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The Early Bibles of Philadelphia and Germantown

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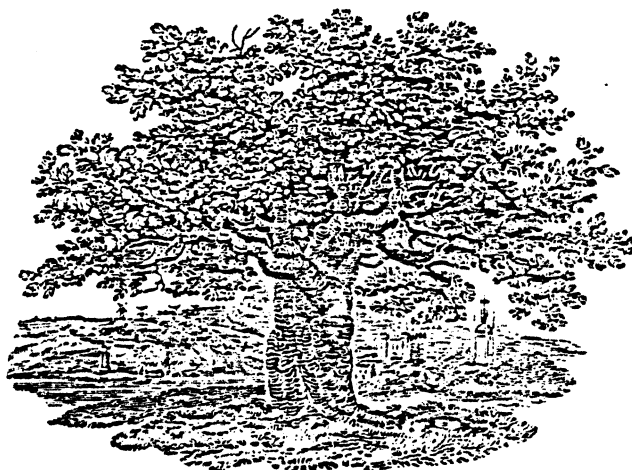
Recommended Citation

La Salle University Art Museum and Burke, Brother Daniel FSC, "The Early Bibles of Philadelphia and Germantown" (1982). *Art Museum Exhibition Catalogues*. 78.

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*The Early Bibles
Of Philadelphia
And Germantown*



The Susan Dunleavy Collection of Biblical Literature

La Salle College Art Gallery

November 15, 1982 - February 20, 1983



The Early Bibles of Philadelphia and Germantown

Aside from the extraordinary Indian Bible of John Eliot in the seventeenth century, the early history of the Bible in America is centered in Philadelphia and Germantown. As a small tribute during the tricentennials of the city (1982) and the town (1983), La Salle is offering an exhibition of their many firsts: the first Bible printed in a foreign language (1743), the first children's Bible (1763), first New Testament in English (1777), first and only Bible printed under the patronage of Congress (1782), first Catholic bible history (1784), first Catholic Bible (1790), first of John Wesley's edition with notes (1791), first with American illustrators (1796), first from a "hot press" (1798), first Bible printed by a woman (1808), first Hebrew Bible (1814).

These editions and others indeed make for an interesting historical record, especially when one considers the difficulties our earliest printers had in getting type and other equipment, the scarcity and the generally poor quality of paper and ink available, and the strict prohibition of England, in an effort to protect its own monopoly, against printing English Bibles.

Moreover, the early history of the Bible in America is replete with interesting characters—Christopher Saur, the first printer in Germantown, who agreed to print some pamphlets for the German immigrant community and backed into printing their first Bible; his son Christopher, who printed

the third edition of the same Bible but saw most of the edition used for gun-wadding in the Battle of Germantown; Philadelphia printer Robert Aitken (his splendid portrait in the exhibition is by Charles Willson Peale, the major colonial painter from whose farm the La Salle campus is decended), who printed the New Testament less as a commercial or devotional enterprise than as a revolutionary gesture to the mother-country; Benjamin Franklin who called for an update of the King James Version and translated the opening of Job rather freakishly to demonstrate what he had in mind; deist Thomas Jefferson who excerpted the New Testament for his private use in a manuscript that was later printed by the Government; Joseph Cruikshank, a Quaker printer who published the first Catholic prayer-book in the Colonies and later the first Methodist Bible; Mathew Carey, Irish revolutionary who learned printing in Franklin's shop outside-Paris and came to Philadelphia to print the first Catholic edition; Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress, who made the first English translation of the Septuagint and had it printed by Robert Aitken's daughter, Jane; the obscure Carl Cist, who had a printing house on 20th Street.

Philadelphia was also the site of the first Bible Society (non-commercial publishers) in America founded in 1808 with Bishop White as its President. It was then called The Philadelphia Bible Society, and continues today as The Pennsylvania Bible Society, 701 Walnut Street.

The works exhibited here are a memorial and a celebration of American men and women who found strength and guidance in the Holy

Scripture during trying times and who sought to bring its solace and
inspiration to others in two major centers of early American industry
and culture.

