

What do a Michigan Manufacturer, Scottish Scribbler and Illinois Attorney Have in Common?

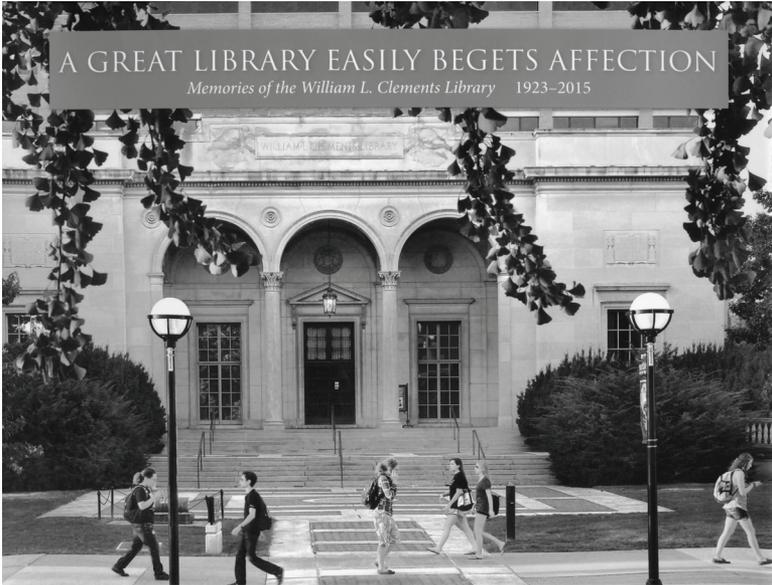
WILLIAM BUTTS

DUNNIGAN, Brian Leigh, SCHOPIERAY, Cheney J., HASTINGS, Emiko, and GRAFFAGNINO, J. Kevin (editors). *A Great Library Easily Begets Affection: Memories of the William L. Clements Library, 1923-2015.* Ann Arbor: William L. Clements Library, 2015. Wide 8vo. Hardbound, dust jacket. v, 169pp. Extensive color illustrations, pictorial endpapers. **\$40.00.**

SEYMOUR, Terry I. *Boswell's Books: Four Generations of Collecting and Collectors.* New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2016. 4to. Hardbound, dust jacket. 556pp. Frontispiece, illustrations. **\$95.00.**

CORNELIUS, James M. *Fire, Fraud, and Reporters: And Other Ways Lincoln Manuscripts Have Been Lost.* Janesville, WI: Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, 2015. 8vo. Softbound. 12pp. 33 signed copies. **\$5.00.**

I absolutely *love* it when rare book libraries toot their own horns. I wish they did it more often and more loudly, too. Fabulous



book and document archives populate this country's public and private research libraries, each with their own strengths and focuses: Chicago's Newberry Library, Worcester's American Antiquarian Society, Bloomington's Lilly Library, San Marino's Huntington Library, Williamsburg's Rockefeller Library, to name a few – each a rich, deep well of rare original artifacts for the use of scholars, writers and researchers, though often unknown even to those in their immediate vicinity.

Among this elite group is the University of Michigan's renowned William L. Clements Library at Ann Arbor. *A Great Library Easily Begets Affection: Memories of the William L. Clements Library, 1923-2015* uses the occasion of this great library's two-and-a-half year, multi-million-dollar renovation and expansion to tell the stories behind some of its greatest treasures in this handsome, unusual volume. (Whose quaint title, by the way, comes from English politician and Irish chief secretary Augustine Birrell, 1850-1933.) Clements (1861-1934)

made his fortune in railroad equipment manufacturing and only in middle age discovered his passion for early Americana. “For the remaining three decades of his life,” write Graffagnino and Hastings, two of this book’s editors, in their introduction, “business, books, and service to the University dominated Clements’s time and attention. In what we now regard as a golden age for Americana collecting, Clements acquired an outstanding library of books, pamphlets, maps, and other rarities on explorations and voyages, military and political history, Native Americans, biography, religion, and other aspects of pre-1800 North America. In the 1920s he began adding manuscript material to his holdings, concentrating on large archives of British and American leaders in the era of the American Revolution.”

