CLA: Twelfth Year

At the end of a dozen years of existence the Clements Library Associates can take pride in the impressive total of acquisitions it has made for the Library. It has expended in that period the sum of $45,664. Stated another way, the Library now owns more than $45,000 worth of books, manuscripts, and maps that it would not possess if the Associates did not exist.

In the past fiscal year the Board of Governors met in October 1958 and June 1959. At those meetings they authorized the expenditure of $4759 for purchases, as compared to $4203 the year before. Altogether eight books and two manuscripts were purchased. Both manuscripts were sufficiently significant to achieve publication: the unaccepted letter to George Washington from Lord Howe was issued for the Associates, and Lord Howe’s essay defending his naval conduct during the Revolution will be published this fall by the University of Michigan Press. Four of the books were purchased at auction from funds made available by the Board for this purpose.

The seventh in the series of annual Randolph G. Adams Memorial Lectures was delivered at the Library by Prof. Edmund S. Morgan of Brown University speaking on “The Trouble With Books.” Four issues of The Quarto were issued for members. The gift booklet was mentioned above.

The Board’s momentous decision occurred in June. A manuscript collection that would augment another already owned by the Library was offered at a price beyond the reach of the University appropriation to the Library. The Board came to the conclusion that it would join hands with the Library’s Committee of Management in an effort to make the purchase, if the portion wanted of the collection is made available. The decision meant that the Board would pledge a bequest and also raise money from among its members for this undertaking. Success of the joint endeavor cannot be announced with certainty before the end of the summer.

With this exciting commitment, the Board then made only two purchases, both books, from materials the Library had on approval.

As the fiscal year ended, membership in the Associates stood at 512. Balance of uncommitted funds on hand was $3619.

The great enemy of any civilization is the enemy within. Its name is not subversion or revolution or decadence but rigidity. Just as every power group tends to limit its outlook as it hardens its position, so the temptation of a successful people is to make a cult of the artifacts of its success, rather than celebrate the daring and the large outlook that made the achievements possible.

—Max Lerner

'Voices of the American Revolution'

After long planning and mechanical delays, the Clements Library has produced a long-playing phonograph record that "publishes" in a new medium excerpts from some of its manuscript collections. It is not a musical but a speaking record, with a score of appropriate voices repeating words written during the American Revolution. It is not a dull lecture about the war, but impassioned, moving utterances by participants. You hear history in the making.

The Library director made the selections and then "bridged" them with brief explanations, so that a running narrative or commentary results. The record begins with General Thomas Gage reading the first part of his orders sending the British troops out of Boston to seize the rebel supplies in Concord, in April 1775. It ends with some pearls of wisdom dropped by old Ben Franklin to the British government in October 1789 that it had better sign the peace treaty in hand because certainly a more favorable one would not be conceded by the Americans.

This is the stuff from which history textbooks are written, but they unfortunately drain all the drama and emotion out of the events recounted. The listener will hear how common soldiers and minor officers as well as commanders reacted to the events in which they were caught up. They will hear Britain's Colonial Sec-
note of Lord Cornwallis offering to surrender at Yorktown is followed by his acrimonious self-justification. Altogether there are more than twenty excerpts from significant letters and reports on important events of the Revolution. The record not only says something, it conveys something—the tenseness, the weariness, the joy, the glorious expectations of the struggle for independence.

With the indispensable help of the staff of WUOM, the University Broadcasting Service, the cast of readers was assembled and a tape recording made. Records were pressed by RCA and are carefully packaged in a colorful album carrying pictures and explanation. Admittedly, this is an experimental product of the Clements Library, a departure in communicating source materials and an advertisement of the resources available in the Library.

The 12-inch record runs on its two sides for a total of 45 minutes. It is offered for general sale at four dollars, postpaid. Associates and alumni should find it of special interest.

Christmas Gift?
For the person who “has everything,” for the relative who is always difficult to buy for, and for the school child whose interest might be caught, may we suggest for Christmas the new Clements Library phonograph record of “Voices of the American Revolution” at $4, postpaid. It is a dramatic and different kind of lesson in history, a contemporary reconstruction of our heritage. You do not simply hear, but overhear—as if you were standing near—the words of participants in the stirring episodes of the American Revolution. See this column for further explanation.

