

BOOK COLLECTIONS IN THE PORTSMOUTH ATHENÆUM LIBRARY

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Painted signs that once hung above the library bookcases help us understand the earliest subject organization of the Athenæum collections. "Periodicals, Science, Arts" were shelved together, as were "Irish, Scottish, English, French" histories. Two signs reflect *belle lettres*: "The Drama, Poetry, Classics" occupied one set of shelves, "Novels, Tales & Romances" another. In May 1853 *Norton's Literary Gazette* described Portsmouth's Athenæum as quite full of English and American history. "It has also a fine collection of Voyages and Travels, and of works of Natural History, besides many valuable works on Architecture and Ship Building." With the Athenæum's relatively high rate of book retention, this is still a fairly accurate summary of the nineteenth-century core library and makes the Athenæum book collections an important document of Portsmouth reading habits.

When books from several large private libraries were added at the turn of the 20th century, a card catalogue replaced earlier printed catalogues published from 1823 (unlocated) to 1886. Numbering some 40,000 accessions and shelved according to a modified Library of Congress system, the books are now in a computer database. Unlike the Library of Congress, the Athenæum retains biography as a separate subject category, with autobiographies, biographies, diaries, memoirs and similar works shelved by name order across the eastern wall and central end bays of the old library room. Here, too, are some nineteenth-century periodicals, maritime and naval histories, and two personal libraries.

Books on the modern stacks in the addition and the open shelves of the old library circulate only to proprietors and subscribers. Rare books and imprints, like manuscripts, are housed separately for safety and can be brought to the library only by a staff member. The Copley Research Library is open regularly to the general public, and its shelves contain genealogy, local and regional history of the New England states, biographical dictionaries, encyclopedias, bibliographies, and other reference works that do not circulate.

Given its long collecting history, the Athenæum often holds the only known copy of earlier works north of the larger libraries in and around Boston. The library may contain a few books on almost any eighteenth- or nineteenth-century published topic, but is simply not large enough to be encyclopedic in any one area. Indeed, the lack of space was one reason for the "rigid, critical taste" that governed the choice of books throughout much of the nineteenth century. The Athenæum continues an old tradition of accepting donated books on almost all subjects that fill gaps in the collection.

Purchases, however, are generally limited to new works about the Piscataqua region and its people, popular works of modern literature and non-fiction of interest to the proprietors, the work of local authors, and other selections of the library committee.

Many books contain information about the history of the printing, distribution, sale, and reading of books in the Piscataqua region. Indeed, most of the collection can be studied in this manner. Especially useful are booksellers' catalogues, library catalogues, bookplates of individuals, embossed book covers or bookplates from other libraries, bookbinders ads and labels, as well as signatures inside old volumes that testify to local reading interests. For example, three volumes from the Portsmouth Library (1785-1813) survived the fire of 1813 and are on our shelves, and a possibly unique copy of Tobias H. Miller's *Circulating Library catalogue* (ca. 1822-26) hidden among our many bound pamphlets.

A collection of Portsmouth imprints before 1900 brings together individual and bound pamphlets printed locally after 1750. (These are organized by accession number and may be located in

the on-line catalogue where they are filed under author, title, subject, as well as Portsmouth Imprint.) One rarity is a small pamphlet entitled *A Collection of the Most Fashionable Cotillions and Contra Dances* by F. C. Schaffer printed in Portsmouth by S. Whidden in October 1810. Pamphlets printed after about 1900 are also organized by accession numbers, but are available to proprietors in the file drawers and closet shelves of the old library room. Longer works of local publication are shelved by Library of Congress number according to their subject or, for rare books, by accession number.

Incunabula and other early printed books are also housed in the Rare Book room with later rare volumes and early Portsmouth imprints. Many of the oldest books were gifts from nineteenth-century rare book collectors, including Levi Woodbury and his son Charles Levi Woodbury. While thirty-three volumes then in the Athenæum collections were listed in earlier censuses of books printed before 1500, only four remain in the Athenæum today. However, there are several sixteenth- and seventeenth-century volumes, many owned by identifiable Portsmouth citizens before being donated to the Athenæum.

One of the largest collections is that of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century newspapers and magazines, despite the fact that bound periodicals became so vast that at various times some were discarded. The Athenæum still retains long (but often incomplete) runs of several local newspapers including the *New Hampshire Gazette* (1756-1940), the *Portsmouth Oracle* (1798-1889), the *Portsmouth Journal* (1822-1900) and *States & Union* (1863-1896). It also holds the shorter runs of others like *The War Journal* (1813), *The Literary Mirror* (1808-09), *Portsmouth Weekly Magazine* (1824-25), *Rockingham Messenger* (1847-54) *Portsmouth Chronicle* (1852-1915), and *The Penny Post* (1880-1889), as well as incidental issues of many other rag paper newspapers.

