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Abraham Lincoln – from prairie village to the nation’s heart

Robert Cotner

Abraham Lincoln is a constantly emerging presence in American intellectual life. Born in 1809, in a log cabin near Hodgenville, KY, he remembered as a child the three hills that lay behind his home, part of the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, which extend southward to the coastal plain of Georgia. He escaped that hardscrabble mountain scene in 1812, when his family moved to the densely forested regions of southern Indiana, just north of the Ohio River in Spencer County.

For 14 years, he lived here among a sparse population and struggled to get an education from his mother’s reading, borrowed books, and his first look at the law in a borrowed Indiana book of statutes. The greatest sorrow of his young life occurred when his mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, died in 1817 of milk sickness. He left this wilderness habitat in 1831, when his family moved to Illinois, and he set out on his own, ending up in New Salem, the next important sojourn on his destined path. He arrived in New Salem, piloting a flatboat on the Sangamon River, where he distinguished himself by getting his heavily laden boat over a milldam. The residents were so impressed with

his ingenuity as a riverboat man, they offered him work in the village. He told villagers at the time that he was nothing more than a “piece of floating driftwood.”¹ Here he spent the next six years, living with people who would be important in his development and in refining the great powers of mind, which would distinguish his life in leadership and letters.

The frontier settlement of New Salem lies on a long, narrow plateau, perhaps a hundred yards wide and a mile long, with a single, gently winding road between the log cabins on either side. Behind the cabins, the land falls away sharply into heavily treed ravines that protected the residents from attacks of any kind. Along the dusty road of New Salem, Lincoln tried his hand at rail splitting, entrepreneurship, and politics. He liked politics best and emerged from this enclave of friendships into the world of prairie politics in Springfield, the new Illinois capital, just a dozen miles south, in the midst of one of the grandest expanses of flat prairie grasslands in America. More than anything else in his life, the prairie defined the man.



Lincoln the rail splitter; statue at New Salem, IL.

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New Salem, IL, January 2004. All photos in this article, unless noted otherwise, by Norma J. Cotner



Musings...

CAXTONIAN

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One of the more remarkable literary achievements in the 20th Century was by prairie poet Carl Sandburg, whose 3,600-page, six-volume biography of Abraham Lincoln was published in 1926 (*The Prairie Years*) and 1939 (*The War Years*). Between June 8, 2003 and September 12, 2003, it was my great pleasure to read this sterling biography — one of the finest of American letters.

I finished the final volume reluctantly, as one always does when finishing a good book. It (or, in this case, they) become such a part of your daily anticipation and assume such an integral place in your life that you know it will be a while before you find another book as good to fill in the void when you're finished.

My second response was of appreciation: how I came to love this man Abraham Lincoln! There was so much rich detail in every aspect of his life in these books that I felt as though I were spending each daily reading session with Lincoln himself. I became annoyed at him occasionally; I laughed at his constant stories; I marveled at the superb intellectual capacity of his lawyer-mind — particularly his capability with analogy: he had a tale to tell for nearly every circumstance, almost always concluding with a chuckle or hearty laugh. I came to understand the principle that, if he didn't laugh, he would cry, for there was so much to weep about, in his life and particularly during the war years, when things did not proceed as he planned and directed. And so many young lives were being lost each day!

Another important response was one of awe, for Sandburg's incredible gifts as scholar and writer. I have imagined him often, as I travel American highways and byways, on the road in the 1920s and 1930s, with his guitar, his duffle of clothes, and his briefcase of sheet music and notebooks, a troubadour in search of American songs and unrecorded stories of Lincoln. The results of Sandburg's travels were his important collection of American folk music, *The American Songbag* (1927), and his Lincoln books.

