MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF FRENCH HISTORY IN THE JOHN CARTER BROWN LIBRARY OF BROWN UNIVERSITY

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For over half a century many scholars have recognized the importance of the great and diversified collection of Americana in the John Carter Brown Library for the study of the history and thought of France, Spain, England, and other western European nations.[1]

The basic policy of the Library, since its foundation by the Brown family in 1846, has been to concentrate on printed source materials for the history of the Americas before 1801, including books, pamphlets, broadsides, maps, and prints. This function has been liberally interpreted to permit the acquisition also of a number of manuscripts dealing with single topics (but not collections of an archival nature) and files of periodicals of special interest. These primary sources are supplemented by a large collection of pertinent bibliographies and bibliographical studies, and, in addition to the usual card catalog, by a chronological file by year of publication, a catalog of maps by place delineated, a list of portrait subjects in books and separate prints, a file of accumulated bibliographical data on individual items, and other special bibliographical indexes. In addition, the Library has acquired in the course of its history a limited number of rarities

[1] For the greater part of the information in this article the writer is grateful to Dr. Lawrence C. Wroth, Librarian Emeritus of the John Carter Brown Library and the author of *The First Century of the John Carter Brown Library* (Providence, 1946), to Thomas R. Adams, the present Librarian, and to the Library Staff. They are, however, of course not responsible for the accuracy of any statements.

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not directly related to American history, such as illuminated medieval manuscripts and fine examples of early printing. Books outside the special field of the collection are available in the nearby John Hay Library of Brown University and the Annmary Brown Library of incunabula.

Of the total of over 30,000 items in the Library, there are 3,809 works in French or printed in France: 3,119 of the eighteenth century, 565 of the seventeenth, 120 of the sixteenth, and five of the fifteenth. This may seem a disproportionately small fraction, but in fact these figures represent a large percentage of the known French-American items for these periods. Checks against various bibliographies—cited in detail below—indicate holdings ranging from approximately 50 to 80 per cent, plus many books not included in these listings. To these must be added relevant material in non-French sources. For instance the Library has one of the finest collections of controversial tracts on the Peace of 1763—115 of the 130 known pieces—and those in English are as important as those in French for a study of the issues.

The relevance of these books to European and French history becomes apparent when one considers that, properly regarded, the colonial history of the Americas from 1492 to 1800 is the history of the westward expansion of European civilization, and that its documentation is the documentation of certain important aspects of the history of the participating nations—their colonial policy and practice, their diplomacy, their military activities, and their economic and political development. The value of Americana is perhaps greatest, however, in the study of European intellectual history; for the large majority of the books in the Library, though they are about America, were published in Europe or written by native Europeans. They are expressions of European—not American—thought.

Moreover, many items acquired for their incidental American interest are largely related to European history. An example is the file of French periodicals, which includes the *Courrier d'Avignon* (1777), the rare *Courrier du Bas-Rhin* (1786-1788), the *Journal Général de Politique, de Littérature et de Commerce* (1791), and the *Mercure François* (1611-1648).

A few examples from special fields will help to illustrate the Libraries resources.

For the history of printing there are, *inter alia*, about 300 works from the Aldine presses; the Gutenberg Catholicon; the 1476 Boccaccio of Colard Mansion of Bruges; the Caxton Royal Book of 1484; the magnificent Bible of 1462 in a copy printed on vellum formerly owned by Prince Eugene of Savoy; and fine copies of the five great polyglot Bibles, those of Alcalá de Henares, Antwerp, Nuremberg, Paris, and London.

The Library is especially rich in the history of cartography and of the expansion of geographic knowledge. Starting with practically all of the editions of Ptolemy's Geographies of the fifteenth and later centuries, the collection continues to the end of the eighteenth century, including important French atlases, such as those of Sanson and Delisle and the *Neptune François*, and many maps either unique or of great rarity, for instance the so-called Ramusio Map of 1534, but forming at the same time a well-balanced selection illustrative of the history of cartography.

The documentation of the history of New France is unusually complete. The Library possesses 57 per cent of the 187 titles for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries listed in the first part of Harisse's *Notes pour servir à la Bibliographie de la Nouvelle France;* 76 per cent of the 325 titles for the same period and the eighteenth century in *Canadiana and French Americana in the Library of J. C. McCoy;* 70 per cent of the titles before 1801 in Gagnon's *Essai de Bibliographie Canadienne*; and all but two of the Jesuit *Relations*, 1632-1673. The exploration accounts include all but one of the seven editions of Hennepin and forty of the forty-five Lahontan items. The machinery of economic, church, military, and governmental life is set forth in nearly 2,500 royal acts relating to the French colonies in the New World.