Among the earliest magazines are important British serials like *The Rambler*, *The Spectator*, *The Female Spectator*, and *Polyanthos* plus long runs of *The Gentleman's Repository* (1735-96), *The London Magazine* (1739-66), the *Annual Register of Politics and Literature* (1758-1893), *The Monthly Review* (1790-1801), *The Edinburgh Review* (1802-1883), *The Penny Magazine* (1832-45), and three volumes of the *Sporting Magazine* (1795-99). We retain long runs of such American magazines as *Niles Weekly Register* (1811-36) and the 10 volumes of *The Monthly Anthology and Boston Review* (1804-1811) associated with the society that founded the Boston Athenæum (among them Joseph Buckminster and Nathaniel Haven, Jr. who both had Portsmouth ties) and later created the *North American Review*.

Also surviving are many runs of short-lived magazines and other specialized publications, including: *The Analectic Magazine* (1813-1818), *Art Journal* (1849-54+), *Boston Journal of Natural History* (1837-47), *Campbell's Foreign Monthly Magazine* (1842-44), *Common School Journal* (1838-45), *Naval Gazetteer* (1797) and *Naval Chronical* (1844), *Polyanthos* (1805-12) and *The Port Folio* (1817-18), and the *Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections* (1862-80). Local serials range from *The Piscataqua Evangelical Magazine* (1805-7) to the Navy Yard's *Life Buoy* (1918-19) and *Portsmouth Periscope* (1942-79+), as well as the *Masonic Trestle Boards* (1964-83). It also has long runs of many New England nineteenth- and twentieth-century antiquarian and genealogical magazines, modern state historical magazines, plus *American Neptune*, *Antiques*, *Old-Time New England*, *New England Quarterly*, *Dublin Seminar proceedings*, *Winterthur Portfolio*, and various publications of the U.S. Naval Institute.

Subject Categories

Charles Brewster, writing in the *Portsmouth Journal* for 1 Sept. 1849 noted,

The Portsmouth Athenæum is well worth a visit, not of a moment, but of a day -- no, of a week. It has a reading-room down stairs, for the daily gossipers; but above are works which are

rare - books that carry you back for centuries . . . A glance at the alcove reminds you of bygone years, and you feel as one who treads the chamber of a newly-unburied Herculaneum. Here one should lock the door, and sinking into antiquarian researches, say to the world: '*Procul, O procul, esti profani!*'

The categories of knowledge in the Athenæum's older printed books represent those subjects most widely published and read throughout the English-speaking world of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, its shelves contain whole sections devoted to both the traditional cannon and books of practical knowledge.

Divinity:

This includes Bibles and testaments (in many languages), prayer books, commentaries, sermons, and ecclesiastical and universal histories in multi-volume sets. Many standard works of devotion, religious history, and theology, as well as locally published sermons and tracts, reflect the importance of religion and the ideal of a moral education. Works of divinity, theology, and religious history may also be found in several special collections including the Sewall -Pepperrell library and Kittery Point Congregational Church collections, and the early imprints of the Charles Levi Woodbury collection.

Literature: Works of philology, *belles lettres*, classics, poetry, the drama, as well as "Novels, Tales & Romances" both in English and many other languages were much depleted over the decades. They now line only the east wall of the balcony, but must have once encompassed much more of the library. Many lost titles have recently been replaced and the literary canon much better represented by the gift of the John Elwyn Stone collection (see below). Related to the Athenæum's long interest in other tongues are the large number of dictionaries of all ages and languages that line the rear wall of the research library. Among American writers local authors of the Piscataqua region are fairly well represented, as are the many of the nineteenth-century Boston and New York literary leaders who came to or summered in the area.

History and Description of Foreign Places: "Voyages & Travels," includes voyages of discovery, circumnavigations, and various other explorations that the English bibliophile Dibdin considered "among the most precious and instructive in our Libraries." The Athenæum combines works of foreign history, travel, and description with the folio plate books & other works of colonial and later exploration. Nearly two thirds of the ends and west wall of the balcony house works on the British Isles, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. We are especially strong in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century places visited by Portsmouth ships, but also have standard works on all corners of the globe like Constantine John Phipps, *A Voyage Towards the North Pole Undertaken By His Majesty's Command 1773* (London, 1774) or J. N. Reynolds, *Voyage of the United State Frigate Potomac... During the Circumnavigation of the Globe* (NY, 1835).

