Founder's Day

More Than 200 Associates and friends gathered on April 15 to observe Founder's Day and bid goodbye to the Director and Mrs. Peckham. As chairman of the Committee of Management, President Fleming presided. Dr. William B. Willcox, editor of the Benjamin Franklin papers, former chairman of the University of Michigan History Department, was the speaker. Using autobiography, Dr. Willcox gave a memorable tribute to Mr. Peckham as he related the importance of the Clements Library in his own scholarly career.

Mr. Fleming called on James Schoff of New York, one of the Governors of the Associates. Mr. Schoff announced that the Board of Governors had commissioned a portrait to be painted of Mr. Peckham as a gift to the Library to mark his administration. Robert Briggs, chairman of the Board, unveiled it. The artist is Joseph Maniscalco of Detroit. Mr. Fleming then called on the director.

Mr. Peckham expressed his own and Mrs. Peckham's thanks for the honor of the day. He paid tribute to the presidents and vice presidents under whom he had served for their sensitivity to the needs and values represented by this Library, to the very competent and dedicated staff for their services, and to his wife who shared his interest in American history and had shared him with the Library.

Tea and a social hour followed the formal program.

That night the Board of Governors and Committee of Management dined at Inglis House. Robert Briggs, who had arranged most of the day's festivities, presided. Professor John Shy of the Committee of Management offered toasts to the Peckhams after an amusing résumé of toasting history. Former President Harlan Hatcher spoke of the University's re-examination of the role of the Clements Library when he came here, the Committee's search for a new director, and Mr. Peckham's appointment.

Duane Diedrich, a Governor, reminded the guests that Indiana also laid a claim on the Peckhams and presented two certificates to them signed by the Governor of Indiana appointing them "Sagamores of the Wabash." Dr. Thomas Cross, a Governor, presented to the Peckhams from the Board an early book on whaling, specially bound and boxed by James Craven with a piece of scrimshaw inset in the morocco cover designed by Susan Sanford.

Mr. Peckham thanked his hosts and hostesses for a memorable occasion and assured both the Board and the Committee of his warm regard for their counsel and help through the years. He recalled that he first became acquainted with the Clements Library as a student when it was six years old, and now it is 54.

Hudson Panorama

Although as a Rule the library does not collect mere curiosities, of which many have been produced by inventive minds in the printing fraternity over the years, the Associates Board has purchased a delightful oddity.

Anticipating sales among the thousands of inhabitants and tourists who patronized Hudson River steamers, William Ward published a Panorama of the Hudson River in 1845. Its dimensions are six inches wide by twelve feet long! On six pieces of paper pasted together are engraved one inch high continuous views of the river from New York to Albany and back. The artist had to take considerable license with the scale (uninteresting sections of the shoreline are shortened); it shows all natural phenomena, homes, boat-houses, and even historical sites. Should any Associates have a particular interest or knowledge of the Hudson River, the staff would be delighted to show off this fascinating item.
Hawthorne on Manuscripts

There is a tangible aesthetic reward in reading manuscripts. For today’s scholars, inundated with printed words and microforms, there is a relevancy to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s words: “To give them their full effect, we should imagine that these letters have this moment been brought to town by the splashed and wayworn post rider, or perhaps by an orderly dragoon, who has ridden in a perilous hurry to deliver his dispatches. They are magic scrolls, if read in the right spirit. The roll of the drum and the fanfare of the trumpet is latent in some of them; and in others, an echo of the oratory that resounded in the old halls of the Continental Congress, at Philadelphia; or the words may come to us as with the living utterance of one of those illustrious men, speaking face to face, in friendly communion. Strange, that the mere identity of paper and ink should be so powerful. The same thoughts might look cold and ineffectual in a printed book. Human nature craves a certain materialism, and clings pertinaciously to what is tangible, as if that were of more importance than the spirit accidentally involved in it. And, in truth, the original manuscript has always something which print itself must inevitably lose. An erasure, even a blot, a casual irregularity of hand, and all such little imperfections of mechanical execution, bring us close to the writer, and perhaps convey some of those subtle intimations for which language has no shape.”