International Council
The University is host in September to the International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies for its fifth biennial assembly. The Council was organized in Brussels ten years ago with the blessing of UNESCO. It has always met in Paris, but two years ago the University of Michigan delegate invited the group to Ann Arbor.

Seeking a cultural setting for the Council that would reflect the American heritage, the committee in charge of arrangements turned to the Clements Library. We are glad to accommodate them. There will be 26 delegates from 14 countries, plus 17 observers. Telephonic immediate translations will be provided.

Much of this year’s program will be concerned with the place of the humanities in a world that is rapidly becoming urbanized and subject to the forces of technology. Specifically, are the “humanizing” effects of classical traditions given a chance to operate in the rapid shift in certain parts of the world from rural to urban culture? The proceedings of the conference will be published. If the deliberations of the Council require the closing of the Library to readers for three days, we think the purposes are worth this concentration.

Panorama Painter
Henry Lewis, a self-taught painter of St. Louis, was one of four artists in the mid-nineteenth century to combine showmanship and art in a unique way. These men painted “panoramas” and exhibited them for pay. Perhaps they were forerunners of the Chautauqua movement, for their motive was educational rather than entertainment.

A panorama was a scene, a
series of travel scenes, on a continuous roll of canvas. The favorite topic was to delineate what the traveller down the Mississippi River saw. Of course, in reality that was a journey of several days and several hundred miles. But the panorama painters did their best to reproduce the habitations, forests, plains, and cities en route. One of them advertised that his canvas was a mile long! Lewis was content with an actual half mile of canvas, eight feet high.

The huge roll was unwound and wound on to another spool by a boy or two turning a crank out of sight on the stage. Mr. Lewis stood to one side of his overwhelming masterpiece and delivered a lecture, taking his audience in words and pictures on a cruise down the Mississippi. Don’t think these panoramas were not popular! Unfortunately, they were expensive to transport and operate, as several persons had to be paid.

Lewis painted his canvas from 1847 to 1849, then exhibited it for the next three years in the East, Midwest, and Canada. Serious, optimistic, and hard working, he decided in 1852 to carry his work to Europe, where he also wanted to study art earnestly. He settled in an art colony in Düsseldorf and tried his hand at what all the other artists were doing: sentimental scenes and dark, dull views of the Rhine. The competition for sales was terrific, and ultimately Victorian taste for landscapes was satiated. Even though Lewis never prospered, he did get married and continued to live in his adopted city. Ultimately he became American consul there, until his death in 1904.

He tried one more wild project. In collaboration with George B. Douglas he wrote a book about the Mississippi Valley which he illustrated with 78 plates made up of minute scenes copied from his panorama. (Incidentally, he sold his monster canvas to a man who carried it off to India and the East Indies, but never quite paid for it.) The Düsseldorf publisher who issued Lewis’ book in 1854 promptly went broke, and only a few copies were bound up and sold. The printed illustrations were all made and they were sold separately and even given away in the Düsseldorf bookstores. Entitled Das Illustrierte Mississippihal, the book is phenomenally scarce today and worth something more than $2000.

What this long introduction is leading up to is that 48 letters from this fascinating person have turned up in, of all places, Ann Arbor! They were owned by the granddaughter of George Lewis, Henry’s brother, to whom they were addressed over the years from 1849 to 1876. They tell of his trials in exhibiting his panorama through the Old Northwest, his struggles in Europe, his reflection of foreign opinion on our Civil War, etc. The Library has now bought the letters (we lack a copy of the book) which reflect the tastes of a century ago and the hard lot of a dedicated artist.

1958-59 Growth

Compilation of the Library’s annual report reveals that 313 rare books were acquired in the past year. Twenty-seven of them date before 1700, 94 date in the eighteenth century, and 192 in the early part of the nineteenth century. It is clear that books of the nineteenth century are more available than earlier ones.

Viewed topically the largest additions were made in the category of religious activities and sermons: 63 titles; and in the westward movement: 53 titles. Voyages and travels were enriched by 27 items, American literature and music by 19, and antislavery literature by 16. On the Revolutionary period we added 14 titles, and to the French and Indian War 6 titles plus 10 others on Indian affairs generally. In economics fell 15 titles, and science claimed 12. These groups serve to give an idea of how the Library grows.

