Observations on the Winthrop, Bentley Thomas and 'Ex Dono' Collections of the Original Library of Allegheny College, 1819-1823,

First listed by President Timothy Alden in Catalogus Bibliothecae Collegii Alleghaniensis, E Typis Thomae Atkinson Soc. apud Meadville. 1823.

Edwin Wolf, 2nd

Mr. Edwin Wolf, 2nd, Librarian of The Library Company of Philadelphia, was commissioned by Allegheny College to make a survey of the Original Library, March 6-16, 1962.

Notes:

Through his observations, Mr. Wolf uses the original spelling of the College's name: Alleghany.

This document is a typed transcript of Mr. Wolf’s original work.

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Section VI. [Closing Remarks]

In the library there are by chance of accumulation and by the accolade of the rare-book world a number of books which have unusual "rare-book" interest and considerable intrinsic worth. Since the collection at Alleghany has not been known to bibliographers, its holdings have been generally ignored in catalogues and complications. While it does not have a large group of early imprints, these are among its most valuable holdings.

A rare Boston almanac, Clough, 1701. The New England Almanac, Boston, 1701, is recorded inaccurately by Evans from a copy in the Boston Anthenaeum, which may be imperfect. Perhaps the Alleghany one, in very fine condition, is unique. The first Book of Common Prayer printed in America is Clausse's Morning and Evening Prayer... Translated into the Mahaque Indian Language, New York, 1715. It is one of the cornerstone pieces of Americana. Some accounts of King Philip's War in Massachusetts appeared almost contemporaneously. The last early history of this bloody event was Thomas Church's Entertaining Passages Relating to Philip's War, Boston, 1716, which was based upon the notes of his father, Colonel Benjamin Church, a participant. It is one of the important early narratives of New England. Of very great rarity and high value, one of the earliest printed Indian treaties, is George Town on Arrowsick Island Aug. 9th, 1717... A Conference of His Excellency the Governour, with the Sachems and Chief Men of the Eastern Indians, Boston, 1717. William Burnet's Essay on Scripture-Prophecy, New York, 1724, while not uncommon, is a representative piece of early New York printing. The Alleghany copy was given by Mrs. Mascarene to William Kneeland, and in 1796 by Mrs. Kneeland to James Winthrop.

The largest work up to that time printed in America and a classic of Puritan New England theory is Willard's Compleat Body of Divinity, Boston, 1726. The bibliographer Evans permits himself a rare sally of humor concerning this book: "As the values of books seem to grow in inverse ratio to their being read this would seem to place a higher monetary value of this work than it has yet reached." William Kneeland, who had owned the Burnet, also owned Judah Monis's Dickdook Leshon Gneebreet, A Grammar of the Hebrew Tongue, Boston, 1735, another pioneer work, being the first Hebrew grammar printed in America. It was mentioned that Judge Winthrop did have a number of local law books. One of them was the Massachusetts Charter and Acts of Law, Boston, 1742, with printed session laws down to 1745 and, bound in, a manuscript list of cases and records of the settlements of awards before the Court at Charlestown from December, 1753, to September, 1765.
A number of pamphlets which had belonged to various donors were bound up in volumes at
Meadville. We know that some of the Winthrop ones were exchanged with Isaiah Thomas. It is
probable that others were lost, for what survives shows that John Winthrop, at least, did have a
representative lot of contemporary pamphlets. Lewis Evan's Geographical, Historical, Political,
Philosophical and Mechanical Essays, printed at Philadelphia by Franklin in 1755, still survives
in its original marbled paper covers, but the important map is now gone. There are a few
narratives of the French and Indian War, Charles Chauncy's Second Letter To a Friend, Giving a
more particular Narrative of the Defeat of the French Army at Lake-George, Boston, 1755, and
Sir Jeffrey Amherst's Journal of the Landing of His Majesty's Forces on the Island of Cape-
Breton, Boston, 1758.

