CAXTONIAN

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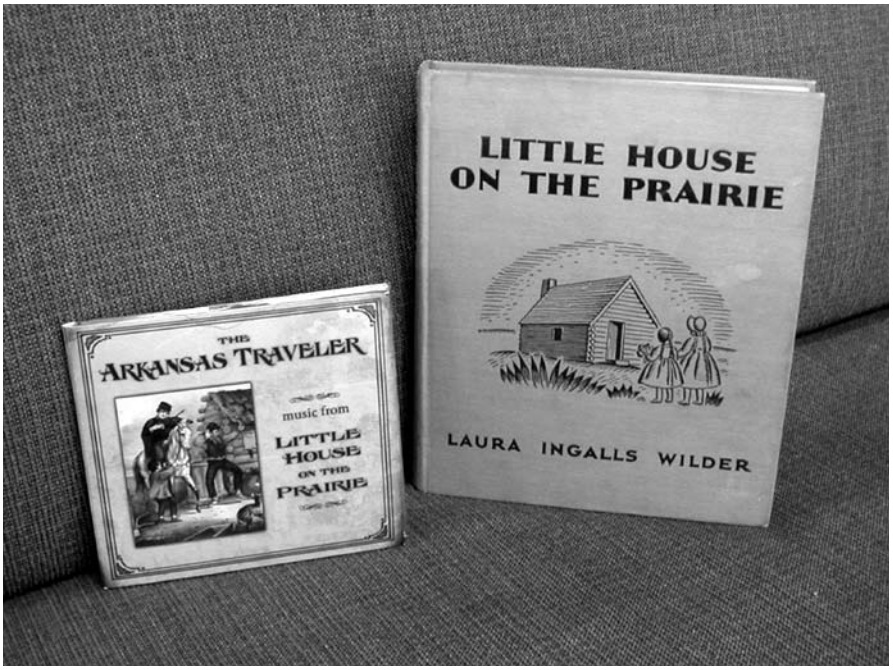
A Diamond Anniversary – With Music

Peggy Sullivan



An early edition of Little House on the Prairie *(right) with a CD containing recordings of songs mentioned in the book's text.*

Laura Ingalls Wilder's first book, *Little House In the Big Woods*, was published in 1932, so 2007 marks its seventy-fifth or diamond anniversary. Thinking of that anniversary and of all the landmark events that have occurred since then, I felt sure there would be appropriate celebrations. The publisher announced that a new edition of the "Laura series" would appear in September, with photographs used as illustrations because they would be more likely to appeal to children of the twenty-first century than the familiar Garth Williams illustrations.

Few people today remember the original illustrations by Helen Sewell. They always seemed just right to me – spare and simple, like Wilder's prose – so I was among those who lamented their loss in 1953 when Garth Williams became the illustrator of the series. Nevertheless, I learned to enjoy the softness of his drawings and the detail with which he enhanced the simple stories. And I believed that any publisher, such as Harper, which had been so loyal to the stories and the author for so long, would do well with a more contemporary kind of illustration.

But the awaited 2007 edition had only photographs on the cover and no illustrations throughout the text. Not much of a way to celebrate a major anniversary! The almost iconic Williams illustration of Laura looking rapturously at a doll in her arms can continue to stand for the series. Because the doll itself is not shown, someone who sees that picture may not realize that Charlotte was really a very simple rag doll with berry juice to mark her features and only Laura's love to make her beautiful.

I was three years old in 1932 when *Little House In the Big Woods* appeared, and I can scarcely believe that I did not encounter these books until I was a children's librarian in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1952-1953. At the Westport Branch Library, we had a wonderfully enthusiastic patron who arrived regularly every two weeks, returning a load of books in a bushel basket, with each of her children carrying one or two on their own, ones they could not part with until they themselves reached up and put them on the desk.

The children's room was on the second floor, and we could always hear the family coming, usually in the early evening, and see the children spilling across the floor like marbles when they arrived. The youngest, of course, headed for the picture books and began pulling them off joyfully, going quickly from one to the other, and the other children ranged through the fairy tales, the biographies, and the books we now call chapter books. Their mother moved among them, finding new titles, asking at the desk about old favorites of hers, gathering their choices together and sorting through their library cards so that each could go away with four books, and she would have a half dozen or so to read to them. They never seemed especially noisy, but the library did seem very quiet when they left. They were all fans of Laura Ingalls Wilder, and there would nearly always be one or two of her books among those they carried away. Their mother, Mrs. Williams herself, was as much a fan as they were, and told us about their plans to visit Wilder in Mansfield, Missouri. Every library visit was an adventure for them all, and their visit to Laura Ingalls Wilder was another major adventure.

Since then, I have visited the sites of the little house in the big woods in Pepin, Wisconsin, and also the one in Walnut Grove, Minnesota. Browsing through a jumble of household items, toys, and oddments near the site of the Ingalls' home in Walnut Grove, I could envision what it was like when, in *Little House On the Prairie*,

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LAURA INGALLS WILDER, *from page 1*

Pa came back from Independence, Kansas, with little black rubber combs for Mary and Laura, each comb rounded to fit a little girl's head, each with slits cut in it, a five-pointed star cut in the center, and a colored ribbon showing through the comb. Such treasures!

As others began to write about Laura Ingalls Wilder and her life, my own appreciation grew. When the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association established the Laura Ingalls Wilder Award for a contributor to children's literature whose body of work was comparable with hers, it was some compensation for the fact that she herself had never received a Newbery Award. The consistent quality of her books is impressive as the little family grows and ages and moves from place to place. There is a reality that could be recalled only with imagination. Donald Zochert, who wrote *Laura: the Life of Laura Ingalls Wilder* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1976), made me aware of Laura's own development; he depicted how, as the family traveled back from Indian Territory to the Big Woods in Wisconsin, her memory developed. As he described it:

> She was four years old and her eyes saw everything.... The deep mine of her memory began to fill – with words and images, with the scents and sounds and sights of pioneer America, with remembrances of tears and laughter, of bonfires and fiddle music. It built up bit by bit – a sound, a feeling, a hope that came true – until her memory was as full and rich as the pantry of a farmer's wife in good times. [p. 56]

