



# Occasional Miscellany

A Newsletter for Members and Friends of

## The Library Company

OF PHILADELPHIA

FOUNDED BY BENJAMIN FRANKLIN IN 1731 "FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND LITERATURE"

Fall 2011

## John A. McAllister's Civil War

As Philadelphia planned for sesquicentennial commemorations of the Civil War, Library Company Curator of African American History Phil Lapsansky saw an opportunity to put the spotlight on John A. McAllister, one of the 19th century's most extraordinary collectors. McAllister was indefatigable, seeming to acquire mint condition copies of anything run through a printing press in Philadelphia over a period of twenty years—political broadsides and leaflets, tickets, trade cards, cartoons, patriotic envelopes and stationery, song sheets, recruiting posters—as well as a complement of ribbons, buttons, and other items. Learning of his interest, other collectors throughout the North supplied McAllister with material, and soldiers in the field even sent him Confederate ephemera. His remarkable collection—numbering more than 50,000 pieces—constitutes a detailed and nuanced record of social, cultural, and political life on the Philadelphia home front during the Civil War.

The exhibition *John A. McAllister's Civil War: The Philadelphia Home Front*, on display through December 16, touches on military recruitment; activism by African Americans; political campaigns; social life; and the great variety of civic associational activity—including the Union League, the Cooper Shop Volunteer Refreshment Saloon, and the Sanitary Commission Great Central Fair—in support of (and sometimes in opposition to) the Union cause.

Before the war was over, some 75,000 to 100,000 Philadelphia men out of a male population of approximately 300,000 had fought for the Union—an astonishing per-

centage. McAllister collected more than 500 local recruiting posters that boldly document the drama and excitement of a city mobilizing for war. Among the treasures on display is a seven-foot-tall broadside imploring *Men of Color to Arms! To Arms! Now or Never* (the unique challenges of conserving this large format piece are described on the next page). Further specialized enlistment appeals include a poster for

the Irish Brigades (printed in green ink, naturally!) and a German-language poster recruiting for the Russel-Garde Light Infantry.

Philadelphia's African American population initially had nothing in particular to gain from support for the Union cause, but the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1863 changed that. Leaders such as young educator Octavius Catto and elder statesman Frederick Douglass believed that if African

Americans could convince the North to arm black regiments, their valor could overcome Northern racial prejudice and lead to greater equality. McAllister collected examples of their vigorous calls for the right to fight for the Union.

When the Republican Party held its first nominating convention in Philadelphia in 1856 it was little more than an inconsequential minority, disliked and distrusted for its abolitionist taint. By the end of the war ten years later it was on its way to becoming the dominant political force in the city. The Emancipation Proclamation infuriated Democrats, some of whom urged a negotiated settlement with the South. But the Confederate invasion of central Pennsylvania and Union success at Gettysburg stiffened Union-



Thomas Nast, *The Past and the Future* (Philadelphia: King & Baird, [1864]). Color wood engraving.

*continued from page 1*

ist resolve and helped turn public opinion against the Democrats. McAllister collected a variety of printed artifacts reflecting the bitter partisan spirit of the times.

As the southernmost Union metropolis and a major transportation hub, Philadelphia was temporary host to tens of thousands of soldiers from throughout the northeast. Philadelphians volunteered money, material, and time to establish refreshment saloons where soldiers could relax and enjoy a hot meal. The city's strong tradition of volunteer benevolent associations was also behind the Great Central Fair, held here in June 1864 in support of the United States Sanitary Commission, which had more than 250,000 visitors and raised more than one million dollars. Including an art gallery, a restaurant, historic relics, a horticultural hall, and more, the fair was described at the time as "the most wonderful display of ev-



*Samuel Hart & Co.'s Union Playing Cards For Sale Here* (Philadelphia: Thomas Sinclair, 1862). Chromolithograph.

erything under the sun."

