

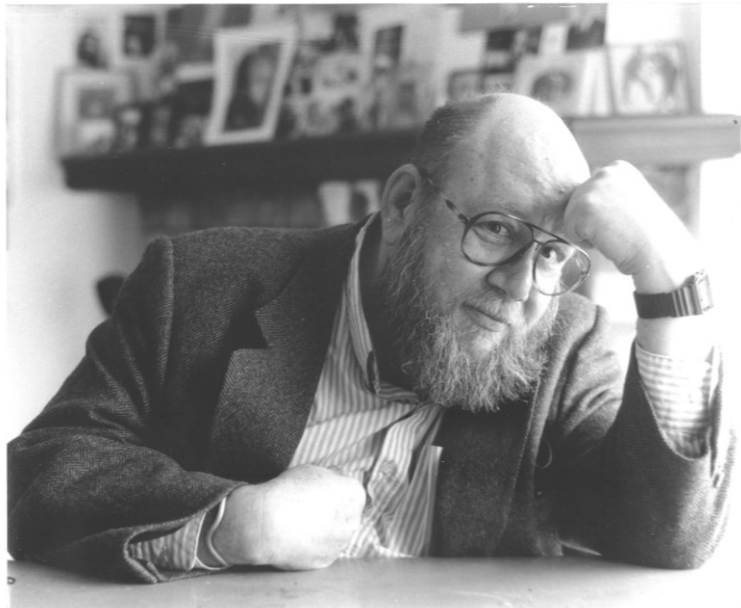
WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT MY LIFE

by David Frank Phillips II

San Francisco  
2010

# WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT MY LIFE

by David Frank Phillips II



But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see:  
and they that have not heard shall understand.

Romans 15:21

History is a process of memory, and all the rest you make up.

Robert O'Hara

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**San Francisco • 2010**

**dfp18@columbia.edu**



THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO

## **LORD GANESHA**

THE MIGHTY ONE, REMOVER OF OBSTACLES

GOD OF KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

PATRON OF LITERATURE AND LEARNING

INSPIRATION AND SCRIBE



Personal God (*ishwara*) is no other than Impersonal God or *Nirguna Brahman* experienced through the veil of time, space and causation.

Swami Bhaskarananda, *The Essentials of Hinduism*

## **OM GANG GANIPATIYE NEMAH**

---

And to the memory of Dr. Timothy Leary (1920-1996), psychedelic pioneer, to whom I promised the dedication of my first book, never imagining that it would be a book about myself.

# WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT MY LIFE

by David Frank Phillips II

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## TABLE OF SUPPLEMENTS

This table lists the Supplements I intend to lodge eventually with my autobiography in the Phillips Family Papers at Yale. Some may have to wait until my will is executed; others may go up earlier. Some (like the writing files) are not yet complete; I may add more. The numbering is strictly provisional, and the order of the listing is arbitrary.

### Not keyed to particular chapters

1. Files of personal letters
2. Files of transcriptions of selected e-mails
3. List of books read, 1984-2006
4. File of selected non-legal writing
5. Commonplace book
6. File of non-heraldic articles published under my name
7. Dream book and supplement
8. Notebook of *I Ching* records
9. File of doodles
10. File of letters to my nephew Noah as a child
11. Original diplomas and certificates
12. Will and associated documents (instructions for executor, power of attorney for health care decisions, general power of attorney)
13. Accounting of my estate (to be submitted by my executor)

### Keyed to particular chapters

14. Letter from my grandmother describing the circumstances of my birth (Chapter 1)
15. *Hoofprints on the Roof*, a children's book by my aunt Louise Phillips, dedicated to me (Chapter 2)
16. *Simple Heraldry Cheerfully Illustrated* (Chapter 6)<sup>1</sup>
17. *New Flags for the States* (Chapter 6)
18. Draft chapter, *Royal Standards* (Chapter 6)

---

<sup>1</sup> As of August 2010, Yale's only copy is in a special collection.

19. File of heraldic articles published under my name (Chapter 6)
20. Catalogue of atlas collection (Chapters 4.D, 5 and 29.A)
21. Catalogue of heraldic collection (Chapters 4.D, 6 and 29.A)
22. Catalogue of heraldic covers (Chapters 4.D, 6 and 29.A)
23. Catalogue of medal books (Chapters 4.D, 6 and 29.A)
24. Form 150 (Conscientious Objector) (Chapter 12.B)
25. Brief for the *Air Pirates* case (Chapter 15)
26. Eulogy for my father, 1973 (Chapter 16)
27. *Neurologic* (Chapter 19.A)<sup>2</sup>
28. *Exo-Psychology* (Chapter 19.A)<sup>2</sup>
29. *In Tao We Trust* (Chapter 19.A)<sup>2</sup>
30. Plant Works crib sheet (Chapter 23)
31. Application for admission to Master of Arts in Humanities program, San Francisco State University (Chapter 23)
32. File of seminar papers written at San Francisco State University (chapter 23)
33. File of librarian memos (Chapter 24.B)
34. The Koronyi reverie (guided regression) (Chapter 25)
35. Application for admission to Massachusetts bar (Chapter 25)
36. WOMR playlists (two notebooks) (Chapter 26.A)
37. *Show and Tell* production notebook (Chapter 26.B)
38. Videotape of *Show and Tell* shows (Chapter 26.B)
39. Legal writing: partial list of titles (Chapter 27B)
40. A year's legal work summarized (from a document prepared for a law firm employee evaluation) (Chapter 27B)
41. Two law review articles, included as good samples of my work.(Chapter 27B)
42. File of theatre reviews from law firm newsletter (Chapter 27B)
43. Set of pocket notebooks, with wooden storage cases (Chapter 28)
44. List of notebooks (Chapter 28)
45. First series of notebooks (Leathersmith, 1966-77) (Chapter 28)
46. Lists of trips (Chapter 30)

