

## Remembering Bruce Beck

Designer, Printer, Teacher, and Caxtonian

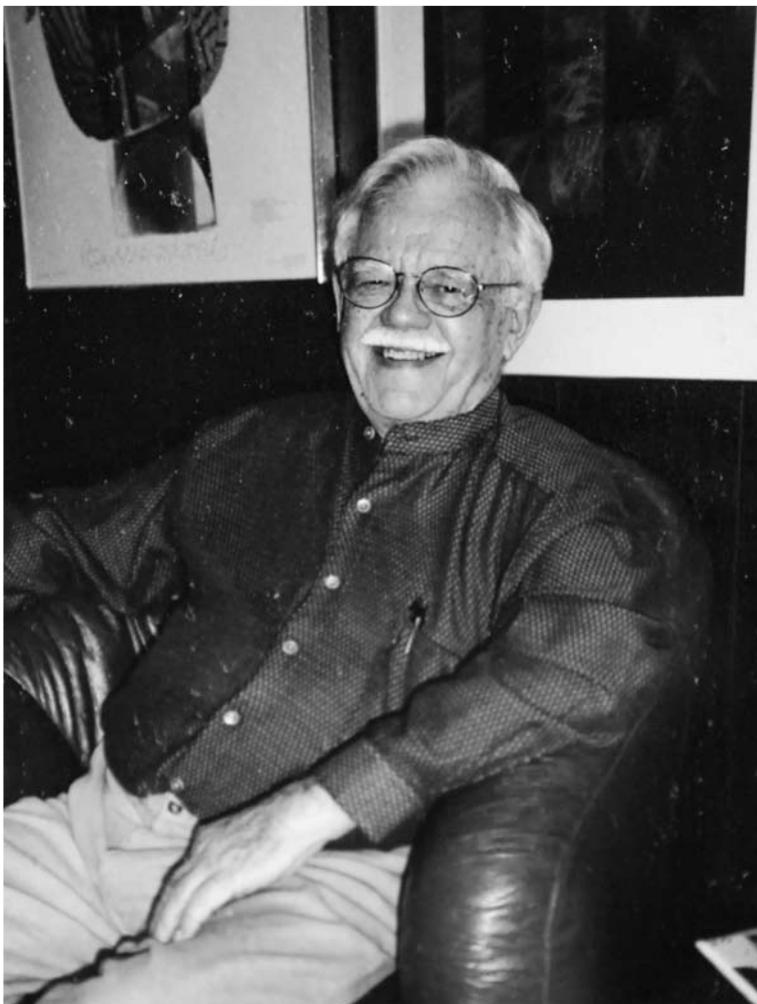
Robert McCamant

Bruce Beck ('77) was a pivotal member of the Caxton Club. His web of personal connections led out towards dozens of members both older and younger than himself. He was an organizer of Club programs, and the designer of Club publications. Unfortunately, he was confined to the McGaw Care Center of the Presbyterian Homes for several years, so new members are unlikely to have met him or his delightful wife Margaret. He died on July 21 of this year.

He was born in Harvard, Illinois, in 1916. Printing interested him from an early age. In high school, he had a part time job at the Lanning Bag Company of Harvard, which made cloth bags for the distribution of screws. He made himself so useful there that the owner of the factory tried to talk him out of going to college, asking him to train as the future head of the factory.

Beck had the sense that the world had more to offer than screw bags, and went ahead and attended Cornell College. He majored in English there, and minored in art. A decisive moment came when during senior year (1938) he discovered a copy of *27 Chicago Designers*, the book, in the college library. That spring vacation, he came to Chicago to meet many of those designers: John Averill, Rainey Bennett, Ray DaBoll, Everett McNear, R. Hunter Middleton, Bert Ray. He had a glimpse of the world he wanted to join.

But several years intervened before that became possible. First there were some unsatisfying jobs, and then there was World War II.



He served four years in the Army, rising to the rank of Captain despite poor vision.

Upon his return after the war, he took a train to Harvard from Chicago. Meanwhile, Margaret was meeting an arriving boyfriend on the same train. They crossed paths at Margaret's father's jewelry store on Main Street when Beck stopped in for a new watch band. Margaret figured out who he was, and named some of his classmates who were attending a nearby college. Bruce was several years older than Margaret, so even though they had attended the same high school, he did not know her. He went home and asked

his mother who the girl was working at the jewelry store. She could think only of the older-women salesclerks, and said none worked there. But then the thought came to her: it must have been the jeweler's daughter, Margaret! "She's way too young for you," was her motherly advice.

A year later, they were married.

Margaret was teaching at Elgin high school, and Bruce had a job doing design work at a printing company. But Bruce was getting restless, so Margaret assured him that he should feel free to strike out on his own. So he took a space in an office above the Schubert Theater with three other people (Rainey Bennett, Martha Bennett King, and James Hayes) and hung out his own shingle. After a few months, he went to work at Whittaker Gurnsey studio, where he stayed for three years. Then, in 1952, Bruce Beck Design became his only employer for the remainder of his life. That same year he

became a member of 27 Chicago Designers, the organization.

