CAXTONIAN

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James M. Wells

30 years at the Newberry, 56 years a Caxtonian, and enjoying every minute

Robert McCamant

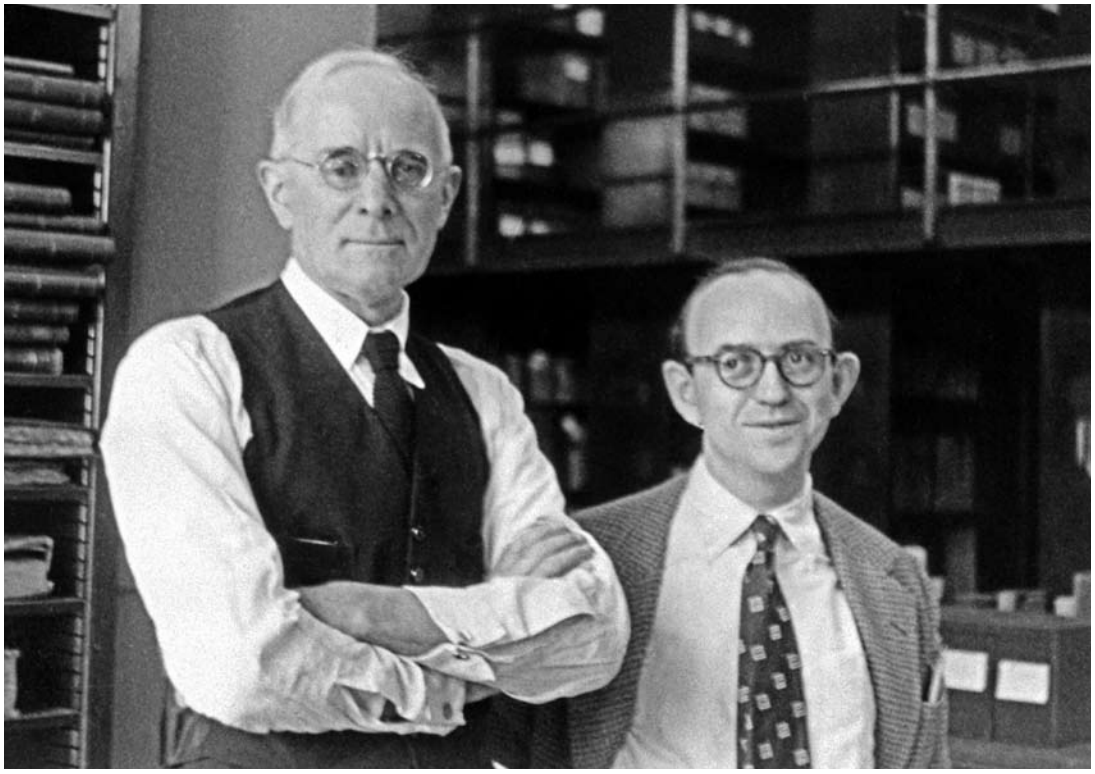

photo courtesy The Newberry Library

Stanley Morison (left) with James Wells, ca. 1960

The entry for James M. Wells in the Club's 1995 centennial volume is fairly extraordinary:

> WELLS, JAMES M. (b. 1917). The librarian was born in West Virginia and received a B.S. from Northwestern University (1938) and a M.A. in English from Columbia University (1939). After serving as an English instructor, he entered the United States Navy during World War II (1942-46) and served as a Japanese-language officer in the Pacific campaigns, rising to the rank of lieutenant. In 1951 he joined the staff of the Newberry Library as the custodian of the John M. Wing Foundation. He subsequently held a number of posts in his long and distinguished career there, including that of vice-president (1975-84). He is the author of *Opera di Giovonantonia Tagliente* (1952), *The Scholar-Printers* (1964), and *The Circle of Knowledge* (1968). He has also contributed articles to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and to professional journals. A member of several professional societies, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship (1978-79). He joined the Caxton Club in 1951, served on the Council (1959-67, 1970-71, 1974-75, 1984-86) and on the Publications Committee (1953-69), which he chaired from 1960 to 1962. He was elected vice-president (1966-67) and president (1968-69). In 1958 he read a paper before the Club, "William Caxton," in which he gave a masterful summary of the life of the Club's namesake. His text was reprinted as a keepsake for Caxtonians in 1960. He also spoke at three dinner meetings on "Stanley Morison, A Portrait" (1971); on "Do You Remember John Calhoun? A Brief History of Chicago Printing" (1975); and on "Daniel Berkeley Updike and the Merrymount Press" (1982). He wrote chapter 1 of *RHM Robert Hunter Middleton* (1985), an essay entitled "The Man and His Career." He also wrote the introduction for *An Alphabet Stone Cut*, published by the Club in 1963. He was elected honorary member in 1984.

"I'm a reader, not a collector," says Jim Wells. Looking around the walls of his Lake Shore Drive apartment, lined as they are with books, one might call it a fine distinction.

He joined the Caxton Club in 1951, the year he came as the trial Custodian of the John M. Wing Foundation on the History of Printing at the Newberry Library. Wells was hired by Stanley Pargellis, then the President, on the strong recommendation of Stanley Morison, who interviewed Wells in London and became his good friend. Pargellis had told Wells to look up Morison. But Wells, figuring that Morison had bigger fish to fry, had not approached him. He was surprised to get a call from Morison demanding to know why he hadn't called. "Pargellis loved long-distance phone calls, and he had been on the phone to Morison asking the outcome of the interview which hadn't even taken place," Wells recalled. Morison invited Wells to lunch at the Garrick. Thereafter (for the rest of Wells'

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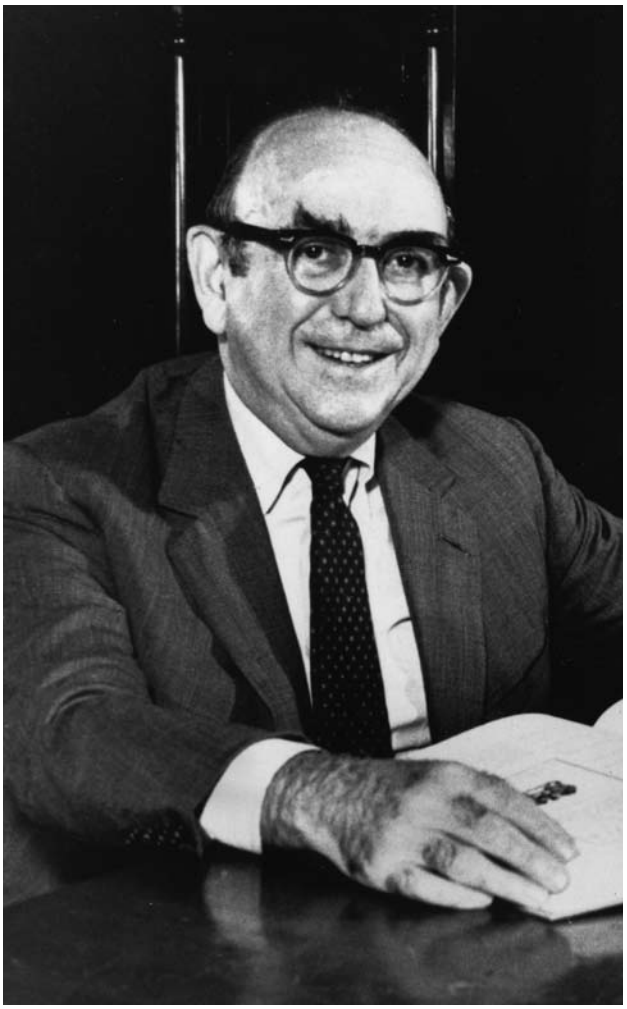
stay in London) they lunched once a week.

