



Caxtonian

A Newsletter of The Caxton Club of Chicago

Volume II, No. 8

August 1994

From Author to Autograph Collector

Long ago, in the distant year when I was 25 years old, my first book was published in collaboration with A. I. Tobin, a Brooklyn dentist. It was *Frank Harris—A Study in Black and White* (1931).

You ask, who was Frank Harris? He was a once-famous author, editor, and sexual adventurer whose highly explicit autobiography, *My Life and Loves*, was banned everywhere. In his day, Harris knew everyone in the arts, sciences, and public life, and he wrote about them in several volumes entitled, *Contemporary Portraits*, and in various other books.

When, as a stripling, I became enamoured of his writings, I read everything that he wrote and carried through an intimate correspondence with him, in which we addressed each other by first names. Then I decided to do the the first serious biography of him.

I jotted down the names of all of the illustrious persons mentioned by him in his books, and I wrote them, generally in long hand, this being much more legible than it is today. I received responses from virtually everyone to whom I wrote. They gave their unvarnished impressions of Harris, which I incorporated in my book. They included such luminaries as Winston Churchill, Leon Trotsky, Lord Alfred Douglas (the lover of Oscar Wilde), Augustus John, John Galsworthy, and innumerable others.

In the end, I had an invaluable autograph collection. Some of the letters I gave, reluctantly, to my collaborator. Others I gave to the Library of Congress, which

has a huge collection of Gertz material—hundreds of thousands of items. One letter I put to special use. Falling short of my college tuition, I sold a Galsworthy letter and some other materials to a dealer. It paid my way for a year.

The book had many adventures. It was accepted for publication by Simon and Schuster, who then reneged. In England, the contracted publisher destroyed the plates when Harris' widow threatened suit. The Author's Society urged us to sue. In the end, it was published in Chicago by the daughter of one of Harris' friends.

It seems that everyone who read the book was moved to write about it with enthusiasm—Rebecca West, G. K. Chesterton, H. G. Wells, H. L. Mencken, Max Eastman, Louis Adamic, and many others.

Years later, a publisher wanted to issue a revised edition, but my collaborator, by then estranged from me, refused to permit the change of even one word. So the book died, I thought. Then many years later, I learned that another publisher, noticing that the copyright had expired, issued a new edition in 1970. I was not consulted, and I did not know about this new edition until 1990. At that time, the publisher presented me with a complimentary copy. How nice of him!

Elmer Gertz

Elmer Gertz: In the Eye of Many Legal Storms



Caxtonian Elmer Gertz is an attorney, educator, and author of 16 books, including *Henry Miller: Years of Trial and Triumph, 1962-1964: The Letters of Henry Miller and Elmer Gertz* (1978), and his memoirs, *To Life* (1974), which won the Friends of Literature Award.

As an attorney, he has participated in some of the most celebrated cases of the day: The freeing of Nathan Leopold; the setting aside of the death sentence of Jack Ruby; many censorship cases, including those involving *Tropic of Cancer*; cases involving basic aspects of the Illinois constitution; and a landmark libel case (Gertz v. Robert Welch, Inc.) that has caused the Supreme Court to modify the law in that basic area.

Mr. Gertz, a Caxtonian since 1964, collects books on and of American history and literature. He was honored by both the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois in having "Elmer Gertz Days" dedicated to him. Friends of Midland Authors gave him its first award for the body of his work.

Caxtonian

The Caxton Club of Chicago
Founded 1895



President - Robert Cotner
Vice-President - Thomas J. Joyce
Secretary - Karen A. Skubish
Treasurer - Charles L. Miner
Historian - Frank J. Piehl
Archivist - Brother Michael Grace, S. J.
Past President - Hayward R. Blake

Council

Class of '95

Celia Hilliard
Bruce W. Hubbard
Susan F. Rossen
Alice D. Schreyer
Harry L. Stern

Class of '96

Robert L. Brooks
Eugene Hotchkiss III
Gretchen L. Lagana
Kathleen Lamb
Frank J. Piehl

Class of '97

Brother Michael Grace, S. J.
Edward Quattrocchi
Florence Shay
Glen N. Wiche
Robert Williams

First Fridays Program

Chairman - Edward Quattrocchi
Co-Chairman - Leonard Freedman

Secy - Bookkeeper - Jane Smith



Newsletter Staff

Publisher - Robert Cotner
Editor - Michael Braver

The *Caxtonian* is published monthly by The Caxton Club. The Caxton Club office is located in The Newberry Library, at 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610. Telephone 312/943-9090, ext. 204. Permission to reprint material from the *Caxtonian* is not necessary if copy of reprint is mailed to The Caxton Club office and credit is given to the *Caxtonian*.

