The Smith Family Bibles

Members of the Jedediah Smith Family, who have made the Bancroft Library the repository for original papers reflecting their history, have added to the Bancroft collection in recent months all the known Bibles in which the family genealogy has been recorded.

From the Calhoun family of Los Angeles has come a Bible published in 1834 which for many years before his death in 1849 was the property of the senior Jedediah, father of the great explorer and fur trader, Jedediah S. Smith, whose name is an imperishable part of the historical heritage of California and the West. This Bible later passed into the possession of Smith’s sister Eunice, and was faithfully preserved in her family until given to Bancroft.

A similar Bible which had belonged to another sister, Betsy Smith Davis, has been presented to Bancroft by a granddaughter, Miss May Davis, of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa; it is valued not only for its record of the birth dates of Jedediah S. Smith and his immediate family, but also for its Davis family entries. (Betsy’s eldest son, George Washington Davis, a California pioneer of 1854, settled at Santa Rosa. His second son, William Rude Davis, became a prominent Oakland attorney, educator, and public official whose papers were added to the Bancroft Library’s Smith Family collection some years ago through the gift of his son.)

The third Bible had belonged to Ralph Smith, Jedediah’s eldest brother, before Miss Lura Smith of Meade, Kansas, gave its family record pages to Bancroft.

All these Bibles provide documentary evidence valuable in compiling the history of the Smith Family.

Who Saw the Elephant?

Members of the California Library Association, meeting in annual convention at Fresno October 15-18, heard the Director of the Bancroft Library, Dr. George P. Hammond, deliver the sixth annual Edith M. Coulter Lecture under the title “Who Saw the Elephant?” The address, preceded by a dinner of the Alumni of the School of Librarianship, was given at a general session of the Association on the evening of October 17.

The Coulter Lectures were established in 1951 by the Alumni Association of the University of California School of Librarianship to honor Miss Edith M. Coulter, Professor Emeritus of Librarianship, for her long and distinguished career as teacher, counselor, and friend of young people. Miss Coulter not only was a friend to all her students, but also is a loyal and valued Friend of the Bancroft Library, where she continues her historical research.

To date the Coulter Lecturers have been: Rodman W. Paul, “The Universality of California History” (1952); Savoie Lottinville, “Western Man and His History” (1953); Hubert Herring, “Latin American Books—Hispanic American Literature and Historiography” (1954); Sears Jayne, “The California Scholar in British Libraries” (1955); and John E. Pomfret, “Libraries and Scholars” (1956).

Dr. Hammond took as his theme the development of a slang expression that began with the curiosity aroused by traveling circus menageries—especially interest in the huge, lumbering but intelligent elephants. Americans were so curious to see a real elephant that the expression became a catchword which
passed into the folklore of the nation. Through transference, it grew into one of the most common expressions used by the '49ers. "By a simple transposition of values," said the speaker, "the gold fields now became the elephant; and the would-be miner far more eager to see this new wonder than he had been to see the old one, that is, the elephant."

Hammond "played hopscotch with history," to use his own phrase, by drawing vivid pictures of events that had taken place long before Gold Rush days. The Conquistadores' exaggerated ideas of the importance of gold is understandable, he pointed out, when one considers the cultural influences to which they were subjected in Europe. Marco Polo's travels opened the eyes of Europeans to the spices, gems, and precious goods that were obtainable from the East. Later, Prince Henry the Navigator's seamen explored the coast of Africa, discovered the Cape of Good Hope, and brought back spices from India. The Portuguese had proved that what Columbus had discovered was not India but a spiceless New World; and the Spaniards in America, quite naturally, carried on the lusty tradition of pursuing treasures and exploiting the land. Soon English and other Europeans took possession farther north, and their colonies in time formed a new nation, the United States of America, which shortly expanded to the Pacific Ocean. The discovery of gold in 1848 climaxed this period of national expansion.

The California gold fields did not yield up the riches most Argonauts had been led to believe they would. These '49ers had come West eager "to see the elephant"—that is, to see the gold fields, to test their dreams, to try to bring their hopes of riches to fruition. But few of the Argonauts. His excellent account of the march was published in 1950 by the Friends of the Bancroft Library as Volume II in its series of books. This volume has now been out of print for several years.