The Newberry flew Wells over for interviews in Chicago, too. "I stayed for three weeks as a house guest of the Pargellises. I even interviewed with Alfred Hamill, the branch manager of Goldman Sachs and then head of the Newberry board. I didn't expect him to like me. He asked if I liked the *Tribune*, and I honestly answered that I didn't. I figured that would be it. But somehow I was hired."



Pargellis' February 27, 1950 invitation letter to Wells is in the archives at the Newberry. It is a model of convincing rhetoric. "Good men in English Literature are almost a dime a dozen today, while Morison and I have literally searched the western world for someone to do scholarly work in the exacting field of the history of printing.... A youngish man who has his necessary tools of Latin, Greek, French, and German, and who is willing to study and make himself an expert now seems to us to be our best solution. I would propose to mold such a young man..."

When the year's trial was up, it was Wells, not the Newberry, who wanted to end the relationship. "They were only paying me $3600 a year! I was still having to rely on my parents' subsidy," he explained. When Wells went to Pargellis to complain, Pargellis explained that he had docked his salary for the first year to cover the expensive plane fare over from London.

Once the salary question was dealt with, Wells admitted that he enjoyed working at the Newberry. "I learned my way through the collection," he said. He joined the Caxton Club and the Society of Typographic Arts. There was a calligraphy study group, and a printing workshop was set up in the basement of the Newberry. He had interesting readers and excellent colleagues, including Hans Baron, Gertrude Woodward, Ruth Butler, Ben Bowman, David Stam, and Bob Karrow.

Soon there were additional responsibilities, as well. When Ken Davis resigned as editor of the Newberry *Bulletin*, Wells took over. "I got to write the articles about notable acquisitions, which was a pleasure. And I found that commissioning articles also gave me satisfaction, because of getting to know new people and working with them to shape their articles."

Lawrence Towner replaced Stanley Pargellis as President of the Newberry in 1962. Where Pargellis had been thrifty, Towner was expansive. Towner set about using the nest egg that Pargellis had accumulated for staff, facilities, and holdings.

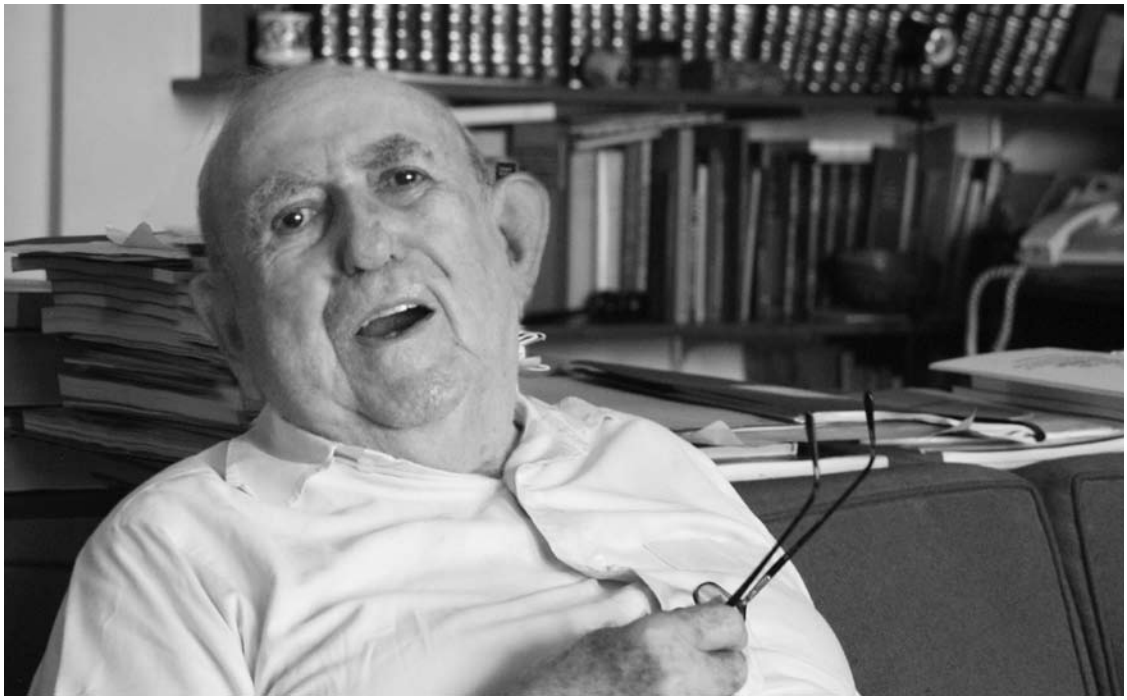
Eventually Wells was in charge of acquisitions, fellowships, education, and publications at the Newberry. Then the process was reversed, as staff was found to be responsible for specific areas, and Wells was freed up to work on acquisitions. "Towner spent his time raising money," Wells explained. "I spent my time spending it."*

Every other year, Wells would visit London and Paris on a shopping trip for the Newberry. He particularly remembers two booksellers. In Paris, it was André Jammes. "His grandfather had been a bouquiniste [stall owner], his father had moved into a store, and he became an antiquarian dealer. During the course of the two years between my visits he would put items he expected us to want in a closet. When I would arrive, I'd take a week going through the closet."

The experience with E. P. Goldschmidt in London was similar, but with a difference: Goldschmidt was a night owl, and particularly

disdained mornings. So "He would invite me to his apartment at 11 p.m., and show me books until the wee hours."

The large acquisition of which Wells is most proud was the Louis H. Silver collection. Wells was familiar with the collection from having visited Silver and his wife, Amy (who acted as his bibliographer) at their Wilmette home. The books (many of them acquired from famed bookseller John Fleming, himself the successor to the even more famed A.S.W. Rosenbach) were housed in a vault that had room for a table and easy chairs. Silver was a hotelier; he had put his companies at risk by purchasing the Ambassador hotels, an over-extension of resources and perhaps his capabilities. To secure a loan, he used his books and prints as collateral. With his untimely death in 1963, the books had to be put on the block. At first, a rumor circulated that the collection was going to go to the University of Texas. But Wells did some research and learned that it was not a settled agreement. Wells went to Towner, who went to the board of trustees with a plan.



1980 photo courtesy The Newberry Library; current photo by Robert McCamant

Jim Wells ca. 1980 (facing page) and today

Although the en-bloc cost of the collection was expected to be $2,750,000, Wells argued that a large portion could be recouped through the auction sale of books that were duplicates of ones already held by the Newberry. Furthermore, many of the items in the collection were famous and would be good candidates to solicit individual donors to underwrite. Towner proposed the sale of stocks and bonds from the endowment to fund the purchase.

The trustees approved the plan. The Newberry acquired the collection. Shortly thereafter, an auction at Sotheby's returned more than $800,000 for the duplicates. In the process, the Newberry received international publicity. Word reached Wells that the New York *Times* was going to cover the story, so he quickly called in the *Tribune*, *Sun-Times*, and *Daily News* for a press conference. The local papers responded with front page stories the next day. Sotheby's was proud enough of the subsequent auction that they made a documentary about the sale that circulated for years.

Among the curious consequences of the deal was that anyone and everyone offered their books for sale to the library. The Towner papers at the Newberry have a folder, 3/4 of an inch thick, of letters from people who believed that their collections belonged there.

Wells mentioned other collections he snagged. There was the Katherine Mansfield collection amassed by Jane Dick, wife of Adison (subsequently a trustee). "We were both Stevenson supporters, so we got along well." When Rose Hecht, Ben's widow, sent the Newberry her husband's papers, in one of the 67 boxes they discovered a spatula with egg still stuck to it. Rudy Ruggles was particularly generous with his collection: along with the 400+ priceless books, he gave funds for the publication of a catalog. When Everett Graff gave his collection of Americana, he hired Colton Storm to do a complete bibliography and left a fund for future acquisition.

