



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"

Winter 2011

Laurel Hill Cemetery Exhibition

Members pining for the morbid pleasures of the Library Company's 2008 exhibition, "Philadelphia Gothic," will be delighted to discover "Building a City of the Dead: The Creation and Expansion of Philadelphia's Laurel Hill Cemetery." The exhibition, curated by Aaron Wunsch, who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, examines the history of Philadelphia's first "rural" cemetery – an institution that catered to urbanites' romantic sensibilities and quest for postmortem permanence by shifting the locus of burial to the countryside.

The Library Company's long-serving Librarian John Jay Smith (1798-1881) was Laurel Hill's leading founder. Indeed, the two institutions came to form an axis around which his life revolved. A Quaker antiquarian and would-be litterateur, Smith had tried his hand at the drug and newspaper businesses before becoming Librarian in 1829. Six years later, he declared, "The living population has multiplied beyond the means of accommodation for the dead." Recalling a futile attempt to locate his daughter's grave in one of the city's Quaker burial grounds, he vowed "to procure for the citizens a suitable, neat & orderly location for a rural cemetery, where each individual or family might have a lot in fee simple to bury their dead." Former mayor Benjamin Richards held similar ambitions. After speaking to Smith, he invited China merchant Nathan Dunn and druggist Frederick Brown to join their enterprise.

In early 1836, Smith and his collaborators cast about for a site befitting their project. Having rejected one possibility as "too near the city" and "too level for picturesque effect," they settled on Laurel Hill, the former estate of merchant Joseph Sims. Less than twenty of the property's thirty-two acres could be used for burial purposes. However, rocky bluffs, spectacular views, and proper distance from the urban core (almost four miles) made up for such deficiencies.

Laurel Hill's managers ultimately chose Scottish émigré architect John Notman (1810-1865) as their designer of record. Still identifying himself as a carpenter at this time,

Notman edged out better-known candidates on a project that helped launch his career. Yet the cemetery's design remained a work in progress, and a collaborative one at that. Notman and his employers borrowed ideas from his competitors. Smith oversaw the site's planting, and important aspects of the ground plan were worked out by surveyor Philip M. Price.

The cemetery received its first burial in October of 1836.



Laurel Hill Cemetery Gate, Philadelphia (ca 1840). Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Gift of Mrs. Edgar P. Richardson

Three years later, nearly half of the 800 original lots had been claimed. As sales increased in the following decade, Smith and his colleagues realized they were running out of room. However, since the adjacent Fairy Hill estate was unavailable, the managers established a separate annex to the south. Not until the mid-1860s would North and South Laurel Hill Cemeteries be joined.

For many of Laurel Hill's early lot owners, bonds of sentiment joined home and tomb. Both arenas were discussed as havens for the family in an urbanizing society. Both were also targets of unprecedented consumer spending – typically

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on industrially produced goods. Three miles southeast of the cemetery, merchants selling monuments, mantels, iron fences, and outdoor furniture set up shop in the Spring Garden district. More discerning (or wealthy) customers might seek out center-city marble mason John Struthers. His firm's famous work helped him afford one of Laurel Hill's grandest lots.

During the Civil War the sheer number of dead dispelled the aura of festive curiosity and sentimental domesticity that had surrounded rural cemeteries. While Laurel Hill absorbed its share of casualties and, ultimately, of war celebrities, it also lost visitors. Urbanites seeking recreation were more likely to go to Fairmount Park, which expanded after 1867. The Gilded Age left the cemetery grander but emptier. In time, even the tending of graves fell to the company.

Laurel Hill has long attracted the interest of scholars and curiosity seekers. So, you might ask, what's new here? Our exhibition attempts to set Laurel Hill in urban context, relating it not only to the biographies of famous individuals but to the growth of the city as a whole. One aspect of that story is the cemetery's relationship with the Spring Garden neighborhood, which lived a sort of parallel life as the city's cemetery supply district. As you walk through the gallery, be sure to look at the posters on the wall. Iron founder Robert

Wood, marble mason John Baird, and nurseryman Robert Buist can all lay claim in some sense to being builders of Laurel Hill Cemetery. In the same vein, it is worth noting how little attention has previously been given to those most directly responsible for laying out the cemetery – its surveyors. The exhibition features the work of Philip M. Price, James C. Sidney, and Griffith M. Hopkins. These practitioners, in addition to conceiving much of Laurel Hill's design, were instrumental in guiding and shaping Philadelphia's growth in the middle of the 19th century.

