FROM THE EDITOR

THE AURA OF THE ORIGINAL

The Huntington’s Ellesmere Manuscript of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales is a true original. More than 600 years old, it has captivated scholars and library visitors alike. Linne R. Mooney has made news by identifying the scribe who produced the rare treasure (see page 2).

Another important version of the Canterbury Tales is housed at the National Library of Wales, copied out by the same hand, although the stories of the pilgrims have been presented in a slightly different sequence. One is hardly a “copy” of the other in any traditional sense of the word, but rather both are valuable and rare versions of the same celebrated poem.

Ten years ago, The Huntington published its own copy of the Tales. The facsimile edition is a photographic reproduction of the Ellesmere manuscript and extends its circulation to scholars who are unable to travel to the Library.

Such a “copy” does not diminish the value of the original work. Rare books and masterpieces hanging in art galleries have a special aura made evident by the throngs of visitors who find their way to the world’s museums to get a glimpse of them. They are irreplaceable cultural and historical touchstones. But what about the plants in the Huntington’s gardens?

In plant propagation, a horticulturalist can make new “originals.” For example, writer Catherine Phillips explains how a plant growing in the Desert Collection nursery is a direct vegetative link to a specimen first documented by a collector in Mexico in 1951 (see page 9). Cuttings of a particular cactus passed along to former botanical director Myron Kimnach in the 1950s led directly to the plant we see today in the nursery. It is not a facsimile but rather a clone.

In her article on the Huntington’s International Succulent Introductions program, Traude Gomez-Rhine explains how John Trager has been germinating seeds and cross-pollinating plants for more than 20 years, creating clones of countless rare succulents (see page 5). In the plant world, the rarer an item, the more you want to reproduce it and circulate “copies” that will ensure the survival of the species. Through plant propagation, a place like The Huntington is helping to spread the aura of the original.

Matt Stevens

Opposite page, upper left: A sample from the Papers of Marie Koenig, Huntington Library. Right: Detail from Astrology, a 17th-century carpet produced by the Savonnerie Manufactory, Huntington Art Collections. Lower left: John Trager, Curator of Desert Collections and director of the Huntington’s International Succulent Introductions program. Photo by Don Milici.
Contents

SPRING/SUMMER 2006

QUIETLY TO THE RESCUE 5
Propagating endangered succulents
by Traude Gomez-Rhine

A SHARED CURIOSITY 9
The story of two men and a cactus
by Catherine Phillips

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE SUN KING 14
The timely arrival of a 17th-century carpet fragment
by Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell

WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE COLD WAR, MOMMY? 18
The acquisition of two anti-Communist collections
by Matt Stevens

DEPARTMENTS

DISCOVERY: Solving a 600-year-old mystery
by Mary Robertson 2

ACCESSIONS: The fine art of paper conservation
by Steven Tice 23

BOOKS IN PRINT: Recommended reading 24
W Dun that rynull with 36 signes were
the sonthe of whiche badeth pessed to the 300
And bathed euer by wynne in sylver and 
of whiche brin engaghes to the flour 
John reposhis ced et His effecte fresh 
Inspired bath in euer host and heeth 
The tendre copped and the yonge comme 
Hath in the bum his half cons yonge 
And awakke fowelles maken melsiye 
That stopen al the night with open eye 
So pulset hem natuye in his corazges 
Thatshortes folk to goon on pilgerages 
And piljournes se to seken strangle stondes 
To some kkybes kowth the mously landes 
And specially from euer stondes side 
Of englande to cruntry suy by they dende 
The hooly missil maste for to see 
That sam hath bussels than pt they see seeke 
Rist that in that seson on a day 
In southwass at the tabash as I say 
Rist to lenden on my puyge puyage 
To cruntry suy by ful knout corgese 
At nght see come in to that hoffelise 
W Vel nye and thurthy in a companynge 
Of mously folk by ancore y falle 
In selligess and piljournes see they alle 
That to glad cruntrye golde 300 
The chaplerys and the stables see 
And wel we seen ess atte ceste 
And短期 than the some ess to deste 
So hisse spoken at hem enconn 
That 7 ess of my selligess anone 
And soone yest for to site
Despite six centuries of intensive study by generations of scholars, the Huntington’s famous “Ellesmere Chaucer” manuscript still guards some of its secrets. Although scholars have long understood it to be the earliest complete text of the *Canterbury Tales*, the identity of its scribe has remained a mystery. Until now.

Credit for this landmark discovery goes to Linne R. Mooney, an American scholar who is a professor of Medieval English Palaeography at the University of York, in North Yorkshire, England. Thanks to her, we can at long last put a name to the Ellesmere scribe. He was Adam Pinkhurst, member of the Scriveners’ guild of London, professional copyist, sometime moonlighting accountant for the powerful Mercers’ (clothiers) Company, and almost certainly a man employed for many years by Chaucer himself as scribe and copyist.

Over the years, scholars had worked doggedly to learn as much as they could about the Ellesmere manuscript. They have known, for instance, that the scribe worked in or around London within a decade of Chaucer’s death in 1400. The same scribe also made another copy of the poem, now in the National Library of Wales (the “Hengwrt” manuscript—pronounced “HENG-ert”). Chaucer’s own handwritten drafts have not survived, so the Ellesmere and Hengwrt manuscripts are the closest we can come to his original intent for the work. The layout of the text and its decorations appear carefully designed to create a unified whole from the disparate stories of 23 pilgrims. Three anonymous artists collaborated to create miniature paintings of Chaucer and the other pilgrims, presenting a vivid, visual cross section of late medieval English life to match the literary genius of the text. By the early 17th century the precious manuscript had come into the possession of the Egerton family, who were dukes of Bridgewater and earls of Ellesmere (from whom the volume took its nick-name). It was the crown jewel of the great English Renaissance library purchased by Henry Huntington for $1 million in 1917. The celebrated volume is the model for most modern printed editions of Chaucer’s greatest work.

Questions about the manuscript have always captured the attention of scholars. For whom was the manuscript made? Why does the Hengwrt copy, written by the same scribe, vary in so many details, omit some of the text, and rearrange the order of the tales? Was the Hengwrt written first, as most scholars now believe? Could either or both have been made in Chaucer’s lifetime, and if so, could the poet himself have been involved in their creation? Who were the earliest owners of the Ellesmere Chaucer, and—more frivolously—which of them scribbled in the preliminary flyleaves, “Margery seynt John ys a shrew”?

Sometimes, after many long years of pursuit, answers emerge. And sometimes, a certain amount of serendipity enters the picture. Mooney’s epiphany came in the course of her more general research on medieval English scribal practices. After spending a morning...
in 2004 in the Mercers’ Hall archives in London, she came across what she recognized as the hand of the Hengwrt-Ellesmere scribe in account books. Energized by her find—and shut out of the Mercers’ archives during the lunch hour—she walked two blocks to the Guildhall Library, where she opened the “Common Paper,” a record book of the Scriveners’ Company. In it new members signed their names and wrote out the text of their oath of admission to the guild. There, on page 56, was the familiar hand of one Adam Pinkhurst. Mooney’s expert eye recognized that the wide spacing, spikey curves, idiosyncratic decorative strokes, and a dozen other characteristic markers matched perfectly the hand of the Ellesmere scribe.

After taking some notes and requesting a photograph, Mooney started to walk back to Mercers’ Hall when corroborating evidence suddenly popped into her head. “About halfway back,” Mooney recalls, “I stopped still in the middle of a busy intersection as the penny dropped—as the British say—and I said aloud, ‘Oh, his name is Adam!’” She was thinking of Chaucer’s short, well-known poem addressed to “Adam, his owne Scribeyn,” in which the poet ruefully chides someone named Adam for careless mistakes in copying two of his earlier poems. If this literary Adam was the very real Pinkhurst, then his association with Chaucer was long standing and of some affection.