Board of Governors

At the meeting of the Board on April 15 at noon, the secretary made a report on a trial mailing to attract new members. It showed twelve acceptances. The Board considered other methods of promoting membership. The purchase of a scarce Parliamentary act of 1650 prohibiting American trade and a pamphlet, engraving, and manuscript orderly book described elsewhere in this issue was approved. The Board also discussed final plans for the day’s activities.

Manuscript Journal

A faithful Michigan alumnus, Oliver P. Grosvenor of Natick, Mass., brought us a series of early nineteenth-century family letters some years back. Returning for his sixty-sixth reunion at the Engineering School this spring, he brought us another treasure.

Almon Wheeler (1798–1837), father of the U.S. Vice President under Hayes, set out from Malone, New York, in a gig for Boston in 1826. Mr. Grosvenor has given us the well-written, thoughtful diary which Wheeler kept on his travels through the White Mountains of New Hampshire to Portland, Maine. He was there on July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of Independence, and notes that “many got drunk.”

Passing through Saco and Kennebunk Harbors, he learned at Portsmouth of John Adams’ death and comments at length on its symbolic significance (the news of Jefferson’s simultaneous demise took several days to reach New England).

Wheeler kept to the coast through Greenfield, Hampton Beach, Newburyport, and Boston, and he returned by way of the Shaker Village at Lebanon, N.Y. The journal is a fine addition to our small but growing collection of manuscript American travel literature.
Staff Change

As a result of Mr. Peckham's moving up his retirement date a few weeks, John C. Dann has assumed the responsibilities of director. He was appointed by the Board of Regents.

His promotion left vacant his former position as curator of manuscripts. The assistant curator, Arlene P. Shy, who has worked in the division for more than four years, has been made curator.

Douglas Marshall, curator of maps and newspapers, who has been on research leave in England for four months, has returned to duty.

Marjorie Brunner, half-time receptionist and typist for the last three years, will be leaving the library on July 1st. She and her family will be in the Washington, D.C., area for the next year, where her husband, on leave from the Political Science Department, will be working as a legislative aide to a member of the House of Representatives with a grant from the Council on Foreign Relations. She has been the ideal employee in every sense and will be greatly missed.

"Jam up" Travel Account

LONG BEFORE H. L. Mencken published his classic study of The American Language (1919), native and foreign observers noted peculiarities in our speech. Origins of our distinctive pronunciations and slang are obscure, but regional differences were sufficient to make travel in nineteenth-century America a fascinating and sometimes baffling experience.

Rev. James L. Scott, a Seventh Day Baptist, journeyed through Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin in 1842 and published his Journal of a Missionary Tour (Providence, R.I.) the succeeding year. As an Easterner, he found "the West" uncouth and uncivilized—speech in particular.

"Well I reckon"; I'm "tolerable"; "We had a powerful rain yesterday"; "I can haul it"; "He knows a heap"; "It was a jam up (good) dinner" such phrases, which, if not all commonplace today, would be intelligible throughout the country, were new and upsetting to a Rhode Islander.

At mealtime, Scott was forced to eat "corn dodgers" and "common doings," wheat bread and "chicken fixings," "pickled eggs," and "stewed crab-apples." He admitted that he often shut his eyes "while conveying the food to my mouth."

Behind the bias of the author, however, lies a fascinating picture of cultural development in the middle West. The volume was obscurely published and is scarce. We are indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Harry Towsley for making possible its purchase.

Committee of Management

THE COMMITTEE MET on April 16 and heard a report on the Library's Bicentennial publications and discussed a royalty policy. James S. Schoff was recommended to the Regents for another term on the Committee. John C. Dann, the director-elect, attended the meeting and announced that a grant had been received from the National Endowment for the Humanities for compilation of a new guide to the manuscript collections, and further that the G. K. Hall Co. of Boston wished to publish it.

Louisiana

CONDITIONED BY THE popular doctrine of the 1840's that it was the "manifest destiny" of the United States to expand from the Atlantic to the Pacific, American history textbooks give the impression that territorial expansion was inevitable. The Clements Library Associates purchased an exceedingly scarce pamphlet for us at their April meeting which illustrates the fortuitous nature of Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase.