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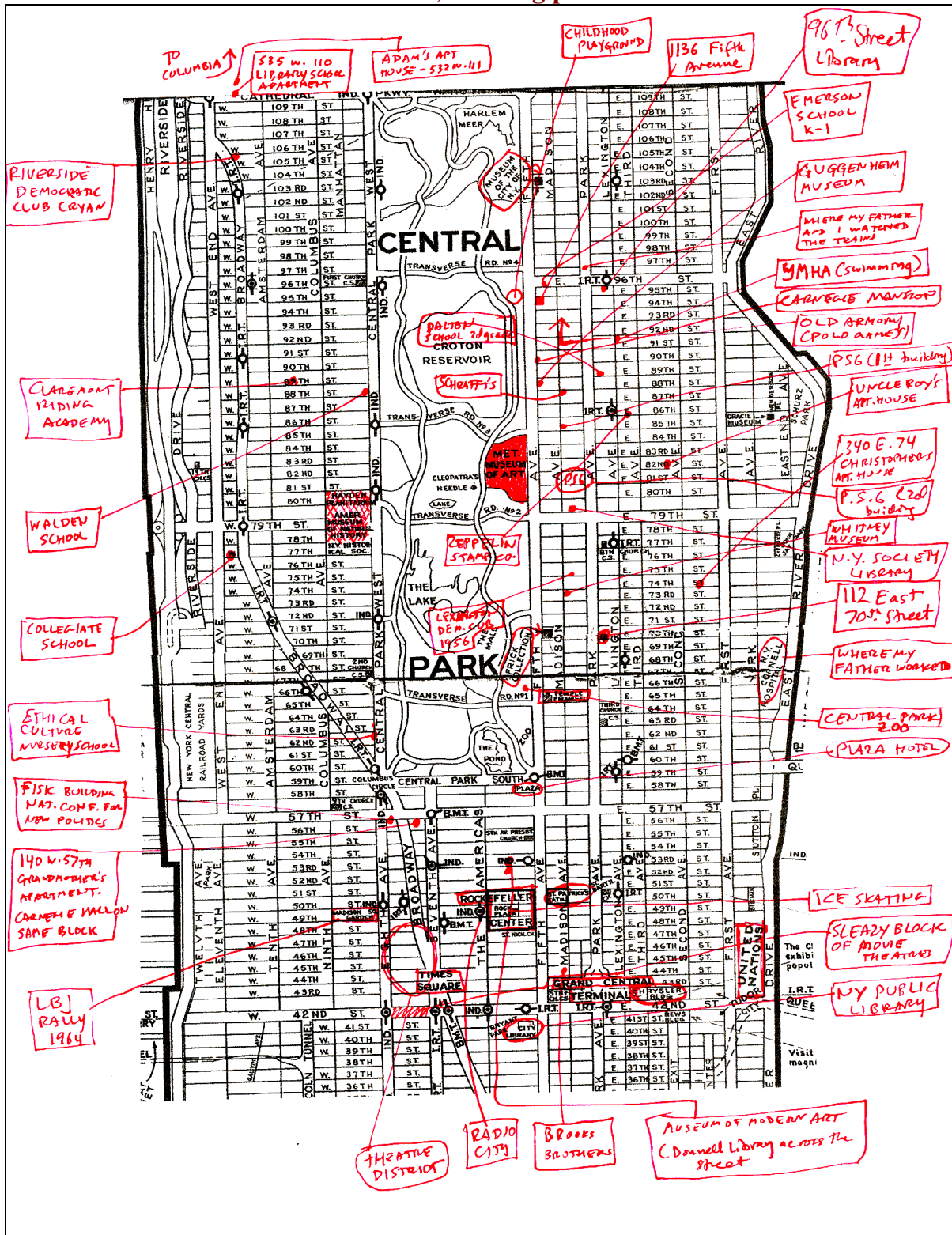
<sup>2</sup> No copy in the Yale library catalogue as of August 2010.

- 47. Travel chronicle (Chapter 30)
- 48. File of e-mail travelogues (Chapter 30)
- 49. County Project maps and records (Chapter 30.B)
- 50. Prescription list (Chapter 34)

**MAPS**  
**showing places mentioned in the text**

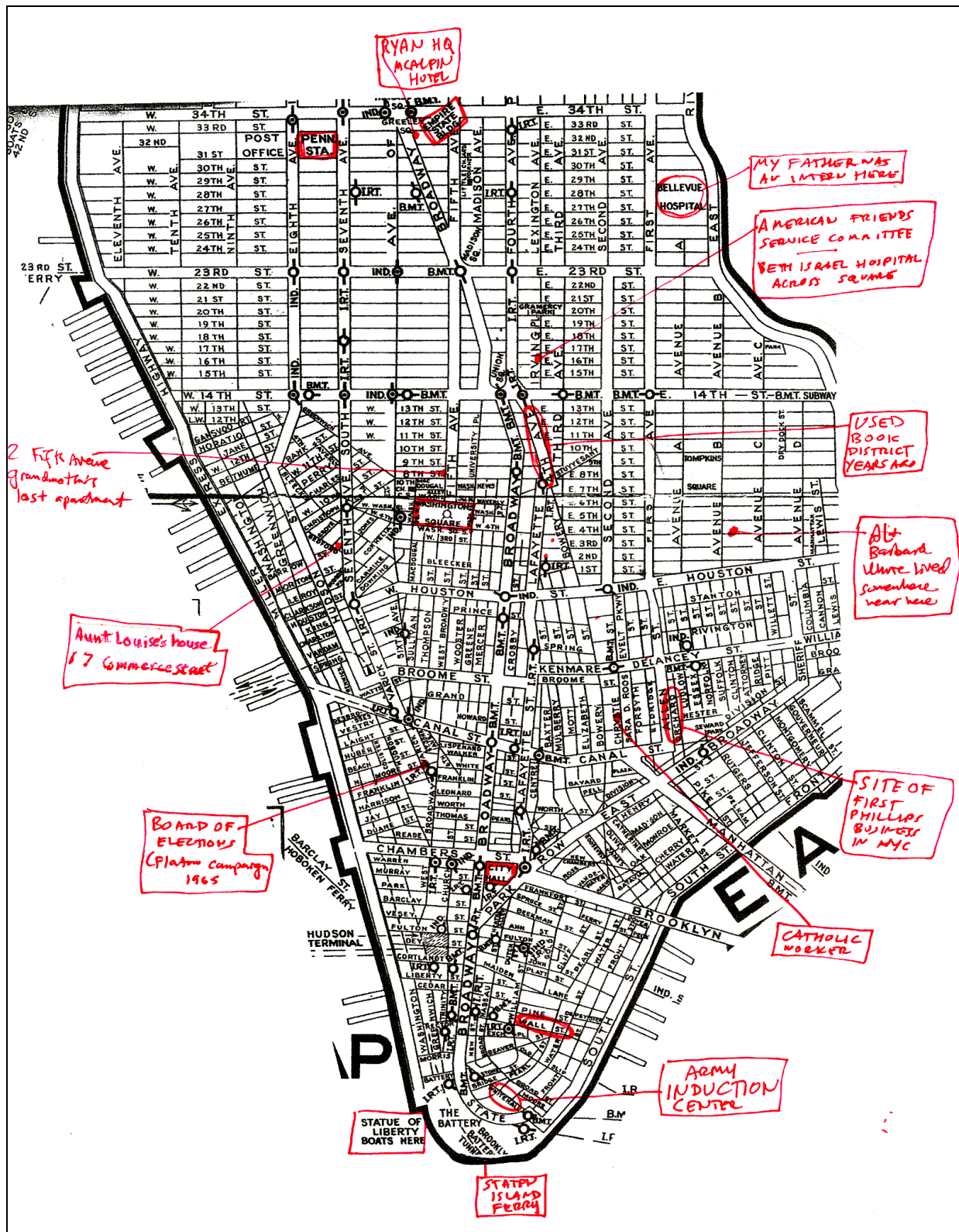
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# MAP I: Manhattan, showing places mentioned



