Carolina COLUMNS

University South Caroliniana Society newsletter
spring 2006

Library Funds Established to Honor Allen Stokes and John Hammond Moore

Staff members at the South Caroliniana Library have established a fund honoring longtime director of the library Dr. Allen Stokes. Stokes resumed his duties as director in July 2005 after having retired the previous year. The fund will be called the Allen Stokes Manuscript Development Fund at South Caroliniana Library. It will recognize Stokes' ongoing work and contributions by providing for the acquisition and preservation of materials for the library's Manuscripts Division.

Allen Stokes

The effort to establish the fund was headed by Nicholas Meriwether, who is in charge of the library's Oral History Project. Regarding Stokes' contributions, Meriwether said, "Dr. Stokes has done so much for the library and its staff over the years that we decided it would be most appropriate to honor him by establishing a library acquisitions fund in his name. The fund will be devoted to a cause dear to his heart: the manuscript collection. With his extensive knowledge of the library's manuscript collections as well as of the history of the state, he will be the ideal person to select materials to be purchased for the fund."

Anyone wishing to honor Stokes through additions to this fund should send a check made payable to the USC Educational Foundation to the attention of Carroll Peters, Thomas Cooper Library, L504, Columbia, SC 29208. For questions, she may be contacted at 803-777-5564 or carrollp@gwm.sc.edu. Gifts may also be made online at www.sc.edu/library/develop/donate.html.

John Hammond Moore

The John Hammond Moore Library Acquisitions and Conservation Fund was recently established to honor Dr. Moore and to provide support for acquisition of new materials and conservation of existing holdings at South Caroliniana Library.

According to Moore's longtime friend Dr. William C. Schmidt Jr., who created the fund, "John has acted as a friend of, mentor and inspiration to, and resource for a legion of individuals doing research on Southern and South Carolina history, myself included. His own extensive body of work, made available through publications, public lectures, and personal communications, has considerably advanced knowledge within various areas of South Carolina history.

"Since much of John's work has drawn upon the holdings of the South Caroliniana Library, I could not think of a more fitting way to honor John than by creating a fund in his name to perpetuate and enhance the Caroliniana's collections."

Additional contributions to honor Moore are welcome. Checks should be made payable to the USC Educational Foundation and sent to the attention of Carroll Peters, Thomas Cooper Library, L504, Columbia, SC 29208. For questions, she may be contacted at 803-777-5564 or carrollp@gwm.sc.edu. Gifts may also be made online at www.sc.edu/library/develop/donate.html.

The Walter J. Brown Papers

By Ron Bridwell

Walter J. Brown started his professional life as a newspaper journalist in Washington, D.C., in the late 1920s. In 1940, he moved to Spartanburg, S.C., where he began a broadcasting career that spanned more than half a century and resulted in the expansion of his company, Spartan Radiocasting Company, from an organization that had one small station in 1947 into a telecommunications giant, Spartan Communications, Inc., at the time of his death in 1995. At that time, the company owned television stations in Georgia, Florida, Iowa, and Kansas as well as WSPA-TV and WBTW-TV in South Carolina.

In the middle of World War II, Brown accepted Jimmy Byrnes' request to become his special assistant after Byrnes had resigned from the U.S. Supreme Court to become director of economic stabilization and war mobilization. Brown began an indefinite unpaid leave of absence from his job and, for the next three years, devoted himself to government service.

While in Washington, he maintained close contact with the radio stations in Spartanburg and was clearly involved in management decisions. He returned briefly to his broadcasting career, but in April of 1945, with the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the elevation of Harry Truman to the presidency, Brown once again took a leave of absence from the radio station to become a special assistant to Byrnes, who had been named secretary of state. By the middle of July, Brown was in Germany at the Potsdam Conference, and he spent much of September in London, where Byrnes participated in the conference of the Council of Foreign Ministers.

In December 1945, Brown returned to Spartanburg to resume leadership at WSPA and subsequently pursued his successful broadcast career in both radio and television.

Brown's will provided for the preservation of his papers. Those of a political nature went to Clemson University; the Walter J. Brown Media Archives went to the University of Georgia; and his business archives became the Walter J. Brown Papers at the South Caroliniana Library. In addition to correspondence dating from 1940 to 1995, this collection includes memos, reports, speeches, studies, WSPA editorials, newspaper clippings, and photographs.

Walter J. Brown

The Brown Papers, organized in 20 boxes, contain business correspondence and memos primarily from the early 1950s through the late 1970s, the years that Brown actively managed and directed WSPA. Additional material exists from his early days in Spartanburg beginning in 1940, but the bulk of WSPA-related information dates from the purchase of that station by Spartan Radiocasting Company in 1953. There are also correspondence files related to Brown's radio stations in Thomson, Ga., 1947–1991.

Even though the letters and memos are business-related, many of his business associates were also Brown's personal friends, and many of the letters reflect those friendships. Sol Taishoff (1904–1982), longtime editor and owner of *Broadcasting* magazine, later *Broadcasting-Telecasting*, began a friendship with Brown that lasted from the 1930s until the 1980s. They met when Brown, as a Washington, D.C., journalist, wrote a number of articles that were published in Taishoff's magazine. Andy Ring, a Washington, D.C., engineer, frequently wrote reports and conducted studies for Spartan Radiocasting Company, but he also was Brown's good friend and frequent correspondent over a period of 40 years. Dana Pratt, an engineer with RCA, also became a friend and continued to do occasional consulting for WSPA into the early 1990s.