As a musical performer, Penelope Niven, his biographer, observed, Sandburg "could hold an audience transfixed when he sang a folk song." She recalled an evening in 1925, in the *Chicago Daily News* office, when Sandburg and his cronies had a

"rousing party" for Sinclair Lewis, just back from a European trip. Ben Hecht, Lloyd Lewis, and Morris Fishbein were bathing their spirits in "good talk, liquor and laughter." Toward the end of the evening, Fishbein asked Sandburg to give them a song. He chose "The Buffalo Skinners," which he had gotten from Texas folklorist John Lomax. Lloyd Lewis recalled, "It was like a funeral song to the pioneer America that is gone, and when Carl was done Sinclair Lewis spoke up, his face streaked with tears, 'That's the America I came home to. That's it.'"

One of the great friendships to develop during Sandburg's Lincoln years was with Caxtonian Oliver Barrett. Barrett had amassed a great Lincoln collection — of books, maps, photographs, letters, and all manner of documents. Many of these became the illustrative materials for the Lincoln biography. And, in 1960, Sandburg published a beautiful, nicely illustrated book, *Lincoln Collector*, on the life and work of Barrett. Barrett's son Roger is the senior member of The Caxton Club, having been a member since 1941.

It took a prairie man and a poet to tell the poignant and powerful story of our greatest President. It took a person of tenacious spirit to pursue the research across America. It took a marvelously disciplined scholar to assemble, retain, organize, and utilize the volumes of materials in preparation for writing. And it took a person of great literary genius to give us the comprehensive and compelling story of Abraham Lincoln.

Contemporary Lincoln biographer, David H. Donald, called Sandburg's Lincoln biography, "the most imaginative and flavorful of all [Lincoln] biographies." It is indeed that, and it will be read as long as the love of Lincoln's generous life is held dear by the American people.

Robert Cotner
Editor

A prairie poet's portrait of Abraham Lincoln

Gene K. Rinkel

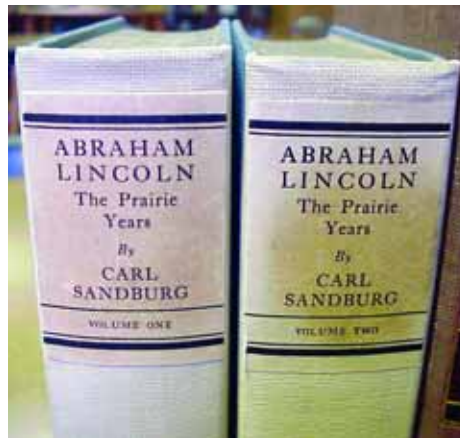
Editor's note: Gene Rinkel is the Curator of Special Collections of the Rare Book and Special Collections Library, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. We welcome Dr. Rinkel's fine contribution to this month's Caxtonian, a special issue on Abraham Lincoln.

A poet, balladeer, folklorist, journalist, novelist, and historian, Carl Sandburg achieved his most enduring national recognition as a symbol of American culture personifying the common man through his monumental and acclaimed biography of Abraham Lincoln in six volumes (Harcourt, Brace, 1926 and 1939). Sandburg captured the spirit and the dreams of his generation in an epic poem, *The People, Yes*, inspired by his appreciation of Lincoln's commitment to democracy and a government "of the People, by the People, for the People."

Significantly, his inspiration came from discussions with descendants of those who had known Lincoln. In the preface to *The Prairie Years* (Harcourt, Brace, 1926) Sandburg wrote, "For thirty years and more I have planned to make a certain portrait of Abraham Lincoln. It would be a sketch of the country lawyer and prairie politician who was intimate with the settlers of the Knox County neighborhood

where I grew up as a boy and where I heard the talk of men and women who had eaten with Lincoln, given him a bed overnight, heard his jokes and lingo, remembered his silences and his mobile face." (p. vii)

The Prairie Years, begun as an account for children, quickly expanded into a saga of the American experience. Benjamin P. Thomas in *Portrait for Posterity: Lincoln and His Biographers*



The *Prairie Years*, 1926.

