



Caxtonian

A Newsletter of The Caxton Club of Chicago

Volume III, No. 2

February 1995

Caxton Gala Sparks Centennial With Festive Dinner

Three hundred Caxtonians and guests gathered January 26, at The Newberry Library to celebrate at the Centennial Gala The Caxton Club's 100th anniversary.

It was flowers and music, photographers and conviviality during the reception, which preceded the dinner and formal program. Two exhibits opened that night in the galleries flanking the spacious lobby of the famed library, which itself dates back to the era of the Caxton founding.

Caxtonians and guests viewed the splendid exhibits, "The Caxton Club: A Century of Books and Book-Loving," in the R.R. Donnelley Gallery, and "Personal Treasures - Favorite Books from the Collections of Current Caxton Club Members," in the Hermon Dunlap Smith Gallery. Karen Skubish on the harp and "Speedy" Walker on the piano provided background music for the reception.

In a lengthy but well-paced program, Caxton President Robert Cotner served as master of ceremonies and began the evening with a recitation of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 116." Member Ned Rosenheim offered a toast to the club's first century as guests dined on filet mignon. Following dinner, Neil Harris, University of Chicago professor and historian, delivered the keynote address, "High Culture and High Ambitions: Chicago in the 1890s," in which he traced eloquently the birth of Chicago as a major cultural, literary, and scholarly center of the nation.

The following then brought greetings: Bridget Lamont, Director of the Illinois State Library; Charles Cullen, President



Caxtonians Gerald F. Fitzgerald and David E. Connor enjoy the comforts of an early Caxton setting during the reception.

of The Newberry Library; and Larry Siegler, of Cleveland's Rowfant Club.

Caxtonian Bruce McKittrick, who wrote the Foreword to the club history, gave a special presentation, a moving tribute to the club as the most open and inclusive book society in the nation.

President Cotner then recognized the Centennial Co-Chairs Ms. Skubish and Frank O. Williams and their excellent committee, the past three Caxton Councils, the nine Caxton Past Presidents present, and the Publications Committee.

Publications Committee Chair Susan Rossen introduced the superb new Caxton centennial history, *Celebrating a Century of the Book in Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1895-1995*. She told of the efforts of her committee in preparing and publishing the history, and introduced James R. Donnelley, whose

family has had membership in The Caxton Club since its founding and whose company has published 36 of the 60 Caxton books. R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company published, as well, the new history and donated its services to make possible what has been called the finest book yet published by the club. Citing his personal pride in his family's long association with the club, Donnelley also praised his excellent staff for their generous efforts in bringing a book of this quality into being.

Ms. Rossen also introduced author and Caxton Historian Dr. Piehl, whom she praised as a splendidly disciplined scholar, who led the Publications Committee in its arduous task of researching, organizing, writing, and editing the 191-page history. "He taught me so much," she said, "and in the process we became not only colleagues but friends."

Dr. Piehl gave brief remarks and offered a toast to the second century of The Caxton Club. Cotner invited Ms. Skubish, Ms. Rossen, Williams, and Beck to join Dr. Piehl and him at the podium to be recognized for their inspired leadership given during the years of planning and preparation.

Cotner concluded the evening by reciting a verse he had written for the occasion, dedicated to the "Man of the Hour, friend and fellow Caxtonian, Frank J. Piehl."

Ms. Skubish summed up the finale appropriately for all, saying, "At the end of the gala, we all *glowed!*"

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

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Musings...

"Everything turned out better than we expected, better than we dreamed." This was Karen Skubish's assessment following the Centennial Gala.

She spoke of the two centennial exhibits at the Newberry and one at the University of Chicago, exhibits which are truly commanding. She spoke of Piehl's and Beck's centennial history, which a Newberry scholar called the finest he has seen. She spoke of the Centennial Gala, where 300 members and guests — the largest gathering of Caxtonians ever — enjoyed a splendid evening's celebration of the club's long and impressive history.