Scholarly precision required further proof, however, and after more than a year of additional meticulous research the full details of Professor Mooney’s argument have only recently appeared in her article “Chaucer’s Scribe” in the January 2006 issue of Speculum, the journal of the Medieval Academy of America. We now know far more about Adam Pinkhurst’s life as a professional scribe in the world of London manuscript production, about the production and dissemination of Middle English poetry, about his work for the Mercers’ Company, about the nine other (so far) surviving literary or business manuscripts written in his hand, and most importantly about his long and close working relationship with Chaucer, for whom he apparently made the first copies of the poet’s three great works—Boece and Troilus and Criseyde as early as the mid-1380s and the Canterbury Tales around the time of Chaucer’s death in 1400 or shortly thereafter.

Mooney’s expert eye recognized that the wide spacing, spikey curves, idiosyncratic decorative strokes, and a dozen other characteristic markers matched perfectly the hand of the Ellesmere scribe.

This last, the most exciting outcome of Mooney’s discovery beyond the actual identification of Adam Pinkhurst, means that the Ellesmere and Hengwrt manuscripts were written by someone who knew and worked directly with the author over many years. As such the two manuscripts now speak with far more authority about the text of the Canterbury Tales than in the past, when the circumstances of their copying were less clear. The Huntington’s Ellesmere Chaucer, admired for six centuries as a literary and artistic treasure from late medieval England, now at last enjoys the added luster of a direct connection to the father of English poetry. What else will future scholars find?

Mary Robertson is the William A. Moffett Chief Curator of Manuscripts at The Huntington.
John Trager is proud to show off his favorite exotic offspring, thousands of which fill the Desert Collection shade house in the Huntington nursery. Row after row of cacti, euphorbias, and other succulents crowd the worktables around the doting horticulturalist. He picks up a small container among a large collection of *Stenocactus ochoterenanus*—delicate globes of cacti resembling sea urchins. Covered with spikes, some are topped with a mere wisp of a flower striped in white and violet—such fragile beauty surrounded by barbed danger make for an alluring botanical specimen.

When the horticulturalist arrived on staff at The Huntington in 1983, a handful of seedlings of the plant were already part of the collection, grown from seed that had been collected in the Mexican state of San Luis Potosí in the early 1970s. Years later, in 1999, Trager finally found a space in his schedule to hand pollinate about five plants. He was rewarded with hundreds of seeds. A couple of years later he sowed the seeds produced from that effort and is now cultivating and selling these second-generation plants as part of the Huntington’s International Succulent Introductions program, or ISI.

In existence for almost 50 years, the ISI is both a shopper’s paradise and a unique conservation program. The Huntington’s plant introduction program propagates and distributes new and rare succulents to collectors, scientists, and research institutions. While certainly a savvy way to build Huntington collections, it also furthers scientific knowledge and helps to mitigate the alarming rate at which the world’s flora is becoming extinct.
“We need to acknowledge that the landscape is changing radically around the world,” says Jim Folsom, the Marge and Sherm Telleen Director of the Botanical Gardens at The Huntington.

“In a few decades half the planet’s succulents will be lost. In the plant kingdom, the more you propagate, the more you keep for the world.”

In existence for almost 50 years, the International Succulent Introductions program is both a shopper’s paradise and a unique conservation program.

It was Folsom who formally adopted ISI as the Huntington’s own in 1989, shortly after he came on board as the new botanical director. His predecessor Myron Kimnach had helped found the program as an independent nonprofit when he was on the staff of the University of California Botanical Garden in Berkeley in the late 1950s. Joining forces with J.W. Dodson and two other like-minded friends, Kimnach started propagating in earnest in 1956. During his tenure as superintendent and curator of the Huntington Botanical Gardens from 1962 to 1986, Kimnach made numerous expeditions to Mexico to conduct fieldwork, resulting in the discovery of many new species. (He began the Huntington’s popular plant sales, in part, to finance such expeditions.) Kimnach supervised the propagation of many of these new succulents for introduction through ISI and for planting in the Huntington’s burgeoning Desert Garden. Today—as then—only seedlings, grafts, and rooted cuttings produced under nursery conditions are sold. All income generated is used to support the program.

Since Kimnach’s heyday, botanical gardens have assumed even greater positions of leadership—and have become much more vocal—on issues of conservation, a response undoubtedly driven by deepening environmental concerns. “Potentially, we play a huge role as repositories of biodiversity—and also as places of outreach and education,” says Trager. Curator of the Desert Collections, Trager is the program’s chief ambassador. He balances the pleasure of distributing new cacti to grace collectors’ hothouses with the responsibility of dissuading people from going into the wild and digging up plants on their own.

For more than 20 years, Trager has spent uncountable hours in the nursery taking cuttings, sowing seeds, cross-pollinating plants, and performing the endless—often mundane—tasks required to generate new life. “Timing is everything,” he explains with a sweeping glance through the nursery’s huge space, which also extends into a hothouse. “We can’t possibly be in the right place all the time. Fruits may explode when we’re not there to catch the seeds.” His coworker Karen Zimmerman, Desert Collections propagator, helps him watch for these opportune moments among the 200 to 300 different species in various stages of propagation. A single plant can sometimes take five to eight years to yield a good crop; some plants need decades. Because Trager does not have to adhere to the business model of a commercial nursery, he can adopt a Zen approach—everything happens in good time. Also, his other full-time curatorial duties mean some plants just have to wait their turn in line, as was the case with *S. ochoterenanus*.

“Propagation requires extraordinary patience,” says Trager. “But it’s worth it for the promise of producing a new plant that hasn’t been seen in the United States.” Trager developed his skills early in life. As a teenager growing...
up in Santa Barbara, he “inexplicably started chopping and propagating” the succulents in his family’s backyard. Upon exhausting these plants, he moved on to take cuttings from the neighbors.

The ISI distributes as many as 40 new succulent varieties every year, requiring at least 100 plants of each to fulfill orders. Published annually in the March/April issue of the *Cactus and Succulent Journal*, the ISI catalog attracts mail orders from around the world—including a thriving clientele in Germany and England, which generates one-sixth of the ISI orders. The ISI catalog can also be found on the Huntington’s Web site.

The laissez-faire political climate that once allowed explorers to collect botanical specimens from Mexico and beyond has—in the last decade in particular—changed dramatically as governments have moved to impose more stringent restrictions on collecting and exporting plants. Intended to protect biodiversity, this tighter control has also severely curtailed field expeditions for educational and research institutions such as The Huntington. Because funds are limited—as is staff time—Trager has relied more heavily on botanists and explorers who already have permits to collect seeds in certain countries. Walter Röösli and Ralph Hoffmann, a noted team of Swiss explorers, collect specimens from the exotic and singular flora of Madagascar. “The Swiss team is very judicious in harvesting from the wild—they only take what they need to establish a species in cultivation,” says Trager.

Röösli and Hoffmann propagate new plants in Switzerland then send them to Trager with necessary permits and documentation. Plant data include information about the precise wild location of the plant and the soil type, associated flora, and altitude in which it thrives in the wild. These tight governmental controls. The plant is perhaps the most ornamental of the frankincense genus, similar in look to a compact bonsai with glossy, featherlike leaves and showy pink flowers.

“Propagation requires extraordinary patience,” says Trager.

The 33 species for sale this year are indigenous to the Canary Islands, Chile, Madagascar, Malawi, Mexico, and South Africa. From the United States comes a new variety of cacti that makes its horticultural debut. Discovered by botanists in the desert of southern Texas a few years back, *Echinocereus viridiflorus var. canus* has greenish-yellow flowers with a lemony fragrance. Also featured is *Boswellia nana*, a rare treat from Socotra, a remote island in the Arabian Sea that has seen few botanical expeditions because of tight governmental controls. The plant is perhaps the most ornamental of the frankincense genus, similar in look to a compact bonsai with glossy, featherlike leaves and showy pink flowers.

