



# Caxtonian

A Newsletter of The Caxton Club of Chicago

Volume IV, No. 2

February 1996

## Melville J. Herskovits — A Life Devoted to African Cultures

Philip Appleman, distinguished teacher, scholar, poet, and novelist, wrote recently, “[Melville] Herskovits was the guiding angel of our whole undergraduate career(s), having engineered the ‘B.A. Program’ at Northwestern University, which knit together an education superior to anything we could have anticipated, or that is even conceived of in other places. We’re forever grateful to him for that.”

Appleman, who spoke to The Caxton Club October 21, 1992, on “Science, Belief and Poetry,” referred to the undergraduate curriculum in the College of Arts and Sciences at Northwestern in the 1940s, developed by Herskovits, which included the study of at least one non-Western world culture. David Easterbrook, curator of the Herskovits Library of Africana, observed, “They were studying multiculturalism at Northwestern 50 years before it was common practice in educational circles.”

This was Herskovits’ human legacy — to teach bright young people creatively in a broad cultural milieu so advanced that half a century later they would praise his genius as teacher.

Herskovits, who came to Northwestern in 1927 as an anthropologist in the Sociology Department, began the Department of Anthropology in 1938 and was its first chairman. In 1948 he established the Program of African Studies and became its first director. And in 1961 he became Chair of African Studies, the first such position in the United States. On a national scale, he founded in 1958 the African Studies Association to foster the sort of cooperative efforts necessary for scholarship to thrive.

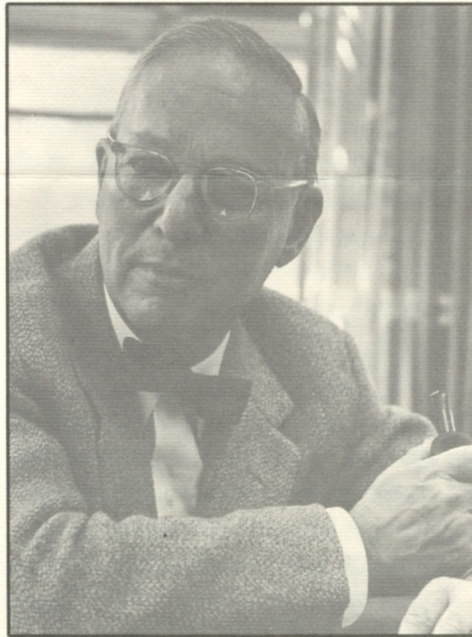


Photo courtesy of Northwestern University Archives

Throughout his long career, Herskovits, scholar as well as teacher, focused on the study of African peoples in the Western Hemisphere and Africa. He did early field work (1928) in Surinam and later conducted field work in Benin (Dahomey), Brazil, Haiti, Ghana, Nigeria, and Trinidad. He produced major, influential works, many of which are yet considered classics in the field of cultural anthropology. These include *The Economic Life of Primitive Peoples* (1940), *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941), *Man and His Works* (1948), *Continuity and Change in African Culture* (1959), *Economic Transition in Africa* (1964), and *The Human Factor in Changing Africa* (1963). These are Herskovits’ legacy to history.

Always concerned with the preservation of printed materials on African culture worldwide in a central library — books,

monographs, texts of all kinds — Herskovits founded at Northwestern the African Studies Library in 1954. In 1970, the library was named in honor of this pioneer scholar and cultural leader, who had died in 1963, as the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies at Northwestern University.

This library is the largest separate Africana collection in the world, containing more than 245,000 volumes, 2,800 current serials, 300 current African newspapers, as well as comprehensive collections of sheet maps, atlases, posters, videos, archival materials, manuscripts, rare books, political ephemera, and pamphlets.

Last year, the professional staff of the library under the direction of Caxtonian Easterbrook served more than 1,100 external (non-Northwestern) readers from 22 regional institutions, 42 institutions outside the region, and 26 foreign countries. Nearly 40,000 monographs are loaned yearly, and more than 5,000 reference questions are answered by the staff annually. This institution is Herskovits’ legacy for ages to come.

As a tribute to Herskovits and his contributions in the understanding of Africa and its peoples and in the preservation of Africana, Northwestern University is currently celebrating the centenary of the birth of Melville J. Herskovits in a year-long series of events, including exhibits, lectures, and programs of music, storytelling, and dance. For information regarding these activities and the library, telephone 708/491-7684.

