A Man of Parts

With the passing of Douglas McMurtrie, the printing and bibliographical worlds lost one of their most energetic and imaginative minds. He brought to typography a judicial touch of modern design, free of fads and exaggerations. To printers he was an artistic businessman. He introduced to bibliographical mass production with quality control and the idea of progressive bibliography—the publishing of good, though incomplete, bibliographical information for use now, rather than waiting indefinitely in the hope of achieving finality or ideal thoroughness. He himself made a practice of getting his bibliographical discoveries promptly into print so that the world could share what he knew. To librarians he was a scholarly businessman.

He had a business, yes; but his avocations deceived others and must have made him wonder sometimes what his real job was. His unselfish work as consultant for the American Imprints Inventory of the Historical Records Survey is a splendid example of good citizenship. His joviality, keen mind, and contagious enthusiasm made him welcome as a speaker to all learned society meetings. If you knew Douglas McMurtrie, probably you associate him with the one kind of work or research which you heard him discussing at that time. But don't be misled by that disarming modesty; his versatility was amazing. Sometime take a look under his name in a large library catalogue. You will find close to 500 cards. And you may be surprised by his productiveness in one field which printers, librarians, and scholars would not suspect.

Incidentally, his monumental work on the history of printing in Michigan is a collector's item. Owing to an unfortunate accident in the bindery, it exists in less than fifty copies.

Spell Well

A new group of Greene letters purchased to add to our collection of General Nathanael Greene's papers contained one from the general to his incomparable wife, Caty, in 1777. Greene was in Morristown, New Jersey, and was expecting his wife to join him from Rhode Island. He was notoriously fond of his bewitching lady and wanted her always to show to her best before others. That she never failed to do so is attested by numerous letters about her visits to headquarters where she captivated everyone, including the stern proprietor of Mount Vernon.
Our friend with the pain in his head
Is an editor headed for bed.
He'll feel a lot worse
When he ponders this verse
And finds that the last line won't rhyme.

Flash on Jefferson's Libraries

Recently the director of the Clements Library attended a seance at the Library of Congress devoted to the preparation of a catalogue of Thomas Jefferson's library, or libraries (he had three in succession). Spirited discussion (no pun) arose over whether it was now possible to locate the books from Jefferson's last library. The Jefferson "experts" were sure they were scattered to the four winds or destroyed—even though it is almost always possible to identify a book once owned by Jefferson from secret marks he made. Mr Adams averred he knew where there were sixteen such books in one place. Mr Lawrence C. Wroth, of the John Carter Brown Library, allowed as how he knew where another lot was.

Well, admitted the experts, those were just exceptions that proved the rule. The bulk of the library was gone. Besides, how would you go about trying to find the surviving volumes, etc., etc. So-o-o, as Ed Wynn still says, the meeting broke up, and our Mr A, donning his fore-and-aft Sherlock Holmes hat, wandered down the street to Lowdermilk's book store. He asked a question. The proprietor nodded. Mr A came home from Washington with three books from Jefferson's last library, raising our score to nineteen.

Since then, the Clements Library has issued a facsimile of the auction sale catalogue of Jefferson's last library and has sent it far and wide throughout the country for the Library of Congress in an attempt to locate other copies of books from the Jefferson Library. If you have Jefferson books—or know of some individual who has any—please let us know. An excellent start towards locating the missing books has been made and we'd like to exhibit the results of a little bit of activity. You can help.

Col. Hamtramck's Library

Newcomers to Detroit are usually surprised by one of two facts: (1) that the city of Hamtramck actually was named after a person, or (2) that the person for whom the city was named was not a Pole. He was Colonel John Francis Hamtramck, born in Canada of Alsatian parentage. He served throughout the American Revolution and continued with the American Army until his death in Detroit in 1809. (There were also three-volume editions in 1772, 1778, and 1789.)

The Life of Frederick the Second, Trans. by Jean Charles Thibalt de Laveaux. Lond.: J. Debrett, 1789. 2 vols.

Collection Complete des Tra vaux, by Honoré Gabriel, Comte de Mirabeau, Paris: Lejay, 1791–92. 5 vols. (In the inventory, this is given as "Mirabeau's Works" so that there is a possibility that Hamtramck owned an English translation. However, Hamtramck was familiar with the French language.

The three other books, which cannot be identified, are:
French Bible. 4 vols.
French and Latin dictionary.
Work on military tactics.

When the estate was settled, the valuation of the volumes was set at $60.47.

