

Caxtonian

A Newsletter of The Caxton Club of Chicago

Volume IV, No.1

January, 1996

Caxton Publications Committee To Pursue Active, Realistic Program

"I want Caxtonians to know that we intend to pursue an active but also a realistic publishing program," Publications Committee Chair Susan Rossen said recently. "We want them to know the parameters of our intended program, and we invite them to submit ideas to us."

As a fulfillment of its own planning and a commitment to the club, the committee drafted and submitted to the Council the following Mission Statement, which was approved by the Council unanimously November 15:

Introduction

According to Section 2, I of the constitution and by-laws of the club, the club's principal "object shall be to promote the arts pertaining to books, and to foster their appreciation" by, among other activities, "arranging...the occasional publishing of books, offered and designed to illustrate and support the object of the club." This language reflects a long-standing tradition of the club, which its leaders clearly intend to continue, as we head into our second century.

In support of this language and the intention it reflects, we propose that an active Publications Committee carry out its charge first by proposing a program that, as approved or amended by the Council, it then seeks to realize. This program is sketched out in general terms in recognition of the club's limited financial and human resources. Rather than aiming to deplete these quickly with too many projects, the committee proposes a reasonable but steady stream of publications in the future.

Resolution

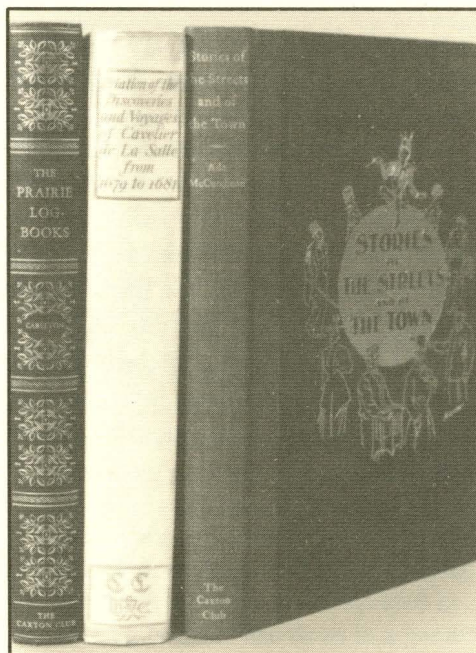
Resolved, at least every two or three years, The Caxton Club intends to produce a small book, distinguished for its content, design, and production values, that it will make available by subscription to club members before the volume is offered to the trade. In addition, at least every five to 10 years, the club intends to produce a major publication that adds significantly to the literature whose content and intent will determine its production values. In selecting projects, the Publications Committee will be open to all suggestions, but will favor subjects related to Midwestern literature and history, and the book arts.

Resolved, the Publications Committee will act as an editorial board, reviewing projects that, if approved, it will present in proposal form to the club Council, along with

essential information such as estimated schedule, budget, and marketing plan. If approved, the committee will work with the club's Development Committee to secure the necessary funds. Once these are assured, the committee will carry out and/or supervise all aspects required, including the editing of manuscripts, the selection of visual materials, the selection of designer and design, the maintenance of budget and schedules, the overseeing of production, the realization of the marketing plan and distribution arrangement, and the management of storage and the backlist. This may include the club's becoming a facilitator or enabler, allowing a small press or other generating source with a publication proposal we decide to support to carry out many of the above tasks with the committee lending its expertise wherever needed.

Resolved, while the Publications Committee will not be responsible for producing the *Caxtonian*, club directories, meeting announcements, or other printed matters, the committee will be available as an advisory group as needed.

Resolved, if the committee's chair does not already serve on the Council, he or she should meet regularly with the Council. The chair will review with the Council the publication's program, its feasibility, its success, and so forth. And, if necessary, it will reconsider and revise its emphasis and direction. He or she shall call at least six meetings a year of the committee, which shall be charged with the responsible realization of the program.



Three publications from the now-complete Caxton Club collection of Frank J. Piehl.