Many voyages and explorations are found in the main library room and in the upper stacks, as are important works of geography and cartography like Emanuel Bowen, *Complete System of Geography* (London, 1747) with its Benning Wentworth bookplate engraved by Hurd in both folio volumes.

American History: Collecting documents of national, state and local history were an important goal for the Athenæum's founders, who feared the ideals of the Revolution were being lost to later generations. Thus, Athenæum became an early repository for the government publications and acquired by gift or purchase biographies of great men as well as histories of many states and towns as

they were published during the nineteenth century. While the government documents were returned when the Athenæum declined to serve as a public repository (many such publications are now found on-line) the Athenæum still retains the late eighteenth century State Papers and other early government works donated by several Congressmen and Senator proprietors. The Athenæum was always seen as a place for works of history, where someone like Tobias H. Miller could "rummage its noble library in search of some old forgotten fact or ancient name." In more recent years library gifts have helped fill large gaps in western history, Maine and New Hampshire local histories, and many other published American studies, while the library always tries to acquire new academic works on many northern New England topics as well as doctoral dissertations dealing with the history of the whole Piscataqua region.

American Indians: Described as "Eliot's Indian Psalter" when given by David Humphries in 1824, our 1709 edition of the *Massachusetts Psalter or Psalms of David with the Gospel according to John in columns of Indian and English* was edited with improved Indian grammar by Experience Mayhew. A 1721 edition of Nathaniel Morton's *New England's Memorial* was purchased in 1832; the 1821 edition of *The Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians* was added soon thereafter, as was an English translation of George Henry Loskiel's *History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians of North America* (London: 1794). Other early efforts to record details of language and ethnography include J. Long's *Voyages and Travels of An Indian Interpreter* (London: 1791) and Josiah Cotton's *Vocabulary of the Massachusetts or Natick Indian Language* (Cambridge: 1829). Even as Native Americans almost disappeared from New England and were being subdued across the expanding nation, interest grew in the archaeology of the first occupants of this continent, their wars with European settlers, and likenesses of western tribesmen and women. The Athenæum bought William L. Stone's *Life of Joseph Brandt* (NY: 1838), George Catlin's *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians* (1841) and later inherited some of Schoolcraft's studies of American tribes from Charles Levi Woodbury. Among the most impressive of these works, however, is the three volume, *History of the Indian Tribes of North America* (1842-44) by Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall, containing biographies of Indian chiefs with portraits among the 120 beautifully colored folio lithographs from the War Department's "Indian Gallery."

Architecture and the Building Arts:

The collection of works on architecture is not extensive, but growing. It includes a number of rarities that increase our knowledge of the transmission of visual information about design to this region. A full listing of these works is available on request. Some, like Luis de Sousa's *Plans, Elevations, Sections and Views of the Church of Betalba. . . in Portugal* (London, 1795) and G. Balzoni's plates of *Researches and Operations in . . . Egypt and Nubia* (London, 1822), are folio illustrations to an archaeological text. Others, like Robert Claverling's *Essay on the Construction and Building of Chimneys* (London, 1779) from the Fisher library that was brought to Portsmouth in the 1790s, are not otherwise among the titles known from ads or library listings in America before 1800. Fisher's gift also contained Antoine Desgodets' *The Ancient Buildings of Rome* (2 folio vols. London, 1795), the only other American copy of which was at the Baltimore Library Company in 1798, and John Wood's 1792 London edition of *A series of plans, for cottages or habitations of the labourer . . .* advertised by a New York bookseller in 1800 simply as Wood's *Cottages*. He also brought works by William and James Pain, English architects who helped define the federal style in this country. Besides arranging for the Fisher library gift to come here, Sheafe family also provided funds for the Athenæum to acquire later architectural works. Fisher's nephew James E. Sheafe left \$1000 when he died that allowed the Athenæum to buy several including

Sir John Soane's Designs for Public and Private Buildings (London, 1828). Four large folio color plate books by Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan were also purchased with Samuel Sheafe's 1857 bequest.

The Athenæum bought its own 1830 Boston edition of Asher Benjamin's *The Practical House Carpenter* while, more recently, Benjamin's first work, *The Country Builder's Assistant* (Greenfield, Mass. 1797) was donated in memory of the late Arthur Gerrier. But William H. Eliot's anonymous *Description of the Tremont House with Architectural Illustrations* (Boston, 1830) formerly in the collection, has been lost and a new copy is still wanted. An unlisted mail-order catalogue by Josiah S. Brien, *Building Plans for Practical Low-Cost Houses* published in Philadelphia in 1886 stimulated James Garvin's modern study of mail order building plans after it was donated to the Athenæum's collections. A list of the Athenæum's rare books and architecture is available on request.