Also the Clements Library can add one title to Hamtramck's library—at least, it was in his possession at one time. It is a copy of The Life of Frederick the Second, Trans. by Jean Charles Thibalt de Laveaux. Lond.: J. Debrett, 1789. 2 vols.


The Seasons, by James Thomson. (Many editions of this were printed during the eighteenth century in both England and America.)

The History of Scotland, by William Robertson. 2 vols. (Fourteen editions of this work were published between 1759 and 1794.)


The Seasons, by James Thomson. (Many editions of this were printed during the eighteenth century in both England and America.)
For Soothing Savage Breasts

The printing of music, like the printing of books, is European in origin and, like books, the printing and engraving of music came late to America. Yet music was significant in American colonial life from the earliest times, although the first example now extant was not printed here until 1698 in the ninth edition of the “Bay Psalm Book”. This was not music for music’s sake, but an instrument of congregational worship. Indeed, most of the early music in America was of religious character and was printed as an integral part of a religious text, says Music Librarian Hartin.

Scattered through the books in the Clements Library there is a good collection of American music which we have pulled together to exhibit during December. It is not a large collection but it is representative of the music published during the early years of this country’s development. Several of the examples are well out of the ordinary, including such a piece as Gabriel Sagard-Thedot’s Histoire du Canada (Paris, 1696) which, incidentally, is the first “Michigan” book. One of the tunes included starts “Alouet ho ho hé hé ha ha Halouet ho ho hé”. (Not the “Alouette” we know, but possibly a blood brother.)

The earliest American music was engraved and it often consisted of a sheet inserted in a magazine or a few leaves added to a book of psalms. The first book to contain music printed from movable types (secured, by the way, from Amsterdam) was the Psalms of David printed in New York by James Parker in 1707. The edition was run off especially for the use of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church and it was paid for by Isaac Roosevelt, an ancestor of That Man Again. (We have the manuscript bills for the printing.)

Paul Revere engraved a frontispiece and text for William Billings’ New-England Psalm-Singer, in 1770, which is the first book of American hymns by a native musician. Far more frequent are collections of English musicians, such as those of William Tans’ur (American Harmony or Royal Melody Complete, Newbury-Port: Daniel Bailey, 1771; 6th ed.) and Nahum Tate & Nicholas Brady (A New Version of the Psalms of David Boston: Nicholas Bowes, 1774). But contributions by sons of other nations are not lacking and the Pennsylvania-German colonies produced several collections including those published by Michael Billmeyer (Germantown, 1799), Johann Wyeth (Harrisburg, 1818 and 1821) and Joseph Bär und Söhnen (Lancaster, 1854). Even Hawaiians are represented with Ka Lira Hawaii (Honolulu, 1844) in which “Old Hundred” starts “leho no ke akua mau, Ka puuhonua no kakou . . .”

Perhaps most interesting of all the pieces in the exhibit is Samuel Larkin’s song book The Nightingale (Portsmouth, N.H., 1804), which contains an early printing of “To Anacreon in Heaven”, the popular English toast song to the tune of which was later sung “The Star Spangled Banner”. The Anacreontic Society (of London), to which the song “To Anacreon in Heaven” was peculiar, was an eighteenth century convivial organization which met fortnightly during the winter season for a grand concert by the flower of the musical profession in London (all of whom were honorary members for the occasion). The concert was followed by an elegant collation and when the cloth was removed the chairman or his deputy sang the constitutional song beginning “To Anacreon in Heaven, where he sat in full glee, a few sons of Harmony sent a Petition that he their inspirer and patron would be . . .”

During the song, the members stood at their places and joined hands; afterwards, they sang catches and glee in their proper styles and all manner of other songs. “The Anacreontic Song” as harmonized by the author was a good standard three-part glee begun by the bass and joined by other voices. The distribution of the voices has led to one or two complications. In combining the parts into a single melodic line, the result is a tune of formidable range and high tessitura (Gosh! what diction!), a musical effect most probably not sought by the jovial Anacreontics—not even the most enthusiastic of their whiskey tenors. Americans are familiar with the difficulty of singing our national anthem.

New Bookplate

The collection of early American drama taking shape in the Clements Library from the generosity of two friends (see The Quartto, No. 7) called for a special bookplate which would designate the acquisitions as part of the Herbert C. Ely Memorial Collection. We wanted some kind of design or illustration on the bookplate. Of course, tragic and comic masks suggested themselves immediately, and so did the facades of some ancient and famous theatres. But we wanted something unusual, something American, and preferably something unpublished.