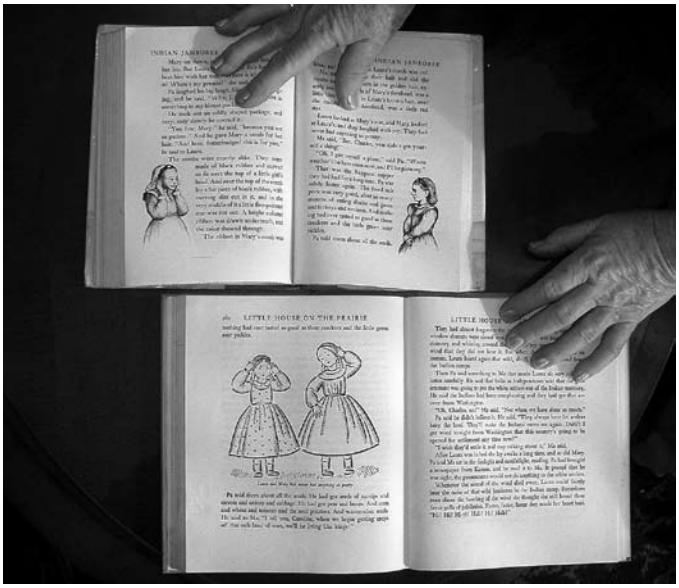
Her memory proved to be important as she recalled, many years later, the details and the feelings of her life as a child. Wilder began writing with some timidity. Her daughter, Rose Wilder Lane, was already a noted journalist and author when Laura herself began to write in longhand in those school tablets that have become legendary – yes, legendary, but very real.

Pa's fiddle was another very real, yet legendary part of the Ingalls' story. Charles Ingalls – Pa – always saw to it that it was packed in some safe place when they started out again for a new home, and he played that fiddle even before they settled again. As *Little House On the Prairie* ends, the family has stopped for the night in their covered wagon.

They are headed back to the Big Woods of Wisconsin, and they are not too sure what life will hold for them there, but they are together and safe. Pa picks up the fiddle and begins to play "The Battle Cry of Freedom," his voice "singing like a deep-toned bell." Laura is wide awake and feels ready to march and shout there in the middle of that empty prairie, but Ma sees her and tells Pa she'll never go to sleep to such music. His response is to switch to "The Gum Tree Canoe," and Laura goes to sleep with thoughts of drifting over the prairie grasses in that canoe. Music was essential to the Ingalls family, even when they had to stretch their food supplies, move from place to place, and struggle with illness and accidents. When I read that a musicologist had collected all the songs mentioned in *Little House On the Prairie* and produced them on a compact disc, I knew I had to have it. Just like many a library patron, I had lost the paper on which I had noted the name of the musicologist and the title of the recording. I went from one record store to another, thinking perhaps that record sections of book stores might be more likely to have it. The sales personnel sounded interested, but their computer listings turned up no fiddle titles that sounded right, no mention of a Charles Ingalls, nothing about *Little House On the Prairie*. Eventually, I found it: *The Arkansas Traveler: Music From Little House On the Prairie* (Pa's Fiddle Recordings, LLC; P.O. Box 40269; Nashville TN 37204.)

The musicologist whom I had read about is Dale Cockrell, a professor at Vanderbilt University, who has set out to produce ten recordings about the music in Wilder's books. *The Arkansas Traveler* is the second; the first appeared in 2005,

See **LAURA INGALLS WILDER,** *page 6*



The same illustration as handled by Helen Sewell (below) and Garth Williams

An embarrassment of riches in our nation's capital

FABS visits Washington, D.C.

Bernie Rost

Leslie K. Overstreet commenting on her exhibit

The tour began with registration in the lobby of the Hotel Washington on a sunny Wednesday morning, October 10. The large, ornate space has a mosaic tile floor and is lighted with elaborate chandeliers. The list of registrants totaled 84. Book fans came from 17 states and DC. The buses were ready to leave for the first tours at 2 pm. I was fortunate to be on the one headed for the Special Collections Division at Georgetown University library.

This division includes, as described on the library's web site, an "Americana-rich library" acquired in 1892 and a classical and scientific library acquired in 1844. Since 1970, when the division was formed, acquisitions include the former rare book collection of the University of Detroit, the Bowen Collection (intelligence, spying, and covert activities, in all more than 20,000 volumes) and a variety of literary collections. Nicholas Sheets, the Manuscripts Librarian, prepared an exhibition from the library and from his personal collection.

From the library we saw the printer's copy of Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer manuscript, one of six known copies of George Washington's Thanksgiving proclamation, and a selection of papers from Richard M. Helms, a former CIA director. We were shown all the editions of the English poet Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the "Rubiyait of Omar Khayyam" and inscribed and presentation copies. (I later learned that Fitzgerald's translation is not a serious one and includes many of his own ideas, following a practice of using Oriental works for inspiration.) There were many more items displayed.

The last stop of the day was the home of Stanley M. Sherman, an architect, and Mrs. Sherman. Mr. Sherman is a bookbinder with his workshop in his home. I have never seen a more organized and well-equipped shop. His bindings are architectural, and visually expressed his interpretation of a book's content.

Our schedule for Thursday called for one hour in the Rosenwald room and the reading room of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress. Vaults adjoining the reading room, we were told, contain 800,000 items. Mark Dimunation, Chief of the Division, gave us a handout which described the 61 items exhibited in the two rooms we were to see. The Chicago group agreed to each select one item as a favorite, but I settled on two American items (here quoted from the handout):

> The Earlist City View in North America. "This hand colored engraving shows the Spanish town of St. Augustine, Florida under siege from the naval forces of Sir Francis Drake in 1586. It is the earliest view of any city in what is now the United States."

> Lincoln's First Romance. "With less than a year of formal schooling, Americans have often wondered how Abraham Lincoln authored such masterpieces as the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural Address. Perhaps the answer can be found in Samuel Kirkham's *Grammar* (1828) – the earliest extant book known to have been in Lincoln's possession....Lincoln rigorously studied the volume for many weeks – later passing it on to his sweetheart Anne Rutledge, who died shortly after. The inscription on the title page 'Anne M. Rutledge is now learning grammar' is in Lincoln's hand."

For the second hour in the Library of Congress we had a choice of one of the following: prints and photography, geography and maps, conservation lab, and exhibits in the Great Hall. I went to see prints and photography. The curator and her assistants had laid out a variety of items. Some were surprisingly familiar to me considering the immense archive the curator had to choose from. For example – "Lynd Ward ,Selected wood engravings from the graphic novel *Prelude to a Million Years*." I have a number of Lynd Ward items in my collection. Next, "Curb Service; Chicago Public Library, 1936-1941, Color silkscreen poster." I was very familiar with the bookmobile when in grammar school, which this WPA poster promotes.

