



Caxtonian

A Newsletter of The Caxton Club of Chicago

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March 1995

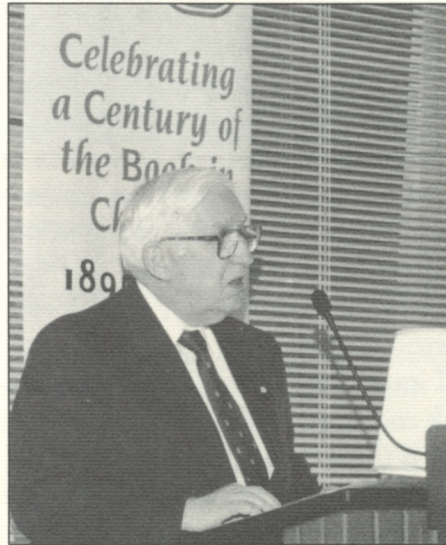
Club Centennial Celebrations Continue at Appointed Times and Places

One hundred and sixty Caxtonians and friends gathered February 15, 1995 at the Fine Arts Building for refreshments and an engrossing tour of the lovely former home of the Studebaker Corporation. Caxtonians Ralph Newman and Glen Wiche were hosts, and Wiche led a tour through the halls of the old building, which yet exude the ambiance of the distinguished tenants who once had their workplaces there. A special six-page publication prepared by Wiche, "Some Famous Early Tenants of the Fine Arts Building in Their Own Words," became the evening's keepsake. Arrangements for the tour were made through building owner Tom Graham, whose graciousness was much appreciated.

The dinner meeting, held following the tour under the sculpted domed ceiling of the Gold Room of the Congress Hotel, continued the joyous celebration of the Caxton centennial begun at the Newberry in January.

Master of Ceremonies Robert Cotner presented a literary prelude from *The Great Learning of Confucian Philosophers*, which, he observed, was most appropriate in honoring the distinguished Donnelley family that night and as a preface for the evening's presentation. He then read:

"The ancients who wished to illustrate the highest virtue throughout the empire first ordered well their own states; wishing to order well their own states, they first regulated their families; wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons; wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts; wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts; wishing to be sincere in their thoughts,



Caxtonian Historian and author of the Caxton centennial history Frank J. Piehl discusses the early history and development of The Caxton Club, at a luncheon meeting, February 3, 1995, in the East Room of The Newberry Library, where 45 members and guests gathered as part of the club's centennial celebration and "The Year of the Book in Chicago."

they extended their knowledge to the utmost. This extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things."

Following dinner, Caxtonian Bruce Beck introduced the evening's speaker, former Caxtonian and Yale University Printer Emeritus Greer Allen, who, with his wife Sue, has maintained close associations with Chicago and many Caxtonians over the years.

In a brilliant, illustrated lecture, Allen then traced the history of the R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company of Chicago since its founding in 1860, detailing its rise to become the world's largest and most successful printing facility. With emphasis on the long-standing relationships between the Donnelley family and company with

The Caxton Club, Allen told of the unique characteristics of family members and company employees who have played such an instrumental role in the life and distinguished nature of the company in the world of books.

Following Allen's presentation, Cotner invited Caxtonian and retired company executive Thomas Donnelley, who is one of three Donnelley family members in the club and whose family has been active in it for four generations, to give a response. Noting how rare it is to have a gathering to honor a printing company, Donnelley pledged, "When The Caxton Club celebrates its 200th anniversary, you can be sure there will be a Donnelley company and some of my family will yet be members."

One Caxtonian observed following the program, "I thought we'd have a let-down after our wonderful Centennial Gala last month — but not so. This evening was equally marvelous!"

Columbia College To Open Caxtonian Book Arts Exhibit

The Chicago Center for Book & Paper Arts at Columbia College will open an exhibit, "The Look of the Book: Work by Caxton Club Members," on March 24, 1995. An opening reception for the exhibit between 5 to 7 p.m. will also dedicate the Frank Archer College at the center's bindery.

The exhibit features Caxtonians who create fine bindings, limited editions, book designs, and artist's books. Tours of the center dedicated to the book arts will also be available. The exhibit will be held at 218 S. Wabash Street, 7th Floor. It will run through May 19.

