Autographs of the Powerful and Famous in 1910

Autographs can be an intriguing and exciting way to recreate history. To examine the actual handwriting of individuals from the past who are known today because of their personal history decades ago usually stimulates one to explore what occurred when that man or woman passed through a period in time. Such motivation is found in a small but fine collection of autographs, housed in the Rare Book Room of Waldo Library, that was assembled at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The provenance of this collection or how it came to Western Michigan University is itself a strange story, albeit a sobering one when considering how temporal some records may be. Between 1900 and 1910, Sophie Levin, a young stage-struck woman in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, sat down and wrote letters to those from all walks of life who she considered to be famous personalities—and she asked for their autographs. Nearly ninety people answered her and sent their contributions. Some time later—no one knows the date—she gave the letters to the Carnegie Mellon library in the same city. Still later, in 1936, a young page in the Library was helping a librarian to move materials and clean out the stacks when he found the box containing the autographs. The librarian, who shall remain anonymous, told him to “throw them away.” The latter, more prescient than the librarian, asked if he could keep them; she agreed. That young page, Fred Hartenstein, eventually earned a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in management from Pittsburgh and became a university faculty member. He came to Western Michigan University in 1959 serving as Chair of the Management Department and as a distinguished senior Professor for many years—retiring in 1985. Two years prior to that, he donated the collection of autographs to the University.

Many of the “great” people who responded to Sophie’s request for autographs were part of the economic and political environment that dominated and troubled the 19th and 20th centuries including the threat of wars and wars themselves as well as the degradation of the nation’s resources, the rise of feminism, and the scourge of racism. A number of the autographs are from individuals whose names are readily recognizable today; others have slipped into the mists of the past and mean nothing to the majority of us. Sic transit gloria mundi!

The names of former presidents are, of course, familiar to everyone; the signatures of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson are found in the collection. Unsuccessful candidates, for example, Charles Evans Hughes, may not be recognized. Special recognition can be given to Taft’s signature; it is on the White House stationery of that time. Woodrow Wilson sent two—one while he was President of Princeton University and a later one when he was President (1913-1921) of the United States.

Many novelists have some hope for lasting fame because their books have become a permanent record that may be resurrected in later years. Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849-1924, has recently come back into the public eye with the film release of her successful children’s story, A Little Princess. Others may be recalled because of their regional reputations. Stewart E. White, 1873-1946, is a native Michigander who was born and educated in Grand Rapids. One of his most popular books, The Blazed Trail, was his third publication; it takes place in the north Michigan forests.

Perhaps the most famous novelist whose autograph was saved from “tossing out” is Jack London, 1876-1916. London is well known for his adventure stories set around the world. His book, John Barleycorn, is autobiographical and tells of his struggle with what was known as “John Barley corn” or whiskey. He has added a note for Sophie to his signature.

On a different note comes the signature of Julia Ward Howe, 1819-1910, an author, poet, and reformer who may be best known for her poem, published first in the Atlantic Monthly in 1863. Once set to music, it became famous, and all of us know the Battle Hymn of the Republic. Poor Julia was paid only $4.00 by the magazine for her work—and there were no royalties in those days.

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A Different Look

Everyone has heard the familiar maxim, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Less familiar, however, is the cartographer’s assurance that a map can contain more information, in and of itself, than any other document or printed information “package.” Although a final proof of such a statement may remain elusive, it’s well worth the time to reflect on why this may be true.

A map can illustrate an endless variety of information in a concise and precise format. Even a simple road map alerts the user to the size of the cities and the distance between them. Splashes of green indicate the vegetation such as forests or parks, and a careful examination of the type of line used will give an indication as to the nature of the road on which the automobile will travel: gravel, two lanes, four lanes, expressway—even if freely accessible or at a cost. Regional attractions and campgrounds are marked along with airports and other notable resources of a given community. If it is a geological map, the maker uses a complex system of symbols to describe the earth itself in such a way as to be clearer than pages of text. Innumerable maps of many different purposes graphically demonstrate every possible activity or topic from troop movements to political entities to planets and stars of the universe. Think of a subject; invariably there will be a map that will illustrate more than is readily learned from pages of description—no matter how well written.

The story of mapmaking is the story of our attempt to represent the round orb that is earth on a flat surface. The first cartographers attempted to resolve the problem by miniaturizing the area being mapped. In choosing this approach, they were making use of the power of pictures. However, as the area to be illustrated grew, and as more and more aspects of the earth were shown, cartographers had to look for other methods of representing the geographic reality. They were looking for something more powerful than pictures.

