

4-1995

## Transatlantic Exchange: Francis Lieber and His Contemporaries

Steven Alan Samson

*Liberty University*, [ssamson@liberty.edu](mailto:ssamson@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov\\_fac\\_pubs](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov_fac_pubs)

---

### Recommended Citation

Samson, Steven Alan, "Transatlantic Exchange: Francis Lieber and His Contemporaries" (1995). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 31.

[http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov\\_fac\\_pubs/31](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/gov_fac_pubs/31)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Helms School of Government at DigitalCommons@Liberty University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Liberty University. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunication@liberty.edu).

## TRANSATLANTIC EXCHANGE: FRANCIS LIEBER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Steven Alan Samson

It is remarkable how quickly America was transformed from an isolated agrarian republic in 1800 into a hegemonic industrial power by 1900. Intellectual and cultural changes that began taking root in the early half of the century yielded a cornucopia of new fruits in the latter half, including tax-supported public libraries, the rise of the scientific professions, and German-style graduate education. The impact of democracy, nationalism, industrialization, the reform crusades, sectionalism, urbanization, commerce, and immigration together gave new urgency to Crèvecoeur's old question: What is this new man, the American?

It was during this time of ferment that a young *émigré* scholar, Francis Lieber, arrived from Germany.<sup>1</sup> He was to play a role in the process of national self-definition while helping to facilitate a growing transatlantic cultural exchange.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>See Frank Freidel, Francis Lieber: Nineteenth-Century Liberal (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1947). Helpful secondary literature on this period includes Alice Felt Tyler, Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944); and Ann Douglas, The Feminization of American Culture (New York: Avon Books, 1978).

<sup>2</sup>Lieber claimed to have coined or introduced several neologisms, including penology, jural, city-state, nationalism, internationalism, and individualism (which his friend Tocqueville also claimed in Democracy in America). Francis Lieber, "What I Have Done," Huntington Library. "Cultural" and "bureaucracy" may be added. The Oxford Universal Dictionary of Historical Principles (1955) gives 1868 as the earliest known use of "cultural." Yet Lieber's lecture on "The History and Uses of Athenaeums" at the Columbia (South Carolina) Athenaeum, March 17, 1856 uses it: ". . . I have omitted an entire important class of cultural institutions, of recent origins. I hope you will allow the word cultural to pass without censure.

## CULTURAL NATIONALISM

The self-conscious nationalism that shook the old empires of Europe was the leading edge of a wave of revolutionary cultural change that has now swept across the globe. Though we may find forerunners in the Dutch revolt against the Spanish Habsburgs, the English civil wars, and the American War for Independence, the real impetus of modern nationalism came from the French Revolution. The revolutionaries drew their inspiration from diverse sources: English deism, dissent, and empiricism; French rationalism and anticlericalism; German historicism, illuminism, and romanticism.<sup>3</sup> But matters quickly took an ugly turn as liberty, equality, and fraternity each fought for preeminence and the revolution began devouring itself. When republican (and later imperial) France made war on the crowned heads of Europe, the newly independent Americans, hardly yet a nation, began choosing sides while staying on the sidelines.

The American republic was a cultural melting pot from its inception. Prior to

---

We stand in need of a term for the distinct idea it expresses, and having agricultural from agriculture, I do not see why we should not have cultural, since we have culture." Francis Lieber, Miscellaneous Writings, Vol. 1: Reminiscences, Addresses, and Essays (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1881), p. 303.

<sup>3</sup>See James H. Billington, Fire in the Minds of Men: Origins of the Revolutionary Faith (New York: Basic Books, 1980), esp. pp. 4, 17-20; Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man (New York: William Morrow, 1938). Lieber's chief contribution to the literature of nationalism is "Nationalism and Internationalism (1868)." Francis Lieber, Miscellaneous Writings, Vol. 2: Contributions to Political Science (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1881), pp. 225-43. The Oxford Universal Dictionary gives the dates of the introduction of "nationalism" and "internationalism" into English as 1844 and 1877 respectively.

the War for Independence four distinct waves of English colonization duplicated much of the character of the regions from which they were drawn, leaving a distinct imprint upon a physical landscape that was already laced with pockets of Dutch, Swedish, Huguenot, and German settlement.<sup>4</sup> To create a new nation out of such a hodge-podge required some unifying principle to replace the firm hand of the British Crown. Evangelical Christianity and the English common law traditions were among the earliest of these unifying factors, but even these soon became tangled in fractious partisan divisions -- Federalists vs. Republicans -- that pitted Eastern commercial and Southern agricultural interests against each other.<sup>5</sup> The house soon began to divide over foreign entanglements and commercial rivalries.

