

1-1998

## Paul Leicester Ford

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### Recommended Citation

University of South Carolina, "University of South Carolina Libraries - Paul Leicester Ford, January 1998".  
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Department of Rare Books &  
Special Collections

# PAUL LEICESTER FORD

*an exhibit recognizing  
the recent gift to  
the University from*

**Mrs. William R. Bailey**



*Paul Leicester Ford*

**Main Lobby Exhibit Area  
Thomas Cooper Library  
University of South Carolina  
*January–February 1998***

**Paul Leicester Ford** (1865–1902) was the consummate bookman of the late nineteenth century. During his brief life, he successfully contributed to the world of letters through printing, bibliography, editing, scholarship, and fiction. This exhibit represents part of a gift recently made to the University by **Mrs. William R. Bailey** of Camden in memory of her husband, William R. Bailey. Bailey was the grandson of Rosalie Ford Barr, one of Paul Ford's older sisters. Mrs. Barr was close to Ford throughout his life; she also provided him with his only formal schooling. Later in his life, she furnished him with a much needed retreat to complete one of his best-sellers. The collection contains almost forty books and pamphlets pertaining to Ford, including inscriptions, photos, and letters, and additional material by Noah Webster, Ford's great-grandfather, Emily E. Ford, his mother, Worthington C. Ford, his brother, and other authors.

## **The Exhibit**

### **Family history**

Owing to a spinal injury suffered in early youth, Ford was never able to attend school. Instead, Rosalie, his sister, tutored him in English, French, Greek, and American History. After three years, this arrangement ended due to Rosalie's marriage, and Ford began educating himself in the world-renowned library belonging to his father, Gordon Lester Ford. Housed within their residence were some 100,000 books and 60,000 manuscripts, dealing mainly with colonial and revolutionary American history. At this time, however, Ford's greatest interest was family history. Shown here is one of his great-grandfather's works: Noah Webster (1758–1843), **Dissertations on the English Language**, Boston: For the author by Isaiah Thomas, 1789.

### **Youth and printing**

In 1876, at the age of 11, Ford received a small press. This present and the massive resources to which he had access shaped his future interests. Ford immediately set about printing. Initially, the young man edited and reprinted manuscripts found in the library, specifically relating to his family, such as Ford's first reprint entitled **The Genealogy, Compiled for Presentation only by Noah Webster, New Haven, 1836, with Notes and Corrections by His Great-Grandson, Paul Leicester Ford**. In a matter of years, how-

ever, the young printer also turned his attention to new manuscripts, such as this collection of poems shown here by his mother, Emily E. Ford (1826–93), **Poems**, Brooklyn, N.Y.: Priv. print., 1879.

### **Bibliography**

Called precocious by all who knew him, Ford demonstrated this quality by quickly gaining the skill of an expert bibliographer. Shown here is one of his earliest and most successful compilations entitled **Bibliotheca Hamiltoniana: A List of Books Written by, or Relating to, Alexander Hamilton**, New York: Knickerbocker, 1886 (#5 of 500). Inscribed by Ford to his sister, Rosalie Barr, Xmas 1886.

This bibliography remains the most extensive treatment of Hamilton to date.

### **Bibliography and Reference List of the History and Literature relating to the Adoption of the Constitution of the United States, 1787–8**

Brooklyn, N.Y.: n.p. 1888.

**List of Some Briefs in Appeal Causes Which Relate to America Tried before the Lords Commissioners of Appeals of Prize Causes of His Majesty's Privy Council, 1736–1758.** Offprint. Brooklyn, N.Y.: n.p., 1889. Reprinted from The Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

**Check List of Bibliographies, Catalogues, Reference-lists, and List of Authorities of American Books and Subjects.** Brooklyn, N.Y.: n.p., 1889.

### **Editing**

At the same time that Ford was working hard to organize and catalogue numerous manuscripts, he was also involved in reprinting texts for scholarly use. Shown here is **Pamphlets on the Constitution of the United States: Published during Its Discussion by the People, 1787–1788.** Brooklyn, N.Y.: n.p., 1888 (#4 of 500). One page presentation inscription to Rosalie Barr.

This interesting collection of 14 pamphlets published during the years of 1787–88 included both Federalist and anti-Federalist texts. Up to this point, anti-Federalist tracts had remained in a state of oblivion.

**Writings of Christopher Columbus: Descriptive of the Discovery and Occupation of the New World.**



New York: C.L. Webster and Co., 1892. Signed by Ford to Rosalie Barr, September 22, 1892.

