A General Diffusion of Knowledge

A legacy of books for all ages to enlighten and delight

Thayer Memorial Library

Celebrating 150 Years of Public Library Service, 1862-2012

PREPARED BY LESLIE PERRIN WILSON, WITH A FOREWORD BY MARGE FISCHER
A General Diffusion of Knowledge

An exhibition to show volumes from the Rare Book Collection of the Thayer Memorial Library, Lancaster, Massachusetts
January 15-April 21, 2012

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In 2012 the Thayer Memorial Library in Lancaster, Massachusetts, celebrates 150 years of service as a free, public library. Our anniversary year opens with “A General Diffusion of Knowledge,” an exhibit which includes books that were part of the original collection when the Lancaster Library opened its doors in 1862.

It seems remarkable that the Town voted to support a public library during the Civil War. As the United States struggled to determine whether the country would remain a united, democratic nation, perhaps it was fitting to open a library for all citizens. Townspeople believed that access to knowledge and information was vital to the ideals of democracy upon which the country was founded. After the vote in 1862, over 600 books from earlier private libraries and individual collectors were donated to form the general collection of the new Lancaster Town Library.

This exhibit was first shown in 1984-85. With our milestone anniversary in 2012, Library Director Joseph Mulé suggested to the Board it was time to showcase these books again. Leslie Perrin Wilson, who developed and presented the first exhibit, agreed to serve again as Curator for the 150th anniversary showing. Museum exhibit specialist Frank E. Graham provided expertise with exhibit design and execution. Working under the guidance of these professionals the 150th Anniversary Committee Exhibits Group prepared and updated the exhibit and catalog. An accompanying lecture series will enhance understanding of the importance of the books on display. Thank you to the specialists, volunteers, speakers, and staff who brought “A General Diffusion of Knowledge” to the public for enjoyment and reflection.

The volumes selected for this exhibit depict the history of ideas, the importance of education for children and adults, and the message at the core of public library service – a general diffusion of knowledge for the benefit of all. It is unusual for a town library, (in fact, any public library in the country) to have been in operation for 150 years. It is a privilege to serve on the Board of an institution which has so long held a special place in the hearts of Lancaster’s people.

Emily J. Rose
Chair, Board of Library Trustees
Thayer Memorial Library
December 2011

A General Diffusion of Knowledge
Sunday Lecture series:

Leslie Perrin Wilson, Exhibit Curator:
“Books are the best of things, well used”: The Value of Lancaster’s Rare Book Collection

Warren Rassmussen:
Mary Rowlandson—Minister’s Wife, Redeemed Captive, First Best-selling American Author

Timothy Castner:
Searching for the Heart of the Community—Religious Books in the Rare Book Collection

Kevin Doyle:
Lancaster in the Civil War and Gardner’s Photographic Sketchbook of the War

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This exhibition, “A General Diffusion of Knowledge,” prepared according to the provisions of the Constance V.R. Dexter endowment established in 1976, is the first major exhibition of material from the Rare Book Collection of the Lancaster Town Library.

Mrs. Dexter, daughter of Bayard Thayer (fifth son of Nathaniel and Cornelia Van Rensselaer Thayer) and Ruth Simpkins Thayer, was born in 1900 at Boston, and married William Dexter of Boston in 1923. Her early life in Lancaster was spent at Hawthorne Hall (more recently called the Cenacle) on George Hill Road. After her marriage, she and her family lived at Hillside, also on George Hill Road. They were the parents of four children, Constance V.R. Dexter White of Boston, Nathaniel Thayer Dexter of Boston and Lancaster, Philip Dexter of St. Louis, Missouri, and Mary Ann Dexter Streeter of Wenham, Massachusetts.

A member of the Board of Library Trustees, Mrs. Dexter continued the family tradition of service to the Lancaster Library, which began with her grandfather Nathaniel (on the Board from 1873-1883), and continued with her uncles Nathaniel Jr. (1883-1885), Eugene (1886-1889), and John Eliot (1887-1933), her brother Nathaniel 2nd (1924-1927) and her sister Ruth Thayer Greene (1927-1928). Mrs. Dexter served on the Board from 1928 to 1976, bringing the family’s total commitment to the town’s public library to more than 113 years.

Members of her immediate family, including her sister Mabel Bayard Thayer Storey, were active in the planning and dedication in 1927-1928 of the Children’s Room, a gift to the children of the town by Mrs. Bayard Thayer and a memorial to her son Nathaniel. This event marked the opening of one of the earliest rooms especially to be set apart for children in the history of public libraries.

From the earliest days, the collection of the Lancaster Town Library has always been carefully selected to include “from among the most valuable books in the market, whether for standard merit or beautiful illustrations” (Annual Report of 1870). In a report for the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners in 1891, Henry Nourse wrote that “the old town of Lancaster has long boasted a possession of one of the best selected libraries as well as the largest library in proportion to its population in the Commonwealth.” That same tradition has been carefully adhered to during these many years, both in the addition of books to the circulating collection and in their removal from the stacks for inclusion in the Rare Book Collection.

It was during Mrs. Dexter’s chairmanship of the Library Board (1957-1976) that a rare book room was established. Until 1965 all books, with the exception of the Washburn and Lancaster Collections, were on open shelves. With the help of the Central Massachusetts Regional Library system’s director, Jack Bryant, Librarian Virginia Dunning reorganized the collection. Older valuable books were culled for a rare book collection; American history (Indian, Colonial, Massachusetts, Civil War, and the like) was shelved on the balcony. Older standard works were stored in the lower stack area, the circulating collection in the upper stack area, and reference and new books in the main room. After consultation with the Council on Library Resources and the American Antiquarian Society, the Board of Trustees voted to establish a rare book collection. The Town, by vote at the September 30, 1968 Special Town Meeting, provided the necessary funds to convert the former adult reading area to a climate-controlled room to house the collection.

The Rare Book Room opened on November 14, 1971. Shortly thereafter the entire collection of books was chemically sterilized and George Cunha of the New England Document Conservation Center was engaged to repair and restore selected volumes. Further measures to protect and preserve the collection included the installation of a security system, light filters to prevent paper damage and discoloration from ultraviolet rays, and a new display case for the Audubon elephant folio. Librarian Grace Comes, involved in a state library conservation program sponsored by the Massachusetts Bureau of Library Extension and the New England Document Conservation Center, received federal funds to further the restoration of Lancaster’s rare books and manuscripts. The Lancaster Town Library was a pioneer among small public libraries in its concern for the preservation of special collections.

According to Mrs. Dexter’s will, the continuation of her favorite library project is provided for as follows:

“To the Town of Lancaster, Ten Thousand Dollars ($10,000) the income only therefrom to be used by the Trustees of the Public Library of said Town for the care, maintenance, preservation and exhibition of its collection of rare and historic books and maps published prior to the twentieth century belonging to said Library as the Trustees in their discretion deem proper and appropriate.”

The Library is fortunate to have had Leslie Perrin Wilson, former Assistant in Special Collections at Wellesley College and former Rare Book Cataloger at the Concord Free Public Library, as a Rare Book Consultant during the past six months. She has inventoried the collection, upgraded the cataloging to include the provenance of each item, implemented an in-house conservation program, written a set of policies for the collection, and last, but not least, has put together this exhibition of materials from the Rare Book Collection.