Against these centrifugal tendencies the first generation of cultural nationalists, including Noah Webster, Jedidiah Morse, and Timothy Dwight, built on a predominately British cultural tradition while introducing republican educational and cultural innovations. The national aspirations stirred by the French Revolution produced strong sympathetic vibrations on both sides of the Atlantic

---

<sup>4</sup>David Hackett Fischer identifies these four folkways as Puritans from East Anglia who made an exodus to Massachusetts, 1629-1641; Cavaliers from the South of England who migrated to the Chesapeake region, 1642-1675; Friends from the North Midlands who went to the Delaware Valley, 1675-1725; and Borderers from North Britain who settled the Backcountry, 1717-1775. David Hackett Fischer, Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). See also Henry A. Pochmann, German Culture in America: Philosophical and Literary Influences, 1600-1900 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961). In the South and West, Spanish and French communities would soon be absorbed into the new republic.

<sup>5</sup>See Perry Miller, The Life of the Mind in America from the Revolution to the Civil War (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965).

that harmonized with this quest for a distinctly American national self-identity. The nationalist impulse initially took root as part of a generalized search for common roots in the language, history, native soil, and folkways of the people.<sup>6</sup> But the generation of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allan Poe looked outward once again and reshaped America's cultural landscape while drawing, directly and indirectly, upon European scholarship and cultural themes.

### THE GERMAN CONNECTION

A German or, more specifically, Prussian influence on American education and culture grew rapidly during the half century following the War of 1812 and helped give rise to the modern university system after the Civil War. Transmitted in part by English Romantics like Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle, its by-products in the 1830s included New England's Transcendentalist Club, the public education movement (promoted by Gov. Edward Everett and his political ally, Horace Mann), and much of the idealism that helped mobilize as well as polarize the social reform movements.

The highly systematic, philosophically- and historically-based, critical

---

<sup>6</sup>While Napoleon's troops still occupied Berlin, Johann Gottlieb Fichte laid the intellectual foundation for German nationalism in his Addresses to the German Nation (1808), where he called for a national system of public education. John H. Hallowell, Main Currents in Modern Political Thought (New York: Henry Holt, 1950), p. 567. By this time, the Grimm brothers had begun collecting folk tales. Here literary romanticism gave rise to a sense of national self-identity. George L. Mosse, The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: An Introduction (n.p.: Rand McNally, 1961), pp. 41-42.

research methods cultivated by the German universities were introduced into American cultural circles by at least three distinct groups. The *avant garde* included an assortment of scholars, promoters, and popularizers: William Bentley, the American polymath; the celebrated Madame de Staël; Washington Irving in literature; Victor Cousin in philosophy; and Giovanni (or Johann) Pestalozzi in education.<sup>7</sup> It was Madame de Staël's *On Germany*, published in New York in 1814, that inspired a second group, composed of young Harvard scholars, to pursue graduate studies in the German universities,<sup>8</sup> much as earlier generations of Americans had gone to England and Scotland to study theology, law, and medicine. This new wrinkle on the traditional Grand Tour produced a very influential band of German-educated scholars and political figures, the earliest of

---

<sup>7</sup>Pochmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-03, 226, 367-81. There was much cross-pollination. Pestalozzi drew on Locke and Rousseau. Prussian education was influenced by the English industrialist and utopian socialist, Robert Owen, who later established a commune at New Harmony, Indiana. George Hillard, a long-time friend and correspondent of Francis Lieber, was an early supporter of the Prussian model of public education publicized in Cousin's 1832 report to the French government. Others influenced by the same report were Sarah Austin in England, Calvin Stowe (the husband of Harriet Beecher), and Horace Mann. John Albrecht Walz, *German Influence in American Education and Culture* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969 [1936]), pp. 14-23.

<sup>8</sup>Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England, 1815-1865* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936), pp. 73-88. See also Jurgen Herbst, *The German Historical School in American Scholarship: A Study in the Transfer of Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1965), pp. 1-22; Pochmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-75. Benjamin Franklin visited the University of Göttingen in 1766. Franklin's University of Pennsylvania subsequently appointed Johann Christoph Kunze, a German-American minister and classicist, to a chair in philosophy. The disruptions that accompanied the War for Independence also disrupted American higher education through the War of 1812. A revival of learning soon followed, accompanied by an amazing degree of voluntary social activism.

whom included Edward Everett, George Ticknor, George Bancroft, and Joseph Green Cogswell, who studied at the University of Göttingen between 1815 and 1819.<sup>9</sup> A third group included such *émigré* scholars as Carl Beck, Charles (Carl) Follen, and Francis Lieber, who arrived between 1824 and 1827.<sup>10</sup> They had been preceded a generation earlier by the geographer, Alexander von Humboldt, who visited from 1804 to 1805.

