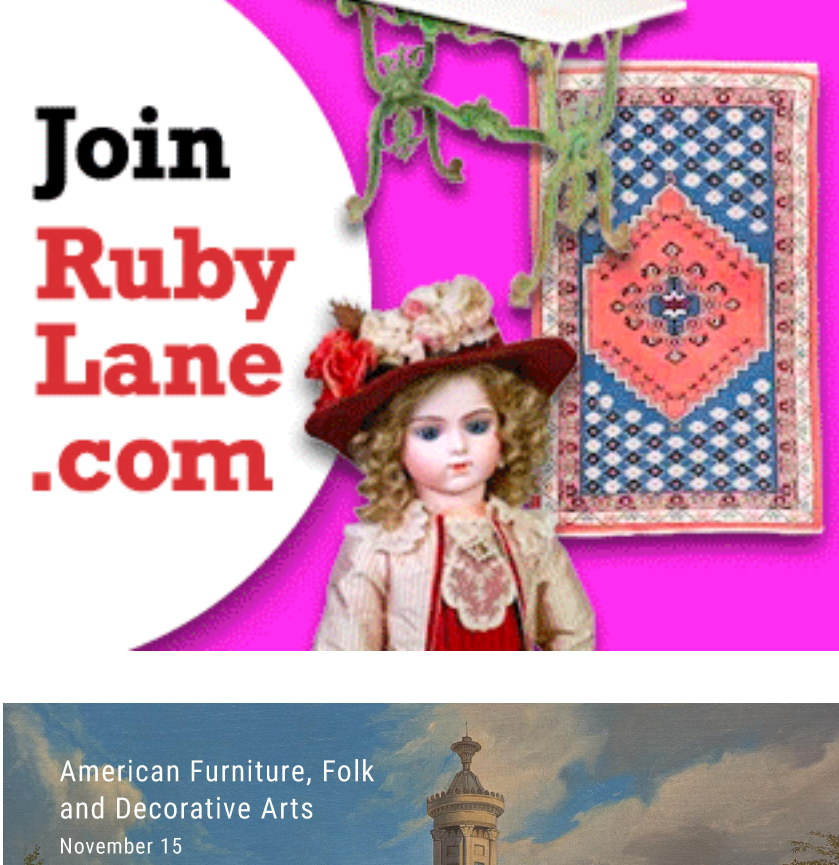


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# Clements Library Buys Strachey Papers at Third Copley Library Sale

by Jeanne Schinto



Sotheby's, New York City

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Photos courtesy Sotheby's

The William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor paid \$602,500 (including buyer's premium) for the papers of Sir Henry Strachey (1737-1810) at the third Copley Library sale on October 15, 2010, at Sotheby's in New York City. The estimate was \$700,000/1.2 million. "But it's more than a good buy for them," declared William S. Reese, founder and president of the antiquarian bookselling firm William Reese Company, based in New Haven, Connecticut.

"The Strachey papers were broken in half at some point," said Reese, who executed the institution's bidding. "I don't know the story of how it happened, but they were divided into two units, and not in any systematic way. It was a pretty jagged tear with some pieces going this way, others that way. One half ended up at the Clements, the other at the Copley Library. So not only does this [acquisition] fit in with the Clements collection, but it restores a major archive."

J. Kevin Graffagnino, the director of the Clements Library, issued a prepared statement about the purchase, approximately 40 documents relating to the British statesman who was a negotiator of the peace treaty ending the American Revolutionary War. "It is rare today to see a large collection of American Revolution manuscripts come on the market," he said, "and adding the Strachey material to the voluminous primary sources already at the Clements makes the Library even more attractive as a destination for all researchers working on Revolutionary War topics."

Those other sources include the military correspondence and headquarters papers of Thomas Gage and Henry Clinton, commanders in chief of the British army in North America, 1763-75 and 1778-82, respectively; the political and military correspondence of cabinet minister George Sackville, later Germain, who urged continuing the war and refused to accept American independence; and the papers of Lord Shelburne, who, as Britain's prime minister, shaped the policy that determined the controversial peace treaty of 1783.