To amass the necessary information to edit these documents, Ford visited several European libraries.

### **Historical Printing Club**

Ford was also involved in a printing club, which was quite the rage within educated circles in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Along with his father, Gordon Lester Ford, and his older brother, Worthington, Ford set out to make available to scholars and libraries important but little known works and manuscripts. The source of much of this material was the family library. These separate texts were ultimately included in fifteen volumes of **Winnowings in American History**. Shown here is a pamphlet edited by Ford entitled **An Account of a Plan for Civilizing the North American Indians, Proposed in the Eighteenth Century**. By John Daniel Hammerer. **Winnowings in American History: Indian Tracts**, 1. Brooklyn, N.Y.: n.p., 1890.

**Orderly Book of the "Maryland Loyalists Regiment," June 18th, 1778 to October 12th, 1778.** Brooklyn, N.Y.: Historical Printing Club, 1891. (#63 of 250)

This book was probably the first Loyalist orderly book published. Its vivid descriptions of camp conditions, day-to-day existence, and regulations governing camp life, during the Revolution made it a very important historical text.

### **The Library Journal and librarianship**

From 1890-93, Ford co-edited the **Library Journal**, shown here. His growing renown as an editor and bibliographer qualified him for such a position, but his friendships with Richard Rogers Bowker, the publisher of **Publisher's Weekly** and the **Library Journal**, and Melvil Dewey, the president of the New York Library Club and the creator of the Dewey Decimal Classification System, certainly helped him gain this position. During his tenure on the magazine, Ford advocated the most progressive ideas of the day: free access to book shelves, cooperative buying on the part of libraries, the formation of union catalogs, the collecting and indexing of neglected research materials, and the introduction of inter-library loans.

"The James Lorimer Graham Library." **James**

Lorimer Graham, Jr. January 17th, 1894. N.p.: Century Association, 1894. 14–28.

In this speech given to the members of the Century Association, Ford recounted his experiences cataloging the Graham collection and stated through this process he had grown to know not only Graham's books but also Graham.

### **The novelist**

To the surprise of his family and friends, Ford wrote his first novel in 1894. The novel, shown here, is entitled **The Honorable Peter Stirling and What People Thought of Him**. 18th ed. New York: H. Holt, 1896.

Composing the majority of this work at his sister Rosalie Barr's home, Stoney Wolde Farm in Turners, New York, Ford hoped to enter yet another facet of the publishing world—fiction. The novel chronicled the rise and progress of an ideal statesman, who resists the intrigues and corruption of American politics, while fighting for honor, sympathy for all classes, and the "American Ideal." Ford had trouble finding a publisher initially and watched for several months as the book languished on the shelves. Suddenly, however, the book became a best-seller, being bought out as fast as copies could be printed. The reason for this new interest was based on the rumor that the protagonist, Peter Sterling, was based on President Grover Cleveland. Although Ford vehemently denied this hearsay, he relished his rapid ascension to literary notability. As for the novel itself, in the first 25 years of the book's publication 53 editions were released and, as late as 1945, the book went into its 76th edition. Even though the book had remarkable sales, many critics noted the lack of symmetry, style, and realistic characters. One of them, Henry James, is reported as saying that the enormous sales success of **Peter Stirling** keeps one from saying more than that the work is both formless and tasteless.

"The Great K. & A. Train-Robbery." Offprint. **Lippincott's Monthly Magazine** (Aug. 1896): 147–207. Ford inscribed the front free endpaper: "Emily - a cheap expression of a dear attachment. PLF."

**The Great K. & A. Train-Robbery**. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1897.

This Western tale, published in part-publication and book-form, recounts the exploits of Dick Gordon, the ex-football player from Yale who, as super-

intendent of the Kansas and Arizona Railroad, prevents one of the most bizarre holdups in train robbery literature. The sales of this story were moderate and, once again, the critics attacked Ford's lack of artistry.

### **The historian**

While working as an editor, bibliographer, and novelist, Ford decided to try his hand at yet one more genre—biography. It was his intent to present familiar and revered historical figures as men, not heroes or demigods. Rather than taking a chronological approach, Ford analyzed twelve aspects of each figure's career, and where ever possible, he used direct quotes to allow the subjects to speak for themselves. Shown here is **The True George Washington**. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1896. Inscribed by Ford to Rosalie Barr.

Ford was applauded by scholars for his thoroughness and his ability to present Washington as an actual human being.

**The Many-sided Franklin**. New York: Century, 1899. Inscribed to Rosalie Barr, October 6, 1899.

Although this biography was well-received, it was quickly superseded by later works.

