

CAXTONIAN

JOURNAL OF THE CAXTON CLUB

VOLUME XVI, NO. 1

JANUARY 2008

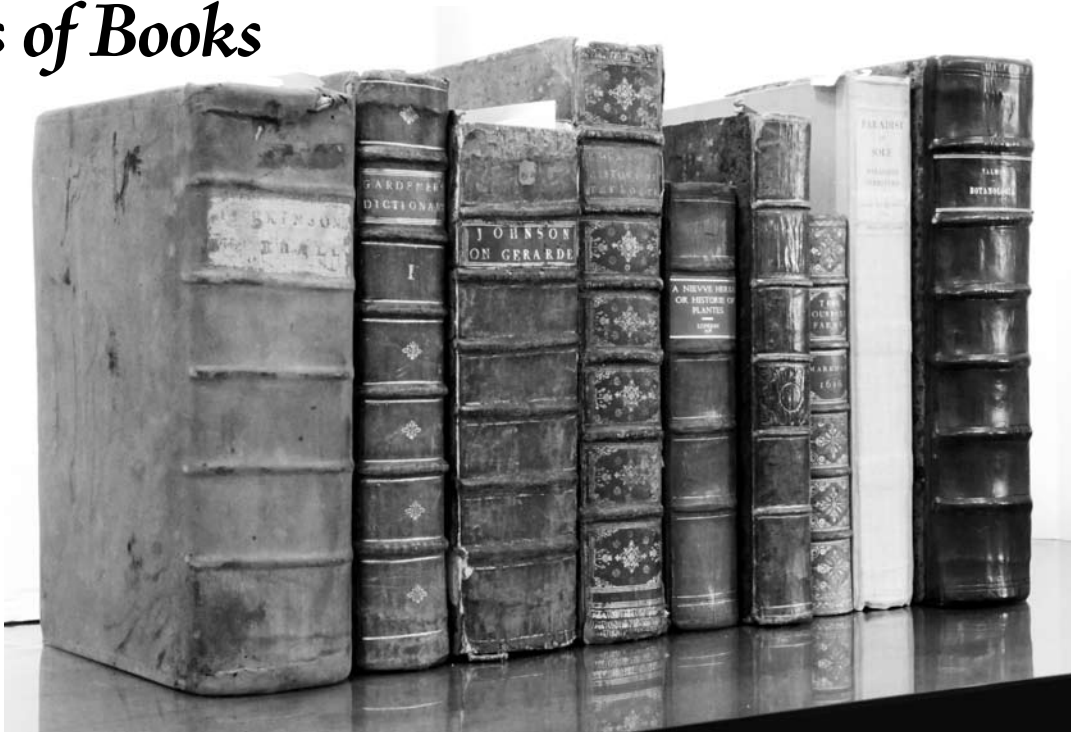
Generations of Books

David Meyer

Most of what we no longer use, but do not discard, ends up in a drawer or a closet, the attic, the basement, the garage, a storage unit or the room we close the door on when guests come in the house. Only books remain close. Whether read for the last time or never read, they stay in sight.

Two generations of Meyer family books line the walls of my office. They remind me of the interests and pursuits of my grandfather and father. Because these books will not pass on to another generation, the history of their association with my family ends with me. This, then, is a record, short and superficial, of books I have lived among since my youth, in my family's homes and now in my own. Brief references will be made to the contents of certain volumes but, unlike my grandfather and father, I did not read these books. I have lived "outside" them. Most of what I have to say about them, beyond their personal associations, will be merely descriptive.

My grandfather, Joseph E. Meyer, as I have mentioned in previous *Caxtonian* essays, was the founder of a mail-order business selling herbs and herbal remedies. He began, however, as a printer, having been taught the trade in an orphanage in Milwaukee. He worked on newspapers in Chicago and in Hammond, Indiana, where he finally settled. In his spare time (if you can imagine there being any while raising a family of seven children), he wrote, typeset, printed (on coated yellow paper intended for labels), and bound



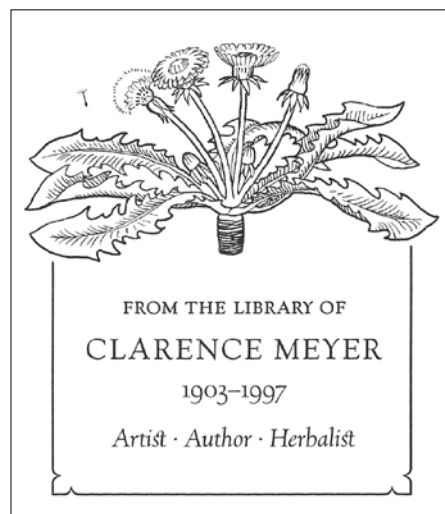
[ABOVE] Herbals from the 16th and 17th centuries. [BELOW] Bookplate created by the author for his father's library. Designed by Dan Franklin of Village Typographers, Belleville, Illinois.

(with grommets!) a book exposing crooked gambling. Titled *Protection: The Sealed Book*, the first edition was printed in 1908, with the imprint of Milwaukee on the title page, just in case any of the crooked gamblers or gaming supply companies where he obtained his information should come

looking for him. The books were sold by mail through ads in magazines, and sales were so brisk that future editions were printed in subsequent years.¹

His greater success came from marketing herbs and herbal products (the family-owned business, founded in 1910, is still in operation), and books were an essential part of his marketing. Most customers purchased herbs for the self-treatment of ailments. To learn the medical properties of plants and how to prepare them, books were necessary. Most of those that my grandfather offered were reprints of English and American herbals from the 19th century or earlier. He interspersed original texts with advertising and with recipes using combinations of the herbs he sold.

He also added color illustrations of herbs, usually taken from plant guides printed in Germany. The books and booklets of



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that era (1890s – 1920s) consisted of drawings rather than photographs, all printed in vivid lithographic colors. They are attractive productions but many were, regrettably, printed on pulp-based paper that has browned over the years. The bindings are often linen or paper-covered boards, with colorful paste-downs of plants or plant designs on the front covers. The term *Heilpflanzen* (healing plants) is often found in the title.

One booklet of this kind is only a half-inch thick (perfectly suited for carrying into the field) yet depicts 300 plants on 36 panels which are viewed and turned like pages in a book. The panels are attached and fold one upon another, accordion-style, and, surprisingly, when fully extended the panels reach over 15 feet in length.

