

Dear Members:

I am writing today to ask you to consider making a gift to support the work of a graduate student transcribing and translating portions of a manuscript genealogy of King Edward IV, now called Ms. Roll 1066, in the collections of the University of Pennsylvania Library. This roll is 37 feet in length and has two separate chronicles, one on each side. It is unique among manuscripts of this kind.



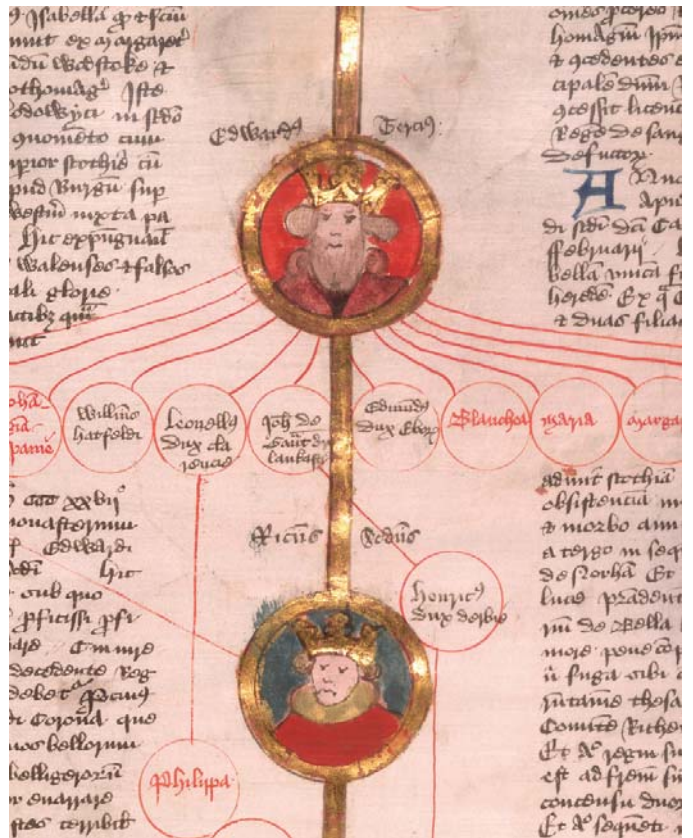
As many of you know, our contributions resulted in the restoration of another genealogy of Edward IV in another Philadelphia library. That manuscript was exhibited in 2001 and again in 2007, and has resulted in recognition of the Richard III Society by an international community of medieval scholars and art historians. It is almost unbelievable that two of the three most significant genealogies of Edward IV should come to one American city, but the unbelievable has happened.

The Executive Board has already agreed to match member contributions up to \$2,500 from the portion of our Schallek Fund that was retained by the American Branch in order to help the University of Pennsylvania Library carry out this wonderful project. The librarians tell me that our gift will serve as "seed money" to encourage other donors and foundations to continue the work that we have made it possible for them to begin.

The University of Pennsylvania Library is investing considerable funds in this project to make it possible to "scroll through" this magnificent manuscript online. It is also in discussions with the Free Library of Philadelphia to apply the same technology to their manuscript. This will allow all of

us to have an experience of these two manuscripts very much like the one their original owners and readers had.

Our part of this project would provide funding for another important aspect. Like its sister roll, Ms. Roll 1066 is written in Latin and is very difficult to read. As Professor Emily Steiner writes in the attached project report, "Scholars tend to be interested in these kinds of mid-15th century rolls for their propagandistic aims, the ways in which they bolster a contender's claim to the throne or a noble family's claim to ancient lineage. During the war of the Roses -- which was as much a propaganda war between the York and Lancastrian factions as it was a series of bloody battles -- it was nearly impossible for a historian to maintain a fiction of neutrality." Our funding would provide for a medievalist graduate student to transcribe and translate critical portions of the roll and to create a searchable index of names and events in the roll.



Although times are difficult for us all, I am hoping that Ricardians will recognize the importance of this project and make a gift to support a graduate student in work that will deepen and enrich our understanding of the swirling political currents around Richard and his family. You can send checks to our treasurer, Diane Hoffman, specifying that they are for the Edward IV Manuscript Matching Gift program. We will also explore the possibility of

making gifts to this fund, using your credit card, via PayPal. If you have any questions about the manuscript project, please feel free to email me at [lblanchard@rblanchard.com](mailto:lblanchard@rblanchard.com)

Thank you.