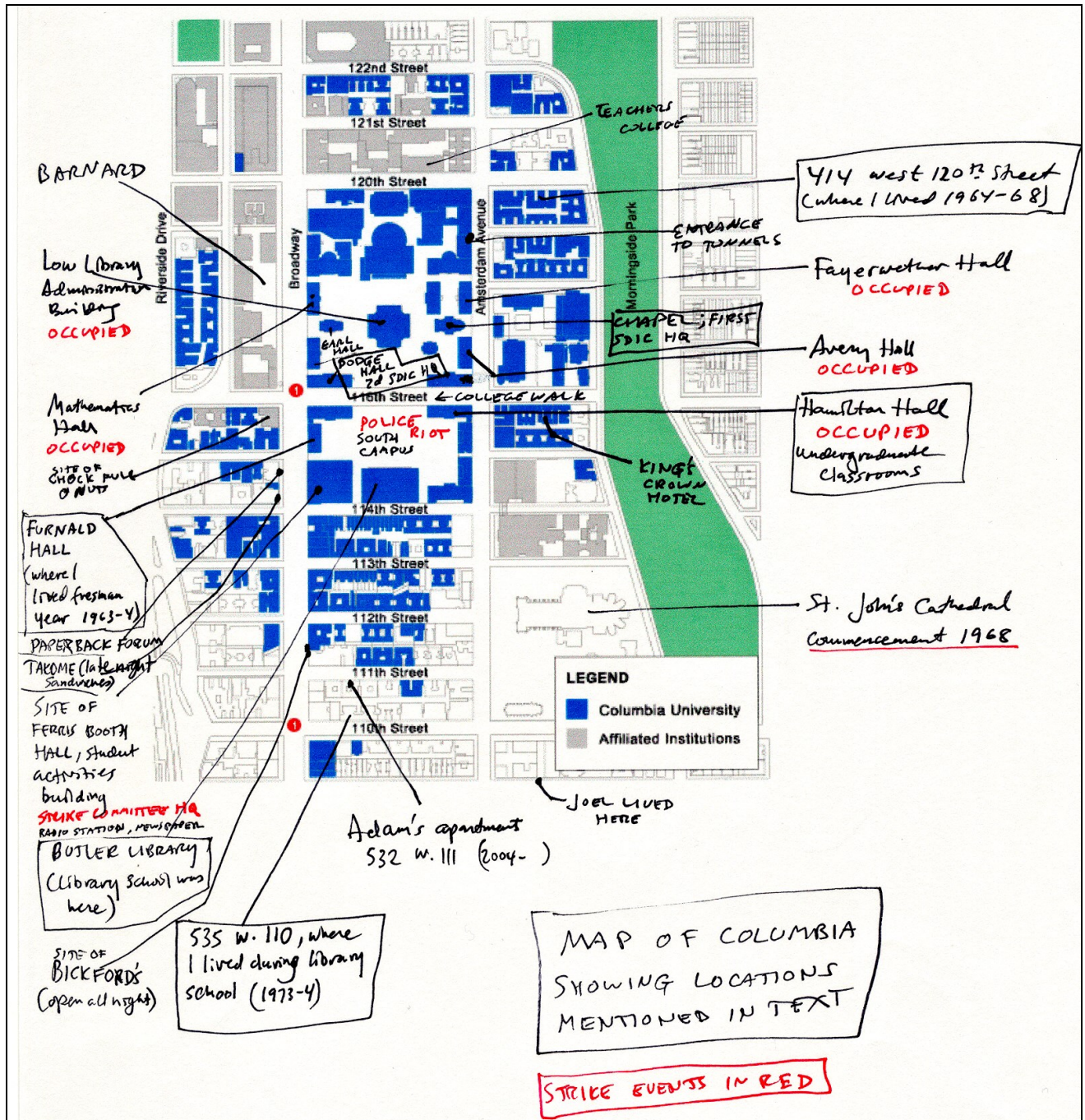
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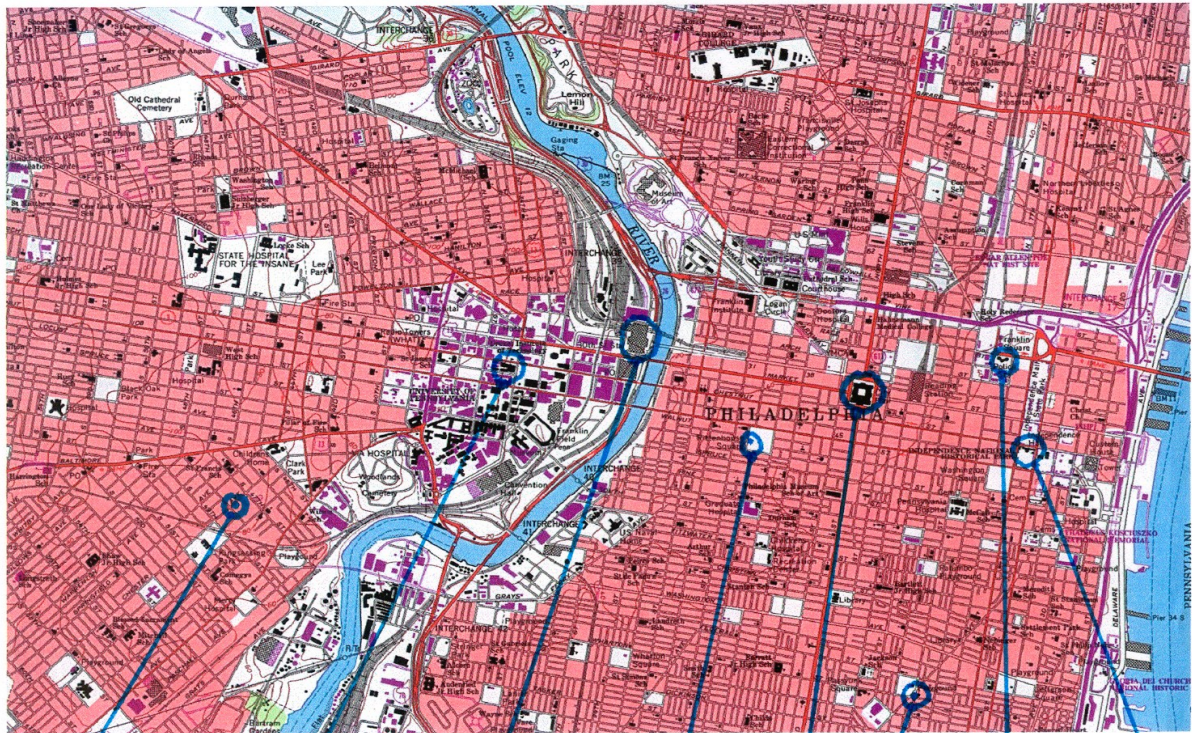


**MAP II: Columbia University, showing places mentioned**





**MAP III: Philadelphia, showing places mentioned**



MY HOUSE  
4630 Chester Ave.