Suddenly we remembered that we owned an unpublished play evidently written by John Graves Simcoe, commandant of the Queen’s Rangers in the Revolution, first governor of Upper Canada (1792-1794), and author of a military journal. What is more, the manuscript drama was illustrated with water color drawings. Mrs Simcoe was a noted amateur painter. One of the illustrations shows an interior stage scene, with seven actors in view and a map of North America above the fireplace. Here, then, was an unpublished stage setting for a play written by a man well known in America. Besides, it is the kind of picture which makes people ask questions and we like people who ask curious questions. Although we could not reproduce it in color, the picture came out very well (reduced) in collotype.
Noel and Coward
The fortunate (or unfortunate) coincidence of Christmas and income tax figuring produces an admixture of joyful and grudging giving. Each occasion is presided over by a gentleman with a white beard; there the resemblance ceases. We certainly have no claim on our readers for St. Nicholas bundles, but as the editors have been badgered for nigh on two months by the excited wants of their small fry, they take a vicarious pleasure in telling the world what the University collecting agencies want for Christmas.

The directness, not to say baldness, of our approach exonerates us at least from charge of unseemly coyness or cowardice. Moreover, we exhibit our continued faith in Mr S. Claus by assuming that there are people of generous instincts who honestly would like to know what items the University wishes to own. Merry Christmas!

But if we appear to some readers to resemble more closely the other bearded gent, Uncle Sam with extended palm, let us only remind them, while they are using their holidays madly to seek income tax reductions, that gifts to the University are deductible. Pax vobiscum.

THE LAW LIBRARY WANTS:

Laws of the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio to 31st of December 1791. Phila.: Childs & Swaine, 1792.
Early session laws of Ohio, first through seventh assemblies, 1803-1808.
Autograph letters of the justices of the U. S. Supreme Court, preferably written while they were on the bench.

MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS WANTS:

Histories of Cheboygan, Huron, Ionia, Macomb, Sanilac, Schoolcraft, and Tuscola counties.
Printed pamphlets of local history, convention speeches, orations, state occasions and events, memorials, etc.
Printed handbills of sales, recruiting, entertainments, lectures, public meetings, rewards for criminals and runaway slaves, election campaigns, etc.
Photographs of Michigan residents and scenes within the state.
Records and minutes of school districts and churches.
Diaries, letterbooks, and papers of Michi­
gan people.
Ledgers and letterbooks of Michigan businesses.
Papers of former faculty members of the University.

THE CLEMENTS LIBRARY WANTS:

Bay Psalm Book. Cambridge, 1640.
Exquemeling's Zee-Roovers, or Pirates. Amsterdam, 1678.
Sir Jeffery Amherst's papers. ("All right, boys, now let's be reasonable.")
Fry & Jefferson's Map of Virginia, 1751.
Bellin's Carte de la Louisiana, 1750.
Warner's Courses of the River Rappahannock and Potowmack, c. 1737.
Manuscript maps of the Old Northwest Territory.
Rowlandson's True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson. London, 1682.
Cohen's History of the Five Indian Nations. N.Y., 1727.

An Act of the Fourth Congress of the U.S.A. Detroit: John McCall, 1796.
The Western Almanack. Detroit, 1825.

A letter like the following:

Dear Dr. Adams:

For several years I have followed the course of the Clements Library from a distance with great interest. What you have been doing there has always pleased me very much. Your library is different from all other libraries I know. It preserves the cultural heritage of America with a wonderful respect for the books themselves. Briefly, it understands and appreciates books the way a collector does.

You will find enclosed my check for $50 as a measure of my appreciation of what your library is doing. I shall be happy to think that I now have a share in that work. Please use the check for the purchase of any rare book which appeals to you and which you might not be able to buy otherwise.

Why is there no organized "friends of the Clements Library?" I would like to belong to such a group and so would others, I believe. Then we would know from time to time about the acquisitions you make and the gaps you would like filled.

Very truly yours,

Bibliographical Purlieus

John Carter, co-author with Graham Pollard of the bibliographical sleuthing on the Thomas J. Wise literary forgeries, recalled those exciting days when he spoke at the Clements Library late in November. Mr. Carter is in this country for the British Ministry of Information and apologized to the Library's guests for playing hookey from his regular work to indulge in thoughts of former times. He supplied a good deal of information about Wise's peculiarities which was not in the restrained volume which he helped to write. And he confessed his chagrin that already careless booksellers are offering (as the first printings) the very books he and Pollard exposed.

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