(Rutgers University Press, 1947, p. 285) described Sandburg's contribution to Lincoln biography in chapter 12, "An Impressionist Tries His Hand." He noted a critical review by Milo Quaife in the *Mississippi Valley*

Historical Review of Sandburg's interpretation of Lincoln's early years, in which Quaife asserted, "whatever else it may be, it is not history as the reviewer understands the term." While a few scholars echoed his opinion, the general response has been enthusiasm for an alternative method, a more poetic method, of presenting the drama of history.

Sandburg's research profited from travels with his guitar during a heavy schedule of platform performances. From local sources, both individuals and libraries, he collected personal insights, sifting through newspapers, diaries, pamphlets, posters, handbills, pictures, cartoons, official records, and hundreds of books. The style of *The Prairie Years* combines the art of the news reporter with that of the poet. It has been tersely described as one of "dismaying simplicity," "economy of narrative," "as detailed as Dostoevsky," "as American as Mark Twain."

From the proceeds of *The Prairie Years*, Sandburg bought a home at Harbert, MI, and there he produced the greatest of his Lincoln volumes. Undaunted by critical reviews of the first two volumes, he pursued tenaciously the challenges of assembling a barrage of factual details from the sweep of history during 11 more years of patient research. In 1,175,000 words and 3,400 typewritten pages, he completed his Lincoln story in four more volumes of 2,400 detailed pages, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, published in a first printing of 15,000 sets at \$20 each.



The *War Years*, 1939.

For *The War Years*, his technique was essentially the same as for *The Prairie Years*. The result was "panorama through minutiae."



J. G. Randall's and Sandburg's Lincoln. All photos in this story are from the Sandburg Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, through whose courtesy they are used.

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Lincoln

Continued from page 1

There is little to distinguish the prairie but its vastness and its depth of soil. What you see is what you get, the real estate agents of Lincoln's day might have said of this land. That is certainly what his friends said of the man Lincoln. With few frills and little polish, he distinguished himself by an encompassing honesty, a depth of mind, and an engaging love of people.

Lincoln's training in the law was so personalized as to be almost ideal. He came to understand that the intellectual framework for the highest expression of legal education and practice directs all thinking, all decisions, toward justice, within the framework of common law. With the agility of mind characteristic of our best lawyers, Lincoln adapted this abiding

be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become one thing, or all the other."⁴

Lincoln's language, like the prairie landscape, was plain to see, easy to comprehend, and with an elemental dignity to convince even the simplest of people. Though unappreciated by Eastern politicians who met him in the early years, Lincoln drew national attention to himself by the quality of his intellect as it was framed in language almost biblical, which he developed and refined in his 25 years of legal practice and personal study while living in Springfield.

The seven Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858, which began under a broiling Midwestern sun on October 21, 1858, in Ottawa, IL, were covered by the national press, and his Cooper Union



Newly erected statues of Lincoln and Douglas on the site of the first Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Town Square, Ottawa, IL



The block on 6th St., Springfield, IL, where the Lincoln family lived in the home to the left.

principle into all of his thinking.² The people of Illinois caught the currents of this magnanimous ideal in Springfield on June 17, 1858. Lincoln's law partner William Herndon, upon having heard in advance the "House Divided Speech" in their Springfield law offices, said, "Lincoln, deliver that speech as read, and it will make you President."³

The speech began with a sentence that would guide him throughout his presidency: "If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it." But it was his prophetic sentences, which gave title to the speech, for which it is most often remembered: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to

speech in New York, February 27, 1858, printed in full by four major newspapers, placed him in the public eye. A recent biographer called one sentence from the Cooper Union speech a "spine-tingling peroration": "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."⁵ Lincoln emerged from the Cooper Union speech the dark-horse candidate as the first Republican Party nominee for President against his old archrival, Democrat Stephen Douglas, in 1860.

On paper, no person entered the American presidency more poorly prepared for the task that lay before him. In spirit, no person entered it better prepared. He departed from Springfield for Washington, on February 11, 1861, telling his fellow citizens in farewell that he left "with a

task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington."⁶ So it was: the Union was divided. The fears of the Founding Fathers were fulfilled. And Lincoln's task was to restore the Union and finish the work of the Founding Fathers. In so doing, he spent the next four years in travail, the likes of which few leaders have ever experienced. And he achieved a success, the likes of which few leaders have ever known.