All the groups were to assemble for a substantial lunch in the Montpelier room. We had perhaps stretched the viewing time beyond the two hours. The prints and photography curator suggested I come back, get a reader's card, then look at leisure.

Our next stop was the Folger Shakespeare Library. The impressive white marble structure is decorated with Shakespeare quotations and has art deco details.

See **FABS VISITS WASHINGTON**, *page 4*

FABS VISITS WASHINGTON, *from page 3*

The interior is designed in a Tudor style. Henry and Emily Folger established the library in 1932 as a gift to the American people. The ashes of both Folgers are interred behind a memorial plaque in the library. We all assembled in the Elizabethan theater that was in the midst of a play rehearsal. We left in groups of 20 to tour the library.

My group began in the Great Hall to view the current exhibition, "Marketing Shakespeare, the Boydell Gallery, (1789–1805 and Beyond)." John Boydell was a publisher, politician, and print seller. He produced an edition of Shakespeare's plays with illustrations from paintings of scenes commissioned from well known artists of the time. Engravings were made from the paintings. His gallery exhibited the paintings that by 1802 numbered 150. The gallery served to promote the sale of the illustrated book.

Our next stop was the 131-foot Old Reading Room. It was designed by the Folgers to resemble the great hall of an Elizabethan house. It is a breathtaking space with carved oak paneling, a high trussed roof and a large fireplace. On the east end hang portraits of the Folgers. On the west end is a large stained glass window depicting the seven ages of man from Jaques' speech in *As You Like It*. This room is open to the public only once a year during the Shakespeare birthday celebration in April.

We moved from here to the Founders' Room. This was originally a private office space for the Folgers. A display of ten items was on the table. One was a facsimile of "The Trevelyon Miscellany of 1608," This is a stunning copy edited by the Folger and distributed by the University of Washington press. Also displayed was Cicero's "Commentu…" dated 1502, a copy inscribed by the young Henry VIII with "This was my book."

After a visit to the Conservation Lab we joined the others in the Great Hall for a high tea. We learned that afternoon tea every afternoon is a decades-old tradition for visiting scholars and staff.

The library of the US Naval Observatory was my destination Friday morning. The USNO provides Precise Time and Time Interval, Earth Orientation, and astronomical information. The library building was designed by Richard Hunt in 1893. The rotunda room was not meant to house a telescope. There are approximately 80,000 volumes in the collection. The library has 800 pre-19th-Century books including works by Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton, some of which were on exhibit.

Stanley M Sherman, bookbinder with Mrs. Sherman.

A last minute addition to the itinerary was a visit to the White House on Friday afternoon. The only visits to the White House now have to be arranged in advance through a representative. Ours was arranged by Laura Bush. Only 22 could go on the tour. Four Caxtonians made the list. We were met at the gate after clearing security by William Gallman, the White House curator. He told us we could walk in the rooms, sit on the chairs and take pictures. Before 1961, books in the library were available to guests to read and take with them if they wished. "In 1961 a committee was appointed to select works for the library that are representative of a full spectrum of American thought and tradition." The president and Mrs. Bush were away, so the house was quiet. It was thrilling to go from room to room with a guide who could describe every item and speak of the history that occurred there.

Saturday morning the FABS Symposium was held in the Library of Congress. Mark Dimunation, Chief of the LC's Rare Books and Special Collections Division, spoke on "Keeping Special Collections Special in the 21th Century." An interesting comment he made was that the L.C. periodically takes and saves a "snapshot of the entire internet." How this will be accessed is still to be decided. Kraig Adler, Professor of Biology at Cornell, spoke on the topic "For Systematic Biologists: Only the Real Book Will Do." Terry Belanger of the Rare Book School spoke about "Lucile Who? 19th Century Books and 20th Century Collectors." Robert H. Jackson, Chairman of FABS, spoke on the question "Can the Book Survive the Information Revolution?"

Saturday night we all enjoyed the banquet at the Cosmos Club. This Club was incorporated in 1878 by men distinguished in science, literature, and the arts. In 1988 it voted to allow women to become members, thanks to Sandra Day O'Conner, Supreme Court Justice.

On Sunday morning those who stayed traveled to Anderson House, a gilded-age residence completed in 1905. It is the home of The Society of The Cincinnati. This is one organization I had never heard of before. It was founded at the close of the revolutionary war by the officers of the Continental army and navy and their French counterparts. George Washington was its first president. The library contains several collections, one of which is the Art of War Collection. We saw texts that the revolutionary war officers studied because they did not have formal training. Letters from George Washington when he was General were displayed.

The tour ended on Sunday afternoon after I and others sat on the porch of Mt. Vernon overlooking the Potomac.

Leslie K. Overstreet is chair of the Washington Rare Book Group. She heads the Smithsonian's new Cullman Library of Natural History. She greeted us at registration, she and her colleagues guided us to and from all the events, she moderated the symposium, and she hosted a group at the natural history museum. Many thanks, Leslie.

In preparing this account I relied on the extensive web sites of the institutions we visited. In so doing I noticed that the Washington Rare Book Group's Executive Committee includes the position of Wine Steward. We did enjoy the wine at all the receptions.

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A Special Visit to the Library of Congress

Junie Sinson

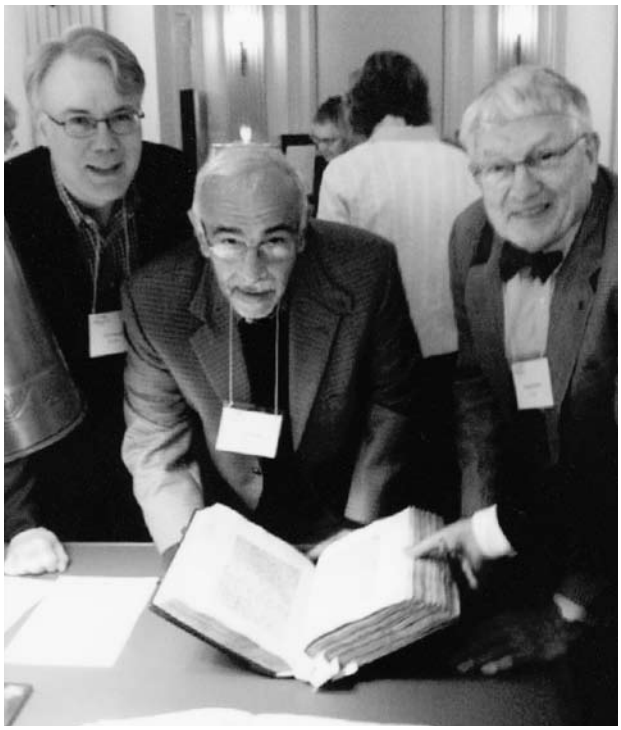
The title "Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies" is hardly a household name known to the average Chicagoan. Unless abbreviated as FABS, it might not be identifiable to the average Caxtonian.

