



Caxtonian

A Newsletter of The Caxton Club of Chicago

Volume II, No. 12

December 1994

The Art of 'Keeping' the Season - - According to Christopher Morley

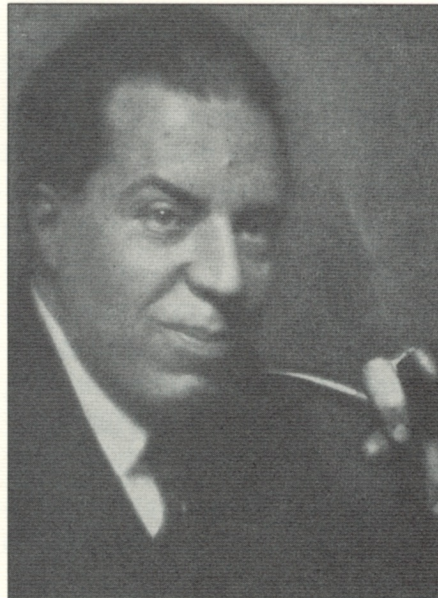
If asked to select an author most readily identified with Christmas, most grazers in literary pastures would name Charles Dickens. For more than 150 years his *A Christmas Carol* has been coruscating in the literary firmament like the top-most decoration on a beautifully adorned Christmas tree.

A possible runnerup for honors in this area of literary endeavor might be the Rev. Clement Clarke Moore, who penned the immortal "A Visit from St. Nicholas" ("Twas the night before Christmas. . ."). Who can forget it?

But, a third candidate for recognition here — although he remains to be "rediscovered" by the reading public — is author Christopher Morley, who once addressed The Caxton Club. (Is there any member still around who remembers hearing him on that occasion?)

Morley, as even a cursory examination of his work will show, had a lifelong love affair with Christmas. Himself the beneficiary of a warm and happy Quaker upbringing, he sprinkled his works — poems, articles, short stories, plays, and books — with numerous references to Christmas, and always with fond memory. Read, for instance, his essay, "A Christmas Soliloquy," in which he states, in part:

"Probably the most sensitive and complex of human sensations is the pre-Christmas feeling: because it is not merely personal but communal; not merely communal but national; not merely national but even international. We know then that a great part of the



world is busily thinking of the same things; how it can surprise its friends, how it can encourage the miserable, how it can amuse the harmless. . . . Christmas is certainly a time when a reasonable man should overhaul his religion and see if it amounts to anything. . . . If millions of people believe a thing, that doesn't make it true, but it makes it better than true: it makes it Poetry, it makes it Beauty."

In his poem, "Christmas Eve," Morley says,

"Our hearts tonight are open wide,
The grief, the grudge are laid aside;
The path and porch are swept of snow,
The door unlatched; the hearth
stones glow—
No visitor can be denied."

Truly, it can also be said of Morley, who fervently believed that life and literature are inextricably intertwined, he knew how to keep Christmas well.

Charles J. Shields

Development Committee Launches Second-Century Fund Program

To insure the long-term financial health of The Caxton Club, the Development Committee, under the leadership of Eugene Hotchkiss III, has outlined an ambitious fund-raising program to be known as the Second-Century Fund.

"This is too important an organization," Dr. Hotchkiss commented at the November dinner meeting, "to expect it to survive another century by chance. We must ensure its existence, and to do that we need at least \$50,000 to cover the costs of our own centennial and to have reserves for publications and other important programs of the club in the future."

Dr. Hotchkiss and his committee, composed of Karen Skubish, Tom Joyce, Frank Piehl, Charles Miner, Hayward Blake, and Robert Cotner, are currently soliciting funds from members who may wish to make tax-deductible donations to The Caxton Club.

Inquiries may be directed to Dr. Hotchkiss or any of the committee members. All donors will be recognized at the May dinner meeting.

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

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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

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Fine Printers & Lithographers

Musings...

I hold in my hand a first issue of the prospectus for the Caxton centennial history. Designed by Bruce Beck and written by Frank Piehl, it is both reminiscent and representative. Set in typeface designed in 1928 by Caxtonians Ernst Detterer and Robert Hunter Middleton the prospectus harks back to an era when care drove as hard a bargain as profit, and the bottom line was qualitative as much as quantitative in society.

A thoughtful inquiry into the matter of our prospectus reveals that it echoes of Renaissance Venice and earlier. The type, a Venetian face, was originally designed and cut by early printer Nicolas Jenson in 1470 for his book by Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340 A.D), a cleric, historian, and scholar.