The Clements had been hoping to complete its Strachey holdings for decades. It bought a small batch of Strachey material in 1924, according to the library's associate director, Brian Dunnigan, a specialist in 18th-century military cartography. The Graffagnino statement related the rest of the story. In England in the 1930's or 1940's, Randolph G. Adams, the Clements's first director, saw the bulk of what became the Strachey collection but was unable to persuade Strachey's descendants to part with it. Decades later, in December 1981, the Clements bought half of those papers at Sotheby's in New York City, with the rest going to the Copley Library a few years later. That first half cost the Clements all of about \$7000, said Dunnigan.

"Now the two halves are reunited," Graffagnino's statement continued, "making a rich array of unpublished material on Anglo-American relations, the battles and events of the American Revolution, English investments in North America, and the social history of the late eighteenth century available for the first time to researchers."

Major institutional purchases at auction require advance orchestration, often involving serious fundraising efforts. The preparations for this buy began in April 2010 and continued until the week of the auction, said Ann Rock, the library's director of development. By Rock's estimation, there were 100 donors in all, including an anonymous benefactor who offered \$150,000 if the Clements could match those funds. It did.

The Strachey papers went up at the end of the day in a lot with its own separate catalog and session. In the earlier session of the day, 253 other Copley Library lots were offered, 216 of which sold for a total of \$2,714,508. Early California material was supposed to have been the high point of that earlier session, but, like the Strachey papers, those lots were aggressively estimated and did not do as well as the auction house had expected.

The first reliable chart of San Diego Bay, drawn in pen and ink with gray wash in 1782 by Juan Pantoja y Arriaga and known as the Pantoja Map of San Diego, sold on the phone to dealer W. Graham Arader III for \$68,500 (est. \$80,000/120,000). The first census and directory of the missions in Alta California, written in the hand of their founder, Franciscan Father Junipero Serra (1713-1784), did not sell (est. \$150,000/200,000). Neither did a 76-piece archive of Mexican President Benito Juarez (est. \$75,000/ 100,000).

As Gertrude Stein once said of Oakland, California, "There's no there there." In the case of the former Copley Library of La Jolla, it's literally true. The fourth and final sale of the defunct institution is scheduled for April at Sotheby's, and the building where the collection used to be housed has been sold. So the bought-in pieces will not return there but to David Copley, heir to James and Helen Copley. One assumes that everything will get sold eventually, but in the meantime, post-sale offers are not being entertained.

The sale in general did not have many successful participants. Besides Reese, who bought 53 lots, there were two other major buyers. One, bidding in person, was the same private collector who dominated the first Copley sale in April 2010; the other was an on-line bidder identified in a Sotheby's press release as another private collector.

The major private buyer in the room paid \$43,750 for a four-page letter by a delegate to the first session of the Continental Congress, Silas Deane. Deane wrote the letter, much talked about before the sale, on October 16, 1774, to Thomas Mumford, a Connecticut state assemblyman. In it he discusses with his colleague a proposed bill of rights, American grievances, and measures for redress. He also mentions a communication by Paul Revere, asks Mumford to exert his influence on a Connecticut publisher who

wasn't sympathetic to the cause, and even promises to look for a job for Mumford's son.

That private buyer paid \$34,375 (est. \$18,000/25,000) for another good letter, a two-pager written by Benjamin Franklin to his sister Jane Mecom on October 25, 1799, while he was ambassador to France. Franklin discusses serious matters, including John Paul Jones's engagement with the British navy off the coast of England. He also gives a rather boastful account of his celebrity status within French society, stating, "Perhaps few Strangers in [F]rance have had the good fortune to be so universally popular."

A first edition of Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, one of just 200 early copies printed privately for its author in Paris in 1785, sold to the on-line bidder for \$254,500 (est. \$100,000/ 150,000). The underbidder was on the phone. "I had what I thought was a strong bid on it; I never bothered to raise my hand," said Reese, who believes the price to be an auction record for this edition of Jefferson's famous argument on the nature of the good society.