# Caxtonian

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Founded 1895



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# Musings...

A page-one story in the *Chicago Tribune* last fall (November 25) discussed the emergence of an American Black intelligentsia, commenting that "W.E.B. DuBois, the eminent turn-of-the-century historian whose writings on the African-American experience are widely acclaimed today," would likely be a frequent guest on "Nightline" and a regular essayist in *The New York Times*.

I have been a bit player in this drama of American intellectual life, which has its origins in the mind and spirit of earlier leaders such as Melville Herskovits. My role was cast in this fashion. In 1968 I was assigned to teach a research course on a Maryland campus at the edge of the District of Columbia. Walking to the first class that summer morning, I could see smoke still rising from the ruins of buildings to the south along Georgia Avenue, a result of the incendiary violence following the assassination of Martin Luther King.

Entering the classroom, I found five African-American women sitting ill-at-ease in the front row separated by a complete row of empty desks from 15 caucasian students seated stoically behind them. Feeling the latent anger in the room, I made a quick decision, which I announced to the class as we discussed the plan for the term: "Let's use this research course to explore some of the underlying causes that brought about the devastation here and across the land. I'd like each of you to select a topic focusing on a cultural issue for research and prepare both an oral and a written research study on what you find. I'm beginning my doctorate this summer, and I'll do the same sort of study with you."

The class became one of those remarkable human experiences through which people discover their own and another culture and, in discovery, find both pleasure and growth in human exchange. By the end of the summer term there was a complete mingling of personalities across cultural barriers. I had a set of good-to-fine scholarly papers, and class members had shared far beyond the classroom — in churches, in neighborhoods, and even in homes. This experience, I believe, demonstrates the power of cooperative scholarship.

During that summer, I also established myself at the Howard University library and began what turned out to be one of the more important discoveries of my life — the person and work of Alexander Crummell (see inside). I read everything available by and about this great American, the spiritual father of DuBois and a kinsman of Herskovits. I completed one of the first major studies of this then virtually unknown person, who today would most certainly be part of an American intelligentsia.

As a result of that summer's work, I created at Montgomery College one of the first Black Studies programs in Maryland and, later, pursued my research in Liberia as Senior Fulbright Lecturer while teaching where Crummell had taught more than 100 years earlier. In short, I held in my hands the treasured culture of others and cherished it as my own.

The theme of this continuing drama is best expressed, it seems to me, in the words of the Polish poet Zbigniew Herbert: "I am a citizen of the Earth, an inheritor not only of the Greeks and Romans but of almost the whole of infinity...."

Robert Cotner  
Editor

## Scholar Espoused A Life of the Mind in African-American Society

"Tall, frail, and black, he stood, with simple dignity and an unmistakable air of good breeding." That is how one contemporary described Alexander Crummell.

One hundred years ago, Crummell, whom historian August Meier called "The noted Episcopal divine,...generally regarded as the leading 19th century [African American] intellectual," stood tall upon the stage of American life.

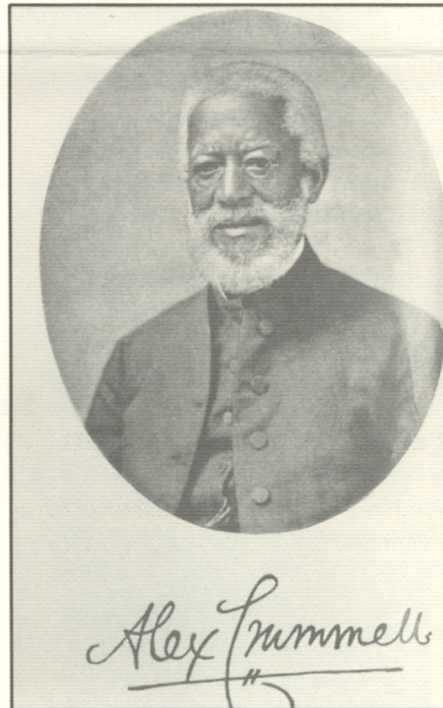
Educated in Quaker schools in New Hampshire and New York, he graduated from Queens College, Cambridge, in 1853, with a degree in theology. He then sailed for Liberia, where he founded and was pastor of Trinity Episcopal Church and where he was master of a local high school and held a professorship at Liberia College. Driven by a clear vision and deep compassion for people, Crummell communicated from Africa almost monthly through periodicals to all who would read in the United States. His voice became a strident call to racial pride, personal achievement, and self-sacrifice for those less fortunate.