The Newberry Associates was an important innovation during Wells' tenure. "It was an excellent source of volunteers, books, and money. People would become involved, learn more, and develop collections of their own which they would leave to the Newberry." He thinks it reached almost 2000 members while he was there.

During Wells' Newberry years, until his death in 1967, Stanley Morison was a great friend and influence. William Benton, who, through his role as Vice President of the University of Chicago, controlled Encyclopedia Britannica, appointed Morison to its board. As a result, Morison spent several weeks a year at the Drake Hotel. But the board meeting only took a day or two, so the rest of time he spent at the Newberry looking at books with Wells.

"Morrison was great fun. He had an infectious laugh, and he loved gossip. In London, 'elevenses' with Morison meant champagne. He called himself a socialist, but he managed to do quite well. When he retired he kept contracts with the *Times*, Monotype, and Cambridge, with generous pensions from each," Wells observes.

Morison is famed for the design of Times New Roman, cut by both Monotype and Linotype, and which has become ubiquitous on today's computers because of its inclusion in the first Apple Laserwriter (Linotype version) and every copy of Microsoft Windows (Monotype version). In the 90s there was a flurry of controversy whether Morison had actually been the moving force behind the design of Times. Wells says, "I'm firmly of the conviction that Morison was responsible. Certainly, much of the drawing work was done by others. But Morison was the vision behind

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Peter Stanlis, Robert Frost: Another Chapter

'But I have promises to keep..."

Robert McCamant

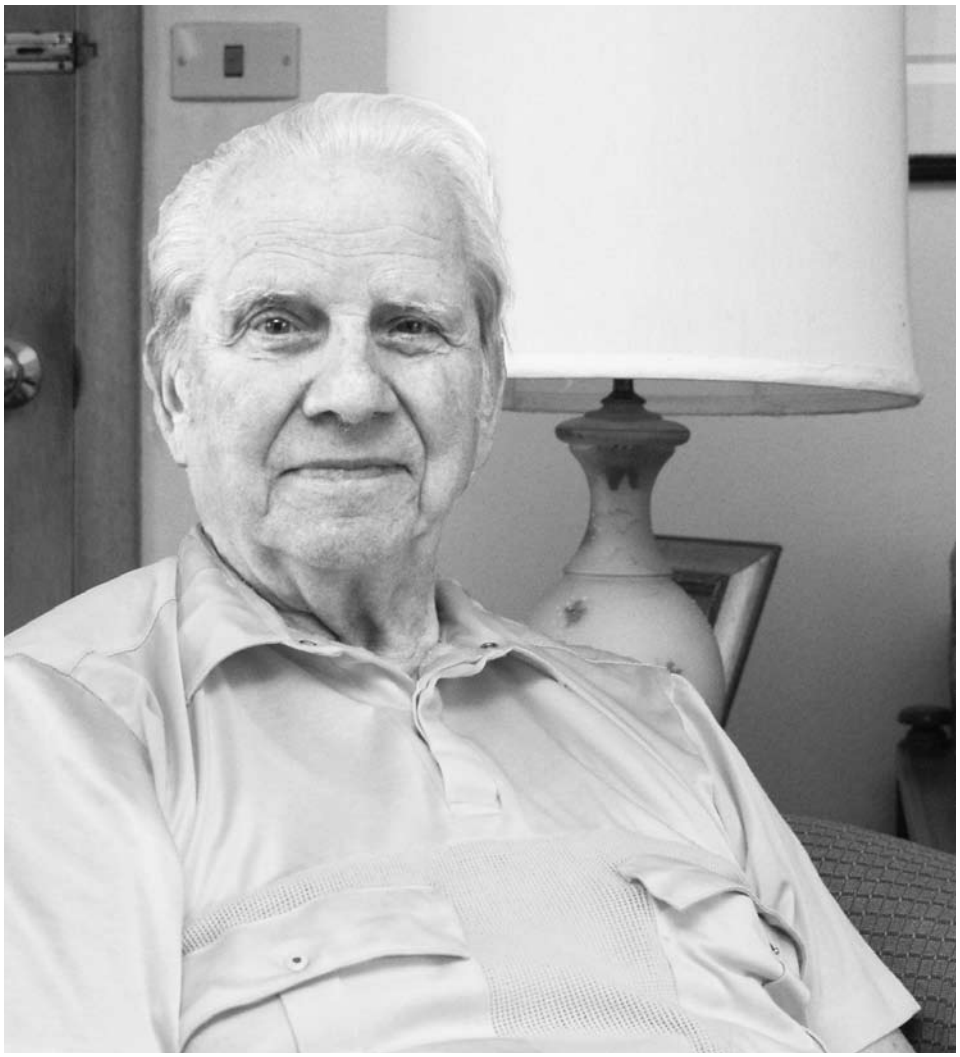

photo by Robert McCamant

On the last day of August, 1944, Peter Stanlis said goodbye to Robert Frost. They were on the porch of the Little Theatre on the campus of the Bread Loaf Graduate School of English in Ripton, Vermont. For the previous six summers, they had enjoyed many conversations on literature and the humanities, mainly in Frost's cabin on the Homer Noble Farm, Frost's summer home, near Bread Loaf. Two weeks before, Stanlis had received a M.A. degree from Bread Loaf; he was about to leave for additional graduate studies at the University of Michigan. They both knew that they would not have occasion to meet again for several years.

In parting, Stanlis said that some day he would write the best book on Frost's art and philosophic beliefs that he had it in him to write. Little did he know that he would not fulfill that promise until more than sixty years later—in the spring of 2007.

Stanlis first met Frost in Ripton late in June 1939. In 1978 he published a literary memoir on the first three summers of his conversations with Frost, "Acceptable in Heaven's Sight: Robert Frost at Bread Loaf 1939-1941," in *Frost Centennial Essays, Volume III*. (The whole story of his first encounter with Frost can be read online at http://www.frostfriends.org/stanlis2.html.) Stanlis described how he and three other students from Bread Loaf visited Frost in his cottage in Ripton:

> The poet, aged sixty-five, greeted us warmly at his cottage door. In a quiet and gentle manner, as we filed into the cottage living room, he shook hands and asked each of us his name and where we were from. Frost settled down in an old rocking chair near the center of the room, with his back to a wall.... There were books, magazines, and unanswered letters or papers piled on a table, and additional books on the floor. We sat in a semi-circle around the poet.

In the wide-ranging and lively conversation that followed, Stanlis didn't hesitate to express his opinions, and even disagreed with Frost on the nature of Puritanism. But the poet responded very positively to the brash freshman, especially when Stanlis complied with Frost's request for each student to present a poem by reciting from memory Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." The poet was particularly pleased that Stanlis paid strict regard to the phonetic pattern and voice tones in the meter and rhythm.

But the story of Stanlis as a student, teacher, and writer actually begins in June, 1937, when he graduated from Nutley High School in New Jersey, in the middle of the Great Depression. What was a terrible economic disaster for the United States turned out to be an academic blessing for Stanlis. Because no jobs were to be found, he spent more than a year in the Nutley Public Library, reading almost 400 books on literature, history, and the humanities. He did not know it at the time, but he was preparing himself in the best possible way for success in college. Two of his high school teachers, Esther Byerley, in history, and Ida Cone, in literature, discovered him reading in the library, and urged him to apply for admission to Middlebury College. He did so and was accepted and granted a half-tuition scholarship. By the end of the summer of 1938 he had saved $50 from odd jobs. That was his total financial stake when he hitchhiked to Middlebury a few days before the fall semester began.