Seen as the ultimate culmination of the dispute over the issue of slavery, which Washington, Jefferson, Adams, and others would not touch because of the fragile nature of the early republic, the work of Abraham Lincoln constituted the final deed of nation-founding. Lincoln was the Commander in Chief of the Union Army under Ulysses S.

Grant, which brought the nation into wholeness, into an integrity, never before achieved. The Battle of Petersburg, in a manner of speaking, was not only the final great battle of the Civil War, but the final battle of our Revolutionary War.

Garry Wills is accurate in quoting Wilmore Kendall, who claimed that, at Gettysburg, in his dedicatory speech on November 19, 1863, "Lincoln undertook the new founding of the nation, to correct things felt to be imperfect in the founders' own achievement."⁷ Wills is equally correct in his assertion that "Without Lincoln's knowing it himself, all his prior literary, intellectual, and political labors had prepared him for the intellectual revolution contained in those fateful 272 words [of the Gettysburg Address]."⁸

Wills then gives a detailed analysis and descriptive assessment of the background, writing, delivering, and response to the "Gettysburg Address." He calls it an "authoritative expression of the American spirit — as authoritative as the Declaration of Independence itself, and perhaps even more influential, since it determines how we read the Declaration."⁹ The intellectual revolution that Lincoln gave America, besides the reestablishment of the Union, lies in what Wills calls the "correction of the spirit...." And finally, he asserts, "By accepting the Gettysburg Address, its concept of a single people dedicated to a proposition, we have been changed. Because of it, we live in a different America."¹⁰

Lincoln's level-headed, steady Midwestern kindness became integral to his extraordinary national leadership as the war plodded through the months and years of bloody battles over the mountains, across the coastal plains, and along the nation's waterways. In acts of courage so natural to him that they seem commonplace, Lincoln visited the Union army, went into the Confederate capital of Richmond, and continued his late-night journeys around Washington-city against the wishes of those closest to him.

His prairie sagacity, seldom understood even by those nearest him, opened the White House

to all comers once a week, for a visit with the President himself. Any subject was open for personal consultation, and people lined up in great numbers to meet, shake hands with, and talk over personal matters with their President. He was, in fact, the first Populist President — 50 years before *Populism* was known in America. He defined the term by his open and beneficent presidency.

His "Second Inaugural Address," the final address of his brilliant career as 16th President, is a statement of contrition, forgiveness, and redemption. Quaker theologian Elton Trueblood called the Second Inaugural the "noblest state paper of the 19th Century," and a "theological classic."¹¹ Just weeks before the end of the Civil War and his assassination at Ford's Theatre, it stands as a suitable conclusion to the life Lincoln gave to his nation and to history: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan — to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."¹²

On April 4, 1865, Lincoln, his family, and a contingent of military personnel left Washington-city for a river trip to the Confederate capital, Richmond, VA. In what must be considered one of the most courageous acts by an American Commander in Chief in any age, Lincoln, with his small son Tad at his hand, docked at Rockett's Landing in Richmond, where a crowd "entirely of Negroes" greeted him. Many knelt before him in honor and respect, but Lincoln would have no man bowing to him and urged them to rise and "kneel to God only and thank him for your freedom."¹³

"The pedestrian President," as Sandburg called him, then, with Tad by his side, walked the two miles to the Confederate capital, amidst a stony-silent congregation, looking from every open window and watching from every street corner. What a perfect target for an assassin's bullet — a nearly seven-foot-tall president in top hat walking through the vacant streets of the enemy capital. But Lincoln declared by this

daring deed that State's Rights were dead, that he was President of this rebellious city, state, and region, and that he claimed victory for the Union, restored by his presence here on this day. America was born again!

