## No. 1

The Papers of **Henry Strachey** 

March 2011

## A MEMORABLE ACQUISITION

irectors of great research libraries remember their big collecting coups. If we're lucky and we serve for a long time, maybe we get half a dozen remarkable acquisitions on our career-highlights list. My three predecessors at the Clements Library chalked up some impressive accomplishments for me to match. Randolph G. Adams helped bring some of the Library's outstanding manuscript archives to Ann Arbor-the Henry Clinton, Thomas Gage, Lord George

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Germain, Nathanael Greene, Weld-Grimké, Lucius Lyon, John Wilson Croker, and Josiah Harmar papers. Howard H. Peckham acquired the manuscripts of Anthony Wayne and Oliver Hazard Perry, the James S. Schoff Civil War collection, the Renville Wheat map collection, and Antonio Pigafetta's Le Voyage et Nauigation Faict par les Espaignols (Paris, 1525). John C. Dann brought in the ca. 1698 William Hacke atlas and the papers of the Tailyour, Handy, and Townshend families, along with the manuscript archive of Eyre Coote. Some of these wonderful acquisitions came as gifts, some as purchases, but all as institutional rather than individual achievements. I feel confident in writing that every Clements director would say that it's relatively easy to

acquire new treasures for a collection already rich in them. Although the boss usually gets much of the public credit for the good things that happen (as it's his job to take all the blame for anything bad that occurs on his watch), maintaining and enhancing this remarkable library is a team effort every day.

When I look back on my career (not too many years from now, if truth be told), participating in the initiative to secure the second half of the Henry Strachey Papers for the Clements will stand out for me. Readers of this bulletin will learn in the essay by Cheney Schopieray and Shannon Wait that the Library has pursued the

Strachey manuscripts for more than 80 years, and bringing that hunt to fruition last October was immensely gratifying to everyone here. There was nothing inevitable about our success, and you could make a good argument that the sequence of events leading to the victory-the Clements purchasing half the Strachey papers in the 1960s and early 1980s; the Copley Press buying the other half a few years later; our anonymous angel coming forward in March

2010 to offer a challenge grant for buying at the Copley auctions; the Library scraping together enough money to reach the Sotheby's low estimate for the Strachey lot; the absence of competition materializing at the auction to push us to that level-was so unlikely that any Hollywood producer would reject the tale as too unbelievable for a film script. I'm a gambling man, as my wife Leslie can attest, and I like long shots, but I wouldn't have bet the farm last October on our winning the Strachey race. We did, though, and the study of American Revolution history will be better for it.

It's important for the Clements to build on our Strachey success. Other great acquisition possibilities will surely come our way, and we have to capitalize on them. The Strachey win and the way

it happened-the Library, the University, and a host of Clements supporters coming together in pursuit of a golden prize—is the model for keeping our collections strong. Last July I told the University Regents that U-M football success comes and goes, but the Clements has been a Top Ten library of early American history for 87 straight years. Maintaining that level of greatness and ensuring that our future will be as bright as our past is the challengeand the opportunity—of the years ahead at the Clements Library.

- J. Kevin Graffagnino Director



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## A PERFECT FIT

The William L. Clements Library is renowned for its holdings of primary source materials documenting the era of the American Revolution. The Library preserves more than 150 manuscript collections on the subject, about 5,500 books, and over 1,000 maps, some 400 of which are one-of-a-kind manuscript items. Our manuscript holdings relating to the British side of the Revolution are especially strong. These include the papers of several prominent politicians as well as those of the commanders-in-chief of British forces in America from 1763 to 1782, excepting only William Howe, whose papers have been lost or destroyed.

The recent acquisition of a large and important group of Henry Strachey's papers nicely complements the Library's previous Strachey holdings, adding new material regarding the unsuccessful peace commission of 1776, for which Strachey served as secretary under Admiral Sir Richard Howe. Among the Library's Howe Brothers Collection is a retained copy of a letter to George Washington, dated July 13, 1776, and written in Richard Howe's hand, in which the admiral asks for an "opportunity to converse" with Washington about the peace commission. The American general refused to accept the letter, addressed as it was to "George Washington, Esq.," because it pointedly ignored his rank as the leader of an opposing army. Another related item in the Howe Brothers Collection is an 80-page manuscript, partially in Strachey's

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The Library's original Strachey collection includes a document listing the costs of slaves purchased for his Florida plantation.



