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THE JOHN CARTER BROWN LIBRARY

THE DEDICATION OF THE  
**CASPERSEN BUILDING**

SEPTEMBER THE SEVENTEENTH

A.D. MDCCCCXCI

WITH THE ADDRESS BY

BERNARD BAILYN



PROVIDENCE • RHODE ISLAND

MDCCCCXCII

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## Preface

THIS SMALL BOOK is consciously modeled on another book that the Library published, almost ninety years ago in 1905. The title of the earlier work, in the formal style of those days, was: *The Dedication of the Library Building, May the Seventeenth, A. D. MDCCCIII, with addresses by William Vail Kellen LL.D and Frederick Jackson Turner Ph.D.* It was a predictably handsome letterpress volume, produced by the Merrymount Press of Boston, the proprietor of which was Daniel Berkeley Updike. Updike did almost all of the early printing for the John Carter Brown Library and sat on what was then called the "Committee of Management" of the Library from 1916 to 1941.

The 1905 book, as the title makes explicit, recorded the dedicatory events of May 17, 1904, when the Library's first independent building officially opened for business. It must have been a great day. A local newspaper observed in sub-headlines: "Impressive Ceremonies Marked the Occasion,"

and "State and City Officials Were in Attendance." Among other things, the President of Brown University, the Reverend William H. P. Faunce, read aloud to the audience "a large number of telegrams and cablegrams from all parts of the world, which expressed the regrets of the senders at being unable to be present." One of these, according to the newspaper account, "was from a Florentine book collector and was written in Latin."

Mr. Robert H. I. Goddard represented the trustees of the Library, who were in effect the executors of the will of John Nicholas Brown (d. 1900). It was John Nicholas Brown's bequest that established the John Carter Brown Library as a public institution. The Library had formerly been simply a wing of the Brown family home on Benefit Street, although it was open to scholars, and since 1865 a published catalogue of the collection had been available. "The books which here have their abiding home," Goddard said, "will be an enduring monument to the patience, the scholarship and the enthusiasm for historical study of John Carter Brown and John Nicholas Brown—father and son. Hither will come

from many lands the historical student to drink deep from the springs of truth and knowledge which will flow perennial from this spot." It was taken for granted at the time that the transfer of the Library to the care of the Corporation of Brown University was the largest gift ever made anywhere for the purposes of historical studies.

Eighty-seven years later, on September 17th, 1991, the Library celebrated a kind of re-dedication in ceremonies recognizing the opening of the Caspersen Building, a 15,000 square foot addition to the original edifice that virtually doubled the Library's functional space. We have to admit that the 1991 dedication did not duplicate either the formality or the fanfare of the 1904 event, but it was a meaningful and joyous occasion. To dedicate is the opposite of to abdicate, and there was a satisfaction among the assembled group that the John Carter Brown Library had, since 1904, in no sense abdicated its mission of serving as a spring of truth and knowledge from which the student of history could drink deep.

In 1904, representatives of the Brown family and

the president of Brown University figured in the events, the trustees of the Library participated, and there was an address also by a great historian, Frederick Jackson Turner. In 1991, that much at least we duplicated. Mr. J. Carter Brown, great-grandson of John Carter Brown and grandson of John Nicholas Brown, was a speaker; the president of Brown University, Vartan Gregorian, was a speaker; a representative of the Board of Governors of the Library, Mr. Charles H. Watts II, was a speaker; and we also heard an address by a great historian, Bernard Bailyn.

It was in no way mandatory that we publish the present book, except that members of the Board of Governors of the Library wished to see Professor Bailyn's address permanently recorded in print, as Frederick Jackson Turner's had been earlier, and two of these Board members, Mr. Vincent J. Buonanno and Mr. Artemis A.W. Joukowsky, instantly and magnanimously offered to underwrite the cost of production.

Human beings are historical animals. We look to the past not simply by choice but because it is our

nature to do so. It is also our nature to recognize by ceremony those moments that we know will form the markers and the milestones of the past. In September 1991, as this book testifies, the John Carter Brown Library formally recognized that it had dramatically expanded its capacity to preserve the records of the American past and to promote their study.