Eccleston's Yosemite diary has been edited by Dr. C. Gregory Crampton, now professor of history at the University of Utah. He earned his doctorate at the University of California under Professor Herbert E. Bolton, writing on the topic, "The Opening of the Mariposa Mining Region, 1849-1859, with particular reference to the Mexican Land Grant of John Charles Frémont." This Yosemite diary is being published by the Friends in conjunction with the University of Utah Press, and will be distributed to all members of record during the 1957-58 year. For 1957-58, members will receive the delightful Stockton Boyhood, of Charles Grunsky, edited by his daughter, Mrs. Clotilde Grunsky Taylor. An unusual book, it is to be printed for the Friends by London Kennedy, and has just gone to press. It should be ready for distribution early in the spring of 1958.

Eleanor Bancroft Memorial

Shortly after the death of Eleanor Ashby Bancroft on August 28, 1956, a group of her friends and colleagues, under the leadership of Mrs. Lindley Bynum of the President's Office, made plans for establishing a memorial to her, to be placed in the Library she served so long and faithfully. Since Mrs. Bancroft was for many years the chief adviser and reference librarian and in later years responsible also for the acquisition of materials for the Bancroft Library, it was thought that sufficient funds might be collected to purchase a group of rare books or manuscripts which she herself would have liked to select and acquire for the Library. Such a memorial would seem to be more suitable than one of bronze or stone. With this in mind permission was sought from President Robert Gordon Sprout to establish an Eleanor Bancroft Memorial Fund, and this was subsequently granted by him and the Regents of the University of California.

All friends of the Eleanor Bancroft are invited to share in this Memorial. Many have already responded, and it is hoped that many more will welcome this opportunity of honoring a friend whose greatest delight consisted in solving the most difficult research problems. Hundreds of writers remember her genial smile, her friendly greeting, and her unfailing helpfulness. Contributions should be mailed to the President of the University of California, Berkeley, California. Should your gift be in the form of a check, it should be made payable to the Regents of the University of California. Gifts to the University are deductible from income subject to the federal income tax.

The Portola Documents

New insights into the historic exploration of the California coast in 1769-70 by Gaspar de Portolá, first Governor of California, are provided by a group of extremely rare documents given recently to the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, by the Friends.

The newly acquired papers are the first signed originals by Portolá to be received into the Bancroft collection. Such papers are scarce because Portolá was in California for only a year, and he was principally a soldier, not given to the writing of extensive reports or letters.

The Portolá papers fall into two groups: one relating to his service as Governor of California; the second treating of his career as Governor of the town of Puebla, in Mexico, the important midway station between Mexico City and Vera Cruz. The new documents deal mostly with accounts of the juntas or councils of Portolá and his officers and friars, held between October, 1769, and February, 1770, during an exploration to locate the Bay of Monterey, which the party reached but failed to recognize from earlier descriptions. The documents provide a ringside seat at the conferences of Portolá and his staff as they struggled with the confusing problem of California geography. Almost all have been unknown and unpublished, but plans for publication are now under discussion.

Director Honored

At the Annual Meeting of the Managing Board of the School of American Research in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on September 6, 1957, Bancroft's director, Dr. George P. Hammond, was elected a member of the Board. The year 1957 marks the 50th anniversary of this institution.

The School of American Research was organized in 1907 as the School of American Archaeology by the late Dr. Edgar L. Hewett, an able and dynamic leader, who gave a tremendous impetus to the study of the art, archaeology, ethnology, and other phases of the life of the Indians of the Southwest. The School includes the Museum of New Mexico, the Laboratory of Anthropology, and the Museum of International Folk Art, all of Santa Fe.

The Coblenz Party

The tea at Temelec Hall, September 22, given for the Friends of the Bancroft Library by Mr. and Mrs. Edmond D. Coblenz, was a charming affair. The day was sunny and warm and the gardens surrounding the lovely old house were a delight to behold. As the guests came up the long walk, shaded by lovely cypress trees, they were greeted by Mrs. Coblenz and several friends she had asked to assist in receiving them. Their dresses, blending with the bright blue decor of the house and garden, added to the perfection of the setting.

The old stone barn, with its collection of vehicles, saddles, and harness, the American Kitchen, where tea and coffee were poured, the swimming pool with its picturesque dressing rooms, the terrace, featuring a large table and chairs, were all greatly enjoyed by the guests.

Standing on the steps of the house, overlooking the fountain, Dr. John B. Tompkins read a short history of the place. He told of...
its early residents, of the building of the house, and of the many people who, through the years, have been sheltered by its handsome walls. Looking at the fine old mansion, built in the Southern manner, it is hard to believe that Mrs. Coblentz found it almost a ruin and has restored it to its present condition.