She spoke, as well, of the superb article by Jon Anderson and Charles Cherney's perfectly conceived photograph (the subject notwithstanding), in the center of Page One in all editions of the *Chicago Tribune*, Friday, January 27, commemorating The Caxton Club, a "legendary Chicago institution whose bookish concerns swirl back to exactly 100 years ago Thursday,..." The editors, it is apparent, celebrated Chicago as a significant cultural center in honoring the organization in this fashion.

What we have witnessed is the chance convergence in a remarkable way of like-minded people dedicated to a common purpose greater than themselves and encompassing, in Thoreau's words, the "two eternities, the past and future."

We experienced the pleasant results of men and women from different generations and differing viewpoints putting aside personal biases and moving toward common, worthy goals — actions rare these days. The unifying force, it seems to me, was that each, in his or her own way, came to the tasks — the centennial planning, the design, writing, and publication of our history; the staging of the exhibitions, and the gala itself — with minds finely attuned to the best interests of The Caxton Club.

As your "accidental president" (I fill the term of the late Rolf Erickson, whose untimely death deprived us of his leadership these past two years) I sense keenly the role that chance plays and know well its favor. My most important contribution has been the *Caxtonian*, through which we have forged an identity for the organization that is now clearer than at any time in recent history.

In 1854, Louis Pasteur gave the world this thought provoking statement: "In the fields of observation, chance favors only the prepared mind." In 1995 Caxtonians confirmed Pasteur's statement. The success of The Caxton Club in its centennial year lies in our being a society of people prepared by a rigorous discipline to bookishness of all sorts and a life of the mind emanating from this bookishness that most of us have known. It has been a collective preparation and a celebratory achievement.

I salute the club on its fine health at 100. I congratulate in a special way colleagues who have worked so long and hard toward the marvelous centennial accomplishments. Our splendid success is a testimony to the beneficent power of the book in life.

It is the colophon for The Caxton Club's first century.

Robert Cotner
President

Chicago's Historic Fine Arts Building, Early Home Of The Caxton Club

Little did I expect that when we recently opened our new bookshop at 410 South Michigan Avenue, I would be keeping company with so many talented and influential figures from Chicago's cultural, artistic, and literary past, many of whom will be familiar names to Caxtonians. It is interesting to note, in our centennial year, that The Caxton Club and the Chicago Literary Club *both* occupied quarters on the 10th floor of the now beautifully restored Chicago landmark, the Fine Arts Building.

Designed by Solon S. Beman and built in 1885 for the Studebaker Carriage and Wagon Company, the building was converted into artist studios some 10 years later. Today, it retains much of the character about which Elia W. Peattie wrote in *The Book of The Fine Arts*



A photograph of The Caxton Club rooms, which appears in The Book of The Fine Arts Building, provided by member Glen Wiche.

Building, a publication designed and printed by Caxtonian Ralph Fletcher Seymour.

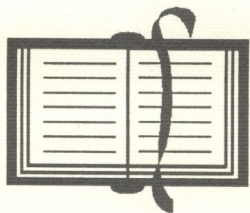
The building was once characterized as a place "... occupied by sculptors, painters, musicians, actors, writers, illustrators, etchers, gold and silver-smiths, carvers, decorators, publishers of

special editions; teachers of elocution and expression, the drama and the cognate arts; dealers in the antique and curious; ..." Many who occupy offices there today still reflect the pursuits of their ancestral tenants.

Of particular interest to Caxtonians will be a special reception and tour of the Fine Arts Building, February 15, 1995. There will be a rare opportunity to visit the former Caxton Club rooms, as well as a leisured opportunity to wander the hallways and studios that once housed Browne's Bookstore, The Little Theatre, and the Fortnightly Club, as well as the studios where John T. McCutcheon and W. W. Denslow once wrote and sketched, and to view the magnificent Joseph C. Leyendecker art nouveau murals.

Glen N. Wiche

The Caxton Chronicles



The first four years of Caxton Club history were devoted to establishing a cadre of mem-

bers, evolving a satisfactory format for meetings and exhibitions, and developing a publications program. In the fall of 1898 the Council became dissatisfied with the club's quarters in the newly constructed Art Institute building, and the club's treasury was on a sound enough basis to consider renting permanent club rooms. So, in February 1899 the club moved into new club rooms in the Fine Arts Building, beginning "The Golden Years" in its history.

