

Fellowship of American Bibliophilic Societies

Volume 1, Number 2

NEWSLETTER

Winter 1995-1996

WORDS FROM CHAIRMAN PRO-TEM LAWRENCE N. SIEGLER

SINCE our first newsletter in late January 1995, several encouraging events have occurred:

On February 23, we met in San Francisco during the West Coast Antiquarian Book Fair weekend. There was a cocktail party hosted by the Book Club of California and the Roxburghe Club. Over fifty people attended. Sandor Burstein, Jerry Cole and Paul Birkel made remarks welcoming book club members from various parts of the country. This gathering gave us the opportunity to meet other bibliophiles from the west coast and enjoy a fine city and book fair.

Another gathering, on April 20, was hosted by the Grolier Club in New York City. This gathering occurred at the outset of the New York Antiquarian Book Fair. Grolier President, William Warren, and Martin Antonetti welcomed members of the FABS clubs. They asserted Grolier's support of our organization. Some of us also attended Bruce McKittrick's Fellowship of the Book seminars. As in San Francisco we met collectors, dealers, and many members of the Grolier Club at this warm gathering.

The best environment for meeting one another seems to be at the various book fairs in different parts of the country. A modest reception, and time to talk to each other is all that is needed. We hope to continue this format wherever possible. Contacts made through FABS events should prove to be valuable to each club.

All this makes for an encouraging beginning. Much correspondence, many phone calls and conversation indicate we should go forward to make FABS a vehicle to stimulate our own clubs' activities and make this a more gratifying experience for our members.

So far there are eight clubs located around the country affiliated with FABS. As a new organization, FABS still must get its message to as many members of the various bibliophilic clubs as possible. We hope that each member of the FABS clubs will receive and read this newsletter.

The message of FABS is still simply to share information and create an environment to meet each other. The sharing of information is primarily through the newsletter. We hope to make the newsletter interesting and useful.

If anyone has additional ideas, comments, and espe-

cially a desire to further this work of FABS, do not hesitate to call. So far the work has been done by a relatively small number of representatives from the various clubs. To build a strong and permanent organization any and all help is vital.

LAWRENCE N. SIEGLER

THE founding member clubs of FABS are in the order of their "seniority"—

- The Grolier Club of New York City (1884)
- The Club of Odd Volumes, Boston (1886)
- The Rowfant Club, Cleveland (1892)
- The Philobiblon Club, Philadelphia (1893)
- The Caxton Club, Chicago (1895)
- The Book Club of California (1912)
- The Roxburghe Club, San Francisco (1927)
- The Baxter Society, Portland, Maine (1984)

If you are a member of another bibliophilic club and would like more information on possible membership of your group in FABS, contact our membership director, Bruce McKittrick, 43 Sabine Avenue, Narberth, PA 19072, phone (610) 660-0132, Fax (610) 660-0133. FABS is designed as a loose affiliation of independent clubs, with each member club free to maintain its quaint traditions and peculiar ceremonies.

NEWS FROM THE CLUBS

If you are interested in attending any of the events listed here, and are not a member of the host club, contact them for details and assistance in making arrangements. Some of the clubs have special rules for guest sponsorship, etc.

THE GROLIER CLUB

November 29-January 12—Small Exhibition: *Stephen Crane: An Exhibition on the Centennial of The Red Badge of Courage*. Curated by Stanley Wertheim.

December 6–February 17—Public Exhibition: *Poets in a War: British Writers on the Battlefronts and the Home Front of the Second World War*. Curated by Kenneth A. Lohf.

December 13—George Newlin: *Was Mr. Pickwick an Irishman?* Member George Newlin will speak after dinner on one of his many special interests. (See "A Dickensian Task" in the Talk of the Town of the September 25th, 1995 issue of *The New Yorker*.) Dinner 6:00 p.m.

January 9—Ward Smith: *T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets—a group reading*. Cocktails and dinner.