George Orr was a perceptive British citizen who observed France's takeover of Louisiana with apprehension. In the Possession of Louisiana by the French Considered (London, 1803), he warns that a Napoleonic stronghold in the continental heartland of America would enable the French to dominate the Gulf of Mexico, threaten the West Indies, and exert a major influence in South America. By implication he urged intervention, and it is not inconceivable that, had France fortified the territory, the British might have readily opened an American theater to the Anglo-French struggle.

Fortunately for the Americans, Napoleon foresaw the possibilities of entanglement in an American struggle. Before he had even taken formal possession of the territory as stipulated in the Franco-Spanish treaty of October, 1801, the Emperor transmitted to U.S. envoy Robert E. Livingston his willingness to sell. Jefferson had the foresight to purchase, and in so doing, he laid the foundation for national greatness.
CORNWALLIS WAS FAR TOO ambitious to be content merely with holding territory in South Carolina and Georgia after the capture of Charleston on May 12, 1780. He applied to his British superiors and was granted permission to launch an offensive campaign in pursuit of Horatio Gates and Nathanael Greene. Cornwallis brilliantly defeated Gates at Camden on August 16, 1780. Although the British suffered losses at Kings Mountain, October 7, 1780, and Cowpens, January 17, 1780, Cornwallis commanded a superior force against the ill equipped American troops even after the arrival of the able Nathanael Greene as U.S. Southern commander.

Through the generosity of the Associates, the Clements Library has acquired an important British orderly book; it provides a daily record of the progress of Cornwallis' army from Shallow Ford, N.C., to Petersburg, Va., Richmond, Hanover Courthouse, Williamsburg, Jamestown, and across the James River to Suffolk. At that point the journal stops. Shortly afterwards, the army was transported to Yorktown, where, after a two month siege, Cornwallis surrendered.

Orderly books tend to be dull reading, but behind the dry entries, this volume clearly suggests why Cornwallis, seemingly on the attack, was in fact marching to defeat. Numerous orders relate to the plundering which so alienated even well-disposed citizens. Morale was dangerously low. Provisions were increasingly scarce, and the many slaves taken up and enrolled by the army as laborers were obviously becoming a food-consuming burden. This orderly book complements the Nathanael Greene Papers and the Clinton-Cornwallis letterbooks already on the library shelves in documenting the Southern campaign.

My Dear Cousin,

I am very tired tonight, have been on the field all day, went to the 3rd Division 2nd Army Corps. I suppose there are about 500 wounded belonging to the second Army Corps. They have one patch of woods devoted to each army corps for a hospital. I being interested in 2nd Corps because Will had been in it, got into one of its ambulances and went out at 8 this morning and came in at 6 this evening. There are no words in the English language to express the sufferings I witnessed today. The men lie on the ground. Their clothes have been cut off them to dress their wounds. They are half naked, have nothing but hard tack to eat only as sanitary commissions and Christian associations and so forth give them. I was the first woman who reached the 2nd Corps after the 3 days fight of Gettysburg. I was in that corps all day, not another woman within ½ mile. I was introduced to the surgeons of the post, went anywhere throughout the corps and received nothing but the greatest politeness from the lowest private. You can tell Aunt that there is every opportunity for seeseh sympathizers to do a good work among the butternuts. We have lots of them here suffering fearfully. To give you some idea of the extent and number of the wounds, 4 surgeons, none of whom were idle 15 minutes at a time, were busy all day amputating legs and arms. I gave to every man that had a leg or arm off a Gill of wine, to every wounded man in 3rd division I glass of lemonade, some bread and preserves and tobacco. As much as I am opposed to the latter they need it very much, they are so much exhausted. I feel very thankful that this was a successful battle. The spirit of the men is so high lots of poor fellows said today what was an arm to whipping Lee out of Pennsylvania. I would get on first rate if they would not ask me to write to their wives. That I cannot do without crying which is not pleasant to either party. I do not mind blood a bit, have seen arms and legs both taken off and was not sick at all.

Women are needed here very badly, anyone who is willing to go to field hospitals but nothing but an order from Secretary Stanton or General Halleck will let you through the lines. . . . If you could mail me a newspaper it would be a great satisfaction as we do not get the news here and the soldiers are so anxious to hear. Things will be different here in a short time.