The Continental Congress and the Plan for a Library of Congress in 1782-1783

An Episode in American Cultural History

This is an essay in historical revision. Its point of departure is the received account concerning the earliest phase in the history of the Library of Congress, and its conclusion, the substitution of a fresh and enlarged body of relevant fact for the accepted historical narrative. The supported findings illuminate a forgotten episode in the intellectual history of the American Confederation of 1774-1789, and indicate in a hitherto unsuspected way the spiritual kinship of the founders of the American republic with the forces and ideals of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.

In 1904, William Dawson Johnston of the Library of Congress published his first volume of a History of the Library of Congress, 1800-1864.¹ The opening chapter of this work, a chapter of less than four full pages, discusses "Conditions before the year 1800." A rapid résumé of the historian's narrative may be given here. He relates that when the Continental Congress met at Philadelphia in September, 1774, the directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia took

¹ A proposed second volume did not appear.
order to make the facilities of their collection available to the members of Congress and that Congress then returned thanks for this obliging act.²

When, under the Constitution of 1787, he continues, the First Congress of the United States met at New York City, the sessions of that body were held in the City Hall and "The City Library, or New York Society Library, as it was officially known, at that time deposited in the city hall, was used by Congress."³ On the removal of Congress to Philadelphia, the directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia again offered Congress and the President the free use of the books in their library, and President Washington through his secretary returned thanks in a letter of January 20, 1791.⁴

Johnston states that there were some "who felt that Congress should possess a library of its own. . . . The most earnest advocate of these views and the author of the first measure to establish a library for Congress was Elbridge Gerry, Representative from Massachusetts." On August 6, 1789, Gerry, we are told,⁵ offered a motion that a committee be appointed to draw up a catalogue of the books that Congress should find useful, with an estimate of the expense. At the end of April, 1790, a committee of three was appointed, with Gerry serving as first member. Almost two months afterward, Gerry for the committee submitted his report, which Johnston prints. From this a few extracts are taken:

That, as far as the nature of the case will admit, they have in the schedule annexed complied with the order of the House, having due regard to the state of the Treasury.

The report next declares that the committee

have confined themselves in great measure to books necessary for the use of the legislative and executive departments . . . . That, nevertheless, without further provision of books on laws and government, to which reference is often necessary, members of the legislature and other offices of the Government may be either deprived of the use of such books when necessary, or be obliged at every session to transport to the seat of the General Government a considerable part of their libraries, it seldom happening that they can otherwise command such books when requisite, without trespassing too much on the indulgence of their friends.⁶

³ Ibid., 17.
⁴ Ibid., 17–18.
⁵ Ibid., 18.
⁶ Ibid., 18–19.
The report went on to recommend that a sum "not exceeding 1,000 dollars, be appropriated in the present session," and that five hundred dollars be thereafter annually spent for the purchase of books, "for a public library." These moneys were to be laid out by a board of three men: the Vice-President, Chief Justice, and Secretary of State of the United States. The committee's report offered suggestions as to the titles of books which would well serve the needs of men of government.\(^7\)

Gerry's report was laid on the table, continues Johnston, and no further attempt was made to revive the project for a library or to devise others until Congress had removed permanently to Washington. The catalogue of 1802 shows that the Library of Congress then possessed 243 volumes in all.\(^8\)

On this showing then, the movement leading up to the establishment of the Library of Congress by the act of Congress approved on April 24, 1800, began in 1789, and Elbridge Gerry earns honors as its originator. This confers an interesting and additional distinction on an alumnus of Harvard and a son of the Old Bay State. It is a reasonable and a plausible attribution too, for old-time New Englanders of the right breed cherished both sound learning and the repositories of sound learning, libraries, whether privately owned or otherwise. Therefore, Mr. Johnston concluded, and with seeming cogency, that Gerry had earned the right to have a likeness of himself, in the form of a full-page portrait, within the pages of his *History*.\(^9\)

But Johnston, as will shortly appear, has committed a serious, though unavoidable, error of omission. Gerry, and therefore Harvard, and so Massachusetts too, must now be shorn of this most desirable honor which goes accordingly to another American, a Virginian. Ironically enough, the manuscript materials which destroy Johnston's case for Gerry were in Washington in the custody of the State Department at the very time he wrote his first chapter.

The documentary materials referred to are the manuscript Journals and Papers of the Continental Congress. When the new government, set up under the Constitution of 1787, began to function in the

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9 The portrait of Gerry, plate 2, faces page 18.
early months of 1789, the Department of State fell heir to the papers of the old Confederation. For more than a century the State Department kept these records. The decision was finally made to transfer them to the Library of Congress which, to save the originals from wear and tear, decided to publish them.  

In 1904, W. C. Ford edited and saw through the press the first volume of a series entitled *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*. This volume contains a modicum of material of interest in the present connection. It is only with the publication at Washington during the years 1914 to 1922 of volumes XXII, XXIII, XXIV and XXV of the *Journals*, which cover the years 1782 and 1783, that the most significant source documents for the earliest phase of the movement for a library of Congress come into view.