In 1920 Clements gave his collection to the university and paid for the dignified 3-story edifice that houses it. The near-century since has witnessed a gradual shift from exclusive (Carl Sandburg’s least favorite word) Fort Knox-like vault for high-level research to a welcoming, accessible facility retrofitted with amenities such as elevators and air conditioning. The Clements has also opened up and enlarged its mission, moving beyond its pre-1800 focus to include all manner of nineteenth-century history and culture.

A Great Library Easily Begets Affection consists of fifty essays covering specific aspects of the Clements Library published in a variety of books, journals, letters, diaries and other sources over the past nine decades, including some written expressly for this volume. Organized chronologically and featuring a half dozen high-quality illustrations per several-page chapter, this is a fun and innovative approach to what might otherwise be a traditional institutional history.

“The Presentation” is the first of these fifty – Clements’ speech at the dedication of his library on June 15, 1923. In this readable period piece the industrialist tells about his connection

to the University of Michigan, why it's a great place for his large collection – and says something no research library would dare say today: “It must not be supposed that this library is for the use of the undergraduate, or for others who have not exhausted the facilities of the General Library. It is primarily a library for advanced research on the part of scholars already well equipped....” A subsequent chapter, “This Sacred Precinct,” quotes an anonymous letter to the editor of the *Michigan Daily* (jokingly signed “Campus Supines”) which notes, “We undergraduates of the university admit that we are entirely too frivolous, obstreperous, and unappreciative to intrude upon the scholarly atmosphere of the Clements Library. We therefore keep away from this sacred precinct....” Clements would likely look askance at the opening up of his library over the decades to lowly undergraduates and others, but the days of stuffy, monastic-like seclusion for archives have gone the way of— well, *monasteries*. Even seriously valuable archives with tight security need to prove their relevance, accessibility and usability in our Internet age.

Tales of great acquisitions and discoveries naturally pepper these chapters, none better than the 1936 *Michigan Alumnus* report titled “University Acquires the Harmar Papers.” When the library’s first director, the legendary Randolph G. Adams, visited Philadelphia and had the unanticipated opportunity to purchase the papers of Continental Army general Josiah Harmar, he lunged at the “large, old, pine chest full of manuscripts....” The description of this enormous cache’s arrival at the Clements, when “the entire staff knocked off regular duty and began to dig in,” is thrilling in its immediacy as rarity upon rarity is unpacked. Just when you thought it couldn’t get any better, the writer notes: “But to get to the really important part of the lot!” Harmar’s tenure as commander of the Old Northwest Territory brought forth

petitions of the settlers who were desperately fighting Indians and begged for help; the reports of the commanders at the frontier posts in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois; the story of the multitude of quarrels between the holders of government land titles and the thousands of squatters who surged over the Alleghenies during and after the Revolution; the reports of the surveyors and the shrieks of the early 'realtors', the reports of the engineers....; the official letters of the Commanding General to his far-flung subordinates, and to his superiors in Philadelphia and New York City; the complaints of contractors, sutlers, settlers, land agents, traders, merchants, Indians....

Even after this jackpot, in true infomercial "But wait!" fashion, the writer reveals that even this isn't the end of the bonanza: "Yet all this is but a small part of the yarn," and one more torrent of unique historical documents floods forth.

"The Gage Papers" is another memorable chapter, first published in pamphlet form by the library in 1941. In 1930 William Clements was able to purchase from his heirs the papers of this British general who tried to control the upstart colonies in the 1760s and '70s – housed in "twelve pine chests which General Gage originally used as filing cabinets." (Sadly, only "One of these boxes is preserved at the Library. The fate of the others is currently unknown." How do you lose eleven large, historic wooden trunks?) "Gage kept all the letters he received," it notes.