Henry Strachey came to America as secretary to the peace commission led by Admiral Lord Richard Howe (1726–99).

hand, titled "Reflections on a Pamphlet entitled 'A Letter to the Right Honble. Lord Vi[s]ct. Howe," by Lord Howe, 1779.

The Strachey purchase also considerably enhances our already-strong holdings pertaining to negotiations for the 1783 Treaty of Paris, particularly the Manchester Papers, the Shelburne Papers, and the Hartley Papers. The Clements's cartographic holdings on the subject include a number of excellent maps defining the boundaries of the new United States as confirmed by the treaty. Most of these contemporary works were published in England, such as John Wallis's *The United States of America Laid Down from the Best Authorities, Agreeable to the Peace of 1783* (London, 1783), the title cartouche of which is boldly emblazoned with the flag of the young republic and portraits of revolutionary celebrities George Washington and Benjamin Franklin.

The papers of William Petty, 2nd earl of Shelburne, prime minister of Britain during the peace negotiations, contain many items related to Strachey, whom Shelburne sent to Paris as undersecretary of state to assist the British commissioner Richard Oswald. The material in this collection regarding the Peace of 1783 includes Shelburne's notes of instructions to Strachey and correspondence to Strachey from the American commissioners, John Jay, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Henry Laurens, and John Adams.

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acceptable I would advance in a Frijale Whave the pleasure to receive you, as near to the Town of New york no will be most for your accommodation I flatter myself I shall find no sifficulty in oltenining credit to my aprivances for the perfect sufery of your Person, & free liberty to return on thors NA your Pleasure. The Schall be conally ready to afford way more proforable security that may be required, in come no other objection occurs to the desired Interview . Jum hi George Washington Eigh your miner 110 ka- Us-

George Washington would not accept Lord Howe's letter of July 13, 1776, requesting a meeting to discuss peace conditions because it was addressed to him using the civilian honorific "esquire" rather than his military rank. This detail of a retained copy of that letter, in the admiral's hand, is part of the Howe Brothers Collection.



William Petty, 2nd earl of Shelburne (1737–1805), dispatched Strachey to Paris in 1782-83 to assist with negotiations to end the war. This 1798 portrait by Jean-Laurent Mosnier (1743–1808) was a 1923 gift to the Library from the 5th marquess of Lansdowne. The Clements holds Shelburne's papers.

The newly acquired papers add much depth to the Shelburne documents with their minutes, notes, and memoranda regarding boundary issues; instructions to the commissioners; and letters from key figures such as Thomas Townshend (British home secretary), Shelburne, Oswald, and the American commissioners. The Strachey purchase adds about 200 pages of manuscript material on the negotiation of the Peace of 1783.

Two other significant Treaty of Paris collections at the Clements are the Manchester Papers and the David Hartley Papers. George Montagu, 4th duke of Manchester, was the British ambassador to Paris at this time, and, as such, was a key figure in the negotiations. The Manchester Papers contain diplomatic correspondence, partial drafts of the treaty, and other papers concerning negotiations. The correspondence includes letters from Lord Grantham, foreign secretary under Lord Shelburne; Charles James Fox, foreign secretary before Grantham; and the influential Charles Gravier,



John Wallis's 1783 map colorfully differentiates the United States from British North America with the boundaries established by the Treaty of Paris.

comte de Vergennes, French foreign minister. David Hartley was a British statesman, also sent to Paris to negotiate the treaty. He had been in favor of American independence as early as 1778, when he wrote a pamphlet titled *Letters on the American War*, in which he accused Britain of tyrannical policies toward her American colonies. However, Hartley's political opposition to Shelburne thwarted the success of his agenda.

The Strachey Papers could not find a better or more appropriate home than the Clements Library. We are extremely fortunate to be able to add these documents to our extraordinary collection of American Revolutionary War materials.