The garden, too, reflects the Southern influence. Crepe-myrtle, magnolia, clipped box hedges, and heliotrope are only a few of the extensive plantings.

Those accepting Mr. and Mrs. Coblentz’s gracious invitation were: Mrs. Albert K. Andross, Miss Anne Avakian, Mrs. Anne Bancroft, Mr. Philip Bancroft, Mr. and Mrs. E. G. Bangs, Mr. and Mrs. Claude S. Barham, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Becker, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Bransten, Mr. and Mrs. R. Brettnor, Mr. Charles Coit, Miss Rosario Curletti, Mr. and Mrs. Ben Elkus, Dr. Lillian Fisher, Mr. and Mrs. Donald R. Fleming, Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Fullerton, Mr. and Mrs. Guy Gilchrist, Mr. and Mrs. W. Edwin Gledhill, Miss Mary Gruening, Mrs. Elisabeth Gudde, Dr. and Mrs. George P. Hammond, Mr. and Mrs. John S. Hatfield, Mr. and Mrs. George L. Harding, Mr. and Mrs. S. T. Harding, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Harrison, Miss Helen Dodge Hill, Mr. and Mrs. Stetson G. Hinde, Mr. and Mrs. Warren R. Howell, Dr. and Mrs. John A. Hussey, Mrs. Joseph Henry Jackson, Mr. and Mrs. Edgar M. Kahn, Mrs. Ira Kahn, Mr. James R. Kantor, Mrs. Gerald D. Kennedy, Mr. Roger Levenson, Mr. T. M. Lilienthal, Mr. and Mrs. Oliver S. Loud, Mr. and Mrs. Hobart M. Lovett, Dr. James E. McConnell, Mr. Marshall McDonald, Mr. and Mrs. H. B. McFarland, Mrs. Alfred McLaughlin, Mrs. Julia Macleod, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Mansfield, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Moore, Mr. Malcolm Moss, Miss Margaret Mollins, Judge and Mrs. James H. Oakley, Mr. Viola M. Priest, Mr. and Mrs. Alan Ribera, Dr. Charles A. Shumate, Miss Irene Simpson, Mr. and Mrs. John M. Stone, Mr. and Mrs. Philip M. Stone, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Sullivan, Miss Virginia Thickens, Dr. and Mrs. John Barr Tompkins, Miss Jean M. Whitney, Mr. O. J. Wohlgemuth, Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Woods, and Mr. and Mrs. William P. Wreden. A number of Friends brought guests to enjoy the lovely party.

Surely we all agree that it was a memorable day. It also was a “first” for the Friends, a purely social gathering, held in the fall of the year. Members came from all parts of the State—from Los Angeles, Santa Barbara, San Francisco, Sacramento, San Jose, Columbia, and elsewhere. It was delightful to greet so many of you from such distant points.

It would give Mr. Gilchrist and myself great pleasure to entertain the group in Dutch Flat next August or September. We cannot match the Coblentz party (that would be difficult to do!) and our summer home is no Temelec Hall, but the little town is historically interesting.

With the Friends’ approval, a fall gathering could become an annual affair.

ADELINE GILCHRIST, Chairman

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(Since March 19, 1957)

Avakian, Miss Anne
Bancroft, Griffing
Bancroft, Hubert Howe, II
Bancroft, Paul, Jr.
Carlisle, Henry C.
Coonan, Michael
DeWitt, Dr. Ward G.
Eccleston, Mr. and Mrs. C. H., Jr.
Ehrlich, Philip S.
Elkus, Ben
Gildred, Philip L.
Griffin, Colonel Allen
Hackett, C. Nelson
Hanna, Warren L.
Hansen, Harvey
Harrison, Samuel H.
Heider, Mr. and Mrs. Bill H.
Howell, W. Robert
Krusi, LeRoy F.
Landweer, Mrs. Lulu
Leonard, Irving A.
Levenson, Roger
Lipman, E. C.
McKever, Robert, Jr.
Morbio, Mrs. Lucile C.
Myerson, Robert
Parish, Miss Helen Rand
Reynolds, J. E.
Robbins, Irving
Rogers, Mr. and Mrs. Franklin R.
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Shaffer, Miss Ellen K.
Sondheim, Norman J.
Stone, Mrs. Lois Chambers
Thickens, Miss Virginia
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Zeitlin, Jake

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