Others with whom Brown corresponded include U.S. senators J. Strom Thurmond, Richard Russell, and Sam Nunn; CBS president Dr. Frank Stanton; and journalists Lowell Thomas and Charles Kuralt. Legal

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
DELIVERED BY
WALTER J. BROWN
AT
South Carolina
BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION
SUMMER CONVENTION
JULY 17, 1961
OCEAN FOREST HOTEL
Myrtle Beach, S. C.

issues necessitated frequent correspondence with the Washington law firms representing Spartan Radiocasting Company: Dempsey & Koplovitz until March 1963 and Covington & Burling after that date. Thirty-one volumes of the *Official Report of Proceedings Before the Federal Communications Commission at Washington, D.C., In the Matter of: The Spartan Radiocasting Company, Spartanburg, S.C., Docket No. 11314* document the efforts of Brown to bring a VHF television station to Spartanburg.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the collection is that it contains the letters and documents from which the story of one of the state's pioneer broadcasting stations can be pieced together. The history of radio and television is a neglected area of research, due partly to the paucity of business archives from S.C. stations. The Walter J. Brown Papers provides the raw material for future work that will not only illuminate WSPA's past, but also illustrate the role that radio and television have played, and continue to play, in helping form public opinion and in influencing popular culture in the state.

The Watson-Brown Foundation, Inc., of Thomson, Ga., a nonprofit corporation established by Brown in 1970 and funded by him throughout his life, provided a grant to support processing this collection. The Watson-Brown Foundation each year provides college scholarships to qualified students from Georgia and South Carolina and also awards millions of dollars in grants to colleges and universities throughout the South.

Shared History

By Felicia Furman

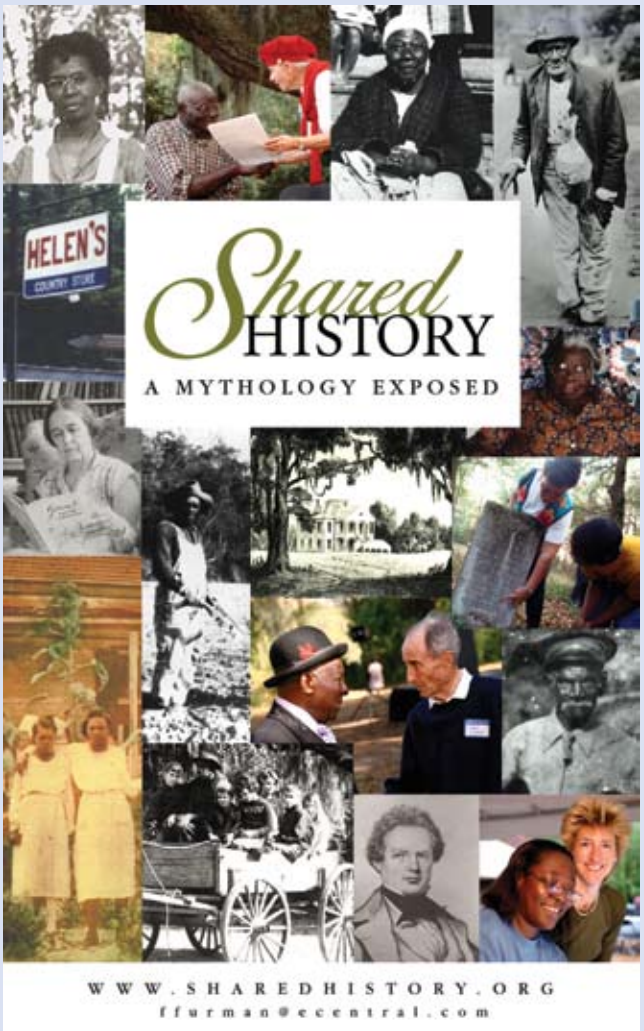
"We have all been impacted by the institution of slavery, and we have a shared history."
—Felicia Furman, producer and director of PBS film, *Shared History*

In the discussion about race, many whites dismiss the impact of slavery on contemporary society by claiming "it was a long time ago" or remove themselves from the discussion by saying, "my ancestors didn't own slaves."

For some of us, however, the reality is much different. As a little girl, my now octogenarian mother recalls accompanying her mother, Mary C. Simms Oliphant, on visits to "Maum Sallie" bearing gifts of coffee, sugar, and tobacco. Maum Sallie was Sallie Laboard. She had been a slave at Woodlands Plantation, the home of American writer William Gilmore Simms and 70 members of enslaved African-American families. For me, my mother's memories place slavery very much in the present. And, unlike many in this country, my ancestors did, in fact, own slaves. Do I then have a special responsibility to acknowledge this history? I think I do. My "acknowledgment" has come in the form of a 13-year project titled *Shared History,* an effort to document the lives of all the families at Woodlands Plantation. Woodlands, located in Bamberg County, is still owned by Simms' descendants. Several African-American families stayed on at the plantation after the Civil War and maintained a relationship with my family, which continues to the present.

Shared History is now a PBS film sponsored by the SC-ETV Endowment with support from The Humanities Council[SC] and the National Endowment for the Humanities. The film tells the story of descendants of slaves and slave owners as they explore their 260-year-old relationship at Woodlands Plantation. *Shared History* is narrated by three of these descendants: myself; Rhonda Kearse, who is descended from Jim Rumph, a slave foreman who stayed on at Woodlands after the Civil War; and Charles Orr, who is descended from Isaac Nimmons, the coachman of Woodlands and William Gilmore Simms' personal manager. Nimmons left Woodlands after the war and purchased land nearby.