When it did so, it placed itself in the heart of Chicago's growing cultural community. The building stands next to the Auditorium Building, where the Chicago Symphony Orchestra played, and it was only a few blocks away from the Art Institute and the new Chicago Public Library. Within a few years, a

new Orchestra Hall and the Field Museum of Natural History would be added to the community.

The Fine Arts Building itself was the center of Chicago's own burgeoning arts and crafts movement. The Caxton Club's neighbors on the prestigious 10th floor included the Chicago Literary Club, sculptor Lorado Taft, cartoonist John T. McCutcheon, and painter Ralph Clarkson, who hosted an informal group of writers, musicians, and artists on Friday afternoons, a group that came to be known as the Little Room. Elsewhere in the building, Francis Browne, a renowned local poet and the club's first honorary member, opened a bookstore designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The Caxton Club rooms were spacious and well-appointed. Carpets covered the wood floors and draperies adorned the windows. A large fireplace and mantle added elegance and warmth. The walls were lined with glass enclosed cases that housed the club's growing

library of publications, mainly bibliographical in character. Portraits, prints, medals, and a stag's head adorned the walls. A large library table and cushioned chairs completed the amenities. President John Henry Wrenn commented that the new rooms provided a "greater freedom of intercourse and the exchange of ideas among our members."

Ralph Fletcher Seymour, a local author and publisher, who had a studio elsewhere in the building, served as curator for many years, maintaining the rooms open six days a week for members. Luncheons were served for members and their guests on the first Saturday of each month from October through April. Most of the books and prints exhibited at these meetings were loaned by members. Caxtonians fraternized in these sumptuous surroundings until 1919, when the club fell on hard times and had to give them up.

Frank J. Piehl

Words and Scenes from Gala Capture the Evening Brightly

Frank Piehl: A Salute of Our Second Century

Fellow Caxtonians and guests, it's an honor to participate in this impressive celebration of a century of Caxton Club history. In thinking about the last two years of my own life, which have been largely devoted to writing the history of the club, I'm reminded of an old and homely analogy: writing the history of The Caxton Club has been like giving birth to an elephant. After a gestation period of almost two years, and after long and arduous birthing labor, the mother elephant finally gives birth, looks at what she has produced, and says to herself, "That's really something to be proud of." When you see the Caxton Club centennial history, there is no doubt in my mind that you'll agree, "That's really something to be proud of." But unlike the mother elephant who gives birth alone, many midwives assisted in our birthing process.

Our history is the product of the cooperative effort of many Caxtonians, too numerous to name here. They're identified in the preface to the history, but I would be remiss not to mention three people. Bruce Beck designed the book, which in my opinion stands second to none in quality and beauty of design among the Caxton Club publications. Susan Rossen guided the book through the publication process and was immensely helpful in resolving some of the knotty problems that I had in writing the text. Many of the finest passages in the text grew from her suggestions. Finally, the book would not exist today to exemplify all that's best in the book arts without the personal support of Jim Donnelley and the competent employees of R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company. We are deeply indebted to them.

What about the future? What direction should our publications policy take in



Karen Skubish and Frank Williams,
Centennial Co-Chairs

the future? That was one of the knotty problems I wrestled with for a long time. At Susan's suggestion, we deleted the last chapter about the future and replaced it with a short epilogue that simply says, "The future will be different from the past, and we can make it anything we want it to be." We have the talent sitting in this room to do just that.

So, in closing, would you all join me in a toast to the second century of Caxton Club history: "May the members of The Caxton Club dedicate themselves in their second century not only to sharing with each other their knowledge about the traditional arts pertaining to the production of books, but also about what's new in those arts. May they build upon the camaraderie among the members that has become the lifeblood of the club, and may they continue to publish good books in the traditions established by our namesake, William Caxton, and by our founding fathers."



