1. Bibliothèque Nationale stamps on the verso of Jean Le Pautre (1618–1682), *Bassin de 10 pieds de diamètre, d'une seule pierre, et au milieu trois petits Termes …*, 1673. Graphic Arts Collection, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
MANY of the prints displayed on the walls of the Main Gallery of Firestone Library during the exhibition “Versailles on Paper” belong to a vast collection known as the Cabinet du Roi: copperplate engravings produced and distributed by order of Louis XIV. They came to Princeton in 1886, when the Bibliothèque Nationale (BN) sent four large boxes of books and prints to the College of New Jersey in exchange for more than three hundred volumes on the American Civil War donated by John Shaw Pierson (1822–1908), Class of 1840. On some of these prints, two little red stamps—known to collectors as Lugt 253 and 684—discreetly indicate their Parisian provenance (fig. 1).\(^1\) The discovery of this curious transaction during the preparation of the exhibition raised a number of questions that the present essay attempts to answer: What led Pierson to act as foreign agent on behalf of his alma mater, and how did he approach the Bibliothèque Nationale? Why was the Cabinet du Roi included in the exchange, and how were these prints received and used at Princeton? Between the lines incised by the royal engravers lies a tale of two libraries—two very different institutions whose histories came to intersect through the initiative of a singularly enterprising individual.

John S. Pierson’s role in the early development of Princeton’s historical collections is well known. In 1898, University Librarian E. C. Richardson highlighted the extent of his contributions: “Undoubtedly the largest single giver of books to the Library since its foundation, if the gifts by the Green family for the purchase of books be excepted, is Mr. John S. Pierson, ’40, of New York City, who has been giving for more than twenty-five years; he has given more than 5,000 volumes

\(^1\) Frits Lugt, Les Marques de collections de dessins et d’estampes (Amsterdam: Vereenigde Drukkerijen, 1921), 45 and 123. Lugt 253 bears “Biblio. Nationale” and “RF” (for “République Française”), and Lugt 684 “Double Echange” (Exchanged Duplicate). The number 907 applies to all the items deaccessioned as part of the Princeton exchange.
relating to American history and especially to the history of the Civil War, and is continuing his good work.”

By the time of Pierson’s death in 1908, his Civil War collection had grown to “6,538 volumes and 2,520 pamphlets.” In more recent overviews of holdings at Princeton, it continues to be cited as “the first large book collection to come to the library.” But the 1886 exchange with the Bibliothèque Nationale (and other European libraries, as we shall see) has been all but forgotten. It deserves to be brought back to light and calls for a broader reassessment of Pierson’s purpose as a collector and benefactor.

THE MANY LIBRARIES OF JOHN S. PIERSON

John Shaw Pierson was born in London, England, on April 21, 1822. His father, Charles Edwin Pierson (1787–1865), was a great-great-grandson of Thomas Pierson (1641/2–ca. 1684), whose brother, the Reverend Abraham Pierson (ca. 1641–1707), was the first rector of the Collegiate School, which later became Yale University. Abraham’s youngest son, the Reverend John Pierson (1689–1770), was one of the original trustees of the College of New Jersey.

Born in Morristown, New Jersey, Charles E. Pierson received his A.B. from the College of New Jersey in 1807 and his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1813. In 1817 he married Ann Marston Shaw, the daughter of an English businessman established in New York City; a daughter, Clara Ann, was born later that year. The family spent

several years in England and sailed back to New York in May 1823. In 1828, Dr. Pierson was appointed to a professorship at the Medical College of Ohio in Cincinnati. In 1835, he returned permanently to New York, where he practiced as a physician and became a trustee of the Public School Society.7

John S. Pierson began his college education in 1836 at fledgling New York University, where he was a member of the Psi Upsilon fraternity.8 In November 1838, he entered the College of New Jersey as a junior and (like his father before him) joined the American Whig Society, which had just completed its new building on Cannon Green. Notable classmates and fellow Whig members included Henry M. Alexander (future trustee of the college) and Charles Scribner (future founder of a publishing firm). Pierson was a heavy user of the well-stocked Whig Hall library and, with the exception of a B+ second quarter, earned excellent grades throughout; his overall average of 94.5 placed him fifth among the seventy-six graduating seniors. At commencement in September 1840 he was accordingly appointed to deliver an honorary oration, for which he chose to give a “Defence of the Character of Cromwell.”9 Clearly, books and civil wars already engaged much of the teenager’s attention.

After graduation, Pierson studied law in New York City and was admitted as attorney in May 1845. Five years later, however, he quit legal practice and took over as marine agent of the New York Bible Society, charged with supplying the Scriptures in many languages to the sailors in the port. “Never have our efforts among this class been under better organization or in better hands. Mr. John S. Pierson, long before his appointments as Marine Agent a volunteer in the same work, has pursued his duties with a most commendable constancy, faithfulness, and discretion.”10 Between 1851 and 1853, the number of

8. The Tenth General Catalogue of the Psi Upsilon Fraternity (Bethlehem, Pa.: Comenius Press, 1888), 69.
9. This paragraph is based on various materials preserved in PUA. During Pierson's studies, the faculty consisted of the following professors: James Carnahan (president), John Maclean, Albert B. Dod, Joseph Henry, James W. Alexander, John Torrey, Benedict Jaeger, Stephen Alexander.
10. Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the New York Bible Society, November 1851, 13. The society’s annual reports contain lengthy excerpts from Pierson’s journal documenting the distributions and their impact around the world. See also Rev. David J. Fant, The
volumes distributed through his agency jumped from 12,800 to 31,400 per year. This job remained Pierson’s principal occupation for thirty-three years. In 1881, toward the end of his tenure, he reported the distribution of “44,763 Bibles and Testaments” and “some 4,142,970 pages” of tracts and periodicals provided by the American Tract Society. The majority of the texts were in languages other than English, as they were intended not only for the seamen themselves but also for passengers immigrating to America from Europe, as well as for the destitute (Catholic) inhabitants of distant shores.

During the Civil War, the New York Bible Society exerted special efforts to distribute the Scriptures to all Union soldiers passing through the city. “The prompt organization of this work was largely due to the energy of Mr. Pierson, our Marine Agent, who during the first three months [April – July 1861] gave to it nearly the whole of his time, and has since had the supervision of it.” Each copy of the New Testament “was made still more attractive by a handsome presentation label, arranged by Mr. Pierson, printed in colors, with the American flag and texts of Scripture appropriate to the soldier.”

In 1862, John S. Pierson took on an additional role, becoming book selector and purchaser for the American Seamen’s Friend Society. Twenty-five years before, the society had begun to supply ships with portable libraries, each comprising a few dozen volumes of both religious and secular, but decidedly edifying, literature. Pierson greatly expanded the program, developed a systematic collection policy, and over a period of forty-six years composed “in all 11,386 libraries, averaging forty-three volumes to a library.”

His retirement was saluted by the New York Times, which dubbed him the “Andrew Carnegie of the Seas” and promised lighter fare for the reading sailor: “Under the old librarian books filled with sober, solemn, elevating thoughts formed

the bulk of the volumes in the libraries sent to the ships; under the new librarian their places will be taken by thrilling tales of trouble, adventure, and intrigue—real stories; not preachments.”