Maritime, Naval, and Military Technology:

This is a modest collection of books about maritime and naval histories, shipbuilding and works related to life on the sea, maritime shipping and navies of the world. Sets of *Merchant Vessels* as well as English & American *Registers* of naval officers and Portsmouth Custom Records are available in the research library; maritime and naval histories, biographies, and courts marshal are in the old library.

We also have Sir Walter Raleigh's *Essays* on the invention of shipping and the Royal Navy and Sea-Service" (London, 1650) and several works from the John Fisher library on ship building, shipping, and commerce: Mungo Murray's *Elements of Naval Architecture* (1754), Leonard Euler's *Construction and Properties of Vessels* (1776), an undated copy of the *Shipbuilder's Repository*, and Marmaduke Stalkartt's *Naval Architecture* (1787), *Marine Architecture* (1794), and *The Shipmaster's Assistant and Owner's Manual* (1796). An interesting 1749 presentation to Samuel Partridge from his sister Dorothy Brown of William Leybourn's *Works of Edward Gunter* on navigation instruments was donated early by Charles Burroughs. Early works of military and civil engineering includes Henry Wilkinson's *Engines of War* (London, 1841) and *An elementary course of civil engineering for the use of cadets of the U.S. Military Academy* (NY: 1838).

Natural Philosophy, Science & Technology. This vast field of publishing is now scattered throughout the stacks of the forth floor in several modern specialties. It once included such different works as the seven volume *Birds of America* (184044) purchased from John J. Audubon's widow and later sold. Surviving works like Wilson's *Ornithology* (1829), from which some "evil-minded person" (for whom a reward was offered) cut two plates in 1837. Agriculture and horticulture are represented, too, in surprising numbers. In the vault is the copy of John Gerarde's *The Herbal, or General Historie of Plants* (London, 1633) that belonged to the eighteenth-century Portsmouth doctor Hall Jackson, as well as the folio of Mark Catesby's *Hortus Europæ Americanus, or a Collection of 85 Curious Trees & Shrubs [from] North America* (London, 1767).

The collection contains works by many eighteenth-century English improvers like James Anderson, *Essays Relating to Agriculture* and *Treatise on Draining Bogs and Swampy Grounds* (both 1797), Ellis's *Husbandry* (1772), Francis Forbes on *The Improvement of Waste Lands* (1778) and *Modern Improvements in Agriculture* (1784), Thomas Hale's *Complete Body of Husbandry* (1756), Richard Kirwin on *Manures* (1796), Miller's *Gardener's Dictionary* (London: 1760), Arthur Young's *Rural Oeconomy* (1770), and Varlo's *New System of Husbandry* (Philadelphia, 1785). There are also a small group of nineteenth century books, pamphlets, and magazines on geology and climate as well as British and American agriculture, horticulture and pomology. Nineteenth century works include Cuvier's seventeen volume *Animal*

Kingdom (1827-30) and Buffon's *Natural History* (1831), as well as a variety of works in geology, minerology, conchology, botany, and entomology.

Several early technical works, such as John Smeaton on steam power (London: 1812-14) or Baron Dupin's 1825 *The Commercial Power of England, Exhibiting a Complete View of Public Works* can also be found here. In early nineteenth-century Portsmouth there was great interest in the new railroad and other forms of improved transportation. The Athenæum holds William Strickland's folio *Report on Canals, Railways, Roads and other subjects . . .* (Philadelphia, 1826), P.R. Hodge, *The Steam Engine* (N.Y., 1840), and F. B. Tower's *Illustrations of the Croton Aqueduct* (N.Y., 1843). That these books were read may be inferred from Charles L. Woodbury's recollection of the "old dons" of the Athenæum who queried him and his father for hours about the railroad "which just then had been built to the Relay house, which was a famous stopping place eight miles beyond Baltimore. . . The locomotive was a subject for a good deal of speculation, and few believed it could ever be utilized."

Special Book Collections

In addition to collections organized by subject under our modified Library of Congress system, the Athenæum also holds the personal libraries of several individuals and institutions as special collections. Many are stored in the vault and may be called up by their accession number for non-circulating reference. Others, like the Woodbury, Horace Haven, and Tredick collections and several modern bequests, still circulate to proprietors. The earliest donated library, that of John Fisher of London, was early scattered among shelves of the library and is not kept together as a special collection.

The Library of John Fisher of London The story behind this gift has never before been fully explored and, because the books were always shelved by subject classification, the importance of the collection has not been recognized. Its history spans the two wars with England and goes back to the Wentworth family.