Continued on back page

Caxtonian

The Caxton Club
Founded 1895



President - Thomas J. Joyce
Vice-President - Karen A. Skubish
Secretary - Glen N. Wiche
Treasurer - Bruce W. Hubbard
Historian - Frank J. Piehl
Archivist - Brother Michael Grace, S J
Past President - Robert Cotner

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

Class of '97

Brother Michael Grace, S J
John K. Notz, Jr.
Edward Quattrocchi
Florence Shay
Robert Williams

Class of '98

David L. Easterbrook
Susan M. Levy
Jane M. Rosenthal
Susan F. Rossen
Willard E. White

First Fridays Program

Chair - Edward Quattrocchi
Co-Chair - Leonard Freedman

Secy - Bookkeeper - Dan Crawford



Newsletter Staff

Editor - Robert Cotner
Associate Editor - Michael Braver
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Musings...

The winter's first snowfall is upon us as I write. Through the triptych of leaded windows on the landing in our old house, I watch the gently falling snowflakes. The gray edges of the patio fence are white with a thin dusting of snow.

Upon a stand before the windows on the landing a Christmas cactus is in full flower: "Its lush blossoms...[hang] at the drooping ends of strange, thick stems and [outline] themselves in blood against the glistening background of the frosty pane — jungle flower against frostflower." That's the way Joseph Wood Krutch described a similar scene in his home in the essay, "The Colloid and the Crystal," first published in *The Best of Two Worlds*.

It is because of his essay that such a scene occurs each winter in my home. This little setting of flower against leaded windows is one of those things I do to remind myself of people and writings that I hold dear. You may think it a bit idiosyncratic, but I say, Why read if we don't build into our lives, even in small ways, reminders of large ideas important to us?

The Krutch essay is important because it fuses elemental biological truths with those known to be philosophically profound. For him the Christmas cactus represented the unpredictable protoplasm of all living things, a "shapeless blob of rebellious jelly," he called it. The frostflower on the frozen window and the snowflake are lifeless, "complicated and perfect but without any meaning, even for [themselves]." The perfection of the snowflake lies in its obeying without question one law only: "Be thou six-pointed."

The rebelliousness of all living things lies in their constantly testing the "supposed immutability of the rules which the nonliving changelessly accepts." Thus, in Krutch's elegant words, the "story of every living thing is still in the telling." The danger, of course, arises when the living imitates the nonliving, when that which is *defined* by change wills *not* to change and becomes fixed — frozen — in perspective, viewpoint, and attitude. When this happens, as it does too frequently these days, we suffer strife, wars, assassinations, and general social disorder. Civilization itself becomes an endangered species.

It is only as humankind *individually* commits to becoming greater than anyone "could predict [we] would be," as Krutch said, that we shall achieve a sort of commonwealth never before possible and never so necessary. Books will be the script for the new era as they have been for so long. The reflective capacity of the human mind kept dynamic through the inspired wisdom of past and present in devoted, ample reading remains our greatest hope.

The Christmas cactus blossoms again against the backdrop of winter snow, a simple, vivid reminder of these important truths. The Caxton Club celebrates these and other truths month after month as the world lurches fitfully toward a new millenium.

Robert Cotner
Editor

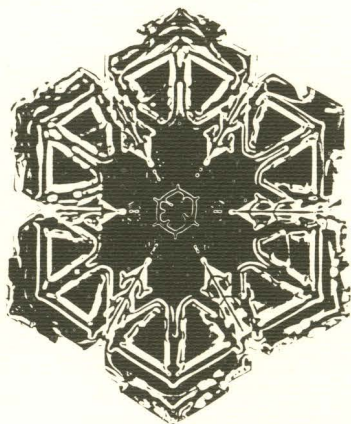
Two Books With Cherished Attachments — A Collector Remembers

Dealers in old books use the term “association copy” to describe a book that has a trace of its history still connected with it. A book that once belonged to someone who knew the author, a letter laid in between the pages, or an inscription by the author in some part of the book or other are evidence of such a connection. Collectors prize such books.

