



LEFT: A life's work on a shelf – a sampling of Wright Howes's catalogs, the first and second editions of *U.S.IANA*, and the "updated" edition by Hartley. INSET: Howes himself.

Making Americana Accessible: *U.S.IANA* and Wright Howes

John C. Blew

Wright Howes (1882-1978), ably assisted by his wife and business partner, Zoe Howes (1887-1977), operated an antiquarian book business in Chicago specializing in rare and collectible Americana for 45 years, from 1925 to 1970. Howes rose to the very top of his field, becoming known nationally and internationally as one of the foremost dealers in antiquarian Americana during a time considered by some to have been the golden age of rare book collecting in this country. Nevertheless, if Wright Howes is remembered at all today, it is likely to be as the compiler of *U.S.IANA*. In its definitive second edition, published under the auspices of the Newberry Library in April 1962, this oddly-titled bibliography of uncommon Americana contains, in a single volume, 11,620 separate entries, many of which are accompanied by succinct, penetrating and witty annotations. The Newberry Library has

mounted an exhibition, currently on display, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the publication of the second edition of *U.S.IANA* and the relationship between Howes and Everett Graff.

U.S.IANA remains in regular use today by collectors, dealers, and librarians. Enter any antiquarian bookshop specializing in Americana and ask to borrow its copy of *U.S.IANA*, and I can almost guarantee, unless recently replaced, that the book will show the effects of heavy use. The nation's leading Americana dealer, Bill Reese of New Haven, told me that *U.S.IANA* is "the one bibliography that I actually keep on my desk in easy reach. It is the single most valuable book of its kind." Ken Nebenzahl, one of the most

important Americana dealers of the second half of the 20th century, told me "If it wasn't in Howes, then it usually wasn't worth buying. Howes was totally indispensable. I don't know what I would have done without it."

Wright Howes and Everett Graff

While *U.S.IANA* is the centerpiece of this article, no discussion would be complete or even meaningful without first introducing the compiler, Wright Howes, and its principal sponsor, Everett Graff.

Howes was born in 1882 in Macon, Georgia. His roots in America on both sides of his family can be traced to the 17th century. His father was general manager of a small hosiery manufacturer and dealer in knitting yarn. His mother came from a long line of Southern plantation owners and military leaders, including at least one Confederate general. Raised in a middle-class household, Howes attended public elementary and high schools in Macon. He then enrolled at Mercer University, a private men's college located in Macon. After his first college year, his father, whose textile firm had been acquired by a much larger company, was transferred to New York City by his new employer. Howes enrolled in

Columbia University for a year and then, without graduating, entered Columbia Law School, from which he graduated with an LL.B. degree in June 1905.

Howes practiced law for less than two years in Rogers, Arkansas, and then gave it up to enter the book business, making stops in Kansas City, San Antonio, New York City, and Boston before finally settling in Chicago in 1912. There he worked first for Powney's



Book Store in the Methodist Church Block at 37 North Clark Street (the "House of a Million Books") and then, after spending
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two years as a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army in World War I, as manager of Powner's Antiquarian Book Store at 26 East Van Buren Street until 1924. With his wife, Zoe (whom he married in 1919), he opened his own antiquarian bookshop in Chicago on January 1, 1925 on the ground floor of the building where they lived at 1142 South Michigan Avenue. By the mid-1930s, Howes had emerged as one of the preeminent dealers in the country specializing in rare and collectible Americana. During his years as a bookseller, Howes issued 73 catalogs, a complete set of which can be found at the Newberry Library. Many of these catalogs, with their informative, scholarly, and humorous annotations, are classics in the field of Americana.

Wright and Zoe Howes lived modestly in rented apartments all of their life together. They never owned nor knew how to drive a car. They were childless. Although cultivated and urbane, their lives centered on their book business. After closing their shop on South Michigan Avenue in 1939, they conducted the business from their book-filled apartments, first at 100 East Chicago Avenue and then at 1018 North State Street. Zoe was an integral part of the business. She kept the accounts, filled orders, conducted most of the correspondence with customers, and paid the bills. She was also a skilled bookbinder who repaired or rebound damaged books. All of this work by Zoe freed Wright to do what he loved and did best: the acquisition, cataloging, and selling of the books, handling visits and calls from customers and other dealers, poring over catalogues received and the nearly continuous reading of a great many of the books which he stocked. He favored first-person or eye-witness accounts based on interviews with those who participated in the events. Wright Howes was a handsome, gracious, kind, and unassuming Southern gentleman, possessed of a dry wit, who was generous in sharing with all comers his prodigious knowledge of American history and of the books, pamphlets, and more ephemeral written evidences of that history. Reflecting in part his Southern upbringing, he remained throughout his long life deeply conservative, both politically and socially.

Everett Graff was born in 1885, three years after Howes, in the small town of Clarinda, Iowa. His father was the proprietor of a successful department store and a state legislator. After attending public schools in Clarinda, Graff went to Lake Forest College, graduating in 1906. Following college, he was employed in a sales position by Joseph T. Ryerson & Son, Inc., a steel service company. Graff spent his entire business career with Ryerson, holding successive positions of increasing importance. When Ryerson merged with Inland Steel Company, Graff became president of the Ryerson

subsidiary and a member of the board of both parent and subsidiary, all of which positions he held until his retirement in 1951 at age 65. Over the course of his 45-year career with Ryerson and Inland, Graff became a prominent, powerful, respected, and wealthy member of the Chicago business community. Following his retirement, he became a civic leader as well, serving as a trustee and President of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1954 to 1958 and as a trustee and President of the Newberry Library from 1952 until his death at age 78 in 1964.

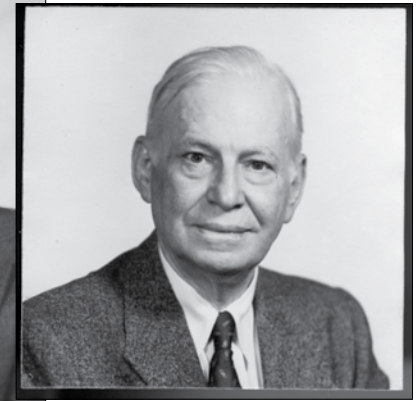
Graff was an assiduous student of American history. Throughout his adult life, his great passion was collecting books, manuscripts, and other items dealing with the exploration, pacification, settlement, and development of the trans-Mississippi West. Over more than 40 years, Graff assembled a collection exceeding 10,000 items, which he left to the Newberry Library along with substantial funds for an endowment to maintain and enhance it. The Everett D. Graff Collection of Western Americana at the Newberry is generally regarded as one of the finest and most important such collections in the world, in terms of breadth, depth, rarity, and condition. Unlike many collectors, Graff read and understood the historical context of a great many of the books and other materials he collected.

Graff and Howes first met when the former, a neophyte collector, began to visit the Howes shop on South Michigan Avenue in the late 1920s. Howes was a mentor to Graff in the early days of their relationship, and for many years Graff was one of Howes' most important customers. Over time, they became close friends. The relationship was symbiotic. Graff rapidly came up the Americana learning curve, and in time he and Howes became near equals in terms of their knowledge and love of American history and collectible Americana.

The Sources of U.S.IANA

For nearly 20 years before opening his own business in Chicago, Howes, in addition to being an independent book scout, was the co-proprietor of two book stores and an employee of at least two others. These establishments sold both new and antiquarian books, common during that period. Howes' specialty was the antiquarian side. He crisscrossed the country many times by train, calling on libraries, historical societies, schools, rare book dealers, and collectors to buy and sell books. After establishing his own business, he continued to make such trips as well as at least seven lengthy buying trips to Europe, the source and repository of so much important early Americana.

Throughout his entire career in the book business, Howes took detailed notes in a highly organized fashion – for his own use – on the bibliographic features of the antiquarian books which he bought, sold,



Howes over the years.

or otherwise handled or saw during his travels. Howes kept these notes in a number of “little black books” which were legendary in the trade. The total number of these handwritten pocket notebooks is unknown, and undoubtedly some have been lost. Bill Reese, who calls Wright Howes one of his “personal heroes” in the Americana book world, has ten of them in his collection. Ken Nebenzahl was a friend of Wright’s and a frequent visitor to his home. When I asked Ken if he had ever seen these notebooks, he quickly responded with “Oh yes. They were on a shelf right behind his chair. He had a whole row of them.”

The idea of creating a reasonably comprehensive, yet practical and portable, Americana reference book sprang from multiple sources.

Everett Graff



One source was the widely acknowledged need. Americana bibliographies available at the time and which covered much of the same ground were: Evans, 14 volumes which covered only books printed in America up to 1801; Sabin, 29 volumes compiled over many years by three different bibliographers with decidedly different strengths and biases and with a hemispheric scope; and Church, a collection catalog consisting of five hefty illustrated volumes devoted primarily to early European Americana. A number of more specialized bibliographies featured Americana of a particular region or event, but these were inherently limited in scope and spotty in coverage.

The entreaties of other dealers and collectors, who had dealt with Howes for many years and were aware of his notebooks and his comprehensive knowledge, collectively formed another source. Many of them urged Howes to make his knowledge available in published form so they might take advantage of it. Howes by nature was inclined to share his knowledge: he had done so freely throughout his career with customers, dealers, and others. The idea must have been germinating in his mind for years. Bound into the back of one of the 16 leather-bound volumes containing Howes’ personal set of his 73 catalogs now in Mr. Reese’s collection is an abbreviated list of 3,000 items. Mr. Reese believes this list was prepared by Howes from 1943 to 1945, and he suggests that it is an indication of “the developing scope of the work from [Howes’] bookseller’s notes.”