---

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 75-76. These early students paid visits to such luminaries as to Goethe, Cousin, and Christopher Daniel Ebeling, the Hamburg geographer and librarian who was the chief German expert on America and whose library of Americana was donated to Harvard after his death in 1817. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and John Motley, a student of Cogswell and Bancroft at their German-style Round Hill School, studied in Germany at a later date. Together these six "literary pioneers" are the subject of Orié William Long's Literary Pioneers: Early American Explorers of European Culture (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963). Even so, their personal impressions of German intellectuals were in many ways unfavorable and the feeling appears to have been reciprocated. "Ticknor was shocked to find that almost all the intellectuals he met swore abominably, even professors of divinity and the ladies 'in whom such an intimation is horrible'. . . ." David B. Tyack, George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 59. See also Pochmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74 on Bancroft's reactions.

<sup>10</sup>Pochmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-28. Beginning in 1825 Follen lectured on German and civil law, then in 1828 became instructor in ethics and ecclesiastical history at the Divinity School, and finally Professor of German Literature in 1832, the same year Beck was elected professor of Latin. Andrews Norton (the father of Charles Eliot Norton), a professor of theology at Harvard, was one of the first Americans to become acquainted with German theology and who later raised the charge of infidelity against its chief exponents, sparking a continuing controversy among American theologians (pp. 109-14, 148-51). Earlier *émigrés*, such as the H. M. Mühlenberg (an early graduate of Göttingen) and his sons, as well as Johann David Gros, also brought German scholarship and educational methods with them but had a more limited impact on American thought (pp. 43, 304-05). On Gros's contribution to moral philosophy, see Anna Haddow, Political Science in American Colleges and Universities, 1636-1900 (New York: D. Appleton-Century Crofts, 1939), pp. 65-67. Lieber is treated on pp. 138-44.

In the field of library science, German and Scandinavian librarians took a lead in the development of modern librarianship. How their innovations might have been transmitted to America is a question that, to my knowledge, has not been systematically examined. George Ticknor, however, was struck by the contrast between the libraries at Harvard and Göttingen:

I cannot . . . shut my eyes on the fact, that one *very* important and principal cause of the difference between our University [Harvard] and the one here is the different value we affix to a good library, and the different ideas we have of what a good library is. . . . The truth is, when we build up a literary Institution in America we think too much of convenience and comfort and luxury and show; and too little of real, laborious study and the means that will promote it. We have not yet learnt that the Library is not only the first convenience of the University, but that it is the first necessity, -- that it is the life and spirit, -- and that all other considerations must yield to the prevalent one of increasing and opening it on the most liberal terms to *all* who are disposed to make use of it. I cannot better explain to you the difference between our University in Cambridge and the one here than by telling you that here I can hardly say to much when I say that it *consists* in the Library, and that in Cambridge the Library is one of the last things thought and talked about, -- that here they have forty professors and more than two hundred thousand volumes to instruct them, and in Cambridge twenty professors and less than twenty thousand volumes.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup>Letter from George Ticknor to Stephen Higginson, May 20, 1816, Boston Public Library. Long, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13. Ticknor also corresponded with Bentley and Jefferson while in Europe. His critique of Harvard is seconded by Bentley in his diary entry of October 7, 1816: "Mr. Shaw of the Boston Athenaeum says that in the Abeena, Moison, in which I sent my first box to Hamburg [to Ebeling], upon her return we lost the collection of Books made by Everett & Tichenor [sic] in their visit to the Continent as well as a Library ordered from that Country by Mr. Jefferson. Whether I am a sufferer I do not yet learn. Great expectations were formed from Cambridge that the Library of that place would profit from the vigilance & discretion of Mr. Everett. This loss will be more regretted as in nothing has the University been more negligent than in the attention to the Library since the revolution. For nearly thirty years its increase was hardly to be observed by a person who had been well acquainted with it before that period." The Diary of William Bentley, D.D.: Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, Vol. 4 (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1962), pp. 411-12.