NORMAN FIERING

*Director and Librarian*

John Carter Brown Library

DEDICATION PROGRAM

NORMAN FIERING  
*Director and Librarian,*  
John Carter Brown Library

WARREN COX  
Hartman-Cox Associates, Architects

J. CARTER BROWN  
*Director, National Gallery of Art*

CHARLES H. WATTS, II  
Board of Governors,  
John Carter Brown Library

VARTAN GREGORIAN  
President of Brown University



An Address by BERNARD BAILYN  
*Adams University Professor*  
Harvard University

*"The Boundaries of History:  
The Old World and the New"*



## *Foreword*

MY PREDECESSOR in the office of President of Brown University in 1901, when the John Carter Brown Library became officially part of the University, was William H. P. Faunce, class of 1880, who led the University with distinction from 1899 to 1929. When the new Library building was dedicated on May 17th, 1904, Faunce received the keys to the front door from four-year-old John Nicholas Brown (d. 1979), the grandson of John Carter Brown (d. 1874) and the son of John Nicholas Brown (d. 1900).

On behalf of the Trustees of the estate of John Nicholas Brown (d. 1900), Robert Hale Ives Goddard addressed President Faunce as follows: "A child bearing the name of his honoured father has presented to you the keys of this building. No words of mine can add to the dignity or to the pathos with which this simple ceremony is invested."

President Faunce replied: "This building, with its literary treasures, constitutes both a memorial and an opportunity. . . . It shall stand through slow-

revolving centuries, telling all who enter of a family which, in the devotion of successive generations to the cause of education, has a record without parallel in America. . . . When we remember how other buildings across the sea have survived dynasties and kingdoms and the migrations of races, it may not be too much to hope that a thousand years from now this solid structure may still remain a witness to the immortality of a great purpose greatly fulfilled."

Here we are, only thirteen years shy of a century later, and another great family, that of Olaus and Freda, and Finn and Barbara, Caspersen, have joined the Browns in greatly augmenting and preserving this treasure house and its contents. The seagoing, adventurous Norwegian forebears of the Caspersens have produced a legacy of brilliant business people, scholars, and philanthropists. We are immensely proud that Finn Caspersen, like John Carter Brown, is a graduate of this University.

Four years ago we celebrated the gift from the Caspersen family that made possible the installation in the John Carter Brown Library of the Freda and Olaus Caspersen Map Room, named after Finn's late parents. Today we admire the ingenuity and

classical beauty of a new addition, greatly enhancing the ability of the Library to meet its world-wide responsibilities to scholars and the general public, which would have been impossible without this family and without the charitable foundation created by the Beneficial Corporation.

The bronze plaque affixed at the entrance to the Caspersen Building records that the structure has been named in recognition of the outstanding generosity of the Caspersen family and of former and present trustees of the Beneficial Foundation, including Roy E. Tucker, Robert A. Tucker, and Charles H. Watts. To all of these benefactors we owe gratitude.

Barbara Morris Caspersen, in writing a memorial essay in tribute to the late Freda Caspersen, described at length the love of life the Caspersen family shares. They could have chosen no better way to express that love than to give new life here to a house of scholarship where an unmatched record of mankind's past will live forever.

VARTAN GREGORIAN  
*President*  
Brown University

"THE BOUNDARIES OF HISTORY:  
THE OLD WORLD AND THE NEW"

BY  
BERNARD BAILYN

*The Boundaries of History:  
The Old World and the New*

IN 1904 FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER, already at the age of forty-three America's most famous historian, spoke at the dedication of the original building of the John Carter Brown Library, and commented on the Library's treasures. This extraordinary library, Turner said, reflecting in general "the importance of the private collector in the scholar's field" and in particular the public benefactions of the Brown family, constitutes the "elite of the original sources" pertaining to the three centuries after the discoveries. And "what centuries they were!" Turner exclaimed. "How full of meaning for the future of the race!" And he conjured up, in vivid phrases, "the band of explorers and conquerors" who combined, he said, "the fire of the mediæval mystic and the insatiable questioning of the modern man of science"; they were "courageous men, with the gleam before them; men who 'yearned

beyond the skyline where the strange roads go down,' and whose discoveries gave new realms wherein the human spirit might unfold itself."