What cartographers found were symbols as, over time, the first primitive efforts of mapmakers evolved. Many of the illustrative mechanisms used by the early cartographers are the foundations for later mapping techniques. Or to put it another way, early illustrations have been distilled to become the symbols we find on contemporary maps. Carefully drawn woodlots on 18th century maps have become the green areas representing forests on 20th century maps. When examining one of the classic French maps of an earlier century, the size and importance of a town is represented with a fair degree of accuracy by the size of the miniature church or cathedral drawn on the map. The “picture” of the church eventually became a square surmounted by a cross or a synagogue by a star, and the community was reflected in different-sized dots or blocks. Or, for instance, we can all recall seeing antique maps where disembodied cherubic heads blow the prevailing winds across newly discovered or even undiscovered seas. Those figures later became the wind roses that still appear on nautical charts. Also worth note is the fact that historians use old pictorial maps to learn the geographical vision of the age in which they were prepared rather than merely as predecessor to today’s cartography.

Despite the triumph of symbols over pictures in cartography, pictorial maps are still used for a number of reasons. Here the best of two worlds may be combined: pictures that demonstrate and a map that provides succinct information. Pictorial maps provide a simplicity and effectiveness that can’t be matched by other approaches. Daily weather maps, seen in newspapers, on television, and elsewhere are a wonderful example of communication in its most basic form. Almost everyone uses these maps to understand complex meteorological systems. And, who does not recall the pictorial maps of childhood that illustrated the nation’s industries through the use of cars in Detroit, oil derricks in Oklahoma, and movie cameras in California?

Yet, there are some who may well raise questions of accuracy when the complex is reduced to the simple. When does this approach create an inaccurate overview? Admittedly, this does occur, but underlying all of the work is a cartographer’s belief that his is an exact science. And, in general, it is although the nature of the beloved pictorial map does lend itself to generalization. Maps, too, have to be criticized for that which they intend to do. No one would intentionally direct a desert traveler to an oasis that is several miles from where it is noted on the map, or send a ship sailing where there are reefs and shoals. Valid use depends on the degree of specificity that is needed. In the end, it must be recognized that a pictorial map simply doesn’t try to tell what a geological or nautical map must tell.

Waldo Library is the home of a wide-ranging and research-oriented collection of maps and atlases. Located on the third floor of the library, the area contains over 170,000 sheets in special housing, and hundreds of atlases. Although it is basically a research collection, there are a few pictorial maps. One example, found in the main library, is in An Atlas of Fantasy, compiled by J.B. Post (Ballentine Books, 1979). Here fact gives way to whimsical fantasy in that the cartographers present maps of imaginary places from mythology and fiction. Castles perched atop mountains abound as do forests made up of individual trees and fully formed mountains that rise suddenly from flat plains.

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The World's a Stage: Kristin Tyrrell
A Friends' Personality

Act I

Oak Park, Illinois, has been the birthplace of several distinguished individuals who have enhanced the culture of this country through a variety of artistic contributions. From Ernest Hemingway to Frank Lloyd Wright to the subject of this essay, Library Friend Kristin Tyrrell, each has played a unique role—or roles as the case has turned out.

Kristin grew up in the environs of Oak Park where, from birth, she was exposed to the contributions of creative artists to the society. Whatever the reason, Ms. Tyrrell readily admits to being "bitten" by the acting bug so early in her life that when she "came of age" and enrolled at nearby Rosary College, a theatre major was the obvious choice. (And, it must also be noted, when she did encounter students studying to be librarians, she tended to think of them as "rather weird." Later, you will see the irony!)

After earning her bachelor of arts degree from Rosary, Kristin sought out a chance to practice the acting that dictated her interests and enthusiasm. This brought her first to Kalamazoo as an intern with the Civic Players. As is typical of interns, she did everything—painted scenery, sewed costumes, swept floors—and had her premier professional role in *Johnny Belinda*. This was the first of more than seventy roles that she would act on Kalamazoo stages including her current and first musical, *Singing in the Rain*.

In 1969, Kristin tried out for the New Vic production of *The Thurber Carnival*. Not only did she get the role, but she has continued to perform almost exclusively for the New Vic—at least two, often three, and even four roles a year. Some were extra special:

*The lead in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.*
*The lead in *The Witching Voice,* Western Michigan University Professor Arnold Johnston’s play about Robert Burns. The opportunity to work with a playwright on an original script, to have a hand in shaping the play’s outcome is something few actors or actresses ever enjoy.

