

Collecting Emily Dickinson

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By general acclaim Emily Dickinson was one of the great poets of America – indeed, one of the greatest poets writing in English. Her poetry embodies charges of compressed thought and strikingly novel poetic forms and patterns of rhythm and rhyme – and, often, non-rhyme.

For lovers of great literature – particularly book collectors – interest often centers on the intersection of a great writer’s life and the publication of his or her work. In the case of Emily Dickinson, two problems confound any effort to focus on these intersections. The first is that surprisingly little is known about Emily Dickinson. As one of her biographers has noted, “Emily Dickinson’s life, in a sense almost unique among poets, was her work. She left no hints as to the occasion or setting of any of the poems.”¹ The second is that virtually everything she wrote, including all the collections of her poetry, appeared after her death.

Usually a writer’s life is used to try to explain or give color to references or ambiguous lines of verse. In Emily’s case, this process is reversed; in the absence of facts, her verse has been used to support speculation as to what her life must have been like.

Here is a brief summary of what we know. Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, on December 10, 1830, the daughter of Edward Dickinson and Emily Norcross Dickinson. She had an



This daguerreotype, ca. 1846-47, may be the only photograph of Emily Dickinson. (A second possibly-authentic photo was sold on eBay in 2000.)

older brother, Austin, and a younger sister, Lavinia.²

Emily’s father was a prominent lawyer and businessman. According to one of Emily’s biographers, he was “sanctimonious and frightened, repressed and prudish, honorable and honest, but bullying and bossy....”³ Her mother has been described as fearful, meek, self-effacing, and not well educated – but as having a warm relationship with the children.⁴ However, Emily later wrote to a friend, “My Mother does not care for thought. I never had a mother. I suppose a mother is one to whom you hurry when you are troubled.”⁵

Emily’s brother Austin would later marry a friend of Emily’s, Susan Gilbert. Their daughter Martha (Emily’s only niece, later Martha D. Bianchi) edited books of Emily’s poetry after her death. Emily’s sister Lavinia never married.

As one of her biographers notes, “If Emily’s genius was apparent in her early childhood, no one seems to have been aware of it or bothered to record its signs.”⁶ Emily learned to read using the *New England Primer*.⁷ Books and words were an important dimension of family life. Emily wrote later to a friend that Father “buys me many Books – but begs me not to read them – because he fears they joggle the mind.”⁸

In her early years, Emily attended a one-

room school. Then, in the fall of 1840, at the age of nine, she began attending the Amherst Academy, affiliated with Amherst College. Students at the academy often attended courses at the college.⁹ Emily studied “Mental Philosophy, Geology, Latin and Botany” – as well as foreign languages and music. One of her teachers at the Academy later wrote about her:

I remember her as a very bright, but rather delicate and frail looking girl; an excellent scholar, of exemplary deportment, faithful in all school duties; but somewhat shy and

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nervous. Her compositions were strikingly original; and in both thought and style seemed beyond her years....¹⁰

Her father bought her a piano when she was 14 years old, and she learned to play well enough to improvise for her friends.

In 1847 Emily (age 16) transferred to Mount Holyoke, where she spent one school year. She studied, among other things, algebra, chemistry, and physiology.¹¹ In a letter to a friend, she described a day at the school: Seminary Hall for devotions; then ancient history; then a lesson on Pope's "Essay on Man"; then calisthenics, singing and practice on the piano; then study and a lecture from the Principal.¹²

Emily evidently liked her classmates and her school work but she was not able to reconcile the pressures toward religious conformity with her own personal beliefs. A story was later told that during one school gathering, the Principal asked all those students who wanted to be Christians to rise. "The wording of the request was not such as Emily could honestly accede to and she remained seated – the only one who did not rise."¹³ She wrote to a young friend that, "I am not happy, and I regret that last term, when that golden opportunity was mine, that I did not give up and become a Christian." In a later letter to the same friend, she wrote again, "I am one of the lingering bad ones, and so do I slink away, and pause and ponder, and ponder and pause, and do work without knowing why, not surely, for this brief world and more sure it is not for heaven; and I ask what this message means that they ask for so very eagerly...."¹⁴

After her year at Mount Holyoke, Emily returned to the family home at Amherst, where she lived the rest of her life. Her formal education was now completed, but what would she do? She read Shakespeare, the Brontes, Emerson, and Longfellow, among others. She also read German plays with one of her brother's friends. Young men called at the house to visit. Emily's brother and sister said "she had the usual number of romantic attachments."¹⁵

Five men played important roles in Emily's life. The first was a young lawyer, Benjamin Newton, who clerked in her father's law office in 1847-49. Young Newton visited Emily in the Dickinson home, where they talked about literature and religion. In 1850 Newton moved back to his hometown, Worcester, where he set up a law practice and married. Emily later described Newton as "a gentle, yet grave Preceptor, teaching me what to read, what authors to admire, what was most

grand or beautiful in nature, and that sublime lesson, a faith in things unseen, and in life again, much nobler and much more blessed."¹⁶ It was probably Newton who first encouraged Emily to become a poet. He died in 1854.

Despite the loss of Newton, Emily initially maintained a social life. She attended parties given by her brother Austin and his wife Sue, who lived next door to the old brick house where Emily and Lavinia lived with their parents. And she made occasional short trips to visit relatives in Connecticut and Boston. But it was not long after her return to Amherst that she began declining social invitations. Wolff thinks it was partly due to problems with her eyes:

[Emily] seems to have been a more or less regular visitor at the Evergreens [Austin's home next door] until about 1860, popular at dinner parties and known for her sprightly wit. After that time she began to withdraw, principally because of her increasingly severe eye trouble. Her last two long visits away from Amherst were occasioned by this illness: seven months in the Boston area in 1864 and a shorter period in 1865.... For many years she continued to be on hand to receive guests at Father's gala parties during commencement week. She never enjoyed entertainments like the Ladies' Sewing Circle, and gradually she stopped attending Austin and Sue's ever more elegant social gatherings next door; yet she saw those with whom she wished to visit....¹⁷

Like so much else about her life, it is not clear when Emily began writing poetry. Her earliest surviving poems are in the form of valentines, one written in 1850, and another in 1852.¹⁸ Professor Johnson, her biographer and modern editor, believes that she had "probably written very few poems" by the time Austin and Sue were married in 1856, but, he adds, "she had written some and she certainly had high hopes that the writing of poetry might be for her more than a pastime."¹⁹

Clearly by 1858 Emily (age 27) was seriously engaged in writing, because it was in this year that she gathered some fifty poems into packets, though there is no way to be sure when the poems in this packet were actually written. She would continue to gather additional groupings of poems into packets in later years – nearly 100 in 1859, about 65 in 1860, and more than 80 in 1861. As her biographer Johnson concluded, the poems in the 1858 packet "are written by a person not yet inspired. They are uniformly sentimental, set down by a poet in love with the idea of being in love."²⁰

Emily's second great friend, and possibly the person who inspired her to a higher level of artis-

tic maturity, was Reverend Charles Wadsworth, pastor of a Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. Emily and her father probably heard him preach in 1854. Reverend Wadsworth called on Emily in 1860 in Amherst, and they exchanged letters for the next 22 years, until Wadsworth's death. Professor Johnson believes that Wadsworth was the "turning point" in her life. He writes that in the late 1850s and early 1860s, Emily – "under the creative impulse of her love for Charles Wadsworth" – began to "work out her testament of beauty."²¹ Emily referred to Wadsworth in her letters to him as her "closest" or "dearest earthly friend."

Drafts of loving letters (perhaps never sent) refer to someone, perhaps Wadsworth, as "Master." But their relationship seems to have been one of emotional and perhaps intellectual attachment – nothing more. Wadsworth was a married minister, living in another city. It appears that he met Emily only twice in his life. Yet about the time he accepted a call to preach in a San Francisco church in the fall of 1861, Emily was stricken with some kind of "terror." Philadelphia was nearby, but San Francisco must have seemed half-way around the world. "I had a terror – since September – I could tell to none – and so I sing, as the Boy does by the Burying Ground – because I am afraid."²² It was shortly after Wadsworth moved to San Francisco in the spring of 1862 that Emily began dressing entirely in white.²³

If Emily's loving "Master" letters were not written to Wadsworth, they may have been written to Samuel Bowles, a friend of the family and the editor of the *Springfield Republican*, which published a handful of Emily's poems.²⁴ Emily wrote to Bowles from the mid-1850s until the end of his life. Bowles also was married and "out of her reach in every way, professionally, domestically, morally." Yet, as Sewall observes, Emily's letters to him show that "she was deeply in love with him for several years and never ceased loving him, at a distance, for the rest of her life."

Whether it was Wadsworth's impending departure or perhaps Bowles' bout of illness that was the cause of her "trauma" in the fall of 1861, something seems to have spurred Emily to greater poetic achievement. In 1861 she had gathered some 80 of her poems in packets, about the same as 1859 and 1860. In 1862, by contrast, she copied at least 365

poems into packets. As Johnson concludes, "the creative drive must have been awesome." Moreover, apart from the quantity, "the quality of tenseness and prosodic skill uniformly present in the poems of 1861-1862 bears scant likeness to the conventionality of subject and treatment in the poems of 1858-1859."²⁵ (One of Emily's biographers believed that Emily wrote many of the 1862 poems at an earlier time and then "consolidated" them in 1862.²⁶)

The fourth important male friend in Emily's life was Thomas Wentworth Higginson – a Unitarian minister living in Worcester, and a literary man who had published several essays in *The Atlantic Monthly*. In April 1862 he published an essay giving advice to young writers. On April 15, 1862, Emily wrote to Higginson enclosing four of her poems and asking him to advise her whether the poems were "alive," – whether they "breathed."²⁷ Professor Johnson calls this the "most significant date in Emily Dickinson's life."²⁸ Higginson immediately responded, asking her to send more poems and inquiring about her reading, her companionships, her life. She sent more letters and poems, and he wrote back, offering criticism.