It is with much appreciation from the citizens of the Town that the room which houses this collection of books is formally dedicated to the memory of Constance V.R. Dexter. This exhibition and accompanying lecture (“Why Rare Books in Lancaster?”) by Dr. Eleanor L. Nichols, former Curator of the Harry Elkins Widener Collection at Harvard University and former Special Collections Librarian at Wellesley College, are offered as part of the celebration surrounding the dedication.

Marge Fischer
Library Director
December 24, 1984
In October of 1790, a committee of five men was chosen to frame the by-laws of the Lancaster Library (later named the Lancaster Social Library), the earliest predecessor of Lancaster’s free public library. The committee wrote in the preamble to their regulations:

“We the subscribers to the following Articles, being sensible that a general diffusion of knowledge has a tendency, not only to promote individual happiness, but to strengthen the bonds of society, by making ‘man mild and sociable with man;’ and it being incumbent on us as members of a free and independent community, to use our endeavors to preserve the liberty, freedom and happiness we enjoy; and convinced that we cannot effect this in a more eligible way than by enlarging our minds with such useful knowledge as will best serve to increase our estimation of such invaluable blessings,—do for the purpose aforesaid severally and reciprocally promise to agree to and with each other that we will associate ourselves together, and purchase a Library . . . “

This idealistic statement of purpose reflects the prevailing concern with the dissemination of knowledge that characterized both Europe and America during the eighteenth century. Lancaster’s first organized library was as much a product of the Enlightenment as was, for example, the great French vernacular encyclopedia of Diderot and d’Alembert.

Today, that “general diffusion of knowledge” so admired by the founders of the Lancaster Library is a fact of life that most of us take for granted. Developments in the technology of printing and the rise of other forms of communication have made available to all an abundance of information too vast and too diverse for any one person to assimilate. Given the overwhelming volume of printed material at our command, it is reasonable to question why we create special collections to house the printed books of previous centuries. Specifically, what is the purpose of the Rare Book Collection in the Lancaster Town Library?

Several answers to this question are possible, but one among them is by far the most important in explaining the value of this collection. Above all, the Constance V.R. Dexter Rare Book Room exists to preserve a collection of books that may be regarded as documentary evidence of the past, whatever their intrinsic intellectual or esthetic value. Volumes from the collection illuminate various aspects of history—for example, the history of ideas in many disciplines, the history of printing, publishing, and the book-trade, and the history of taste and culture in and around Lancaster. Some of the historical evidence provided by books in Lancaster’s Rare Book Collection may also be found in special collections elsewhere; much of it is offered only by the particular copies located here.

Perhaps in a less apparent way, but no less importantly, the Rare Book Collection in the Thayer Memorial Library also exists to promote the “general diffusion of knowledge” that served as the stated goal of those who organized the Lancaster Library in 1790. Rare books and special collections are usually housed in college and university libraries or in urban research libraries, not in small public libraries. There are some notable exceptions to this generalization, however, and Lancaster’s Rare Book Collection is one of them. The accessibility of material in this collection to the general population of the town—whether through exhibition, lecture, tour, or individual research—suggests the endurance of that sense of the importance of democratizing knowledge that acquired such significance during the eighteenth century.

Consisting of some 1,500 volumes, Lancaster’s Rare Book Collection is small, but the diversity of material that it contains is remarkable. Amidst this diversity, six major categories of printed books comprise the bulk of the collection and are actively sought for addition to it. The primary strengths of Lancaster’s collection are:

• Volumes that reflect the history of libraries or of book collecting in the Town of Lancaster
• New England imprints, particularly Massachusetts imprints, up to the mid-19th century
• Volumes produced by European printers and/or publishers important in the history of the book, whether significant in the history of printing, publishing, typography, book illustration, or some other aspect of bookmaking or the book-trade
• Illustrated works in botany, horticulture, gardening, and natural history, through the 19th century
• Sermons and other religious works, American and English, up to the mid-19th century
• Historical writings of all descriptions, up to the mid-19th century, with special emphasis on American history

The purpose of this exhibition is simply to acquaint the viewer with the full range of materials in the Rare Book Collection of the Lancaster Town Library. The display has therefore been organized around these six major collecting areas. It is hoped that greater public awareness of the nature of the Rare Book Collection will both advance the “general diffusion of knowledge” and, at the same time, encourage the gift to the Library of materials that further enhance the existing strengths of the collection.

Leslie Perrin Wilson
Rare Book Consultant
Lancaster Town Library
December 24, 1984

Note: The Library’s Lancaster Collection—the local history collection containing both manuscript and printed materials relating to the history of Lancaster, genealogical volumes, works by and about the town’s residents, and the like—is separate from the Rare Book Collection. Although the Lancaster Collection is a valuable and much-used resource, items from it have been intentionally excluded from this exhibition. The kinds of material included in the Rare Book Collection and in the Lancaster Collection differ, as does the general purpose of each collection. The two collections complement each other, but they cannot both be adequately represented in a display the size of this one.
The majority of volumes in Lancaster’s Rare Book Collection came to the Library as gifts by local residents. A large proportion of donations was made during the nineteenth century, in the several decades following the foundation of the Town Library, when public interest and support were strong. Many of the early gifts circulated for decades, becoming part of the Rare Book Collection only with the creation of the Rare Book Room in the 1960s.

Provenance—that is, the history of previous ownership of a book—is in itself a significant aspect of many volumes in Lancaster’s collection. The identity of previous owners, whether individuals or institutions, is revealed through the presence of inscriptions or bookplates within volumes and through consulting the Library’s early accession records. The provenance of books in the Rare Book Collection reflects the history of trends in intellectual, literary, and social history, the degree of learning and sophistication of earlier members of the community, and the relationships between individuals of importance in local history. Evidence provided by the books themselves—for example, the bookplates of the various libraries that antedated the Lancaster Town Library—confirms and supplements the written records of Lancaster and its inhabitants.

The Rare Book Collection includes remains of four earlier Lancaster libraries: the Lancaster Social Library; the Library of the Lancaster Sabbath School Association; the school district libraries; and the Lancaster Agricultural Library. A representation of books from each of these collections is included in this exhibition. From the many individual donors whose gifts might receive special emphasis here, six—Nathaniel Thayer, Alexander C. Washburn, George M. Bartol, Sally Flagg, Henry S. Nourse, and J.L.S. Thompson—have been selected on the basis of the extent or particularly interesting nature of their donations.

THE LANCASTER SOCIAL LIBRARY

The social library as an institution was introduced to America in 1731, when Benjamin Franklin founded the Library Company of Philadelphia. Roughly defined as a partnership of individuals each contributing money towards the maintenance and expansion of a commonly-owned book collection which each member has the right to use, the social library was well established in England before it made its appearance in this country.

The Lancaster Social Library (called for its first decade simply the Lancaster Library) was founded in 1790, at the beginning of the half-century of the most rapid increase in the number of social libraries in New England. There were seventy-four original proprietors. New proprietors could be added through election by a two-thirds vote, payment of at least three dollars, and signing the articles of agreement. The by-laws of the Lancaster Library as framed in 1790 stipulated that the collection was to be housed not more than a mile-and-a-half from the meeting-house.