It was with slight knowledge of the organization that I decided to attend the 2007 FABS Symposium in Washington, D.C. Of special attraction was the planned visit to the Rare Book and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress.

Because we came to the Library of Congress by car, our vehicle had to meet the approval of bomb experts, sniffing attack dogs and very serious looking guards. But soon we were being escorted to an elevator that delivered us to the Rare Book and Special Collections Division. There, any apprehension was quickly relieved when we exited the elevators and were greeted by Mark Dimunation, the Chief of the Rare Book and Special Collections Division.

After welcoming us, he advised us that he had selected more than sixty of his best and favorite items and had placed them on display for viewing. He reminded us that we were in "our library" and they were "our books" he was offering for examination. He also emphasized that it was a public library accessible to any individual over the age of 18. To register and use the Library, a Caxtonian would need only to arrive at the facility with a photo I.D. and request that a book be paged for examination and study.

The photo accompanying this report shows Dan Hayman, Hayward Blake and me joyously examining one of the Library's finest William Caxton volumes. It consists of six distinct works in four separate editions brought together into a single volume. Contained in the volume are: (1) *Mirror of the World*, Caxton 1481; (2) *The Dictes and Sayings of the Philosophers*, Caxton, 1477 (The 2nd edition of Caxton's first book printed in England); (3) Cicero, *De Senectute*; (4) Cicero, *De Amicitia*, English; (5) *Declamation of Noblesse*, Caxton 1484; and (6) *Cordyale or, the four Last Things*, Caxton 1479. This volume is of special interest to our Club. Two of the works were translated for William Caxton by his patron,



Anthony Lord Rivers from Jean Mielot's French version of *De Quator novissimis* by Denis le Chartreaux. His descendent, the internationally known genealogist Anthony Hoskins, spoke about his famous relative, ("16 x great" grandfather), at our January, 1997 dinner meeting. [His speech is available on DVD.] This particular volume is one of more than a dozen Caxton volumes from the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection. The Library of Congress has many additional Caxton printings.

The following are additional examples of representative books in the Library:

An originally bound 12th century white deerskin binding over boards of Nick-leather of *Espositio Mistica Super Exodum*. We also saw an Italian manuscript contained in Platinas' *De honesta voluptate* (1475) which is considered to be the first printed cook book.

Additionally, we examined William Blake's *The Book of Urizen*, 1794. It is one of seven known copies of the book powerfully painted in bright watercolors containing added gold.

Of particular interest to me was Samuel Kirkham's *Grammar* (1828), which Abraham Lincoln purchased for his own use. After having seriously studied the book, at the age of 21, he passed it on to his sweetheart, Ann Rutledge, who died soon thereafter. The title page, in Lincoln's hand, reads: "Ann M. Rutledge is now learning grammar."

In 1872, Susan B. Anthony was tried for voting illegally. The Library of Congress possesses and displays her annotated copy of the printed trial manuscript, also available for study.

An interesting and moving item was a 1913 French edition of Kipling's *Kim* with a bullet hole three-quarters of the way through the book! Next to the book was a letter written after the war by Kipling to the very young son of the soldier whose life had been spared. In the letter, Kipling gave advice about it being the kind of book one should always carry in one's breast pocket. He then tenderly expressed hope that, under the circumstances, the child could one day come to consider him a "kind of ancestor."

Lastly and also of special interest to Caxtonians is Michael Karasik's book, *The Board of Honor*. It is a series of his portraits that include representations of Joseph Stalin, Leonid Brezhnev and Boris Pasternak. Michael Karasik is an internationally renowned Russian artist. He is remembered by Caxtonians for his spirited address to our Club in November, 1997. [His address is also included in the Club's DVD collection.]

Although the formal name of FABS is somewhat intimidating, their annual conference and symposium is simply an opportunity for both scholarship and fun. In 2008, the FABS Symposium will be held in Providence, Rhode Island. Although this year's conference had over eighty participants, the 2008 conference will be limited to 45 attendees. Information is in the issue of the FABS newsletter distributed with the November *Caxtonian*.

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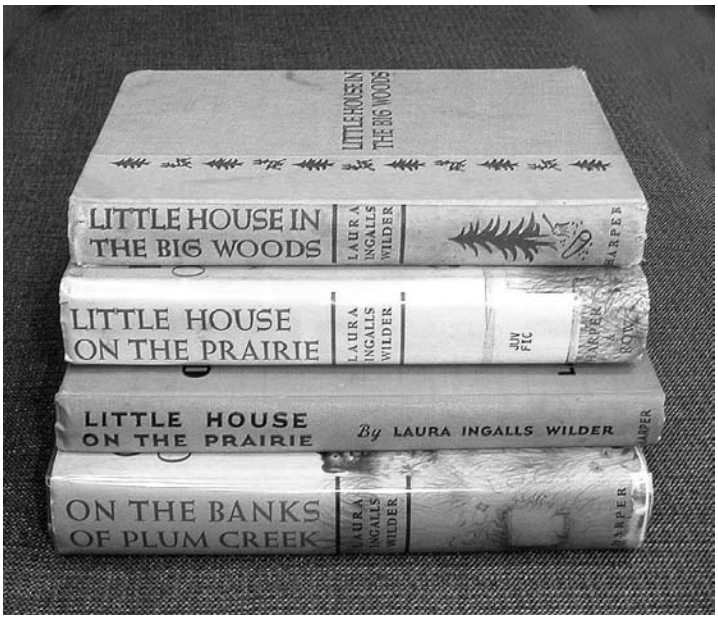
Photograph by Patricia Pistner.



LAURA INGALLS WILDER, *from page 2*

Happy Land: Musical Tribute To Laura Ingalls Wilder. At the Pa's Fiddle website (pasfiddle.com), Cockrell explains how he has tried to keep the spirit of the old songs, the simplicity of the music, while still making them pleasurable for adults and children today, who often have quite sophisticated tastes and who are accustomed to the best in musical recordings. There are eighteen pieces of music on this compact disc, some instrumental only.