What a loss John Wilkes Booth's bullet brought to America on April 15, 1865! Had Lincoln lived, we might well have had a "Richmond Address," or an "Appomattox Address," in which, in his unique way, he would have enunciated what it means to be a nation of one people — black and white, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, rural and urban, religious and non-religious. Had he lived, the politics and economics of the nation might well have been spared the trauma, which occurred under the leadership of his successor. Had he lived, it might have taken less than a hundred years to achieve the Voting Rights Act. Had he lived, we might be closer to a full equality as a nation than we are in 2004. But such was not to be: like an ancient Greek drama unfolding, the foretelling and fulfillment of Lincoln's death came quickly, with a Derringer shot to the cranium, and the brilliance of our greatest President was forever darkened.



Lincoln's tomb, Springfield, IL

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Sandburg

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The reader was “infused with detail until suffused in atmosphere,” creating “an impressionist” view of Lincoln. In his Harbert workshop, stocked with 1,000 source books, Sandburg marked passages for copyists, who worked on a glassed-in porch while his wife Paula and three daughters, Margaret, Janet, and Helga, helped file and organize the growing mounds of paper.

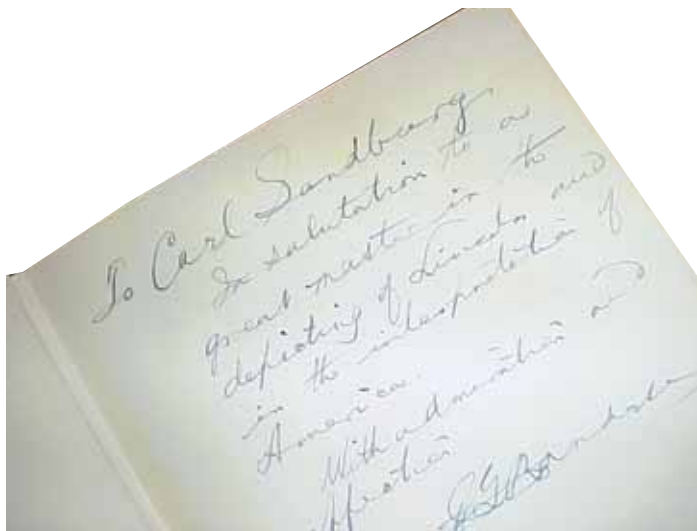
With typewriter perched precariously on a packing crate, his notes and scattered pages torn from books and thumb tacked to an upright screen, he surveyed and summarized, distilling the essence into a creative poet’s view of Abraham Lincoln. The poet had indeed profited from the critiques of other Lincoln scholars, among them, Professor J. G. Randall, historian at Illinois, who criticized the discursiveness of *The Prairie Years*. When *The*



Sandburg's thumbtack story board

War Years appeared, historians, still amazed at his methods, were slower to condemn. Eight years later Randall wrote, “To Carl Sandburg, in salutation to a great master in the depicting of Lincoln and in the interpretation of America. With admiration and affection. J. G. Randall, June 5, 1947.” (*Lincoln: the Liberal Statesman*, Dodd, Mead, 1947). Increasingly, readers have granted a large measure of poetic license as Sandburg unfolds the drama of the Civil War.

Sandburg described his workshop in a letter to Bruce Weirick, June 4, 1955, when he offered his archives to Illinois. Among the significant Lincoln material, he listed “3,000 and more Lincoln books, related biographies,



J. G. Randall inscription to Carl Sandburg.

photostats, photographs, along with hundreds of notes and memoranda, holograph letters of Lincoln and his Cabinet members, holograph letters of Grant, Sherman, Lee, Jeff Davis....”

