
IN JCB

AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE JOHN CARTER BROWN LIBRARY

Events of Moment

IN THE LONG HISTORY of the JCB, it is doubtful there has ever before been a brief period so packed with major new developments as the past six months. In October, Maury A. Bromsen died and bequeathed to the Library the largest single gift it has received since 1900, \$4 million in cash plus books and manuscripts worth at least another \$1 million. In January, Ted Widmer was named the new director of the Library, bringing to an end, as of July 1, the tenure here for twenty-three years of Norman Fiering. Then, in April, the Board of Governors voted to invest as much as \$2 million in a residence and meeting space for the Library's research fellows. More on these changes is recounted below. Any one of them alone would be transforming to the Library, yet each, rather than a departure from the norm, is an enhancement of existing strengths and rests on a solid foundation.

Maury A. Bromsen

MAURY A. BROMSEN was named Honorary Curator of Latin American Books at the JCB in 1996, and in 2000 he donated to the Library his Simón Bolívar collection, the main feature of which is the iconography, including twenty-two engravings of the South American Liberator. A special room was set aside and completely rebuilt to house this stellar gift. The room is named after Mr. Bromsen and dedicated to the memory of his parents. It was understood at that time that the Library would be Mr. Bromsen's principal legatee.

Maury Bromsen was a collector and private bookseller for more than fifty years, dealing broadly in Americana, but his great love was colonial Spanish America. In this field, he was



Maury A. Bromsen (April 25, 1919–October 11, 2005)

a mentor to the JCB. Not only did he know the Spanish American past very well, he above all knew the books that have survived from that past; even more, he knew the books *about* the books that have survived from that past, i.e., the bibliographical literature relevant to the Spanish empire.

Possessed of a formidable memory, he loved to pour forth on the people, the books, the times, the historians, the bibliographers, the professors who are, or were, in this world of colonial Spain. Ask Maury a question about the primary historical literature of Peru, or Chile, or Cuba, or Venezuela, and one could almost see the brain cells mobilize while his incredible recall went into action, and then came the precise and extended discourse. He had little tolerance for imprecision. Few scholars or booksellers in the past half century possessed Maury's capacious knowledge of colonial Latin American bibliography.

He particularly valued and promoted the singular geniuses who have brought order, or as librarians say, *control*, to the history of the printing and publishing of early books, since

these are largely unsung heroes—especially the phenomenal Chilean bibliographer and author José Toribio Medina, about whom Mr. Bromsen edited a collection of essays.

Maury had books to sell in our field and instruction to give. In fact, in his case, the two were inseparable. He was constitutionally incapable of selling a book without accompanying instruction—about the author, the printer, the text, the context, the book as object, and the book as historical document. In the past two decades the JCB bought hundreds of hard-to-find books from him including some exceptional rarities.

Maury not only sold the Library books, he helped to shape this great collection. His influence is written into this institution more than anyone will ever know. It is fitting that his will includes funds to endow a new position of Curator of Latin American Books, the Bromsen Curator. This incoming staff member, for whom a search is now underway, will have to be extraordinarily accomplished to live up to the standards of the Honorary Curator.

Ted Widmer

FORMALLY, “Edward L. Widmer,” but preferably just “Ted,” will be the sixth JCB Librarian in 150 years, excluding Champlin Burrage, who held the job for a year, and Worthington C. Ford, who was acting librarian between 1917 and 1922. The first was John Russell Bartlett, who became John Carter Brown’s librarian in 1855.

There is continuity in this story too. Ted was a research fellow at the JCB twelve years ago, in 1994, working on the history of African drumming in Haiti. He distinguished himself at the time by his quick intelligence and sharp sense of humor. Our affection for him and his affection for the JCB never languished between then and now.

In 1993, the year before his stint at the Library as a fellow, he had earned a doctoral degree at Harvard in American Civilization and was looking forward to a typical academic career. Between 1993 and 1997 he was a lecturer at Harvard in its History and Literature program and won a prize for teaching excellence. Clearly gifted with the pen as well as in the classroom, in 1997 he was recruited by the White House to write speeches on foreign policy for President Clinton, and remained with the administration until 2001, eventually becoming Senior Advisor to the President for Special Projects.