The laissez-faire political climate that once allowed explorers to collect botanical specimens from Mexico and beyond has—in the last decade in particular—changed dramatically as governments have moved to impose more stringent restrictions on collecting and exporting plants. Intended to protect biodiversity, this tighter control has also severely curtailed field expeditions for educational and research institutions such as The Huntington. Because funds are limited—as is staff time—Trager has relied more heavily on botanists and explorers who already have permits to collect seeds in certain countries. Walter Röösli and Ralph Hoffmann, a noted team of Swiss explorers, collect specimens from the exotic and singular flora of Madagascar. “The Swiss team is very judicious in harvesting from the wild—they only take what they need to establish a species in cultivation,” says Trager.

Röösli and Hoffmann propagate new plants in Switzerland then send them to Trager with necessary permits and documentation. Plant data include information about the precise wild location of the plant and the soil type, associated flora, and altitude in which it thrives in the wild. These

SEUSSIAN SCULPTURES

The Huntington’s Desert Garden serves as an important lab for ISI plants. Celebrating its 100th anniversary next year, the 10-acre garden contains one of the largest and oldest assemblages of succulents in the world, collected for decades from such places as the American Southwest, Mexico, Guatemala, Brazil, Bolivia, and South Africa, and now tended by Desert Garden Curator Gary Lyons. These Seussian sculptures, otherworldly shapes in shades of green and gray, blue and silver, thrive in a sunny locale on the estate’s east side. From hoary columns that shoot toward the sky to squat barrels covered with vicious-looking spines and needles, the cacti and euphorbias can seem simultaneously creepy, prehistoric, and utterly amazing. The Huntington has in its collections about 5,000 species of cacti and other succulents. There are an estimated 10,000 succulents worldwide, about 2,000 of them classified as cacti. While all cacti are succulents, not all succulents are cacti. Succulents are defined as having water-storing tissue to sustain them during periodic drought, which can be found in many diverse lineages, including the grape and orchid families.
details are critical to researchers, and many have used the Huntington’s repository of original source material for their own botanical studies precisely because the records are so thorough. The documented collection grows more valuable to researchers as governments around the world impose more restrictions, and as plant diversity diminishes.

Anyone with even a slight interest in the environment knows the outlook is not especially hopeful. Some studies estimate that as many as two-thirds of the world’s flora and fauna may become extinct during the course of the 21st century, the result of global warming, encroaching development, and over-farming. Scientists alarmed by these prospects are working diligently to propagate plants outside their natural habitats, in protected areas.

Ex-situ cultivation, as this practice is known, can serve as a stopgap for plants that will otherwise be lost to the world as their habitats disappear. In Madagascar, from which come a significant number of ISI plants, only about 15 percent of the land is now forested—people, cattle, fire, and a burgeoning industry of charcoal production have cleared much of the rest. The Huntington has 60 individual seedlings of the Madagascan succulent tree *Euphorbia kamponii*, a few of them growing in the Desert Garden. (*Euphorbia* is a succulent genus of the Euphorbiaceae family, one of the largest families in the plant world.)

The ISI distributes as many as 40 new succulent varieties every year, requiring at least 100 plants of each to fulfill orders.

Only three individual trees of the species are known to exist in the wild in Madagascar. While Trager has no illusions about repopulating species in the far corners of the world, he is heartened by the fact that future botanists will be able to use ISI plants if they ever want to reintroduce a species into its native habitat.

It’s easy to be a pessimist in this business, just one step ahead of extinction. Trager, however, brightens considerably as he displays another offering from this year’s catalog, *Othonna protecta*. “It’s an ugly little plant, actually, in the sunflower family—a little succulent with daisy-like flowers that only open in the morning,” he says with pride. “Its charm is that it has a caudex, a Latin term for a swollen, water-storing stem. Caudiciforms attract a huge following because of their gnarled, bonsai quality.”

Trager collected the original plants himself in the Richtersveld region of northwest South Africa in 1997, being permitted to bring back only three specimens. Now he gazes upon an entire flat of descendants. The ISI offerings represent the first time the plant has been in cultivation, although fortunately its survival in the wild—at least at the moment—is not in jeopardy. But Trager is ever mindful of his role as custodian of a species’ future. “It’s definitely worth having in cultivation,” he explains, “because you never know when something might happen to the indigenous population.”

Traude Gomez-Rhine is a staff writer at The Huntington. The current ISI catalog can be found at www.huntington.org/BotanicalDiv/ISI2006/catalogintro.html.
Beneath the benches of the Desert Collection shade house are several pots of a rare and nocturnal-flowering cactus, *Epiphyllum chrysocardium*. Here they thrive, lush and sinuous and verdant under the filtered, broken light cast through the wooden slats as if they were growing under the canopy of the Mexican rain forest, where the species first was found.

In one pot is the old embossed aluminum tag with the Huntington accession number 15189. The matching accession card lists two cuttings that arrived at The Huntington with Myron Kimnach when he moved from the University of California Botanical Garden at Berkeley in November 1962 to become superintendent of the Huntington Botanical Gardens.

Kimnach brought with him the glossy stems of the living plant as well as a dried herbarium specimen, a fragile but unchanging artifact that speaks equally to
botanists and historians. Both the living and the pressed plants were cuttings of the original plant first documented by naturalist Thomas Baillie MacDougall in the wetlands of northern Chiapas, Mexico, on Feb. 9, 1951. They survive to remind us of the close collaboration between Kinnach and MacDougall, two men who devoted years to the study of Mexican flora and saw the safe passage of many succulent plants from the wild into cultivation and scientific research.

The massive faded stem, similar in shape and arch to a fern frond or the huge pinnate leaf of a deciduous ash or hickory tree, presents a profile quite unlike a cactus.

It was Kinnach who established the herbarium at The Huntington; throughout his tenure he contributed to the archive of preserved specimens as both collector and taxonomist. Although he retired in 1986, he continues to participate in its care even today. Among the many herbarium sheets he has prepared is the mounted *E. chrysocardium* specimen, an example so large that two sheets of paper are required to lay out both a flower and a stem. The massive faded stem, similar in shape and arch to a fern frond or the huge pinnate leaf of a deciduous ash or hickory tree, presents a profile quite unlike a cactus. Reduced succulence, subdued spines, climbing stems—a taxonomist’s puzzle.

“There was a cactus that didn’t look like a cactus” is a refrain he has repeated many times about this and other members of the Hylocereae, the group of cacti to which it belongs.

When he was just 12 years old, Kinnach tended his first cactus, a gift from his mother. It was an epiphytic rattail cactus native to Oaxaca and Hidalgo, Mexico. So from the very beginning, Kinnach was drawn to the

Above: Thomas Baillie MacDougall graces a 1956 cover of the Cactus and Succulent Journal. The publication lists the annual offerings of the International Succulent Introductions program. In 1962, the catalog offered *Epiphyllum chrysocardium*, described as a spectacular species with fern-like stems and magnificent nocturnal flowers, almost a foot in diameter. Previous Page: The stem of the *Epiphyllum chrysocardium* stretches across hybrids of *Haworthia retusa* from the ISI. Photo by Lisa Blackburn.
Hylocereae, the tribe of epiphytic cacti that thrive, far from arid desert habitats, in the humid cloud and rain forests of Central and South America, where they live alongside other epiphytic plants such as bromeliads and orchids. There they find support from triangular, pencil-thin, or flattened stems that scramble and hang like vines, and from roots that establish themselves in the leaf litter on the forest floor or high up in humus pockets in the crotch of an adjacent tree.