During the national period of mourning that followed the assassination of President Lincoln at Ford's Theatre on April 14, the President's body traveled by train throughout the North on its way to Illinois. The train arrived in Philadelphia in the afternoon of Saturday, April 22, and Lincoln lay in state at Independence Hall through the next evening. City officials estimated that some 300,000 Philadelphians paid their respects, with large crowds left standing in the street when the doors closed Sunday evening.

### **John A. McAllister, Collector Extraordinaire**

The minutes of the Library Company Board of Directors meeting of April 4, 1886, relate that McAllister offered to give "a collection of illustrations and printed matter relating to the civil war, which he said cost him the labor of twenty years and more than a thousand dollars of money."

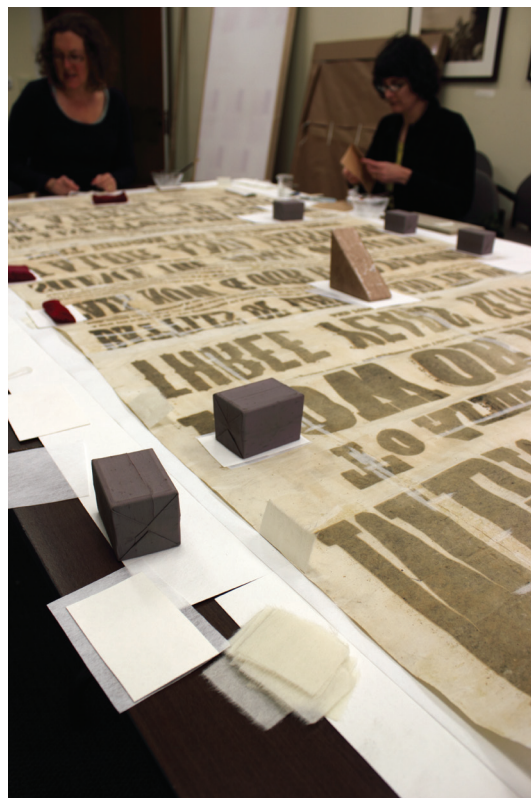
Progress organizing the remarkable assemblage was slow. In 1897 a committee noted "there are 43 boxes of McAllister accumulations . . . whatever of value or note is yet to be known. It now stands as an untouched heap of combustible matter." In 1898 the collection was assembled into dozens of large scrapbooks, which, though clumsy, allowed researchers to have access to the material.

*continued on page 3*

## **Men of Color**

The huge broadside *Men of Color to Arms! To Arms! Now or Never*, most likely printed in 1863 by the US Steam-Power Book and Job Printing Establishment, has been on exhibit before, but was never properly framed. Its large size (almost four feet wide and more than seven feet tall) posed a challenge for Library Company conservators, who took over the meeting room at the Cassatt House for the project.

The broadside was in surprisingly good condition, considering the fact that it had been printed on low-grade paper and, until the 1970s, been folded up in an album. Many repairs—some better than others—had been made over the years. The worst damage was to the top edge, which had tears and missing areas. Conservators Jennifer Rosner and Alice Austin decided to remove the old repairs and apply new high quality Japanese and Korean handmade paper repairs with wheat starch paste. Afterwards, twenty-four hinges were attached around the edges of the poster. Slits were cut into the acid-free mat board and the hinges were pulled through, holding the broadside in place. The frame was then placed on top and the stretcher was screwed into place from below. The whole process took two days. Enjoy a slide show of our hard work on Flickr.com ([photos/librarycompany/sets/72157626113916517/show/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/librarycompany/sets/72157626113916517/show/)) And come to see the real thing!





continued from page 2

Beginning in 2006, Library Company staff disassembled the scrapbooks, re-housed the collection, added records to the online catalog, and created finding aids, making the collection much more accessible to researchers. This work was supported by grants from the William Penn Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The current exhibition is supported by Independence Foundation, The Albert M. Greenfield Foundation, and the Philadelphia Cultural Fund.

