

BOOKS AT BROWN

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THE HARRIS COLLECTION OF AMERICAN POETRY AND PLAYS

The Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays, housed in the John Hay Library, is one of the boasts of Brown University, as it has long laid claim to being a world-first in its twin fields. Its object is to be all-inclusive: "American" is interpreted as covering the entire New World, while anything considered a poem or play by its author is accepted at his valuation.

It was begun by Judge Albert Gorton Greene (1802-1868), Brown 1820. Judge Greene was a literary man, who was just out of college when the *Providence Gazette*, on January 16, 1822, published his best-loved poem, "Old Grimes is Dead," which added a permanent figure to American mythology. We cannot say just when Judge Greene began to specialize in collecting American verse; but as editor of a *Literary Journal* (1833-34) he acquired many review copies which (unlike most editors) he kept. Eventually he became a well-known book-collector; and when, after his death, his books were sold (March 29, 1869), the sales catalogue stated: "The special feature of his Library, and the one by which it was most widely known, is the department of American poetry, which is catalogued by itself. It is probably the largest collection existing of that department."

This entire section (1824 items) was acquired by Caleb Fiske Harris (1818-1881), Brown 1838, another ardent collector of Americana. He extended the scope of the collection to include American songsters and drama. In 1874 he printed an *Index*, listing 4192 items, which he sent to various authors, collectors, and book-dealers, in an effort to discover what items were still lacking. Some three hundred more came in, as we learn from a description of his library in the *Providence Journal* (June 4, 1875). The author, General Horatio Rogers, concluded: "Especially will the future Warton of American poetry be under obligations to him for the abundant harvest of material so generously gathered."

After Mr. Harris's death, his collection was acquired by his cousin, Senator Henry Bowen Anthony (1815-1884), Brown 1833, who had also been buying Americana. He had but three more years to live. In his will appeared the following clause:

I give to the Library of Brown University the collection of American poetry which I have recently bought of the estate of my late cousin, Caleb F. Harris, and which, I am told, is the best collection extant. I request that it be kept together, and that over the alcove in which it is placed, there be an inscription in Latin by Professor Lincoln: "The Harris Collection of American Poetry; commenced by Albert G. Greene, continued by Caleb Fiske Harris and Henry B. Anthony. By the latter presented to this Library."

In 1886 was published the Reverend John C. Stockbridge's *The Anthony Memorial. A Catalogue of the Harris Collection of American Poetry*, which contained 4272 titles. The small number of additions indicates how thoroughly Senator Anthony's two predecessors had done their work, but does not show to what extent he improved the collection. Necessarily, when he added his own books, there were many duplicates; the retention of the better copies raised the value of the entire library; and the sale of duplicates in 1901 brought in \$1500, which was turned back into the collection.

A copy of the *Anthony Memorial* reached Walt Whitman (who, in the days when he was Walter, had published a "Young Grimes"); he reviewed it in an enthusiastic article "Five Thousand Poems" (*New York Critic*, April 16, 1887), which voiced amazement at the quantity of poetry produced by our supposedly unpoetic country.

For about ten years the Harris Collection remained honored but unread and virtually unincreased. At first, as the University had no place to house the books, they were stored in the bookshop of Sidney S. Rider (1833-1917) Hon. A. M. 1880, the founder of the Rider Collection of Rhode Island History (now also owned by the University). In 1885, the Harris Collection was housed in the then new library building on the corner of Waterman and Prospect Streets, now occupied by the Department of Economics. In 1910, it moved again to the present library building. As the Collection had long since outgrown the "alcove" anticipated by Senator Anthony, it was housed in a handsome room where, on an oak panel above the fireplace one may read the inscription:

Poesis Americana Harrisiana
Quam Ab Alberto Gorton Greene Inchoatam
Et A Caleb Fiske Harris Maxime Auctam
Unice A Se Perfectam
Huic Bibliothecae Testamento Legavit
Henricus Bowen Anthony

Meanwhile, in 1898, Samuel Coffin Eastman (1837-1917), Brown 1857, began his gifts, first of books, then of funds in memory of his father-in-law, Judge Greene, which eventually amounted to \$10,000; and finally, after his death, the Library, as residuary legatee, received over \$60,000, from which "such portion of the income as is deemed advisable may be spent for additions to the Harris Collection." His wish was that the entire income should be so spent, but knowing something of the needs of universities, he did not tie the money up too absolutely. His wish, however, has been respected; and the entire income of this fund, with that of the previous \$10,000, has been used to keep the Collection built up.