Barbara Lazarus Metz

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
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Council

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Class of '97

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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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Musings...

It seems like a hundred years ago but it was only 35, when, as a young English teacher in a small Western Ohio farm community, I ordered from far-away University of Chicago Press a book entitled, *What Happens in Literature*, by Edward W. Rosenheim.

I read it, I marked it, I copied parts of it (using, you'll recall, those purple Ditto masters), and I even memorized portions of it. Later, when I discovered it was available in paperback, I had my students buy copies and we used it throughout the year in advanced English classes. Still later, when I went to Liberia as Fulbright Lecturer, I took it along and used it there, too, because its clear prose and lucid explanations were so valuable in helping students understand poetry and other genres of literature. It was always "my Rosenheim book," and so the name Edward W. Rosenheim became to me like a line of lovely poetry.

On my first evening as a member of The Caxton Club, in September 1990, I walked into the lobby of the Mid-Day Club, went to the table where the name tags were being distributed, and was greeted by a gentleman who said, "Hi! My name's Ned Rosenheim. I'm the president of this august group. Welcome to The Caxton Club!"

I introduced myself, we shook hands, and I went down the hallway to the cloak room. As I walked, my mind said, "Ned Rosenheim, Ned Rosenheim. I wonder if that could possibly be Edward W. Rosenheim?" After hanging my coat up, I returned to the lobby, found the gentleman, took him by the arm and asked, "Did you write a book called *What Happens in Literature*?" Somewhat embarrassed, he said something about the book's being out-of-date these days, but, yes, he had written that book — a long time ago.

So you could say that my introduction to The Caxton Club came in 1960 through the prose elucidation, rendered in simple elegance, by Ned Rosenheim in his fine little descriptive book on literature. It was that same sort of eloquence that we became used to under his presidency.

It was Ned who asked me if I would join the Council and, a few months later, whether I would consider being vice president of the club. How could I refuse. Before my presidency began, I had lunch with Ned at the Faculty Club of the University of Chicago to discuss my plans for leadership, including initial ideas for the *Caxtonian*. "Be gentle, be yourself, and be careful of divisiveness of any kind," he counseled. I could not have been better advised.

Emerson wrote, "Each age,...must write its own books." Edward W. Rosenheim wrote an important book for my generation. By an inexplicable blessing of fate, I have come to know his eloquent spirit personally and have learned that that spirit, so evident throughout our centennial events, is The Caxton Club's epitome.

Robert Cotner
President

Regenstein Exhibit Reveals Eugene Field as a Bookman,

The Eugene Field Exhibit now on display at the University of Chicago Library prompts some reflections about the survival of literary reputations. Even the gracious, informative catalogue for the exhibit, admitting in its final paragraph that Field's popularity has waned since the '30s, helpfully indicates those aspects of his work and enthusiasms that continue to merit our interest.

This history of a reputation can be put in personal terms. As a small boy in the '20s, I knew Field as the author of poems that not only I but most kids knew well and often memorized — the most famous, of course, being "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod," "Little Boy Blue," and "The Gingham Dog and Calico Cat." In my case, these poems became associated — actually confused — with another charmed body of children's poetry, *A Child's Garden of Verse*. And, as a kid, I didn't think of Field as particularly an American, let alone a Chicagoan; I clearly remember my happy astonishment on learning that he was buried in Kenilworth, about two miles from where I lived. I guess I'd previously assumed that he lay in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

If some appreciative memories of Field's verses persist, I suppose we should be grateful. In his day, he was hailed as the Children's Laureate, and laurels, as we know, tend to fade quickly and even disappear. Today, alongside such notable works for kids as those of Lear, George MacDonald and Andrew Lang, or latterly Belloc, Milne and Thurber, it's hard to make a case for the importance, as a children's writer, of Eugene Field.

Accordingly, I looked forward to this exhibition only as a kind of sentimental journey, made further interesting by my rather inexact awareness of Field as a Chicago newspaperman. Well, it has

turned out to be a somewhat sentimental experience, but not so much for nostalgic recollections of Wynken, Blynken, and Company as for my sentimental feelings as a Caxtonian and a Chicagoan, and as a great admirer of people who can discourse with grace and humor about things they take very seriously — about things, that is, they are likely to regard sentimentally.

