

# Trexler Library Special Collections & Archives

## Researchers' Window to the Intellectual and Cultural Past

By Susan Falciani, Special Collections and Archives Librarian at Trexler Library

Trexler Library's collections of rare books, maps, periodicals, music and memorabilia represent a wide swath of intellectual, institutional and regional knowledge that mirrors the growth of Muhlenberg College. Many items in Special Collections bear the bookplates of the Euterpean and Sophronian Literary Societies, organizations founded in the first months of the College, which called for circulating libraries for "the diffusion of liberal principles and the promotion of intellectual, social and moral improvement of [their] members." In 1912, the society libraries were merged with the College's collection, which was comprised largely of gift books in German and Latin, and the nucleus of what has become Trexler Library's collection was formed.

Among its holdings, the Rare Books Collection contains

multiple editions of the Luther Bible and commentaries spanning several centuries, reflecting the Lutheran heritage of the College. The Pennsylvania German Collection connects that heritage with the founding of the United States through examples of early American printing and manuscript materials relating to the Muhlenberg family, as well as its depth in local history and culture. The Ray R. Brennen Map Collection, the Abram Samuels Sheet Music Collection, the Sam Stovall Record Collection and other works of literature, history, science and philosophy represent generous gifts of alumni, trustees and friends of the College. These gifts allow Special Collections and Archives to preserve and share our intellectual and cultural past with researchers and, most importantly, with our students.

### Ovid Incunable ▼

"Publii Ovidii Nasonis epistolarum Heroidum" is one of four incunables held by Trexler Library; an "incunable" is a book printed before 1501, during the first five decades after the invention of the printing press in the 1440s. This work, printed in Venice in 1485, is an early edition of Ovid's "Heroides," a collection of epistolary poems presented as if written by legendary characters in Greek mythology, including Penelope and Ulysses. This copy, in what is believed to be its original wooden binding, is one of only five copies extant and is the only one held by a United States library.



### Cuneiform Tablets ▲

These six clay tablets were acquired by the College in 1916 and date from ca. 2350 to 538 B.C.E. Two of the oldest tablets are receipts for sheep and goats. A tablet containing a contract has been burned black by fire—what would be a catastrophe for paper has here served to make the clay record stronger. The "votive cone" (ca. 2100 B.C.E.), found at Uruk (Warka, Iraq) is of a type made by temple priests and sold to pilgrims to wedge between the bricks of the Temple of Ishtar, goddess of love, as an offering for the welfare of the king.

## Ray R. Brennen Map Collection ▼

In December 1997, Trexler Library received a noteworthy gift of maps, atlases, land deeds, prints and books on cartography from Ray R. Brennen '35. Several of the larger framed maps and land deeds from the collection are displayed throughout the library; the rest are housed in secure storage as part of Special Collections.

Many of the maps in the collection date to the 18th century and represent the work of some of the finest mapmakers in Europe and America. The maps depict the world, Europe, North America and Pennsylvania during a time of expanding exploration and settlement. Several atlases chronicle the progression of the American Revolution as well as the development of Pennsylvania, and Lehigh County, in particular.

Items of note in the collection include: Herman Moll's "A New & Correct Map of the World Shewing Ye Situation of its Principal Parts," published in 1719 and Lewis Evans' series of "Maps of the Middle British Colonies in America," published in London in 1755. Shown here is John Cary's "New Universal Atlas, Containing Distinct Maps of all the Principal States and Kingdoms throughout the World from the Latest and Best Authorities Extant," published in 1808.

The Brennen Map Collection provides many wonderful examples illustrating the history and art of mapmaking as well as the development of North America and Pennsylvania during the formative years of the United States.



## Charles Dickens Christmas Books ►

Just one example from the Library's fine collection of literature spanning seven centuries, this set of first edition (first or early states) "Christmas books" by Charles Dickens was a gift of trustee J. Wilmer Fisher in 1952. Rebound in lovely, unsigned green morocco, the set comprises "The Cricket on the Hearth," "The Haunted Man," "The Chimes," "The Battle of Life" and of course "A Christmas Carol," which, since its first appearance in 1843, has conjured up for us what a "modern" Christmas celebration should look like.



