



# Caxtonian

Journal of The Caxton Club of Chicago

Volume V, No. 8

August 1997

## Frank Harris Remembered for 'Dynamic Qualities of Existence'

It must be more than 75 years ago — three quarters of a century — that I first began reading the works of Frank Harris, then unknown to me and still hardly a name to most readers. I hasten to add by way of identification that Harris was an editor, short story writer, novelist, biographer, essayist, adventurer, man of affairs, self-anointed seer, and, to many, a scoundrel. If his name has persisted it is largely because of his sometimes scabrous autobiography, *My Life and Loves*, possibly the frankest self-exposure ever written, at least until Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* came along. Once universally banned, *My Life* is now generally available, thanks at least in part to my arranging its reissue by Miller's publisher.

At the time of my initiation into the exciting world of Frank Harris, I was less than 15 years old, consumed with a love for literature and all high endeavor. I had already read much of Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo, George Eliot, and other literary greats. At the same time, I had also devoured trash by Horatio Alger, who repeatedly glorified the rags-to-riches theme.

Harris seemed to embody all that I loved in literature and in life. Whether these emotions in him were real or simulated, I did not know then any more than I know now. Harris was like the fictional Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, first one side of him was seen and then another. I realized this most intensely when I wrote my critical biography of him in collaboration with Dr. A.I. Tobin, published in 1931, four months after Harris' death. We subtitled our book *A Study in Black and White*, which, indeed, it was. Harris could write, for example, the tenderest account of a poet like Ernest Dowson, then swindle someone out of large sums or lie outrageously.

Who was this strange man? He was born James Thomas Harris, supposedly on February 14, 1856, St. Valentine's Day, in Galway, Ireland. Later some claimed the birthplace and birth year were wrong; and by his own act, James Thomas Harris became Frank Harris. He was a contemporary and close friend of



A cartoon by Art Young. "Frank Harris and Others" — from left: Christ, Shakespeare, Harris, Wilde, and Shaw. From the Tobin and Gertz biography.

Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw, who, like Harris, left their native land to go to London, where all three achieved fame. Later Harris wrote biographies of Shaw and Wilde, the Wilde biography called by some a masterpiece, the Shaw a lesser work.

Before his London years, Harris says he wandered through America, France, Germany, and Greece, acquiring much education, several languages, and many adventures, chiefly sexual.

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## President's Assessment of Club and Its Future

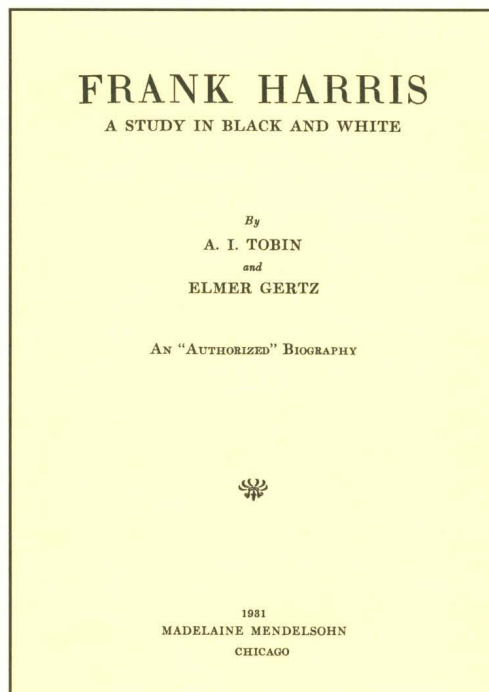
*Editor's note: The following represents the thoughts of outgoing Caxton president, Thomas J. Joyce, regarding his view for the direction of the club beyond his term.*

I have been asked to set down my vision of The Caxton Club and its future. What follows is an expression of my view, which may be helpful in generating comments among the members of the Council on relevant topics.

Fundamentally, I endorse most of the ambitions and goals of the club founders as stated in the original (1895) Constitution and By-Laws. The club should continue to promote literary study and the appreciation of the arts pertaining to the production of books.

The primary way the club has promoted literary studies is by means of programs at monthly dinner and luncheon meetings. Contrary to recent years, when there were typically only nine meetings in the Caxtonian year, there have recently been 11 dinner meetings each year and eight or nine luncheon meetings. This is far beyond the ambitions of

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The title page of the pioneering Tobin-Gertz biography of Frank Harris, Caxtonian Gertz's first published book.

