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Library Notes: Selected Acquisitions [v. 5, no. 2]

Claire McCann

University of Kentucky

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Selected Acquisitions

Recent acquisitions which complement the Peal Collection's holdings of the English Romantics include the second edition of Charles Lamb's *A Book Explaining the Ranks and Dignities of British Society* (London: Tabart, 1809), with twenty-four colored engravings; Percy Bysshe Shelley's *The Masque of Anarchy* (London: Moxon, 1832), which relates to the Peterloo massacre at Manchester in 1819; William Wordsworth's *Poems in Two Volumes* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1807) and the *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Longman and Rees, 1800), with the Preface that became a manifesto for the Romantic movement; and Robert Burns's *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Edinburgh: Printed for the author, 1787), the "Stinking Edition," so called because of a typographical error in the poem "To a Haggis," "stinking" being printed for "skinking" (i.e., "watery"). In nineteenth-century American literature, another of Mr. Peal's major collecting interests, we have added John Greenleaf Whittier's *Poems Written during the Progress of the Abolition Question in the United States between the Years 1830 and 1838* (Boston: Knapp, 1837).

A welcome addition to the libraries' collection in contemporary literature is an autographed copy of Kentucky-born Robert Penn Warren's *Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce* (Random House, 1983), a poem commemorating the valiant but ultimately futile struggle of the Nez Percé tribe to maintain its homeland in Wallowa, Oregon, a battle lost when Chief Joseph and his band were confined to a reservation in Washington in the late nineteenth century.

Gray's Elegy

The libraries are most fortunate to have acquired a copy of the rare first edition of Thomas Gray's *An Elegy Wrote in a Country Church Yard* (London: R. Dodsley, 1751). The initial publication of this famous poem has an unusual history. On the day Gray completed it in June 1750, he forwarded a draft to his friend Horace Walpole, whose admiration for it prompted him to share copies with his circle of friends without Gray's knowledge. Gray first learned of Walpole's indiscretion when he received a letter on 10 February 1751 from gentlemen at the *Magazine of Magazines*.
AN ELEGY
WROTE IN A
Country Church Yard.

LONDON:
Printed for R. Dodsley in Pall-mall;
And sold by M. Cooper in Pater-noster-Row. 1751.
[Price Six-pence.]
edited by William Owen, informing him that the next issue of the periodical would contain the *Elegy*. Gray wrote the next day to Walpole, urging him to have Robert Dodsley publish the poem immediately. Four days later, on 15 February, the pamphlet was available for sale, the author cloaked in anonymity at Gray’s request; Owen’s version, however, appearing a day later, attributed authorship to Gray. The hasty composition necessitated by the deadline resulted in several interesting typographical anomalies. The printing oddities in our copy include “sacred” in lieu of “secret,” page 1, line 11; “they” repeated on page 6, line 15; “hidden” for “kindred,” page 10, line 4; and “frowning” rather than “smiling,” page 10, line 13. In addition, the *F* in “Finis” appears to have been skillfully repaired. The Kentucky copy, bound in a handsome crushed tan morocco with elaborately decorated gilt border, inner dentelles, and gilt edges, is housed in a slipcase covered with rust linen. The *Elegy* was quite well received, becoming a contemporary success and since achieving the status of a classic. The churchyard of St. Giles, Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, is the setting traditionally associated with this celebrated poem.

*Mary Wollstonecraft’s Vindication*

With the acquisition of the second edition of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women, with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (London: J. Johnson, 1972), the masterpiece of this eighteenth-century feminist, and a milestone in the literature of women’s emancipation as well, has been added to the libraries. Censured by many for its liberal views, the *Vindication* was nevertheless translated into both French and German soon after publication. A free-spirited woman, Mary Wollstonecraft was uninhibited by convention. She formed a liaison with the American adventurer Gilbert Imlay during her stay in Paris from 1792 to 1795. When this relationship disintegrated, her attraction to English philosopher William Godwin resulted in their marriage in early 1797, shortly before her thirty-eighth birthday; their brief union ended with her death in September after the birth of their daughter Mary, later the wife of Shelley. To Mrs. Godwin, meaningful education was the key to freedom for women, the means through which equality between the sexes could be achieved.
History of Printing

Several essays relating to typography and fine printing by Harry Duncan, proprietor of the Cummington Press and one of the most distinguished of contemporary American printers, have been published under the title *Doors of Perception* (Austin, Texas: W. Thomas Taylor, 1983). This acquisition is of particular interest for “My Master Victor Hammer,” a talk delivered during the Fifth Seminar in Graphic Design at the King Library Press in 1981 and first published in this journal. Another item of interest to printing historians is Colin Franklin’s *Doves Press: The Start of a Worry* (Newton, Pennsylvania: The Bird & Bull Press, 1983), a collection of previously unpublished correspondence, chiefly of T. J. Cobden-Sanderson and Emery Walker, the principals in the well-known dispute concerning the ownership of the Doves Press types.