Now Field's writing is not on display here in order to be patronized, and especially not to be patronized because he was a newspaper columnist or, in the language of his day, a "paragrapher." His is essentially writing of the kind we professorial types call "the periodical essay" and which, when it takes form in the *Spectator* or Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* or Johnson's *Rambler*, we are prepared to discuss with worshipful, elaborate pedantry. Field can claim legitimate kinship with these worthies, not the less because during most of the 12 years that he wrote his "Sharps and Flats" column for Chicago newspapers, he produced a two-thousand word column six days a week.

Confronted by this volume of writing, the latter-day reader's natural instinct is to forget matters of unity, subsuming themes, and the like, and simply to search in Field's work for memorable "nuggets" — passages to be cherished for their intrinsic qualities, whatever their content. (Let me confess, since I am no longer worried about getting tenure, that I am a shameless nugget-hunter even in the exalted domains of Addison and Goldsmith and, indeed, even Dr. Johnson.) What constitutes a true nugget, of course, is dictated by readers and their particular circumstances. To illustrate this, let me simply produce three passages from Field's "Sharps and Flats" columns that seem particularly apposite for the present occasion.

The first is from the *Daily News* in 1891:

"It seems that the Library just purchased in Berlin for the Chicago University weighs five hundred thousand pounds. We are sorry that we cannot give the figures in furlongs, rods and feet. It is hard to form any adequate idea of the merits of books unless the length, breadth and thickness and style of bindings are known. Therefore until these details are forthcoming we shall shiver in suspense."

I find the passage of special interest for two reasons. First it is almost a *leitmotif* in Field's column as it jocularly attacks collectors' inordinate absorption with the physical qualities of books — though, in truth, Field was not only very knowledgeable on these matters but insisted, for his own writings, on the highest quality of book production. But the passage is significant for a second reason, pointing to an aspect of this University's founding that we mentioned rarely, if at all, in celebrating our centennial two years ago. This was the public response, largely humorous, to the emergence of a complete new university, overnight as it were, and entirely equipped, funded, and staffed in the manner of a high-powered business enterprise, such as (not accidentally) a meat-packing plant.

My second nugget calls for a brief prefatory note. Over the years, the numerous columns Field devoted to bibliophilic matters made regular reference to an organization he called the Saints and Sinners Club, which allegedly met in a corner of McClurg's book store. Now this club was neither totally fictional, like, say, the *Spectator* group, nor was it a genuine organization. Instead, it was a fanciful assemblage of real people — all of them Chicago book collectors and most of them leaders in Chicago's business and civic life. I find it impossible to explain why Field commonly sought to fictionalize or place in fanciful contexts actual

Ingenious Satirist, and a Writer of Pleasing Versatility

friends of his, and ideas and sentiments which were transparently his own. This is most strikingly the case with the largely autobiographical papers and personal reflections brought together as *The Love Affair of a Bibliomaniac* and diluted by fictional characters of slight literary appeal.

Field's quasi-fanciful organization of bibliophiles, however, was to become a reality which, shortly before his death, he was able to greet in a column of February 16, 1895. Here is a short excerpt:

"The Caxton Club is a bookish organization which has just come into existence in Chicago, and it starts out not only with a determination but also an ability to accomplish noble results There are very many book lovers and book collectors in Chicago; the Caxton Club will serve at once to unite and crystallize these varied interests which hitherto have struggled independently."

After naming the president and vice-president of the club (respectively, James Ellsworth and George A. Armour), Field asserts that "these officers and their capable associates ... give the organization at once a desirable prestige" — a reminder that The Caxton Club, in all its nobility of purpose, was not in its early years a notably egalitarian enterprise.

Let me produce, without further comment, a third nugget, this one from the "Sharps and Flats" column of June 12, 1894:

"The Chicago base-ball club appears to be the vermiform appendix of the National League. Nobody speaks or knows good of it, and all agree that general good would be conserved by getting rid of it."

Eugene Field did not court literary immortality. He was an ingenious satirist, but satire, because its targets far more often than not are transient, is among the most ephemeral forms of

writing. He had a newsman's preoccupation with the immediate, the particular, and the personal, so that even his reflections on very general topics are studded with proper names and specific events. He had some strong opinions and was capable of some scathing assaults, but he could never have been called a warrior in a sustained, significant conflict.