Nevertheless, although I have no hard evidence, a major impetus for *U.S.IANA*, if not its principal source, was undoubtedly the prodding of Everett Graff. After all, as a long-time important collector of Americana and student of American history, Graff was

aware of the need for such a useful tool. In addition, as a close and respected friend, as well as an important and nearby customer, he had regular contact with and the “ear” of Howes and must have recognized that Howes was capable of producing such a work. Finally, as the wealthy President of the Newberry Library, Graff was in a position to influence the library to finance and support the production and publication of such a volume, probably with funds which he contributed to the library. One hint of the important role played by Graff in the creation of *U.S.IANA* is the following inscription by Howes in Graff’s copy of the 1954 first edition, now in my collection:

“To Everett Graff who was a silent partner in this undertaking. Wright Howes. November 29th 1954”

The Creation and Content of *U.S.IANA*

These sources came together to produce action shortly after 1950. Howes, then in his late 60s, was reducing his activities as a bookseller. He issued his last catalog in 1949. In 1951, probably at Graff’s instigation and with his help, Wright and Zoe moved to an apartment on the first floor of the Irving Apartments at 1018 North State Street. The Irving was owned by the Newberry and located a block from it. Many Newberry staff members and scholars visiting the library had apartments there. The location was convenient for Wright, and both he and Zoe enjoyed socializing with Newberry trustees, staff, and users, many of whom were their close friends. In addition, the rent on the apartment was below market rates, another source of support from the library.

A critical step in making the book a reality was Howes’ appointment by the Trustees of the Newberry Library as a Fellow in Bibliography. See *U.S.IANA*, page 4



U.S.IANA built upon the tradition of trade catalogs the Howes had issued over the years. The cover of this one pictures the interior of his Michigan Avenue shop.

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raphy from 1952 to 1954, for the purpose of preparing what the library, in its announcement of this appointment, referred to as a “selective dictionary of uncommon and important books dealing with regions now the United States.” The fellowship provided an annual stipend of \$5,000, a part-time assistant, an office at the library, access to the library’s collections, and other forms of tangible support to assist Howes in compiling the first edition of *U.S.IANA*. Again, it is reasonable to assume that Graff, who was about to become President of the Newberry, was instrumental in Howes obtaining this position. Another key supporter of Howes was his good friend Dr. Stanley Pargellis, a former Rhodes Scholar and history professor who was Librarian of the Newberry from 1942 to 1962.

In May 1952, the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America (ABAA) published and distributed to its members and many others a five-page prospectus of the book written by Howes and entitled an *Outline of A Bibliography of United States History*. This

unprecedented step was taken by the ABAA, it said in the foreword to the pamphlet, because the work was “deemed . . . to be a project of such moment to the host of Americanists . . . on whose shelves it is destined to occupy a place that some advance notice of its character, aims, method, and scope would be welcome.” In this outline, Howes described what he was doing, why he thought it desirable that it be done, and how it was being done. But first, in his laconic and witty style, he stated that:

“to make understandable the necessity for certain compromises and limitations in scope and treatment soon to be disclosed, it must be explained that this experiment is scheduled for completion three years from the start of operations. In actual working time this will be one and a half years, as the two persons engaged in it – myself and the competent assistant supplied by the library – work half days only. A longer time would be preferable, of course, but just isn’t practicable. In a commendable cause, limited servitude is endurable; but anyone – even an infatuated

bibliophile – balks at indeterminate bondage, or a lifetime at the galleys.”

As we shall see, Howes was as good as his word. With respect to the aim and scope of the book, Howes stated:

“Briefly, the plan is to compile a selective, though reasonably comprehensive, reference tool offering essential bibliographical data concerning a certain class of books – namely those of a character genuinely significant or useful, and not too common or commercially valueless, relating to the history of that portion of this continent comprising the present United States; books printed anywhere, in any language, within the last two and a half centuries (1700 to 1950), with emphasis on those having wide or national rather than narrow, limited or local appeal.”

Although there were a number of exceptions for important works, Howes explained that sets of more than five or six books would be arbitrarily excluded, as would pamphlets of less than 24 pages, broadsides and broadsheets,

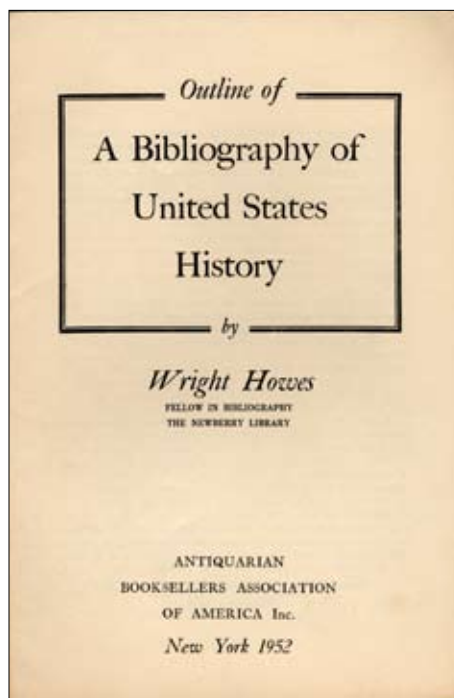
periodicals, almanacs, legal reports, constitutions, charters, technical treaties, and many official documents. Geographic limitation to books (no matter the language or where published) relating to affairs of the continental United States (including Alaska) led to the bibliography's awkward title. A subject limitation excluded books not fundamentally historical "... in a strictly orthodox ... sense" – thus, no fiction, drama, poetry, orations, and sermons. The books included would have more of national than local interest, resulting in, as Howes put it, "escape from myriads of town and county annals, as only those particularly rare or meritorious will have to be included."

Perhaps the most significant limitation would be chronological, listing only books published after 1700 (and up to 1950). It was, Howes said, "necessary but highly regrettable." He justified this limitation on the grounds that to cover 450 years in a single volume would have resulted in a "thin, skimpy treatment consisting mostly of high-spots," that there already existed adequate bibliographical coverage of this early period (for example, the Church catalog earlier referred to), and most importantly that it is:

"... the later period that the vast majority of our book-buying population – collectors, libraries, and antiquarian booksellers – are chiefly interested; books on that period are far more frequently bought and sold; information concerning them more constantly required."

Another element of the book was to limit entries to relatively uncommon and significant books, excluding all which Howes regarded as commonly available or mediocre. Thus, for example, two important and well-written 19th century works – the two-volume memoirs of both Grant and Sherman – are excluded from *U.S.IANA*, not on the grounds of mediocrity – far from it, as Howes himself was quick to acknowledge – but because they were both issued in immense numbers and copies were widely available at very modest prices.

Howes explained that he would evaluate the comparative rarity of each listed item, using a rating system based on commercial value as the "yardstick" of rarity. Through auction records, other booksellers' catalogs, and his own extensive experience and contacts, Howes kept meticulous track of the sale prices of an amazing number of titles over an extended period of time. The rating system consisted of a series of "value symbols," as Howes called them, comprising the lower case letters "a," "b," "c," "d," and "dd," with "a" to repre-



The ABAA threw its weight behind the project by publishing a prospectus, well in advance of the book's appearance.

sent books which were "mildly scarce" and "dd" to represent "superlatively rare books, almost unobtainable." Each such symbol also carried with it an estimated market value range expressed in dollars. This comparative rating system, Howes stated in the outline, would be a "composite of [the book's] rarity, importance, the demand for it, and commercial market value;" an entirely new innovation, it was to prove among the most useful as well as controversial aspects of *U.S.IANA*. Also, the locations in libraries or collections of perfect copies of any book rated "b" or better would be set forth when known, but confined to no more than two such repositories.

In the 1952 prospectus, Howes identified the individual elements each entry would contain and how the work would be assembled as follows:

- (i) bibliographical information would be confined to essentials, given using abbreviations in most cases;
- (ii) arrangement would be alphabetical by author; if the author is unknown, by a proper name of a person or place in the title;
- (iii) entry treatment would accord "pretty much" with established practice, giving in order author, title, publication place and date, size, and collation; each collation would include numbers of pages, maps, and plates and any other data – such as advertising pages, if any, necessary to establish the "correct physi-

cal integrity" of the book;

(iv) later editions, reprints or translations into languages other than the original would be identified, frequently with similar collations; and

(v) there would be no restriction to books printed in the English language or those published in the United States, since so much important Americana originated abroad, mostly in Europe and mostly in the language of the author's home country.

With respect to why he was undertaking the project, Howes simply said that there was an "undeniable desirability" for a bibliographical guide to books confined to the United States since no such work existed.

The 1954 First Edition

It was an enormously ambitious – almost heroic – venture for one man nearing 70 to undertake, working part time and aided by a part-time assistant whose work was largely confined to typing entries and correspondence and proofreading. Ken Nebenzahl told me, "[Howes] expended an enormous amount of time and effort on *U.S.IANA*. People today cannot imagine the individual effort required to compile a work of that complexity and size and scope without computers and without anything ... All of the entries were done by hand." Howes labored diligently on the project for nearly three years, walking daily from his apartment at the Irving to his office at the Newberry.

