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## Angelica Singleton Van Buren (1816-1877)

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Department of Rare Books  
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**ANGELICA  
SINGLETON  
VAN BUREN  
(1816-1877)**

*an exhibit from the books  
recently donated by  
Mr. and Mrs. David Phillips  
of Florence, S.C.*



*July-August 1997*  
Main Lobby Exhibit Area  
Thomas Cooper Library

## INTRODUCING ANGELICA SINGLETON

The books displayed here belonged to Angelica Singleton Van Buren (1816-1877), the South Carolina-born daughter-in-law who was President Martin Van Buren's hostess at the White House. They are among a larger group of books, from the Barnwell and Singleton families, that were for many years in the home of Miss Malinda Barnwell of Florence, S.C. The collection has recently been donated to the University by Mr. and Mrs. David Phillips of Florence.

Angelica Singleton, daughter of South Carolina planter Richard Singleton and Rebecca Travis (Coles) Singleton, was raised at the family plantation Home Place, in Sumter, South Carolina. During the late 1820's and early 1830's she attended Madame Grelaud's Seminary in Philadelphia, along with her older sister Marion; such seminaries offered young ladies instruction in such subjects as grammar, languages, deportment, history, and music.

After leaving school Angelica spent time in Washington D.C. with distant relation Senator William Campbell Preston and his family. Her mother's cousin Dolley Madison, introduced her to Washington society, and in November 1838 Angelica married Abraham (Abram) Van Buren, the President's oldest son and personal secretary, whom she had met at a White House dinner earlier that year. The President reportedly approved of the marriage and the ties it brought between the White House and the powerful Southern aristocracy.

After an extended European honeymoon, Angelica returned in 1839 with her husband to live in the White

House and to serve as its hostess for Van Buren's remaining years in office.

When President Van Buren left office in 1841, Angelica and Abram first visited with Angelica's family in Sumter, where Angelica gave birth to their first son Singleton, and then settled at Van Buren's estate Lindenwald, in Kinderhook NY. The Van Burens continued to winter in South Carolina, and she later inherited Home Place. In 1848 the Van Burens moved to New York City, where Angelica was known for her charitable work.

## THE EXHIBIT

### **Engraving of Angelica Singleton**

From *Munsey's Magazine*, 38 (March 1907).

### **The Keepsake for MDCCCXXX**

Ed. F. M. Reynolds.

London: Hurst, Chance & Co., 1830.

*Inscribed "To Angelica from a Friend."*

### **The Atlantic Souvenir for 1830**

Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, & Carey, 1830.

*Inscribed "From Marion to her sister Angelica."*

### **Angelica Singleton's Autograph Album**

This manuscript volume, from 1831, includes inscriptions, poems, and sketches from school friends and teachers. The largest section commemorates Angelica's role as "Queen of May" in 1831; it includes "Address spoken by Miss A.L. Pearson to the Queen of May Miss Sarah Angelica Singleton, May 1 '31" and Angelica's "Reply," written by Edward Clayson, the English master, asserting that "Queen Angelique / Is not so weak / As some folks please to think," and that "Men don't wed girls / For eyes or curls / But court them for their Cash."

John Aiken, 1747-1822, *ed.*

**Select Works of the British Poets.**

Philadelphia: Thomas Wardle, 1831.

*Signed "Angelique Singleton 1834."*

George Combe, 1788-1858

**System of Phrenology.**

Boston: Marsh Capen & Lyon, 1835. .

*Inscribed "Angelica Singleton from R. M. Deveaux 1835."*

**Engraving of Mrs. Dolley Madison**

An American [J. F. Cooper, 1789-1851],

**Gleanings in Europe.**

Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, & Blanchard,

1837. *Signed "A. Van Buren."*

It was especially exciting to discover among Miss Barnwell's books this first edition, in the original binding, of a pseudonymous travel book by America's first major novelist James Fenimore Cooper.

Thomas Gray, 1716-1771

**The Poetical Works of Thomas Gray.**

London: William Pickering, 1836. *Signed*

*"A. S. Van Buren 1842."*

Robert Burns, 1759-1796,

**The Poetical Works of Robert Burns.**

London: William Pickering, 1839.

*Volumes 1 and 2 signed "A. S. Van Buren 1842."*

Richard Monckton Milnes, 1809-1885,

**The Poems of Richard Monckton Milnes.**

London: Edward Moxon, 1838. *Volume 2 only; signed "Angelica Van Buren London 1839."*

The inscription indicates that it was bought on Angelica's European honeymoon.

Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, 1803-1848.

**The Life of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry.**

New York: Harper & Bros., 1841. *Both vols. signed "A. Van Buren."*

Catharine Maria Sedgwick, 1785-1867

**Letters from Abroad to Kindred At Home.**

New York: Harper & Bros., 1841. Signed  
*"A. Van Buren."*

Grace Aguilar, 1816-1847,

**The Mother's Recompense.**

New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1850.

Signed *"Angelica Van Buren 46 East 21st  
Str."*

Charles Dickens, 1812-1870, ed.

**Household Words, A Weekly Journal**

London: Bradbury and Evans, 1855.