Penn Law School  
3400 Chestnut St.

30th Street  
Station  
(Railroad to  
New York)

Pat. Schottland's  
Rittenhouse Sq.  
apartment

City  
Hall

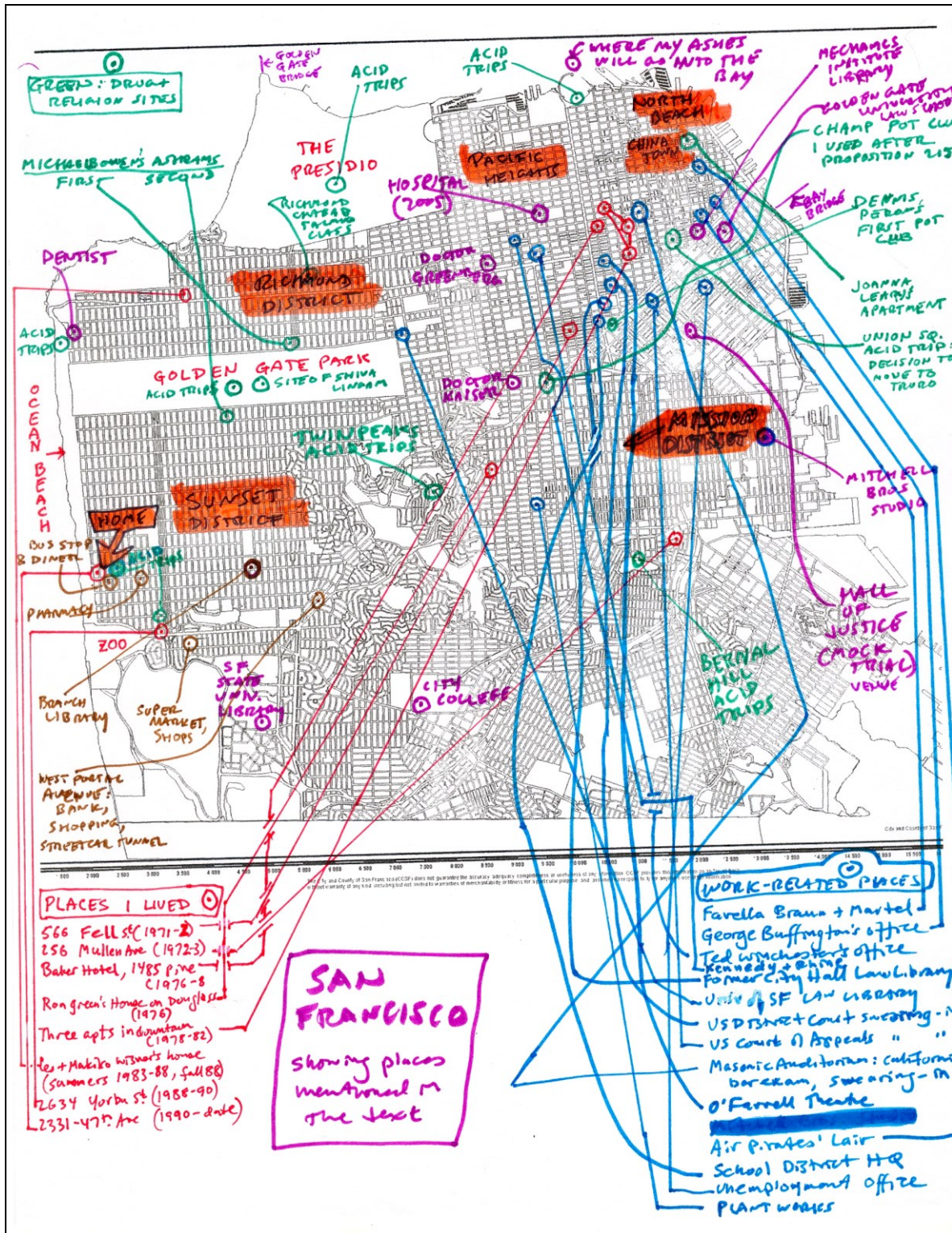
Pat's  
Kingd  
Steaks  
(Cheesesteaks)

Police Court  
(Roundhouse)

