

Exhibit Reviews

"William Mackenzie: America's First Book Collector," The Library Company of Philadelphia, November 9, 1994-March 24, 1995.*

William Mackenzie left virtually no personal papers when he died in 1828. His legacy, slightly more than seven thousand volumes bequeathed to the Library Company of Philadelphia, was the largest single donation in the institution's history at the time. It encouraged other collectors, such as artist James Cox, to donate their collections to the library. Mackenzie's bequest helped to establish the Library Company as the largest public library in the country until the mid-nineteenth century. Perhaps most important, Mackenzie's interest in books as artifacts shaped the history of book collecting in America. This exhibit highlighted Mackenzie's achievements as a collector, and neatly bridged the gap between the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century collector and the contemporary exhibit-goer, by inviting the viewer to consider those aspects of individual volumes which make them technologically, socially, politically, and artistically significant.

Little is known about Mackenzie's personal life, and most of that knowledge is second-hand. The primary accounts of his life and character appear in an introduction to the catalogue of the library's collections published the year after (and largely as a result of) Mackenzie's bequest, and in the descriptions of his friend James Abercrombie, a classmate of Mackenzie's at the Philadelphia Academy and an associate minister of Christ Church. Mackenzie was born in Philadelphia in 1758, attended the Philadelphia Academy, and was employed in the offices of John Ross, a prominent shipping merchant. An inheritance received in his thirties allowed him the leisure and the funds with which to pursue his personal interests. Mackenzie was known to be a philanthropist, and belonged to charitable organizations including the Society for the Relief of Poor, Aged and Infirm Masters of Ships, the Female Bible Society, and the St. Andrew's Society.

The collection Mackenzie amassed includes many books common to the libraries of substantial citizens of the time. This exhibit's primary purpose, however, was to showcase the books which reveal Mackenzie as a discerning collector of incunables (books printed before 1501), scholarly editions of works both ancient and contemporary, reference materials, first editions, and political tracts. In spite of the fact that Mackenzie did not travel extensively, and lived his entire life on the same block (on Second Street near the New Market), he exhibited a lively appreciation for European printing, engraving, and binding. He collected French imprints extensively, and many of the volumes in his collection show evidence of late-eighteenth-century British and Continental ownership.

The exhibit was arranged thematically, with sections centered around Mackenzie's life, sources for his books, incunables, original editions, and eighteenth-

Courtesy Library Company of Philadelphia.



William Mackenzie, painted in 1829 by John Neagle.

century printed materials. This arrangement allowed the copy to direct the viewer's attention to those features of the texts which made the books and pamphlets important to Mackenzie as a collector. Many of these items remain significant to the contemporary bibliophile or historian for the same reasons: for example, Mackenzie purchased volumes at auctions of the libraries of other famous collectors such as Virginia estate owner William Byrd II, and acquired numerous books from the library of Benjamin Franklin.

Curator Karen Nipps explained that many of the exhibit's texts were selected for inclusion for their visual impact. The incunables are especially notable in this respect; volumes such as the first Bible printed in Italy (produced by Sweynheym and Pannartz in 1471), and a 1476 edition of Pliny's *Historia Naturale* are arresting in the sheer beauty of the vellum, the type, and the illuminations. The elegant presentation of these volumes highlighted their beauty as physical objects. The label copy skillfully drew attention to the importance of binding detail, printing technique, and of provenance in understanding the significance of individual volumes, encouraging the viewer to reexamine them in light of this additional information. Engravings of the interior of the Library Company of Mackenzie's time, and scenes of the street on which he lived, provided further visual context for the consideration of the books.

The exhibit labels presented a quantity of information unusual for a relatively small exhibit. The availability of a flyer detailing Mackenzie's life and his significance as a collector, and of a checklist of the items in the exhibition which includes most of the label copy, were therefore valuable additions to the display. While the exhibit is now over, the supplementary materials will continue to be useful as an overview of Mackenzie and his collection, and as a summary of the exhibit. Like the catalogue and label copy still available from the 1986 cooperative exhibit "The Larder Invaded," these materials have valuable information to offer those who never attended the exhibit. The volumes themselves remain available for examination in the Library Company's collections.

