

# MHS Miscellany

## 109,000 SLIPS OF PAPER

In 1954, the Adams family of Massachusetts donated to the MHS their entire family archive, a massive collection that spans the American Revolution, two presidencies, the Civil War, and four generations of family correspondence—what Edward Everett Hale called the “manuscript history of America.” That same year, the Society established the Adams Papers Editorial Project. Editor-in-chief Lyman Butterfield canvassed historical repositories all over the country—and sometimes the world—for

Adams documents that were not included in the original gift of Adams Family Papers. Throughout this search, Butterfield and his staff made a detailed record of every copy of every letter and other type of document written by or to an Adams from 1639 to 1889. This item-by-item inventory provides intellectual control over the entire corpus of Adams documents and is known simply as the “control file.”

The control file has grown over the past 55 years to represent not only the 300,000 manuscript pages in the Adams Family Papers held by the MHS but also more than 80,000 pages of material copied from other repositories. Each document is recorded on a color-coded slip of paper and filed both chronologically and by author. There are approximately 109,000 slips of paper (hence the other curious in-house name, the “slip file”). This astounding resource is one of a kind; it exists only on the third floor of the Society.



This past fall the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) awarded the MHS a \$150,000 grant to convert the 50-year-old control file into an online database, and in January the Adams Papers and Library Collections Services departments began the two-year digitization project.

Without the control file, the work of publishing the Adams Papers would not be possible. It not only tracks the content of each letter, answering questions of author and recipient, where and when it was written; it also tracks the letter itself with information about how many contemporary copies were made, where to find it on the microfilm (a particularly valuable piece of information since the microfilm edition runs to 608 reels), its current physical location, who has owned it, where it has been published, and how much it sold for at auction, as well as many other bits of information that have been added over the years. Most archival collections include only one side of the correspondence—the letters received. In contrast, this comprehensive record shows the complete conversation between the Adamses and their many correspondents.

As a paper file, the control file is available only to a handful of editors and librarians at the MHS. In electronic form, thousands of researchers throughout the world will have access to this invaluable body of information free of charge at the Society's website.

Once completed, the database will link to many other digital resources at the MHS, including the *Founding Families Digital Edition*, the *Adams Electronic Archive*, and the *Diaries of John Quincy Adams Digital Collection*. With just the click of a button, anyone will be able to access the “manuscript history of America” from anywhere in the world.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT



To say that we live in challenging times is an understatement. As with our sister cultural and historical organizations, the current economic downturn has eroded the operating income of the MHS. The value of our endowment, which provides over 65 percent of our operating budget, has contracted. This has meant adjustments throughout the Society to accomplish a reduction in expenses so that we may lessen our endowment draw. These prudent measures ensure that our collections are secure and that they will continue to be as publicly available as possible. Fulfilling all aspects of our mission will require ingenuity and innovative approaches as we adapt to this new reality. It will be a challenge, but one the MHS will rise to meet, especially given the strong support

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Society

Masthead illustration:  
“Plan & Elevation of the  
Tontine Crescent, now erect-  
ing in Boston.” From the  
*Massachusetts Magazine*, 1794.  
All images are from the MHS  
collections unless otherwise  
credited. The MHS occupied  
the Tontine Crescent from  
1794 until 1833.

Front page photograph by  
Laura Wulf.

#### *Address:*

1154 Boylston St.  
Boston MA 02215  
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#### *Hours:*

The MHS reading room is  
open to the public free of  
charge, 9 AM to 4:45 PM Mon-  
days, Tuesdays, Wednesdays,  
and Fridays, 9 AM to 7:45 PM  
on Thursdays, and 9 AM to 4  
PM on Saturdays.

#### *For more information:*

Please call ahead or check  
the website for directions,  
information about collections,  
reading room policies, holiday  
hours, and special events.

we continue to receive from our Fellows, Members, and friends.

Despite the present economic climate, our programs and activities have never drawn larger or more appreciative audiences. While remaining both free and stimulating has an appeal in the down economy, I believe two other factors have given us a boost: a heightened effort to publicize our activities and partnerships with other institutions. We began to increase public awareness of our resources and activities two years ago, and this endeavor is finally having an impact. MHS programs now regularly appear on calendar listings, and feature articles—like those on the discovery of the account books of the Salem furniture maker Nathaniel Gould—have appeared in both the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times*.

Partnerships bring us to new and wider audiences while at the same time allowing us to share programming costs. This issue of the *Miscellany* features a collaborative effort with the Boston Public Library, Monticello, and the University of Virginia to present a major conference on the libraries of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. In April we joined with the Concord Free Public Library and the Minute Man National Historical Park to launch an exhibition and programs commemorating the Battle of Lexington and Concord and the 50th anniversary of the park's creation. Throughout this winter and spring our programming partners are as diverse as Old South Meeting House, Primary Source, and the Seminar-ians. Through these collaborations we are making new friends, promoting our mission, and helping to secure our future.