Before going on to a study of the source material itself one may pause long enough to remark that it is a more than ordinarily curious circumstance that the editor who supervised the transcription of the original manuscripts, who proofread and performed numerous other editorial labors in connection with the documents, and who finally saw them through the press, should not have seen fit to comment somewhere upon the plan proposed for a future library. Gaillard Hunt, the editor of these particular volumes, was an accomplished scholar with a lifelong interest in American history and American institutions. He was, moreover, a valued staff member of the Library of Congress and has the distinction of being the author of a sound biography of James Madison. And as we shall soon see, Madison, along with Bland (not Gerry), is one of our sought-for prime movers. How it happened, in view of such circumstances, that Gaillard Hunt could pass over in silence the records which add luster to Madison's name and a fresh interest to the annals of the Library of Congress, becomes anything but easy to explain. Perhaps Hunt's interest in political history left no room for an interest in cultural history.

Before Congress possessed a library of its own, it had the use of a

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10 By Executive Order of March 9, 1903, the historical archives in the Department of State were ordered to be transferred from the Department to the possession and custody of the Library of Congress. These archives consisted of seven classes of records and papers of which the archives of the Continental Congress formed one entire class of 385 volumes. By June 30, 1905, the order to transfer had been complied with. *Report of the Librarian of Congress for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1903* (Washington, 1903), 24–25; *Report of the Librarian of Congress . . . for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1905* (Washington, 1905), 48.
well-stocked library already established in Philadelphia. In December, 1773, the Library Company of Philadelphia was agreeably housed in the then newly constructed Carpenters Hall on Chestnut Street, a two-story brick building set some distance back from the road in the center of an open square. The Company's quarters consisted of two large rooms. In one of these the books "(enclosed within wire lattices)" were kept; in the other, a "handsome apartment," the philosophical apparatus was placed. Here, too, the directors of the Company met. The library was open to readers from two until seven p.m.\(^1\) The Library Company of Philadelphia had been founded in 1731 by Benjamin Franklin and a small group of associates. The first meeting of the group was held on November 8, 1731, and the first Board of Directors counted among its members such local worthies as Thomas Godfrey, Isaac Pennington, Robert Grace, Franklin himself and others.\(^2\) As the years passed, the Company prospered and took firm root, until by 1774, its collection consisted of about 3,850 volumes.\(^3\)

These books were not administered in any narrow spirit. Quite early in the history of the Company the directors had voted that the librarian should have power "to permit any civil gentlemen to peruse the books of the Library in the Library room, but shall not lend to, or suffer to be taken out of the Library by any person who is not a subscribing member, any of the said books. . . ."\(^4\) The Library Company of Philadelphia, popular rather than exclusive in its corporate character, was a well-established going concern as the move-

\(^3\) I am indebted to Mr. Barney Chesnick, Assistant Librarian, Ridgway Branch, Free Library of Philadelphia, for the following information kindly supplied me in his letter of January 15, 1947.

The printed catalog (1770) of the Library Company lists 2,033 titles in approximately 3,459 volumes. The Minutes of the Company for the years 1771-1774 list approximately 400 volumes as ordered during that period. In February, 1785, the Library Company had these:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Titles</th>
<th>Volumes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Folio</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarto</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octavo</td>
<td>1282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duodecimo</td>
<td>731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2764</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) Abbot, *op. cit.*, 7.
ment for American independence entered into its later phases. The Company was now to become allied with that movement. "In spite of the paradoxes involved," a recent authority states, "one may still maintain that the Revolution was essentially, though relatively, a democratic movement within the thirteen American colonies, and that its significance for the political and constitutional history of the United States lay in its tendency to elevate the political and economic status of the majority of the people."\(^{15}\)

By the late spring of 1774, the decision to call a general meeting of the representatives of the colonies had been made. The elected delegates to the first Continental Congress prepared for residence in Philadelphia where the Congress was to assemble in the early autumn. The delegates came from twelve colonies. There were among them radical men, who stood for complete independence, and conservatives, who believed in American home-rule under the British Crown. "Essentially, then, the delegates to the first Continental Congress came as the ambassadors of twelve distinct nations (or of certain groups within those nations), and most of them came voluntarily as a result of certain forces at work within the colonies and of a common external force: the threatening power of Great Britain, which was taking the form of increasingly forceful attacks upon colonial liberties."\(^{16}\)

The officers of the Library Company of Philadelphia took note of the prospective arrival of the delegates and on August 31, 1774, voted to extend the courtesies of their library to the gentlemen of Congress. The librarian was instructed to furnish them with such books as they needed while the Congress was in session.\(^{17}\)

The opening session of the Congress was held on Monday, September 5, 1774. A leading Pennsylvania conservative, Joseph Galloway, Speaker of the provincial Assembly, offered the State House as a meeting place. In the morning of this day the delegates had visited Carpenters Hall, "where they took a view of the room, and of the chamber where is an excellent library. . . . The general cry was, That this was a good room, and the question was put, whether we


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 56.

\(^{17}\) Abbot, *op. cit.*, 11.
were satisfied with this room? and it passed in the affirmative. A very few were for the negative, and they were chiefly from Pennsylvania and New York." As the invitation to use Carpenters Hall came from the radical party, the acceptance of their offer by Congress "was highly agreeable to the mechanics and citizens in general but mortifying to the last degree to Mr. Galloway and his party." On September 5, the opening session of the Continental Congress was held. The members assembled at Carpenters Hall. John Adams, who was one of these members, took note in his diary of what he termed "an excellent library."