While Howes had personal knowledge of and much bibliographic data concerning many entries in *U.S.IANA*, by necessity he was required to gather much of the information from a painstaking process of examining books in the collections of the Newberry and Graff, from consulting other bibliographies (the source of many errors embedded in *U.S.IANA* to this day), and from voluminous correspondence with dealers, librarians, and collectors throughout the United States and abroad. In addition, he prepared lists and "slips" of collated works which he rated "b" or better – i.e., "rare" – and sent them to the New York Public Library, the Yale University Library, and the American Antiquarian Society for checking by those institutions with respect to whether they had "perfect" copies in their collections. As Ken mentioned, all this took place before the era of the fax machine, the computer, email, or the Internet. Without question, however, Howes' own resources, both his

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U.S.IANA, from page 5

extraordinary memory and the contents of his field notebooks, formed the most important source for the nearly 12,000 works included in the first edition of *U.S.IANA*.

The ABAA/Howes prospectus was greeted with widespread enthusiasm and encouragement, though there were a few dissenters. Surely the most vocal critic was Charles Heartman, a curmudgeon if ever there was one. Heartman was a respected bibliographer, antiquarian bookseller, and editor of a magazine for book collectors. In November 1952, a few months after the ABAA issued the Howes prospectus, Heartman self-published a six-page response entitled *U.S.IANA, A New Bibliography: One Commercial Bibliographer to Another*. In this "open letter," Heartman took Howes to task for the bibliographic compromises Howes outlined. And he didn't pull any punches.

His first words were:

"So we're going to have another 'Selected' bibliography. One of those which requires 700 apologies, explanations, and never satisfies anybody. Least of all the research worker for whom, after all, bibliographies are compiled. That all of this should be the work of a bookseller astonishes me in the extreme. In fact, I read and reread the outline. I did so with mounting anger . . . [T]he intelligent bookseller . . . learns daily, and as he grows in intellectual stature, the outstanding unpleasant and regrettable experience he daily has to endure because of the incompleteness and imperfections of the bibliographies he uses should sharpen his wits. And now you are going to add to this mess? For shame I say."

And it was all downhill from there! According to Heartman, the only good bibliography is one complete in all scholarly respects and free from imperfections. Heartman missed – or chose to ignore – the point and purpose of *U.S.IANA*. Howes made no claim to perfection. He wanted to create a practical and useful reference for the audience to whom the book was aimed, and he wanted to complete the project in a reasonable period of time.

Perhaps the most widely criticized aspect of Howes' bibliography was its title, *U.S.IANA*. To explain it, Howes stated in the outline that the typical collector of the mid-20th century, unlike his 19th and early 20th century counterpart, limited his buying to:

" . . . material relating to the United States, generally even to some specific section of it, some particular period or phase . . . He still

Antiquarian Bookman

THE SPECIALIST BOOK TRADE WEEKLY

MAY 8, 1954



Front Row Center at the Parke-Bernet Sale of Western Americana belonging to W. J. Holliday. (L to r): Michael J. Walsh (Goodspeed's, Boston), Ernest J. Wessen (Midland Rare Book Co, Mansfield, O), Wright Howes (Chicago), Everett Graff (collector, Chicago), Edward Eberstadt, (NY), and Arthur Swann (v-p, Parke-Bernet). Full report of record prices in this issue of AB.

The Antiquarian Bookman pictured Howes and Graff (third and fourth from the left) at the center of things in this 1954 issue.

calls himself a collector of Americana but he really isn't. He is a collector of only a small portion of Americana. He is – to coin a more specific and less misleading word – a collector of U.S.iana."

Howes intended to differentiate the area covered by the continental United States from the larger Western Hemisphere. Some might argue that Howes, who loved to write doggerel and did so all his life, chose the title with tongue in cheek. For example, he inscribed a copy to two of his closest friends, John and

Katherine Miller, with the following verse:

"Let both of them sing hail and hosanna,
They now own a copy of *U.S.IANA*"

Bill Reese believes – and I agree with him – that Howes tried to make a serious point with the name and hoped it would become a "catch phrase." But it didn't work. Nearly every reviewer, and everyone else who embraced the book, hated the title – which they branded with words such as "infelicitous," "ungainly," "unpronounceable," and the like – and refused to use it. Also, few could even spell it correctly.

Fortunately, it was and remains common practice to refer to bibliographies by the names of their compiler(s) – for example, Evans, Sabin, Wagner-Camp, Vail, and so on. In the case of *U.S.IANA* the book was quickly and pretty much universally referred to simply as “Howes,” as in “may I borrow your Howes?” This remains true to this day.

The publisher of *U.S.IANA* was the R.R. Bowker Company of New York. According to Jim Wells, Custodian of the Wing Foundation at the Newberry Library at the time and a good friend of Wright and Zoe, the Newberry sought out and engaged Bowker to publish and promote *U.S.IANA* because “the Newberry had no real mechanism for distributing the work.” Jim also told me that the Newberry paid all of the printing and other costs for both the first and the second editions of the book and consigned them to Bowker for sale. Nevertheless, upon the publication of the first edition, it was Bowker that registered the copyright for *U.S.IANA* in its name.

The first edition was published on December 1, 1954, Wright Howes’ 72nd birthday. Fifteen hundred copies were printed and offered for sale at a retail price of \$12 per copy. Six weeks earlier, Bowker widely disseminated an advertising circular for the book, in response to which it received 1,100 orders by the time of publication. The book turned out to be very popular among its target audience. The entire run of 1,500 copies was sold out within 60 days of publication! It had succeeded beyond what even Howes expected.

The 1962 Second Edition

The immediate success of *U.S.IANA* emboldened and encouraged Howes to get to work on what he envisioned as a definitive second edition. According to Bill Reese:

“The first edition of *U.S.IANA* was intended as a first draft and was very much put forward that way [by Howes]. He wanted this to circulate and he wanted to get corrections [from users of the book]. [While the first edition] was a much more popular book than anybody thought it would be, they didn’t reprint it because they wanted to create a second edition...”

Bill’s explanation was confirmed by Jim Wells, who told me that “Bowker and the Newberry Library decided to make the first edition a trial edition” which, he noted, was “printed on poor paper” and “cheaply manufactured.”

Howes’ fellowship at the Newberry ended in 1954 and with it the accompanying annual

stipend. Although I have so far found nothing in the record to identify its nature or extent, it appears that the library continued to provide financial and logistical support to Howes over the next eight years as he worked part time preparing a revised and enlarged edition of the book, which was to become the definitive 1962 edition. In the foreword to this second edition, Howes seems to confirm this, saying:

“Above all, must be acknowledged the renewed, material support furnished by The Newberry Library, whose similar aid alone made possible the publication of the first edition.”

During this eight-year period, Howes corresponded widely with librarians, collectors, and dealers, soliciting and receiving comments, corrections, and suggestions for additional titles. An open letter from Howes to the book trade requesting such aid was printed in an issue of *Antiquarian Bookseller*. He relentlessly reviewed all the entries in the first edition, marking up his personal copy with numerous revisions and identifying additions to and some deletions from the titles that comprised the first edition. Although he continued his antiquarian book business, the focus of his efforts during this period was getting out the revised edition of *U.S.IANA*. His work on the second edition, as well as his advancing years, took a toll on Howes’ strength and health. In a tribute to Howes, which appeared in the April 1978 issue of *AB Bookman’s Weekly* shortly after his death, Jake Chernofsky, the editor, stated that “Work on that 1962 edition had clearly been more of a strain than the basic work completed eight years before.”

Howes seemed to know this would be his last shot, and he was determined to make it his monument. Again quoting Jim Wells, the Newberry’s point person on the project:

“The decision was made that the second edition would be done properly. Wrightie [as Jim and others affectionately referred to Howes] had very strong views on the kind of book he wanted. It had to be something lightweight that would fit easily into a suitcase or briefcase. It had to be on opaque paper so there would be no see-through. It had to be a sewn binding. We chose Enschede in Holland to print it because they had a very good record of printing scholarly bibliographies and because they came in with a very reasonable price. [The Newberry] made all the business decisions, [the Newberry] paid for everything. Bowker distributed it, the Bowker name was on it, but [the Newberry] supported it all the way through. The agreement was that after the costs were recovered [by the library], the

Newberry and Wrightie would split the [royalties paid by Bowker to Newberry on sales of the book.]”

Wells also told me that the Newberry, even after splitting the royalties with Howes, actually made money on this project though clearly that was not the purpose of its sponsorship and support.

The second edition of *U.S.IANA*, described on its title page as a “Revised and Enlarged Edition,” was published in April 1962. Unlike the 1954 edition, the library’s name also appeared on the title page, which stated that the book was published by “R.R. Bowker Company for the Newberry Library,” more accurately reflecting their respective roles. This edition was an immediate and extraordinary success. The initial estimated press run of 5,000 copies carried a retail price of \$25 and sold out within a year. It was almost immediately reprinted, in 1963, and then reprinted five more times by Bowker through 1988 (and by at least one other publisher after it fell out of copyright). I was told by a reliable source that some 31,000 copies of the second edition were printed and sold, which is quite respectable for a bibliography.