During the sixty years of its existence, the Lancaster Social Library survived reorganization, the rewriting of its regulations and by-laws, the tardiness of some proprietors in paying their dues, and the vicissitudes of taste in reading. In 1850, the separation of Clinton from Lancaster raised the question of how to divide the collection for use by members now living in two towns. Consequently, the books were sold at auction, many of them to individuals who had been proprietors of the Social Library. The Library Club of Lancaster, formed in 1851, filled the place of the earlier Social Library until the establishment of the Lancaster Town Library in 1862.
1. **The American Spectator**  
*The American Spectator, or Matrimonial Preceptor. A Collection ... of Essays, Epistles, Precepts and Examples, Relating to the Married State, From the most celebrated Writers ... Adapted to the State of Society in the American Republic ...*  
Boston, printed by Manning & Loring for David West, 1797.  
Presented by Josiah Stickney.

This compilation, modeled on an earlier English work of similar nature, consists of selections from authors as diverse as Cicero, Dr. Johnson, and Elizabeth Bonhôte. It illustrates an important characteristic of American social library collections during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. In general, these collections were varied in nature, including a mixture of history, travel, biography, literature, and theology, with the presence of fiction and of science increasing during the nineteenth century. While theological and philosophical works were included, amusement was as important an object of social libraries as was instruction. A volume like *The American Spectator*, varied in its contents yet designed (according to the prefatory “Advertisement”) to promote “the essential interests of society,” fulfills both the entertaining and the didactic functions.

The Rare Book Collection contains more than a dozen Social Library volumes presented by Josiah Stickney. The books came from the library of Mr. Stickney's great-grandfather, Charles G. Stevens, who purchased them at the 1850 auction of the Lancaster Social Library. Judge Stevens was important in instigating and overseeing the separation of Clinton from Lancaster.

2. John Mason (1706-1763)  
**Self-Knowledge. A Treatise, Shewing the Nature and Benefit of that Important Science, and the Way to attain it ... The Eleventh Edition.**  
London, James Buckland and C. Dilly, 1784.  
Presented by Henry S. Nourse.

3. Philip Doddridge (1702-1751)  
**The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul: Illustrated in a Course of Serious and Practical Addresses ... The Tenth Edition, To which is added, A Sermon on the Care of the Soul.**  
London, J. Buckland, W. Strahan, J. and F. Rivington, [and others], 1773.  
Presented by Henry S. Nourse.

Contemporaries John Mason and Philip Doddridge were both English nonconformist (that is, non-Church of England) ministers, teachers, and authors of popular works. The first edition of Mason's *Self-Knowledge* appeared in 1745. Numerous later editions followed throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. Doddridge's *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, also first printed in 1745, was much-reprinted and, in addition, translated into a number of other languages, among them French, Italian, Syriac, Dutch, German, and Danish. The inclusion of these two popular works in the Lancaster Social Library suggests an attempt to appeal to a general audience in the selection of theological works for the collection.

These volumes both bear inscriptions dating their addition to the Lancaster Social Library at 1790 (the year of the library's founding). Moreover, both titles are listed in the original manuscript catalog of the Social Library, now in the possession of Old Sturbridge Village. Also, both have the earliest bookplate of the Social Library (found in most of the items shown here). Henry S. Nourse, the donor of both volumes, was an authority on the history of Lancaster and the surrounding towns and a writer on topics of local history. (See Items 36 and 37.)

4. John Adams (1735-1826)  
**A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America, Against the Attack of M. Turgot ... In Three Volumes ... The Third Edition.**  
Philadelphia, printed by Budd and Bartram for William Cobbett, 1797.  
Presented by Mrs. G.R.M. Wirthington.

John Adams, second president of the United States, wrote his *Defence of the Constitutions ... of the United States* while he was in England, serving as envoy to the Court of St. James's. The first edition came out in 1787. Along with Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* and Barlow’s *The Vision of Columbus* (two other titles from the Social Library which survive in the Rare Book Collection), it reflects the growing sense of national identity that followed the American Revolution.

5. François Marie Arouet De Voltaire (1694-1778)  
**The History of Charles the Xlith, King of Sweden.**  
Translated ... By W.S. Kenrick. To which is added, the Life of Peter the Great. Translated by J. Johnson ...  
Presented by Josiah Stickney.

Historical writings comprised the single largest subject category in the earliest Lancaster Social Library collection. This work by French philosopher, historian, dramatist, and essayist Voltaire—first published in French in 1731—is one of a number of original Social Library titles dealing with European
The first proprietors of the Social Library maintained a balance in adding historical volumes to the collection, which included a nearly equal representation of titles in American, English, European, and ancient history.

6. Alexander Pope (1688-1744)

*An Essay on Man* ... *Enlarged and Improved by the Author. Together with his MS. Additions and Variations as in the last Edition of his Works. With the Notes of William, Lord Bishop of Gloucester.*

London, A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1786.
Presented by Lucius Farwell.

7. Joel Barlow (1754-1812)

*The Vision of Columbus: A Poem, in Nine Books* ...

London, C. Dilly and J. Stockdale, 1787.
Presented by Josiah Stickney.

Literature formed the second largest group of books in the original collection of the Lancaster Social Library. English literature was represented by the works of such writers as Addison, Goldsmith, Pope, and Sterne, American literature by those of Dwight and Barlow.

The first edition of *An Essay on Man* by English satirical poet Alexander Pope was published anonymously, the four epistles comprising the work appearing in 1733 and 1734. Although critics and scholars have found a variety of faults in *An Essay on Man*, the work achieved—in translation—considerable circulation among Continental European readers.

Connecticut-born poet and statesman Joel Barlow spent the spare time of eight years (1779-1787) writing *The Vision of Columbus*, the first version of his epic poem about America. Published both in Hartford and in London in 1787, this grandiose work achieved popularity in an America marked by a growing desire for a literature of its own. The success of the poem is illustrated by its inclusion in the Lancaster Library in 1790, only three years after its publication. Barlow later extensively revised and rewrote *The Vision of Columbus*; the new version appeared in 1807 under the title *The Columbiad*.

The nature of the Sunday school library developed through the nineteenth century in such a way as to ensure continued appeal to a general audience. Fiction, popular science, history, biography, travel, and the historical novel all made their way into these collections. As general and religious publishers began to offer standard sets of titles appropriate for the Sunday school libraries, there was an increasing uniformity among the collections. The number of volumes in Sunday school libraries varied, as did their organization and rules for membership and use.

In Lancaster, both the First Parish Church (now called the First Church of Christ) and the Evangelical Congregational Church offered Sunday school library collections. Volumes from the Lancaster Sabbath School Association, many given to the Town Library by the First Parish Church in the 1890s, have become part of the Rare Book Collection.

The Sunday school of the First Parish Church was established in 1817, during the ministry of Dr. Nathaniel Thayer. In 1846, the constitution of the Lancaster Sunday School Association and a catalog of its books were printed in a ten-page pamphlet, a copy of which is available in the Lancaster Collection of the Town Library. The preamble to the constitution reads:

“Inasmuch as it is highly desirable that parents and teachers should be furnished with information in regard to the Religious Education of the young, and have their interest enhanced in this great subject,—we agree to form an association for this purpose ...”