Many books in my own library I would call association copies, although booksellers might not. That is because the importance I hold for the book is neither apparent nor necessarily related to the book’s author. Yet every time I handle such a book, its special reason for being in my library returns to me.

Sports And Pastimes For In-Door And Out is such a book. It was published in Boston in 1863 by G. W. Cottrell. An attractive volume in green pebbled cloth stamped in gold, the book is illustrated with two striking chromolithograph plates, and includes articles on fireside games, parlor magic, chess, and charades for in-doors, and angling and gymnastics for out-doors. It is the kind of book I avidly collect, but the association is much stronger than that.

I found this book in the late summer of 1972 in a bedroom of a Walpole, NH, book dealer named Bob Kolvoord. As



The photomicrographed snowflakes opposite and above are from “*Snowflakes and Snowflake Bentley*,” now on exhibition at Rosary College, River Forest, through January 30.

you may imagine, Kolvoord’s entire house was full of books, from the garage through the living room to the den, the kitchen, and the bedrooms. Visiting with me on this occasion was Louis Sheaffer, author of a Pulitzer prize-winning biography of the playwright Eugene O’Neill. Both of us were staying at the MacDowell Colony, an artist’s retreat in the nearby town of Peterborough. I was working on a novel based on my wartime experiences in Vietnam and Lou was just finishing the second volume of his biography, which had taken him 10 years to research and write.

After each morning’s writing, I took daily drives along the country roads seeking respite from memories of Vietnam by searching book and antique shops, flea markets, and barn sales — any place that might offer old books. Lou joined me on many of these jaunts. He had long been seeking a scarce novel by Ralph Barton, an early *New Yorker* cartoonist, who had been a friend of O’Neill’s. Many of the major book shops in New York City, where Lou lived, should have been able to turn up the Barton book for him, but they never did. He finally found it that summer on one of our outings. He was so elated about the discovery that I thought for a moment he might mention my name in a foot-note just for having driven him there.

Lou had read in a newspaper article that someone in New England had found in an attic a copy of Edgar Allan Poe’s *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. It was Poe’s first book, published anonymously in Boston in 1827. Only six copies had been known to exist at that time, and this was one more, certain to bring at auction \$50,000 to \$100,000. (It sold for \$123,000 in 1974.) After finding the Barton book, Lou was certain we were on the trail of another *Tamerlane*.

Of course, we never came close. But had it not been for Lou, I doubt

whether I would have found *Sports And Pastimes For In-Door And Out*. When we visited Kolvoord’s house-cum-shop, I asked the dealer if he had a section devoted to my interests: recreations, magic, pastimes. He did not. Literature, history, philosophy, and other lofty categories existed, but finding the humble topics that interested me meant rooting through everything else in hopes of an off-chance discovery. The two of them seemed to have much to talk about as I wandered off through the house. When I returned with the little green volume, the two were drinking martinis in the kitchen. “It’s cocktail hour,” Kolvoord said to me, suddenly friendly. “Have a martini!” So I joined them.

We visited Kolvoord another time, about a month later. A note pinned to his door advised visitors that he was in Iceland watching Bobby Fischer play in a world chess tournament. The note also invited visitors to drop in, and to leave payment on the kitchen table for any books they took. Neither Lou nor I was willing to venture in even on these friendly terms. Lou, I know, enjoyed Kolvoord and his cocktail hour more than his books.

I have another valued book from that summer. It is entitled *Eugene O’Neill: Son and Playwright*. The inscription on the flyleaf reads: “To David — My fellow-sleuth in many enjoyable hours of trying to track down the elusive *Tamerlane* in the wilds of New Hampshire in the summer of 1972./All the best in your solitary efforts to capture the right phrase and word!/ — Louis Sheaffer.”