— Barbara DeWolfe Curator of Manuscripts

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## THE STRACHEY PAPERS

#### SIR HENRY STRACHEY

Henry Strachey was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on May 23, 1736. He was the son of Henry Strachey (1707–65) and Helen Clerk (ca. 1710–45) and grandson of notable geologist John Strachey (1671–1743). After studying at Westminster and Oxford, Strachey

began his public career as a clerk in the War Office. In 1764, George Grenville recommended him to prominent military and East India Company official Lord Robert Clive, and Strachey began service in India as Clive's private secretary shortly thereafter. During this time, Strachey developed a close personal friendship with Lord Clive and his wife Margaret and assumed a large share of the administrative duties when Clive's health began to fail. Strachey returned to England in 1767 with sufficient funds to redeem mortgages on his impoverished family's estate, Sutton Court, in Somerset. The next year, he stood for the House of Commons, of which he would remain a member almost continuously until 1807, variously for Pontefract, Bishop's Castle, Saltash, and East Grinstead. As a Member of

Sir Henry Strachey (1736–1810). Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

Parliament, he rarely made major speeches but was respected for his intelligence and fair-mindedness on a variety of issues.

In 1770, Strachey married Jane Latham; their correspondence reveals a remarkably affectionate and loving attachment. The pair had five children: Charlotte-Margaret (ca. 1771–1801), Henry (1772–1858), Edward (1774–1832), Richard (1781–1847), and Lucy (1782–1863). Around the time of his marriage, Strachey purchased a plantation, called Beauclerc Bluff, near present-day Jacksonville, Florida. He invested in the cultivation of indigo as an absentee planter but experienced continuing disagreements with the plantation's managers and frequently struggled to turn a profit.

In 1776, Strachey was presented with a momentous opportunity. Admiral Lord Richard Howe, commander-in-chief of the North American naval station and head of a commission to restore peace between Britain and her colonies, wished to appoint Strachey as secretary to the peace commission. Strachey had little desire to leave his young family for such a distant and difficult mission and was thus reluctant to take the position. However, persistent overtures from the prime minister, Lord North, and the negotiation of a generous annual pension upon his return persuaded him to accept.

Howe and Strachey arrived in New York on July 12, 1776, eight days after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and almost immediately initiated attempts to negotiate peace. Strachey assisted Howe in drafting a letter to George Washington proposing

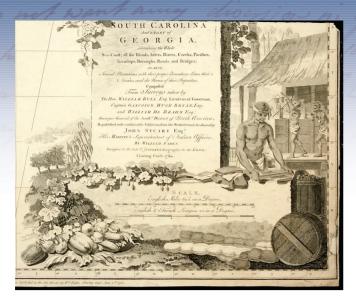
> reconciliation, but Washington took offense at Howe's refusal to address him as "General" Washington and did not respond. On September 11, 1776, Howe and Strachey met for a three-hour peace conference with several members of the Second Continental Congress—John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Edward Rutledge—in an attempt to find common ground. This effort also failed, likely as a result of the clash between the resoluteness of the American patriots and the strict constraints placed on Howe's authority to negotiate by King George III and Lord George Germain.

Though opportunities for peace negotiations became less frequent after the failed meeting of September 11, Strachey spent two additional years in North America before returning to Britain. He served as secretary to Lord

Howe and his brother, General Sir William Howe, as they waged war, but he sometimes found himself with little to do besides write letters. Strachey witnessed and gave accounts of the battles of Long Island and Red Bank, puzzled over the "Military Phrenzy" of the Americans, and provided illuminating commentary on the recreational activities and social mores of loyalists and military officers. From 1777 to 1778 he resided with the Howes in Philadelphia, where he enjoyed the city's cultural activities. Upon the resignation of the Howes in 1778, he sailed for home, motivated both by loyalty to the brothers and by homesickness for his family.

Upon Strachey's return to Britain, he took the position of storekeeper of the ordnance, which he held for three years, and then served as joint secretary to the treasury in the second Rockingham ministry in 1782. He continued as undersecretary of the Home Department in the Shelburne administration and in this office traveled to France to help negotiate the Treaty of Paris. British officials deployed Strachey to assist Richard Oswald, the 77-year old merchant originally selected for the task, whom Shelburne considered too yield-





Slaves process and pack indigo in this cartouche illustration from the 1780 state of John G.W. De Brahms's map of Georgia and South Carolina. The pods from which the strong blue dye was produced are seen at bottom left and center. Indigo was the primary crop of Beauclerc Bluff, Strachey's Florida plantation.

ing in his negotiations. Strachey bargained for several key British gains, including the retention of Canada and associated fishing rights. He attempted to negotiate rights for loyalists who remained in the United States but made little progress in this regard.