Pierson himself explained the principles underlying the two areas of his marine work in a paper that he read in May 1878 at the fiftieth anniversary of the American Seamen’s Friend Society and then published in brochure form. The peculiar “system of Gospel propagandism” developed by the New York Bible Society employed sailors as “laborious and valued helpers of the church, in its plans for the conversion of the world.” As for the loan libraries, they served the following goals, “in the reverse order of their importance: (1) recreation, (2) humanization, (3) the culture and storing of the mind, (4) religious instruction and impression.” To show “the good resulting from ship’s libraries,” he referred to the words of the sailors themselves, “for no scheme of benevolence has ever received more enthusiastic endorsement from the class it was intended to benefit.”

In the 1860s, Pierson developed another scheme of benevolence and began to offer large numbers of books, periodicals, and prints to mental hospitals around the country, from Texas and North Carolina to Minnesota and Michigan. This initiative may have been inspired in part by his father’s admiration for Benjamin Rush (Class of 1760). Charles E. Pierson’s medical studies in Philadelphia coincided with Rush’s final years and the publication of his pioneering *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon the Diseases of the Mind*. In 1823, just before the end


18. Ibid., 18–19.
of his stay in London, Dr. Pierson commissioned a portrait of Rush, which John Pierson later gave to Princeton.  

But this concern for the situation and treatment of the mentally ill appears to have had a more private origin. In June 1856, John S. Pierson married Cornelia Louisa Tuthill at her home in Princeton. Born in 1820 in New Haven, she was the eldest but fragile daughter of Louisa Caroline Tuthill (1798–1879), a writer and editor well known for many works of juvenile literature as well as an ambitious *History of Architecture from the Earliest Times* (1848). Cornelia herself was the (anonymous) author of several books but stopped publishing after her marriage.  

In 1860, following the death of a prematurely born daughter, her mind was reportedly “affected,” possibly leading her to spend a few months in the New Jersey State Lunatic Asylum in Trenton, founded by Dorothea Dix in 1848. A first gift from Pierson was acknowledged in the superintendent’s report for 1860: “fifty volumes for patients’ library; several interesting prints for the amusement of the patients; also exchange religious newspapers, which are highly valued.” More contributions followed, including several from Mrs.  

19. The posthumous oil painting by J. Tickell Viner was presented to the library in 1905 and now hangs in the Faculty Room in Nassau Hall, next to Charles Willson Peale’s *George Washington*. A label on the back, in the handwriting of John S. Pierson, explains that it “was painted from engravings, & was pronounced an excellent likeness by Hon. Richard Rush (the son) then Minister to England.”  

20. On Mrs. Tuthill and her daughters (Cornelia, Sarah, and Mary), who “are entitled to be classed among the most literary families of Princeton,” see John Frelinghuysen Hageman, *History of Princeton and Its Institutions*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1879), 400–404, 412.  

21. See Annie Porter’s letters to Anna Baker (sister-in-law of Cornelia’s sister Sarah Baker), Blair County Historical Society, Altoona, Pennsylvania. July 1: “Sylvester told me of her being sick. Did the baby live? I am very anxious to know. Poor thing! How she must have suffered. Nearly every woman who has been confined this spring, of whom we have heard, has had those fits of depression and melancholy.” July 21: “Of course, I shall say nothing to anyone, dear, but indeed she may hope. I know two ladies whose minds were affected just so—last winter in H., and are now perfectly recovered. I think so much about poor Mrs. Pierson, both for your sister’s sake and her own bright, talented mind.” October 15: “I am just as glad as I can be that Mrs. Pierson has recovered.” The baby did not live and was buried in Green-Wood cemetery, Brooklyn, on June 12, 1860. For much of her later life, Cornelia had “a serious illness,” which “laid her upon a bed of pain, from which only the blessed Angel of Death was to release her” (Hageman, *History of Princeton*, 402–3).  

Pierson: dried flowers in 1863, oranges and fancy work in 1867, books and sugar candy for Valentine’s Day 1870. Six months later, Cornelia died, childless.  

As a widower, John S. Pierson kept up the donations, typically combining books with colored engravings, chromolithographs, or stereoscopic views (along with a stereoscope or two). At least two institutions—in Stockton, California, and Tuscaloosa, Alabama—named patients’ libraries after Pierson. In many reports by asylum superintendents, his gifts are acknowledged next to similar ones from Dorothea Dix herself. By 1874, he had become known nationwide for his contributions: “This benevolent gentleman … devotes a large portion of his time to collecting reading matter, pictures, and everything within his reach that will, in any way, interest or benefit the unfortunate inmates of lunatic asylums. This is one of many Asylums benefited by his liberality. Would that there were more Piersons in the world!”

NEW BOOKS FOR OLD PRINCETON

Ships, asylums, universities. The third stage of John S. Pierson’s library mission was launched on May 14, 1869, with a letter to Henry Clay Cameron (Class of 1847), professor of Greek and pro bono librarian of the College of New Jersey. It is worth quoting in full:

My dear Cameron,

I have a number of volumes on the late war,—mostly memoirs, sketches of particular campaigns, histories of regiments &c.—monographs which (many of them) will never be reprinted, & which though not scarce just now, will become so in a few years & then be valuable.

It occurred to me that they might properly go into the college library

23. John S. Pierson’s mother and father had died in May and August 1865, respectively. For the rest of his life, he lived with his younger brother Charles (1825–1912), who was not only single and unemployed but also “invalid [and] eccentric” (Sarah Baker to Sylvester Baker, May 5, 1865; Sarah Baker Letters, Blair County Historical Society). Their elder sister Clara had died in 1853, five years after her only son, Franklin.

at Princeton in your historical alcove. Some of them are of course outspoken & bitter, yet containing more or less matter valuable to the future historians of the period. If you see no objection on this score & consider them worth receiving, it will give me a great deal of pleasure to send them to you by express.

I am glad to see “Old Princeton” more talked about in the papers than formerly—a good sign. I had hoped before this to have taken a day or two of refreshment among your shaded walks and green fields, but have not been able.

Very truly yours,

J. S. Pierson

“Old Princeton” was indeed in the news that spring. On May 14, when Pierson wrote to Cameron, several New York papers ran articles on Class Day, celebrated the day before: “The Class of ’69—the Addresses and Prizes—A Jovial Time at Old Princeton—Fun, Music and Pretty Girls.” Two weeks earlier, they had reported at length on the first annual dinner of the New York Alumni Association of Princeton College, created amid the excitement and energy surrounding the election of James McCosh as eleventh president of the college. The New York Times summarized President McCosh’s speech to the three hundred alumni assembled at Delmonico’s:

He praised especially the elective system by which students were allowed to pursue particular and select branches at will. This was the only true way to make first-rate scholars…. The only thing wanting now was the endowment of a professorship of modern continental languages and of scholarships that should encourage study. Princeton College was an excellent place for the joining of North and South together. It had now seventy Southern and Border State students, and applications for admission from all parts of the Union. He enlarged upon the importance of making Princeton College first among the institutions in the land, and concluded amid great applause.

25. Cameron Family Papers, box 20, folder 2, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.
27. An April 1868 circular announcing the establishment of this association was signed by John S. Pierson and eight other members of the Class of 1840, including Henry M. Alexander (a trustee since 1863) and Charles Scribner. Alumni Organization Records, box 22, PUA.
Pierson’s timely offer of Civil War books demonstrates his adherence to McCosh’s master plan for Princeton, which put the college gently but firmly on track to becoming a university.  