In his new town, he found two jobs that paid almost nothing. But while standing outside the chapel at Middlebury College, he chanced to meet and talk with a pleasant older gentleman. The next day he found a note in his student mailbox asking him to go to the office of Dr. Paul Moody, the President of Middlebury College, who

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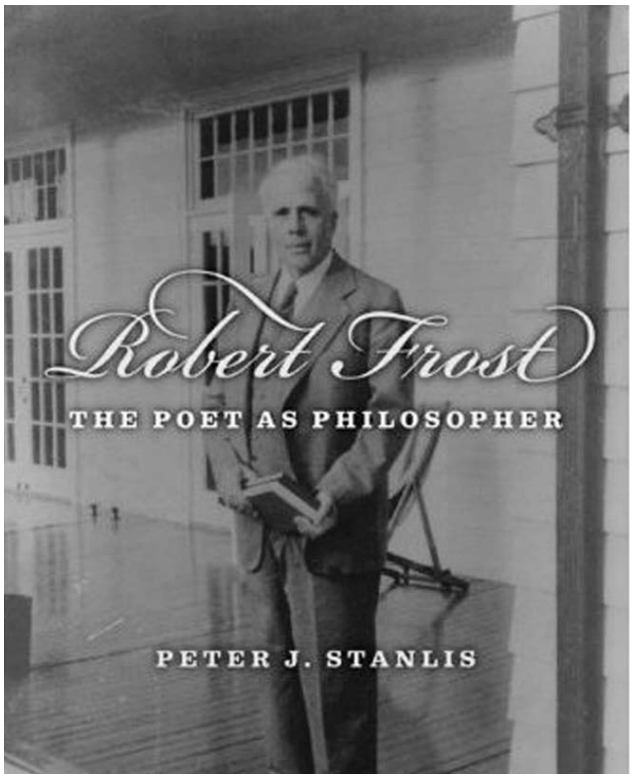
Robert Frost

Vital Intellectual Force of 20th Century America

Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher
By Peter J. Stanlis
482 pp. ISI Books, 2007

Reviewed by Robert Cotner



In 1921, two important poems were written by leading American poets. One was "The Wasteland," by T. S. Eliot. The other was "Acquainted with the Night," by Robert Frost. The poems represented distinctly different approaches to poetic art. Both achieved significance beyond their time of writing and remain important in the American canon.

"The Wasteland," a poem of 434 lines required, the poet thought, 50 footnotes (plus seven footnotes of the footnotes) to make the point of his poem understandable and clear. It is the supreme achievement of the genre of obscurantist verse, written for and celebrated by the academic community, which holds obscurantism very high in its esteem.

"Acquainted with the Night," a sonnet written in terza-rima form, depends on subtle allusions from Dante, Shakespeare, and the Old Testament, and delicate metaphor to achieve its permanence in American literature. It is indeed one of Frost's "dark poems." Caxtonian Peter J. Stanlis, in his recently published *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*, explains Frost's incomparable success as a poet of subtlety and great depth. He writes, "Frost's 'Americanniness' consisted of his skill in handling the complex contraries of life in such a simple and apparently artless style that his poetry became widely read by discriminating intellectuals and uncritical common readers alike." This insight, representative of Stanlis' unique view of Robert Frost, man and poet, was gleaned from Stanlis' 23-year friendship with the poet that brought the two men together in frequent, extensive dialog and conversation. Few people living have the scholarly background from the eras from which Frost emerged and from those with which Frost was personally most conversant than Peter Stanlis. These two intellectual streams are brought together in this new book by Stanlis.

In this 13-chapter study, Stanlis focuses on Frost's dualism, tracing it in substantial detail through Frost's poetry and linking it to the great movements in history, literature, science, and philosophy throughout the first half of the 20th Century. He discusses, as well, Frost's important and unique views on education and politics. And he concludes with "Some After-Thoughts," which reviews Stanlis' personal engagements with Frost throughout the years.

The book begins, where all Frost studies should, expressed in a "Prelude" entitled "Frost: The Conversationalist as Poet," for it was from his superb gifts as a raconteur that Frost achieved his subtle guile as a master poet. Stanlis writes, "From around 1913 until Robert Frost's death in January 1963, almost everyone who knew him personally agreed that he was among the most brilliant, provocative, learned, and original conversationalists of the twentieth century." Stanlis traces Frost's conversational techniques to a host of friends and scholars, all of whom knew and spoke with the poet. From the earliest years, Frost forged what made him distinctive as a poet. Writing his old friend John Bartlett on July 4, 1913, Frost declared his independence from the "common beliefs and practices" of Victorian poets, such as Swinburne and Tennyson, who created poetry through the "harmonization of vowels and consonants."

Frost declared: "I alone of English writers have consciously set myself to make music out of what I may call the sound of sense." Then he produced a marvelous metaphor to illustrate what he meant: "The best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind a door that cuts off the words.... [The] sounds [of sense] are summoned by the audible imagination and they must be positive, strong, and definitely and unmistakable indicated by the context."

It was during his family's stay in England, which included Frost's interaction with some of the great English poets of that time—especially after he moved to rural Gloucestershire in May 1914—that his conversation took on epic proportions in both method and content. His second book of poetry, *North of Boston*, published in England in 1914, presents to the world for the first time "many passages on the power of conversation in the poems." This is but Stanlis' prelude of his splendid book.

Stanlis casts Frost as a poet working counter to the accepted idiom of his time, both philosophically and in prosody. At a time when much of the world was moving toward a philosophy of monism, Frost maintained throughout his life a devotion to dualism. Stanlis writes, "[M]y thesis is that dualism provides the whole basis of his total but unsystematic philosophical view of reality. This includes Frost's epistemology, his psychology, his logical and analogical methods of reasoning, his emotional bias and choices regarding ideas and events in conflict, his conception of what is true or false, good or evil, ugly or beautiful—in short, that Frost's dualism accounts for

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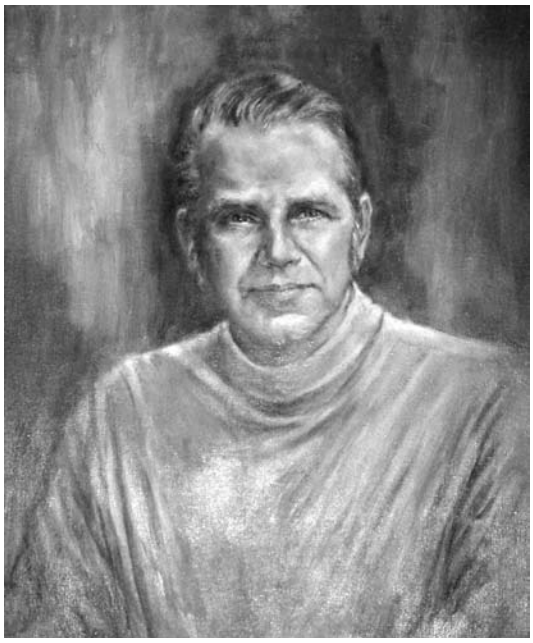
turned out to be the man he had talked with outside the chapel. Out of the president's discretionary fund Dr. Moody awarded Stanlis a full-tuition scholarship. He also urged him to be sure to register for the required course in English literature with Professor Harry G. Owen.