Ticknor, Everett, Bancroft, and Cogswell returned to Harvard filled with missionary zeal. "In the tones of a secular sermon the new professors spoke of transplanting the culture and scholarship of Europe. Significantly, Everett called the library, not the chapel, 'the life and soul of any university.'"<sup>12</sup> But Harvard was not yet ripe for reform. Cogswell, who received library training from Professor Georg Benecke at the University of Göttingen, introduced changes in cataloguing at Harvard, but these were discarded after he resigned. He and Bancroft then founded the Round Hill School, modeled on the German *Gymnasium*, which eventually failed. Two decades later Cogswell organized the Astor Library in New York.<sup>13</sup> Everett resigned his teaching position in 1825 to pursue a political career. Ticknor held out the longest, but he left Harvard in 1835 following the death of his young son and returned to Europe with his wife. He and Everett later took the lead in developing the Boston Public Library and served together on the board of trustees.<sup>14</sup> When reform came, it did so largely from outside the groves of academe. By the time the German university system took root following

---

<sup>12</sup>Tyack, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>13</sup>Van Wyck Brooks described Cogswell as "a founder of the modern library-system." Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup>Everett, who had served as governor and would later run for vice president, donated his collection of Massachusetts state papers and other materials. Elizabeth W. Stowe, American Library Development, 1600-1899 (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1977), pp. 71-72. David Tyack notes that Ticknor, characteristically, endorsed the the free circulation of books; but Everett was reluctant to do so, and Cogswell opposed. "The young fry," complained Cogswell, "employ all the hours they are out of school in reading the trashy, as Scott, Cooper, Dickens, Punch, and the 'Illustrated News.'" Tyack, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-10.

the Civil War, the world that had produced these men and given substance to their hopes had vanished.

It is to the role of their friend Francis Lieber, however, that I wish to turn now. Both as an insider and an outsider, Lieber was uniquely placed to comment on American politics and culture from his arrival in 1827 until his death in 1872. He personally knew and maintained a rich correspondence with many of the leading scholars, literary figures, and statesmen of the day. His role as a cultural catalyst -- as an international "technology transfer" agent -- deserves recognition. A glance at his career as a pioneering scholar in America will be followed by some of his observations about American libraries, his work as an archivist, and a note on the remarkable Huntington Library which houses the bulk of his personal papers.

#### FRANCIS LIEBER: ÉMIGRÉ SCHOLAR

Franz (Francis) Lieber was born on March 18, 1798 in Berlin into a once prosperous business family that had suffered financial reverses during political upheavals spawned by the French Revolution.<sup>15</sup> Forever etched into his memory was the shame a young boy felt at his country's defeat in the Battle of Jena (1806) followed by the parade of Napoleon's troops outside his window on Breite

---

<sup>15</sup>This account is largely drawn from Freidel, *op. cit.*, and Pochmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-27. See also Lewis R. Harley, Francis Lieber: His Life and Political Philosophy (New York: AMS Press, 1970 [1899]); Charles Franklin Thwing, The American and the German University: One Hundred Years of History (New York: Macmillan, 1928), pp. 79-84, which relies on Harley.

Strasse in Berlin where, later, on his 50th birthday, the opening battle in the Revolution of 1848 was to be fought.

In March 1815, Franz, a first-year medical student, interrupted his studies to enlist in the Prussian army. Before three months had passed he was severely wounded and left for dead at the Battle of Namur during the Waterloo campaign. It took him nearly a year to recover and return home. He enrolled at the gymnasium operated by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, attended a military swimming school, and joined the ultranationalistic *Turnerschaft* movement, where he came under the influence of Friedrich Schleiermacher and soon assumed a leadership role. Lieber even helped compile the official *Turner* songbook, which Father Jahn complained was too radical.

The increasing radicalism of this early German youth movement may be attributed to reactionary policies of Prince Metternich and the failure of the Prussian king to grant constitutional liberties. In 1819 Lieber's political activities led to his imprisonment for four months following the assassination of the playwright and political satirist, August von Kotzebue, who had ridiculed the movement. Like Jahn, Lieber knew the assassin but was not personally implicated in the crime. The student movement was suppressed and the *Turner* drill grounds (*Hasenheide*) were closed by the Prussian government. The police confiscated Lieber's diaries and published some of his most strident poems, which served only to provide an ampler forum for disseminating his political views.

Following his release, Lieber resumed his studies and sought admission to

the University of Berlin in the safe subject of mathematics but his application was rejected by the rector on orders from the police. He lodged a protest with Freiherr von Stein zum Stein, the liberal Minister of Education, who responded by barring his entry into any Prussian university.<sup>16</sup> But Lieber surreptitiously won admission to the University of Jena, which had been declared off limits to Prussian students because it was a center of radical activity.

Lieber matriculated in theology early in April 1820, switched to the liberal arts where he specialized in mathematics, and was granted his Ph.D. diploma after four months. The police regarded his acquisition of the Ph.D. as another political offense and kept him under surveillance, but no one questioned the degree's validity. Soon it would open doors that might otherwise have been closed to him.