Ted then became the first Director of the C. V. Starr Center for the Study of the American Experience and Associate Professor of History at Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland. But even after leaving the White House in 2001, he remained until 2004 a Special Assistant to President Clinton, along with his duties at the new Starr Center. It would take up more space here than we have available to describe Widmer’s numerous program initiatives at the Starr Center, starting from scratch, but sufficient to say, it was work that prepared him well for administrative duties at the JCB.

Ted is a widely published author of both academic and popular essays, often appearing in *The New York Times* among other publications, and has written several books, including *Martin Van Buren* (Henry Holt, 2005) and *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2001).

Change is the order of life. At this moment in the history of the JCB it is time for new wine (in old bottles), or maybe old wine in new bottles. In any case, there is sure to be a mixture of the two at an institution with traditions as deeply rooted as they are here.

79 Charlesfield Street

THE LIBRARY’S FELLOWSHIP program some years ago reached a kind of plateau, a fulfillment of all that was envisioned when it began in 1982–83. We now award over thirty fellowships a year, which is our absolute capacity, and the program is entirely endowed, stealing no money away from other essential functions, such as acquisitions, or from staff salaries. It is a truly and appropriately international program. Of the approximately 600 fellowship appointments made since 1983, close to 200 have been to citizens of countries other than the United States.

As a program that awards fellowships to hundreds of graduate students as well as to senior faculty, it plays a role in the training of scholars for academic research as well as contributing directly to the study and teaching of the early modern Americas.

After twenty-three years of operation, the fellows who come every year fit into a well-established flow at the Library. The new arrivals from month to month immediately become part of the respiration of the institution and oxygenate our blood. We typically have in residence at any given time nine to twelve fellows,

plus other academics with semi-permanent status here, who are designated Invited Research Scholars. This group and other visitors, including a regular contingent from the surrounding community, bring the normal attendance at our weekly fellows' lunch talks on Wednesdays to about thirty-five people. The Library thus provides a rich intellectual environment for its fellows.

This flourishing and much acclaimed program needed improvement in only two critical areas that we could see. First, the scholars in residence at the JCB at any given time lacked informal, accessible meeting space outside of the Library itself, where many restrictions necessarily apply, since at the JCB we must always pay close attention to the security of the collection.

Second, we suffered from the vagaries of the short-term housing market in the vicinity, where all of our fellows must find lodging for periods of time ranging from two months to ten months. Each of the thirty or more visiting scholars every year have to have a furnished place to live that is a reasonably short distance from the Library and with an affordable rent.

To overcome these difficulties, and indeed to enhance the fellowship program as a whole, we began a few years ago to search for a large house near the Library that could accommodate as many as fifty people for a lecture on the ground floor and also house seven or eight fellows at any given time in spacious rooms on upper floors, each with a private bath.

We finally settled on a large Victorian of just the right dimensions, 9,300 sq. ft., three stories tall with high ceilings, built in 1900, only four blocks from the Library. It is presently owned by Brown University but has been vacant for the past few years. Identified for now only as 79 Charlesfield Street (for a donation of \$1 million,

dear reader, it can be named after you), this residence and intellectual and social center will also have a large communal kitchen and dining room. All scholars in residence at the JCB, whether or not they are actually living at 79 Charlesfield Street, will find the house an asset in numerous ways.

This scholars' residence will not only greatly ease our problem of finding suitable housing for our fellows, it will also make possible quite spontaneous gatherings for lectures and seminars, or any sort of informal discussion, uninhibited by the security concerns at the Library itself. We believe that the combination of resources at the JCB, meaning the peerless collection and the Library's superb staff, plus the community of visiting scholars clustered at 79 Charlesfield year round, will make the JCB as a center for advanced study even more attractive than it is already.

To realize this dream, the Board of Governors voted in February to commit up to \$2 million for the renovation and furnishing of the Charlesfield Street building, the interior of which will be entirely reconstructed. Bringing the space up to present-day fire, handicapped, and building codes is a serious part of the expense. In



SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION

79 Charlesfield Street
(Berry/Lykins Architects)

exchange for this investment, the University has turned the building over to the JCB for its exclusive use. The operating costs of the building—utilities, maintenance, custodial care, and so forth—will be exactly met by the income from nine furnished rental units, one of which will be reserved for a Brown graduate student concierge.