The effective pamphleteer James Otis is represented by his Vindication of the Conduct of the
House of Representatives, Boston, 1762, and a note by him in Charles Lloyd's Conduct of the
Late Administration Examined, Boston, 1767, expresses his strong and sometimes erratic pro-
American feelings: "To the Revd Mr. Shaw (of Barnstaple) who is presented with this picture of
Treachery of the American letterwriters by his Servt James Otis." The flood of political
pamphlets which appeared at the time of the Stamp Act and continued through the Revolution
swept onto Winthrop's shelves. Governor Dummer's Defence of New-England Charters, Boston,
1765, (a timely reprint of an older work), John Dickinson's Letters from a Farmer in
Pennsylvania, Boston, 1768, Bernard's Letters to the Ministry, Boston, 1769, The Free Britons
Memorial, London, 1769, which was given to John Winthrop by that staunch patriot John
Hancock, and A Letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Hilsborough, Boston, 1769 - these
were typical. Historically important and bibliographically interesting are two editions of A Short
Narrative of The Horrid Massacre in Boston, Boston, 1770: 1) pp. 38, 80, 79-81; 2) pp. 48, 80,
85-88, 81-82.

As the times grew more troubled, the printer's ink flowed more freely. Others of the important
pre-Revolutionary tracts are also at Alleghany; The Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders
and other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston, Boston, [1772,] The Representations of Governor
Hutchinson and others, Boston, 1773, William Bollan's Petitions... to the Two Houses of
Parliament, London, 1774, Lyttleton's Letter to William Pitt... on the Quebec Bill, Boston, 1774,
Josiah Quincy's Observations on the Act of Parliament, Boston, 1774, and Bishop Shipley's
Speech intended to have been spoken, Boston, 1774. John Winthrop was an ardent patriot, and
hence took an intense interest in the events stirring about him. It is, therefore, not surprising to
find Extracts from the Votes and Proceedings of the American Continental Congress, Boston,
1774, in his possession. Other Revolutionary tracts he owned were Barry's Strictures on the
Friendly Address Examined, [Boston,] 1775, Glover's Substance of the Evidence on the Petition,
New York, 1775, The first Book of the American Chronicles of the Times, Boston, [1776,] and
Thomas Paine's Common Sense (with Additions), Philadelphia, 1776. Sermons, political and theological, are also to be found in considerable numbers.

There are not a great many pamphlets of equal importance in that portion of the collection which came from James Winthrop, Bentley and Alden. Some pieces are, however, noteworthy. Franklin's friend Richard Price presented James Winthrop with a copy of his Observations on the Importance of the American of the American Revolution, London, 1784, and the printers gave him the 1791, Boston edition of the ever-popular narrative of Mary Rowlandson. Richard Henry Lee's pamphlet on the Constitution, Observations leading to a Fair Examination of the System of Government, [New York,] 1777 [i.e. 1787], is there. Alden was interested in western land development. Charles Williamson's Description of the Settlement of the Genesee Country, New York, 1799, and his Observations on the Proposed State Road, from Hudson's River to Lake Erie, New York, 1800, are evidence of this interest. Of even greater value is a collection of the Indian translations of the half-breed missionary Eleazer Williams, who worked with the Oneidas in upper New York and later Wisconsin. It is doubtful that there exists in any other library a more complete collection of these, ranging from his Gaitonsera... A Spelling-Book in the Language of the Seven Iroquois Nations, Plattsburgh, 1813, and Utica, 1820, Good News to the Iroquois Nations, Burlington, 1813, and Iontatretsiarontha... A Caution against our Common Enemy, Albany, 1815, to Oseragwegen Orhonkene Ionterennaientagwa Nononsatokentike, n.p., [1882], the Episcopal church service in Mohawk.

It may be that the single most valuable item in the library is the superb copy, in original boards, uncut, of Marchand's Voyages Autour du Monde, Paris, 1798-1800, with the atlas. Two other rarities come from halfway round the world, Noceda and San Lucar's Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala, Manila, 1754, and San Augustin's Compendio de la Arte de la Lengua Tagala, Pueblo de Sampaloe, 1787.

To be sure, these works singled out do not comprise all the intrinsically valuable books in the old library. They are indications, however, that some rarities have been found, and are a promise that a full catalogue will reveal others.