Owen was a superb classroom teacher, and required his students to write many brief critical essays on the assigned works of literature. As Stanlis noted, "By June I had written over forty critical essays for Owen, thus deepening, extending, consolidating, and systematizing my knowledge and understanding of English literature." In addition to teaching at Middlebury, Owen was the Dean of the Bread Loaf School of English. He liked the essays Stanlis had written, and invited him to attend the Bread Loaf summer session of 1939. He mentioned that Stanlis would be able to meet Robert Frost, and that was a liberal education in itself. But Stanlis was concerned that he had to earn money during the summer in order to meet his expenses for his sophomore year. Owen talked with Moody, and the president arranged for Stanlis to work as a waiter in the Middlebury Inn, starting in September, to earn room and board at the Inn. Thus Stanlis was able to accept Owen's offer and attended Bread Loaf in 1939. During that summer, Stanlis had several long conversations with Frost, and during his sophomore year, the poet appointed him to the Elinor Frost Fellowship, which in turn led to four more summers at Bread Loaf, so that he had earned more than half of the required credits for a M.A. degree while he was still an undergraduate.

During the summer of 1943, Frost asked Stanlis what he wished to do with his life, and Stanlis said that he wanted to teach literature in a good liberal arts college and to write. All of his teachers had told him that to achieve this aim he had to secure a Ph.D., which he planned to do. Stanlis knew that Frost thoroughly disapproved of the application of the scientific method to the study of literature, which was then the established method in graduate schools. Frost and Stanlis agreed that the scientific analysis of poetry, novels, and plays ruined them as creative works. He was not surprised, therefore, at Frost's reply



Stanlis in a painting by Rockford artist Beverlie Maynard

to his statement that he planned to go to another graduate school after Bread Loaf: "Well! If you must corrupt yourself, go to the University of Michigan!" Frost had been poet-in-residence at Michigan twice during the 1920s—he had been treated well, and had many good friends among the Michigan faculty. After condemning the methodology in graduate studies in literature, he provided Stanlis with a list of teachers to look up in Ann Arbor, "because they are such fine men and good scholars." A few months after Stanlis got to Michigan, he learned that Frost had contacted the dean of the Horace Rackham Graduate School and recommended Stanlis for a fellowship that covered all of his expenses for a year.

During one conversation with Frost at Bread Loaf, Stanlis had heard the poet spend the better part of an evening praising the politics of Edmund Burke. Frost had read Burke's writings on both the American and French revolutions, and unlike many scholars he did not believe that the Whig statesman had contradicted himself by praising the American revolution and condemning the French revolution.

Stanlis recalled this discussion in a seminar with Professor Louis I. Bredvold on 18th Century "sensibility," at Michigan, and decided to write his dissertation on the politics of Edmund Burke. Bredvold became chairman of his dissertation committee. He gave Stanlis excellent advice: "Don't read any scholars about Burke; read all of Burke himself. See if you can discern any basic patterns of thought in Burke's politics. You may find your thesis there." After reading through more than twenty volumes of Burke's writings, speeches, and correspondence, Stanlis was convinced that Burke assumed that moral natural law was the basic belief in politics that made constitutional law and restrictions on absolute political power the great aim of practical politics. Stanlis said: "This became my doctoral thesis. I subsequently discovered, after reading much scholarship on Burke, that my thesis contradicted the basic conclusions about Burke's politics put forth for 150 years by Victorian Utilitarians and modern positivists, all of whom appeared to me as in the tradition of Machiavelli. Bredvold agreed with me. In the process of writing my dissertation, I shifted Bredvold's scholarly interests from John Dryden and the early eighteenth century to Burke and modern American politics."

Through a Newberry Library research fellowship, Stanlis revised and refined his dissertation thesis, and it was published by the University of Michigan Press, on Bredvold's recommendation, as *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (1951). This book is now in its fourth edition. During the last half of the twentieth century all scholarship on Burke's politics has had to take into account his appeals to moral natural law. Stanlis adds, "In practical politics, this counter-revolutionary interpretation of Burke became the basis for the conservative movement in modern American politics, first advanced by Russell Kirk in *The Conservative Mind* (1953), until it was subverted by the self-styled 'neo-conservatives'."

Stanlis became so absorbed by Burke that after publishing *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law,* his academic career was dominated by studies in Burke. For thirteen years he published and edited a journal, *Studies in Burke and His Time*, which covered nineteenth- and twentieth-century studies on Burke. He wrote twenty-three articles on Burke, and edited or wrote seven books on the Whig statesman, including a co-authored annotated bibliography. Stanlis noted the irony of his work on Burke: "It is incongruous that Frost's high praise of

Burke's politics in the 1940s should have resulted in my commitment to so much scholarship on Burke that it led me to constantly postpone my promise to Frost that I would write a book on his art and philosophical beliefs. But off and on I kept returning to Frost, and finally, after more than sixty years, I fulfilled the promise made in 1944, and completed *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher,* in the spring of 2007. Frost's connection with the University of Michigan and my having Bredvold as my mentor there resulted in a final happy event: In 1962, the last summer of Frost's life, I taught at Bread Loaf; Bredvold visited me there, and we had a memorable meeting with Frost in his cabin, discussing our experiences at Michigan."

During Stanlis' academic career, teaching at the University of Michigan, Ithaca College, Wayne State University, the University of Detroit, and, finally, for nineteen years at Rockford College, the two writers who dominated his teaching and scholarship were Frost and Burke. The latter absorbed most of his time and energy, and led to twenty-three trips to Europe, including one entire summer as a British Academy Research Fellow. Yet from time to time he published articles on some aspect of Frost's poetry and philosophic beliefs, and these were refined and placed into their logical context and grew into chapters of his book. *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher* (Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Wilmington, Delaware, 2007), after a gestation of more than sixty years, is now published.

Stanlis says, "It is a unique book. It is the first time that anyone has attempted to describe in detail and comment upon Frost's philosophical beliefs on every important subject—science, religion, the creative arts, poetry, the humanities, education, society and politics. Many critics and scholars have explored Frost on the forms, techniques and language of his poetry, but no one has ever tackled his basic philosophical beliefs centered in his dualism of spirit and matter and in his metaphorical interactions of reality perceived within his dualism."

Stanlis expects the book to be reviewed throughout the United States and in several foreign countries. A Japanese translation is already in process. The promise Stanlis made in 1944, leaving Bread Loaf, is at last fulfilled.

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his view of God, man, and nature; that it permeates much of what he said about science, religion, art and poetry, society and politics, and education; and, finally, that it provides the characteristic qualities in his brilliant and witty conversation." Now that's inclusive.

According to Stanlis, "no biographies of Frost and very few studies of his beliefs or critical discussions of his poetry have dealt directly, consciously, and deliberately with his philosophical dualism." The mission he assumes in this book is to set the record straight. One of the primary tasks Stanlis undertakes is to correct the "deliberate character assassination" of Frost's official biographer, Lawrance Thompson, who "leads the way" among literary critics who are avowed optimistic monists and who "turn to abnormal psychology as their way of responding to it." Thompson's flaw was that, as several scholars have said, he "was almost unbelievably literal-minded, like a fundamentalist in religion..." As a result, Stanlis observes, Thompson reveals in his biographies that he had "virtually no ability to follow Frost's trail through the pathless woods of his nature and personality, or to mark the witness trees that would enable him to read the symbolic signs provided by the poet's dualism in pursuit of his thoroughly unsystematic philosophy."