I want to close by adding a few words to Amalie's lovely tribute to Bill Saltonstall. Hardly a week went by when I did not hear from Bill at least once, and often two or three times. Bill's conversations were often laced with historical perspective whether they be a simple check-in to make sure all was going well, guidance on a project under way, or an inquiry about a staff member whose activities caught his fancy. He respected the staff and wanted to get to know people better to show his appreciation for them and their work. At our most recent Board meeting, which

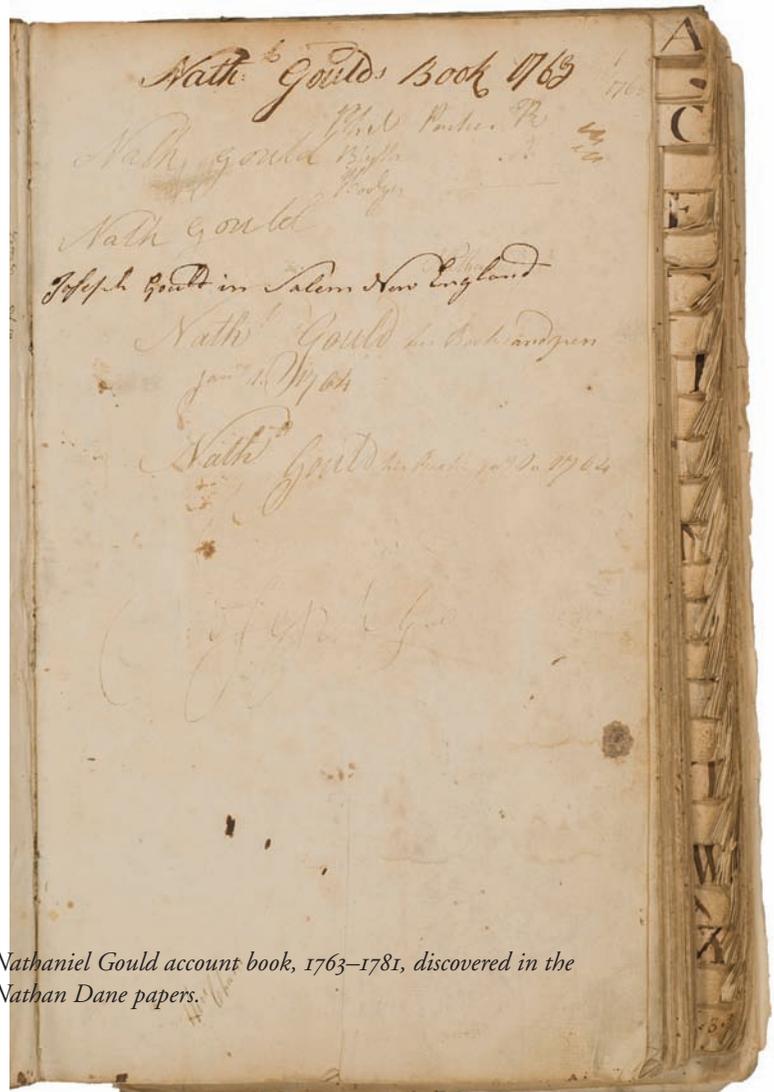
took place just days before Bill died, the staff was trying their best to explain in simple terms how we convert a written manuscript into an electronic document—tough stuff for the uninitiated. Near the end of the presentation, Bill spoke up with a great smile: "I don't understand very much of this, but I'm glad you're doing it." He is greatly missed.

—Dennis A. Fiori, President

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## MAJOR DISCOVERY

The business ledgers of preeminent furniture maker Nathaniel Gould were hidden in plain sight at the MHS for 172 years—until local scholars Kem Widmer and Joyce King uncovered them. Gould is considered Salem, Massachusetts's finest cabinet-maker of the mid 18th century, but without detailed records of his work, his legacy has been contested



*Nathaniel Gould account book, 1763–1781, discovered in the Nathan Dane papers.*

and enigmatic. The three previously unstudied ledgers not only shed important light on the sophisticated business practices of a merchant craftsman but open a window into 18th-century Massachusetts society. Ultimately, the ledgers will point to works by Gould that have not yet been identified and possibly lead to the reattribution of key pieces in museum collections. Gould's records have been in the MHS's collections since 1835 but went unrecognized because they lay cached within the papers of his lawyer, Nathan Dane. In the end, a quintessentially 21st-century tool unearthed the 250-year-old ledgers: a Google search.

Thanks to grants and private funding awarded in recent years, the MHS is digitizing thousands of catalog records and documents from its collections. Widmer and King had been studying Gould's furniture for decades when suddenly King saw an intriguing new Google entry that led to the Society's website. They immediately rushed to Boylston Street to investigate.

"We are the oldest historical society in the United States, but we are using the latest communications technology to make our collections even more accessible to researchers, students, teachers, and the public," says Society president Dennis Fiori. Peter Drummey, the Stephen T. Riley Librarian at the MHS, adds, "Kem and Joyce's work highlights the dynamic nature of history. When documents like these are found, they dramatically change our understanding of the past. . . . As the Society's initiative to digitize our collections continues, there is no telling when the next important discovery will take place."