My grandfather was not always kind to the books he researched or borrowed from. His notes, scrawled with a pencil in a tiny hand, were set down wherever he was reading – on a book's cover or in the text. A handsome volume titled *Pflanzenbuch* (Munich, 1924) offers an example of his wandering pencil. Bound in paper-covered brown boards, the cover carries an attractive design of vines and flowers printed in several colors. "Copyrighted," my grandfather scribbled across the cover and underlined the word for emphasis. Alongside many of the several hundred plant illustrations he wrote their common English names.

A more serious intrusion is seen in an 1814 edition of *Culpeper's Complete Herbal and English Physician Enlarged*. My grandfather reprinted this book in 1944. Although substantially bound in cloth, the reprint has a rushed-together appearance. The text is set in a cramped and wearisome 8-point type, perhaps to keep the paper content within bounds during wartime shortages. Double columns at least save the reader's eyes from getting lost as they move across the page. The paper is thin and gray, resembling newspaper stock. The postage-stamp-sized illustrations are ganged together at the back of the book on unnumbered pages.

In an effort to insure that the original hand-colored plant illustrations in the 1814 edition would reproduce well, without showing the dull background of 130-year-old paper, each plant was haphazardly outlined with white ink. Is this a proper way to treat a 19th-century folio bound in calf? I try to keep in mind that my grandfather probably did not consider it a particularly valuable book, for he owned two copies and in a notebook inventory of their books, my father wrote that it was "the most common herbal." The 1814 *Culpeper* is, in fact, a very late edition of a book

printed in numerous editions under various titles since 1661.

But my grandfather did not treat all of his books in a careless fashion. In Munich he bought a magnificent 13-volume set of the first edition of *Illustrierte Flora von Mittel-Europa*, published in that city over a 24-year period from 1906 to 1930. The volumes have the dimensions (8" x 11") and heft (58 pounds combined weight) of an encyclopedia. At 7,145 pages with 263 full-page color plates, it was a definitive work on the subject.² My grandfather not only left the pages free of penciled notes, he did not remove the plain printed wrappers that the publisher intended to temporarily protect the beautifully designed and embossed bindings.

My father, Clarence Meyer, grew up working in the family business but aspired to become a portrait painter. He studied for three years at Chicago's Art Institute and for six years dutifully saved his money with the intention of going abroad to pursue his dream. Fortunately, he withdrew his savings six months before the local banks failed as the Great Depression came on. He was 28 years old when he left for Germany.

He bought the first of his many early herbals in Vienna, on his way to Munich. "In 1931 Vienna was an antique collectors' paradise," he wrote. "In these depression years many families were compelled to sell their heirlooms... While browsing an old shop I found an herbal printed in 1595 titled *Kreütterbuch* filled with many [woodcut] plant illustrations. I paid only \$7 for the huge leather-bound book and mailed it to my father." As much of the spine was missing, my grandfather glued beige-colored oilcloth over the remaining leather binding, bringing a surprising contrast to a lectern-sized book with covers secured by metal clasps.

As an art student in Munich, my father purchased individual numbers of a series of *Künstlermappen* folders published in Leipzig by E.A. Seemann, offering introductions to the work of famous artists. They are identical in format. Heavy paper covers of a mottled red-and-brown color contain a title page and short essay on the artist's life and work, followed by six or more color reproductions of paintings tipped onto scrapbook leaves. The contents could be enlarged by undoing the string binding, punching holes in the material to be added, and tying everything together again.

The Seemann's series, begun in the early years of the 20th century, ran to nearly 100 numbers. An artist's position in the publisher's line-up was



sive in their own way. Most of those my father bought – on such artists as Donatello, Raphael, Vermeer, and the younger Holbein – are oversized (10 1/2” x 14”) volumes which, when opened, require a table rather than a lap for studying. If an illustration is in color, it is usually printed on a separate leaf and tipped into the book; more commonly the reproductions are deeply toned black-and-white photographs. Many of my father’s later book purchases, especially from the mid-1930s through the 1970s, were intended to provide

A 1595 herbal (with illustration details at right) purchased by the author’s father in Vienna in 1931, for \$7.

likely due to his reputation or marketability. Rembrandt was number 5 in the series; Rubens 9, Titian 11, Goya 27, Tintoretto 44. Carl Spitzweg, a popular portrayer of sentimental scenes of German life, was number 7. Max Klinger, Max Liebermann, Friedrich Kaulbach, Franz von Stuck – all German artists – appear in the series early on, nearly one after another. Clearly, their paintings were what the art-viewing public wanted to see. Nine of the 21 folders my father bought were devoted to German artists. Having come from a German household, he was evidently inspired by (or perhaps merely curious about) the art produced by his forbears’ fellow countrymen. Across the street from the pension where my father was living in Munich was a bookstore where my grandfather bought a 1610 German translation of a famous herbal by Dioscorides, “whose life,” Agnes Arber noted in her book *Herbals*, “was passed probably in the first century of the Christian Era” and whose work, “usually cited

under its Latin title, *De materia medica libri quinque...* is an account of the names and healing virtues of the herbs enumerated.”³ My father described the book as “an unusual piece of printing – type evidently printed first – then [the] copper plates [of plants]....Father re-covered the book.” Once again my grandfather’s “touch” is evident. As an example of amateur book-binding it can be best described as drab and sturdy. The olive-colored, heavy buckram cloth makes the herbal look like an accountant’s ledger. During the 1930s and early ‘40s, when he was earning a steady income in the family business, my father purchased more substantial books on art, as he hoped to continue his aesthetic pursuits. The art books of that period were not the lavish, heavy-weight, color-on-glossy-paper productions of our time, but they are impres-

information for educating customers of the family business on the uses of herbs. My grandfather had begun issuing an almanac in 1925, which contained the usual elements of such publications – weather forecasts, planting guides and household advice – in addition to advertisements for herbal products. As my father gradually took over the editorship of *The Herbalist Almanac* (including compiling, writing, and illustrating it), he improved its content with essays and selections based on his research of old herbals, 19th-century medical texts, home encyclopedias, and cookbooks.⁴ Although many of these books have been donated to the Lloyd Library and Museum in Cincinnati since my father’s death in 1997, what remains of the collection fills six large
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Early 20th-century books on Florida.

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(7' high x 4' wide) bookshelves in my library.⁵

My father probably never appreciated just how many books he came to own during the years because few were kept on bookshelves. Many of the older herbals, often large enough to take up the flat surface of a small table, were kept in fireproof filing cabinets. Medical texts and cookbooks were stored in trunks. The trunks had spent previous years traveling by Railway Express to and from Florida, where the Meyer families had winter homes. Yet my father's records indicate that he knew where most of his books were located at all times.