Elizabeth (Rindge) Wentworth, relict of Mark Hunking Wentworth, died possessed of a substantial estate (including a library of 47 titles) in 1794. Under the terms of her will, family lawyer John Pierce was named co-executor with her son-in-law John Fisher of London (b.17?? - d. 1805) who had married Anna Wentworth in 1763. Fisher owned substantial property in Portsmouth, including the Pleasant Street home of his brother-in-law, Gov. John Wentworth, with whom he and most of his family escaped to England during the Revolution. In London Fisher was appointed Under Secretary of State to Prime Minister William Pitt and held the lucrative office of Secretary of Excise until his death in 1805. Confiscated in 1778, Peirce had Fisher's New Hampshire lands returned by special act of the legislature in 1786; in 1793 this prominent British official sold the town of Portsmouth a lot for a new brick Market House.

Unable to leave London and Bath to administer Elizabeth Wentworth's estate, in April 1796 he and other English Wentworth relatives gave power of attorney to John Fisher Jr. (1764-1838), a lawyer who arrived in New Hampshire by September that year. In a fascinating 1786 letter to John Peirce Fisher's cousin, John Wentworth, the lawyer-author of "Wentworth on Pleading" (10 vols., London, 1797) that got him appointed Attorney-General for Prince Edward Island, wrote he was "alarmed and shocked" by the small inheritance that he received from the estate of his grandfather Mark Hunking Wentworth and blamed "my G^d mother's disaffection" (she seems to have disliked his London lifestyle). He claimed the younger John Fisher held a "seat in my G[rand]mother's good wishes" because of the

"length of time he lived with her." It was long known that infant Sarah Fisher (1774-1863) stayed in Portsmouth after her family fled and was brought up by her grandmother Elizabeth. John Wentworth's letter suggests, however, that her brother, John (10 years old in 1774), also remained here for some time.

Elizabeth's 1786 will virtually disinherited John Wentworth, while young John Fisher Jr. returned from London as co-executor as well as a major beneficiary of the estate. John Wentworth also returned and in 1802 married Martha, daughter of Martha (Hilton) and Michael Wentworth, living in the old Benning Wentworth estate at Little Harbor. When the probate court approved the distribution of his Elizabeth's estate in 1803, it was over his objections. In fact, he charged the administrators with unfair dealings in the local paper, for which Fisher and Federalist lawyer Jeremiah Mason waylaid and flailed him with cowhides. For this, according to Brewster "the sympathy of Water Street was raised in favor of their Republican friend [an 1804 Fourth of July oration by Wentworth attests to his politics], and their wrath boiled over against the Federalists." When Mason and Fisher were arrested, tried, and given a small fine, South End republicans nearly mobbed the defendants.

John Wentworth returned to Europe in 1806-08, after his mother-in-law's death, leased the Wentworth estate, and auctioned "a small Library of valuable Books, including law Books and others . . . not to be met with in shops in common." In Portsmouth again from 1809 to 1816, he sold the Little Harbor farm and sailed to England after loaning sixteen books to the fledgling Athenaeum in 1817 that were "Returned" (perhaps to his lawyer, Ebenezer Wentworth) in December 1819. John and his daughter never returned and he died in Paris later.

John Fisher Sr. owned a large gambrel "double house" located between the new brick market that gave its name to Market Square and the State Street home of the merchant and Federalist senator James Sheafe. Here the younger Fisher lived with one or, perhaps, both sisters from 1796 to 1805. During this time he was guardian of the teenage Frances Ann Fisher, who apparently accompanied him to America, and in July 1800 they attended the wedding of their 26-year-old sister Sarah to James Sheafe. In 1805 Fisher returned to England at his father's death and in September his household furnishings were sold at auction.

Beside a few items they bought at auction, including an oil painting of Washington, the Sheafes retained other Fisher's possessions, perhaps anticipating an intended return. In 1811 James Sheafe purchased Fisher's house, only to see it destroyed in the fire of 1813. As the War of 1812 broke out, Fisher became private secretary to Lord Grenville and Secretary of the Barracks until that office was abolished after the Napoleonic wars. He never returned to America and died a bachelor in England in 1838.

A founding member of the Athenaeum, James Sheafe, Esq. (1755-1829) was about the highest taxpayer in Portsmouth from 1798 until his death. In the late 1820s James and Sarah (Fisher) Sheafe helped John Fisher of London become the most important early patron of the young organization. In 1828 they acted as the intermediaries for her brother's gift to the Athenaeum of three oil portraits of the heroes of Louisburg that Fisher had acquired from the Sparhawk family during his residency. The next year Sarah persuaded Fisher to give the 300-volume library that he brought with him from England in 1796 and had left with the Sheafes. Finally, in 1833 Sarah Sheafe gave the Athenaeum the last remnants of her brother's library: partial runs of three 18th century London periodicals and a number of catalogues including his father's copies of some 1760s lists from Thomas Osgood, a well-known London bookseller.

