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The Whole Art of Marbling

Elizabeth Frengel

"Read, read, read, read,
my unlearned reader!"
Laurence Sterne. *Tristram Shandy*

The Moral of the Marbled Page

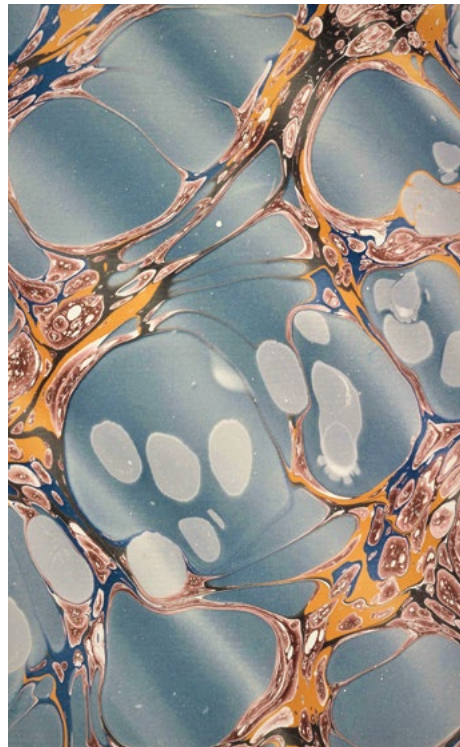
Any reader with the fortitude to make it through to volume three of an eighteenth-century nine-volume edition of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* will discover something remarkable – page 169: a hand-marbled page, each one unique to each copy, or, as Sterne writes, the "motley emblem of my work!"

At first glance, one might think the page is misplaced, for, surely, marbled paper belongs on the endpapers of a book. To the reader of *Tristram Shandy*, the stray marbled page may be a representation of the infinite possibilities of human nature. The same physiological elements combine to form the myriad manifestations of *homo sapiens*. To the bibliophile, the page might symbolize the infinite patterning and possibility that can be achieved in paper marbling, for every marbled paper is unique, even those that use the same pigments, paints, and patterning techniques.

One does not have to be a bibliophile, or a Shandyphile, to appreciate marbling's infinite variety and charm. The subject of paper marbling is as dimensional as the characteristics of the mineral it seeks to emulate. Marbling is one of the earliest techniques used to decorate papers and textiles, yet the place and time of its origin is largely a mystery, with inconclusive and scant documentation.

The art itself is difficult to master, and its practitioners have a tradition of guarding their trade secrets closely, from a spirit of competition and perhaps a bit of contrariness. It is rare, to the point of being almost unheard of, for paper marblers to sign their works, thus leaving a question mark on the provenance of the papers we so commonly associated with

printed books. In the words of marbling's foremost chronicler, Richard J. Wolfe, the history of paper marbling has been difficult to write, though during the course of 25 years of careful labor, he achieved what remains the definitive work on the subject.



Spanish Pattern by Iris Nevins

The history of paper marbling

In his *Marbled Paper: Its History, Techniques, and Patterns* (University of Pennsylvania Press 1990; Oak Knoll 2018), Wolfe investigates the history of paper marbling, from its probable origin in the Far East and subsequent development in Persia and Turkey, to paper marbling's journey along the Silk Road, to its eager adoption by bookbinders in Western Europe in the early modern period.

The process of paper marbling, as it is practiced today, sounds straightforward: droplets

of paint or pigment are dropped onto the surface of a bath of viscous fluid – usually water mixed with a thickening agent, such as carrageen or gum dragon (tragacanth) that adds tension to the surface and provides suspension for the paint or pigment. After the desired colors are dropped onto the surface of the bath, they can be shaped into a variety of patterns using tools such as rakes, combs, styluses, and fanned and fine-haired brushes. Then paper (or textile or wood or stone) is laid on the surface of the bath and pulled up, picking up the marbled pattern in the process.

If it sounds easy, do not be fooled – it is not. The relative humidity of the environment, the hardness (dissolved mineral content) of the water, the quality of the paints/pigments, and the steadiness and skill of the hand that draws the paper through the marbled bath all play a role in the result. Even experienced marblers have bad days, with air bubbles that emerge from nowhere, paints that will not spread or float, colors that clash, and any number of other things that can spoil a pattern.

However, anyone who has ever tried hand marbling and has a feel for it, even if not a true knack, can find the work highly rewarding – therapeutically as well as artistically.

Where did the idea for marbling come from?

One theory, put forward by Wolfe, is that marbling may have originated when a painter or calligrapher looked down at a bucket of water, on the surface of which floated a swirl of discarded paints. Those paints or pigments likely formed an intriguing pattern. It is not difficult to imagine an artist would have the idea of placing a sheet of paper or a cloth onto the surface to pick up the accidental pattern.

The Japanese, already known for their skills at papermaking, may have been the first to intentionally marble paper. The earliest surviving specimens of Japanese marbling, called *suminagashi* ("ink floating") date from the twelfth century. *Suminagashi* differs from the

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marbling techniques that emerged in other cultures, and it is perhaps the purest form of marbling. In *suminagashi*, the colors are not shaped into a pattern using rakes, combs, styluses, or other tools of Western marbling. Instead, the water of the bath is pure and free of thickening agents, such as gum dragon or carrageen. The inks are dropped onto the surface of the bath one at a time, allowing each

Marbled papers and textiles traveled over the Silk Road, delighting Westerners who likely first encountered marbled paper in *libri amicorum* (an early type of autograph book or album) that were popular among travelers to the Near East, or in the borders of calligraphic manuscripts. Exactly how marbling techniques were transmitted from East to West is not documented, but according to Wolfe, the first mention of the practice appears in *Ars Magna*



Stenciled Marble Pattern by Richard J. Wolfe

droplet to disperse before another is dropped into the space vacated by its predecessor. The process forms concentric circles of floating ink, left to their own devices to cohere and scatter as they will. On rare occasions, the *suminagashi* marbler manipulates the pattern by blowing gently on the surface of the water, or by applying the delicate touch of a brush with a single hair.

Persians may have been the first to apply paper marbling to books. They ornamented the borders of calligraphic manuscripts with marbled patterns. Evidence of this exists from the fifteenth century and onward.

Ebru ("cloud art") arose in Turkey at about the same time, suggesting that the art was observed in Persia and carried westward. The *ebru* style of marbling is easily recognized by the distinctive pattern of flowers, pulled from droplets of pigment using a fine-haired brush or stylus, and set against a background that closely resembles the pale veining of natural marble.

Lucis et Umbrae, a technical treatise by Athanasius Kircher published in 1646 in Rome.

