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Library Notes: Selected Acquisitions [v. 14, no. 1]

James D. Birchfield
University of Kentucky, j.birchfield@uky.edu

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Recent Acquisitions

Colonial Printing by James Franklin

The Libraries have recently acquired a copy of Robert Barclay’s *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity* printed at Newport, Rhode Island in 1729 by James Franklin, the older brother of Benjamin Franklin. After being jailed for seditious printing in Boston in 1722, James Franklin moved to Newport and became the first printer in Rhode Island; he started *The Rhode-Island Gazette*, the state’s first newspaper. It was James Franklin who taught Benjamin Franklin the art of printing, though the younger brother found the elder quite disagreeable. The book is in an original Colonial binding by James Skinner of Newport. The binder is the subject of Willman and Carol Spawn’s article, “Francis Skinner, Bookbinder of Newport: An Eighteenth-century Craftsman Identified by His Tools,” in the *Winterthur Museum’s journal, Winterthur Portfolio*. The binding is illustrated in the article.

Printed on Straw in London

The ingredients for papermaking have been the subject of wide experimentation. Papers have been made from linen and cotton, from grapevines and hornet’s nests, from woodpulp and, as is now demonstrated, from straw. M. Koops is the author of this treatise, dedicated to George III of England and entitled, *Historical Account of the Substances Which Have Been Used to Describe Events, and to Convey Ideas, from the Earliest Date to the Invention of Paper*. The title-page declares that this work is “Printed on the First Useful Paper Manufactured Solely from Straw.” It was printed in London in 1800; the printing was very expertly carried out by T. Burton, with rich and even inking. The book is signed by the intrepid Mr. Koops and bears the engraved bookplate of the Holland House library.

An Unrecorded Kentucky Imprint

One of the most interesting projects of the Great Depression was the Historical Records Survey, which included within its activities
the American Imprints Inventory. The American Imprints Inventory was an effort to prepare a detailed bibliographical record of the output of America's early press. The project produced a number of very expertly accomplished enumerations on a state-by-state basis, overseen in their preparation by Douglas C. McMurtrie of Chicago. The search for Kentucky's earliest books was a very refined effort, and few titles escaped the net of McMurtrie and his collaborator on this state's volume, Albert H. Allen. In 1939 McMurtrie and Allen produced Check List of Kentucky Imprints 1787-1810. The appearance of an unlisted Kentucky imprint of this period is an event of the greatest rarity. Nearly six decades later, however, one of those rare unrecorded titles has emerged from obscurity. The University of Kentucky Libraries is fortunate to have acquired for the Samuel M. Wilson Americana Collection the only known copy of The Lexington Collection, Being a Selection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs, From the Best Authors. Together With a Number Never Before Printed. The book was published in Lexington in 1805 by Joseph Charless, who later became the first printer in Missouri. The book measures 14.5 x 7 centimeters and contains 264 pages. It is printed on a laid paper stock and remains in its original calf binding. Within is the inscription of an early owner, "Pattsey Temple / Hir Book January / the 20 1809." The Lexington Collection should succeed item number 252 in the McMurtrie and Allen bibliography.

An 1815 Broadside About the Woodford County Serpent

A handsome broadside, or work printed on only one side of a sheet of paper, was recently obtained by the Libraries, and bears the heading, "Description of a Monstrous Serpent, Which Was Discovered Near the Banks of the Ohio River, in Kentucky, January, 1815, and Killed by Three American Soldiers." The text purports to give an account of a sensational incident in Versailles at the end of the War of 1812. Samuel Hanson writes to his brother in Philadelphia:

Picture to your imagination, dear brother, a monster of the serpent kind, full twenty-two feet in length, and the thickest part of his body of the size of the thigh of one of our largest men! his eyes sparkling like fire, and venously shooting forth his forked tongue, with his whole body drawn in a
position to defend himself or to dart upon every object that should venture within his reach! and you will have a pretty correct idea of the appearance of this truly frightful monster.

After some further description, Hanson continues,

With his tail he beat the ground bare of every shrub, leaf, or spire of grass, causing a noise like distant thunder, while he bit and chewed the poor dog to a mummy! . . . After conceiving him too weak . . . we ventured to approach and attack him with out tomahawks — although still writhing, twisting, and coiling himself into a know, we found no difficulty now in dispatching him, and succeeded in chopping off his head.

The broadside bears a superb woodcut of a large and scaly serpent.

The Dixon Barr Genealogical Collection

The Rev. Dr. Dixon Barr, Episcopal priest and twice president of the University of Kentucky Library Associates, has made a generous gift to the Libraries of approximately seventy-five linear feet of books and journals in the field of American genealogy. A Mayflower descendant through Myles Standish, Dr. Barr has been interested in genealogical research for many years. He is a member of numerous lineage societies, including the Society of the Cincinnati, the Society of Mayflower Descendants, the General Society of Colonial Wars, the Order of Americans of Armorial Ancestry, and the Hereditary Order of Descendants of Colonial Governors. Both antiquarian and contemporary in scope, this important collection includes many family genealogies as well as census data, court records, church records, local history, and works on research methodology. The Dixon Barr Genealogical Collection derives from a much larger personal library with professional research standards. It is a significant addition to our local and regional historical collections of Americana and will meet with extensive use, both from the campus and the community.

— James D. Birchfield