Here We Go!

Plans for Observing the 50th anniversary of the Library this year are taking shape.

The first event will be a special exhibition and bulletin for a scholarly conference on campus in mid-March on The City in History: Idea and Reality. We will display our earliest urban maps and describe them in an accompanying guide. This publication will also be mailed to all Associates. One afternoon the Library will be host to the conferees at tea.

Early in May the Associates will host a banquet for all friends of the Library, which will include state officials and University officers as well as Associates. The University is providing a distinguished speaker: Carlisle H. Humelsine, President of Colonial Williamsburg. Invitations will be sent out later with an offer of free tickets. We hope to see all of you within driving distance at that time. The Board of Governors expects to announce victory in its campaign to raise $50,000 as a birthday gift.

A conference of some two dozen rare book librarians will convene at the Library later in May. This informal group has been meeting annually to discuss common problems and hear outside speakers.

A biography of Mr. Clements as a collector will appear by summer. It was written by a doctoral candidate in Library School, Mrs. Margaret Maxwell, and publication has been made possible by the interest of certain friends of Mr. Clements who are Associates. The book was carefully researched here and elsewhere and will establish Mr. Clements among his contemporaries, who were among the last of the great collectors of Americana. Associates will be advised later on how to procure copies from the publisher.

A history of the Library, with a résumé of its collections on various major topics, will be published as a booklet. Readers will learn of the growth of the institution and the kind of materials to be found on its shelves. Associates will automatically receive copies.

In October the Library will exhibit gems from its remarkable collection of early American sheet music donated by Mr. and Mrs. Bly Corn ing of Flint. The exhibition will be held in the Art Museum, where wall space is available. There will be an opening night to which Associates and friends of the Art Museum will be invited. Mr. and Mrs. Corn ing will be honored guests. The Library will also publish a descriptive guide to the Corn ing collection.

By coincidence, this is Quarto No. 100. The four issues during 1973 will each carry some recognition of the Golden Anniversary. There may be other developments to add to this list.

The Frugal (?) Housewife

Most of the cookbooks in use in 18th century America were either published in England or were American editions of English works. Perhaps American cooks simply did not have the leisure to commit their recipes to writing. The Frugal Housewife, by Susannah Carter (Philadelphia, 1796), a recent addition to the Library from the Philadelphia Alumni Club, had first appeared in England about 25 years earlier. By present-day standards its directions seem charmingly inexact, obviously intended for experienced cooks. Of special interest are the twelve suggested bills of fare, one for each month of the year, listed at the end of the book. Each menu consists of two courses, with nine dishes for each course. Frugal? Among the 18 items suggested for a March menu are stewed carp, soup lorraine, beef steak pie, veal collops, almond pudding, calves ears, a trifle, tame pigeons, sweetbreads, craw fish, fricassee of rabbits, and stewed sweet pears.
THE CLEMENTS LIBRARY ASSOCIATES
of The University of Michigan

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The Pitchman

To our growing collection of books on early American humor, we have added The Life and Adventures of Henry Smith, the Celebrated Razor Strop Man (Boston 1848). After pursuing a variety of careers without notable success, the English-born Smith turned to selling razor strops on Wall Street. Here his amusing line of patter gained him an audience as well as a large number of customers, and he became something of a local character. The newspapers took him up, and someone even wrote a play about him. Eventually he toured most of the eastern and southern states as far west as Arkansas, selling his razor strops and telling his droll stories wherever he went. Because he was a reformed drunkard, he liked to intersperse his humor with serious homilies on temperance.

Winning New Friends

Under the Leadership of Mrs. Eleanor Wernette of Ann Arbor, an enthusiastic Associate, a committee of women interested in the Library has been formed. They are going to act as hosts for groups of other women, husbands and even families to visit the Library and hear a "gallery talk" about interesting areas of collecting and research from the director or staff members.