Our ongoing Endowment Campaign, “Ensuring the Future,” with a preliminary goal of \$7.5 million, from the beginning included \$2 million as a goal for a fellows’ residence and meeting center. We will now begin in earnest to raise that \$2 million, hoping to reach the goal within a year. It is anticipated that 79 Charlesfield will be ready for occupancy by April 2007.

Bequest of Frederick Lippitt

WE MUST TAKE A MINUTE here to honor Fred Lippitt, who died in May 2005 at the age of 88. Fred served on the Library’s Board from 1973 to 1996, a very long tenure. Although he was a Yale graduate, with both a bachelor’s degree and law degree from that institution, he was a major benefactor of Brown and a trustee of the University. The scion of a distinguished Rhode Island family—the son of a U. S. senator and the grandson of a governor of this state—Fred’s entire life was devoted to public service.

In addition to major generosity to Brown, Fred bequeathed to the JCB \$250,000 to establish an acquisitions endowment in his memory, and he also left us the pick of a substantial library gathered by him and his sister Mary Ann. With elation we took away more than fifty volumes from his house on Prospect Street, including several editions of Cook’s voyages that we lacked, Robert Barclay’s *Apology...for the Quakers* (London, 1701), a sixteen-volume set of the works of Edmund Burke, eighteenth-century collected works of Benjamin Franklin, a London 1639 edition of More’s *Utopia*, the works of Sir William Temple (London, 1770), and so forth.

As with all bequest intentions, the expected recipient dare not calculate that largess into any immediate concrete plans. At some unknown distant point in the future one hopes to see a promise realized. In this case, as it happens, Mr. Lippitt’s generosity is a timely, unanticipated infusion into our Endowment Campaign.

The Campaign

THAT CAMPAIGN, to raise \$7.5 million for the Library, primarily in endowment, has surpassed the \$4 million mark. Included in the goal was \$2 million to be invested in a residence for our research fellows. The house at 79 Charlesfield does offer opportunities for donor recognition. Individual bedrooms may be named for gifts of \$100,000 or more; public rooms on the ground floor for donations of \$200,000 to \$500,000. The entire house may be named for a gift of \$1 million.

One might surmise that with Maury Bromsen’s bequest of \$4 million, the Library is now over the top and could call a successful conclusion to this quest. Our Endowment Campaign, however, was devised with specific, strategic goals in mind, some of which are not met by the Bromsen gift. So we must continue this effort.

Indeed, to accommodate Mr. Bromsen’s bequest and also to bring the JCB’s campaign more into line with Brown University’s \$1.5 billion campaign, which is also underway at this time, we are making two formal changes to the JCB campaign. We are incorporating Mr. Bromsen’s gift into our campaign but changing the goal from \$7.5 million to \$11.5 million. Our official tally, then, as of this date, is \$8 million raised, with \$3.5 million still to go!

Brown University’s campaign will officially end in December 2010. The JCB’s campaign was scheduled to end in December 2008. We are now officially extending the term of the JCB’s campaign also to the end of 2010. Gifts and pledges may thus be stretched a bit more. A pledge made now can be made in four payments, the last in 2010.

We are including with this newsletter a list of donors to the Library’s Campaign as of May 15. Our gratitude for such help is unbounded. The Library has no significant sources of income other than gifts—gifts for endowment that provide income in perpetuity and cash gifts for current purposes. Both are important. There is a strong sense in this institution that we must merit the confidence in the Library implied by such donations.

Other Gifts of Note

GIFTS FOR PURPOSES other than endowment were mentioned above. A good recent example was the gift to the Library of \$25,000 by Ira

Unschuld, a New York investor and also an ardent collector of documents related to American financial and business history. Ira's interest in historical documents extends not only to his growing private collection but also to the well-being of manuscript collections buried in libraries and never fully processed.

The JCB is a fastidious institution and every historical item in the building is carefully protected. We admit with some embarrassment, however, that it may take many years before substantial manuscript collections are properly catalogued. One of the few such neglected collections here is the Arnold-Green Papers, containing the original records of the Rhode Island firms of Samuel G. Arnold & Co., Welcome Arnold, Green and Arnold, and the Plainfield Union Manufacturing Company, covering the years, roughly, from 1773 to 1825. These were given to the Library for safekeeping in 1944, with only occasional attention paid to them since that time. With the help of Mr. Unschuld, we are hiring this spring a manuscript librarian for a two-year period for the express purpose of cataloguing and making fully accessible this collection.