The *Caxtonian* is printed compliments of River Street Press, Aurora, Illinois
Fine Printers & Lithographers

Musings...

August 3, 1994, marks the 123rd anniversary of the birth of Vernon Louis Parrington in a house yet standing on the northeast corner of Garfield and Highland Avenues, Aurora. I consider VLP both friend and neighbor, and we've established quite a decent relationship over the last 40 years. No one much cares in Aurora, mind you—but that's the way good friendships often are.

I met VLP quite casually one day in 1955 as assigned college reading. We met a second time, again quite casually, in 1962 through my Masters degree studies. In the 1970s, Otho Beall, University of Maryland, instructed his Ph. D. students in American Studies, "Go see what Parrington says about it." I always did. A casual acquaintanceship became a burgeoning friendship.

In 1987, I read Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* and realized that old VLP had some respectable enemies: he could use a good friend in this alien world. That's about the time I discovered we were neighbors. I learned his father came to Aurora from Maine in 1856, as a teacher. He built the house in Aurora "in the building season of 1867," according to local records.

I found that VLP's mother was Louise McClellan from Bristol (now Yorkville); that her father, James C. McClellan, Jr., came from New York state to Chicago in 1835 as a teacher and was later (1847-52) abolition writer/editor with *The Western Citizen*; that her grandfather, a Baptist deacon who came west in 1836, was an important pioneer landowner in Bristol.

Most satisfying was the discovery that VLP has descendants yet living in the West. In 1991 and 1992, I visited VLP's daughter, Louisa Tucker and her son, Stevens Tucker, who generously shared with me the wealth of family lore—and their friendships. I now know six generations of this remarkable American family.

All this has merited two footnotes in Lark Hall's new and excellent biography of my good friend and neighbor, VLP. It does not delineate the exquisite affinity that exists between VLP and me—a mutual sense, as VLP wrote of Roger Williams, of being "A humane and liberal spirit, . . . groping for a social order . . . that should satisfy the aspirations of [people] for a catholic fellowship, greater than sect or church, village or nation, embracing all races and creeds, bringing together the sundered societies of [peoples] in a common spirit of good will."

In this luminous spirit, with Caxtonian friends and neighbors—past and present—we look forward to our forthcoming centennial.

Robert Cotner
President

Second FABS Meeting Held in New York City

The second organizational meeting of the Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies (FABS) was held on April 21, 1994, at the Grolier Club, New York City. Bruce McKittrick, Philadelphia book dealer and son of Caxtonian Bill McKittrick, attended as representative of The Caxton Club.

Other clubs attending were: The Baxter Society (Portland, ME), The Book Club of California (San Francisco), The Club of Odd Volumes (Boston), The Grolier Club (NYC), The Philobiblon Club (Philadelphia), The Rowfant Club (Cleveland), The Roxburghe Club (San Francisco), and the Zamorano Club (Los Angeles). The atmosphere of congeniality was somewhat modified by the serious business of reviewing and voting on the articles of association. Larry Ziegler of The Rowfant Club was elected temporary chair, and

the following agreed to serve as committee chairs: *Conference*, Bob Jackson; *Speaker*, Eliot Stanley; *Publications*, Msqr. Francis Weber, and *Membership*, Bruce McKittrick.

Annual dues would be \$100, to be used chiefly for stationery, telephone, and fax charges. The proposed object of FABS shall be the promotion and development of the common interests of the member societies; assistance in arranging the joint sponsorship of conferences and seminars; assistance for joint trips of individual members of member societies' to member society cities, as well as other domestic and foreign locations; establishment of relations with other domestic and foreign bibliophilic societies; and such other beneficial purposes as shall be determined from time to time by the member societies.

Copies of all the articles, minutes, and the report from McKittrick were sent to the Council for review and discussion. FABS will be on the agenda of the September meeting for discussion and possible ratification.

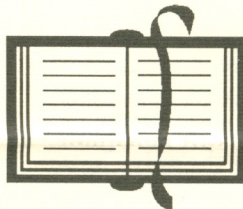
The next scheduled meeting of FABS is set for fall 1994, in New York City.