Lou died in August 1993. For his last 20 years our friendship was sustained by letters and by the memories of the summer of 1972. But now, with no more letters to come, the inscription becomes even more meaningful.*

David Meyer

Dedication at Wheaton College Concludes Caxton Centennial Year

The final exhibit commemorating the Caxton centennial concluded November 18, in Barrows Auditorium at Wheaton College, with an address, "Seeing Through The Eye: Muggeridge, the Prophet of the Media Age," by Canon David Winter, Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

The event was part of the dedication of the Malcolm Muggeridge papers owned by Special Collections of the Buswell Library at Wheaton. It was the culmination of a exhibit by Special Collections on the life and work of the English journalist, novelist, and raconteur.

The exhibit, mounted in two wall-length cases in the museum of the Special Collections department, featured excellent illustrative materials on the development of the Muggeridge autobiography, on his military life during World War II, and on his diverse production as a literary giant of the 20th Century.

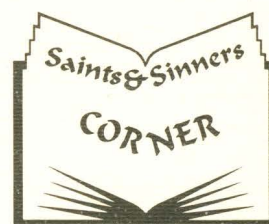
Director Larry Thompson used The Caxton Club banner as a focal point between the two exhibits in the museum, and he made available to guests copies of the Caxton broadside and the Caxton centennial bookmarks.

This exhibit served as a fine culmination of the more than 22 exhibits at 15 institutions throughout the Chicago area during 1995, the "Year of the Book in Chicago," the Caxton centennial year. This overall exhibit program, part of the work of the Centennial Committee, was orchestrated by the Exhibit Committee over the past four years. Caxtonians involved in this excellent program were Paul F. Gehl, Kathryn DeGraff, Kathleen Lamb, Mary Ann Bamberger, Gretchen Lagana, and Ned Rosenheim.

The Wheaton exhibit was developed by Larry Thompson and Judy Truesdale.

Herskovits Centenary Exhibits Continue at Northwestern University

The continuing series of exhibits in honor of the centenary of the birth of Melville J. Herskovits includes correspondence between Herskovits and Franz Boas and both correspondence and other materials relating to Melville and Frances Herskovits' field trips to Suriname in 1928 and 1929. The current exhibit continues through the end of January at Northwestern University's Library, Evanston. For additional information, telephone Caxtonian David Easterbrook at 708/491-4549.



Caxton Club Historian Frank Piehl presented slide programs entitled "Eugene Field — Bard, Bibliophile, and Bon-Vivant" to the Rowfant Club in Cleveland on November 8, and to the Nineteenth Century Women's Club of Oak Park on November 13. They were adapted from his September 1992 presentation to Caxtonians.

Caxtonians at the November dinner meeting were introduced to *Chicago Books*, Volume I, Number 1, of a quarterly newspaper on the book trade in Chicago. Copies were distributed to each person present, and Publisher/Editor Robert Remer was introduced. The 20-page tabloid contains the richest collection of writing on Chicago and on books about Chicago seen in a long time. Caxton President Tom Joyce and Caxtonian Connie Goddard have columns in this issue, and Goddard serves as a contributing editor.

Non-Resident Caxtonian Jack Bales, Fredericksburg, VA, put together an exhibit in the Simpson Library, Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, VA, which includes signed biographies of Al Capone, *The Untouchables*, signed by actor Robert Stack; *84, Charing Cross Road*, and other items that illustrate collecting less expensive books is enjoyable and highly satisfying — especially when they are autographed.

Non-Resident Caxtonian Bob Kantor, Bellingham, WA, reports that the Manuscript Society has undertaken to award an honorarium to the writer of a book that uses original manuscripts. Fellow-Caxtonian Scott Peterson and Kantor serve on that committee.

Caxton FY 96 Budget Proposed and Approved

The following budget was proposed by Treasurer Bruce Hubbard and approved by the Council, November 15, 1995.