Almost a century has passed since Turner spoke at the dedication of the original building, and during those years the Library's holdings have expanded, not in one direction but in many, in a profusion that is not easily grasped and that responds uniquely to a profound development in modern historical scholarship, a development that in some ways would surely have surprised Turner, but that in other ways he clearly anticipated in the address he gave here at Brown.

A glance at the holdings of the John Carter Brown Library, which have grown in so many ways over the years and which account for the need for this splendid new wing, is a starting point for tracking this movement in modern historical writing. The Library, following the original interests of its founder, has spread its acquisitions into five major geographical areas: materials relating to Latin America and the Spanish southwest; British North America; the French in America; the Caribbean;

and European imprints concerning America published before 1800. And each has significant subdivisions. The German section of the European Americana, for example, forms a library in itself; it is probably the largest collection in the United States of works written in German about America between 1492 and 1800. In its Caribbean collection, the Library has seventy-five percent of all known imprints related to Barbados and over eighty percent of all known titles related to the French West Indies. Its imprints related to New France are almost as extensive. It has the largest collection in the United States of books and pamphlets published in Britain and the continent concerning the American Revolution. Its holdings include almost all the pre-1800 imprints related to the southwestern United States, and major blocks of works related to the discoveries and exploration of Spanish America and to the early history of Brazil. And if there is a larger, better selected assemblage of maps of the early modern period relating to the Americas than the stunning collection in the John Carter Brown Library, it can only be that of the Library of Congress, and

I am not at all sure that that distinguished collection is superior.

The importance of this splendid, quite unique collection of printed materials and maps, so carefully preserved in this building and so accessible to qualified scholars, is obvious simply on the face of it. But there is a deeper significance to the collection that is not, I think, so obvious and that relates to the boundaries of historical inquiry as it has developed in recent years.

What is most striking about the John Carter Brown collection is not its size but its focus and range. Pivoting on the Western Hemisphere during the three centuries after the first European discoveries, it reaches out to the whole of Western civilization in its connections with the Americas. In this library North American history is not autonomous. Spain is relevant; so too is Portugal, France, Germany, the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and Ireland. America is part of a much greater whole, and not simply as a basis for comparison. The JCB collection facilitates, almost requires, a subtler approach than comparison and contrast.

Since Turner's time—almost a century now—so many changes have overtaken historical study that the present state of things would have amazed the scholars of 1904, and among the most profound changes has been the expansion of the units of inquiry and of the terms of explanation. Slowly over the years, in many spheres of history, historians have found connections among hitherto disparate phenomena, connections that at first seemed startling and that seemed to suggest answers to questions that have never been posed.

It could be quite bewildering. What did it mean to discover that the first entrepreneurs of the British settlements in America, whose records form a vital part of this library, were simultaneously involved in settlements in Ireland? Raleigh and his associates were the great instigators and sustainers of the Roanoke voyages of the late sixteenth century, but they and their subordinates were mainly interested in developing new estates in Cork during the same years. If one looks at the world from their point of view rather than our own, something new, interesting, and difficult to define begins to come into

focus. For them an outer arc of exploitable borderlands had suddenly opened, a vast arc swinging north to south in a great western curve, from the Celtic marchlands of the Scottish Highlands, the Hebrides, and Ireland, to Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New England, the Chesapeake, and the Caribbean. What happened in one area of this borderland affected what happened in others. Fortified house styles in the first North American settlements were adaptations of the Irish. American natives were understood—or misunderstood—by some to be similar to the “wild Irish” whom the Elizabethans had likened to barbaric savages, by others to be specimens of benign humanity in its innocent origins, a subject that had long been a matter of speculation among European intellectuals. It was not a question of contrasting settlements in one area with settlements in another: in the context of the time, some common thing was happening, with variations in the entire arc of English expansion—north, west, and south. And the same could be said of Spanish and Portuguese expansion.