The purpose of these gatherings is to introduce strangers to the nature of the Library, its holdings, and its program of activities. There are many younger couples in Ann Arbor and vicinity, newcomers to faculty and town, whom we don’t know and who are unfamiliar with the Library. We need a constituent body, not just for publicity value, but to attend various functions we sponsor. The problem has been to identify and reach them. The committee hopes we will embark us on the right course for enlarging our circle of local friends. Of course, they will be invited to join the Associates, but that is not the primary objective. We must interest them first.

Hello! Anybody Home?

In this era of tight security surrounding public officials, we can but marvel at the free access to the President which our nineteenth-century forefathers accepted as a citizen’s right. Hugh Roden, a charmingly precocious drummer boy in the 7th Regt., New Jersey Volunteers, describes an uninvited visit to President Lincoln in a recently-catalogued letter:

Camp Casey
October 13th, 1861

Dear Mother, Father, Sisters,

I take this opportunity of writing a few lines to let you know that I am well and I hope you are the same. . . .

I went down to the City yeasterday afternoon and Bought me a pair of Shoes. We are under marching orders and no man is allowed to leave the Camp. . . . I hope we will move soon. I was in the presidents house yeasterday. I was all alone. I had heard that they received visitors so I walked in to the reception room. Every thing is style there. After I had reasted myself I went up stairs. I had my new shoes on my feet and the old ones under my arm but I wanted to see
the President of this Glorious Republic so I marched along the large Hall till I was arrested by the sound of voices which proceeded from a small room. I immediately continued my march in the direction of said room. When I arrived who should I see but the object of my search seated around a small table with other men of less distinction. Some were office seekers who were trying hard to talk sweet to the president. One man wanted an office as major in the regular army and he delivered a fine speech about shedding his last drop of blood for his country (Pocket). He said it was not for gain that he wanted the office but it was for to serve his country and he thought the country would be benefited by his services. Mr. President replied that there was not a place open at present, but if his visitor was so willing to sacrifice for his country he could find plenty of opportunity in the volunteers. The visitor sighed and walked away. I shook hands with the President and took my leave of all the other members, promising to call again. I put my shoes under my arms and commenced my march to the camp. While on the way I picked up a cat just like the cat I had at home, and carried it in triumph to the camp where I was received with shouts of applause and so ended my adventure.

Lord Byron

Surprisingly, the first collected edition of the poems of the English writer, Lord Byron, appeared in the U.S. This was in 1813, six years after his first publication. It came upon the heels of the amazing success of the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" published after his "Grand tour" of Europe. By 1815, a collected edition was issued in England and many such editions came out on the continent too.

A recent acquisition is this set of two small volumes published by Moses Thomas and printed by William Frey in Philadelphia. A quotation from his friend, George Ticknor, in his Life, Letters and Journals shows the author's pleased reaction: "He [Byron] spoke to me of a copy of the American edition of his poems, which I had sent him, and expressed his satisfaction at seeing it in a small form, because in that way, he said, nobody would be prevented from purchasing it."

An interesting feature of each volume is the presence of two title pages, one called Poems and the other Poetical works. The publisher carefully explains in volume 1, that this volume can be sold as a separate work, or as the first volume of his entire works, and for that reason one of the title pages can be cancelled when the work is bound.

This item was purchased from the fund established by the University of Michigan Club of Greater Philadelphia.

First Circus Ad

In the course of research at the Library, Associate Stuart Thayer has discovered what he considers the first illustration used by a circus in newspaper advertising. The cut depicts a man standing on one foot on the back of a trotting horse waving an American flag in each hand. The circus was that of James West, and the ad appeared in the New York Evening Post to publicize performances given between September 4 and October 30, 1820.

An Englishman, West had brought his troupe to this country in 1816, when the circus was at low ebb, and revitalized the business with his outstanding entertainment. So successful was he that a New York theater group bought him out in order to limit his competition. Apparently West's use of newspaper cuts did not impress his competitors, for no others appeared until 1823.