Income

Dues	\$ 34,500
Initiations	2,125
Merchandise	2,000
Interest	200
Caxton History	5,000
Meeting Income	26,785*
	\$ 71,210

Expenses

Meeting Expenditures	\$ 36,680
Announcements	7,500

Caxtonian, 12 issues	11,000
Secretary/Bookkeeper	2,100
Speakers	3,000
Auditing	2,250
Liquor	800
Mid-Day Club Gratuity	300
Publication Fund	5,000
Postage	50
Office Supplies	750
Miscellaneous	1,000
Lock Box	500
Directory	1,500
	\$ 72,612

*At FY95 Dinner rates

A Bibliophile Views the Rewards and Challenges of Collecting Books

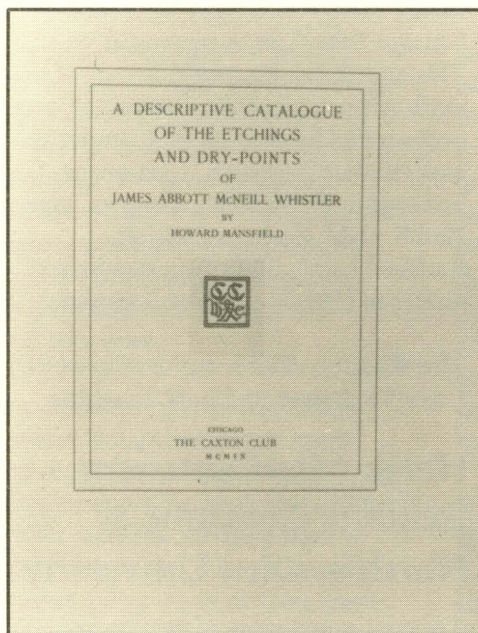
I began building a personal library in 1967 as part of a study of Chicago and Illinois history, a hobby adopted to cope with the onset of my "mid-life crisis." Unwittingly, I also embarked on a path of discovery that would change my life dramatically. Used book stores became my regular haunts, and new horizons were uncovered about Chicago and Midwest literature, the writings and publications of Eugene Field, and limited editions and fine bindings.

On one of my early visits to a dealer on north Wells Street, the proprietor offered to sponsor my membership in The Caxton Club. "We put a bottle on every table, have a good dinner, and listen to someone speak about books," he said. "You'll enjoy it." Being young, inexperienced, and short of money to spend on books, I declined his offer. But I did buy a copy of a 1901 Caxton Club publication, Mrs. John H. Kinzie's *Wau-Bun*, the most handsome edition of this classic. This purchase introduced me to The Caxton Club reprints of other early historical works by La Salle, Wakefield, Charlevoix, and Benton. With patient searching, they were added to my shelves.

Years later another dealer from Geneva repeated the offer to join The Caxton Club. This time I jumped at the chance. As my education in books continued at the dinner meetings, I began to appreciate the fine points of book design. More Caxton Club publications adorned my shelves, reflecting my expanding interests.

When I consented to write the history of The Caxton Club in March 1993, I was privileged to browse in the archives and discover the awesome heritage that the club has given the book world. And I vowed to complete my own collection of Caxton Club publications. With the help of dealers all over the country, my collection grew. Last November a dealer in Geneva, now in Chicago, supplied the

last Caxton Club publication needed to complete the collection.



The title page of Frank J. Piehl's final Caxton Club acquisition

The Caxton Club shelves in my library have become the focus of my browsing. When binders at the Monastery Hill Bindery prepared a presentation copy of *Wau-Bun* for the author's daughter, Nelly Kinzie Gordon, to give to her socialite friend, a "Mrs. McCormick," they used a blue levant morocco, whose lingering aroma transports me to the previous century when I read again about the early days of Chicago. As I chuckle over the early American humor of Captain George Horatio Derby's *Phoenixiana*, the knowledge that Caxton Club President John Henry Wrenn presented my copy of the book to Robert Todd Lincoln, son of President Lincoln, emphasizes the literary significance of what I'm reading. And when studying the antiquity of the materials used in making books, I can do so in a gorgeous copy of Frederic Kenyon's *Ancient Books and Modern Discoveries*, designed for The Caxton Club by Bruce Rogers, signed by 155 Caxtonians, and presented to Walter Muir Whitehill,

when he spoke on "What Forbids Us to Tell the Truth Humorously?" at the Christmas Revels in 1961.