The archives at Illinois supplies convincing evidence of the exhaustive research Sandburg undertook in writing the Lincoln biographies, lending credibility to his integrity in handling the documentation he boldly omitted from the printed text. The determined scholar can retrace Sandburg’s methods through much of the same Lincoln and Civil War material he



Sandburg's markers in *The War of the Rebellion*.

used for *The War Years*. In 133 volumes of *The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Sandburg painstakingly marked sources with paper slips for review. In the Foreword to *The War Years*, he observed no student of the War should neglect “a few hours of wandering hither and yon amidst the wilderness of marching and battle orders,

munitions and supply requisitions, transport and communications broken or repaired, documents, diplomatic notes and proclamations.” He explained, “If I had not faithfully plodded through every last piece of essential material that I could lay my

hands on, I would feel guilty.”

Aware of the issues in presenting history, the problems of evidence, and the impon-



The Sandburg Archives.

derables in the career and personality of Lincoln, he often discussed his research with others, among them Henry Horner of Illinois (then judge of the Probate Court of Cook County). Governor Horner gave Sandburg unlimited access to his private Lincoln

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Sandburg

Continued from page 6

collection, which has become the core of “The Lincoln Room” at the University of Illinois Library. The present Sandburg Archives of 5,000 books and over 500 cubic feet of manuscript material has grown out of the “Connemara” purchase from Carl Sandburg in 1954, the “Asheville Collection,” given by his eldest daughter Margaret, materials from Helga Sandburg Crile, and numerous sub-collections acquired at auction over the past 50 years.

Sandburg was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in history for *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* in 1940, and another Pulitzer Prize for *Complete Poems* in 1951. John Drinkwater, Lincoln dramatist, thought it likely that Sandburg “will be found to have given the world the first American epic” (Thomas, p. 291). ❖

Author’s note: The Sandburg Archives at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, were a primary resource for the film documentary, “The Song and the Slogan,” produced by WILL-TV for the University of Illinois in January 2003. For more information about the Carl Sandburg Archives at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: <http://door.library.uiuc.edu/rbx/>.

End-of-Year giving pleases . . .

Gene Hotchkiss, chair of the Development Committee, reports that, while the final results are not yet tabulated, he estimates that the total funds raised when combining the Annual Fund Drive and the Book Auction, will exceed \$30,000. “This comes within sight of our goal, and, speaking for the Development Committee, I could not be more pleased. We thank all members who contributed so generously,” he reported.

He indicated that the number of members participating, through gifts of cash or books, seems to have fallen short of the goal of fifty-percent. All this, he concludes, leads to an even greater effort, and even greater challenge, next year. ❖



The Lincoln Memorial, Washington. From National Park Service art.

Lincoln

Continued from page 5

It is fitting that, in national mourning, a funeral train bore the body of Lincoln through the nation’s principal cities and across the American landscape — thousands upon thousands of people grieving along the way — to a prairie resting place in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield. It is fitting, as well, that one of the greatest memorials in human history — Lincoln Memorial — be situated at the end of the Mall in the Nation’s capital, overlooking the Washington Monument and the Capitol itself. More than any other leader, this prairie

¹ David H. Donald, *Lincoln*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1995, p. 38.

² I want to thank Caxtonian and attorney Junie Sinson for the language of these two sentences.

³ Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*, New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1926, II, 102.

⁴ Sandburg, *The Prairie Years*, II, 103.

⁵ Donald, p. 239

⁶ Donald, p. 273.

⁷ Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Changed America*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992, p. 39.

⁸ Wills, p. 40.

⁹ Wills, pp. 145-146.

¹⁰ Wills, p. 146.

¹¹ D. Elton Trueblood, *Abraham Lincoln: Theologian of American Anguish*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1973, p. 5.

¹² Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, IV, 94.

¹³ Sandburg, *The War Years*, IV, 176. The account by Sandburg is a dramatically written portion of his biography and must be read to be fully appreciated.

An advanced notice

Christopher de Hamel, Donnelley Fellow Librarian at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, England, will write the Introduction to the exhibition catalog for the forthcoming Caxton Club Leaf Book Exhibition, currently being organized by Kim Coventry and the Exhibitions Committee. ❖

Bookmarks...