From 1952 to 1981 (when Beck gave up graphic design for a second career as a fine printer) he served a raft of businesses and not-for-profits, designing books, signs, packages, and promotional materials. He won design awards from the Society of Typographic Arts, the Art Director's Club of Chicago, and the American Institute of Graphic Arts. He also found time to teach classes at the Institute of Design (now part of IIT) and to serve on the board of the International Design Conference

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# CAXTONIAN

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BRUCE BECK, *from page 1* at Aspen.

His family tells the memorable story of a time they were headed out for an Aspen conference, during the period when Bruce was head of membership for the organization. At 6 am on a Friday morning, the family car broke down in Nebraska. Once it had been towed 50 miles to the nearest town, the prognosis was grim: the part it required would take two days to arrive. But the Aspen membership materials needed to get to the conference on time. A rental car for Bruce was considered, but rejected in favor of buying a new car. By 3 pm that afternoon, they had settled on the station wagon they wanted, but Chicago banks had closed, precluding a telephone call to establish his check was good. Fortunately, Bruce, Margaret, and the kids seemed right to the dealer. "You look like honest people," he told them as he sent them on their way.

Beck was especially proud of his relationship with long-term clients, in particular S.C. Johnson and Rand McNally, both of which he served for more than 30 years. "The design business was very different in those days," explained Margaret. "When we'd send out an invoice, we'd almost always get payment back in ten days. I don't see how people can get started these days, with companies holding payments for months."

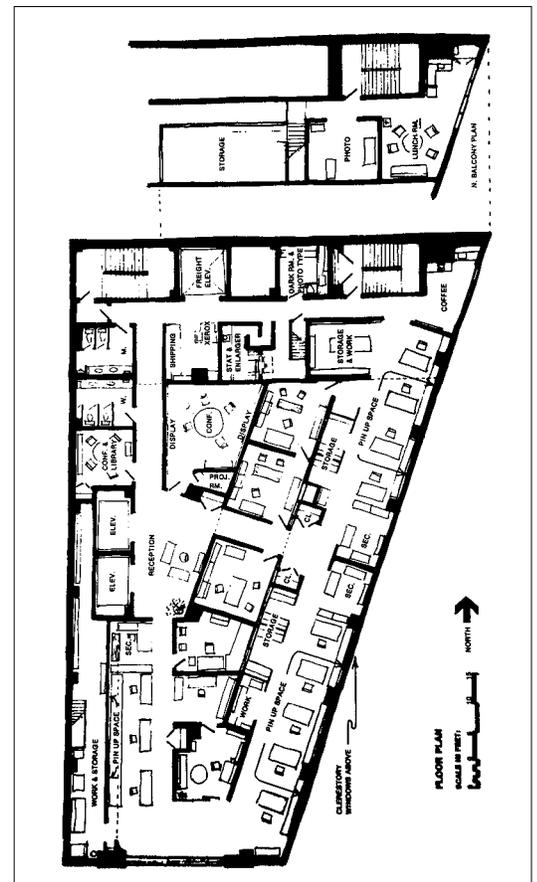
1968 was a landmark year in his design history, because in that year he and several friends (Hayward Blake, Lindell Mabrey, Henry Robertz, Jack Weiss, and Ken Kaiser) formed the Design Partnership. Here's how *Communication Arts* described it in a 20-page article in 1974.

... The total staff numbers 26 and they operate out of offices in Chicago and Evanston. With that much description, The Design Partnership sounds like a normally-structured design firm with the capability of handling very large projects. Sometimes they do. But there is something unique about the organization. It is also four more modestly-sized firms that can operate individually or in tandem.

... Being in neighboring offices allowed a workable participation in mutual projects and a fairly free exchange of ideas and critiques, but it was sometimes



ABOVE *The Design Partnership in 1974: standing: Bud Mabrey, Hank Robertz, Hayward Blake; seated: Bruce Beck, Jack Weiss. RIGHT Floor plan of the office.*



short of the ideal.... They began considering a more integrated working arrangement with shared space and facilities... They found an interesting location, a whole floor of a triangular-shaped building that was primarily one large open space. The former tenant was a clothing store. It had 6000 square feet and a 16-foot ceiling. A carefully thought-out interior design plan turned this into a really handsome, functional working space with all the amenities an artist/designer could want.

The article even devoted a full page to the floor plan of the office!

Margaret explained an unusual element of her husband's administrative style, which he followed pretty much everywhere he could, with clients, partners, and even fellow members of volunteer organizations. "Any time there was a difference of opinion, he insisted that things be talked through until a common opinion developed. No cutting the discussion off with a vote! The result was that everyone ended up on the same page and worked better subsequently."

