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Library Notes: Selected Acquisitions [v. 9, no. 1]

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Selected Acquisitions

Thomas D. Clark Americana Collection

The libraries have benefited significantly over the years from the interest and support of Dr. Thomas D. Clark, the revered Southern historian and former Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Clark has recently made a gift of over a thousand items to the University Libraries. Included in the gift are letters by Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, and James T. Morehead; there is a survey map of Bourbon and Harrison Counties of around 1800; and there is an account of an 1839 duel in Richmond, Kentucky, fought and described by John B. Mussey. Also present are documents signed by Isaac Shelby (selling a pair of slaves) and by Franklin Pierce (a land grant). There is a fore-edge painting of the William Penn Treaty Oak on a copy of Reed’s Introduction to English Literature and a marble fragment of Joel T. Hart’s famous statue, Woman Triumphant, which was destroyed by fire in the Fayette County Court House. The collection contains books, broadsides, newspapers, account books, receipts, photographs, and other materials. In all, it is a rich gathering with promising potential for research by students and scholars of American history.

An Incunabulum

The libraries have recently acquired the 1483 Chronicon of Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Caesarea, printed at Venice by Erhard Ratdolt. The work was purchased on the Algernon Dickson Thompson Fund, established to collect books published prior to the year 1501, which is to say during the first half-century of printing.

Radtolt’s influence as a fine typographer has extended over the centuries in the printing craft. It was of special interest to William Morris, well-known for his efforts to revive the art of beautiful printing in the nineteenth century. The Chronicon, revised from time to time by various hands, comprises a brief account in Latin of major events in specific years, beginning with the times of
Greek and Roman history and stopping with the year 1481. For students of the history of printing, seven lines of text for the year 1457 detail the invention of printing by Johann Gutenberg.

**Tacitus Dismembered**

In 1822 an edition of *The Works of Cornelius Tacitus*, edited by the British scholar Arthur Murphy, appeared in America in six volumes. On its title-page, the work is described as the “second American, from the London edition.” The first American edition appeared in 1813. The imprint of this work appears differently from issue to issue, showing variously that it was printed in Baltimore for F. Lucas, Jr., in New York for P. A. Mesier, in Philadelphia for H. C. Carey and I. Lea, or in Lexington for W. W. Worsley. This technique of the varied imprint is but a marketing device, and, more than likely, all of the sheets were printed in one city by one printing establishment; the lines giving the place and publisher were changed merely to fulfill orders from the cities indicated.

Willard Rouse Jilson, in his *Rare Kentucky Books* [(Louisville: Standard Printing Company, 1939), 64], states that if this edition of Tacitus had actually been printed in Lexington, it would represent “the most pretentious work published in early times in Kentucky.” Roscoe M. Pierson enters the Lexington *Tacitus* as item 421 in his *Checklist of Lexington, Kentucky Book and Pamphlet Imprints: 1821-1850* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1953).

Pierson states that he has seen only Volume IV of the Lexington *Tacitus*, owned by the Bluegrass bookman and bibliographer John Wilson Townsend. “The other volumes of the only set known, which has been broken up,” writes Pierson, “are in the hands of several collectors in central Kentucky according to J. W. Townsend.”

The collectors' acquiescence in breaking up this set of Tacitus, and almost assuring its loss, is similar in impulse to the obliging practices of Jared Sparks, the nineteenth-century editor of the works of George Washington. Nathaniel E. Stein, in his “The Discarded Inaugural Address of George Washington” (in *Manuscripts: The First Twenty Years* [Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984], 239-51), recounts how Sparks complied with patriotic requests for Washington’s autograph by passing along individual sheets from an unused first inaugural speech.
When the sheets began to run short, Sparks thoughtfully met the demand by scissoring pages into smaller pieces.

The University of Kentucky Libraries recently acquired a copy of Volume III of the rare 1822 Lexington Tacitus. No set is now known in Frankfort, no portion of the book is in the John Wilson Townsend Room of the John Grant Crabbe Library at Eastern Kentucky University, no copy is in the Kentuckiana Library at Western Kentucky University, no copy is in the Kentuckiana Collection at Northern Kentucky University, and none is in the library of the Filson Club in Louisville. No holdings appear on the OCLC computer network. An uncataloged copy of Volume I is in the Special Collections Department of the Frances Carrick Thomas Library at Transylvania University. A broken set is always an attractive candidate for discard, and of the sets of Tacitus printed for W. W. Worsley of Lexington in 1822, no complete one is now known to exist; of the entire printing, these lone copies of two volumes appear at present to be the sole survivors.

—James D. Birchfield