When I had heard that 2007 was this major anniversary year, I had thought there would be celebrations. Libraries might have Laura-look-alike contests. The publisher might ask people to write about their favorite event in the books. Schools might declare Laura Ingalls Wilder Days. As far as I know, none of that has happened, so I decided to stage my own anniversary party, just for me. I reread *Little House On the Prairie* and I listened to the recording. I went back and forth between the two, realizing anew how much music there is in the book. Sometimes, Pa plays quietly, almost to himself, after the little girls are in bed, but there is one magical night when Mr. Edwards, a neighbor, stays for dinner after putting the finishing touches to the Ingalls' new house. Pa fiddles and Mr. Edwards dances "like a jumping-jack in the moonlight," and Ma and the girls clap their hands and tap their feet and when Mr. Edwards finally has to head home, he says, "Play, Ingalls!… Play me down the road!" Pa plays the lively "Old Dan Tucker" and Mr. Edwards sings as he goes. Then, in the quiet, a nightingale sings, and Pa replies softly on the fiddle with the same tune. And the nightingale sings right along with the fiddle. There is nothing comparable to that on the compact disc, but the rousing, funny lyrics of "Old Dan Tucker" are there, along with many more.

I thought perhaps I might have a glass of champagne and a slice of cake for my celebration, but it didn't seem right somehow. The Ingalls family treasured sugar and rarely had white sugar or white flour. They all worked long, hard days and often met disappointment, even disaster, like the time that prairie fire nearly destroyed their home. Music was their celebration, their elegance, their luxury. And fortunately, the music is with us once again. It says, "Happy anniversary – and many more!"

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Photos by Bernie Rost of books from the Chicago Public Library and the collection of Karen Skubish.

Club Notes

Membership Report, October 2007

1. Newly elected members:

Jon Lellenberg, a long time devotee of Arthur Conan Doyle, has relocated in Chicago after retiring from the Department of Defense. Jon has edited or authored several books related to Doyle, including collections of stories honoring his works and archival histories of the Baker Street Irregulars. His new book, *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters*, is an annotated collection of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's previously unpublished private correspondence, including many letters from Doyle to his mother. Lellenberg is the agent for administering the remaining American rights to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's works and related rights to the Sherlock Holmes character. Nominated by Fred Kittle, seconded by Dorothy Sinson.

Susan Jewel grew up in a family devoted to books; her mother was a professor of English and her father a mathematician who devoted his spare time to a fascination with Arthur Conan Doyle. Susan has pursued her own fascination with Doyle along with a companion interest in P.G. Wodehouse, through her college and professional school years, a successful career in law, and raising a family. She is a member of the Baker Street Irregulars and the founder of the Chicago chapter of the P.G. Wodehouse Society. Nominated by Ann Kittle, seconded by Dorothy Sinson.

Debra Mitts-Smith recently completed her graduate work at the University of Illinois. Her award-winning dissertation deals with the visual image of the wolf in children's books spanning from early print to the present. For her research, she consulted western European images and texts in English, French, German and Italian, and has attended the University of Virginia's Rare Book School concentrating on illustration. Debra is currently on the faculty of Dominican University as Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Her areas of interest include children's literature, the history of the book, and visual images as text. Nominated by Don Krummel, seconded by Margaret Oellrich.

2. If you have friends with interests related to those of the Club, consider sending them a DVD of one or more of our talks – a unique holiday gift! Dorothy Sinson has led a team of volunteers creating these disks from videos of past luncheon and dinner meetings. While the collection is not complete, she has a good selection from which to choose.

As usual, I stand ready to send a membership brochure to candidates members suggest.

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

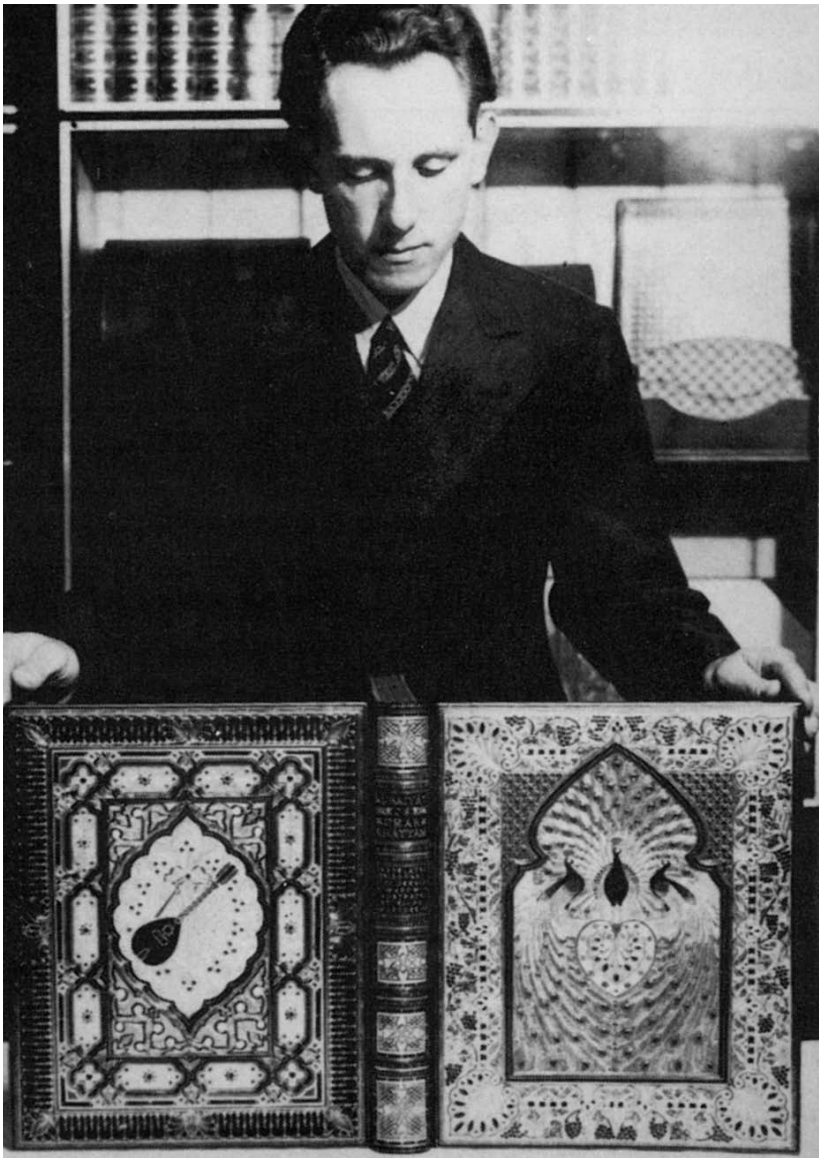
A copy sank with the *Titanic*, another was charred in the war – but one lives on at the British Library

Binding The Great Omar

Tom Joyce

Ken Grabowski, master bookbinder for The Field Museum through the past 30 years or so, has been working on a selective bibliography of bookbinding articles in periodicals and other stray places. I wonder if he saw the recent note in the Newberry Library's quarterly report that referred to the lost masterpiece of 20th Century bookbinding known as "The Great Omar?" Actually, the Newberry notes at best told only half of the story. I recently acquired from Ray Epstein ('63) some copies of "Antiquarian Book Monthly Review" which date from the 20th century – 1981 more precisely – that remind us that every book has at least one tale to tell, sometimes more.