Higginson's letters back to Emily do not survive, but from her responses it is clear that he told her that her rhymes were imperfect and her rhythms "uncontrolled" and "spasmodic." Moreover, though he extended some praise, he advised her not to publish, or to "delay." Higginson was too much a traditionalist to understand or appreciate Emily's poetry – her idiosyncratic rhymes and irregular metric beats. Sewall says "he was miles away from her imaginatively. He had none of her inquiring, groping, experimental spirit."²⁹ Higginson never came to have the slightest concept of what Dickinson's artistic achievement consisted.... He literally did not understand what he was reading." He was "trying to measure a cube by the rules of plane geometry."³⁰

Emily's biographer, Johnson, believed that she elected "poetic obscurity.... by Higginson's verdict." But she may have accepted obscurity not because she agreed with Higginson's judgment of her work, but because she had other reasons for not wanting to see her work in print. In one of her letters to Higginson, she wrote: "I smile when you suggest that I delay 'to publish' – that being

foreign to my thought, as Firmament to Fin. If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her – if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase – and the approbation of my Dog, would forsake me – then. My Barefoot Rank is better."³¹

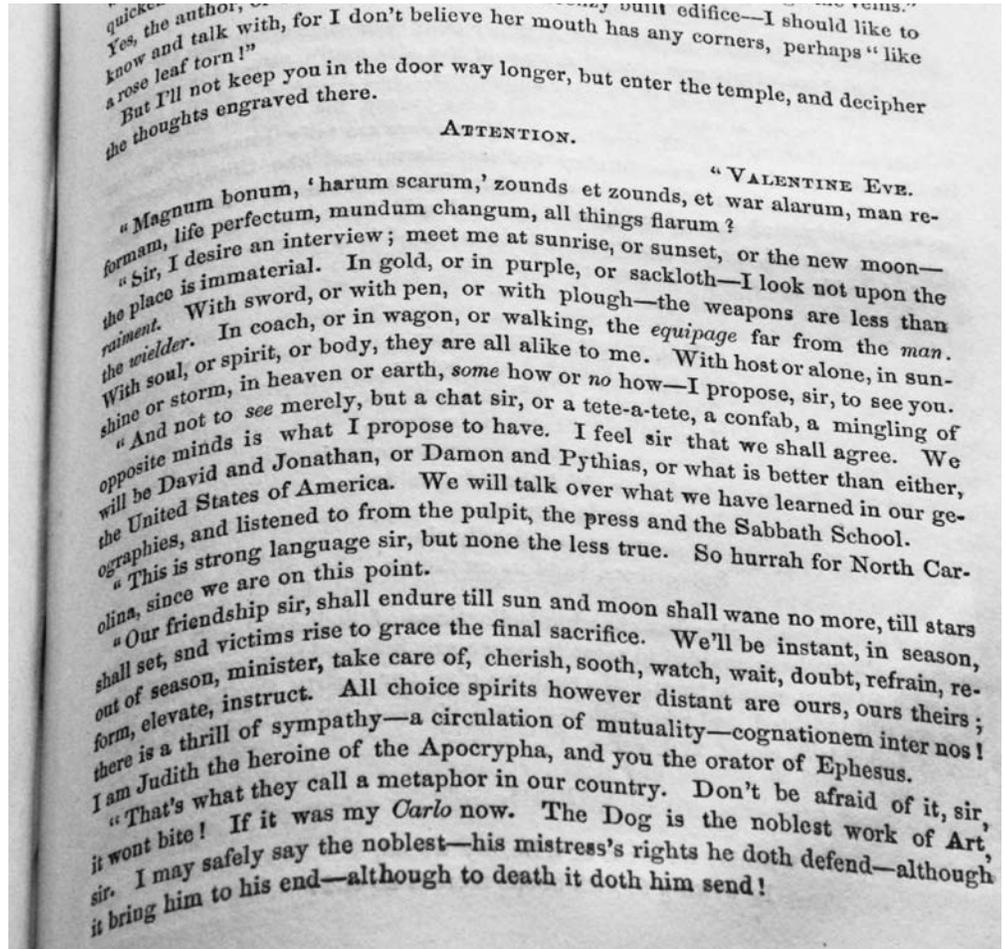
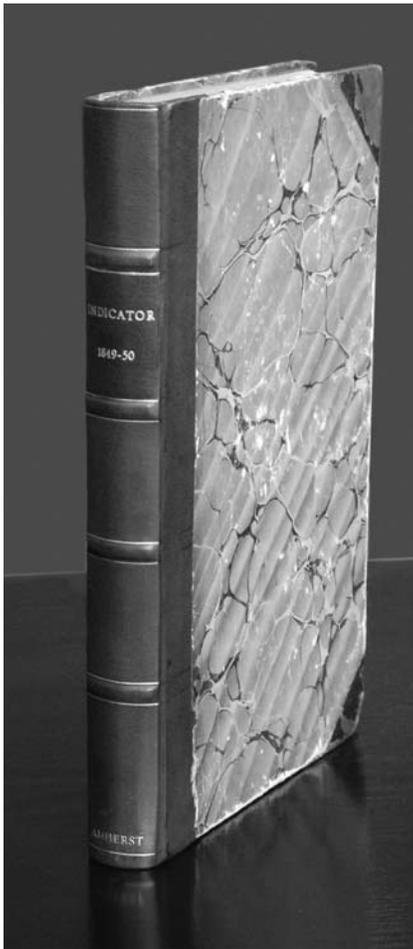
Colonel Higginson did not actually meet Emily until he paid her a visit in 1870. His diary and a couple of letters are the sole record of his conversation with Emily – indeed, the only record of a conversation *anyone* ever had with her. During the visit he asked if she ever "felt want of employment, never going off the place, and never seeing any visitor." She replied: "I never thought of conceiving that I could ever have the slightest approach to such a want in all future time.... I feel that I have not expressed myself strongly enough." They talked about books; Emily said she "read Shakespeare & thought why is any other book needed." Clearly, Emily was a powerful intelligence and strong personality. Higginson wrote, "I never was with any one who drained my nerve power so much. Without touching her, she drew from me. I am glad not to live near her."³²

A fifth important friend of Emily's was Judge Otis "Phil" Lord. She probably met him in 1857 when she was 26 – and he 45. Lord served on the Massachusetts Superior Court from 1859 until 1875, when he was elevated to the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth. Though the two friends exchanged letters, it was not until 1878 that their friendship became very close. After Mrs. Lord died in December 1877, Emily and Phil Lord exchanged passionate letters. Her letters to him were destroyed after her death; only the drafts survive. Based on the drafts, Emily's biographer Sewall describes her relationship with Lord as "the most securely documented of all Emily Dickinson's so-called love affairs." By this time, Lord was 66 years old, and Emily was 47.³³

Some admirers of Dickinson have been surprised at these letters; but the more intelligent and sophisticated readers of these pages will readily understand how a 66-year old aging but intellectually-vigorous lawyer might still be attractive to a brilliant and talented woman almost two decades younger than himself.

In any event, there is no evidence that she did anything about her passion other than write about it. In one of Emily's draft letters

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Emily's first appearance in print was a flirtatious Valentine to the editor of the Amherst College Indicator, February 1850.

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to Lord, she wrote: "It is strange that I miss you at night so much when I was never with you – but the punctual love invokes you soon as my eyes are shut – and I wake warm with the want sleep had almost filled."³⁴ The significant words in that sentence, for modern speculators, are: "...at night...when I was never with you...."

By August 1881, when David Todd and his wife Mabel Loomis Todd moved to Amherst, Emily had become a complete recluse. David Todd was the new director of the college observatory, and the Todds soon became friends of Austin and Sue – and also Lavinia. Mabel Todd was a bright young woman and a fine writer. She later became the principal editor of the first three collections of Emily's poems. The Todds were often invited to dinner at Austin's home, and Austin and Mabel developed a close relationship. Mabel frequently played the piano, and Emily apparently enjoyed listening to her play. But it is both striking and disconcerting that though they were often in the same house at the same

time, and though Mabel frequently socialized with Austin, his wife Sue, and their sister Lavinia, *Mabel never met Emily face to face*. Emily always managed to be listening in the next room, out of sight.³⁵

In 1882 Austin Dickinson began an affair with Mabel Todd that continued until his death. Austin stayed with his wife Sue and their children in their home next door to the old brick Dickinson residence where Emily and her sister Lavinia continued to live.

In 1883 Emily experienced the first symptoms of Bright's disease – a slow failure of the kidneys, probably the consequence of an infection. She died on May 13, 1886, at age 55. Her last letter, to her cousins, written shortly before she died, said simply, "Called back. Emily." Emily's sister-in-law Sue wrote the obituary for the local newspaper:

Very few in the village, except among the older inhabitants, knew Miss Emily personally, although the facts of her seclusion and her intellectual brilliancy were familiar Amherst

traditions.... As she passed on in life, her sensitive nature shrank from much personal contact with the world, and more and more turned to her own large wealth of individual resources for companionship.... Not disappointed with the world, not an invalid until within the past two years, not from any lack of sympathy, not because she was insufficient for any mental work or social career – her endowments being so exceptional – but the "mesh of her soul,"...was too rare, and the sacred quiet of her own home proved the fit atmosphere for her worth and work....

Emily's long-time correspondent, Colonel Higginson, came to Amherst for the funeral. It was only the third time he had ever seen her. Although Emily was 55 when she died, Higginson wrote in his diary that "She...looked 30...not a gray hair or wrinkle, & perfect peace on the beautiful brow." She was buried next to her father and mother.³⁶

Very little of Emily's writing appeared during her lifetime; and none of her collections of poetry was published until

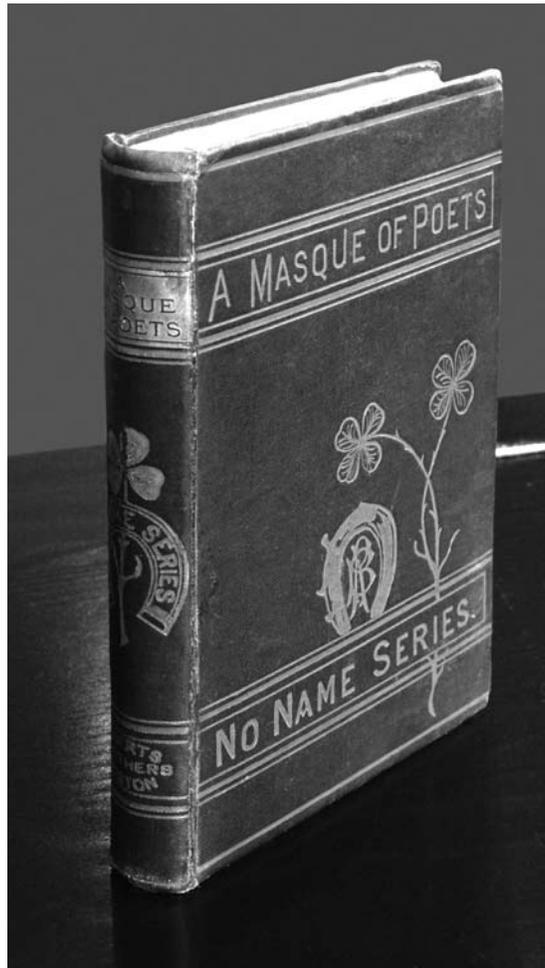
after her death. Her life-time publications consist only of: (1) a letter that appeared in the Amherst College *Indicator* in February 1850; (2) six poems which appeared in a newspaper, the *Springfield Daily Republican*; and (3) a single poem in one book of poetry – *A Masque of Poets*.³⁷

Emily's first work to appear in print was a letter to the *Indicator*, a literary periodical produced by Amherst students. "The *Indicator* lived for three years, and then it too went down to join the publications that had preceded it. Perhaps one cause of its untimely death was the profundity of the articles it contained," said *Student Life at Amherst College, Its Organizations Their Membership and History*.³⁸ During the *Indicator's* life span – from 1848 to 1851 – the enrollment at Amherst was not large, about 175 in 1850. Volume II of the *Indicator* covered the period June 1849 to April 1850. In the February 1850 issue appeared Emily's five-paragraph unsigned letter. A prose "Valentine," it begins with rhythmic nonsense:

Magnum bonum, 'harum scarum,' zounds
et zounds, et war alarum,
man reformam, life perfectam, mundum
changum, all things flarum?
Sir, I desire an interview; meet me at
sunrise, or sunset, or the new moon – the
place is immaterial... With sword, or with
pen, or with plough – the weapons are less
than the wielder.... I propose to see you.
And not to see merely, but a chat sir, or a tete-
a-tete, a confab, a mingling of opposite minds
is what I propose to have....