## The Visual Culture Program

Although the Library Company has held collections rich in visual material for most of its existence, the creation of the Visual Culture Program (VCP) has placed a new focus on the potential of images and other visual material to enrich historic interpretation. Co-Directors Rachel D'Agostino and Erika Piola oversee efforts to foster research using historic visual materials, build the collections, and spread the word about the Library Company's preeminent visual holdings. Public programming is a major emphasis of VCP.

In March, William H. Helfand Visual Culture Fellow Sarah Gillespie provided an engaging presentation about her research into the intersection of art and science in the development of daguerreotypy. Discussing the evolution of the first successful photographic technology, Dr. Gillespie explored the possible motives for the differing acceptance of the medium as art by the Philadelphia and New York scientific and art communities.

For VCP's June program, artist-in-residence Jennifer Levonian discussed her creative process in the production of *Rebellious Bird*, an animated video inspired by women who disguised themselves as men during the Civil War. The program included a performance by Civil War re-enactor Wendy Ramsburg, who for more than twenty-five years has portrayed the character of a woman disguised as a Confederate soldier. Ms. Levonian's project was supported by a grant from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage.



[Elizabeth Lea Jaudon (later Bakewell) as a young woman], September, 1846. One-quarter plate daguerreotype.



Artist-in-residence Jennifer Levonian.

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Planning for upcoming programs has also begun in earnest. In March 2012, VCP will co-sponsor the conference *Before Madison Avenue: Early American Advertising* with the American Antiquarian Society's Center for Historic American Visual Culture. More than a dozen scholars will present on pre-20th-century advertising mediums and techniques. Topics include the 18th-century sign painting trade, antebellum writing specimens, and promotional imagery of Native Americans.

In the fall of 2013 VCP will co-host with the Ephemera Society of America a one-day symposium about the Library Company ephemera collections currently being cataloged through a National Endowment for the Humanities grant. An exhibition based on this material will accompany the symposium.

VCP also hosted a private tour by William Helfand of the Philadelphia Museum of Art "Health for Sale" exhibition of posters from his collection. Following the gallery talk, Erika Piola gave a lively presentation on related medical ephemera in the Library Company's collection.

The VCP co-Directors have also been active in professional circles, with both presenting at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives "Sensational Archives" Conference in May. Ms. D'Agostino described the Library Company's extensive collection of ornate and ornamented book bindings and Ms. Piola presented a case study of stereographs depicting comic views satirizing the New Woman.



Papier-mâché, enameled, and inlaid with mother-of-pearl binding, ca. 1850-1855.

## Upcoming Events

### James Peale Lecture

Monday, October 3, Reception at 5:30 p.m.,  
program at 6:00.

Carol Soltis, Library Company Trustee and Curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Center for American Art, will discuss the work of the artist James Peale, focusing on our recently-acquired portraits of Zachariah and Susannah Knorr Poulson. Co-sponsored by the Center for American Art.

### Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711 - 1787): Pastor, Penman, Politician

Friday, October 7, Reception at 5:30 p.m.,  
program at 6:00

Join us for a small exhibition and a talk by Wolfgang Splitter of the Center for United States Studies at Martin Luther University in Halle, Germany, commemorating the tercentenary of the birth of Muhlenberg, patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America.

### Conference: "Ireland, America, and the Worlds of Mathew Carey"

Thursday - Saturday, October 27-29

This is the first part of a transatlantic conference on printer and publisher Mathew Carey (part two will be held at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland in November). This conference is co-sponsored by the Program in Early American Economy and Society, the McNeil Center for Early American Studies, and the University of Pennsylvania Libraries. To learn more and to register please visit [www.librarycompany.org/careyconference](http://www.librarycompany.org/careyconference).

### Annual Dinner

Tuesday, November 15

The Library Company will host its 181st members-only Annual Dinner, featuring a talk by David S. Reynolds, author of *Mightier Than the Sword: Uncle Tom's Cabin and the Battle for America*.