In 1873 he returned to America and founded St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Washington, DC, where he served as rector for the next 20 years. Henry Phillips, a close friend of Crummell, said he "had a stronger grip on the intelligent thought of the country than any other [African American], and he did more to give character, dignity, and unity to the race than any other [person]."

As rector, he became a nationally known public figure and a major force in the ongoing dialogue in his time regarding the issue of race in the United States. A speech that he gave before the Protestant Episcopal Church Congress in Buffalo, NY, November 20, 1888, is illustrative of his mature view: the racial issue in America as a "moral issue." It

was, he said, not between black and white, but a nation against itself. "It is the nation which is on trial.... By this black man she stands or falls," he said.

To W.E.B. DuBois, Crummell was the most important figure in his life. His tribute to Crummell, "Of Alexander



Crummell," appears in *Souls of Black Folk*. Although Crummell was "less conspicuous" than others of his age, he was, DuBois wrote, "of greater social significance."

Although DuBois is credited with originating the idea of the "Talented Tenth," a leadership in the African-American society, Meier said, "by a college-educated elite," it was Crummell who first enunciated the idea in a sermon at St. Luke's Church, September 13, 1886: "We *must* have a class of trained and superior men and women. We *must* have a cultured, refined society. To live on a dead level of inferiority or to be satisfied with the plan of uniform mediocrity, would be death to us as a people."

In 1897, he founded and gave the inaugural address for the American Negro Academy. Through this organization, he called for men and women "who have secured the vision which penetrates the centre of nature, and sweeps the circles of historic enlightenment; and who have got insight into the life of things, and learned the art by which [people] touch the springs of action."

DuBois said of Crummell: "He did his work — he did it nobly and well; and yet I sorrow that here he worked alone, with so little human sympathy. His name today, in this broad land, means little, and comes to 50 million ears laden with no incense of memory or emulation."

Pastor, visionary, author, and public spokesman, Alexander Crummell labored tirelessly for more than four decades in Africa and America. He left a heritage of books and deeds well worth discovery even in 1996.

RC

### Caxton Article Lauded

Dear Bob,

What a delightful surprise, a voice and images from out of the dim past. I still have those slides, even had them out a few years ago for some purpose or other. Your "Musings" [October *Caxtonian*] is just lovely, and I appreciate your having that memory, and restoring it to me! Very precious. Very many thanks.

Perhaps we'll have a chance yet to meet again and review those many miles we've both travelled since "then."

With all warmest regards,  
Alan Trachtenberg  
Neil Gray, Jr. Professor of English and  
American Studies  
Yale University

## Council Honors Cotner for Centennial Leadership

Norma Cotner was mystified when President Tom Joyce called her to the podium at the Christmas Revels at the Belmont Yacht Club on December 20. He asked for her assistance in presenting a gift to her husband, immediate Past President Robert Cotner, from the members of the Caxton Club Council.

When Cotner arrived at the podium, Joyce expressed the appreciation of the Council for his leadership in guiding the club through an outstanding and successful centennial year. Then Norma unveiled the gift, a framed enlargement,

in color, of the photograph of Cotner that appeared on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune* on January 27, 1995, the day after "The Great Centennial Gala." The photograph by Charles Cherney bore the inscription: "Robert Cotner/The Caxton Club/Centennial President, 1993-1995."

"I am grateful to the Council and the club for the opportunity of leadership at this time in the club's history," Cotner said. "It was one of my truly great pleasures in life. This gift will remind us of wonderful events, splendid experiences, delightful people — and I thank the Council."

*Frank J. Piehl*

## Washington Center To Show Rare Films

The following films will be shown in the Video Theatre, Lower Level, Harold Washington Library Center:

\* *The Great Train Robbery and Other Primary Words from A Treasury of Early Cinema, 1894-1914* (75 min.); 5:15 p.m., February 15, and 2 p.m., February 25.

\* *Locomotion of Four-Footed Animals* (15 min.); 5:15 p.m., February 15, and 2 p.m. February 25.

\* *Eadweard Muybridge Motion Studies* (20 min.); 2 p.m., February 25.