The typeface is called Eusebius (pronounced you-SEE-be-us) in honor of the cleric and Jenson's book. Bruce Beck notes that it has remained almost unchanged since Jenson first cut it, and Detterer and Middleton designed it for use at the Ludlow Typograph Co. Caxtonian Jim Wells observed that it inspired important figures, including William Morris, Bruce Rogers and others.

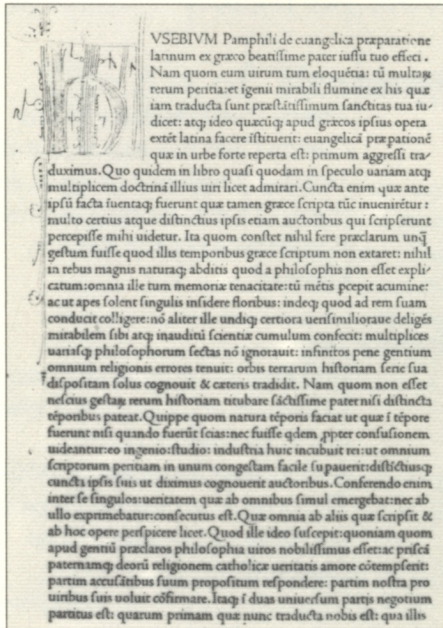
It is available today because Caxtonian Beck envisioned its use in the digital age and — to use Bruce's word — "nagged" Paul Baker into digitizing a set of templates of Nicolas Jenson type, which Middleton had hand-engraved and given him many years earlier. Bruce and Paul inked these templates and printed proofs from them in Bruce's marvelous basement print shop. They scanned these proofs and then, using the Fontographer computer type design program, fulfilled their mutual quest to perpetuate Eusebius into today's world of typography and printing.

I am reminded of a line from Palladio that seems appropriate regarding our prospectus: Humankind "associates [it]self with the ancient world, not in order to reflect it like a mirror, but to capture its spirit and apply it in a modern way." The prospectus is representative of what can be done — what shall be done — in years ahead. Creative forces yet drive Caxtonians, such as Bruce Beck, who has given us this prospectus and who shall soon give us one of the finest-designed Caxton books ever published, our beautifully written centennial history. The prospectus is a luminous promise for our club in printing.

To fulfill that promise, I believe we must remain committed to fine printing of important books. We have vast resources in many gifted people and extraordinary printing capabilities. Some members cherish a focused vision of fusing past and future in important, living texts of which the prospectus is a symbol. The available material lies ready for discovery, awaiting the Caxton logotype. We must put in place a fiscal plan — and reaffirm a commitment — that will insure a Caxton publication at least every two years during our second century. This promise fulfilled applies the spirit of our founders to The Caxton Club's second century.

Robert Cotner
President

Original Page of Eusebius Typeface



The page above is Folio 1 of *Ecclesiastical Histories* by Eusebius of Caesarea, printed in 1470 by Nicolas Jenson, a French goldsmith and mint master working in Venice. It is thought that Jenson was sent to Mainz in 1458, under the sponsorship of Charles VII, to learn printing under Guttenberg, Fust, and Schoffer until 1462.

According to Bruce Beck, "Jenson based [his] design on the forms of the Italian Humanistic hand, that had developed from the Carolingian, and which reached its zenith in the superlative manuscript books against which the best printing was then being compared."

This page was photographed from the copy now owned by The Newberry Library and originally owned by Bruce Rogers. He used this book to develop the Centaur typeface, the most popular commercial adaptation of the Nicolas Jenson typeface.

Illustration provided courtesy of The Newberry Library.

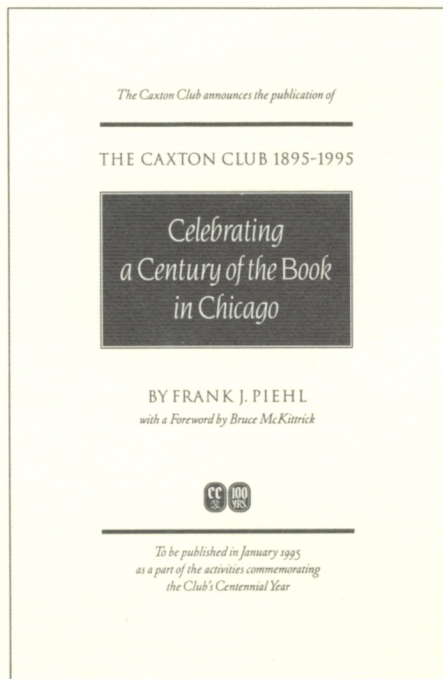
Publications Committee Sets Caxton Book Price

The centennial history, *Celebrating the Century of the Book in Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1895-1995*, is now available for purchase. The prospectus is printed and soon to be distributed (see below).

