

DENISON

LIBRARIES

WILLIAM HOWARD DOANE LIBRARY
SEELEY G. MUDD LEARNING CENTER

Documents Stored Here Returned to Washington

By Ginger Moore

During the months of April and May 1942, trucks from Washington carrying valuables from the Library of Congress arrived at Denison. Students, who were sworn to secrecy and forbidden to give out any information disclosing the location of the national archives, helped to unload the valuable papers and to store them in the basement of the Swasey chapel, Life Science and Doane library. All these valuables were recently returned to Washington.

When the officials in Washington felt that the threat of token bombing warranted the hiding of these documents, Alvin W. Kramer, keeper of collections, made a 24,000 mile tour of the country and chose five schools to house the papers, Denison being the only one chosen west of the Alleghenies.

We received 1200 cases of papers and our collection was the second most valuable called the "60 Cubic Feet." The other schools chosen were the University of Virginia, Virginia Military institute, and Washington and Lee University.

The fifth hiding place, the one where the most precious collection is stored, will not be disclosed until after the war. Such things as the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Articles of Confederation, Magna Carta and the Guttenberg Bible are stored there. In total, 4,789 packing cases or 26 freight carloads were shipped from Washington.

Four guards from Granville and Newark were chosen to guard the cases 24 hours a day and periodical temperature and humidity readings were taken of the storage places. The guards were Burton Dick, Bert Young, William Hunt, and the head guard A.D. Piper, who had made a trip to Washington to get instructions several months before the documents arrived.

Kramer and his assistant, Richard LaRoche, made periodic visits to the campus and Archibald Macleish, librarian of Congress, made a visit in August of 1943.

Many interesting papers and books were stored in Denison buildings: eighteenth century American newspapers, Major L'Enfant's plans for the city of Washington, presidential papers, autographed letters of Queen Victoria; Marie Antionette and Napoleon; letters of Samuel Clemens, Walter Scott, John Greenleaf Whittier and Charles Dickens to Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, all the manuscripts of Walt Whitman. proceedings of the Annapolis Convention of 1786; Jefferson's first report on the Temporary Government of Western Territory in 1784; Jefferson's bicentennial exhibition and the exhibition pertaining to the Bill of Rights; plans of Stephen Halle and B. Henry Latrobe for the capital building; and James Madison's notes of debates in Constitutional Convention of 1787.

Three Stradivari violins and bows by Tourte, as well as the forerunners of the violin and 103 cases of rare books were on the campus. Also included was the original telegram "What hath God wrought" sent by Samuel Morse, which was removed for display at the Morse centennial.

In a letter to Miss Ruth Outland, director of publicity, concerning the storage, Milton M. Plumb Jr., information officer of the Library of Congress thanked Denison for its cooperation. "The university was exceedingly cooperative and we hope that you will tell just how much the officials of Denison went out of their way to accommodate the library."