Cameron, however, was slow to respond. On May 27, Pierson had to write again to his “dear friend” concerning his “offer of books on the late war”: “If there is any objection or indifference as to receiving them, in any quarter, please advise me. I have another alternate destination ready for them.” This threat must have spurred the librarian into action; on June 28, he was able to report to the trustees the accession of “an interesting & valuable collection of works relating to our late civil war,” presented by “John S. Pierson, Esq., a graduate of the College.” A first batch of 43 books was soon followed by additional shipments, bringing the total to about 200 volumes in 1872. Meanwhile, the main collections of the library, which McCosh had declared “most inadequately supplied with books,” grew rapidly, thanks to the endowment established by John Cleve Green in honor of his mother, Elizabeth. The income from the “Elizabeth Foundation” boosted the annual acquisition budget by $3,000 and enabled large-scale purchases, beginning with 10,000 books and pamphlets from the estate of the German metaphysician Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg. Additional gifts from John C. Green allowed the erection of the college’s first library building and the appointment of its first professional librarian, Frederic Vinton.  

Chancellor Green Library opened in 1873, its roughly 28,000 volumes arranged in thirty-two alcoves on two levels. The budding Pierson Collection was installed in the gallery above the western entrance (fig. 2), where it would remain for the next seventy years. In 1875,  

31. Librarian’s Annual Reports, Princeton University Library Records, box 99, folder 49, PUA (hereafter cited as PUL Records).  
32. President’s Report, June 28, 1869, Board of Trustees Minutes, vol. 5, p. 55, Board of Trustees Records, PUA (hereafter cited as Trustees Minutes).  
34. In 1933, Robert G. Albion described it as “resting behind a grilled cage over the western arch of the library” (“An Unrivalled Civil War Collection,” 401).
President McCosh deemed it worthy of the trustees’ attention: “It may be interesting to state that Mr. John S. Pierson, of New York, has presented the Library with upwards of one thousand volumes on the late war, being, it is believed, the fullest and most complete collection of works on that subject.” The board passed a resolution thanking Pierson for his gifts. To supplement them, General William W. Belknap (Class of 1848), President Ulysses S. Grant’s secretary of War, presented seventy Civil War maps engraved for his department. And at Pierson’s suggestion, the librarian sent a circular to southern alumni soliciting Confederate documents:

It is very desirable that such a collection should give an impartial view of the purposes, principles, and deeds, of both the actors in the great

35. President’s Report, June 28, 1875, Trustees Minutes, vol. 5, p. 399.
36. Librarian’s Report, June 28, 1875, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 1, PUL Records.
struggle. Its history cannot, of course, yet be written, but now is the time to gather materials for such a history.... We point with pride to our new Library Building—a structure of most solid and permanent character, and a safe place of deposit, you may feel assured, for any precious documents you may intrust to us.... The contributions will be prized as the means of historical study, and cherished as an exhibition of the grand physical and moral qualities of Americans.  

Despite several positive replies, this appeal yielded few actual contributions; over the next three decades, the continued growth of the collection remained almost exclusively the work of John S. Pierson. But the circular effectively underscores the collection's purpose and its place at Princeton. Unlike the small, select libraries that Pierson carefully composed for ships and asylums, his Civil War collection aimed at completeness and was amassed less for the current reader than for the future scholar. “Located by itself, and not intended for general use,” its fragile and elusive contents were protected “by a gate secured by lock and key,” appearing to the roaming student like “the garden of forbidden fruit.” Equally patriotic and scientific, Pierson’s deposit proclaimed that the college library could also be a research library, preserving masses of rare and ephemeral materials for posterity.

In 1877, with the count approaching two thousand, the trustees again resolved to tender thanks “to Mr. John S. Pierson for the deep interest he has manifested in the Library of this College, and the large and valuable addition he has made thereto in the collection of works upon the Civil War.” More significantly, the librarian’s report for this year points to a new strategy on Pierson’s part, which anticipates his 1886 transactions with European libraries: “he has employed his stock of duplicate war books, procured during the course of his collections for us, in obtaining by exchange from the state historical libraries of this country, something like one hundred and fifty volumes of their publications. These enable us to exhibit a far better library of American history than before.”

37. Letter dated March 10, 1875, box 290, folder 1, PUL Records.
41. Librarian’s Report, June 20, 1877, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 3, PUL Records.
to have survived, but a perusal of the F stacks (U.S. local history) in Firestone Library turns up some of the publications obtained through Pierson’s industry. His name (printed, stamped, or handwritten) appears on the bookplates or title pages of numerous early volumes from series published by state historical societies (Massachusetts, Minnesota, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, to name a few), the Essex Institute, and the Literary and Historical Society of Québec, among others. At a time when Princeton had nothing to offer (no reports, no journals, no dissertations) to support an institutional exchange of publications, Pierson made up for the college’s deficiencies by supplying his personal Civil War collection as capital. Although this scheme was necessarily temporary, it provided a kick-start for subsequent, more systematic efforts by the library to secure these serials on a regular basis. It also placed the college more prominently within the growing network of learned societies and promoted its library as a repository of scholarly papers.

This initiative indicates Pierson’s desire to make useful contributions to the library beyond the gated confines of the Civil War alcove and to convert his monothematic hoarding into somewhat more diverse returns. Although his philanthropic activities suggest a certain level of financial comfort, he evidently did not possess the wealth of the Greens or Pynes, Marquands or Morgans. But he could capitalize on his individual resourcefulness and energy as a collector to move Old Princeton forward. Having distributed his Civil War books throughout America, it remained for him to go global.

In 1878, the trustees appropriated special funds to send the librarian on a purchasing trip abroad. Vinton spent two months in Europe and brought home some eighteen hundred volumes (mostly nominated by the faculty) bought in London, Paris, and Berlin. Two more expeditions followed in 1880 and 1881, focused on the papers of royal scientific societies and on geo-paleontological publications, respectively. But Vinton’s later reports openly express his increasing frustration with

42. According to the antiquarian bookseller Lathrop C. Harper, Pierson “was a man in moderate circumstances who was pursuing an ideal with a maximum of perseverance and a minimum of money expended … it meant an immense amount of correspondence and perseverance. And whatever his system—it worked!” Letter to Julian Boyd, n.d., printed in *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 3, no. 2 (February 1942): 65.
the state of the library: “The fact that its revenue remains the same as when the college was half as large oppresses me with discouragement and dejection.” In his view, the holdings did not grow rapidly and systematically enough, and they were not sufficiently used by the students (the rise of athletics didn’t help). In this respect, the Civil War Collection itself elicited ambivalent feelings and appeared among those documents that “encumber my shelves without materially assisting the inquiries of the students.”

Whether or not he agreed with Vinton’s grumblings, John S. Pierson must have asked himself what else he could do for his alma mater with the means at his disposal. On July 24, 1883, accompanied by his younger brother Charles, he boarded the *Alaska* (the fastest steamship afloat) and sailed to England. The two had already made a similar voyage in 1875, but this time the trip included a visit to the Bodleian Library in Oxford. “When I was in Europe in 1883, I had the pleasure of an interview (in August I think) with a gentleman in charge of your library at the time … and proposed to him to send a donation of books upon our Civil War & related topics.”

The rest of Pierson’s itinerary is not known; we may assume that he also went to Sweden to visit the family of his late wife’s sister Sarah Baker, with whom he had stayed in touch. In any case, it took two more years before this journey would begin to bear fruits.