The Fisher gift was the first, largest and only complete personal library given to the Athenaeum until the end of the 19th century. Twice as large as most social libraries in most New England towns in the 1790s, it was half the size of the Portsmouth Library (647 volumes and 224 titles); only six of its 152 titles match the 1796 catalog of that proprietary library. A quarter of the works were late eighteenth-century literature, poetry and belle lettres and nearly ten per cent were devoted to voyages and travels. The young lawyer's books on international commerce, law, and politics (9.1%); natural history (8.5%), biography (7.8%), history and geography (6.5%), and the classical authors whose works mirrored these topics (3.9%) were mixed with a smaller number of specialized works on architecture and the visual arts (5.8%), agricultural improvement (5.2%), plus a half dozen works on maritime architecture and civil engineering. Books devoted to religion, moral philosophy, or conduct of life were few indeed.

Some of Fisher's books may have been the only copies of those works in Portsmouth. In fact, a few seem to have been loaned or given to the Athenaeum even before 1829. Two folios of Desgodetz's *The Ancient Buildings of Rome* with architectural plates by Marshall (London: 1795) were deposited by James Sheafe at the Athenaeum as early as 1819. The Rev. Charles Burroughs gave a copy of James Harris's *Hermes* (London 1781) in 1821 that was later given a Fisher bookplate; Dr. John L. Thompson donated Fisher's copy of Mungo Murray's *Elements of Naval Architecture* (London, 1754) and a *Shipbuilder's Repository and Treatise on Marine Architecture* in 1826; and Nathaniel Adams was credited with giving Eyles Irwin's *Voyage up the Red Sea* (London: 1780) three years before the Fisher Library was transferred to the Athenaeum. Because the Fisher library was listed with the place and date of publication, we know these books are the same editions given by Fisher and, perhaps, the same volumes. What cannot be known is whether these volumes had been borrowed from Fisher's library and "donated" to the Athenaeum under their borrower's names, or whether their gifts were replaced by Fisher's in 1829.

The Fisher gift is the only surviving English gentleman's library with well-documented Portsmouth associations. As such, his books differed as much from those the Athenaeum acquired over its first decade as it did from the Portsmouth Library list. Some 80% of the Fisher titles were late 18th century London imprints, compared to only 20% of the Athenaeum's pre-existing collection, and the preponderance of mid-1790s imprints suggests many of Fisher's books were purchased just before he sailed to America. The gift also included certain older works of special interest including a now-lost 1676 copy of Milton's *History of England*. He also had three 1760s London imprints on American subjects: Mark Catesby, *Hortus Europae Americanus* (London 1762); John Wright, *American Negotiator* (London 1761); and *American Husbandry* by "An American" (London 1775). Moreover, two folio volumes with 122 maps by Emanuel Bowen entitled the *Complete System of Geography* (London, 1749) contain Sir John Wentworth's American bookplate by Nathaniel Hurd. These were, perhaps, a gift from his uncle or, as it is unlikely the former Governor took them into exile, may have been among the books John Fisher or Sarah Sheafe inherited from their grandmother, Elizabeth Wentworth. Among the titles listed in her 1794 inventory the two volume "System of Geography" then valued at 12 shillings.

Some two-dozen titles were likely purchased by Fisher in Portsmouth, including John Melcher's 1789 *Laws of New Hampshire* and other American volumes such as Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* (Philadelphia, 1794) -- a book already on the Athenaeum's shelves -- or Samuel Dean's *New England Farmer* (Worcester, MA, 1797). Works published between 1797 and 1802 and imported to Portsmouth from London or Paris also appear as late additions to Fisher's library. Among these are William Godwin's 1798 memoir of his wife, Mary Woolstonecroft (author of *The Rights of Women*) and James Anderson's *Essays on Agriculture and Rural Affairs* (London, 1797). One title, James G. Jackson's *Account of the Empire*

of Morocco (Philadelphia, 1810), was more likely purchased by the Sheafes after Fisher left America. That it could be confused with those left behind by Fisher in 1805 suggests that for nearly 25 years his books were mingled with those of the Sheafes. How they and Fisher's Smibert paintings of the Louisburg heroes escaped the 1813 fire that destroyed the Sheafe house is totally unclear. But that they did was of great importance to the Athenæum's early growth.