In the course of the project, I spent many days at the South Caroliniana Library. I am indebted to the library's extraordinary staff, who always knew more about what I was looking for than I did. Much of the research was done through conversations and interviews with the descendants of the families connected to Woodlands and in my mother's attic, which held a treasure of materials about life at Woodlands that was saved by my grandmother. These materials, specific to the lives of the slaves and their descendants, included photographs, letters, legal records, genealogies, and reports of daily life. They had never been available to the African-American families. I wondered how many other S.C. families, whose ancestors had owned slaves, might not also have this same kind of historical material—material stashed away in the attic that would be essential for African Americans researching their family roots and for scholars who use family records to tease out the details of slavery and its aftermath.



Llewellyn Rowe Hopkins (1902–1987), Elliott Manigault Jr. and Mary Simms Furman, Sallie Laboard (1847–1947), Jim Rumph (1810–1922), Bessie Laboard Brown (1905–2000), Simms and Rumph descendants read inscription on Jim Rumph's grave marker at Woodlands, Woodlands Plantation (1853), Louis Rumph and Albert Oliphant Jr. (1920–2004), George Rowe (1885–1955), Rhonda Kearse and Felicia Furman, William Gilmore Simms (1806–1870), Jim Rumph III (1900–1985) in wagon with Simms descendants, Jim Rumph II (1875–1937) with plow, descendants of Isaac Nimmons (circa 1910), Mary C. Simms Oliphant (1891–1988), Helen's store, Midway, S.C., where everybody gathered.

I hope *Shared History* will encourage others to explore the contents of their attics and, perhaps, through a donation to the South Caroliniana Library, make this important historical material available to families and other researchers.

Shared History aired on SC-ETV in February. For more information, visit www.sharedhistory.org.

Felicia Furman is a descendant of William Gilmore Simms, the last slave owner at Woodlands. She left South Carolina in 1978 and now lives in Boulder, Colo.

Furman began making films in her 40s with a mission to create high quality social culture and history documentaries for television and theatrical distribution. She is the producer of "Passing It On: A Tap Legacy" (1997 Denver International Film Festival and 1998 Dance on Camera festival) and documentaries on African-influenced religious practices in Cuba for the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race in America at the University of Colorado, Boulder, among other video projects.

A Century of Culinary History: The Wylma Wates South Carolina Cookbook Collection

By Craig Keeney

We often take the things we eat for granted. Broccoli, cheesecake, and yogurt are nearly ubiquitous in today's grocery stores. Have they not always been with us? In truth, many now familiar foods in our diet started life in this country the same way our ancestors did—as aliens in a suspicious environment. The foods listed above, for example, initially all were popular within an ethnic group before they found wider acceptance. In the American South, as elsewhere, a person nowadays can eat Hungarian goulash, Szechuan chicken, and tamale pie all within the same week and without having to scramble to find the proper ingredients. Such staggering variety, however, is but a recent phenomenon.

> "To Dress Turtle Fins: Put the fins of a turtle in a stew-pan; season with half an ounce of mace, a tea-spoonful of allspice and a few cloves, ground very fine. Squeeze the juice of one lemon over it, and add a gill of Madeira wine, a desert-spoonful of flour, a pint of water, a bunch of thyme and parsley. Let the fins smother in this, until sufficiently done, then add a teaspoon of colouring, and when dished up, garnish with balls." (p. 55)

A unique collection of cookbooks recently acquired by the Published Materials Division offers some glimpses of the extent to which Southern American cuisine has been transformed over the past century.

The Wylma Wates South Carolina Cookbook Collection spans a full century, the earliest book dating from 1901 and the most recent published in 2001. Wates began collecting cookbooks in earnest in the mid-1960s when, by her recollection, she purchased her first book out of necessity. As she traveled within South Carolina and throughout the country, however, her interest in cookbooks grew into a full-blown hobby. As tourists collect postcards, so Wates collected cookbooks from the places she visited. In 2005, she gave the library approximately 240 books published within or specific to South Carolina.

As several of these cookbooks demonstrate, African influences in Southern cooking were always present. The *Southern Cook Book*, compiled by the Interior Decoration Committee of the Woman's Department of South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition of 1901–1902, for example, includes recipes using okra and rice, both foods familiar to the descendants of African slaves. Colonial-era Southern slave owners were in fact known to favor slaves from West Africa on account of their experience and knowledge in cultivating rice. The *Carolina Housewife*, first published in 1847 and reprinted in 1963, includes a recipe for groundnut, or peanut, soup. Like okra, the peanut arrived in North America via Africa. (Portuguese traders from South America introduced it there in the 1500s.) Initially, white Southerners fed peanuts to their livestock, but during the food shortages brought on by the Civil War, the peanut caught on among Confederate and Union soldiers alike.

At a cursory glance, the collection on the whole appears to be a procession of recipes for such familiar Southern delicacies as cheese straws, cornbread, hominy, peach cobbler, and a variety of bean casseroles, pickled vegetables, and preserves. But these cookbooks also demonstrate the resourcefulness and frugality of Southern cooks. Of necessity, cooks supplemented their diet of beans, rice, and hominy with seafood and wildlife such as deer, raccoon, and squirrel. They also used brains, liver, tongue, and intestines.