A shelf of his books about Florida – most published during the first decades of the 20th century – is a delight to behold. The stamping on the front covers of such books as *Florida Enchantments* (1908), *Florida Trails* (1910) and *A Florida Sketchbook* (1924) depict tropical scenes of palms and cypress trees, egrets and lots of water – almost three-dimensional views of the Eden that Florida was once considered to be. Looking at these covers takes you there. In contrast, the black-and-white photographs scattered among the text erase the enchantment immediately. Either from bad photography or poor printing, they are usually blurry, fuzzy, gray, and lifeless.

Dreamy views of Florida began appearing *inside* books in the 1930s and '40s. My grandfather kept a few volumes of this kind on the shelves of his home in Coconut Grove. An example is H.W. Hannau's *Florida: A Photographic Journey*

(1948) which, as the flap on the dust jacket states, attempts to “catch the mood and atmosphere of... the wide plains and swamps, the lush and tropic vegetation... the Negroes in the fields, the [Seminole] Indians in their villages and, of course, some resorts, gardens and beaches.” Printed in ethereal sepia tones and excluding images of cars and tourists, tranquility reigns in every scene and gives a timeless aspect to each view. It is a Florida that exists only in books.

As most of my father's older books were out of sight except when he was writing about them, the herbals most familiar to me were those he talked about. He treasured all his early herbals for their rarity, the fact that they had survived since the 15th and 16th centuries and because they were beautifully illustrated with woodcuts both delicate and boldly printed. I, in turn, valued them as I was growing up because I revered my father. Three of these herbals appeal to me still because they inspired my father to write essays on them in *The Herbalist Almanac*.

In 1950 he printed an essay in the almanac titled “The Botanic Age,” after studying his copy of John Parkinson's *Theatrum Botanicum: The Theatre of Plants. Or, an Herball of a Large Extent...*, published in London in 1640.

“At the age of 73,” he wrote, “when most men considered themselves very old, John Parkinson published the largest herbal ever printed in the English language. This botanical encyclopedia contains descrip-

tions and uses of some 3,800 plants.”

In order to handle this massive volume of 1,771 pages, bound in contemporary (and now worn) sheep skin, my father constructed a stand to hold the book so that its pages would lie flat without having to be held down with one's elbows. To accompany his article, he drew a pen-and-ink illustration in the style of a woodcut engraving depicting an apothecary's garden as

it would have existed in the 17th century.⁶ Parkinson maintained a botanical garden filled with rare plants.

For his essay on Rembert Dodoens' *A New Herball or Historie of Plantes*, he transcribed notes written in the margins of his copy of a 1586 English translation of this Dutch herbal. He also reproduced for almanac readers a five-line passage on the herb savin in the original early modern English script and hand-lettered a rendering that could be more easily deciphered.

The third herbal he often referred to was a facsimile edition of the Mediaeval *Herbal of Pseudo-Apuleius from the ninth century manuscript in the Abbey of Monte Cassino...* which stands nearly two feet high and, when opened, measures nearly three feet across. It reproduces both the original incunabulum and the edition first printed in Rome in 1481. The facsimile was issued in an edition of 200 numbered copies on handmade paper in Leiden, Holland, in 1935. Whoever sold my father his copy later requested to buy it back, claiming that the manuscript had been destroyed during the Allied bombing of the abbey in February 1944. The dealer said he wished to donate the facsimile to the abbey's library. Although my father did not know that the abbey's huge library and precious relics had been removed to the Vatican before the bombing, he suspected that the book dealer had another customer who was seeking the herbal and was no doubt willing to pay more for it than my father had.

The condition of the herbals my father acquired ranged from ragged to fine. Con-

dition did not matter to him, for he was acquiring them in order to share what he found with those who wanted to learn about the medicinal values of herbs. His rarest herbals have recently been donated to various institutions.

The 18th- and 19th-century medical books in his library are of two kinds: those written by doctors trained in English medical schools, and those written (and often published) by self-taught “pioneer” doctors in America.⁷ The discursive title

pages often spell out the themes my father focused on. *Every Man his own and his family's physician; or a treatise on health and long-life* by William Forster, M.D. (London, 1763) is one of a number of books that carry similar titles. Although Dr. Forster's book was set in 14-point type and ran to only 102 pages, it also offered “a compendious discourse on the diseases of children with a treatise on all kinds of foods.” *Plain Rules for improving the health of the delicate, preserving the health of the strong, and prolonging the life of all* by William Henderson, M.D. (London, 1831) is one among many such books which promises to cover every aspect of a medical topic.

Just perusing the spines of books of this period hints at the authors' approaches: *Pitt's Antidote* (1704), *Savory's Companion to the Medicine Chest* (1840), *Health Without Physic* (1830), *Young Woman's Companion* (1822), *The Old Man's Guide* (c. 1750). Some, of course, border on the uncomfortable. Consider *Hamilton on Purgative Medicine*. And who would be induced to buy a book with the title *Coffin's Guide to Health*? Yet the title page of this “botanic guide to health” notes that it was in its 23rd edition in 1845. My father referred to self-taught practitioners in America who may have used such volumes as “book doctors.”

Another kind of medical book, intended for domestic use, flourished in America in its early history, and those who relied on them my father called “home doctors.” Books on botanic medicine that were used for self-treatment make up the majority of the American medical books my father collected. Interesting examples abound.



Early 20th-century home medical books, including the blockbuster *Vitalogy*.

The American Physician; being a new system founded on botany was written by David Rogers, who was not a physician, and published by him in Rochester, New York, in 1824. “Concerning my pretensions to medical skill and the efficacy of the methods of cure here recommended, I shall at present add nothing, except what may be found in such certificates as I shall present to the reader.” Testimonials of patients cured by Rogers, “selected from the many hundreds which might be produced,” were presented in lieu of a diploma.

Vegetable Medical Assistant prepared for the use of families by Mrs. Lydia Capwell, published for the author in Providence in 1850, is a compilation of home cures for ailments that might be categorized by a modern reader as common, serious, and outright mysterious. The ingredients for “the cure when the wheels roll too fast” give no hint as to exactly what that ailment might have been.