Emily's letter was a flirtatious invitation to the editor, George Gould, to meet for an intellectual mingling of spirits, timed for arrival just before Valentine's Day. Gould was an Amherst classmate and fraternity brother of Austin's and had visited in the Dickinson home. The *Indicator* printed her letter in the "Editor's Corner," and then responded to it, playfully: "Now this is, after all, a very ingenious affair. If it is not true, it is at any rate philosophical. It displays clearly an inductive faith; a kind of analytic spirit, identifying each independent truth, and fixing it as a primary essence, which the author had known and felt."

Years later it was said that Gould had been interested in Emily, but her father



Emily's only poem to appear in a book during her lifetime was included anonymously in this Boston volume in 1878.

forbade them to see each other. Emily supposedly gave Gould the bad news personally but added "that love was too vital a flower to be crushed so cruelly." Much later, after Emily died, it turned out that Gould had kept for a time "a cherished batch of Emily's letters" but they had been lost.³⁹

The *Union List of Serials* locates six copies of the February 1850 *Indicator*, only two of which are in private hands. My copy is signed on the title-page by James Buckland, who was a member of the class of 1853.

Of the handful of Emily's poems that saw the light of day during her life time, all but one appeared in the pages of the *Springfield Daily Republican*, edited by her friend Sam Bowles. The first was a 17-stanza "Valentine" she wrote in 1852 to William Howland, a young law clerk working in her father's office. Howland "retaliated" by sending the poem to the *Daily Republican*, where it was published unsigned on February 20, 1852, with an editorial note that the "hand that wrote the following amusing medley... is

capable of writing very fine things."⁴⁰

Over the years Emily sent Bowles at least 37 poems, though he published only six. Once Bowles called at the house and asked to see Emily. She refused to come downstairs to see him, apparently for the same reasons she declined to see almost all visitors. Bowles called upstairs: "Emily, you wretch! No more of this nonsense! I've traveled all the way from Springfield to see you. Come down at once." She apparently did – and their conversation was said to be brilliant.⁴¹ When Bowles died in 1878, it was a severe blow.

The only poem of Emily's to appear in a book during her life time was "Success," which appeared anonymously in *Masque of Poets*.⁴² It would not have happened except for Helen Hunt Jackson.

Helen Hunt, like Emily, was born in 1830 in Amherst. "H.H.," as she was known, was a talented and popular novelist, known for many volumes of poetry and prose, in particular her novel *Ramona*, about the mistreatment of Indians by the whites. During the mid-60s Higginson had told Helen Hunt about Emily and her poetry, but they did not enter into correspondence until 1875.

A few months later, H.H. persuaded the Roberts Brothers publishing firm in Boston to publish several volumes anonymously, leaving readers to guess the identity of the authors. One of these volumes was to be an anthology of verses contributed by English and American authors. Helen then undertook to persuade Emily to contribute one of her poems. Several letters were exchanged, with Emily continuing to express unwillingness. Indeed, it seems likely that Helen submitted the poem she had chosen – "Success" – to the publisher without Emily's consent, hoping that it could be obtained. Helen met with Emily personally in Amherst in October 1878, "staking everything on this meeting and her persuasive arguments as the means of breaking down Emily Dickinson's determination not to publish. She failed." But three days later, Helen tried again, by letter. She made the request personal: "If you will [consent] it will give me great pleasure. I ask it as a personal favour to myself – Can you refuse the only thing I perhaps shall

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ever ask at your hands?" Emily reluctantly acquiesced – "withheld refusal."⁴³

A few weeks later, on November 12, 1878, Roberts Brothers published *A Masque of Poets* as part of its "No Name Series." All the individual poems appeared anonymously. The volume included the first book appearance of a poem by Thoreau as well as Emily's "Success." There was some speculation in literary circles at the time that "Success" had been written by Emerson. The first edition, first printing, consisted of 1,500 copies; a second printing of 500 appeared later in the month. Emily's was one of the last poems in the volume – perhaps because the publisher had had to wait until the last minute to get the necessary permission to include it. Unfortunately, Emily's poem as it appeared reflected several changes made by the editor without Emily's advance knowledge or permission. All were minor, but to a perfectionist like Emily Dickinson, they were no doubt irritating.

H.H. gave Emily, "as no other person ever did, a conviction that her poems were of first importance. Nothing ever touched [Emily] more deeply than the recognition thus bestowed upon her art – and by another poet, one whom the best critics of the day acclaimed as a leading, if not the leading, writer of verse in America."⁴⁴

Not long after Emily died in 1886, her sister Lavinia went through her effects and was astonished to find dozens of groupings of poetry in Emily's handwriting, neatly organized and placed in a cherry bureau. There were 39 packets, each consisting of 4-5 folded sheets of note paper threaded together, and some 25 other gatherings.⁴⁵ From the dates Emily had placed on the packets, it appeared that after the burst of productivity in 1862, she wrote about 150 poems in 1863, more than 100 in 1864, and 70 in 1865. After that the annual number never exceeded 20, and about half of these were drafts, never completed.⁴⁶ Her *Complete Poems*, edited by Thomas Johnson,⁴⁷ contains 1,775 poems or fragments.

It did not take Lavinia long to decide that these poems should be published. Her first instinct was to go to Austin's wife Sue and seek her help. Sue at first indicated an interest but did nothing to advance the

project. As Lavinia later wrote, "Mrs. Dickinson [Austin's wife, Sue] was enthusiastic for a while, then indifferent & later utterly discouraging...."⁴⁸

Dissatisfied with the delay, in November 1889 Lavinia took back the manuscripts and turned to Colonel Higginson, Emily's adviser of many years. Higginson doubted whether enough publishable material could be pulled together to make a book. But if someone else would make that effort, he would go over the results and give his advice. That "someone else" turned out to be the Dickinsons' neighbor and friend, Mabel Todd, wife of the Amherst astronomer and lover of Austin Dickinson.

In 1889 Mabel was only 33. Her pictures show that she was an attractive woman; and she was unusually talented – a serious musician, a painter in oils and watercolors, and an author. Part of Mabel's story was told by her daughter, Millicent Todd Bingham, in a wonderfully readable book, *Ancestors' Brocades, The Literary Debut of Emily Dickinson*.⁴⁹

After inspecting the manuscripts, Mabel Todd quickly realized that the poems could not simply be turned over to a publisher to be set in type because Emily's handwriting was difficult to read. Also, choices would have to be made among the variant versions of the poems.

As Mabel proceeded to transcribe and type Emily's poems, she reported that they had "a wonderful effect on me, mentally and spiritually.... Most of them I came to know lovingly by heart, and I was strengthened and uplifted. I felt their genius..." From the mass of finished and unfinished verses, Mabel selected "about two hundred of the most characteristic, most different...." She took these to Mr. Higginson.⁵⁰ They examined the poems together, and classified them into groups relating to "Life," "Nature," and "Time, Death and Eternity."

Unfortunately, the contribution of these two editors extended beyond deciphering Emily's complicated handwriting. Emily's drafts, setting forth alternative wordings, compelled the editors to make some choices. But the editors did more: they altered words to make rhymes or to conform to rules of grammar, and they deleted stanzas they believed were imperfect. They also added titles where none had existed.⁵¹ In the meantime, Lavinia was prodding the two editors to complete the project.

Because Colonel Higginson was a reader for Houghton Mifflin, he first tried to interest them in publishing Emily's poems. But, as Mabel reported later, "They decided against it. The poems, they said, were much too queer; the rhymes were all wrong. They thought that Higginson must be losing his mind to recommend such stuff."⁵² So in May 1890 Mabel took their selection to Thomas Niles, the head of the publishing firm of Roberts Brothers, the same firm that had earlier published *A Masque of Poets*, containing Emily's poem "Success."

Niles' reaction was not much better than Houghton Mifflin's. "He was scared to death about printing the poems! He suggested a hectograph edition of five hundred copies." Mabel Todd rejected the suggestion, and ultimately Niles "came around." Before coming around, however, Niles sent the collection to the author, and later professor, Arlo Bates, for his appraisal. Bates replied,

There is hardly one of these poems which does not bear marks of unusual and remarkable talent; there is hardly one of them which is not marked by an extraordinary crudity of workmanship.... There are some poems in the book, however, that are so royally good, and so many that to the poetical will be immensely suggestive, that it seems a pity not to have at least a small edition.⁵³

Bates' evaluation led Niles to offer to publish a small edition of 500 if Lavinia Dickinson would pay for the plates. Mabel Todd later reported that Bates' criticisms caused Vinnie to become "inarticulate with rage." Moreover, Vinnie was irritated because the publisher had cut almost half of the proposed 200 poems in the collection. But eventually she accepted the deal, and Mabel quietly restored about twenty of the cut poems.