And yet Field is to be valued beyond our approval of occasional nuggets. He was a writer of surprising versatility, of humor that can approach hilarity, of authentic learning (he did know a great deal about old books and about the works of Horace, Heine, and Hugo), with a capacity for friendship that colors and sometimes shapes his literary performances. What he says about Chicago in the last decade of the 19th century is shrewd and illuminating. What he says about book-collecting and collectors is affectionate, ingenious, amusing, and realistic to a degree unapproached by the coy collectors' confessions of later years and matched only by works like William Targ's *Carrousel for Bibliophiles* after half a century.

In effect, then, it is a privilege to be reintroduced to Eugene Field and his accomplishments through this exhibit. And there is something particularly fitting about this event's occurring through the generosity of Frank Piehl. If Frank were not the unassuming and tolerant man that he is, my own reflections on Eugene Field would be audacious, as would any reflection I offered on the history of Chicago. For on the subject of Field, Frank is that easily described but rarely encountered phenomenon, the genuine scholar-collector, while his mastery of Chicago history embraces even — or rather, particularly — those 17th century days when this place was notable only as a portage for Father Marquette, Joliet,

and LaSalle. Frank's report to the Caxtonians on the principles and practice of genealogical inquiry reveal how his self-styled amateur adventures soon acquire the level of professional. In short, his activities over the past decade make it clear why he has been named the first Official Historian of The Caxton Club. And if you want to know what an Official Historian does, the answer in this instance is that he writes the magnificent centenary history called *Celebrating a Century of the Book in Chicago: The Caxton Club, 1895-1995*, which is in every respect a collector's item of the first order.

I'd like to say one further thing about Frank Piehl, a matter of special interest to me as a teacher of the humanities. The point is simply that Frank holds a doctorate from this University but his degree is in the physical sciences. And Frank retired some years ago, not from an academic career, but from his position as an executive of Amoco. Frank seems to me superb evidence of the fact that the humanities and their satisfactions are not exclusively — nor need they even be principally — the property of the academic or the artistic establishments — that the humanistic experience consists in the informed, joyous, affirmative response to human achievements and their products, wherever they are encountered. I am sure Frank's scientific and technological background has great effect upon his habits of investigation and his analysis and organization of historical materials. But more central to this occasion, to this library in which we are meeting, to the Chicagoan and Caxtonian traditions, are those broad habits of learning, judgment, and generosity which, combined, I like to call by a rather old-fashioned word. That word is *appreciation*. Frank has the gift of appreciation in rare degree. And toward him, we in turn are deeply appreciative as well.

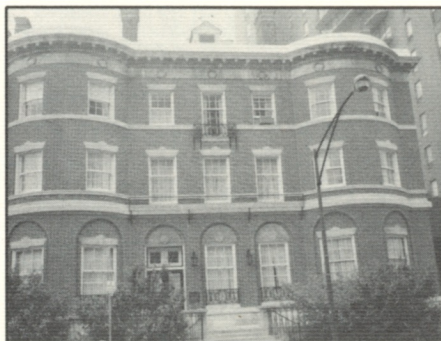
Ned Rosenheim

March Dinner Meeting Rekindles Caxton Club Ties to The Fortnightly

The Fortnightly is the oldest women's organization in Chicago. Founded in 1873 by 12 of the city's social leaders, its purpose was, and is, to provide intellectual and cultural stimulation for its members.

Essays and lectures at the twice-monthly meetings were at one time presented exclusively by members. Today, guest speakers are more the norm, with recent programs varying from the Hon. Lynn Martin on global economy, to the Newberry's Fred Hoxie on the American Indian, and Chef Charlie Trotter on today's cooking trends.

In the early years, The Fortnightly held its meetings in a variety of locales,



ranging from Standard Hall, at Michigan Avenue and 13th Street, to the Fine Arts Building, where The Caxton Club was among its distinguished neighbors.