The Publications Committee has established the following pricing guidelines. Until February 1, 1995, Caxtonians may purchase one copy of the history for \$45. All others will pay \$60. After February 1, the price for members will be \$60 and for non-members, \$75.

After February 1, the book will be available to members at \$60 through the club Council. The Newberry bookshop will sell the book at \$75. All multiple-book orders after January 1 will be handled through Oak Knoll Books, 414 Delaware Street, Newcastle, DE 19720.

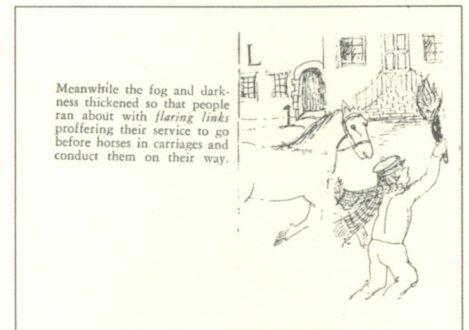
Members of the Publications Committee are Susan Rossen, Chair, and Frank Piehl, Bruce Beck, Paul Gehl, Celia Hilliard, and Robert Cotner.



Caxtonian Celebrates a Christmas Dickens

A Christmas Carol Alphabet Book. The Bronte Press: Manteno, IL, 1994. 46p. \$29/\$42 (with hand-coloring).

Caxtonian Susanne Smith Pruchnicki, publisher of miniature books, has produced an endearing alphabet book inspired by Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.



Each letter of the alphabet is enhanced by a passage from Dickens' old story, and generously illustrated with beautifully detailed, hand-colored drawings by the publisher/editor. This little treasure is only 2 1/2 inches high, is bound in gold-stamped red leather, and is letterpress printed in 8-point Garamond Old Style type.

The choice of quotations to accompany the letters is provocative, and sent me back to the original to find where they fit into a story I thought I knew well. And do you know what a "Norfolk Biffin" is? "Flaring links"? "Smoking Bishop"? Back to Dickens and to the OED!

The latest in the Bronte Press' series of miniature Christmas books is issued in an edition of 100 signed and numbered copies, not all with the hand-coloring. Dickens' classic tale still has the power to inspire other creative efforts. This is a 26-part delight. The Bronte Press is at 623 S. Curtis, Kankakee, IL 60901.

Jeanne Goessling

Book Illustrators: Inspiring Love and Delight in Observant Readers

To my way of thinking, illustrations enhance a book when the marriage between them and the text illustrated is a happy one.

Upon close examination of a book's illustrations, one can discern if an illustrator has read the book with sensitivity and intelligence. It becomes plain whether he or she has enjoyed the text and has been emotionally moved by it.

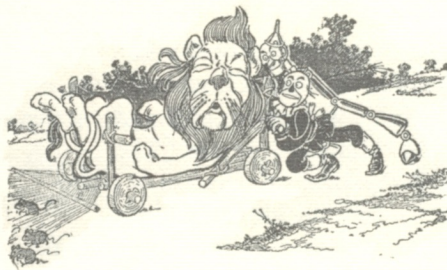
So called "livres d'artistes," books illustrated by famous artists, such as Picasso, who was not a book illustrator, are, usually, extremely costly and well-printed but, not always happy marriages.

Illustrations are usually composed of lines. The trained eye can see that some lines are "dead" on the page, while others are alive. Those by a hack illustrator lie dead when compared to those of Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Hogarth, or Rowlandson, for instance. The lines of truly great illustrators are those which convey vitality, a love of the subject drawn, and unmistakable feeling – for example, Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*, which tells a lively, though unhappy, story. Illustrations by Thomas Rowlandson radiate vitality in their close observation of human form and behavior of the very late 18th century. His *Dance of Death*, grim as the title surely is, somehow strikes a hilarious note in depicting inconvenient Death.

Dickens was extremely precise in what he expected his illustrations to include. He was fortunate to have fine illustrators, such as John Leach (*A Christmas Carol*) and Hablot Knight Brown, whose drawings for *Pickwick Papers* immortalized Pickwick and his friends.