In addition to its enhanced appearance and binding and to the many corrections made to its entries, there were several key changes to this definitive edition. In making them, Howes acknowledged that he was responding to specific criticisms of the first edition. The time span covered went back an additional 50 years, so that the book now covered the 300 years from 1650 to 1950. Notwithstanding, the entries in the second edition increased by only 170, to 11,620 titles. A second important change was an additional “value symbol” which he designated with the lower case “aa,” making a definite distinction between books he labeled “fairly scarce” and designated with a single lower-case “a” rating and those works which he considered “quite scarce” and designated with the new “aa” symbol. Another user-friendly change was to number entries separately in alphabetical order under each letter of the alphabet, rather than being numbered consecutively from A through Z.

The Abandoned Effort at a Third Edition

It seemed that Howes, who celebrated his 80th birthday six months after the publication of the second edition, regarded his work on *U.S.IANA* to be complete. He said as much in the last sentence of the foreword, stating that:

See *U.S.IANA*, page 8

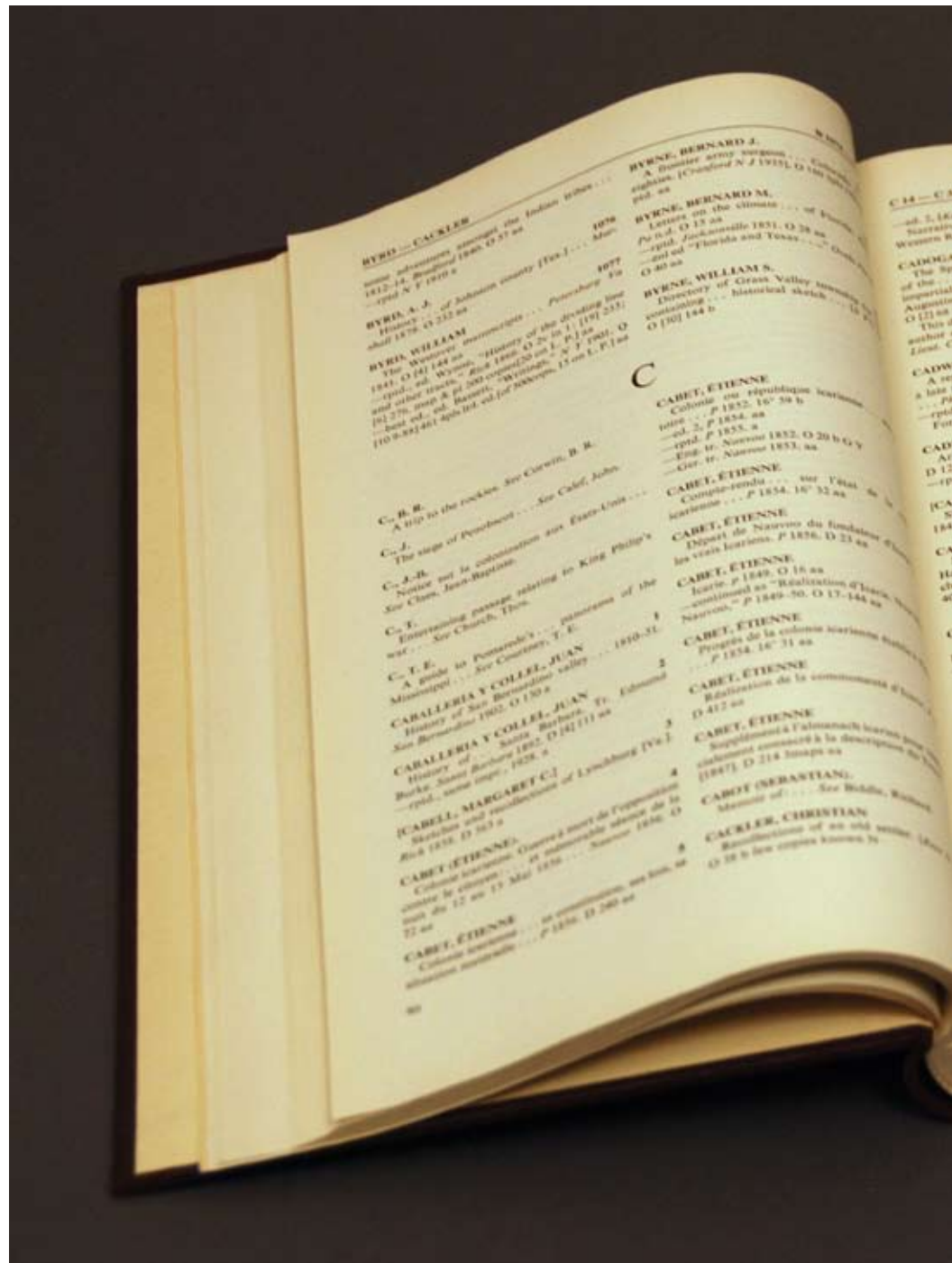
CAXTONIAN, APRIL 2012

“Even in the improved form of a revised edition, this thesaurus can be considered definitive only in one sense: it is the last that will be done by these hands.”

A little earlier in that same foreword, however, Howes acknowledged that despite all of the “time and labor . . . lavished on it, the revision of a work of this nature can never attain anything approaching impeccability.” He knew there were still mistakes in many entries and there were books that, on reflection, he wished he had included.

As he had done in his copy of the 1954 first edition, Howes began entering in his personal copy of the 1962 edition what eventually became hundreds of handwritten corrections, annotations, additions, and deletions (to this I can personally attest, since that copy is now in my collection). Then, confounding his friends both inside and outside the Newberry—who knew nothing about it in advance and were not consulted—Howes, in 1969, when he was 86 years old, quietly entered into a contract with Swallow Press and John Jenkin, a Swallow Press staff member, to collaborate on a third edition of *U.S.IANA* to be completed by 1971! The Swallow Press had been purchased in 1967 by Caxtonian Durrett Wagner and Morton Weisman after the untimely death of its founder, the Renaissance man Alan Swallow of Denver, Colorado. The new owners moved the company to Chicago. Swallow Press was, both before and after its move to Chicago, a respected publisher of Western Americana (under the Sage Books imprint) and of literary works and poetry. In 1969, Swallow was beginning a period of significant growth under its new owners. John Jenkin joined the staff to edit the Sage line of books.

The idea was that Jenkin, working under Howes’ supervision, would do most of the work necessary to produce this third edition. But it didn’t work. Howes realized almost immediately that he had made what he himself described as a foolish mistake. He did not get along with Mr. Jenkin, and just as importantly, his frail physical condition and failing health made it impossible for him to perform his obligations under the contract. At that point, according to a contemporaneous writing by Howes, “[I] saw I couldn’t do it, so abandoned it with publisher’s consent, but was unhappy that [Swallow Press] intended completing it with another man” (i.e., Jenkin). Howes contacted Jim Wells and asked for Jim’s help and the help of the Newberry in



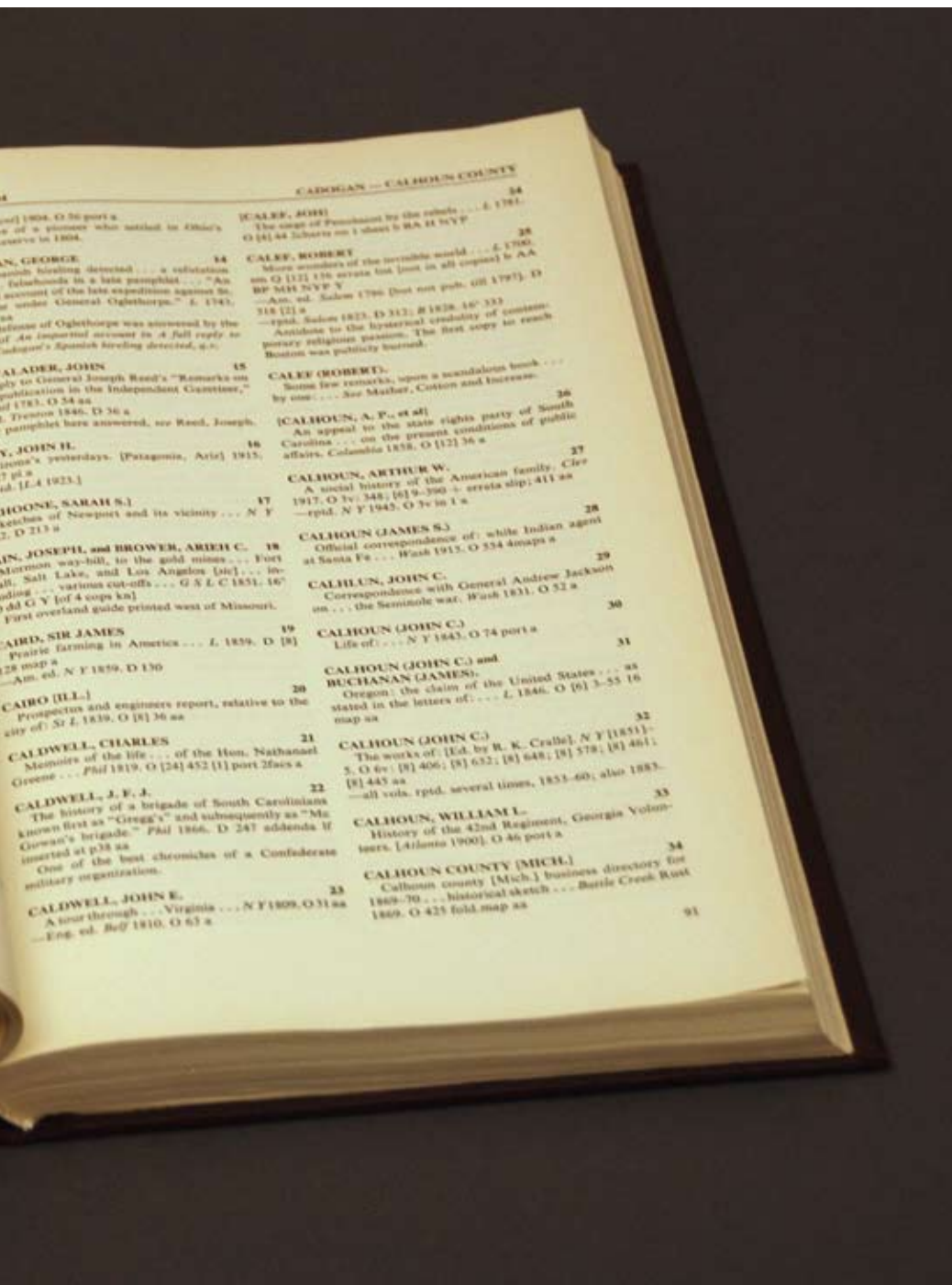
The second edition, still the standard reference today.