A similar re-orientation of inquiry can be seen in

the transfer of people from Europe to America. The study of the re-peopling of America by Europeans can no longer be viewed simply as a problem in immigration. The unit of study must be larger, more comprehensive, trans-national. The most compelling unit of explanation, in the context of the time, must include not simply arrivals here but departures there, so that the entire phenomenon, in its overall integrity, can be grasped. The bare fact that the first Dutch settlers in what became New York were not, for the most part, Dutch at all, but Flemings, Germans, and Scandinavians, is only rather strange—taken by itself, a curiosity—until one examines what was happening in the Netherlands at the time. It turns out that that loosely federated nation was the receptacle for a large inflow of people from all over northern Europe, and that because of that inflow the Dutch nation had become an exporter of people, only some of them Dutch, not principally to the west but mainly to the east, to the Dutch settlements in Indonesia, and its capital city of Batavia. What happened in Dutch New Netherland no longer has an integrity of its own; events there

were the outermost, almost accidental reflexes of actions taken by men distant from America and concerned not with American affairs but with events taking place on the opposite side of the globe.

Local events can no longer be understood in local terms only; the contexts of the most familiar local histories have broadened enormously. We celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims. But their original purpose, consistent with their view of the world, was to create a refuge not here in New England but on the whaling islands in the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, islands they had heard much about and which they visited and favored until they were driven off by Basque and Norman fishermen. Virginia too was within their purview; they intended to settle a private plantation there, until bad weather forced them into Cape Cod harbor. We usually call the Puritan movement to Massachusetts "the great migration," but in the context of the time this was no great migration at all. Winthrop led less than 20,000 settlers to Massachusetts, but by the 1670s 200,000 English had resettled in Ireland, nearly 250,000 had colonized the West Indies, and

another 100,000 had migrated to the Chesapeake colonies. These movements are not discrete; they are parts of a single great movement in English population history. Understanding any one of these migrant flows depends on understanding the others.

A century later a great migration of German-speaking people to North America, well recorded in the holdings of this library, was under way. By 1790 they and their immediate descendants would constitute approximately ten percent of the American population. Yet we know surprisingly little about these people: who they were, where they came from, why they came, what difference their being here made to our history as a whole. In recent years, however, we have begun to see, if not the answers, at least some of the most useful questions, once we locate that migration in its original context. That the exodus came mainly from the southwest of the German lands, principally the Electoral Palatinate, we knew before; that they were Protestants we knew too. But what we have only recently discovered is that most of the Germans who left the Palatinate and adjacent territories migrated not to



North America but to other regions of the German-speaking world. And why should they not have? North America was reached only by a vastly difficult and dangerous 4,000-mile trip down the Rhine, over to England, and across the Atlantic under conditions that were physically brutal and financially devastating. Most people determined to move were more sensible than to join such a migration. They went off a couple of hundred miles southeast, down the Danube to Austrian lands, or northeast to Prussia's eastern border areas. Both were regions in need of new settlers; the rulers of both were willing to subsidize or at least encourage newcomers. The question now broadens and sharpens—not why our 100,000 left the southwestern German states but why 500,000 did, and why our segment rejected the more sensible alternatives and took the difficult, life-threatening journey to North America. Were their circumstances somehow different from the others'? Were there, for them, special attractions of some sort?

So much begins to shift, so many new questions

arise, in this pan-Western, at times pan-global context. Race relations may have been obvious to Turner and his generation but they are obvious no longer. Miscegenation, race mixing, was common in Spanish and Portuguese America from the beginning; by the end of the colonial period forty percent of the Latin American population was *mestizo* (mixed Spanish and Indian blood). The French in Canada lived in similar intimacy with the natives, and an important population of *métis* resulted. But not the British. In the British colonies miscegenation is known to have happened—but only occasionally, here and there, marginally. It never produced a significant population—except in Rupert's Land of remote Western Canada, among the Hudson Bay fur traders, but even there only for a brief period in the early nineteenth century. How does one explain this? Were the British simply xenophobic? Were they innately racist—more racist than other European people? Perhaps it has something to do with religion—perhaps Protestantism, as opposed to the more ritualistic Catholicism, breeds ethnic endog-

amy. But race mixtures were common in Dutch Indonesia where the dominant group was no less Protestant than the English.

And slavery? Slavery in the southern American states is no longer an autonomous subject; it is a subtopic in the general history of slavery in Western culture. For slavery in any one place must now be understood as part of a world phenomenon, involving not only race relations but labor sources, labor markets, and profit margins in agricultural economies throughout the globe. The latest studies of American slavery appear together with studies of the trans-Saharan slave trade, slavery in Angola, in central Sudan, and West Africa, the Dutch and French slave trade, and the relative profitability of slave labor, serfdom, indentured servitude, and wage labor.