Many writers have created their own illustrations. Thackeray, who wanted to be a professional artist, did some quite good ones for *Vanity Fair*. Author-illustrators of children's books are very common today.

Randolph Caldecott, for whom the Caldecott Medal was named, was an illustrator of spirit-lifting liveliness and zest. His illustrations are based on a very careful observation of people, horses, dogs, and farm animals *in movement*, as Caldecott chronicles the frivolities and festivities of an earlier age.



Kate Greenaway and Beatrix Potter are known for the gentleness, sweetness, and subtlety of color they brought to illustrations of children and animals.

Charles Robinson, William Heath Robinson, Arthur Rackham, and Edmund Dulac stand out as giants in early 20th century illustrations. Rackham is consistently very good; his lines live. *Ondine* represented a high point in a lifetime of superb illustrations, beautifully printed. Rackham always checked the color plates himself to make sure they were accurate.

Edmund Dulac, Rackham's contemporary, was an artist whose color, though subtle, had great richness of tone. His brilliant, sensual technique was well suited to *The Ruby Hat*. He was equally effective with the *Fairy Tales* of Hans Christian Andersen. (His later, Art Deco-inspired illustrations are too mannered to convey much feeling.)

Ernest Shepard displayed near-genius in depicting Winnie the Pooh and his cronies, as well as the almost human Toad in *Wind in the Willows*. He made their anthropomorphic lifestyles quite believable and interestingly English.

Howard Pyle, the famous artist-teacher of classes at Chadds Ford, PA, taught a whole school of illustrators, the most famous of them being N.C. Wyeth. Wyeth immersed himself as completely as anyone could in the fantasy and the history he was depicting. He made the classics that he illustrated come alive for readers. In his work, a careful observer finds the marriage of action, character, superb composition, color, and form – all suffused with strong emotion. No wonder the books he illustrated are such treasures!

The first editions of *The Wizard of Oz*, by Frank L. Baum, are forever joined to the illustrations of W.W. Denslow; consequently, it is difficult for other illustrators to improve on the brilliant conceptions of Denslow. The reader who has been introduced to the first edition of *The Wizard* may very well picture the characters ever after just as Denslow has drawn them.

Within the past years, Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales* has been illustrated by at least three gifted interpreters: first, by Fritz Eichenberg, a strong wood engraving style; second by Edward Ardizzone, gently and dreamily, and third, by Trina Schart Hymen, in more English color and style. Since the first illustrations did not permanently fix the reader's imagination, there would seem to be room for repeated tries at the ideal marriage in this creative Christmas tale by the Welsh poem and playwright.

There are a great number of very fine children's book illustrators today. Their works are beautifully printed, and it can truly be said that this is a golden age of children's book illustration. Regardless of the large numbers of illustrators and of books of exceptional quality, time has a way of sorting out the illustrator and the book that will continue to inspire love and delight in readers with an educated eye.

Eugene Field and His Books - The Frank J. Piehl Exhibition

A current exhibition at the University of Chicago provides a portrait of the book world in Chicago 100 years ago and an opportunity to view manuscript and printed items from the Eugene Field collections of Caxtonian and club historian Frank J. Piehl and the university library. "Eugene Field and His Books," which marks the centennial of Field's death and the founding of The Caxton Club, opened December 9 and remains on view in the Special Collections Exhibition Gallery, Regenstein Library, through March 20, 1995. Caxton Club members will receive invitations to a reception and exhibition viewing, scheduled for January 17, 1995.

Club members who attended Piehl's 1992 illustrated presentation, "Eugene Field — Bard, Bibliophile and Bon-Vivant," will recall that Field achieved extraordinary popularity during his 12 years as a journalist, writer, and collector in Chicago. His verse, stories, and

essays were read throughout the country and were collected in a series of finely printed works avidly sought by contemporary collectors. In his *Chicago Daily News* column, "Sharps and Flats," and in his book publication and collecting activities, Field promoted the writers, publishers, and collectors who formed Chicago's developing cultural community.

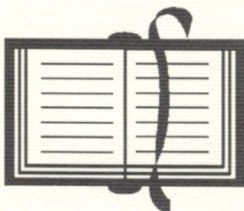
Field made lasting contributions to the literature and lore of book collecting in his apocryphal reports of the adventures of the "Saints and Sinners." There, secular and clerical portraits of bibliomania were modeled on Chicago collectors of the day, including William F. Poole, librarian of the Chicago Public Library and later first librarian of the Newberry; businessmen George A. Armour, Charles J. Barnes, and James W. Ellsworth, and clergymen Frank M. Bristol and Frank Wakely Gunsaulus.