Surprising ingredients can be found in many of the home doctoring books. *The Indian Vegetable Family Instructor... designed for use of families in the United States* by Pierpont F. Bowker, published in Boston in 1836, advises that “the best method of curing a Wen [a benign skin tumor] is to “bake a live frog in one pound of fresh butter. Keep the frog's back down until he is thoroughly baked....”

Many doctors – or at least those calling themselves doctors – embraced botanical cures and wrote books promoting them. “A Book for Everybody,” the title page of *The Reformed Botanic and Indian Physician* by Dr. Daniel Smith declared. It was

published by the author in Utica, New York, in 1855. *The Sick Man's Friend: being a plain, practical medical work on vegetable or botanic principles designed for the use of families and individuals* (1844) was another doctor-authored title. *Dr. Chase's Recipes; or Information for Everybody* was first published by A.W. Chase, M.D., in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in 1867. Expanded editions appeared throughout the remainder of the century and reprints were plentiful

into the 1950s. My grandfather sold countless copies by mail order.

Although *Our Family Physician*, published in Chicago in 1868, ran to only 544 pages, it was touted as a “thoroughly reliable guide to the detection and treatment of all disease... without the aid of a physician... embracing the allopathic, homeopathic, hydropathic, eclectic and herbal modes of treatment.”

But the doorstep book of home treatments was *Vitalogy*, published in 1923 by a company of the same name and sold by subscription only. Its compiler was a doctor and prolific author of medical books, who had brought together “twenty books bound in one volume” with the help of “ten departmental editors.” This book, with both the look and heft of a block of concrete, begins with a frontispiece showing “The Home” and ends in an index of illustrations on page 1004. Its illustrations include two “manikins” in “natural color” that depict a man's head (and everything inside it) and his muscles, bone, and vital organs on separate layers of paper that can be lifted to progressively reveal the vital parts within the body. Half a dozen books of this kind can quickly fill the shelf of a bookcase.

Household hints and old-time recipes were a staple of *The Herbalist Almanac* and they were gleaned by my father from cookbooks and “home help” books he acquired over a 30-year period. English and American titles, from the late 1700s to the early 1920s, comprise the collection. Although I doubt that my mother prepared any of the recipes my father selected, and he never,

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to my knowledge, tested those he printed, these books must have been valuable to their former owners. Most are well-worn; their bindings are loose and the cloth is soiled from usage and food stains.

Examples from the collection allow for a few interesting observations. Titles of English cookbooks of the 19th century were often simple and direct, such as: *Cook's Oracle* (1827), *The Cook* (1842), *Cookery Book* (1852), and *Wholesome Fare* (1868). An earlier volume (1825), by "An English Physician," is titled *French Domestic Cookery combining economy with elegance and adapted for the use of families of moderate fortune*. (You wouldn't want a cookbook with recipes calling for ingredients you couldn't afford to buy!) Although only hinted at in this book's title, the word "practical" appears in the titles of a number of early 20th-century cook books in the collection.

American cookbooks often declared their nationality in the titles: *The American Practical Cookery Book* (1858), *The American Housewife Cook Book* (1878), *The All-American Cook Book* (1922). There is even *The American Salad Book* (1912) – although it contains a number of apparent immigrant salads identified as Spanish, French, Russian, Polish, Swiss and a few other nationalities.

American cookbooks of the late 19th and early 20th-centuries were sometimes bound in cloth that attempted to reflect kitchen surroundings. *The New World's Fair Cook Book* (1891) was bound to resemble wood paneling with a prominent grain. It is difficult to determine exactly what the binding of *The Ideal Cookery Book* (1889) was originally intended to suggest, but now, faded and in poor condition, the dark lines running through the once-beige cloth look like cracks or veins – not a very appetizing sight. The light or white pebbled cloth covering *The Cook County Cook Book* (1912) and the *German American Cook Book* (1897) must have been intended to fit in with what were considered sleek and sanitary "modern" kitchens of the day.

Many of my father's older books were purchased from dealers' catalogs received from England. The more common titles were bought in the rare book department of Marshall Field's department store and in the used book stores that flourished on Wabash Avenue and Clark Street from the



[ABOVE] Shelves of vintage cookbooks. [BELOW] An selection of English and American cookbooks from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

1940s to the '60s. While Chicago has a long history as a center for the printing industry, with the exception of publishers Way & Williams and Stone & Kimball, "fine printing" is seldom associated with the city. Thus it was surprising to find among my father's books two examples of exquisitely printed books bearing Chicago imprints.

The first, *Apicius: Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome* by Joseph Dommers Vehling, was published in 1936 by the book dealer Walter M. Hill. Described as "a bib-

liography, critical review and translation of the ancient book known as *Apicius de re Coquinaria* now first rendered into English" it was issued in an edition of 530 numbered copies. The first 30 copies were printed on Arnold handmade paper; the remaining 500 were printed on "Hurlbut ivory custom laid deckle edge paper," which actually *sounds* better than the first choice.

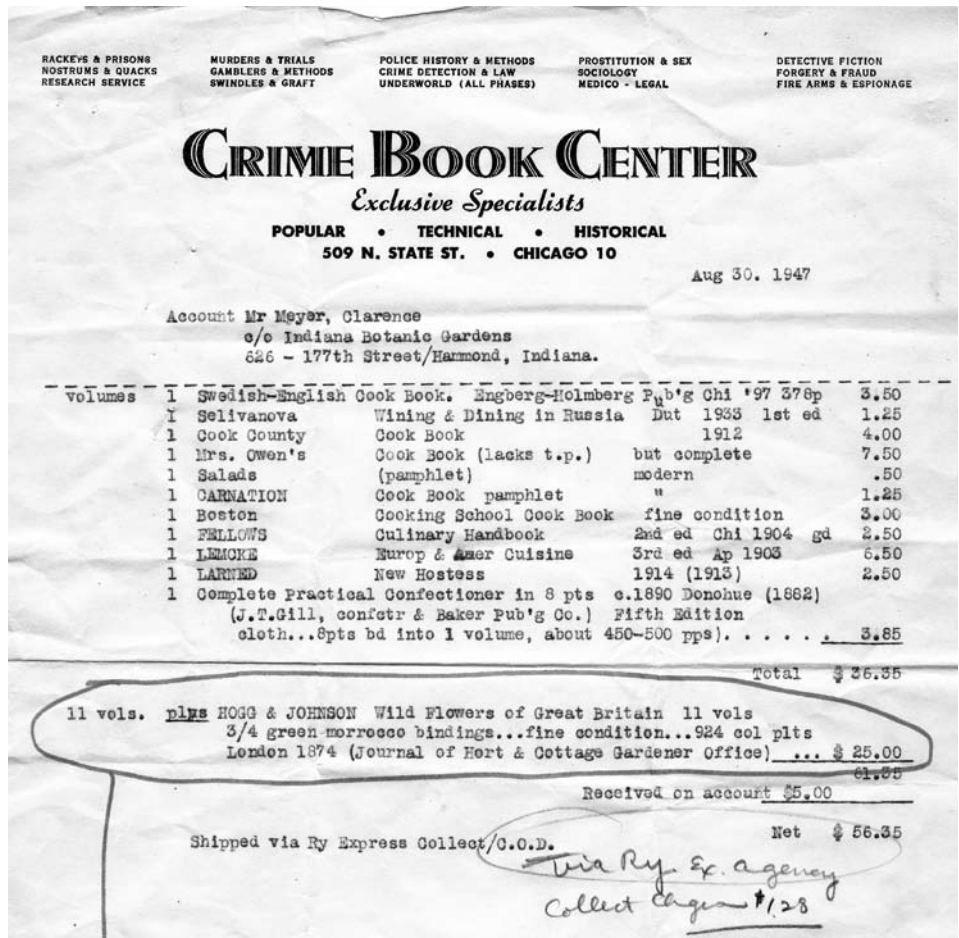
Hill, who had a reputation as a "wheeler-dealer," cleverly enlisted the prepaid support of 156 subscribers to the book (no doubt