Independence  
Hall

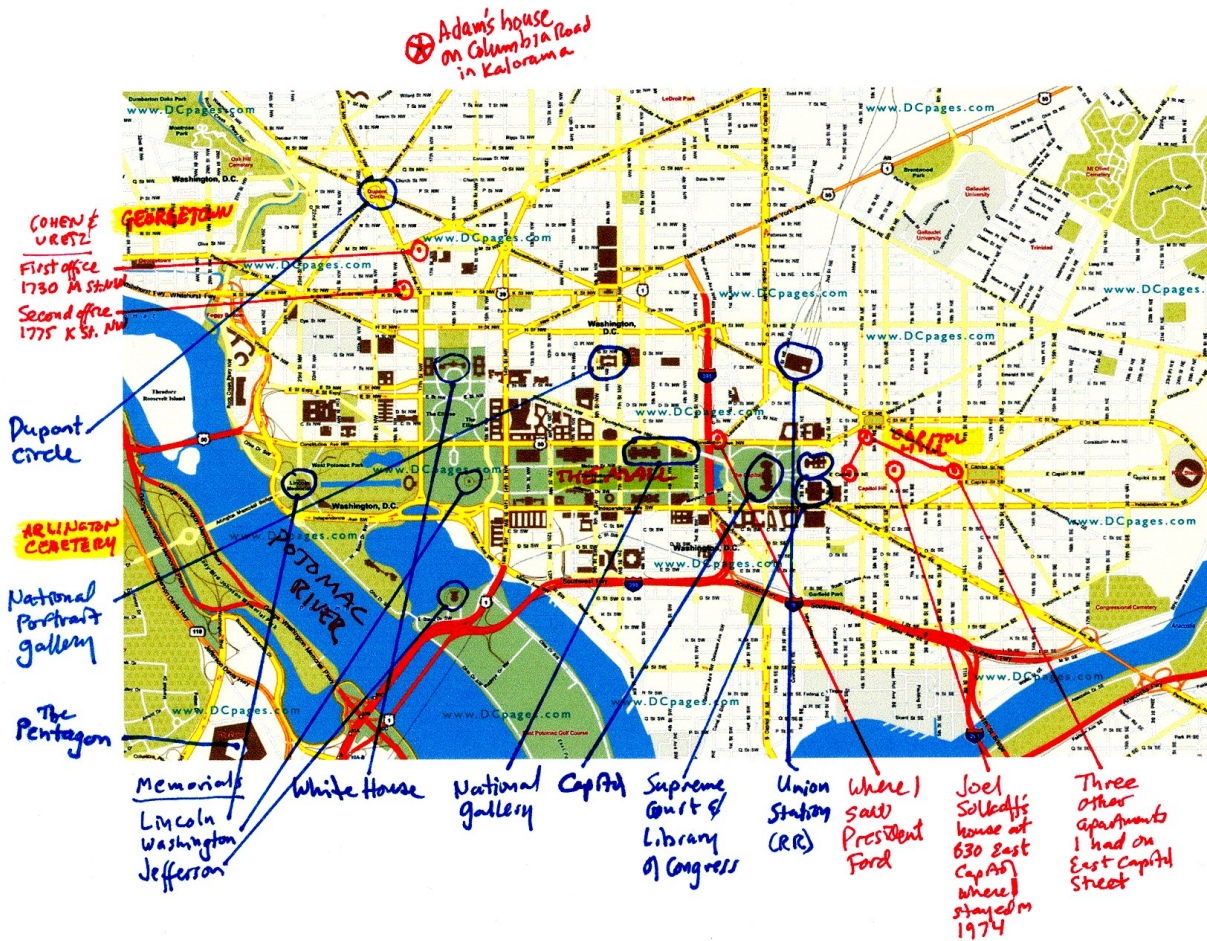


### MAP IV: San Francisco, showing places mentioned

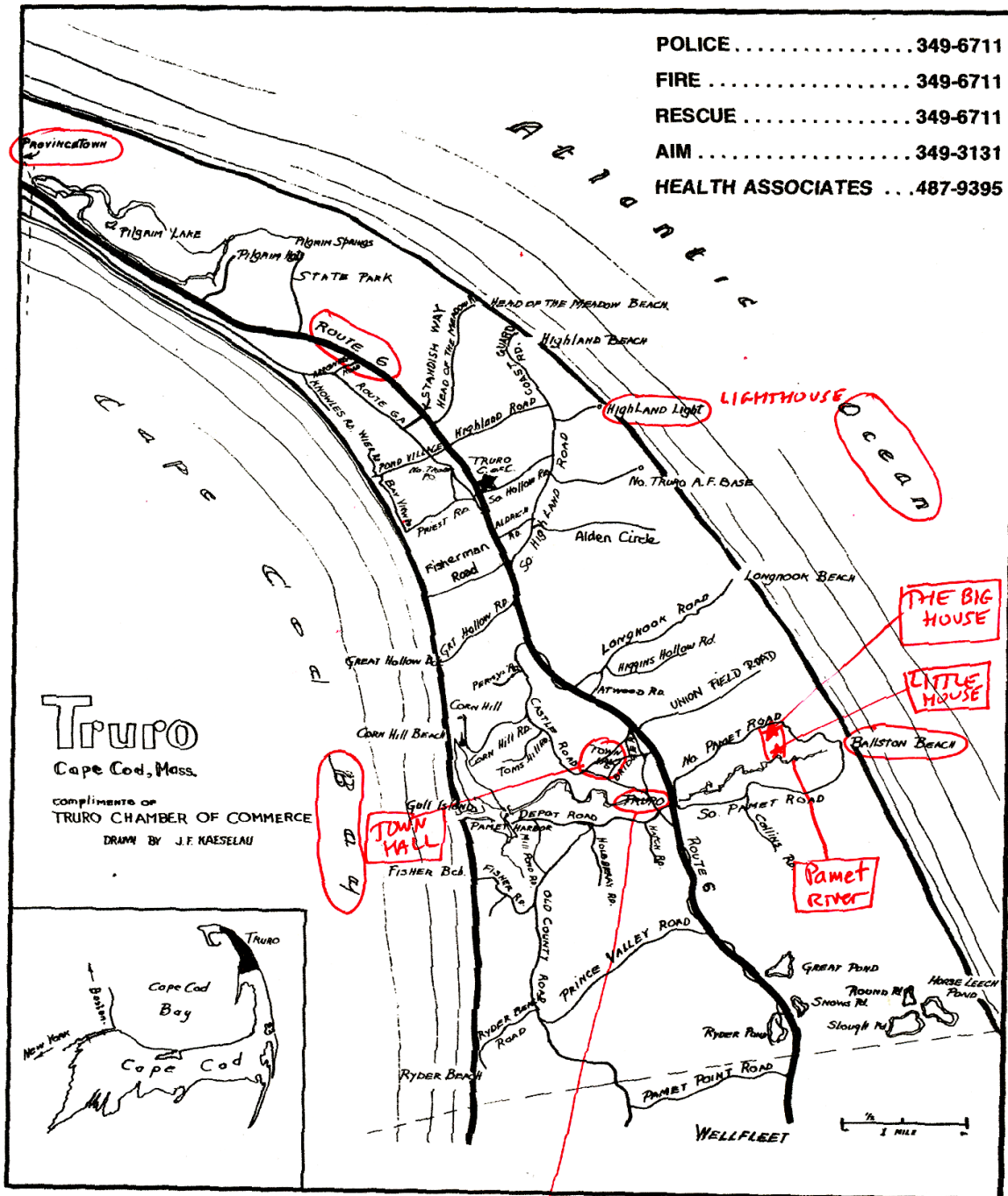




**MAP V: Washington D.C., showing places mentioned**

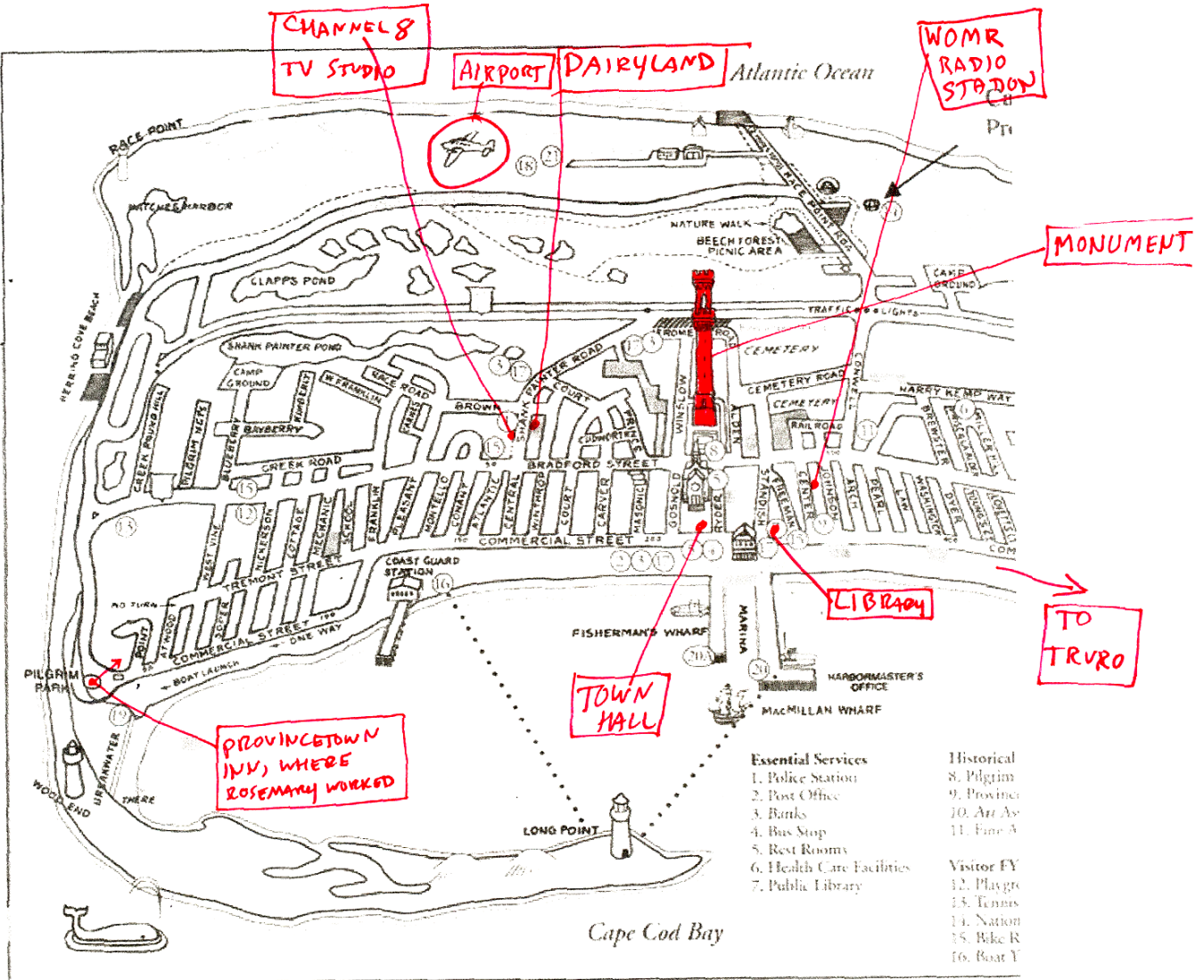


**MAP VI: Truro, with places mentioned**



TOWN CENTER,  
SUCH AS IT WAS.  
POST OFFICE,  
STORE.

**MAP VII: Provincetown, with places mentioned**



## PROVINCETOWN

SHOWING PLACES  
MENTIONED IN THE  
TEXT



## WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT MY LIFE

### THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DAVID FRANK PHILLIPS II WRITTEN FOR THE PHILLIPS FAMILY PAPERS ARCHIVE AT YALE UNIVERSITY

#### PREFACE

An autobiography promises feats worthy of record, conversations with famous people, a central role in important events. There is none of that here.

Barack Obama, *Dreams From My Father* (1995)

An autobiography should be its own justification and its own interpretation. There should be no room for a preface.

Samuel Squire Sprigge, prefatory note to *The Autobiography of Sir Walter Besant* (1902)

This book fills a much-needed gap.

Moses Hadas<sup>3</sup>

I wrote this autobiography to supplement the Phillips Family Papers and the Christopher Phillips Papers at Yale University. I am Christopher Phillips' elder brother, born in 1944, and in his Papers he has preserved a number of letters to and from me, so users of the papers might have an interest in knowing who I am (or was). The Phillips Family Papers were included in the archives set up by Christopher at Yale partly because Yale wanted the records of a typical New York Jewish bourgeois family. We might not be typical, but we have the other parts covered.

I am taking advantage of the existence of the Phillips Family Papers to lodge here the story of my life, such as it is, was, or has been. I am not likely to achieve any measure of immortality on my own account. But as long as a space has been made available for me, for whatever reason, to leave a trace of myself in a perpetual institution, I might as well do it. It has been fun to write, and helpful in getting some perspective on my life, as in my sixties it begins to wind down. This is my story, then, pretty much, augmented by

---

<sup>3</sup> Moses Hadas (1900-1966) was a distinguished professor of classics at Columbia. This was his standard thank-you for unsolicited books. Sometimes he would say instead: "Thank you for sending me your book – I'll waste no time in reading it."



some documents I have included with the text, and some others which will go up to Yale after my death as a Supplement.