But Laurel Hill was also constructed through words, images, and experiences. Books and articles about the cemetery are presented here alongside contemporary examples of consolation literature, mourning jewelry, and accounts of famous funerals. While inventor John Gravenstine's corpse preserver claims the limelight in the main gallery, Victorian attitudes toward death and burial are explained with greater nuance in the hallway to the Reading Room.

Lenders to the exhibition include the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Pennsylvania Hospital, the Philadelphia Athenaeum, Yale University, and John Jay Smith's descendants. The exhibition is free and open to the public, and it runs until April 29, 2011. Gallery hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

James Fenimore Cooper in the Archives

When founded in 1731, the Library Company was the first of its kind, created by and for working men of modest means, to allow them to pool their resources to build a collection of books otherwise unavailable to them. It served as the de facto Library of Congress when Philadelphia hosted that body through the Revolution and until the capital was established in Washington, D.C. The Library Company had a relatively welcoming policy for 19th-century Philadelphia readers, serving as the city's public library until the opening of the Free Library in 1894. Because of this unique history, we can be assured that the Library Company was visited by many illustrious, seminal figures in the shaping of this country, its government, art, and society. Because relatively few of our books have been deaccessioned, particularly those acquired during our first 150 years, the materials used by these early readers are likely still on our shelves.

Unfortunately there is very little to tell us just who visited or what books they borrowed from our shelves. Part of this is due to the early lending procedures themselves. Upon returning their borrowed books, readers were given the Library Company's copy of their loan slip as a form of receipt.

That means that the only loan slips retained here were for items never returned. The sole exception to this dearth of information is a single loan book covering the years 1794 to 1812.

It is a great pleasure, therefore, when we come across a reference to the use of the Library Company in any early source. Each reference can provide a window to the reading room of old, where we might hope to glimpse a long-forgotten visitor exploring our treasures. Occasionally, we find ourselves thanked in the preface to a work of history, a token of appreciation we still enjoy from contemporary scholars. Perhaps we are described in a stranger's guide to the city, with a brief explanation of our relevance to the metropolis. Less frequently, some found piece of ephemera provides what would otherwise be entirely lost to us.

While preparing to catalog a new acquisition of three pieces of ephemera to enter the institutional archive, we came across a record for an item given to us in 1958 (and mentioned in that year's *Annual Report*) by Alexander D.

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Wainwright, whose brother Nicholas was a Trustee of the Library Company for thirty years and its President from 1951 to 1966. It is a loan slip for James Fenimore Cooper listing the accession numbers of seven items he borrowed in the winter of 1838-39, each one crossed out indicating that it was returned. The borrowed items were works relating to naval history and were presumably used by Cooper while researching his work *The History of the Navy of the United States of America*, first published in 1839. Cooper thanked the Library Company in his preface to that work, noting that we were able to supply resources unavailable anywhere else (a common refrain we never tire of hearing). Though the loan slip has been in our collection for a while already,

we were excited to rediscover this piece at a time when we have been actively acquiring Cooper's fiction. In the last year we have added more than ten Cooper works not already in our collection. Coming across that loan slip was a striking reminder of the treasures within our institutional archives. A card catalog of archive materials exists, but these entries have not yet been added to our online catalog. Sitting down with these drawers of cards, which record some of the rarest materials we hold, can give one an immediate appreciation of the unique place of the Library Company in American history.

Rachel D'Agostino
Curator of Printed Books

Letter from the Director



In our last newsletter we noted that philanthropist Robert L. McNeil, Jr. had made a munificent gift to the Library Company to endow the Director's position in honor of our late Librarian Edwin Wolf 2nd. Not many months later we learned that Mr. McNeil had died at the age of ninety-four. With his passing we have suffered the loss of an extraordinarily generous man deeply committed to the Library Company and to many other institutions that work to foster a greater understanding of our nation's past. His abiding interest in American history and culture took tangible form in his collections of American art, which include a remarkable collection of works by Charles Willson Peale and his family and a significant group of prints that will one day find a home at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and many hundreds of books, pamphlets, and maps, mostly dating from the 18th to the early-19th centuries, which will find a home at the Library Company. We are only now beginning to take the full measure of this stupendous gift, but already it is clear that it will be among the most significant ever to come to the Library Company. Mr. McNeil was a very discerning collector, and virtually everything in the collection is remarkable for its provenance, condition, or inherent historical significance. Mr. McNeil's collection includes such treasures as:

- A first edition of Blaeu's Great Atlas (*Atlas Major*) of America (Amsterdam, 1662)
- The first edition of Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Directory* (London, 1754)
- A deluxe edition of Benjamin Franklin's *Way to Wealth* (Paris, 1795), one of eight copies printed on vellum

- Jesse Kester's *American Shooter's Manual* (Philadelphia, 1827), the first sporting book written by an American
- The first edition of William Penn's pamphlet *Primitive Christianity* (London, 1696), a copy that belonged to the Penn family
- Abraham Swan's *British Architect* (Philadelphia, 1775), the first architecture book published in America
- Peter Williamson's *French and Indian Cruelty* (York, Eng., 1758), the first edition of the first important Indian captivity narrative

The McNeil gift is also filled with many extraordinary maps, some relating to the earliest years of settlement of Pennsylvania and to 18th-century military campaigns, such as:

- William Berry's London-published *North America Divided into Its Principall Parts* (ca. 1681), the first to identify Pennsylvania on the North American continent
- William Faden's *Plan of the Operations of General Washington, against the Kings Troops in New Jersey, from the 26th of December 1776 to the 3rd January 1777*, detailing the ten days following Washington's famous crossing of the Delaware River and the march to Princeton

In the coming months we will no doubt discover many more such riches in the McNeil gift, and you will be able to see them in an upcoming exhibition. How fortunate we are that Mr. McNeil entrusted these treasures to our care.

John C. Van Horne
The Edwin Wolf 2nd Director

Mini Exhibition: Mourning in 19th-Century America

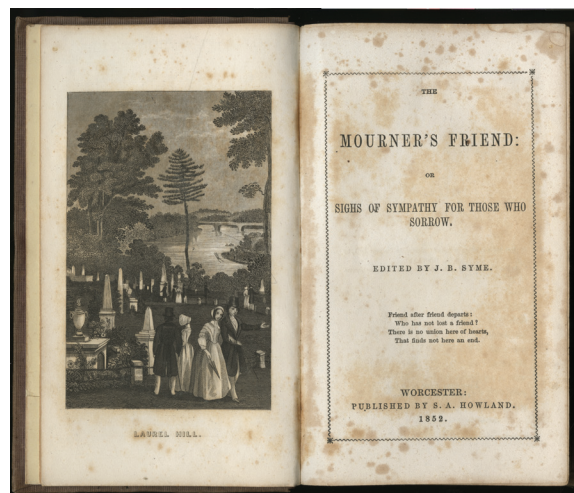
A smaller, complementary exhibition provides an understanding of the significance of mourning in American culture during the early years of Laurel Hill Cemetery's history. It features consolation literature, images of mourning fashions, and tributes to dead children and a national hero – plus a selection of mourning jewelry.

By 1836, small volumes that were suitable as gifts for the bereaved had long been a publishing staple. A very early example was the London, 1792 publication *A Friendly Visit to the House of Mourning* by English clergyman Richard Cecil (1748-1810). The first American edition of Cecil's book appeared in 1836, coincidentally the date of the founding of Laurel Hill Cemetery, and it remained a steady seller in this country for decades. Dozens of similar titles also appeared. We hold *The Mourner Comforted* (1832), *A Wreath for the Tomb, or, Extracts from Eminent Writers on Death and Eternity* (1839), *Another Lily Gathered* (1842), *The Mourner's Friend, or, Recognition of Friends in Heaven* (1850), and many others.

During these same years, the bereaved wore clothing to signify that they were in mourning. Women in particular acquired black clothing for periods of full mourning and then wore grey or lavender for "half mourning," before returning to their regular clothes. Businesses such as Besson & Son in Philadelphia specialized in producing an array of mourning clothing in various fabrics including cashmere, silk, and bombazene. On numerous occasions, *Godey's Lady's Book* published fashion plates depicting women in full or half mourning as well as directions for making mourning apparel by hand. Interestingly, men's mourning attire typically was a simple black armband.