covering its cost) and printed their names on the first leaves in the book, giving the impression that the subscribers' page held precedence over the title page. Among the 14 subscribers to the "hand-made paper, limited edition" were The Caxton Club and a prominent member, Gaylord Donnelley, and Jake Zeitlin, the noted antiquarian book dealer in Los Angeles. Mr. Zeitlin is listed twice because he also subscribed to the "Book-Paper Edition." The colophon states that the author signed the first 30 copies, but a possibility exists that both he and Hill signed and inscribed most, if not all, of the subscribers' copies. My father's copy, number 156, carries elaborate inscriptions by the duo to subscriber Walter W. Schmauch of Chicago.

A second example is the two-volume facsimile edition of Baron de Lahontan's *New Voyages to North America* published in 1905 by A.C. McClurg & Co. The handsome set is printed on watermarked paper and bound in gray boards with vellum spines stamped in gold. The type was set in Chicago but the printing was by The University Press in Cambridge, England. Communication between the publisher and the printer was apparently faulty, for the limitation page states: "This Large Paper Edition... is limited to Seventy-five Copies..." but this number has a line drawn through it and the word "fifty" is inked above it. My father's set was number 38, purchased at the same price he paid for Hill's *Apicius*: twenty-five dollars.

Chicago provided book surprises even for my father. In 1947 he purchased an 11-volume set, in fine condition, of the *Wild Flowers of Great Britain*, printed in London in 1874, containing 924 colored plates and bound in three-quarter green morocco leather. Who would have guessed that the set would be found at the Crime Book Center? This dealer, located at 509 North State Street, advertised itself as "exclusive specialists" in "popular, technical and historical" books on such subjects as "rackets & prisons," "murders & trials," "prostitution & sex," "swindlers & graft," and "underworld (all phases)." The price for the wild flower books: twenty-five dollars.

If any single book was my father's favorite at a certain period in his life, it was a thin, self-help medical book published in America early in the 19th century that he received when he was in his late eighties.



Book bargains from an unlikely source.

It was sent to him by an elderly man who had found it when he was a boy hunting in the deep woods of northern Wisconsin. He discovered the book in the ruins of a pioneer's cabin. My father studied the little book and wrote notes he laid into it, just as he did with all the books in his library. Then, because the book's wood covers were split and the pages loose, he wrapped it carefully and slipped it into a manila envelope on which he wrote the title and date. He treated many of his smaller books and pamphlets in this way, keeping them safe but making it difficult to find them among so many other envelopes and larger books. This reminds me of my father's advice when he turned his and his father's books over to me, adding them to the many I had.

"Take inventory," he said; but this account is as close as I have come to doing so.

§§

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

NOTES

¹ Although he sold the rights to *Protection* some time

- early in the 20th century, reissues kept appearing, most recently in 1999.
- ² The author was Gustav Hegi and the publisher J.F. Lehmanns Verlag. The first edition appears to be rare; but subsequent editions have been continuously issued with new information; and the set presently totals 23 volumes.
- ³ *Herbals: Their Origin and Evolution, A Chapter in the History of Botany 1470-1670* was published in 1912 and has been revised and expanded several times since.
- ⁴ Information gleaned from this collection led to the publication of my father's book, *American Folk Medicine*. First published in 1973 by Thomas Y. Crowell & Company in New York, the sixth printing of the trade paper edition is still available under the imprint of my company, Meyerbooks.
- ⁵ The mission of the Lloyd Library and Museum, founded in 1898, is to "collect and maintain a library on botanical, medical, pharmaceutical and scientific books and periodicals and works of allied sciences." Ten cartons of my father's files on herbal research were donated to the library in 2004.
- ⁶ His authority on woodcuts was *A Treatise on Wood Engraving, Historical and Practical* by John Jackson and W.A. Chatto, published in London in 1839. Three hundred and forty-six woodcuts are reproduced in this classic work on the subject.
- ⁷ Classic medical texts in his library will not be mentioned.