Br. Daniel Burke, Director



CASE I

1

Biblia Das ist Die Helige
Schrift...

Germantown: Christopher Saur, 1743

Christopher Saur (1694-1758) emigrated to Germantown, Pa. from his native Germany at thirty-one years of age. Here he became a master of many trades and arts: clockmaker, glazier, book-seller and printer. Although largely self-taught in the latter trade, Saur founded a printing establishment in 1738 which became one of the largest of its time. He was a man of deep religious conviction and his desire to fulfill the great need in his community for a Bible led him to print the first Bible in a European language in America (1,200 copies). Basing it on a non-orthodox Luther version, Saur tried to produce a Bible which would satisfy the various conflicting German Protestant sects (Dunkards, Mennonites, Lutherans) who settled in the Germantown area. The Bible also served the German speaking people who settled in Lancaster and Lebanon counties (Schwenkfelders, Moravians, Amish).

D & M: 4240

78-B-106



2

Das Neue Testament...

Germantown: Christopher Saur, 1745

This is the first edition of the New Testament printed in German in America, by Christopher Saur's son, Christopher Saur II.

Rumball-Petre: 160

Lent by The Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

3

Die Helige Schrift...

Germantown: Christopher Saur,
(the younger), 1763

Upon Saur's death in 1758, his son, Christopher Saur II, continued his father's printing business at 5225 Germantown Avenue. In 1763 he issued a second quarto edition of the Bible (2,000 copies). This edition has the distinction of being the first Bible printed on American paper. Saur became self-sufficient in the bookmaking trade for in 1773 he built his own paper mill on the Schuylkill, obtained binding from his own bindery and made his own ink.

Rumbell-Petre: 161

79-B-204

4

Die Helige Schrift...

Germantown, Christopher Saur, 1777

Christopher Saur II issued a third quarto edition in 1776, just as the Revolution began. Because he was dubious that the American cause would succeed and, on religious grounds, refused to take an oath of allegiance to the new confederation of states, his property was confiscated. Tradition has it that most of the unbound sheets of his Bible were used as cartridge paper in the Battle of Germantown, hence it came to be known as the "Gunwad Bible". It was the first Bible set in American-made type, cast in Saur's own foundry.

D & M: 4240

Rumbell-Petre: 159

78-B-106

5

Das Kleine Davidische Psalterspiel...

Chestnut Hill: Printed by Samuel Saur, 1791

Samuel Saur, the youngest of Christopher Saur II's sons continued in the printing business upon his father's death in 1784. He moved from Germantown to

Chestnut Hill where he printed a weekly newspaper in German, Die Chestnuthiller Wolchenschrift, and many religious publications.

82-B-459 (B)

6

Das Neue Testament...

Philadelphia: Carl Cist, 1791

Charles Cist, a Russian, and Melchior Steiner, a Swiss, established a printing press in Philadelphia in 1776, where they published many works in German and English. Cist moved his business to Washington, D.C., when it became the nation's capital and remained there until his death in 1804.

Not in D & M

Lent by The Lutheran Theological Seminary Library, Philadelphia



Das Neue Testament...

Germantown: Michael Billmeyer,
1795

Billmeyer and his father-in-law, Leibert, recommenced the printing business in Germantown in 1794 after Christopher Saur II's property was confiscated. The partnership ended in 1787 and, thereafter, the two men printed in separate shops in Germantown. Billmeyer became a prolific printer of the New Testament in German. He issued ten editions (seven of which are in La Salle's collection) between 1787-1822 to satisfy the great demand of the various German speaking people in Germantown, the Ephrata Cloister and other areas in Lancaster County. The paper for Billmeyer's printing business was likely obtained from the first paper mill in the colonies, established in 1690, that of William Rittenhouse, located nearby along a branch of the Wissahickon Creek.

O'Callahan: p. 50

80-B-308 (1)

Psalmen Davids...