The French West Indies are equally well represented. Eighty-two per cent of the titles listed in Dampierre's *Essai sur les Sources de l'Histoire des Antilles Françaises* are in the

Library. Perhaps the most comprehensive group is a collection of some 800 titles dealing with Santo Domingo, especially during the revolutionary period, including files of seven Santo Domingan newspapers, a complete collection of Moreau de St. Méry's works on Santo Domingo, and also pamphlets, broadsides, and newspapers published by Creole refugees in the United States in the 1790's. The most important item is Champlain's manuscript *Bref Discours des choses plus remarquables que Samuel Champlain de Brouage a reconnues aux Indes Occidentales* (c. 1601).

The Library has a number of rare documents relating to the French Hugenot settlements in the New World, including eight (two probably unique) of the twelve known contemporary publications on the attempt to settle Florida, 1562-1565, and two unique Huguenot reports on the prospects of settlement in British North America, *Nouvelle Relation de la Caroline* (1685) and *Plan pour former un establissement en Caroline* (1686).

In addition to these works related specifically to the French American colonies, the Library offers a broad documentation of French travel and exploration in all parts of the world from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, including the narratives and collections of Bougainville, Fleurieu, Thevet, Thévenot, Fréville, La Pérouse, La Condamine, Marchand, Pagès, D'Avity, Labat, Bellegarde, Du Perier, La Barbinais, Le Blanc, Pernetty, Verdun de la Crenne, and others. In these may be seen the gradual expansion of geographic knowledge and the stresses, conflicts, and myths created by the disintegration of the Europocentric world.

The activities of the Church and of various religious orders are represented by the Jesuit martyrologies, Annual Letters, *Lettres Édifiantes*, and *Relations* for New France, the chronicles of the Franciscans and other missionary orders in both North and South America, formularies of the Church, offices in honor of local saints, biographies, and records of synods.

The Seven Years War is a subject for which the Library offers a particularly good documentation. Eight of the nine French newsheets recounting military events in America are

in the collections, and also the Comte de Malartic's manuscript *Journal des mouvemens et campagnes qu'a faits le Second Bataillon du Régiment de Béarn réformé depuis le 8 avril 1755 qu'il s'embarque à Brest pour le Canada jusqu'au 25 9bre 1760*. The collection of tracts on the Peace of 1763 has already been mentioned.

This writer has found the Library second only to the Bibliothèque Nationale in the area of French-American relations of the eighteenth century. It contains 51 per cent of the items in Fay's *Bibliographie critique des ouvrages français relatifs aux États-Unis* and 61 per cent of those before 1801 in Monaghan's *French Travelers in the United States*. A few high lights are one of the few complete sets in this country of the *Affaires de l'Angleterre et de l'Amérique*, files of French papers published in the United States during the Emigration, and the manuscript *Journal du Siège de Savannah, septembre et octobre 1779. Avec des observations de Mr. le Cte d'Estaing*.

The collections on the American Revolution and the Seven Years War form the basis, but not the entirety, of the Library's documentation on French military and naval history. For instance, the manuscript *Journal d'évolution en extrait du Journal Général de M. le comte d'Estaing, divisé par exécutions, et Réflexions* (1766) contains a description of a series of fleet evolutions, each with its signals and flags in color, and an "Avertissement" showing the position of the ships during the maneuvers.

Although there is no section in the Library headed "Economics," it is estimated that there are at least five thousand printed pieces dealing with the economic history of Europe and America. Important groups of French documents are those related to the Mississippi Bubble of John Law and the many royal administrative documents on the Compagnie de l'Occident and the Compagnie des Indes.

In the history of science the Library is strongest, naturally, in such areas as cartography, geography, astronomy, navigation, and linguistics. Of special interest are the first French translation of Franklin's *Experiments* and the important

French works written in support of or in opposition to *le Franklinisme*.

In the field of French government and law the Library's holdings are chiefly in colonial administration. The 350 or more separately printed royal *édits, arrêts,* and *ordonnances* are supplemented by *Le Code Noir, Le Commerce de l'Amérique par Marseille, Mémoires des Commissaires du Roi,* and several other *recueils* of French administrative acts of a general and specific character. In all, these sources contain some thousands of official documents regulating French colonial government of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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