

Adams and Jefferson, 22 June at Boston Public Library
Marcus McCorison

Good morning. Before turning to our morning session, I state my personal thanks to Robert Baron and his staff at Fulcrum Books for initiating this event, as well as to the staff members of the Boston Public Library and the Massachusetts Historical Society for their work in organizing so a grand event. Also, my gratitude goes to Jeremy Dibble of the Massachusetts Historical Society library for his eager help to me in helping me prepare for this session. In addition, at Monticello Jack Robinson, Foundation Librarian, and Endrina Tay of his staff were gracious hosts and very helpful to me. So too was Gail Pond, Collections Manager at Poplar Forest, who guided me through that delightful place and exposed to me materials on Jefferson's library in retreat.

Our session is entitled, "Adams and Jefferson as Book Collectors." The venue for our cogitations is entirely appropriate to our subject because our hosts this morning hold the bulk of the library of John Adams, deposited here many years ago by the City of Quincy, once the north precinct of the Town of Braintree.

Our speakers have developed a good deal of information about the libraries of these two, dare I say, bibliomaniacs, as you learned when reading their papers posted on the conference web site. Each emphasizes Adams' and Jefferson's life long drive for learning. Both men found within their libraries the sources of deep knowledge and, ultimately, wisdom that enriched their own lives and that played such pivotal rôles in the forming the foundation of our nation. But, these two brilliant men could have hardly been different.

Adams – short and stout, marked by Calvinistic personal questioning, plain of manners and outspoken and always vividly present – a pragmatist who was shaped by physical labor on a small farm, and who was intellectually circumscribed by the preoccupation with his profession and his personality.

Jefferson – tall and handsome, elegant of manners and fully assured of himself and his place in life, although when in public, vivid but not always present – a romantic who was shaped by a culture that depended upon the labor of others, and who was intellectually adventurous with interests that all but outran his possibilities.

Our presenters demonstrate these opposites as expressed in the manner by which they built and used their libraries.

Elizabeth Prindle

Beth is the Manager of the John Adams Library Project at the Boston Public Library. As such she was co-curator (with Earle Havens) of the Library's 2006-2007, award winning exhibition, "John Adams Unbound," that brilliantly exposed the contents of Adams' library and not insignificant segments of his mind. In 2005 Beth was curator of another excellent exhibition that illuminated the events of the Boston Massacre and the subsequent trials of the English soldiers who were defended by Adams. And, she has been of great assistance to me. An alumna of Stanford University and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Beth has been a teacher, an officer of Boston's South End Historical Society, and serves on the administrative committee of

MHS's Adams Papers.

The title of Beth's paper is "Thought, care, and money: John Adams assembles his library." She depicts John Adams, a man of modest means but ambitious of spirit and energy, self-questioning in the Calvinist tradition of New England Congregationalism, striving to succeed in his profession. His library of some three thousand volumes (number of titles?), chiefly professional in nature, reflects that underlying personality and mind.

David Emblidge

Formerly the director of his own publishing house, David Emblidge has been an editor at the Harvard University and Cambridge University Presses. DaCapo Press published his edition of "My Day": *Eleanor Roosevelt's Acclaimed [newspaper] Columns* and Oxford issued his *Appalachian Trail Reader*. He is, as well, an essayist and reviewer for *The New Republic* and *The New York Times*. I, having suffered to no avail through dreaded grade school exercises, would most like to read his article, "The Palmer Method and the Tenor of our Times." Having devolved into academia, he is now Associate Professor at Emerson College in its Department of Writing, Literature, and Publishing. David has held a Fulbright professorship in France and a fellowship at the International Center for Jefferson Studies at Monticello.

"Bibliomany has possessed me: Thomas Jefferson the booksellers' customer extraordinaire" is the title of his paper which depicts Thomas Jefferson as a man of confidence, engendered by privilege, possessing unbounded curiosity, governed by a mind that required discipline that found expression in catalogues and lists, yet one unable to restrain impulses that resulted in uncompleted dwellings and libraries. David's survey of his first libraries and that of the nascent University of Virginia demonstrates those conflicting energies.