Letters from cabinet ministers in England, colonial governors in America, the Indian superintendents, the admirals in American waters, and reports from his army post commanders scattered throughout the British

dominions in North America. Likewise, he kept copies of all the letters he wrote to others. It is not surprising then that his papers numbered about 25,000 pieces....

Current library director J. Kevin Graffagnino gives a most memorable and much more recent acquisition tale in his 2011 article “Patience and Fortitude.” The library’s out-of-this-world collection of Sir Henry Strachey (1736-1810) began with the library’s first acquisitions in the 1920s under its first director – and ended a few short years ago at a Sotheby’s auction when Graffagnino pieced together a budget and acquired the mother lode of Strachey’s American papers for about \$600,000. A riveting tale, well told.

But a great library is not just all of its stuff – books, documents, maps, paper – but great people doing great work in a great location. Just as enjoyable as those chapters recounting the Clements’ finest objects and collections are those recounting daily life over the decades in this institution and the staff who made it all happen.

First director Randolph G. Adams recounts the circumstances of his being offered that position in 1923 in “A Good Day’s Work” and offers day-in-the-life observations in his 1926 “A Day at the William L. Clements Library.” His son Thomas R. recalls early years spent among the stacks at his father’s work place, including “the scene of youthful races up and down the aisles with book trucks, much to the distress of Miss Steer” in his 1994 speech “Racing with Book Trucks.” Adams’ assistant Dorothy J. Chipman offers up a different perspective of daily doings in a 1937 letter to her sister, here titled “Pretty Hectic Times: Views of an Assistant to the Director,” and a manuscripts division staffer, Frances Reece Kepner, gives a glimpse of World War Two employment at the library in “Wartime Memories.” To give a more recent staffer’s point of view, long-time manuscript

curator Arlene P. Shy describes 25 years there (1973-98) in "Some Clements Memories," a warm recollection of experiences and acquisitions over a quarter century.

Even the supposed dean of American autograph dealers, the late Charles Hamilton, makes an appearance in "Fooling RGA" (an excerpt from his well-known 1980 book *Great Forgers and Famous Fakes*). Hamilton tells the ultimate prank tale: How he and manuscript curator Howard H. Peckham created an elaborate fake bookplate for Ottawa chief Pontiac (of whom Peckham was writing a biography) printed on vintage paper, enlisted the aid of Battle Creek, Michigan autograph dealer Forest H. Sweet, and got director Adams to research and excitedly proclaim his "discovery." Not to leave out the booksellers, the editors of *A Great Library Easily Begets Affection* also include a 1948 essay by famed bibliophile Lathrop C. Harper, "For Rare Book Dealers." Harper funneled many stunning tomes of Americana into the hands of William Clements, beginning in 1912 with the cream of his newly-acquired Newbold Edgar library, "one of the choicest collections of Americana and remarkable for its uniformly splendid collection" and continuing until Clements' death decades later.

Where there are many high spots such as these there must also unfortunately be low, and I admit a few chapters left me wondering if I was simply as obstreperous and unappreciative as the 1920s UM undergraduates mentioned earlier. "Crashing the Clements Library or The Day the Aviator Dropped In," a 1936 contribution from noted manuscript curator Howard H. Peckham, is a mini-play (published in pamphlet form) featuring director Adams and some library staff and is meant to show a "day... typical of the bustling activity of the library." Another chapter features "Storm Over the Clements Library or The Man in the Brown Study," another mini-play by wannabee-playwright Peckham, this one set in "Basement of the Clements Library."

Some humor just doesn't age well, and these two efforts fall as flat as a folio on a polished marble floor. I'm glad Peckham kept his day job – or perhaps it's just me.

These near-random observations are just surface-scratching, though, among the half-a-hundred essays that make *A Great Library Easily Begets Affection* such an engaging institutional history – and certainly in format one of the more unusual examples I've encountered. Clements director Kevin Graffagnino and his co-editors betray their deep respect and affection for their library in this bang-up compilation.