From 1914 to 1936, its unchallenged position as world-first collection of American poetry and plays prompted the Librarian of Congress to send us on exchange nearly 18,000 duplicate copyright deposits not needed by the Library of Congress or the Washington Public Library.

In 1930, Harry Lyman Koopman, Librarian of Brown University since 1893, whose creative ability and love of books had made the Collection flourish under his liberal and careful direction, became Librarian Emeritus. Professor S. Foster Damon, of the English Department, was then appointed Curator.

By now the Harris Collection has completely outgrown its room in the John Hay Library and the adjacent stack, and is housed chiefly in the basement of the new wing. It contains some 100,000 items, to which perhaps 3500 items are added yearly,—books, pamphlets, periodicals, broadsides, sheet-music, manuscripts, and photostats, besides some phonograph records, films, and museum pieces, such as portraits, photographs, busts, plaques, medals, and association items. There are writings in French by the French Canadians and the inhabitants of Louisiana; in German by the settlers of Pennsylvania, the refugees of 1848, and their descendants; in Dutch by the founders of New York; in Welsh, by immigrants from Wales; in Spanish, from Central and South America; dance-songs and hymns in various American Indian dialects; plays and poems in Yiddish; Esquimau poetry from Greenland; Hawaiian hymns; translations of American poetry in Chinese and Japanese; poetry in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew,—in fact, in all the principal languages, living and dead.

Besides poetry and plays, there are great quantities of anthologies, biographies, hymnals, operas and their librettos, school readers, old magazines that published the best poets, as well as the elusive modern poetry magazines, concordances, literary his-

tories and criticisms, town and family histories which contain poetry, scrapbooks of many sorts, and a great number of personal albums. Our oldest book is *Les Muses de la Nouvelle France*, Paris, 1609, which includes a pageant enacted in Nova Scotia twelve years before the Pilgrims landed. Pageantry is a branch of drama, and is well represented, especially since William Chauncy Langdon (Brown 1892), himself a leading writer of pageants, presented us with his remarkable collection. Caleb Fiske Harris made a special effort to collect songsters; the start he made has been the splendid beginning of a notable assemblage, which has been supplemented by nearly 5000 song-sheets and Dr. Koopman's emphasis on Civil War songs in the sheet-music department (which total over 20,000). We are also proud of our thousand gift-books; and, among the manuscripts, our collection of "literary remains."

While "world-first" is a claim which any librarian is reluctant to put forward, every effort is being made to keep up that proud boast of the founders of the Harris Collection; and no conscientious research in American poetry or drama can be undertaken today without investigation of the material in the John Hay Library.

S. Foster Damon,

Curator of the Harris Collection of American Poetry and Plays.

YOU KNOW HOW IT IS—

if you've ever worked on a budget. No matter how carefully you plan, desirable opportunities appear when no money is available. Here are four good current books requested by one professor just too late to be included in this year's appropriation. None of them is particularly expensive, but added to similar demands from nearly every department, they stretch the budget so far that they cannot be purchased—unless some Friends come to the rescue—so they go on the deferred list. The last time we looked at the list, it contained a few over two hundred titles. If every Friend gave one book, the problem would be solved for this year. None of these costs more than five dollars:

Frederick Lewis Allen. *Since Yesterday.*

Clark Wissler. *Indians of the United States.*

Salvador de Madriga. *Christopher Columbus.*

Constance R. Webb. *A History of Contagious Disease Care in Chicago before the Great Fire.*

RECENT GIFTS

In the six months ending May 15, sixty-seven Friends gave more than 1800 items to the Library of Brown University. These

included many that were greatly desired, some for immediate use and others as additions to existing collections. We should like to acknowledge each gift, but space in these pages is at a premium this time. Three kinds of gifts, however, are sufficiently unusual and suggestive that they demand attention.