Laura Blanchard  
October 17, 2009

## The Penn Roll Project

In 2007, the University of Pennsylvania Rare Book & Manuscript Library acquired a remarkable roll, now called Ms. Roll 1066. The Penn Roll, a staggering 37 feet and 13 membranes long, contains two chronicles, one on each side of the roll, both written down in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. On the front side of the roll is a Latin universal chronicle, beginning with Adam and Eve and ending with Edward IV (1461). This chronicle, which takes up all 13 membranes, is devoted primarily to English history, culled from Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury, Matthew Paris, Ranulph Higden, and lesser-known later medieval redactions. The chronicle is largely arranged in three columns, with text in the left and right columns and a genealogical line running down the middle column. This genealogy contains 174 bust-length portraits in color, 5 mandorlas with tinted full-length portraits, and 80 roundels containing crowns. On the back of the manuscript, ending on membrane 5, is a *Genealogy of Christ*, an abbreviated biblical history attributed to Peter of Poitiers (d. 1215), followed by a list of popes and emperors.

The Penn Roll is related to three other known rolls completed early in the reign of Edward IV, the first Yorkist king and brother to future king Richard III. Of these four rolls, only two probably share identical text, the Penn Roll and the Harvard Roll (Ms. Typ. 40). The Trinity Roll (Trinity College, Cambridge R.452) leaves off at membrane 5, right in the middle of British history (corresponding to the Penn Roll, membrane 7, where the Penn Roll has a mandorla of King Arthur); whereas the Huntington Roll (HM 264), also 5 membranes long, successfully progresses from Adam and Eve to Edward IV but is either missing material in the middle or has severely compressed the history recorded in the Penn Roll.

These four manuscripts are otherwise very closely related; a comparison between them would form the nucleus of the Penn Roll Project with Penn Ms. 1066 at the center.

The Penn Roll Project has two goals. The first is to give readers a virtual format that captures the experience of reading a roll. Reading a roll might seem like a straightforward enterprise, as simple as tracing a line of English kings: we start at the top with Adam and Eve and unroll until we reach the chronological endpoint, the ascension of Edward IV in 1461. But, in practice, reading a roll, especially an extremely long roll like Ms. Roll 1066, is a more complicated task. To read a roll is constantly to roll and unroll, reading backward and forward in history, across columns, and from text to image and back again. Penn's novel presentation of Ms. Roll 1066 would allow viewers to unroll and re-roll the manuscript from either side. This project would enhance Penn's longstanding seminar in the History of Material Texts, which has inspired so many undergraduate and graduate theses. It would also complement other digitizations of medieval rolls, such as the Free Library of Philadelphia's splendid Edward IV Roll, which can be viewed membrane by membrane but can't be virtually unrolled.

The second goal of the Penn Roll Project is to give students and scholars a new appreciation for 15<sup>th</sup>-century historical writing. In contrast to 12<sup>th</sup>-century Latin histories, 13<sup>th</sup>-century encyclopedias, and 14<sup>th</sup>-century universal histories, 15<sup>th</sup>-century histories often seem derivative, crudely propagandistic, and stylistically impoverished. The universal chronicle in the Penn Roll, though a redaction of earlier texts, shows just how inventive 15<sup>th</sup>-century historiography could be. Scholars tend to be interested in these kinds of mid-15<sup>th</sup> century rolls for their propagandistic aims, the ways in which they bolster a contender's claim to the throne or a noble family's claim to ancient lineage. During the War of the Roses – which was as much a propaganda war between the York and Lancastrian factions as it was a series of bloody battles – it was nearly impossible for a historian to maintain a fiction of neutrality. But the Penn Roll's creative historiography challenges some of the assumptions of modern scholarship. For example, though the roll clearly supports the Yorkist claim – it shows, parallel to the central line of royal descent, a Yorkist genealogy descending from Lionel of Antwerp, 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Edward III, which argues for Edward of York's claim to the English throne – it

also lays out the competing claim of the Lancastrian line, descending from Edward III's 4<sup>th</sup> son, John of Gaunt. The Penn Roll thus proves how history can make arguments for the right to rule at the same time that it accommodates different versions of history.