I first met Kevin, by the way, more than twenty years ago when he was director of the library at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison and would make the drive down through Frank Lloyd Wright's breathtaking Taliesin countryside in southwest Wisconsin before entering my corner of northwest Illinois to browse my shop on Main Street in Galena. Bookish spirits always manage to find each other. Around this time he compiled *Only in Books: Writers, Readers, & Bibliophiles on Their Passion*, a delightful collection of bookish quotations by famous writers, duly reviewed in this column.

I cannot conclude a review of *A Great Library Easily Begets Affection* without completing this famous Birrell quotation, as does Kevin in the introduction: "A great library easily begets affection, which may deepen into love." *A Great Library Easily Begets Affection* accomplishes this lofty goal even for those of us who haven't been fortunate enough to have visited the William L. Clements Library.

Any Johnsonian – devotees of the life and writings of Samuel Johnson (1709-84), the great "Dr. Johnson" who compiled a famous dictionary, writer, essayist and literary critic extraordinaire – is by default also a Boswellian – devotees of the Scottish biographer, diarist and lawyer James Boswell (1740-95) who did more than anyone to immortalize the "Great Cham of

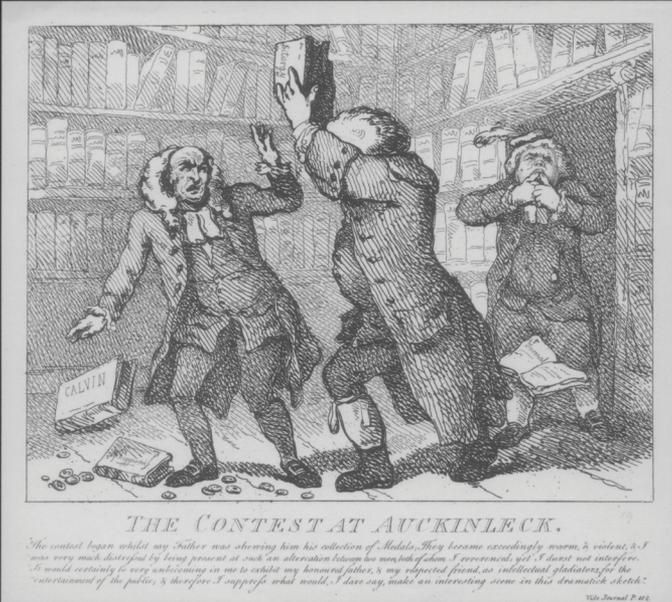
Literature” in his remarkable 1791 *Life of Samuel Johnson*. The Johnson bug bit me early and bit me hard, and though I’ve been in remission, a first visit to Johnson’s London house last summer brought back the symptoms full blaze. So I was particularly susceptible to Terry I. Seymour’s exciting new *Boswell’s Books: Four Generations of Collecting and Collectors*.

If you’ve read neither Johnson nor Boswell and mention of “Dr. Johnson” evokes only a hazy character who was perhaps English (?), from the title maybe a physician (?) and probably long ago (?), you’ve got loads of company. He’s one of those literary figures one is expected to know about but is not taught in schools except in college English survey courses that briefly touch upon him. If it’s difficult as an American to relate to the buzz that swirls about big new contributions to Johnson/Boswell scholarship, think of America’s Holy Trinity -- Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald -- and the bloated cottage industries that have arisen around each. Better yet, think of the granddaddy of all literary cottage industries -- Shakespeare studies -- in which hordes of scholars have fought turf wars and built and lost reputations and tenure over the past two centuries.