I'm not certain when I met Bruce myself. It must have been in the late 70s, when he was still a practicing designer but had started to think about his second career as a printer. Perhaps it was at a Wayzgoose in San Francisco in 1979. (These days, Wayzgoose is the name for any sort of gathering of letterpress printers. It was originally the name for a party given by a printer on the occasion of putting waxed paper into the windows of the print shop every fall, to keep out the cold air.)

In any case, his excitement over letterpress printing was contagious, and was an important influence on me taking it up myself. He devoted his full attention to printing upon his retirement in 1981. But printing was anticipated as early as 1972, when Bruce and Margaret bought their house on Greenwood in Evanston. "Bruce insisted that our new house must have a basement suitable for printing equipment," Margaret explained. Not only was the basement ample and dry, it also had concrete steps leading straight to the basement, so that a winch could lower very heavy items.

Bob Middleton was Beck's principal mentor in letterpress printing. "I wanted to give Bruce something that would let him know that I supported his press ambitions," Margaret explained. "So I called Bob Middleton. 'Don't buy him a press!' he exclaimed." Ultimately the perfect gift was arrived at, and it was a gift from Middleton: a California case of his Eusebius typeface. "Bruce was always proud that only two people had the Eusebius: Bob Middleton and himself." Margaret hid it in the linen closet, and made Bruce go on a treasure hunt to find it. Ultimately, he had three presses: a Vandercook Universal, a Miehle Vertical, and a Washington hand press. Middleton advised him on each purchase. (I also remember a Colt's Armory for a time.)

It was once he had embarked on printing that he became a Caxtonian, in 1977. "Before then, he had known many members. He saw them at Society of Typographic Arts meetings," Hayward Blake explains. "But he had been

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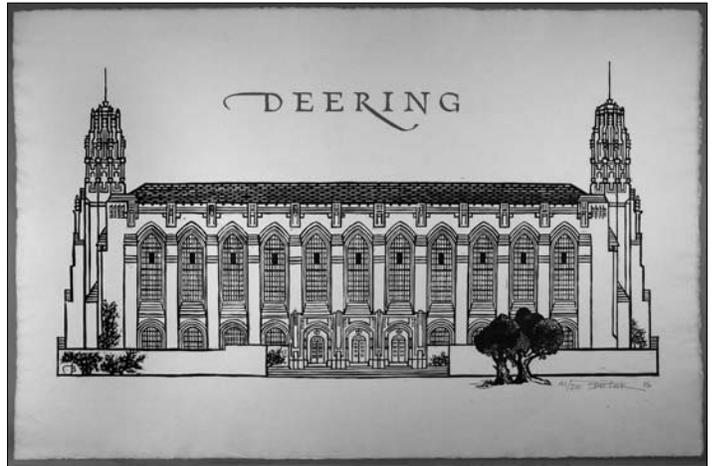
## Russell Maylone remembers Bruce Beck

Bruce Beck and I first met in 1971, when the Northwestern Library needed a bookplate for the collection of the works of the Latin poet Horace. Someone suggested that Bruce might be interested in doing such a bookplate and thus our first

meeting. What happened was less about the bookplate (though one was made) than about using printing and images to promote the library, and we talked of it continuously from then on. Bruce was an advocate of promoting what you thought was good and worthwhile; if you were enthusiastic about it, he was a strong supporter. For thirty years Bruce provided me with advice, suggestions, counsel, restraints (which my enthusiasms always needed) and especially encouragement.

If Bruce was going to support your project, it was going to be with the highest goals and with the anticipation of good results. His enthusiasm carried him along, carried me along, but on occasion the results were not what we had hoped for, though it was never for lack of trying. Special Collections librarians know they never control all that they would like. So did Bruce. He didn't let less than spectacular achievements of one project or another detract from the next project; his enthusiasms remained broad and infectious.

I do not recall when in the 1980s Bruce and I began to talk of what became the lovely Deering Library print, though I think it was in 1986 or 1987. There was a major fund raising campaign beginning to take shape at the Library, and I was thinking that maybe some sort of image of the Deering Library, perhaps a photograph, might make a suitable donor recognition token. In talking about this with Bruce, he suggested an alternative idea, that of a print of Deering. Clearly Bruce was far ahead of me on this for it was only a short time later that he mentioned that he had spent the previous Sunday sketching the Deering Library from



several places on the meadow. I convinced the Library that the print would be a suitable token. Bruce and I talked a good deal over the look of the print, the trees in front of the building, the level of detail, and soon there was a finished drawing. Bruce prepared the very large block, printed the image in his basement at the Turtle Press, and soon the print was a lovely reality that he was, with good reason, very proud of. Alas, the fund raising program came at the wrong time and was not what we, or the Library, had hoped and few of the prints were distributed. Despite the small success Bruce's enthusiasm was not dampened and there were several more projects where our enthusiasms carried us along.