formally getting him out of the contract and stopping Swallow Press and Jenkin from proceeding with an unauthorized third edition. Jim found a lawyer for Howes (John Angle at Kirkland & Ellis, who was the son of Paul Angle, a close friend of Howes) and together they concluded that, since the Newberry (or, as was actually the case, Bowker as nominee or agent for the Newberry) held the copyright on *U.S.IANA*, Howes had no legal right to enter into the contract and Swallow and Jenkin had no right to publish a new edition of *U.S.IANA*.

Although a lawsuit was threatened, no one

really seemed to have the stomach for it, and a settlement was reached. In consideration for releases from Swallow Press and Jenkin, Howes agreed:

- (i) to revise his Will to appoint the Newberry Library as his “Literary Executor” with proprietary rights over all of his work product related to *U.S.IANA* and the right to determine in its sole discretion whether a third edition of *U.S.IANA* should be published using his name and, if so, by whom; and
- (ii) to provide copies to Swallow Press of the “joint work product” on the project completed before Howes stopped work, consisting



in March 1978, at age 95. Carrying out the covenant in the settlement agreement with Swallow Press and Jenkin, Howes' will, made in 1975, less than three years before his death, contained the following provision:

"If the publication of the third edition of *U.S.IANA* has not occurred prior to my death, all of my manuscripts, papers, and other materials relating to said third edition owned by me at my death and all rights to the publication of the third edition of *U.S.IANA*, I give to **NEWBERRY LIBRARY**, Chicago, Illinois."

This provision suggests to me that even at this late date Howes had the idea of a third edition in mind. I believe he wanted it to happen if done by a qualified person. This view is at odds with that of Bill Reese, who, ironically, would be the perfect person to undertake such a project.

Given the size of Howes' estate and the modest way in which he and Zoe lived, they had ample funds during their final years in Augusta. Nevertheless, Howes continued to send books from his personal collection to auction at Sotheby Parke Bernet in New York. The priced catalog for a January 1975 Sotheby auction indicates that Howes' personal annotated copy of the 1954 first edition of *U.S.IANA*, now in Mr. Reese's collection, was sold for \$350. I was unable to find any Sotheby catalog for a sale prior to Howes' death that included his personal annotated copy of the 1962 second edition of *U.S.IANA*. It is hard to believe that Howes would have sold this copy. And yet, had he died owning it, it should have been sent to the Newberry by his executor under the will. However, I am not aware of any papers or other materials that came to the Newberry as a result of that provision. Nor is the work cited in a detailed inventory of the estate of Zoe Howes who died six months prior to Wright's death. The November 1977 inventory included a listing, by title, of most of the books, maps and images owned by Wright and Zoe at the time of her death. The inventory does list Howes' personal set of the 73 catalogs he issued during his career as a bookseller in 16 leather-bound volumes. It is peculiar to me that Howes would have retained the bound set of catalogs but sold his personal copy of the definitive edition of *U.S.IANA*.

Why is any of this important? Because of two quite remarkable events which occurred following the death of Howes and which dramatically affected *U.S.IANA*. Before describing them, it is relevant to note the considerable

See *U.S.IANA*, page 10

of 30 or 40 pages of *U.S.IANA* marked with proposed changes: Howes also agreed that Swallow was free to use this material and only this material "for any purpose you deem appropriate."

At the same time, Wells (on behalf of the Newberry) wrote to Mort Weisman at Swallow Press to state that as Literary Executor of Howes' estate with respect to *U.S.IANA*, when and if the Newberry determined to proceed with a third edition of the work and if he (Wells) was still on staff at the time, he would "present the viewpoint of yourself as publisher and Mr. Jenkin as a possible

editor, as I promised." And that was it.

The Publication of "Wright Howes: The Final Edition"

Or so it seemed at the time. In 1970, shortly after this affair ended, the library sold the Irving Apartments to a developer who intended to raze the building and make way for the Newberry Plaza development. Wright and Zoe were forced to move on short notice. They elected to leave Chicago, entering a retirement home in Augusta, Georgia, not far from where Wright was raised in Macon. Seven years later, Zoe died there in October 1977 at age 90. Wright died six months later,

U.S.IANA, from page 9

agitation after Howes' death for a third edition of *U.S.IANA*. For example, in his 1978 memorial editorial in *AB*, Jake Chernofsky, referring to *U.S.IANA*, stated that:

"No better tribute to this monumental effort can be found than the launching of a new edition of the work . . ."

And in the introduction to a September 1981 catalog offering some 3,000 books which appear in *U.S.IANA*, a prominent and at the time widely respected Texas antiquarian book dealer, historian, and future president of the ABAA, John H. Jenkins

– not to be confused with John Jenkin of the Swallow Press earlier described – noted that (referring to *U.S.IANA*):

"Without doubt, it has proved itself as the most used, and most useful, single volume guide to Americana in existence . . . That it needs revision is without question – it has been twenty years since its last revision. Numerous attempts by those of us to whom it is essential to institute a program to produce a new revised edition have been rejected by the copyright holder [presumably referring directly or indirectly to the Newberry Library] . . ."

Fifteen months after Mr. Jenkins issued his Howes catalog, there occurred the first of the events to which I have referred. The copyright on *U.S.IANA* was inexplicably allowed to expire by the holder (either Bowker as registered holder or the Newberry under an agreement which may have given it the beneficial interest in and control over the copyright) as a result of its failure to renew the registration prior to its expiration on December 1, 1982, the end of the 28th year after the copyright was registered on December 1, 1954. There is no record in the Copyright Office of any assignment or renewal of the copyright registration. Representatives of the Newberry frequently claimed to be the copyright holder prior to this time. Also, during the Swallow Press episode, an internal Newberry memorandum stated that under the Newberry's contract with Howes in 1952, *U.S.IANA* was a work "made for hire," a term of art in copyright law, and that therefore the Newberry and not Howes was the copyright holder.

It is possible, and perhaps likely, that there was a standard publishing agreement between the Newberry and Bowker in which the Newberry assigned to Bowker the copyright



Howes relaxing at his apartment in the Irving on his 80th birthday.

for *U.S.IANA*, with a condition that if the book was allowed to go out of print, the copyright would revert to the Newberry. On the other hand, the registration application filed by Bowker in the Copyright Office identified Howes as the "author" of the work, which may be inconsistent with a work "made for hire." Though copyright law was not my legal specialty, I have sniffed around its edges enough to know that it is complex, especially at the time these events were unfolding and especially regarding bibliographies. However, to the extent there was value in the registered copyright, had it been renewed by the copyright holder prior to its expiration on December 31, 1982, the second term of the registered copyright would have extended for another 67 years, or until the year 2049, thanks to a new federal copyright law enacted in 1976!

This is relevant to the story of *U.S.IANA* because of the occurrence of the second event. Somehow, Howes' personal copy of the 1962 edition with his handwritten annotations, corrections, additions, and deletions, ended up in the hands of Frank O. Walsh III, an antiquarian bookseller in Atlanta, Georgia. William Hartley, the protagonist in this second event, told me that Mr. Walsh bought this copy of *U.S.IANA*, together with other items, from Mr. Howes' estate. This is entirely possible, since Atlanta is not far from Augusta, where the assets of the estate were located, the executor of the estate is known to have invited dealers to bid on items in the estate, and, as previously mentioned, I am reluctant to concede that Howes would have parted with the copy before his death.

On the other hand, Mr. Hartley also told me that Frank Walsh knew Wright Howes and had visited him several times in Augusta prior to his death. Frank Walsh also held himself out as an appraiser, and it was none

other than Frank Walsh who prepared the detailed room-by-room inventory previously referred to for the estate of Zoe Howes in November 1977, while Wright was still living on the premises. Since Howes' personal annotated copy of *U.S.IANA* did not make it into this inventory but ended up in Frank Walsh's hands, the logical conclusion is that it was acquired by Walsh from Howes prior to Wright's death and probably prior to Zoe's death. Why would Wright have conveyed this book, which had to have been a treasured possession, to Walsh? As a matter of pure

speculation, I think it possible that Howes may have suggested the idea of a third edition of *U.S.IANA* to Walsh, that Walsh may have given Howes some indication that he would undertake or find a qualified person to undertake such a project, and that Howes may have sold or given Walsh his personal annotated copy of the 1962 edition of *U.S.IANA* for that reason. This would also explain why the executor of Wright's estate, an Augusta Certified Public Accountant who was also Zoe's executor, and who appeared to have done a thorough job of winding up both estates, failed to convey this copy of *U.S.IANA* to the Newberry pursuant to the previously quoted provision of Wright's will.