What makes James Boswell’s library of especial interest is how it may have “assisted him in his work, shaped his thinking, and reflected back on the owner,” notes Seymour in a lengthy, wonderfully informative introduction that explains the challenge. What makes it especially difficult, and explains why this hefty volume is a first-of-its-kind, is that the Boswell library covers not just the man, but several generations of Boswells and at a variety of locations, not all of them the famed ancestral mansion Auchinleck in Ayrshire, Scotland. Boswell died more than 220 years ago, and time and its accompanying ravages -- not to mention auction houses -- have taken a brutal toll on this and indeed almost all old country homes in England. Seymour’s task

Boswell's Books

Four Generations of Collecting and Collectors



Terry Seymour

is thus to reconstruct the no-longer-intact library of Boswell's grandfather, father, Boswell himself and his two sons, with the aid of a half dozen partial and inaccurate lists made ages ago – a century-plus span of collecting housed in various residences and sold off at auctions until as recently as 1976. Sound daunting?

“When I first conceived this project, my aim was to reconstruct the library of James Boswell,” writes Seymour.

The twentieth-century recovery of his private papers, most of which are now in Yale’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, gave a substantial boost to Boswell’s importance as a literary figure. The absence of a reference work on his personal library seemed to me a significant hole to be filled. But I soon realized that the story of James Boswell’s books is not the story of just a library, or just one man’s library. A library is often deemed a physical place, an important room, or sometimes rooms, with impressive bookcases, perhaps decorated with family portraits and classical busts. But a person’s library can also mean a lifetime’s accumulation of books. Some are acquired in youth and then discarded as juvenile or unworthy. Some are added early in a collector’s career when mistakes are common. Duplicates may replace inferior copies, which are then sold or given away. Books pass in and out of a collection over the years, and are never all assembled at one time....

In a nutshell, Boswell’s grandfather (“Old James”) assembled several hundred books, his father (“Lord Auchinleck”) about 2,000 books, Boswell himself perhaps 1,000 books, son Alexander about 1,500 books and James junior upwards of 4,000 books.

Although the 400-plus pages of painstakingly-gathered bibliographical entries are the heart and soul of *Boswell’s Books*, in the introduction Seymour attempts to separate the tangled history of these different collections. He discusses the ownership signatures of all three James Boswells and both Alexander

Boswells, with multiple illustrations of each at different points in their lives – uncanny how roughly similar James Jr.’s signature is to that of his famous father. He goes into details such as whether they placed ownership signatures in their books and if so where they placed them and how consistently, plus other crucial details. The presence of annotations and other markings is addressed and a number of different bookstamps are also enumerated and illustrated. Each of the half dozen book lists prepared are covered in detail – Boswell himself prepared a list of books he kept in Edinburgh, his wife attempted an inventory of many of her father-in-law’s books and his son Alexander worked on lists of the family’s books and manuscripts and even an aborted printed catalogue. And let’s not forget the *content* of these different collections: Lord Auchinleck’s focus on Greek and Latin classics, Scottish history, land management, James’s concentration on literature and poetry, and so on. Seymour delves into all of the descendants who owned these collections down into recent times and how each may have dispersed some of them. The various printed auction catalogues, starting in 1825, that featured Boswell books are all discussed and dissected. Seymour seems to have left no stone unturned in his forensic sleuthing.

Collecting “Boswelliana” (and “Johnsoniana”), as it’s called, can be a rarified pursuit. Some of their book titles are within reach for most collectors, as is almost all of the secondary scholarly material about Boswell and Johnson. But an entry-level first edition of Boswell’s *Life of Samuel Johnson* or Johnson’s pioneering *Dictionary of the English Language* lands you squarely in the low five-digits, and association copies and autograph material will likewise make you want to reach for the oxygen mask. It may not be stratospheric, but the air up there gets mighty thin. Which is why a study such as *Boswell’s Books* may well help bring to light some books connected to

Boswell or his family unrecognized for what they are until now. A great many books known to have been owned by Boswell and/or to have been part of the famed Auchinleck library can be identified with greater certainty thanks to Terry Seymour's exceptional scholarship – and the current whereabouts of many, if they survive, is unknown. It will be thrilling to see if this groundbreaking studies facilitates any Boswell discoveries.

Before you turn back to the first page of these reviews to check the price (*that's gotta be a typo!*), let me assure you that the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin's latest annual *Historical Bulletin* (their 69th) costs one fiver. For this fin (plus a bit for shipping) you get one of the 33 out-of-series copies signed by the noted curator of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, James M. Cornelius.