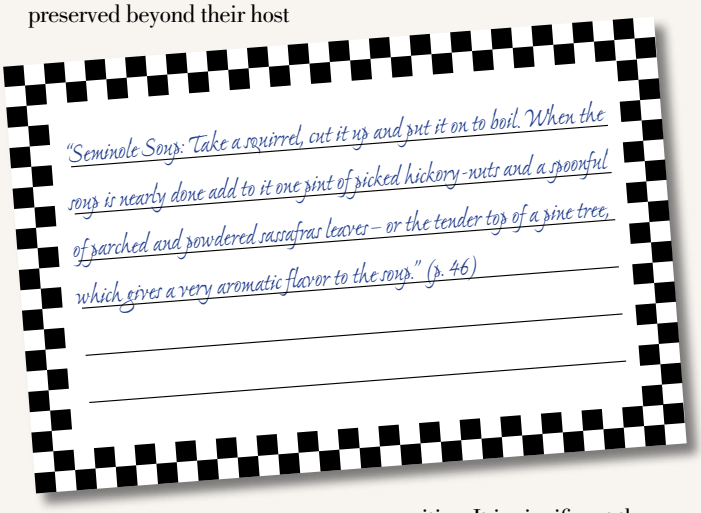
From our present vantage point, recipes such as that for calf's head soup (*Southern Cook Book*, p. 6) and roast leg of lamb with bananas (*Recipes from Old Cheraw*, p. 12) may appear strange and exotic, but a Southern gastronome of several generations ago would perhaps feel equally suspicious examining a contemporary cookbook. The reason is that many now familiar foods were once strange and unfamiliar to this region. Take for example, two wholly dissimilar foods: broccoli and cheesecake. Before the 1920s, broccoli was a delicacy among Italians from that nation's southern region, many of whom settled on the West Coast. It was unknown elsewhere. Only in the late 1920s did broccoli (often sold with instructions as to how to prepare it) reach an appreciative audience beyond the Italian-American enclaves of major cities. Cheesecake, a seasonal delicacy originating from Eastern Europe's Jewish communities, likewise began its career in this country from humble ethnic roots. In cookbooks from the Wylma Wates South Carolina Cookbook Collection, recipes for broccoli and cheesecake first appear in 1956 in *Delectable Dining*, compiled by the Women's Society of Christian Service of St. Andrews Methodist Church in Orangeburg, S.C.

> "Lamb's Head Soup: Prepare the head, and put to it two quarts of water, boil it until the head becomes so tender that the bones may be taken out. Then cut it into small pieces, and put them back into the pot; cut up, also, into small pieces, half of the heart and half of the liver, and add them. Season with pepper, salt, a little onion (chopped), a few herbs, turnip, carrot, and celery (chopped). Boil together over a slow fire for several hours, skimming well. If the water boils away too much, add more—which must be boiling." (p. 46)

In modern cookbooks, recipes for old-fashioned cakes, casseroles, and pies still abound, but truly, self-identified "Southern cuisine" is now a veritable smorgasbord of international flavors. For example,

Meet Me at the Garden Gate, a cookbook compiled in 2001 by the Junior League of Spartanburg, S.C., reads like an ethnic market's inventory list. It includes recipes for baklava (a pastry of Turkish origin usually filled with honey and nuts) and gazpacho (a cold tomato soup of Spanish origin) and embraces atypical Southern ingredients such as cilantro, feta cheese, gnocchi (potato dumplings of German-Italian origin), and wasabi (a condiment similar in potency to horseradish and often served with raw fish). In the modern South, as elsewhere, an adventurous person may savor the flavors of cultures the world over.

The cookbooks also serve a less obvious but no less important evidentiary purpose. Many books originate from small churches, civic groups, and schools about which little was recorded or preserved beyond their host communities. It is significant then that several cookbooks include biographical and historical sketches about the institutions and their communities. These sketches may be the only printed record ever produced about these organizations.



The Wylma Wates South Carolina Cookbook Collection is currently being processed, so not all titles appear yet in the library's catalog (http://libcat.csd.sc.edu). To peruse titles processed thus far, search the catalog by the author phrase "Wylma Wates South Carolina Cookbook Collection."

Recipes shown are reproduced in full from *Carolina Housewife*, 1963.

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Report from the Director

By Allen Stokes

The University South Caroliniana Society will hold its 70th annual meeting on Saturday, April 29, 2006. Dr. A.V. Huff, Furman University professor of history, will deliver the address. Of the title, "Violence in South Carolina: Political Assassination," Dr. Huff observed: "It sounds a little gruesome, but then we do have some rather gruesome aspects to our history!"

Your dues, endowment earnings, and direct gifts have enabled us to continue to make significant acquisitions in 2005, and you will have the opportunity to view selections from recent acquisitions at the reception at the South Caroliniana Library on annual meeting day. Library staff members are currently working on the narrative report of acquisitions that will be distributed to those who attend the meeting and mailed to those who are unable to attend.

The year 2006 is a time to celebrate milestone birthdays. In print and on screen and radio, we are reminded of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 250th and Benjamin Franklin's 300th birthday. This year is the 200th anniversary of the birth of South Carolina writer William Gilmore Simms, and while Simms will not command the national attention that is accorded Mozart and Franklin, this significant anniversary of the birth of South Carolina's most prolific writer was celebrated at the meeting of the William Gilmore Simms Society, April 6–8. An exhibit and reception at the South Caroliniana Library on Thursday focused on conservation of Simms' literary manuscripts, and papers on Simms and his writings were presented on Friday and Saturday.

Recent publications of interest by the University of South Carolina Press include *A Sober Desire for History: William Gilmore Simms as Historian* by Sean Busick and *A City Laid Waste: The Capture, Sack, and Destruction of the City of Columbia* by David Aiken. The History Press of Charleston published an edition of *The Cassique of Kiawah* with a new introduction by Sean Busick.