The death of a child had a tremendous emotional impact in 19th-century America and prompted the publication of numerous tribute volumes, such as *The Empty Crib* (1869), written by the Rev. Theodore Cuyler following the death of his own son. Other parents sought to memorial-

ize their dead children with funeral monuments. The 1844 guide to Laurel Hill Cemetery featured the tomb of Alfred T. Miller, the infant son of a Philadelphia exchange broker



The Mourner's Friend, or, Signs of Sympathy for Those Who Sorrow (Worcester, 1852). The frontispiece depicts Laurel Hill Cemetery.

and his wife. The Millers hired marble mason John Struthers to create the elaborate architectural monument enclosing a sculpted reclining infant carved by German sculptor Ferdinand Pettrich. The monument, although now much weathered, is one of the best-known at Laurel Hill.

Laurel Hill Cemetery gained additional fame in 1857 after the death of America's first arctic explorer Elisha Kent Kane. The public perceived Kane as a hero tragically cut down in his prime, and his death prompted a huge, public display of mourning. Descriptions of Laurel Hill Cemetery invariably mention his distinctive monument, set directly into rock on a bank high above the Schuylkill River.

Curated by Cornelia King, the mini-exhibition attempts to place Laurel Hill in the context of 19th-century mourning culture. And it also shows the ways Laurel Hill Cemetery itself became an integral part of that culture.

"Philadelphia on Stone" Exhibition Concludes with "Representations of Economy Conference"

Last October over eighty people attended "Representations of Economy: Lithography from 1820-1860" jointly sponsored by the Library Company's Program in Early American Economy and Society and the Visual Culture Program. The conference marked the close of "Philadelphia on Stone: The First Fifty Years of Commercial Lithography, 1828-1878," the exhibition curated by Print and Photograph Department Associate Curator Erika Piola as part of a multi-faceted three-year project gener-

ously funded by the Willian Penn Foundation.

The one-day conference examined how the emerging important American industry of lithography represented and documented the evolving economic conditions in the country between 1820 and 1860. Professors Martin Brückner of the University of Delaware and Jeffrey Cohen of Bryn Mawr College kicked off the proceedings with talks examining the influence of lithography on the conception and production

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And One More Makes Three

The Library Company has purchased a neighboring property in order to provide for our current space needs and future expansion. The building is the only adjacent property likely ever to become available, and it will provide the Library Company with the ability to expand as our collections and programs grow in the coming years. We expect that the cost of acquisition and renovation will be about \$1.5 million, with an additional \$500,000 needed for a maintenance endowment to cover utilities, insurance, and other such expenses. To date, Library Company shareholder H. F. “Gerry” Lenfest has generously committed \$750,000 as a challenge grant, and our Trustees have collectively committed an additional \$250,000.

The three-story brick building (with a partial fourth floor) is immediately behind the Library Company’s main facility at 1314 Locust St., and the rear entrances of the two buildings face each other across a narrow alley. Built in the 1880s by a grocer to serve as a warehouse and to provide shelter for the wagons and horses that delivered provisions to his several stores throughout the city, it has a footprint of about 2,400 square feet – giving us a great deal of flexibility as our needs change.

The carriage house supplements the Library Company’s two other buildings, the main building, which dates to the 1960s, and the Cassatt House, an 1880s townhouse next door, which was renovated ten years ago and now serves as a residential research center with meeting spaces and housing for visiting scholars and special projects. Both buildings are used to capacity, and our growing collections and programs call for additional space.

In order to make the best decisions about the functions to be accommodated in the carriage house, we have com-



missioned Voith & Mactavish Architects to study all three of our buildings and prepare a Master Plan for space utilization. This process will entail not only studying the physical spaces, but also interviewing staff, fellows, and other visitors to ensure that the recommendations represent the most effective (and cost-effective) way to accommodate all of our activities in the three buildings. The study should be completed this spring, and renovation of the carriage house will begin this summer. Our expanded three-building “campus” should hold the Library Company in good stead for a great many years to come.

