Constitution Day ceremonies at the Library of Congress. Left to right: Herbert Putnam, Librarian of Congress Emeritus; Luther H. Evans, Librarian of Congress; Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson; Senator Thaddeus Francis Groves (D-Ri), Chairman of the Joint Committee on the Library; President Harry S. Truman, with his first page of the engrossed and signed Constitution of the United States. The dignitaries are preparing to place the document in a glass frame to preserve it from deterioration. September 17, 1951.

ACQUISITION OF THE WILLIAM MARBURY CARD TABLE

By Matthew H. Hoff, Associate Curator
with contributions by Sampson Pridy III and Elaine Bachman

A card table originally owned by one of the most famous lawmakers of the United States, William Marbury (1762-1855), has recently been added to the collections of the Supreme Court Historical Society. Acquired at the 1980 spring auction of the Sotheby Parke Bernet Galleries, the table descended in the Marbury family until it was recently offered for sale by Mrs. Alice Cooper, a trustee of the Supreme Court Historical Society. The table was purchased by the Society and the table has been restored by the Library of Congress. The library has now acquired the table for the Supreme Court Historical Society.

The card table is an early example of a so-called "card table," a form of furniture that was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. The table has a rectangular top with a raised gallery around the edges, and a single drawer for storage. The legs are turned and feature a large central medallion with an intricate design. The table is made of mahogany and is in excellent condition with no evidence of age or wear.

The table was acquired by the Library of Congress in 2001, along with two other 18th-century tables, one from the Washington family and the other from the Adams family. The acquisition was made possible through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

When President Thomas Jefferson took office, Marbury was involved in one of the most important Supreme Court cases in history: Marbury v. Madison. Marbury was one of the original justices appointed by President John Adams and was designated as the "chief justice of the peace in the District of Columbia." He served on the court until his death in 1855.
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The Marbury card table has been placed in the John Marshall Dining Room, adjacent to the Justice's Dining Room in the Supreme Court building. Viewing the table today, it is not too hard to imagine Marbury and his friends discussing the case while playing cards at the table in his Georgetown home. It will be included in an upcoming exhibition organized by the Office of the Curator focusing on cases in the early years of the Marshall Court, including Marbury v. Madison, scheduled to open in early 2003.

*Mr. Madison is the newly appointed Associate Justice of The Court.

Members who are aware of items of significant historical importance to Supreme Court history are requested to contact the Society's Acquisitions Committee in care of the Executive Offices. Donations are welcome, but some funds are available for purchase of items with unique connections to the Court and the individuals who have served thereon, or played a significant role in its history. Please write or telephone the offices if you have a significant item.

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barely mask an underlying bitterness. From the Librarian:

There was an archivist named Grover

Who said why Luther move over.

For protecting the Declaration and the Constitution,

I have a permanent, a wonderful solution.

Take them from poverty and put them in clave:

There was an insurrection strong and rich

Whose head had an unaccountable rich

And a desire everything to take over.

Everyone remembers that his name was Grover

An unalloyed, two-footed tough son of a bitch.

Mr. Grover replied:

I have read your effusions.

I bless with reverence.

No further continuations

Will come from this source.

But to label as "nich"

Is outright deception.

Better limit the pitch

To innumerable conception.

There is a magnificent view of the Capitol from the West

Corridor windows of the Library's Great Hall at the spot where

the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were

once displayed. Visitors still walk through the marble hall

and look at masts, quotations from the classics, and

tradesmen of the patriots who followed Goutchberg. However, on

the inlaid tile floor, there is no indication that a massive marble

display case once sat there. Nothing remains, nor even a

plaque to record that America's founding documents had for

three years been protected and preserved by the Library of

Congress.

Note:

Some material for this paper may be found in the Li-

brary of Congress Archives in the Manuscript Reading Room.

The collections of MacLeish-Evans contain extensive corre-

spondence concerning the Declaration and the Constitution.

See boxes 428, 733-735, 783-797. See also the papers of

David C. Moore, box 74. Papers of the Keeper of Collec-

tions, boxes 14, 23, 38-48 are exhaustive for the evalu-

ation of the Library's collections during World War II.

1. There are five known copies in Lincoln's handwriting. The President
gave the copy generally considered the "First Draft" to his great secretary,
John G. Nicolay. The "Second Draft" was given to his other secretary,
John Hay. It is believed that the Nicolay copy was the one the President
read. However, some historians dispute this. On Nicolay's death, his copy
was given to Hay. On April 11, 1865, Hay's possession appeared to be
destroyed in the Library of Congress. Lincoln wrote to Nicolay to have the
copies recovered in order to be sold for charitable purposes. The only copy
bearing a date and the President's signature is in the Lincoln Room of the
White House.

2. Vernon E. W. Cumby's assignment as assistant in the Declaration of
Independence during World War II and his involvement in its restoration
are described in his "The Declaration of Independence: A Case Study in

3. For a brief history of the Constitution's various locations see: David C.
Moore and Vernon W. Cumby: The Constitution of the United States together
with the Articles of Confederation (September 17, 1787), Washington:

4. In 1959, conservators at the National Archives and Records
Administration administered the Declaration of Independence and the Consti-
tution from their 1951 treatment. Earlier, the glass case marble
was seen to deteriorate, resulting in the formation of droplets and
crystals. Following preservation treatments, both Documents were
then at risk in conditions of high heat and humidity.

First Fifty Years," published by the Independence National Historic Park
in 1976.