Germans were the first to adopt and develop their own techniques for marbling, perhaps just before the seventeenth century, and then the practice spread to other European countries. Details of the craft were kept secret by guilds, who wished to protect their trade secrets.

Marbled papers were used as decorative wall hangings, as wallpaper, as parcel wrapping, and to line shelves and cupboards. Marbled designs were also useful as security marks on paper currency to prevent counterfeiting. The French were the first to apply decorative marbled designs to endpapers and book edges, doing so from the 1630s onward.

Marbled papers were imported to the North American colonies as early as 1698, but it would take another hundred years before Americans would begin to make their own marbled papers, perhaps because of a dearth

of professional literature on the subject. No manuals on the practice of marbling circulated in any European language until the nineteenth century. *The Whole Art of Bookbinding, Containing Valuable Recipes for Sprinkling, Marbling, Colouring, &c*, attributed to Henry Parry, appeared in 1811 and is the first manual on the subject printed in English. By then, the art of paper marbling had reached its pinnacle in Western Europe, and the use of marbled papers in bindings was so common that it made the marbled page almost synonymous with the idea of a printed book.

Marbling today

The art of paper marbling has experienced a revival from the mid-twentieth century to today. Historians and practitioners such as Sidney Berger, Douglas Cockerell, Claudia Cohen, Karli Frigge, Rosamond Loring, Iris Nevins, Robin Heyek, Nedim Sönmez, Geoffrey Wakeman, and Richard J. Wolfe, among many others, have done much to document, instruct, and make their own beautiful contributions to the art of marbling.

Before the pandemic, one could easily attend in-person workshops and receive training from master paper marblers. In the Chicago area, Sevim Sucuru teaches marbling in the Turkish *ebru* tradition. On the east coast, Dan and Regina St. John of Chena River Marblers open their studio in Massachusetts to anyone interested in learning the art of Western marbling. They also take their skills and supplies on the road, leading workshops at centers for book arts across the United States. There are many other marbling instructors. Professionally hand-marbled paper can still be readily obtained today.

Richard J. Wolfe, marbling historian

In January 2020, The University of Chicago Library acquired the research papers and personal library of Richard J. Wolfe, whose work *Marbled Paper: Its History, Techniques, and Patterns* remains the definitive history of the subject. Wolfe, who died in 2017, had a distinguished career as a scholar, librarian, and bibliographer. While at the New York Public Library, Wolfe began work in the 1960s on a bibliography of American sheet music, in the course of which he encountered many examples of marbled paper used in bindings. He wondered at the decorated paper's ubiquity, and about its origins. Wolfe found almost nothing published on the subject until he came upon a copy of Paul Kersten's *Die Mar-*

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MARBLING METHODS

Suminagashi

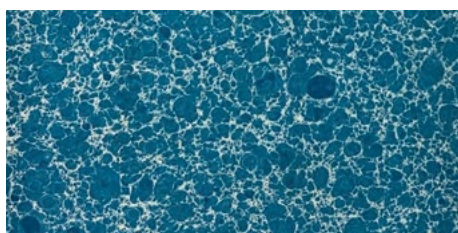
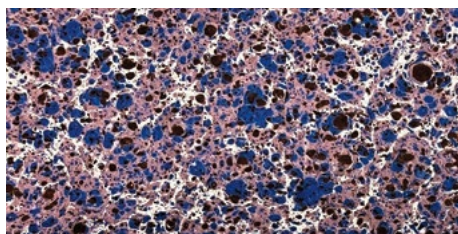
Suminagashi is perhaps the first and oldest style of paper marbling. Considered the purest form of the art, this technique uses pure water and a minimalist's approach to manipulating the pattern of the ink droplets after they are dropped on the surface of the bath.



From Claudia Cohen and Barbara Hodgson's *Decorating Paper* (HM Editions 2015).

Sprinkled

Sprinkled marbling is achieved by loading pigment on a paintbrush and gently tapping the brush to distribute droplets of pigment over the surface of the marbling bath.



Two samples hand-marbled by Richard J. Wolfe from Josef Halfer and the Revival of the Art of Marbling Paper (Oak Knoll Press 2018).

Ebru

Also known as "cloud art," the *ebru* style of marbling was developed in Turkey and is distinguished by the bright flowers set against a pale, in some cases translucent, stone marbled background.

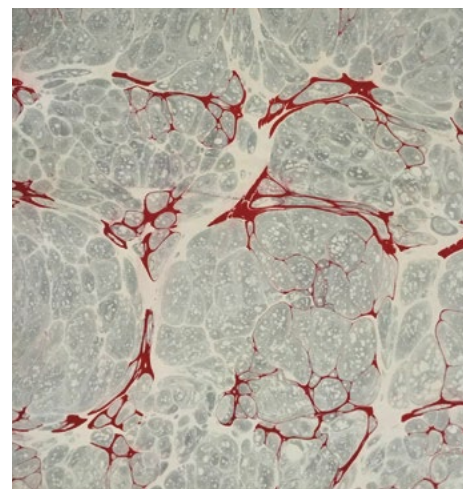


1. TURKISH FLOWER

"Turkish Flower," plate 1 in Christopher Weimann's *Marbled Papers: Being a Collection of Twenty-Two Contemporary Hand-Marbled Papers* (Dawson's Book Shop 1978).

Turkish or Stone

One of the most common patterns of marbling, the "Turkish" or stone pattern closely resembles the veining seen in natural marble.



A sample hand-marbled by Richard J. Wolfe, from "The Richard J. Wolfe Collection of Paper Marbling and Allied Book Arts."

MARBLING, from page 3

moriekunst (*The Art of Marbling*) and taught himself from that. In the course of his research on sheet music and, later, the history of marbling, Wolfe became a master paper marbler, producing some of the finest published examples of a variety of historical and modern techniques and styles. In addition to *Marbled Paper*, a few highlights from Wolfe's contributions to the history of marbling include James Sumner's *The Mysterious Marbler: with an Historical Introduction, Notes and Eleven Original Marbled Samples* by Richard J. Wolfe (Bird & Bull Press 1976); a translation from the German of Franz Weisse's *The Art of Marbling* (Bird & Bull Press 1980); *The Role of Mann Family of Dedham, Massachusetts in the Marbling of Paper in Nineteenth-Century America* (self-published 1981); *On Improvements in Marbling the Edges of Books and Paper* (Bird & Bull Press 1983); *Three Early French Essays on Paper Marbling, 1642-1765, with an Introduction and Thirteen Original Marbled Samples* (Bird & Bull 1987); and, most recently, *Josef Halfer and the Revival of the Art of Marbling Paper* (Oak Knoll 2018).