# 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  
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## Friday Luncheon Program

Chair - Edward Quattrocchi  
Co-Chair - Leonard Freedman

Secy - Bookkeeper - Dan Crawford



## Journal Staff

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Associate Editor - Michael Braver  
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# Musings...

Like Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, I am a "thinker-tinker." I suppose this is one of the reasons I took to photography early in life — it provided a means of expression through the mechanical operation of a sophisticated instrument, which, if you were good enough, created art. Alas, I have produced little, if any, photographic art, I confess.

Being a thinker-tinker, I relished the study of grammar — English, Latin, and French. An understanding of grammar, the nuts-and-bolts of verbal expression, gives writing and speaking an orderliness, a structure, that is both intricate and clear. I once taught a course, "Grammar for Teachers," at Ball State University, which was so successful that former students came back and asked, "How did you make that grammar course so *interesting*?" Part of the answer was that I combined traditional, structural, and transformational approaches rather than just a single approach — the *thinker* part. The other was that I used the language of the classroom for analysis as well as that of the textbook — the *tinker* part. Thinker-tinkers have an aversion to boredom and will do almost anything to make the routine extraordinary.

My greatest accomplishments, however, as a thinker-tinker may be in the restoration of old artifacts: of all sorts of furniture, of a 1941, all-wooden sloop 10 years ago, of a 1907 house in Aurora, ongoing since 1984, and, most recently, of a 1923 apartment on Chicago's North Side. In restoration there is the initial necessity of historical conceptualization — seeing the thing as it originally existed. Then you must study the materials and processes to accomplish the restoration — the *thinker* part. Finally, you must do the deed — the *tinker* part.

Thinker-tinkers enjoy hardware stores almost as much as bookshops, and my wife rarely allows me to wander in either alone. But this past Sunday I was alone in my favorite hardware store getting brass screws to install restored brass doorplates. It was early in the morning, and I found a few fellow communicants already there. In one aisle I witnessed a man, eyes lifted heavenward, gazing reverently at a new garage door opener on a top shelf. Another stood, head bowed, contemplating some object of adoration on a shelf before him. Still another knelt in an aisle, turning, in a most devoted manner, a package containing the new mechanism for a toilet. All performed their personal rituals in silence, and I moved past each careful not to disturb his meditation.

I proceeded to a wall display containing screws of all sorts — brass, steel, Phillips, slotted, flat-head, round and oval, and all sizes. Ah, the sheer pleasure of sorting through the little boxes containing the screws to find the exact size — and the shiniest. I always buy more than I need so that I have a supply, seldom used but always available, in the little drawers of a case above my workbench at home. Ah, the ecstasy of *things cherished!*

As I left the store carrying my crisp paper bag of brass screws — and a few other "necessities" — I recalled Edith Hamilton's account of Achilles in King Lycomedes' court before the Trojan War and the trick Odysseus, the greatest of all thinker-tinkers, played on him. There is a certain solemn satisfaction in the awareness that, as a thinker-tinker, I am a minuscule part of a grand tradition that has carried Western Civilization to such heights — and depths — especially in America of the 20th Century.

Robert Cotner  
Editor

## Joyce Perspective

(Continued From Page One)

the founders. I think these activities should continue, and I applaud the members whose dedication makes them happen.

Our founders were the most successful at the “occasional publishing of books.” During the last 30 years, the club has been too irregular in publishing books. Our centennial history is a notable exception to the norm. When I became President, I asked that the Publications Committee produce something within the next two years, whether a book or a pamphlet, but something that would reaffirm that the club can publish. Despite the work of the committee, there is nothing that can be imminently published, certainly not by September, when the new officers and Council convene.