Another Great Omar

This Just In

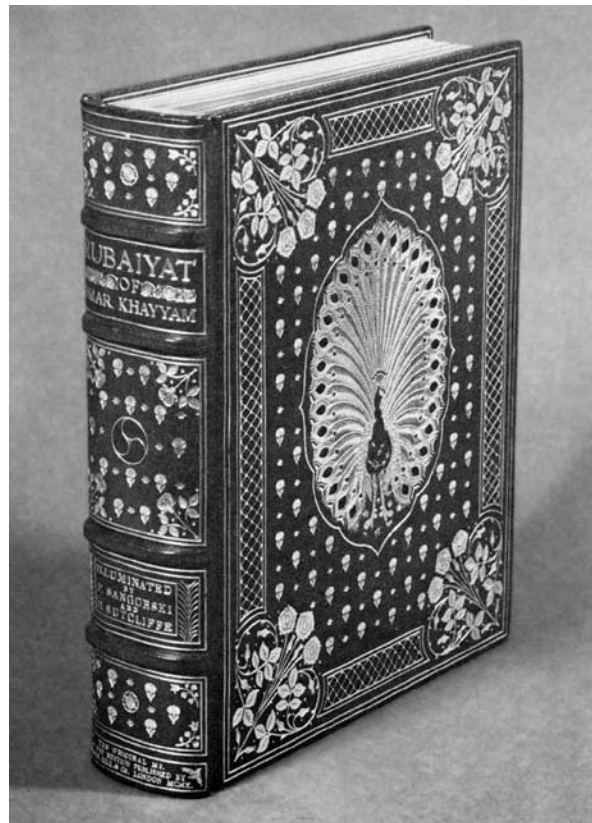
Thomas J. Joyce

In the December, 2007 issue of the *Caxtonian*, I explored the astonishing history of Francis Sangorski's effort to create "the greatest of modern bindings ever made," which became The Great Omar. That "*Rubaiyat*" in a jeweled and inlaid morocco binding disappeared into Davy Jones' locker, never to be seen again. His successor, Stanley Bray, re-created that fine binding, but it was destroyed by fire during the London Blitz. His second, magnificent recreation survives at The British Library as a national treasure.

It turns out that there was another quite spectacular folio Omar with a Caxtonian connection. It was owned by member Louis Silver. This one was sold by the Parke-Bernet Galleries Inc. as item no. 100 in its sale no. 2381, in November, 1965. It was catalogued (in part) thusly,

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam Translated into English Verse...a Manuscript Written and Illuminated by F. Sangorski & G. Sutcliffe. Original Ms. of the edition published by Siegle, Hill & Co., London, 1910. Folio, full levant, spine with floral tooling... covers with onlaid borders and massive floral tooling. On front cover a large stamped peacock in gold and three colors of onlays; on back cover stamped wine-cup...and grapevine design with onlays in three colors.... 78 pages on white board. 4 full-page watercolor illustrations and 7 miniatures by E. Geddes; borders, initials and manuscript by a. Sutcliffe, original designs for the publisher's binding and endpapers by F. Sangorski.

Please note that this is the original, illuminated manuscript for the Siegle, Hill printed edition. It also featured initials and borders by Francis Sangorski's older brother, Alberto, who was the secretary at a goldsmithing firm. Alberto had become intrigued by the binding and calligraphy being done at Sangorski & Sutcliffe, and he devoted himself to calligraphy and illumination and soon mastered the arts. He subsequently illuminated favorite texts such as Gray's "*Elegy in a Country Church-*



A great Omar with a Caxtonian connection

yard," Robert Louis Stevenson's "*Prayers at Vailima*," and others by Tennyson, Poe, Jesus, and others.

If you are intrigued by these masterworks of the binder's art, I commend you to examine the color images of two other amazing Sangorski & Sutcliffe bindings in the Posner Collection at Carnegie Mellon University: http://posner.library.cmu.edu/Posner/books/book.cgi?call=891.5_O24R_1872

Posner's copy of the "*Rubaiyat*" features a real inlaid snakeskin.

More than a decade ago I had an encounter with an S&S snake as well. It was wrapped around the Tree of Knowledge, and it carried a bright red apple in its mouth. I was invited to visit a small, downstate college looking to dispose of some books which had been stored for decades in a bank vault drawer. The early edition of "*Huckleberry Finn*" I was shown was only a distraction. The folio-sized cloth-covered box hid unlimited promise. It was opened to reveal a magnificent folio jeweled binding by Sangorski & Sutcliffe of the 1688 fourth

edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

The beauties of the inlaid leather designs of the top cover and the rear cover were exceeded only by the beauties of the inlaid doublures of the insides of both covers. I can still see that Satanic green snake climbing up the brown bark of the inlaid trunk of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The other three "faces" of the binding depicted other scenes of archangels and the Garden of Eden.

My assessment of the work was that I thought I could get something in the neighborhood of \$15,000 for this masterpiece. Because the college wanted to sell the book, I proposed a price in four figures. "Oh, no!" said the Development Office official, "we are thinking of a much higher figure." "Well," said Tom swiftly, "what amount do you have in mind?" "We are thinking about \$250,000," she replied unabashedly. "We looked it up in the auction records," she added.

I responded that that would be a price for the extremely rare true first edition of *Paradise Lost*, from 1667, in fine condition [one had sold at auction in 1989 for \$230,000; Caxtonian Abel Berland's copy brought \$28,000 at auction in 2001], but that was not the value for the 1688 4th edition.

I realized quickly that my attack was blunted by an unmoveable object. Nothing I could say or show was going to change her mind. Somebody had decided that the college was going to get two hundred thousand dollars painlessly, and that was that. I do not know what the college thought when they learned that I was telling the truth. Perhaps they were too embarrassed to give me another opportunity with it. They never responded to my inquiry. That is how I lost "*Paradise Lost*."

I know not where Lou Silver's *Rubaiyat* is today, nor what it brought at auction. As for the magnificent Milton, it was sold at Swann Galleries in 1996 for \$16,000, so my only pleasure is that I was right about the price.

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Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

The December 2007 issue of the *Caxtonian* is a gift I can open again and again.

I particularly enjoyed Peggy Sullivan's piece about Laura Ingalls Wilder for the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the first Little House book.

I am not an ardent fan of Laura's, but I have a number of friends who are. For years I tried to locate Laura's birthplace at Lake Pepin in Wisconsin, only to find that Lake Pepin is not a lake at all. It is a wide spot in the Mississippi River (had I read the book, I might have learned that sooner).

Florence Shay and I visited the re-created Ingalls homesite on a return trip from the Twin Cities Book Fair one year. Another time I went alone to the LIW Museum in Burr Oak, Iowa (a different Field of Dreams). It is the only childhood home of Laura's standing on its original site. I urge Peggy Sullivan and Karen Skubish to visit it and collect the rare t-shirt.

I think, like Peggy, that I prefer Helen Sewell's original illustrations to Garth Williams' later interpretations.

I learned a few things from reading the accounts by Bernie Rost and Junie Sinson of the FABS trip to Washington, D.C. Most especially I learned that the trip was too good to miss.

Thomas J. Joyce



To the Editor:

This [ABOVE] is a picture of Jeanne Goessling [RIGHT] and myself selling our miniature books at the Miniature Book Society conclave in Seattle.

Caxtonians keep in touch.

Muriel Underwood

To the Editor:

Let me make it clear that I am not a member of your fool society. I just happened to discover copies of your newsletter in my college library, and I felt called upon to set you straight.