Bruce's generosity with his time, ideas, type, and tools will be recounted by many. I benefited from that generosity to a very large degree. Bruce never insisted that one make large monuments from his gifts, but he conveyed to all of us the sense that we were, in part, keepers of the tradition, the tradition of typography, type, presses and even enthusiasms. It was up to us to pass on the enthusiasms of Bruce, Bob Middleton, and all those who Bruce brought us in contact with to others so that these traditions would not wither and die. Bruce's legacy is made up of his enthusiasms, his generosity and especially his unflagging belief in the goodness of others whose love of the printing craft will continue for years to come, even in the age of computers, which Bruce also loved.

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R. Russell Maylone ('76) was for many years the Curator of the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections at Northwestern University. He has recently retired to Maine.

BRUCE BECK, from page 3

living in Lake Forest, and had too much on his plate. When he was a little closer, in Evanston, and was living printing day in and day out, he wanted to join." Blake also remembers that Jim Wells doggedly pursued Beck to join.

My own relationship to Beck was cemented with a 1981 project called "Typography and the Private Press," which brought together the Caxton Club, the Library Council of Northwestern University, and the Society of Typographic Arts. It involved an exhibit of private press books, held at Northwestern, as well as a series of three meetings on the topic. I had the rare pleasure to serve on the committee (other members were Beck, Robert Adelsperger, Bill Hesterberg, Russell Maylone, and Eugene Richardson) which picked the books for the exhibit and produced its catalog.

Beck was largely responsible for the 1985 Caxton Club book *Robert Hunter Middleton, The Man and His Letters*. Bruce came up with the idea of making it a series of essays, dogged each writer to finish his manuscript, and saw it through to the beautiful finished product. It was the last major Caxton publication to be printed letterpress.

By 1993, Beck had become so indispensable to the club that he was named an honorary member. He was inducted at the same time as Abel Berland, at the May Council meeting. It was as if the Council had chosen symbols for the two branches of Club interest: Berland representing collecting and Beck representing book arts.

One major project Beck worked on for the Club was the 1995 centennial volume, written by Frank Piehl and designed by Beck. It was set in Eusebius, a typeface originally issued in very limited quantities by Ludlow from a design by Bob Middleton. The version for the book was a Postscript adaptation by Paul Baker. I asked Baker what it was like to work with Beck. "He was always demanding. At first, when he was getting to know you, he watched you like a hawk. Then as he developed confidence in your abilities, he would stand back and let you do more on your own. But no matter what stage you were, he was always very particular. He knew what he wanted, and never settled for anything less."

Baker had a couple of other

## Bill Hesterberg remembers Bruce Beck

My wife Barbara and I met Bruce and Margaret through Robert and Katherine Middleton and thanks to the Becks we found a house across the back fence from theirs. The Hesterberg Press finally had a physical home. It also had a compatriot in Bruce, with shared interests, advice and a much needed printing empathy. The Turtle Press was well underway at the time although Bruce was always looking for new ways to print and was quick to incorporate the latest, including digital. He was an exceptional wordsmith and I have

a collection of his work to prove it. Our show and tell visits were frequent and I quickly learned to do my homework because the questions would always come, "Why do you think that". He was a dear friend, always welcoming and eager to talk Design, Advertising, Typography and of course, Fine Printing. I will miss those discussions and his questions.

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*Bill Hesterberg ('05) was an advertising designer and typographer. He has recently retired to his basement to print.*

recollections of Beck, with whom he worked on many projects over the years. One was that he was a pioneer in design research, meaning that he believed the answer to how something for a client should look could be figured out partly by studying the company and the product. "Many times we remember Bruce as the consummate craftsman, not as a thought-

ful businessman. But he was both. I remember several times observing how he handled a new client, one he hoped to do annual reports for. He would spread out 10 or a dozen previous reports, and ask the potential client to look at them. Inevitably one of them would say 'But these are all so different. Don't you have a house style?' Which gave him the chance

to explain that at his design firm every solution was individually crafted to fit the needs of the company, customer, and product."

Baker's second observation was that Beck was a very independent thinker. "I remember when Motorola was proposing to build a plant in Harvard, his home town. The proposal involved deep concessions by the town. But Bruce thought it was a bad idea, fearing that the factory would bring on a boom in Harvard which would be followed by a bust when the company moved on. He tried to get the town managers to see his point of view, but the plant was built. And sure enough, six years later Motorola left town and Harvard was in a worse position than it had been before."

Jack Weiss, one of the Design Partnership, had known Beck as a teacher (at the Institute of Design) as well as a partner. That is how Weiss remembers him still. His talk at the memorial service (held August 8th) was titled "Bruce Beck as Teacher," and asserted that "it was all about typography.... He was fierce about correct typographic usage.... I sometimes feel

*Beck in the Turtle Press. His hand is on the Washington press, and the cylinder in the foreground is part of his Vandercook.*



the hot presence of Bruce's critical commentary about something I may have missed." But he also repeated an observation (by Sharon Poggenpohl) that "He was very accessible and practical. Bruce was willing to think with you – he was an enabler – and that is what a good teacher does."