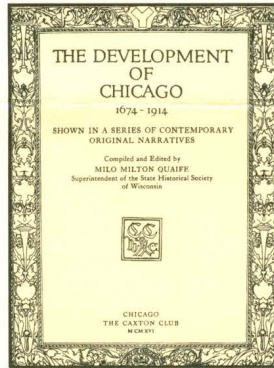
I believe the club should continue to publish. This does not require that the club has to make the books. We could co-publish, or help subsidize the production of worthy books that might otherwise not be published. I spoke with another publisher who had found an important, illustrated edition of Dickens’ *Christmas Carol* that had never appeared in an English edition. He was/is planning to publish the book anyhow, but was willing to entertain doing a deluxe version with a Caxton imprint, which might be enhanced by a different introduction, on nicer paper etc. than the trade edition, and this would be available only to Caxtonians, in a limited edition. We would produce a wonderful book, and it would help the other publisher by subsidizing some of his costs. Publishing is hard, but we have many members with expertise who know how it could be done.

No more than any other publisher can The Caxton Club be expected to publish a book that will always appeal to every buyer. It is impossible. But a responsibility of membership is to support the goals of the organization (which is another reason why candidates should be expected to attend several meetings before being nominated for membership, so they will have a clearer notion of the nature of the club). Accordingly, a commitment to buy the publications of the club should, again, be a requirement of membership, and a portion of the dues or an extra

assessment for publications should be normative.

Our founders failed to provide the financial package for the “suitable quarters for the club,” as called for in the club objectives. The various “temporary quarters” that housed the club failed after 40 years. It is hard to specify how factors of Prohibition, the Depression, and World War II compounded the challenges of maintaining membership, publications and funding, which required giving up club quarters. But that was then, and this is now. I believe that having affordable club rooms would help to maintain and enhance the pleasures of being a Caxtonian and enlarge the sense of Caxtonian identity.

My experience of many Caxtonians is that they are lively, mentally engaged people.



Some of them have enjoyed sizeable incomes, although that is often a by-product of their enthusiasm for life in its broadest meaning. Other Caxtonians earn their bread in pursuits that naturally have limited opportunities to accumulate wealth, such as library work or teaching, but which satisfy larger humanistic concerns. Such members are not able to substantially increase their financial support of The Caxton Club to pay for club rooms, whereas, wealthier members often are already supporting other clubs with existing facilities. I conclude that there is little or no support for significantly increasing membership costs to underwrite club rooms for Caxtonians, but that does not mean that Caxtonians would not enjoy having club rooms where there could be exhibits of bookish collections, where members could meet and interact — preferably with food and beverages, where smaller meetings and luncheons could be had — if it could be done without an increase in fees. Furthermore, I believe that such an opportunity exists now through the Gerald Fitzgerald gift, and that it would be worthwhile for us to make this experiment soon. If we do it, we may encourage yet

other members to fund a permanent account that would guarantee its future. If not, and if the club becomes unwilling or unable to continue the experiment, then the Fitzgerald gift allows us to make the experiment without affecting the fiscal soundness of the club.

Another original goal of the club was the maintenance of a club library. The club has only one full set of its own publications, and it would be a pleasing thing if we had an accessible place (i.e. club rooms), where they could be on constant display to inspire our members and to display our heritage. The club's original library was sold several decades ago when the club was without quarters. It is not, in my view, appropriate for the club to build a rare book library, but it would be a worthy object to have a limited library of inexpensive, hardcover copies of books about books, book collecting, and bibliography, and perhaps subscriptions to magazines such as *Mercator*, *The Library*, and the *Typophile*. These could be enjoyed on-site, or possibly borrowed, to the advancement of the members.

I also hope that one or more of our members will fund a lectureship that would enable the club, once a year or so, to bring in a top-rank speaker to a meeting. That way we could invite a speaker we want when we want to address a topic, and pay the concomitant expenses with an appropriate honorarium such as was done during the centennial series (instead of hoping we can coordinate with a speaker who may otherwise be travelling to Chicago). I would also like to have a commemorative talk once a year. This talk could explore the history and members of the club (e.g. the program devoted to Frances Hamill, or the panel of former Presidents who reminisced in anticipation of the centennial). Other possible subjects are Gen. A.C. McClurg, Daniel Burnham, or Livingston Wells Fargo.

The second century of The Caxton Club is limited only by the vision and desire of the Council and the membership, and I am encouraged by the vigor of the Council, and by members who have come forward with funding to enable the club to persist and evolve into its second century.

