Fund Raising Campaign

Our Fund Raising Drive is moving along at a fairly good pace. To date 112 have contributed a total of $23,000.

Our goal is $65,000. We need $2,000 more to secure the $25,000 challenge grant from the McGregor Fund and a total of $17,000.

Our sincere thanks are extended to those who have generously contributed! We would encourage anyone who has not yet given to consider doing so. It is only through your support that the Clements Library is able to take advantage of the opportunities for outstanding acquisitions provided by the Sang sales.

New York's Wealthiest Men

We Americans have long been interested in the rich among us and have displayed an avid curiosity about the sources of their wealth and the way they live. To gratify this interest, Moses Yale Beach, publisher of the New York Sun, compiled in 1845 a small pamphlet with a long title, Wealth and Biography of the Wealthy Citizens of New York City, Comprising an Alphabetical Arrangement of Persons Estimated to Be Worth $100,000, and Upwards. With the Sums Appended to Each Name. The pamphlet was issued yearly for some time, and it was the precursor of many studies of the rich, such as the recent book on America's richest families.

The longest biography belongs to John Jacob Astor whose wealth, conservatively placed at $25,000,000, was gained chiefly through investing in New York real estate, "not one foot of which he ever mortgaged." His son and successor, William B. Astor, is said to have received much of his property from his deceased uncle, Henry Astor, "long celebrated as a butcher in the Bowery." Of Cornelius Vanderbilt (worth only $400,000 at that time) the compiler says, "Of an old Dutch root, Cornelius has evinced more energy and 'go aheadativeness' in building and driving steamboats . . . than ever one single Dutchman possessed. It takes our American hot suns to clear off the vapors and fogs of the 'Zuyder Zee,' and wake up the phlegm of a descendant of old Holland."

A Quaker merchant, Thomas Buckley, is commended in these words: "[He] made a very good adventure, the first impulse to his fortune, when he married a daughter of the rich John Lawrence, deceased." The author, Mr. Beach, even includes a flattering biography of himself and notes that from the time he bought out his partner on the New York Sun for the sum of $19,000, "his star, or rather his Sun, has been steadily in the ascendant."

Other familiar New York names that appear are August Belmont; Albert Gallatin; several Lorillards who had already become rich in the tobacco business; Duncan Phyfe who "commenced . . . a poor cabinetmaker, and has now the largest and most fashionable establishment in the country"; two Roosevelts; Josiah Macy, the sea captain and merchant; and Clement C. Moore, author of "'Twas the Night Before Christmas."

Gettysburg

Thousands of Words have been written about the Battle of Gettysburg. No other single event in the Civil War has so fascinated and appalled the American mind. Contemporary accounts of those terrible three days have a compelling immediacy. This is one of several fine letters recently given to the library by Mrs. Norman Hartweg of Ann Arbor.

Camp In the field At Kelleys
Ford Fauquier County, Virginia
Sunday Morning August the
Second, Eighteen Sixty three
Dear Sister,

I received your kind and welcome letter of the twenty-fourth and was glad to hear that the folks were all in good health. My health is first rate and has been all through this terrible campaign, for we have had a great trial of very hard marching and the weather has been very hot and dry the most of the time. We have marched some three to four hundred miles since the thirteenth of June and fought one of the hardest battles of the war and, better than all the rest, we have thoroughly flogged the best army the rebels ever had and the one with which they boasted that they were a going to run over Maryland and Pennsylvania, take Harrisburg and Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington and dictate their own terms of Peace on our own soil. But thank God that the bloody field of Gettysburg changed their tune from a strain of triumphant boasting to one of howling despair and instead of a confident forward march into Pennsylvania they commenced a sneaking, cowardly retreat to the mountains of Virginia, closely followed by our victorious army. And now after a retreat of two hundred miles, they begin to turn at bay and dispute our advance and yesterday there was heavy cannonading in our front and on our right and distant, as near as I could judge by the sound, from seven to ten miles. But what it amounted to I have not heard as yet and in all probability you will get the particulars of the fight of yesterday in the New York papers sooner than we shall here within ten miles of the action and, in fact, we are the most anxious mortals you ever saw to get the papers that give accounts of battles in which we have participated. For in the smoke of a battle field all that we see or know is confined to our own regiment and half of the time we can’t see four rods in either side of us. I am not surprised to hear of your anxiety to hear from me after the battle for it was a busy place, I can tel you. At our part of the line the battle commenced at daylight on the third and became general along the whole of our division in a few minutes. The first three or four shots that were fired on that part of the field were fired by one of the boys in our co. at one of the rebel sharpshooters. He hit him at the third shot and just at that time the rebels showed their line and the fire commenced in earnest. Our men were being sheltered by log breastworks and the rebels being in the woods and behind the rocks and trees and until we fired our sixty rounds of ammunition. We loaded and fired just as fast as we could and then we were relieved by other troops and went out to rest and replenish our cartridge boxes and for one hour we rested and then went in again and fired from sixty to eighty rounds to the man and then we were relieved by other troops...