Four Jefferson letters did very well. All of them went on line. Two, about wine-making and addressed to American soldier, surveyor, judge, and pioneering viticulturist John Adlum in 1809 and 1810, brought \$34,375 and \$26,250, respectively (each est. \$20,000/30,000). A letter written by Jefferson in 1820 to Thomas Cooper, hired as a faculty member for the nascent University of Virginia, realized \$59,375 (est. \$25,000/35,000). (Cooper never taught there, however, forced to resign over his agnosticism and other unorthodox religious views.) An 1826 Jefferson letter to Robert Mills, one of America's first native-born architects, endorsing the idea of an obelisk for the Washington Monument, made \$62,500 (est. \$35,000/50,000).

George Washington's copy of Jonathan Swift's *The Beauties of Swift*, signed by Washington, was another standout of the sale, realizing \$104,500 (est. \$30,000/ 50,000). William Reese said he bought it on behalf of a private collector. The first English edition of *The Journal of Major General Washington* brought the same price as the Swift, more than double its low estimate. A beautiful copy, it sold to a phone bidder.

A phone bidder also took a letter penned by George Washington's last secretary, Tobias Lear. Written at Mount Vernon on December 15, 1799, it provides a firsthand account of Washington's final illness and death. Lear sent similar letters to all of Washington's executors, neighbors, friends, and family members. This one, which sold for \$50,000 (est. \$30,000/ 50,000), was addressed to Colonel Burgess Ball, who was married to one of Washington's nieces.

A few Washington items went well below estimates, including a 1779 letter relating to the Indian-Loyalist raids in New York and Pennsylvania. Signed only, with its text in the hand of aide Robert Hanson Harrison, the six pages sold for \$68,500 (est. \$70,000/ 100,000). What may have held it back was its poor condition, with repairs described in the catalog as "unskilled."

Some more material with condition problems struggled a bit. These included letters by Jefferson, Franklin, some signers of the Declaration of Independence, and Thomas Paine. But good material that had no need for excuses also sometimes went low. For example, Reese paid just \$11,250 (est. \$10,000/15,000) for an 1859 Kit Carson letter, plus a Carson carte de visite produced by Mathew Brady's National Portrait Gallery. "I will confess that it was a bargain," the dealer said of the letter in which Carson advises Antonio Joseph, a student at Webster College, St. Louis, Missouri, to "Be a good boy, attentive to your studies, obedient to your teachers and kind to your comrades." Said Reese, "I don't know why I got it, except that I was sitting there waving my hand a lot."

For more information, contact Sotheby's at (212) 606-7000 or see the Web site ([www.sothebys.com](http://www.sothebys.com)).

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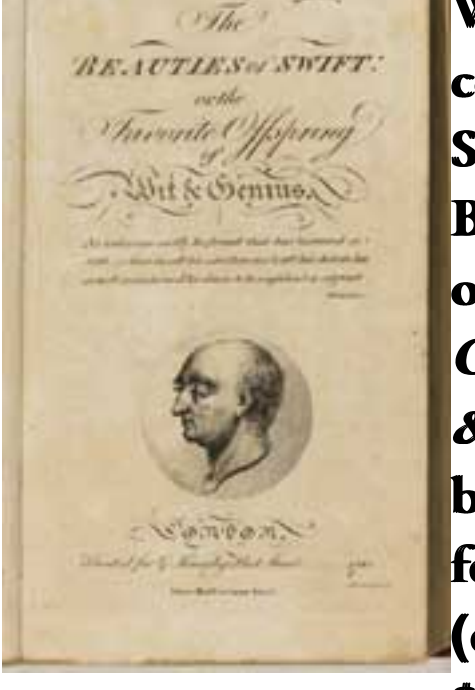
**The Henry Strachey papers, 1775-83, approximately 480 pages, sold for \$602,500 to the William L. Clements**