Germantown: Michael Billmeyer,
1799

80-B-308 (3)



The New Testament of Our Lord
and Saviour Jesus Christ:
Newly Translated Out of the
Original Greek...

Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by
R. Aitken, Printer and Bookseller,
Front Street. 1777.

Born in Scotland in 1734, Aitken came to Philadelphia in 1769 and began a business as a bookseller and later as a printer. During the Revolution he became printer to the Congress and an interested party to the deliberations of one of its committees on ways to meet the rising demand for Bibles. Since England had forbidden the printing of English Bibles in the colonies and their export of Bibles was now cut off, the Committee urged that 20,000 copies be imported, at government expense, from Scotland and Holland. But the recommendation was not followed up, and Aitken took the initiative of producing the first English New Testament in America in 1777, reprinting it several times thereafter.

Hills: 1

Lent by The Historical Society
of Pennsylvania.



The Holy Bible
Containing the Old and New
Testaments: Newly Translated Out
of the Original Tongues...

Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by
R. Aitken, at Pope's Head, Three
Doors Above the Coffee House, in
Market Street. 1782.

The first complete edition of the Authorized Version was issued with the seal of Pennsylvania on the title-page and, on the second leaf, the resolution of Congress of September 12, 1782, approving the publication and recommending it to the inhabitants of the United States. The recommendation reflected the interest of Congress in the work itself but also, undoubtedly, its gratitude to Aitken for his service during the war, especially his removal to Baltimore during the British occupation.

It was Charles Thomson, Secretary who signed the Congressional resolution commending Aitken for a "pious and laudable undertaking" accomplished with such "care and accuracy." Soon afterwards, Washington wrote to a friend that he regretted not having been able to give a copy of the Aitken Bible to each veteran before the Army was disbanded.

Hills: 12

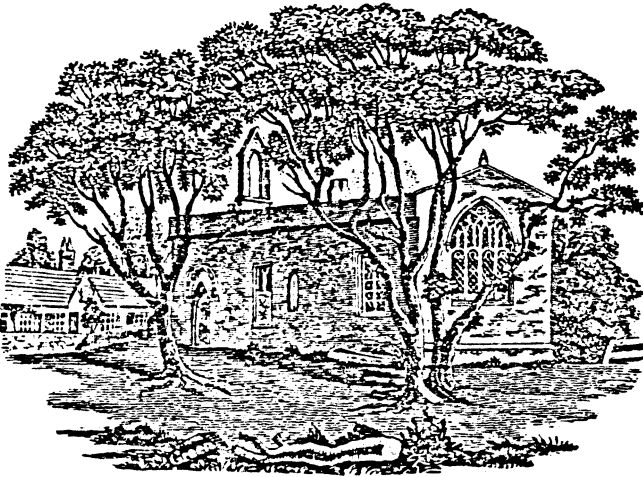
Lent by The Rare Book Room,
The Free Library of Philadelphia

The New Testament...

Philadelphia: Printed and sold
by Hall and Sellers in Market
Street, 1780

David Hall was hired by Benjamin Franklin in 1744, became his printer in 1748, replacing the "B. Franklin" imprint with "Franklin and Hall"-an association which lasted 18 years and operated three presses. Hall later took on William Sellers (a London bookseller) as a partner. After Hall's death in 1772, the firm retained the name of Hall and Sellers until the latter died in 1804.

Lent by The Rare Book Room,
The Free Library of Philadelphia

The History of the Old and New Testament...

Chiefly taken from the Holy Fathers...
From the French by J. Reeve
3rd edition

Philadelphia: Printed by M. Steiner
for C. Talbot, 1784

This is the first book issued by a Catholic publisher in America, Christopher Talbot, who came to Philadelphia from Dublin. In 1785, Talbot joined Mathew Carey and William Spotswood, to found the Pennsylvania Herald, and in 1786, he became one of Carey's partners in establishing the Columbian Magazine. John Henry Miller, who had a long and distinguished printing career in Philadelphia, disposed of his business to Melchior Steiner and Charles Cist in 1779.

Lent by The Historical Society
of Philadelphia

Holy Bible...