Rick Valicenti, who worked for Bruce shortly after school and went on to a distinguished career as designer and type designer, remembered Bruce teaching him the joy of

making something. "On so many occasions I remember him coming out of his office, holding his felt-tip drawing on a piece of tracing paper in his hands and a big smile under his mustache." Valicenti concluded his memorial presentation with the story of his first encounter. "On the day I first met Bruce he said to me after he reviewed my wanna-be portfolio, 'I really don't like your work, but I love your (personal) style.' Ever since then I have asked, what type of person actually says

something like this to a young person upon first meeting? The only answer I have come to live with is that this type of person is brutally honest and one that sees himself in others."

Both the Caxton Club and the world of design in Chicago are certainly better because of the contributions of Bruce Beck – not to mention the hundreds of individuals who learned from him or enjoyed his company. He will be missed.

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## Another One for the Books

Dan Crawford

**2008** went down in the Caxton Book of World records as the year of two auctions. The 2007 auction had to be held in March, 2008, and we returned to our regular Revels schedule in December. This was also our tenth year-end auction, and, of course, the first one to be held within nine months of the previous auction. What other statistics were drawn from the event? Fortunately, the Club statistics-monger was present, and made these notes.

Items for sale: 304 in 179 lots

Word used most often by the person who had to store and move these: You really don't want to know

Largest number of books donated by one person: 25

Pages in the catalog: 28

Attendees: 101

Attendees who really missed the music played at the March auction: 0

Bidders: 65

Bidders who won something: 44

Bidders who bid on 10 or more items: 4

Bidder who won the most: One person bid on 23 lots, and won 16 (just beating out the bidder who bid on 31 but won only 7)

Bidders who bid on only one thing and won it: 2

Items bid on by the bidder who bid most without winning anything: 12

People exclaiming "I won that? But I don't remember bidding on it!": 3

Biggest category: Literature, with 30 lots  
Donor from farthest away: Lee J. Harrer (Florida)

Items bought at previous Caxton auctions returned for re-sale by owners who wanted to pass the joy along: 3

Caxtonians who, in response to a request, donated books they had written: 7

Tours offered: Beer Tour (Ed Bronson), Military History Tour (Pritzker Military History Library), Cemetery Tour (Helen Sclair), Lincoln Tour (Brooks Davis), Newberry Library Tour (Paul Gehl and Jill Gage)

Signed books: 28

Books signed by Pulitzer or Nobel winners: Nobel: *Borlaug on World Hunger* (donated by Bob Cotner), Pulitzer: *Moo*, by Jane Smiley (donated by Janis Notz) and *Damascus Gate* by Robert Stone (donated by Susan Levy) and one winner of both: *Paradise*, by Toni Morrison (donated by Janis Notz)

Books by, about, or otherwise connected to Caxtonians (aside from donors): 54

Most thoroughly Caxtonian item: *The Crockett Almanacs* (donated by Adrian Alexander), not only published by the Club in 1955, but a speaker's copy, inscribed by members to John I. Tucker for his talk on *Tarzan*

Most books about a single event: 4 books on the Chicago Fire (donated by Roger S. Baskes)

Most related to the upcoming Association copy volume: Joy Morton's copy of the *Works of Theodore Roosevelt* (Joy Morton's brother Paul served in Roosevelt's cabinet as Secretary of the Navy)

Oldest item: 13th century manuscript leaf from II Maccabees (donated by Junie Sinson)

Newest Item: The 2008 Lakeside Classic (donated by Susan Levy), or *In Every Book a Little Truth* (donated by Muriel Underwood), each hot off the presses

Most edible items: gift cards good for \$250 at any Lettuce Entertain You restaurant (from Lettuce Entertain You, through the agency of Bill Locke)

Heaviest single book: *Gastronomic Bibliography* (donated by Steve Tomashefsky)

Lightest item: either the silver bookmark from Tiffany's (donated by Donna Tuke) or the ad for beds used at the Women's Athletic

Club (donated by Evelyn J. Lampe)

Biggest items: the signed Peter Darro animal prints, measuring about 2 x 3 feet (donated by "an anonymous print accumulator")

Happiest item: a Joy Beastie by Milwaukee artist Donald Pearson gave the whole auction an air of "Hip Hooray!" (donated by Wendy C. Husser)

Book there most often: *Art Through the Pages*, 3 copies of which were spread among the categories (donated by Susan Rossen; all of 'em sold, too)

Prettiest item: The copy of Algernon Swinburne's *Tristram of Lyonesse* published by Thomas Mosher and specially bound with morocco slipcase at R.R. Donnelley and Sons (donated by James R. Donnelley)

Most unusual historical items: Either *The Cardinal's Mistress*, Benito Mussolini's only novel (donated by Jeanne Goessling) or three prints from Drew Mattot's Combat Papers, dealing with the Gulf War and printed on paper made from recycled uniform cloth (donated by Drew Mattot)

Most prophetic items: a 1957 Caxton Club invitation to a talk on whether electronic media could take the place of books, and a 1951 Caxton Club invitation reminding members to make reservations good and early, so as to guarantee a reliable count (donated by the Caxton Club)

Most bid-upon items: a signed copy of Art Shay's *Chicago's Nelson Algren*, (donated by Florence Shay), with 14 bids, and the 1910 Northwestern University calendar (donated by William Clark), with 13

Dollars raised: About 6700

Dollars raised at the next auction: That depends on the wonderful books YOU send in, of course.