New books about South Carolina and by S.C. authors appeared at a fast and furious pace in 2005. We honored five of these authors with a book signing at the South Caroliniana Library on Nov. 30. Honorees and their books were Nancy Rhyne, *Before and After Freedom: Lowcountry Folklore and Narratives*; Katherine Chaddock, *Flings, Frolics, and Forever Afters: A Single Woman's Guide to Romance After Fifty*; Fritz Hamer, *Charleston Reborn: A Southern City, Its Navy Yard, and World War II*; Harvey Teal, *The South Carolina Dispensary and Embossed South Carolina Whiskey Bottles and Jugs, 1865–1915*; and a new edition of Charles Cauthen's *South Carolina Goes to War, 1860–1865*, edited by J. Tracy Power.

For years we at the South Caroliniana Library have attempted to maintain as complete a collection as possible of all S.C. publications. The quantity of current Caroliniana that is available today is almost staggering, and the number of new titles is in part attributable to the offerings of Arcadia and the History Press, both of which are located in Charleston. In addition, the University of South Carolina Press continues to offer a superb list of Caroliniana titles.

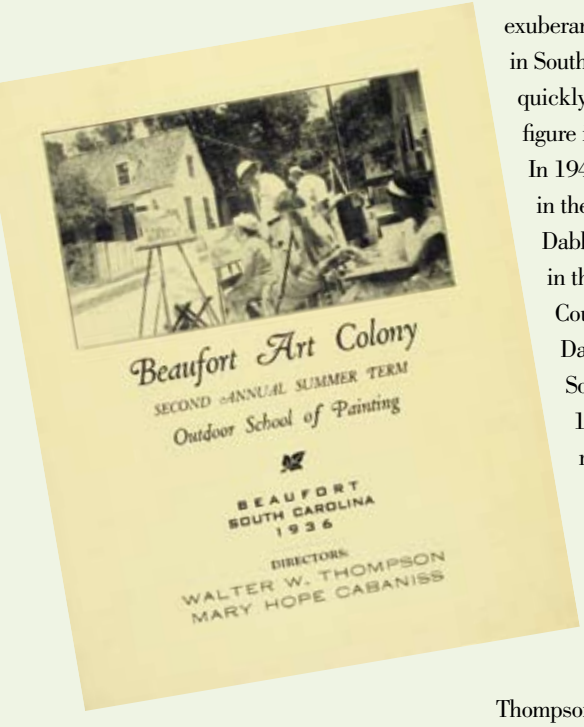
Walter Thompson and the Beaufort Art Colonies

By Peggy Gardner

Coming to the South Caroliniana Library by means of its connection to the Dabbs family of Sumter County, the Walter Whitcomb Thompson Papers provide lively insight into the history of art in South Carolina. In the mid 1930s, many artists found retreat and camaraderie in the Beaufort area while they learned the fine art of outdoor oil painting from one of the country's most respected artists. After visiting and being inspired by the region's distinctive natural beauty and peaceful atmosphere, Walter Thompson (1882–1948) decided it was the perfect place to open his next art school.

Before choosing South Carolina as his home, Thompson had exhibited his lyrical marine and landscape studies in major cities throughout the United States and had established painting schools in New York, California, Oklahoma, Florida, and Georgia. A member of the American Artists Professional League and many other art associations, he had been listed among the 12 Best American Painters by the Macbeth Galleries in New York.

The Beaufort Art School shared the Lafayette Building with several other businesses.



Thompson's talent and exuberance thrilled artists in South Carolina, and he quickly became a prominent figure in the state's art scene. In 1940, Thompson appears in the guest book of the Dabbs home "Road's End in the Pines" in Sumter County, where Elizabeth Dabbs and her sister Sophie had lived since 1937. The detailed book reveals that the Dabbs home was a magnet for artists, musicians, and other adventuresome souls. Elizabeth, an accomplished poet and artist, and Walter Thompson were married in 1942.

The Thompsons' joyful letters and scrapbooks show how they wove art into all aspects of their lives at Road's End. During their six-year marriage, Walter had five major exhibitions of his paintings. In March 1947, the Pink House Galleries in Charleston gave him a one-man show. Its opening had a steady three-hour stream of visitors. After this opening, Walter Thompson wrote of how he was delighted by the gracious support of Alice Ravenel Huger Smith and by Elizabeth O'Neill Verner's compliment on his mastery of "giving distance to several strong color values" in his painting "Crop Game," a feat she claimed she had not been able to attain.

The Thompson collection has extensive correspondence and detailed records about the operations of the Beaufort area art schools. Thompson and codirector Mary Hope Cabaniss, an artist and educator from Savannah, organized the first of these S.C. schools in 1934. It was held on the Marvin plantation, near White Hall, and was called the Combahee River Art Colony. The *Savannah Evening Press* noted, "Creature comforts have not been neglected in the economy of the colony. There are camping accommodations in an old remodeled rice barn, well screened throughout, with hot and cold showers, electric lights, and other accommodations, including splendid meals prepared by a plantation cook … fishing and boating facilities, and a tennis court."

The next summer the outdoor school of painting moved to Beaufort, where students were supplied room and board at the famous tabby-walled Gold Eagle Tavern for $70 a month. The Beaufort-Brevard Art Colonies offered an additional session during the month of August in the mountains of western North Carolina. A letter from Thompson states the mountain school was not successful "due to an outbreak of infantile paralysis" in the area (Oct. 8, 1935).

In fall 1935, the directors opened the Beaufort Art School, to continue their instruction year-round. A letter drafted to prospective students on Dec. 24, 1935, advertises "elementary … as well as advanced courses in drawing, painting, and color analysis leading up to more specialized work in figure, portrait, landscape painting, and commercial illustration." The school operated on the second floor of the Lafayette Building in downtown Beaufort. Walker Evans, while working for the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration, captured the multifaceted nature of the building at that point in time with his close-up of the many signs attached to its facade.