There is convict labor too, mysteriously buried in our colonial past. It too has a vital global reference. The most interesting problem that arises in the study of the 50,000 convicted felons that Britain shipped to North America before the Revolution is

why their experiences were so different from those of the convicts that Britain sent, soon thereafter, to Australia. A glance at Australian history shows that something strange must have happened here. In America the convicts somehow disappeared; they seem to have left no traces behind; no one claims them as ancestors; they are simply nowhere in the historical record. But in Australia the convicts are the key to the nation's history. There, they are written about endlessly, tabulated, analyzed, praised by some, condemned by others; they are as prominent in Australian history as the Puritans are in ours, though the convicts sent here were more than twice as numerous as the Puritans. Only one book has ever been written on the history of the convicts in America, and it appeared as late as 1987. Why the historical indifference? The convicts in America and Australia, though separated by half a century, had committed the same offenses, more or less, and were condemned by the same courts; they came from the same prisons, from the same strata of British society, and settled into communities domi-

nated by similar laws and a similar culture. And if historians have been indifferent to the convicts in America, contemporaries were not. Repeatedly they warned of a bloodbath of criminality that would follow the arrival of so many convicts; they condemned the traffic publicly and loudly year after year; and they did everything they could to stop it. Yet historians have ignored the whole segment of the American population because it seems to have disappeared. What happened to the convicts? Was our outback so different from Australia's?

But the re-orientation of inquiry, the broadening of the units of investigation, is not something confined to the geographical expansion of Europe, overseas settlements, and population history. It has happened, too, in intellectual history, an area particularly relevant to the multi-national range of the John Carter Brown collection.

In Turner's time the intellectual roots of American Revolutionary principles, the origins of the founding political doctrines of the United States, were assumed to lie somewhere in a vaguely defined

intersection of Enlightenment ideals and British constitutionalism. No one attempted to show precisely how such ideas related to each other or how and why they had come to matter so much to the colonists of British North America. But the entire subject began to shift when one related the specific notions of the Revolutionary generation to emerging lines of scholarship in British history. British historians, with little interest in American history, concentrating on their own materials, uncovered a pattern of thought that had originated in the ideas of seventeenth-century radicals. This complex of ideas was then modernized and transmuted into the reformist notions, not of the British establishment but of the strident opposition groups of the early eighteenth century that demanded, futilely, a reformation of Britain's stable but corrupt government. The concerns of these reformers, their concepts, even their phraseology, turn out to be identical with those of the leaders of the American Revolution. Suddenly it became clear that the ideology of the American Revolution, and hence the founding principles of the American nation, were the fulfill-

ment of these reformist ideals, ideals that had been frustrated—that had never matured and that never would mature—in Britain itself. And it became evident, too, when the details of pre-Revolutionary American politics were compared with the equivalent details of British politics, why the reformist hopes and ideas that had had no success in Britain had such bite here, took such deep rootage here, and came to dominate the public life of the new nation. A powerful body of idealist beliefs and aspirations that had flowed underground, at the margins and in the interstices of public life in eighteenth-century Britain, had surfaced in America to dominate politics and to become its guiding ideology, once the constraints of empire had been thrown off. The unit of inquiry of this basic topic in American history was no longer America alone but the entire English-speaking world, at both its manifest and latent levels.

Much of this Turner would, I think, have welcomed. He knew that historical inquiry would change, that new questions and new answers to old questions would emerge. "Each age," he said in his

address here at Brown—repeating almost verbatim a pronouncement he had made in one of his earliest papers thirteen years earlier—"each age studies the history of the past anew with reference to the conditions which dominate its interests." And he said, too, in that earlier paper, that current domestic problems require that we understand the historical linkages between this country and the world at large. So in general, I think, he would have understood and appreciated the enlargement of scope and the re-orientation that I have mentioned. But at the same time he would, I think, have been surprised at other changes that have also taken place, and shocked, perhaps, at the bearing that the re-scaling of perspective now under way would have on his own working assumptions.

