

Dr. William B. Munro (right), Caltech Professor Emeritus of History and Government, and Robert O. Schad, Curator of Rare Books at the Huntington Library, look over the Munro collection of election ballots which were on exhibit at the Huntington Library this fall.

ON THE BALLOT

DR. WILLIAM B. MUNRO, Caltech's Professor Emeritus of History and Government, and Treasurer of the Board of Trustees, is a collector of election ballots. As an indication of how unique a hobby this is—in all the years that he's been tracking down old ballots, Dr. Munro has never come across another collector in the field.

His collection includes ballots from all over the world, including some from Persia, Peru, China and Greece. Most of the ballots, however, are from the United States—and the Munro collection graphically demonstrates the development of our election procedures.

More ballots have been printed in the United States than in any other country in the world; and more experiments with different types of ballots have been tried here than anywhere else. Still, the ballot is just about the most ephemeral piece of printed matter imaginable. It's against the law for an election officer to give one out before election. After election, unused ballots are usually destroyed, while used ones are locked up in case of a recount.

National election ballots prior to the Civil War are especially rare in this country, though occasionally one still turns up in some old family papers. The oldest presidential ballot in the Munro collection is an 1840 one, used to cast a vote for Martin Van Buren.

Printed ballots weren't used in the United States until at least late in the 18th century, and there doesn't seem to be any reliable record of when they first appeared. The earliest elections in this country, in Massachusetts, were held in town meetings, and votes were taken by a show of hands. A little later some towns began to use the "corn and bean" ballot. Voters who attended town meetings each received one grain of corn and one black bean. When a candidate was nominated for the Great and General Court, the ballot box was passed. If, on inspection, it contained more grains of corn than it did black beans the candidate was elected. The Massachusetts Historical Society still elects members by the corn and bean system.

Though written ballots were sometimes used even in Colonial days, no official ballots were printed until long after the Civil War. Each party had its own ballot, with its slate printed on it. Sometimes these ballots contained only the presidential and vice-presidential candidates' names, with those of the electors pledged to them.

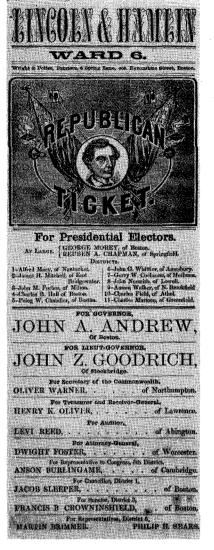
Prepared by the party, the ballot was mailed to the voter, or thrust into his hands as he approached the polling booth on election day. This made it easy to "stuff the ballot box," since anyone with a mind to could put more than one ballot in the box.

No strict count was kept of the used and unused ballots. There was no "X" to be marked on the ballot. It was just dropped into the box, or, in some cases, was first signed on the back by the voter. If the voter wanted to vote the straight ticket, he used the ballot as it was; if any of the candidates didn't please him,

VAN BUREN -ARTHUR SMITH of Isle of Wig 3d District .-... JAMES JONES, of Note 14 Diarlet --- WM. R. BASKERVIELE of S ries-CHARLES YAN EY, of B ith District .--- RICHARD LOGHN, of Halifax. Nistrict __ ARCHIBALD'STUART, of Patrick sth District __ WILLIAN JONES, of Glas ath Distin -AUSTIN BROCKENBROUGH, of E oth District.-JOHN, GIRSON, of Prince William. 11th District .- L.D. HAL YBUR TON, of New Kent. Sth District .- THOMAS J. RANDOLPH, of Alb 13th District - WALLER HOLLADAY, of Spottay 14th District .- INMAN HORNER, of Fanquier. 15th District - Sumet Balan of Mangerton 16th District .-- WILLIAM A. HARRIS, of Page. 17th District.-JACOB D. WILLIAMSON of Rocking) 18th District - WILLIAM TAYLOR, of Rockbridge. 13th District .--- A UOUSTUS A. CHAPMAN, of Monro 20th District-JAMES HOGE of Pulaski. 21at District-WM. BYARS, of Washington 24 District .- BENJAMIN BROWN, of Cabell. id District -- JOHN HINDMAN, of Br

1840

This is the earliest ballot in the Munro collection, and the ink signature written across its face indicates it was used to cast a vote for Van Buren and Johnson, running on the Democratic ticket —against William H. Harrison and John Tyler, on the Whig ticket. Van Buren and Johnson headed a winning ticket in 1836, but in 1840 they were defeated by "Tippecanoe and Tyler too."



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1861

A rare item in the Munro collection—the ballot naming Jefferson Davis as the unopposed candidate for the presidency of the Confederate States of America.

1860

In this year Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin, on the Republican ticket, defeated Stephen Douglas and Herschel Johnson, Democrats—as well as the candidates of the Southern Democratic Party and those of the Constitutional Union Party. Note on the ballot that Lincoln is clean-shaven. By inauguration day in 1861 he had grown the beard which he wore for the rest of his life.

he could "scratch the ticket" by crossing out names and substituting others.

It wasn't until the late 1880's that the Australian ballot came into use here. Politicians contemptuously referred to it as the "Kangaroo ballot" when it was first introduced from Australia. It was the first American ballot requiring a voter to mark a cross, but its most distinguishing feature was that it was *official*—printed by the election authorities, and not by the political parties.

The largest ballot in the Munro collection is one

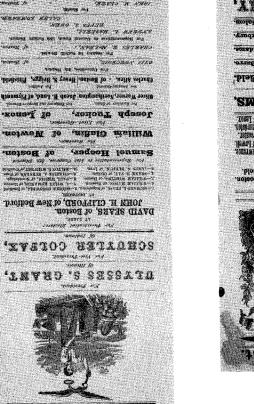
for the 23rd Assembly District in the New York State primary election of March 26, 1902. It is 14 feet long.

A slightly smaller ballot, used in Yankton County, South Dakota, measures 8 feet, 3 inches. It contains the complete text of several statutes, including one on the reorganization of the South Dakota National Guard. It is set in 7 point type (three sizes smaller than what you are now reading). It contains 4-feet-square of reading matter. And it is mentioned here to give courage to Californians facing a ballot containing 24 propositions on November 4.

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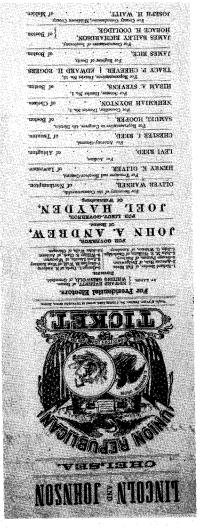
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and Schuyler Colfax. cis P. Blair, Jr., were defeated in the election by Ulysses S. Grant candidates on the ballots for 1868. Horatio Seymour and Franfo eines int a bered a full search Both Republican and Democratic