Pepperrell Library & Kittery Point Congregational Church Deposit Collection Sir William Pepperrell's library was bequeathed to the Rev. Benjamin Stevens, pastor of the church at Kittery Point from 1751 to 1790, of whom it was said, "he never spoke but in Greek or Hebrew." After his death the Pepperrell library, with remnants of Steven's own library and gifts of other parishioners, was bequeathed for the use of Congregational ministers in the towns of Kittery, Eliot, and York, Maine. Also in this collection are several volumes with signatures of Henry Flynt, the well-known Harvard tutor from 1699 to 1754, as well as two seventeenth-century additions with York church associations. The remaining titles are late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century religious works, American Tract Society publications, and odd works printed through the mid-nineteenth century.

Some 290 titles in the Kittery Congregational church survive today, but only about 80 of them were published before Pepperrell's death in 1759. Of these only 30 have explicit Pepperrell provenance (signature, bookplate, or family association); many were originally owned by Harvard graduate Andrew Pepperrell who died unmarried in 1751. Besides travels and works of divinity, Sir William owned Humphrey Bland's *Treatise of Military Discipline*, his father's copy of *A Complete History of the Turks* (1719) and Gilbert West's *Defense of Christian Revelation* (1748); his wife kept the Bible of her grandfather Judge "Samuel Sewall, Febr. 9, 1712/13." Andrew's books replicated many of those ordered by the first Social Library in Portsmouth, plus works of literature like Addison Steele, and Swift, as well as works of mathematics and astronomy. Also among the other volumes associated with the Pepperrell family is the family bible published in London in 1608, said to have been owned by the senior William Pepperrell and originally given to the Athenæum in the nineteenth century by Mary Sheafe Israel.

Horace Haven Collection In 1845 the Rev. Burroughs and Peabody and George Jaffrey were appointed to spend the \$1000 legacy bequeathed by Horace Haven. Set apart in glazed cases next to the front windows of the old library, the collection of imported English works survives intact. These purchases reflect a strong dose of Anglophilia: works on heraldry, British antiquities (all the Camden Society works), churches, natural history, with a special emphasis on color plate books of flora, horticulture, and geology. The collection, located in its original glass cases between two of the front library windows, also contains travels to classical and biblical lands.

The Woodbury Collections In 1898 the Athenæum received a substantial collection bequeathed by Boston lawyer Charles Levi Woodbury (1820 - 1898), a prominent Boston lawyer and judge, and the only son of Levi Woodbury (1789-1851). Charles was a noted amateur historian, scholar, and lecturer, and served as vice president of the New England Historic and Genealogical Society. Many of these 2369 volumes represent the replacement of some 2,000 rare books of medieval, Masonic, French, and American history lost in the great 1872 Boston fire. So deeply was this loss felt, he composed a fifty-page eulogy entitled "My Books," that listed many individually to recall what they meant to him.

After the fire Charles Levi rebuilt his collection, but it never achieved the same level of distinction. To the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century books of his father he added new works that show an Anglophile's taste for early folk studies, Celtic investigations, British antiquities, geography, geology, and the natural sciences. Several novels, many written by women, suggest something of the literary

taste of this Boston bachelor jurist. Unlike many gentlemen book collectors of his day, he believed books were to be read, not just seen in serried rank on the shelf. Amazingly well read by today's standards, his collection was "in a very close sense" his autobiography.

What did survive the Boston fire were Charles Lev's office law library and "a large and well selected library" of 1,000 volumes he had inherited in 1851 from his father, Levi Woodbury. Because he used his father's Portsmouth estate as a summer home, some rare volumes now in the vault escaped destruction in 1872. The elder lawyer, politician and jurist's library was said to contain "the best French authors; histories and memoirs, much of it very rare; numerous books on modern science and the practical arts; the works of statesmen; early history of Canada [and] of New England -- a substantial collection, including several choice editions of the best English dramatists, poets and historians."

This describes quite well the Athenæum's Woodbury alcove (and many other Woodbury volumes scattered throughout the library). Moreover, a Latin Bible printed by Koburger[?] at Nuremberg in 1478, a manuscript fifteenth-century Dutch book of hours and a manuscript monastic breviary of 1576 are believed to have been collected by the senior Woodbury, making the Supreme Court jurist one of the earliest collectors of incunabula, early printed books, and manuscripts in the United States. Charles Levi Woodbury also left the Athenæum a copy of Blondin's history of Rome (1483), a Latin grammar (1480), and a Latin Bible printed in Venice (1483) that may have been collected by either father or son. These all retain plain early or original covers, not the ornate replacement bindings favored by many later nineteenth century collectors.