Hayward Blake



Suzanne Smith Pruchnicki

The Caxton Chronicles



The Caxton Club of 1994 remains dedicated to a tradition of fine printing but bears little resemblance

to the club of 1895 in other ways. The intent to maintain a library has been abandoned, and exhibitions are now held only rarely. Regular dinner meetings and the Friday luncheons have replaced the informal meetings and "smokers" of the early 1900s.

Although the dedication to fine printing has not been abandoned, the realities of the 20th century world have forced changes in the club's publication practices. The rising cost of publication in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in a reduced frequency of publication.

A dramatic change has taken place in the membership of The Caxton Club. Mem-

bership was originally restricted to men of public and civic stature, albeit men dedicated to the production and appreciation of fine books. Thanks to the wisdom and foresight of club leaders in the post-World-War years, The Caxton Club has been democratized. The recently-issued Directory for 1993-94 reveals a broad interest in the book among the current membership. Its members come from a variety of social, cultural, and academic backgrounds with a growing number of women and minorities active and important in the club's work.

An even more dramatic change has occurred in what the club does for its members. By way of the formal and informal discussions at its meetings, the club now brings together a community of individuals who share the love of books and provides members a forum for educating each other about the history, production, and preservation of books,

about the appreciation of the beauty of their content and design, and about the joys of reading books. That community is open to all who cherish good books.

There are many other books clubs in America. Some are older and larger in membership. Others publish more frequently or charge more dues. Not one, however, has been more progressive than The Caxton Club in changing its essence. As President Cotner wrote recently in his "Musings," The Caxton Club is a vital commonwealth, whose affinitizations give us an important advantage, rare in this city and nation, as we begin our second century as Chicago's premier organization dedicated to the book in society and all that means to the life of the mind in our time, and beyond."

It's going to be an exciting centennial year and one helluva second century.

Frank J. Piehl

New Book Illumines Life of Illinoisan, Vernon Louis Parrington

V. L. Parrington: Through the Avenue of Art. H. Lark Hall. Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1994. \$39.

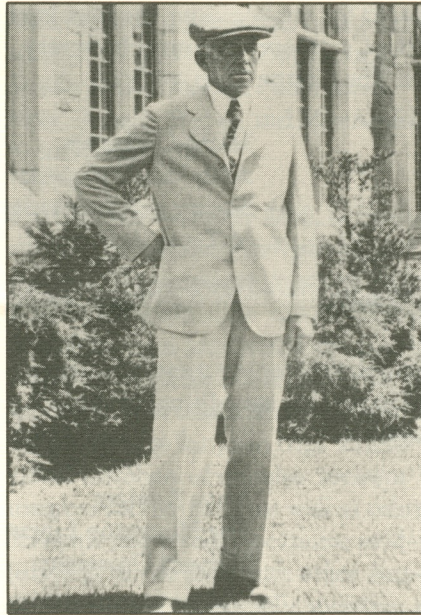
Vernon Louis Parrington, who won the Pulitzer Prize in History in 1928, is the subject of a new biography by Helen Lark Hall, Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania.

Parrington, born in Aurora in 1871, moved with his family to a homestead north of Americus, Kansas, in 1877. Dr. Hall's study begins with Parrington's family, using materials gleaned from early local records in Aurora, Yorkville, and Chicago. It culminates in a splendid analysis of Parrington's Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, *Main Currents in American Thought*, which stunned the nation's intellectual community in 1927.

The 12-chapter biography includes a brief look at the Parrington and McClellan families, which came to the Chicago area from Maine and New York, respectively, in the early years of settlement, as pioneer teachers and frontier intellectuals.

From these two strong, directed, and mobile families with eastern roots transplanted into Midwestern culture, Vernon Louis Parrington grew to be the foremost intellectual of his day. Hall describes the origins this way: "Both the parallel hardships these shifts wrought in his parents' childhoods and the role education played in mitigating those hardships contributed to the psychological dynamics and cultural values that shaped young Vernon's development."

This is a book about intellectual maturation through the study and understanding of art, from early European settings to the latest Ameri-



can novel, poem, or play. Parrington's intellectual growth and its fulfillment inspired two generations of the nation's brightest minds to understand the power and role of irony in the human quest. Hall chooses the appropriate main current of Parrington's own life—"the avenue of art"—to recreate in a powerful, compelling manner the rich, subtle texture of Parrington's own life and work. The greatest irony, as Hall so admirably chronicles it, lies in this quiet Midwesterner's becoming the creator of a treatise that so beautifully linked American and European thought and that stands even in 1994 as an important statement of American democracy for the world.