Among the items from Piehl's collection on display are Field's copy of his first appearance in print, inscribed by the poet; an early manuscript autobiographical sketch; autograph manuscripts and letters, written in Field's characteristically minute hand and embellished by him with illuminated initials and decorations; finely printed, limited editions of Field's works, and books collected by Field. Included in the exhibition are Field manuscripts and letters from the library's collection of Harriet Monroe's papers, and the manuscript of "The Temptation of Friar Gonsol," presented to the library by the Rev. Gunsaulus, one of Field's "saints" and an early benefactor of the library.

"Eugene Field and His Books" pays tribute to a century of the book in Chicago and the complementarity of institutional and private book collecting. A checklist of the exhibition is available to visitors.

Alice Schreyer

The Caxton Chronicles



The founders of The Caxton Club specified four main activities to accomplish their objective in cre-

ating the club: publication of books, exhibition of books and prints, creation of a library, and acquisition of club rooms. Although luncheons and dinners with invited speakers were not the norm at early meetings, informal presentations by Caxtonians or guests often accompanied the meetings held in conjunction with the exhibitions.

When the club was forced to give up the luxury of its own meeting rooms for financial reasons in the 1920s, exhibitions could no longer be held. When Prof. John A. Scott of Northwestern University spoke about Homer on February 16, 1924, he became the first scheduled speaker under a new meeting format that

featured speakers at the luncheons. This change proved popular. The quality of the speakers improved, and the luncheons were eventually replaced by Wednesday dinners in 1961.

In the years following World War II, Caxtonians heard about etching, the history of printing, books published by current authors, poetry, private book collections, publishing, library collections, and a variety of other book-related topics. Notable speakers included: writers Howard Vincent O'Brien and Vincent Starrett; historians Bruce Catton and Benjamin P. Thomas; librarians J. Christian Bay and Stanley Pargellis, as well as notable Caxtonians. Speakers talked about: "The Vinland Saga," "Recollections of Eugene Field," "Michigania," "The Life and Times of Sherlock Holmes," and, at the Christmas Revels in 1943, "The Greek Theory of the Nude in Art."

The excellent quality of the presentations stimulated attendance at meetings and growth in membership.

The club does not give speakers a cash honorarium, but it has paid travel expenses for speakers invited on special occasions. The club customarily presents to its speakers a copy of one of its publications, inscribed to the speaker and signed by members and guests at the meeting. For many years the presentation pages were prepared by master calligrapher Caxtonian James F. Hayes. The first such memento was presented to author Christopher Morley on November 13, 1937, when he spoke on "The Persistence of Myths." An example of Hayes's calligraphy will be on display at the Newberry Library Exhibit, "The Caxton Club: A Century of Books and Book-loving," as part of the Centennial Celebration.

Frank J. Piehl

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.

December 9.

This very special luncheon will be held at the **University Club**, Monroe and Michigan, and feature a double presentation. Following lunch, Chicago architect Ed Noonan, will lead a tour of Cathedral Hall. Ed Quattrocchi then will discuss the relationship between the University Club, The Caxton Club, and Crosby Hall, from which Cathedral Hall was adapted.

January 13.

Caxtonian John Chalmers, Curator of Special Collections, Chicago Public Library, will speak on the history of acquisitions and the current holdings in Special Collections at the library.

*Ed Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman*

Committee Chairs Named

The Caxton Council approved the appointments of the following committee chairs for 1994-95, at the special November meeting of governing body.

Standing Committees of the Council

Auditing - Bruce Hubbard
Nominating - Alice Schreyer
Program - Thomas Joyce
Publications - Susan Rossen

Other Committees of the Council

Archives - Michael Grace
Centennial - Karen Skubish and Frank Williams
Development - Eugene Hotchkiss III
Friday Luncheon - Edward Quattrocchi and Leonard Freedman
Recruitment & Membership - Florence Shay

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

December 21.

Several Past-Presidents of The Caxton Club will entertain at the Holiday Revels in a program entitled, "Thanks for the Memories: Recollections of My Years in Charge."

January 26.

Neil Harris, Professor of History, University of Chicago, will speak on "High Culture and High Ambitions - Chicago in the 1890s." The evening program will mark the 100th anniversary of The Caxton Club

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 the meeting.

THE CAXTON CLUB



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