We wish also to acknowledge a gift of \$30,000 to establish the Albert Harkness preservation Fund at the JCB, made by family members of the late Mr. Harkness. Albert was fond of saying that he was not part of the rich half of the noted Harkness clan, but he was continually generous to this Library. During his life he offered us more than money, namely the benefit of his long experience as a foreign service officer in several Spanish American countries.

His connection to the JCB began in 1939, when Albert was in Santiago de Chile at the age of twenty-four, having just graduated from Harvard. The JCB Librarian at the time, Lawrence C. Wroth, proposed to the Rockefeller Foundation that someone in Chile be commissioned to microfilm some 2,400 pre-1800 Spanish American imprints in the José Toribio Medina Collection at the National Library of Chile that were not in the John Carter Brown Library. Wroth's idea was that the research resources of the Library could be dramatically expanded by this project. The Foundation supported the proposal, and Albert Harkness undertook this task for the Library. The *Filme Hispanica Americana* collection (FHA) is still regularly used at the JCB, although we have acquired since those days copies of many of the books that we lacked in 1939.

The outbreak of world war interrupted that work, but later Albert earned a Ph. D. in history from Harvard, and until the 1970s was employed mostly by the United States Information Agency in a number of different posts, including a stint back in Chile. Settling down near Providence after his retirement, he visited the JCB often, an inherently courtly gentleman whose conversation always brought enlightenment and pleasure. He took a particular interest in the many researchers from Latin America who frequent our reading room.

When the Harkness family wanted to memorialize Albert at the JCB, we thought immediately of an endowed fund to support preservation, meaning particularly an extension of the FHA project, money to convert original texts into other durable formats—microform, digital, or printed facsimiles. We had not the slightest doubt that Albert would approve.

Fellowships

VARIOUS REVIEW committees have completed the selection of Research Fellows for 2006–2007, and a detailed list will be distributed in a news release in June. We have made thirty-five appointments, including two scholars from the United Kingdom who will be coming to the JCB for several months as Caird Fellows under the auspices of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England, a standing arrangement we have with the NMM.

Nine foreign countries are represented in the 2006–2007 group—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Germany, the Netherlands, Peru, Portugal, Spain—and eleven of the fellows are graduate students working on dissertations. American institutions represented include Carleton, Clark, Colgate, Duke, Holy Cross, NYU, Johns Hopkins, the University of Houston, Howard University, University of Michigan, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Northwestern, Princeton, University of Virginia, Williams College, Texas A & M, and others.

France and America

THE JCB LIKES TO think of itself as a global institution, to use the phrase of the moment (“world” has been superseded), in that the extent and depth of our holdings pertaining to the Western Hemisphere between 1492 and 1825

have few rivals anywhere on the planet (still a good word), and we serve an international constituency. On the other hand, we are planted here in Rhode Island, and the Library's founding family is the Browns of Providence Plantations. From time to time, we pay attention to our local heritage, and this year is one of those times.

In June 1781, two hundred and twenty-five years ago, the French expeditionary force sent to Newport, Rhode Island, by Louis XVI the year before was bivouacked right on the Brown University campus. Its essential purpose was to unravel the British empire. The University thus became a participant in the historical moment whether it wanted to be or not.

From Providence General Rochambeau's army set off on its march to Virginia, converging with George Washington's Continental Army in New York, to effect that historic pincer on the Yorktown peninsula in October 1781. With the French navy under the Comte de Grasse in Chesapeake Bay blocking an escape by sea, and 15,000 French and American troops closing off an escape by land, General Cornwallis was forced to surrender after a three-week siege. No one knew it at the time, but the war for independence had been won. It is said that the British

military band on surrender day, October 17, played "The World Turned Upside Down," and surely somewhere an American piper played "Yankee Doodle."

The story is too rich and miraculous to let pass without some remembrance here, especially since this Library and the John Hay Library at Brown together own hundreds of relevant books and maps. It is all too easy, moreover, for patriots to forget how utterly decisive was the French contribution to victory.