Philadelphia: William Young, 1790

This is the second Protestant Bible printed in America in English and apparently the first Bible with an American imprint containing the Psalms in meter (Scotch version of 1790). It was advertised at "five-eighths of a dollar" as a school edition in 1794 and 1802.

Hills: 25

Lent by The Rare Book Room,
The Free Library of Philadelphia

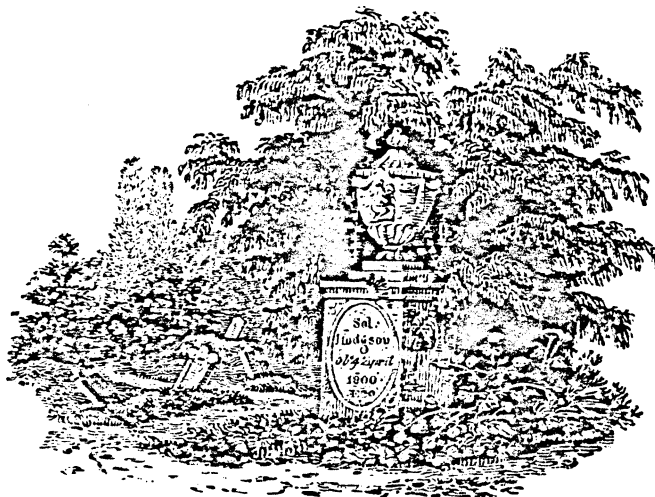
An Original Leaf from the Bible
of the Revolution

and An Essay Concerning It by
Robert R. Dearden, Jr. and
Douglas S. Watson

Printed by Edwin and Robert Grabhorn
for John Howell, San Francisco, 1930.

Many American Bibles in La Salle's
Dunleavy Collection come from the
collection of the late Robert R.
Dearden, Jr., a prominent Philadel-
phia Bible collector and author of
the history of the publication of the
Bible, The Guiding Light on the
Great Highway.

81-B-410



15

The Holy Bible...

Philadelphia: Printed for Berriman & Co., by Jacob R. Berriman. 1796.

This is one of the earliest illustrated Bibles in America, and surpasses all previous issues typographically. It is illustrated with eight full-page engravings by American artists; F. Shallus, A. Anderson, C. Teibout, A. Doolittle and Rollison, also contains a two-page list of subscribers located principally in New York and Philadelphia.

Hills: 53
Rumball-Petre: 175

80-B-295

16

Charles Nicolas Cochin, The Younger, (1715-1790), French

D. Benjamin Franklin, 1777

Mezzotint
8-5/8 x 6-1/4"

75-Por-34



17

Benjamin Franklin's Proposed Version

Several proposals were made during the Colonial period for American editions of the Bible, including one by Cotton Mather, but none of these achieved publication. One of the more eccentric was by Benjamin Franklin, who in 1789 proposed updating of the Authorized Version, with a more modern "turn of phrase and manner of expression." He supplied a few verses from the Book of Job to indicate what he had in mind: "And God said, 'Well, what think you of Lord Job? You see he is my best friend...' And Satan answered...'Try him: only withdraw your favor, turn him out of his places, withhold his pensions, and you will soon find him in the opposition.'"

See Wright, Early Bible of America, p. 228. Calligraphy by Mrs. Helen Gidjunis.

The "Jefferson Bible"

The so-called "Jefferson Bible" was actually entitled "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth, Extracted from the Gospels in Greek, Latin, French, and English." Jefferson apparently had in mind such a "digest of moral doctrine" as early as an 1804 letter to Joseph Priestley. In a letter to John Adams in 1813, he reports that he had made his compilation of forty-six pages by cutting parallel verses from several New Testaments. The digest was intended for his own use and so it remained unpublished until Jefferson's papers were acquired by the government in 1895. Thereafter, by resolution of the Fifty-seventh Congress, some nine thousand copies were printed for the use of the House and Senate.

Washington; Government Printing Office. 1904. (Facsimile)

New Testament...

Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1792.