Parrington prepared himself thoroughly through a disciplined personal life, his scholarly pursuits, and an inspired teaching career at Emporia College, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Washington. A wanderer, in Matthew Arnold's words, "between two worlds/one dead, the other powerless to be born," Parrington forged America's first intellectual history, the two-volume *Main Currents of American Thought*, his attempt to

bridge the intellectual and emotional chasms between the worlds that trapped his generation. The fact that his work remains in print (University of Oklahoma Press), stands as an important indication Parrington is yet relevant to an understanding of what it means to be American and what America means to the world.

Caxtonians will especially appreciate the section on Parrington's year-long study tour (1903-04) in Europe, when he came to understand in a life-changing way the ideas and work of William Morris. Parrington, in fact, "followed the model of the doer and the workman epitomized for him by William Morris . . ." The mutual dilemma of Morris and Parrington was, "to reconcile their personal elitism . . . with 'the general sympathy of simple peoples' . . . or, . . . to reconcile art with democracy."

Hall's work is thorough, her writing pleasant. She visited strategic locales—Gorham, Maine; Emporia, Kansas; Norman, Oklahoma; Seattle, Washington—and used the extant resources scattered in these diverse settings. Eight years in writing and revision, this book is commensurate with the majestic spirit and powerful intellect of Parrington, one of America's greatest intellectuals and most important scholars.

Vernon Louis Parrington became a beacon for enlightened inquiry in his time and for a generation after him. For this age of the late-20th century—in turmoil, frightened, and even mystified by the clamor around the world—Dr. Hall has rekindled the brilliance of Parrington for our time.

Parrington Chronology

A Side-Bar to American Intellectual History

August 3, 1871

Born, Aurora, IL

1877

Moves with family to Americus, KS

1893

A.B. degree, Harvard College

1895

M.A. degree, College of Emporia

1893-97

Instructor, English & French,

College of Emporia

1897-1908

Instructor, Assistant Professor, Professor

English & Modern Languages,

Football Coach, Designer of Norman campus,

University of Oklahoma

July 31, 1901

Marries Julia Rochester Williams

Children: Elizabeth, Louisa, Vernon Louis

1903-04

Studies at British Museum, London,

Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

1908

Is dismissed from University of Oklahoma

for smoking in public

1908-1929

Assistant Professor & Professor, English,

University of Washington

Teaches summers at University of California,

University of Michigan, Columbia University

1917

Writes "The Puritan Divines, 1620-1720,"

The Cambridge History of American Literature

1919-1928

Publishes reviews, *The Nation*,

The Pacific Review, *NY Herald-Tribune*, et al.

1910-1927

Researches and writes

Main Currents in American Thought

1927

Publishes *Sinclair Lewis: Our Own Diogenes*

University of Washington Bookstore

1927

Vol. I & Vol. II of *MCAT* published by

Harcourt Brace & Company

1927-29

Continues work on Vol. III, *MCAT*

1928

Receives Pulitzer Prize in History for *MCAT*

1929

Writes Introduction to

O.E. Rolvaag's *Giants in the Earth*

June 16, 1929

Dies of heart attack,

Winchcomb, England

1930

Harcourt Brace publishes

Three-volume edition of *MCAT*

First Friday Leads to a Second . . .

Not the least of the benefits from speaking at the Caxton Friday luncheon meetings is the wisdom and knowledge shared by members in the discussion following the speaker's remarks. Such was my delight in learning from Bill McKittrick, after my talk about Thomas More's *English Works*, that the architect of Cathedral Hall at the University Club of Chicago, Martin Roche, was inspired by Crosby Hall in London, once the home of Thomas More.

Even though my wife, Carolyn, and I had cherished a visit to Crosby Hall with our friends from Ohio University, Sam and Susan Crowl, and the Crowls had hosted a wedding luncheon in Cathedral Hall for one of our daughters, we were unaware of its architectural heritage and therefrom its rich association not only with Thomas More, William Roper, his biographer and son-in-law, William Rastell, his nephew and editor of his *English Works*, but also King Richard III and William Shakespeare, as well as other illustrious figures in the history of England. And these connections, I have since discovered, have indirect associations with William Caxton and the early history of printing in England.

