

MANUSCRIPT REPOSITORIES SECTION NEWSLETTER

Manuscript Repositories Section of the Society of American Archivists

Spring 2002

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From the Chair: Pieces of the Past by Peter Blodgett

Recent developments in the business of buying and selling manuscripts highlight the fascinating ways in which history, commerce and the collecting impulse can collide at the beginning of this new century. As reported in various news outlets during the winter of 2002, two significant bodies of historical documents have been slated for dispersal through the mechanisms of the market place. Although wildly different in content, each contains materials possessing critical importance for the story of our national experience.

For many years, Malcolm Forbes, Sr., eponymous founder and publisher of the leading business periodical Forbes, also avidly collected a wide variety of riches from Faberge eggs and lead toy soldiers to historical manuscripts. Housed in the Forbes Galleries, located in the magazine's New York City offices, the family's holdings have been evolving under the direction of Forbes's sons following their father's death in 1990. Most recently, the Galleries have announced plans for two major sales of manuscript Americana through the New York branch of Christie's auction house. The first sale, scheduled for March 27 of this year, includes many celebrated single items such as Abraham Lincoln's April 11, 1865 speech outlining various aspects of his plans for reconstructing the Union and the letter sent by Albert Einstein to Franklin Roosevelt in August 1939 expressing the growing concern among various physicists of the military potential of current research in nuclear physics. Incorporating letters and manuscripts from every American president between George Washington and Ronald Reagan, the Forbes sale represents the kind of treasure trove that excites the desire of private collectors.

While Christie's plans for the Forbes auctions in New York have been unfolding, another proposed sale of manuscripts on the opposite coast has ground to a halt in response to persistent questions concerning ownership. Butterfield and Butterfield, the San Francisco-based subsidiary of on-line auction giant eBay, had announced its

intention to auction various personal papers of prominent African-American leader Malcolm X, murdered by an assassin in 1965. Like Christie's approach to the Forbes holdings, Butterfield initially proposed to break the larger group up into smaller lots, thus maximizing the financial return. During the week before the March 20 auction date, however, already laboring under the pressure of increasingly adverse publicity, Butterfield withdrew the entire collection from auction in the face of uncertainty over who holds actual title to the documents. Of greater concern to scholars, archivists and curators has been the knowledge that an important research collection sold in this manner would be scattered to the four winds among private individuals and public collections, thus severely hampering further research into Malcolm X's life and legacy.

Though the subject matter of these two collections could not be more disparate, the common fate proposed for them both springs from a widespread perception of historical documents. However compelling or noteworthy may be the information they contain, the greatest appeal they often hold is as pieces of the past. For some, those pieces symbolize sacred relics whose very existence helps the living to animate the shades of the dead. For others, they are beacons of prior glory in whose light their current owners may bask by association. In any event, this passion for the remnants of former days, part of what historian David Lowenthal has described as "the heritage crusade," only exacerbates the aura of collectibility generated around documents of all types by such engines of marketing as "The Antiques Roadshow" and eBay. The challenges of building permanent collections to advance the ends of scholarship in this environment, from managing collection development to ensuring long-term security, will demand all our very best efforts in the years ahead.

Peter Blodgett

H. E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery

"Baldy" Cartoons Available Online

A collection of editorial cartoons from the most tumultuous decades in American history are now available to everyone from scholars to schoolchildren on the web via the Digital Library of Georgia, an initiative of GALILEO, Georgia's online virtual library.

Clifford "Baldy" Baldowski, cartoonist with the Atlanta Constitution for more than 30 years, gave more than 7,000 cartoons to the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies at the University of Georgia before his death in 1999. The electronic availability of the work, which deals with topics including the Civil Rights Movement, the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis, is the culmination of a collaborative effort between the Russell Library and the Digital Library of Georgia.

"In snapshot form, Baldy's cartoons provide a kaleidoscope view of three eventful decades of post-World War II American history. Baldy produced cartoons in a heyday of newsmaking events, which were promoted by social unrest, nuclear anxiety, antiwar sentiment, and epochal changes in his native South," said Sheryl Vogt, director of the Russell Library. "His thought-provoking approach to news led Time magazine to call him 'one of the South's leading appeals to reason.'"