In keeping with the intention of providing both a broader perspective of book collecting, and information useful beyond the confines of the building and after the exhibit's tenure, the Library Company supplemented the exhibit's presentation of Mackenzie's life and selected items from his collection with a series of public lectures held at the Library Company. These lectures introduced attendees to the history of book collecting in Philadelphia, to the evolution of printing and illumination in Europe, and to the history of the printed book in general. Behind-the-scenes tours informed professionals and the public about the problems of conserving rare books, and about how these materials are handled at the Library Company.

This exhibit went beyond presenting Mackenzie in the context of Philadelphia's long history of book collecting, and illuminating the early years of the city's great libraries and institutions. The exhibit effectively demonstrated the value of the books he collected as artifacts, both for Mackenzie and for the contemporary viewer. As the flyer accompanying the exhibit notes, "the books he so thoughtfully assembled into

Courtesy Library Company of Philadelphia.



A Mackenzie brochure: Jean Lemaire de Belges. Les illustrations de Gaule . . . Paris, 1521.

one library have remained together for subsequent generations of historians and collectors to study and admire. The books themselves remain the monument to the man."

Monique Bourque, *Francis C. Wood Institute, College of Physicians of Philadelphia*,

*The author thanks Karen Nipps for her generosity in providing information about Mackenzie and this exhibit. Any errors are entirely my own.

"Coal People: Contemporary Images of Northern Appalachia"

James W. Harris, Photographer

Travelling Exhibition. March 14, 1995-April 11, 1995, University Museum, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA. May 1, 1995-July 14, 1995, District 2, United Mine Workers of America, Ebensburg, PA. September 25, 1995-October 1, 1995, International Convention, United Mine Workers of America, Miami, FL. Exhibit available on loan from photographer.

Having taken to heart the admonition of Alfred Stieglitz that a photographer should never have to leave his own backyard to find something worthy of his interest, James Harris has produced a stunning photo-documentary of the lives and work of the people of the Northern Appalachian coal region. The exhibition was funded by a Visual Arts Fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and grants from the Pennsylvania Humanities Council and Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

"Coal People" presents approximately 85 black and white images arranged in nine sections. The black and white photography lends a classic historical tone to the contemporary images which were all taken since 1991. Organized around the decline of the coal industry in western Pennsylvania, Harris unflinchingly portrays the hardships that deindustrialization has imposed upon generations of people who have drawn their identity and livelihood from the black gold within the northern Appalachians. Avoiding the extremes of romanticism or pathos, Harris' photographs of the commonplace of everyday life present a humane portrait that underscores the dignity and perseverance of these people of coal as they struggle to maintain their culture and economic security.

The opening section of the exhibit contains photographs taken in 1991 in the small coal town, or "patch," of Iselin, Indiana County. The accompanying text panels contain portions of interviews conducted at the time of the photos, in which elderly residents talked of the early days of mining in the 1920's and the years after World War II when their town was booming. Iselin sets the tone for the exhibition, revealing in the faces of its residents both a sense of pride in their culture and a sense of what it means to outlive the economic viability of one's community.

The exhibition's second section consists of photographs taken in and around Greenwich Mine, Indiana County. The initial images, taken as Harris joined a work

crew underground, along with the accompanying text panels, explain the process of mining, while the latter part of the section follows the closing of the Greenwich Mine and the attendant loss of 500 jobs.

Ethnicity provides the topic of the next section, with particular focus on the region's Hungarian-Americans. The section also includes several photographs from Harris' May 1992 visit to an underground mine in Pecs, Hungary.

The fourth section depicts the mine workers' struggle amidst the realities of mine closings and layoffs. Included are images from area food banks and the UMW Unemployment Assistance Fund as well as photographs taken of western Pennsylvania miners as they journeyed to the August 31, 1991, Solidarity Day in Washington, D.C., where they joined hundreds of thousands of workers in a march for labor rights.