\* *Film Before Film* (83 min.); 2 p.m., February 25.

Film historian George C. Hall will give a Gallery Talk, February 17, at 12:15 p.m. in Special Collections Exhibit Hall, 9th Floor; he will present the film, *Overlooked Film Pioneers: Edward Hill Amet*, and lecture on the evolution of film from the magic lantern.

For more details, telephone Caxtonian Ingrid J. Lesley, Chief, Special Collections & Preservation Division, at 312/747-4740.

## New Caxton Directory To be Distributed Soon

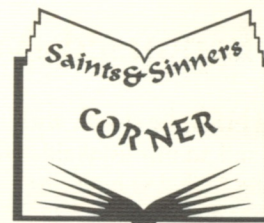
As a result of the great centennial surge of new members, the Council has authorized the preparation of a new Caxton Club membership directory.

The directory measures 4x9 inches, contains 48 pages, and is a collection of vital information on the membership. Printed on Mohawk natural white Super Fine text with French brick red Construction cover (illustrated at right), it was designed by Caxtonian Hayward Blake and typeset and printed by Nancy Sexton at Carnegie Printers, Chicago.

The new membership directory includes not only the names, titles, affiliations, addresses, and phone/fax numbers of resident and non-resident members, but their areas of book interests and a new way to communicate — their e-mail addresses. The volume also includes members' new area code numbers.

The directory will be distributed at a forthcoming dinner meeting and mailed to members not present at that meeting.

*Hayward Blake*



Caxtonian Ed Quattrocchi will present a paper, which originated with a talk at a Friday luncheon meeting, "A Medieval Architectural Legacy in Chicago," at the Illinois Medieval Association's 13th Annual Meeting, February 24, at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Quattrocchi will also offer a seminar, "The Renaissance Prince," March 28 through May 30, 5:30-7:30 p.m., at the Newberry Library. The cost of the eight sessions is \$90. People interested in attending the seminar should telephone the Lyceum office of the Newberry Library.

THE CAXTON CLUB FOUNDED 1895

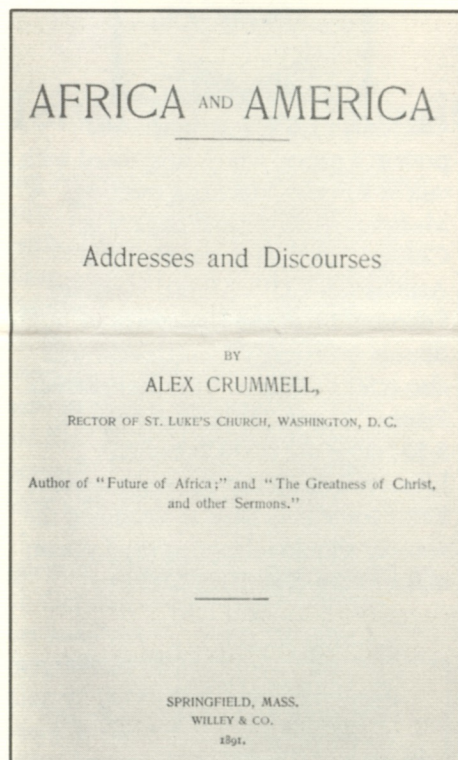
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BEGINNING THE SECOND CENTURY

## Early Black Leader Alexander Crummell in Herskovits Library



Title page of *Africa and America: Addresses and Discourses* by Alex. Crummell (Springfield: Willey and Co., 1891), from the collection of the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University.

The works of the American intellectual and civil rights leader Alexander Crummell are well represented in the collections of the Northwestern University Library in general and the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies in particular, both in original and reprint editions.

There is as well a number of recent works that offer analysis and commentary regarding Crummell's life, in addition to reprinting some of his briefer works, in particular sermons, secular addresses, published letters, tracts, and pamphlets.

The most comprehensive collections of Crummell's works are at the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University, and the Schomburg Center

for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, which also holds his papers. Significant collections of Crummell's published works are also found in libraries of historically African-American institutions, in particular Fisk University in Tennessee and Wilberforce University in Ohio.