Dinner Program
February 19, 2004

Richard Kuhta
“Caxton to Langston: Celebrating Books and their Owner”

Richard Kuhta is the Librarian of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, where he has been since 1994. He is an expert on the Irish literary Renaissance, the Shakespearean paintings of Henry Fuseli, and has lately become interested in the subject of provenance: the history of who has owned a book and what use the owner made of it. That interest led to a 2002 exhibit at the Folger Library titled “Thys Book Is Myne,” which title came from a line boldly written by the school-boy Henry VIII in his copy of Cicero: “Thys Boke Is Myne Prynce Henry.” (That copy now resides at the Folger.)

His talk will explore the relationship between people and their books through five hundred years of printing history. It explains how bibliophiles, famous and forgotten, have signaled ownership of treasured volumes, revealing something of their character in the process. Books belonging to writers, collectors, royalty, actors, statesmen, and women will be discussed, showing the interesting and amusing ways people connect with their books. Inscriptions, mottoes, marginalia, bookplates, book labels, armorials, and binding stamps will be shown and analyzed. And lest we be carried away, Kuhta promises to conclude with a discussion of the challenges and uncertainties faced by bibliophiles in determining provenance. He will look at two books the Folger is currently puzzling over: do they own Alexander Pope’s annotated copy of a *Third Folio*? Can they claim to have Sir Walter Raleigh’s personal copy of his monumental *History of the World*?

Writer’s markings in their own libraries are especially interesting. It is thrilling to see copies we know were owned by Ben Jonson or John Dryden and amusing to read Trollope’s acid assessments of Marson’s plays, sharply penned at the end of every play in his copy of the complete works. “These books exude a quality of life, at times highly idiosyncratic, that connects us with these historic figures,” says Kuhta.

In short, this promises to be an evening of anecdote and human interest as well as erudition. Join friends and fellow bibliophiles for an evening of books in February.

Robert McCamant
Vice President and
Program Chair

March luncheon and dinner programs

On Friday, March 12, 2004, Kim Coventry, Daniel Meyer, and Arthur H. Miller will present their book, *Classic Country Estates of Lake Forest*. They will show, describe, and discuss their new book, which explores the development of the Lake Forest community, beginning with Almerin Hotchkiss’ original romantic, picturesque town plan of 1857, charting the transition from suburban villas and Italianate styles to grander, more sophisticated country estates.

Luncheon Program
February 13, 2004
Susan Jackson Keig
“Pictures Speak Louder than Words”

Caxtonian, Council member, and graphic designer, Susan Jackson Keig believes that pictures do speak louder than words. For the past 40 years, Susan has pursued collecting historical photographs and other images and has been active in the restoration of the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, KY.

Using her resources, she has helped others to visualize what part this remarkable communal sect played in settling America. Susan will speak about and show her collection of graphic art and the various ways it has been used in the printed pieces and exhibits she has designed and executed.

This will be a splendid opportunity to learn of the Shakers and about the passion of one of our fellow Caxtonians. She will, as well, bring some of her Shaker books for guests to examine.

We hope you’ll join us for what promises to be a delightful, informative luncheon program.

Edward Quattrocchi & Leonard Freedman
Co-Chairs

On Wednesday, March 17, 2004, Claire Van Vliet, internationally known hand printer and bookbinder, will talk. Van Vliet has operated her Janus Press since 1955, moving from traditional books of poetry and prose into unique editioned works, which stretch the meaning of “book” through remarkable materials and structures. Van Vliet was a 1989 recipient of a McArthur prize, but she’s no dry intellectual: she grows her own vegetables on her Vermont farm, and her wit charms just about everyone.

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of BankOne, Madison & Clark, Chicago. Luncheon, 12:00 noon. Dinner meetings: spirits at 5pm, dinner at 6pm, lecture at 7:30pm. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org. Members and guests: Lunch \$25, Dinner \$45. Discount parking available for evening meetings, with a stamped ticket, at Standard Self-Park, 172 W. Madison.