## The "Gun Wad" Bible ▲

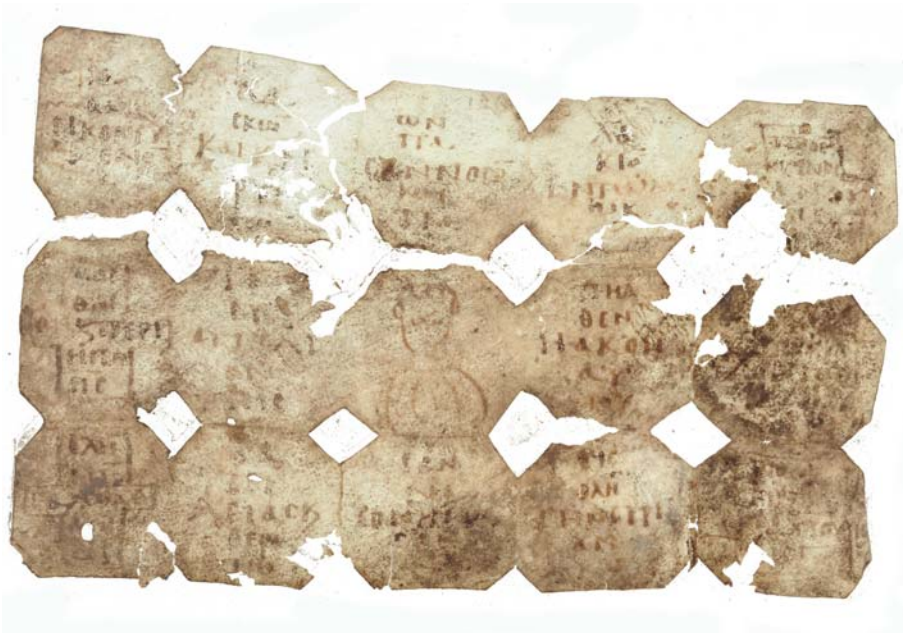
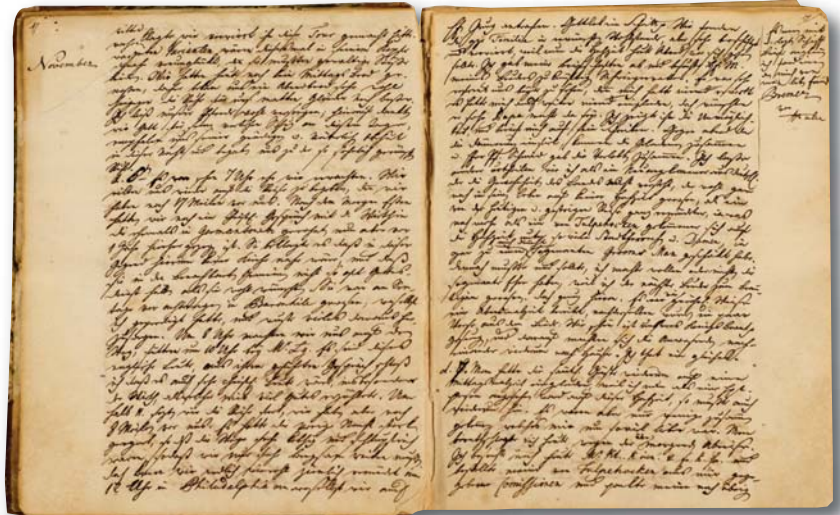
Within Trexler Library's Bible collection are three volumes that have great significance in both the history of the Lutheran Church and that of American printing. Named after the influential Christoph Saur family of printers from Germantown, Pa., the "Saur Bible" of 1743 was the first Bible in a European language printed in the colonies. There followed in 1763 the first Bible printed on American-made paper. This 1776 edition (pictured), the first Bible printed with American-made type, is known anecdotally as the "Gun Wad" Bible, as unbound sheets of the volumes were reportedly used as much-needed cartridge wadding for guns during the Battle of Germantown in 1777.

The Bibles produced by the Saur family, with their selective doctrinal inclusions and omissions to the text, met with long and bitter opposition from Lutheran patriarch Henry Melchior Muhlenberg; yet when Christoph Saur II was arrested in May 1778 by George Washington's troops as a spy because of his pacifist leanings, General Peter Muhlenberg, Henry Melchior's son, interceded on his behalf.



## The Speaker's Tage-buch (Diary) ▶

Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg (1750-1801) was the second son of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg and served as the first Speaker of the House of Representatives. This diary, written in German and spanning the years 1770 to 1772, commences at his ordination as a minister in the Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania in October, 1770. During the period when this diary was kept, he was preaching at Stouchsburg and Lebanon, Pa., and he married Catherine Schaefer, daughter of a Philadelphia merchant.