Known by the pen name "Baldy," Baldowski retired from the Atlanta newspaper in 1982. His cartoons regularly appeared in other publications including the major newsweeklies and leading newspapers across the United States. In his tenure with the Constitution, he drew more than 15,000 cartoons, appearing seven days weekly for more than 30 years. Baldy was a Pulitzer Prize nominee for a cartoon on U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign in 1964, and he was awarded the Sigma Delta Chi National Award for Distinguished Service in Journalism for a cartoon reflecting the threat of Southern school closings in the Sixties.

The Clifford H. "Baldy" Baldowski Collection includes his original editorial cartoons from both the Augusta Chronicle (1946-1950) and the Atlanta Constitution (1950-1982). Subject content relates to international, national, state and local (Augusta and Atlanta-Fulton County) politics, and to society in general, and features such topics as individual politicians, world leaders, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam Conflict, and the Cold War.

"Students will find these cartoons not only useful in examining historical events, but entertaining as well," according to Vogt. "Noted for 'getting to the heart of the matter,' Baldy excelled in taking the complex issues of current events to a few visual brush strokes captioned with wit and savvy - leaving the delight of interpretation and judgment to the individual reader."

Not only do students and scholars have access to Baldy's view of the post-war world through the online collection, but they also can discover some of the unique aspects of Baldy's cartooning style.

"For example, during his earliest days at the Augusta Chronicle, Baldy was working part-time and left his cartoons unsigned as he feared reprisals from the ruling Cracker Party whom he criticized in his works. Only after becoming a permanent employee at the paper did he begin to sign his work with the nom-de-plume he used throughout his long career," said Stephen Miller, DLG director.

Through search features built into the database, users may easily locate some of his earliest work by searching for unsigned cartoons. Another search will reveal two stock characters Baldy used throughout much of his career: the "rooty toot," which represented ultra-conservative views, and John Q. Public, a mild, bespectacled man.

The cartoons, along with supplementary supporting materials such as a commentary on Baldy's cartooning, a biographical essay, as well as suggested reading links, are available through the Digital Library of Georgia, a GALILEO initiative that provides online access to Georgia's history and culture found in digitized books, manuscripts, photographs, newspapers, audio, video and other materials. To access the Baldy collection, go to dlg.galileo.usg.edu/baldy.html.

Sheila McAlister

Whaling Crew List Index Project

The New Bedford Free Public Library has initiated a five-year project to construct and make available on the Internet a comprehensive index to whaling Crew Lists of the New Bedford Custom District from 1809 to 1925. The first year of this project is supported in part by a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Records Advisory Board and the Secretary of the Commonwealth. The Library's Archives Department is coordinating the project. The City of New Bedford Management Information Systems Department constructed and maintains the Internet database. In this first year the database indexes information from Crew Lists and Whalemen Shipping Papers in the Library's Archives Department collection, covering the period from 1810 to 1855. Information from collections of cooperating institutions, the National Archives in Waltham, Ma., and the New Bedford Whaling Museum/Kendall Institute, will also be included. The index is searchable through five search templates: Crew Men, Vessel, Port of Registry, Whaling Ground, and Crew Supplemental Information. This last search option allows searching on a crewmember's physical description, rank, residence, or keyword in Remarks field.

The Crew List Index is available free of charge through the New Bedford Free Public Library's home page and can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For more information, contact crewlist@www.ci.newbedford.ma.us.

Kathy Jacobs

Congressman Bill Emerson's Papers Transferred To WHMC-C

The Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Columbia recently received the papers of former U.S. Representative Bill Emerson. As a Republican Congressman, Emerson served southeastern Missouri's 8th District from 1980 until his death in 1996.

The papers comprise 255 linear feet of correspondence, publicity clippings, research files, and other information regarding bills and resolutions debated in the Capitol during his tenure.