By this decision, the Congress and the Library Company were now housed under the same roof. On Tuesday, September 6, the second day of business, there was spread upon the pages of the Journal the following:

Extract from minutes of the directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia, dated August 31st,—directed to the President, was read, as follows:

Upon motion, ordered,
That the Librarian furnish the gentlemen, who are to meet in Congress, with the use of such Books as they may have occasion for, during their sitting, taking a receipt for them.

By order of the Directors,
(Signed) William Attmore, Secy.

Ordered, That the thanks of the Congress be returned to the Directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia, for their obliging order.

Adjourned until nine o'clock tomorrow.

Thus, at the very opening of the Continental phase of American government a connection of value was established between the Library Company and the Congress. To hard-reading members of Congress this convenient proximity of library and council chamber must have come as a welcome boon. Some restriction, however, was to be placed upon the use of this library. In July, 1777, the Board of the Library Company, feeling some doubt as to the meaning of the

19 Jensen, op. cit., 57.
22 Journals of the Continental Congress, I, 27.
minute of August 31, 1774, directed that "in the future such Books only be delivered under that Minute as may be requested by the Congress as a Body or a Committee thereof." Despite this limitation upon the accessibility of the library to individual members of Congress, thanks to the directors’ vote, there had smoothly come into being, if not a library of Congress, then a library available to Congress.

The Confederation had no fixed seat of government. From Philadelphia it moved on to Baltimore, back to Philadelphia, then (for one day, September 27, 1777) to Lancaster, Pennsylvania and then successively it carried on its labors at York, Philadelphia, Princeton, Annapolis, Trenton and New York City.

In the autumn of 1782, Congress was again at work in Philadelphia, where it had settled itself in July, 1778, and where it remained till June 21, 1783. Welcome news had come to the delegates in Congress in July, 1782, that the United Provinces had recognized the independence of the United States. Then in mid-October, 1782, Congress learned that the British Minister at Brussels had been commissioned to conclude a treaty of peace. Soon, therefore, the Congress would be speaking for a new nation in the family of nations, would be facing grave problems of negotiating for peace and of constructing a peaceful state system on this continent. Wise men foresaw the need for a library for Congress equipped with the reference works, the manuals, histories and other books that could assist rational legislation and make easier the tasks of enlightened administration. The Library Company of Philadelphia had cheerfully permitted Congress to use its published resources for many years. But now, had not the time arrived for Congress to institute a library of its own?

So thought Theodorick Bland, delegate in Congress from Virginia. On or before November 12, 1782, he offered a motion that Congress should import a list of books from Europe for the use of the United States in Congress. With this motion, Theodorick Bland becomes the prime mover, not Elbridge Gerry. The name of the delegate who seconded this historic motion has not been recorded and the Journal of Congress for that year contains no mention of Bland’s

24 For the exact dates when Congress resided at these several localities, consult the Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1927 (Washington, 1928), 31.
motion. But such a deficiency in the official record, while an inconvenience to the historian, has no real significance. Long ago Gaillard Hunt, while at work editing the Journals of Congress for publication, wrote:

The Journals for 1782 are meager. For many days there are no entries at all, and yet on those days Congress sat and transacted business. So far as it was possible to do so, the gaps have been supplied by the other papers of the Congress. [Accordingly,] I have added to the volumes for 1782 the important journal of debates of James Madison.

That Bland did make such a motion we know positively from unpublished evidence supplied by the manuscript book of Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 186.

Dr. St. George L. Sioussat obliged the writer by examining these records of critical importance. His statement is offered here.

The Bland motion is not included in the collection so far as one can discover and thus it is impossible, in the absence of a covering journal entry, either to tell who seconded the motion or to fix the date exactly. Unless the usual procedure was varied in this case, however, the motion was made on November 21, 1782, since the Committee Book records that it was referred to a committee on that day.

The names of the committee members are noted both in the endorsement of the report (the only portion of the endorsement or of the report not quoted in the printed Journals), and in the Committee Book entry which is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Action]</th>
<th>[Referred]</th>
<th>[To whom]</th>
<th>[Subject]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>1782</td>
<td>Mr Madison</td>
<td>A motion for a list of books to be imported for the United States in Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan°</td>
<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>Mr Williamson</td>
<td>Mr Mifflin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 Bland attended Congress in 1782, as follows: April 15 to October 15, or later; and October 28, or earlier, to November 12, his last recorded appearance. He did not vote on November 14, and Madison states that he left Philadelphia for Richmond on November 15. Bland had been unwell in the latter part of October, as Madison (on October 22) wrote to Edmund Randolph. It is to be inferred, therefore, that he offered his motion on or before November 12, so that it must have been among his last official acts in Congress. Burnett, Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, VI, lii, 514 (note 3), 545; Journals of the Continental Congress, XXIII, 746-749.