Founded in the 1940s by Wisconsin educator and Lincoln scholar George P. Hambrecht, the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin remains active, sponsoring an annual lecture by Lincoln scholars which is then published in booklet form, usually in an edition of 200 signed, numbered copies. A complete run of these booklets, if challenging to collect, is a wonderful thing to behold, too, including talks given by most of the major Lincoln scholars and writers of the second half of the twentieth century (and beyond): Louis Warren, Mark E. Neely Jr., Wayne C. Temple, Daniel Weinberg, Harold Holzer, Michael Burlingame, John Y. Simon, Frank L. Clement, Richard N. Current, Ralph G. Newman and many others have addressed this long-enduring organization.

James Cornelius's *Fire, Fraud, and Reporters: And Other Ways Lincoln Manuscripts Have Been Lost* is one of the few bulletins of direct interest to autograph collectors – or as a cautionary tale to those who would someday like to own a Lincoln item. In it this Lincolnist offers up a mini-survey of Lincoln material that isn't quite what it seems to be.

**"FIRE, FRAUD, AND REPORTERS:
AND OTHER WAYS LINCOLN
MANUSCRIPTS HAVE BEEN LOST"**

by James M. Cornelius, Ph.D.

Curator, Lincoln Collection, Presidential Library, Springfield

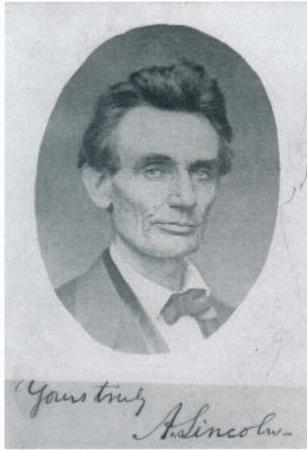


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Bulletin of the 74th Annual Meeting
of
The Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin
April 11, 2015

Historical Bulletin Number 69

Frauds are the category collectors are likely to encounter. There are letters that surface in facsimile form but no original is believed to have ever existed, and other facsimile letters in facsimile whose text is believed to be original but no original letter in Lincoln's hand survives. His letter to Mrs. Lydia Bixby is by far the best known of these, with copies made for different purposes over the course of many years. These still show up regularly, and I for one have seen enough of them to wallpaper

my office. Notes Cornelius, “John Hay boasted a bit later in life that he could sign Lincoln’s name pretty persuasively,” and one well-known Lincoln scholar argues that Hay may have penned the forgery of Lincoln’s actual words to Mrs. Bixby. I share Cornelius’s skepticism, though: had Hay penned authorized Lincoln signatures or texts some would have been identified by now. Also, I have met any number of people over the years convinced they could forge certain signatures or handwritings wonderfully well – but I’ve yet to see any of their products that would fool anyone or rank higher than amateur fan tracings.

Cornelius makes a strong case against Mary Lincoln’s supposed bedside letters. She’s supposed to have visited wounded soldiers in hospitals regularly and penned some of their letters home for them. One specific letter cited has never turned up – and if she penned any number of these surely others would have been brought to light. “My suspicions could be removed some day if this, or any other ‘Bedside Mary’ letter should appear. Yet it is hard to imagine that every recipient would have thrown away a letter signed by the First Lady.” I would be less tactful myself, convinced that Mrs. Lincoln exaggerated her hospital visits for the sake of public morale.

Cornelius’s comments on known Lincoln writings lost to the ravages of fires or the carelessness of reporters given original speeches for reporting who then discarded them (“reporters have cost us dearly”) is a sad litany. But Cornelius chooses not to end on this depressing note, instead offering up some “Hope for Future Findings” that inspires and uplifts.

The typesetting may be reminiscent of an electric typewriter and the production quality rudimentary, but this latest contribution to this long-running series will interest anyone interested in Lincoln autograph material.