The jointed growths of epiphyllums that appear to be leaves—but are actually stems—give each species a distinct silhouette, and it was the strangeness of the silhouette that both perplexed and tantalized Thomas Baillie MacDougall one wet Friday morning in 1951 when he discovered *E. chrysocardium*. He was descending a steep path through the low clouds and primeval oak and pine stands of the rugged, remote mountains of La Selva Negra, Chiapas, into a heavily shaded ravine, a “botanist’s paradise” of orchids, aroids, dwarf palms, bromeliads, begonias, ferns, and flowering vines:

A remarkable plant caught my eye. Closer inspection showed it to be undoubtedly a cactus, and apparently an *Epiphyllum*; a terrestrial, with stems arching over the undergrowth until the tips sometimes touched the humus again, to root and form new plants….An herbarium pad….surprised me by drying within a few days—almost like a true leaf.

The excerpt is from MacDougall’s article written in 1953 for the *Cactus and Succulent Journal*. Accompanying the piece is a photograph of MacDougall’s guide, Valentin Villareal, holding a glistening lobed pad of *E. chrysocardium* across the width of his chest, pressed flat against his loose white garment, like a specimen on a white herbarium sheet.

**Myron Kimnach** inspects the herbarium specimen of a cutting from the plant collected by Thomas Baillie MacDougall. **Photo by Lisa Blackburn.**

**MacDougall’s guide, Valentin Villareal, posing with the plant in Chiapas, Mexico, February 1951.** Photo by Thomas Baillie MacDougall (roll 8, no. 7), American Museum of Natural History.

Thomas Baillie MacDougall was born in Scotland in 1895 and grew up in a village on the Sussex Downs. After fighting in the battles of the Sommes and Arras in World War I, he left Europe for the United States in the early 1920s. He trained in forestry in Syracuse, N.Y., and took a position in the nursery business of William and Emmanuel Shemin in the Bronx and later Greenwich, Conn. There, he propagated rhododendrons and hollies and bided his time during the summer months.

With his imagination kindled since childhood by the writings of naturalist W.H. Hudson—and eager to explore a region “rich in rare and unknown species of plants and animals”—MacDougall at age 36 began his journeys to Mexico. From 1931 until his death in Oaxaca in 1973, he spent each dry season (November to May) searching for flora and fauna in the two southernmost states—Oaxaca and Chiapas. He made his base in the Zapotec town of Tehuantepec at the southern Pacific side of the isthmus. From there, he roamed in all directions, exploring the high mountains and cloud forests, sites rich in diversity.
He sent thousands of mammal and reptile specimens to the American Museum of Natural History, N.Y., and plants to the New York Botanic Garden (NYBG) and later to specialist growers in California.

But, it was not enough to visit a locality, collect, and leave. Rather, MacDougall immersed himself in the very essence and ecology of each place, teaching himself about the plants, insects, birds, archaeology, language, costumes, markets, fiestas, and rituals of the distinct groups of people who lived there. He never drove a car, preferring to walk for days on end with little but a clean shirt, straw hat, flower press, and satchel, sleeping outdoors or finding “posada” with a local family. During the summer months, MacDougall would spend long hours in the New York Public Library, reading anything he could find on Mexico. The depth of his reading altered his interpretation of everything he saw and ultimately the scope and ambition of his legacy as collector and naturalist.

MacDougall was generous with his collections, and he was equally generous with his accumulated knowledge.

Slight in frame and often elusive to the curious, “Don Tomás” was loved and revered by those who knew him for his self-effacing charm, his warmth and gentle wit, and his indifference to physical discomfort and risk. He was generous with his collections, and he was equally generous with his accumulated knowledge.

In late February 1958, almost five years before he arrived at The Huntington, Myron Kimnach began to correspond with MacDougall. Kimnach was writing a series of articles under the title “Icones Plantarum Succulentarum” for the Cactus and Succulent Journal, concentrating on epiphytic and jungle cacti and species in the Crassulaceae family. Each article was devoted to a comprehensive account of one species. In the fall of 1958, he wrote to MacDougall asking for information for a new article on E. chrysocardium. Had MacDougall collected additional specimens? Did he have anything new to share? Kimnach described taking botanical artist May Blos to the University of California Botanical Garden at midnight to draw the plant, just as the huge fragrant white flower unfolded into its brief, extravagant bloom.

A week later, MacDougall wrote back with praise for Kimnach’s greenhouse skills but offered no new information. A second letter came six weeks...
later, clarifying the 2,000-foot altitude of the type locality—the mountains in Chiapas where he had collected the original specimen.

In the tone of their letters is something of the shared curiosity, the modesty and tact, the give and take between two self-taught botanists. For five years, these two men who had yet to meet—one almost 30 years older than the other—corresponded between Oaxaca and California, exchanging information about trails, localities, plants in habitat, plants in cultivation, as together they sorted out the epiphytic cacti of southern Mexico.

In October 1962, on the eve of leaving Berkeley and taking up his new Huntington position, Kimnach wrote to MacDougall, confiding to him the excitement of his new endeavor:

Starting Nov. 1, I will be the superintendent at Huntington Botanical Gardens. This should prove to be more interesting work especially because of the huge cactus collection there. I hope to bring in collected material to replace some of the things whose origin is unknown, so that the research value of the collection will be increased. I think I can get starts of most of your things that are already in the U.S., but in the future I hope you can send me some items directly, especially of the epiphytic cacti that you will come across in your travels. I am taking all the cacti that I need from U.C. to carry on my studies, but of course there must be much else of interest yet to be found in Mexico.

It was at The Huntington, in February 1963, that Kimnach met MacDougall for the first and only time. Their correspondence continued until MacDougall’s death, 10 years later. Kimnach never finished the article he had proposed in 1958. Only in 1991 did he return to writing about *E. chrysocardium*. In a short note in the journal *Bradleya*, he revised and renamed the plant, placing it in what he considered to be a more suitable genus, *Selenicereus*, the night-flowering moon cactus.

Kimnach’s short note remains the last taxonomic change for the plant that MacDougall first collected. But curiously, the source of the clone that Kimnach brought with him to The Huntington—both to the herbarium and the nursery—was not MacDougall, but an intermediary link, Edward Johnston Alexander (1901–1985). In the early days of his Mexican travels, it was to Alexander, curator and botanist at the NYBG, that MacDougall sent his collections for identification and determination. Gradually, this partnership soured, as plants sent to Alexander were neglected and new finds were left unnamed.

Although many of MacDougall’s later discoveries remain in the herbarium at the NYBG, those from the early years have disappeared. But there is one item that survives. Deep in the basement of the NYBG herbarium is a collection of specimens pickled in alcohol, a method used to preserve plants that are too fleshy to mount or too big to be contained on one herbarium sheet. There, in a glass jar, is the holotype of *E. chrysocardium*—the specimen designated by Alexander as the “type” of the species at the time he wrote the plant’s description.

Unlike the brittle, splayed pads on the herbarium sheet at The Huntington, this precious original is wet and three-dimensional and, to the untrained eye, unrecognizable. It floats like a ghostly seaweed, seemingly halfway between life and death, with a flower bud not quite open and not quite closed, forever caught between day and night, colorless like a black and white photograph. It is the spectral remnant of the plant first seen by MacDougall and then grown and described by Alexander. It is what remains of the plant that mesmerized Alexander when he saw it bloom for the first time in cultivation in the early hours of dawn on Jan. 2, 1954. It is what survives of the plant his gardener called “a beauty,” which Alexander named as the epiphyllum with the golden heart (*chrysocardium*) because of the flower’s central mass of yellow stamens. It is a direct vegetative link to the plant that May Bloch drew, that Myron Kimnach renamed, and that endures today at The Huntington, in the herbarium, and in the nursery of the Desert Collection.

