But the war also divided them; Priestley favored American Independence, but Shelburne, less radical, clung to his hope for a restored Anglo-American empire until, as prime minister in 1783, he would be forced to accept the new political realities. In 1780 the two men parted company, amicably. But with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 they and their liberal opinions were once again at the center of a political storm.

After leaving Shelburne, Priestley had settled in Birmingham, a rapidly growing industrial city where religious Dissent was influential among both the restless working class and the rising captains of British industry. Priestley himself married the daughter of the well-known ironmaster, John Wilkinson. But Dr. Priestley’s strenuous advocacy of ideas espoused by the early French himself. The climate in England turned still more hostile with the outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1793. Priestley, lacking the protection of Shelburne’s personal wealth and connections, decided to leave.

So Priestley and his family came to Philadelphia, and trekked up the Schuylkill valley to rustic security in Northumberland, where a stream of visitors, foreign as well as American, soon followed to pay homage to the great man. But his welcome was mixed. Officially greeted by President Washington, invited to settle in New England by Vice-President John Adams, offered Unitarian pulpits in New York and Philadelphia as well as the presidency of the American Philosophical Society, Dr. Priestley was soon under attack by the Federalist Party press and by conservative clergymen for his liberal views. The French Revolution proved as divisive in the United States as in England. But living an ascetic life in the Pennsylvania wilderness, well supported financially, his every need catered to by a devoted wife, he continued to research, write, and support Thomas Jefferson until his death in 1804.

Arriving in Philadelphia from England a year before the famous Dr. Priestley were two artists, husband and wife James and Ellen Sharples, who would make a notable if more modest contribution to the new nation’s history. James was an established painter and had exhibited his oils at the Royal Academy, but in America of the 1790s, facing stiff competition from portraitists like Charles Wilson Peale, John Trumbull, and Gilbert Stuart, James and his talented, much younger wife turned to smaller, less expensive portraits in pastel that could be done quickly and readily reproduced. Their surviving work includes more than two hundred finely detailed, beautifully executed pastel portraits, many of the Founding Fathers and of less prominent Americans as well. Unlike Priestley, James and Ellen Sharples did not settle in the United States; instead, they made two extended

CLA NEWS

A PORTRAIT OF JOSEPH PRIESTLEY IN AMERICA
BY ELLEN SHARPLES, PHILADELPHIA CIRCA 1796-1801

English artist Ellen Sharples made this pastel portrait of Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), shortly after he emigrated to America in 1794, capturing the famous scientist, radical philosopher, theologian, and defender of American liberty in late middle age, with the hint of a smile.

Revolution made him a highly visible target for conservative opposition to all that was happening in France. In mid-1791, when the anti-Christian direction of the Revolution had manifested itself, Birmingham erupted in one of the most serious urban riots in British history, with Priestley and his Dissenting and Unitarian supporters as its chief victims. A mob, driven perhaps as much by class hatred and xenophobia as by traditional religious views, ransacked and burned his house, destroyed a priceless collection of manuscripts and apparatus, and narrowly missed lynching Priestley.
and profitable visits, 1793-1801 and 1809-1811. James died in 1811 and Ellen, herself by then an accomplished and fully established portraitist, returned to England, where she raised three children who also became accomplished artists, leaving £2,000 from her considerable estate to found the Bristol Fine Arts Academy after her death, age 80, in 1849.

The pastel portrait of Joseph Priestley recently purchased by the Clements Library Associates was done by Ellen Sharples. It captures the eminent doctor well into middle age—delicate features, aging skin, and faint smile. Probably it dates from 1796 or 1797, when Priestley made several of his infrequent visits to Philadelphia. After a few years of itinerancy, doing profiles for $15, full face for $20, on "thick gray paper, softly grained and of woolly texture" as one observer recalled, James Sharples had settled his family in Philadelphia with its abundance of prominent and affluent subjects. As James became increasingly diverted by mechanical inventions, none of which succeeded, Ellen took over. She wrote at the time in her diary:

"I had frequently thought that every well educated female, particularly those who had only small fortunes, should at least have the power (even if they did not exercise it) by the cultivation of some available talent, of obtaining the conveniences and some of the elegancies of life and be enabled always to preserve that respectable position in society to which they had been accustomed."