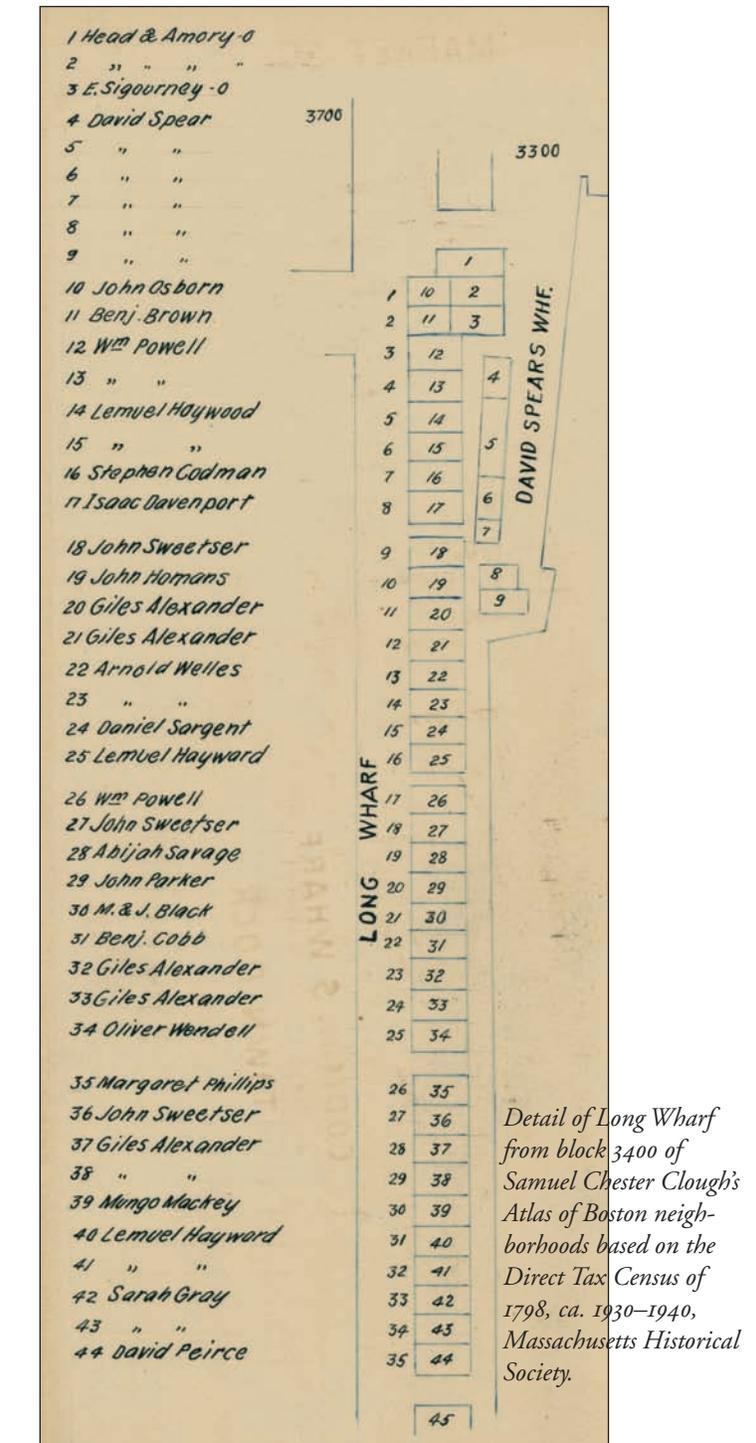
An exhibition featuring the ledgers was on public view at the MHS from 12 February to 15 May 2009.

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## MASSACHUSETTS MAPS

*Now online!*

The MHS is pleased to present 104 rare manuscript and printed maps of Massachusetts at a new website, *Massachusetts Maps* ([www.masshist.org/online/massmaps](http://www.masshist.org/online/massmaps)). Selected from the 2,500 maps in the Society's collections, these unique and iconic maps include John Foster's *A Map of New England* (1677), the first map published in the English colonies; Osgood Carleton's *Map of Massachusetts Proper* (1801), the first published map of the state based on land surveys; and the first edition of *The Town of Bos-*