One afternoon, the week after my talk, I revisited Cathedral Hall to reacquaint myself with its heritage. As I reentered the empty, cavernous dining room after lunch, I had ambivalent feelings about how I would view the place now, knowing its association with literary history, especially with More and Shakespeare. On one hand, I had heard critical remarks from an art collector friend of mine that the architect of the Hall was disingenuous in imitating the art of a bygone era, and despite my Italian heritage, I have little confidence in my judgment about art and architecture; but on the other hand, I have always felt comfortable with the Gothic ambience of the room, and I was exhilarated to know that at the turn of the century, about the time my parents were emigrating to this city from Italy and Ireland,

some imaginative and farsighted, book-loving Chicagoans were establishing a link between our city and 15th-century London, the home of two of our language's greatest masters.

There, on a sultry Chicago afternoon, I experienced the liberating fantasy of conjuring up the lives of those who had been associated with Crosby Hall in its long and checkered history. I was reminded that, imitative as Cathedral Hall may be, it is imitative in the way that Sir Philip Sidney, in the 16th century's most influential work of criticism, *Defense of Poesy*, defines poetry: "Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture with this end, to teach and delight." I was reminded of Sidney, by association, because his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, to whom Philip had dedicated his *Arcadia*, was reputed to have lived in Crosby Hall in the late 16th century, some years after More's family had vacated it. That afternoon Cathedral Hall was to me a speaking picture.

After a dispiriting day in the cattle pit at the Mercantile Exchange, I experienced a minor epiphany. Reflecting on the realization that I was the only Caxtonian who traded regularly in the cattle pit, and presumably in most other pits at the Exchange, I was heartened to think that John Crosby, a Sheriff of London, who had built Crosby Hall more than 500 years ago, was a commodity trader, as was William Caxton, who had printed his first book in England, *The Dicts and Sayings of The Philosophers*, nearby at Westminster, some seven years after Crosby built his mansion. Subsequently I found it stimulating and enlightening to make other connections between Crosby and Caxton, as well as that between the two Chicago clubs associated with these two medieval merchants. I shall write more of this in a future issue of the *Caxtonian*.

Ed Quattrocchi

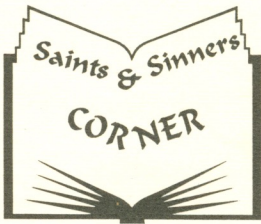
Book Marks

Luncheon Programs

All meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of the First National Bank of Chicago, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon and discussion, 12:30pm.

The **second** Friday of September, the 9th, will launch the First Friday program for 1994-95. Caxtonian, Council member, and club Archivist, Brother Michael Grace will present a program, "Jesuit Visitors to an Antique Land," focusing on Jesuit scientists and scholars visiting 17th and 18th century China.

*Ed Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman*



A Manner of Speaking ... A remark by Caxtonian Jay Marshall overheard on the Caxton Field trip to the Regenstein Library, June 14, 1994, to view the Stephen A. Douglas exhibit: "Was Stephen Douglas the first oxymoron? He was called 'The Little Giant.'"

We Get Letters

Dear Bob,

Thanks for sending along the June issue of the *Caxtonian* -- it proves how very vital The Caxton Club really is!

Michael Winship
American Antiquarian
Society and University
of Texas, Austin

Dear Bob,

Many thanks for the most interesting and impressive issue [June] of the *Caxtonian*.

Anne Anniger
The Houghton Library
Harvard University

Caxton Ties ... Michael Kimmelman, in "Art View," *The New York Times* (7/19/94), praised the book, *Odilon Redon - Prince of Dreams*, which accompanies the current exhibit on the French Symbolist master, now at the Art Institute of Chicago, saying it "will become a standard text on Redon." Susan Rossen, Executive Director of Publications at the Institute, was lead editor of the book. She is Chair of the Caxton Publication Committee and is supervising preparation of the Caxton history by Frank Piehl, to be published in early 1995.

Dinner Programs

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

August 17.

Jack Bales. "Kenneth Roberts: Maine Curmudgeon, Maine Conundrum."

September 21.

Susan Collister. "The Art and Life of Edward Gorey: A Chicago Original."

October 19.

Gregory Carlson, S.J. "My Collection of Aesop's Fables."

Tom Joyce

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 \$7, or \$5 if validated at meeting..

THE CAXTON CLUB



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