"The Richard J. Wolfe Collection of Paper Marbling and Allied Book Arts" consists of more than 400 books on the subject of paper marbling, paper making, and paper decorating, as well as works on book history, book binding, the book trade, and technical works on aesthetics and the mechanics related to the book arts. A few gems in the book portion of the collection include an extra-illustrated edition of Rosamond B. Loring's *Decorated Book Papers* (Harvard College Library, 1942) interleaved with 30 original specimens decorated by Douglas Cockerell, Rosamond Loring, Veronica Ruzika, and others; as well as several extra-illustrated copies of Charles Woolnough's *The Whole Art of Marbling* (1881), which includes some with samples marbled by W. Mansell & Co. Bookbinders in London. Many books in the Wolfe collection include a swatch hand-marbled by Wolfe, which served as his bookplate.

In addition to collecting voraciously any technical material related to the book arts and to making his own marbled papers and marbled stenciling masks, Wolfe collected vintage marbled and decorated papers. The collection also includes his research files and drafts of all his published works related to paper marbling.

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MARBLING PATTERNS

The following are variations on the Turkish patterns that are achieved by dropping ink, watercolor, acrylic, or oil paints onto the surface of a viscous bath and then manipulating them using rakes, combs, brushes, and other marbling tools.

Turkish Variation



A sample hand-marbled by Douglas Cockerell, from "The Richard J. Wolfe Collection of Paper Marbling and Allied Book Arts."

Tiger's Eye



A sample hand-marbled by Richard J. Wolfe from Josef Halfer and the Revival of the Art of Marbling Paper (Oak Knoll Press 2018).

Nonpareil



From *On Improvements in Marbling the Edges of Books and Paper* (Bird & Bull Press 1983), by Richard J. Wolfe.

French Curl



From the endpapers of a volume of plates from Denis Diderot's eighteenth-century *Encyclopédie*.

Harry L. Stern – Antiquarian, Bibliophile, Gentleman – An Appreciation

With thanks to Harry L. Stern III, Jeffrey Stern, and Wendy Husser

Harry Stern was a gentleman and a gentle man. Across the decades I knew him, I do not recall him ever appearing annoyed or agitated. He was a delight to be with. Tom Joyce

Harry L. Stern, a member of the Caxton Club since 1966, passed away on November 14, 2020, at the age of 90. A fifth-generation Chicagoan, Harry turned his classical training and love of languages into a 55-year career as an antiquarian book and map dealer. He never retired and was working on appraisals up to the end.

He was educated at Culver Naval Academy (summers 1944-1946), the Latin School of Chicago (class of 1948), Yale University (class of 1952, classical languages), and the University of Geneva (1954-1955, modern languages). At the age of 61 he earned a master's degree in American history from the University of Chicago (1991). When in the Army, he was posted to the National Archives, where he translated German documents captured during WWII. After his studies in Geneva, he remained in Europe and sold books in France and Germany. In 1956 he married Suzanne Denison, and in 1957 they settled in Chicago, where they had three children.

Harry worked in the family business as a wine merchant until 1965, when his interest in antiquities and books led to a job with Kenneth Nebenzahl, Caxtonian and world-renowned dealer in antiquarian books and maps. In 1975, Harry launched his own business in the same field, buying and selling rare books and antique maps, and appraising items for universities, private collectors, insurance companies, and estates in the U.S., Canada, and Europe. He also dealt in rare manuscripts and American art.

Mentor

George Ritzlin: "There is a tradition in the book trade of experienced dealers helping neophytes get started. When I began in the trade in the 1970s Harry was happy to take a new dealer such as myself under his wing." Kathy Lamb: "He was an early mentor, and I will always cherish our friendship, his scholar-

ship, his excitement over a great book or map, overhearing his pivots to another language on the phone, his gracious demeanor, and smile." Martin Antonetti: "As my first mentor and role model, Harry was totally responsible for my choosing the professional path that I did, and I was – and am – immensely grateful for his kindness to me and his continued guidance over the subsequent decades."

John P. Chalmers: "Like everyone else, I was charmed when I met Harry at the Caxton Club in the early 1990s. Robert McCamant wrote a profile for the *Caxtonian* in which a number of anecdotes are recounted, including this from Harry about operating a retail bookshop and the antiquarian book trade: 'The cash flow worries are deeper, the stress level more profound. But the exhilaration of repetitive gambling – buying a book, enhancing its value through personal research, and then re-selling it at a profit – that is a hard-to-beat narcotic.'"

Gentleman

Wendy Husser: "When a new member, I attended a Chicago Literary Society dinner. A tall, smiling man took the chair next to mine. He put out his hand in greeting, saying 'Hello, I'm Harry Stern.' I said, 'Oh my God, I know who you are!' Still smiling, Harry asked how I knew of him. There we were at a dinner table, dressed for the evening, and anticipating a fine speaker ahead. I told him where I had worked for 27 years before arriving in Chicago for a new job, and the name of the surgeon with whom I worked. The smiling, calm, dignified, Harry nearly shouted out loud: 'You worked with him?' His chair nearly fell over backward. Harry knew the man well as a serious map collector who had purchased maps and antique books during many years of friendship with Harry at his Chicago office. The surgeon often spoke of Harry and made many trips to Chicago, and Harry had visited him in Rochester over the years. They were the same age and, as it happened, died within a month of each other. I knew both well, ultimately, even though they were complete opposites. A surgeon from New York city, aggressive, dramatic, self-important, and always in charge of everything and everyone, and Harry Stern, a gentle, refined, agreeable peace-keeper."

The word that most often recurs in mem-



Harry L. Stern

ories of Harry is "gentleman." Pia Oliver: "A gentleman with a twinkle in his eye!" Casey and Peter Bensinger: "Harry was always a gentleman, well read, well intentioned, and well spoken. He was always interested in others and, unlike many, he listened. Rare qualities that we need today more than ever." Judith Kolata: "I first met Harry in 1976 when my rare book professor at the U of I suggested I contact him to see if he could use some research help. Throughout all these many years Harry has been a delight. Always urbane, sweet, curious, never a bad word about anyone, a real gentleman in a charmingly old-school way. I know no one else like him and I will miss him sorely." Gordon Hollis: "My understanding of Harry crystalized when I shared a booth with him at a book fair in California. Dealers came the entire length of the fair to say hello. Sometimes they did business, but that was not so important as just visiting with Harry."

Harry's lifelong interest in travel and learning other languages was sparked by a trip to Europe with his mother in 1947. George Ritzlin: "I once asked him how many languages he knew and he replied, 'about five or six.' Later I mentioned this to a dealer who knew Harry before I did, and was told Harry probably meant he was fluent in five or six languages, but he had a working knowledge of 20 or more."