When I started this project I never imagined I would write so much. I thought I remembered very little, but the more I wrote, the more I remembered.<sup>4</sup> And then I began adding documents and pictures, and began reading through old letters and e-mails looking for illuminating vignettes and contemporary *cris de coeur*, and it started to add up.<sup>5</sup> I'm still not sure I have the larger picture yet, but certainly I have more of it now than I did before I started writing. From an e-mail:



After decades of study I developed a historical perspective about politics and world events – now maybe I'm getting some about myself. It is odd to be working with such enthusiasm on a book that not only is no one paying me to write, but which I am not even going to publish. But a lot of the appeal of this project is taking stock of my life and trying to see it as a whole rather than just as shreds of memory appearing every now and then with no context. I remember lot more than I thought I did. One thing about an autobiography is that no one can reproach me for saying *it's all about me*.

Now it is as complete as I can make it and still finish it – I keep remembering more, but every book must have an end. I have left out a few (only a few) things I do not wish to record, or still do not understand.<sup>6</sup> It isn't exactly *art*, but it does tell something of who I am (or was) and what the world seemed like to someone in my (varying) time, place and station in life.

Is all this mass of information worth remembering? I don't know – I don't need to make that judgment. If I were going to try publish this memoir, that question would need to be answered, and the answer would probably be: whether it's worth *my* remembering or not,

---

<sup>4</sup> “I tend to live in the past,” said the San Francisco columnist Herb Caen (1916-1997), “because most of my life is there.”

<sup>5</sup> The illustration is a woodcut by Albrecht Dürer, of Peter of Almastra, from the *Revelations of St. Bridget* (1500).

<sup>6</sup> As Anthony Trollope wrote at the beginning of *his* autobiography, published posthumously in 1883, “That I, or any man, should tell everything of himself, I hold to be impossible. Who could endure to own the doing of a mean thing? Who is there that has done none? But this I protest: – that nothing that I say shall be untrue.”

it isn't particularly worth *anyone else* remembering.<sup>7</sup> My life, while not uneventful in a micro- sense, has been quite without macro-significance. But although my life might not be of much interest right now, I have read a lot of history in which the memoirs of ordinary obscure individuals have centuries later become primary sources for the social history of the times.<sup>8</sup> Yale is going to be around for a long time – it has been already (founded 1701). In 2319, at this moment as far in the future as the founding of Yale is in the past, my memoir might be very useful as a view into the world I lived in way back then. That's the principal external reason I'm doing it.