I remember seeing copies of both states of Elihu Vedder's *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* at the bookshop of J & S Graphics back in the mid-1970s. The owner, Lawrence Kunetka, had both the large quarto, measuring 16 inches by 13 inches, and the squarish octavo. I have not seen another such paired set since.



Stanley Bray and the second OMAR, before charring, from the July 1981 Antiquarian Book Monthly Review.

The binding for a copy of the large quarto *Omar* was meticulously designed by Francis Sangorski, the senior master craftsman of the famous Sangorski & Sutcliffe bindery in London. Sangorski had uncommon talents as a binder and he applied everything he knew to create the "Peacock" design for *Omar,* which he then directed his master craftsment of S&S to execute. "It was painstakingly bound… in tissue green morocco, with thousands of leather inlays, set with no fewer than 1,500 precious and semi-precious gems."

"Sangorski's ambition was to create the most brilliantly beautiful binding ever made for the great Vedder *Omar Khayyam*, partly because of its exotic subject matter and partly because of its size and shape, crown quarto, adaptable to his imaginative ideas."[1] He found a patron for such a masterpiece when John Harrison Stonehouse of Henry Sotheran, Ltd., engaged him to create "the greatest of modern bindings ever made, *with no regard to cost* [emphasis added]."[2]

The challenge became a passionate obsession. "The binding and its inclusions took two years of work, both day and night. He made six separate designs, two each for the outside covers, the doublures, and the flyleaves. The front cover was covered with the three peacocks traced in gold, the eyes of the feathers set with 97 topazes, especially cut to the correct shape of the eye, the birds' crests inlaid with 18 turquoises. Rubies were inset to form the eye, the tracery of feathers outlining the heart. The border and corner pieces were set with 289 garnets, turquoises, and olivines. In the centre was inset a model of a Persian mandolin, carved from mahogany and inlaid with silver, satinwood, and ebony."

On the front doublure a "serpent with ivory teeth and an emerald eye was entwined in an apple tree, the sun in solid gold glinting through the foliage, the background of gold dots. The back doublure was intended to suggest Death, in the sunk panel an ivory skull, surrounded with the design based on the poppy, floral symbol of death. The front flyleaf was of morocco with inlaid strap work at the border and an inlaid rose in the corners, to carry out the implication of Life at the beginning. The back flyleaf of finest leather and gold was similar, but corner designs were the treatment of the deadly nightshade, the taste of Death."

"The Great Omar" was proclaimed a national treasure, and was placed on exhibit at the time King George V was crowned. Sent to America for display, it was stopped by American customs officers and

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GREAT OMAR, *from page 7*

blocked as a modern book, despite its 19th century origin. Back in England once more, the work was sold by Sotheby's, yielding less than half its value (£405 vs. £1000), attributed to the economic downturn in a national coal strike. Then, sent on a return trip to America, it travelled regally and safeguarded aboard the mighty S. S. *Titanic*, and sank with it on April 14, 1912. In a great irony, Francis Longinus Sangorski himself drowned while bathing at Selsey Bill about six weeks later.[3]

Stanley Bray and the second OMAR, after charring. Bray sent the photo along with a letter to the editor to the ABMR after they ran the story on the binding.

But, still the dream for "The Great Omar" inspired Stanley Bray to attempt to re-create the masterwork. Bray was the nephew of George Sutcliffe, Sangorski's partner, and Bray had apprenticed into the craft when he reached 16 years old. Contrary to the practice of the day, Bray was trained in both of the arts of forwarding and gold finishing, making him singularly well-suited to personally craft a replica of Sangorski's dream. Having discovered Sangorski's original designs and tracings in 1932, where Sutcliffe had cached them away, Bray began buying the kinds of gemstones Sangorski had used in his binding. When he obtained a large quarto copy of Vedder's *Omar,* Bray exhibited the same single-minded devotion to recreating the binding.

Through the ensuing seven years, in his "spare time," Bray employed "over 5,000 hours of tooling and tracing in gold leaf. He encrusted the front cover and back with 1,051 precious and semi-precious jewels, rubies, emeralds, pearls, amethysts, olivines, and others, as used in the original binding. He put his fortune and his life into it. There were more than 5,000 separate pieces of leather of different colours. He worked only in the finest morocco and used 100 square feet of 18 carat gold leaf."

After the completion of the work in 1939, Bray followed the advice of members of Parliament who insisted that this treasure be saved. Accordingly,

> Bray had the illustrious book put into a leather-covered case of wood, lined with metal. The terrible days of the bombings began, and the danger to the treasure was too great. The encased book was stored deep in the underground vaults of the City of London, in Fore Street off the City Road.
>
> The area was devastated by German bombs in 1941. But the 'Omar' buried deep within the City was considered safe. When the top rubble was cleared away, and the vaults opened, Bray was called to examine the contents of the metal case, preserved for posterity.
>
> He found the small casket perfectly whole, unscathed. He found the velvet cover unharmed. Inside the velvet was discovered the cruel fate of the second 'Great Omar'. As if under a curse, it was completely destroyed. The fine, tooled leathers were crumbs, disintegrated in the heat of the blast.[4]

Another observer noted, rather, that the pages of Omar the 2d were only "a little singed," but that the velvet lining of the chest had fused with the leather disastrously from the intense heat.[5] *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

Stanley Bray reported that the gemstones had survived their ordeal quite well except for the turquoise, which had turned black. In fact, he began a third attempt at "The Great Omar," cutting the first board for the cover before finally abandoning the project. Still he was haunted by the great poet's stanza that reads, "The Worldly Hope men set their hearts upon, turns ashes – or it prospers; and anon, like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face, Lighting a little hour or two – is gone."

