4-15-2009

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Boston College Law School

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Coquillette Donates Rare Books to Library

4/15/09--Professor Daniel R. Coquillette, J. Donald Monan S.J. University Professor at the Boston College Law School, has given the Law Library several sets of historical, literary and reference works, and three rare historical studies of Doctors' Commons.

"As scholars look at the law from a more interdisciplinary point of view, Professor Coquillette’s newest gifts add important depth to our rare book collection," said Filippa Marullo Anzalone, Associate Dean for Library and Computing Services. "Professor Coquillette has truly been our greatest friend and benefactor. Throughout the years, the Law School and University communities have gained wonderful insights into the lawyer’s world from centuries past because of his generosity; future generations of legal scholars will also reap tremendous benefits from the Daniel R. Coquillette Rare Book collection."

Included in the gift is a beautiful leather-bound thirteen-volume ENCYCLOPEDIA AMERICANA: A POPULAR DICTIONARY OF ARTS, SCIENCES, LITERATURE, HISTORY, POLITICS, AND BIOGRAPHY, dated 1846. Besides providing a window into all areas of life in the mid-nineteenth century, this set is particularly valuable to legal historians because it includes many law-related articles written by Joseph Story, an early Supreme Court Justice and Professor at Harvard Law School.

Other historical works include a rare set of William Davis' PROFESSIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL HISTORY OF SUFFOLK COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS (1894), and Winsor and Jewett’s MEMORIAL HISTORY OF BOSTON, INCLUDING SUFFOLK COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS, 1630-1880 (1880). These important historical studies of New England provide background to the many works of early American legal history previously donated to the Library by Professor Coquillette.

Literary works include a Victorian edition of the COMPLETE WORKS OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1899) and a magnificent limited-edition eighteen-volume set of THE DIARY OF SAMUEL PEPYS (1899), featuring charts, illustrations, engravings, and two-color red and green title pages. Both of these works are replete with references to lawyers and the effects of law on the lives of everyday people.

Completing the gift are three historical studies of Doctors' Commons, the British society of civil law practitioners in the Admiralty and ecclesiastical courts, which existed from 1495 to 1858. Two works deal with the demise of Doctors' Commons, and one anonymous work, THE PROCTOR AND PARATOR, OR LAMENTATION OF THE DOCTORS COMMONS FOR THEIR DOWNFALL, is an extremely rare comic play "relating the fearful abuses and exorbitancies of those spirituall courts." These special books complement works purchased from the Library of Doctors’ Commons and given to the Law Library by Professor Coquillette in previous years.

"Professor Coquillette's gift deepens our library's holdings in the areas of literature, history, and reference," said Karen Beck, the library’s Curator of Rare Books / Collection Development Librarian. "They are valuable precisely because they are not strictly 'law books': they provide
context to our study of the law, and enrich our understanding of law's place in society. We are so grateful to Professor Coquillette for his many generous gifts over the years.

The collection also complements a gift of classical, historic, and literary works belonging to the late Frank Williams Oliver and given to the Library in 2008 by his widow Andrée Oliver.