**All programs, with the exception of the members-only Annual Dinner, are free and open to the public.** Please visit [www.librarycompany.org/events](http://www.librarycompany.org/events) or call 215-546-3181 to register.

## Welcome to New Staff

**Molly Roth**, the Library Company's new Development Director, brings almost twenty-five years of experience in nonprofit fundraising, administration, and governance. She holds a doctorate in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania and will devote her efforts to raising funds for capital and endowment purposes while at the same time building a robust program of annual giving.

**Lindsey Adkins**, Development and Membership Coordinator, comes to the Library Company from the Institute for Justice in the DC metropolitan area, where she managed the grant portfolio and donor records.

**Arielle Middleman**, our new Cataloging Assistant, gained cataloging experience at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and Bennington College.

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## News from the Board

The Library Company has elected **B. Robert DeMento** President of the Board to succeed Beatrice Garvan. He has served on the Board since 2005 and as Vice President since 2010.

We would also like to extend an enthusiastic welcome to three new Trustees :

**Maude de Schauensee** is the retired Fowler/van Santvoord Keeper of the Near Eastern collections at the Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. She has served on the boards of the Zoological Society of Philadelphia, the Friends of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Alliance Française de Philadelphie, and the Print Club. She acquired her late father's Library Company share in 1990.

**Richard Wood Snowden** is Managing Director of Bowman Properties, a real estate investment firm that owns and manages a portfolio of historic residential and commercial buildings in the Chestnut Hill section of Philadelphia. He serves on the board of the Andalusia Foundation and chairs Southeastern Pennsylvania's regional preservation organization. He acquired his share in the Library Company in 1981.

**Clarence Wolf**, owner and operator of the antiquarian bookselling firm George S. MacManus Company, has served on the boards of the William L. Clements Library and the Rosenbach Museum & Library. He is a member of the American Antiquarian Society and has been a Library Company shareholder since 1974.



## More Paintings Conserved

Thanks to a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, we have conserved three significant paintings in our collection. Two of the newly restored paintings are fine examples of Thomas Sully's portraiture. *Zachariah Poulson* (1761-1844) presents the benevolent spirit of a man who devoted much of his life to the Library Company. Born in Philadelphia into a family of printers, Poulson prospered in the business, editing and publishing the newspaper *Poulson's American Daily Advertiser*. This portrait was commissioned by the Library Company's Directors to honor his commitment to the institution. (He served as Librarian from 1785 until 1806, after which he was Treasurer and then a Director for thirty-eight more years.)

Sully painted this portrait of *Charlotte Cushman* (1816-1876) while she was the stage manager of the Walnut Street Theater. Cushman was a Boston-born actress who became the leading American stage actress and immensely famous in both America and England. She was acclaimed for her strong and dramatic performances. Sully captured Cushman in character as Beatrice in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*. This painting is not only an example of Sully's skill but also a record of a talented and successful female artist.

Edmund Darch Lewis (1835-1910) was a landscape artist who quickly became one of the most popular painters in Philadelphia, mostly depicting scenes of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New England. *Stenton, Seat of the Founder of the Loganian Library* depicts the Germantown home of James Logan (1674-1751). At his death Logan left his 2,600-volume library for the use of the public, but in 1792 the books and assets of the Loganian Library were transferred to the Library Company, a far more active institution. In 1867, twenty-five individuals contributed the funds to



Thomas Sully, *Zachariah Poulson*, 1843. Oil on canvas. 20" x 24". Commissioned by the directors of the Library Company.



Thomas Sully, *Charlotte Cushman*, 1843. Oil on canvas. 20" x 17 1/2". Bequest of Anne Hampton Brewster, 1892.



