“There is one kind of robber whom the law does not strike at, and who steals what is most precious to men: time.” ~ Napoleon.

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The Watts de Peyster Collection:
Napoleon Buonaparte

“There is one kind of robber whom the law does not strike at, and who steals what is most precious to men: time.” ~ Napoleon.

Even when I am gone, I shall remain in people's minds the star of their rights, my name will be the war cry of their efforts, the motto of their hopes.” –Napoleon

Napoleon (1769—1821)

Archives and Special Collections
Martin Library of the Sciences
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The Collection and Its Significance:

Despite his small stature, Napoleon cast a long shadow across the first half of the 19th century, inspiring countless biographies, polemics and histories. In the wake of his death in 1821, an entire field of study was devoted to his reign and life. Napoleon studies encompass a vast breadth of fields, reflecting his undisputed influence on 19th and 20th-century European affairs.

The extent of material found in the Watts de Peyster Collection – Napoleon Buonaparte is testament to Napoleon’s monumental impact. Gathered on frequent trips overseas by soldier, author, and historian, John Watts de Peyster (1821-1907), the vast majority of the collection is from the early and mid-19th century. Although de Peyster was a military historian, his collection is all inclusive, containing subjects ranging from literary criticism, to political commentary, to personal memoirs.

Originally gifted to the Smithsonian Institution in 1901, the 1,182 title collection was given to Franklin & Marshall College by the Smithsonian in 1957. Since then, the collection has gone essentially unused, largely due to the value and condition of many volumes. More recently, however, in a student led collaborative project between the French department and the Library’s Archives and Special Collections, the collection records have been updated and all items fully cataloged and preserved. Presently, the Watts de Peyster Collection – Napoleon Buonaparte is available for study to students, faculty, and members of the public upon re-

Statistics and Research

Additional Research Opportunities:

This list of other Napoleon collections has been provided as a reference for those interested in continuing research on Napoleon. They are listed in alphabetical order, by institution. For a brief analysis of each collection please see the descriptive bibliography available online at http://library.fandm.edu/archives/spcoll/napoleoncoll.php

- **Bullard Napoleon Collection**
  - Brown University, John Hay Library: Providence, RI
- **Leslie H. Kuehner Napoleon Collection**
  - Christian Brothers University, Plough Library: Memphis, TN
- **Napoleon Collection**
  - DePaul University: Chicago, IL
- **Institute of Napoleon & the French Revolution**
  - Florida State University, Strozier Library: Tallahassee, FL
- **Fish-Roebling Collection of Napoleon**
  - Harvard University: Boston, MA
- **Napoleon Collection**
  - McGill University: Montreal, Quebec, Canada
- **W. H. Hoyt Collection**
  - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill, NC
- **A. H. Sensbogen Napoleonic Collection**
  - University of Seattle, A. A. Lemieux Library: Seattle, WA
quest. Although it sat idle for many years, the vast majority of the collection is still in usable condition. De Peyster’s personal collection has been kept intact for over a century, with only a few additions being made by each of the housing institutions. This collection holds tremendous potential scholarly value, that can only be unlocked by active use of the material.

Pasted to the front board of most volumes is de Peyster’s signature bookplate, identifying these titles as original to the collection.
Collection Highlights

Bindings and Treatments:
The collection exemplifies the wide array of binding styles used in 19th century bookmaking. Molded, stamped and tooled by hand, each volume exhibits variations on the stylistic themes of the time. Some such styles seen in the collection are: the Napoleon Style, Armorial Style, Bozerian Style, and the Publishers' Binding Style.

Napoleon
This popular binding style of early 19th-century France is embellished with bright colors and gilded emblems, demonstrating the opulent tastes of the time. This style is only used to bind material which directly treats Napoleon and his reign. Therefore, it is seen extensively in the collection.

Armorial
Identifying the owner by a symbol, usually a coat of arms, this was often added after the book had been bound. Usually gilt, there is only one image in the center of the front cover.

Bozerian
Popular in France in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Bozerian style is identified by a gilded, double roll-tooled border surrounding a straight-grained goatskin board. The undulating borders stand in contrast to this otherwise linear style.

Military and Political History

General History:
Supplementing the military histories are hundreds of historical and political histories and commentaries. These are important as many of the authors were actors in the events they describe, adding a unique perspective to historical events.

Depicted in full military regalia, this portrait of Napoleon offers a different view of the Emperor from the one shown below. This image is taken from a collection of letters written by French nobility.

Many comparative histories, such as this German political history critiquing the reigns of Napoleon and Frederick the Great, add a multi-cultural dimension to the English and French dominated collection.

Accompanying British letters written from Paris, these front and back portraits show Napoleon with a smug expression, far away from battle. This illustration shows the contempt the English held for Napoleon during the early-19th century.
Military History:

By far the most impressive and comprehensive section, the Napoleon Collection’s military histories describe, in detail, each of Napoleon’s battles. Not exclusive in its treatment of military affairs, however, descriptions of everything from the French Revolution to the Franco-Prussian war are abundant.

This title text and adjacent engraving are wonderful examples of the artistic influence on book publishing during the 19th century. Extensive use of symbolism in the engraving helps to reinforce the main thesis of each volume. Below, Britannia is shown conquering over the horrors of war and returning peace to all of Europe.

Etchings such as this one of a young Bonaparte are commonly used to illustrate the major actors of each epoch.

Bindings and Treatments

Classical

This full-bound leather board is notable for its simple, double-ruled gilt border. The decorative spine, which harkens back to the fleurons of the 16th century, adds life to the otherwise static binding. The Classical Style was rarely used by French binders due to its plain appearance.

Publishers’ Binding

With the growing popularity of books, publishers began to print volumes with prefabricated bindings. This heavily decorated and gilt binding, full of symbolism, is typical of the late 19th century. At the turn of the 20th century the Publishers’ Binding Style became less decorative and was eventually replaced by the dust jacket. In this example, the binder is identified by a stamp at the tail of the spine.

Diced

Created by running a fillet or other blind tool across smoothed leather, dicing sets a uniform tone. Looking closely, one sees a series of small triangles of uniform size. As this was done by hand, dicing, although simple in appearance, was extremely difficult to execute.
Tree Calf

Looking closely one can see a tree-like image created by running acid down a calf skin board. The amount of acid used is reflected by the varying shades of brown and black. This binding style was used for nearly 150 years, although it is rare to find such a crisp example.

Speckled

By flicking small amounts of acid onto paper, an uneven dotted effect is created. This board also demonstrates half binding, with the spine and corners covered in leather and the main board left covered in paper.

Gilded Marbling

Accomplished by dipping paper into colors floated on a gelatinous surface, marbling is a common technique often accompanied by gilding. This three-quarter, green leather binding is extremely rare. Gilt geometrics, engraved on the spine with a fillet, are almost unheard of until the 20th century, making this volume a unique specimen.

Memoirs and Biography:

Memoirs from all major and many minor Napoleonic-era figures are found throughout the collection. Authored by Napoleon and his contemporaries, these works add colorful illustrations to many events described in military and cultural histories.

Memoirs such as this one offer unique insights, giving a woman’s perspective of the Emperor. Many of these are translated from the original French, making them accessible to everyone.

This engraving, contained within a published collection of letters from Napoleon to Josephine, depicts a sturdy, classical image of Napoleon. Linking him to the great Romans, it offers a contrast to the more gentle, loving man revealed through Napoleon’s letters.

Detailed illustrations of significant battles bolster the collections importance as most of them are in great condition. Here, Napoleon is crossing the Bridge of Arcola during the Italian Campaign of 1796. These engravings, etchings, and sketches could be of interest to Art Historians.