Frost came into his own as a dualist during the two-and-one-half years he and his family spent in England, 1912-1915. Stanlis calls the change in Frost's poetry during these years, "radical alterations" that made possible the "long objective narratives and dramatic poems about 'a book of people' in *North of Boston*." Frost worked counter to the psycho-poetry of the 1920s and 1930s, when poems were often used as confessional vehicles to present strong autobiographical incidents. Frost's unnamed narrative was just that—*unnamed*, and not to be confused with the poet himself. Frost's thrust in constructing a poem was to address objectively the subject and present the findings of his explorations directly to the reader. His approach to interpretation was to set the poem in the intellectual or philosophic milieu of its origin. He disliked line-by-line explication of his poetry and, as Stanlis points out, "contended that explicating in a prose analysis what a poem means or how its technique functions, is like explaining a joke to someone who fails to get the punch line." Knowing well that Frost disliked having his poems appropriated by teachers, scholars, and others in the business and analyzed line-by-line and word-by-word, often having read *into the poem* the reader's personal meanings and neglecting what the poet intended for the poem to convey, Stanlis approaches Frost's poetry in this book in a manner with which Frost would have been delighted: Stanlis creates the intellectual milieu that gave birth to the poem and fits the poem into that milieu. Thus we have beautifully presented throughout the text a true portrait of Robert Frost as philosopher.

Monism, Frost believed, leads to a "spirit of fanaticism and a belief in absolutism"—a "monomania," he called it. Central to Frost's approach to conflicts was what Stanlis calls the "trinity of Frost's open-minded eclectic method, his philosophic dualism, and his faith in metaphorical thinking." All "contrarieties" are resolvable. Frost considered science, often thought as a contrariety, one of the humanities, and utilized his understanding of metaphor to resolve "into a harmonious whole" through the "free play of metaphorical thinking." Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this book is the depth and breadth of Stanlis' intellectual scope and his scholarship as they relate to philosophic and scientific thinking in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. He is thoroughly conversant with Charles Darwin, Asa Gray, William James, Henri Bergson, Herbert Spencer, and the Huxleys—three generations, including Thomas Henry, Leonard, and Aldous and Julian.

These are thinkers, of course, with whom Frost himself was intimately involved in study and conversations, as an active, open-minded intellectual crafting poetry from his time for posterity. To Frost, the "abuse of science was clearly evident in the Victorian belief in 'progress' as a law of history." In Frost's lifetime, this philosophy came "to dominate the whole culture of Western Civilization." Scientists espousing scientific monism became the fundamentalists of the intellectual world, and Frost rejected fundamentalism in all forms. Scientism, as propagated by the Huxleys and others, conceived that every discipline—"all of civil society through the ethics based on

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BOOK REVIEW, *from page 7*

nature"—would be organized around the scientific principles promoted by them. Frost's intellectual scope was vast, from the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, to Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and the Stoics, the Medieval Christian theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine, "who promulgated belief in the 'right reason' of moral natural law." Monists, represented by Lawrance Thompson and the Huxleys, "perceived reason as an abstract absolute, rooted in empirical observations of physical phenomena, a logically discursive, analytical, and mathematically deterministic process by which to arrive at scientifically verifiable truths."

Because Frost came to realize that the gulf between him and the man he had unwisely chosen as his biographer could never be bridged, Frost told Stanley Burnshaw, his last editor at Holt, "I'm counting on you to protect me from Larry." Burnshaw wrote *Robert Frost Himself* (1986) "in an attempt to redeem Frost from Thompson's portrait of [the poet] as a moral monster."

But Frost's life went on, in spite of his disappointment with his biographer, and he wrestled with the vital issues of philosophy as they played out in his writing, thinking, and conversation. Stanlis lists, among others, significant poems Frost wrote in response to his intellectual engagement. These include "Design," "Accidentally on Purpose," "The Demiurge's Laugh," "Two Look at Two," "The Most of It," which illustrates Darwin's scientific naturalism. It was "Creative Evolution" and Puritanism, which reinforced and further defined Frost's dualism as he continued to develop as poet and philosopher. Stanlis says it this way: "Frost's creative evolution did not reject Darwin's theory; rather, it supplied a supplementary exposition of how man continued to evolve throughout history, beyond biology."

Stanlis is at his finest in discussing Frost and modern scientists. Well-read in both the scientific and philosophic literature of the modern era, both American and European, Stanlis reveals Frost as an equal in the ongoing debate and holding his own through his poetry and public lectures with the men and women of science. He reports, "Frost read Einstein's *Relativity: The Special and General Theory* (1920) and was made aware of much that was encompassed in the complex development of Einstein both as a man and as a highly original and creative physicist. The eclecticism and modesty of Einstein appealed strongly to Frost." Frost found in Einstein a kindred spirit, who was, as Darwin had been, courageous and open-minded. Frost referred to Einstein "as a philosopher among outstanding scientists," a man who was, as Frost was, "willing to trust his own intuition and imagination through deductions from intuited perceptions which transcended the conventional assumptions and methods of his contemporaries." He found in Einstein's theism a dualism not unlike the dualism Frost held. And he found the character traits of Einstein—"courage, the will to believe, a moral and aesthetic imagination, and faith in the original creative power of the human mind"—in keeping with his own world view and human perspectives. And he found Einstein to be an "agent of God's revelations in the realm of matter; Einstein and his theory served a religious purpose." And because Einstein was so adept with metaphors, Frost found further kinship with the great scientist.

In Frost's first five books, he focused on two central themes: man's relationship to external nature and man's relationship with man. With the publication of *A Masque of Reason* (1945) and *A Masque of Mercy* (1947), he explored, head-on, man's relationship with God. Again, Stanlis' breadth of reading in early English literature of the masque is enlightening. Stanlis observes that these masques of Frost are "closet dramas" and should be considered as extended poems rather than plays.

In the *Masque of Reason*, Frost presented a "dramatic explication of Old Testament justice, contained in the forty-two chapters of the Book of Job, as understood by modern man in a modern setting." The splendid wit of Frost presents itself in his rather casual view—"mock-serious," Stanlis calls it—of the biblical story. *The Masque of Mercy* "is that rarest of literary forms, a city eclogue engrafted upon a dramatic fantasy," revealing the "claims of New Testament mercy." Stanlis relates other major Frost poems, including, "The Trial by Existence," "Death of the Hired Man," and "West-Running Brook," to conclude that the masques "are in the classic tradition of American literature."

We come to know Robert Frost in this book as an engaged, tough-minded, deeply spiritual person, whose views are yet worthy of consideration and whose poetry remains as vital and important to the life and spirit of the nation as the day it was published. In the concluding chapter, "In the Clearing," Stanlis presents a Frost who is still creative, even into his eighties. Most significant, however, is the "emblematic theme," from "Kitty Hawk," which he places at the beginning of his final volume:

But God's own descent
Into flesh was meant
As a demonstration
That the supreme merit
Lay in risking spirit
In substantiation
Spirit enters flesh
And for all it's worth
Charges into earth
In birth after birth
Ever fresh and fresh,
We may take the view
That its derring-do
Thought of in the large
In one mighty charge
On our human part
Of the soul's ethereal
Into the material.

Stanlis calls this the "vital archetypal passage," and affirming in a final way Frost's commitment to the dualistic nature of the Christian doctrine at the heart of the allusions in the passage and foundational to his life-long poetic achievement. It is a suitable conclusion for this complex, profound book about one of the 20th century's most important intellectuals.

Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher is indeed one of the most valuable books to be published on Robert Frost in recent years. Many years in research and writing, this book is a much-needed addition to growing Frost scholarship, which establishes Frost as the premiere American poet of the 20th Century. The book fills the much-needed void in discussing the pervasive dualism of Robert Frost, which was characteristic of his writing, his conversations, and his life. We are indeed fortunate that a good friend of Frost and such a consummate scholar has focused his attention on the philosophic and religious dimensions of Robert Frost, and given us this fine study. It will be a guide through the life and writings of Frost for years to come.