Kevin J. Hayes

Professor Hayes holds a chair in the English Department of the University of Central Oklahoma where his offerings extend from colonial and 19th century American literature and English literature, to New Wave cinema, and to bibliography and research methods. A graduate of the University of Toledo, his Ph.D. was achieved at the feet of J. A. Leo Lemay, that late and lamented autocrat at the University of Delaware. An active scholar and writer, Kevin is author or editor of a number of books, for which he has received several awards. Those most germane to our doings this morning include massive works on the libraries of William Byrd II of Westover (Madison House, 1997), and (with Edwin Wolf II of Benjamin Franklin (APS and Library Co. Phila., 2006), as well as his *Road to Monticello, the life and mind of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford, 2008).

Kevin's subject is "Jefferson's vacation library." Located at Poplar Forest, it was some 90 miles from Monticello; in those days a three day trip. There, Jefferson was not a man entirely at rest, but one who actively supervised a tract of 4,000 acres, manned by thirty slaves. He lived in an unfinished house, surrounded by grandchildren and workmen who were building a dwelling house that embodied Jefferson's mature ideas of life, expressed in architecture. His library at

Poplar Forest, also, was an encapsulation of his ideals. But, like nearly all of his possessions, it was dispersed by sale and lost, although some 600 titles have been identified.

I have a question to put to each of our speakers. That is, what is your opinion of the bibliophilic interests of Adams and Jefferson in the quality of the printing, illustrations, bindings of the books they collected? Zoltan Harasty, William Peden, Millicent Sowerby, and Hannah French deal with some aspects of this aspect of their subject's book collecting and we know that Jefferson was particular about the quality of the translations of the classics, but I would be happy to learn of your views on this topic.

MAMcC NOTES

Adams and Jefferson as Connoisseurs of the Book

Beth Prindle

“Thought, care, and money, John Adams assembles his library”

As in all things a pragmatist, Prindle writes, “He did not collect with a collector’s eye.” — “Book collecting—from first to last—was John Adams pathway, not his destination.” But he was ever questioning.

JA to Isaac Smith in London, 1771

I want to agree with some Bookseller, of character, in whom I could entirely confide, to send me Books whenever I shall want them, as long as I shall live. As I am a little inclined to be extravagant, in that kind of Entertainment, it is very likely I may write for books to the amount of twenty, perhaps thirty, Pounds sterling a year.

In Paris his bookseller was Charles François Hochereau from whom Adams bought books on modern philosophy, e.g., the enlightenment idealists – Rousseau &c. with whom he had fundamental disagreement, and on the political science, on which he built his profound knowledge of theories of government.

David Embidge

“Bibliography has possessed me: Thomas Jefferson the booksellers’ customer extraordiniare”

Describes Jefferson as a book collector, a book user, a dilettante, an aficionado, a connoisseur of books, maps, and engravings.

Jefferson’s search for order — organization of his library on Baconian principles:

Memory, Reason, Imagination, catalogue gives author, title, number of volumes & size
Booksellers –

Paris — Froullé; Reibelt (& Baltimore and New Orleans); duFief (& Philadelphia);

Amsterdam — Van Damme and DuFour

London — John Stockdale and James Lackington

Georgetown — Joseph Milligan

Boston — Cummings, Hilliard & Co., for library of UVa.

Bought his sets of books in sheets, had them bound, often shelved them by subject rather than as sets

Ordered bindings of conflated texts, e.g. Cicero with latin and greek texts together

Careful in obtaining best translations, e.g., Sales; Schultz for the classics

Examples of purchases –

Milton's *Works* (London, 1753) — [Sowerby 4917] gilt (v.5, 4917)

deBry — [Sowerby 3973-83] *The Great or American Voyages* (Frankfort, 1590-1619)
11 parts in 3 vols.

Arrowsmith's — [Sowerby 3846] *Map exhibiting all the new discoveries in the interior parts of North America* (London 1802). TJ notices US edition but if available wants the English edn. as being better engraved than US edn.

Palladio — [Sowerby 4174] TJ binds up English, French, and Italian versions in 2 vols. each vol. containing the 3 languages.