Catherine Phillips is a research fellow at The Huntington. She works in the Desert Collection nursery and is researching a biography of Thomas Baillie MacDougall.
The Huntington recently acquired a piece of a puzzle dating back to the time of France’s Louis XIV. At first glance, the jagged patchwork of 17th-century carpet—held together with fat, clumsy stitches à la Frankenstein and shedding its knots like wooly dandruff—appears to be the detritus of an extreme home makeover gone horribly wrong. It’s hard to believe these bits of wool once felt the footsteps of kings and revolutionaries.

But the patchwork of carpet fragments comprises rare remnants from one of the most famous interior decoration schemes in history. Measuring about 35 by 56 inches, it is an assemblage of long-lost pieces of Astrology, one of two 17th-century French carpets in the Huntington collection. Astrology and the other carpet—Music—were part of a series of 93 carpets once intended to furnish the Grand Gallery of the Louvre, the former French royal palace that became a museum in 1793. The commission, initiated around 1665 by the Sun King—as Louis XIV (1638–1715) was known—and his finance minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, was intended to unify the gallery’s vast, high-ceilinged interior, which stretches along the banks of the Seine for 1,460 feet, longer than four football fields. (The gallery is well known today as the setting of the opening scenes of The Da Vinci Code.)

How did an illustrious object like Astrology suffer such a fate? Charissa Bremer-David, associate curator of decorative arts at the J. Paul Getty Museum, and independent textile conservator Sharon Shore began unraveling the carpet’s knotty history in the spring of 2003. They were conducting research on the Huntington’s textile collection; their findings will be published in a forthcoming French art catalog.

“On one day, I’d be on a ladder or lift many feet in the air, looking at a tapestry in weak light,” Shore recalls. “The next day, I’d be literally down on my hands and knees with my derriere sticking up in the air.” Bremer-David and Shore pored over every inch of Astrology and Music, uncovering evidence of multiple campaigns of alteration and restoration. As they concluded their work in late 2004, The Huntington got word that a group of some missing pieces of Astrology had survived all these years in the archive of Maison Hamot, a Paris textile firm established in 1762. Bremer-David and Shore soon found out how close they had come to piecing together the carpet’s history.

Long before they heard from Maison Hamot, Bremer-David and Shore had started to examine the history of Astrology and Music. They began with the more well-known history of the fragments from Astrology as they arrived from the Maison Hamot textile firm in 2005, sewn together and measuring 35 by 56 inches.
the Sun King’s ambitious commission before delving into the archival and physical histories of the two carpets. For the unprecedented task of carpeting the Grand Gallery, Louis XIV had turned to the Savonnerie Manufactory, the royal carpet-making workshop housed in a former soap factory on the outskirts of Paris. The king’s pet project would keep the Savonnerie looms busy for decades. A skilled craftsman could produce about two and a half yards of plain carpet per year; intricate patterns like those required for the Grand Gallery took much longer. The Huntington examples contain up to 132 Turkish knots per square inch, creating astonishingly intricate patterns.

The architect Louis LeVau and the painter Charles Le Brun collaborated on the designs for the carpets. Mixing classical mythology, religious symbolism, and allegory, they celebrated the virtues and glories of the king’s reign. Their designs called for rich black backgrounds, the botanical flair of acanthus scrolls, gold borders, and the symmetrical placement of panels, bas-reliefs, and cartouches.

It would have been a dazzling artistic and technological achievement. Unfortunately, the ambitious plan to carpet the Grand Gallery never came to fruition. By the time 92 of the 93 carpets had rolled off the looms in 1689, the king had transplanted the court to his newly renovated country château, Versailles, and lost interest in decorating the Louvre. Although the Savonnerie manufactory eventually completed all 93 carpets, they were never displayed together as originally intended, but went into storage to be used as needed in the various royal residences. The carpets were, nevertheless, highly prized, and when the king gave away 10 as diplomatic gifts, replacements were immediately made, making a total of 103. Of those, only 48 are intact today, scattered among museums and private collections around the world. Another 18, including the two Huntington carpets, survive in an altered state. The remaining 37 are known only by fragments or written descriptions.

During three reigns, from Louis XIV to Louis XVI, the carpets found their way out of storage for special occasions and holidays. Astrology, for example, reappeared for the fateful meeting of the Estates-General—or general assembly—at Versailles in 1789. But during the public sale of the royal furniture following the French Revolution, the carpets were dispersed, and many suffered damage. The Revolutionary government required buyers to promise to remove all vestiges of the old regime from their purchases. Thus, royal crests, monograms, and symbols were removed or replaced with innocuous motifs. Bremer-David and Shore already had established that the central globe of Astrology originally had been surrounded by a ribbon of the royal Order of the Holy Spirit, which was replaced by an incongruous garland of oranges. Music has lost its fleurs-de-lys and royal monograms. A similar fate befell the Huntington’s five-piece tapestry suite The Noble Pastorale, which also has a royal provenance. Each shows evidence of alteration in the top center, where the royal crest would have been displayed.

Some of the royal furniture ended up in the offices of new government ministries or in the homes of creditors.
of the bankrupt monarchy. Under the Directoire government (1795–99), Astrology decorated the offices of the Ministry of Justice. Further alteration ensued when new owners reshaped these carpets—scaled for the vast expanses of the Grand Gallery—to fit the smaller interiors of offices and private residences. Both Huntington examples reflect such changes. Astrology has lost about three feet in length, including a large panel showing a female figure representing Astrology.

About 18 inches of depth at the other end have been replaced, giving the figure of Dusk an elongated profile (see detail, page 1). Music has lost about three feet in length, much of it cut from the middle of the carpet, and eight inches in width; two feet have been reknotted, including the head of the female figure representing Music. The second figure, Euterpe, the muse of Music, has been replaced by a cartouche from an entirely different carpet in the series.

After the Directoire era, the Huntington carpets disappeared for more than a century. In 1911, they resurfaced at another illustrious address, 14 Princes Gate, the London home of American financier and art collector J. Pierpont Morgan. Morgan had large chunks of both carpets cut out so they would fit around his fireplaces, a sad but common fate. Despite these alterations, Arabella Huntington admired the carpets when she visited Morgan, paying particular attention to the larger carpet, Astrology. Arabella was an avid collector of French decorative arts, and she especially liked objects with a royal provenance.

When Morgan’s carpets came on the market after his death in 1913, the Huntsings snapped them up for $110,000. The dealer, Mitchell Samuels of French & Company, arranged the cleaning, repair, and lining of the carpets before shipping them to San Marino. Bremer-David and Shore speculate that it was during this round of repairs that two large and five smaller pieces were removed from Astrology and the carpet returned to its earlier rectangular shape. The carpet now measures approximately 25 by 16.5 feet. When The Huntington opened as a museum in 1928, both carpets adorned the floors of the large library at the east end of the Huntington house, where they rested peacefully until 2003, when Bremer-David and Shore entered the picture.

For two weeks, Bremer-David and Shore pored over every inch of the carpets, side by side on their hands and knees, using dental tools and a spatula to push back the dense pile so they could count the knots and glimpse the dizaines, the darker warp threads indicating a 10-knot unit. Savonnerie weavers had been paid for every 100 knots, and the dizaines helped them keep track of their earnings. It was difficult to see the dizaines in the...
intricate *Astrology* carpet, as they were completely obscured by the knots, but Bremer-David and Shore hypothesized that they were light brown, which would date the carpet to the 1670s, the only period when the Savonnerie Manufactury used the light brown color for that purpose. Bremer-David combed through the records of the Mobilier National (the royal furniture warehouse) and surviving palace inventories stored in the French national archives to find early descriptions of the carpets and trace their whereabouts between their creation and the French Revolution. Like a detective building her case, she compared the carpets to duplicate versions and searched museum and auction catalogs for clues.