*The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* had been performed in New York city in a nine-hour period broken by dinner. In Kalamazoo, the Old Vic performed it in two successive evenings with Kristin playing three different roles.

*The Norman Conquests* is a series of three interlocking plays by Alan Ayckbourn in which each play takes place in a different room of a country estate in England. Kalamazoo's presentations were given in three different months, September, January, and April, with Tyrrell carrying a major role in each.

*Two very different roles at two distinctive periods in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf.* Kristin played Honey in 1973 and Martha in 1993—an intriguing challenge to any actress.*

*In March of this year, the Carver Center presented *A Piece of My Heart,* a play in two acts by Shirley Lauro based on a book compiled by Keith Walker. The work is a collection of interviews with Vietnamese women. The powerful script is not only profoundly moving from the point of view of the audience but also to the cast. Tyrrell numbers her role in this tour de force as one of the high points of her acting career.*

Act II

Up to this point, the reader is caught up with Kristin's life in the theatre, but, did anyone mention that acting on Kalamazoo stages is usually a volunteer effort? That's right, no salaries are paid. Thus, what began for Kristin as a career path ended as an avocation that did not pay the bills. Herein lies the irony noted earlier. Those "weird students" who were studying library science at Rosary turned out not to be so strange after all. While pursuing her avocation as an actress, Kristin, in 1972, became a clerk in an elementary school library and ended up, two years later, running the library—except that she still was earning a clerk's salary. A little thought about this led her rather quickly to the fact that she needed a professional degree and, fortunately, a master's program was offered at Western Michigan University.

By 1976, Kristin had her ticket to the profession, the Master of Science in Librarianship. Since that time, with two exceptions, she has worked as an elementary school librarian in Kalamazoo's public schools. One interruption was a year in the Brooklyn Public Library in 1980, and, when state allocations eliminated funding for elementary school librarians in 1981, Kristin turned for a time to the Powell Branch of the Kalamazoo Public Library where she continued to work with children. When support for elementary school libraries was reauthorized by the State in 1984, she returned to the schools. In 1994, she jumped a few grades and joined another librarian at the media center in the Kalamazoo Central High School where she continues to work today.

Act III

With two major occupations, is there time for anything else? Kristin adores three nephews: John, an Oberlin graduate; Luke, a senior classics major at Kalamazoo College who recently finished a foreign study in Greece; and Paul, a remarkable pianist who has just completed basic training in the Marines. Her household is graced by one part-Siamese and one Scottish fold cat who add a touch of activity, and, when not attending to them, she turns her hand to the collecting of arts and crafts furniture. Part of her ability to keep up with her demanding schedule is enhanced by her biking. She is a member of both the Kalamazoo and Three Rivers bicycle clubs, groups who think nothing of thirty mile jaunts. Curiosity about what else "fuels" her body and mind brought a quick response; her favorite food is "desserts." And, adding to her many commitments, she became a charter member of the Friends of the University Libraries serving the Board as its first Secretary. Finally, as the curtain closes, we see Kristin Tyrrell ...

G.E.

"A good book is the purest essence of a human soul."

Thomas Carlyle
Rare Books: A Price to Pay?
Commentary by Dean Lance Query

Our university and public libraries are among our most civilizing of institutions, bulwarks against those whose beliefs and practices coarsen our culture and society. At the heart of our libraries are collections of rare books, manuscripts, and other special works that comprise a distinctive and coherent collection designated for a unique use. Such irreplaceable materials are the pride of our libraries—and are the best testament to our own humanity.

At the same time, however persuasive the mission of rare book libraries for preserving the recorded history of civilization, the argument loses its urgency when opposed to the need to acquire the major tools of research and teaching: journals, monographs, electronic databases, and other audio and visual resources. Rare book collections are criticized as expensive and unnecessary except for the wealthiest of public and private institutions. And, in fact, such criticism is valid if the institution is concerned only with enhancing its ego or, in superficial ways, focusing on a "high spot" here or there. Such a development philosophy is particularly unfortunate when other, more pressing needs are set aside.

Moreover, rare book librarians have not, traditionally, justified the high cost of their acquisitions. Rather, during the halcyon era of higher education funding, the 1950s to the 1970s, newcomers plunged boldly into an expensive market that was inappropriate to their own institutional mission. Scholarship would have been better served if rare materials had been acquired, housed, preserved, and cataloged by fewer, but more accessible libraries.