The articles that follow the preamble specify that the association was to be called the Lancaster Sabbath School Association. Anyone could become a member by paying a fifty-cent admission fee and a twenty-five cent assessment at every subsequent annual meeting. This early catalog (one of a series issued for the library) listed some 135 titles arranged under the following headings: History; Biography; Sermons and Practical Ethics; Commentaries; Theology; Travels; Philosophy & Natural History; Poetry; and Miscellany. The Library of the Lancaster Sabbath School Association survived into the early twentieth century.
8. George Washington Burnap (1802-1859)
*Lectures on the Doctrines of Christianity, in Controversy Between Unitarians and Other Denominations of Christians*...

9. Clarke, James Freeman (1810-1888)
*The Christian Doctrine of Forgiveness of Sin: an Essay*...
Boston, Wm. Crosby and H.P. Nichols, 1852.

The First Parish Church became Unitarian under the liberal ministry of Dr. Nathaniel Thayer, which spanned from 1793 until 1840. As might be expected, the remains of the collection of the Lancaster Sabbath School Association include works by prominent Unitarian clergyman.

George Washington Burnap was for more than thirty years pastor of the First Independent Church of Baltimore, Maryland. Spurred by widespread misunderstanding of Unitarianism, he was an avid public speaker and writer on the subject. His other writings include *Expository Lectures on the ... Passages of the Scriptures Which Relate to the Doctrine of the Trinity* (1845) and *Popular Objections to Unitarian Christianity Considered and Answered* (1848).

James Freeman Clarke, founder and minister of the Church of the Disciples in Boston, was a friend and associate of Dr. William Ellery Channing and of Ralph Waldo Emerson and others among the New England Transcendentalists. Believing reform activity to be part of his duty as a clergyman, he was involved in the temperance, antislavery, and women’s suffrage movements. He was also a member of the State Board of Education, a trustee of the Boston Public Library, and a member of the Board of Overseers of Harvard College. He wrote voluminously, publishing many pieces in newspapers and periodicals.

Clarke’s *Christian Doctrine of Forgiveness of Sin* is one of a number of volumes from the Library of the Lancaster Sabbath School Association in the Rare Book Room bearing spine labels hand-numbered with the shelf-numbers of the books. (It is labeled #327.)

10. Isaac Taylor (1787-1865)
*Wesley and Methodism* ...
New York, Harper & Brothers, 1852.

English artist, inventor, and popular author Isaac Taylor was a prolific writer on a variety of subjects, theological topics primary among them. *Wesley and Methodism* (first published at London in 1851) was the second of two biographical works by Taylor; it was preceded by *Loyola and Jesuitism in Its Rudiments* (London, 1849).

Like most of the other Lancaster Sabbath School Association books in the Rare Book Room, this volume bears the bookplate of the association. Its shelf-number—269—appears on both the bookplate and the spine label attached to the book.
11. William Carpenter (1797-1874)
*Scripture Natural History*: or, *A Descriptive Account of the Zoology, Botany, and Geology of the Bible. Illustrated by Engravings* …

12. John Pye Smith (1774-1851)
*On the Relation Between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science* ...

Works suggesting that a compatible relationship existed between religion and natural science were popular in nineteenth-century Sunday school libraries. William Carpenter’s *Scripture Natural History* and John Pye Smith’s *On the Relation Between the Holy Scriptures and Some Parts of Geological Science*—both works by English authors—each attempted to bridge the gap between theology and science.

Carpenter, a self-taught man with a particular interest in biblical study, wrote a number of books and articles on theology, political reform, and other subjects. He was for a time the editor of the *Scripture Magazine*. Shown here is the first edition of his *Scripture Natural History*; an American edition appeared at Boston in 1833.

13. George Robert Gleig (1796-1888)
*The History of the Bible* ... *in Two Volumes* ...

George Robert Gleig, born at Stirling in Scotland, held the positions of inspector-general of British military schools and chaplain-general of the forces during the course of a long and active life. He was the author of many books on historical and theological topics and a contributor to such periodicals.
14. The Winter Evening Book

The Winter Evening Book; Embracing Personal Narrative; Incidents of Travel; Popular Information on Science; Poetical Selections; and Other Subjects Fitted to Interest and Improve the Mind. Embellished with Numerous Engravings.

New York, C.S. Francis & Co. (and at Boston, Joseph H. Francis), 1842. From School District No. 5

The Winter Evening Book was designed to appeal to that same faith in conscious self-improvement that was at the heart of the school district library movement. This volume seems to touch upon as many topics as its compact format will permit. It includes such widely varying pieces as “Ancient British Costume,” “Art of Writing,” “Destructive Kissing,” “Lapland Skate Runners,” “Liverpool and Manchester Rail Road,” “Mechanical Power,” “Meteors of 1807,” “Muscular Strength of Insects,” “Trust to Yourself,” and “Young Poet’s own Epitaph.” (An alphabetical index at the beginning of the volume to some degree facilitates access to the diverse contents.)

15. Thomas Dick (1774-1857)

On the Improvement of Society by the Diffusion of Knowledge: or, An Illustration of the Advantages Which Would Result from a More General Dissemination of Rational and Scientific Information Among All Ranks ... Illustrated with Engravings.


Scottish-born scientific writer Thomas Dick was a zealous advocate of popular scientific study. On the Improvement of Society by the Diffusion of Knowledge (the introduction and first two sections of which were originally published in 1816 as periodical contributions) was only one in a long series of efforts by Dick to promote the spread of scientific knowledge among the middle and lower classes. The success of his first book, The Christian Philosopher, or the Connexion of Science and Philosophy with Religion (1823), established his reputation as an author. Much-read both in Britain and in the United States, Dick’s writings conveyed his missionary message simply, clearly, and effectively.

16. Anne Pratt (1806-1893)

Dawnings of Genius; or, The Early Lives of Some Eminent Persons of the Last Century ...


Englishwoman Anne Pratt (Mrs. John Pearless after 1866) was primarily a botanist and a writer of popular works on botany. Her major work, The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Great Britain, was first published at London in five volumes in 1855. Dawnings of Genius came out at London in 1841. The author’s purpose in writing the book, according to her preface, was didactic: “… to show that moral excellence is, in many eminent instances, combined with mental greatness, giving to it its peculiar beauty and highest value … to convince the young of the importance of cultivating both the mind and the heart;—of taking for their example a high standard of mental and moral worth … [to] recommend them to adopt the motto of Dr. Johnson, and ‘Aim at the eagle if they only hit the sparrow.’”

17. Robert Southey (1774-1843)

The Life of William Cowper ... In Two Volumes ...


18. Allan Cunningham, (1784-1842)

The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters and Sculptors ... In Three Volumes [v. 4 and 5: In Five Volumes ...]


As with social libraries and Sunday school libraries, biography and history were staple components of school district library collections. If the volumes from Lancaster’s school district libraries now in the Rare Book Collection offer an accurate indication, biographical and historical titles formed the largest group of books in the town’s school district libraries.

Robert Southey—English poet of the Romantic period, poet laureate from 1813 until his death, historian, and writer of miscellaneous prose—was adept at producing popularly successful historical and biographical works. Two of his biographies in particular have proved to have lasting value. His Life of Nelson, expanded from an article, was published at London in two volumes in 1813; it is a classic of its genre. Southey’s Life of William Cowper (first printed at the beginning of his edition of Cowper’s works, the whole originally published at London in fifteen volumes between 1833 and
1837) has also been considered a standard.