The fragments came to light in early 2005 when the Maison Hamot textile firm liquidated its inventory and archives through the Paris auction house Drouot. The auction included several Savonnerie carpet remnants from the period of Louis XIV. Experts at Drouot identified the fragments as missing pieces of the Huntington’s *Astrology* carpet. Only two versions of that carpet had been completed; the other, now in the Mobilier National Museum’s collection, is largely intact with a violet background color in the central reserve, whereas the Huntington’s is *rose seiche* (dried roses), like the background of surviving fragments. Separately, the pieces visually complete the top of the head and arm of the figure of Dusk and some background now filled by re-created inserts.

It is likely that Maison Hamot undertook the replacement of damaged sections of the Huntington carpet at some point in its history (possibly around the time of Morgan’s sale) and retained the unused portions. Seven pieces from the area around Dusk had been crudely sewn together in a long rectangle, with the design forming a mirror image. The Huntington purchased the pieces for its collection, allowing Bremer-David and Shore to delve more deeply into the carpet’s rich history. Shore is grateful that someone had the foresight to sew the fragments together. “Care was taken not to lose the original pieces,” she says. “They didn’t just blithely cut them off and throw them away.”

The recovered remnants acted as a kind of textile DNA, helping Bremer-David and Shore understand the construction and original appearance of the carpet. “Laying them right on the carpet allowed us to see exactly the color change and the rates of fading between the reknotted sections and the original,” Bremer-David explains. They were elated to see the frayed ends of the light brown *dizaines* clearly visible among the prevailing off-white warps around the roughly hewn edges of the pieces, confirming their hypothesis about the carpet’s date. Though the pieces have suffered obvious damage, their colors are far more vibrant than those of the faded carpet, which has been on display since The Huntington opened to the public in 1928. (The carpets have always been cordoned off to prohibit foot traffic. They are now in storage, awaiting the reopening of the house after renovations are completed in 2008.) Against the rich, velvety black background, the pink marbled scrolls and arabesque *rinçaux* stand out in all their baroque splendor. Dusk’s face in this original version is not awkwardly elongated, and her uplifted eyes are more soulful than in the later rendering. The vases on either side of her are filled with lush, almost three-dimensional fruits—grapes, bursting pomegranates, pears, and apples—rather than the fussy pastel flowers of the altered version. But what is most striking about the pieces is not their beauty, but their imperfection. Even in such a small area, it is evident that the pattern is slightly asymmetrical and irregular, as only handmade textiles can be. It is a powerful contrast to the cold perfection of today’s mechanized, computer-designed textiles.

The Huntington has no plans to restore *Astrology* to its original appearance. Even if the other pieces removed from the carpet over the years should surface, the task would be more destructive than beneficial. Furthermore, restoring the carpet would erase material evidence of its fascinating history, which is as important as the object itself.

Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell is a Mellon Foundation Curatorial Fellow in French art at The Huntington. She would like to acknowledge Charissa Bremer-David and Sharon Shore, whose entry in the upcoming French art catalog served as a source for this article.
Michelle Nickerson wanted answers. The Yale doctoral candidate was at The Huntington in 2000 on a history fellowship, trying to reconstruct the impact women had on conservative politics in Los Angeles during the 1950s and ’60s. She hoped to demonstrate that women played a vital role through their grassroots activism—conducting meetings, challenging school boards, and distributing pamphlets, newsletters, and flyers. The activists were the bloggers of yesteryear, producing and distributing materials at a frantic pace, but their paper trail had disappeared into the proverbial ether.

Nickerson’s curiosity brought her out of the confines of the Library and into the homes of 28 local women who had played active roles in various clubs and organizations. “I wanted to get their perspective,” she explains. “I wanted to visualize this political landscape through their eyes.”

Now an assistant professor of history at the University of Texas, Dallas, Nickerson is back at The Huntington as the Fletcher Jones Foundation Fellow, working on a new book—Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right. While supplementing her research in the Library with testimony from activists, she met two women who had much more than stories to share. Their personal archives—newsletters, correspondence, news clippings, reports, magazines, and books—comprise a trove that has since become part of the Huntington’s rich collection of 20th-century political materials.

Equal parts gumshoe and scholar, Nickerson cobbled together several fellowships to keep her in Southern California for the 2000–2001 academic year. But while digging through archives was vital to her research, it left her begging for details about the lives of women and their grassroots activism. The papers she found provided mere hints. “Maybe you would find something with a woman’s name on it,” Nickerson says. “But you were shooting in the dark.”

So at the end of her long days in the stacks, she tried to call some of the people who had been mentioned in various news articles and reports. It didn’t seem to bother her that she was working off leads that were 40 or 50 years old. She wanted to know what made these women become political. “What made them want to get a babysitter and go to a meeting?” she asked herself. “How did they put dinner on the table and then go out at night and give talks?”

One night she picked up the phone and called F. X. Ranuzzi. She had found the name in an archive housed at California State University, Northridge—the “Spy Reports” of the Community Relations Council, a division of the Jewish Federation Council of Los Angeles that monitored right-wing activity. Ranuzzi, it said, ran the “right-wing” Poor Richard’s Book Shop on Hollywood Boulevard in the early 1960s. A quick search on the computer turned up a listing in Tehachapi, Calif.

Nickerson was greeted by an awkward silence on the other end of the line. When she described her research and explained that she was hoping to
interview activists of the era, the voice warmed up. Frank X. Ranuzzi had passed away, his stepdaughter explained, “But it was my mother who really ran that bookstore. And she would love to talk to you.”

Mrs. F. X. Ranuzzi was Florence Ranuzzi, who saw no reason to change the phone listing after the death of her second husband some years before.

The common practice among widows of her generation had made it difficult for Nickerson to track down other women who balanced household responsibilities with activism while avoiding the limelight.

Ironically, Ranuzzi began her career in the spotlight—literally—as a movie actress. But she suffered from “Klieg eyes,” a common affliction among actors sensitive to the bright lights on movie sets. She would thrive behind the scenes, though, first as a legal secretary and eventually as the manager of the bookstore run in the back of her husband’s insurance company.

“Not only did I learn that this woman ran the bookstore,” Nickerson says now in recalling the weekend she spent at the Ranuzzi home with Florence and her daughter, Mary Cunningham. “I learned that the bookstore was a clearinghouse for right-wing literature for the entire country!”

Throughout her reminiscences, Ranuzzi would punctuate her tales by showing Nickerson some of the materials she had sold in her shop as well as old letters, photos, and scrapbooks—touchstones that led to digressions and memories of old movies, family history, and politics. Nickerson had a hard time keeping up with the effusive 93-year-old, but managed to inject follow-up questions about groups like the Mothers of Good Council or the John Birch Society. Ranuzzi and her cohorts were suspicious of the United Nations and other government programs that smacked of “creeping socialism.”

Many women entered activism when their children started school, not because they had more time on their hands but because they grew increasingly wary of “progressive” education methods. In 1955, for example, the superintendent of schools in Pasadena met resistance when he tried to combine the early-20th-century
reform principles of John Dewey with summer education “camps,” among other programs. This was at the height of the red scare, and a number of groups—many composed mostly of women—were taking action to protest policies with allegedly “collectivist” or “socialist” agendas. The superintendent eventually was pressured to resign.

When Nickerson came back to The Huntington, she shared her findings with Alan Jutzi, the Avery Chief Curator of Rare Books. Both agreed that the binders and boxes of speeches, correspondences, diaries, and political literature offered a rare portrait of an activist in Los Angeles in the 1950s and ’60s. Jutzi eventually would contact the family about donating the materials to The Huntington.