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## Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Bernice E. Gallagher

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

Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600: "Picture Perfect: Art from the Caldecott Award Books, 2006-2009" (seventeen Caldecott Medal books), Ryan Education Center and Gallery 10, through November 8; "Daniel Burnham's Plan of Chicago" (an exhibition presented in five separate rotations, including maps, diagrams, perspective drawings and watercolors), Gallery 24, through December 15; "Playing with Pictures: The Art of Victorian Photocollage" (rarely displayed albums and loose pages from collections across the United States, Europe and Australia, avant-garde works combining photographs and watercolors in whimsical and fantastical compositions), Galleries 1 and 2, through January 3, 2010; "Heart and Soul: Art from Coretta Scott King Award Books, 2006-2009" (a collection of picture books whose African American authors and illustrators promote understanding and appreciation of all cultures and their contributions to the American dream), Ryan Education Center and Gallery 10, November 21 through April 18, 2010.

Lenhardt Library, Chicago Botanic Garden, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: "Kew: 250 Years of Science at the Royal Botanic Gardens" (selected publications of the Royal Botanic Gardens, all of which made a significant impact on science), through November 15; "Children's Books Around the World" (uncommon children's books on nature and the plant world, published in eastern and western Europe and delighting young and old alike), November 20 through February 2, 2010.

Harold Washington Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: "Inspiring Dreams! Promoting the Burnham Plan" (featuring documents and artifacts used to promote the "selling" of the Burnham plan to the Chicago City Planning Commission and the public as well), Chicago Gallery, 3rd Floor, through February 2010; "Tall Man of Destiny: Images of Abraham Lincoln" (images of the president made during his lifetime, after his death in 1865 and through to today, all from the Chicago Public Library's Grand Army of the Republic and Civil War Collections), Special Collections Exhibition Hall, 9th Floor, through February 2010.

2009 Chicago Humanities Festival: "Laughter" (ninety programs at nineteen venues featuring writers, scholars, filmmakers, politicians and economists, offering opinions on ethnic and cultural shadings of laughter, the battles around humor and political correctness, gallows humor and medical ethics, laughter and the brain, and laughter as imagined by artists including Moliere, Mozart and Beckett), information and tickets at 312-494-9509 or [www.chicago-humanities.org](http://www.chicago-humanities.org), November 2 through 15.

Center for Book and Paper Arts, Columbia College Chicago, 2nd Floor, 1104 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, 312-369-6631: "Pearl of the Snowlands: Buddhist Printing at the Derge Parkhang" (from the collection of the only surviving traditional printing temple in Tibet, a living cultural institution that stores the woodblocks used to publish sutras/holy scriptures, commentaries, and histories of traditional Tibetan Buddhism), through December 5.

DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 East 56th Place, Chicago, 773-947-0600: "The Soul of Bronzeville: The Regal, Club DeLisa, and the Blues" (original photographs, personal memorabilia, music and concert collectibles, all from the Chicago Blues Museum), through December 13.

Cudahy Library, Loyola University, 1032 W. Sheridan Road, Chicago, 773-508-2632: "Daniel H. Burnham, Creator of 1909 Plan of Chicago" (archival material highlighting the city before the Burnham Plan, at the time of the Great Chicago Fire, the 1893 Columbian Exposition, the 1909 Plan of Chicago, and after the Burnham Plan), Donovan Reading Room, ongoing.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: "With Malice Toward None: The Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Exhibition" (a Library of Congress exhibition featuring books, broadsides, newspapers, prints, photographs, artifacts, maps, manuscript letters, the Bible on which President Lincoln swore the oath of

office, his hand-annotated First Inaugural Address, and early copies or facsimiles of the Second Inaugural Address, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address), Smith and East Galleries, through December 19; "Honest Abe of the West" (selections from the Newberry's rich collection, including rare copies of printed materials relating to the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates, recently discovered ephemera from the 1860 presidential election and the Republican Convention held in Chicago, and more), Donnelley Gallery, through February 15, 2010.

Charles Deering Library, Northwestern University, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: "Burnham at Northwestern" (documents, photographs, blueprints and sketches of Daniel Burnham's 1905 "Plans of Northwestern," a redesign of the University's Evanston campus), Special Collections and Archives, ongoing.