Mrs. Thompson with her husband's portrait

In July 1936, Thompson was asked to volunteer his writing skills to provide architectural descriptions of Beaufort area houses for the Works Progress Administration's *American Guide*. He subsequently was hired as assistant director of the WPA's Federal Art Program in South Carolina and worked in this capacity until 1939. During this time Thompson continued operating the art schools and also taught in the Beaufort public school system.

Even before his busy days during the Depression, Thompson struggled with the realities of financing his artistic calling.

Lafayette Building

Meeting the Dabbses helped him devote more energy to painting and exhibiting his work for the last years of his life.

After his death, Elizabeth Thompson continued to live at Road's End with her sister and organized several exhibitions of her husband's work, often donating original works or proceeds from their sales to S.C. organizations. Elizabeth Thompson died in 1975.

"New Old View of the South Caroliniana Library Discovered" Revisited

Old View of South Caroliniana Library

In the fall 1999 issue of *Caroliniana Columns*, Tom Johnson, the library's retired assistant director and field archivist, wrote about a new postcard added to the collection that depicted a view of the South Caroliniana Library (SCL) that no one on staff had seen before. He asked that anyone with information on the artist, James F. Murray, to contact the library. This request languished until recently, when another copy of the image came into the library. The new image is also a halftone print, but it measures about 9 by 14 inches and is hand-colored.

A Google search on Murray uncovered some biographical information on a James Francis Murray (1899–1990), who lived in Massachusetts and worked as a newspaper illustrator. His work is described as realist with subjects ranging from townscapes to architecture to historical events, mainly of New England. Murray worked as an illustrator, painter, and printmaker.

While staff members have not been able to compare signatures of James Francis Murray with James F. Murray, it seems likely they are the same person.

If anyone is able to contribute further to the library's information on Murray, please contact Beth Bilderback at 803-777-7090 or bilderbk@gwm.sc.edu.

University South Caroliniana Society 70th Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 29, 2006

Guest Speaker: Dr. A.V. Huff, Furman University

"Violence in South Carolina: Political Assassination"

Dargan Papers Reveal 19th-Century Discovery

By Graham Duncan

While working recently among the papers of John Julius Dargan, the staff of the Manuscripts Division found references to a rather unusual discovery concerning a 19th-century American missionary to Africa, John Leighton Wilson.

Wilson contributed enormously to the Western world's understanding of both the geography and culture of the African continent. He was born near Salem in what is today Sumter County on March 25, 1809, and graduated from Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., in 1829. In January 1831, he entered the Presbyterian Seminary at Columbia (which had been founded by his uncle Robert W. James) and became a member of the institution's first graduating class. After ordination, in September 1833 Wilson made his first overseas voyage, a five-month exploratory tour of West Africa. He married Jane Elizabeth Bayard in May 1834, and shortly afterward they sailed out of Baltimore bound for his African post at Cape Palmas, in present-day Liberia. Wilson's 18 years in Cape Palmas and in present-day Gabon were remarkable in many ways. Included among his achievements were a successful petition sent to the British government to request increased efforts to suppress the transatlantic slave trade and the compilation of grammars and dictionaries for several West African languages, into which he translated the Gospels and a number of Christian tracts. His most unusual contribution, however, may have been in the field of zoology—in late 1846, Wilson "discovered" the Western Lowland Gorilla.

John Leighton Wilson

While this species was well-known to the native Mpongwe as the *enge-ena* and may have been sighted as early as 470 B.C. by Hanno of Carthage during his explorations of the West African coast, its existence had not been substantiated by Western naturalists prior to the mid-1840s. Wilson's role in the process of cataloging and describing this unknown animal, however, was soon overshadowed by the publication of "*Troglodytes gorilla,* a New Species of Orang from the Gabon River" in December 1847 by Thomas Savage and Jeffries Wyman and the exploits of French-born writer Paul Du Chaillu, who shot and preserved specimens for scientific study in the 1850s. Through the efforts of Colonel John Julius Dargan, Wilson's contribution was finally recognized in 1904.

Dargan, a native of Darlington, S.C., served as a delegate to the International Peace Congress in Boston in October 1904, and while there he convinced the Boston Society of Natural History to recognize Wilson as the correct donor of the society's original gorilla skeleton. The discrepancy in the discovery occurred in April 1847 when Savage was forced to stop at Wilson's mission due to illness, whereupon Wilson showed him the skull of a male gorilla. Savage immediately sent word to his colleague Jeffries Wyman at the Harvard Medical School, and the two coauthored the above mentioned article, which appeared in the *Boston Journal of Natural History*. When the specimens were sent to Boston, they were misidentified as being donated by Savage.

Among the Dargan papers at SCL is the transcript of a letter from Charles W. Johnson, curator of the Boston Society of Natural History to Colonel Dargan. In it Johnson thanks Dargan for his work and acknowledges that in the letter sent to the society with the specimen in 1847 Savage indicates that "Mr. Wilson showed me a skull represented by the natives to be that of a monkey-like animal, remarkable for its size, ferocity, and habits." Johnson also assures Dargan that he will amend the accession record to indicate that the gorilla skull was "received from the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions through Dr. J.L. Wilson, December 1847."

Celebrations Mark William Gilmore Simms' Bicentennial Year

By Nicholas Meriwether

To celebrate the bicentennial observance of the birth of noted 19th-century South Carolinian William Gilmore Simms, the South Caroliniana Library hosted a conference on Simms' work and his relationship with South Carolina and the South, April 6–8. The conference featured an exhibit of conserved items from the Charles Carroll Simms Collection of the Papers of William Gilmore Simms as well as presentations from a variety of scholars known for their work on Simms and the broader circles in which he moved and in many cases helped define. Some conference participants included David Aiken, Sean Busick, James Kibler, Jeff Rogers, and Kevin Collins.