January 24–March 29—Small Exhibition: *Serial Publications: Essential Parts of the 19th-Century Imagination*. From the collection of Robert H. Jackson. Opening 5:30 p.m.

January 25—112th Annual Meeting: Meeting 6:00 p.m., reception 7:00, dinner 8:00. Black tie.

January 27—Bibliography Week Farewell Tea. 4:30 p.m.

February 20—Mildred Abraham: *Joseph Pennell in Italy*. Cocktails and dinner.

March 19—Wendell Garrett: *American Colonial Architecture & Antiques*. Cocktails and Dinner.

April 10—Andrew Nadell and William Helfand: *Re: A Social History of Medicine*. Curator's Chat, cocktails and Dinner. Sponsored by the Committee on Prints, Drawings and Photographs.

April 22—Loren Rothschild: *W. Somerset Maugham*. Cocktails and dinner.

April 30—Joyce Carol Oates: Cocktails and dinner with the author.

May 20—William Barlow: *John Baskerville*. Cocktails and dinner.



Publications update: The Publications Committee, which is headed by James O'Halloran, has much to report. You will see the fruits of their labors in a series of new books bearing our imprint:

- The eagerly-awaited *One Hundred Books Famous in Medicine* by Haskell F. Norman will soon be available. Note that the members' price is \$200.00 per copy (not \$250.00, which is the non-members' price); copies will be mailed directly from The Stinehour Press to those who ordered in advance. After *The Etched Work of Whistler* (six volumes, 1910–1922), this is the most monumental of all Grolier Club publications, weighty with erudition, eminently useful, and sumptuously produced.

- Kenneth A. Lohf's *Poets in a War*, the catalogue of his December exhibition, has just arrived from Italy, where it was printed at Martino Mardersteig's Stamperia Valdognaga. This 200-page, beautifully illustrated, cloth-bound study of the British poets of the Second World War is now available to members at \$45.00.

- *Collecting and Recollecting James Boswell* by William Zacks and Mary Eccles, the catalogue of the bicentennial exhibition, derived from the collections of Yale University and Four Oaks Farm, will be sent to all members gratis.

- Another catalogue, *Stephen Crane: An Exhibition on the Centennial of The Red Badge of Courage* by Stanley Wertheim, documents the small exhibition that opened on November 29. This catalogue, which was designed by Jerry Kelly, will also be sent to all members gratis.

- Two publications will celebrate another bicentennial: *John Keats Bicentennial Exhibition*, the catalogue by James Weil and Jerome Buff, with a foreword by Jack Stillinger, and *Letters from a Walking Tour*, a limited, letterpress edition of Keatsian letters, the first in a new series by Kenneth Auchincloss's Fine Printing Committee. More details on both of these to follow.

And to help you keep all of that straight the Publications Committee is about to distribute an updated and *complete catalogue of Grolier Club publications for sale*, including all of our backstock of books, exhibition handlists, Gazettes and Yearbooks, and posters and prints. It is amazing that our backlist contains some 19th-century items; certainly we are the only publisher to keep items in print for 100 years!

MARTIN ANTONETTI

THE ROWFANT CLUB

OVER the past few months we have heard speakers discuss topics ranging from *Alice in Wonderland* to World War II. For example, in October of 1995, we listened to George Allen deliver a fascinating account of his experiences in the Berchtesgaden area and as a paratrooper in France. He was the first to learn of the nature of Hitler's death and discovered an archival trove of minutes of the Nazi's last year of meetings.

We heard from John Lindseth on October 18, a world famous collector of memorabilia on Lewis Carroll (Dodson), author of the *Alice in Wonderland* books as well as a more than mediocre professor of logic at Oxford.

We listened, on October 25, to Dr. Peter Carson, a cardiologist from England discuss his new book on President Roosevelt's illness and its effect on World War II. He too was a paratrooper, but for the British.