27 St. George L. Sioussat, Chief, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress, to Fulmer Mood, Washington, D. C., February 14, 1947. For other references to the Bland motion, see Journals of the Continental Congress, XXIV, 92 (note 1); XXV, 858. There is no mention of the committee's report in Burnett, Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, VII. The Committee Book entry is to be found in the Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 186.
Certainly on November 21, 1782, then, Bland's motion was referred to a committee of three delegates of Congress to study and report back. It was a strong committee which now took the motion under advisement—James Madison, Hugh Williamson, and Thomas Mifflin. Just two months later, on January 24, 1783, the committee rendered its report to Congress, James Madison serving as the spokesman. This report fortunately has been preserved and from it one learns that the committee's favorable report on the motion to purchase books was rejected. Information thereon supplied by the editor of the Journals may be appropriately introduced here:

This report, in the writing of James Madison, is in the Papers of the Continental Congress: Miscellany. It is indorsed by Thomson [Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress]: "Report of Com** List of Books to be imported for the use of Congress Read Jan 24, 1783. Question taken to empower Superint: finance & Secy to import them. Passed in the negative."  

For January 24, 1783, the printed edition of the Journals of Congress has this entry:

The Committee [Madison, Williamson and Mifflin] instructed on the motion of Col. Bland to report a list of books proper for the use of Congress, recommend that the Superintend* of Finance and the Secy of Congress be empowered to take order for procuring the books enumerated below: the same when procured to be under the care of the said Secy.  

The list of "books enumerated below," as printed, is spread over nine full pages and a portion of a tenth page.  

The draft of the committee's report is, as we have just learned, in Madison's handwriting. His notes of the debates in Congress assign the report to January 23, and summarize the arguments used in Congress for and against the adoption of the committee's report. In favor of the report it was urged "as indispensable" that Congress should have at all times easy access to "such authors on the law of Nations, treaties, Negotiations &c as w'd render their proceedings in
such cases conformable to propriety; and it was observed that the want of this information was manifest in several important acts of Congress.” In speaking to this point, the committee were assuming the position that well-considered legislation and international agreements require on the part of their architects thorough knowledge of the relevant historical and juridical data.

It was further observed that no time ought to be lost in collecting every book & tract which related to American antiquities & the affairs of the U. S., since many of the most valuable of these were every day becoming extinct, & they were necessary not only as materials for a Hist: of the U.S., but might be rendered still more so by future pretensions agst their rights from Spain or other powers which had shared in the discoveries & possessions of the New World.

The committee’s reference to the source materials necessary for the composition of a history of the United States can have occasioned no surprise on the part of Congress generally for Pierre Eugène du Simitière, a resident of Philadelphia, was eager to compose an elaborate narrative dealing with the course of American history from its beginnings, and had spent many years in collecting manuscript and printed materials which were to be the bases for his proposed history. His quality as a scholar was recognized by the American Philosophical Society which elected him to membership in 1768, and by the College of New Jersey which conferred on him the honorary degree of Master of Arts in 1781. The Library Company of Philadelphia purchased at auction in 1785, after his death the year before, his important collection of papers and letters relating to American history.33

The arguments against adoption of the report were grounded entirely on the need for economy. At this moment of serious fiscal crisis, some members urged, no money was available for the purchase of books. Not during a war but in seasons of peace was the time, others counseled, to buy books. “These objections prevailed, by a considerable majority.” But the friendly minority did not give up hope at once. James Wilson, one of the Pennsylvania delegation, then rose and introduced a new motion, seconded by Madison, “to confine the purchase for the present to the most essential part of the books.”

But Congress, "for the present," looked with no favor on the creation even of such a basic library. So the new motion failed; in Madison's own words, "This also was negatived."

A word or two may be spent at this point in examining the institutional arrangements which the delegates of 1783 proposed for the management of their library. The selection of the books, in this first instance at least, was to be made by a committee appointed for that specific purpose. The acquisition of the books was to be undertaken jointly by the Superintendent of Finance, who at this time was Robert Morris of Pennsylvania, and by the Secretary of Congress, who was Charles Thomson of Pennsylvania. The circulation of the books was to be looked after by the Secretary of Congress. He was thus conceived of as the first librarian of Congress. A former school teacher, a trained keeper of records, and an experienced writer, Thomson, this "perpetual secretary," as he has been called, labored industriously as Secretary for almost fifteen years. His hands were always full; for him to have served as librarian into the bargain might have meant bearing the straw that breaks the camel's back. But Thomson never was called on to serve in that proposed office, and Congress had, for many sessions after 1783, neither a library nor a librarian.

The Continental Congress never again discussed instituting a library of its own. But it is pleasant to record that, in at least a small way, the members recognized their heavy collective obligation to the Library Company of Philadelphia, by arranging for the presentation to that Company of a gift of a Congressional publication. On January 26, 1784, in Congress David Howell moved and Arthur Lee seconded a motion. It is recorded in the Journal thus: "Ordered, That the Secretary deliver to Josiah Hewes, one of the directors of the Library Company of Philadelphia, two setts of the Journals of Congress, neatly bound, for the use of the said Library Company." It needs to be borne in mind by twentieth century readers that the Continental Congress differed in important respects from the Congress of the United States which came into existence under the Constitution of 1787. The powers of the earlier Congress in the beginning were undivided and undistributed. They comprehended

34 Dictionary of American Biography, XVIII, 481.
judicial, legislative, and executive authority. Committees of members were designated to transact the executive and administrative business. For tasks of a semi-permanent or permanent character standing committees were created. From some of these standing committees or boards (the board of war, the board of treasury, the marine committee, the committee for foreign affairs) the principal executive departments under the Constitution afterward developed. “It was inevitable under such a system that many things were left undone that should have been done and other things were done poorly that needed to be done well, and that the over-burdened members, who labored long hours in Congress and other long hours in committees, could not give their minds as devotedly as was desirable to their proper legislative duties.”