In 1784 Strachey cut his last ties to North America when he sold his Florida plantation at a great loss, compounded by the unpaid debts of Thomas Bee, the man who had purchased his slaves. From 1794 to 1805, Strachey served as master of the king's household. He was made 1st baronet Strachey on June 15, 1801, and chose for the family motto a quote from the poet Horace: *Coelum non Animum* (from *Coelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt*—"Those who cross the sea change the sky not the soul"). Henry Strachey died on January 3, 1810.

### THE STRACHEY PAPERS

The manuscripts of Sir Henry Strachey have their own history, from their origins in the family library at Sutton Court to their current distribution among at least five different American and British institutions. Although the majority of the family papers are now part of the Somerset Heritage Centre, the materials related to Henry Strachey's service in America have seen over 150 years of dispersal and sales. And, for the past 86 years, the William L. Clements Library has been patiently accumulating them.

The Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) published a descriptive report of the Strachey family papers held at the Sutton Court library in 1877. In addition to materials related to British affairs in the Far East and the papers of John Strachey, the HMC report includes a partial list of the manuscripts of Sir Henry Strachey related to American affairs during the Revolution. Sadly, the report also notes that the papers "would have been far larger and more fruitful of startling revelations, had it not been for circumstances unfortunately common in the history of manuscripts carelessly stored in country houses. During the last illness of the late Sir Henry Strachey (the *second* baronet), some of the most important of the first Sir Henry Strachey's American documents were withdrawn from the library of Sutton Court, conveyed to the United States, and there sold." Most of these "lost" Strachey papers are now scattered among American libraries.

The first acquisition of Henry Strachey materials by the Clements Library consisted of two large, vellum-bound volumes, which had been the property of Edward Strachey, 1st baron Strachie. The volumes contain copies of 22 reports by British colonial governors and other officials in response to a circular questionnaire distributed by William Legge, Lord Dartmouth, on July 5, 1773. The reports contain a wealth of quantitative and qualitative information about the American colonies on the eve of the Revolution, such as the numbers and attitudes of Native Americans, quantities and types of imports and exports, sizes of militias, population characteristics, and the geography and natural resources of each colony. The reports were apparently copied from the originals into the volumes for use by Henry Strachey and the peace commissioners. The Library purchased them from Henry Stevens Son & Stiles in 1924.

Five years later, the Clements Library's first director, Randolph G. Adams, traveled to England. While there, he personally surveyed the manuscripts in the Sutton Court library at the invitation of Lord and Lady Strachie. In addition to the items listed in the 1877 HMC report, he found an abundance of American papers not inventoried, including letters written by Henry Strachey to his wife in 1776–78, nearly 100 letters and other papers related to English politics and events in America during the Revolution, and materials pertaining to Strachey's property in East Florida. By 1929, both Quaritch and Sotheby's had approached Lord Strachie regarding the family manuscripts, and Strachie conveyed his intention to sell portions of them. Unfortunately, despite Adams's enthusiasm for the

100: Germain

Henry Strachey's appointment as secretary to the commissioners for restoring peace in America is among the papers acquired by the Clements Library in October 2010.

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papers and Lord Strachie's generous offer to give Mr. Clements first refusal, the negotiations never reached a definitive conclusion.

Between the 1930s and 1980s, most of the American papers at Sutton Court were sold (and later resold) in three primary groups. The Clements Library purchased two of them at Sotheby's sales in 1967 and 1981 and combined them into one collection of 112 manuscripts. These papers consisted of a large portion of the non-HMC report papers surveyed by Adams in 1929. The collection includes 34 letters between Henry and Jane, written from 1776 to 1778, while Strachey was in North America. The letters contain candid impressions of the colonies and political and military events, including the burning of HMS Augusta at the Battle of Red Bank (December 8, 1777) and a fine description of life in British-occupied Philadelphia (March 24, 1778). Miscellaneous official correspondence related to Strachey's American duties includes a signed copy of a letter from General George Washington to Brigadier General Jared Irwin requesting his opinion on the advisability of attacking Philadelphia during the winter (December 3, 1777) and other correspondence pertaining to the British military and politics. Thirty letters and one letter book relate to the Beauclerc Bluff plantation, primarily Strachey's correspondence with East Florida Governor Patrick Tonyn, lawyers Edward and James Penman, and plantation managers Alexander Gray and John Ross.