The following year Lieber escaped Germany to fight in an early phase of the Greek war for independence (as did Lord Byron and Samuel Gridley Howe later). The experience left him disillusioned and destitute. He left for Italy in the Spring of 1822 and called upon the great liberal historian, Barthold Niebuhr, who was then Prussia's ambassador to Italy. Niebuhr took pity upon the young man, hired him to tutor his son, helped moderate his revolutionary fervor, and introduced him to international cultural circles.

The year-long association with Niebuhr had a profound influence on Lieber's

---

<sup>16</sup>Lieber's personal experience evidently colored his later view of Stein, as may be seen in the entry on Stein that Lieber wrote for his *Encyclopedia Americana*. By contrast, his article on Gen. Blücher, under whom he served at Ligny, is effusive in its appraisal of the man.

intellectual development. One biographer suggests that the Francophobia of Lieber's youth was, if anything, intensified through his association with Niebuhr. But Niebuhr's Anglophilia is especially evident in Lieber's subsequent development and undoubtedly inspired the contrast he later made between Anglican and Gallican liberty.<sup>17</sup>

Lieber published an account of his experiences in Greece and met both Alexander von Humboldt and the Prussian king, Frederick William III, during his stay in Rome. For his part, Niebuhr interceded with the king on Lieber's behalf and won a pardon for him. Lieber returned to Germany with Niebuhr late the following summer. Even so, Lieber continued to face difficulty and eventually spent more time in prison after refusing to identify his earlier compatriots.

Faced with an uncertain future at home, Lieber emigrated first to England in the Spring of 1826, where he met his future wife Matilda, as well as John and Sarah Austin, Jeremy Bentham, George Grote, Henry Brougham, and John Stuart Mill. In the meantime his friend Carl Follen, now a Harvard lecturer, recommended him to a group of Bostonians who were seeking to establish a gymnasium. Lieber accepted the offer, sailed to America the following summer, and started his own swimming school, as well. Two years later he sent for Matilda. They married, started a family, and were naturalized in 1832.

---

<sup>17</sup>Freidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.

In addition to operating a swimming and gymnastics program (1827-29),<sup>18</sup> Lieber edited the 13-volume *Encyclopaedia Americana* (1828-33), designed the curriculum for Girard College (1833-34), and subsequently taught at South Carolina College (1835-56), Columbia College (1857-65), and Columbia Law School (1865-72). During the Civil War, Lieber drafted the first code of military conduct for use in land warfare, which was later incorporated into the Hague and Geneva Conventions.<sup>19</sup> Lieber also carried on an extensive correspondence with a great number of scholars, politicians, and literary figures in Europe and America.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>Harvey Wish notes that the initial popularity of the regimented German calisthenics and swimming exercises quickly passed. It was rehabilitated thirty years later when Boston's National Institute for Physical Education blended it "with the Anglo-American sport tradition and with Swedish medical gymnastics to become the American system of physical training." Harvey Wish, Society and Thought in Early America: A Social and Intellectual History of the American People Through 1865 (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950), p. 293. John Quincy Adams, who had been the ambassador to Berlin from 1797-1801, was one of the visitors to Lieber's swimming school.

<sup>19</sup>See Richard Shelly Hartigan, Lieber's Code and the Law of War (Chicago: Precedent, 1983).

<sup>20</sup>The full list of Lieber's correspondents is a veritable "Who's Who" of the literary, political, and academic leaders of his day. Among his major correspondents were J. K. Bluntschli, Henry Clay, Dorothea Dix, Edward Everett, Hamilton Fish, Simon Greenleaf, Gen. Henry Halleck, Samuel Gridley Howe and his wife, James Kent and his son William, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his wife, K. A. J. Mittermaier, William H. Prescott, Joseph Story, Charles Sumner, George Ticknor and his wife, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Andrew Dickson White. For a more comprehensive list, see Charles B. Robson, "Papers of Francis Lieber," Huntington Library Bulletin, 3 (February 1933): 135-55.