Meanwhile, Nickerson focused on finding more former activists. Jutzi suggested she approach the local San Marino Tribune, which ended up running a feature story about a young scholar’s quest to interview conservative women activists. Her phone started ringing off the hook.

“What I learned was that these women were serious, but they had not been taken particularly seriously,” Nickerson says. The “little old ladies in tennis shoes” were dismissed by Democrats in the early 1960s. The disparaging phrase was attributed to California State Attorney General Stanley Mosk and then picked up by a number of newspaper cartoonists. The label stuck regardless of the diversity of age and apparel preferences among conservative women. Cheryl Walker, president of the Tuesday Morning Club at the time, embraced the epithet while convening a luncheon of the women’s political group at the Huntington Hotel in Pasadena. She made a gavel out of a bronzed tennis shoe and hammered it on the podium. “The place fell apart,” mused her sister, Joan Bennett, in an interview with Nickerson at her San Marino home in 2002.

Some of the very same women have also been guilty of painting with a broad brush, mislabeling many so-called opponents as Communists and contributing to a climate of suspicion and fear. For too long, though, right-wing women have endured stereotypes and neglect within the academic world. Only recently have scholars like Nickerson begun to challenge these one-dimensional portraits. Bill Deverell, the director of the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West (ICW), attributes the change to the curiosity of a new generation of scholars. “Michelle is writing in a period of time in which the scholarly rediscovery of conservative politics is really a growth field.”

Nickerson admits that her original dissertation topic had been an environmental history of Alaska. A seminar on 20th-century political history resulted in a paper about the Alaska Mental Health Bill—legislation in 1956 that appropriated land and money to fund psychiatric facilities and programs. Opposition to the bill came from—all places—the suburbs of Los Angeles. Groups of conservative women vociferously attacked a policy that would allow Alaskan police officers or health care professionals to incarcerate mentally ill patients in facilities that they contended would transform the state into “Siberia, U.S.A.” Despite passage of the bill, a grassroots movement led by two women’s clubs—the American
Public Relations Forum and the Minute Women of the U.S.A.—gained considerable attention. Nickerson was hooked.

The admitted liberal was 30 years old in 2001 when she set out to interview staunchly conservative women who were in their 70s, 80s, and 90s. But Nickerson seemed to tap into the authentic voices of her subjects. Call it a common language of bravado or chutzpah; more than likely it boiled down to a mutual respect and curiosity.

“I told them I wasn’t going to write a polemic against the organizations they belonged to,” Nickerson explains. The women opened up. They wanted their stories to be heard.

Not long after the appearance of the Tribune article, Nickerson received a letter and résumé from Marie Koenig, a Pasadena resident who proudly explained that she had compiled one of the larger research collections devoted to the anti-Communist movement.

Born Marie King in New Orleans in 1919, Koenig had been raised by a family that had rallied around the populist—and Democrat—Huey P. Long. “Nobody was a Republican in those days,” she told Nickerson. Koenig adapted her homegrown populism to the anti-Communist movement of the postwar suburbs. Nickerson suggests that “right-wingers saw themselves as the people in the community, constantly doing battle with intellectuals or the government.”

Koenig moved west in the late 1940s, and later landed a job at Spiritual Mobilization, an anti-Communist organization founded by the Rev. James W. Fifield of the First Congregational Church in Los Angeles. A chance encounter there with the president of the American Public Relations Forum got her involved in that organization—the very same group that stood up to “Siberia, U.S.A.” From there she kept track of just about every cause or group that attempted to hold Communism at bay.

For decades, Koenig had kept a full-blown archive on the second floor of her traditional home. “Marie was clearly a packrat,” Nickerson says now with obvious relish. Her holdings included a dozen four-drawer file cabinets with books and binders piled on top of them.

“The folders were organized exactly the way I could only beg for,” Nickerson recalls with a grin as she thinks back to the days she spent in libraries looking for needles in haystacks.

“Over the course of my year in Southern California, I would call her up and ask questions like, ‘What do you know about Fred Schwarz and the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade?’ And Marie would respond, ‘Oh, I have a couple folders on them. Come
on over and copy them. I knew Fred Schwarz. We were friends.”

If Florence Ranuzzi’s material was a snapshot of one activist, then Marie Koenig’s collection represented a complex portrait of the American right. Her 600-plus files ran the gamut of local, national, and international issues: UNESCO and education in public schools, Christianity and the National Council of Churches, fluoridation, and Communists in Hollywood. She kept binders and folders on local clubs, national organizations, and political figures. Like any compulsive collector, she saved indiscriminately, so her stash of periodicals and books representing the left likely rivaled the inventories of used bookstores in Berkeley.

**FOR DECADES, KOENIG HAD KEPT A FULL-BLOWN ARCHIVE ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF HER TRADITIONAL HOME.**

Alan Jutzi and Bill Deverell soon paid a visit to see the materials for themselves. “The Koenig house was a time capsule,” Deverell says, “and Marie Koenig had a librarian’s sensibilities.”

Sadly, both Ranuzzi and Koenig passed away before the completion of Nickerson’s dissertation in 2003. Their daughters then worked with Jutzi to complete the move of each collection.

In the summer of 2004, Nickerson hosted a reception at The Huntington for the two dozen surviving women she had interviewed. Part reunion, part wake, the occasion gave the women the opportunity to listen to highlights from Nickerson’s research and contemplate their impact. They didn’t need someone to tell them that they had played critical roles. But few people had ever acknowledged the connections between their years of grassroots activism and the eventual rise of presidential candidate Barry Goldwater or California governor Ronald Reagan in the mid-1960s. Nickerson concluded her dissertation by saying that “conservatism was not simply mass hysteria, but more thought-out, organized, female, and deeply woven into the fabric of American political life.”

Today, other scholars are benefiting from the Koenig Papers. USC graduate students Daniel HoSang and Barbara Soliz recently presented articles from their own research at a workshop moderated by Nickerson and sponsored by Deverell’s ICW—“Grassroots Conservatism in Post-War California: New Research from The Huntington’s Marie Koenig Papers.” Soliz had begun asking Nickerson for advice a year earlier, when she was in her first year of graduate school. She says that her final dissertation topic will likely address the effects of Communism and anti-Communism on Los Angeles political activism and will draw heavily from the Koenig collection.

Like Nickerson back in 2000, HoSang is in the thick of his own dissertation, “Contested Terrain: Ballot Initiatives, Race, and Political Culture in Post-War California.” The Koenig collection—which spans a broad swath of time—has allowed him to trace the progression and contradictions of ideas about race, housing, and busing. Koenig’s file on the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963, for instance, contains grassroots literature on legislation that pitted anti-Communist activists against civil rights proponents.

Nickerson concedes that Marie Koenig might not have agreed with interpretations from young scholars like Soliz and HoSang, but she would have been pleased to see people using her materials. Nickerson, too, is pleased that more answers are now being found within the Huntington Library. “Every time I’ve been curious about a specific subject,” HoSang explains, “I find that Koenig seems to have paid attention to it.”

Matt Stevens is editor of Huntington Frontiers magazine.
A New Destiny

PRESERVING A DIARY FROM THE MEXICAN WAR

by Steven Tice

Fiona Johnston is in the middle of a sticky problem, thanks in no small part to 19th-century writer Ralph Waldo Emerson. In 1844, Emerson wrote a lecture titled “The Young American.” In it he said, “The bountiful continent is ours.” John L. O’Sullivan, a prominent New York editor at the time, evoked the words “manifest destiny” in proclaiming that it was the right—even the duty—of the United States to expand to the Pacific Ocean. Some 160 years later Johnston has found herself repairing a diary from the Mexican War (1846–48), a conflict that was manifest destiny in action.