Trained as a stonemason and employed as secretary to London sculptor Francis Chantrey from 1814 to 1841, Allan Cunningham of Keir in Scotland was, because of his connection to the art world, well-fitted to write The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters and Sculptors. The six-volume first edition appeared between 1829 and 1833 as part of Murray’s Family Library. The work sold well and was later included in another popular series, Bohn’s Standard Library (three volumes, 1879).

19. James Fletcher
The History of Poland; from the Earliest Period to the Present Time ... With a Narrative of the Recent Events Obtained from a Polish Patriot Nobleman. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1843.
From School District No. 5.

Of the historical titles from the school district libraries in the Rare Book Collection of the Lancaster Town Library, this Harper’s edition of The History of Poland by James Fletcher is interesting because of the publisher’s advertisement that appears at the end of the volume. The advertisement announces the issuing of a new catalog of Harper publications. The following portion of the advertisement illustrates this publisher’s eagerness to solicit the business of those responsible for purchasing school district library collections:

“In this catalogue may be found over one thousand volumes embracing every branch of literature, standard and imaginative. The attention of persons forming libraries, either private or public, is particularly directed to the great number of valuable standard historical and miscellaneous works ...”

The brief list that follows includes the Family Library (153 volumes), the Classical Library (36 volumes), the School District Library (200 volumes), and the Boys’ and Girls’ Library (32 volumes).

20. George Bancroft (1800-1891)
History of the Colonization of the United States ... Abridged by the Author. In Two Volumes ...
Boston, Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841.
From School District No. 8.

The magnum opus of American historian and diplomat George Bancroft was the ten-volume History of the United States, published over a period of forty years (1834-1874). The two-volume History of the Colonization of the United States (the two volumes of the copy shown here bound in a single volume) was an abridgement of the first three volumes of the larger work. (The three volumes had originally been published in 1834, 1837, and 1840, respectively.)

The inclusion of this book from the library of School District No. 8 in the Rare Book Collection takes on a special significance in light of George Bancroft’s personal fondness for Lancaster and his contribution to its public library. In 1878, he wrote the following letter to the selectmen of the town:

“Gentlemen:
In the early years of my life, I was very often at the house of Capt. Samuel Ward of your town, my mother’s brother-in-law, and the very intimate friend of my father. Indeed, his house was almost a second home to me. The town was in those days the best possible specimen of an old-fashioned New England town ... Though I have not been there for more than fifty-five years, I remember vividly and affectionately the loveliness of the country ... as well as its minister, my father’s bosom friend.

When I went to college, Capt. Ward took part in defraying my quarterly ... bills, and being unwilling that the generous act should come to an end with him or with me, I have deposited with my friend, Mr. N. Thayer, the sum of one thousand dollars for the benefit of the Lancaster town library, to be called the Capt. Samuel Ward library fund, the income only to be expended year by year, for the purchase of books in the department of history, leaving the word to be interpreted in the very largest sense ...”

I remain, gentlemen, with the highest respect, your friend,

George Bancroft”

Today, more than a century and a quarter after Bancroft presented this gift, the Ward Fund is still used for the purchase of books in the subject area of history.
The establishment of agricultural libraries in American towns was commonplace during the mid-nineteenth century. Lancaster, like so many other towns in New England, had its own small collection, consisting of some 150-175 volumes on such topics as agriculture, botany, gardening, landscaping, rural architecture, animal husbandry, and fishing. The agricultural publications of both the state and the federal government were included in the Lancaster Agricultural Library. The bookplate of this library—a standard form with blank spaces left for the name of the town, the shelf-number of the volume, the length of circulation, and the amount of the fine for overdue books—suggests the popularity of the agricultural library as an institution just prior to the wide-spread foundation of public libraries.

In 1862, the Agricultural Library communicated to the Library Club of Lancaster its approval of the suggestion that both libraries donate their collections to form the basis of the future town library. The gifts of both are recorded in the earliest accession book of the Lancaster Town Library. Today, the handful of volumes from the Agricultural Library that remain in the collection are found in the Rare Book Room.

21. Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852)
A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America; with a View to the Improvement of Country Residences ... With Remarks on Rural Architecture. Fifth Edition, Enlarged, Revised, and Newly Illustrated ...

22. Jane Loudon (1807-1858)
Gardening for Ladies; and Companion to the Flower-Garden ... Second American, from the Third London Edition. Edited by A. J. Downing ...

Landscape gardener, horticulturalist, and architect Andrew Jackson Downing is even today considered among the most important figures in the history of American horticulture. Downing was responsible for popularizing landscape gardening in this country and had a marked influence on those who followed him, Frederick Law Olmstead among them. His A Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening Adapted to North America, first issued in 1841, was immediately successful, frequently reprinted, and is still a classic. Downing enjoyed the respect of the great English landscape gardeners of his day.

Jane Webb Loudon, the wife of English landscape gardener John Claudius Loudon, began to write popular horticultural books when the publication of her husband’s Arboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum plunged the family into debt. Her best-selling work, The Ladies’ Companion to the Flower Garden, was first published in 1841. Gardening for Ladies; and Companion to the Flower-Garden, the American publication of which was edited by Andrew Jackson Downing, was dedicated to her husband, under whose tutelage she had acquired her knowledge of horticulture and gardening.
NATHANIEL THAYER

Born in Lancaster in 1808, the seventh child of the Reverend Nathaniel Thayer and his wife Sarah, Nathaniel Thayer was educated entirely in this town. At an early age, he chose a career in business. Successful from the start, he eventually joined the banking house of his brother John, taking it over upon John’s death in 1857. This firm, which was involved in financing the building of railroads and the organization of manufacturing companies, made him one of the wealthiest men in New England.

Expressed his affection for his birthplace through a number of gifts, among which were the several contributions he made to the Lancaster Town Library. In 1866, he endowed this library with $5,000, the interest from which is still used to purchase books. He also gave the bulk of the money needed to build the original portion of the present library building. (From 1862 until 1868, when the new building—called Memorial Hall to honor the Civil War dead—was completed, the library collection was housed on the upper floor of the Town Hall.) In addition, during the 1860’s and beyond, he contributed in a more personal way, by donating hundreds of volumes from his own collection and by purchasing volumes specifically for the library.

The volumes that Mr. Thayer gave to the new public library indicate that he was a man of broad interests and considerable learning and also a discriminating collector of books. He donated quantities of English literature and drama, as well as some classical and European literature. He gave many volumes of history (including American history), a substantial number of reference works, and some periodical literature, theology, and natural history, among other categories of books. Those of his gifts that are found in the Rare Book Collection suggest that he had a fondness for finely illustrated books, a taste for handsome leather bindings, and a preference for volumes in collector’s condition.

It is appropriate that the room that houses so many volumes from Nathaniel Thayer’s library is named the Constance V.R. Dexter Rare Book Room. By his marriage in 1846 to Cornelia Van Rensselaer of New York, Nathaniel Thayer had seven children. Mrs. Dexter (1900-1976), who endowed the Rare Book Room, was a granddaughter of Mr. Thayer, the daughter of his son Bayard.