If the members of Congress were to perform well their legislative and executive duties, it was (in Madison’s own words) “indispensable” that they should have “at all times easy access” to the volumes they needed for the proper conduct of weighty governmental business. And so Madison pointed out that “...the want of this information was manifest in several important acts of Congress.”

Prominently associated with this ill-fated, original proposal to establish a library for the use of Congress are five delegates whose names are well known to us. Theodorick Bland, Jr., was the author of the motion leading to the appointment of the committee which afterward reported the list of books. The committee itself was composed of James Madison, Hugh Williamson, and Thomas Mifflin. James Wilson, finally, introduced the substitute motion. A mere glance at these names indicates that the institution which these statesmen were proposing to create very definitely grew out of an eastern Pennsylvania social matrix. Williamson and Mifflin were natives of Pennsylvania and Wilson was an adopted son of that province and state. Madison, a Virginian, was educated at Princeton and enjoyed residence in Philadelphia as opportunities offered. The Virginian, Bland, alone seemingly had no Middle States connection.

From the denominational point of view, this little group is composed of one Quaker, Mifflin; one Episcopalian, Bland; and three Presbyterians, Madison, Williamson, and Wilson. The last-named,

however, eventually transferred his church membership from the Presbyterian to the Episcopalian church. From the standpoint of an interest in a form of government stronger than that afforded by the Articles of Confederation, this group consists of four individuals who were members of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, who signed that document, and who afterwards worked for its adoption. Bland served in the Virginia Convention of 1788 to ratify the Constitution and there opposed its adoption.

Although their careers were various to a degree, these fathers of the Library of Congress idea were among the cosmopolitan *illuminati* of their age. They nurtured educational institutions and were active in the advance of the science and culture of their country. They counseled or governed states, they ruled confederated republics. From the judicial bench, they handed down fateful decisions. In military no less than in civil affairs they acted their several responsible parts. Men of theory as well as men of practice, they were in both theory and practice richly experienced. When men such as these supported the movement for a Congressional library, they acted from motives of high utility and a genuine concern for civic culture. They envisioned a practical collection of books that would function to serve the purposes of rational, enlightened statesmen bent on founding and strengthening a republican form of government in a world then largely dominated by non-republican states.

In conclusion, it is possible to establish several direct personal connections between the proposal for a library for Congress in 1782, and the revived interest in 1789, of something like the original project. Of the five delegates to the Continental Congress who associated themselves with the library project in the winter of 1782–1783, three afterward became members of the First Congress of the United States—from North Carolina, Representative Hugh Williamson; and from Virginia, Representatives Theodorick Bland and James Madison. The date of Gerry’s motion authorizing the purchase of books for Congress was August 6, 1789. But on that date Williamson was not yet in attendance; he took his seat months later on March 19,

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1790. He is thus eliminated as a link.\(^{38}\) At this time, Wilson was not yet on the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States and Mifflin was holding office under the constitution of Pennsylvania. They, therefore, provide no elements of continuity. However, Bland, although he died on June 1, 1790, was already a seated member of the House, as was Madison, at the time Gerry offered his motion. In Madison and Bland then, we have two individuals who span the years from the original to the revived project.\(^{39}\)

As another possible link, the case of Elbridge Gerry (1744–1814) may briefly be considered since to him goes the credit for making the motion of August 6, 1789. Gerry saw much service in the old Congress. He was first elected to Congress on January 18, 1776, and attended its sessions almost continuously until February 17, 1780. Although he was re-elected in 1782 to serve "until the fifth day of November, 1783," he was in attendance only from August 14 to November 4,\(^{40}\) and thus was absent from the session in which Bland introduced his motion and Madison championed it. Gerry, therefore, serves as no link between the library Bland proposed and the library foreseen in his own motion.

A comparison of the Continental Congress membership in the winter of 1782-1783 with the membership of the First Congress under the new Constitution would perhaps reveal several additional linkages. Of these but one will be offered—Elias Boudinot of New Jersey. Already elected to Congress, which he had attended from September 14, 1782, to the end of the year, he was on October 30, 1782, re-elected for a term ending November 5, 1783. On November 4, 1782, Boudinot was elected President of Congress and served in that capacity from November 4, 1782, to November 3, 1783. During the year 1783 he appears to have been absent but once (September 6-12).\(^{41}\) Elias Boudinot served in the First, Second, and Third Congresses of the United States as a Representative from New Jersey.\(^{42}\) As a former president of the Old Congress, he doubtless had

\(^{38}\) Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 45 (note 7).

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 45 (note 15).

\(^{40}\) Burnett, Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, VII, lxviii. For Gerry's membership in the First Congress of the United States (1789-1791), see the Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 44.

\(^{41}\) Burnett, Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, VI, xlvii; VII, lxx.