Lord George Germain (1716–85), King George III's secretary of state for America, signed Strachey's 1776 commission. In 1928 William L. Clements commissioned this copy by Dorofield Hardy of Sir George Romney's original portrait. Germain's papers are held by the Clements Library.

# THE JAMES S. COPLEY LIBRARY ACQUISITION

On October 15, 2010, the William L. Clements Library purchased a set of 80 letters and documents once belonging to Sir Henry Strachey from the recently dissolved James S. Copley Library. The Copley Library's "Henry Strachey Papers" were previously owned by London bookseller and collector Philip Robinson and are the third group of manuscripts that left Sutton Court between the 1930s and 1980s. They contain all but one of the American manuscripts itemized in the 1877 HMC report and are perhaps the most significant portion related to the War of Independence. With this acquisition, the Clements Library has effectively reunited the two largest bodies of scattered Strachey papers relating to America.

The Copley purchase chiefly illuminates Strachey's work as a peace negotiator in both the opening and the closing stages of the war, his opinions on Americans and their desire for independence, and his relationship with the Howe brothers and other military officials. The "new" papers span 1776-83 and include a large variety of correspondence, memoranda, diaries, notes, and official documents. The earliest items in the collection are Strachey's commission as secretary to the peace commission (May 6, 1776) and three sets of instructions to the commissioners from King George III (May 6-8, 1776). The instructions document the king's lofty goal for the mission-to demand from the colonists "such a Submission on their Part to lawful Authority, as shall consist with the just Relation and Dependence in which they stand"-but provide few means to entice the Americans into such a position. Further, the instructions gave the commission little authority to negotiate on trade restrictions, the existence of local congresses and militias, and the payment of reparations to loyalists.

The papers also contain a set of 19 letters written by Strachey during his tenure as secretary to the Howe brothers in New York and Philadelphia from 1776 to 1778. In his correspondence, Strachey wrote primarily to his wife Jane, giving accounts of military events and his pastimes and everyday experiences, while frequently expressing homesickness for his family and England. On September 3, 1776, he described the taking of fortifications on Long Island by the British, which he witnessed as a "distant Spectator." He also expressed doubt concerning the dedication of the American troops, predicting "many of them may begin to look towards their respective homes, and contend for the Recovery of those Liberties which have been most grievously invaded by the Tyranny of their own Countrymen." Showing little understanding of patriot philosophies or motivations, he wrote further, "They might at this Moment have Peace and Happiness, but they insist upon having their Brains knocked out first." By July 14, 1777, when he wrote to his longtime friend Christopher D'Oyley, Strachey had changed his tune, stating, "No honorable peace can in



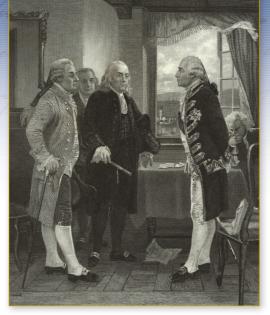
my opinion now be attained, till the rebel armies are subdued, or till our forces have possession of every province." In other letters, Strachey described the occupations and entertainments of British officers, including their "transient Amours" with American women (December 2, 1777). He particularly enjoyed the theatricals organized by British officers, describing them as "exceedingly well acted" (January 28, 1778), as well as balls put on by the Howes.

Henry Strachey's diary, written in two parts during his time in North America, is of significant interest. The first

section covers June 22-August 30, 1776, and the second, cheekily entitled, "An insignificant Journal of insignificant Events," documents November 14-December 3, 1777. In the first half of the volume, Strachey wrote numerous short entries, commenting on negotiation efforts, the progress of the war, and meetings with British officers. In several entries of July 1776, he described Lord Howe's unsuccessful efforts to secure "an Interview with Mr. Washington." In the latter part of the journal, which he wrote



On May 18, 1778, British officers in Philadelphia staged an elaborate pageant and ball called the "Meschianza" to honor departing commander-in-chief General Sir William Howe (1729–1814). Henry Strachey was in the city at the time. This ticket to the event, reputedly designed by Major John André (1751–80), is among the Clements Library's Henry Clinton Papers.