A handsome facsimile, handbound in goatskin and cedar, of *The Codex Benedictus* faithfully reproduces, from the original in the Vatican Library, the eleventh-century illuminated manuscript of the Lectionary for the Feasts of Saints Benedict, Maurus, and Scholastica. The elaborately decorated manuscript, written in Beneventan script at Monte Cassino Abbey, was intended for liturgical use, principally honoring St. Benedict, the founder of the Benedictine order who established Monte Cassino in 529. Because no surviving manuscript from the scriptorium of the abbey is so elegantly enhanced as the *Codex*, the Johnson Reprint Corporation’s 1982 republication, in a limited edition, is a fitting tribute to the monks of the abbey which was the focal point of Western monasticism and a center of learning during the Middle Ages. It is a pleasure to add this extraordinary facsimile to the libraries, where its calligraphy and art will be available for study.

Manuscripts

The splendid gathering of Charles Lamb letters in the W. Hugh Peal Collection has been increased by the recent acquisition of Lamb’s letter of 18 June 1818 to Charles and James Ollier, his publishers, requesting that complimentary copies of *The Works of Charles Lamb*, an edition from that year represented by a fine example in the Peal Collection, be sent to several friends, including Robert Southey and William Wordsworth. Referring to
First page of Charles Lamb’s letter of 18 June 1818 to his publishers

forthcoming reviews of the newly released Works, Lamb notes in a postscript: "I think Southey will give us a lift in that damn’d Quarterly. I meditate an attack upon that Cobler Gifford, which
shall appear immediately after any favorable mention which S. may make in the Quarterly. It can’t in decent gratitude appear before.” Lamb’s “attack” on William Gifford, editor of the Quarterly Review from 1809 to 1824, did not occur for over a year. It took the form of a sonnet, “Saint Crispin to Mr. Giffard,” in The Examiner of 3 October 1819, in which the poet advises the critic to ply the cobbler’s trade in which he was apprenticed. Lamb’s spite against Gifford dated from the latter’s reference, years earlier in the Quarterly Review, to Lamb’s comments on John Ford in Specimens of English Dramatic Poets (1808) as “the blasphemies of a maniac.”

We have also been fortunate in acquiring two Robert Southey manuscripts. One is an early draft of the poem celebrating his daughter’s tenth birthday, “To Edith May Southey. 1814.” The poem was published in 1825 as the dedication to A Tale of Paraguay. The second item is a manuscript, “The Life of Rodrigo Diaz De Bivar. The Cid,” which appears to constitute notes Southey used when, in 1808, he translated several prose romances including Chronicle of the Cid.

In an undated letter from this century, Clarence Darrow comments on John Chamberlain’s Farewell to Reform (Liveright, 1932), a chronicle of the development of the progressive movement in the United States. Darrow notes, “I know of no book by a modern American that gives such an unbiased and fair judgment of men and events.” The letter is a gift to the libraries from Peter A. Gragis of Huntington, New York.

Kentuckiana

A recent major addition to our Kentuckiana manuscripts are papers of the William K. Griffith family covering the years from 1813 until the 1930s. Mr. Griffith was a well-known breeder of shorthorn cattle and Cotswold sheep, and a substantial landowner in Bourbon and Harrison counties, possessing some 2,000 acres at his death in 1915. His mother’s family, the Kings, are also well represented by numerous letters and documents. Of particular interest is the Civil War material, including a 2 June 1864 certificate of recruitment for Harrison Griffith, a black soldier, as well as his letter of 8 January 1865 written from Camp Foster, Nashville, inquiring about his family and requesting that his mother send him a cravat. In addition, Mrs. W. K. Griffith’s brother, Sol Spears, a prisoner at Fort Delaware, writes from the
officers' barracks on 10 August 1864, cautioning his sister about the necessity of labelling packages with the proper rank (Spears was a lieutenant), since one of her boxes intended for him was taken to the privates' camp and "claimed by some scoundrel."

Another noteworthy Civil War item is an 1867 affidavit in which Mr. Griffith claims that on 28 October 1862 Union soldiers in Brig. Gen. A. J. Smith's brigade commandeered over six dozen cords of wood and 752 bushels of corn valued at $575. Several letters from Garret Davis, United States representative (1839–1847) and senator (1861–1872) from Kentucky, are also included; most of them concern various land transactions.

Two recently acquired broadsides are of special interest for the Kentuckiana collection. A late nineteenth-century broadside discusses various possibilities for relocating the state's capital from Frankfort to a more suitable site. Of the competing cities mentioned — Lexington, Danville, Lebanon, Bowling Green, and Louisville — the author unquestionably favors Louisville, hoping by centering Kentuckians' attention on the river city to shift the balance of trade of local Kentucky businesses from Cincinnati to Louisville's commercial advantage. The second piece is a Lexington imprint published by the Loyalist Power Printing Office on 2 September 1863, announcing openings for "100 picked men" to serve as a special guard at Gen. Speed Smith Fry's headquarters at Camp Nelson, Kentucky. The inducements offered include comfortable quarters, well-equipped arms, and — an extra enticement to veterans — a ten- to fifteen-day furlough.

— Claire McCann