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Caxton Club scholarship winners

Wendy Husser

With those for the 2007-2008 year, the Caxton Club adds three names to its roster of scholarship recipients. Of the nine superb applications the committee considered, three rose to the top of the top, and while it was not easy to choose among these gifted students, the jurists agreed unanimously. (The committee for the last three years has been Gene Hotchkiss, Wendy Husser, and Bob McCamant.) These 2007 awards, accompanied by a $2500 check to each, will be presented at the September dinner meeting; the awardees plan to attend and to show samples of the work that earned them this year's awards. The three are: Amy Jacobs and Drew Mattot of Columbia College, and John Vincler of The Newberry Library and the University of Illinois.

(The Council authorized the expansion of the awards program for this year from two to three recipients—at the request of the committee—because of the outstanding characteristics of the applicants. The Council also asked that additional fundraising be done by the committee, and as of the June meeting, $1377.50 in special donations had been received.)

book by Amy Jacobs

Amy Jacobs is a candidate for the MFA at Columbia College Interdisciplinary Book & Paper Arts, and was a Follett Graduate Fellow 2006-07, and has a graduate assistantship for 2007. She graduated from the University of Louisville in 2001 with a degree in Sociology, and has spent several years at the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina.

Her work at Penland was among the hardest for the committee to consider but the most interesting because it was done in a variety of mediums that complement her love of books. Among her studies were papermaking for broadsides and books, books as voice, books as architecture, shaping images, topography of handmade paper, contemporary encaustic painting, metal design and technique, and textile dyes and applications.

This summer Ms. Jacobs has spent a month in Angers, France, at Chateau de Pin for a Book Arts seminar residency working with 4 x 9 foot papers and learning about coptic, envelope-journal, accordion and album-style structures; she instructed one of the sessions and was an assistant in all aspects of the classes. She also had a two week class in Deer Isle, Maine, studying paper fibers and creating a lab book as a permanent reference document. She has participated in dozens of art exhibitions and is represented in galleries in North Carolina and Kentucky.

Drew Luan Matott has a BFA from State University College at Buffalo, and is a current Follett Fellowship student at Columbia College. While at Buffalo he won the award for outstanding achievement in printmaking and the Marie Dellas Creativity Award. He has been a visiting artist and guest lecturer since 1997. He has exhibited in Burlington, Vermont, Buffalo, New York, Olympia, Washington, and in Chicago.

Drew is currently working on the Masters of Fine Arts in the Book & Paper Arts program in the Department of Interdisciplinary Art at Columbia College, expecting to fulfill his requirements in 2008.

See SCHOLARSHIPS, *page 11*

Where they are now: Caxton Club Scholarship Awards, 2002-2007

2002-2003
Emily Reiser
Book artist in Ohio
Jill Summers (Twice given fellowship)
Columbia College, Director of College-Wide Events/Student Affairs

2003-2004
Kerri Cushman
Longwood University, Assistant Professor of Art
Elisabeth Long
University of Chicago Library, Co-director of the Digital Library Development Center

2004-2005
Ben Blount
The Cleveland Institute of Art, Director, Extended Studies and Outreach
Mardy Sears
The Art Institute of Chicago Prints & Drawing Conservation

2005-2006
Sara Otto
Book Artist, in Oklahoma; nonresident member of Caxton Club
Aimee Lee
Book artist in New York

2006-2007
Zenny Kim
Recent MFA in Book Arts, Columbia College, Interdisciplinary Arts
Mark Moroney
Recent MFA in Book Arts, Columbia College, Interdisciplinary Arts

JAMES WELLS, *from page 3*

the design. And the newspaper benefited a great deal from the typeface, particularly the very small version which allowed them to get many more words of advertising into less space, yet still maintain legibility."

Morison introduced Wells to Beatrice Warde, who worked for first the American Typefounders and then Monotype Corporation.

One day when Wells and Morison were dining at the Garrick in London, people kept talking about "Tom" being there. Tom turned out to be Tom Eliot (T.S. to the rest of us). They talked a bit and he asked Wells to visit him at his office at Faber and to lunch afterward. After Eliot's death in 1965, Wells kept in touch with his wife Valerie, who now lives in New York and is a member of the Grolier Club.

Morison also introduced Wells to Arthur Crook of the *Times Literary Supplement*. "Their articles paid well," Wells admits, "so when I was asked, I generally accepted the assignment. But I refused to write reviews, because they weren't so remunerative."

Wells got the assignment from the *World Book* to write 26 articles. You can guess their subjects: the letters A through Z. "At the time, the fee they paid me, $100 per article, seemed princely. I was able to take a month in Greece with the proceeds. But as the years rolled by and they reprinted the articles every year, I came to think they got a bargain."

Every few years during Wells' tenure other institutions tried to absorb the Newberry. "The University of Chicago tried to get us to move south repeatedly," he said. "But that would have violated the terms of the Newberry bequest. We were a northside institution, built with funds acquired by selling off land that is now Northwestern law school and Northwestern hospital."

Among the many Newberry publications with which he was involved, Wells particularly remembers two: *USiana*, by Wright Howes (discussed by John Blew in his January, 2007 luncheon talk) and the Bewick portfolio done with R. Hunter Middleton. "*USiana* was our most successful book ever," he crowed. "We actually made money on it!" The Bewick project was a labor of love on the part of Middleton. He printed 100 Bewick blocks belonging to the Newberry (81 of which he had given to the Newberry; the remaining 19 had been acquired by Wells predecessor Ernst Detterer) in a double portfolio, including an essay by Wells.

In 1976-77, Wells was the Sandars Reader in Bibliography at Cambridge.

Wells retired from the Newberry in the early '80s. He has been pleased with how his retirement turned out. His investments proved wise, and his health has held up (though with a few complaints of late). He particularly endorses charitable gift annuities, in which you make a donation to an institution (the Newberry, say, or the Art Institute) and they agree to pay you something every year in return.

Although his job required every-other-year trips to Europe, in retirement Wells has traveled even more. He still visits London and Paris, as he did on business. But he has also managed to visit Turkey, Greece, Egypt, and Spain—places not on the normal book-buying circuit. Every winter there is a warm six weeks in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. In September, there is frequently a week spent in Maine with Marian Bowman.

Wells has had time to read his books, as well. Although not a "collector," Wells saw to it that he regularly received first editions of his favorite authors. (He mentioned Anthony Powell, Willa Cather, Kingsley Amis, and Muriel Spark, but I had the sense that this was the tip of the iceberg beause he says he gets some 100 books annually. In recent years, however, he has tried to divest himself of at least 300 books per year, often through the Newberry book sale.)

He has found he has time to help some private collectors, as well. He mentioned Sam and Marie-Louise Rosenthal, who also became close personal friends. And he has continued to write for such publications as *The Book Collector* and the *Times Literary Supplement*.

Wells is not certain who nominated him to the Club, but assumes it was Stanley Pargellis because he was an active Caxtonian and his boss. He spent four terms on the Caxton Council. He also served as vice president and president, and was program chairman for at least four years, two of them as "ghost" chair when someone else introduced the speakers, but Wells did the inviting and publicizing. Among the speakers he can remember bringing are Nicolas Barker, Stanley Morison, Mary Hyde (later the Viscountess Eccles), and Frederick Adams of the Morgan Library.

Wells remembers the "old" Caxton Club, before it allowed women, but thinks it is better with them than it was before. "Many women are important collectors and dealers. Their jokes can be as ribald as any man's. It was silly to keep them out." He recalls a period when meetings were held in the Cliff Dweller's Club at lunch time on Saturdays. "There would be a bottle of Scotch and a bottle of Bourbon on every table. Since I always preferred wine myself, I worked to get that tradition changed."