In the meantime, Sue Dickinson, who had not been told about the soon-to-be-published collection or about Mabel Todd's work on it – sent one of Emily's poems to *Scribner's* for publication without telling Vinnie. The poem appeared in the August 1890 issue of the magazine. Vinnie, of course, was infuriated because she believed she was the sole owner of the poems, and Sue had not asked her permission.⁵⁴

As the publication date for the collection neared, Vinnie became fearful of Sue's reaction to the fact that Mabel – rather than Sue – would be credited as an editor of the

forthcoming volume. Mabel later explained:

Vinnie did not want my name on the book because she didn't want Sue to know that I had anything to do with it. Sue would have annihilated her if she could. They hated each other black and blue. She was scared to death of Sue, though she talked awfully about her.⁵⁵

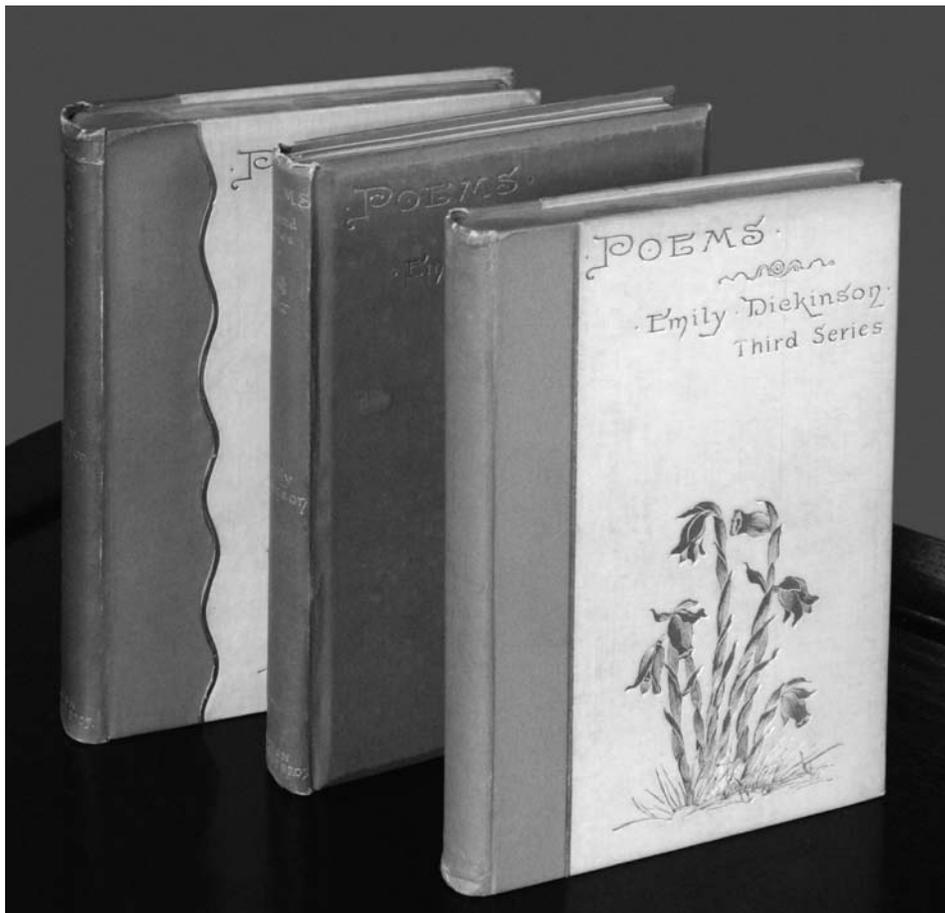
But when the book appeared, Mabel was given proper credit.

When the question rose about a possible decoration for the cover of the volume, Mabel remembered that a few years earlier she had painted for Emily a group of flowers called "Indian pipe." Emily had been delighted with the painting. So in September, Mabel made a copy of a panel from the original painting, and gave it to the printer. Plate proofs were reviewed in late September 1890. The final contract details were worked out between the publisher and Lavinia, who was to receive any profits, no provision being made for payments to either Mabel or Colonel Higginson, who were identified on the title page as "two of her [Emily's] friends."

The book appeared in white cloth covers and a gray spine – the white and gray separated by a wavy vertical line. Mabel's drawing of the "Indian pipe" flower appeared on the front cover. The book was protected by an unprinted light yellow-brown dust jacket, rarely seen today, and a two-part cardboard box. Containing 115 poems, the 500 copies of the first printing priced at \$1.50 appeared on November 12, 1890.⁵⁶

Prepublication copies were sent to literary magazines and reviewers. Higginson in his preface anticipated the criticism of "uneven vigor" in an oft-quoted sentence: "After all, when a thought takes one's breath away, a lesson on grammar seems an impertinence." The print run of 500 was small, but General Pershing's widow made it even worse for collectors by buying up every copy she could find and donating the entire group to a university library.

Though the initial reviews were mixed, many were enthusiastic. The same Arlo Bates who had earlier given his assessment to the publisher wrote for the *Boston Courier* that the book was "remarkable": "It is so wholly without the pale of conventional criticism, that it is necessary at the start to declare the grounds upon which it is to be judged as if it were a new species of



Dickinson's first three posthumous collections, published in 1890, 1891 and 1896.

art...." The *Boston Sunday Herald* reviewer was even more positive: "I have read this book twice through already. I foresee that I shall read it scores of times more. It enralls me and will not let me go." The *Boston Budget* reviewer noted poems of "extraordinary intensity, insight and vividness, and an almost equally startling disregard of poetic laws...."⁵⁷

Perhaps the most important review was that of William Dean Howells in *Harper's Magazine*. Howells understood better than any other reviewer that the apparent roughness in some of Emily's lines, the off-beat rhythms and unorthodox rhymes, were part of her artistry:

Occasionally, the outside of the poem, so to speak, is left so rough, so rude, that the art seems to have faltered. But there is apparent to reflection the fact that the artist meant just this harsh exterior to remain.... If nothing else had come out of our life but this strange poetry we should feel that in the work of Emily Dickinson, America, or New England, rather, had made a distinctive addition to the literature of the world, and could not be left out of any record of it.⁵⁸

Another measure of the book's success was its sales. The first printing of 500 copies sold so well that a second printing of 380 copies was required by December 11, 1890, followed shortly by a third printing on December 24. The printings were identical except that in the second, the gray spine and white covers were replaced by a white spine and gray covers. These second and third printings incorrectly identified the book thus printed as a "second edition." Four additional printings were required in early 1891 (likewise misidentified as separate "editions").⁵⁹ By mid-January 1891 about 1300 copies had been sold, and the publishers were sufficiently pleased that they volunteered to sweeten the original agreement by paying for the plates and granting a copyright to Lavinia on all copies sold at ten percent. Under this amended arrangement, Lavinia earned \$192 on the first 1300 or so copies.⁶⁰

Sue Dickinson, however, was predictably displeased. From the moment she learned about the publication of Emily's first collection, she did not speak to Lavinia. Instead, she wrote in mid-December to
See *EMILY DICKINSON*, page 8

Colonel Higginson saying that she had been “dazed” by the press announcement that Emily’s poems would soon appear. “It was my first intimation that stranger hands were preparing them for publication.” Although Sue had allowed years to pass without doing anything to advance the editing or publication of Emily’s poems, she now told Higginson that she had “planned to give my winter, with my daughter’s aid, to the arrangement of a vol. to be printed at my own expense sometime during the year, subject to your approval of course....” She would have printed them privately only, being held back from publication by Higginson’s earlier verdict that the poems were “un-presentable.”⁶¹

The generally positive reviews and strong sales encouraged Lavinia and Mabel Todd to produce another volume of poems. Mabel had already copied more than enough from the manuscripts. Mabel and Colonel Higginson raised the subject with the publisher on February 12, 1891, and found him enthusiastic.

At almost the same time, Sue Dickinson wrote to the editor of a New York newspaper – *The Independent* – offering the opportunity to print one of Emily’s poems “for money compensation.”

I have many manuscripts, letters, poems &c. which I mean to make up into a unique volume as I can command the time.... If you will print it [the enclosed poem “Martyrs”] for a money compensation I should be glad and will reserve others for you which have never been seen.... I would like this confidential as the sister is quite jealous of my treasures. I was to have compiled the poems – but as I moved slowly, dreading publicity for us all, she was angry and a year ago took them from me. All I have are mine, given me by my dear Emily while living so I can in honor do with them as I please. [Emphasis supplied]

So, Sue still had “many manuscripts, letters, poems, &c.” Had she retained some that should have been returned to Lavinia? Or were her “treasures” letters and poems that Emily had given to her in her lifetime? And even if they were, did the copyright belong to Sue or to Lavinia? The New York editor replied, expressing reluctance to publish the poems. Sue responded, renewing the suggestion that the “Martyrs” be published, offering to send additional “little

poems,” but backing off from her earlier-expressed wish to publish her own volume:

Mr. Dickinson [Sue’s husband, Austin] thinks as Col. Higginson and Niles are to bring out another vol. of the poems, it is not best, or fair to them to print many. I do not feel in any way bound to them, but will of course defer to his wish in the matter.

So Austin must have intervened and persuaded his wife Sue not to publish her poems (or at least not “many”) in order to avoid bringing to the surface the family dispute over who owned the publication rights.⁶²

The dispute might be quieted for the moment, but it would not go away. The New York *Independent* did publish two of the poems sent by Sue. When Lavinia found out about it, she blew up. Rather than talk to her next-door neighbor and sister-in-law, she wrote the editor in New York to ask what had happened. The editor explained that the poems had come from Sue and suggested: “It would seem as if somehow you ought to pool your interests and not have any division over so sacred a matter.”⁶³ Lavinia would have none of it. She wrote back to the editor:

I wish simply to say that my sister gave her poems to me, all of them, as I can prove, if necessary; and that although copies of them have been given at different times to different persons, they have been so given simply for private perusal, or reading to others, and not to pass the property in them, which is in me. So there will be no occasion for any pooling of interests which you suggest.

The editor, caught in the middle, then wrote to Austin Dickinson, urging him to settle the matter between his wife Sue and his sister Lavinia. But the dispute could not be settled. Sue – like Lavinia – would not yield an inch:

I beg you will not be drawn into any correspondence with Miss Lavinia over the poems, or allow yourself to be troubled by her foolish fits of temper which have worn into her brother’s life very deeply. She feels a little baffled by my possession of so many mss of Emily’s and is very foolish in her talk of law, etc. I am quite used to her vagaries, and while I pity her, I shall never yield a line in my possession to her.⁶⁴

The Roberts Brothers publishing firm

obviously had an interest in this quarrel because they were the publishers of the poems in the possession of Lavinia. The head of the firm advised Lavinia that she was in the right: “It is a well settled point of law, I believe, that the receiver of letters has no right to dispose of them in any way & I presume manuscript poems would be protected in the same way.” In other words, Sue might read the correspondence or poems received from Emily, but she could not publish them.⁶⁵

Roberts Brothers naturally sent Lavinia the payments due her under their contract. But what of the editors – Mabel Todd and Colonel Higginson? They had no agreement with Lavinia, although they had committed considerable time and energy to the project. Lavinia solved this problem unilaterally by sending each of them – without negotiation or discussion – \$100 for their work on the first collection.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1891, as Sue and Colonel Higginson were hard at work on the projected second volume, they came upon one of Emily’s poems that presented a problem:

Wild Nights – Wild Nights!
Were I with thee
Wild Nights should be
Our luxury!
Futile – the Winds –
To a Heart in port –
Done with the Compass –
Done with the Chart!
Rowing in Eden
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor – Tonight –
In Thee!

Higginson shared with his co-editor Mabel his concerns that this poem might be misinterpreted:

One poem only I dread a little to print – that wonderful “Wild Nights,” – lest the malignant read into it more than that virgin recluse ever dreamed of putting there. Has Miss Lavinia any shrinking about it? You will understand & pardon my solicitude. Yet what a loss to omit it! Indeed it is not to be omitted.

Subsequent generations of readers have debated the meaning of “Wild Nights.” Some have seen in it reflections of Emily’s relationship with Judge Lord. In any event, Higginson’s final instinct was followed: the poem was included in the second volume.