About that time the rebels fell back and we took position [on] the battle field and for the rest of the day their was skirmishing all along our line. That night the rebels retreated leaving their dead and a good many of their wounded in our hands and the next morning it was one of the most awful sights I beheld. For where the rebel line was, their dead were literally piled in heaps and their was not a twig or bush, tree or stone of the size of a hens egg but what showed the effects of our murderous fire and as a proof of its deadly effects I saw lots of dead rebels that
had been hit ten to twelve times each. . . . The officers of our division said that their was five hundred of the rebels killed and fifteen hundred wounded. Five thousand muskets were thrown away by the foe in front of our division [and] were picked up by our men the next day after the battle. The loss of our division in killed, wounded and missing amounted to three hundred and forty three. The reason for the great difference in our loss and that of the enemy was in the fact that we acted on the defensive and we fought behind breastworks and the rebels had to come out in sight and we butchered them like sheep. The loss in our regiment was six killed and sixteen wounded and of that number our company lost two killed and six wounded, being by far the most exposed of any of our regiment. But I never saw men go into battle with that recklessness and gayety that our men displayed on that bloody day. They were laughing and joking all the time while busily engaged in the work of death. . . . Our foe were the very best in Lee's army, being Johnson's Division of Ewell's Corps and being composed in part of Jackson's old Stonewall Brigade. . . . We [took] two hundred of them prisoners and they said that they never withstood anything like such a murderous fire as that we poured into them that day. . . . We have just got orders to march at four P.M. and I shall be in a hurry to get ready so I will say good bye for the time and hoping soon to hear from you, I remain truly your Brother, J. Miller.

Sang Sale

The Sang Auction of April 26 was advertised as the manuscript sale of the century, and it lived up to its name. Philip Sang was a wealthy Chicago businessman. He accumulated a vast amount of first rate autograph manuscript material, most of it relating to American history before 1865.

John Dann and Jim Schoff attended the sale, and it was quite a spectacle. No manuscript sale had ever approached the one million and four hundred thousand dollar sales total, and no one had ever before paid $70,000 for a single document (a Paul Revere signed receipt). Records were set for Lincoln letters, for a set of autographs of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, and for many other items.

To be honest, many of the manuscripts were show items of little research value. All of the Lincoln and Washington letters had been previously published—their texts fully available to scholars. Yet there were many bidders with more money than sense and investors who know very little about manuscripts.

Alongside the excessively priced autographs, however, were manuscripts with less glamor but significant historical content. The Clements, with your generous contributions behind it, did remarkably well with these substantive items. We acquired two long letters, two maps, and a pencil drawing by John André: 30 letters to Nathaniel Freeman of the Sandwich, Mass., Committee of Safety, many of whose papers we already had; 18 outstanding letters of Nathanael Greene; a manuscript map done in 1760 of Fort Ligonier in western Pennsylvania. Jim Schoff added a wonderful letter of Henry Wirz, which he immediately donated to the Library. Several of the items are described on the following pages.

Carpenters of Shippensburg

Carpentry was a critical skill in eighteenth-century America, as an expanding urban population and new wealth increased the demand for private homes and public buildings. In the 1720's the craft began to protect its interests by forming restrictive societies. The Carpenter's Company of the City and County of Philadelphia became the model for these organizations which spread along the eastern seaboard. Initially, they resembled an association of contractors rather than a trade union, with membership limited to "none but Master Carpenters and Fellow Craft of the Trade." These companies, concerned primarily with the standardization of fees and quality of work, wrote constitutions to govern the membership, drew price lists, controlled competition within the city, and mediated disputes.