The materials reflect Emerson's work as a member of both the Agriculture and the Public Works and Transportation Committees. Many files pertain to Missouri's highways and waterways, particularly drainage areas in the Bootheel. Of note are photographs showing damage caused by the Mississippi River flood in 1993.

As a member of the Select Committee on Hunger, Emerson traveled to the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East to study world famine. And as a retired Air Force Reserve officer, he was concerned about ex-soldiers and closely worked with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

WHMC-C staff worked nonstop for two weeks sorting through the boxes to produce a preliminary inventory so the collection could be made available to researchers as soon as possible. The inventory is available on the Internet: www.system.missouri.edu/whmc/invent/emerson.htm.

Thomas H. Miller

Abraham Lincoln Papers Available

The Library of Congress National Digital Library Program and the Manuscript Division are pleased to announce the final release of the Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress, at memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html. This final release of the Papers includes 20,000 documents, comprising 61,000 digital images and annotated transcriptions of approximately 10,000 documents.

The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress contain items dating from 1833 through 1916. Most of the approximately 20,000 items in this release are from the 1850s through Lincoln's presidential years, 1860-65. Treasures include Lincoln's draft of the Emancipation Proclamation; his March 4, 1865, draft of his second Inaugural Address; and his August 23, 1864, memorandum expressing his expectation of being defeated in the upcoming presidential election. Other correspondence relating to these treasures provides historical context for understanding how and why they were written.

The Lincoln Papers richly documents historical events of the period, such as the crisis surrounding the reinforcement of Fort Sumter in early 1861, the Sioux uprising in Minnesota in the fall of 1862, and the writing of and popular response to the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. Letters to Lincoln from a wide variety of correspondents--friends and legal and political associates from Lincoln's Springfield, Illinois, days; national and regional political figures and reformers; local people and organizations writing to their president--offer sources on the political, social, and economic history of the times as well as insights into Lincoln's personal and professional life. Included in the Papers are documents written after Lincoln's assassination on April 14, 1865, such as letters of condolence to his widow, Mary Todd Lincoln, and correspondence between his oldest son, Robert Todd Lincoln, and others.

Annotated transcriptions that accompany the digital images of items in the Papers were provided by the Lincoln Studies Center, under contract to the Library of Congress. The Center is located at Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, and was established in 1997. It is headed by noted Lincoln scholars and editors Rodney O. Davis and Douglas L. Wilson. The Lincoln Studies Center created annotated transcriptions for all the documents in Lincoln's own hand and, in addition, annotated transcriptions for nearly 50 percent of the other items, which consist mostly of Lincoln's incoming correspondence. Annotation for Lincoln's autograph documents include a headnote providing historical and documentary context, as well as annotations on the content of the document. Annotations for incoming correspondence typically identify persons and organizations writing to Lincoln or referred to in the documents, explain terms and events, and provide brief historical context. These fully searchable transcriptions and annotations dramatically extend access to the Abraham Lincoln Papers and enhance their teaching and research value.

This release completes the online presentation of the Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. An introductory, or demonstration, release of approximately 2,000 documents was made available in February 2000. This was followed by the first formal release in February 2001 of approximately 17,000 documents (54,000 images) and 3,500 document transcriptions. Both the introductory and the first release contained descriptive document titles and annotated transcriptions that were "works in progress." This final release in March 2002

includes updates of those "works in progress" as well as the remaining 3,000 documents (7,000 images) and 6,500 transcriptions. Please direct any questions to ndlpcoll@loc.gov.

Archives listserve

A Day In Northampton

In celebration of its sixtieth birthday, the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, is offering a one-day pre-conference workshop on researching women's history and an opportunity for researchers to use the Collection's rich holdings before the opening of the twelfth Berkshire Conference of Women Historians. The workshop and research day is Thursday, June 6, and will undoubtedly prove attractive to students and scholars coming from across the country and around the world to attend the "Berks" at the University of Connecticut, in Storrs, Connecticut, that weekend.