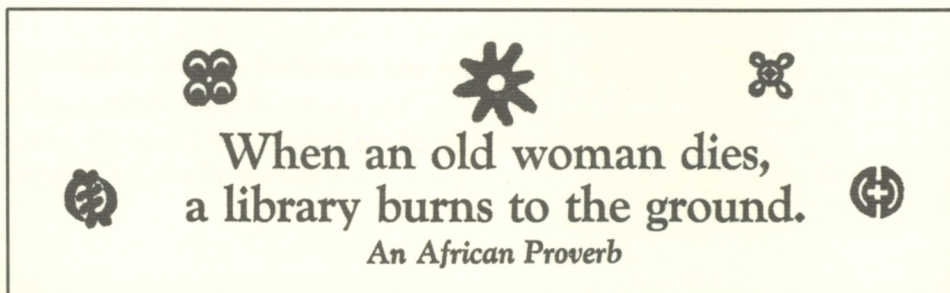
Northwestern's holdings of works by Crummell include *Africa and America: Addresses and Discourses* by Alexander Crummell (Springfield: Willey and Company, 1891), reprinted in 1969 by Negro University Press; *The English Language in Liberia; The Annual Address Before the Citizens of Maryland County, Cape Palmas, Liberia - July 26, 1860* (New York: Bounce and Company, 1861); *The Future of Africa: Being Addresses, Sermons, etc., etc., Delivered in the Republic of Liberia by Rev. Alexander Crummell* (New York: Scribner, 1862), reprinted in 1969 by Negro University Press; *The Greatness of Christ; And Other Sermons* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1882); and *The Relations and Duties of Free Colored Men in America to Africa* (Hartford: Press of Case, Lockwood and Co., 1861).

Also in the Herskovits Library are contemporary monographs about Crummell, including reprints of some of his briefer works. These include *Alexander Crummell: A Study of*

*Civilization and Discontent*, by Wilson J. Moses (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); *Alexander Crummell: Pioneer in Nineteenth-Century Pan-African Thought*, by Gregory U. Rigsby (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987); *Alexander Crummell (1819-1898) and the Creation of an African-American Church in Liberia*, by J.R. Oldfield (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1990); *Civilization and Black Progress: Selected Writings of Alexander Crummell on the South*, edited by J.R. Oldfield (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), and *Destiny and Race: Selected Writings, 1840-1898 of Alexander Crummell*, edited by Wilson J. Moses. One dissertation is held in the Herskovits Library's collections. This is *The Missionary Career of Alexander Crummell in Liberia, 1853 to 1873*, by Luckson E. Ejofodomi. This dissertation was completed at Boston University in 1966.

These and the writings of hundreds of other Africanists worldwide are available at the Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University, the world's preeminent Africana library.

David L. Easterbrook  
Curator  
Herskovits Library of African Studies



Bookmark designed by Caxtonian Amos Paul Kennedy and printed at his Kennedy & Sons Press, Fine Printers, Milwaukee.

# 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.

### 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.

### March 8.

Richard Wilson, visiting British scholar studying at the Newberry, will present his only lecture while in the U.S., "A Crucial Moment in English Book Design." This is a rare opportunity that Caxtonians will not want to miss.

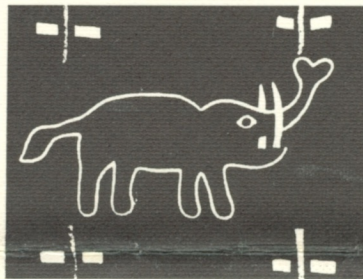
Ed Quattrocchi  
Leonard Freedman

**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.

## Prof. Peterson of Harvard to Speak at Northwestern

Orlando Peterson, Harvard sociologist, Guggenheim Fellow, and recipient of the 1991 National Book Award for non-fiction, will deliver a lecture, "Herskovits and the Problem of Black History," 4 p.m., February 25, in Harris 107, Northwestern University. The lecture is sponsored by the Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies and the university's Board of Governors. It is part of the year-long commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Herskovits' birth.

Preceding the lecture, from 2:30-3:30 p.m., an open house at the Herskovits Library will be held. Correspondence, papers, and publications of Herskovits will be on display at this time. Following the lecture, a reception for guests will be held in Harris 108. Reservations should be phoned in at 708/491-4449.



February is African-American History Month

## 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.

### 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.

### March 20.

Leslie Lee Francis, granddaughter of poet Robert Frost, will share her recent studies on the early family life of the Frosts and will autograph copies of her recently published book, *The Frost Family's Adventures in Poetry*.

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