Section five moves the exhibition's focus to the small Cambria County town of Patton. Here Harris directed the photography unit in IUP's Oral History and Visual Ethnography Field School. Subsequent field schools conducted in the Cambria County communities of Nanty Glo and Portage provided rich material for images of daily life in these communities as they face the economic devastation of the collapse of the coal industry.

Section six provides an intimate view of Wilfred "Dip" Conrad, a 101-year-old resident of Patton. Harris follows Conrad on his rounds as self-appointed caretaker of an unattended cemetery in Glenhope. Text panels report Conrad's earthy wisdom and cite an editorial written for the local newspaper by Conrad himself—"Only God knows why I am still alive. I am thankful for a clear sound mind."—ten days before his death in November 1993, at the age of 102. The final photograph in the section records Conrad's final resting place in Chest Springs.

The following section records activities surrounding the 1993 selective strike called by the United Mine Workers of America. This strike involved many miners in the central and western Pennsylvania region, and Harris records the impact of the strike on workers and their families. Photographs include local demonstrations and meetings, including images of UMW President Richard Trumka and Vice-President Cecil Roberts, and Jesse Jackson as they lent their support to the cause.

Section eight captures the closing of two area mines, Luceme 8 and 9, in late 1994. Photographs include images taken of workers on their last day at the mother mine, and at a paneling session several days later as the laid-off miners apply for other work and receive information about unemployment benefits and area food banks.

The final section of the exhibition contains a series of moving images of Oreste Martini, a 101-year-old miner from Homer City, Indiana County. One particularly moving photograph captures a moment of surprising tenderness between union president Richard Trumka and Martini. As Trumka knelt before Martini to present him with a union pin honoring his eighty-two years of service, Martini gently stroked the president's cheek. Trumka apologized that the union made nothing higher than a sixty year pin. Someone in the audience urged Trumka—"Give him two!"

The educational content of the exhibition is greatly enhanced by the accompanying 135-page book, which bears the same title as the exhibit. *Coal People* contains approximately fifty images, a forward by Professor of Photography Ronald Juliette, five essays written by historians of the region, and a concluding essay by James Harris. The essays, which range in topic from the development of the coal towns, the role of women in coal communities, deindustrialization, the 1993 coal strike, and a portrait of a miner drawn from an oral history, provide a historical context for the photographs. Harris' essay, which includes thumbnail photos and text, takes the reader through the events and subjects of the exhibit as experienced by the photographer.

Documentary photography at its best provides the viewer with an empathetic avenue to its subject. Harris' photographs, particularly those of people, are strikingly candid. In addition to the photos themselves, the text panels which accompany the exhibit not only provide useful information, they also draw the viewer into the world of the photographer and his subject. Written largely in the first person, the text presents Harris' deeply emotional connection to his subjects and his passionate commitment to humanistic values. Taken as a whole, "Coal People" is both personal and universal, compelling the viewer to reconsider his or her understanding of the human condition.

The exhibition is available for showing by arrangement with the photographer. The exhibit includes 65 framed pieces. In addition to the black and white photographs are several drawings and sketched representations of these images by Harris' mother, Margaret Harris. The frames are finished black oak and natural cherry. Outer dimensions of the framed pieces are 16x20 and 20x24. Actual photographs range in size from 8x10 to 11x14 and are ready to hang.

The exhibition book and exhibition posters are also available from the photographer. Books are priced at \$15 and posters at \$5. Profits from the sale of the book and poster benefit The United Mine Workers' of America Unemployment Assistance Fund located in Indiana, Pennsylvania. Checks may be made out to James Harris, or for a tax deductible donation, to UMWA Unemployment Assistance Fund.