Published in 1866, this steel engraving after a nineteenth-century painting recreates the September 11, 1776, meeting between Admiral Howe and representatives of the Continental Congress. The figure seated by the window represents Henry Strachey.

for his wife, he briefly described the Battle of Red Bank but mainly related amusing anecdotes and descriptions of peculiar people that he encountered in America.

Other authors wrote several groups of items, which Strachey received, collected, or transcribed. These include a set of 12 letters written by Frenchmen in America during the war, many expressing sympathy for the Americans and sometimes scorn for the British. Almost certainly intercepted by Strachey or his associates, the let-

ters include interesting observations on subjects as disparate as local skirmishes, American women, and reasons for joining the proindependence forces. The Howes also contributed several items to the collection, including a transcribed letter from William Howe to George Washington of February 21, 1778, describing in strong detail the mistreatment of British prisoners of war. Also included is an early, 85-page draft of General Howe's defense of his actions as commander-in-chief of the British forces in North America, in which he placed blame for his failures upon a lack of promised reinforcements, the ruggedness of the American landscape, and the cunning tactics of Washington.

Closing the collection are approximately 205 pages of material relating to the Treaty of Paris, including the king's authorization for the negotiations, Strachey's notes and proposals for the content of several articles, and retained copies of letters by Strachey that relate progress made in the talks. Also of note is an official copy of a letter by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay, in which they expressed their refusal to assist or reimburse the American loyalists for their losses.

The James S. Copley Library acquisition adds greater depth and nuance to the Clements Library's previously held Strachey Papers. The reunification of scattered official documentation of the highest level of British-American diplomatic relations, Henry's descriptive letters to his wife, and other political and business papers is truly an event to celebrate. The Henry Strachey Papers are an important resource for the study of the social, political, and military history of the Revolutionary War and they will provide historians with a refined sense of the attitudes of British officials toward colonial rebellion, the progress of peace negotiations at various stages during the war, and the private reflections of a shrewd and practical negotiator.

— Cheney Schopieray	— Shannon Wait
Assistant Curator of Manuscripts	Project Archivist



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# ACQUIRING THE STRACHEY PAPERS



Part of Henry Strachey's American diaries, acquired in 2010. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

The acquisition of the Henry Strachey manuscripts, offered for sale by Sotheby's in October 2010, was one of the Clements Library's most important accomplishments of the past year. And it was made possible only by the support and generosity of the Clements Library Associates and the University of Michigan. The effort began when an Associate approached Library Director J. Kevin Graffagnino to discuss the impending series of auctions of the collections of the James S. Copley Library and to ask how he could help the Clements acquire some of this important historical material. The anonymous donor, who has a deep and abiding interest in American history, decided to challenge our other members with a matching gift of \$150,000 for the purpose of obtaining items from the Copley sales. In just five months we met that challenge, demonstrating the dedication of our Associates. The Clements Library thus had \$300,000 in hand, enough to make substantial acquisitions at the auctions, but not enough to purchase the Henry Strachey papers, the gem of the sales. By drawing on the Clements's reserves and with additional support from the University of Michigan, we were able to amass the funds needed to make a reasonable bid on the Strachey collection.



By October 15, 2010, the day of Sotheby's special one-item auction, we had gathered the resources to make a serious attempt to acquire a significant portion of Henry Strachey's legacy and reunite two parts of an important collection of primary sources on the American Revolution. Noted

Henry Strachey's personal seal is found on many letters in the collection. Americana dealer William Reese represented the Library in the bidding. The auction began at 2:00 p.m., and by 2:15 the Clements owned some 80 documents that would soon be reunited with the Strachey manuscripts previously acquired by the Library. Each and every dollar donated—100% of all gifts to the Copley Challenge—was used to purchase these papers.

Describing the Copley Library auctions in the summer 2010 issue of *Fine Books and Collections*, Jeremy Dibbell wrote of his concern that these important documents would disappear from the public view and be lost to researchers. The Clements Library Associates, with the purchase of the Strachey papers, has ensured that one of the most important components of James Copley's collection will remain available and accessible to scholars for years to come.

— Ann Rock Director of Development

> Clements Library Director J. Kevin Graffagnino

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