William Gilmore Simms

Some of those broader circles in which Simms moved will be explored in a second academic conference, scheduled for later in April in Philadelphia, and celebrated at the last gathering in June, close to Simms's ancestral home outside of Midway, S.C. titled "Communities of Culture: The Geography of Americanism," the two academic conferences will emphasize Simms' contributions to local, regional, and national culture. Simms shared an interest in geography with Young America, a concern that also ties him to Philadelphia-based actor Edwin Forrest, whose connection with Simms will be a major theme in the Philadelphia conference. Simms' publishing connections with that city also reveal his importance to those who may not realize the extent of his stature outside of his native state.

Any discussion of Simms must grapple with the impact of the Civil War on his declining literary fortunes, and both conferences are featuring papers devoted to assessing Simms' centrality in the debates over sectionalism. Other themes include comparisons of Simms' work with Herman Melville and George Frederick Holmes, Simms' treatment of the border, his work as a historian, and his writing during the Civil War.

In June, Simms fans will gather as guests of the Barnwell County Museum and Historical Society for a program culminating in the unveiling of a bust commemorating this multi-talented man of letters.

Born in Charleston on April 17, 1806, Simms is perhaps best known to scholars today for his magisterial correspondence, but during his life he was one of the country's most prolific and popular novelists, as well as a fine poet and tireless editor.

With the support of the University South Caroliniana Society and the Edwin Forrest Endowment, the William Gilmore Simms Society hopes that the celebrations this year will stimulate more interest in this neglected, fascinating figure. "It is a sad irony that Simms' reputation has never regained the heights it enjoyed before the Civil War," explained Dr. David Newton, president of the Simms Society. "But with every conference like this, the quality and quantity of the scholarship done on him increases, and we can imagine a time when historians will say that events such as these portended his renaissance."

Report from the President

By Steve Griffith

It is an exciting time to be associated with the University South Caroliniana Society. The society exists to support the South Caroliniana Library, and today the library has never looked better. There is a new system to heat and cool the building. Restoration work has been completed on the windows, and much of the building's interior has been painted. It probably looks as good or better than at any time in its long and distinguished history. If you have not been in the library recently, you should come for a visit just to see for yourself how fine the library looks.

The society provides funds for two main purposes. The first is to purchase papers, books, pamphlets, and other materials that have research value and enhance the already spectacular collections. The society also provides funds for exhibits, symposia, book signings, and special programs. Over the years we have had a distinguished group of writers and historians who have presented programs at the library.

This year we sponsored an event on Feb. 22 at Cambridge Hall in Greenwood to present an exhibit of the papers of William Jennings Bryan Dorn. We had an exhibit in the foyer of the library on Dorn and thought it would be appropriate to take it to Greenwood. Other programs will be in Spartanburg and at the library in the fall.

We encourage members to invite friends and neighbors to join the University South Caroliniana Society. You simply fill out the form and return it to the library. We will send information on the library and the society to the person(s) nominated. We look forward to seeing many of you at the annual meeting on April 29 with a reception at the library beginning at 11 a.m. followed by lunch at Capstone House. For those who wish, we will provide transportation from the library to Capstone House and back.

Digital Technology Improves Access to Collections

By Elizabeth West

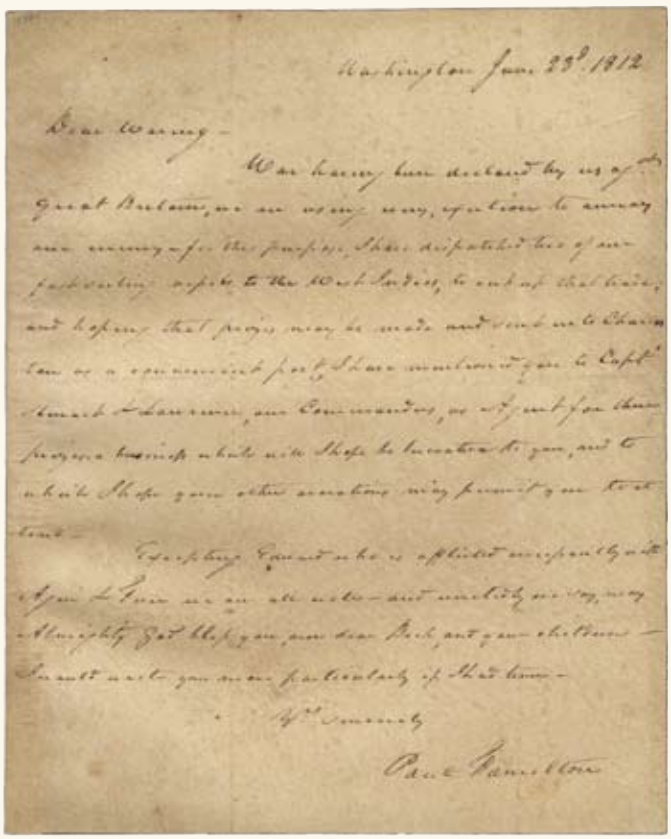
More and more frequently, the staff members at the South Caroliniana Library hear the question, "Why don't you scan everything and put it online?" In this age of instant access, it may seem like an obvious solution; however, most patrons don't realize the tremendous amount of time and effort that must go into creating a digital collection. Scanning is only a small part of the process. The size, condition, and format of the materials dictate the method of digital capture. Options include flatbed scanners, overhead-book scanners, and digital cameras. Once a scan is made, information (metadata) about each individual image is entered into a database to place the materials in context, to aid in keyword searching, and to identify resources. The process is similar to cataloging on an item-level basis. Policies and procedures must also be developed for long-term maintenance to ensure that the digital collection remains accessible regardless of changes in hardware and software.