By July 1891 the poems had been arranged and proofed, titles were added, and a preface and index prepared.⁶⁷ The editors decided to use again the images of Indian pipes that had appeared on the front cover of the first collection.

The new volume appeared on November 9, 1891. Entitled *Poems by Emily Dickinson, Second Series*, it contained 166 poems. There were three different bindings, two in cloth and one with a white leather spine and paper boards. The two cloth versions had paper wrappers; the leather-spine version had a slipcase. In all, 960 copies were printed. The cloth bound versions sold for \$1.25 and \$1.50, and the leather-spine version for \$3.50.⁶⁸ Mine, in the cloth "B" binding, bears the bookplate of the collector Estelle Doheny.

The public response to the second collection was enthusiastic. Within a week the first issue had been sold. The publisher wrote on November 13 to tell Lavinia that the book was going like "hot cakes" and that a second printing was in the hands of the binder.⁶⁹ The critical responses to the second collection, like the first, ranged from hostile to wildly enthusiastic. Negative reviews emphasized Emily's lack of orthodoxy in the technical aspects of her writing. The enthusiastic reviews emphasized her subtlety and power.⁷⁰ Again Lavinia gave Higginson and Mabel each \$100 for their work.

The enthusiastic response from most critics and the market encouraged Lavinia and her two editors to think about two more books – a volume of Emily's selected letters, and a third collection of poems. Lavinia and Mabel had already embarked on an effort to gather, decipher and copy all of Emily's letters that could be found. Many of the letters included poems within their text, so the volume would have interest to those interested in her poetry, as well as those interested in her prose or in her relationships and activities. Because of his other commitments, Higginson withdrew as an editor, leaving all the work to Mabel Todd.

Lavinia continued to push for immediate publication; and Mabel, who was doing the work, became irritated by the pressure. Lavinia "is rampant for the letters to come right out – sees no necessity for chronological arrangement, or anything, indeed,

except merely copying them. She is horribly ignorant."⁷¹

Forty years later, after reviewing all the surviving journals, letters, and notes, Mabel's daughter, Millicent, concluded that Lavinia's attitude had passed beyond impatience. Lavinia viewed herself as the heir and principal advocate of Emily's work. Mabel was simply an assistant – a secretary and transcriber. However, now Mabel "was becoming an authority, to be consulted when questions concerning Emily required answers." She was even giving occasional talks about Emily, for which she might receive \$10 or so and expenses. "[T]here is no question that Emily was coming into her own. But to her sister's mind the intermediary in the process [Mabel] was a menial.... Vulgarly speaking, my mother seemed to be cashing in on Emily in so far as reputation was concerned, and Lavinia's resentment smoldered hot."⁷²

By early 1894, the publisher was ready to publish Emily's letters, but needed to know with whom to make the contract – Lavinia or Mabel.⁷³ Lavinia claimed the "copyright" on the letters and insisted that the contract should be with her.⁷⁴ Meanwhile, Mabel continued to do the work of proofreading. By this time, Austin, who knew how much work Mabel had committed to the project, had entered the fray on her side.

Austin was far from a disinterested bystander. He and Mabel Todd had been carrying on their intense love affair since September 1882. Lavinia knew about it, as did his wife Sue, and also Mabel's husband David, the astronomer.⁷⁵ For a time, Mabel even wore a wedding ring, and at one point she and Austin attempted to conceive a child.⁷⁶

The details of intimate family relations can rarely be known for sure. But in this case, contemporaneous letters and diaries leave no doubt about both the affair and Austin's unhappiness in his marriage with Sue even before he met Mabel Todd. Mabel wrote in her diary that Austin told her about Sue's "morbid dread of having any children," which led her to discontinue marital relations. He also told her that Sue had three or four abortions, and that one of her failed attempts to have an abortion had led to the birth of their son Ned with physical and mental infirmities.⁷⁷

Austin mediated a settlement in which Lavinia orally agreed to give Mabel half

the proceeds from the collection of letters, though Lavinia would retain the copyright. Austin insisted that this be spelled out in the contract, rather than left to chance.⁷⁸ Lavinia at first refused to allow the matter to be dealt with in the contract. Austin then intervened directly with the Roberts Brothers on Mabel's side. He told the publisher that Lavinia "has great trouble in understanding how I should have any interest or part in the matter, and is disturbed by the feeling that somehow her glory and magnificence are dimmed by any other than her supreme self being recognized in correspondence."

The intensity of the quarrel was reflected in one silly last-minute tiff that threatened to block publication. At Lavinia's insistence, the draft preface by Mabel had initially contained this statement:

The lovers of Emily Dickinson's poems have been so eager for her prose that *her sister has gathered these letters*, and committed their preparation to me. [Emphasis supplied]

In fact, most of the work of collecting the letters had been done by others, including Mabel. But she had gone along with Lavinia's language. When Austin found out about it, he sent a telegram to the publisher instructing him to run off only ten copies of the book using the pro-Lavinia version of the preface – but then to change it back to the original form and print the rest of the books with the accurate preface. Austin must have thought he could "finesse" the problem by giving Lavinia the 10 or so copies and selling the others. The final printed form of the preface thus eliminated the statement that Lavinia had collected the letters. Any surviving copies with the pro-Lavinia preface are obviously quite rare.

The two volumes of Emily's letters, *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, were published by Roberts Brothers on November 15, 1894. These letters included 102 additional poems and parts of poems. The volumes were bound in light green buckram and protected by a box. The initial printing of 1000 copies, priced at \$2.00 per set, was sold within the first week.⁷⁹

Reviews were mixed. The *Nation* was perhaps typical; its reviewer noted both "a precious legacy of genius" and "the equally strong feeling that they are the abnormal expression of a woman abnormal to the

See EMILY DICKINSON, page 10

EMILY DICKINSON, *from page 9*

point of disease, and that their publication by a friend and a sister is not the least abnormal thing about them...."⁸⁰ The sales were not sufficient to generate any royalties, so the quarrel over contract terms turned out to be moot, and Mabel's editorial work on the *Letters* went entirely uncompensated.⁸¹

During the months of final preparation of the *Letters*, Austin's health deteriorated. He consulted doctors in the spring and summer of 1894.⁸² By early 1895 he was sick with pneumonia. He died in mid August. While his body was laid out in the family home and Sue and the children were at dinner, Mabel was permitted to come quietly into the house to say goodbye and place a token in his casket.⁸³ After the funeral, Mabel wore mourning clothes, black dresses, black cape, and black hat – which infuriated Austin's widow Sue.

The relationship between Lavinia and Mabel was now further strained by a dispute over Austin's estate. Austin had left his share of his father's estate to Lavinia on the express understanding that she would give it to Mabel. He had apparently thought this would be less public and less objectionable to Sue than if he had provided for such a gift to Mabel directly in his will. Austin had written to Mabel when he made his will that he had left this share to Lavinia "with the request that she turn it over to you. *She has promised to do this, so you are protected in any case.*" [Emphasis supplied] Before he died, Austin also had decided to give Mabel a slice of the Dickinson meadow adjacent to the Todd's home; and he had obtained Lavinia's consent to this.

But within a couple of months of Austin's death, Lavinia told Mabel she would not honor Austin's request with respect to his father's estate. In her diary, Mabel recorded her reaction: "She is, as he always told me, utterly slippery and treacherous, but he did not think she would fail to do as he stipulated in this. Oh, it is pitiful!"⁸⁴ Lavinia did, however, after some cajoling, make good on Austin's promise to deed Mabel the slice of Dickinson meadow adjacent to their home.

It was in this charged atmosphere that Mabel turned to the projected third volume of Emily's poems. She consulted Higginson

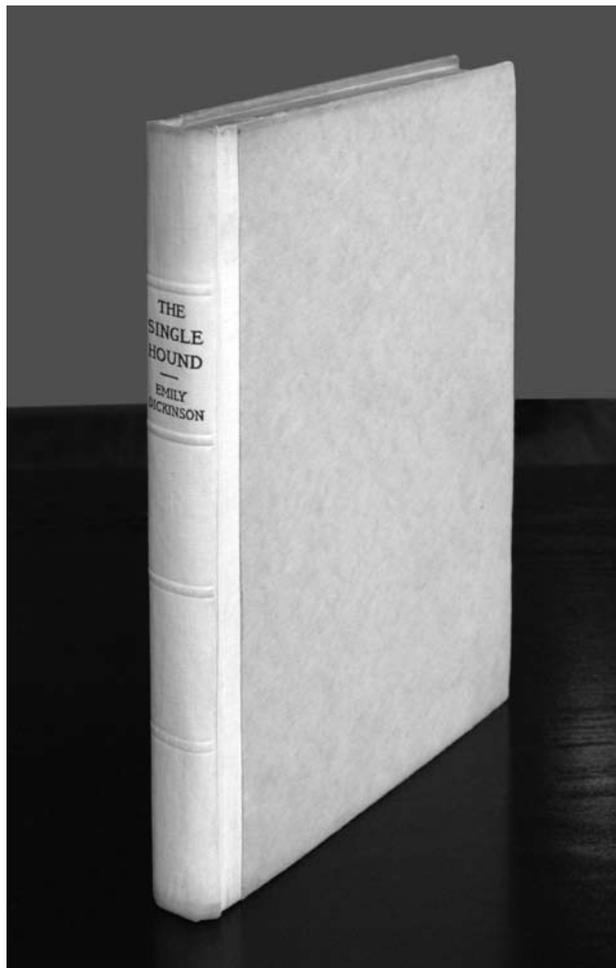
in September 1895, and soon found that he was unable to assist. So she would go it alone.

Mabel sent Roberts Brothers the manuscript containing 165 poems on the last day of 1895; and within a week it was at the printer. Mabel finished her proofing in April, shortly before leaving for Japan with her husband on an astronomical project. While she was in Japan, Emily's *Poems, Third Series* was published by Roberts Brothers, on September 1, 1896. The book appeared in two cloth bindings, one selling for \$1.50 and the other for \$1.25; 1000 copies were printed.⁸⁵ Mine is in the cloth "A" binding. A second printing of 1000 copies was made later in the month. As Mabel's daughter noted years later, this third volume "did not make a great stir.... After a preliminary flurry the Third Series settled down, taking its place in the steady stream of demand for the two earlier volumes."⁸⁶

Through Mabel Todd's efforts (with help from Hutchinson), 551 of Emily's poems had now been published in the three collections and the two volumes of letters. But, hundreds of Emily's poems remained unpublished for almost two decades.

Lavinia's relationship with Mabel Todd now ruptured completely. Perhaps Lavinia came to believe that Mabel had exercised undue influence in getting Austin to agree to give her part of the Dickinson meadow. Possibly she could not stand the thought that her Amherst neighbors might conclude that Austin had given the land to Mabel as a parting present to his long-time mistress. Perhaps she was just greedy, wanted to hang on to the land, and, with Austin gone, simply changed her mind.