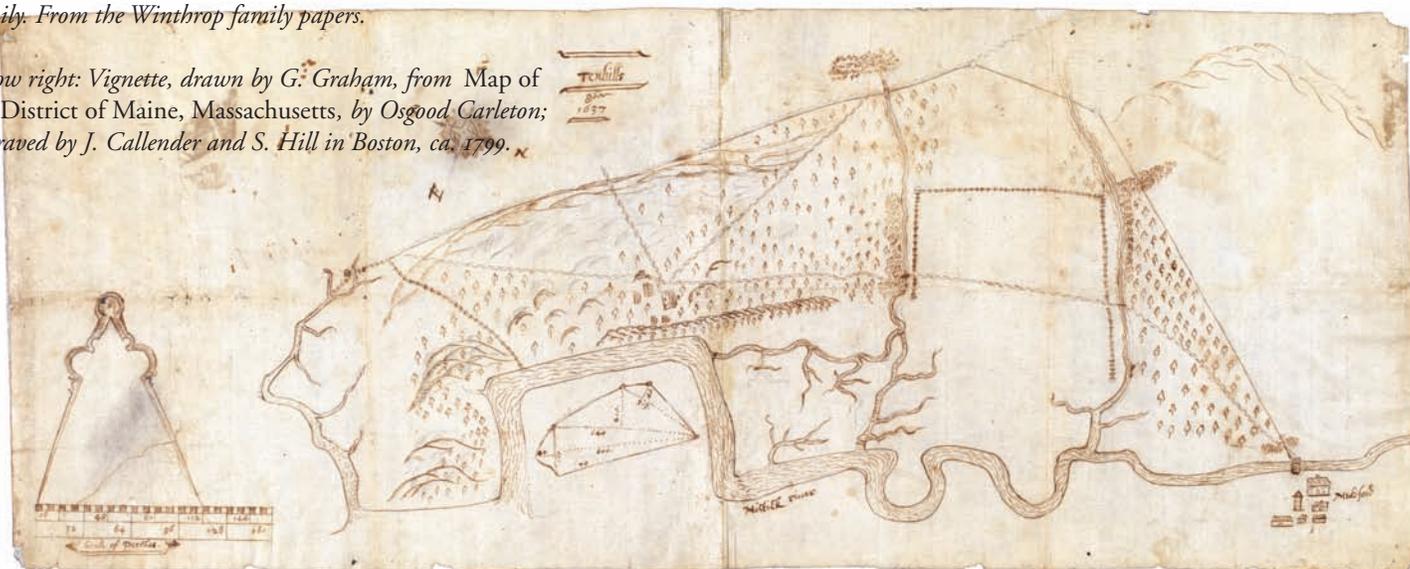
*Detail of Long Wharf from block 3400 of Samuel Chester Clough's Atlas of Boston neighborhoods based on the Direct Tax Census of 1798, ca. 1930-1940, Massachusetts Historical Society.*

ton in New England, by Capt. John Bonner. Though frequently revised and republished, Bonner's original 1722 edition in the Society's collection is the only known surviving copy.

The website also presents 24 hand-drawn manuscript maps depicting local towns and counties from 1637 to 1839. Examples include John Adams's map of taverns in Braintree and Weymouth, Jeremy Belknap's map of Plymouth Harbor, and Rufus Put-

Below: Manuscript map of the Ten Hills (Medford, Mass.), October 1637. Possibly drawn by a member of the Winthrop family. From the Winthrop family papers.

Below right: Vignette, drawn by G. Graham, from Map of the District of Maine, Massachusetts, by Osgood Carleton; engraved by J. Callender and S. Hill in Boston, ca. 1799.



nam's 1785 manuscript plan of Worcester County. Rev. James Freeman donated Putnam's map when the Society first established its library in 1791.

Web visitors can navigate the offerings on the site via an interactive outline map of the state, or they can select items from a list of titles. When viewing the screen for an individual historical map, the user can choose from several sizes of images of the maps or select a zoom option—newly installed for this project—that can pan in, out, and around the image.

A significant section of the website features 72 meticulously drawn manuscript maps by Samuel Chester Clough (1873–1949). During the course of his life, Clough compiled an enormous amount of data about Boston landowners in the 17th and 18th centuries from town, court, and tax records. Using this information, he created maps of Boston at different points in time. Clough's reconstructions consist of oversized maps of Boston in 1648 and 1676 and two atlases depicting Boston property owners in 1798. The web displays of the atlases include interactive key maps of Boston that allow users to link to specific plates in the atlases. An index of street and wharf names also allows users to locate the atlas plates that show specific streets.

Funding for the *Massachusetts Maps* website and digitization project was provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act grant as administered by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners.

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ADAMS FAMILY  
CORRESPONDENCE,  
VOL. 9

This April the Adams Papers published *Adams Family Correspondence*, volume 9. Covering the years 1790 to 1793, this book explores the beginning of the American republic under the new constitution, a contentious period in American history as the nation struggled to create a functioning government amid increasingly bitter factionalism. On the international stage, the turmoil of the French Revolution and war in Europe forced the United States to rethink its diplomatic priorities. As usual, the Adams family found itself in the midst of it all—and chronicled it extensively in letters to one another. John, as vice president, faithfully presided over Senate sessions even as he was prevented from participating in any meaningful fashion. Abigail, whether with John in New York and Philadelphia when her health permitted or from afar, provided important advice and keen observations on American politics and society.

The Adams children have a strong presence in this volume, especially younger sons Charles and Thomas Boylston, who, for the first time, appear as substantial correspondents in their own right. Both embarked on legal careers, in New York and Philadelphia respectively, while elder brother John Quincy did the same in Boston. Daughter Nabby cared for her growing family while her ambitious husband, William Stephens Smith, pursued various financial schemes at home and abroad. All of them offer the frank commentary on life in the late 18th century that readers have come to expect from the Adamses.