Nur Senf!

From Wendy Husser's memories of her friend: "Harry Stern was a person of refinement, education, devotion to his work, kindness to his friends, and always with calm balance."

See HARRY L. STERN, page 6

Endowment Supports Rare Book School Scholarship by T. Kimball Brooker

Jackie Vossler

Since 2015 the Caxton Club has sponsored an annual \$2,500 scholarship for early-career midwestern scholars to attend the Rare Book School, offering tuition support and funds to support the expenses necessary for attendance. The club is delighted to report that Caxtonian Kim Brooker has generously enabled us to create an endowment that will support this scholarship for future generations. Dr. Brooker was himself a Rare Book School scholar. His appreciation of this training led to his visionary desire to make certain that our initiative would continue. The scholarship

has been renamed the **T. Kimball Brooker/Caxton Club Rare Book Scholarship**. The club extends a sincere note of thanks to Kim for his generosity and vision.

Caxton Club Rare Book School Scholars:

2015: Lindsey O'Brien
2016: Sarah Evenson
2017: Matthew Blackwell
2019: Kadin Henningsen
2020: Kerri Mulcare
2021: Candela Marini

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T. Kimball Brooker
Photo by Alan Klehr

2021 Caxton Club RBS Scholarship Award

The Rare Book School at the University of Virginia has announced that this year's recipient of the Caxton Club RBS Scholarship is Dr. Candela Marini, an assistant professor in the Milwaukee School of Engineering. Her intention is to take the course on Book Illustration Processes to 1900 with Terry Belanger, or the Identification of Photographic Print Processes with Al Carver-Kubik and Jennifer Jae Gutierrez. Dr. Marini is a cultural historian whose research focuses on nineteenth-century South America, particularly visual discourses related to nation building.

One of these RBS courses will inform her book project, *War, Photography, and Visual Citizens: Territorial and Visual Expansion in the Construction of Chile and Argentina*. The RBS thanks the Caxton Club for another opportunity to issue this wonderful scholarship; the General Scholarship Committee was impressed by the quality of Dr. Marini's application, and they are thrilled that she will be able to attend a course, thanks to the Caxton Club's support.

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Candela Marini

HARRY L. STERN, from page 5

These adjectives never changed: kindness, a willing listener, non-confrontational, a soft and accepting demeanor toward everyone. In 2008 Harry read a wonderful, historically accurate, and remarkably interesting paper to the Chicago Literary Club. None of us there will ever forget the evening. Harry talked of early Chicago days and how the small town on Lake Michigan became a cosmopolitan city. Slaughterhouses were a large component of Harry's story – a story, in the long run, about family and an all-beef frankfurter. David Berg was the founder of a sausage company that received the very first Inspection Approval. His

only child was Harry's great grandmother. By the mid-1880s baseball had developed in the Midwest. One field was established close to Berg's location by his friend Charles Comisky, a neighbor. Berg's frankfurters were sold at both Cubs and Sox games. It was said that the Sox used mustard as their hotdog condiment while the Cubs used all kinds of things on theirs. Stern blamed the abysmal record of the Cubs on this heretical practice. Harry's father, then a six-year-old, asked his great-great grandfather what to put on his frankfurter, and the crusty German from Frankfurt am Main said 'Nur Senf!' (Only mustard!) I was lucky to know Harry, a fine gentleman."

In addition to the Caxton Club, Harry was a member of the Chicago Map Society, the Chicago Literary Club, the Bandar-Logs, the Grolier Club, and the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America. A resident of Lake Forest since 1979, he is survived by his wife of 41 years, Petrea Rahr Stern, three brothers, three children, five grandchildren, two step-children, and two step-grandchildren. Donations in his memory may be made to the Chicago Map Society. A memorial service/celebration of his life will be held in summer 2021 if conditions allow.

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New Caxtonians 2020

Susan Hanes and Jackie Vossler

Timothy Barrett (Non-Resident)

Papermaking history and technique

Tim is a professor in Iowa's School of Library and Information Science and director of the University of Iowa Center for the Book. His research on early European handmade papers has been funded by, among others, a MacArthur Fellowship. Barrett is author of three books and other publications on hand papermaking. *Nominated by Margaret Gamm and seconded by Greg Prickman.*

Joe Berton (Resident)

T.E. Lawrence, WWI poets, illustrated periodicals, military history

A teacher and artist, Joe has conducted extensive archival research on T.E. Lawrence and the Arab Revolt. He has published numerous articles in professional journals and spoken widely on the subject. *Nominated by Teri Edelstein and seconded by Susan Rossen.*

Bexx Caswell-Olson (Non-Resident)

Embroidered bindings, abecedarians, Edward Gorey

Bexx Caswell-Olson has more than ten years of experience in the preservation and conservation field. She is an associate member of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) and the president of the Guild of Book Workers. *Nominated by Patrick Olson and seconded by Tad Boehmer.*

Melanie E. Emerson (Resident)

Avant-garde and contemporary artists' publications and typography

Melanie is currently dean of the Library and Special Collections of the School of the Art Institute. She holds an MA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, an MLIS with a concentration in Archives and Special Collections, and a BA in Art History from Wayne State University. Her research and publications focus on artists' books and artist-produced serial publications. *Nominated by Suzanne Karr Schmidt and seconded by Carolyn Szylowicz.*

Jennifer Farrell (Resident)

Letterpress print and design, Chicago design

Jen has operated Starshaped Press, a letterpress design studio in Chicago's Ravenswood neighborhood since 1991. She creates both commercial projects and limited-edition fine press

works using exclusively metal and wood type, deeply rooted in the history of Chicago printing and design. Jen is becoming well known nationally and is a mentor of young printers, especially women. *Nominated by Jill Gage and seconded by Eileen Madden.*

Dr. Syed Hasan (Non-Resident)

Nineteenth-century English authors

Dr. Hasan is a biomedical scientist who has developed new therapeutics against cancer, viruses, and pathogenic bacteria. His book collecting interests include nineteenth-century English authors, particularly authors of the late nineteenth century. He is especially interested in the topics of social life and strife during this period. *Nominated by Jackie Vossler and seconded by Richard Renner.*

Kathryn Isola (Non-Resident)

W. Somerset Maugham

Kathryn graduated from The College of St. Scholastica and has published three children's books through Lakewalk Publishing of Duluth. She works at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. She is a writer of meta-fiction, the relationship between fiction and reality, and has studied the metaphysical or physical secrets of the world. Her favorite theme is psychological fiction and secret writing. She attended three virtual programs and applied through the website. *Nominated by Michael Gorman and seconded by Jackie Vossler.*