At any rate, one William E. Hartley III of Pine Mountain, Georgia, purchased the book from Walsh at some point in the early 1980s. Mr. Hartley was employed as a graphic arts equipment salesman who collected and traded in antiquarian books on the side. When I interviewed him in 1997, Hartley told me that he had had some business dealings with Walsh previous to acquiring from him Howes' personal copy of the 1962 edition of *U.S.IANA*. It is possible that it was Walsh who, in conversation with Hartley, suggested that Hartley undertake a new edition of *U.S.IANA*. Hartley told me that as he read Howes' personal copy of the second edition, with its many annotations in Howes' hand, he became interested in the possibility of updating the work. At some point he talked to Bill Reese about the venture. Reese, feeling Hartley was not qualified to undertake the task, tried to talk him out of it. Among other things, Reese told him that he couldn't legally do it since the work was under copyright. Much to Reese's surprise, Hartley told him that he had checked with the Copyright Office and that the Office confirmed that the

registered copyright had expired.

Hartley never met Wright or Zoe Howes and he knew little about them. My view is that Hartley was an opportunist who saw a chance to do good and also to make some money. After acquiring Howes' personal copy of the second edition, he set out to "update" *U.S.IANA*, principally by using and incorporating all of the handwritten annotations made by Howes in that copy of the book. Hartley seemed to me, and I believe to Bill Reese, a decent and well-meaning man who cared about the project but who lacked the specialized knowledge, experience, and resources to do a proper job. Nevertheless, in 1994 Hartley self-published this updated version of the second edition of *U.S.IANA* under the title *Wright Howes: The Final Edition*, abandoning the awkward title used by Howes and seeking to capitalize on the goodwill in and wide recognition of the name of the original compiler. He was careful to copyright those portions of this edition which constituted new material, namely, as he described them in the copyright application, the "introduction, editing, compilation of new annotations and values, [and] index." All in all, it is a handsome piece of work.

But Hartley's edition suffered from several problems. It was not well-received and was not a commercial success. Hartley told me in 1997 that he sold about 1,000 copies and had about 100 left in stock. The list price was a whopping \$97, nearly four times the list price of the second edition 32 years earlier. Hartley said he had problems with the printing and that he "got burned." The Hartley book has not been reprinted. He died in 2004. His widow, finding a letter from me to Hartley in which I expressed interest in purchasing Howes' personal copy of the second edition should he ever be willing to part with it, wrote to me asking if I was still interested in buying it. So I purchased it from her, which is how it wound up in my collection.

One of the valuable things about Hartley's edition is a careful title index of the works included, something lacking in both the 1954 and 1962 editions of *U.S.IANA*. Of course, the inclusion of all of Howes' annotations, corrections, additions, and deletions from his personal copy of the second edition is also valuable. But Hartley made no effort to correct the many errors that Howes made in the second edition, probably because he was unaware of them. He also went wrong in altering the numbering system from the second edition and, even more egregious, changing on his own a large majority of the value symbols (*i.e.*,



Brochure advertising the second edition.

the "a," "aa," etc.) from those that appeared in the second edition. He lacked the specialized experience to do this well. However, since he invariably changed the symbols to a more rare category, a few booksellers continue to cite the ratings in Hartley's book to justify higher asking prices for the cited works. Most do not, and I think it is fair to say that *Wright Howes: The Final Edition*, with the exception of its title index, is largely ignored today. Nevertheless, Hartley's partial copyright of certain of the material in his book could complicate any effort to do a proper "third edition" of *U.S.IANA*.

Why *U.S.IANA* Endures

If you ask a bookseller today if you can borrow his "Howes," nearly always he will produce a well-worn copy of the 1962 second edition. Why is that? What makes this book, 50 years after its publication, so popular among dealers and collectors of Americana as well as librarians and some historians? For me the dealer's sobriquet "Not in Howes," meant to be a positive selling point, is a distinct liability. While I sometimes buy books that are not

listed in Howes, there needs to be a special reason to do so. It has been my personal "bible" in building my Americana library. Its unique strengths include the following:

- ◆ The 300-year span covered by the book – 1650 to 1950 – is when the great bulk of today's collectible Americana was published, so in that temporal sense *U.S.IANA* remains comprehensive.
- ◆ The book is also comprehensive from a geographic standpoint. It spans the continental United States. Of course, it reflects the compiler's experiences and his prejudices. It is weaker in some areas – such as New England history – and stronger in others – such as Western and Southern Americana – but all areas and events are covered, and covered well. One aspect of *U.S.IANA* which is very useful, and which is very badly covered in traditional bibliographies, is local history. Howes had a great interest in and knowledge of local history. He included, and rated the rarity of, many obscure but valuable state, county, and city histories, directories, gazetteers, and the like which are often well written and packed with fascinating information and illustrations.

◆ While termed a "selective bibliography," with over 11,600 works included, there are relatively few glaring exclusions. Most excluded works are obscure rarities. Hence to a great extent *U.S.IANA* quickly became and remains today a commonly agreed-upon point of reference for Americana across the spectrum of dealers and collectors – what Bill Reese refers to as the "stabilizing center."

◆ One of the essentials for any dealer or collector of Americana is to be able to know whether a particular copy of a book is complete. In the case of Americana, that means knowing if the book when published contained any maps or plates and, if so, how many of each. If you collect first editions of fiction, you don't have to worry about such things. But an Americana collector does, especially since these elements of a book were often excised as it passed from one owner to the next or were never included in some copies when published. Howes provides this information in each of his collations with, overall, remarkable accuracy. At the time – and even today – this was one of the major contributions of *U.S.IANA*.

◆ For many of the 11,600 works cited in *U.S.IANA*, Howes includes information regarding other editions, reprints, and translations, often with similar collations. This is immensely valuable, especially to collectors like me who can't read many of the important works of early Americana in the foreign
See *U.S.IANA*, page 13

languages in which they were written and to those who, also like me, can't afford the great rarities of Americana as they were originally published. Many of the scholarly reprints and translations which began to appear in the latter part of the 19th century and continued up to the onset of World War II are superbly done productions, with lengthy historical introductions, fine paper, printing, and bindings, and beautifully reproduced maps and plates. Over 7,000 of these later editions, reprints, and translations are cited in U.S.IANA.

◆ Howes entered uncharted waters with the rating system he applied to most of the entries in U.S.IANA. Other than the book's title, this was its most controversial aspect. As mentioned, the system attempted to rate the rarity and commercial value of the book, using six different levels, each with a value range expressed in dollars. It is a shame that he chose, in his introductory explanation of the system, to attach dollar amounts to each level, since they rapidly became outdated and laughable. But the rating of *comparative rarity*, although flawed in a number of cases, is a valuable tool when assessing a particular book. It is important to emphasize that Howes rated the rarity rather than the historical importance of a given work, although in many cases the two coincided.

◆ The book is durable, lightweight, and portable. It travels easily and well. So it really can be used "in the field," whether that be at a bookshop, book fair or auction, reviewing a dealer's catalog, or visiting an electronic website which lists antiquarian books.

◆ What I like best about U.S.IANA are Howes' annotations. He had an uncanny ability to sum up in a few well-chosen words the importance – or lack thereof – of a work in American history. He also had a great sense of humor which surfaced in many of these annotations. They are a major reason why many Americana dealers and collectors consider U.S.IANA "airplane reading." They also are the principal source of Howes' evaluation of the historical importance of the work. Here are a few of these, selected at random, to give you a flavor for what I mean:

○ *Final report of investigations among the Indians of the southwestern United States*, by Adolph Bandelier; 1890-92. Howes says:

"Most important work of its nature on Arizona and New Mexico; based on original sources, historical and archeological."

○ *History of the United States [during the Jef-*



Zoe Howes.

erson and Madison administrations, 1801-1817]; 9 volumes; by Henry Adams; New York 1889-1891. Howes says:

"The most skillfully organized and most brilliantly presented interpretation of any period of our history yet attempted."

○ *The History of the American Indians* by James Adair; London, 1775. Howes says:

"Best 18th century English source on the Southern tribes, written by one who traded forty years with them."

○ [in French] *History and Description of New France with a Journal of a Voyage to America* by Francois Xavier de Charlevoix; Paris, 1744. Howes says:

"The principal work of this great Jesuit traveler and historian and the pre-eminent authority on the French period in the west..."

○ *The Truth at Last. History Corrected. Reminiscences of Old John Brown* by George W. Brown; Rockford, IL, 1880. Howes says:

"John Brown stripped of his halo by a leading abolitionist."

○ This is one of my favorites: *The History of Illinois* by Henry Brown; New York, 1844. Howes says:

"Chronologically the first, intrinsically the worst, history of this state."

I remember passing on a copy of this book after consulting U.S.IANA.

○ *Anticipations of the Future . . . as Lessons for the Present* by the Southern firebrand

Edmund Ruffin; Richmond, 1860. Howes says:

"An ingenious effort, this, to awaken the South to the inevitability of sectional war and the advisability of immediate secession. Ruffin fired the first shot of the Civil War, at Ft. Sumter; after Appomattox and the collapse of his anticipated Confederacy he triggered another shot – into his own brilliant but erratic brain."

