



THE COVER

In 1928 James Ford Bell merged his company Washburn Crosby with four other flour milling companies to form General Mills. He then managed the company as it grew to become the large international cereal company that it is today. In 1926 Mr. Bell purchased *A Summarie and True Discourse of Sir Frances Drake's West Indian Voyage* by Walter Bigges. This book was printed in London by Richard Field in 1598. It was the first book in the library that Mr. Bell would later establish at the University of Minnesota in 1953.

Mr. Bell was a graduate of the University of Minnesota, majoring in chemistry. Much later he served on the Board of Regents of the University. But he was also a book collector. Mr. Bell began collecting early English works, mostly drama and poetry. By the 1930s his book collecting shifted to nonfiction works, particularly the reports of the French Jesuits of North America and other pieces of Americana. These Jesuit reports were issued on an annual basis from 1632 to 1672. They were extremely popular reports of the North America missions, containing lively comments on the manners and customs of the various North American Indians. The market for travel accounts written during the European Age of Discovery was almost insatiable, as Europeans sought to find out about and make sense of lands and peoples different from themselves.

It was natural for a businessman like James Ford Bell to read in his books accounts of economic activity between various peoples. This rein-

Bookplate courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota.

forced his belief that commerce, the desire of people to trade their surplus goods for products that they do not possess, is the most important factor motivating interaction among people. Economic activity, Mr. Bell believed, underlies all other human activity: social, cultural, and political. When Mr. Bell took a look at his international company he wondered where it all began. He soon realized that the documentation of the beginnings of world commerce was not being done in a consistent manner. So in 1953 he donated six hundred carefully chosen books to the University of Minnesota Library. The original goal of what became the James Ford Bell Library was ambitious. To get at the earliest records the library's first curator was sent to the Middle East to inquire about collecting clay tablets, scrolls, and papyri documents. Serious consideration was given to collecting oral histories and other materials documenting the foundations of air cargo routes. It was soon realized that this was too much for one library to do, so the scope of the James Ford Bell Library was redefined to collect books, maps, and manuscripts that document Europe's relationship with non-European parts of the world in the time period 1400 to 1800, approximately. Europeans left behind many written records about their travels and encounters all over the world. Today the collection stands at just over twenty thousand items.

All of those first six hundred carefully chosen books contain Mr. Bell's bookplate. This tiny oval green leather plate measures just 2.5×3 centimeters. Stamped in gold is the family motto: *Nec Quaerere Honorem Nec Spernere* [Neither seek nor spurn honor]. In the center, also stamped in gold, is the family crest consisting of an eagle on top of the shield, three bells (very difficult to see), the bottom one separated from the top two by a center field of bells (also difficult to see). Separating the name, James F. Bell, from the family motto on one side is a three-leaf clover and on the other side is a bundle of grain. Use of the bookplate was discontinued when it was discovered that the leather was reacting with some of the end papers in certain books, and books added to the collection since then are plated with a James Ford Bell Library bookplate meeting modern preservation standards.

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