These gems from the past serve as a beacon for The Caxton Club in defining a publication policy for its second century. We should also remember what David R. Godine said about the computerized revolution in printing: "The trick is not to lose sight of what we have learned in the past in our headlong rush to keep up with the present." And as Norma Levarie wrote in concluding her recently revised edition of *The Art & History of Books*: "For the lover of fine books, nothing can replace the bite of type into good paper, the play of well-cut, well-set text against illustration or decoration of deep artistic value. But an inexpensive edition can carry its own aesthetic validity through imaginative or appropriate design. These are not matters of concern only for aesthetes; if, in an era of uncertain values, we want to keep alive respect for ideas and knowledge, it is important to give books a form that encourages respect. The style and production of books, for all the centuries they have been made, still have much to offer the designer and publisher in challenge, the reader in pleasure."

Frank J. Piehl

Club Dinner Charges to Increase in 1996

Because the club during the last calendar year paid from its treasury \$10,000 to supplement dinner costs, the Council, after lengthy discussion and debate, voted on November 15, to increase the price of dinners to \$35 for members and guests, effective with the January meeting. In addition, the Council voted to charge \$4 a drink during the cocktail hour preceding dinner.

Book Marks

Luncheon Programs

All luncheon 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.

January 12.

Caxtonian Bruce Beck will explain how the computer has affected the private press — how the computer enters the letterpress operation. He will illustrate his discussion with actual printed materials, many of which were in the Caxton centennial exhibit at the Newberry Library.

February 9.

Caxtonian Ralph Carreno will talk on "Architecture as Sculpture and Sculpture as Architecture," a study of the cohesiveness of the Medici Chapel of San Lorenzo as an ensemble of architecture and sculpture — a followup to Ed Quattrocchi's presentation on Michelangelo and the Renaissance.

*Ed Quattrocchi
Leonard Freedman*

Important Note: Members planning to attend luncheons must make advance reservations by calling either the Caxton number, 312/255-3710, or Mr. Quattrocchi's number, 708/475-4653. Luncheon for members and guests, \$20.

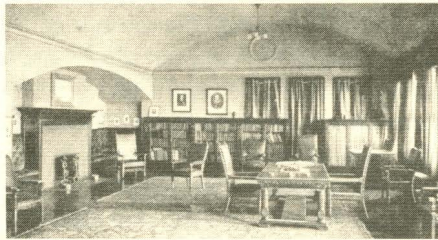
Publications Committee Mission

Continued from front page

Resolved, the committee shall name six committee members drawn exclusively from the club's membership, who are interested in and/or knowledgeable about various areas of publishing. The chair can, as needed, ask non-club-member experts to attend meetings. Committee members shall serve for at least three years.

If a project approved for publication by the Council involves a committee member as an author or supplier of services requiring financial remuneration, that member shall be excluded from voting on matters concerning his or her business relationship with the club.

Members of the Publications Committee are Paul Baker, Bruce Beck, Paul F. Gehl, Celia Hilliard, and Frank J. Piehl. Rossen also reminds Caxton Club members "that many of them still need to buy our prize-winning centennial history — their copies await them!"



Dinner Programs

All dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th Floor of the First National Bank, Madison and Clark streets, Chicago. Spirits, 5 p.m., dinner, 6 p.m., lecture, 7 p.m.

January 17.

Chicago Alderman Edward M. Burke (14th Ward) and his wife, the Honorable Anne M. Burke, Justice of the Illinois Appellate Court, will speak on his collecting of Chicago history, both oral and written.

February 21.

Caxtonian and Council member David Easterbrook, Curator of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern University, will share the Herskovits' biography, details on the Herskovits' collections, and his own personal collection of Africana.

Karen Skubish

Advance reservations, which are absolutely necessary, may be made by calling the Caxton office, 312/255-3710. Any special meal requirements (such as vegetarian) need to be made in advance. Members and guests, \$35.

The First National Bank of Chicago's parking garage, 40 S. Clark Street, offers a special parking rate after 5 p.m. 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 \$5.25



The Caxton Club
60 West Walton Street
Chicago, IL 60610