First, nobody cares about Laura Ingalls Wilder or Jules Verne or Samuel Johnson. They are DEAD. If you have to write about books, at least you could write about Michael Crichton or John Grisham. At

least they are ALIVE.

Second, ELEVEN PAGES about EMILY DICKINSON? Need I say more? Can't you even get a decent picture of her?

Third, you interview all these members but don't tell how much their collections are worth. Who cares about a signed first edition of Brautigan except for what you can sell it for?

Fourth, all this mumbo-jumbo about "The Art of the Book." Maybe writing books is a bit of an art, but making them? There was one whole issue about a printer! Actually, not a whole issue. That one had a story about the dumb college kids you'd given scholarships to just because they made pretty books.

Wise up.

Rodney Rice Stong
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Club Notes

Membership Report, November 2007

1. Newly elected members:

Andrew Call grew up in a family of book lovers. He is the author of *Jacob Bunn: Legacy of an Illinois Industrial Pioneer*, the first biography of the man who financed Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign. As a child Andrew collected books on biology and herpetology; his current collecting interests are corporate and business history. He serves on the Board of Directors of the American National Business Hall of Fame and the National Advisory

Board of the James Monroe Memorial Foundation. Andrew is currently a post-doctoral student at John Marshall Law School, specializing in corporate law and finance; he hopes to practice in Chicago. Nominated by Bill Locke, seconded by Skip Landt.

John Lancaster, a passionate bookman, recently retired as archivist and curator of Special Collections of the Robert Frost Library at Amherst College. His many collaborative projects have included editing, designing, and composing works including "The Bowyer Ledgers," "An Early London Printing House at Work," and "A Register of Artists, Engravers, Booksellers, Bookbinders, Printers & Publishers in New York City, 1821-42." Now that he is retired,

he hopes to revive the Wayzgoose Press, of which he is the proprietor. Lancaster is currently at work on a bibliography of Richard Wilbur. His interests include the history of printing and related arts and crafts; physical bibliography; book design and production. Nominated by Paul Ruxin, seconded by Sam Ellenport and Alice Schreyer.

2. Once again, thanks to those of you who are bringing guests to Caxton luncheons and dinners. Should your guests express an interest in the Club, let me know; I'll be happy to send them a sample copy of the *Caxtonian* and information on forthcoming meetings.

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

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. Keep in mind that most of these exhibits will close at or near the end of January.

"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 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)

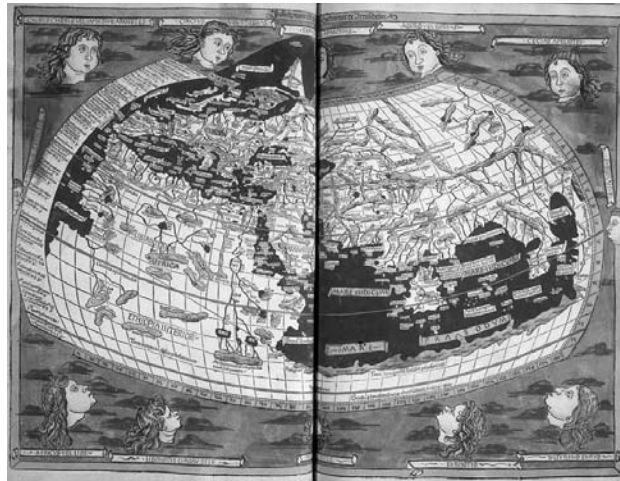
"The Irene Balzekas Memorial Map Collection" (antiquarian and modern maps of Lithuania and its Eastern European neighbors, as well as maps which document the multifaceted Lithuanian immigration experience throughout much of the 20th century) at the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, 6500 South Pulaski Road, Chicago 773-582-6500 (a permanent exhibit)

"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)

Ptolemy's Geography at the Newberry
PTOLEMY, CLAUDIUS. GEOGRAPHIA. ULM: LIENHART HOLLE, 1482.



"The Virtual Tourist In Renaissance Rome: Printing and Collecting the Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae" (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)

"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's 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)

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: Susan Higinbotham

Thirty-seventh in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Susan Higinbotham does not think of herself as a collector. “I’m more of a curator, or a trustee. I found myself with a trove of historic treasure, and my job is to preserve and protect it, while using it to enhance our understanding of Chicago’s forebears.”

It all began 21 years ago, when she was dating her now husband, Harlow Higinbotham. (He is the great-grandson of Caxtonian Harlow Higinbotham (1897) who was a business partner of Marshall Field, and a major force behind the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the Field Museum.) The two were hanging out at the family farm, south of the city, which was purchased in 1834. She started to notice that the books on the shelves were not the standard country-house fare of abandoned mysteries. Instead, they were books from the late nineteenth century, many about the Columbian Exposition.

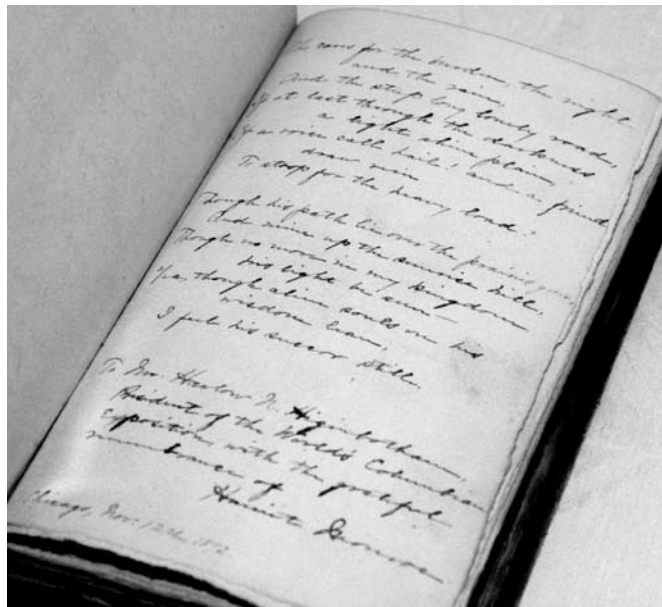
Later, after they were married, Susan explored the house, only to discover an attic packed with memorabilia. There were original hand-colored views of the Exposition, dresses which had been worn to the opening ball, promotional items (including hundreds of slides and a magic lantern projector used by Daniel Burnham in his trips around the country) from the Exposition, years and years of newspaper clippings about the movers and shakers of the period. Some ancestor had carefully put the items there, many in handsome trunks, but the family had lost track of what was there.

