



Caxtonian

A Newsletter of The Caxton Club of Chicago

Volume I, No. 3

November 1993

Children's Books --- They're Not Just For Children Anymore

"If you don't like them, never mind, I do. So while we take a nice old-fashioned stroll With Alice down the well-worn rabbit hole, You'll see the point of bedtime literature -- It's to make parents sleep safe and secure."

-- Walter Gibson

Do you recall the first book that was read to you? Can you remember the title of the first book you read yourself? Do your hands remember how it felt? Does your 'mind's eye' see how it looked, how it was smaller than your parents' books, and how it smelled of glue and paper? Was it illustrated? Did it have bright colors?

In Chicago, after the turn of the century, a man with a fresh vision of childhood, started an innovative publishing firm to focus on books for children and began cranking them out in great numbers to

delighted children throughout the land. The name of his firm was P. F. Volland and Company.

One of his goals was to establish a new stable of writers and artists. And he found them, such as Johnny Gruelle, the creator of the immortal Raggedy Ann and Andy. Another of its more enduring works was a version of *Mother Goose*. The Volland Company achieved such success that they built a large new plant in Joliet to produce its books. Another sign of its success was the imitators who plagiarized the books. And, yet another was the number of books that were 'stolen' by other publishers when, in 1938, the Volland Company failed.

Overlooked by the mainstream for 60 years, the Volland books have remained dear to the hearts of certain faithful children-now-grown-older, and they

have remained ripe for re-discovery by a new generation. But few persons have had a chance to experience the depth and breadth of the Volland adventures, from its earliest attempts to its late works.

One of those captured by Volland Press is Gloria Damon Timmel, who will be our tour guide through this wonderful world at our November 17 dinner program. Ms. Timmel is proprietress of Children's Vintage Volumes, once the Midwest's leading specialist in out-of-print and antiquarian color illustrated juvenile books. She has spent eight years compiling an illustrated bibliography of the Volland Press and will share her expertise and passion for this subject through slides and lecture.

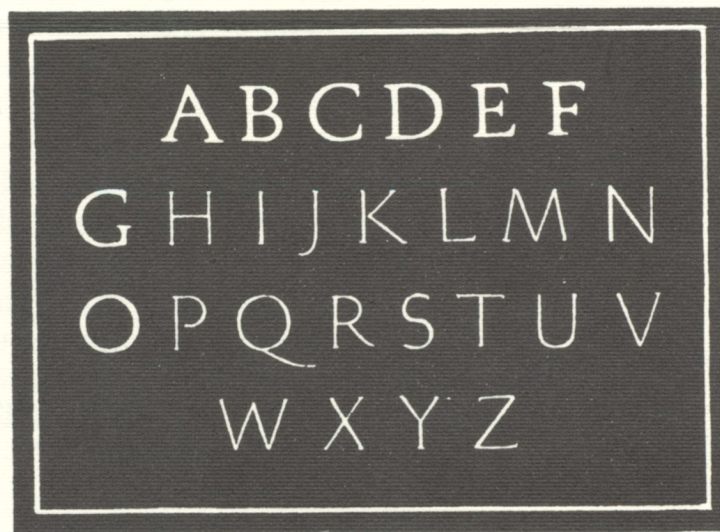
Tom Joyce

Editor's Note - Please see Page 4 for reservation information.

RHM Creates Art Form

Alphabet in Process was engraved by Caxtonian Robert Hunter Middleton in 1953. It was executed as a study of the roman capitals he later used in a series of hand engraved boxwood bookplates. Several tissue proofs were made from the block but no prior edition had been printed.

These prints were produced as a Caxton Club keepsake using a Shniedewend Reliance hand press on dampened Amatruda paper at Caxton Honorary Member Bruce Beck's Turtle Press in 1984.



This particular print is Number 128/275, signed by Middleton and owned by Caxton Club President, Robert Cotner.

128/275

R H M

1985

Caxtonian

The Caxton Club of Chicago
Founded 1895



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First Fridays Program

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Musings...

"I look forward to the time when I can sit quietly and reflect on those days of struggling in the cause of perfection."

-Robert Hunter Middleton

A seldom recorded history of The Caxton Club is written subtly in the private lives of its members. It is that history, as much as the oft-recorded deeds of members' public works, which gives the transcendental qualities -- the *patina*, if you will -- to the fellowship within the society.