**Library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, with dealer William S. Reese acting as agent. "The purchase of the Strachey papers at Sotheby's auction was a remarkable collaborative effort," Clements Library director J. Kevin Graffagnino said. "The Clements Library is grateful to many individuals who donated funds to the initiative, to the University of Michigan administration for its strong support, and to the Board of Governors of the Clements Library Associates for their individual and collective assistance." The acquisition doubles the library's Strachey holdings, Clements associate director Brian Dunnigan said. "I was keeping my eye on anybody who showed up at the time the papers went up," Reese said. "A gentleman came in, but it turned out he wasn't a bidder; he was a researcher desperate to work with the papers. He had come to the sale to find out who the buyer would be. We were able to line him up for his research on the spot, so to speak."**



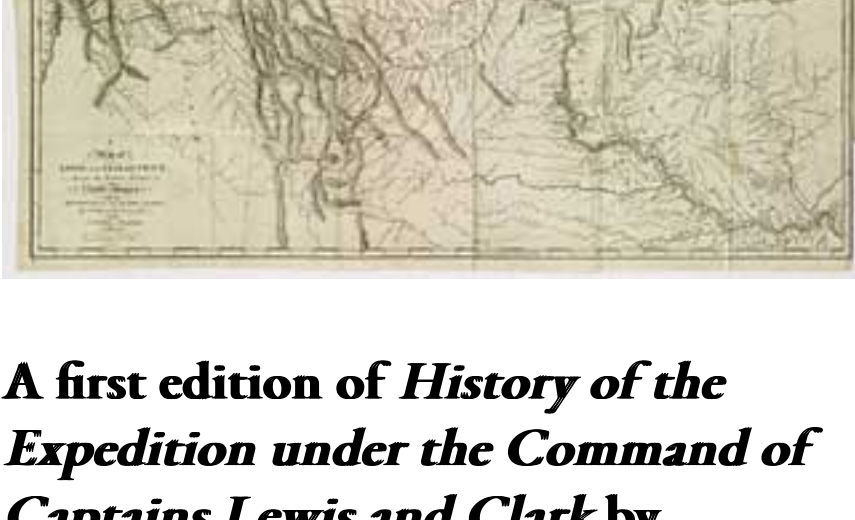
**An early (1785) edition of Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* sold for \$254,500 (est.**

**\$100,000/150,000) to an American private collector bidding on line. Printed by Philippe-Denis Pierres in Paris, it is one of only 200 copies from that run.**

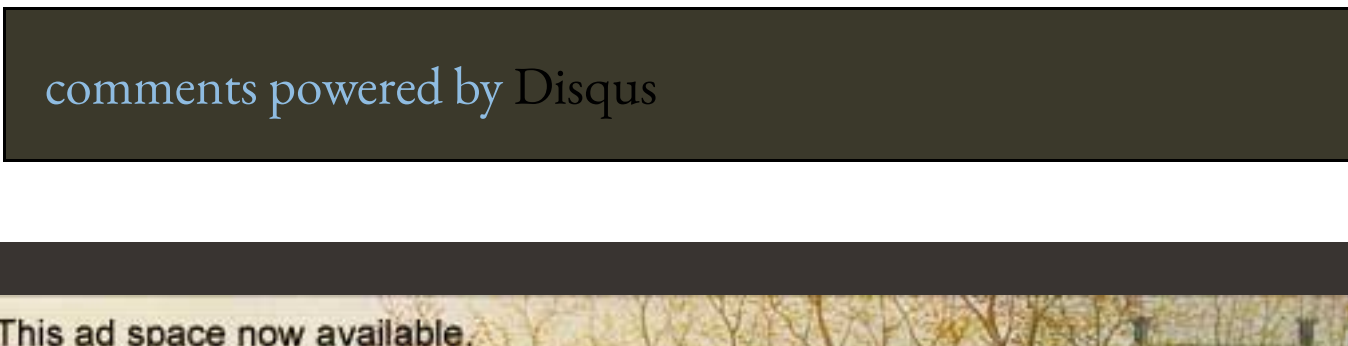


**George Washington's copy of Jonathan Swift's *The Beauties of Swift*; or, *The Favorite Offspring of Wit & Genius*, signed by Washington, fetched \$104,500 (est.**

**\$30,000/50,000).**



**A first edition of *History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark* by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, published in two volumes in 1814, sold for \$110,500 (est. \$80,000/120,000) to a bidder identified by Sotheby's as an American private collector.**



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