Whatever the explanation, Lavinia brought suit to have her own deed of the meadowland annulled on the ground that she had not understood that what she was signing was a deed.⁸⁷ In the end, Lavinia



Martha Bianchi, Emily's niece, published a fourth collection of her poems in 1914, *The Single Hound*.

somehow prevailed. The local judge and the neighbors knew all about the Austin-Mabel affair; and although Lavinia clearly had been aware that she was signing a deed, the judge probably concluded that Mabel had obtained it by means of improper influence over Austin.

The rupture in the Lavinia-Mabel relationship stopped publication of Emily's poems dead in its tracks. Lavinia had the copyrights as well as possession of the hundreds of original manuscripts, but could not do the work herself. Mabel had more than 1000 copied poems of Emily's, about half of which had still not been published, but she would have nothing more to do with Lavinia.⁸⁸

Lavinia died on August 31, 1899. Her decline may have been accelerated by her anger at her neighbor Sue for the alleged theft of Lavinia's fertilizer and for allowing her dogs to harass Lavinia's cats. Leaving no heirs of her own, Lavinia's copyright interest in Emily's poems apparently passed to the children of Austin and Sue – including

Sue's daughter, Martha, who married Alexander Bianchi in 1903.

Austin's widow Sue died in 1913, leaving Emily's original manuscripts to her heirs, including Martha Bianchi. But Mabel still had the copies she had made over 20 years earlier. After Sue died, her daughter, Martha Bianchi, prepared a fourth collection of 142 of Emily's poems, *The Single Hound*. Martha made fewer editorial changes to the poems, but misread occasional words or phrases – and these mistakes appeared in the final printed text.⁹⁰ The title was taken from the last stanza of the first poem in the collection:

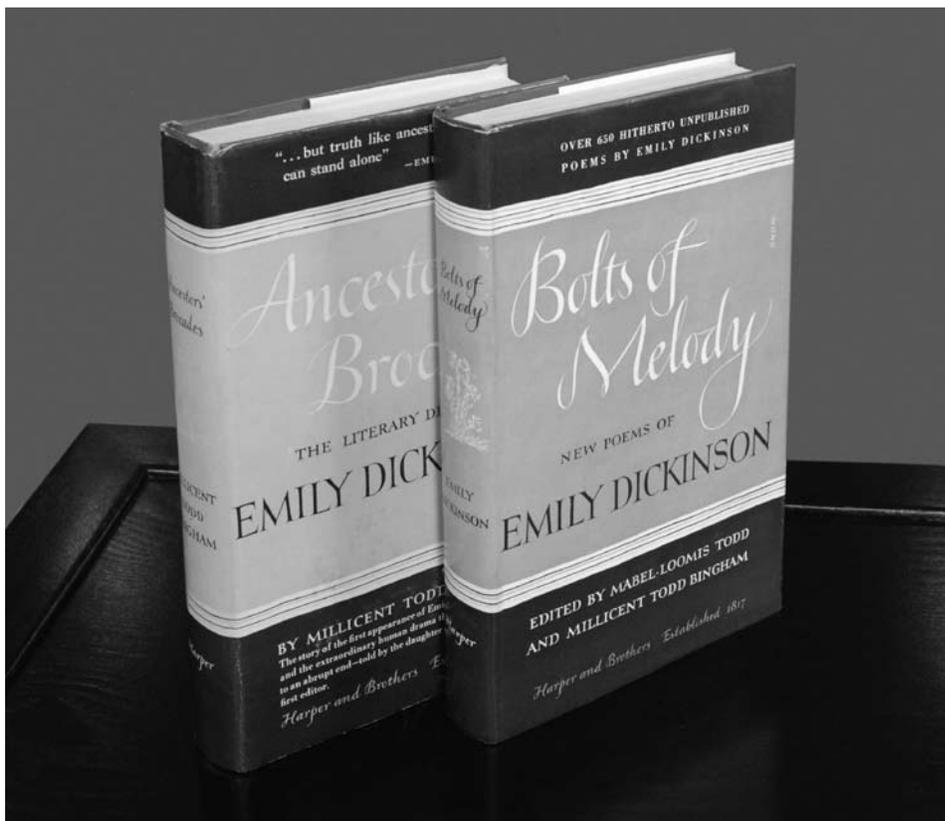
Adventure most unto itself
The soul condemned to be,
Attended by a single hound –
Its own identity.

The Single Hound was published by Little, Brown, and Company, successors to Roberts Brothers.⁸⁹ The first printing was 595 copies, bound in white cloth and boards, protected by a glassine dust jacket. My copy was in the collection of Arthur Swann, and later that of Bradley Martin.

A decade later, Martha Bianchi published another volume, entitled *The Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson*.⁹¹ It consisted of 105 pages of "life" written by Martha, and 269 pages of "letters" taken without acknowledgement or reference from Mabel Todd's earlier 1894 volume of letters. Mabel's daughter, Millicent Todd Bingham, later wryly noted that among the "misrepresentations" in the "life" was that Sue (Martha's mother) was "pictured as Emily's closest friend and adviser, on whose literary acumen she depended as long as she lived."⁹²

Five years later, Martha and a friend, Alfred Hampson, published a fifth batch of poems, entitled *Further Poems of Emily Dickinson*.⁹³ Hailed by the publisher as a great literary discovery, the title page says that these poems were "withheld from publication by her sister Lavinia." In fact, because of her ongoing feud with Sue, Lavinia had hidden them away before she died, and they were not discovered until Sue's daughter Martha found them some 30 years later. The book, containing 181 "further" poems, was published in an edition of 2000 copies, in dark gray-green cloth with a light yellow-brown dust jacket.⁹⁴

Then in 1935 came a sixth collection from Martha Bianchi and her friend Hampson –



In 1945, Mabel Todd's daughter Millicent, in two companion volumes, told the story of her mother's work as an editor, and also published a final collection of Emily's poems.

this time entitled *Unpublished Poems of Emily Dickinson*,⁹⁵ limited to 525 numbered copies.⁹⁶

Despite the fact that Mabel had now edited three volumes, and Sue's daughter Martha Bianchi had done another three, several hundred of Emily's poems remained unpublished. In her Introduction to *Bolts of Melody, New Poems of Emily Dickinson*,⁹⁷ Mabel's daughter Millicent tells how in 1929 her mother consented to open a chest that contained dairies, letters, and manuscripts – and, most important, the copies of Emily's poems – almost half of which had not previously appeared.⁹⁸ The copies were the original transcriptions made by Mabel 40 years earlier.

Using Mabel's transcriptions, Millicent prepared one more "final" volume of Emily's poems – entitled *Bolts of Melody, New Poems of Emily Dickinson*.⁹⁹ She credited her Mother by stating on the title page that these "new" poems had been "edited by Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham." How she got past the copyright problem is not clear. *Bolts* appeared April 4, 1945, and sold for \$3.00. Two further printings were required in 1945, and one in 1946.

This book virtually completed publication of Emily's poems.

Through the generosity of a private donor, rights to Emily's poems then passed to Harvard College, which published, in 1955, the definitive collection of 1,775 poems: *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, including variant readings critically compared with all known manuscripts, edited by Thomas H. Johnson (Belknap Press, Cambridge, 1955). Harvard also published Emily's letters, *The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, also edited by Thomas H. Johnson (Belknap Press, Cambridge, 1958). Almost a quarter century later, Harvard also published *The Manuscript Books of Emily Dickinson*, ed. R. W. Franklin (Belknap Press, Cambridge, 1981).

Emily was an extraordinarily intense and sensitive person, and writing must have helped her live in a world in which many of her neighbors bored her. She wrote, I think, to cope with her own isolation, rather than end it. She would surely have been flummoxed by the notion that her poetry might be published. Here is what she said on the subject:

See *EMILY DICKINSON*, page 12

Publication – is the Auction
Of the Mind of Man –
Poverty – be justifying
For so foul a thing

Possibly – but We – would rather
From Our Garret go
White – Unto the White Creator –
Than invest – Our Snow –

Thought belong to Him who gave it –
Then – to Him Who bear
Its Corporeal illustration – Sell
The Royal Air –

In the Parcel – Be the Merchant
Of the Heavenly Grace –
But reduce no Human Spirit
To Disgrace of Price

§§

All book photographs are of ones in the author's collection, photographed by Robert McCamant.

NOTES

- ¹ *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, Richard B. Sewall, New York, 1974. Vol. I, p. 7
- ² Two long biographies are Richard Sewall, *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, New York, Farrar Straus, 1974, and Cynthia G. Wolff, *Emily Dickinson*, Massachusetts, 1988. Also helpful is Thomas Johnson's shorter and less speculative *Emily Dickinson*, Cambridge, Knopf, 1955. Professor Johnson was the editor of the definitive Harvard editions of her verse and letters. The best bibliography is Joel Myerson, *Emily Dickinson, A Descriptive Bibliography*, Pittsburg, 1984.
- ³ Wolff, p. 38.
- ⁴ *Id.*, p. 44.
- ⁵ Johnson, p. 29.
- ⁶ Sewall, II, p. 326.
- ⁷ Wolff, p. 69.
- ⁸ Johnson, p. 29.
- ⁹ Wolff, p. 564.
- ¹⁰ Sewall, II, p. 337, 342, 395.

- ¹¹ Wolff, p. 100.
- ¹² Sewall, II, p. 365.
- ¹³ *Id.*, p. 360.
- ¹⁴ Johnson, p. 14.
- ¹⁵ Sewall, II, p. 415.
- ¹⁶ Johnson, p. 72.
- ¹⁷ Wolff, p. 492
- ¹⁸ Sewall, II, p. 416, 418.
- ¹⁹ Johnson, p. 38.
- ²⁰ *Id.*, p. 75.
- ²¹ *Id.*, p. 56.
- ²² *Id.*, p. 81.
- ²³ Sewall, II, p. 448.
- ²⁴ The debate over the identity of the addressee of the "Master" letters is summarized by Sewall, Vol. II, pp. 520-1.
- ²⁵ Johnson, p. 73-74.
- ²⁶ Wolff, p. 576.
- ²⁷ *Id.*, p. 255.
- ²⁸ Johnson, p. 103.
- ²⁹ Sewall, II, p. 550.
- ³⁰ Johnson, p. 107, 110.
- ³¹ *Id.*, p. 113-114.
- ³² *Id.*, p. 51, 127.
- ³³ Sewall, II, p. 642.
- ³⁴ Wolff, p. 402.
- ³⁵ *Id.*, p. 510.
- ³⁶ *Id.*, p. 535.
- ³⁷ Boston, 1878.
- ³⁸ Amherst, 1871, p. 71-72.
- ³⁹ Sewall, II, p. 421-422.
- ⁴⁰ Johnson, p. 70.
- ⁴¹ *Id.*, p. 48.
- ⁴² Boston, 1878.
- ⁴³ Wolff, p. 437.
- ⁴⁴ Johnson, p. 179.
- ⁴⁵ Sewall, II, p. 537.
- ⁴⁶ Johnson, p. 154.
- ⁴⁷ Harvard, 1955
- ⁴⁸ Bingham, *Ancestors' Brocades*, at 18.
- ⁴⁹ New York, 1945
- ⁵⁰ Bingham, p. 31, 34.
- ⁵¹ *Id.*, p. 39.
- ⁵² *Id.*, p. 51.
- ⁵³ *Id.*, p. 52.
- ⁵⁴ *Id.*, p. 59.
- ⁵⁵ *Id.*, p. 61.
- ⁵⁶ Myerson, p. 3.
- ⁵⁷ *Id.*, p. 73-75.