While the American Revolution and the Civil War have loomed larger in the national consciousness, the Mexican War was a pivotal event in American history. At the close of the war a defeated Mexico ceded almost all of present-day California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado. Today, scholars use Huntington materials to gain a better understanding of this era, especially by consulting the observations of participants such as Jacob Medtart Smith.

When Smith served in the Mexican War, he carried a packet of writing paper with him and eventually filled 36 pages with his experiences between July 1846 and June 1847, including entries during the two-day Battle of Buena Vista (Feb. 22–23, 1847). His unit, the Arkansas Regiment, “represented the worst of the volunteer troops who supplemented the regular army,” says Peter Blodgett, the H. Russell Smith Foundation Curator of Western Historical Manuscripts. “Undisciplined and poorly trained, they seemed to do everything they could to embarrass the army.”

The Huntington has only one other firsthand account by an enlisted man from the Mexican War. “This fact makes Smith’s perspective valuable,” explains Blodgett. It is among the 2,000 objects that are being treated this year by the Huntington’s staff of five conservators and one volunteer.

This diary speaks volumes about its own wear and tear. Smith wrote during a year of travel on horseback across more than 2,000 miles of Texas and northern Mexico. He (and the diary) endured 25-mile marches in summer heat and winter cold. Diary passages reveal his tribulations: “Oh! What a storm…our tents blew down…it was a hell of a cold night…crossed the Rio Grande by swimming most of the horses.” Such fluctuations in temperature and humidity wreak havoc on a soldier’s morale—and on paper.

Before and after views of one page from Jacob Medtart Smith’s diary. The diary entered the collection in 1988 as loose sheets without a binding. Following Fiona Johnston’s treatment of the paper, it will be bound once again as a book.
The real damage came with a well-meaning but misguided repair effort about 25 years before it was donated to The Huntington in 1988. A page-by-page reinforcement with clear tape—considered state-of-the-art adhesive around 1960—had done more harm than good. The tape had become embedded in the paper and darkened over time, obscuring much of the writing.

In the conservation lab, Johnston first examined the diary with her unaided eye and then with a microscope. The sheets had a fair share of water stains (think rain, snow, Rio Grande) as well as numerous tears and “losses” (areas of missing paper). But Johnston would devote most of her attention to the adhesive, which was acidic and had weakened the paper over the years. Surgery is an apt word to describe much of her work. Her instruments are tiny spatulas, scalpels, and tweezers as well as small artist’s brushes and cotton swabs.

She began by warming a thin metal spatula on a heating iron before using it to soften the adhesive under the cellophane strip. This allowed her to lift off the tape, but some of the adhesive remained. She then donned a respirator to get ready for the task before her: dissolve the rest of the adhesive without damaging the paper or affecting the ink in any way. By spot testing more than 20 solvents on discrete areas of the diary, she was able to settle on a group of four that proved to be both safe and effective. Throughout this painstaking procedure—taking up to three days per sheet—the pages rested on a counter equipped with a suction device that drew the liquid through the paper.

She then used Japanese tissue to repair tears and fill in the missing areas of paper. Made with plant fibers native to Japan, the tissue is strong, flexible, and naturally acid-free. The new tissue is “sympathetic” in hue to the original, says Johnston. “The finished effect should not distract a reader—it should not draw the eye.”

Conservators are forever asking themselves when to treat an object and when to leave well enough alone. Both Johnston and Blodgett agree that nothing should be done about the water stains that appear on the top half of many of the pages. As Johnston puts it, “The dramatic water stains are part of the history of the document.”

Steven Tice is a project archivist in the Manuscripts Department at The Huntington.

Steven Tice is a project archivist in the Manuscripts Department at The Huntington.
and punishment. Hackel draws on a wide variety of sources, using Mission San Carlos Borromeo—the administrative center of colonial California—as a case study.

**CONSUMING SPLENDOR: SOCIETY AND CULTURE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND**

Linda Levy Peck

*Cambridge University Press, 2005*

Peck explores the ways in which the consumption of luxury goods transformed social practices, gender roles, royal policies, and the economy of 17th-century England. Her book charts the development of new ways of shopping; new aspirations and identities shaped by print, continental travel, and trade to Asia, Africa, the East and West Indies; new building, furnishing, and collecting; and the new relationship of technology, luxury, and science.

**BÁRBAROS: SPANIARDS AND THEIR SAVAGES IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT**

David J. Weber

*Yale University Press, 2005*

Weber explains how late-18th-century Spanish administrators tried to fashion a more enlightened policy toward the people they called bárbaros, or “savages.” Even Spain’s most powerful monarchs failed, however, to enforce a consistent, well-reasoned policy toward Indians. Although the Crown sometimes recognized autonomous tribal governments, it also authorized bloody wars against Indians when Spanish officers believed they could defeat them.

**Pulitzer Prize**

Historian Edmund S. Morgan received a Special Citation from the Pulitzer board in April “for a creative and deeply influential body of work that spans the last half century.” Morgan, whose essay “Cultivating Surprise” appeared in the premier issue of *Huntington Frontiers* in 2005, has authored more than a dozen books on early colonial history since first serving as a research fellow at The Huntington in 1952–53.

Historian Edmund S. Morgan received a Special Citation from the Pulitzer board in April “for a creative and deeply influential body of work that spans the last half century.” Morgan, whose essay “Cultivating Surprise” appeared in the premier issue of *Huntington Frontiers* in 2005, has authored more than a dozen books on early colonial history since first serving as a research fellow at The Huntington in 1952–53.

**WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS: A WRITER’S LIFE**

Susan Goodman and Carl Dawson

*University of California Press, 2005*

Susan Goodman and Carl Dawson like to finish each other’s sentences. Actually, the colleagues from the University of Delaware (who also happen to be wife and husband) edited each other endlessly when they wrote their biography of William Dean Howells (1837–1920).

Howells wrote more than 100 books and served as editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* magazine in Boston. He counted Mark Twain and Henry James among his closest friends and mentored many young writers before they gained wider exposure. As a political critic, he found company in his opposition to slavery, but stood nearly alone in his condemnation of the Haymarket trials of 1886 and ‘87 and the subsequent execution of four Chicago anarchists. Goodman and Dawson used a letter from the Huntington collection in describing the lack of courage among Howells’ contemporaries: Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier lamented to Boston writer Annie Fields, confessing his shame in “being only a looker on.” Other items show a glimpse of Howells’ private life. The Huntington’s collection of the family papers of Howells’ sister, Annie Fréchette, contain letters and diaries that describe family reunions and the declining mental condition of their youngest sibling, Henry.

The co-authors’ collaborative approach seems to work. They are currently divvying up the nearly 4,000 letters from the Huntington’s Mary Hunter Austin Papers as they polish their Austin biography. Goodman explains that biographers not only must attempt to show how someone lived in the world. “We must also describe that world.”
On the Cover

Since the 1950s, the International Succulent Introductions (ISI) program has propagated and distributed succulents to collectors, scientists, and research institutes. Cofounded by Botanical Director Emeritus Myron Kimnach in the Bay Area, the program moved to The Huntington in 1989. In this issue we speak with ISI director John Trager about the program’s unique role in conservation.

While the jade plant (cover and left) is now common in cultivation, this particular species (Crassula ovata) was not commercially available until The Huntington introduced it in 2004. It was collected in the Western Cape Province of South Africa in 1990 by the late Michael Vassar, plant propagator and Curator of Floristic Gardens at The Huntington from 1997 to 2003.

This collection differs from commonly cultivated forms, with its slightly rhomboidal shape, red-edged leaves, and its exceptionally compact, bonsai-like form. The tiny red dots along the leaf margin are specialized stomata called hydathodes, which function in the excretion of water and dissolved salts, helping the plant retain the optimal amount of each in its succulent tissues.

Photos by John Trager