○ Another favorite of mine: *The Book of Mormon* by Joseph Smith, prophet; Palmyra NY, 1830. Howes says:

"On this flimsy foundation was reared America's most successful theocracy, its most enduring communal movement."

○ For a more recent scholarly historical work: *The Colonial Period of American History* by Charles M. Andrews; 4 volumes; New Haven, 1934-38. Howes says:

"Profound, exhaustive, and dependable survey of the various American settlements in the 17th Century and of England's commercial and political policy towards them."

○ And finally: *Thirty-one Years on the Plains and in the Mountains* by William Drannan; Chicago, 1899. Howes says:

"Reminiscences – chiefly of adventures that never happened – by a senile braggart."

○ Which was followed by *William F. Drannan, Chief of Scouts* by the same author; Chicago, 1910. After noting that it was "reprinted ad nauseam," Howes goes on to state:

"Additional fabrications by this hoary-headed father of liars."

Conclusion

I wish so much that I had known Wright Howes. I am certain I would have liked him and that I would have learned much from him and laughed a lot with him. And for sure I would have bought lots of U.S.iana from him! Readers who want to learn more about the life and career of Wright Howes or about his relationship with Everett Graff are invited to consult my papers on those subjects presented to the Chicago Literary Club and available on its website. Most of the papers of Wright and Zoe Howes are held by the Newberry Library.

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All items pictured are from the author's collection, as scanned and photographed by Robert McCamant.

Remembering Peter Stanlis

Musing on the Caxtonian and the author of *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*

Robert Cotner

Junie Sinson and I were talking at a Caxton Club dinner meeting recently, and the conversation turned to our mutual friend and fellow Caxtonian, the late Peter Stanlis.

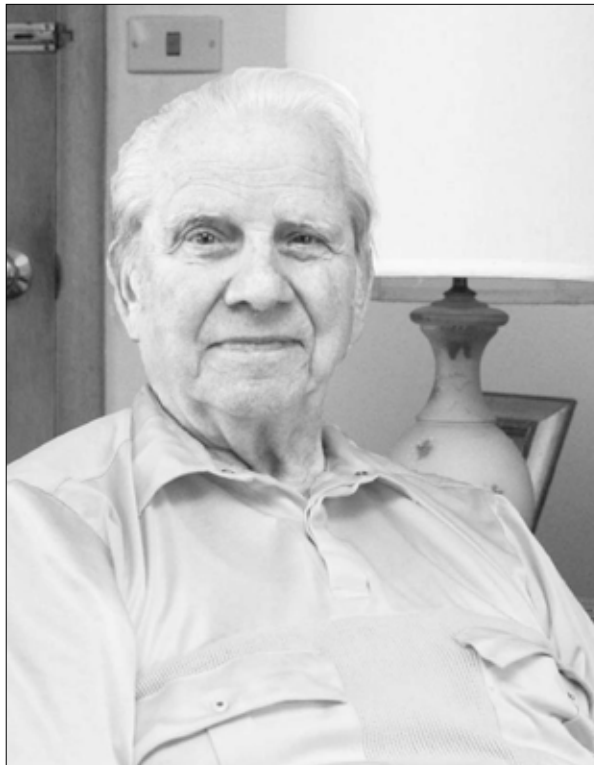
Junie said, "You know, I keep Peter's new book on my nightstand and read it often. It creates for me a pleasant feeling of comfort, and Peter has given me an understanding for something I never before understood—poetry!" Peter Stanlis would have appreciated the conversation, for his great commitment in life—particularly in his later years—was to bring to people understanding of poetry and especially the poetry of Robert Frost.

He taught through lectures, in his expansive letters, through superbly created conferences, and, ultimately, for posterity, in his final book, *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*. His lectures were always masterpieces of memory and delivery. While not strong in elocution, Peter was gifted with total intellectual control of his subject and seldom spoke from manuscript or notes. Whether his subject was Edmund Burke, about whom he was most prolific in scholarship and as a frequent lecturer, or Robert Frost, whom he counted as a personal friend of more than 23 years, he spoke with authority and grace.

It was my pleasure to introduce Peter on April 15, 2009, in his final lecture before the Club, when he discussed his just-published book. I reminded the audience of his signal honors. He had twice been named a Newberry Library Fellow. He was a member of the Academy of the Humanities, the British Academy of Research had recognized his significant contributions, and the mayor of his hometown, Rockford, Illinois, proclaimed a week in 2009 as Robert Frost-Peter Stanlis week in Rockford. Shortly thereafter, the General Assembly of the State of Illinois passed a resolution recognizing Peter for his vast scholarship on Robert Frost and many other subjects. I continued on my topic by acknowledging that Peter honored Robert Frost with the publication of a long-ago promised book on the Frost philosophy. Peter then presented us with a splendid discussion on the history of his and Frost's long association,

an evening filled with wit, detail, and genuine wisdom.

Many of us have extensive collections of Peter Stanlis letters—these are letters in the old-fashioned style: personally typed on Peter's letterhead, they begin at the very top of the page and run two and three pages in length, and they express with thoroughness his wide interests and reading. One such letter to me, dated July 9, 1996, illustrates what I say. I had just published an article on Ernest



Hemingway in the *Caxtonian*, which I was then editing. Peter wrote that this issue was "of particular interest" to him. The second paragraph, Melvillian in length, told of his friendships in 1961 or 1962 with Hemingway biographer Carlos Baker, Marcelline Hemingway Stanford, and Hemingway's Cuban friend, Bill White, and recalled "one of the most memorable evenings of my life." The letter ended with an eight-line P.S. and a shorter P.P.S. Now that's letter writing of the first order!

In a two-page letter of October 15, 2002, Peter invited me to participate in the Liberty Fund colloquium "Liberty in Robert Frost's Philosophy of Dualism," organized by Peter for March 13 to 16, 2003, in Tucson. This was an international symposium, with scholars and poets from England, Ireland, and Scotland, as well as a dozen more from the United States.

It was a splendid event that reverberated beyond its time, for Peter and I arranged for some of the European guests to appear and lecture at the Caxton Club.

Peter played a major role in the creation of the annual Robert Frost Colloquium, working with Frost's granddaughter Lesley Lee Francis, Jack Hagstrom, and others. This annual event for selected scholars occurs in strategic Frost sites around the country each autumn. It opens new avenues of thinking and conversation about the poet who, himself, was the master of thinking and conversation.

History, however, will remember Peter Stanlis as the author of *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*. For in these pages he made permanent the record of his 23-year friendship with the poet, beginning in 1939. This is a book Stanlis promised Frost that he would write at a meeting in 1944. Spanning 62 years of research and writing, the book is a welcome clarification and elaboration of the important philosophic stance of Frost as a dualist in an age of monists. Peter's extensive understanding of European poets and philosophers, and his rich knowledge in the fields of science and the humanities, provided the basis of his broad understanding of the intellectual milieu from which Frost's poems arose. Peter placed Frost as an equal among the intellectuals of his time.

Structured organically, the book fuses Frost's own grasp of the two grand opposites in human life—matter and spirit—

into the reality of cosmic universals, the very stuff of which Frost's poetry is composed. You can have, Peter affirmed, opposition without contradiction—whether it is justice and mercy, light and darkness, life and death (the possibility for opposites is unlimited)—and poetry has the potential for the reconciliation of all, through metaphor.

Peter Stanlis has long been a presence in our lives, and his passing leaves a void. We shall miss his frequent phone calls, his old-school epistles, his occasional monographs, and the generous conversations.

Thank God we have his book! In that book—as he did in life—he reminds us, in the words of his friend Robert Frost, "... but nothing tells me/That I need learn to let go with the heart."

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Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Robert McCamant

(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: "Beauty and the Book: 19th- and Early 20th-Century Folios on the Decorative Arts" (books in a range of cultural and historical styles of ornamentation and design, lavishly illustrated), Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, weekdays only, through May 7. "Schiff Fellowship for Architecture: Selections, 1989-2011" (exceptional projects by young architects selected annually), Gallery 24 through May 20.

Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library, 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, 847-835-8202: "Renaissance Artists: Illustrations of Science and Art" (examines the artists and publishers of featured rare volumes), through May 13.

Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077: "Charles James: Genius Deconstructed" (preserving the legacy of this Chicago fashion designer), through April 15.

Columbia College Center for the Book and Paper Arts, "Poems and Pictures: A Renaissance in the Art of the Book" (traveling exhibit from Center for Book Arts, NYC, covers book art from 1946 to 1981), through April 7.

Harold Washington

Library Center, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-4300: "One Book, Many Interpretations: Second Edition" (juried exhibition of books by bookbinders and book artists), Special Collections Exhibit Hall, Ninth Floor, through April 15. "Actors, Plays & Stages: Early Theater in Chicago" (memorabilia of the early performances and theaters), Chicago Gallery, Third Floor, through May 15.

DuSable Museum of African American History, 740 East 56th Place, Chicago, 773-947-0600: "Spread the Word! The Evolution of

Gospel" (great Gospel singers including Mahalia Jackson and Alberta Walker), through May 20.

Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 East Chicago Avenue, Chicago, 312-280-2660: "Laura Letinsky: Ill Form and Void Full" (book and other art from the museum's collection), through April 17.

Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: "Exploration 2012: The 26th Annual Juried Exhibition of the Chicago Calligraphy Collective," through June 8.

Northern Illinois University Art Museum, NIU Altgeld Hall, DeKalb, 815-753-1936: 4 exhibits exploring the graphic novel. "Francisco Goya: Satirical Caprices" (the 1799 originally bound portfolio of metaphoric caricatures), through May 25. "Graphic Novel Realism: Backstage at the Comics" (cutting-edge non-traditional, full-length graphic novels), through May 25. "The Golden Age of Wordless Novels and Artist Illustrated Books: 1917 - 1951," opens April 5. "The Graphic Novel: An Interpretive History," opens April 5. Reception for all exhibits Thursday, April 5, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.



Newberry Library: Chicago Calligraphy Collective Annual Juried Show
CATHERINE KEEBLER'S "THE O'S HAVE IT"

Northwestern University, Block Museum of Art, 40 Arts Circle Drive, Evanston, 847-491-4000: "Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe" (how celebrated Northern Renaissance artists contributed to scientific inquiries of the 16th century), through April 8.

Northwestern University, Charles Deering Library, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston, 847-491-7658: "Papering Over Tough Times: Soviet Propaganda Posters of the 1930s," Special Collections, through June 15.

Oriental Institute, 1155 East 58th Street, Chicago, 773-702-9514: "Picturing the Past: Imaging and Imagining the Ancient Middle East" (paintings, facsimiles, casts, models, photographs, and computer-aided reconstructions show how the ancient Middle East has been documented), through September 2.

Smart Museum of Art, 5550 S. Greenwood Avenue, Chicago, 773-702-0200: "Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art" (artist-

orchestrated meals that offer a radical form of hospitality), through June 10.

University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library, 1100 East 57th Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: "Passover Haggadot from the Stephen P. Durchslag Collection" (the book of prayers, illustrations, and stories recounted on the Jewish holiday of Pesach, in many editions), Special Collections Research Center Exhibition Gallery, opens April 5.

Until a replacement exhibit editor is found, please send your listings to bmccamant@quarterfold.com, or call 312-329-1414 x 11.

Caxtonians Collect: Adam Muhlig

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

If your memory of Adam Muhlig has grown a bit hazy, don't blame your memory. He hasn't been at many events lately, since the days when he was restarting the book department at Leslie Hindman Auctioneers. He joined the Club in 2006, nominated by Shawn Donnelly and Tom Joyce.

He's still in the book trade, as he has been since he was a teenager. But he has moved into appraisals, mainly of archival collections, and within that specialty, mainly the collections of musicians and poets. That occupation involves a great deal of travel. And when he manages to be at home in Chicago, he wants to spend as much time as he can with his two-year-old daughter Lucy and his wife Ellie.

His father collected books. Before and after he graduated from the University of North Carolina, Muhlig worked for bookstores, doing everything from shelving books to cataloging. Two stores he remembers fondly are Detering Books of Houston, and Captain's Bookshelf of Asheville, North Carolina. The former closed in 2004, while the latter is still going strong and an ABAA member.

Marathon, Texas was in there somewhere. He managed to serve in its fire department (the nearest fire and rescue department to Big Bend National Park) as well as in Brewster County, Texas, which is larger than the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island put together. It could have to do with his wife, who is from Austin, where they have also lived and still frequently go.

His biographical page on the Harry Ransom Center Advisory Council web site was my source for the fire department information, and it also includes a list of his clients: "Mr. Muhlig has completed appraisal work for former Poet Laureate of the United States, Ted Kooser; longtime Editor of *Poetry*, Joseph Parisi; Stevie Ray Vaughan archive belonging to Connie Vaughan; The University of California at Los Angeles; The University of Chicago; Syracuse University; The Newberry Library; and The University of Texas at Austin." I got the impression from Muhlig in

person that the list might include a number of additional interesting names, but that professional discretion made it unwise to list them. "Sometimes I work for insurance companies, sometimes for people planning to make a donation to a university, sometimes for estate lawyers," he explained. "Almost nobody is seeking a spotlight by hiring an appraiser."

He is very comfortable in his role as an appraiser, pure and simple. "It gets harder



when you know you're going to be the broker for a collection you've appraising." And archives are more interesting to appraise than book collections today. "With books these days, you find yourself just looking on a few web sites to assign a price. Practically every book is out there at least once, and Google has already done the heavy lifting to find them. But with a manuscript, by definition it's one of a kind. It takes a fair amount of thought to come up with what would be a comparable item, and then sometimes a lot of research to figure out what the comparable sold for."

I asked what he thought about the way people's archives these days are more digital and less physical. He said, "First, I would encourage all Caxtonians to read Anthony Grafton's essay, *Codex in Crisis*. I feel digital archives are

as important as paper archives, especially for contemporary writers, poets and musicians, although I prefer the paper to the zeroes and ones. More and more libraries and archives are investing in large computer servers that have the capacity to search and manage large amounts of data. I'm already seeing fewer typed manuscripts, letters and handwritten notes in archives. A great example of an archive being digitized is the National Jukebox, which was launched earlier this year by the Library of Congress."

Muhlig admitted to having "the seed of bibliomania" somewhere in his personality. "So I have to be careful," he says. With that he took me on a short tour of some of his favorite items. These included such things as Elizabeth Spencer's 1956 novel *The Voice at the Back Door*, which is inscribed to Muhlig and has more emotional than financial value, both because of their personal relationship and because of his admiration for her work.

A really exotic item hung on the wall. It was an intricate magic scroll, written in one of Ethiopia's 83 languages. "Unfortunately I can't read it," he confessed. "But I do know that it has spells for use in specific situations. What's interesting is that it also has Christian symbols. Ethiopia has a unique blending of Orthodox Tewahedo Christianity with paganism—not to mention a large Islamic population as well." Muhlig acquired the scroll while working on an appraising project for George Fox University. "Don't worry,"

he laughed. "They had experts who could read it doing the cataloging. I was just figuring out what they were worth once somebody else had figured out what they were." Also on a wall was the cover of a piece of Ornette Colman sheet music, "A Girl Named Rainbow," which the musician had autographed to Muhlig.

But the walls were also lined with bookshelves chockablock with volumes of literature, biography, and books on books – the tools of his trade. At one end of the bright living-dining-kitchen area was a collection of items appropriate for a 2-year-old girl. "At this stage of my life, it's a question of balance," he concludes. "I love my work, and I love my family. There isn't quite enough time in the day."

§§

Photograph by Robert McCamant



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Bookmarks...

Luncheon: Friday, April 13, 2012, Union League Club

Tony Batko

Bergen Evans: Part II, Northwestern University
and Beyond, 1932-1978

Caxtonian Tony Batko returns to the podium to complete his insightful presentation on Bergen Evans: author, scholar, wit, TV personality, brilliant and exacting professor of English at Northwestern University for 42 years and, one of the most relevant and fascinating 20th century personages without a biography, yet. Hard to pin down on paper (or anywhere), Evans authored *The Dictionary of Contemporary Usage* and also *The Natural History of Nonsense*. He became a legendary NU professor while hosting TV shows like "Down You Go." Who was he? Tony answers this with facts and anecdotes, including especially, personal ones as Tony had a working relationship with him for a number of years. In Tony's words, "...no one has made me laugh harder or ... think more..." (than Bergen Evans).

Be prepared! Tony is a Northwestern University graduate and Founder and President (semi-retired) of Vocab, publishers and developers of educational materials.

*April luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard
Luncheon buffet (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. April
dinner: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Timing: spirits at*

Beyond April...

MAY LUNCHEON

On May 11th at the Union League Club, Caxtonian Paul Ruxin will talk about The Club, founded in 1764 in London by Sir Joshua Reynolds for the sole purpose of conversation with Samuel Johnson. It still exists today, 248 years later!

MAY DINNER

Michael Winship of the University of Texas at Austin will speak on 19th-century American bookstores. It will be held May 16 at the Union League Club.

Dinner: Wednesday, April 18, Union League Club

Nina Baym

Women Writers of the American West, 1833-1927
Note move to Union League!

Nina Baym will discuss the genesis, research, and organizational structure of her latest book, which recovers the names and works of hundreds of women who wrote about the American West during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In pursuing her research she mined literary and cultural histories, anthologies, scholarly essays, catalogs, advertisements, and online resources to debunk critical assumptions that women did not publish about the West as much as they did about other regions. What she discovered was a substantial body of nearly 650 books of all kinds by more than 300 writers; these works showed women making lives for themselves in the West, how they represented the diverse region, and how they represented themselves.

Nina Baym is a professor emeritus of English at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The general editor of The Norton Anthology of American Literature, she has written several books on nineteenth-century women writers, beginning with *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-70*.

*5:00, dinner at 6:00, program at 7:30. Prices will be shown on the postcard
and at www.caxtonclub.org. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email
caxtonclub@newberry.org; **reservations are needed by noon
Friday for the Wednesday dinner.***

JUNE LUNCHEON

On May 8th at the Union League Club, Caxtonian Jerry Meyer will talk on "Juncture of the Sacred and Profane: Eric Gill and British Wood Engraved Illustration Between the Wars."

JUNE DINNER

Our final dinner meeting of the Club year will be held June 20 at the Union League Club. The speaker may be Andrew Hoyem of San Francisco's Arion Press.