The gathering of book-lovers monthly to dine in the splendid ambiance of The Mid-Day Club, a celebration of civility among kindred spirits -- men and women from diverse professions and stations in life -- is symbolic of countless private aspirations beyond the dilettantism of the *star* culture in which we live.

In this regard, Robert Hunter Middleton is a name natural to consider. Born in Scotland in 1898, he lived the greater part of his life with his wife Katharine at 4722 Dover Street, Chicago. Greer Allen recalls that, from their home on Dover Street, "The net of hospitality [spread] wide --" cast forth by "What ... amounts to ... the Middletons' uncanny gift to detect need and to do something about it in a quiet, warm, and loving way."

Rhodes Patterson writes of Middleton's work with the Ludlow Typographic Company on Clybourne -- "the relatively small world of [his] professional pursuits." Patterson comments, "It may well have been a small world when Bob Middleton first came to it, but he became its indefatigable ambassador to the broader world, ..."

R. Russell Maylone writes of Middleton's life after his retirement from Ludlow in 1970 -- the "Cherryburn Press story." In his personal printing operation, located in the basement of the Dover Street house, Middleton produced remarkable imprints, which had world-wide acclaim, for the next 15 years.

Fortunately for us, both the personal and professional histories of Robert Hunter Middleton have been preserved in The Caxton Club publication, *RHM: The Man and His Letters* (1985). It tells of his nearly 50 years at Ludlow, his design of more than 80 families of typefaces, his inspired and inspiring work as printer at Cherryburn. But it does more: it gives us a rare insight into the private life of "this remarkably complex man."

As a Caxtonian from 1945 until his death in 1985, RHM embodied what I have found in many fellow members and what I believe has been a hallmark of the majority of the people in this organization throughout its 99-year history. I am reminded of a descriptive line from Tennyson: "One equal temper of heroic hearts, ..." It is this equality, as well as a certain perfection in life, which we constantly celebrate.

Robert Cotner
President

Conjuring a Magic Sale (or Sweet Revenge)

For collectors of conjuring books--and The Caxton Club has several members interested in this subject (Rex Conklin, John McKinven, Jay Marshall, Robert Parrish, and myself, to be precise) -- a "sale of the century" occurred March, 1974, in Sotheby's auction rooms in London. This was the dispersal of the famous Roland Winder collection of magic books, which included rare and desirable titles from the 16th through 19th centuries, from multi-volume sets of "rational recreations" to ephemeral chapbooks with hand-colored frontispieces.

Jay Marshall not only attended this sale, but he opened the bidding on numerous lots and recorded portions of the proceedings to prove it. I still recall hearing the voice of the auctioneer on the tape saying, "We begin bidding at ... Mr. Marshall bids...." Of the 230 lots offered, Jay was chagrined at having successfully purchased only four.

Although nearly 20 years have passed since listening to Jay's tape, I still recall the occasion with excitement, for I felt Jay to be fortunate indeed. I had neither attended the sale nor had I placed a bid.

What I didn't know at the time was that my chance had not passed. In 1976, two years to the very month after the London auction, books from the Winder sale began appearing on the market. With what even now seems incredible luck, over the next several months I acquired six 19th century titles which had been offered in the auction. The last was a fine copy in the original boards of the second edition of *Endless Amusements: A Collection of Upwards of 400 Entertaining and Astonishing Experiments*, published in London in 1820. I bought it in the antiquarian book section of Marshall Field's Department Store. I haven't acquired another book from the sale since. Yet, for someone who never placed a bid at the auction,

I think I did fairly well -- especially considering that Jay Marshall shopped at Field's as frequently as I did.

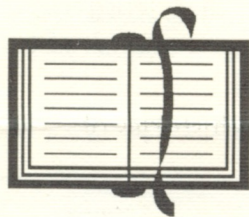
David Meyer

Watermarks

"The Holbein family at Ravensburg - a town famous to this day for the manufacture of paper - used a 'bull's head'. Fust and Schoeffer (circa 1460) used a 'clapper' or rattle, which has a somewhat curious history. At Ravensburg there was a hospital for lepers, and whenever any of the inmates had occasion to leave the building he was strictly enjoined to flourish a rattle with which he was provided so that healthy folk could get out of the way. Paper made at the town is often found marked with the rattle, that having grown by reason of its frequent use, into an institution of the place." J.H. Slater, *Book Collecting*, London, 1892.