The compiler of the universal chronicle was clearly interested in figuring out ways to reconcile different histories graphically. The single genealogical line running through the middle is meant to show the order of royal succession, as well as the smooth translation of periods and empires, from biblical to Roman and British, to Anglo-Saxon, and Norman. When he reached the Anglo-Saxon period, however, the compiler chose to divide the genealogical line into 8 columns in order to accommodate his source, William of Malmesbury (12<sup>th</sup> century), who divided his history of the Anglo-Saxons into separate books, each book dealing with one of the 7 Anglo-Saxon kingdoms (Mercia, Northumbria, Kent, and so forth). The compiler realized that the histories of 7 kingdoms weren't synchronous, so he tried to portray them linearly and laterally at the same time. He understood, too, that the history of the Britons didn't come abruptly to a halt with the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, so he designed an 8<sup>th</sup> column of British kings to interweave with the histories of the English kings.

As suggested above, history, as embodied, by the Penn Roll, tends to wreak havoc with modern expectations of historical narrative, and particularly in the way that it selects for persons and events. Three of the 5 mandorlas, for instance, contain images of notable figures in the history of the British Isles: the Trojan conqueror, Brutus, King Arthur, and William the Conqueror. The other two mandorlas, however, one drawn just above the other, portray images of the Roman emperor Claudius and the British king Lucius, a king little known to modern readers. As it turns out, Lucius is important to the compiler of Ms. Roll 1066 because he represents the first royal initiative, following Claudius's conquest of England, to import Christianity to Britain from Rome, way ahead of the early missionaries and the later mission of Augustine of Canterbury recounted by Bede. In this way, the universal chronicle, though indebted to monastic historiography, presages Reformation histories in which King Lucius often figures prominently.

Finally, the two sides of the Penn Roll offer a double view of history. As far as we know, the Penn roll is the only 15<sup>th</sup>-century English genealogical roll

from this period to have Peter of Poitiers's *Genealogy of Christ* on the back. It's tempting to study the front and back of Ms. Roll 1066 separately: after all, the *Genealogy of Christ* comes from a much earlier scholastic tradition; in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, a roll version may have even been pinned up on the wall of a Paris university classroom. The universal chronicle, on the other hand, comes from an English monastic tradition of historical writing modeled by Matthew of Paris's 13<sup>th</sup>-century *Chronicle of English Kings*. If we examine Ms. Roll 1066 more closely, however, we see that the scribe of the *Genealogy of Christ* deliberately matched up the Adam and Eve images on the two sides of the roll, likewise the ark image on the front and the Noah image line up fairly closely, and the Nativity image on the back lines up perfectly with the Christ medallion on the front. Clearly, the scribe of the *Genealogy of Christ* wanted to emphasize an affinity between the two texts, an affinity made possible by the roll form.

This past summer, the assistant curator of manuscripts at Penn, Amey Hutchins, and Penn English professor, Emily Steiner, began work on Ms. Roll 1066 and identified every name in the center column of the universal history and transcribed some selections from the text. A grant from the American Branch of the Richard III Society would allow us to continue to work on the manuscript in conjunction with David McKnight, who directs the Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image (SCETI), which is developing in parallel the Roll viewer. We would also like to pay a medievalist graduate student to transcribe key passages of text, especially at the top and bottom of membranes, which would help us compare the Penn Roll with its sister rolls. The graduate student would also create a searchable index of names and events in the roll. Amey Hutchins will oversee the project at the Penn Library; Emily Steiner is presently in the UK, where she plans to consult the Trinity Roll mentioned above, in addition to other rolls and genealogical chronicles in British archives; she and Amey will write an introductory essay to accompany the digitization of the roll. We hope to launch the Penn Roll Project in May, 2011.

*Please make checks payable to The Richard III Society, Inc. and mail to treasurer Diane Hoffman, Treasurer, 2580 S. University, #903, Denver CO 80210-6104. Indicate that the check is a contribution to the Edward IV Manuscript Matching Gift program.*