And the talented and determined Ellen Sharples, her elderly spouse drifting ever further into unprofitable eccentricity, proceeded to fulfill her own manifesto, artfully and faithfully recording the likenesses of a stream of "distinguished visitors," among them Dr. Joseph Priestley.

—Arlene Shy
Clements Library

FORTHCOMING EXHIBIT,
"AMERICAN FIRSTS"

Who "discovered" America or invented the steamboat or wrote the first American novel, play, or poetry? When was the first map printed in this city or the first book produced with photographic illustrations? We are all fascinated by "who was first" — first to win the race, to do what no other had done before.

The Clements Library's mid-winter exhibit will celebrate American "firsts," offering a melange of printed works dating from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Included will be early treasures — the first world atlas, pre-dating Columbus' 1492 voyage, the book where America first appeared as a place name, the first published account of Magellan's circumnavigation of the world. There will be first-hand accounts of historical events — the founding of Roanoke, the first English colony in North America, and the settlements at Jamestown, Plymouth, and St. Mary's City (Maryland). On exhibit will be the first account of an American military success on foreign soil — a long-forgotten expedition in 1690 in which Sir William Phipps, with New England troops, captured New Brunswick and Nova Scotia only to have them returned to the French in the peace treaty ending the conflict. There will be magnificent books — the first American color-plate book, architecture book, furnituremaker's guide — and mundane books — the first city directory, sex manual, and set of road maps. Some will be sacred — the first Jewish prayer book published in America, and the Book of Mormon. Others are profane — Fanny Hill, our first "dirty book," the National Police Gazette, our first "supermarket tabloid" (then found only in barbershops and barrooms), and the confession of the country's earliest mass murderer — the sad tale of an indentured servant in Virginia who murdered a family in their sleep with an axe in 1678.

Plan to see this intriguing exhibit, November 4 to January 31, weekdays 12 to 4:45 pm, or by appointment (313) 764-2347. Holiday closing, December 21 through January 1.

Henrietta B. Judah was the owner of this Jewish Prayer Book, the first published in North America, printed by John Holt of New York in 1766.
ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALENDAR OF EVENTS


September 26, Lecture, "Medieval Book Illumination," Professor Jonathan Alexander, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 5 pm., with a reception following. The Medieval Lecture in honor of Emma (Johnny) Alexander is co-sponsored by the History of Art Department, the Hatcher Graduate Library, and the Clements Library.

October 1, Clements Library Associates Board Meeting, 10 am. and Lunch, 12:30 pm, at the Library.

November 4 - January 31, Exhibit, "American Firsts," featuring a melange of rare printed works dating from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, each one being the first published record of a critical moment in early American history. Open weekdays, 12 - 4:45 pm. Holiday closing, December 21 through January 1.

February 3 - April 25, Exhibit, William Cobbett, 1763-1835: The Lives and Adventures of Peter Porcupine. Open weekdays, 12 - 4:45 pm.

CURATOR OF MAPS AND NEWSPAPERS

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Brian Leigh Dunnigan as Curator of Maps and Newspapers, succeeding David Bosse who has become Librarian of Historic Deerfield. Brian Dunnigan attended the University of Michigan, receiving the B.A. and M.A. in history and holds a M.A. in museum practices from the Cooperstown Program, State University of New York. He has enjoyed a distinguished career as Director of Historic Fort Wayne (1973-77) and Fort Niagara (1977-1996). His numerous publications are in the field of eighteenth-century British and American military history. Clements Library Associates will remember his illustrated lecture on the history of Michilimackinac presented several years ago. A native of Michigan, Brian has strong family ties to Mackinac Island, where he and his wife Candice have been lifelong summer residents. He will assume the curatorship in November 1996.

PRICE VISITING RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

Applications for 1997 Price Visiting Research Fellowships, which provide support for travel, should be made between October 1 and December 20, 1996. Awards will be announced in January 1997. For further information contact Head of Reader Services, phone (313) 764-2347, FAX (313) 747-0716.

EXHIBIT BULLETIN

Copies of American Cookery: The Bicentennial, 1796-1996: An Exhibition of 200 Years of American Cookbooks at the Clements Library August 15-November 1, 1996, by Jan Longone are available: Clements Associates, $4.00 by mail, $2.50 at the Library; non-members, $8.00 by mail, $5.00 at the Library.