\(^{42}\) Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 44, 719.
recollections in 1789 of Bland's motion of 1782, Madison's Committee report of 1783, and the results of the debate.

There remains the task of indicating how the Confederation phase of our subject ties up with its earliest Federal phase. The demonstration serves also to supply an historical perspective in which the elements of Gerry's motion may be the more clearly perceived.

November 3, 1788, was the first day of the Federal year 1788-1789, and from this date forward to March 2, 1789, delegates from the various states appeared and for the last time offered their credentials. But the Continental Congress for 1788-89 transacted no business, for everyone now knew that its days were numbered. From January 1, 1789, to March 2, the Journal records that but eleven delegates were present on but ten "sessional" days. When Philip Pell, delegate from New York, left the chamber on Monday, March 2, 1789, the Confederation gave up the ghost. Then, on Wednesday, March 4, "This being the day for the meeting of the new Congress . . . under the Constitution submitted by the Federal Convention in Philadelphia, September 18, 1787," Senators of the United States to the number of eight and Representatives to the number of thirteen appeared and took their seats in the new Congress. Neither of the Houses could then show a quorum and both adjourned. However, Representative Elbridge Gerry was present on March 4, James Madison appeared on March 14, Elias Boudinot, on March 23, and Theodorick Bland, on March 30. By April 1, a quorum of the House was present, whereupon the first business to be completed was the selection of a Speaker. George Washington took the oath as President on April 30.

The First Session of the First Congress, held at New York City where the Continental Congress had met since June, 1785, adjourned on September 29, 1789. Debates on bills for duties on imports and tonnage, and on the organization of the executive departments of the new union of states, as well as on other matters, occupied much of the time of the House. The First Session was therefore far advanced when on Thursday, August 6, Gerry rose and "moved that a com-

43 Journals of the Continental Congress, XXXIV, 604 (note 1), 605.
44 The Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States (Washington, 1834), I, 16.
45 Ibid., I, 100.
46 Ibid., I, 100.
mittee be appointed to report a catalogue of books necessary for the use of Congress, with an estimate of the expense, and the best mode of procuring them.—Ordered to lie on the table." With this motion the movement for a library of Congress entered into its Federal phase. No immediate action followed and on September 29, 1789, Congress adjourned. When the Second Session of the First Congress convened at New York City on January 4, 1790, the House soon involved itself in profound and lengthy debates on the public credit of the United States. It was not until April 30, 1790, therefore, that Gerry’s motion was called up for discussion by the House which then “Ordered, That a committee be appointed to report a Catalogue of Books necessary for the use of Congress, with an estimate of the expense of obtaining them; and that Messrs. Gerry [of Massachusetts], Burke [of South Carolina] and White [of Virginia], form said committee.” On June 23, 1790, “Mr. Gerry, from the Committee appointed for the purpose, reported a catalogue of books necessary for the use of Congress; which report was ordered to lie on the table.” Representative Bland had died in New York City a few weeks before, but Madison of Virginia and Williamson of North Carolina (the latter tardily taking his seat in the House on March 19, 1790) may have been on hand to console Gerry when his library motion, too, ended in inactivity. And here ends the second phase of the movement we have studied and with it this reconstruction of the subject itself.

The following list of books proposed by Madison’s committee to be purchased for the Library is printed as it appears in the Journal of the Continental Congress. The several headings given in the printed list are kept here, but the typographical setup has been somewhat altered in the interests of economizing space. A bibliographical study of the volumes has already been undertaken and the results are reserved for extended treatment in the future.

University of California, Berkeley

**Fulmer Mood**

47 Ibid., I, 705.
48 Ibid., II, 1623.
49 Ibid., II, 1703.
51 Esther Hile, M.A., Librarian, University of Redlands, facilitated work on this project by granting the writer access to the *Journals* on most convenient terms during a vacation period spent at Redlands, California. Professor Irvin G. Wyllie, University of Maryland, kindly obliged the author by establishing Theodorick Bland’s church relationship.
BOOKS PROPOSED BY MADISON'S COMMITTEE

Encyclopedie Methodique.
Dictionaire de l'homme d'Etat.

_Law of Nature and Nations_
Cudworth's Intellectual System.
Cumberland's Law of Nature.
Wolfius's Law of Nature.
Hutchinson's Moral Philosophy.
Beller's delineation of universal Law.
Ferguson's analysis of Mor: Philosophy.
Rutherforth's institutes of Natural Law.
Puffendorf de officio hominis et civis.
Vattell's Questions in Natural Law.
Grotius's Mare liberum.
Selden's Mare clausum.
Molloy de jure maritimo.
Beaux lex mercatoria.
Jacob's lex mercatoria.
Lee on captures.
Ordinances of Marine of France.
Admiralty Laws of G. Britain.
do. of the several others of Europe.
Wiquefort's Ambassador.
El Embaxador, par Antoine de Vera.
L'Ambasciatore Policie Christiano, par le prince Charles Marie Carafe.
De la charge et dignite de l'ambassadeur, par Jean Hotman.
Le Ministre public dans les cours etrangeres &c. par J. de la Sarras du Franquesnay.
De foro legatorum par Bynkershock traduit en Francois par Barbeyrac, sous le titre de traite du Juge competent des Ambassadeurs &c. with all his other works.
De legationibus par Alberic Gentilis.
Legatus par Charles Paschal.
Legatus par Frederick Marsalaer.