Lieber's work covers a wide range of fields.<sup>21</sup> In the field of political science, his work embodies the transition from academic moral philosophy to political science proper. His contributions to penology, international law, and higher education have been acknowledged in the standard histories of those fields.<sup>22</sup> Apart from the *Encyclopaedia Americana* for which he solicited contributions by leading scholars, Lieber's larger works include a popular travelogue, *Letters to a Gentleman in Germany* (1834), reprinted in England as *Stranger in America*, which included an account of his experiences at the Battle of Waterloo; a set of principles for interpretation and construction in law and politics, *Legal and Political Hermeneutics*<sup>23</sup> (1839); a textbook on political economy, *Essays on Property and Labour* (1841); two political science treatises, the *Manual*

---

<sup>21</sup> Apart from several treatises, occasional verse, special lectures, and topical pamphlets (including pro-Union propaganda for New York's Union League, which he headed at one point), Lieber also published -- in succession -- a study of the Lancastrian system of education; a booklet of German drinking songs; thirteen volumes of his encyclopedia, which was modeled upon Brockhaus's *Konversations-Lexikon*; an introduction to Beaumont and Tocqueville's work on the American penitentiary system; an education plan for Girard College; reminiscences of Barthold Niebuhr; proposals to Congress concerning statistics and an international copyright; remarks on the relation between education and crime; remarks on comparative philology; a study of penal law; a study of the vocal sounds of Laura Bridgman, the blind deafmute; and several essays on nationalism and international law.

<sup>22</sup> In addition, Lieber's influence on sociology is noted in Albion W. Small, "Fifty Years of Sociology in the United States," *American Journal of Sociology*, 21 (1915-1916): 728-29, note 1; and his place in physical education (along with that of Friedrich Jahn) is considered at length in Fred Eugene Leonard, *A Guide to the History of Physical Education*, 3rd ed., revised by George B. Affleck (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press), pp. 242-47.

<sup>23</sup> This work is the subject of James Farr, "Francis Lieber and the Interpretation of American Political Science," *Journal of Politics*, 52 (November 1990): 1027-49.

*of Political Ethics* (two volumes: 1838, 1839) and *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (1853); a posthumous collection of his shorter writings, *Miscellaneous Writings* (two volumes: 1881); and selections from his letters edited by Thomas Sergeant Perry, *The Life and Letters of Francis Lieber* (1882).<sup>24</sup>

Besides the Lieber Code, Lieber is best known for his pre-Civil War work on political ethics and civil liberty, particularly his "theory of institutional liberty;" the assistance he gave to Charles Sumner's Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the Civil War; and his post-Civil War contributions to international law and the study of nationalism.<sup>25</sup> Following the Civil War, he organized and catalogued the state papers of the Confederacy for the Archives Office of the War Department.

#### LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES

Francis Lieber's correspondence and his published work contain scattered

---

<sup>24</sup>I am working with an editor at Liberty Press in Indianapolis to develop a new collection of Lieber's published and unpublished writings.

<sup>25</sup>Alan Grimes has summarized Lieber's place in American political thought as follows: "The decline of the constitutional and legal approach to an understanding of the nature of the American Union, and the rise of the organic concept of the nation is well illustrated in the writings of Francis Lieber. An immigrant from Germany, Lieber skilfully synthesized the English emphasis on civil liberty and the importance of local political institutions, with the German emphasis on nationalism. Thus Lieber's nationalism was built upon decentralized institutions which in turn helped protect the civil rights of the citizens. It was, Lieber believed, the happy combination of local institutions and national purpose which protected and fostered civil liberty in a modern nation state." Alan Pendleton Grimes, *American Political Thought*, revised ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), pp. 283.



references to libraries that reflect the changing state of American culture.<sup>26</sup>

From his first arrival in Boston late in June 1827 Lieber was taken into the city's heart and plunged into a whirl of activity. Boston was then the intellectual capital of the country and blossoming with literary and scholarly projects.<sup>27</sup> After Lieber took up his duties he soon realized that the gymnasium was a passing fad, so he sought other sources of income. With Niebuhr's assistance, he became a correspondent with several German newspapers, which gave him ready access to invaluable sources of information, statistics, and notable personalities. By November he had conceived the idea of an American encyclopedia, drafted a prospectus, and solicited advice from Ticknor, Everett, Bancroft, and Follen. In January he took a leave of absence from the gymnasium, traveled widely for three months, and personally solicited articles from such notables as Joseph Bonaparte and Peter Duponceau. Once under way, he secured contributions from Everett, Ticknor, Benjamin Silliman, Moses Stuart, and Joseph Story.

An unsigned article entitled "Libraries" in the *Encyclopaedia Americana*

---

<sup>26</sup>For this paper, I extended my research on Lieber's work in political science to include Lieber's letters to Lyman Cope Draper, the librarian of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, which were supposed to contain "a lengthy discussion of library systems." Three months of persistent efforts by Sharon Epps of the USF Interlibrary Loan Department turned up four letters that include only a brief discussion of school district libraries.