23. Alexander Gardner (1821-1882)

Photographic Sketch Book of the War.
Washington, D.C., Philip & Solomons, [1865-1866].
Born in Scotland, Alexander Gardner achieved fame in America as a photographer of the Civil War and of the American West. In 1856, Mathew Brady hired him as a portrait photographer. After the outbreak of the war, Gardner became part of "Brady's Photographic Corps," which assisted Brady in creating a complete photographic record of the conflict. In 1863, desiring public recognition of his own considerable talent, Gardner broke away from Brady and opened a portrait gallery in Washington. Continuing to photograph the war, he produced some of the most famous images to come from that period of American history. Gardner became the photographer for the Union Pacific Railroad in 1867, which position took him West, where he had the opportunity to photograph the American Indian.

Gardner's two-volume *Photographic Sketch Book of the War* includes photographs taken just after such battles of the Civil War as Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg. Each volume contains fifty photographs; each photograph is accompanied by a leaf of descriptive text. This set is apparently one of the many titles purchased by Nathaniel Thayer for the Town Library rather than for his own collection. Because the library building was constructed as a memorial to those who died in the Civil War, the addition of this work to the collection was especially appropriate.

24. William Wagstaffe (1685-1725)

*Miscellaneous Works of Dr. William Wagstaffe*

... To which is prefix'd his *Life, and an Account of his Writings. Adorn'd with several Curious cuts engrav'd on Copper,* London, Jonah Bowyer, J. Ilsted, and John Worral, 1726.

The Miscellaneous Works of English physician William Wagstaffe were first published in 1725, the individual items included in the volume having earlier been published separately. Because there has been some disagreement as to whether the real author of the pieces was Wagstaffe or Jonathan Swift, this book is something of a literary curiosity.
25. William Combe (1741-1823)
The First Tour of Doctor Syntax, in Search of the Picturesque; A Poem ... Illustrated with Eighty-One Plates by T. Rowlandson.

The Second Tour of Doctor Syntax, in Search of Consolation; A Poem ... Illustrated with Eighty-One Plates by T. Rowlandson.

The Third Tour of Doctor Syntax, in Search of a Wife: A Poem ... Illustrated with Eighty-One Plates by T. Rowlandson.

London, Nattali and Bond, 1855.

English satirical poet William Combe wrote the text of The First Tour of Doctor Syntax at the request of publisher Rudolph Ackermann. The great caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) had arranged to supply Ackermann's Poetical Magazine with a series of plates illustrating the misfortunes of a vacationing English schoolmaster. Combe wrote the accompanying verses as he received sketches or etchings of Rowlandson's illustrations. The resulting “Schoolmaster's Tour” was tremendously popular. Ackermann published it separately (under the title The Tour of Doctor Syntax, in Search of the Picturesque) in 1812. Many later editions appeared, as well as many imitations—the ultimate acknowledgement of success. Combe again joined forces with Rowlandson to produce The Second Tour of Doctor Syntax, in Search of Consolation (completed in 1820) and The Third Tour of Doctor Syntax, in Search a Wife (1821).

Nathaniel Thayer also presented to the Lancaster Town Library two other works by Combe (published anonymously, as were all of Combe's writings during his lifetime), the lavishly illustrated two-volume sets History of the University of Oxford (1814) and History of the University of Cambridge (1815). Both were published by Ackermann in folio format.

26. Comte De Constantin-François De Chasseboeuf Volney (1757-1820)
The Ruins: or A Survey of the Revolutions of Empires ... Translated from the French ...

London, J. Johnson, 1792.

First published in 1791, Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les Révolutions des Empires was the most influential work of French historian and philosopher Volney. Depicting revolution as the product of society's relinquishment of liberty, equality, and natural law and religion, the book had an appeal for those committed to opposing tyranny and social injustice. This translation of the work was printed for bookseller and publisher Joseph Johnson, an important figure in the English book-trade during the late eighteenth century. Johnson was a Dissenter in religion and a liberal in politics.

(For another title published by Johnson, see Item 57; see Item 81 for more information on and for another work by Volney, also presented by Nathaniel Thayer.)
ALEXANDER C. WASHBURN

Alexander Calvin Washburn was born at Raynham, Massachusetts, in 1819. Having attended the Boston Latin School, he graduated from Harvard in 1839. In 1844, he received the degree of Bachelor of Laws from Harvard. He was married to Ellen M. Bailey at Roxbury in 1849. A resident of Norwood for much of his life, he was a member of the Suffolk Bar and practiced law in Boston. He died in 1906.

John Marshall Washburn (1801-1861)—a prominent Lancaster resident who held a number of public positions during the middle of the nineteenth century—was an uncle of Alexander C. Washburn. Elizabeth Kimball Washburn Bartol (1834-1912), one of John Marshall's daughters and the wife of George M. Bartol, minister of the First Parish Church from 1847 until 1906, was a first cousin to Alexander. Aside from A.C. Washburn's relationship to important citizens of the town, nothing is known about the motivation or the circumstances of his gift of a small but choice group of books to the Lancaster Town Library during the final years of the nineteenth century.

If for no other reason, Alexander C. Washburn deserves to be remembered for the presentation of his copy of the famous Liber Chronicarum published in Nuremberg in 1493—the earliest and perhaps the most bibliographically and historically interesting volume in Lancaster's collection. (This book shown as Item 86.) The remainder of the gift of fewer than twenty volumes from his collection consists of sixteenth and seventeenth century books, most of them issued under such key names in the history of printing and publishing as Estienne, Plantin, and Elzevier. Mr. Washburn's books have been separate from the circulating collection from the time of their donation.

27. Terence (195/185 – 159 B.C.)
Pub. Terentii Comoediae Sex. Ex recensione Heinsiana.
Leiden, the Elzeviers, 1635.

28. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645)
Hugo Grotiius de Mari Libero et P. Merula de Maribus.
Leiden, the Elzeviers, 1633.

Both of these volumes from the collection of Alexander C. Washburn were produced by the Elzeviers, a well-known Dutch family of booksellers and publishers renowned for their duodecimo series of the Greek and Latin classics. The Elzevier edition of Terence shown here was edited by Daniel Heinsius (1580-1655), one of a number of classical scholars and editors in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century. Heinsius, whose primary interest as a classicist lay in Plato and Aristotle, was a trusted advisor of the Elzeviers in their ventures.

Hugo Grotius, another Dutch scholar, was not only a classicist, but also a statesman, diplomat, and poet. A masterly translator and editor, his editions of both Greek and Latin authors were issued by the Elzeviers, who also published his own writings. In his Mare Liberum, which first appeared in 1609, Grotius advocated the freedom of the ocean to all nations in response to Portugal's claim of exclusive rights to certain waters. (For additional information on the Elzeviers, see Item 60.)

29. Michael Eytzinger (16th century)
Michaelis Aitsingeri Austriaci Pentaplus Regnorum Mundi.
Antwerp, Christopher Plantin, 1579.

German historian and diplomat Michael Eytzinger (or, in Latin, Aitsingerus) was sent in 1563 by Emperor Ferdinand I as ambassador to the Council of Trent. Eytzinger was an ardent supporter of Spanish rule in the Netherlands. His Pentaplus Regnorum Mundi—a chronological work—was issued by printer and publisher Christopher Plantin, who had been appointed court printer and supervisor of all Dutch printing by King Philip II of Spain.

(For further information about Plantin, see Item 59.)

30. Vincenzo Cartari (1520-1570)
Imagini delli Dei de gl' antichi ... Cavate da'Marmi, Bronzi, Medaglie, Gioie, & altre memorie antiche; con esquisito studio, & particolare diligenza da Lorenzo Pignoria Padoano ...
Venice, Nicolò Pezzana, 1674.