Nonetheless, passion and pride can be quite powerful forces. Bray's 1981 "Letter to the Editor" makes no reference to the fact that he did continue working on a replacement binding – the third – which occupied about 4000 hours of his spare time over forty years. Bray's final attempt used 5000 pieces of inlaid leather, ivory, silver, and ebony; 600 sheets of gold leaf; 1,052 garnets, turquoises, topazes, olivines, and an emerald.

Bray's widow and family donated the book, his bookbinding tools, and the designs to The British Library in 2004, and the work can now been seen and enjoyed by anyone there. (It can also be viewed on the web at the British Library's Bookbinding Database [Shelfmark c188c27], but the images are copyrighted.)

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Note: Rob Shepherd combined the two legendary firms of Sangorski & Sutcliffe's with Zaehnsdorfs in 1998 as Shepherd's Bookbinders (now again operating under the name, Sangorski & Sutcliffe. 76 Rochester Row, obtaining thereby their archives, including a surviving photograph of Sangorski's original binding. This has been digitally enhanced, colored, sized, and produced as a poster, which may be obtainable from that firm. See photos and read more history at http://bookbinding.co.uk/History.htm

NOTES

[1, 2, 3] Reeves, Ann C. "The Great Omar", in *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review,* issue 87, July, 1981, pp. 268-269.

[4] Bray, Stanley. "The Great Omar", in *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*, issue 89, September, 1981, pp. 350-351. Letter to the Editor.

[5] Elkind, Arnold. "The Great Omar", in *Antiquarian Book Monthly Review*, issue 89, September, 1981, pp. 351. Letter to the Editor.

See also Stonehouse, John Harrison. The Story of the Great Omar, The Fountain Press: London, 1933;

Shepherd, Rob. Lost on the Titanic. London : Shepherds Sangorski & Sutcliffe and Zaehnsdorf, 2001. This is obtainable for £85 directly from S&S, and from the website above.

Attend this spring, and help the Council decide on our future venue

With the Mid-Day Club's closing, we will be meeting at a variety of locations from January-June 2008 to explore which of them is best suited to be our next long-term home. The dates, locations, and other pertinent information are all in the chart below. We are not moving by choice, but since we must, this is an excellent opportunity to survey our options and decide what best fits our members' needs.

PLEASE HELP US by attending as many dinners and lunches as you can and then giving us your opinions on where we should sign up for the long term. Factors you may wish to consider are:

- Location
- Quality and comfort of facilities
- Access to parking
- Access to public transportation and train stations
- Quality of food and service
- Cost of drinks
- Cost of food
- Desirability of having dinners and lunches at the same location
- Format of the meetings

Send your comments to me by e-mail at stomashefsky@jenner.com or by U.S. mail to The Caxton Club, 60 W. Walton St., Chicago, IL 60610.

Thank you,
Steve Tomashefsky

Caxton Club Spring Venues, 2008

DINNERS

Date	Location	Address	Food Cost, inclusive	Parking	Public Transportation
Jan. 16	The Cliff Dwellers	200 S. Michigan, 22d floor; sign in at desk	$48	Underground garage on Michigan	All downtown bus lines and rail routes
Feb. 20	Union League Club	65 W. Jackson Blvd. Main Lounge, 2nd floor	$48; future will be $58	Garage to the south on Federal; valet on Federal	All downtown bus lines and rail routes
Mar. 19	Newberry Library	60 W. Walton St.; Ruggles Hall	$48	In lot on Oak or validated at garage on Clark & Chestnut	#22 and #36 buses
Apr. 16	Woman's Athletic Club	600 N. Michigan, enter on Ontario; 7th floor	$53	Garages in area	North Michigan Ave. buses
May. 21	Petterino's	150 N. Dearborn, NW corner Randolph & Dearborn. Enter on Randolph, NW corner	$48	Valet-northbound on Deartborn	All downtown bus lines and rail routes
Jun. 18	Fortnightly Club	120 E. Bellevue Pl, just w. of inner Lake Shore Drive	$60	Garage at 100 E. Bellevue; lot on Cedar, just east of Big Bowl	Michigan Ave. & State St.buses

LUNCHES

Jan. 11	The Adler Planetarium	1300 S. Lake Shore Dr., Galileo's Café	$27	2 hour meters in area, park district lot - $15.00	#146 southbound on Michigan and State; #12 on Roosevelt Rd.
Feb. 8	Union League Club	65 W. Jackson; Tudor Room, 7th floor	$27	Valet on Federal; expensive garage on Federal before 4 PM	All downtown bus lines and rail routes
Mar. 14, Apr. 11, May 9, Jun. 13	Woman's Athletic Club	600 N. Michigan; enter on Ontario, Silver Room, 4th floor	$27	Garages in area & limited valet	North Michigan Ave. buses

Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by John Blew

Again this month, most of the exhibits listed below are 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.

Finding Our Place in the World at the Field
Hindu Globe, 19th Century, Victoria and Albert Museum

"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 (closes 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 Street, 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 (closes 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 (closes 27 January 2008)

"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 (closes 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 internationally renowned 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 (closes 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 as published in the 16th Century by Antonio Lafreri which tourists 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)

"European Cartographers and the Ottoman World, 1500-1750: Maps From the Collection of O.J. Sopranos" (an important collection of early printed maps, atlases and sea charts that trace the changing view of the Ottoman world from the Age of Discovery to the 18th century) in the Oriental Institute Museum at the University of Chicago, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago 773-702-9514 (closes 2 March 2008)

"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)

"What's in a Name? Carl Linnaeus' 300-year Legacy" (materials from the Library's collections which celebrate the 300th anniversary of the birth of this great botanist) at the Sterling Morton Library, The Morton Arboretum, 4100 Illinois Route 53, Lisle, IL 630-968-0074 (closes 26 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: Tom Swanstrom

Thirty-sixth in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Tom Swanstrom has books in his blood. His father was a bookseller, the owner of Swanstrom's Books, the only book store in Green Bay, Wisconsin. His father had started the store as a sideline while working as a ship designer (he was an architectural engineer) in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, during World War II. When the war was over, his father became a full time bookseller.