What, then, is the rationale that justifies the development of rare book collections? If it is not to provide distinctive evidence of mankind's "humanity," what persuades scholars, librarians, and academic leaders that the considerable expenses of the purchase, security, and preservation—not to mention the cost of experienced staff to interpret the materials for users—is worth the price? Most simply put, each rare book collection must support, in a tangible way, the research and scholarship of the institution in which that specific collection is housed. Even though such use may ebb and flow as changes occur in the faculty and curricula with respect to research interests, a larger audience must continue to exist because that particular institution is recognized for the relevance of its rare but coherent book collection. Collections as, for example, the pre-Colombian codices and early cartographic maps at the Newberry Library in Chicago are internationally known to researchers because of their rich depth. Yet, it is equally important that similar excitement and enthusiasm are generated among undergraduate and graduate students when they, too, can examine and analyze these unusual materials.

Still, a question remains answered. How can we most efficiently ensure scholars' or students' access to costly, rare materials? Not only is the price prohibitive in many instances, but private collectors are continually at work building their own libraries which are seldom available to scholars. Once again, the answer may well lie in shared collection development. Such a plan calls for proximity of participating institutions, comprehensive and accurate catalogs of holdings, and, perhaps most difficult, a commitment of scholars, academic leaders, and librarians to provide easier and improved access to the special collections.

The University Libraries has assumed a position of leadership in making shared acquisitions of rare materials a reality. Western Michigan University and the Newberry Library are jointly acquiring a 14th century manuscript that will complement WMU's liturgical collections and medieval studies as well as the recently approved Ph.D. program in Comparative Religion. This extraordinary volume will be housed at our library four months each year.

A similar arrangement has also been made between the Newberry Library and Notre Dame in Indiana. These two examples of cooperation are the first efforts of three distinctive institutions to resolve the serious problem posed earlier. We hope that they signal other regional institutions as well as private collectors that we are committed to ensuring that the recorded testimonies of our civilization are available to students, researchers, scholars. To this end, I am both dedicated to and celebrate each effort that explores cooperative and shared acquisition of our rare book heritage. These efforts represent a innovative and progressive solution to the problem of collecting and accessing rare materials—as well as a means by which we can justify the price to be paid.

"What I mean by reading is not skimming, not being able to say as the world saith, 'Oh, yes, I've read that!', but reading again and again in all sorts of moods, with an increase of delight every time, till the thing read has become a part of your system and goes forth along with you to meet any new experience you may have."

C.E. Montague
Early English Manuscripts

The Goliards, a student organization associated with the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University, has donated $1,000 to the Richard Rawlinson Center for Anglo-Saxon Studies and Manuscript Research. The monies will be used to support the acquisition of a complete set of the Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile (EEMF)—as well as a continuing subscription to this unique resource. The gift, which represents in part proceeds from this year’s sale of T-shirts, caps, and other items at the Medieval Institute’s annual Congress, held each May at WMU, will make it possible for the University Libraries to develop its collection in Medieval Studies to the level of a Research II university classification as designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

"Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile," notes Paul E. Szarmach, the Medieval Institute’s Director, "is the premier collection of manuscript facsimiles in Anglo-Saxon studies. The series aims to support the work of students and scholars by offering clear, accurate representations of some of the most important texts and images in early English history, literature, and art. These books are not deluxe, coffee-table productions; they are extraordinarily useful books with authoritative introductions. With this generous gift, our WMU students are telling us that they want Medieval and Anglo-Saxon Studies to remain major emphases here.

Currently, Waldo Library owns four of the 25 facsimiles published in the series thus far. Of these four, The Nowell Codex may be the most famous, containing the complete text of the only version of Beowulf and other works that describe monsters such as The Wonders of the East. Gradually, patrons may consult the book in the third floor Rare Book Room.

The remaining volumes will enter the collection, if we can obtain funding, over the next two to three years, and the continuing subscription will become part of the overall acquisitions program. One volume to be added this coming year is The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch, a facsimile of an eleventh century vernacular prose version of the first six books of the Old Testament with some 600 drawings. However, funding is not yet assured for the remaining volumes, and each volume has a limited printing of only 250 copies. Following is a list of the proposed purchases with the latest cost estimate although there could be increases due to the dollar exchange fluctuation.

