Board of Governors Meeting

The board gathered for lunch before the Founder’s Day tea and program on April 4. It passed a resolution of respect for the late Roscoe O. Bonisteele and acted to fill three vacancies on the Board (see below). Plans for next year’s “birthday present” campaign to mark the fiftieth year of the Library were discussed. Robert P. Briggs was elected vice chairman. Various books were examined, and four were purchased from Associates’ funds and one more from the contributions of Fellows. They are described in other columns.

At this close of the fiscal year we are happy to report that the total amount of money raised and spent by the Associates since 1947, in regular contributions and special fund drives, has reached the stunning total of $330,700! As a result we are about fifteen years ahead of where we would have been if we had had only our university appropriation to spend. Moreover, all those extra acquisitions made possible by the Associates have increased in value.

New Governors

The board recommended to the Regents, and they have appointed the following persons to serve on the Board of Governors:

President-emeritus Harlan Hatcher is familiar with the purposes and development of the Library because of his long service as chairman of its Committee of Management. His literary interests and perception, along with his sense of history, will be valuable to the Board.

Dr. Thomas N. Cross, associate professor of psychiatry in the Medical School, is well known to the Library because of his interest in collecting manuscript letters. He has a number of distinguished autographs of eminent 18th and 19th century figures.

James M. Klancnik is a recent graduate of our Law School who joined the Associates while still a student. He is now practicing in Chicago and continues to collect early books on Dutch history.

We are glad to welcome them to the governing council of our friends’ organization.

Ohio Company

A year after it was organized (we have the Articles of Association, 1786), the Ohio Company issued its first report—misleadingly called also Articles of Association, 1787. This report did reprint the articles, but it also offered the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and a report of progress in securing land from Congress and attracting settlers to move there. It seemed to us to be a necessary adjunct to the first title, and the Board wisely used Fellows’ money to acquire this very rare and expensive item. Naturally we feel a special obligation to acquire the source materials for history of the development of the region west of the Alleghenies.

Committee of Management Meeting

At the meeting of the Committee at dinner on April 4, several matters were discussed which are still in motion, so that nothing can be reported on them at the present moment. The Committee was pleased to learn that six of the largest and most important manuscript collections have been microfilmed as part of its safety program and insurance protection. Financial matters also occasioned some discussion. As Mr. Bonisteele also served here, the Committee voted to join the Associates Board in expressing their admiration for him; his death has created a vacancy the Committee must fill.

The Georgia Trustees

One of the titles purchased by the Associates’ Board was the General Account of All Monies.
and Effects Received and Expended by the Georgia Trustees (London 1736). As it covers three years, it appears to be the first accounting rendered of this philanthropic project. James Oglethorpe had gathered some friends to sponsor a new colony in America for destitute Englishmen, who would be transported, given land and tools, and subsidized until they could become self-supporting. Slavery was prohibited and there were other paternalistic regulations. Eventually the settlers rebelled against the trustees, demanded slaves, and the colony passed to royal supervision.

Here are lists of contributors to the welfare scheme, those who gave money and those who contributed seeds, tools, Bibles, etc. The money was listed as spent on transportation of colonists, on Indians, on churches, and on improving agriculture. This kind of financial detail can't be well known, because the booklet is not in the chief bibliography of Georgia and apparently is known in but one other copy, at Harvard. Probably the report was printed only for the trustees. This is the type of source material we like to procure.

The Russians in Alaska

The Library has made a point of collecting the controversial books on the effort in the middle eighteenth century to discover a water route around the north end of North America—the fabled Northwest Passage. Now the Associates have made it possible for us to acquire a translation of the same objective by the Russians, who headed northeast. Muller's *Letter from a Russian Sea Officer* (London 1754) is the first authentic and detailed account of Vitus Bering's voyage beyond Alaska in 1741. The book also contains a report of a Spanish admiral about his search for a passage around the top of Alaska, and the controversy between de L'Isle, a Paris map maker, and Arthur Dobbs, sometime governor of North Carolina, about the existence of a Northwest Passage. Dobbs was a True Believer, de L'Isle was a Skeptic. Since only six or seven copies of this title are known, we are glad to add it to our holdings on this topic.