For information or orders, write James W. Harris, Department of History, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, Pennsylvania 15705.
Elizabeth Cocke, *Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

Photo by James W. Harris



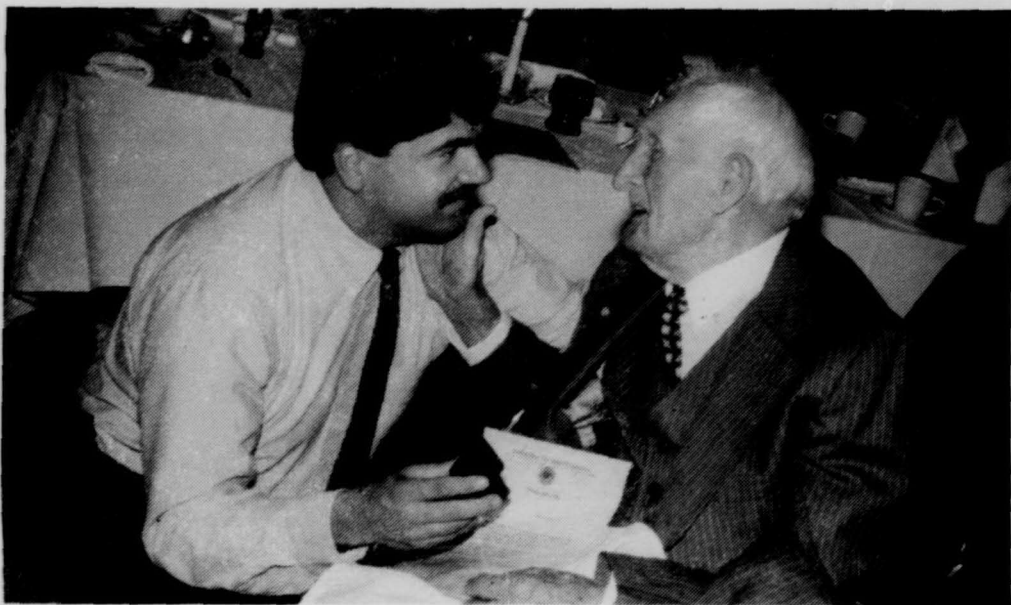
The closing of the Lucerne Mines in 1994 brought the total number of working miners in Indiana County below 1,700. When I began photographing this project in 1991 there were 3,500 miners working in Indiana County; in 1980 there were 5,600. The night before the closing of Lucerne 8, I called the President of Local Union 3458 and caught him before he was leaving for "hoot-owl," the last time at his mother-mine. I told him I was interested in photographing the workers coming off their last shift, but I didn't think the company would allow it. He said to show up. "The worst they could do is throw you off the site." After a few photographs of the men and women on their final shift, I was indeed, thrown off.

Photo by James W. Harris



Harry Miller, who passed away in 1994, was a pensioner and member of UMWA L.U. 1257. Harry and his wife, Mary D, were devoted volunteers to the UMWUAF food bank. Mary D continues her work with the fund, while seeking black lung benefits as a widow.

Photo by James W. Harris



At a banquet commemorating the 105th anniversary of the UMWA, Richard Trumka, President of UMWA International recognized Oreste Martini of Homer City for his 83 years as a union member. While presenting a pin to Mr. Martini, Trumka apologized that the UMWA doesn't make anything more than a sixty-year pin. Someone in the crowd hailed out, "Give him two!"

Photo by James W. Harris



Ian, the son of Bob and Cindy Uher of Indiana County, exhibits the sign he made for the Solidarity March '91. Bob Uher is a miner at the Lucerne Extension, L.U. 488.

Historical Gems at La Salle University

The next time you're in Philadelphia, or even if you live there, take the Broad Street line to the next-to-last stop north, Olney Avenue. Walk west four blocks on Olney, and you will find La Salle University's attractive campus, which has at least three features of interest to historians of Pennsylvania: the Connelly Library's Special Collections; Belfield, country home of painter Charles Willson Peale; and the University Art Museum.

La Salle's Special Collections house the world's largest collection of "Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War." They include fiction, poetry, comic books, pamphlets, flyers, film (over six hundred titles), and miscellaneous items such as board and video games, and works of art including posters, photos, and sketches. Filmscripts and multiple editions of novels are collected so students of popular culture can trace development and transformations of images and ideas. Of particular interest is material on the planning of the Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The collection now totals over six thousand items, and is beginning to include materials from Vietnam now that its relations with the United States are becoming normal. The collection can be accessed on Telnet.