### **A man of many talents**

Enjoying his successes of 1896, Ford spent the next seven years proving his talent as a bookman, by publishing in all fields. Shown here is **The New-England Primer: A History of Its Origin and Development, with a Reprint of the Unique Copy of the Earliest Known Edition and Many Facsimile Illustrations and Reproductions**. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1897. (#61 of 425) Inscribed by Ford to Rosalie Barr, September 17, 1897.

This edition contains a complete reproduction of the earliest known copy of the Primer, the 1727 edition at the Lenox Library. Ford also included a series of appendices: reprintings of **The New England Tutor**, John Rogers's "Exhortation," and one of Cotton Mather's works on catechizing.

**The Story of an Untold Love**. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1897. An autographed postcard from Ford to Rosalie Barr, dated October 2, 1897, "day of publication," inserted.

This short novel was criticized for being slow moving and having unbelievable characters, espe-



cially female characters. The most interesting aspect of this text is the autobiographical element.

**Janice Meredith: A Story of the American Revolution.** Deluxe issue. 2 vol. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1899. Inscribed by Ford to Rosalie Barr.

This novel proved to be Ford's greatest literary success. Although the critics attacked the novel's faulty construction, lack of style, and contrived action, the reading public adored it. Within the first three months, over 200,000 copies sold, which was the largest on record of any novel then published. Within two years of its publication, it was dramatized and, early in the twentieth century, it was even made into a motion picture. The novel was a culmination of Ford's diverse skills. This historical romance, set before and during the of the Revolutionary War, narrates the struggle of the colonies to gain their freedom and the struggle of the hero, Jack Brereton, to win the heroine, Janice Meredith. One enthusiastic critic went so far as to declare that this novel was "the great New Jersey novel, if not the great American novel." For the publics part, a new dance was coined the "Janice Meredith Waltz," and a new hairstyle was labeled the "Meredith curl." All in all, most critics agreed that **Janice Meredith** was proof of Ford's improved skill as a novelist.

**A House Party: An Account of Stories Told at a Gathering of Famous American Authors, the Story Tellers Being Introduced by Paul Leicester Ford.** Boston: Small, Maynard, 1901.

Ford served as the editor of this interesting volume, consisting of twelve anonymous short stories, one of which was written by Ford, "A Family Tradition." Some of the other famous authors included Sarah Orne Jewett, Owen Wister, George Washington Cable, and C.G.D. Roberts. Readers were instructed to identify the authors, and the first to do so correctly would win a large monetary prize.

**The Journals of Hugh Gaine, Printer.** New York: Dodd, Mead, 1902. Presentation note and autograph letter signed from the editor to Rosalie Barr.

This two volume set contained not only a seventy-page bibliography of Gaine and a bibliography of the issues of his press between the years of 1752-1800, but also contained various selections of Gaine's journals and letters. This work was well received



and provided scholars for the first time with a large body of information relating to one of colonial and revolutionary America's most important printers.

### **The Bibliographer**

Because Ford was widely recognized as a literary and historical scholar, he was chosen in 1902 by the Dodd, Mead publishing firm to edit their new journal, the **Bibliographer**. Although he served on the staff for less than a year, Ford brought prestige, experience, and commitment, to this new science and new journal. Unlike many other scholars of the day, Ford believed that historical texts could no longer be based on the scholar's opinions and a few other histories; bibliography was a necessary basis for all historical work. It was his firm conviction that "the personal opinion of the writer, unless most thoroughly supported by citations and references, is no longer accepted as fact, and is hardly wished for by the scholar."

### **Tragic death**

On May 8, 1902, Ford was shot by his estranged brother, Malcolm Webster Ford, the athlete and magazine writer, who committed suicide immediately afterward. In response to his early demise, the **Bibliographer** lamented that "The death of Mr. Ford is a permanent loss to American bibliography." A writer at **Harper's Weekly** stated that "there can be no doubt had Mr. Ford lived and kept what shreds of health his delicate system vouchsafed him that he would have contributed several more novels of American life and social conditions, which would have placed him in the history of American literature as one of the greatest of American novelists." And an article in the **Bookman**, declared that Ford was one of the great historians of the nineteenth century. Leaving behind a wife and small daughter, Ford's death was truly a loss to his family, friends, and American letters. Examining his short life and his numerous accomplishments, however, makes one readily accept his friend's assertion that Ford had "an almost superhuman capacity for work."

*This exhibition has been created for the Department by Donald L. Kaplan, a graduate student in the joint MA-MLIS program in English and Library and Information Science.*