Current Exhibition

Some extraordinary manuscripts are on display at the Library now representing letters, speeches, petitions, and treaties of the Indians before 1825. Since the aborigines could not write, the items were dictated to white interpreters or set down by them. They echo the early complaints of the Indians over trade regulations, prisoners, boundaries, allegiance and the misrepresentations of officers and interpreters. The Indians reveal shrewdness, probity, and peaceful inclinations, but also some irresponsibility and dependence. The show suggests there is much more here for interracial study, which it was meant to do. The exhibition was selected and arranged by John Dann.

A Tribute

In the death of Roscoe O. Bonisteel in February, the Library and the Associates suffered a severe loss. Mr. Bonisteel was not only deeply interested in our institution and its asset value...
in the University; he was concerned about its growth and development. Moreover, as a collector himself, he contributed generously to its support both in money and in kind. He gave his complete collection of first editions of the writings of Winston Churchill, a gift we accepted because of Sir Winston’s connection with American affairs (just as we collect the writings of William Pitt) and because such a splendid collection, bound in full morocco, deserves university custody and protection. It is housed in the director’s office.

Further, Mr. Bonisteel presented his collection on Lewis Cass, Governor of Michigan Territory, Secretary of War, U.S. Senator, Minister to France, and Presidential candidate. It is made up mostly of manuscript letters, but includes printed items and pictures. It greatly augments the Cass collection already owned by the Library. The Board of Governors intends to buy another Cass manuscript in memory of Mr. Bonisteel.

On the Committee of Management, Mr. Bonisteel brought decades of legal practice, years as a Regent, and experience in public life and private organizations, as well as sound judgment and a sense of humor, to bear on Library problems. To say that we benefited is the most obvious kind of statement.

Two More Gems

Two Other Books bought by the Associates’ Board reflect concerns in early America. Unlike New York and Philadelphia, early Boston had no center for selling farm produce and merchandise. The Rev. Benjamin Colman urged use of the square in front of Old North Church for this purpose in Some Reasons and Arguments Offered for Setting Up Markets in Boston (Boston 1719). Evidently his argument set the magistrates to thinking, for a market did materialize. This is an early piece of economics, and only four other copies seem to be known.

Among various segments of the populace not prepared for war in 1775 were physicians. A manual on gun-shot wounds and fractures was put together by Dr. John Jones in 1776. Additionally he seems to have been instrumental in having reprinted here Van Swieten’s Diseases Incident to Armies (Philadelphia 1776). This was a translation of a German work, with two essays by Englishmen on gun-shot wounds and scurvy at sea. It was used enough to be reprinted again in Boston the following year.

Entertainment

In response to our notice in the last issue of The Quarto that we could put some volunteer helpers to work, two women promptly appeared. They are Mrs. Ralph Muncy and Mrs. Richard Schneider. They are doing some collating of newspapers which our staff never seems able to get to. Of course, the great temptation in working with old newspapers is to read some of the news articles or advertisements. Mrs. Muncy pointed out to us a story in the New York Evening Post of February 17, 1802, which shows how our forefathers were amused.

Under the headline SEEING IS BELIEVING: THE LEARNED PIG, the story unfolded:

“As the extraordinary sagacity of this animal is too well known to need a vain, puffing, elusive advertisement, the proprietor will only state what the Pig actually performs viz.– He reads printing or writing, spells, tells the time of day both the hours and minutes by any person’s watch in the company, the date of the year, the day of the month, distinguishes colors, how many persons there are present ladies or gentlemen, and to the astonishment of every spectator will add, subtract, multiply, and divide. To conclude, any gentleman may draw a card from a pack and keep it concealed, and the Pig without hesitation will discover the card from a pack and besides a variety of entertaining matters on politics, love, and matrimony.”