Benjamin Johnson was a well established bookseller-printer in Philadelphia at the end of the American Revolution. In 1808, he was joined by Benjamin Warner who eventually bought out Johnson's share of the business.

Hills: 41

Lent by The Rare Book Room,
The Free Library of Philadelphia

The Holy Bible...

Translated from the Latin Vulgate
...And first published by the
English College at Doway, Anno
1609.

Philadelphia: Printed and sold
by Carey, Stewart, and Co., 1790.

This is the first American edition of the Douai translation of the Vulgate and is probably the first quarto Bible published in the United States. Given the size of the Catholic minority, the demand for a Douai-Rheims version was relatively small when Carey announced his intention of publishing one in 1789. He requested 400 subscribers, got 471, and published the work on December 7, 1790. His firm soon became the largest and most important Bible-printing house in the country. It continues today under the name of Lea and Febiger.

Hills: 23

82-B-444



Explanatory Notes upon the New
Testament by John Wesley...
The First American Edition

Philadlephia: Printed by
J. Crukshank, sold by J. Dickins
..., 1791.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, felt the need for improving the Authorized Version of the King James Bible (1611). He made 12,000 changes, a considerable number of which were later adopted by the English Revised Version of 1881/85 and some by the Revised Standard Versions of 1952. Methodist publishing was under the control of the church and John Dickins was made its official publisher in America in 1783. Joseph Crukshank, a Quaker, operated a printing business in Philadelphia between 1770 and 1780. Here he issued the first Catholic prayer book in America, as well as many publications for the Society of Friends, c. 1770-1774.

Hills: 35

Lent by The Historical Society
of Pennsylvania.

CASE IV

22

The Holy Bible...

Translated out of the Original
Tongues.

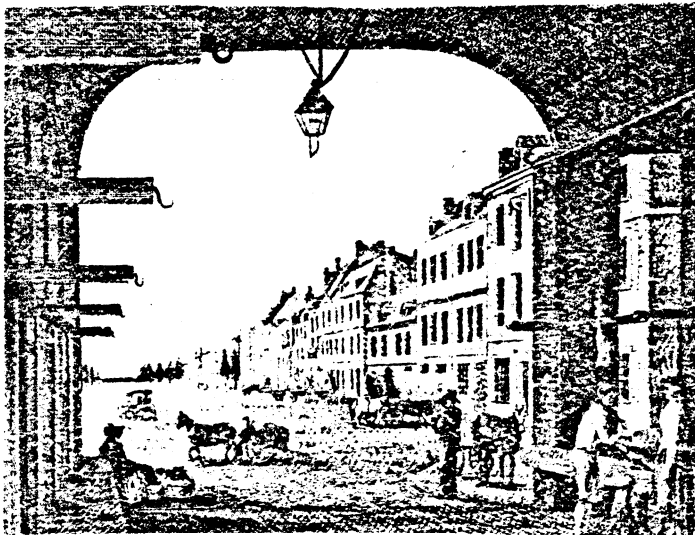
Printed and published by
Mathew Carey,...

May 8, 1805

In 1801, Carey published his first
edition of the King James Bible.
He eventually published more than
sixty editions of this version.
As his business grew, it became
necessary to assign much of the
work to outside printers.

Hills: similar to 121

78-B-182



23

The Holy Bible Containing The Old
and New Covenant...

Translated from The Greek, by
Charles Thomson, Late Secretary to
the Congress of the United States...

Philadelphia: Printed by Jane
Aitken, 1808. In 4 vols.

Charles Thomson (1729-1824), emigrated
from northern Ireland to Philadelphia
in 1739. Here he led a distinguished
career as teacher (Philadelphia
Academy/Univ. of Pa., William Penn
Charter School), friend to the Indians,
patriot, biblical scholar and only
Secretary to the Continental Congress
(1774-1789). He was described by
John Adams as "The Sam Adams of Phila-
delphia, the life of the cause of
liberty." Upon his retirement as
Secretary to Congress he devoted the
rest of his life to the translation of
the Bible (a twenty year undertaking),
and to other scholarly pursuits. His
Bible is the first English translation
of the New Testament in the western
hemisphere and the first English
translation of the Septuagint (the
Greek Old Testament) in the world.
It has the further distinction of being
the first Bible in America printed by a
woman, Jane Aitken, the daughter of
Robert Aitken. She continued her
father's publishing-printing, book-
selling business after his death in
1802.