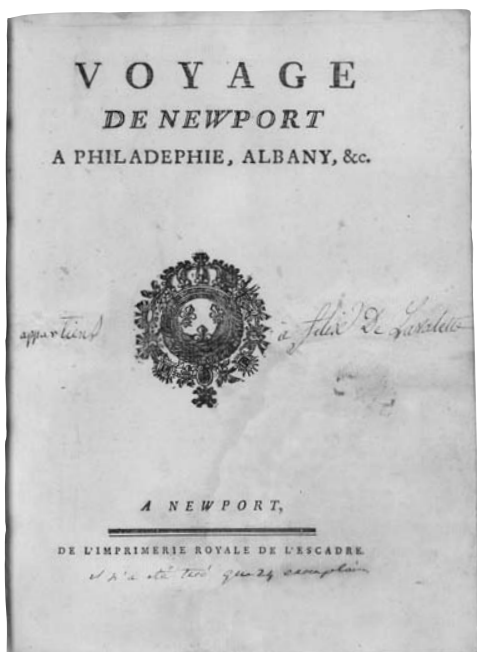
On Saturday, June 17, the JCB is sponsoring a Symposium on "France and the American Revolution," with three speakers in sequence beginning at 9:00 a.m.: Prof. Jeremy Black, University of Exeter, on "French Policy in the Great Wars of Empire, 1689 to 1815"; Edward G. Lengel, University of Virginia, on "From Rhode Island to Yorktown: George Washington and the Forging of the Alliance that Won the Revolutionary War"; and Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, Institut Charles V, Université Paris 7 – Denis Diderot, "Beyond Yorktown: From the American Revolution to the French Revolution with the Veterans of the War of Independence." We are grateful to the Florence Gould Foundation for awarding the JCB a grant to make possible this event.

Beyond JCB doings, the Rhode Island State Rochambeau Commission and the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route Committee (W3R), in which nine states are involved from Massachusetts to Virginia, have multiple other plans for this commemoration.