Edmund Darch Lewis, *Stenton, Seat of the Founder of the Loganian Library*, 1867. Oil on canvas. 27" x 47". Commissioned by 25 individuals in 1867 for the Loganian Library.

commission Lewis to paint Stenton, which was "to be presented to and preserved by the Loganian Library."

Conservation work on the paintings and their frames was completed in April. Painting conservator Carole Abercaugh cleaned dirt, grime, overpaint, and discoloring varnish from the canvases, filled in losses, and applied new coats of varnish. Frame conservator Howard Serlick removed dirt and grime, replaced ornament losses, and re-gilded the frames. Our visitors can now fully appreciate these superb paintings. We hope that you come and see them in person.

### *Contribute to the Anthony N. B. and Beatrice W. B. Garvan Fellowship in Material Culture*

In recognition of the distinguished service of Anthony and Beatrice Garvan, we are delighted to announce the creation of a fellowship in their honor. Tony Garvan, a professor of American Civilization at the University of Pennsylvania, was a member of the Library Company's Board for thirty-six years and was chair from 1986 until his death in 1992. Bea, a curator of American Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, carried on the family tradition, joining the Board in 1999 and assuming the presidency in 2006. Bea's five-year tenure as the Board's leader saw momentous accomplishments, including the acquisition of the nearby Carriage House and the receipt of a major endowment, both of which will help ensure the Library Company's continuing growth and vitality. Together Tony and Bea have made enormous contributions to the study of American material culture as well as to the Library Company itself, and the establishment of the Garvan Fellowship is a fitting recognition at the conclusion of Bea's term as President. We have established a goal of \$40,000, which will permanently endow an annual month-long residency for a scholar in this field. Please join us in honoring the Garvans with your contribution to the Fellowship Fund.

## *From the Director*

I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Erica Armstrong Dunbar, an associate professor of History at the University of Delaware, as the Director of our Program in African American History.

Four years ago, with the support of a generous grant from The Albert M. Greenfield Foundation, the Library Company established a Program in African American History to foster research and public programming in this now well-established field. (Indeed, more than forty years ago the Library Company did much to establish the field by mounting the pioneering exhibition “Negro History, 1553-1903.”) The Program has thus far supported sixteen research fellows; acquired, cataloged, and conserved more than 100 rare books, pamphlets, and graphics for the collection; held two major scholarly conferences; mounted two exhibitions; presented many lectures and other public programs; and conducted several seminars for school teachers. The Program will soon bear additional permanent fruit with the publication of the papers from the “Early African American Print Culture” conference (in cooperation with the University of Pennsylvania Press) and the co-publication with the University of Georgia Press of its “Race in the Atlantic World, 1700-1900” book series. In sum, the Program is now thoroughly ensconced at the Library Company and poised for the next stage of its life.

Phil Lapsansky will soon be retiring after forty eventful years with the Library Company. He came in 1971 to work on a project to catalog more than 10,000 of the Library

Company’s books, pamphlets, and broadsides relating to all aspects of the black experience in the United States. Phil stayed on to become a reference librarian (serving for many years as Chief of Reference) and our resident expert in African American history. In that capacity he aided the work of scores of scholars who have passed through our Reading Room and who came to rely on his expertise and encyclopedic knowledge of our collections. Phil has also been adding to our holdings in African American history and providing learned and lively accounts of those acquisitions in our *Annual Report*. In the coming months we will certainly have opportunities to acknowledge Phil’s many contributions to the Library Company and to the field of African American history.

Professor Dunbar, who is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, received her Ph.D. from Columbia University and has been on the faculty at Delaware for more than ten years. She is a former Library Company Fellow whose research project was later published as *A Fragile Freedom: African American Women and Emancipation in the Antebellum City* (Yale University Press, 2008). She has accepted this new assignment with great enthusiasm, and we are confident that the Program in African American History, which has gotten off to such a strong start, has an even brighter future under Professor Dunbar’s leadership.

*John C. Van Horne*  
*The Edwin Wolf 2nd Director*

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