Or more correctly, full time store owner. "Though it had a population of 60,000, Green Bay was not really enough of an intellectual center for a bookstore to make it on books alone," Swanstrom explains. "He had to sell greeting cards and wrapping paper—and even bar supplies—to make enough money. Come to think of it, I think there was more profit in bar supplies than any of the rest!" He worked for 40 cents an hour, and was allowed to borrow books to read. But the experience neither made him into a book collector nor made him want to sell books.

photograph by Robert McCamant

Swanstrom became a collector because of a course he took in maps 28 years ago, taught by the dealer George Ritzlin. "I thought I'd be interested in maps, and sure enough, I was." It didn't take long for him to move from maps to atlases, and from atlases to globes, and from atlases to other books. Today, Swanstrom has a total of 4175 items he has catalogued.

The move from maps to atlases was practical and economic. Maps are inconvenient to store, and tend to be expensive. "Nowadays the only maps I consider purchasing are ones I like well enough to frame and hang on the wall," he says. Atlases store on bookshelves, and you pay less for each map than you do when buying them singly.

Globes have many charms, but ease of storage is not one of them. Rows of them line the tops of many of the cabinets in the Delaware Street apartment he shares with his wife Nancy. They are decorative, but "there just isn't room for any more." He has a total of 18. A favorite was an early purchase, an 1843 one. "It depicts Texas as a separate state. I was offered a 50% premium on my purchase price within the week I bought it by a Texas fanatic, but I held onto it."

"Another reason for category creep among collectors is the way many purchases are in lots," he explains. "You go an estate sale or a farm sale and all the books are in one lot. You really only want one or two of them, but the price you pay for the whole lot is reasonable for the few you want. So then you have the rest of the books. Before long you find yourself looking at the others, and discover they're interesting too." That was the explanation for the move from atlases to illustrated books. "But I was always interested in birds, so collecting bird books was perfectly natural."

Swanstrom is now retired from a career as an economist and manager for Sears, Roebuck. In a biographical note he recently penned for a Chicago Literary Club introduction, he explained his choice of career. "After two years at Notre Dame, I transferred to Wisconsin, losing half my earned credits in the process. Economics was the only field I had enough credits in to justify a major. As a result, my entire career has been in or allied to economics. I took a job at the U.S. Department of Labor writing articles, but found Washington hot, so I moved on, eventually to Sears, Roebuck. First I was an economist, then the manager of catalog research, and finally the Chief Economist. In that job I had to forecast every conceivable view of Sears sales, keep management informed about he economy, and provide creative rationales for poor sales performance to parade before the media and Board of Directors."

On the side, Swanstrom managed to be an adjunct professor at Lake Forest Graduate School of Management for fifteen years, and an economic consultant for lawyers for twenty years.

Now, he sounds like one of the busiest retired people you've ever met. One of his largest time commitments is to the Osher Life Long Learning Institute at Northwestern, where he has coordinated classes on historic trials, the history of discovery, the history of exploration, and the mysteries of the Maya. He is also a docent who leads nature tours at the Alfred Caldwell Lily Pool, the North Pond, and the Conservatory (all in Lincoln Park) as well as tours at the Lurie Garden in Millenium Park. He has been a member of the Chicago Map Society for 28 years, the Caxton Club for seven (nominated by Morrell Shoemaker), and a volunteer for the Newberry Library for more than 20 years, serving now as Co-Chair of the annual book fair.

His main means of deaccessioning is that same book fair. He jokes that the only thing he sells on eBay is his Green Bay Packer tickets. "We've got a great pair of seats on the 50-yard line, so when we can't make it we're able to manage a decent profit."

But he tries not to think of his collections as an investment. "I always advise people starting out a collection not to think of it that way. For one thing, unless you wait a long time, the process of selling will usually eat up most of the increased value of your books. But more than that, you should collect what interests you, not what you think you can make a profit on." For Swanstrom, it all boils down to the fact that history and nature have always interested him more than economics. "I collect maps as pieces of history. I collect bird books to be able to live with the illustrations. My collections bring me pleasure."

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program
December 14, 2007
Thomas J O'Gorman
"*End of Watch* and Other Matters"

Author, historian and raconteur Tom O'Gorman last regaled the Caxton audience (June '98) with a series of James Joyce readings preceding a lecture by John Astin. Tom returns to talk about other matters and to give an illustrated talk about his latest book (March 2007): *End of Watch – Chicago Police Killed in the Line of Duty 1853-2006*, co-written with Edward M. Burke, veteran alderman, historian and former policeman. Together these two have woven a vibrant tale that is really the story of a city, told through the stories of 534 of its most remarkable heroes. From just a prairie outpost to a Prohibition gangland city; from the chaos of vast numbers of immigrants to the great advances in law enforcement technology – this is the story of Chicago: its struggle to survive, to grow and to eventually become America's most American city.

Don't miss this one.

Dinner Program
December 19, 2007
John Notz and others
"The Caxton Club and the Mid-Day Club: Sixty Years Under the Same Roof(s)"

This will be our last meeting in the Mid-Day Club, which has hosted Caxtonians (with a few interruptions) since December 1936. Many of us have never known another Caxton Club venue than the 56th floor of 10 South Dearborn. After the new year, we will never know it again. A committee is busily at work to find us new lodgings and the Caxton Club will continue and prosper; the Mid-Day Club, however, will close permanently on December 31st. To celebrate our long association with the Mid-Day and to bid good-bye to a grand suite of rooms, we've planned an evening of recollection and revelry. John Notz, Caxtonian since 1990 and third-generation Mid-Day Clubber, will present a brief survey of their long and pleasant association. Another group of Caxtonians, including Hayward Blake, Don Krummel, Harry Stern, Karen Skubish, and Dan Crawford, will share some memories of meetings past. And we will get to relive, via a videotape montage, some highlights of great meetings of yesteryear. Join us for an evening of conviviality, booktalk, music, good food, and remembrance.

The December 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: 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. See page 9 for venue information on meetings in 2008.

Beyond December...

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. Meeting held at the Cliff Dwellers, 200 S. Michigan.

FEBRUARY LUNCHEON
February 8; speaker to be announced. To be held at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson.

FEBRUARY DINNER
February 20; speaker to be announced. To be held at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson.

Calling All Collectors! Save the Date: Saturday, April 12...

Rare Books and the Common Good: American Perspectives
This year's Caxton Club / Newberry Library Symposium on the Book will take as its theme the future of the rare book. Dan Meyer of the University of Chicago will start the morning with an account of Chicago collecting history. He will be followed by Edward Tenner (Princeton) on the state of rare book research, and Francis Wahlgren (Christie's) onthe state of the book auction market today. Alice Schreyer will lead an afternoon panel of librarians from across the country in responding to the provocative morning talks, and will invite your participation.