The Tollemanche Orosius (EEMF 3) $ 566
The Pastorial Care (EEMF 6) $ 822
The Moore Bede (EEMF 9) $ 792
The Blickling Homilies (EEMF 10) $ 807
Alfric’s First Series of Catholic Homilies (EEMF 13) $ 898
The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch (EEMF 18) $ 1154
The Vercelli Book (EEMF 19) $ 1222

We are seeking private donations, and welcome all inquiries as to the means to make such a gift. Please contact Lance Query, Dean, University Libraries, at 387-5202 or Dr. Paul Szarmach, Director, Medieval Institute, at 387-8745.

Autographs of the Powerful and Famous in 1910
Continued from page 1

One of the most successful poets at the turn of the century would not gain easy recognition from the majority who saw her autograph. She was Ella Wheeler Wilcox, 1850-1919. Yet lines such as "Laugh, and the world laughs with you;/ Weep, and you weep alone" are now in the stock of common proverbs of the language. She took the time to include a short poem with her signature.

Another poet whose words have outlived recognition of her name is Rose Aline Hartwick Thorpe, 1850-1939, who wrote poems which added unforgettable rallying calls to our language: "Remember the Alamo" and "Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight."

Victor Herbert, 1859-1924, was an Irish-American composer who wrote such perennially favorite operettas as Babes in Toyland, The Red Mill, and Naughty Marietta. His autograph is visually intriguing since he included bars of music. Marching to a steady beat, John Philip Sousa, 1854-1932, rose to prominence as the band master of the American Marine Band from 1880-1892. Internationally known as a composer of marches, every American celebrates the Fourth of July with his The Stars and Stripes Forever.

The only artist included in the collection is Will Hickok Low, 1853-1932, an illustrator for such magazines as Our Young Folks and Appleton's Journal, he studied in France under Jean-Francois Millet, and was a close friend of Robert Louis Stevenson. His work is still occasionally found on the art market.

Actors and actresses were and are extraordinarily popular, but while they may have fame for a time, they also slip into obscurity once the show has closed or, today, if the film is no longer available. The following were well-known to Sophie, but their fame and art have disappeared: Robert C. Hilliard, 1857-1928; Jack Norworth, 1879-1959; Nora Bayes (Norworth), 1880-1928; Blanche Ring, 1877-1961; and Robert Bruce Mantell, 1854-1928. Julia Marlow, 1866-1950, refused to send her autograph unless a dollar was donated to the Actors Retirement Fund; there is no autograph.

In the collection is an autograph of Booker T. Washington, 1856-1915, whose stature in time has continued to grow. Not all of his ideas are as acceptable today as when he advocated that African-Americans should strive for economic prosperity and independence before fighting for equality. Along with him as an agitator for rights would have stood Belva Ann Bennett Lockwood, 1830-1917, whose name and autograph are far less known to us, but who was a pioneer feminist. She received a law degree, and was the first woman admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States. A life-long suffragette and advocate of women's rights, she died before women got the vote.

And to conclude this peripatetic tour through turn of the century history, there is the signature and recognition of Thomas Alva Edison, 1847-1931. He was
Autographs
Continued from page 5

one of the most important inventors of
the 19th century whose imagination and
creativity transformed modern living.
From the moving picture to the incan­
descent lamp to the recorder and player
of sounds, his contributions were truly
as extraordinary in the realm of science
and industry as the respective talents of
those other great and powerful people
who responded to Sophie Levin almost a
century ago. From a microcosm of indi­
viduals comes a macrocosmic picture
of a moment in time—discovered in
some 90 autographs that were not thrown
away.

B.B.

“A house without books is like a
room without windows.”

Henry Ward Beecher

A Different Look
Continued from page 2

The variety of maps found in Waldo
includes topographic sheets covering all
areas of the world, geologic maps of the
United States, aeronautical charts of the
earth, and nautical charts of the United
States as well as numerous topical maps
covering all hemispheres. If, just to salve
your curiosity, you do pursue a pictorial
map, be sure to look for the Souvenir Map
of Newport, Rhode Island, that is replete
with a wind rose and bell-bottomed
sailors. Another splendid example of this
genre is the 1952 map of Historic Michi­
gan, published by the Historical Society of
Michigan and drawn by Frank Barcus.
Displayed are historical facts and events
that occurred in Michigan—framed in a
geographical context.
The presence of pictorial maps in a
research collection brings into focus a par­
ticular aspect of both scholarship and car­
tography. That is, even in serious
research and mapmaking, there is a place
for simplicity, and a place for a diverse,
possibly whimsical viewpoint. Looking at
a problem, or a place, in a different way
can be just what is needed.

M.M.