## Letters Tell of Touring Guests' Pleasures With Windy City Tour, Caxton Meetings

Dear Bob:

The Rowfant Club [of Cleveland] enjoyed one of its most satisfying and delightful trips when we visited Chicago and The Caxton Club last week. Our grateful thanks to you and the many other Caxtonians for their effort, advice, and support. We know that without you, Hayward Blake, Alice Schreyer, Russ Maylone, Tom Joyce, Karen Skubish, and The Caxton Club our time there would have been far less exciting and illuminating.

Your talk provided a warm and welcome core to our visit. Robert Frost in all seasons and also for many occasions is most valuable and appropriate. Your impressive presentation was at once bibliophilic, philosophic, and poetic.

Our time with Caxton was far too brief. I'm sorry we did not plan more together as clubs. I think that we needed more time to get to know one another better.

We did learn that Chicago has a vast array of bookish and cultural delights. We now know more vividly how livable and exciting life in your city is. As you wrote and also said at the luncheon, it is only in a city that such institutions can thrive, grow, and make life for its residents and visitors more gratifying.

Again our deep appreciation to you and The Caxton Club for making our trip so extraordinary.

*Larry Siegler*  
*The Rowfant Club*

Dear Karen:

I just want to thank you again for your triple-treat commitment to our enjoyment last Friday at the Newberry. Your schedule was already loaded, to be sure, with the Caxton luncheon, the Newberry-touring Clevelanders, and a wedding waiting in the wings. But a harp concert on top of everything!...that capped the afternoon with a memory we'll not soon forget.

At our closing luncheon on Saturday, I asked the group if they understood all the ways you contributed to our pleasure. Not all did. But they all, to the man and woman, join me in thanking you for your amazing performance. We had a splendid introduction to the Wing Collection: I especially appreciated the explanation about polymer plates. A good trip for us. Thanks to you.

*Hugh Brown, President*  
*The Rowfant Club*

Dear Karen:

I wanted to thank you on behalf of the Book Club of Detroit for making it possible for us to attend The Caxton Club luncheon at the Newberry Library on May 23 and for arranging the tours of the library. It was a real pleasure to mingle with the Caxton and Rowfant Club members, and it was a special treat to do all this while having the opportunity of viewing the magnificent Hebrew Renaissance exhibit. Thanks again for your hospitality and help.

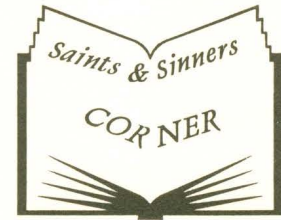
*Gordon B. Neavill*  
*Wayne State University*

Dear Karen:

What a fine meal and talk you and your Caxton and Newberry colleagues put on for us Friday! The huge numbers — what with Detroit, Rowfant, and, of course, Caxton — were handled very well by chef and servers. Bob Cotner's talk on collecting Robert Frost was comprehensive, emotive, and, above all, interesting.

Rest assured, we have the fondest memories of the visit, thanks in large part to your efforts. All the very best for your time in office.

*Nick Ogan and Bob Targett*  
*Rowfant Club Travel Committee*



Caxtonian Leslie S. Hindman in June became senior vice president and director of business development of Sotheby's Midwest. Sotheby's, which acquired her firm, Leslie Hindman Auctioneers, will move its five-person staff from its current River North location into the Hindman facility on West Ohio Street.

Caxtonian Ed Quattrocchi on May 8, presented a paper, "The Influence of Dante's *Commedia* on Michelangelo," at the International Medieval Conference, Western Michigan University. The paper grew out of his presentation to a Caxton luncheon meeting in 1995. This and a paper coming from a piece for the *Caxtonian* (February 1997), "Highlights of Viewing Utopian Books in Newberry Special Collection, April 15, 1997," are being prepared for publication in scholarly journals.

Caxtonian David Meyer's article, "My 'Discoverie' of Witchcraft: A Magical Tale of Many Editions," appeared in *Biblio* (July 1997). The illustrated piece gives a detailed history of Reginald Scot's 1584 book, the "first book in the English language to explain the techniques of the magician's art."