Kyle McCafferty (Non-Resident)

American and European fiction since the late nineteenth century; labor and counterculture movement publications

Kyle manages the main stacks at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign library. He has a BA in English with a focus on Irish Modernism, and an MS in Library Science from the U of I. Kyle and his wife live on a small farm with seven chickens, two rambunctious cats, and lots of brambles. *Nominated by Carolyn Szylowicz and seconded by Adam Doskey.*

Jerry Morris (Non-Resident)

Books about books, Samuel Johnson, association copies, dictionaries

Jerry was born in New York and spent 23 years in the Air Force, followed by 16 years with the U.S. Postal Service. He is now retired in Florida. He has a wide range of collecting interests, including Samuel Johnson and his

contemporaries, Mary Hyde, association copies, and dictionaries. His passion for Johnson led him to a close friendship with Paul Ruxin, respected and beloved Caxtonian, for whom he gave a memorial talk. Jerry helped to catalogue the Boswell Library for the online site "Library Thing." He wrote an article for the October 2011 issue of the *Caxtonian*, and writes a blog, *My Sentimental Library*. He has been an active member of the Florida Bibliophile Society since 2004. *Nominated by Jackie Vossler and seconded by Susan Rossen.*

Gregory Nosan (Resident)

Art, artists, and other illustrated books; books on gardens, gardening, and garden history; books on cooking and food history

Greg is the executive director of publishing at the Art Institute of Chicago, leading a team of editors and production experts who create award-winning books on the museum's exhibitions, collections, and history. A graduate of Kenyon College, he holds a PhD in English Language and Literature from the University of Chicago and has taught there and at other institutions. *Nominated by Danny Greene and seconded by Susan Rossen.*

Christine Singer (Resident)

Chicago cultural, political, and social history; Americana before 1840; travel writing; natural history; cookbooks

A Chicago native, Christine was educated at Michigan State University and the University of Chicago. After four years at Leo Burnett, she devoted her career to philanthropy management at the University of Chicago, the Art Institute of Chicago, Lincoln Park Zoo, and the World Wildlife Fund. *Nominated by Neil Harris and Terri Edelstein and seconded by Jackie Vossler.*

Carl Weitman (Non-Resident)

Children's books, private press, history

Carl was born in New York City and lives and practices neuropsychology in the Cleveland area. He received his PhD and conducted post-graduate work at Case Western Reserve University. A member of the Grolier Club, NOBS, Rowfant, the Union Club, and the Book Club of California, he is currently writing a history of book collecting organizations. He is an enthusiastic book collector and auction attendee, and is interested in the past and future of book clubs. *Nominated by Alice Schreyer and seconded by Susan Hanes.*

Conserving the Gwendolyn Brooks Papers at the University of Illinois

Jennifer Hain Teper and Quinn Morgan Ferris

"If you wanted a poem, you only had to look out of a window. There was material always, walking or running, fighting, or screaming or singing."
Gwendolyn Brooks in *Report from Part One*

In 2013, the University of Illinois Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML) was thrilled to acquire the papers of renowned poet and Pulitzer Prize winner, Gwendolyn Brooks. The collection was compiled by Brooks and her daughter, Nora Brooks Blakely. It was received by the RBML in well over 500 cardboard boxes filled with manuscripts, drafts, revisions, correspondence, scrapbooks, clippings, recordings, broadsides, photographs, awards, artefacts, notebooks containing personal notes and lists, and several homemade chapbooks of handwritten early poetry. Since that time, the RBML manuscript curator, Siobhan McKissic, has supervised the processing and rehousing of this extensive collection. That work is now nearing completion, though slowed by the current health emergency. After an in-depth review of the collection, we have established that it consists of unique content that illuminates Brooks's creative processes, personality, and literary career in a variety of ways. We also know that much of the unpublished manuscript material – mostly created between 1960 and 2000 – has been well used in the years before its acquisition by Illinois. The natural deterioration of the ground wood pulp paper that makes up much of the collection, in addition to accumulated environmental changes, has resulted in this valuable research material being in a fragile state and, in some cases, inaccessible to scholars. We sought and have been awarded a Save America's Treasures grant to fund a full-time conservator to focus solely on the conservation needs of the Brooks papers and to prepare them for selective digitization, thus enabling broader public access.

Due to Ms. Brooks's unique interactions with her own manuscripts – often revisiting pieces many times, even after publication, to edit and add commentary – our traditional approaches to conservation fall short. What has made conservation of these artefacts challenging is not simply their damaged state,

but an understanding of how far conservation work should remediate the damage to the materials visibly, when much of that damage was done by Brooks herself. Her editorial process was as much a part of her work as her compositions. Her papers are rife with marginalia and commentary, later additions to already published works, and alterations of her works by cutting out portions or taping on overlaying material. She also regularly cut herself out of many photographic images she



Before treatment

saved. While we conservators are familiar with approaches to repairing "damaged" special collections materials such as these, we found that there were numerous instances where traditional approaches to repair could not be carried out without risking erasure of Brooks's presence within her own archives. After many (and continuing) discussions with our curator and archival specialists, we decided to maintain Brooks's intentional damage by making visible repair interventions part of the conservation of these materials.

We hope here to share not only the conservation challenges of this collection, but how we have reconsidered our usual treatment approaches to preserve the evidence of the cre-

ative processes of one of America's greatest poets.

When planning the hiring of the Brooks papers conservator, we strove first to reach a better understanding of the broader conservation needs of the collection. We anticipated that some work would be straightforward, while other conservation required more discussion and planning. A review of the condition of each box of manuscript materials and books in her personal library confirmed our assumptions: that many of the most intellectually and culturally valuable items in the collection – scrapbooks with family photographs, early poems, and notations, early hand-written and illustrated chapbooks, notebooks containing her thoughts and copious lists, to name only a few – were in perilous condition. We found that materials were torn, dirty, moldy, folded/rolled, and taped, in addition to being generally chemically unstable. Of the 131 books in her library, over a third had "damaging" materials laid into the texts by Brooks (clippings, tissues, etc.) while almost 15 percent showed severely embrittled paper and/or evidence of mold or pest damage due to their previous storage. Protection of brittle paper and mold remediation are standard collections care techniques in our libraries, but what to do with the materials she added to her books?

Of the 360 boxes of manuscript and photographic materials reviewed, we learned that Ms. Brooks *loved* Post-it notes (over one-third of all boxes had at least some Post-it notes present), at least nine percent of boxes had materials that had been cut or torn away, and sealed envelopes both to and from Ms. Brooks were present in a quarter of the boxes. While other conventional preservation concerns were also noted (folded materials that should be flattened, mold and pest damage, tears on paper, etc.), these could be performed without too much debate. While we know that Post-its will cause damage to papers if left in place. We also know that many of the cut- or torn-away pieces were in Ms. Brooks's own hand, and we know that the unopened envelopes offer evidence of their own by the very fact that they are unopened. What to do?