In 1922, the group purchased the stately Georgian house at 120 Bellevue Place (pictured above). The mansion was

designed by the New York firm of McKim Meade and White, for Bryan Lathrop. Mrs. Lathrop was a member of The Fortnightly; her husband was a Caxtonian. The house has been designated a Chicago landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Other Caxton-Fortnightly couples have included the Charles Lawrence Hutchinsons, the James Westfall Thompsons (both men were Caxton Club presidents), and the T.E. Donnelleys. Suzanne Hotchkiss, the wife of Caxton and Council member Eugene Hotchkiss, is The Fortnightly's current president.

Suzanne Hotchkiss

Former Caxtonian and Chicago Historical Society President Reviews Recent Caxton History

For a former Chicagoan like myself, *Celebrating a Century of the Book in Chicago* is a truly wonderful gift.

First is the gift package. This centennial publication is covetable as an artifact. Its thoughtful and elegant design and feel is an appropriate remembrance of The Caxton Club's tradition of fine book making. It is the kind of volume that will be proudly held, read, shared, and displayed.

But the gift does not end here. Like any other gift, it is a physical reminder of the giving of time, attention, and affection that resulted in the gift. It clearly is a labor of love by Frank J. Piehl and made possible by the efforts of the club's Centennial and Publications Committees.

The narrative is an honest account, well told, of yet another gift. The Caxton Club itself is a great gift; like so many other Chicago institutions, it was

created out of the best kind of midwestern boosterism of the late 19th century. And like so many Chicago institutions, it was based on eastern precedent. But, of course, it took on a special character, which was created and nourished by a city that was a powerful solvent in cutting through boundaries of occupation and interest.

Books were and remain today a common denominator in the life of the city, and this Piehl's narrative makes clear. The other common denominator was the book people who had the forethought to establish The Caxton Club and to continue it through a century. This history is a reminder of how important such people as Charles Hutchinson and Richard Donnelley were in bridging the gap between the world of learning and the world of doing. The chronicle of The Caxton Club is a wonderful microcosm of the larger story of Chicago as both a business and a cultural center.

For me, the most important gift of the volume is to remind this former Caxton Club member of his debt to other Caxtonians, such as Gay Donnelley, Bill Towner, Ned Rosenheim, and Ken Nebenzhal, who were so welcoming to this raw recruit from the east. Their hospitality, mentoring, and friendship were characteristic of club members and nurtured me in the same way they nurtured so many others in diverse ways. For many of us today, the Caxton remains a vital force, in the words of Chicagoan Nathan Scott, "To engage the unexclusive mutuality which belongs to the true life of the city."

From its publications to its Holiday Revels, the Caxton has left its mark on Chicago. Let us all wish it well in its new century!

Harold K. Skramstad, Jr.
President

Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village

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, Gertz was a personal friend of the President and will share his intimate knowledge of this illustrious American.
On the first Friday of April.

*Ed Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman*

Important Note: Members planning to attend luncheons must make reservation in advance by calling either the Caxton or Mr. Quattrocchi's number. Luncheon for members and guests, \$20.

Committee Calls for Nominees

Alice Schreyer, Chair of the Nominating Committee, has issued a call for nominees to fill vacant positions for the 1995 election.

In the charge to the committee from the Council, the following positions are listed as open: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Five Council positions, for the Class of 1998, also are open.

Nominations should be mailed to The Caxton Club, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60610. The committee will present its slate to the Council at the April 26 Council meeting.

The approved slate will be presented to the full membership at the Annual Meeting, May 18, 1995.

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.

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.

March 15.

The Fortnightly will be the setting for cocktails, dinner, and a talk by Richard Wendorf, Director of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, on "Rare Book and Manuscript Libraries in the 21st Century." Caxtonian Dr. Eugene Hotchkiss III and Mrs. Hotchkiss, president of The Fortnightly, will host the event. Cocktails, 5:30 p.m.; dinner and program, 6:30 p.m.

April 26.

The Cliff Dwellers will be the site of West-Coast Caxtonian Beverly Lynch, Dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of California at Los Angeles, to speak on, "The Past, the Present, and the Future of the Book in Chicago." Cocktails, 5:30 p.m.; dinner and program, 6:30 p.m.

Tom Joyce

Advance reservations are absolutely necessary, and meals must be paid for in advance. Members and guests, \$40.

THE CAXTON CLUB



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