This volume also marks a milestone for the Adams Papers: for the last fifty years, the Hon. Hiller B.

Zobel has been an editor, advisor, and friend to the project. To honor Judge Zobel's long-standing (and ongoing) contributions, the Adams Papers staff is pleased to dedicate this volume to him.

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PILOT PROGRAMS &  
PARTNERSHIPS

The Education Department is thrilled to report several exciting collaborative efforts to promote the new *Coming of the American Revolution* website ([www.masshist.org/revolution](http://www.masshist.org/revolution)) to educators nationwide. The website shows off the Society's greatest strength: primary source documents, digitized and accompanied by contextual essays and curricular components.

With funding from the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, this summer the MHS, along with the National Heritage Museum in Lexington and Minute Man National Park, will present a pilot workshop for teachers who will be training others in their districts to use the *Coming of the American Revolution* website effectively. The collective historical assets of the institutions involved will provide participants in this program with a broad array of learning experiences and teaching approaches.

This past January, the Education Department joined Mount Vernon, the National Archives, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, and the Papers of George Washington in the collaborative program "Primarily George." Participants selected key documents from their respective collections for educators to use as teaching tools. The materials all related to George Washington, and each institution selected one document for grade levels 5, 8, and 11. The combined result appears at the Mount Vernon website ([www.mountvernon.org/learn/teachers\\_students/index.cfm/pid/1217](http://www.mountvernon.org/learn/teachers_students/index.cfm/pid/1217)), and the selections from MHS—with accompanying questions for historical investigation—appear at [www.masshist.org/education](http://www.masshist.org/education).

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*Abigail Adams Smith, miniature portrait on porcelain tile after the portrait by John Singleton Copley, circa 1795. Thomas Boylston Adams, miniature portrait, watercolor on ivory by Mr. Parker, 1795. Charles Adams, published image of miniature portrait. Reproduced in Wide Awake, an Illustrated Magazine, November 1888.*

## JEFFERSON DISCOVERY

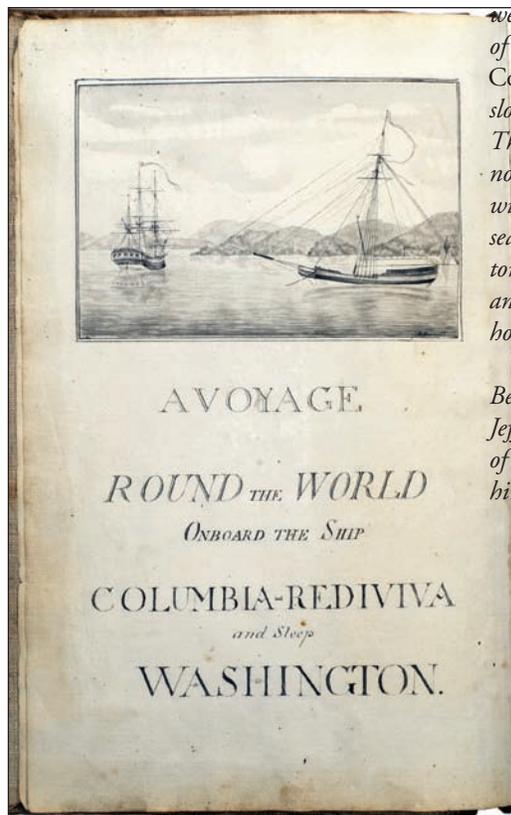
In November 2008, Assistant Reference Librarian Jeremy Dibbell pulled Jefferson's 1783 Catalog of Books to show Endrina Tay, Monticello's associate foundation librarian for technical service. The pair found within the bound volume a small booklet in Jefferson's handwriting listing book titles under various headings and categories. Much detective work later, Tay and Dibbell concluded that this list is an inventory, written by Jefferson in September 1806, of the library given to him by his longtime friend and mentor George Wythe.

Wythe (who died in June 1806 after being poisoned by a grandnephew) had bequeathed his entire book collection to Jefferson, calling it "the most valuable . . . of any thing which I have power to bestow." Jefferson's correspondence shows that his cousin George Jefferson packed up the Wythe library in Richmond and moved the books to Monticello, but the catalog that supposedly accompanied the books had disappeared, leaving many unanswered questions about the contents of Wythe's library and Jefferson's receipt of it. While several books containing Wythe's bookplate or signature were among the books Jefferson sold to Congress in 1815 and a handful of others are scattered in libraries around the country, no complete inventory of George Wythe's book collection has been possible—until now.

The unique and invaluable document includes 326 titles in at least 646 volumes and makes it possible to know which of Wythe's books Jefferson kept for himself and which he presented to others. A transcription and digital edition of the list are now available as part of the Society's *Jefferson Electronic Archive* ([www.masshist.org/thomasjeffersonpapers/](http://www.masshist.org/thomasjeffersonpapers/)).