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**Wells gave his own description of the process in the summer, 1959 issue of the* Book Collector:

The present writer, who became Custodian of the Wing Foundation in 1951, has made no startling changes in its direction. The original plan has proved flexible enough so that there is still ample room for growth within it. There has been less emphasis on incunabula, mainly because so much was successfully accomplished in the early years. Calligraphy is still collected, but important additions become progressively more difficult as well as more expensive to pick up in what has become a fashionable field. The holdings in later printed books have been considerably augmented, with improvement in the already excellent representative groups of 16th-century French and Italian books, of baroque books, of French romantic books, of the work of such printers as Baskerville, Bodoni and Morris. There has been a conscious effort to strengthen holdings of material with primarily typographic interest; among such may be listed Baskerville's 1765 specimen sheet; the 1785 specimen book of Isaiah Thomas in original calf; a large collection of Bodoni's ephemeral printing, comprising over a hundred broadsides, certificates, invitations, book-plates, blank cheques, and the like; the photographic enlargements and the drawings made from them for the Doves type; the 1785 specimen book, a splendid affair, issued by Ph. D. Pierres, the last French royal printer and a friend of Franklin, together with a collection of his work; and a manuscript collection formed over almost a century by various editors attempting to compile the printing section of the Description des Arts et Métiers, commissioned in 1666 and still unfinished in 1789. A small collection of modem French illustrated books, designed to supplement the fine one at the Art Institute and to give an idea of today's most interesting livres de luxe, is another work in progress.

The collection grows slowly; about 300 books are added to it annually, the guiding principle being lasting importance. It is widely used by students, scholars, artists, typographers, collectors, among others—by those, in short, who consider that printing is an art as well as a craft, and who can find in the Wing Foundation evidence to support that belief.

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by John Blew

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit)

"The Virtual Tourist in Renaissance Rome: Printing and Collecting the Speculum Romanae Magnificantiae" (prints and maps depicting major Roman monuments and antiquities originally published in the 16th Century by Antonio Lafreri which tourists and other collectors in Renaissance Rome and later periods acquired in various combinations and had individually bound) at the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago 773-705-8705 (14 September 2007 – 11 February 2008)

"The Origin of Darwin's Revolution" (rare books by Charles Darwin and his colleagues, selected from the Garden's collection as well as from several private collections, which present the background for the publication of *Origin of Species*, considered the most important book in the natural sciences) in the Lenhardt Library at the Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe 847-835-8202 (closes 28 October 2007)

"Books for Book Lovers" (an exhibit on special topics in the history of astronomy featuring some of the rarest and most interesting volumes in the Adler's collection) at the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, 1300 South Lake Shore Drive (the Museum Campus), Chicago 312-322-0300 (14 September – 8 October 2007)

Virtual Tourist at University of Chicago Library
Title page, Lafreri's Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae, ca. 1574-77

"An Admirable Nucleus: The Prussian Purchase at the Heart of Today's Northwestern University Library" (features highlights from the 20,000-volume personal library of Johannes Schulze, an influential 19th century Prussian educator and collector, and tells the story of its purchase for Northwestern in 1869 by University librarian Daniel Bonbright) on the third floor of the historic Deering Library at Northwestern University, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston 847-491-2894 (closes Autumn 2007)

"Origins of Color" (explores the historical and scientific development of pigments and dyes and their production and uses in both fine art as well as craft manufacture) at the John Crerar Library of the University of Chicago, 5730 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago 773-702-7715 (closes 2 November 2007)

"Black Jewel of the Midwest: Celebrating 75 years of the George Cleveland Hall Branch Library and the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection," spotlighting their roles in the cultural flowering of the Chicago Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement (includes books, manuscripts, photographs and ephemera, many of which have never before been exhibited, from the Harsh Collection, one of the finest institutional collections anywhere of African-American history and literature) at the Woodson Regional Library of the Chicago Public Library, 9525 South Halsted Street, Chicago 312-747-6900 (closes 31 December 2007)

Members who have information about current or forthcoming exhibitions that might be of interest to Caxtonians, please call or e-mail John Blew (312-807-4317, e-mail: jblew@bellboyd.com).

SCHOLARSHIPS, *from page 9*

He is interested in exploring how personal beliefs are represented by the collective and how they personally differ.

John Vincler's higher education began at Michigan State where he was originally studying physics; he transferred to Loyola University for English Language and Literature (BA) and then received an MA in the History of the Book at the University of London, School of Advanced Study, Institute of English Studies. At London he studied historical bibliography and bibliographic description with the former director of collections and preservation at the British Library. He also studied incunabula, early Greek printing, and the early Italian book.

John was a member of the Illinois Arts Council literary advisory committee (2004) and a contributing writer to the arts and entertainment weekly *Newcity* in 2004. Currently he is a student at Columbia College, Center for Book and Paper Arts, and also at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) LEEP Program in Library and Information Science.

John is Associate Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations for Development, The Newberry Library (a job he has held since December) and has worked at the Newberry since 2001.

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program
September 14, 2007
James Hagy
"Dazzled by Diamonds—
Evanion and Houdini"

Henry Evans Evanion enjoyed a successful 19th century career as a magician and ventriloquist. Over his life, he amassed huge quantities of ephemera relating not only to conjuring, but to a wide variety of aspects of Victorian life. The legendary Harry Houdini, himself an avaricious collector, stumbled onto Evanion's amazing collection. Houdini set about to acquire it. This and other stories of magician-collectors will be the subject of a presentation by member James Hagy, a longtime lawyer with a major international firm and a published author on the history of magic and its characters. His biography of the life of Evanion was the subject of his keynote lecture at The British Library in 2005. With a little luck, Jim may even treat us to a trick. He has assured us in any case that at the appointed ending time of our lunch, he will disappear!

Dinner Program
September 19, 2007
Carl Smith
"The Making of *The Plan of Chicago*"

Professor Smith (of Northwestern) will speak about his book, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City*, published by the University of Chicago Press in 2006 and which recently appeared in paperback. As many members of the Caxton Club know, *The Plan of Chicago*, published in book form in 1909, is also known as the Burnham Plan, after its author, the noted architect and planner Daniel Burnham. A major milestone in Chicago's development and in the history of American urban planning, the *Plan* is full of stirring prose and magnificent illustrations (Professor Smith's talk will be accompanied by slides). It proposed many of the city's most distinctive features, including its lakefront parks and roadways, the Magnificent Mile, and Navy Pier. It established the concept of city planning in the United States and encouraged the reconceptualization of urban life itself. Professor Smith will not only discuss the planning process, the planners' recommendations, and their importance, but also the preparation and publication of *The Plan of Chicago*.

Beyond September...

OCTOBER LUNCHEON
On October 12, Caxtonian Robert Karrow, Curator of Maps at the Newberry Library, will present a preview of the once-in-a-lifetime Festival of Maps opening at the Field Museum and the Newberry Library on November 2. It will feature more than 100 of the world's greatest maps.

OCTOBER DINNER
On October 17, Paul Gehl will speak on Chicago Graphic Designers of the 20th Century in relation to the 80th anniversary of the Society of Typographic Arts. He will review the major figures, show examples of their work, and ask whether there is a "Chicago School" in graphic design.

NOVEMBER LUNCHEON
November 9. Speaker to be announced.

NOVEMBER DINNER
Peter Barber, a diplomatic historian by training, has been at the British Library since 1975, most of that time working with the rare map collection. He is currently Head of Map Collections. He has published extensively on the history of cartography, and will speak Nov. 14 (note date change).

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of Chase Tower, Madison and Clark, Chicago. Luncheon: buffet opens at 11:30; program 12:30-1:30. Dinner meetings: spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, lecture at 7:30 pm. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org. Members and guests: Lunch $27, Dinner $48. Discount parking available for evening meetings, with a stamped ticket, at Standard Self-Park, 172 W. Madison. Call Steve Masello at 847-905-2247 if you need a ride or can offer one.