University of Illinois at Chicago Library, Special Collections, 801 S. Morgan Street, Chicago, 312-996-2742: "English in Print" (fifty items drawing from the University's remarkable English Renaissance collections, including a 1570 copy of Euclid's Elements of Geometrie, Milton's Areopagitica (1644), the first appearance of an English font (1566), and a Lily grammar (1566) used by school children until the late 19th century), Room 3-330, through November 30.

Bernice Gallagher will be happy to receive your listings at either 847-234-5255 or [gallagher@lakeforest.edu](mailto:gallagher@lakeforest.edu).



Laughing at Norman Rockwell at Humanities Festival  
IMAGE FROM MASSLIVE.COM

# Caxtonians Collect: Richard Lamm

Fifty-ninth in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Lise McKean

By age seven, Richard Lamm knew he was going to collect something. And he told his grandfather it was going to be something smaller than the vintage farm equipment looming over him that his father and grandfather restored in the limestone barn on the family farm in Freeport, Illinois.

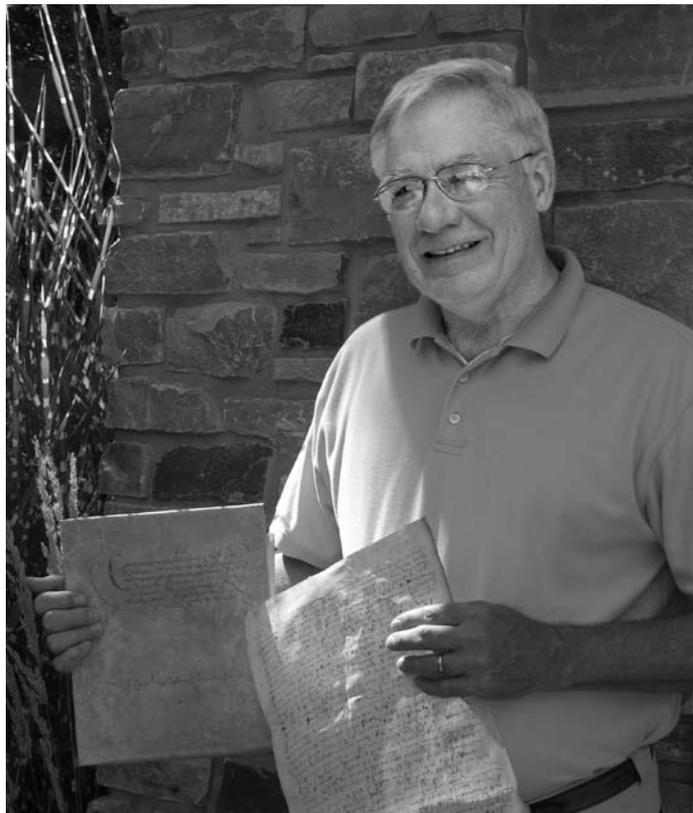
Richard met his wife Becky when they were in school together – he the farm boy, she the town girl. After marrying they lived for a while in nearby Dixon but later returned to Freeport, where they now live.

They have three children and seven grandchildren. When we spoke, Richard was on the cusp of retirement from his position as a partner at an accounting firm. In October he launched his own CPA firm, which will specialize in complex tax issues affecting businesses and individuals, including estate planning. Among his free-time activities, Richard serves on the boards of several local nonprofit organizations and plays pick-up games of basketball.

Richard's mother encouraged his childhood interest in reading and books by giving him engaging, attractive, and well-crafted books. When he was a student at Loras College, he saw an exhibition of manuscript letters from the library's collection and "got hooked." The letters' palpable connection to persons and times long past stirred his imagination and thus he discovered his collecting destiny – manuscript letters and pre-nineteenth-century handwritten books. The first manuscripts in his collection were a Christmas gift from his parents. They were a group of letters sent in 1885 to President Grant from Civil War veterans in which each writer "carefully crafted words to express his feelings for the dying hero." In Richard's view, the way that a manuscript can evoke the past is all the more powerful because "in many cases it's the only tangible thing that's left of people's lives. To be able to hold a manuscript in which an ordinary or famous person has written down their feelings is very precious or important to me."

Complementing the appeal of manuscripts

to his emotional sensibilities are the intellectual horizons that they can open up. That is, before and after acquiring something, Richard enjoys immersing himself in research to learn about the historical context of the item: "Collecting allows me to gain knowledge about fields I'm not familiar with." Take for example his research on a centerpiece of his collection, the manuscript for *Traité analytique des sections coniques* by Guillaume-François-Antoine de L'Hospital, which was published posthumously in 1707. Richard learned that this early work on applying algebra to geo-



metrical questions was an antecedent of the mathematics used in rocket science. In like fashion, reading up on L'Hospital introduced him to two erudite eighteenth-century Italian women. Maria Gaetana Agnesi published an authoritative early work on finite and infinitesimal analysis and wrote a commentary on L'Hospital's treatise on cones. The portrait of her sister, composer, librettist, and musician, Maria Teresa Agnesi, hangs in the La Scala Theatre Museum.