Pallas — [Sowerby 4737], *Vocabulaires*, published by Catherine the Great in Russian, 200 copies. TJ receives by request a copy a gift of a Russian count

Bacon, Locke, Newton his most revered authors other than the classics

Newton' — [Sowerby 3721] *The mathematical principles of natural philosophy* (London, 1803) 3 vols.

Kevin Hayes

“Jefferson's Vacation Library” (Poplar Forest)

Duplicate titles from Monticello at Poplar Forest

Grand daughters pasting numbers (shelf marks) on spines of TJ's books

3 mahogany library book cases

Examples of purchases –

Many large sets in small formats

Classics in editions by Elzevir and Aldine

Greek historians publ. by Tauchnitz in Leipzig

Set of 98 vols. classics, varying edns. — Pindar printed on satin

109 vols. Bell's *British poets*

35 vols. French authors in a London, 1784 edn.

Letters of the British spy, Baltimore, 18mo, gilt, used as example for binding his *Manual of Parliamentary Practice*

Buffon, *Histoire naturelle* in 52 vols.

Dobson's Encyclopedia in 18 vols. qrto

de Herrera, *Historica generale* in vellum

\Zoltan Haraszti

John Adams & the prophets of progress

Harvard Univ. Press, 1952.

A critique of Adams' social and political philosophy using his library to explicate it.

Wm. H. Peden, "Thomas Jefferson, book-collector"
PHD dissertation, UVa, 1942

Chapter VI, Thos. Jefferson, Librarian and bibliophile

Jefferson's search for order — organization of his library on Baconian principles:

Memory, Reason, Imagination, catalogue gives author, title, number of volumes & size
Care — wrapt and sewed up his volumes of ancient laws and newspapers in oil cloth, "so that neither air nor moisture can have access to them."

Collection of American laws for his study of same. En bloc purchases, Peyton Randolph and Col. Richard Bland being important.

Philology — American Indian vocabularies, constructed of 30 years, stolen and lost in move from Washington to Monticello

Anglo-Saxon – fascination with ancient Briton as source of liberty, ruined by kings and priests — view of society in accord with J-J Rousseau

Tacitus and Horace as pure use of language

Collections of literature relatively small. Sterne a favorite, with *Sentimental journey through France and Italy* (London, 1770) — [Sower4335] by being a favorite.

Poems of Ossian by James Macpherson — [Sowerby 4377] TJ requested a cousin of "editor" in England to find Ossian's poems in the original Gaelic written in a fair round hand, to spare no expense and if found would have them bound in vellum with edges gilt. Unable to produce same. TJ never accepted them as contemporary productions.

Neat books — booksellers Robert Aitken (excellent bookbinder) and Robert Bell in Phila.

On book bindings — "Our American bookings are faulty in execution as well as materials. They are so spongy that when once a book has been opened, it will never close again. A book well bound is as heavy as a piece of lead."

Edwin Wolf II, "Thomas Jefferson, 1743-1826," in *Gazette of the Grolier Club*, n.s. 16, June 1971, pp.55-59.

Exhibit lot 116. Christoph Daniel Ebeling, *Erdbeschreibung und Geschichte von Amerika*. Hamburg: 1816. Presentation from Ebeling to TJ who had it neatly bound in half red, roan over marbled boards.

Hannah D. French

“Thomas Jefferson’s last bookbinder,
Frederick August Mayo,” in *Bookbinding in Early America*, AAS, 1986, pp.148-220.

Detailed account of correspondence between TJ and Mayo, 1818-1825.

Gilreath and Wilson

Thomas Jefferson’s library. Library of Congress, 1989. Illustration on p. x

Seneca Philosoph (Biponti Soc., 1782) and *Oeuvres* (Paris, 1795) — [Sowerby 1324] TJ
conflated two eds. into 10 vols. in straight grain read morocco, gilt, labels.

Tacitus, *Opera and Works* (Amsterdam, 1672 and London, 1737)— [Sowerby 80] TJ conflated
the latin and English eds. into 9 vols., tree and marbled calf, gilt spines

Analyse raisonnée [of cults and religion] by D. de Tracy (Paris, 1804) — [Sowerby 1296]
author’s presentation copy, TJ had it bound in tree calf, gilt.