Freneau

When the New York Theatre in New York was to be dedicated in 1821, replacing the former structure destroyed by fire a year earlier, the managers offered a prize for the best poetical address written for the occasion. The winner out of some fifty or sixty entrants was Charles Sprague of Boston, who was awarded a gold medal and the honor of having his poem recited on opening night by one of the actors. All of entries in the contest were published under the title The Rejected Addresses; Together with the Prize Address (New York, 1821), which the Library has just acquired.

It is of interest to us primarily because it includes a hitherto unknown poem by Philip Freneau, whose entry appears anonymously under the heading "Address. The author's name mislaid." Until a modern Freneau scholar discovered the same poem printed in a New Jersey newspaper for Sept. 8, 1821, where it was attributed to Freneau, the authorship remained
unknown. The poem laments the fact that America is still dependent upon Europe for its stage productions and expresses the hope that native geniuses will arise to supply the lack of good American dramas.

The book includes a magnificent folding frontispiece showing the interior of the new theater's stage.

When the World was Young

Sometimes it is difficult to explain our interest in old books on America. They appear so remote and irrelevant. We have argued that they contain ideas, now so readily accepted they are taken for granted, which were fresh and exciting when offered. We argue mathematically that in acquiring books from 1492 to 1860 we cover 368 years of the 480 years of the history of the Americas.

Now we have run across reinforcement. Oliver Wendell Holmes refreshed us with what appears to have been an offhand, but sage, remark: "Old books, as you well know, are books of the World's Youth, and new books are Fruits of its Age." We wish the Now Generation could comprehend this.

Don't Spare the Rod

Maria Edgeworth, better known as a novelist, was also intensely concerned with social and moral issues. A reflection of this interest was her two-volume publication, Practical Education, written in collaboration with her father, Richard L. Edgeworth. It was a scientific work in that it was based upon actual observation of children and on interviews between children and adults. As explained in the preface, all the chapters relating to the teaching of specific subjects, such as literature or arithmetic, were written by her father; while Miss Edgeworth contributed the sections on toys, obedience, rewards and punishments, etc.

Her advice sounds quite sensible and is, in fact, very much the sort of thing we might read in a 20th century book on child rearing. For example, there is her emphasis on the importance of having the punishment follow soon after the misdemeanor, if the child is to understand what he is being punished for; and her insistence that toys should exercise the imaginative and inventive powers of the child, rather than being merely decorative.

Our edition of the book is the first American (New York, 1801), and was purchased from the Charles A. and Alva Gordon Sink Fund.

Handsome Transfer

In keeping with the generous spirit of cooperation existing between our institutions, the Michigan Historical Collections has recently transferred to our care a variety of manuscripts and printed items. Inevitably, they have accumulated some non-Michigan items of the pre-Civil War era which would be more fully utilized by scholars in our library.

Each of the four small lots of letters provides depth to subject areas in which we already possess strength. Ninety-nine items relating to John P. Williams, 1797-1816, give new insight into the problems of supplying the nation's earliest military outposts on the Ohio and Mississippi; twelve letters of Alanson St. Clair, lecturer and editor in Iowa and Illinois, provide a most welcome addition to our strong antislavery holdings; and the brief diary of Lucius W. Chapman, chaplain to the 110th Ohio Vols., complements our miscellaneous collection of Civil War items. We were also greatly pleased to add five fine letters to our extensive Lewis Cass collection.

We were also given 80 pieces of sheet music by Stephen Foster, two songsters of the 1860's containing words to his songs, and several sheets bearing words and illustrations of his popular songs.

Carousing Sailors and Other Odds and Ends

While much of the work of the Library's American Revolution Bicentennial Project deals with rather dry statistics, occasionally we come across items of more general interest. Take the case of sixteen sailors in 1776, for example. According to one newspaper report, in April of that year these British sailors went ashore for water on Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Finding a lighthouse, they began to behave in its upper room as sailors on shore are reputed to do. Some patriot militia surprised the carousing sailors, took away the bottom of the stairs, and made unhappy (or happy) prisoners of them.

Careless grammar sometimes makes for humor. Take the following sentence from a 1776 journal: "We have lost one Sailor, who was killed as he lay sleeping on the Grass by a Cannon Ball."