Boca man donates rare pieces of history

Florida Atlantic University became home to the eighth-largest collection of American Revolution-era books and documents in the United States on Thursday after the donation of a man's decades-long pursuit of history.

The 13,000-item compilation is worth $3.8 million.

By KIMBERLY MILLER
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Weiner, 88, began his collection in the 1940s. It is now worth $3.8 million.

"This is the documented proof that the framers of our Constitution and our nation gave us that indeed this is a land of, for and by the people and continues to exist as a brilliant model of possibility and of what mankind can do when given a chance." FAU President Frank Brogan said during a dedication ceremony at the Boca Raton school.

The collection, which will include a 1777 copy of the Articles of Confederation, the 13 original states' first constitution, "This is just utterly unlike any other collection we have," FAU library Director Bill Miller says.
Donor compared colonists to enslaved Jews

COLLECTION from 1C

be held in storage at FAU for about a year while a special suite is constructed, is the school’s rarest and most important collection and the only one of its kind south of the Mason-Dixon Line, FAU library Director Bill Miller said.

The collection’s core is composed of first and later editions of books, manuscripts and pamphlets printed in America before 1865. It includes Thomas Paine’s 1776 book The American Crisis, which begins, “These are the times that try men’s souls.”

“T’ve been a professional librarian for over 30 years and I’ve seen my share of original documents, but we opened one package and it was the Articles of Confederation and I looked at it and just said, ‘Wow,’ ” Miller said. “This is just utterly unlike any other collection we have.”

Weiner and his wife, Sybil, live in Boca Raton now and attended Thursday’s dedication, but let their son, Howard, also of Boca Raton, speak for the family.

Howard Weiner said his father’s fascination with American history began when he was a child listening to the story of the Jewish exodus from slavery in Egypt.

As he got older, he saw a similarity in the founding fathers of the American Revolution who he said sought liberty and freedom like the Jewish slaves.

Weiner was particularly inspired by Benjamin Franklin, his son said.

Weiner originally wanted to dedicate his collection to his alma mater. Although his son did not disclose the name of the school, a press release says Weiner graduated in 1938 from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

But FAU offered to keep the collection in its entirety in a special secure area that will include exhibition, work and research areas.

“To his credit, he chose to give the collection to FAU,” Howard Weiner said of his father. “Giving this to FAU is actually giving it to the country.”

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