In the spring of 1886, several European libraries recorded large donations of books on the American Civil War from John S. Pierson of New York, amounting to a combined total of more than a thousand

43. Librarian’s Report, June 18, 1883, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 94, folder 37, PUL Records.
44. Librarian’s Report, November 10, 1881, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 94, folder 37, PUL Records.
45. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 24, 1883. The departure was covered by the papers because one of the passengers was the English actress Lillie Langtry, the “Jersey Lily,” returning home from her first U.S. tour. The Pierson brothers appear in a list of fourteen “also-saileds.”
47. In 1876, Sarah’s daughter Louise Woods Baker had married Ernst Beckman, son of the bishop of Skara; following the marriage, both Louise and Sarah moved from Princeton to Sweden. Ernst and Louise’s fourth child was born in December 1881 and given the name John Pierson Woods Beckman.
volumes: Bodleian Library, Oxford (about 250); Königliche Bibliothek, Berlin (240); Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele, Rome (148); Kungliga Biblioteket, Stockholm (95); Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (314). The Bodleian archives, in addition to the letter quoted above, contain a postcard by Pierson acknowledging a return gift: “I am much gratified to hear of your kind donation to Princeton College. I have no doubt that it will be very acceptable & useful.” No other records in Oxford or Princeton seem to exist about this donation. The archives of the Berlin library were destroyed in World War II, but the bookplates of various volumes in Firestone and Marquand libraries bear an inscription by Vinton indicating that they were “presented by the royal library in Berlin through John S. Pierson Esq.” (fig. 3). Some publications of the Swedish royal library (annual reports, catalogs) also came to Princeton via Pierson. But it was his shipment to Paris that produced by far the largest returns, conspicuous enough to form the kernel of an exhibition. It is also the Bibliothèque Nationale that has preserved comprehensive documentation about the exchange. This dossier reveals, first of all, that Pierson did not go or write to Paris himself but instead relied on the services of a special agent, who merits a section of her own.

54. These titles include several catalogs of the library’s holdings of Oriental manuscripts, as well as three numismatic and archeological treatises by Lorenz Beger (librarian of Frederick I of Prussia): Lucernae veterum sepulchrales iconicae … (1702); Ulysses Sirenes Praetervectus … (1703); Numismatum modernorum Cimeliarchii regio-electoralis brandenburgici sectio prima … (1704).
The first letter from Léopold Delisle, eminent historian and director (administrateur général) of the Bibliothèque Nationale, to John S. Pierson begins: “Miss Shaw has informed me of your generous intention to give to the Bibliothèque Nationale a collection of works on the war of the United States....” To the draft of the letter kept in the archives, rue de Richelieu, are pinned two visiting cards (fig. 4). The first shows the name of John S. Pierson and two New York addresses, one printed and crossed out (125 West 41st Street, his midtown townhouse), the

55. Léopold Delisle to John S. Pierson, draft dated October 18, 1884; Archives Modernes 236 (14), Bibliothèque nationale de France. Translation mine. The archives contain Pierson’s letters (in English) and Delisle’s autograph drafts (in French), along with other documents related to the exchange.

3. Bookplate with Frederic Vinton’s inscription noting the provenance: “the royal library in Berlin through John S. Pierson, Esq.” In Lorenz Beger, Numismatum modernorum ... (Brandenburg, 1704). Numismatics Collection: Reference, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

MISS SHAW BETWEEN TWO WORLDS
other added by hand (150 Nassau Street, the downtown office building owned by the American Tract Society). The second card simply bears the printed name “Miss Shaw.” It is as lapidary as it is telling.

Anne Robinson Shaw (1836–1899) was the eldest child of Charles Brion Shaw (1800–1870), the half-brother of John Shaw Pierson’s mother. Charles grew up in New York, attended West Point, then moved to Virginia to work as a highway and railroad engineer under the direction of Colonel Claudius Crozet. In 1857, he published an anonymous abolitionist essay: Is Slavery a Blessing? A Reply to Prof. Bled-

46. Pierson’s maternal grandmother, Anne Marston, died in December 1792, shortly after her daughter’s birth. John Clinton Shaw took as his second wife Anne Robinson; several children were born between 1798 and 1808. See http://records.ancestry.com/john_clinton_shaw_records.ashx?pid=155480277.
soe’s Essay on Liberty and Slavery; With Remarks on Slavery As It Is. By a Citizen of the South. (The book is in Princeton’s Civil War Collection, with an inlaid note by Pierson providing some information about its author.)

Anne was born in Charlottesville in 1836 and received from her father “the best education his means and circumstances permitted.” For over twenty years, she supported herself by working as a teacher in families and schools. “I hated teaching with a perfect hatred but as that was, in the South before the war, the only occupation possible to an educated lady, I made no effort to escape from it until both my parents were dead.” In 1874, she “went to Europe for two years. My brother Charles lent me $800 and my cousin John Pierson lent me $600, all of which I subsequently repaid.”

In Italy, Anne Shaw made friends with other Americans abroad: Eudora Lindsay, her brother Vachel Thomas Lindsay, and her friend and fellow teacher Kate Frazee. After their return to the United States, Vachel and Kate married and had children, one of whom, Vachel Lindsay, would become a famous poet. Eudora later published a collection of letters recounting the trip and containing numerous references to their travel companion, Miss Shaw from Virginia:

She is a most independent personage, exploring London, Paris, or any other city, entirely alone. She has been rather unfortunate, however; for, in Paris, she was ill two months, and in Geneva her trunk was stolen…. She still mourns the loss … of some books among its contents; for they were books once used by her father, whose memory she greatly reveres.

In July 1876, Anne Shaw returned to America, but only temporarily, as she hoped to make a living out of her education and travel experience. She published advertisements directed at “ladies of position and refinement,” offering to guide them through Europe. “Miss Shaw is induced to make this tour chiefly by her love of travel, from which her extensive reading enables her to extract for herself, and communicate to others, a high degree of intellectual enjoyment…. Miss Shaw has lived in Paris and understands economical shopping there.”

57. Autobiographical narrative quoted in “Anne Robinson Shaw,” Memorial Books, Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society, Charlottesville, Virginia. The full name of “brother Charles” is Charles Pierson Shaw.
58. Eudora Lindsay South, Wayside Notes and Fireside Thoughts (St. Louis: J. Burns’ Publishing Co., 1884), 293–94.
59. A Year in Europe, dated New York, June 6, 1877. This broadside includes a list of
Meanwhile, at Princeton College, Frederic Vinton was pressing the trustees to grant him much-needed assistants who could relieve him of a host of everyday chores:

You may see, that none of the services described require the strength of a man. Women, of mature age, and dignified character, and abundant intelligence may be employed at half or two thirds the rate. I have already had applications from several such. I strongly recommend their employment; as being more likely to continue, more conscientious and tractable while they stay. The first assistant should have a salary of eight hundred dollars; the inferior of six hundred.60

Despite this economical proposal, only one assistant was authorized at first. The person hired was indeed a woman of mature age: Anne Shaw. In September 1877, instead of taking American ladies on a grand tour of Europe, she came to Chancellor Green to labor as assistant librarian under her friend Vinton (fig. 5). John S. Pierson’s cousin thus became the first woman to be employed by the College of New Jersey in an academic, non-servant role.61 At a salary of $800 (compared to $2,800 for Vinton, which he found inadequate), she was a steal, as the librarian himself acknowledged:

The lady whom, by your permission, I have employed, except in lacking experience, is just as competent as I am to be the head of the library. Accomplished in as many languages, full of the knowledge of literary history, mature and judicious in mind—I am ashamed to impose upon her the work of mere routine and detail, which occupies all her time…

nineteen references, which begins with John S. Pierson. Also listed are Anne’s travel companions from Italy, Mrs. [Eudora] South and Mrs. [Kate] Lindsay, and Frederic Vinton. A letter preserved in the Frederic Vinton Papers in the Library of Congress shows that Anne Shaw was already on friendly terms with the librarian while he was still in Washington and she was still a teacher. The contact may have been established through Anne’s younger sister Jane, author of several books accessioned by the Library of Congress in 1870–1872.