Use of the Library continues to be gratifying. For the second year in a row we counted more than 1000 research visits—1042 to be exact. This record was compiled by approximately 150 research workers.

The complete annual report will be sent to Associates when it is printed, probably next December or January.

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Harris Letterbook

A recent manuscript purchase has enriched our collections treating American foreign affairs during the War of 1812. It is a letter-book kept by Levett Harris of Pennsylvania, American consul in Russia (1805–1817), containing eighty-two of his letters and dispatches written in 1814. Assuming his post at St. Petersburg six years before the first permanent diplomatic mission of the United States to Russia was launched, Harris became charged

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...Count me as an Associate. Here is my contribution (5$ minimum) for 1959. As a bonus I shall receive a reproduction copy of the Columbus Letter (1493) in Latin and English. (over)
with quasi-diplomatic functions in addition to his consular duties. Thus he came to be regarded in part, Count Nesselrode later certified, as the founder of relations between the two countries.

Glimpses of Harris' activities, with evidence of his wide acceptance in St. Petersburg society, appear in the diary of John Quincy Adams, the minister appointed to Russia in 1809. Minister and consul were at first jointly engaged in the perplexities of trade arising from Russia's limited adherence to Napoleon's Continental System. In defense of American neutral commerce, they cooperated with Russian commissions of neutral navigation in distinguishing genuine American ships and cargoes from British shipping in Yankee disguise; and they took action to protect American seamen, frequently the innocent sufferers from such frauds. When hostilities commenced between England and America, Harris termed himself "an adversary to the war," his view of its "impolicy" provoking "frequent contentions" with his senior colleague. He was soon flattered by an appointment, in 1819, as secretary to the distinguished American legation (composed of Gallatin, Adams and Bayard) commissioned to treat with the enemy under the proffered mediation of the Czar. A year later, that mission having proved futile, he followed Gallatin and Bayard to London. But he was promptly summoned back to St. Petersburg; for Adams had meantime received orders to participate in new direct peace negotiations (ultimately conducted at Ghent), which called for Harris to act as American chargé d'affaires in the minister's absence.

The letter-book entries date mainly from Harris' return, in July 1814, to the Russian capital. His thirty-one addressees include three of the American Commissioners at Ghent and correspondents on the Continent, in England, and in America. Except for two letters, this correspondence has not been printed.

Special interest attaches to these materials for their first-hand accounts of intelligence, opinion and rumor which circulated at the Russian court while critical negotiations were transacting at both Ghent and Vienna. They contain important reports of Harris' official activities, mixed with his personal observations, noteworthy both for their pessimistic estimate of prospects for success in the Ghent discussions, and for their identification of the American war with Continental considerations. Late in 1814, he began to insist that American interests would be served less by a conclusion of peace than by a prolongation of the conflict. In Europe's view, he asserted, America was "fighting the battles of the continent." He therefore cherished higher hopes than did most of his countrymen for a favorable settlement of maritime rights at the Vienna congress.

These letters also open the curtain a little way on the scene of Harris' controversial business activities. Like others in the consular service, Harris conducted private business operations along-side his public post. And when he returned to America in 1817, it was clear that his "private" concerns had netted him "a princely fortune." How far his profits stemmed from corruption in his post was never made certain; but they became the subject of a Cabinet investigation, and subsequently of a protracted suit for slander instituted by Harris in the Pennsylvania courts. Adams assures us, at any rate, that they were unquestionably tainted. Harris lacked "the firmness to withstand the temptation of profitable venality," Adams concluded.

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**Blocked Passage**

In an earlier Quarto mention was made of the books and pamphlets relating to England's attempt to find a northwest passage around North America in the middle of the eighteenth century. Not only did ice block the way and make the passage impossible (until our recent atomic-powered submarine made it under the ice), but rival ship captains fell into an unholy row about exactly where each other had gone. We reported then that of the thirteen titles constituting this controversy, the Library owned nine of them.

This summer Jim Shearer II bought us another, an extremely rare one: Henry Ellis (one of the disputants), *Considerations of the Great Advantages which would arise from Discovery of the Northwest Passage* (London 1750). Nobody would gainsay him that; he was simply indulging in wishful thinking.

Anyway, ten down and three to go.