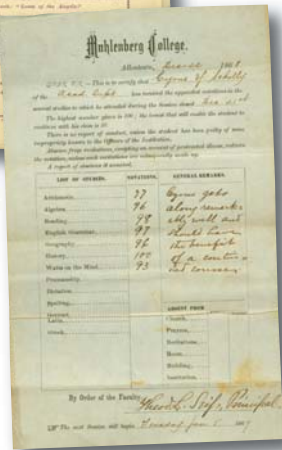
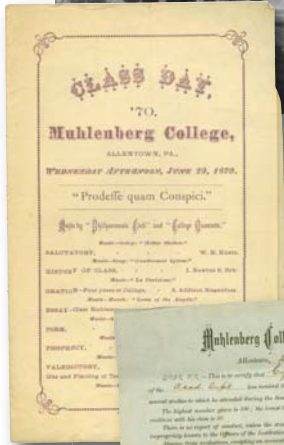
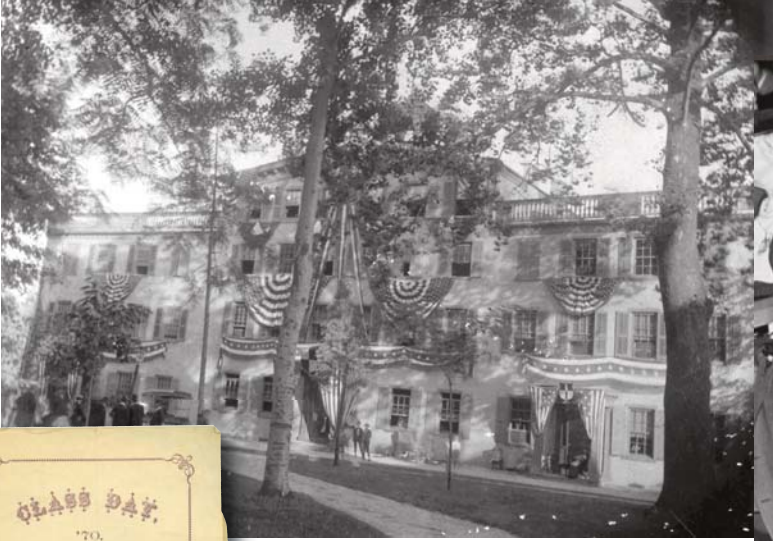
## ◀ Oxyrhynchus papyri

The Robert C. Horn Papyri Collection contains thirty-five pieces of papyrus from the Oxyrhynchus excavation. The collection, dating from the first to the seventh century C.E., comprises documentary fragments including a grocery list, personal letters and official documents, as well as 13 literary pieces including scriptural material, excerpts from known classics and three unidentified fragments. Shown here is an unusual piece dating from the sixth century, containing partial verses 23 and 24 of the fourth chapter of St. Matthew, likely written and designed to be worn as an amulet.

## Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian ▶

With this American masterpiece, published between 1907 and 1930, photographer Edward S. Curtis accomplished his goal of documenting the vast expanse of indigenous North America. He visited over 80 Native American tribes, writing about and photographing their cultural and spiritual life. This sumptuous set of 20 volumes, accompanied by 20 portfolios of photogravures, is one of 272 (of an intended 500) to be published, and came to Muhlenberg from the collection of General Harry C. Trexler, the Library's eponym.





## College Archives ▲

The Muhlenberg College Collection is the home of Muhlenberg's history. Trexler Library actively collects items related to the founding, growth and continued expansion of the College, from published works such as *The Muhlenberg Weekly*, the *Ciarla* yearbook and student handbooks, to photographs, letters from students and administrators, event programs and memorabilia. The most heavily utilized material in Special Collections, the archives are finding increasing use in the hands of student researchers, who hone their skills working with primary sources while increasing their knowledge of the history of their institution.



## William Blake's "Night Thoughts" ►

Although authored by Edward Young in the 1740s, "The Complaint, and the Consolation; or, Night Thoughts" is most remarkable not for its poetry but for its beautiful and very rare hand-colored William Blake engravings. Believed to be the largest commercial project with which Blake was ever commissioned, only one of the four planned volumes was completed because of financial constraints. This 1797 production features forty-three illustrations surrounding the text and is one of approximately twenty-five hand-colored copies known to exist. The coloring is attributed to Blake himself or to his wife, Catherine, his frequent collaborator. Trexler Library's copy is part of the Florence Foerderer Tonner collection.