There are some fairly tedious listings in the chapters which follow – books I read in my youth, courses I took in college, and the like. They will be of little interest to present-day readers, who are invited to skip over them. But to readers in the 24th century, or the 34th, or the 44th, they might be catnip. Many works of ancient and medieval history base extensive reconstructions on just such lists as these.

This is not a polished work. Writing it has heightened my appreciation of writers (like Peter Ustinov, for example, in *Dear Me* (1977)) who can tell the stories of their lives with the depth and wit of a proper biography. This book will probably have an extremely small audience – a very few people living today who might be interested, and whoever else might encounter it in the Yale Library in the centuries to come – so I have not tried to polish it very much. It has seemed enough for me to gather what recollections I could. From another e-mail:

It is somewhat humbling for me as a professional writer, who prides himself on what a polished product he produces, to see how rough this is coming out. Maybe when it's finished I'll revise it. But probably not – as it is not to be published, but is just going into an archive as a primary source for who knows what, maybe it can stay rough. The unknown historian of the 26th century who is looking to my life as an example of how people lived way back then, like Pepys' *Diary* or a monkish chronicle, might be glad to get it without too much editing.

People who read individual chapters in preparation kept suggesting that I refine the work for publication, or expand it to include a history of my times (complete with thumbnail sketches of famous people), or discuss all my unsuccessful love affairs (as a way of “coming to terms” with all that), or engage an editor to give it mass appeal, or self-publish on the Internet, or even turn it into a weblog so people could comment on it! I

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<sup>7</sup> “I think that's everything that might lie behind this book,” says Philip Roth in the letter to his fictional character Zuckerman which begins his 1988 memoir *The Facts*. “The question now is, why should anybody other than me be reading it ...?”

<sup>8</sup> A good example is the diaries of Glückel of Hameln (1646-1724), originally intended just for her children, but which turned out to be a valuable source for Jewish life and commerce during her time. The manuscript is now in the Bavarian State Library.

have resisted all these suggestions – it has been liberating to write *not* for publication. Also when I try to refine the manuscript, I just end up adding more material. And I have added enough – if I haven’t communicated who I am (or was) by this time, more won’t help. I have to stop somewhere.<sup>9</sup>

It was not idly that I entitled this memoir “What I Remember About My Life.” If I don’t remember it, I’m not including it. If people want a history of my times, let them go up to Yale and use my memoir to write one. If they want a trenchant portrait of me as a person, let them write that portrait, and I’ll include it as a Supplement to my papers at Yale, or they can send it up there later. I have adhered firmly to my original plan of recording only what I remember, for the benefit of future historians, whom I picture as graduate students in their 20s, sitting around a seminar table at Yale with copies of my memoir before them, trying to understand my experience way back in the 20th and 21st centuries. It is with them in mind that I have tried to include context, and not leave things out, and explain in footnotes what is common knowledge now, but might by that time be quite obscure. But I am not a historian – the larger picture is not my job here – all I am doing is creating a source, a window for them to peer through.

Along that line, I should admit explicitly that a memoir based on what I remember is bound to have some errors in it. My memory is not perfect, and especially when I get back into my childhood it can be spotty and unreliable. This just has to be accepted – I have forgotten a lot, which is already a distortion of what I do remember, and then an unknown portion of what I think I remember is probably wrong in details. After looking over a few of the earlier chapters, Christopher, who is accustomed to fact-checking articles for *The New York Times*, suggested to me that, for the distant past especially, some of the reporting in this memoir may not be quite up to the *Times* standard. Nor does it need to be, probably, although it would be nice if that were possible. But it isn’t – in many cases what I remember, or think I remember, flaws and all, is all the record there is. As Philip Roth also said, “memories of the past are not memories of facts but memories of your imaginings of the facts.”<sup>10</sup> That will probably have to do.

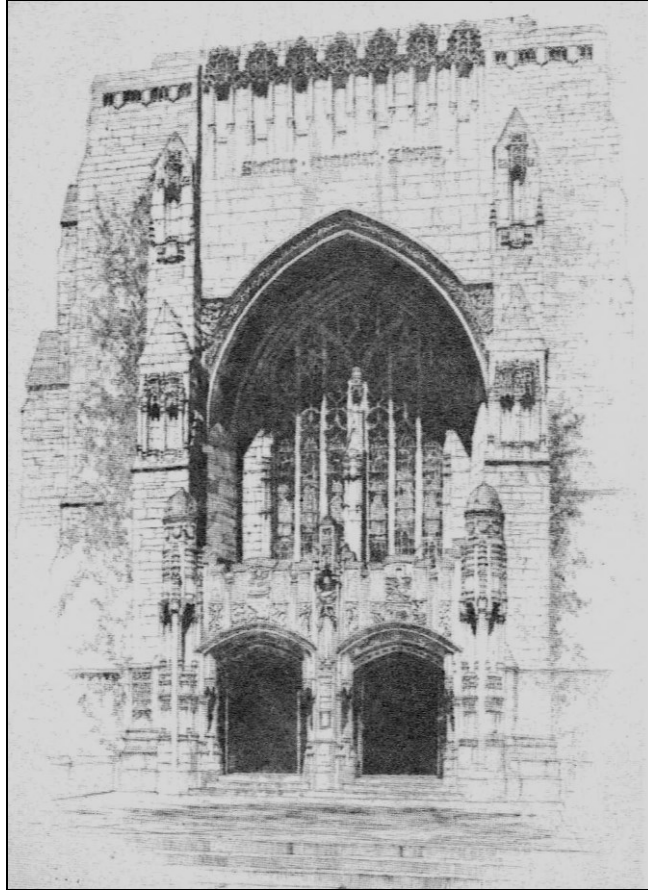
If the Phillips Family Papers were not available to me as a place to lodge this memoir, I would probably not have created it. But since it’s there, I’m doing my bit for the future, and gaining a kind of petty immortality into the bargain. “Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.” Psalm 105:5.

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<sup>9</sup> Don Quixote once freed some galley slaves. One of them was Gines de Pasamonte, who said that he had written his autobiography, although unfortunately he had had to pawn it. “And is it finished?” asked Don Quixote. “How can it be finished,” Pasamonte replied, “when my life is not yet finished?” I am grateful to Bob Hollander for mentioning this passage to me.

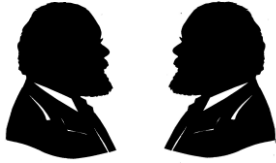
<sup>10</sup> Also in *The Facts* (1988).