Frank Piehl, of the Caxton Club in Chicago, delivered a

marvelous talk on November 8 on the Life and Publications of Eugene Field. He also displayed his very interesting collection of Field memorabilia.

On November 15, we were visited by the Royal Librarian from Windsor Castle in London. Oliver Everett gave us a fascinating tour in slides of the library, which is not open to the public. This was one of our largest turnouts and we required another hall for the event.

For the rest of the year and on into 1996, we will hear from speakers on topics ranging from Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities* to the history of The Great Lakes and the history of accounting. We will also attend a discussion of Deaf Theater by the artistic director of the local, but very famous, deaf theater, the Cleveland Sign Stage Theater. They will perform for us as well.

We will hear talks on ancient music, wine and early film as well before the season is out in late May of 1996. Other talks will focus on Ezra Pound, Gothic Architecture, and the future of reading. Please call for our schedule.

GEORGE WEIMER IV

THE PHILOBIBLON CLUB

1995

October 10—Janice Fisher

November 14—Cynthia Buffington

December 12—Dr. Fred Schreiber

1996

February 13—*Still open*

March 12—Bruce McKittrick

April 9—Amanda Hall

May 7—Jocelyn Konigsmark

We have once again skipped a January meeting and extended the year through May.

Unfortunately, Philobiblon has not maintained a library since the 1920s. Our archives are preserved at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, but it was discovered during our Centennial Year investigations that we no longer kept our own set of publications. Since our Centennial Dinner we have been reassembling a library of the Club's publications and publications related to, presented to, or mentioning the Club. Since we still have stock of some of our publications (collectors note that statement), we have segregated a majority of the publication list, but a number are still wanting.

It was with pleasure therefore that the Club accepted this summer, the kind gift of member Bruce McKittrick, a copy of the first publication of the Philobiblon Club in 1897:

The Excellent Privilege of Liberty and Property. Being a Reprint and Fac-simile of the First American Edition of Magna Charta printed in 1687 under the direction of William Penn by William Bradford.

4to, one of 150 copies, yap vellum binding. Wilberforce Eames' copy. With a laid-in letter of Dodd, Mead & Company of 2 February 1898 concerning the selling of a number of copies of this title.

GEORGE ALLEN

THE CAXTON CLUB

Centennial Celebration

On January 26 1995, the Club held a gala black-tie banquet to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Club. Neil Harris of the University of Chicago spoke on "High Culture and High Ambitions: Chicago in the 1890s." Copies of the Club's sixty-first publication, *The Caxton Club 1895-1995 Celebrating A Century of the Book in Chicago*, were distributed to subscribers at the gala. This book by the Club historian gave not only a history of the club but also a bibliography of the club's publications and brief biographies of one hundred Caxtonians.

The next four dinner meetings, held at historic locations around the city, focused on topics of key interest to members in looking forward to the second century. In February, Greer Allen spoke on "R.R. Donnelley & Sons Company in the World of Books" at the Congress Hotel. In March, Richard Wendorf spoke on "Rare Books and Manuscript Libraries in the Twenty-First Century" at The Fortnightly. In April, Beverly Lynch spoke on "The Past, the Present, and the Future of the Book in Chicago" at the Cliff Dwellers Club. And in May, Paul Banks spoke on "The Development and Growth of Book Conservation in Chicago, 1895-1995" at the Mid-Day Club.

Beginning in the fall of 1994, and continuing to the summer of 1995, twenty-two exhibitions were held by fifteen libraries of public and private institutions in the Metropolitan Chicago Area. They presented to the public a wide variety of book-related topics such as: an exhibition of the Caxton Club publications and another of personal treasures from the collections of Caxtonians, both at the Newberry Library; "The P. F. Volland Company and Juvenile Publishing in Chicago" at the Chicago Public Library; and "Eugene Field and His Books" followed by "Planes, Trains and Automobiles: The Transportation Revolution in Illustrated Children's Books" at the University of Chicago.