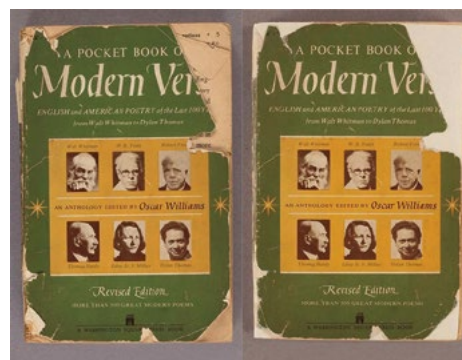
That was just a review of the more conventional materials in her collection. A fortunately small number of scrapbooks and albums are also in the collection and, as scrapbooks and

albums are wont to do, present significant challenges. Several older scrapbooks of early written works and photographs are dangerously brittle and fragile in their present condition. Ms Brooks's later photo albums had plastic pages of pockets literally stuffed with snapshots, some lying loose between the pages. The order in which these photos were inserted, again, says something about her use and value of the images, but their very organization makes them almost inaccessible without risk of loss of original order. Lastly, there are many boxes of miscellaneous items. Ms. Brooks was awarded countless honorary degrees – many of which were accompanied by ceremonial robes, hoods, and diplomas. While the condition of these materials is relatively good, textiles require different storage from papers to avoid risks of damage.

Our Conservation Approach

After evaluating the needs of the collection as a whole, we proposed a four-stage approach to help to both preserve and provide access to these important materials. The first step is to provide suitable boxes for materials that require custom-sized enclosures for enhanced protection, such as various pieces of realia and textiles, fragile books, all scrapbook and albums, and some smaller pamphlets. Textiles will also be padded at the folds with acid-free, lignin-free tissue paper. As well as boxing some materials, this project will undertake several steps that are considered to be basic stabilization rather than conservation repair. By this, we mean that items will not be significantly altered physically by our intervention, but that our work will substantially reduce risk of future damage or loss. Included in such stabilization is mold remediation on a whole host of materials (books, manuscript materials, scrapbooks, and photographs) – in all cases using non-chemical surface cleaning only, protection of very brittle papers with polyester L-sleeves, and humidification and flattening of rolled or folded items. The most critically endangered items and those that are the most valuable to the collection and in need of repair will receive full conservation treatment by a professional conservator hired with funds from our grant and overseen by our permanent conservation staff. The categories of damage observed in the collection that we deem appropriate for conservation treatment include: the removal or treatment of pressure-sensitive tapes or adhesives that are either partially detached or causing damage to the artefact to which they are attached; opening sealed envelopes with contents currently inaccessible

to researchers by use of careful humidification with gellan gum (a method by which moisture is added *very* gradually to soften the adhesive to allow envelopes to be opened without slicing or possible moisture damage to the contents); repair of papers with tears and/or losses that pose a risk of further damage through use via mending with Japanese tissue and wheat starch paste, or heat-set tissue, as appropriate; and the full repair of several of the books, scrapbooks, and albums that can neither be handled nor digitized in their current condition due to inevitable additional damage. Lastly, we plan to digitize materials in three distinct categories – 1) materials at the highest risk for further damage so that we can provide controlled digital access for researchers (predominantly in the corre-



Pre- and post-conservation

spondence series and public engagement series of the manuscripts) while reducing handling of fragile objects, 2) create digital versions for much of the unique textual and image content that we have clear intellectual rights to distribute, and 3) digital transfer of unique audiovisual recordings for access and preservation purposes. Digitization of the Gwendolyn Brooks papers is a highly desirable and necessary step. Due to the inherent shortcomings of many of the support materials, active and dynamic preservation policies will need to be maintained even after conservation and stabilization. The digitization of many of the important areas of the collection is our responsibility as a means of insurance against the increasing fragility of these modern embrittled materials. By having digital surrogates, we can reduce the wear and tear associated with handling and use of these materials, even if we cannot immediately provide broad access to these digital materials outside of the University of Illinois. Additionally, the digitization of these materials will provide the opportunity for future enhanced data-searching capabilities and development of related digital humanities tools, virtual exhibits,

and other means of diversifying the ways in which the public can engage with the collection.

As mentioned, not all of our decisions on how to move forward with the preservation needs of these materials were easily made. Several materials required discussion between the curators and conservators about how to best meet the long-term preservation and access needs of the materials while still clearly showing Ms. Brooks's intent. Harmful materials that were found laid into books from her library were removed from the books and stored separately after carefully recording the book and the pages the item was found between. No item, even a shred of tissue, was left unrecorded and unsaved. For the sealed envelopes, we agreed on the use of gellan gum to open the envelopes very carefully so that the materials enclosed within can be read. We will record in our finding aid which items were received unopened. The most complicated materials – the repair of extensive damage where some or all of the damage was caused by Ms. Brooks – will be evaluated and discussed item-by-item with the curator. Our guiding principle for all items will be that, if the current damage does not increase the risk of future damage, the item will probably not be repaired at all (this is a likely resolution for many of the group photographs from which Ms. Brooks cut her own image). For other materials where there is significant risk of additional damage without intervention, repairs will be minimally invasive and visually identifiable. One example is a well-used paperback copy of *The Book of Verse*. The tattered and dog-eared state of the book as used by Brooks is maintained, though we will repair the cover and some pages. By traditional conservation standards, this repair approach is undesirable and visually jarring, but suits our purposes in that the result clearly depicts the condition of the item as it was used by Brooks.

Overall, we hope that our plan for the preservation of the Gwendolyn Brooks papers will make the collection more easily and safely used by researchers, while still clearly maintaining evidence of her artistic process. By a combination of stabilization, creative conservation repairs, and digitization, researchers from around the world will be able to view Ms. Brooks's works and learn more about her creative process.

The authors would like to thank Siobhan McKissick, Anna Chen, the Brooks Estate, and Nora Brooks Blakely.

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Eminent Caxtonians, Four: A Family Affair

Dan Crawford

Caxton Club membership can run in families. Certainly, the most notable example is the Donnelley family, whose association with the club runs from its founding to the present day. (Thomas E. Donnelley I, who joined the club in 1895, became the first member to reach the 50-year mark, being granted Honorary Membership in 1945.) The Barretts, father and son, have been noted in the *Caxtonian*, and recently we marked the passing of Rhoda Clark, whose grandfather preceded her as a member. Among the many families who provided more than one member we find twin members Alfred John and Adrian Julien Cox, the Smiths of Northern Trust, and father and son Ernest Alfred Hamill and Alfred Ernest Hamill.