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of 19th-century maps and panoramic business directories. Georgia Barnhill, the director of the American Antiquarian Society’s Center for Historic American Visual Culture, and Connecticut Historical Society curator Nancy Finlay addressed the economic history of the trade, providing an overview of the antebellum-era business model for the industry and a case study of the prominent New Haven firm of the Kelloggs. The conference concluded with presenters Linzy Brekke-Aloise and Joanna Cohen, of Stonehill College and Queen Mary, University of London, respectively, exploring the social and cultural ramifications of the printing process on retail and fashion advertising and its effect on consumerism.

Enthusiastic discussions following each session were chaired by Ms. Piola and PEAES Director Cathy Matson, and attendees enjoyed a jovial closing reception with the speakers. The conference also provided a final opportunity for viewing the exhibition and a chance to enjoy a slide show highlighting lithographs surveyed for the project, including advertisements, fashion plates, cityscape views, and maps.

“Philadelphia on Stone” aimed to focus attention on the importance of commercial lithography to our understanding of the economy and visual culture of the 19th century. The exhibition could not have concluded in a more appropriately engaging manner.

Cataloging Stereographs for the NEH Ephemera Project

Last summer we began work on the first of several stereographs that will be processed during a two-year project supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Stereographs, a popular parlor amusement of the 19th century, are pairs of nearly identical photographs mounted on card stock that, when viewed with a stereo viewer, create a three-dimensional image.

Our holdings of approximately 1,300 stereographs, include many by such premier Philadelphia photographers as the brothers William and Frederick Langenheim and Robert Newell. The photographs mainly portray Philadelphia commercial and residential streets, financial and industrial buildings and institutions, and historic and prominent landmarks. Views of the Fairmount Waterworks and Fairmount Park, particularly around the time of the 1876 Centennial, comprise one of the largest groups.

A middle-class entertainment and a sign of civility and refinement, stereographs also document newsworthy events, such as expeditions to the territories west of the 100th meridian and to the Isthmus of Panama; the Transit of Venus; and Peace Jubilee processions and Grand Army of the Republic military parades along heavily decorated stretches of Broad and Market streets in Philadelphia. Cataloging has also unearthed an interesting local-disaster view of the ruins of William C. Patterson & Co.'s warehouse complex at Front and Lombard streets after a fire destroyed it and thousands of barrels of whiskey stored there.

Stereographs were also collected as family mementos. We recently identified, thanks to replies to the Ben's Lens feature of our electronic newsletter, a rare group of twenty-two stereographs attributed to Robert Newell that document the family of war hero Gen. Benjamin Franklin Fisher as they ride horses, pick fruit, read, play croquet, eat, and stitch on an enormous American flag at their country homestead in Schuylkill Township, Chester County, Pa.

Other interesting subjects include genre scenes pro-

duced in large numbers by big distribution companies such as the Union View Company and Underwood & Underwood, which tend to depict comic scenes that captured contemporary ethnic, racial, and gender stereotypes. One such group satirizes the "New Woman" and often portrays the husband and wife in reversed gender roles in the home. For example a woman dressed in her cycling garb with her bicycle by her side shirks her domestic responsibilities and demands that her husband perform them, literally wearing the pants in the family.

Thanks to this in-depth research and cataloging stereographs once thought of as merely entertainment now serve as primary sources for research of economic, social, and visual history.

News from the Board

The Library Company welcomes two recently-elected Trustees:

Harry S. Cherken, Jr. is a partner in the Real Estate Practice Group of the law firm of Drinker Biddle & Reath. He is a current or former Board member of the Armenian Assembly of America, the Reading Terminal Market Preservation Fund, the Woodmere Art Museum, and the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies.

Autumn Adkins Graves is the President of Girard College. She currently serves on Board of the Shipley School and has been a past trustee of the Friends Council on Education.

And in recent months two Board members have entered a new status as Trustees Emeriti following many years of dedicated service:

Charles E. Rosenberg, our longest-serving Trustee, joined the Board in 1981 and served as Vice-President from 1998 to 2010.

Elizabeth P. McLean joined the Board in 1989 and served as Secretary and Vice-President before serving as the Library Company's first female President from 1998 to 2003.

We are deeply grateful to both for their enormous contributions over a great many years.



Ruins of William C. Patterson & Co.'s Bonded Warehouse, South Front and Lombard streets, Philadelphia, 1869. Albumen print on stereograph mount. Rooftop view looking east toward the Delaware River.

Winter 2010 ISSN 0734-3698

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