Kathy Jacobs

New Facility On Track For Summer 2002

The University of Montana Archives and Special Collections will move into a new facility in Summer 2002. Since 1975, the department has been housed in the traditional Archives location of the library's sub-basement, but will now move to a new facility on the fourth floor. For visitors to the department, this means a quiet and pleasant reading room in which to work, spacious new display cases, and a space in which to attend seminars and receptions. For the materials, it means growth space in storage areas, a clean and uncarpeted floor, and a state-of-the-art fire protection system. And for the Archives and Special Collections staff, it means all this plus windows in the workroom and offices!

Jodi Allison-Bunnell

Montana Union Catalog Project Continues

As part of the Montana Union Catalog Project with the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, the K. Ross Toole Archives has submitted 159 manuscript and 321 oral history records. The NUCMC staff have completed a total of 2025 full records for Montana repositories.

Participants include the Butte-Silver Bow Public Archives, the Catholic Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, the Montana Historical Society, Montana State University-Bozeman, the Museum of Women's History, the Musselshell Valley Historical Museum, and the Tobacco Valley Board of History.

Jodi Allison-Bunnell

"Women And War" Exhibit

The Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America invites you to visit "Women and War" - an online exhibit drawing on the Library's photograph, manuscript, ephemera, and book collections. The exhibit documents the involvement of women in the many facets and faces of war, from the Civil War through the Vietnam Era. It features women in the armed forces, in war production work, nurses, aid workers, victims, and peace activists. The online exhibit is a representative sampling of a larger in-house exhibit, mounted by photograph curator Marie-Helen Gold, that was on view at the Library from November 15, 2001 through February 15, 2002. The online exhibit, launched by Joanne Donovan and Glynn Edwards of the Manuscript Department, includes a selection of digitized photographs, pamphlets, and book covers, as well as excerpts from letters and diaries, arranged by topic. Please visit the online exhibit at www.radcliffe.edu/schles/newsevt/exhibits/war/.

Kathy Jacobs

Rasmuson Papers At University Of Alaska Fairbanks

The family of the late Elmer E. Rasmuson donated his papers in August 2001 to the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska and Polar Regions Department. Elmer E. Rasmuson has notably served Alaska and the University of Alaska during his distinguished banking career and years of public service. Born in Yakutat in 1909, he was educated at Harvard and the University of Grenoble. His business career included accountancy and serving as President and Chairman of the National Bank of Alaska. In 1970, the University of Alaska Fairbank's library was named for him in recognition of his dedicated service to the University. Efforts are underway to begin processing the collection. A professional archivist will be hired this spring to arrange and describe the collection, which consists of 850 cubic feet of 20th century materials.

Jodi Allison-Bunnell

Nominations Sought For Section Leadership

Elections for Vice Chair/Chair Elect and two Steering Committee members will be held during the section meeting in Birmingham. The Nominations and Election Committee-Kathi Neal (Chair), Jodi Allison-Bunnell, Cynthia Ghering, and Kathy Jacob-currently seeks candidates to consider for these positions. Candidates must be members of SAA and the Manuscript Repositories Section. In forming the slate, the committee will strive to represent the wide range of repository types found in the section as well as different geographic areas. Duties of the offices are as follows:

Vice Chair/Chair Elect: Serves as the Vice Chair from the conclusion of the 2002 meeting through the 2003 meeting, at which time (s)he assumes the office of Chair for one year. Presides over the 2004 meeting. Also serves as newsletter editor while Vice Chair.

Steering Committee members: Serve for two years from the end of the 2002 meeting through the 2004 meeting. The two committee members elected in 2002 will serve on the Nominations and Election Committee and perform other section duties.

Only two Steering Committee members will be elected this year, rather than the customary three, because a tie for one seat has occurred over the past two years, resulting in staggered terms.

We should identify two candidates for each opening. Please take time to send suggestions to Kathi Neal at nealx008@tc.umn.edu or by fax (612) 625-5525. The deadline for nominations is May 1, 2002. Thanks for participating!

Kathi Neal, Chair of Nominations

MANUSCRIPT REPOSITORIES SECTION

News items, articles, letters to the editor, and comments are welcome.

Next deadline: June 1, 2002

Send to Susan Potts McDonald ([see address below](#))

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