- ⁵⁸ Bingham, p. 96.
- ⁵⁹ Myerson, p. 5-8.
- ⁶⁰ Bingham, p. 103.
- ⁶¹ *Id.*, p. 84-85.
- ⁶² *Id.*, p. 115.
- ⁶³ *Id.*, p. 116.
- ⁶⁴ *Id.*, p. 118.
- ⁶⁵ *Id.*, p. 119.
- ⁶⁶ *Id.*, p. 173.
- ⁶⁷ *Id.*, p. 159.
- ⁶⁸ Myerson, p. 22-26.
- ⁶⁹ Bingham, p. 171.
- ⁷⁰ *Id.*, 174-177.
- ⁷¹ *Id.*, p. 207.
- ⁷² *Id.*, p. 211-213.
- ⁷³ *Id.*, p. 274.
- ⁷⁴ *Id.*, p. 276.
- ⁷⁵ Sewall, Vol. I, p. 176; see also Polly Longworth, *Austin and Mabel, The Amherst Affair & Love Letters of Austin Dickinson and Mabel Loomis Todd*, New York, Farrar Straus, 1984.
- ⁷⁶ Longworth, p. 120.
- ⁷⁷ Sewall, I, p. 188-89; Longworth, p. 111-113.
- ⁷⁸ Bingham, 288-293.
- ⁷⁹ Myerson, p. 33-34.
- ⁸⁰ Bingham, p. 318.
- ⁸¹ *Id.*, p. 299, 338.
- ⁸² *Id.*, p. 384-85.
- ⁸³ *Id.*, p. 400.
- ⁸⁴ Longworth, p. 401.
- ⁸⁵ Myerson, p. 45-46.
- ⁸⁶ Bingham, p. 345.
- ⁸⁷ The story of the lawsuit is told in Bingham, p. 349-375; and Longworth, p. 399-425.
- ⁸⁸ Bingham, p. 397.
- ⁸⁹ Boston, 1914.
- ⁹⁰ *Complete Poems*, Johnson, p. ix.
- ⁹¹ Boston, 1924.
- ⁹² Bingham, p. 380-304.
- ⁹³ Boston, 1929
- ⁹⁴ Myerson, p. 54.
- ⁹⁵ Boston, 1935.
- ⁹⁶ Myerson, p. 60-62.
- ⁹⁷ New York, 1945, p. vii-xii.
- ⁹⁸ Bingham, p. 398.
- ⁹⁹ New York, 1945.

Club Notes

Membership Report, September 2007

1. Newly elected members:

Gary T. Johnson became President of the Chicago History Museum in 2005 after a legal career which included partnerships at Jones Day and Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw. He holds an M.A. from Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, and degrees as well from Yale and Harvard. Gary lists his interests as simply "Chicago" and "history." Nominated by John Chalmers, seconded by R. Eden Martin.

Catherine Mouly is currently a

member of the Arts Club and was for many years a member of the University of Chicago Library Visiting Committee, of which she is now a Life member. Her areas of book collecting interest include poetry and she has a special interest in the writings of Edith Wharton. She also is interested in the "book as art" and collects the works of many of the fine presses and calligraphers. She also collects literary manuscripts and letters. Catherine is a graduate of Harvard/Ratcliffe; she received her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. She has lectured in Romance languages at the University of Chicago and has served as co-editor of the poetry section of the *Chicago Review*.

Nominated by R. Eden Martin, seconded by Steve Tomashefsky.

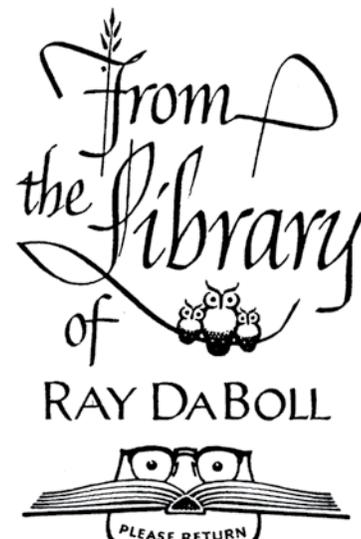
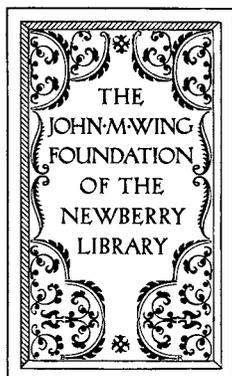
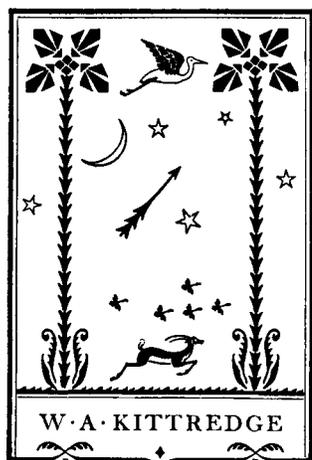
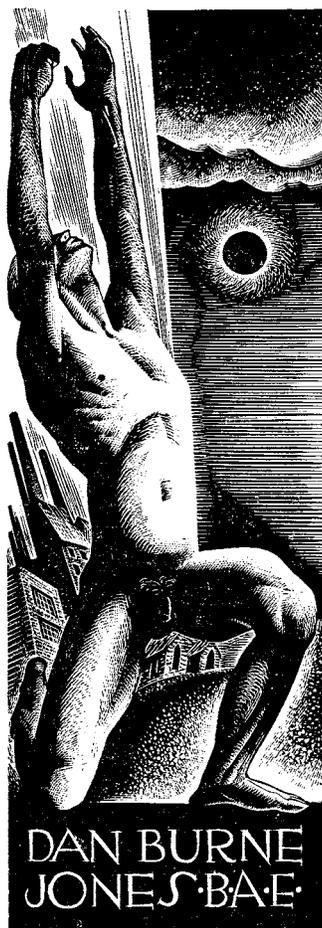
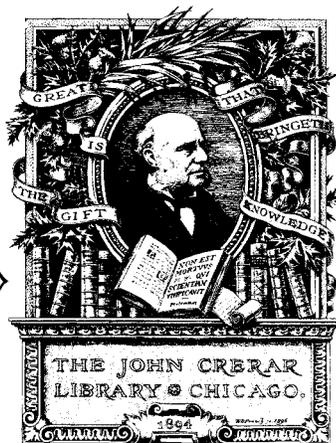
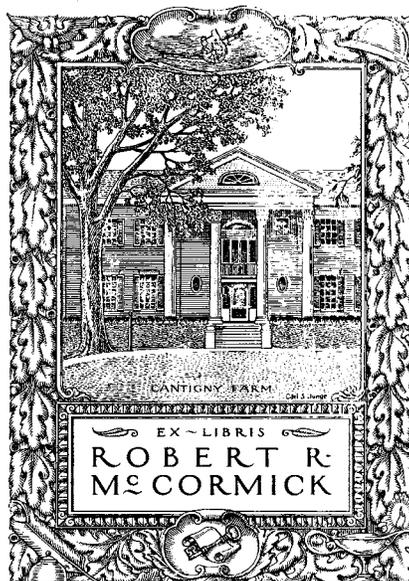
2. If you attended the September dinner meeting, you know that we will be leaving the Mid-Day Club by the end of the year. But there's still time to enjoy the glorious view. Why not consider inviting a guest or two for one of the forthcoming meetings? If you are hesitant, remember the option of having the Membership Committee send your friend(s) an invitational letter indicating that you will be attending and thought they might be interested. Their only cost will be that of the meal.

Dan "Skip" Landt, Membership Chair,
skiplandt@sbcglobal.net, 773-604-4115.

CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Persons interested in the history of "ex libris" or bookplates can get an intriguing and affordable introduction by consulting Fridolf Johnson's *A Treasury of Bookplates from the Renaissance to the Present*, if they buy the quarto volume issued in paperback by Dover. It has 761 illustrated bookplates. The plates are listed chronologically, and by the artist-designers. There are a surprising number of Chicagoans and Caxtonians listed. These are the ones I can identify: George A. Armour (1895), Beverly Chew (1895), John Crerar Library, John W. Farwell (designed by Edwin Davis French); Robert R. McCormick, Edmund H. Garrett (1895; designer of our logo), Dan Burne Jones (one designed by fellow Oak Parker Lynd Ward; another by Rockwell Kent), Chicago Latin School (also Rockwell Kent); Robert O. Ballou, Henry Sell, Frederic W. Goudy ('22), William A. Kittredge ('25) (by Vojtech Preissig); Alfred Hamill ('10) -thrice; W. A. Kittredge ('25) and the John M. Wing Foundation, both by Bruce Rogers ('26); University of Chicago Library, Abel E. Berland ('57), James Fuller Spoerri ('35) by James Hayes ('52); Fannie Corbett Junge by Carl S. Junge (another Oak Parker); Raymond Da Boll, Albert Kner ('49) -4 times, and at least one designed by Ralph Fletcher Seymour ('51).