Consistent with his view of the frontier—the creative, democratizing, modernizing, indeed the ennobling effect of the American frontier on European peoples—he pictured, in his address here, the area of the United States on the eve of European settlement as a "shaggy wilderness" inhabited by "primitive men of the stone age." And he contrast-

ed that primitive society with the "democracy of seventy millions of people [that] has arisen where the forest was," its economic power that "now triumphs over that of the Old World and [its] captains of industry . . . [who] wield wealth and power greater than the wealth and power of the kings of the days of Columbus." How had this come about? Because, he said, "those stout-hearted, high-minded men who in the name of religion, of political freedom, of adventure, or of the hope of a larger life, went forth in travail and suffering to possess the new lands." The three centuries of history following the discoveries, he concluded, was "an age of idealism" whose records were, therefore, "well worth the reading of the man of to-day."

No historian today would write such words. The movement of historical study and "the conditions which dominate [our] interests" (to use Turner's phrase) have carried us into deeper as well as broader ranges. In the late twentieth century, after catastrophic convulsions and horrors that no one in 1904 could have imagined, we have a more tragic sense of history, and we know something of the

cost, to those who were by-passed, of the triumphs Turner celebrated. A regiment of historians and anthropologists is now at work attempting to reconstruct the lives of precisely those "men of the stone age" whom Turner mentioned in passing and to explain how their civilization was destroyed by the "courageous men, with the gleam before them." How many people in fact inhabited Turner's "shaggy wilderness" on the eve of colonization and how many were destroyed by the Europeans we do not yet know, and we probably never will know. But we are at least beginning to understand how their culture, under great pressure, lost its integrity, how their folkways were disrupted, their virtues trivialized, and their religion undermined and rendered impotent. The study of the native populations, so casually by-passed in Turner's account of America's growth, is doubly difficult: because the record of history inevitably favors the winners, and because they left so few evidences of their inner experiences. We hear their voices only dimly through the words of those who conquered them.

All of this, so important a concern of modern

historians, played no role in Turner's scheme of things; but, while it would have caused him to moderate some of the more heroic notes in his celebration of America's triumphs, it would not have led him to reconsider the assumptions of his grand, creative vision. Something more general, however, in this re-scaling of historical perspective, might well have seemed to him a challenge and provocation.

Turner had delivered his paper on the significance of the frontier in American history—the most famous and creative pronouncement ever made by an American historian—in 1893 when he was 32. Thus he wrote and formulated the ideas that would dominate his life as a very young man, who, like the discoverers he celebrated, had what he called “the gleam” before him and, like them, “yearned beyond the sky line where the strange roads go down.” Established in the leading research university of the Old Northwest, Wisconsin, and proud of its distinctive American characteristics, free of cultural nostalgia for the Old World—looking ever westward, not eastward—he was optimistic in his

search for the source of America's uniqueness, its power and accomplishments. For him the frontier, “the line of the most rapid and effective Americanization,” was the generative front, the forward line, of a great historical process: “the frontier promoted the formation of a composite nationality for the American people.” In stripping away the complex social controls of traditional society (“at the frontier,” he wrote, “the bonds of custom are broken and unrestraint is triumphant”), in reducing society to “a kind of primitive organization based on the family,” the frontier bred individualism and with it, democracy. Even intellectual advances were shaped by frontier life. Americans' intellectual “coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness,” he wrote at the end of his paper,

that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and ex-

uberance which comes with freedom—these are traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier.

The frontier, in Turner's view, was the forward edge; it was the beginning of something new in the world, something better than what had existed before, and it gave heart and hope to mankind.

Turner's was an inspiring vision, which he felt applied as much to the first settlements of the seventeenth century as it did to the west coast boom towns of his own time. But did it? There is another way of looking at the frontier, more faithful, I think, to the context of much of our history and consistent with the present enlargement of the scope of historical study.