San Francisco  
August 2010



Tailpiece: Entrance to Sterling Library, Yale University,  
where the Phillips Family Papers are housed.  
Etching c. 1933 by Samuel Chamberlain (1895-1975).

## Author's Note



I have appended documents to some chapters, as reflected in the Table of Contents. Just after the Table of Contents for this book is another table, called the Table of Supplements. This lists separate, longer materials not suitable for appending to chapters, but which I intend to lodge with the Phillips Family Papers at Yale. More may be added which are not on that list. Some of them may not go up to Yale until after I am dead, and a few may go up with a proviso that they remain sealed for a term of years. Most will probably be of more interest in the 24th or 34th century than they are now. My series of pocket notebooks (see Chapter 28) will also go to the Phillips Family Papers.

I have provided in a separate section maps of Manhattan, Columbia University, Philadelphia, Washington DC, San Francisco, and Truro and Provincetown on Cape Cod, annotated to locate for the reader places mentioned in the narrative. I have placed them at the front because a single map may apply to several different chapters.

Chapters 3A, 3B and 3C are so numbered because I split up a chapter of unwieldy length, and didn't want to revise all the references to numbered chapters elsewhere in the book. Much the same thing happened with Chapters 27A and 27C, and with Chapter 27B, which started off as part of Chapter 15. To avoid confusion, I have given numbers to subheadings in these lettered chapters, while subheadings in other chapters have numbers. Only subheading indicators are set off by periods. Thus 26.B is a section of Chapter 26, and 27B.2 is a section of Chapter 27B. This is a nuisance, but only a slight one. For the same reason (unwillingness to renumber references in other parts of the book), some of the appended documents which follow the chapters appear out of their logical order. A glance at the Table of Contents should make everything plain.

The electronic version of this manuscript includes [embedded hyperlinks](#), which allow the reader to jump from the Table of Contents directly to any chapter or subchapter in the text. The chapter may then be searched electronically for individual words.

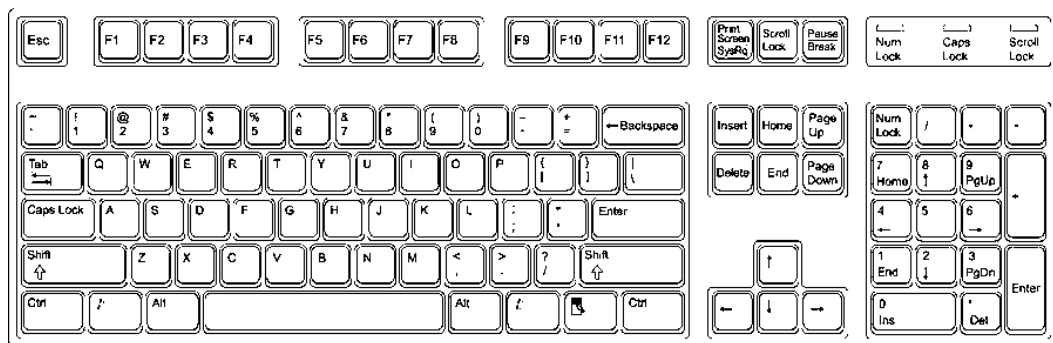
Sometimes I repeat myself, telling essentially the same story in different chapters. I have deleted some of these duplications, but rather than go back and scrub out every last one, I have let some of them stand. I don't expect many people will read this memoir all the way through anyway.

I went through a huge stack of old letters and thousands of archived e-mails, looking for contemporaneous descriptions of events or feeling or atmosphere. I found a lot of these – so many seemed worth including that they threatened to distort the structure of what I had already written. To ease this problem, I found it useful to signal a second voice by quoting old letters and e-mails in a different font and color from the rest of the work. So a typical quote from a letter or e-mail looks like this (sometimes bulleted, sometimes not):

- I never remember anything I say. This gives me deniability, and explains why I archive everything. Or course the real reason I archive everything is that I'm an anal compulsive double Virgo sulfur. But it would be tactless to say so.

I thank Klaudia Nelson for the photographs reproduced on the title page and at the head of Chapter 27, Les Wisner for pictures of me and others, which are credited as they appear, my brother Adam for his pictures of me in Guatemala (Chapter 30.F), of the Thai Buddha statue (Chapter 34), and of me again in Chapter 35, and my brother Christopher, Ron Green, Les and Makiko Wisner, and others for looking over early drafts of some of the chapters.

Dates of books are usually the date of first publication rather than of composition – a few of the books cited or quoted from were published posthumously. Most of the illustrations in the book, except for the heraldry chapter and those obviously specific to me or my family, were taken from the Internet.



## Colophon

This memoir was composed in my home in San Francisco, at various times between 2006 and 2010, on a word processing system called *Microsoft Word*, which is the industry standard now but may be an antique before this book is ever consulted. The compact disks on which copies are now stored may be unreadable before too many more years have passed, but I will send the Phillips Family Papers Archive at Yale University a *printed* copy, produced on my Hewlett Packard 832C Deskjet Laser Printer. *Litera scripta manet*, as the National Archives motto says – *the written word remains*. I will print one more for my own use, for a total edition of two copies, one of the smallest editions in publishing history.

The body type face is 13 point Times New Roman, also the industry standard at the time of writing (footnotes are in 12 point). The type face used for the quotes from letters and e-mails is indigo 12 point Arial (11 point in footnotes). Where chapter tailpieces are captioned, I have used dark red 13 point Arial Narrow.

This work contains seven forematter sections, including a section of seven maps, and 39 chapters.

There are 79 documents appended to chapters, 825 embedded images, including some of the documents, 19 superpositioned autosshapes such as arrows and lines, and 621 footnotes.

The work, including footnotes, contains:

- 929 pages, including 32 pages of forematter
- 5,361 paragraphs
- 29,255 lines
- 357,265 words
- 1,634,696 characters, not including spaces, and
- 2,009,564 characters, including spaces.

These totals were computed by the word processing program's Word Count feature, and tabulated on Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Texts scanned (for example from letters) and embedded in image form count as images and the words are not tabulated. It is not exact – even entering the numbers changes the totals – but it is close enough.

The electronic files which form this work contain a total of 641,816,824 bytes. I have accepted without challenge the numbers provided for each chapter by the properties function of the Microsoft Word file menu. They fluctuate even when no change is made – I am told this is normal. Also they seem anomalous in places – short chapters with few



pictures can record more bytes than big chapters with many pictures. Perhaps they are including background metadata – but mine is not to reason why.



Tailpiece: My father's mechanical counter, which he used in medical school in the 1950s to count the cells he saw under his microscope. He gave it to me after he graduated. Fifty-five years later, I used it to count the images in this book.