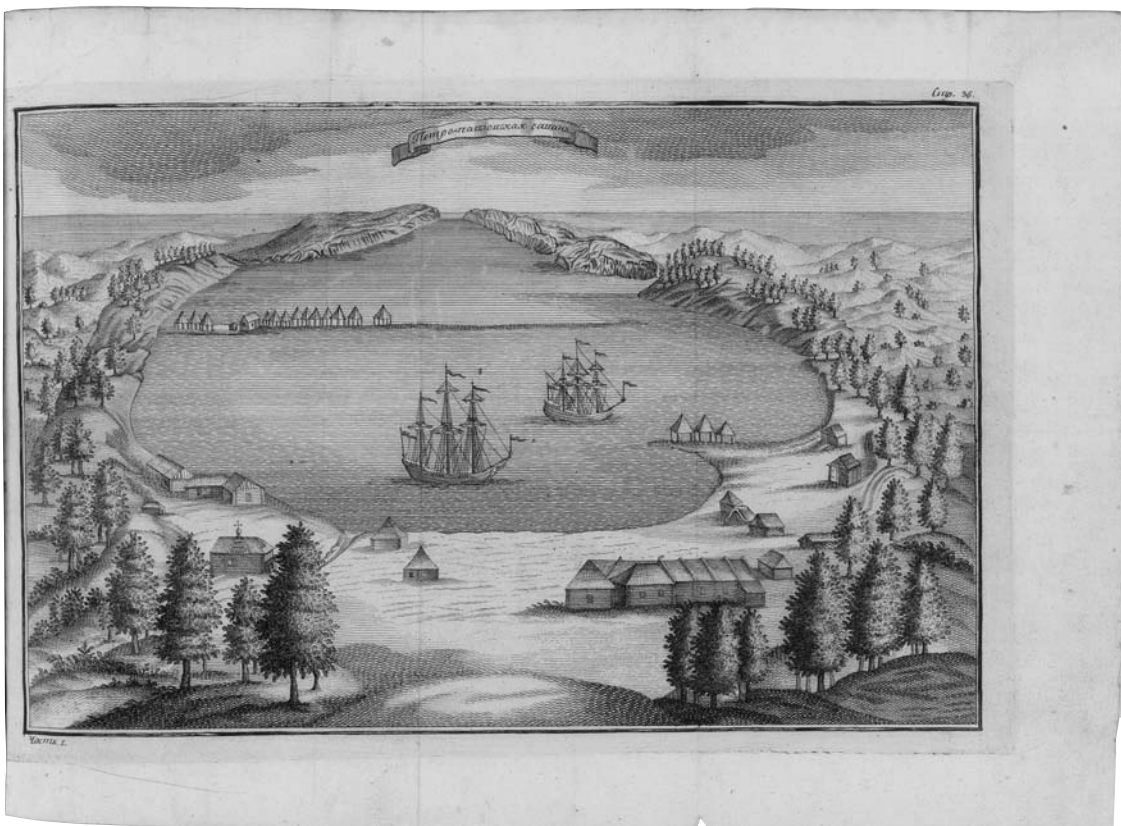
Acquisitions

A GOAL THAT IS NEARLY always part of JCB fundraising is to have money in hand for acquisitions, whether it is from old endowment yield or ready cash. The market is merciless in its prices, and our hunger is insatiable for acquiring all that exists in print, dating from before 1825, pertaining to the Americas. The Library's financial position in this respect has grown increasingly muscular in the past couple of decades, and more than ever we can afford what we feel must be added to the collection regardless of price.

Some choice items, however, so rarely come onto the market that we can only pray that a generous individual collector who happens to own a choice piece will one day look benevolently upon the JCB as the best possible home for a prize possession and simply give us the desired book. Mr. R. David Parsons, an esteemed member of the Library's Board of Governors, has



Marquis de Chastellux, *Voyage de Newport a Philadelphie, Albany, &c.* (Newport, R. I.: De l'Imprimerie Royale de l'Escadre, [1781]). It was not uncommon for naval fleets to have a printing press on board. This work of nearly 200 pages, issued in only twenty-four copies, may have been printed on shipboard when the French fleet was anchored in Newport, but by April or May 1781, it is known that the press had already been moved into Newport proper.



The Port of Petropavlovsk and Avacha Bay, Kamchatka, from Stepan Petrovich Krasheninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki* (St. Petersburg, 1755). Bering is considered the founder of Petropavlovsk.

recently been singularly benevolent and gave us the following coveted work: Stepan Petrovich Krasheninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki* (St. Petersburg, 1755), two volumes, a work that contains one of the earliest descriptions of Russian America.

Krasheninnikov was with Bering's expedition in the far North for some years between 1734 and 1743, and he also had access to the notes of Georg Steller, who accompanied Bering. The book has important content and lovely plates, and is altogether a well-made object, but what made us absolutely feel the joy of closure is this fact: The JCB owns the English translation of 1764, the German translation of 1766, the French translations of 1767, 1768, and 1770, and the Amsterdam Dutch translation of 1770. With the first edition at last, in Russian, published in 1755, we have a straight, or a full house, or maybe it's best to call it a royal flush.

Printing History

IN JANUARY, at a ceremony in the New York Public Library, the JCB was presented with an

award by the American Printing History Association (APHA) for distinguished achievement in the field. The citation read: "For over a century the JCB has been a leader in collecting, preserving, and promoting the printing history of the colonial Americas, North and South. Not content simply to build the world's finest collection of primary printed sources pertaining to the discovery, exploration, and history of the colonial Americas, the JCB and its staff have authored many essential bibliographies and works on American printing history. In support of scholarship, the JCB's fellowship, exhibition, and publication programs are models of their kind."

In a brief speech accepting the award, the director of the JCB noted: "APHA is 30-some years old; the JCB is more than 150 years old, and so strong is the tradition at the Library of attention to printing history that one might say that the JCB was a division of the American Printing History Association before there was such an Association."

Further remarks about the John Carter Brown Library and its contributions may be found online at APHA's website, www.printinghistory.org.



A portrait of Father Jean Baptiste Labat, which appears in his work, *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amerique* (Paris, 1742). Labat was a French Dominican and missionary, active in the West Indies from 1693 to 1706. The legend on the engraving notes that he died in Paris on January 6, 1738, when he was 75 years old. This is one of nearly 3,000 images of the early Americas, dating from before 1825, now accessible online via the JCB's Archive of Early American Images project. The AEAI will eventually have stored over 5,000 images, all from the JCB collection and available for reproduction.

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