60. Frederic Vinton to Charles E. Green (chairman of the Committee on the Library), June 13, 1877, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 3, PUL Records.

61. “A search of Princeton’s archives suggests that the first woman to be employed at Princeton was a Miss Shaw, who in 1877 was hired to help with cataloguing in the library.” Shirley Tilghman, “Coeducation and Leadership,” speech at Leadership Summit Celebrating Coeducation, The Episcopal Academy, October 17, 2006; http://www.princeton.edu/president/tilghman/speeches/20061017). See also Gender in the Academy: Women and Learning from Plato to Princeton, exhib. cat. (Princeton: Princeton University Library, 1990), 39.
5. Floor plan of Chancellor Green Library. *Bric-à-Brac*, 1877–1878, p. 29. The Civil War Collection was above alcoves 1 and 32 (encyclopedias).
There is reason to fear that disgust at her menial occupations, as well as the low rate of her compensation, compared to the high price of board in Princeton, may cause her to resume, before long, the more agreeable plan of life on which her attention was lately fixed.\textsuperscript{62}

Among the areas entrusted to Anne Shaw was the new “art collection,” which Vinton had created shortly before her arrival: “The appointment of a professor of Architecture and Applied Art [Edward Delano Lindsey] seemed to demand the beginning, at least, of a collection of books appropriate to that department.”\textsuperscript{63} These fine books were kept “in a separate room, under the eye of an assistant, and have not been exposed to loan.”\textsuperscript{64} They were inventoried in a handwritten “Catalogue and Shelf-List of books forming the Art Collection”; a pencil note specifies that it was “Comp. by Miss Shaw.”\textsuperscript{65}

During the following years, the trustees allowed the hiring of additional assistants, whose help was crucial for the progress of Vinton’s \textit{magnum opus}, the much-awaited \textit{Subject-Catalogue} of the college library. But while the art and Civil War collections were kept safe, the staff was not protected from the cold, leading eventually to Anne Shaw’s departure: “The arrangements for heating the library building have never been satisfactory…. One of the assistants fell sick and was warned by her physician not to stay in the library.”\textsuperscript{66} In her own words: “I remained at Princeton for four sessions; then my health beginning to suffer, I left there in June 1881 and began to take parties of young ladies to Europe, two parties each year. I was the pioneer in the South of that profession and was able to find parties large enough to be remunerative.”\textsuperscript{67} In an epilogue to her Italian letters, dated December 2, 1884, Eudora Lindsay South provides additional details about her old friend’s new timetable:

\textsuperscript{62} Librarian’s Report, November 6, 1877, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 3, PUL Records.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{The Princetonian}, February 8, 1877.
\textsuperscript{64} Librarian’s Report, June 17, 1878, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 4, PUL Records. The Art Room was located in the east wing (today Chancellor Green classroom 105); see figure 5.
\textsuperscript{65} On the contents and significance of this collection, see Stephen Ferguson, “Rare Books at Princeton, 1873–1941,” unpublished manuscript, 14.
\textsuperscript{66} Librarian’s Report, June 20, 1881, Librarian’s Annual Reports, box 100, folder 7, PUL Records.
\textsuperscript{67} “Anne Robinson Shaw,” Memorial Books, Albemarle Charlottesville Historical Society.
She has turned to good account her knowledge of foreign lands; for twice a year she crosses the ocean with a party of seven or eight ladies. For her winter tour she leaves New York, October 1st, and returns about April 10th, a space of six months. On her summer tour she embarks May 15th, and returns September 15th, time four months. Any lady who desires to see Europe under the guidance of an intelligent and careful chaperon, would do well to address Miss Anne Shaw, care of Messrs. John Munroe & Co., 8 Wall Street, New York.68

And so it happened that in October 1884, Miss Shaw presented her cousin’s generous offer to Monsieur l’Administrateur Général. Having thus prepared the terrain, she let the men handle the rest and resumed her own, more agreeable business.

THE DELISLE-PIERSON CORRESPONDENCE

Let us resume, then, the reading of the Paris archives. In his first letter to John S. Pierson, Léopold Delisle assured him that the Bibliothèque Nationale accepted his proposal eagerly and asked for a summary list of authors and titles to be checked against the library’s holdings, which already included a “considerable number” of books on the American Civil War.69 Pierson promptly sent “a Mss. catalogue in which the two hundred & fifty volumes (or thereabouts) which I have to offer, are indicated by the mark of an ellipse in blue crayon.” He went on to explain the character and purpose of his donation:

These volumes are a portion of many duplicates remaining in my hands, from a collection presented by me to the Library of the College of New Jersey (my “Alma Mater”) at Princeton N.J. Though not of unusual intrinsic value, they embrace many monographs of early date sought after by collectors here and already becoming scarce. Should they serve in any degree to help European readers, to a better understanding of the causes details & results of our great struggle, as well as of the patriotism & courage displayed in it,—the gift will have attained its object.

Three weeks later, Delisle returned the catalog, on which his library’s desiderata had been marked with a black cross.

68. South, Wayside Notes and Fireside Thoughts, 472.
69. Léopold Delisle to John S. Pierson, draft dated October 18, 1884, Archives Modernes 236 (14), Bibliothèque nationale de France. All references and quotations in this section are drawn from documents in this file. Translations mine.
“Ill health & absence from the City” prevented Pierson from carrying out his design until January 1886, when he announced the shipment of “three cases of books, amounting to some two hundred & sixty-five volumes.” He concluded:

I may add,—that if the books please, & any desire should arise to make an acknowledgement in kind, (tho’ this is not in the least necessary) I have no doubt that Princeton College, New Jersey,—in which as my “Alma Mater” I am interested, and which is the possessor of the large collection of books on our Civil War,—of which what I now send you are a few fragmentary [sic] duplicates,—would be glad to receive anything of interest, in the form of Government or local publications outside of the ordinary book-trade publications.70

On March 4, Delisle confirmed the arrival of the three cases, thanked Pierson again for the “handsome gift [beau cadeau],” which filled “regrettable gaps,” and added a postscript: “We hope to soon be able to send you a certain number of volumes for the establishment that you may recommend to us.” Having already mentioned Princeton in his previous letter, Pierson apparently did not see the need to reply. After waiting for ten weeks, however, he wrote back to Paris on May 23 to reiterate that the “Institution in which I am interested” was “the College at Princeton New Jersey” and suggested that the shipment could be handled by the Express Company of Davies & Turner: “I have even ventured to ask that firm,—to direct their agent in Paris, to call upon you and give his address, for such possible use. Any such package should be addressed to me ‘for delivery to the College of New Jersey at Princeton’: which would facilitate its passing free of duty.”71 On June 8, the shipping company Flageollet Frères proposed its services to Delisle on behalf of Pierson. On June 15, the administrateur général wrote to the minister in charge, René Goblet:

In March last, an American, Mr. John S. Pierson of New York, sent the BN a large shipment of publications concerning the United States that were absent from the holdings of the Dept. of Printed Works. Our

70. Pierson’s letter to the Bodleian, also dated January 22, ended with a similar postscript, suggesting that “anything which your authority may choose to send of the character of University or Governmental publications not open to ordinary purchase” would be “very acceptable” for Princeton (Library Records, d. 504, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford).