Caxtonians Carl Kroch and Will White

A Verse for Our Centennial

For Frank J. Piehl

*Bless the word,
a nugget cast in thought,
ringing down through time and mind.*

*Bless the book,
a treasured vessel,
bringing all toward hope and truth.*

*Bless the people
of word and book,
cherished friends,
singing lore, forsooth, eternal.*

Robert Cotner

Former Caxton Presidents and Other Special Guests Saluted at Club Gala

The following former Caxton Club presidents were in attendance at the Centennial Gala of The Caxton Club, January 26, and were introduced with special thanks by President Cotner:

Roger Watson Barrett	1962
Kenneth Nebenzahl	1964-65
Arthur H. Miller, Jr.	1978-79
Frank O. Williams	1980-81
William W. McKittrick	1983-84
Mary Beth Beal	1985-86
Stanton A. Friedberg	1987-88
Edward W. Rosenheim	1989-90
Hayward R. Blake	1991-92

Also present and recognized that evening were two of the club's senior members: Carl A. Krock, a member since 1939, and Ralph G. Newman, a member since 1940. Julie Teipel, granddaughter of famed Caxtonian Ralph Fletcher Seymour, and her husband Alex were guests, as well.

As Members and Guests Celebrate at the Newberry Library

Words of Congratulation Come to Caxton Club

Thank you for the gracious invitation to attend the Centennial Gala of The Caxton Club of Chicago. I am particularly disappointed that a prior commitment prevents me from attending this special event, since as State Librarian I am extremely committed to the promotion of reading and sharing the appreciation of books. I have asked Bridget L. Lamont, the director of the Illinois State Library, to attend in my place.

The Caxton Club of Chicago should be very proud of its accomplishments in enriching the lives of so many by sharing their appreciation and love of the written word. I know that at every stage of life, books and reading nourish the mind as well as stimulate active involvement in our society.

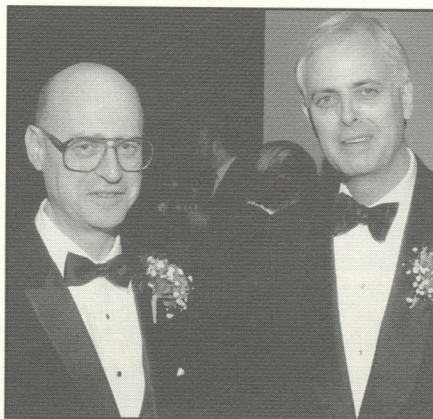
Congratulations on your 100th Anniversary!

*George H. Ryan
Secretary of State
and State Librarian*

The members of The Rowfant Club offer their hearty congratulations to the members of The Caxton Club. On this, the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of The Caxton Club, you are to be commended for your historic and continuing pursuit of the many and varied pleasures of books. With kindred purpose, both clubs have endeavored to provide our members with the maximum enjoyment and knowledge to be gained from the book world.

Delivered at the Gala by Larry Siegler

On behalf of the entire Council and membership of the Grolier Club, I send heartiest congratulations and good wishes to you and your august association on the important occasion of your



Keynote Speaker Neil Harris with Newberry President Charles Cullen

100th anniversary. I am very sorry that I will not be able to be with you on January 26th, the evening of your Centennial Gala, but it happens to fall upon the date of our own annual meeting and dinner. I can promise you, though, that the assembled membership of the Grolier Club will toast your distinguished contribution to the world of bibliophily and the book arts on that very night.

William B. Warren, President

Unfortunately I cannot be with you on the 26th, but wish you all success! I do hope that many of you will attend our reception just before the February Book Fair, here, about which you should hear shortly. And, if at all possible, we'll try to celebrate with you during one or more of the 1995 activities.

*Sandor Burstein, Master of the Press
The Roxburghe Club of San Francisco*

On behalf of my fellow members of this society, I am pleased and honored to send our congratulations to The Caxton Club on its 100th Anniversary. We regret that it is not possible for us to have a personal representative at your Centennial Gala on January 26, but we are still a young club by

comparison (founded 1984) and are building our treasury for the future.