Signed *"Angelica Van Buren Geneva  
1856."*

Saba Smith, Lady Holland, d. 1866,

**A Memoir of the Reverend Sydney  
Smith.**

New York: Harper & Bros., 1856. *Both  
volumes signed "Angelica Singleton Van  
Buren 46 East 21st Str."*

Charles Kingsley, 1819-1875

**Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet. An  
Autobiography.**

New York: Harper & Bros., 1858. Signed  
*"Angelica Singleton Van Buren 46 East  
21st Str. New York."*

**Rhonda: a novel.**

By the author of 'Things by Their Right  
Names,' 'Plain Sense,' &c.

London: Henry Colburn, 1816. *Each  
volume is signed "Angelica Van Buren 46  
East 21st Str."*

**Memoires du Duc de Sully.**

Paris: Chez Etienne Ledoux, 1827. Signed  
*"Angelica Singleton Van Buren 46 East  
21st Str. New York."*

**Memoires du Cardinal de Retz, de  
Guy-Joli et de la duchesse de Nemours.**

Paris: Chez Ledoux & Fevre, 1817. Signed  
*"Angelica Singleton Van Buren  
46 East 21st Str. New York."*

Sir Henry Taylor, 1800-1876.

**Notes from Life in Six Essays.**

London: John Murray, 1847. Signed  
*"Angelica Singleton Van Buren 46 East  
21st Str. New York."*

**Angelica Singleton Van Buren**

Photograph in later life

(*Library of Congress*)

Edward J. Trelawny, 1792-1881

**Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley  
and Byron.**

Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1859. *Signed*

*"Angelica S. Van Buren 46 E. 21 Str."*

**Books belonging to**

**Mary Carter Singleton**

**(1837-1863)**

**and other family members**

Literary taste in the next generation after Angelica is represented by her niece, Mary Carter Singleton. Twenty years on, the upbringing of a South Carolinian young lady remained remarkably similar to Angelica's own, including attending a finishing school, yet Mary Singleton's books show also a significant new interest in works by women authors and about women's issues. In 1858, Mary married Rev. Robert Barnwell, so providing the link between the Singletons and the Barnwell family, through whom this collection descended. Also displayed in this case are books from the Phillips' gift from other members of the family, including her sons, along with some unsigned items from the collection that round out the picture it gives of women's reading in the mid-19th century.

Caroline Gilman, 1794-1888.

**The Sibyl, or New Oracles From the  
Poets.**

New York: George P. Putnam 1849.

*Inscribed "To Mary from her father Dec.  
28th 1849."*

**The Village in the Mountains;  
Conversion of Peter Bayssiere; and  
History of a Bible.**

New York: The American Tract Society,  
n.d. *Inscribed "To M.C. Singleton from  
her Aunt Martha."*

Frederick Rowton, ed.

**The Female Poets of Great Britain.**

Philadelphia: Henry Carey Baird, 1854.

*Inscribed: "Mr Archer's Academy  
Premium awarded to Miss M. Singleton for  
amiable deportment. June 29th 1855."*

Lydia Howard Sigourney, 1791-1865.

**Water Drops.**

New York: Robert Carter 1848. *Inscribed  
"To M.C. Singleton for her composition  
1847."*

**Heroines of Shakespeare.**

Boston: Philips, Sampson & Co., n.d.

*Inscribed "Mary C. Singleton from her  
cousin Richard I. Manning Jr. Dec. 31st  
1855."*

Sir Walter Scott, 1771-1832

**The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott.**

New York: D. Appleton, 1852. *Inscribed  
"Mary C. Singleton from her cousin  
Thomas Taylor."*

Sir Walter Scott, 1771-1832.

**Tales of a Grandfather.**

Philadelphia: J. Harding, 1851. *Each  
volume is inscribed in Angelica Singleton  
Van Buren's hand "Singleton Van Buren,  
from his mother. Jan 1st /52."*

Charles Dickens, 1812-1870.

**Dealings with the Firm of Dombey and  
Son.**

New York: 1847. *Signed on cover "Travis  
C. Van Buren."*

George Alfred Lawrence, 1827-1876.

**Sword and Gown.**

London: Tinsley Bros., 1871. *Signed on  
half-title "M. Van Buren Paris."*



## The Barnwell family books

While this exhibit highlights books from the Singleton family, the Phillips' recent gift includes also books from the Barnwells, a collection especially strong in 19th century theology. Displayed from the Barnwell books is the first book by the English Victorian novelist, "George Eliot" (Marian Evans), her anonymous translation, in three volumes, of the **Life of Christ**, by the German scholar David Friedrich Strauss.

*This exhibit has been curated for the Department of Rare Books & Special Collections by Jennifer Talley, a graduate student in the joint MA-MLIS program in English and Library & Information Science.*

*The Barnwell and Singleton family books form part of Thomas Cooper Library's growing Department of Rare Books & Special Collections, which preserves and makes available to researchers a wide range of research materials. Other collections of related interest include extensive holdings of 19th century English and American literary annuals, and of 19th century fiction, and the Francis Lord Collection on the Civil War.*

*General information about these and other collections is available on the Department's web-page, and individual items are described in the library's on-line catalogue USCAN. Inquiries about use of the materials may be directed to Rare Books & Special Collections, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208 (tel: 803-777-8154; e-mail: [scottp@tcl.sc.edu](mailto:scottp@tcl.sc.edu))*