

DISCOVERY OF NEW YORK'S RARE 1786 DIRECTORY

THE news that an original copy of the first New York directory, published in 1786, had been found recently among a lot of old books in Los Angeles has aroused considerable interest among dealers and collectors of rare books in this city, but, like the gentleman from Missouri, they are in a condition of wishing "to be shown" before accepting the alleged find as original.

The 1786 New York directory is one of the rarest books in the entire realm of Americana, but it is also the object of more suspicion to the expert bibliophile than perhaps any other old volume that suddenly comes to light from an unknown quarter. It is so long since an original has been sold that it is hard to predict what it would bring if offered in the auction room, but the general opinion is that \$1,000 would be a bargain price. The last one that changed hands at private sale is reported to have brought somewhat over \$1,200. Naturally the discovery of a genuine copy is sufficient to create interest, but the old-time dealer is apt to regard such information with a shrug of the shoulder and mutter the word "reprint."

This little directory, compiled by David Franks, and printed by Shepard Kollock, "corner of Wall and Water Streets," has been reprinted three times. Hence the suspicion that always attaches to the news that an original has come to light. Many a dealer in old books can tell how he has had to disappoint an enthusiastic collector by showing him that his supposed prize is merely one of these re-

prints, cut down, steeped in coffee to give an appearance of venerable age, and very likely having one or more pages slightly torn and carefully mended, a favorite method to indicate that the volume has had hard usage in years gone by.

None of these reprints were made with any idea of deception. In fact, that was carefully guarded against in every case. The first reprint was made in 1851. It was an excellent counterfeit in respect to type, the old-fashioned "s's," and all other details. It was printed with wide margins, while the original has narrow margins. This is the copy that has been most successfully used to palm off as the real thing. By cutting down the margins, discoloring the pages, and putting a rough paper or board binding on it the book has been palmed off as the genuine 1786 edition, and more than one amateurish collector has eagerly paid the few dollars asked for it and gone on his way chuckling at his great bargain and the ignorance of the old bookseller.

To celebrate the centennial of the publication of a New York directory the Trow Directory Company issued a facsimile in 1886, which followed the original text very accurately. This also has wide margins but, unlike the original, the copy contained a map of the city in 1786 and a description of the city for that year by Noah Webster. To still further prevent its adaptation into a spurious original the back of the title page, which is blank in the genuine copy, contained an advertisement. Advertising pages were also inserted between the pages of the directory.

Despite these precautions some crude attempts have been made to make this 1886 edition appear like the original by taking out the extra pages and tearing the title page so as to mend it by backing it with opaque paper, thus destroying the effect of the advertising matter. In some cases the map has been retained, which, to any one who knows, is evidence in itself that the directory is spurious.

In 1886 the late S. W. Phoenix purchased a copy at auction for \$100, and it is now in possession of Columbia University in the Phoenix collection. The New York Historical Society has two fine copies, and originals are also owned by the Lenox branch of the New York Public Library, the American Geographical Society, and the Bar Association. There are a few in private collections, but so far as is known not more than a dozen genuine copies are in existence.

New York in 1786 contained less than 24,000 inhabitants, and 82 pages sufficed to give a list of its leading business men, in addition to a list of State and city officials, the almanac for the year, a table of coin valuations, and a list of members of some of the more important societies, including the Cincinnati, St. Andrew's, the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, and the Society of Peruke Makers and Hair Dressers, which met at Mr. Ketcham's, 22 Ann Street.

Having given all the information deemed necessary for his 1786 directory the compiler, David Franks, makes the following interesting statement to the inhabitants at the end of his little book:

"Mr. Franks returns his sincere thanks to his friends and the public for their kind and liberal encouragement towards his publication of the New York Directory; he humbly requests they may indulgently excuse any errors, inaccuracies, or omissions which may appear and impute them only to the local disadvantages he labored under in this first attempt; as he intends in the future editions, he shall have the honour of annually presenting them, to have it more in his power to be exact, correct and circumstantial; as the number of subscribers are but few (which he attributes to a want of knowledge of the utility of this production, it being the first of the kind ever attempted in this city) he makes bold to call on the citizens at large for every information that they think will prove conducive to its future correctness. Their directions will be thankfully received and gratefully acknowledged by Mr. Franks at his lodgings No. 66 Broadway, or at Mr. Kollock's printing office."

Mr. Frank's lodgings are now occupied by the Manhattan Life Insurance Building.

James Duane was Mayor of the city, and his residence was at 26 Nassau Street. Richard Varick was Recorder, and he lived at 46 Dock Street, as the lower part of Water Street was then called beyond Broad Street. Marinus Willet of Revolutionary fame and afterwards Mayor, was Sheriff, and among the Aldermen were Abraham P. Lott, John Broome, Nicholas Bayard, and William Neilson. The Hon. Robert R. Livingston, who three

years later administered the oath of office to George Washington as President, appears as Chancellor of the State, living at 3 Broadway, while Brockholst Livingston of 12 Wall Street, and Morgan Lewis of 59 Maiden Lane, were clerks in Chancery. Heading the list of Grand Departments of the United States is the name of John Jay, as Secretary for Foreign Affairs, his residence being at 8 Broadway. Mr. Jay was also President of the Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves, and among the other officers were Samuel Franklin and John Murray, the eminent Quaker, whose family name is perpetuated in Murray Hill.

Broadway of 1786 was not the fashionable residential thoroughfare which it became a few years later, nor was it as prominent a business street as were William, (then Smith,) Pearl, (then Queen,) and Water Street. The list of tradesmen on Broadway named in the directory indicates that it was chiefly a place of small shops.

The importance of the lawyers of the city is shown by the fact that they are specially tabulated on two pages. They were 41 in number, and by an odd coincidence the name of Alexander Hamilton follows that of Aaron Burr, the latter living in Cedar Street, and Hamilton at 57 Wall Street.

Who was David Franks? has often been asked. Beyond his ambitious effort to establish a directory publication in New York little is known outside of the statement that he makes at the end of his book telling prospective customers that he is a conveyancer and accountant.