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*Darwin's Botanic garden. 8 v.*  
*Zoonomia. 3. v. 8 v.*  
*Spectator. an odd vol.*  
*Connoisseur. an odd vol.*  
*Rabelais. 5. v. 12<sup>mo</sup> 2? wanting*  
*Dictionary of Arts & Sciences. 4. v. 8 v.*  
*Bacon's works. 4. v. fol.*  
*Locke's works. 3. v. fol.*  
*Milton's Prose works. 2. v. fol.*



*Title page of Robert Haswell's log and narrative of the voyage of the ship Columbia Rediviva and sloop Lady Washington. The ships sailed to the northwest coast to trade with native Americans for sea otter furs, then to Canton to trade the furs for tea and other wares, and then homeward to Boston.*

*Below: detail of Thomas Jefferson's 1806 inventory of books bequeathed to him by George Wythe.*

## SHIPS' LOGS

The MHS's large collection of ships' logs is an invaluable resource, but until now detailed descriptions of these logs were available only at 1154 Boylston Street on paper printouts produced from an obsolete database. Thanks to generous funding from the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (a charitable organization founded in 1786 to rescue the survivors of shipwrecks and ships in distress and a precursor to the U.S. Coast Guard), descriptions of all 300 of the Society's ships' logs now appear in ABIGAIL, the library's online catalog. Manuscript and Special Materials Cataloger Benjamin Johnson converted the old paper descriptions into searchable electronic records. In addition to information on the ship, its master, the log-keeper, length and type of voyage, stops made, and notable events, the records now include additional information on the type of voyage, each year represented in the log, and destinations for trade and stopovers.

The ships' logs range from the late 17th century to the mid 20th century and

record merchant, whaling, transatlantic, and other voyages to places all around the globe. Examples include George Henry Preble's account of a mid-1850s trading mission to China and Japan, John Boit's narrative of his round-the-world cruise in the ship *Columbia* in the 1790s, and numerous logs kept on merchant voyages to India and the Philippines throughout the 19th century.

The conversion of the paper database to electronic records required several unexpected—but interesting—policy decisions along the way, including making the distinction between a logbook and a personal diary kept at sea, and determining how to catalog volumes containing records of multiple vessels and voyages. The work was well worth the effort, for in the few months since this project was completed, the Reading Room reports an increase in the number of requests for logbooks, proving once again that if you describe it, researchers will come.

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## ADAMS & JEFFERSON

### *Libraries, Leadership, & Legacy*

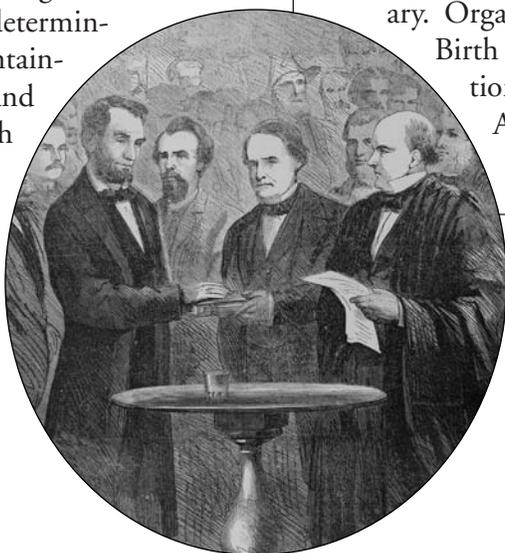
"I cannot live without books," Thomas Jefferson wrote to John Adams in 1815. Books were a passion for our nation's third president, who collected three different personal libraries for himself over the course of his life. Books were equally an enthusiasm for Adams, our second president. In fact, Adams also built an impressive personal library.

Adams and Jefferson were among the leading American book collectors of their day, but each man's relationship with the printed word took him far beyond the thrill of the hunt for a fugitive title. Their reading permeated their thought and

*I suffered very much for want of Books, which determined me to furnish myself, at any Sacrifice, with a proper Library . . .*

## LINCOLN TABLE

When taking his second oath of office in 1865, Abraham Lincoln stood next to a table made from three sections of iron cast for the (then new) dome of the Capitol. That table now belongs to the MHS and is currently on loan at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. At the request of the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies, the table was on display in Statuary Hall of the U.S. Capitol during Barack Obama's Presidential Inaugural Luncheon on 20 January. Organized around the theme "A New Birth of Freedom," the 2009 Inauguration celebrated the 200th birthday of Abraham Lincoln and the ideals of reuniting a nation.



*Lincoln taking the oath at his second inauguration, March 4, 1865. Wood engraving. Illus. in Harper's Weekly, 18 March 1865, p. 161. LC-USZ62-2578, Library of Congress.*

*The quote below is from John Adams's autobiography. Writing in 1802, he reminisces about his days as a law student in 1758 and goes on to recall that he "accordingly by degrees . . . procured the best Library of Law in the State."*

actions, providing an important foundation for their contributions to American governance.