<sup>27</sup>Jared Sparks, for example, was compiling George Washington's works and had secured much of Washington's library for the Boston Athenaeum.

indicates the comparatively poor state of American libraries in the early 1830s. In terms of size the leading libraries were the royal library at Paris, the central court library of Munich, and possibly the Bodleian Library at Oxford, each with over 400,000 volumes. These were followed by the imperial libraries of St. Petersburg and Vienna, and the university library at Göttingen. By contrast, "In the U. States, the principal libraries are that of Harvard college (36,000 vols.); of the Boston Athenaeum (26,000 vols.); of the Philadelphia library (27,000 vols.); of congress (16,000 vols.); of Charleston (13,000)." <sup>28</sup>

Lieber showed a lifelong interest in the development of American libraries. He was so shocked by the poor state of the Library of Congress during a visit circa 1834 that Richard Peters, the Supreme Court recorder, urged him to draft a report to Congress with a view toward securing his appointment as librarian. <sup>29</sup> In his report to the trustees of Girard College in 1834, he recommended establishment of a library as an integral part of a larger pedagogical purpose: "A modern nation that remains behindhand in diffusing knowledge among the industrial class sinks relatively in all its power. We have an instance in Spain." <sup>30</sup>

Following his appointment in 1835 to the chair in history and political economy at South Carolina College, Lieber helped build its library collection into

---

<sup>28</sup>Francis Lieber, ed. Encyclopaedia Americana, VII, p. 536.

<sup>29</sup>Freidel, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>30</sup>Lieber, Miscellaneous Writings, II, p. 519.

one of the better academic libraries of its day.<sup>31</sup> His 1856 lecture, "The History and Uses of Athenaeums," is a paean to libraries and their place in society.

The library is preeminently a concomitant of the civilization of our race. It is always there, yet in the most varied phases, until it penetrates to all the layers of society, from the vast collections made by great national efforts to the irrigating circulating library. . . . The library, the book, is the bridge over which the Grecian princes of thought or the British king of son will come at any time, so that you beckon them to teach, to delight, and to enlarge your soul; aye, it is the bridge over which your Saviour passes at night and morn into the stillness of your closet to bring the bread of life.<sup>32</sup>

In his inaugural address at Columbia in 1858, Lieber called for a comprehensive national university to provide an institutional focus for national unity.<sup>33</sup>

Lieber's correspondence often turned to the subject of books and libraries. To Lyman Cope Draper, the librarian at the Wisconsin Historical Society, of which Lieber was an honorary member, he wrote to laud "the permanent annual appropriation of \$35000 for district school libraries." He recommended that "books of some substance and permanent value only, should be selected. . . . In my opinion it is important that your public libraries contain a proportion of books belonging to the higher class, so as to allure the ardent and gifted, and to benefit,

---

<sup>31</sup>Citing C. C. Jewett's Report, Freidel notes that "in 1850, the South Carolina College library had 18,400 volumes. This was as many as the University of Virginia, and more than Columbia or Princeton. The Harvard Library, largest in the country, contained 84,200 volumes." Lieber's personal library ultimately number around 5000 volumes. Freidel, *op. cit.*, p. 147 and note 9.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, I, p. 317.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, I, p. 334.

through them, the community at large."<sup>34</sup> In much the same vein he wrote to his friend Gen. Henry Halleck:

. . . Have you laid the foundation of a great public library in California? Your State, above all others, ought largely to provide public funds for a library, -- say \$20,000 a year for the first five years, and then, permanently so much a year. We cannot do in our days without large public libraries, and libraries are quite as necessary as hospitals or armies. Libraries are the bridges over which Civilization travels from generation to generation and from country to country; and California will yet be the buttress of the bridge over which encircling civilization will pass to Asia, whence it first came. . . .<sup>35</sup>

Lieber's greatest contribution to the field of library science was two years of service as the War Department's archivist in charge of captured Confederate papers.<sup>36</sup> Lieber began late in the summer of 1865 but chafed against the secrecy.<sup>37</sup> Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton wanted to find incriminating

---

<sup>34</sup>"The Book, so often spoken of with contempt, is the true rafter of the bridges over which we lead our civilization farther and farther." Francis Lieber to Lyman C. Draper, April 6, 1859, Wisconsin Historical Society. Other correspondence from Lieber is dated March 18, 1854, October 25, 1869, and March 31, 1872.

<sup>35</sup>Thomas Sergeant Perry, ed. The Life and Letters of Francis Lieber (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1882), p. 361.