But let us consider the Mortons. The story begins with J. Sterling Morton, Governor of Nebraska, Secretary of Agriculture, and founder of Arbor Day, a self-made rich man who insisted his sons find their own way in the world of business. This they did, achieving success, fame, and, by the way, membership in the Caxton Club.

The oldest brother, Joy (member 1899-1934), named for his mother, Caroline Joy, took up farming to combat the aftereffects of spinal meningitis, picking up an interest in the outdoor life, absorbing something of his father's interest in trees. Like many young men of his day, he set himself to working for a railroad company, banked his money, and when he was called to the staff of a Chicago salt distributor, made it his own. He is commemorated today in the Morton Salt Company and the Arboretum which also bears the family name.

Joy's son Sterling was a member of the club from 1911 until 1945, dying before he could see his plan for a larger library at the Arboretum through to completion. The library was completed by his daughter, Suzette Morton Hamill Zurcher Davidson (wife at one time of Ernest Alfred Hamill.) Suzette lived until well after the Caxton Club admitted women but never joined, though she did become the first female trustee of the Newberry Library.

Joy's brother Paul (member 1895-1906) worked in the coal business and also in railroads, eventually becoming vice president of the Santa

Fe Railroad. Theodore Roosevelt picked him to serve as Secretary of the Navy, making him one of several sons of cabinet members to become cabinet members. His tenure did not last a year. Opponents accused him of certain kickbacks paid by the Santa Fe and of plotting to become



*J. Sterling Morton with four sons
(left to right): Mark, Carl, Joy, and Paul;
Courtesy of The Morton Arboretum*

the sole coal supplier to the coal-burning ships prevalent in the Navy of 1906. Roosevelt, while maintaining Morton's innocence, gave in and replaced him as Secretary.

Mark (member 1903-1951) followed his older brothers into the railroad business, at 18 taking a job at the Burlington Railroad. He moved on to a lumber company, and then joined Joy in founding Morton Salt. This gave him funding for a side business as a breeder of racehorses. What he is most remembered for, however, is being the only member of the Caxton Club ever taken to court for kidnapping.

In 1914, his daughter eloped with a most unsuitable man, and Mark managed to bring her back home, locking her away and seeking to annul the marriage on the grounds of unstable mental condition. This was decidedly not the sort of story one wanted all over the newspapers, and Mark threatened to tar and feather any reporter who ventured onto his land to question him, his family members, or his servants. This was just dangling bait before reporters of that rough and ready day.

Webb Miller, who would write his side of the story in his autobiography, took the train

out to the suburbs and, finding no one willing to drive him to the Morton place, went to a livery stable to rent a car and driver. The chauffeur informed him that the livery stable was under orders to phone Mark Morton about any such request, but scoops are not won by the fainthearted, and Miller insisted.

The chauffeur drove Miller to the gate but declined to go one inch onto Morton property. Miller had spent too much by now to risk going back to his editor without a story, and strolled up the drive, eventually accosting a man working in the garden, offering money if the man could help him get inside the house.

The man was Mark Morton, who knocked him down and dragged him to the barn, shouting for the servants to heat up the tar as he bound the reporter hand and foot. When no one responded, he went in search of decorating material himself. Utterly furious when he returned, having found no servant willing to take part in any feather action, he dragged Miller by the ankles across

the grounds and threw him into the back of one of his own cars, intending to drive him into town to jail. Morton was so furious, however, that he crashed after a short distance, throwing Miller from the open car onto a barbed wire fence.

Eventually, the sheriff obligingly locked Miller up and kept him overnight, in his bruised and bloodied condition. He was allowed to call a friend, a fellow reporter, to post his bond. On his release he found that every newspaper in Chicago except his had a front-page story about his misadventure. Battered by Morton, incarcerated by a Morton-friendly jail, and worst of all, scooped by the competition, Webb accused Morton of kidnapping. The case was tossed around nearly as much as Miller had been done, Morton himself accusing Miller of trespassing (disallowed, as people wishing to buy or sell horses were allowed free access to the property). Six years after his venture onto Morton property, Miller was awarded \$300 in damages.

Webb Miller spent the next 25 years covering the violence leading up to World War II, but even after all that, he found space in his book to recall his encounter with a Caxton Club member.

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Book- and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

(Note: A listing of virtual/online exhibitions that you can visit from the comfort and safety of your home.)

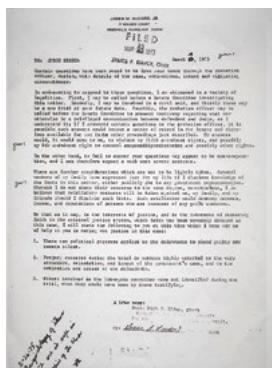


The LIFE Picture Collection

LIFE Picture Collection

life.com/life-picture-collection/

A visual chronicle of the twentieth century and one of the most important photographic archives in the United States. From 1936 to 2000, *LIFE* commissioned more than 10 million photographs across 120,000 stories. At its height, *LIFE* magazine's incomparable images and essays reached one of three American readers. The original pictures and articles remain in Meredith's *LIFE* Picture Collection, an unprecedented cultural asset with millions of untold stories and unseen images. In addition to its core *LIFE* photographic archive, the Picture Collection also contains a number of important photographic collections, including: the [Dahlstrom Collection](#) of about 7000 glass plate negatives of New York and the mid-Atlantic region taken by photographers Wallace Levison and George Brainerd from approximately the 1890s through the 1910s; and the [Hugo Jaeger Photographic Archive](#) of color photographs of Europe, primarily during the Nazi era. These images document rallies, private events of National Socialist leadership, and important photographs of ghettos and concentration camps; and the [Mansell Collection](#) – assembled by a London collector and organized by subject, this archive contains more than 600,000 pieces from the 1870s-1940s, including prints, daguerreotypes, glass plates, and other formats.

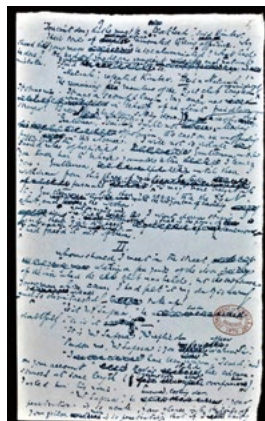


Watergate letter, McCord to Sirica, National Archives

National Archives

archives.gov/exhibits/exhibits-list.html

The National Archives presents a large number of online exhibitions of historical documents including [American Originals](#), documents and artefacts that are primary source materials for American history; [Discovering the Civil War](#), a continuing project building the archive of Civil War documents and records; [John H. White: Portraits of Black Chicago](#), Pulitzer-Prize winning photographer White's images of 1970s Chicago; and [The Watergate Files](#).