71. The same company had handled the shipment to Paris, insured at a value of $450.
historical series about America were thereby expanded by over 300 volumes or brochures.

In presenting us this handsome gift, the donor expressed to me his desire to receive for the library of “Princeton College” in New Jersey, where he had completed his studies, any books of which the Bibliothèque could dispose. To this effect, we have assembled a certain number of documents (catalogs, superabundant volumes, plates etc.) of which multiple copies exist in our collections and which could be safely allocated to the establishment recommended by Mr. John S. Pierson.

I have the honor, Monsieur le Ministre, of sending you herewith the list of these items and asking you to kindly authorize the BN to relinquish them to the benefit of “Princeton College of New Jersey.” This concession could be classified as an exchange.

The proposal was promptly accepted, and on June 25 a ministerial decree was issued authorizing and instructing the BN to carry out the exchange (fig. 6). On August 7, Delisle informed Flageollet Frères that four cases of books and engravings were ready for pickup.

Alas, the head librarian was clearly more familiar with the economics of medieval Normandy than with the customs regulations of modern America, leading to a minor diplomatic kerfuffle. On September 8, Pierson reported a problem:

The four cases of books have also arrived; but owing to the lack of the consular certificate of value (or certified invoice) which is required in case of goods exceeding one hundred dollars in value,—I am not permitted to take them out of the custom house. May I ask you to supply this defect by obtaining for us the requisite document from the U.S. Consul. I think, Sir, that if the circumstances of the case are mentioned,—that it is a gift to an American College, the Consul will remit his charges.\(^{72}\)

Delisle proceeded as Pierson suggested. In response, the consul (the Massachusetts lawyer and banker George Walker) had the honor to inform him that U.S. law required three signed copies of the itemized

72. In 1847, Alexandre Vattemare, creator of a *Système d'échange international*, had encountered a similar hurdle “when a New York civil servant informed him that it would cost 4,500 US dollars ... to clear his crates through customs.” Vattemare managed to persuade the authorities that shipments under his “system” should “be exempt from customs duties.” Pierre-Alain Tilliette, “Alexandre's Adventure,” in *The Extravagant Ambassador: The True Story of Alexandre Vattemare, the French Ventriloquist Who Changed the World*, ed. Earle Havens and Pierre-Alain Tilliette (Boston: Boston Public Library, 2007), 117–18. Pierson, already a volunteer in the Port of New York in 1847, may well have been aware of this precedent.
list of objects, with an estimate of their total value, as well as a customs declaration in triplicate, to be returned to the consulate along with a payment of 13 francs. The Frenchman would have none of that; the forms remained at rue de Richelieu, unused. Delisle instead wrote to Henry Vignaud, the U.S. chargé d’affaires in Paris, lamenting these “great formalities” and pointing out that the required information was “not applicable to antique books, engravings, official publications of which the majority are not commercially available.” Vignaud asked Walker to “simplify as much as possible the formalities required by the law.” The consul complied and took it upon himself to modify the declaration form, which Delisle had only to sign (no fee required after all). On September 30, he conveyed the dénouement to Pierson: “I hope, Monsieur, that the difficulties that you have experienced will thus be removed and that the shipment that we were happy to make to you will reach its destination.”

The last piece in the dossier is a belated letter from Pierson, dated August 20, 1887. He had realized that, “owing to a misunderstanding as to the person upon whom the duty devolved,” Princeton had never acknowledged the “handsome donation” from Paris:

May I ask you to receive my dear Sir, my very humble apology, for this serious omission,—and to accept even at this late date, very hearty thanks from myself and from the College, for your most liberal and acceptable gift.

The set of legislative documents, furnishing, as they do, a complete view of the machinery of your National Government,—will be found of value, I doubt not, to students of political science.

The Engravings are especially appreciated, particularly those which illustrate the art & the history of the reign of Louis XIV: while the mass of Engravings from De Non’s [sic] Egypt fortunately supply the material for filling certain lacunae in an imperfect set of the same work possessed by the College—besides adding, I am informed, one full volume.

To enhance our own appreciation of these engravings today, some further explanations about their history may be useful.

THE CABINET DU ROI, FROM PARIS TO PRINCETON

Thanks to the Bibliothèque Nationale’s meticulous bookkeeping, a detailed listing of the shipment to Princeton has survived. It enumerates ten recently published library catalogs (manuscripts, medals,
reference works, exhibits) and two portfolios with facsimiles of medieval manuscripts from the BN’s collections.\textsuperscript{73} There are also three rare books from Italy, including two in Arabic printed by the Typographia Medicea,\textsuperscript{74} two multivolume sets of government publications,\textsuperscript{75} and two paleographic and art historical treatises published in 1775.\textsuperscript{76} The largest group consists of twenty-three eighteenth-century books and pamphlets concerning the southern provinces of Languedoc and Provence, many related to juridical and political disputes—perhaps chosen because they represent the type of material (polemical, ephemeral, local) featured in Pierson’s collection.\textsuperscript{77}

The two large assortments of engravings were drawn from famous, monumental publication projects commissioned by Louis XIV and Napoleon, respectively. One is listed as “Le grand ouvrage sur l’Égypte, exemplaire incomplet”: an incomplete copy of the \textit{Description de l’Égypte}, the textual and graphic record of the Napoleonic expeditions supervised by Dominique-Vivant Denon. As noted by Pierson, the College of New Jersey already owned an “imperfect set” of the work (albeit of its second edition), presented in 1836 by a trustee, Matthew Newkirk. The copy sent by the BN is no longer at Princeton and was probably deaccessioned following the arrival of yet another set—this one finally “perfect”—presented by the Prime family in 1921.\textsuperscript{78}

73. \textit{Portraits de Niéphore Botaniate} (part of an ambitious facsimile project undertaken by Bastard d’Estang), and \textit{Choix de documents géographiques} (prefaced by Léopold Delisle himself).

74. Avicenna’s \textit{Canon} (1593, the first Arabic edition published in the West) and the Gospel in Arabic and Latin (a 1774 reissue of the 1591 original). The third title is the 1661 Florence edition of Books v–vii of the \textit{Conics} of Apollonius of Perga.

75. \textit{Comptes généraux du trésor public} (and \textit{de l’Empire}) for the years 1803–1811, printed by the Imprimerie de la République (and Impériale), and Bréquigny’s \textit{Table chronologique des diplômes, chartes, titres et actes imprimés} …, printed by the Imprimerie Royale. Having inherited the collections of the Cabinet des Chartes, the BN owned a large supply of the first three volumes of Bréquigny’s \textit{Table} and included them in many exchanges throughout the nineteenth century.