As material prosperity grew, carpenters' companies spread inland. Within a short time after the American Revolution they existed throughout Pennsylvania. The Library has recently acquired a fascinating manuscript documenting this development. On a few small, browned pages, stitched together, and creased with wear is "Robert Cook's Bill of Rates." It records his accounts for work done from 1795-1803, but most important, it contains the price list for "Carpenter and House-Joiner Work, settled and agreed on by the subscribers, for the County of Franklin and Shippensburg, April 13, 1790." The wide range of work listed is impressive.
There is elaborate woodworking: “a double architrave window frame with stone moulding, a double Cornish mantle shelf, fluted shells with all their mouldings” and basic necessities: “Straight joynt floors, Ruff petitions Studed or Boarded, Open nuel Stairs plain, and Shingling.” The less affluent could have “leveling and lathing” or “window ways cut” in log houses.

Andersonville

Through the generosity of James S. Schoff, the Library acquired a superb Civil War manuscript at the Sang sale. The letter, written by Henry Wirz, commandant of Andersonville Prison Camp, two weeks before his execution as a war criminal, is an eloquent proclamation of his innocence.

Henry Wirz, a Swiss-born doctor, had emigrated to America in 1849. When Shots were fired at Sumter, he enlisted in the Louisiana Volunteers. Earlier in the war he had sustained a painful shoulder wound, but in February, 1864, when the Confederates built their prison camp in Georgia, he took command.

Andersonville was no more than a hastily thrown up stockade around 16 acres of field land, remote enough from the advancing Union Army to be secure. From the beginning it was overcrowded; the system of prisoner exchange which had been viable earlier in the war had been abandoned and captives poured into the camp before shelters, kitchen, medical or sanitary facilities could be erected. The economic collapse of the Confederacy itself was reflected in the horrible conditions at Andersonville.

Of all the prison camps, North or South, Andersonville was the most publicized. There developed in the North a conviction that Union soldiers were intentionally mistreated. When Wirz was arrested he was charged with conspiracy to kill prisoners. During his trial the prosecution relentlessly catalogued the atrocities committed at Andersonville to indict Wirz.

The nation, then, could not accept Wirz’s defense: “My heart rebels at the thought, that I should suffer the extreme penalty of the law, in expiation of crimes alleged to me. . . . Crimes which I never committed, which no man who wears the imprint of his Maker ever did, ever could commit. . . . Great God is it possible that I should suffer for the faults of others? . . . If it is decided that I shall be the victim to be sacrificed upon the altar of an offended country, I am satisfied. . . . God grant that my life will be the last one demanded to pacify the people. . . .”

Two world wars and Vietnam have given us the perspective to understand that Andersonville was, in Catton’s words, “a creation of its time and place . . . the real culprit is seen not as Wirz, the luckless scapegoat, but as itself.”

A Land Divided

Ask any schoolchild to name the most important dividing line in the history of America and you are likely to hear about our new map—even if none think of it as a map. The Mason-Dixon line was drawn in 1768, five years after Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon were commissioned to survey it. Although we have come to know the line as the division between southern and northern states, formerly slave and free, it was originally planned to settle the regional dispute between Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. The problem began in 1681 when William Penn’s grant of land was known to overlap with what had already been given to Lord Baltimore and the resulting conflict dragged on for 81 years.

The report of Mason and Dixon and a strip map on two sheets were published by Robert Kennedy of Philadelphia by August 1768. The maps are somewhat unusual in that the Delaware portion of 120 miles appeared on one sheet with title and cartouche, while the Pennsylvania line of 230 miles was engraved on the other sheet with a separate title and cartouche. The arrangement was such that the map strips could be cut away from the remainder of the sheet, including titles, and in all but two of the surviving examples this had been done. Only two hundred copies of each sheet were printed and until now only nine were known to exist. Therefore, it was with particular delight that we learned that an uncut version of the Maryland-Pennsylvania sheet was available.

Each sheet is listed as a separate map in the Wheat and Brun list of maps published in America before 1800. The Mason-Dixon map becomes the second acquired from the list this year; the map of the Western Reserve was reported in the March Quarto. This brings our total to 38 of the 150 known separately published and most significant maps from Wheat and Brun, in comparison to Yale’s 28 and the John Carter Brown’s 30. Only the Library of Congress has more—a total of 64.