_Treaties and Negotiations_
Corps diplomatique.
Rymer's foedera.
A complete collection of Treaties.

Abbe Mably's public law of Europe—principles of Negotiation—other political works.
De la maniere de negocier avec les souverains &c. par Callier.
Discours sur l'art de negocier par Pequet.
Histoire du traité de Westphalie par le P. Bougeant.
Burche's view of negociations between F. & Engit.
Negociations du P. Jeannin.
   du Cardinal D'ossat.
   du Marq d'Estrades.
   de la paix de Westphalie.
   du Marq de Noailles.
   de la paix d'Utrecht.
   des autres paix de ce siecle.
Lamborty's Memoirs & negociations.
Card! Mazarine's letters.
De Witt's letters.

_General History_
Universal History.
Modern History.
Raleigh's History of the World.
Voltaire's Historical works.
Abbé Millot Histoire generale.
Dictionaire of Bayle.
Burnett's History of his own times.
Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History.

_Chronology_
Lenglet du frenoy tablettes chronologiques de l'Histoire universelle.
Blair's chronological tables.

_Geography_
Bushing's Universal Geography.
Smith's System of Geography.
Guthrie's Geographical Grammar.
La Martinier Dictionaire Geographique.
Salmon's Gazetteer.
Priestly's Historical Chart.
Biographical Chart.
Jeffery's Historical & Chronological Chart
Collection of best maps.
Particular History

GRAECIAN.
Goldsmith’s History of Greece.
Stanyan’s History of Greece.
Potter’s Grecian Antiquities.

ROMAN.
Coussin Histoire Romaine.
Histoire de Constantinople.
Goldsmith’s Roman History.
Hooke’s Roman History.
Vertot’s Revolutions of Rome.
Gibbon's on the decline of the Roman Empire.
Kennet’s Roman Antiquities.
Plutarch's Lives.

ITALIAN.
Guicciardini’s History.
Giannini History of Naples.
Nani History of Venice.
Padre Paolo on the Venetian Republic.

GERMAN & HOLLAND.
Histoire d’Allemagne par Barre.
Peffel Abregé chronolo: de l’hist: d’Allem:.
Puffendorf de origine imperii german: notis Titii.
Robinson’s History of Charles V.
Bentivoglio History of war in Flanders.
Le Clerk’s History of the United Provinces.
Strada.
Grotius de rebus Belgicis.
De Witt’s State of Holland.
Watson’s History of Philip II.

FRENCH.
Histoire de France de l’abbé Veli Villaret
Garnier et continuateurs.
D’avila History of Civil Wars of France.
Philip de Comines.
Sully’s memoirs.
Prefixe Henry IV.
Cardinal de Retz Memoirs.
Voltaire’s Louis XIV.

BRITISH.
Matthew Paris by Watts.
William of Malmbury.
Polydore Virgil.
Rappin’s History of England.
Kennett’s English History.
Clarendon’s History.
Ludlow’s Memoirs.
Littleton’s History of Henry II.
Parliamentary History.
Parliamentary debates.
Annual Register.
History of the Reign of Geo: III.
Cabala.
Rushworth’s Collection.
Thurloe’s State papers.
Parliamentary Register.

SCOTCH.
Robinson’s History of Scotland.

IRISH.
Leland’s History of Ireland.

SPANISH & PORTUGUESE.
Mariana’s History of Spain.
Miniana.
Revolutions d’Espagne du P. D’Orleans du Vertot.
Revolutions of Portugal by Vertot.

PRUSSIAN.
Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg.

RUSSIAN.
History of Peter the Great by Voltaire.

DANISH.
Molesworth’s account of Denmark.
History of Denmark by Mallet.

SWEEDISH.
Dallin’s History of Sweden.
Mallet’s form of govt in Sweden.
Vertot’s Revolutions of Sweden.
Sheridan’s do. of do.

POLISH.
Abbe Coyer’s History of J. Sobiesky.
Williams History of the North Gov’t.

SWISS.
Stanyan’s History of Switzerland.
FULMER MOOD

GENEVA.
Keate's History of Geneva.

TURKES.
Mignot's History of the Ottoman Empire.
P. Recaut's do.

CHINESE.
Duhaldes History of China.

Politics.
Plato's Republic by Spend.
Aristotles do.
More's Utopia.
Filmer on Government.
Hooker's Ecclesiastical polity.
Hobbe's works.
Harrington's works.
Sidney on Government.
Locke on Government.
Macchiaveli's works.
Father Paul on the Venetian Republic.
Montagu's rise & fall of antient republics.
Montesquieu's works.
Beccaria's works.
Ferguson's History of Civil Society.
Miller on distinction of Ranks in Society.
Stuart's principles of Political economy.
Smith on the wealth of Nations.
Baron Biefield's political Institutions.
Histoire politique du siecle par Maubert.
Richlieu's Political Testament.
de Witt's Maxims.
Petty's political Arithmetic.
Wallace on the numbers of mankind.
Davenant's Works.
Temple's works.
Hume's political essays.
Postlethwayt's works.
Anderson's Dictionary of Commerce.
Burgh's political disquisitions.
Price's Political works.
Gee on trade.
Child on trade.
Tucker on trade.
Law on money & trade.
Arbuthnot on weights & measures.
Locke on money.
Lowndes on d°.
Necker on Finance.