This work by Italian renaissance scholar and poet Vincenzo Cartari was first published at Venice in 1556. An illustrated study of the ancient gods and rituals, it was a popular success. Cartari revised and expanded it for republication at Venice 1571. Later editions (some published at Venice, some at Padua) appeared in 1580, 1592, 1603, 1608, 1609, 1615, 1625, 1626, 1647, and 1674. A French translation (from an edition in Italian published in Lyons in 1581) was issued at Lyons in 1610.
George Murillo Bartol was minister of the First Parish Church for almost sixty years, from 1847 until his death in 1906. Born at Freeport, Maine, in 1820, he attended Phillips Exeter and graduated from Brown University (1842) and the Harvard Divinity School (1845). He received an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity from Brown in 1892. He married Elizabeth Kimball in 1856; they had six children.

In addition to his involvement in various church-related organizations (among them the Society for Ministerial Relief, the Massachusetts Evangelical Missionary Society, and the American Unitarian Association), Dr. Bartol was an active citizen of this community. A member of the School Committee for almost twenty-five years, he was also a key figure in the early history of the Lancaster Town Library. Having been a member of the Library Club of Lancaster (in fact, he was its last surviving charter member), he chaired the Board of Trustees of the Town Library for forty-four years, from its foundation in 1862 until his death.

Doctor Bartol presented a number of books from his own collection to the Town Library. His gifts, varying in size, spanned the years from the foundation of the Library until the end of the nineteenth century. They cover a range of subjects, theology, history, and literature primary among them. These gifts became part of the general collection and, later, of the Rare Book Collection.

31. William Price (1780-1830)

*Journal of the British Embassy to Persia; Embellished with Numerous Views Taken in India and Persia: Also, A Dissertation upon the Antiquities of Persepolis ... Second Edition.*

London, Thomas Thorpe, Parker, and J. Thorpe, 1832.

*Journal of the British Embassy to Persia* was one of several books written by British Orientalist William Price. Among Price’s other works were three on the various oriental languages and a collection entitled *Hindu and Hindooastanee Selections.*

Price was assistant secretary and interpreter to Sir Gore Ousley’s embassy to Persia in 1811 and 1812. While in Persia, he kept a journal and made drawings of what he saw there. His *Journal of the British Embassy to Persia* was first published in 1825. After returning to England, Price taught oriental languages and became a member of the Royal Society of London and the Asiatic Society of Calcutta.

32. Joseph Priestley (1733-1840)

*An History of the Corruptions of Christianity ... The Third Edition ...*

Boston, William Spotswood, 1797.

Trained for the Dissenting ministry, English-born theologian and scientist Joseph Priestley spent his life working primarily as a preacher, schoolmaster, and tutor. Having endured considerable persecution in England for his radical views in religion and politics, in 1794 he moved with his family to Pennsylvania, where he remained for the rest of his life. Priestley published numerous books, pamphlets, and articles during his lifetime, achieving a wide reputation among his contemporaries. London publisher Joseph Johnson (see Items 26 and 57) issued many of Priestley’s theological, philosophical, political, and scientific writings.

_An History of the Corruptions of Christianity_ was first published at Birmingham, England, in two volumes in 1782. It is not surprising to find a two-volume Boston edition of this title among the books presented by Dr. Bartol to the Lancaster Town Library. However sympathetic Dr. Bartol may have been to Priestley’s questioning of established doctrine, religious leaders of the nineteenth century were familiar with this, the most famous of Priestley’s controversial theological writings.

33. Robert Patterson (1792-1881)

*A Narrative of the Campaign in the Valley of the Shenandoah, in 1861 ... Fifth Thousand.*

Philadelphia, John Campbell, 1865.

Born in County Tyrone, Ireland, Robert Patterson was both a soldier and a successful industrialist in America. Having served in the War of 1812 and the Mexican War, for three months during the Civil War he acted in the capacity of major-general of volunteers. The first printing of his *Narrative of the Campaign in the Valley of the Shenandoah* appeared in 1865. As a businessman, Patterson was involved in the sugar industry and was the owner of cotton mills in Pennsylvania.

The half-title of Dr. Bartol’s copy of this book bears the following inscription: Rev. Mr. Bartol / Compliments of / Genl. Patterson. This is one of a number of volumes that were transferred in the 1990s to the Rare Book Room from the stacks of the Library.
SALLY FLAGG

Born at Lancaster in 1791, Sally Flagg lived in this town until her death in 1881 at the age of nearly ninety years. She was something of a local character, persisting in antiquated methods of cooking and housekeeping and in an old-fashioned style of dress until the end of her long life. She bequeathed to the Town Library fifty dollars and a group of some twenty miscellaneous volumes that had come to her from her father, Josiah Flagg. About half of the volumes in her bequest are now found in the Rare Book Collection.

Josiah Flagg (1760-1840) was employed for a time during his youth as clerk and accountant to his great-uncle, Benjamin Franklin, in Philadelphia. (Franklin’s sister, Jane Franklin Mecom, was Flagg’s mother’s mother). He settled in Lancaster, married Dolly Thurston (1789), and kept a general store. The Flaggs had six children, of whom Sally was the oldest. Josiah Flagg held the position of town clerk in Lancaster from 1801 until 1836. He was a charter member of the Lancaster Social Library and its librarian from 1800 until 1819.

34. Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)
The Interest of Great Britain Considered
With Regard to Her Colonies and the Acquisitions of Canada and Guadaloupe. To which are added, Observations [sic] concerning the increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, &c ... Boston, B. Mecom, 1760.

This pamphlet was written while Benjamin Franklin—American statesman, diplomat, author, printer, scientist, and inventor—was in London representing the legislature of Pennsylvania. (In an effort to raise funds for the defense of the frontier, the legislature wanted to tax lands that the Penn family held by royal charter; this could not be done without negotiation). Franklin wrote The Interest of Great Britain Considered in order to urge the annexation of Canada to Britain. It was published first in England and then in America in 1760.

This Boston edition of Franklin’s The Interest of Great Britain Considered was issued by printer, publisher, and bookseller Benjamin Mecom (1732-c. 1776), nephew of Benjamin Franklin and uncle of Josiah Flagg. The pamphlet is one of four bound together in a single volume. The signature of Josiah Flagg appears on the front free endpaper of the volume and on the title page of the first pamphlet (Benjamin Rush’s Sermons to Gentlemen upon Temperance and Exercise); the inscription “Jane Mecoms”[sic] appears on the half-title of another of the pamphlets.

35. George Keate (1729-1797)
Sketches from Nature; Taken, and Coloured, in A Journey to Margate. Published from the Original Designs ... First American, from the Fourth London Edition.
Boston, printed at the Apollo Press for David West, 1793.

The first edition of this imitation of Sterne by English poet, antiquary, naturalist, and artist George Keate was published in two volumes in 1779. The title is one of several works by authors contemporary with Josiah Flagg included in Sally Flagg’s bequest of her father’s books to the Town Library.