Several Friends realized that the propaganda leaflets that come to this country from warring nations will be of great value to future historians. Ephemeral material of this character cannot be obtained through the usual channels and *after the event* it is almost unobtainable.

Photographs and photostats of rare books and manuscripts are always welcome. Professor Benedict's gift of forty-six volumes of the Henry E. Huntington Library photostat reproductions of Shakespeare quartos, presented in memory of Walter Cochrane Bronson, Brown 1887, and long-time professor in the Department of English, is an outstanding example of important material added in this form.

Before a book can be put on the shelves, it must be catalogued. Here is another case where inelastic budgets may cause delay. A number of gifts of books have been accompanied by checks to insure prompt cataloguing.

Brown University has acknowledged with thanks recent gifts from these Friends of the Library:

Captain Graham M. Adee
Mr. John B. Archer
Professor Raymond C. Archibald
Dr. Samuel G. Ayres
Mrs. Donald S. Babcock
Professor George W. Benedict
Dr. G. Alder Blumer, Hon. '05
Mr. Robert P. Bolan, '28
Professor Leicester Bradner
Rabbi William G. Braude, A.M. '34
Miss Mary Louise Brown
Mr. John Hutchins Cady, '03
Dr. C. Lennart Carlson, '33
Mr. Zechariah Chafee, '80
Mr. Eugene A. Clauss
Professor Theodore Collier
Professor S. Foster Damon
Professor Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow Dana
Mr. John A. French, '25
Mr. Edwin C. Frost, '90
Mr. Edward R. Granniss, Sp. '24
Senator Theodore Francis Green, '87

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Rabbi Louis I. Newman, '13
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 Mr. Frederick S. Peck
 Professor Albert K. Potter, '86
 Dean R. G. D. Richardson
 Professor Charles A. Robinson, Jr.
 Professor Charles H. Smiley
 Miss Hope Smith
 Mr. Thomas E. Steere, '98
 Mr. Edward A. Stockwell, '99

Miss Jeannette Swasey
 Professor Jacob D. Tamarkin
 Colonel G. A. Taylor, '01
 Mr. Lucien E. Taylor, '95
 Dr. Charles C. Tillinghast, '06
 Mr. Charles E. Tuttle
 Dr. Arthur L. Washburn, Hon. '32
 Mr. Clifford E. H. Whitlock
 Hon. George C. Wing, Jr., '00
 Mr. W. Chesley Worthington, '23
 Dr. Frederick R. Wulsin

FRIENDLY AFFAIRS

On January 12 Professor Lawrence C. Wroth exhibited rare books on the Southwest that have been added to the John Carter Brown Library recently.

The Friends were entertained at tea at Pembroke College on February 4. Dean Morriss, Miss Dorothy E. Spofford, the Librarian of the College, and Mrs. Ralph P. Boas, Professor of English at Wheaton College, were the speakers.

The Webster Knight Collection of United States Postage Stamps was formally opened at a meeting of the Friends on March 22. Professor Robert F. Chambers and Messrs. E. Tudor Gross and Colin MacRae Makepeace described the collection, which adds another "world-first" to Brown's library. President Wriston accepted the collection on behalf of the University. At this meeting, officers were elected for the ensuing year.

Professor Sharon Brown read from the works of Robert Frost at John Hay Library on April 26.

Officers of the Friends of the Library of Brown University, who will serve until May, 1941, are

<i>Honorary Chairman</i>	Dr. Henry B. Van Hoesen
<i>Chairman</i>	Carleton D. Morse, Needham, Mass.
<i>Vice-Chairmen</i>	W. Easton Louttit, Jr., Providence
	Albert E. Lownes, Providence
	Dr. Louis I. Newman, New York
	Frederick S. Peck, Barrington
	Clarence H. Philbrick, Providence
<i>Secretary-Treasurer</i>	George L. Miner, Providence
<i>Executive Committee</i>	The officers and
	Albert H. Poland, Providence
	W. Chesley Worthington, Providence

" 'Shakespeare' Ireland's First Folio", by Professor William T. Hastings, was sent to Friends of the Library in March and took the place of *Books at Brown*, Vol. II, No. 3.

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