An outer line, or edge, can be seen either as a frontier or as a periphery, and though the difference may seem only semantic, or only a question of viewpoint, there is in fact all the difference in the world between them. Metaphors matter; they shape the way we think. A periphery is the outer edge of a central, vital body, a radial margin kept

firm by its connections to a central hub; it is a departure, not an advance; a distance from, not a movement toward; it implies a thinning out, a diminution, not an enhancement, a weakening, not a strengthening. For those on an outer perimeter the natural orientation is inward, back toward the familiar, realistic central core, not outward toward some ideal future. One is nostalgic for the fully developed reality left behind; one feels inferior, not superior to the past; one's natural point of reference is an earlier "home," whether one ever actually experienced it or not. One may consciously resist the cultural tug of the core, but unconsciously, instinctively, one knows that the standards of value lie there, and one lives in emulation.

The colonists in America—and Americans for generations thereafter, I believe—felt themselves to be not on Turner's creative, modernizing frontier but on one of the outer peripheries of their civilization. They understood that they had left the core world behind, whether willingly or not, and struggled to retain its standards.

So Harvard was founded not to create a new, in-

novative institution peculiarly adapted to the frontier environment, but in deliberate imitation of the colleges back home, for the founders dreaded, as the first account of the College states, "to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust." Illiteracy was a threat, but there was a more general, more encompassing threat, which Cotton Mather, looking back on almost a century of New England's history, called "creole degeneracy."

That fear was always there, north and south. John Winthrop, Jr., educated in the liberal arts at Trinity College Dublin, in law at London's Inner Temple, and in medicine in Hamburg and Amsterdam—soldier, scholar, scientist, physician, businessman, diplomat, and politician—finally settled down, in 1659, as governor of Connecticut. There, increasingly, he felt the isolation of Britain's borderland world where, as his biographer puts it, "the physical horizon was so vast and the intellectual horizon so narrow." The first member of the Royal Society resident in America, he struggled to keep in touch with European science, writing nostalgic

letters to the Society's secretary, shipping back specimens of odd flora and fauna he found around Hartford—a dwarf oak tree, porcupine quills, a milkweed pod, rattlesnake skins, a hummingbird. But the contacts became more and more artificial, and he died alienated from the high culture from which he had departed, culturally bereft, in provincial isolation.

So too in the South: William Byrd II, born in Virginia but educated in England, where he spent fifteen years among sophisticated lawyers and intellectuals, returned home in 1705 to his Westover estate, where he dutifully, ritualistically, but in isolation, practiced a bit of Greek in the mornings, occasionally some Hebrew, read poetry, and experimented with writing of his own; but it was all derivative and imitative, his efforts to maintain, alone, contact with a distant world, a universe away from his slave estate on the James River. John Dickinson's letters from England, which he visited in 1754, record the "awe and reverence" he felt to be in the presence of the great monuments and scenes of the core culture and to actually hear, in debate,



“some of the greatest men in England perhaps in the world.” And if he was profoundly shocked at the corruption he also found—the immorality and villainy of public life in Britain—and felt his own Quaker Pennsylvania to be far superior in virtue, he knew that the standards by which Britain’s degeneration was to be measured were its own, however disregarded and debauched by the evil men of the day.

In every aspect of life, in the cities and in the countryside, colonial North America was, in the sensibilities of the creoles who lived there, a peripheral world, a diminished world, which might one day recover the metropolitan standards left behind. Its greatest ambition, in its Revolutionary ardor, was to re-create in an ideal form, on these distant shores, England’s earlier, celebrated but now corrupted, free political state.

How long this situation lasted, to what extent it survives to this day, are questions historians must ask, not to the exclusion of Turner’s perception, but in some complex intermingling with it. For in some sense Turner was right: America has been,

and still is, a creative frontier; but it also has been—profoundly in the early years and in an attenuated way thereafter—a periphery too, a departure as well as an arrival.

The records of this complex cultural history, like those of other aspects of our development as a nation, are preserved here in the John Carter Brown Library. The Library’s original outreach, designed by the founder so many years ago, can be seen as prophetic. For our interests are no longer parochial. Our perspective for the historical study of our own lives has greatly broadened, and a library such as this, encompassing the records of the New World in its connections with those of the Old World from which it was derived, suits the conditions which dominate our present interests uniquely.

This book was designed by Gilbert Associates  
and printed letterpress by the Sun Hill Press  
in an edition of twelve hundred copies  
using Janson types and Strathmore  
and Curtis papers.