In addition to the L'Hospital manuscript, Richard counts among the highlights of his collection: court records from the Spanish Civil War; letters from colonial South

America, including a group from Jesuit priests; nearly twenty years of love letters by William Waldorf Astor; an archive of an Arkansas family spanning two centuries and documenting important events and daily activities; and maritime letters in Spanish concerning shipments from the New World.

Richard learned about the Caxton Club through his involvement with the Manuscript Society, some of whose members are also Caxtonians. He attended his first Caxton meeting as a guest of Peter Stanlis. Nominated by Peter as well as Anthony Mourek and Scott

Petersen, three men he considers as "Renaissance persons," Richard became a Caxtonian in 2006.

About his collecting predilections and ongoing discoveries of unexpected interconnections among fields of knowledge, Richard said, "I enjoy the random accumulation of information. I find that in an informal sense seemingly unrelated disciplines become very relevant to each other." Richard also delights in the way manuscripts can bring to life the process of their creation: "You can see erasures, strikeouts – you can see the mind working. They're good for researchers." Many items in his collection pose additional intellectual challenges such as deciphering their handwriting and translating them into English.

Just as he is intrigued by the ways that manuscripts enliven the past, Richard understands that safeguarding their future is cause for concern and action. He believes that collectors need to place important manu-

scripts where they can be preserved and made available for study. In 2008 he donated two collections of letters to the Newberry Library. One comprises seventeenth century Spanish letters concerning the life of Ferdinand III, King of Castile and León, letters which had supported his canonization in 1671. The other collection consists of personal letters to Dr. Frank T. Siebert, a pathologist, authority on Algonquian languages and Catawba, and bibliophile – a consummate collector who once sold his own blood to raise the cash for a rare 1806 second edition of *Essay of a Delaware-Indian and English Spelling-Book*.

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# CAXTONIAN

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 USA

## Bookmarks...

### Luncheon Program

Friday, November 13, 2009, Union League Club

Mrs. Robert Newberry McCreary

“Two Legacies of Walter Loomis Newberry: A Great Library and His Daughter Julia’s Remarkable Diary”

It’s all in the family when Kathleen McCreary, wife of the great-grandnephew of the founder of the Newberry Library, fondly and revealingly presents a slide lecture about Walter Loomis Newberry and some of his fascinating descendants including, most specifically, Julia, his last surviving child (out of 6) who died tragically at age 22 (in 1876), but not before she left an amazingly insightful diary whose style and content could be said to be a cross between Anne Frank and Jane Austen. Included in Julia’s musings are firsthand accounts of the Chicago fire, a Midwesterner’s view of dazzling European Society on Grand Tour, perceptions about wealthy 19th-century American women including the expectations and restraints placed upon them, and caustic remarks about her unrequited suitor: Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte.

You won’t be disappointed!

*The November luncheon will take place at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (in the main dining room on six) opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, to be announced) 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$30. Details of the November dinner: it will take place at the Adler Planetarium. If unfamiliar with its location, consult the Adler web site. Timing: spirits at 4:30. Dinner at 5:30,*

### Beyond November...

#### DECEMBER LUNCHEON

On Dec. 11, Susan Hanes will take us on the journey which produced her book *Wilke Collins’s American Tour 1873-4*. She’ll cover his life and her research – frustrations and triumphs.

#### DECEMBER DINNER

December 16 will bring the annual Revels and Auction to Ruggles Hall at the Newberry. Get your items to Dan Crawford at the Newberry for the auction: the sooner, the better!

#### JANUARY LUNCHEON

On January 8, Caxtonian John Railing will present an illustrated talk about moveable books, beginning in the 16th century, and including gems from his vast collection of over 6,000 items.

#### JANUARY DINNER

The January dinner meeting will be held on the 20th at the Cliff Dwellers. Speaker to be announced.

*Dinner at the Adler – See details below!*

### Dinner Program

Wednesday, November 18, 2009, Adler Planetarium

Marvin Bolt

“Through the Looking Glass”

After Hans Lipperhey unveiled a telescope on September 25, 1608, the device spread around Europe and into Asia. People used telescopes to spy on neighbors and on military and economic competitors. People also viewed the heavens, radically changing our understanding of the universe and our place in it. We will learn about a few pioneers of these telescopes and several important artifacts and books relating to the early years and evolution of the instrument. There will an opportunity to view the artifacts and volumes on display in the Adler’s new exhibition, *Through the Looking Glass: 400 years of telescopes*, which is the nation’s (and quite possibly the world’s) most complete exhibition on the topic.

Caxtonian Marvin Bolt is curator of the exhibition, Director of the Webster Institute for the History of Astronomy, and Vice President for Collections at the Adler. Copies of the exhibition catalog will be available for sale and signing.

*presentation with dessert from 6:30 to 7:00. Tour of exhibit at 7:00 to 8:00. Dinner is \$51, with cash bar. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org; reservations are needed by noon Tuesday for the Friday luncheon, and by noon Friday for the Wednesday dinner.*