The Vietnam collection was begun in 1986 by John S. Baky, now director of the library, a former Vietnam veteran and graduate of Columbia University's library school. He will give serious researchers a warm welcome; advanced students may use the collection with a letter from their professor stating the nature of the project. Every effort is made to maintain flexible hours to fit researchers' schedules. Telephone 215-951-1286, Fax 215-951-1595, E-mail baky@lasalle.edu. or write to him at the Connelly Library, Twentieth and Olney Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19141.

Smaller units in the Special Collections include materials on "Prose Writers of the Twentieth Century Who Have Converted to Catholicism," "Alternate Formats of the Book," autographed books of poetry by contemporary poets, and a collection of materials on the "Japanese Tea Ceremony" — La Salle is perhaps the only university in the United States offering a course specifically on this.

"The Germantowniana Collection" is especially relevant to La Salle's campus. Belfield, the country cottage bought in 1810 by Charles Willson Peale — parts of it date to 1708 — is on La Salle's campus and holds the president's and other offices. Many of Peale's beautiful surrounding gardens are still in tact, and some of the out-buildings also survive. Peale intended the estate as a rural equivalent of his city museum which people would visit for instruction. In 1826, the grounds were purchased by Logan Fisher, who in turn, conveyed it to his daughter Sarah when she married William Wister. Thus, Belfield became the seat of a family which introduced cricket to America and included novelist Owen Wister, author of *The Virginian*, and Mary Channing Wister, founder of the nation's first women's civic club and a greatly-admired Progressive reformer. Papers relating to the history of Belfield and its use as a working farm until the 1960s, when La Salle purchased the property, are housed in

the Special Collections. Researchers may also use a microfilm edition of the Peale Papers edited by Lillian Miller and a good collection of works on Peale.

The University Art Museum, founded in 1976 and still directed by Brother Daniel Burke, includes a Rembrandt Peale self-portrait and works by Benjamin West, Henry Ossawa Tanner (*Mary*), and Thomas Eakins (*Major Manuel Waldteufel*) in a splendidly lit and arranged collection of nearly two hundred paintings, etchings, prints, and drawings by major European and American artists. A fine catalogue of the collection, which is arranged by centuries beginning with the sixteenth, has been prepared by curator Caroline Wistar. The museum is open from 11-4 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, and from 2-4 p.m. on Sundays during the academic year. Call 215-951-1221 for hours at other times.

Two paintings I found especially interesting are reproduced here by kind permission of Brother Burke and Ms. Wistar. The first, *Lager Beer Saloon*, was painted by Christian Schuessele (1824/26-1879) almost immediately on his arrival in Pennsylvania from Alsace in 1851. Exhibited at the Franklin Institute, it received a First Premium award. It was pronounced as "one of the best," if not the very best, picture of its class that has ever been produced in this country," by George W. Dewey (*Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art*, vol. 10, June 1852). Schuessele went on to become Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and to hold its chair of painting and drawing, from 1868 until his death in 1879.

George Thompson Hobbs (1846-1929) painted this bucolic depiction of *The Schuylkill Canal*. The barge drawn by a team of four horses is in the background, pride of place being given to a couple out pleasure-boating. Nature, commerce, and leisure merge in the harmonious union held so dear by nineteenth-century Americans. A similar union of art, scholarship, and landscape is available to those who visit La Salle's campus. Only four blocks away from a busy urban transportation and commercial center, it is indeed a world apart.

Note: See La Salle Magazine, spring 1990, for more information on special collections, and spring 1994, for a fine article by Prof. James A. Butler: "The Remarkable Wisters at Belfield."

William Pencak, *Penn State*

Courtesy La Salle University Art Museum



Christian Schuessele, *Lager Beer Saloon*



George Thompson Hobbs, *The Schuylkill Canal*