<sup>36</sup>Carl L. Lokke, "The Captured Confederate Records Under Francis Lieber," American Archivist, 9 (1946): 277-319. See also Dallas Irvine, "The Archive Office of the War Department: Repository of Confederate Archives, 1865-1881," Military Affairs, 10 (1946): 93-111. Lieber held the rank of colonel during his appointment. His son, Brevet Lt. Col. G. Norman Lieber, who later was Judge Advocate General of the Army, assisted him.

<sup>37</sup>Despite this policy, Lieber occasionally discussed his discoveries in correspondence with Henry Halleck: "As yet I have found very little of any special importance. Beauregard is the veriest coxcomb, corresponding with scores of misses, and receiving information about the *noblesse* in his veins; Sanders, the lowest party hack; Jefferson Davis, quiet. Once he says of Butler, 'justly called the beast.' Though unimportant, I must beg you to treat this as a confidential communication, as my order is to be silent; to you, of course, I can speak." Letter to Gen. Halleck, New York, September 10, 1865. *Ibid.*, p. 360.

evidence that could be used to prosecute Jefferson Davis for treason. Although Lieber shared Stanton's desire to prosecute Confederate leaders, he concluded that the evidence was not sufficient to secure a conviction. Indeed, Davis was never tried. Lieber instead took a larger historical view of his work and carefully organized, classified, and indexed the documents with an eye to future historical research.<sup>38</sup> But he was pessimistic about the future of the archive and fully expected it to fall victim to partisan historical revisionists:

I found a paper containing the report of a committee of the Richmond congress to their secretary of war informing him that the prisons of the Union soldiers were beyond description loathesome, and that the committee could stay but a few moments in some of the apartments. But what use is it to find such things if I or some one else cannot publish them now. In less than ten years the archives will exist no more. . . .<sup>39</sup>

### FRANCIS LIEBER COLLECTIONS

The premier collection of Lieber papers is at the Henry E. Huntington Library, which is located on 207 richly landscaped acres in San Marino, California, that include the Huntington Gallery and the Botanical Gardens.<sup>40</sup> I first visited the

---

<sup>38</sup>Freidel, *op. cit.*, pp. 370-75.

<sup>39</sup>Letter to Gen. Halleck, Washington, May 19, 1866. Perry, *op. cit.*, pp. 363-64. Lieber was well-versed in the many ways that evidence may be tainted.

<sup>40</sup>The Gallery houses Gainsborough's Blue Boy and Lawrence's Pinkie as well as a Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington. The Botanical Gardens include the Desert Garden, the Japanese Garden, and the Rose Garden. All would undoubtedly have met with Lieber's approval. In his article on "Jena," he made note that in 1829 the university (where he received his Ph.D. in 1820) had "a library of 100,000 volumes, museums, a botanical garden, an anatomical theatre, &c." Encyclopaedia Americana, VII, p. 188.

grounds of this remarkable research institution in 1982 and was admitted as a reader in 1985 and again in 1993.

H. E. Huntington, the nephew of the railroad magnate, Collis P. Huntington, was a successful entrepreneur in his own right. After his uncle's death in 1900, he began systematically building his personal library even before he retired from his business affairs in 1910. Often purchasing entire libraries at auctions, Huntington sometimes paid top prices with an eye to building his collection systematically. Among his purchases were four of the finest private collections to be placed on the market. In fact, the volume of Huntington's purchases led to a serious depletion of American markets in rare books by 1914, so he began to turn his attention to England. Rarely did he use an agent. The result was a highly specialized world-class library with major collections in three areas: English and American history and literature, Spanish-American documents, and incunabula. The library also houses collections of manuscripts by Mark Twain, Jack London, Ambrose Bierce, Robert Morris, Rufus King, Adm. Richard Lord Howe, and Eusebio Kino.

In 1919 Huntington set up a library trust and moved the headquarters of his library from New York to the San Marino Ranch in California. Before his death in 1927, he was able to entice Max Farrand to accept an appointment as the first Research Associate. Farrand drafted a plan for carrying on scholarly research at

the library. It has published a journal since 1931.<sup>41</sup>

The Lieber papers were acquired by the Huntington Library from a member of the Lieber family in the 1920s. Lieber's personal library went to the University of California at Berkeley where it was incorporated into the general collection. A list of all the items from Lieber's personal library is available.

Substantial holdings of Lieber material are also located at the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina; the Library of Congress; Columbia University; and Johns Hopkins University. During a recent visit to the Free Library of Philadelphia I found a letter dated June 30, 1866 that Lieber wrote to Sen. W. P. Fessenden of the Committee on Reconstruction.

---

<sup>41</sup>See Robert O. Schad, "Henry Edwards Huntington: The Founder and the Collection," Huntington Library Bulletin, No. 1 (May 1931): 3-32.