Perhaps we could run reproductions of bookplates of any or all of our current membership. Send in your samples, via email to me (wynkendeworde@comcast.net), or if you have paper, to me in care of the Club office, 60 W. Walton, Chicago 60610. – *Wynken de Worde*



Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by John Blew

Most of the exhibits listed below are only part of Chicago's extraordinary and unprecedented Festival of Maps, in which 37 local institutions are mounting some 30 different map-related exhibitions at venues throughout the Chicago metropolitan area; a complete list of these exhibitions can be found at the Festival's website, www.festivalofmaps.org. (Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit)

"Maps: Finding Our Place in the World" (this is the centerpiece exhibit of the Festival of Maps and should not be missed; it consists of more than 100 of the world's greatest maps and many other cartographic objects drawn from the collections of major institutions and private individuals from around the world) at The Field Museum, 1400 South Lake Shore Drive (the Museum Campus), Chicago 312-665-7892 (2 November to 27 January 2008)

"Mapping Chicago: The Past and the Possible" (selected from the Museum's collections, the maps on display, including birds-eye views, plan views, renderings and satellite images, capture events, record the activities of Chicagoans and illustrate unique and selective views of Chicago at different points in history) at the Chicago History Museum, 1016 North Clark St., Chicago 312-642-4600 (closes 6 January 2008)

"Mapping Manifest Destiny: Chicago and the American West" (features more than 65 maps and views from the 16th through the 20th centuries, drawn from the Library's collections, which collectively examine the role of maps in envisioning the American West) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago 312-255-3700 (3 November to 16 February 2008)

"Under Study: Maps and Photographs of Chicago's Near West Side" (drawing on the Library's holdings, this exhibit follows the Near West Side as it changes from a 19th century port of entry neighborhood for waves of immigrants served by Jane Addam's Hull House settlement up to its present-day growth and development as a revitalized 21st century community) at the Richard J. Daley Library of the University of Illinois at Chicago, 801 South Morgan, Chicago 312-996-2742 (closes 31 March 2008)

"Mapping the Universe" (displays cosmological maps, celestial charts, atlases and other objects from the Adler's collections which present both historical and contemporary views of the constellations, Moon and cosmos and guide viewers to a richer understanding of the place of maps in the exploration of the Universe) at the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, 1300 South Lake Shore Drive (the Museum Campus), Chicago 312-322-0300 (9 November 2007 to 27 January 2008)

Finding Our Place in the World at the Field
CHINESE, 19TH CENTURY, COURTESY THE BRITISH LIBRARY



Mapping Manifest Destiny at the Newberry
YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK (1885) COURTESY OF THE NEWBERRY

"Rare Maps: Journeys of Plant Explorers" (features maps from the Garden's Rare Book Collection which illustrate the global travels of plant explorers) in the Lenhardt Library at the Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe 847-835-8202 (2 November to 10 February 2008)

"Ptolemy's Geography and Renaissance Mapmakers" (Claudius Ptolemy, the 2nd century CE Greek astronomer, is known as the father of modern geography; this exhibition features 37 original historic maps and texts drawn from the Library's collection of printed editions of Ptolemy's Geography which highlight Renaissance map printing techniques and illustrate both ancient and Renaissance world views and cartographic practices) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago 312-255-3700 (3 November to 16 February 2008)

"The Virtual Tourist In Renaissance Rome: Printing and Collecting the Speculum Romance Magnificante" (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 (closes 11 February 2008)

"The Capital of the 19th Century: Paris in Maps" (maps of Paris, drawn from the Institute's Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, highlight urban planning and architectural and artistic developments in the "capital of the 19th century") at the Ryerson and Burnham Libraries of the Art Institute of Chicago, 111 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago 312-443-3671 (closes 3 December 2007)

"Highlights from the Mary W. Runnells Rare Book Room" (over 30 stunning works, many never before seen by the public, have been chosen from The Field Museum Library's spectacular rare book collections to inaugurate the Museum's new T. Kimball and Nancy N. Brooker Gallery) in the Brooker Gallery, second floor at the north end of The Field Museum, 1400 South Lake Shore Drive (the Museum Campus), Chicago 312-665-7892 (closes 20 January 2008)

"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).

Caxtonians Collect: Stuart Miller

Thirty-fifth in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Stuart Miller lists three collecting interests: Edith Wharton, Chicago ephemera, and cooking ephemera. Believe it or not, he can even make a case for the three being related: “The central theme of Edith Wharton’s books is the clash of culture as ‘new people’ (with plenty of money but no ties to old elites and their values) came knocking at the doors of American high society, after the Civil War. Regional ephemera began about the same time, as a growing middle class found itself with time to travel, creating a demand for memorabilia that everyone could take home from their trips. And cooking ephemera – handouts from food processing companies with recipes promoting their products – made an appearance because the companies needed to generate demand. So, all three document the changes in American society.”

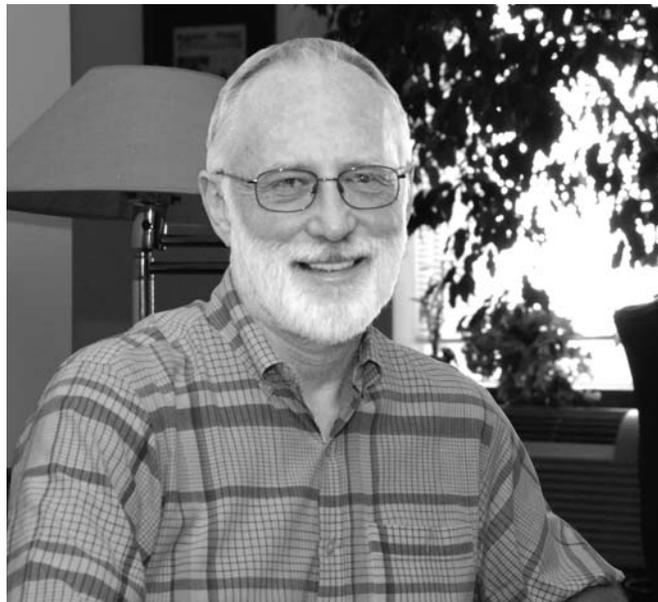
That is not to say that Miller started with his collecting interests systematically. “I really enjoy reading Edith Wharton, and I started before she was ‘rediscovered’ beginning in the 1970s. Back then I would run into first editions in used bookstores for \$10 to \$20, and collecting them made perfect sense. I can’t really remember why I started collecting Chicago ephemera. I guess it was just fun. I got into cooking ephemera for a practical reason: I was searching for the perfect banana cream pie recipe!”

Nowadays Miller seldom adds to his Wharton collection; prices have gotten out of his range. But he still enjoys augmenting the other two. Used bookstores and book fairs are a good source for Chicago items, while antique stores, shows and flea markets tend to be best for cooking – and of course the Internet is a source for both. “Cooking ephemera is quite an industry. I have five guides to collecting it and there may be more. One discusses cook books in the context of foodways and historical developments while the others are only interested in identification and prices.”

Miller hails from Indiana. He went to Wabash College for a BA, then came to the

University of Chicago for an MA in teaching. Two years in teaching convinced him that libraries were more to his taste, so he returned to the U of C for library school. Upon graduation, he worked 11 years as an information service provider for an association of tax assessors.

After the assessors, Miller went into library software. Since then, he has worked for several software firms and currently works as a library systems analyst for the University of Chicago Library. “I even survived a spectacular meltdown in 2001,”



Miller jokes. “The information technology consulting company I was working for was one of the more spectacular bankruptcies when the Internet bubble broke.”

At the University of Chicago, he has a variety of functions. He supervises some of the modules of the library software used there, acting as liaison between the software vendor and the users in the library. He works on specifications for changes that are required, participates in testing programs and documents implementation decisions.

One of the most interesting projects he has been working on is entirely different, however. The library has recently become a participant in the Google Book Project, a plan to create digital images of as many books as possible. “We’re benefiting from the experience Google built up working with the first libraries. They’ve settled on a straightforward scheme. Periodically Google delivers a semi-truck trailer with

special carts, which the library fills with books for scanning. The trailer goes off to Google, the books are scanned, and then the trailer returns and the books go back on the shelves. It’s essentially a matter of identifying which books are to be scanned, pulling them from the shelves, checking them out – and then checking them back in once they return. Then of course there’s creating the links from our catalog to the digital version. It sounds pretty simple but we are talking about 20,000 books per shipment. That certainly presents challenges,

both logistical and technological.”

The Google project brings many issues into focus. “Of course there are technology problems,” Miller says. “For example, technical standards for digital archival file formats are still evolving.” But the intellectual property issues are much more difficult to solve. “Google believes that any copyrighted work published before 1924 is now in the public domain and its full text can be made available digitally. For copyrighted works after 1924, Google takes the position that the ‘fair use’ doctrine permits them to scan in the text of entire books, so long

as only short excerpts are made available to users. Google (and some publishers) thinks that this can increase book sales. But some publishers think Google’s position violates U.S. copyright law, and they’re suing over it. It’s going to take a while before the smoke clears.”

Miller joined the Club in 2002, nominated by Alice Schreyer. He lives in Printer’s Row with his partner, Charles LaGrutta, who also works in library software. In the kitchen, baking is his favorite activity, but he admits to doing less of it these days than formerly. “If you bake it, you’re tempted to eat it,” he sighs. If planning to be stranded on a desert island, he’d take E. M. Delafield’s *Diaries* (the first was *Diary of a Provincial Lady*). “They’re funny no matter how many times you read them,” he says. “And I’d probably sneak in an Edith Wharton.”

§§

Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

November 9, 2007

Adam Muhlig

“My Strange Journey: Encounters With
20th Century Authors, Both Living and Dead”

Caxtonian Adam Muhlig, Director of the Fine Book and Manuscript Department at Leslie Hindman Auctioneers, will entertain the group with stories of 20th Century authors including Poet Laureate William Jay Smith, William Faulkner, Jack Kerouac and Elizabeth Spencer (*Light in the Piazza*). Adam grew up in an intense and zany, literary and musical household in Florence, South Carolina. In some cases he has come full circle: meeting Stevie Ray Vaughan as an 8 year old, he recently appraised a Vaughan musical archive. Very aware, as a child, of Ezra Pound (both as a poet and a political figure), he has appraised a Pound archive at the U of Chicago. Recently Adam spent a year traveling with Alan Tennant, as he searched for Peregrine Falcons. The resulting best-selling book, *On the Wing* (which Adam edited), is being made into a movie with Adam as consultant and Robert Redford in the cast.

Don't miss this presentation by an admitted bibliomaniac.

Dinner Program

November 14, 2007 (*note date change*)

Peter Barber

“A Passion for Maps: George III
and His Geographical Collections”

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.

George III and George Washington had a shared love of maps and it was through maps and views that George 'visited' his colonies and the rest of the world. George III began collecting maps even before ascending the throne in 1760 and this talk will show how his geographical collections expanded to tens of thousands of maps, charts and views and the purposes served by the collection before the bulk of it was presented to the British Museum by his son George IV in the course of the 1820s.

Beyond November...

DECEMBER LUNCHEON

Writer, scholar and raconteur Thomas O'Gorman returns to the Caxton Club at the luncheon on Friday, December 14. His topics include his new book, *End of Watch: Chicago Police Killed on the Line of Duty 1853-2006*, and other compelling subjects.

DECEMBER DINNER

The auction has been postponed until March in favor of a farewell-to-the-Midday program to be held December 19. Presenters include John Notz, Karen Skubish, and Dan Crawford, plus dinner meeting highlights assembled by Dorothy Sinson and Tom Joyce.

JANUARY LUNCHEON

On January 11, the Friday Luncheon will travel to the Adler Planetarium. Curators Marvin Bolt and Jodi Lacey will conduct a gallery tour of their outstanding exhibit, "Mapping the Universe."

JANUARY DINNER

On January 16 Will Noel, of the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, will talk on "The Archimedes Palimpsest" and the remarkable technology which has been devised to make it yield its secrets. Location to be announced.

Through the remainder of 2007, luncheon and dinner meetings will be held at 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.