*John Adams and Thomas Jefferson: Libraries, Leadership, and Legacy*, a conference that the MHS will co-sponsor with the Boston Public Library and Monticello on 21–27 June, will probe the place of books in the lives of these two American presidents. How did their reading and books affect the intellectual roots of the American polity? Presentations by a stellar cast of scholars will look at how each man developed his library; discuss how reading significantly shaped the political, philosophical, and religious identities and actions of these two Founding Fathers; and address the enduring legacy of Adams's and Jefferson's intellectual heritage today.

The conference will begin in Boston on 21 June at the Boston Public Library with a keynote address by Ted Widmer, the director and librarian of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University. Over the course of the next two days, sessions at the MHS and the BPL will

consider “Adams and Jefferson as Book Collectors,” “Law, Libraries, and Political Philosophy,” “Adams, Jefferson, and Nationalism,” and “Libraries and the Enlightenment.” After a travel day, the conference will reconvene at Monticello and the University of Virginia, where there will be panels on “Jefferson and Adams as Readers,” “Libraries and the Revolution,” “Jefferson, Adams, and Religion,” and “The Legacy of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams.” Each session will consider three or four pre-circulated essays and will afford a generous amount of time for comments and questions from the floor. In addition to formal sessions, there will be tours of John Adams’s Library at the Boston Public Library, the MHS’s important Adams and Jefferson manuscript holdings, the Adams National Historic Site in Quincy, and Jefferson’s residence, Monticello. Participants will also be able to see Jefferson’s greatest architectural accomplishment, the heart of the campus of the University of Virginia.

Information on *John Adams and Thomas Jefferson: Libraries, Leadership, and Legacy* is available on its website, [www.adamsjefferson.com](http://www.adamsjefferson.com), including directions for registering for the conference.

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## 2008-2009 ANNUAL APPEAL

### *Update*

The Development Department is pleased to report that as of 30 April 2009, the 2008-2009 Annual Appeal received \$291,587 from 423 Members, Fellows, and supporters. The MHS staff extends its deep appreciation to all who made a gift this fiscal year, which ends on 30 June, especially considering the financial hardship confronting many of our advocates. Having raised 78 percent of our fundraising goal, we are cautiously optimistic despite these challenging economic times.

That being said, we cannot succeed without the help of our friends. If you have not yet made a gift, please show your commitment to our nation’s history by making a donation today at [www.masshist.org/support](http://www.masshist.org/support). Contributions to the Annual Appeal support all aspects of our mission, including fostering original research, publishing leading historical texts, and developing exhibitions, programs, and digital resources for the public. Your participation will make a difference!

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## SUPPORTING *the* HUMANITIES *in* TROUBLED TIMES

In an informed, democratic society, the humanities offer the tools to understand the past and apply its lessons to the problems of today. As individuals across the country are reassessing their charitable giving during the current economic crisis, organizations dedicated to the humanities are finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Like many of our peer institutions, the MHS must make some difficult decisions in order to maintain a balanced budget.

Although you may not feel that you can afford to give a gift to sustain the mission of the MHS, please consider alternative ways to support the Society. Naming the MHS as a partial beneficiary of your will, trust, retirement plan, or life insurance policy is an easy way to provide for the Society’s collections and programs without parting with much-needed assets now. Since all of these potential gifts are revocable, you can always change the terms of your plans should the need arise.

If you include the MHS in your estate plans, your gift will ensure that future generations have access to the documents that are the foundation of our national story. Friends who inform us that they have named the Society as one of their beneficiaries will be invited to join the James Sullivan Society and to special Members-only events.

For more information on how to include the MHS in your estate plans, please contact Nicole Leonard, associate director of development, at 617-646-0552 or [nleonard@masshist.org](mailto:nleonard@masshist.org).

### HOLD THE DATES

The Society will observe the 200th anniversary of the birth of one of the 19th century’s most important writers and critics with a conference 8–10 April 2010 on the life and work of Margaret Fuller (1810–1850). Planning for the program, a collaboration of the MHS and the Margaret Fuller Society, is well under way. Future issues of the *Miscellany* will provide details. In the meantime, save the dates!

# EVENTS

## FALL 2008 & WINTER 2009

### EXHIBITION PREVIEW



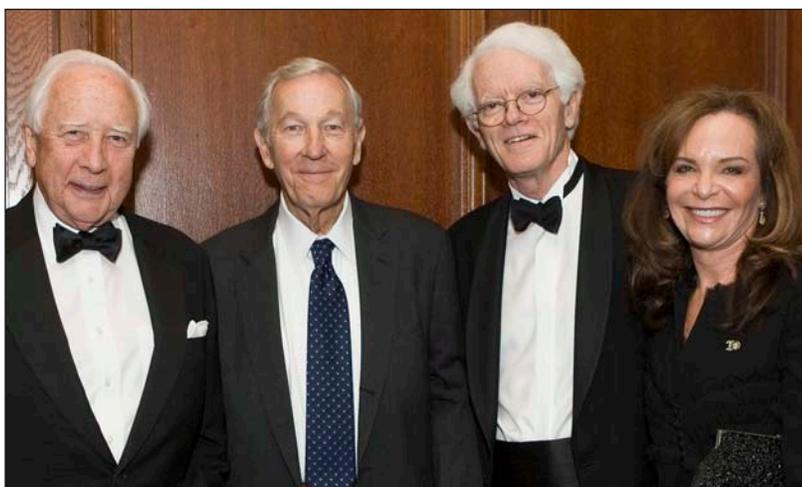
*Above: Lynn Paine, Fellow Miles Shore, and Eleanor Shore smile for the camera. Paine's daughter, Lydia, helped develop the exhibition as part of her summer internship in Reader Services.*