HENRY S. NOURSE

Local historian Henry Stedman Nourse (1831-1903) spent the greater part of his life in Lancaster. Having been prepared for college primarily in this town, he attended Harvard. Upon graduation in 1853, he taught school for several years, then decided to change his profession. In 1858, he went to work for the Boston firm of Whitwell and Henck, an engineering company in charge of filling in the Back Bay. In 1861, at the start of the Civil War, he joined the Fifty-Fifth Illinois Infantry. Participating in much active fighting, he served until 1865. After the war, he was hired as resident engineer to the Pennsylvania Steel Company, and began construction of that company’s Bessemer Steel Works near Harrisburg. He remained there as a superintendent from 1868 until 1874. Nourse married Mary Baldwin Whitney Thurston, a widow, in 1872.

Henry Stedman Nourse, donor

Having fulfilled their commitments in Pennsylvania and vacationed in Europe for a year, the Nourses settled permanently in Lancaster. Henry Nourse devoted the rest of his life to public service and historical research. He was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1883 and of the Senate in 1885 and 1886. He was at various times a member of the State Board of Charities, the State Library Commission,
of the Lancaster School Committee and Library Board, and a trustee of the Worcester Insane Hospital. As a historian, Nourse possessed a single-mindedness and a fastidiousness about details that has made him a reliable authority to the present day. Realizing the importance of primary sources, he produced several major compilations of records pertaining to Lancaster, among them The Early Records of Lancaster (1884) and The Birth, Marriage and Death Register ... of Lancaster (1890). He also wrote numerous historical articles for the Clinton Courant. Although Abijah Marvin rather than Nourse was asked to write the official history of Lancaster, Nourse made sure that his superior knowledge was not lost to the public. He painstakingly annotated a copy of Marvin’s History of the Town of Lancaster (1879), his many corrections and voluminous—not to mention sometimes acerbic—notes expanding the original single volume into four volumes, which are now found in the Library’s Lancaster Collection. (Nourse did prepare the official history of the Town of Harvard; it appeared in 1894.) He was a member of both the Massachusetts Historical Society and the American Antiquarian Society.

Henry Nourse was the guiding intelligence behind the development of the Lancaster Collection, for which he left an endowment in his will. The various scrapbooks of local source material that he compiled provide a wealth of information not available elsewhere. Aside from his contributions to the local history collection, over a period of more than twenty-five years he donated many of his own books in a variety of subjects to the general collection. Those that are now in the Rare Book Collection have, as a group, a decidedly American flavor, having for the most part been written by American authors, issued by American publishers, or both. His appears to have been a working rather than a collector’s library.

36. Henry St. Clair
The United States Criminal Calendar; or An Awful Warning to the Youth of America; Being an Account of the Most Horrid Murders, Piracies, Highway Robberies, &c. &c. Compiled from the Best Authorities ... With Fifteen Engravings ... Boston, Charles Gaylord, 1832.

The compiler of The United States Criminal Calendar made no pretense about the aspect of human nature to which the work was calculated to appeal. He wrote in his preface:

“There is a propensity in man to take pleasure in the sight or relation of human sin and suffering. Thousands flock to the execution of a criminal, and the history of his life, however dull and uninteresting, is sought and read with avidity. No part of a newspaper excites so much attention as the record of crime and calamity. Some have pronounced this curiosity a depraved appetite; we hold the contrary. It is almost universal and therefore natural. It is the object of this work to gratify this feeling in the manner the most advantageous to the public.”

This volume, illustrated with lurid engravings of murderers and their victims, clearly demonstrates that American publishers realized the saleability of sensationalism long before the twentieth century.

37. Noah Webster (1758-1843)
The American Spelling Book; Containing the Rudiments of the English Language, for the Use of Schools in the United States ... Revised Copy—West’s Edition... Boston, printed by David Carlisle for John West, 1807.

The first edition of the famous speller by American lexicographer Noah Webster was published at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1783, as the first part of the author’s three-volume A Grammatical Institute of the English Language. In preparing the speller, Webster had drawn upon his experience as a teacher and his consequent awareness of the shortcomings of current textbooks. The first edition sold out in about a year. Frequently revised, the work was continuously republished, under various titles, into the twentieth century. Because it was used for more than a century in schools throughout the country, The American Spelling Book helped to promote the standardization of spelling in America. It is probable that Henry Nourse used some edition of Webster’s speller in the course of his early education. (For another title by Webster, see Item 48.)
John Leland Sherman Thompson, born in Hinsdale, Massachusetts, in 1810, lived in Lancaster from 1846 until his death in 1885. For most of the almost forty years that he lived here, he was a practicing physician; he ran a drug store during the final years of his life. He was active in town affairs, serving as town clerk from 1856 until 1885 (1873 excepted), on the School Committee from 1873 until 1876, on the Library Committee from 1862 until 1883, and as the first librarian of the town’s public library from 1862 until 1872. He was also a representative to the state legislature in 1861 and 1863. Dr. Thompson’s interests included agriculture, natural history, and taxidermy. He was married to Mary G. Nash.

Dr. Thompson was occupied with books and libraries long before the establishment of the Town Library in 1862. When the collection of the Lancaster Social Library was sold at auction in 1850, he bought more than thirty volumes, some of which are now in the Rare Book Room, having been presented by Dr. Thompson to the Town Library. He was a founder and vice-president of the Library Club of Lancaster; in 1854 he became the club’s librarian and the collection was moved into his home. His tenure as librarian of the new public library was merely a continuation of his service to the Library Club.

In addition to his involvement with the Library Club of Lancaster and the Town Library, Dr. Thompson spent considerable energy developing his personal library. His many gifts to the Town Library (made over a period of more than twenty years, with a final group of volumes presented by his heirs in 1886) suggest that he had wide-ranging collecting interests. He donated works in history, biography, literature, theology, science, and medicine, among other subjects. A small proportion of his total contribution is preserved in the Rare Book Collection.

38. **Bible (Old Testament)**

... *Vetus Testamentum ex versione Septuaginta Interpretum, Secundum Exemplar Vaticanum Romae editum, denuo recognitum. Praefationem una cum variis Lectionibus, e praestantissimis MSS. Codicibus Bibliothecae Leidensis descriptis, praemisit David Millius* ...

Amsterdam, sumptibus Societatis, 1725.

39. **Cicero (106-43 B.C.)**


Of the volumes of classical authors presented by Dr. Thompson to the Town Library, three are included in the Rare Book Collection. This London edition of Cicero was published for the Stationers’ Company. Incorporated by royal charter in 1557, the Stationers’ Company controlled the printing trade in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

40. **Ichabod Nichols (1784-1859)**

*A Catechism of Natural Theology...*

Portland, Shirley and Hyde, 1829.

These titles, a two-volume Old Testament in Greek and Nichols’s *A Catechism of Natural Theology*, are two of a number of religious and theological works presented by J.L.S. Thompson and now in the Rare Book Collection. Dr. Thompson also gave a New Testament in French (published at Amsterdam in 1762), an edition of Brady and Tate’s version of the Psalms of David (Boston, 1773; see Item 46), a New York edition of Hannah More’s *Christian Morals* (1813), and several volumes of religious discourses.

Ichabod Nichols was born at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and died in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Having graduated from Harvard in 1802, he tutored there in mathematics from 1803 until 1809, when he became associate pastor of the First Congregational Church in Portland, Maine. A conservative Unitarian, he was pastor of that church from 1814 until 1855. Nichols’s published works also include two titles issued posthumously.