Since then, she has made it her job to explore what she has. “You have to remember this was before *The Devil in the White City*, which popularized the Columbian Exposition and created a great deal of interest in the *real* history of the time. I educated myself by reading the clippings in the trunks. I learned about the Chicago figures of the era, about the events and relationships of the time. Gradually the items began to tell an important story.”

Almost everything has now made its way

to the closets of the Higinbothams’ Lake Shore Drive apartment. Items have been cleaned and organized. A few have gone to the History Museum, where Susan is a trustee. And many have provided source material for talks she has given at the Chicago History Museum, the Fortnightly Club, and the Newberry Library.

“The talks are a way for me to bring things in the collection to the attention of a wider audience, certainly. But they are also an educational enterprise for me. If I’m giving a presentation on Bertha Palmer, I



Higinbotham discovered this 1892 inscription in a copy of Valeria, a privately-printed poetry collection of Harriet Monroe’s. She takes it as a primary-source confirmation of the rumored role that the first Harlow Higinbotham took in getting Monroe’s poem “The Columbian Ode” reinstated in the opening ceremony of the Columbian Exposition on October 21, 1892.

have a new prism through which I can look at the things I have. They force me to reach out to experts at the libraries and museums, and call on friends who share my interests.”

Among Caxtonians, she cites three as being her most frequent help: John Notz, who proposed her for membership in 2000; Ed Hirschland, who seconded her; and Dan Hayman, whom she has gotten to know since joining the Club.

She is a great believer in primary sources. “When I’m working on a topic I want to read what has been written about it. But I don’t necessarily believe it just because I have read it. For example, there is the case of the Infanta supposedly snubbing

Bertha Palmer. There is evidence on both sides. When I’m giving a talk, I try to present what I have been able to learn from primary sources and let people decide for themselves.”

When pushed, Higinbotham admits to occasionally augmenting the collection. “It’s not that I’m out there looking for things. There’s really no place to be looking. But when [the current] Potter Palmer had things from his mother’s estate, and discovered he had more than a hundred books which belonged to Bertha, I was able to add to our collection.”

She also believes in keeping related items together, even if they are different kinds of artifact. “If the books are at the Newberry, the photographs at the History Museum, the paintings at the Art Institute, and I have the vase on my shelf, then it takes a huge amount of digging to put the pieces together. And you need to put the pieces together to be sure of your facts.” She cites a family example: “My husband’s grandfather made his grand tour in 1887. He brought back photographs and articles from all over. We have a letter he sent to his father describing a pre-Columbian pot, a photo of him holding the purchase, and the pot itself. That’s about as good a chain of provenance as you can ask for.”

She shares a concern with all the private individuals who are responsible for great collections. What will become of it when she can no longer be its caretaker? In her case, there are no direct descendants to pass the collection to. “My husband has a niece and nephew who may be interested some day,” she says. The logical conclusion may be an institution, but here the problem of specialization rears its head. “At least the trend is going in the right direction these days. Nowadays the Art Institute is starting to want more than the painting or photograph. Maybe by the time our collection needs a new home, curators will understand that things need to be kept together.”

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Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

January 11, 2008, Adler Planetarium

Marvin Bolt, Jodi Lacy

Adler Gallery Tour: "Mapping the Universe"

Marvin Bolt, Vice-President of Collections, and Exhibit Curator Jodi Lacy will lead a gallery tour and lecture of the Adler's extraordinary show "Mapping the Universe." Items on display include Albrecht Durer's celestial maps of 1515, Willen Blaeu's stunning 1631 globe and a 9' by 9' moon map (1878), so precise that it shows the exact location of 33,000 craters. A recent tour participant, John Blew, had this to say, "The Adler has some absolutely smashing rare books, maps and instruments in its collection."

Our exclusive buffet in the lake view Galileo's Cafe is \$24 with reservations preferred by noon on Wednesday January 9. Those without or with later reservations may be asked to access the regular Cafe line. There will be plenty of seating. Check the Caxton web site for transportation and other details. Buffet at 11:30, program 12:30-1:30.

Questions? Call the Luncheon Committee.

Come and help the first planetarium in the United States celebrate its 76th year.

The January luncheon will take place at the Adler Planetarium, 1300 S. Lake Shore Drive. Buffet opens at 11:30; program 12:30-1:30. This luncheon is at a reduced price of \$24. The January dinner will take place at the Cliff Dwellers Club, 200 S. Michigan. Spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, lecture at 7:30 pm.

Beyond January...

FEBRUARY LUNCHEON

February 8; the Club's own Paul Ruxin will speak on a topic to be announced. To be held at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson.

FEBRUARY DINNER

February 20; David Spadafora of the Newberry Library will talk about the role of research libraries. To be held at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson.

Dinner Program

January 16, 2008, Cliff Dwellers Club

Dr. William Noel

"EUREKA! The Archimedes Palimpsest"

Dr. William Noel, Curator of Manuscripts and Rare Books at the Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, will provide a fascinating look at an astonishing manuscript loaned to the museum by a private collector. The book conceals the texts of two treatises by Archimedes beneath an 13th-century prayerbook.

The hidden texts that are slowly being retrieved by conservators and imaging scientists and deciphered by textual scholars radically alter our understanding of Archimedes' position in some key areas of mathematics, especially the two related fields of the calculus and of infinity, and also reveal him to have written the first treatise concerning combinatorics. The ongoing work on the manuscript has also revealed unique texts by other ancient authors, including a commentary on Aristotle's categories, and speeches by Hyperides, one of the ten canonical orators of the ancient world.

Noel and co-author Reviel Netz, a Stanford classicist, have chronicled the work surrounding the preservation of the palimpsest in *The Archimedes Codex*. Noel will sign copies of the book, which will be available for sale at the event.

Dinner at the Cliff Dwellers will be at the regular price of \$48. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org; reservations are needed by noon Wednesday for the Friday Luncheon, and by noon Monday for the Wednesday dinner.

MARCH LUNCHEON

On March 14, we will lunch at the Women's Athletic Club to hear Diane Dillon of the Newberry speak about Ellen Gates Starr, including her establishment of the Hull-House Bookbindery and her relationship with Jane Addams.

MARCH DINNER

March 19 brings the postponed annual book auction, with entertainment, to be held this year at the Newberry Library. Get your donations for the auction to Dan Crawford at the Newberry.

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) on the 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.