76. Battenev, \textit{L’Archiviste français}, and Lubersac, \textit{Discours sur les monumens publics de tous les âges}. Battenev and Lubersac were also included in several other exchanges prior to 1886.

77. In 1884, almost identical sets of Languedoc pamphlets had been part of swaps with the British Museum and the Bibliothèque du Ministère de l’Intérieur.

78. “The library possesses an incomplete copy of ‘Napoleon’s Egypt’, and naturally we are very anxious to replace it by a perfect example.” James Thayer Gerould to Ralph Earl Prime Jr., September 17, 1921, box 3, folder 27, University Librarian
The last item on the list is entitled “Cabinet du Roi” and includes 645 prints arranged in sixteen groups (fig. 7). The BN’s register of exchanges for 1846–1903 shows no other transfer of prints in such quantities. But as exceptional as it seems to have been for that period, such a massive swap is consistent with the earlier history and uses of these engravings under Louis XIV. We may assume that the selection for

7. List of Cabinet du Roi selections. Archives Modernes 236 (14), Bibliothèque nationale de France. Photograph by the author.

79. According to Lugt (writing in 1921), duplicate prints owned by the BN are “very rarely” exchanged and never sold publicly. (“Ces cessions de doubles sont très rares. Il n’y a pas eu de ventes publiques de doubles.”) Les Marques de collections, 123.
Princeton was made or at least approved by Georges Duplessis, chief curator of prints since 1885. In 1869, he had published a learned article on the Cabinet du Roi, tracing the development of the collection through the various phases of its history. Since its beginnings in the 1660s, the project to engrave the royal treasures—chateaux, gardens, paintings, sculptures, medals, tapestries, festivals, animals, plants, conquered towns—was closely associated with the Bibliothèque du Roi. In 1670, Jean-Baptiste Colbert ordered that the Bibliothèque (and not the Imprimerie Royale) should house the copperplates and handle all impressions and distributions. During the following decade, several sets of engravings were joined with letterpress texts (by authors such as Charles Perrault, his brother Claude, and André Félibien) to form complex, beautifully designed volumes published under the imprint of the Imprimerie Royale, directed by Sébastien Mabre-Cramoisy. But this modus operandi ceased in the 1680s; from then on, the prints were pulled as needed on the library’s own intaglio presses and, for the most part, kept unbound on its shelves until an order came from Versailles to assemble them for presentation to select recipients, from André Le Nôtre and Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet to Jesuit missionaries and Siamese ambassadors.

Throughout the ancien régime, the Cabinet du Roi was indeed first and foremost intended to supply diplomatic gifts or to reward dignitaries and distinguished servants of the crown. Starting in 1679, however, parts of the collection (complete subsets as well as individual sheets) were also sold to the public through print dealers in order to recoup at least some of the heavy expenses incurred. In 1694, the Bibliothèque found another way to monetize the enterprise: the king authorized an agreement with the Rotterdam bookseller Reinier Leers for the provision of foreign (Dutch, English, German) books to the library in exchange for prints from the Cabinet du Roi, for which he would be the exclusive distributor in Holland. The scheme ran from 1696 to 1708 and procured a total of 1,971 titles from abroad for the Bibliothèque.

In 1702, to Leers’s displeasure, similar arrangements were made with booksellers in Amsterdam and The Hague. In 1886, Delisle and Duplessis may have had these deals in mind when they decided to send royal engravings in return for American books.

After the death of Louis XIV in 1715, the Bibliothèque was reorganized under the abbé Jean-Paul Bignon. The print cabinet became one of five départements and continued to preserve both prints (estampes) and copperplates (planches gravées). The Cabinet du Roi collection itself was restructured and streamlined: it no longer contained engravings of plants and animals (their plates had been transferred to the Imprimerie Royale and the Académie des Sciences) or other scientific illustrations; the descriptive texts that had been an important part of the earliest volumes were also dropped. The result was a purely graphic collection of 956 engravings (some on multiple sheets) illustrating the artistic and military achievements of the Sun King’s reign. They were divided into twenty-three volumes and itemized in a catalog printed in 1727 and 1743. The distribution of the prints seems to have been somewhat more restrictive than before, both to avoid wearing out the plates and to keep the prints scarce and coveted. Initially, only fifty copies of the complete collection were printed and given out as a very special favor at the rate of one or two per year. While additional impressions of various subsets were occasionally produced, they were apparently not sold on the open market.

Up to the Revolution, many new copperplates were deposited at the Bibliothèque. Although they were not officially part of the Cabinet du Roi as defined in 1727, they were seen as logical supplements that belonged with the earlier engravings. Often they were the result not of royal order but of private initiative and commercial enterprise, as in the case of Edme Jeaurat’s two engravings of tapestries after Charles Le Brun (a series left unfinished by Jeaurat’s father-in-law Sébastien Le Clerc) or, most spectacularly, Jean-Baptiste Massé’s ruinous thirty-year venture to reproduce in print the entire ceiling decoration of the Hall


83. Some of the information in this paragraph and the next is based on a cursory perusal of the rich archives of the Département des estampes; the eighteenth-century history of the Cabinet du Roi remains to be written.
of Mirrors (Le Brun again). Hugues-Adrien Joly, the department’s curator from 1750 to 1792, was particularly eager to add these sequels to his collection, which he considered the central location (chef-lieu) for all prints related to Louis XIV. Joly even managed to retrieve from the Imprimerie Royale the 319 botanical plates engraved a century earlier by Abraham Bosse, Nicolas Robert, and Louis de Châtillon; on November 28, 1772, he proudly presented a freshly printed set to Louis XV.

But soon a new institution emerged as the national copperplate repository: in 1797, the Chalcographie du Louvre was created, and in 1812, the plates kept at the Bibliothèque (2,505 in all) were transferred to the Louvre. Evidently, a substantial number of prints from the Cabinet du Roi must have remained on the library’s shelves, relics of a bygone age. In June 1886, these splendid scraps once again came in handy to spread the grandeur of France to foreign shores.

The selections sent to Princeton fall into two groups. The first derives from the Cabinet du Roi in the form given to it by Bignon and amounts to 220 of those 956 prints, with ten of the twenty-three volumes represented. Among these are 32 engravings after paintings in the royal collections (fig. 8), a complete set illustrating the interior decoration of the Louvre and Tuileries palaces (fig. 9), more than a hundred prints of the Versailles gardens and sculptures, and two dozen large-scale topographical views by Israël Silvestre and Adam Frans van der Meulen. The second group consists of 425 prints not included in the 1727–1743 catalog, most notably 312 of the 319 botanicals, including a dozen with captions in pen and ink (fig. 10). Other sets exemplify the eighteenth-century sequels mentioned above, such as Jeaurat’s Tapis-

84. The project to reproduce the Hall of Mirrors vault had begun in the 1680s, but only one engraving was completed during the reign of Louis XIV.


86. Duplessis, “Le Cabinet du Roi,” 20–21. Two centuries later, the Chalcographie is still in existence; new impressions from the copperplates of the Cabinet du Roi (most of which are now steel-faced to protect them from further wear) can be bought in a special section of the Louvre boutique or ordered online at http://www.chalcographiedulouvre.com.
series, Massé’s Grande Galerie de Versailles, and various portrait prints, including one showing the profile of Louis XIV at various ages, presented as medals on a palm tree (fig. 11). Altogether, they compose a varied and representative assortment of classical French printmaking, mostly in fine and strong eighteenth-century impressions.