The Caxton Chronicles



The 15 Chicagoans who founded The Caxton Club meant business about the Club's objective: "the

literary study and promotion of the arts pertaining to the production of books." The founding fathers dispatched post-haste the trivial business of soliciting members and finding a home for the Club. Committees were then appointed to proceed with the business of the Club. The publishing of books was high on their list of priorities.

The Publications Committee that produced the Club's first book was outstanding. George M. Millard was named chairman, with members Thomas E. Donnelley, John Vance Cheney, George S. Payson, Herbert S. Stone and

W. Irving Way. Their first publication, *Joutel's Journal of LaSalle's Last Voyage*, was issued in 1896. These six men were experienced in the world of fine books and comprised a well-balanced committee.

Millard was an experienced bookman, in charge of the antiquarian book department at A.C. McClurg's book store. This mecca for bibliophiles, known as the Saints' and Sinners' corner, was popularized by Eugene Field in his Sharps and Flats column. Millard brought a broad knowledge of books and manuscripts to the committee.

Donnelley was at the time a rising young executive at R.R. Donnelley & Sons, the firm founded by his father. He became president of the firm in 1899, upon his father's death.

He brought a connection to a quality printing firm, the Lakeside Press, that would print many of the Club's early publications.

Cheney was the second librarian at the Newberry Library. He brought a scholarly background that would be invaluable in choosing manuscripts for publication.

Payson, a lawyer and socialite, was a noted book collector. He brought the perspective of the collector and could advise as to the type of books that would appeal to Caxtonian collectors.

Stone and Way were both proprietors of a small press in Chicago that produced books of quality in limited editions. They brought the skills of the book arts to the group.

Frank J. Piehl

Book Marks

Luncheon Programs

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of First National Bank, Madison & Clark, Chicago.

Luncheon and discussion, 12:30pm.

November 5.

Ralph Newman, long-time Caxtonian, author, specialist in the Civil War, and book dealer for 60 years – the city's oldest dealer in rare books

December 3.

*Ed Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman*

Development Committee Co-Chairs Named

Ann Koch and Judson Scruton have accepted appointments as co-chairs of the Centennial Development Committee. These Caxtonians will form a committee to be responsible for working with the Centennial and Film Committees in developing a plan, strategies, and a program for raising sufficient funds to carry out the agendas for The Caxton Club Centennial.

Since The Caxton Club is a 501 (c) (3) organization -- a not-for-profit status with the IRS -- it is a suitable vehicle for members and non-members to make tax-deductible contributions.

RC

Dinner Programs

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of First National Bank, Madison & Clark, Chicago.
Spirits-5pm; Dinner-6pm; Lecture-7pm

November 17.

Gloria D. Timmel. The Volland Press of Chicago and Joliet, and its books for children.

December 8.

The Holiday Revels. At The Newberry Library for the occasion of a major exhibit of modern bookbindings. Dinner, music, and a talk.

Tom Joyce

Holiday Revels at The Newberry to Feature Variety

The traditional Holiday Revels of The Caxton Club, will take place at The Newberry Library on December 8. It will feature a catered dinner and suitable libations, and music of the season. For this event only, the cost for the dinner will be \$30 for members and \$35 for non-members.

The feature of the occasion will be the traveling exhibition of the Guild of

Hand Bookbinders, co-joined with an exhibit by The Chicago Hand Bookbinders. The presentation is expected to include an audience participation segment, and there will be a very special keepsake for the evening.

Lastly, there will be an opportunity to purchase (at below-market prices) CC logo ties, scarves, and books published by the club. A new item will debut.

Reservations for luncheon programs are requested. Reservations for dinner programs are required. Please make them by calling 312/943-9090, ext. 204, no later than 24 hours prior to the event.

The First National Bank of Chicago's parking garage, 40 South Clark Street, offers a special parking rate after 5pm to guests of the Mid-Day Club. When you leave, please tell the parking attendant you were at the Mid-Day Club and your parking fee will be \$6.50.



The Caxton Club of Chicago
60 West Walton Street
Chicago, IL 60610

Tom Joyce