The success of these events has stimulated serious in-

terest in the book throughout the Chicago area, and it has revitalized interest and membership in the Caxton Club as it embarks on its second century.

FRANK PIEHL

THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA

THIS past year, The Book Club of California mounted seven exhibitions and sponsored nine public programs. Members received two keepsakes. In February, the Oscar Lewis Award honored Michael Harrison for his contribution to Western history and Stella Patri and Albert Sperisen for their contributions to the book arts. In March, the Club presented two grants for works in progress in Western history and the book arts. At October's annual meeting, new directors and officers were elected: Joanne Sonnichsen became President, and Peter Hanff, Vice President, while Secretary John Crichton and Treasurer John Borden were re-elected.

For the future, the 1996 Oscar Lewis Award will be announced later in November, and information and applications for Book Club grants for 1996 are now available. Our next exhibition, "Ballooning," will remain in the Club's rooms through January, 1996. Planned exhibitions include one on paper, January 8 through February 12; the work of Will Bradley, February 19 through March 25; and the Rounce & Coffin Club's Western Books exhibition during April. We plan several public programs, some to coordinate with exhibitions, but dates and details have yet to be settled. The Club will soon send a third keepsake to members and will present the Winter book, *A Widely Cast Net*, an anthology of Oscar Lewis's work chosen by himself and produced by the Feathered Serpent Press. Our Spring book, printed by W. Thomas Taylor, will be an important bibliography of Gold Rush literature by Gary Kurutz, Special Collections Librarian of the California State Library.

ANN WHIPPLE

THE ROXBURGHE CLUB

THERE are new officers at The Roxburghe Club: Harlan Kessel, former marketing director at the University of California Press and editor of *The Quarterly News-Letter* for The Book Club of California is the Master of The Press; Jack Maclean, exhibits director for The Book Club of California and a noted collector of Valenti Angelo, is Printers' Devil. Both are busy at work planning for the bi-annual meeting of the Zamorano and Roxburghe Club

scheduled for October 26-27, 1996, and hosted by the Roxburghers. About 125 members in all are expected to attend. One of the tour highlights will be the newly built San Francisco Public Library and its special collections.

A major publication is also in the pipeline. It will be a bound, letterpress volume titled *Roxburghe Club Announcements and Keepsakes, 1967 through 1994*. One hundred fifty copies are planned, with a dozen illustrations and in folio format similar to the earlier Roxburghe volume on the first forty years of keepsakes and announcements.

The Roxburghe fall season opened with a dazzling book "performance" by Charles Hobson, creator of artists' books and the author of *Leonardo Knows Baseball*. His talk was entitled "Making Connections: Navigation, Surrealism, & Magritte's Buckets." It was an amazing tapestry of science, history, and art and an absolutely unforgettable evening. Hobson is a new member of The Club. The October speaker was Dr. Andrew Jameson on "The Codex Sinaiticus and the Monastery of Saint Catherine," a fascinating account of the oldest extant biblical manuscripts. The November speaker is the founder of the Cartoon Art Museum of San Francisco, Malcolm K. Whyte. His illuminated talk is titled "Cartoons Speak Volumes: A Selection from Comic Strip Classics" which recognizes the cartoon world's valuable contribution to our cultural record. Mr. Whyte has written, "If one picture is worth a thousand words, a volume of cartoons speaks libraries. No other medium informs so immediately, thoroughly, and intimately as the cartoon image."

The traditional December meeting is a reception to honor The Club's printer-members such as Peter Rutledge Koch, James Wehlage, Andrew Hoyem, Susan Acker, Robin Heyeck, Bruce Washbish, Alastair Johnston, and Patrick Reagh. The Club virtually wallows in the richness of the work of its distinguished printer-members. Each meeting announcement is designed and produced by a printer-member and is of superb quality. These announcements and keepsakes are of growing importance to ephemera collectors.