The arrival of the engravings from Paris even made the front page of the Prince (those were the days). An anonymous note, most likely written by Frederic Vinton himself, announced Pierson’s bounty:

[F]our enormous boxes of books have been returned to him and sent to our library. Among other things they contain six hundred engravings, many by superior artists and representing famous pictures, objects or enterprises of the French Crown…. It will be felt that they form a valuable and seasonable addition to the Art resources of the College.⁸⁷

In 1886, art was indeed high on the college’s agenda, even more so than ten years earlier, when Vinton had opened the Art Room. The architect E. D. Lindsey had resigned in the meantime, but Allan Marquand (Class of 1874) was back at Princeton. Hired initially as an instructor of logic, he was quickly “invited” by McCosh to change fields and became professor of art in 1883.⁸⁸ In fall 1886, Arthur Lincoln Frothingham Jr. had just been lured from Johns Hopkins to teach archaeology and semitic languages. At the same time, plans were taking shape for a Museum of Historic Art, for which ground would be broken in July 1887. To further support the fledgling art department, Allan Marquand personally imported many fine books from France and Germany and donated some of them to the college library. In fact, the vast majority of books presented in the years 1885–1887 came from either Marquand or Pierson.⁸⁹

It is doubtful, however, whether Marquand and Frothingham much appreciated the Cabinet du Roi prints, considering this passage from their Text-Book of the History of Sculpture:

THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. This was for France a century of self-assertion and of superficial grandeur. It was epitomized in the character

⁸⁷. The Princetonian, October 29, 1886.

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9. François Chauveau (1613–1676), *Porte, dans le grand appartement des Tuileries* [Door in the grand apartment of the Tuileries], [ca. 1669]. Plate 20 from *Ornemens de peinture et de sculpture* [Ornaments of painting and sculpture] ([Paris, 1710]). Graphic Arts Collection.
10. Louis de Châtillon (1639–1734), *Coniza americana frutescens* [Shrubby American fleabane], n.d. From *Estampes pour servir à l'histoire des plantes* [Prints for a natural history of plants] (Paris, [1700s]). Graphic Arts Collection.
of Louis XIV. In architecture the “ordre colossal” was introduced; in painting, huge bombastic canvases, and in sculpture, pompous monuments were popular.  

But at least two other faculty members could have found some usefulness in certain parts of the gift from Paris. The botanicals surely pleased George Macloskie, professor of natural history and author of *Elementary Botany with Students’ Guide to the Examination and Description of Plants* (1883). The engravings of architecture, ornament, and sculpture may have interested Frederick Newton Willson, professor of graphics and engineering drawing and author of *Theoretical and Practical Graphies* (1892). The drafting room in the John C. Green School of Science seated ninety-two students and was amply furnished with “architectural photographs & engravings and casts of Greek statuary.” It is tempting to imagine that some of the prints left Chancellor Green and were put to pedagogical or decorative use elsewhere on campus, in a spirit of resource sharing characteristic of the college at that time.

Unfortunately, the library records for the period are spare and do not allow us to trace with any certainty the path of the *Cabinet du Roi* prints after their arrival at Princeton. The proper cataloging and storage of 650 loose sheets of quite diverse subject matter was clearly a challenge that Vinton’s library (which was starting to burst at its seams) was not prepared for. In a *Bulletin List of Books Added to the Library of the College of New Jersey* printed in 1887, the engravings all appear subsumed under a single entry: “LE BRUN (C.) Architectural ornaments, views of Les grands [sic] eaux, battle pieces, plafonds, etc., à Versailles. Cabinet 5.3.25.” But “Cabinet 5.3.25” is not a valid location, and the handwritten shelf list of the Chancellor Green cabinets does not show any of these prints. The separate accessioning of visual materials did not begin until 1898, after Junius Spencer Morgan (Class of 1888) had become the associate librarian, and it did not extend retroactively.


In 1916, the *Plantes du Roi* were accessioned as a set of three portfolios and apparently placed in the botany stacks, later to be moved to the Annex, then to ReCAP (250 of the 312 plates have survived). In 1934, a smaller portfolio with 45 plates of *Médailles antiques* engraved by Pierre Giffart was cataloged for the Rare Book Division. A certain number of the prints made it into the Art Museum, where some of them were belatedly accessioned and credited to Junius S. Morgan, whose 1932 bequest had led to the founding of the museum’s department of prints and drawings. The rest (about 160 sheets) became part of the Graphic Arts Collection, officially established in 1940 and now housed in Firestone Library.

Over the past century, other accessions have greatly enriched the *Cabinet du Roi* holdings at Princeton. They include several of the original books that combine text and image, such as the 1683 *Description générale de l’Hôtel royal des Invalides* (acquired in 1924 as part of the Blau Memorial Collection), the 1671 *Mémoires pour l’histoire naturelle des animaux* (from the library of Henry Young, Class of 1893, presented in 1951 by his daughter Alice B. Lindabury), and the 1670 *Courses de têtes et de bague* (purchased in 2013 with funds from the Friends of the Princeton University Library). A volume containing the plates of the three Versailles festivals (without the texts) arrived in 1957 as part of a major donation from Susan Dwight Bliss. The Cotsen Children’s Library holds copies of the two original editions of the *Labyrinthe de Versailles* (1677 and 1679), while the Marquand Library of Art and Archaeology owns both editions of another masterpiece by Sébastien Le Clerc, the 1670 and 1679 *Tapisseries du Roi*. Last but not least, Marquand Library recently secured two quintessential *recueils factices*, royal presentation volumes bound in red morocco that combine several sets of prints representing the Versailles gardens, sculptures, and ceiling decorations.

These magnificent acquisitions may be seen as outgrowths of the seed that was planted in 1886. On November 11 of that year, the trustees once again acknowledged Pierson’s contributions, more emphatically than they had done in 1875 and 1877: “Resolved, that the cordial thanks of this Board are due and hereby tendered to Mr. John S. Pierson,


93. For digital versions of these and other volumes, see the collection “Versailles on Paper” at http://pudl.princeton.edu/collections.php.
of New York City, for his late liberal and very handsome gifts of books and engravings to the Library of the College; and they desire hereby further to express their very warm appreciation of the deep interest Mr. Pierson has manifested in the Library and the College."

At the same meeting, President McCosh pushed for the appointment of a professor of French, given that General Joseph Kargé “cannot possibly teach all who take French and German.” He was delighted to report a “great deal of original research in science, in philosophy and philology, conducted by the professors and some of the students,” and “a craving … for the new branches of learning such as archaeology.” “All these advances in the taste for scholarship,” he concluded, seem to show that the time has come to consider whether the college might not be advanced to the name and dignity of a university… Princeton College is so situated that it must either go forward or go back. Its success in the future will depend on its having a scholarship higher and more varied than the average American college, and which will draw young men from other colleges into our Junior, Senior and post-graduate classes.

I may mention that there is a very general feeling among our Alumni that we should proclaim ourselves a university.

Ostensibly, the grand prints hanging on the walls of the gallery of Firestone Library in 2015 celebrate the glorious reign of the Sun King, three hundred years after his death. But they can also be viewed from another angle, as testaments to a special moment in the history of Princeton, when John Shaw Pierson and James McCosh worked tirelessly to move the library and the college forward.

94. Trustees Minutes, vol. 6, p. 784.