Law.
Justinian's Institutes by Harris.
Codex juris civilis.
Taylor's elements of Civil Law.
Domat's Civil Law.
Coke's Institutes.
Blackstone's Commentaries.
Cunningham's Law Dictionary.
Statutes at large by Rufhead.
Lex Parliamentaria.
Cunningham's law of Exchange.
Collection of Laws to prevent frauds in the Customs.
Book of rates.
Clarke's practice of Courts of Admiralty.
Fredencian Code.

War.
Vauban's Works.
Bellidore's Works.
Fouquier's Memoirs.

Marine.
Falconer's Universal Dictionary of Marine.
Burchett's Naval History.
History of the Several Voyages round the Globe.
Murray's Ship Building and Navigation.
Collection of best Charts.
Naval architecture. By Marmaduke Stalkartt.
Pol. £6.6.

Languages.
Best latin Dictionary with best grammar & dictionary of each of the modern languages.

America.
Forti's account of la Sale's voyage to N. America.
Discription geographique et historique des cotes de l'Amerique Septentrionale par le Sieur Denys.
Oldmixon's Brit: Empire in America.
Kalm's travels through N. America.
Carver's travels through N. America.
Ogilvie's America.
Novae novi orbis historiae, i.e. rerum ab Hispanis in India occidentali gestarum calvetonis Geneva 1578.
Wafer's Voyages.
Dampier's Voyages.
Chancellor's.
Borough's.
Forbisher's.
Hudson's.
Davis's.
Baffin's.
James's.
Wood's.
Ellis's voyage to Hudson's Bay.
Moeurs des Sauvages de l'Amerique par Lafitau.
Adair's History of the American Savages.
Hennepin's Voyages.
La Hontan's d^o.
Jone's Journal to the Indian nations.
Voyage de la nouvelle France par le Sieur Champlain.
Histoire de la Nouvelle France par l'Escarbot.
Paris.
Histoire de la N^e France avec les fastes chronologiques du nouveau monde par le pere Charlevoix.
Relation d'un voyage en Acadie par Dierville.
Rouen 1708.
Josselyn's account of New England.
Thomas's account of Pennsylv^a & N. Jersey.
Purchases Pilgrimage. 5 Vol: fol:
Hackluyt's Voyages.
Robinson's History of America.
Russell's Hist: of d^o.
Colden's History of the 5 Nations.
Burke's account of the Europ: Settlem^s in America.
Douglas's Summary.
Collection of Charters.
Neal's History of New England.
Prince's Chronological History of N. England.
Tracts relating to N. England by Cotton Mather.
Mather's ecclesiastical History of N. England
Hubbard's History of N. England.
Hutchinson's History of Massachusetts bay.
Collection of papers relating to the History of d^o.
Smith's History of N. York.
Smith's History of N. Jersey.
Historical review of Penn^s by Franklin's other works.
Smith's History of Virg^a.
Beverley's d^o of d^o.
Keith's d^o of d^o.
Stith's d^o of d^o.
De incolis Virginiae ab Anglico Thoma Heriot.
Discourses of Virginia.
Virginia by E. W.
Jones's present State of Virginia.
A discourse & view of Virg^a by St Wm Berkeley Gov^a. 1663.
An account of the life & death of Nat: Bacon. 1677.
History of the present State of Virginia.
A Short collection of the most remarkable passages from the original to the dissolution of the Virg^a Company. 1651.
Lederer's discoveries in Virginia and Carolina in 1669 & 1670, by St Wm Talbot. 1672.
Brickell's History of North Carolina.
Lawson's d^o of d^o.
Description of South Carolina with its civil Natural and commercial History. 1762.
Huet's History S. Carolina.
Collection of papers relative to Georgia.
Laws of each of the United States.
All Treaties entered into with the natives of N. America.
All the political tracts which have been or may be published & may be judged of sufficient importance.
Brown's History of Jamaica.
History of Barbadoes.
Garcilasso de la Vega's History of Florida.
Cox's Account of Florida.
Romans's History of Florida.
Memoirs sur la Louisiane par du Pratz.
Description de la Louisiane par Hennepin.
Bossu's travels through Louisiane.
Venegas's History of California.
Muratori il christianissimo fèlice.
Voyages et descouverts des Espagnols dans les
Indes occidentales par Don Bernardo de las casas.
Herrera's History of the Spanish colonies in America.
de Solís's History of the Conquest of Mexico by F. Cortez.
Voyages de Gage.
Houston's Memoirs.
Bouguer voyage au Perou.
Garcilasso de la Vega's History of the Incas of Perou.

Histoires des Guerres civiles des Espagnols dans des Indes, de Garcilasso de la Vega.
Histoire de l'Orenoque par Gumilla.
Bancroft's Natural History of Guiana.
Les voyages de Coreal. 1722.
Falkner's description of Patagonia.
Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amerique.
Histoire de St Domingue par Charlevoix.
Chanvalon's Voyage à la Martinique
Acuogna's relation of the river of Amazons.
Tecko's History of Paraguay.