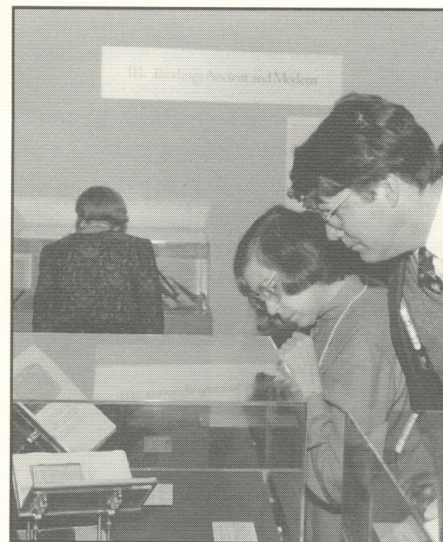
*Eliot H. Stanley
Founder and First President
The Baxter Society
Portland, Maine*

How very thoughtful of you to have sent me the latest *Caxtonian*. I want you to know how much I enjoyed the article Mary Beth wrote about Sam. I was unable to attend the 100th anniversary meeting as I was in Arizona, but I look forward to being at the April meeting. I want to wish The Caxton Club many more years in giving the Book lovers of Chicago more interesting and educational meetings.

Marie Louise Rosenthal

Best wishes on this 100th Anniversary of The Caxton Club. I regret that I will not see you at the Centennial Gala. It was my intention to come back, but twin babies and new shop construction prevents my attendance. See you next month.

Bill Minter



Guests view "Personal Treasures."

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, 12:30 p.m.

March 10.

Caxtonian Glen Wiche will tell the little-known story of the naval side of the American Civil War, utilizing memoirs and other personal documents from his extensive research. In a talk entitled, "Rhett Butler and Company," he will link both literature and history in his presentation.

April 7.

Caxtonian Elmer Gertz will speak on "The Immortal Common Man: Harry S. Truman." Attorney, educator, and author of 16 books, Elmer Gertz was a personal friend of the President and will share his intimate knowledge of this illustrious America President. On the first Friday of April.

Important Note: Members planning to attend luncheons must make reservation in advance by calling either the Caxton or Mr. Quattrocchi's number.

*Ed Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman*

New Caxton Telephone Number Announced

People calling The Caxton Club at The Newberry Library should use the new private line number: 312/255-3710. All luncheon and dinner reservations should be made on this private line. The former Caxton extension at the Newberry is no longer a working number.

Ex-Caxtonian Greer Allen Coming Home in February

Greer Allen joined The Caxton Club in 1954, having come to Chicago to work at the University of Chicago Press, first as designer and later as director of the printing department. He left in 1971 to return to Yale and the University Press, and is now the University's Printer Emeritus.

Three of the Caxton Club's distinguished books were designed by Allen: *Western life in the Stirrups* (1965), *Memories of John Adlum* (1968), and *Status in a Wood Block* (1972). He also contributed a wonderfully warm essay for *RHM, The Man and His Letters* (1985).

Allen will present an illustrated talk, "R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company in the World of Books." Caxtonians will not want to miss welcoming the former Caxton member.

Hayward Blake

Dinner Programs

Caxton Centennial meetings will be held at historic sites throughout the city rather than at the regular meeting site, The Mid-Day Club. Members will want to consult the Centennial brochure for more details and read carefully their program announcements for information regarding parking.

February 15.

Following a tour of the Fine Arts Building led by Caxtonian Glen Wiche, members will repair to the Gold Room of the Congress Hotel for dinner and a talk by former Caxtonian Greer Allen, Yale University Printer Emeritus, on "R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company in the World of Books." The Fine Arts Building, 410 South Michigan Avenue. Cocktails and tour of building, 4:30 - 6:30pm; Dinner and Program 6:45pm

March 15.

The Fortnightly Club will be the setting for our dinner program, a talk by Richard Wendorf, Director of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, on "Rare Book and Manuscript Libraries in the 21st Century."

Tom Joyce

Advance reservations are absolutely necessary, and meals must be paid for, in advance. Members and guests, \$35.



The Caxton Club of Chicago
60 West Walton Street
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