*Right: Peter Drummey amazes and amuses MHS Fellows George Sergentanis and Susan Schur with facts on a presidential campaign medal.*



In appreciation of their generous support, on 18 September members of the Belknap and Sullivan Societies attended a special preview of the fall exhibition, *"As Massachusetts Goes . . .": Two Centuries of Bay State Presidential Politics*. During the evening, guests enjoyed a lively reception in the Dowse Library while Stephen T. Riley Librarian Peter Drummey treated everyone to a "show and tell" of specially selected objects related to the exhibition.

### ANNUAL DINNER



*Left: Fellow and Pulitzer Prize-winning author David McCullough, guest of honor Roger Mudd, Peter Lynch, and Fellow Carolyn Lynch pause for a photograph before sitting down to dinner.*

*Below: Member Geoffrey Wickwire catches up with Trustee Frederick Pfannenstiehl and his wife, Julia.*

An enjoyable evening was had by all who attended the Annual Dinner on 15 October. Fellows, Members, and guests gathered in stately Harvard Hall at the Harvard Club on Commonwealth Avenue to hear Emmy Award-winning reporter and guest of honor Roger Mudd speak about "When the News Was the News."



# AN EVENING OF FINANCIAL HISTORY

Approximately 40 people gathered for a special event at 1154 Boylston Street on 29 October. “An Evening of Financial History” afforded guests the opportunity to hear an enlightening conversation with Matthew P. Fink, author of *The Rise of Mutual Funds: An Insider’s View*, and David Grayson Allen, author of the MHS’s forthcoming history of asset management in Boston.



*Above: Matthew P. Fink and David Grayson Allen answer an audience question about Boston’s role in the rise of the mutual fund industry.*



*Left: William Poorvu and Fellow George Putnam engage in a lively conversation while enjoying cocktails in the Dowse Library.*

HOLIDAY PARTY

*Right: Trustee Michael Yogg and his wife, Joan, President Dennis Fiori, and Member Mary Beth Sandman enjoy the holiday festivities.*



*Below: Trustees and Adams Papers Committee members join Adams Papers staff to toast the new year. Left to right: Lee Campbell, Trustee and committee member; Gregg Lint, editor; Margaret Hogan, managing editor; Pauline Maier, Trustee and committee member; Jim Taylor, editor-in-chief.*



Nearly 115 Members and Fellows started December off with an abundance of cheer at the Holiday Party in their honor on the second of the month. Guests were thrilled to peek at a selection of the MHS’s recent acquisitions.

# WILLIAM L. SALTONSTALL

1927-2009

The Massachusetts Historical Society has lost one of its most dedicated Fellows, the trustees and staff have lost a wonderful friend, and the world has lost an extraordinary man whose generosity of spirit, unfailing kindness and genuine interest in everyone he encountered endeared him to all.

Over the years Bill served the Society in many capacities: vice chair, treasurer, trustee and committee chair. His wise counsel was frequently sought and always appreciated. His many benefactions were made without fanfare but always with an eye to meeting the needs of the Society.

Bill cherished his family tradition at the MHS. Ever since 1816 when the first Leverett Saltonstall was elected a member, there has been a continuous succession of Saltonstalls and their extended family serving the Society. The Saltonstall Papers, spanning four centuries of family history, form an essential part of our collections. The Saltonstall Room is dedicated to one of his forebears. The Nora Saltonstall Preservation Librarian memorializes an aunt. For Bill, this was a legacy to be honored and upheld.

Our last encounter with Bill was a meeting of the Board of Trustees on 21 January, just two days before he died. As usual he walked up Boylston Street from the Massachusetts Avenue T station, entering the Council Seminar Room with his customary ebullient greetings. Bill always sat close by the Board chair so he could signal when he thought a topic had been sufficiently discussed and it was time to move on. He was usually right. He often punctuated his comments with anecdotes of local politicians, especially those with whom he had served at the State House during three terms as state senator.

This time “digitization of the collections” was on the agenda. Bill listened attentively, nodded appropriately, and finally said, “I don’t understand very much of this, but I’m glad you’re doing it.” After the meeting adjourned, he walked up to the third floor for a demonstration of the digitization process by several members of the staff, leaving us with indelible memories of his steady commitment and indefatigable spirit.

We have been blessed by Bill’s presence among us, by his devotion to the MHS, and by his friendship. He was a rare human being, without guile or pretense, always ready to help an individual or a cause. The MHS is diminished by his absence. We offer heartfelt condolences to his wife, Jane Saltonstall, and to the family he loved.

—*Amalie M. Kass, Chair, Board of Trustees*

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