Hills: 153

Rumball-Petre: 20

81-B-409 (1-4)

24

The Old Covenant, Commonly Called
The Old Testament...
By Charles Thomson

Philadelphia: Printed by Jane
Aitken, 1808. Vol. I

This is Charles Thomson's copy,
presented to the Library Company
in 1825 by his nephew, John
Thomson. Its four volumes con-
tain many manuscript corrections
and additions and reveal Thomson's
last efforts to modernize the text.

Lent by The Library Company
of Philadelphia

25

W. L. Breton (c. 1830-1839),
American

Harriton House 1828

Watercolor
7½ x 10 ins.

Harriton House, Bryn Mawr, Pa., was
built in 1704 in the Welsh architect-
ural style, by Rowland Ellis, a
Welsh Quaker. In 1719 he sold his
estate to Richard Harrison, Jr. The
property was inherited by his daughter
Hannah in 1774, who later that year
married Charles Thomson. After re-
tiring as Secretary to Congress in
1789, Thomson retired to Harriton
House to devote the remainder of

his life to the translation of the
Bible and other scholarly pursuits.
The house is now maintained by the
Harriton Association and open to
the public.

Lent by the Athenaeum of
Philadelphia

26

Biblica Hebraica...

Philadephia: Tybis Gulielm:
Fry, Thomas Dobson, 1814. Vol. I

The first Hebrew Bible printed in
America is a reprint of the text of
Everadun Van der Hooght, published
in Amsterdam (1705). The proposal
and the editing for this two volume
Bible was the work of Jonas Horwitz,
a graduate of the Medical School of
the University of Pennsylvania and
a Philadelphia physician.

D & M: 5168a
Rumball-Petre: 191

Lent by The Library Company
of Philadelphia
Gift of Edwin Wolf, 2nd



The New Testament

Philadelphia: Octoraro: Printed by Francis Bailey..., 1801

Bailey began his printing career at Ephrata, moving on to Lancaster in 1771. In 1779 he settled in Philadelphia where he remained in the printing business with partners, Thomas Lang and Robert Bailey respectively, until his death c. 1800. He was one of the few colonial printers to make his own type and was considered a notable typographer.

Hills: 83

Lent by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

H K A I N H Δ I A Θ K H
Novum Testamentum...

Philadelphia: Ex Officina Classica: Impensis. S. F. Bradford, 1886

The first edition of the Greek Septuagint in America was published by one of America's leading publisher-printers, Isaiah Thomas of Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1880. This second edition exhibited here is in both Greek and Latin, and was edited by John Watts. It is a re-print of an edition of Joanne Leusden, published at Utrecht in 1765. Samuel Bradford was one of William Bradford's successors, Philadelphia's most prominent colonial printer.

O'Callahan: p. 84, #3 80-B-311



The Holy Bible Abridged...

Being a valuable present for
a little son or daughter

Illustrated with notes and adorned
with cuts.

Philadelphia: Printed by Francis
Bailey for the Rev. Mason L. Weems,
1794.

This children's Bible is one of
two copies known, and was printed
for Mason Locke Weems, parson,
author of the Life of Washington
(containing many myths which are
still with us), and an eccentric
bookseller for Mathw Carey.
Printers, educators, and clergy-
men collaborated to produce
approved religious stories for
children, often abridged to the
point of being entirely re-
written in simple, direct language
and illustrated with naive wood-
cuts.

Rosenbach: 612.11

Lent by The Library Company
of Philadelphia

The Children's Bible...