Caxtonian President Thomas Joyce will present a series of six sessions in a Sherlockian seminar, "Study in Scarlet & Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," at Centuries & Sleuths, 743 Garfield, Oak Park. For information on the series, which began July 9, telephone 708/848-7243. Joyce also wrote a tribute to long-time Caxtonian, the late Chef Louie Szarthmary, for the summer edition of *Chicago Books in Review*.

Caxtonian Gwendolyn Brooks was featured in the *Chicago Sun-Times* (June 23). Steve Neal wrote of her, "She is a poet of the people." As part of her 80th birthday celebration, Neal surveyed her work and observed that "Brooks is among America's more versatile poets." All Caxtonians wish colleague Brooks the happiest of birthdays — and many more!

## Harris Remembered

(Continued From Page One)

He achieved his first acclaim as a young man, as editor of a London daily newspaper; then as editor of the *Fortnightly Review*, possibly the foremost literary journal of the day; then as editor of the highly regarded *Saturday Review*, acquiring a great staff, including Bernard Shaw. This was followed by the editing of several nondescript publications, culminating on a high level again, with *Pearson's* in New York City. Distinguished as was his career as an editor, it was eclipsed by his literary triumphs.

He produced several volumes of short stories, a few of the stories achieving greatness by any standard. I was privileged later to edit a volume of his stories. In some respects, his supreme achievement as a story teller was "Montes the Matador," an account of a bull fighter, superior to anything by Bizet or Hemingway. The bulls, no less than the men and women, became highly individualized characters.

There were stories of passion, such as "A Daughter of Eve" and "A Mad Love." There were tales of strange places and stranger people. In some respects, the most moving stories dealt with the Jesus theme, especially "The Miracle of the Stigmata" and "St. Peter's Difficulty." He wrote three novels, the best of which was *The Bomb*, dealing in the most moving fashion with the Haymarket tragedy in Chicago, which culminated in the hanging of several radicals. The once famous anarchist, Emma Goldman, called it the Bible of Anarchism. Another of his novels, *Great Days*, depicts life intimately in England and France at the time of Napoleon. Less successful is *Love in Youth*.

I have already referred to his biographies of Shaw and Wilde. His shorter studies of renowned personalities, which he called "Contemporary Portraits," are unique depictions of such giants as Carlyle, Browning, Burton, and Swinburne. He captured unforgettably the essence of these figures and other lesser ones. These persons are, characteristically, intertwined with his own life.

In some respects, his greatest works were his studies of the God of his idolatry, Shakespeare, especially the book called *The Man Shakespeare*. He had absorbed virtually every word of the greatest figure in literature and analyzed Shakespeare's plays and poems as they have never been depicted before or since. Conventional scholars decried his Shakespeare studies. Others, including myself, looked upon them as revealing the most profound understanding of the creative spirit who wrote more masterpieces than anyone else in all literature.

There is great variety in Harris' literary output. But beneath the variety, there is one over-riding pattern that gives a kind of unity to everything: Harris himself looms through all that he wrote. Just as he thought that Shakespeare was implicit in all of the Bard's important writings, so the image of Harris shined through all that he wrote, illuminating the darkest corners.

Throughout his life Harris attracted disciples and admirers, not all of them young. I was a prime example of this effect. We corresponded intimately, addressing each other by first names although he was many years older than I was.

I was prepared to do all that he asked of me, such as inducing Clarence Darrow to agree to defend him if he was arrested because of the claimed obscenity of *My Life and Loves*. Others risked prison in order to sell the book for him.

When Tobin and I wrote our pioneering study of Harris, we were still his admirers. At the same time, we knew the vast contradictions in his character and works.

Towards the end of our book, we had this to say of him: "He transgressed all the inflexible rules of the righteous; judged by all standards, he sinned. He wronged friends, betrayed every one and violated every decency. And yet he was one of the noblest men of his day. Virtue is not the absence of vice; it is the positive doing of good, and Frank Harris has been a benefactor of mankind. By his writings he has elevated and inspired men and women in

every land; his life, too, holds in it the dynamic qualities of existence."

So, despite his many failings, I persist, paradoxically, in cherishing Harris, because he imbedded in me, indelibly, an abiding love for literature and all high endeavor. Perhaps he can yet be an inspiration for other youths.