Frankly, we have observed some television performers lately who seem unable to do that much.

Welcome!

Just after our last issue went to press, three more Fellows renewed their membership: Mr. and Mrs. Harry S. Hawkins of Ann Arbor, Miss Evangeline Lewis of Ypsilanti, and Mr. H. Ripley Schemm of Grosse Pointe. For the Library, the more the merrier.

The Glorious Fourth

Founder’s Day program proved to be as enjoyable as anticipated. It was called “A Salute to America” and consisted of brief excerpts from six Fourth of July orations delivered between 1787 and 1851. In the capable hands of Prof. LaMont Okey, these excerpts were delivered in the manner of the time by six graduate students in public address. They revealed the concerns of the time, which were as serious to the country
as our problems are to us. Until after the War of 1812, the great fear was whether a representative government would work in so large a country. After that, the major questions were whether we were improving on our heritage and whether sectionalism would tear apart the newly welded unity.

Some day we hope that a graduate student will undertake a study of Fourth of July orations for a century or more after 1776 to learn how we regarded ourselves from time to time. They ought to serve as a pretty reliable barometer of self respect. They may carry religious overtones of a Chosen People demonstrating to a decadent Europe the emergence of a new Promised Land. They will analyze national motives and interpret political swings. They will "point with pride and view with alarm." If they don’t see ourselves as others saw us, they yet will reflect our self image. Such orations are not just hot air but beams of light.

Music Gift

Shortly After you read this, you should be receiving the annual gift “book” provided for the Associates by the Library in appreciation of your interest and support. This year the “book” is actually a phonograph record—“A Concert of Eighteenth Century Music.” Most of the music performed comes out of our Americana holdings. About half the numbers are sung by the University Chamber Choir, under the direction of Thomas Hilbish, and the others are performed by Penny Crawford on the harpsichord and Karen Hunt, soprano. Program notes of great historical interest and musical appreciation are provided by Sterling Murray, teaching fellow in musical theory, and printed on the album.

Thirteen years ago we issued another record called “Voices of the American Revolution,” made up of excerpts from letters in our collections read by various interpreters. It was made before a Bicentennial celebration was contemplated, but it went over well and all extra copies were soon sold. We will have a few extra pressings of the new record, available at a figure not yet determined because we don’t know yet the cost of production. Happy listening!

Music With Pictures

More Than 800 pieces of American sheet music with lithographed covers have been added to the Corning Music Collection this spring by Mr. and Mrs. Bly Corning of Flint. This generous gift includes illustrations running from the 1840’s to the 1890’s. In music collecting the lithographed covers are more highly prized than plain printed titles; they constitute a treasury of illustrations for social history. These additions greatly enhance the music we already have.

The Greene Publication

An Editor Has Been appointed for the publication of Gen. Nathanael Greene’s correspondence. He is Richard K. Showman, who has a master's degree in American history from Wisconsin, formerly held positions with Colonial Williamsburg, Inc., and Old Sturbridge Village, and most recently was associate editor of the new History Guide to American History, just published.

This project is sponsored jointly by the Clements Library and the Rhode Island Historical Society, as a contribution to the Bicentennial of the American Revolution. The editorial office is in Providence.

Manuscripts for Business History

The Head of our Division of Manuscripts, John Dann, has compiled a list of our collections of principal interest to historians of business enterprise and economic historians. Each collection is briefly described. Copies of the six-page leaflet have been sent to libraries of business administration schools and to the quarterly journals in this field.

Manuscript material on early businesses is fairly scarce, and the historically minded tend to think of the Clements Library as having collections only of military and political interest. If any Associate wishes to see the leaflet, just drop us a card.

Fire Alarm

As Further Protection of the contents of the Library, the University has installed an elaborate fire alarm system in the building. It is triggered by any combustion that gives off heat or smoke. Hand extinguishers have always been available in various rooms, but their value is negligible when no one is on duty. The automatic alarm system is of particular value at night in the event of some accidental ignition.