London: printed 1759
Philadelphia: reprinted and sold
by Andrew Steuart, ...1763

This is the only known copy of the
earliest Bible printed in America
for children. The first title,
missing from this copy, reveals
the intentions of this publication;
"...to take such a firm Hold of
their young minds and memories, and
leave such Impressions there, both
of Moral and Religious Vertue, as
no accidents of their Lives will
ever be able to blot out...." The
printer and bookseller, Andrew
Steuart, emigrated to Philadelphia
from Ireland in 1758 and established
a press in Laetitia Court, later
moving his business to Lancaster,
Pennsylvania, and Wilmington,
North Carolina.

Rosenbach: 53

Lent by The Rare Book Room,
The Free Library of Philadelphia



31

The Child's Bible

By a Lady of Cinninnati, 1834

Philadelphia: Henry F. Anners

Stereotyped by J. A. James,
Cinninnati, Ohio

79-B-217

32

Der Frommen Lotterie, oder
Geistliches Schatz Kastlein

Germantown: Christopher Saur, 1744

This biblical lottery consists of three hundred and eighty-one numbered tickets, each containing a poetic gem composed by Gerhard Tersteegen (a German ascetic and poet), and a verse or passage from the Scriptures. It was thought of as "a drawing of prizes from a spiritual treasury to uplift the despondent,"-a colonial I Ching.

Rosenbach: 30

Lent by The Historical Society
of Pennsylvania

33

William Penn's Treaty with
the Indians when He Founded
the Province of Pennsylvania
in North America, 1681

Published London, June 12th, 1775

Engraved (sculpsit) by John Hall
(1739-1797), English

After a painting (pinxit) by
Benjamin West (1738-1820), American

Published by John Boydell,
(1719-1804), English

Engraving (Hand colored at a
later date) 18½ x 33"

West commissioned Boydell to market an engraving after his famous painting executed in London in 1772 (now in the collection of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts). Although historically inaccurate in details, this legendary image set the tone for the Europeans' imaginings of the Quakers' dealing with the "noble savage."

74-G-487



34

Child's Sampler, American, 1795
by Hannah Cooper

13 x 15 ins.

The art of embroidery was a part of every young girl's education in the eighteenth century. Various stitches were practiced on a sampler which usually had a central design and often included a text (consisting of a Biblical quotation or sentimental verse on the theme of mortality and death) and the names of living and/or deceased members of the family.

Anonymous loan

35

Charles Willson Peale
(1741-1827), American

Portrait of Robert Aitkin
c. 1780-1795

Oil on canvas
18½ x 24¼ ins.

Peale was America's most prominent colonial portrait painter. In 1810 at sixty-nine years of age, he took up residence at the one hundred acre Belfield Farm, where he pursued farming and landscape gardening until 1821. The present campus of Ia Salle College was purchased from the Belfield Farm property in 1926. The farm house is located

on 20th Street, directly across from the main campus.

Lent by The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

36

Benjamin West, P.R.A. (1739-1820),
American

Theirs' is the Kingdom of
Heaven, 1775

Oil on canvas
50 x 39-5/8 ins.

Born in Springfield, Pa. of Quaker heritage, West was the first American artist to acquire an international reputation. He emigrated to England in the 1760's, remaining there for the major part of his career. Here he became an instrumental force in promoting the neo-classical style of painting, and taught such famous American artists as Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Sully. Under the patronage of King George III, West became one of the foremost painters of historical and religious drama, a founding member of the Royal Academy, London, and later its President.

73-P-125

Br. Daniel Burke, Director
Caroline Wistar, Curator

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We wish to extend our grateful thanks to the following lenders for their significant contributions to this exhibition:

The Atheneum of Philadelphia
The Rare Book Room, The Free Library of Philadelphia
The Historical Society of Pennsylvania
The Library Company of Philadelphia
The Lutheran Theological Seminary Library, Philadelphia

A word of thanks also to Bro. Gregory Paul, F.S.C., for help in the preparation of the exhibition and catalogue. Last but not least this catalogue would not have been possible without the able volunteer assistance of Mrs. Catherine E. Doran who patiently typed the entire text.