Web page for William Drayton Rutherford Papers

Despite its complex and time-consuming nature, digitization of collections can offer important benefits, particularly that of improving access. The library is fortunate to be able to draw upon the resources of the University Libraries' Digital Activities Center for the development of its digital collections. The center provides assistance for the scanning process, the development of metadata standards, and the creation of the collection's Web page.

So far, the library has created four digital collections, and more are being planned. Collections are selected based on several factors, including the condition of the collection, how often it's used, whether reformatting will improve access, and if online access will generate additional interest locally, regionally, or nationally. The initial projects were drawn from three departments—Published Materials, the Manuscripts Division, and University Archives—and cover three formats: maps, manuscripts, and images.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps Collection (www.sc.edu/library/digital/collections/sanborn.html) was the first project and the largest to date, taking two years to complete. Although the maps were microfilmed, the film is black and white and thus lacks the color-coding information on the originals. Many of the original maps are in fragile condition and thus have restricted access. By scanning the original maps in full color and placing them online, access was greatly improved and the need to retrieve originals was virtually eliminated. Originating in the late 18th century, fire insurance maps provided structural and urban environmental information for insurance underwriters. Today, these maps are a valuable research tool for architectural historians, environmentalists, genealogists, historians, historic preservationists, and urban historical geographers.



June 23, 1812, letter from Paul Hamilton Digital Collection

The Paul Hamilton Collection (www.sc.edu/library/digital/collections/paulhamilton.html) was the first manuscript collection to be converted to digital format. This small collection of letters written by U.S. Secretary of the Navy Paul Hamilton documents concerns and developments during the months leading up to the War of 1812. Hamilton shares diplomatic news and his anticipation of war in his letters to his son-in-law, Col. Morton A. Waring, of Charleston. The national appeal of the collection was a key factor in its selection for digitization.

South Caroliniana Library Reading Room, 1940s

The William Drayton Rutherford papers (www.sc.edu/library/digital/collections/rutherford.html) consist of 153 manuscripts dating from 1858 with Rutherford's courtship of Sallie Henderson Fair of

Construction of McKissick Library in 1939

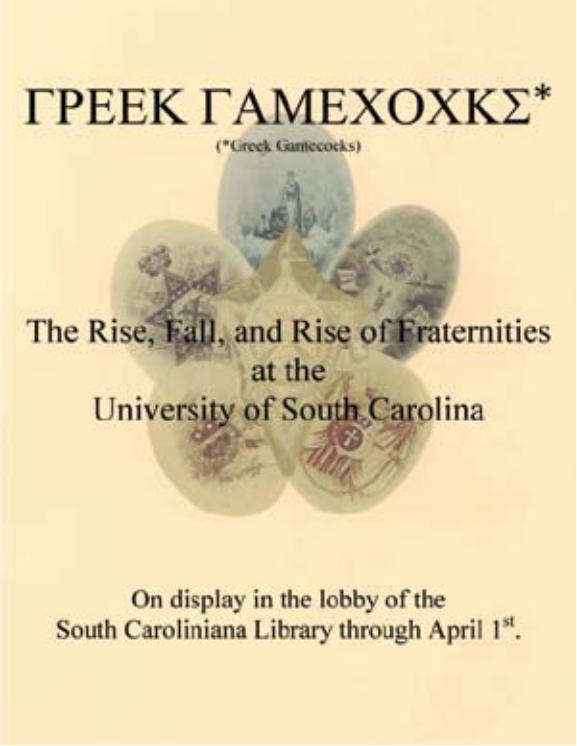
Construction of the Towers ("Honeycomb") residence hall, 1966

Newberry. The collection is interesting not only for Rutherford's accounts of his experiences in the Confederate Army, but also for the letters from his wife detailing activities that were undertaken to support the war effort back home.

Coal-heating plant, 1940s

The USC Buildings and Grounds Collection (www.sc.edu/library/digital/collections/uscbdgsgrds.html) is an ongoing digital project of the University Archives. The collection documents the evolution of the University's physical plant from a handful of buildings on the Horseshoe to the sprawling, modern research campus of today. Academic buildings, residence halls, athletic facilities, and gardens are part of the collection, as are some facilities, such as the Old Field House, that no longer exist. The initial phase of the project focused on reformatting a collection of oversized negatives dating from the late 1920s to the 1980s. Few of the negatives had accompanying photographic prints, making them difficult to access. Scanning the negatives and placing them online dramatically improves access to rarely used images of the University. Future phases of the project will expand the visual documentation of the University.

These four projects are just the beginning. The South Caroliniana Library considers digital technology to be an important tool in improving access to its collections.



"Greek Gamecocks: The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Fraternities at the University of South Carolina" was on display in the lobby of the South Caroliniana Library in March. Produced by the University Archives, the photo exhibit documented the establishment of fraternities at South Carolina College in the late 1800s, their underground activities during a 30-year ban from state-supported colleges and universities, and the return of Greek-letter societies after the ban was lifted.

The South Carolina State Legislature in 1885, about 10 years after the end of Reconstruction

Memorials

In Memory of:	Contribution from:
Mrs. Betty Edgar	Mrs. Robin Copp
	Mr. Henry G. Fulmer
	Dr. William C. Hine
	Dr. Peter Coclanis
Mr. Al Todd	Mrs. Robin Copp
Mr. Walker Elliott Rowe	Mr. and Mrs. David Hiott
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