Future speakers include Joanne Sonnichsen on hand bookbinding; Southern Californian Kitty Marryat on the teaching of fine printing; and New Yorker Dr. Jack Hagstrom on Robert Frost.

The greatest perquisite of membership in The Roxburghe Club is its gift of longevity. Among our members recently exceeding ninety years are Ward Ritchie, Dr. Albert Shumate, California collector Michael Harrison, and journalist and Club archivist Duncan Olmsted. That may account for the six- to twelve-month waiting list for new member nominations.

HARLAN KESSEL

THE BAXTER SOCIETY

DURING 1995 the Baxter Society continued its regular meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of each month, with a three-month summer break. Each summer the Club visits one of the notable book arts institutions of the New England region—this year it was the hand papermaking studio near Lubec, Maine of Katie MacGregor and Bernie Vinzani. In addition to the initial open-house and reception for visiting members of the Baxter Society, MacGregor and Vinzani conducted a two-day workshop in papermaking which several of us attended.

Among many interesting programs this past year, the lecture by Eleanor Garvey, librarian *emeritus* at the Houghton Library, Harvard University, was notable. She was the first Nancy L. Cowan Lecturer, a series begun in memory of our late president. Roger Stoddard, another of the current Houghton Library curators, will be the second Cowan lecturer in April, 1996. Our lead-off program in January 1996 will be a talk by Fred Thompson, board chairman of the Maine Broadcasting Company (Channel 6 TV), on his late friend and mentor David Serette, proprietor of the famed Yellow Kid Press, best known for the book *Shaker Smalls*. That talk will be January 10 at Westbrook College in Portland.

This year we conducted the Club's third competition for the Stephen Harvard Award for Excellence in the Book Arts. Winners this year were Gray Parrot, Maine's pre-eminent bookbinder, for *Thirty-four Marbled Papers*, and the Tilbury House, Gardiner, trade publishers, for *Friendship*. Runners-up were master printer Scott Vile of Portland's Ascensius Press for his edition of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and George Benington, also of Portland, for his Coyote Love Press edition of *12 Journeys in Maine*.

The Stephen Harvard Prize is designed to stimulate interest in the book arts, and to support book artisans. It is also to honor the memory and work of Stephen E. Harvard (1948-1988), book designer, typographer, printer, and honorary member of the Baxter Society.

Book artisans of Maine submit any completed piece, finished (date of publication) within a three-year period prior to the submission deadline. Submissions must fall into the following categories: overall production, overall design, binding, illustration, photography, typography, papermaking, calligraphy, or printing. Book authorship alone is not eligible. No winner of the Stephen Harvard Prize may win two consecutive competitions.

Three judges, selected by the Awards Committee, choose one or more submissions which best exemplify the level of excellence for which Stephen Harvard was known. Judges are selected based on state, regional or national distinction in the book and related arts. Judges for 1995 were: Philip Isaacson, (Chief Judge), Arts Critic for the Maine Sunday Telegram; Martin Antonetti, Librarian, The Grolier Club of New York City; and Aprile Gallant, Assistant Curator

for Prints, Drawings and Photographs, Portland Museum of Art.

The grand winner(s) of the Stephen Harvard Prize will be awarded \$500.00 from the Baxter Society and will be recorded on a permanent plaque. The prize may be awarded to one or more persons at the judges' discretion. Multiple winners of the prize will share the \$500.00 on a formula decided by the judges. The jury may also select one or two submissions as runners-up. Those so selected will receive \$200.00 from the Baxter Society. Unless prior arrangement is made, submissions will become a part of the Harvard Prize Collection, Baxter Society Archives, to consist of all the winners through the years.

Finally, copies of the Baxter Society's books may be purchased by contacting the Treasurer at P.O. Box 10538, Portland, Maine 04104, to obtain our backlist and prices.