Page from manuscript of Edwin Drood, MSL 1866 Forster 167 1,f,5 recto, Victoria & Albert Museum

Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Manuscripts

vam.ac.uk/collections/manuscripts

Among the hundreds of collections in the V&A, the National Art Library holds a rich collection of unique manuscript material dating from the Middle Ages to the present day, in the form of bound volumes, single documents, and whole archives. It includes, among others, illuminated manuscripts; modern calligraphy; literary manuscripts; how-to recipe books; papers of antiquarians, artists, and scholars; correspondence; inventories; and business papers. Its highlights include five notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci; the original manuscripts of most of Charles Dickens's novels; calligraphic work by Edward Johnston; one of Jonathan Swift's diaries; a missal made in the fourteenth century for the Abbey of Saint-Denis in Paris; and the archives of Joseph Archer Crowe and Giovanni Battista Cavalcasse, nineteenth-century specialists in Italian Renaissance art.



Berlin/London: The Lost Photographs of Gerty Simon, Wiener Holocaust Library

Wiener Holocaust Library, London

wienerholocaustlibrary.org/exhibitions/

The library is one of the world's leading and most extensive archives on the Holocaust and Nazi era. Formed in 1933, the library's unique collection of over one million items includes published and unpublished works, press cuttings, photographs, and eyewitness testimony. It mounts a number of online exhibitions including: the [Kitchener Camp](#), a largely forgotten derelict army base on the Kent coast that, in 1939, became the scene of an extraordinary rescue which saved 4,000 men from the Holocaust; [Berlin/London: The Lost Photographs of Gerty Simon](#) (1887-1970), a German-Jewish photographer renowned in the 1920s and 1930s for her portraits of important political and artistic figures in Weimar Berlin and interwar London; and [Fate Unknown](#), which tells the remarkable, little-known story of the search for the missing from the perspectives of Jews and others who survived Nazi persecution, as well as the institutions created to facilitate searching, including the International Tracing Service.

The Oscar Wilde House, Dublin

Joseph M. Morgan

The art of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (1854-1900) has parallels with that of another comic master, P. G. Wodehouse. Like Wodehouse, he created an imaginary world in which the aristocracy and elites of England were cultured, honorable, eloquent, and so witty that bandied epigrams were the common coin of their conversations. In reality, the Marquess of Queensbury, a semi-literate thug, and his poisonous son, Lord Alfred Douglas (Wilde's nemeses) were much more typical of their class and type than were Wilde's creations. Like Wodehouse, Wilde's art was that of an outsider (an Irishman in Wilde's case, a solidly middle-class family in PGW's). Also, like Wodehouse, Wilde's art and place among the consummate masters of literature in English are continuously challenged by the idea that comedy is, in some ill-defined way, inferior to the solemnity and ponderousness of, say, Henrik Ibsen and Theodore Dreiser. Unlike PGW (who sailed serenely through his long life – more than twice as long as Wilde's), Wilde's short life ended in tragedy. To many people, his standing as an artist is lesser than his standing as a martyr to wicked and unjust laws whose prison sentence for the "love that dare not say its name" was, in effect, a death sentence.

Many of the world's museums have put on extensive Wilde exhibitions; his birthplace, 21 Westland Road, Dublin, is now the home of the Irish writing and creative writing (not mutually exclusive) departments of Trinity College Dublin's School of English; and there is a flourishing Oscar Wilde Society but there is, to my knowledge, no Wilde Museum as such. The nearest we have is the house at One Merrion Square, Dublin, an elegant and capacious house in one of the most famous Georgian squares in the world. Now known as the [Oscar Wilde House](#) and situated in the

most fashionable part of Ireland's capital, it has literary associations that predate Oscar. His father, Sir William Wilde, was an internationally renowned eye and ear surgeon and had wide-ranging scientific, literary, and folkloric interests. His mother, Lady Jane Wilde, was a fiction writer and poet who published under



Two views of One Merrion Square, Dublin

the name "Speranza." She was also a translator – her translation of a German Gothic novel published as *Sidonia the Sorceress* was a great favorite of the Pre-Raphaelites. William Morris created a lavish edition of it in 1893. She was known most in her time as a fervent advocate of Irish Republicanism in prose and verse,

chiefly in the Fenian newspaper *The Nation*.

Merrion Square (Cearnóg Mhuirfean) was created in the 1760s and completed about 30 years later. Among others, Daniel O'Connor ("The Liberator") and W.B. Yeats lived in houses in the square. The Wilde family bought Number One in 1855, when Oscar was a baby. The American College, Dublin, founded in 1993 by Lynn University, owns the Oscar Wilde House and uses the ground floor for exhibitions, lectures, etc. The upper floors are, in normal times, open for tours that stress



Oscar Wilde statue by Danny Osborne

the literary and architectural heritage of the house. Many of the original architectural features and furnishings are still there.

The houses of Merrion Square are grouped around a park that houses a number of statues, including those of Bernardo O'Higgins (*Liberator of Chile*) and Michael Collins ("the Big Fella"). The most unusual is the statue of Oscar, just across the road from Number One. Oscar as a young man lounges on a rock, long-haired and with a quizzical half smile, clad in a green jacket carved from nephrite jade with a pink collar (Norwegian thulite). His blue trousers are carved in pearl granite, with shiny shoes of polished black granite. This striking monument was created by the Irish sculptor Danny Osborne and installed in 1997.

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March and April 2021 club events

The Caxtonian lists club events only to ensure a printed record. Full details and registration can be found on our website, under Events. (All events are Central Time.)

March 2, 4:00pm. **The Newberry presents "An Unscripted Look at a Script Type: Matthew Carter and Jill Gage on the Design of Snell Roundhand"** (sponsored by the Caxton Club)

March 12, 12:30pm. **Carl Smith on Chicago's Great Fire**

March 17, 6:30pm. **Silvia Beltrametti on "Pirated Caricatures in Nineteenth-Century Dublin"**

March 24, 12:30pm. **Kinohi Nishikawa on "Toward A Black Book Aesthetic"**

April 21, 6:30pm. **Jacqueline Goldsby on "Do Not be Afraid of No:" Gwendolyn Brooks's Years at Harpers**

April 30, 10:00am. **Chicago Botanic Garden, Language of Flowers Symposium** (co-sponsored by the Caxton Club)