Charles L. Woodbury bequeathed his non-Massachusetts legal library to the Rockingham County Court just as its new State Street courthouse was built in Portsmouth. There the Woodbury books remained until it was to be razed after the court moved to Exeter. It was then that Wyman Boynton rescued several hundred law books, many with signature of Levi Woodbury and other members of the local bar. Of particular interest are especially early printed legal works that have joined the Athenæum's own legal collection that included a short run of the early *American Law Journal* (1808 -1817) and *New Hampshire Laws* published since the eighteenth century.

Benjamin T. Tredick Collection The earliest of the library's memorial alcoves contains the bequest of Benjamin T. Tredick (1802-1877), 1,673 volumes "of standard books, elegantly bound in calf." A native of Portsmouth who moved to Philadelphia, Tredick seems to have adopted a taste for sets of literary works encased in handsome bindings that characterized his adopted city's gentlemen and merchant class. The vast majority of his English and American editions were published from the 1820s through the Civil War, although a smaller group of works reaches back to the mid-1790s. There are works of music, hymns, religious writings, as well as poetry, novels, and *belle-lettres* of most of the century's best English and American writers. Many display a conspicuous high moral tone, such as *The Family Shakespeare, Expurgated* by Thomas Bowlder (who gave his name to such eviscerating activities). Here, too, are works on art and architecture, antiquities and travels, on printing, bibliography, and the creation of a library that attest to his wider love of books.

John Elwyn Stone Collection A gift of the late Frances and Alexander Warwick, the collection of Mrs. Warwick's brother, John Elwyn Stone adds considerably to the rather spotty remains of the Athenæum's once extensive collection of nineteenth-century English and American literature. Indeed, the first and other early editions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors, generally rebound in

handsome collector's bindings, define the literary canon of the past century. Novels include the key works of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Samuel Clemens, Charles Dickens, A. Conan Doyle, Henry Fielding, Thomas Hardy, Herman Melville, Sir Walter Scott, and Anthony Trollope. Sets of Barrie, Burns, Browning, Byron, Conrad, Lewis Carroll, George Eliot, John Gay, Goldsmith, Irving, Henry James, Jonson, Keats, Marryat, Milton, Pope, Shakespeare, Shelley, Spenser, Sterne, and Thackeray in English and the works of Corneille, Lemierre, Mirabeau, Racine, Segur, and Voltaire in French supplement the Athenæum's own editions of these authors. Among the most desirable literary editions are James Joyce's *Ulysses* in wrappers (London, 1922) and one of 425 signed copies of *Finnegan's Wake* (N.Y., 1939), T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock and Other Observations* (London, 1917), *The Wind in the Willows* (London, 1908) by Kenneth Grahame, and Melville's *Moby-Dick* (N.Y., 1851).

The Mary C. Black and Merrilee Possner Folk Art Collections The Athenæum has been the beneficiary of two excellent specialized libraries on American folk arts in the past decades.

Mary Childs Black was born on June 7, 1922 in Pittsfield, Mass. She graduated from the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina in 1943, took graduate courses at Catholic University in 1950, and received her MA from George Washington University in 1952. Her career included major curatorial and administrative positions with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, the Museum of American Folk Art, and the New-York Historical Society.

Over more than 30 years she authored and co-authored many books, catalogs, and essays on folk art painting and artists such as Eratus Salisbury Field, Joseph Whiting Stock, and Ammi Phillips. From the mid-80s and early 90s she consulted with the Museum of American Folk Art and the Albany Art Institute while actually living in Portsmouth. Her research on the eighteenth century limner Nehemiah Partridge led her to the Warner House where she arranged for the conservation of the murals she attributed to Partridge's hand.

After her death in 1994, her daughter Merrill Black offered the Athenæum her mother's entire library. Although Mary often referred to herself as the last pre-Winterthur trained curator, the Athenæum transferred her manuscripts to the Henry Francis Dupont Winterthur library as a center of such research. Her books and catalogs, however, now form the core of the Athenæum's growing collection of art.

Merrilee J. Possner (1943-2007) was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., graduated from Brooklyn College, and worked for the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. She returned to New York City to earn her Masters and was a social worker there for two decades. Her love of antiques led her to a second master's in folk art studies at NYU, an internship at the American Folk Art Museum, and then a position at Christie's as head of the Americana department at Christie's East in the 1980s. In 1992 she moved to Portsmouth to join Northeast Auctions as head of research and Americana appraisals. For several years before her death she served on the Board of the Portsmouth Historical Society and was a Proprietor of the Portsmouth Athenæum to which she left her library of folk art and other reference works.

The Black and Possner collections, together with ongoing gifts from several proprietors, have strengthened the Athenæum's library with an ever-growing core of works on American art, folk art and related subjects.