ELIOT STANLEY

DeGolyer Award in Bookbinding Created

BRIDWELL Library of the Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University is pleased to announce a major gift and an important new program. The heirs of Mrs. Helen Warren DeGolyer (1926-95) have established a generous endowment that will support the *Helen Warren DeGolyer Triennial Exhibition and Award for American Bookbinding at Bridwell Library*. The idea is fitting because Mrs. DeGolyer was a fine bookbinder and a patron of the arts. Although such awards exist in England, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and elsewhere in Europe, there is no regular prestigious award for American bookbinding.

The guidelines for the DeGolyer Award require that binders submit one book, completed within the past three years, and one design for binding a book from Bridwell's collection (the book for the first Triennial is to be the Daniel Berkeley Updike printing of the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer* on vellum). A jury made up of binding historians and artists will look for artistic merit and innovation in design, as well as excellence in structure, workmanship, and selection and use of materials. Up to fifty books and designs will be chosen for inclusion in the triennial book exhibition with accompanying full-color catalog.

The first prize will be a commission for the binding of the Bridwell book according to the design submitted. The value of the commission will be \$5000.00. (Future commissions will range from \$2000.00 to 7000.00, depending on the book chosen for each triennial.) In addition to the

first prize commission, up to three Honorable Mention awards will be given, each having a cash value of \$500.00. The winning design from each competition will be displayed at the next Triennial.

For more information, call Dr. Valerie R. Hotchkiss, Director of Bridwell Library, (214) 768-1867, or Jan Sobota, Director of the Conservation Laboratory at Bridwell Library, (214) 768-3733.



REVIEW

NICHOLAS A. BASBANES, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*. Henry Holt, New York City, 1995. 638 pp.

THE psyche of most FABS members lies between bibliophilia and bibliomania. Our simian ancestors and antediluvian forebears may have survived because they were superior collectors. It was the hunters and gatherers who ultimately established the granaries, archives, and libraries of our world. Note the Old Testament's admonition to save during the bountiful years. Freud's characterization of a *Sammeler* as "anal retentive" seems unhistorical and too visceral. Nonetheless it is valid that the ardent collector is importantly and usefully among us.

Nicholas Basbanes has assembled much lore about extraordinary book collectors, shrewd booksellers, acquisitive librarians and fabulous auctions. *A Gentle Madness* contains accounts of the major participants, mainly in the English reading world, and their collections, appetencies, and occasional shenanigans. There is a fine bibliography, index, and photographs.

The book includes accounts of early great English collectors as, Robert Cotton and Thomas Philips. There is material on many of America's collectors from James Logan and James Lennox through J.P. Morgan, Henry Huntington to more recent notables such as Frank Hogan, Robert Hoe, Donald and Mary Hyde, Richard Manney, and William Scheide. Many currently active collectors, library and institutional acquirers are covered. There is an extensive chapter about Henry Ransom and Lew Feldman's opulent and aggressive drive to make the University of Texas an outstanding rare book library.

We are told of various collectors' maneuverings and sometimes outrageous and often courageous bids at auctions. There are accounts of ingenious agents such as A.S.W. Rosenbach and George Smith. The book relates various collectors' overwhelming desire for special items and their single-minded quests, even to the point of insolvency and forced liquidation.

In his endeavor to fully explain the "gentle madness," Basbanes devotes many pages to the bibliopath. He tries to show us the mania's effects. Of biblioklepts and other malefactors, there is much on Haven O'More, a little too much on Stephen Blumberg, and about enough on James Shinn and T.J. Wise. Some of us will easily understand the compulsion and "the gentle madness" power.

A Gentle Madness neglects to show the role of this nation's book clubs in satisfying a broad desire to delve, to study, and enjoy books in various ways including design, construction, repair, paper, typeface, content and even collecting. Yet this book belongs in the library of anyone who seeks to know better the book world and its history.

L. N. S.

ED. NOTE: This book is now available from the Daedalus catalogue for \$25.00.

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