Elmer Gertz

### A Chronology of Frank Harris First Editions

- Elder Conklin and Other Stories*. Macmillan, 1894.  
*How to Beat the Boer, A Conversation in Hades*. Heineman, 1900.  
*Montes the Matador and Other Stories*. Grant Richards, 1900.  
*The Bomb* (a novel). Long, 1908.  
*The Man Shakespeare and His Tragic Life Story*. Frank Palmer, 1909.  
*Shakespeare and His Love* (a play). Palmer, 1910.  
*The Women of Shakespeare*. Methuen, 1911.  
*Unpath'd Waters* (short stories). Lane, 1913.  
*Great Days* (a novel). Lane, 1914.  
*The Yellow Ticket and Other Stories*. Richards, 1914.  
*The Veils of Isis and Other Stories*. Doran, 1915.  
*England or Germany?* Wilmarth Press, 1915.  
*Contemporary Portraits*. Methuen, 1915.  
*Love in Youth* (a novel), Doran, 1916.  
*Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions*. The author, 1916.  
*Contemporary Portraits, Second Series*. The author, 1916.  
*Contemporary Portraits, Third Series*. The author, 1920.  
*Contemporary Portraits, Fourth Series*. Brentano's, 1923.  
*Undreamed of Shores* (short fiction). Brentano's, 1924.  
*My Life and Loves*. Frank Harris Publishing Co., 1925.  
*My Life*, Volume Two.  
*My Life*, Volume Three.  
*Joan La Romee* (drama). Nicaise, 1926.  
*Latest Contemporary Portraits*. Macaulay, 1927.  
*My Reminiscences as a Cowboy*. Charles Boni, 1930.  
*Confessional*. Panurge Press, 1930.  
*Bernard Shaw* (a biography). Simon and Schuster, 1931.  
*Pearson's Library* (various pamphlets), 1919, 1920.  
*Little Blue Books*. A number of them. Other pamphlets from time to time.

# 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.

There will be no luncheon meeting in August.

### September 12.

Michael Intrator, a new Caxtonian and general manager and technical director of Black Box Collotype Studios, will talk about the magic of printing with dots. His personal interests in the history of chromolithography, photography, illustration, typography, and design in the applied arts will be illustrated through samples in this talk. This will be a great beginning for a new year of luncheon programs.

*Ed Quattrocchi  
Leonard Freedman*

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

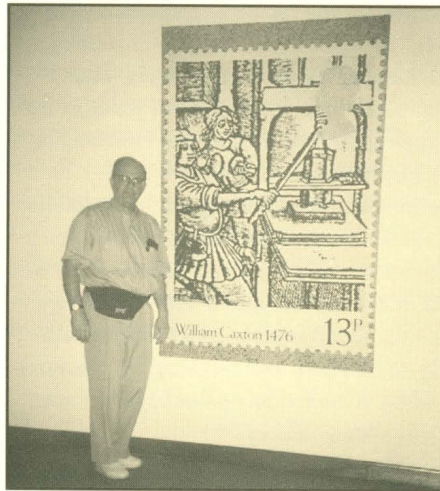
### The Caxton Club on the Web

Internet users may communicate with The Caxton Club at the following address:

<http://www.caxtonclub.org>

Webmaster of the Caxton website is Caxtonian Paul Baker.

## Singapore Exhibit Honors Caxton Club Namesake



*Non-resident Caxtonian, Bob Kantor, Bellingham, WA, visited Singapore in February and found at the philatelic museum a panel of an English postage stamp commemorating English printer and Caxton Club namesake, William Caxton. Here he poses beside the panel.*



## Dinner Programs

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

### August 20.

Peter Fortsas, professor of biology at North Eastern Illinois University, will speak on "Collecting the Writings of Rev. J.G. Woods." Woods (1827-1889), the most popular British writer on natural history, was author of some 20 volumes, including *Animate Creation* and *Our Living World*.

### September 24.

Caxtonian Craig Showalter, Leonard Meldman, and Caxton President-Elect Karen Skubish, will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Somerset Maugham's first book, *Liza of Lambeth*, with a panel discussion on Maugham and his work. Meeting set for The Casino.

*Karen Skubish*

*Advance reservations, which are absolutely necessary, may be made by phoning the Caxton office at 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

*The Caxton Club ... Acclaiming the book arts and literature in society*