

Collecting the Poetry of Thomas Hardy

R. Eden Martin

Most people think of Thomas Hardy primarily as a writer of fiction; and, indeed, he was one of the most accomplished 19th-century novelists writing in English. Six of his novels – *Far From the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) – according to David Perkins – “are among the masterpieces of English literature.”¹

When *Jude* was published, Hardy was 55 years old. He did not publish his first book of poetry until three years later. Over the next three decades, until he died in 1928 at the age of 88, Hardy published ten volumes of verse, including his epic-drama of the Napoleonic wars, *The Dynasts*.

I am an amateur, not an expert on English literature. But based on what I have read, including secondary works, I believe a strong case can be made that Thomas Hardy was not only one of the greatest 19th-century English novelists, but also one of the greatest poets writing in English during the 20th century.

This paper is not that case, however, nor is it a literary evaluation of his poetry. It is, instead, mainly about collecting his books of poetry.

Hardy was born in Dorset near Dorchester on June 1, 1840. He was the son of a stone mason and brick layer – an easygoing man who liked to wander through the woods of the neighboring countryside. His mother, Jemima, by contrast, was hard-driving, ambitious, and occasionally abrasive. The family lived in a two-room cottage – mud-walled, with a thatched roof. They grew much of their



Portrait of Hardy in 1880, from Volume I of his autobiography.

own food in their garden, raised their own chickens and pigs, and kept a hive or two of bees; they led simple, rural lives.²

Young Thomas spent his early childhood in a family of story-tellers – especially his mother, whom the biographer Michael Millgate described as “an inexhaustible source of stories, sayings, and country lore.”³ As a result, Millgate concludes:

Hardy was – to an extraordinary degree – a child of the oral tradition, and, perhaps, in England, that tradition’s last and greatest product.⁴

But his mother also always made sure that

Thomas had books available, and his father made sure that, at an early age, he learned to play the violin.

Thomas attended local schools starting at the age of 8. When he was 13, he began to attend a new “commercial academy” for more advanced students, and it was there that he began the study of Latin. However, shortly after his 16th birthday, Thomas’ formal education came to an end when he was “articled” for three years to work for a Dorchester architect, in return for which he received instruction in drawing and surveying. According to his autobiography, Thomas continued his own education – studying Latin and Greek in his spare time. By the time he was 18, Thomas had already begun writing poems and literary essays.

Hardy continued to work as an architect’s assistant until 1862, when – a couple of months shy of 22 – he left Dorchester for London, where he found work for an architect as a draftsman. He found time to attend operas and heard Dickens lecture.

His biographer Millgate says that Hardy’s “literary career” began in 1863. It was in that year – at the age of 23 – that he began a thorough study of Shakespeare and various secondary

works on writing style.⁵ He apparently hoped that he might somehow be able to study at Cambridge or Oxford. A year or two later, he began a more systematic study of the great English poets. He kept meticulous notes on his reading, and began filling notebooks with ideas and outlines of possible stories or poems. Many of his poems which survive – even though they were not published until decades later – were first written in that period. He sent a few poems to magazine editors, but all were rejected, which discouraged him from further attempts.⁶

In 1867, at age 27, Thomas – depressed

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about his prospects and concerned about the effects of London on his health – moved back to Dorset to work as an architect. He realized that literature offered little hope of economic success and that he had to make a living. But he continued to write verse.

About the same time, he began work on a novel – *The Poor Man and the Lady* – which was never published and does not even survive in manuscript. He finished it in 1868 and sent it to a potential publisher – Alexander Macmillan. Macmillan saw talent in the draft and encouraged Hardy to continue writing, but he thought this particular story was too “extravagant and implausible.”⁷ Perhaps because of Macmillan’s encouragement, in the autumn of 1869 Hardy began work on a new novel, to be called *Desperate Remedies*, cannibalizing sections of the rejected manuscript in the process.

In early 1870, before his new novel was finished, Thomas accepted an assignment to go to Cornwall to evaluate for possible restoration a dilapidated church in a hamlet named St. Juliot. Upon his arrival, he met Emma Gifford, the church rector’s sister-in-law. He was soon captivated by her. They talked about literature, read poetry, and enjoyed piano music in the evenings. They walked together to Beeny Cliff, drew sketches, and rode horseback to the nearby ruins of Tintagel Castle, the legendary center of the Arthur legends. Many of these moments were captured in several of Thomas’ greatest poems, published after Emma’s death over 40 years later.

By the fall of 1870, Thomas and Emma were engaged, and Thomas was making the final revisions to his first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*. It finally appeared – anonymously – in March 1871.

Thomas and Emma postponed marriage for more than three years. In the meantime, his literary career lifted off. A new novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, was published in June 1872 and was enthusiastically reviewed. A *Pair of Blue Eyes* was serialized starting in the fall of 1872, and then published as a book in 1873 – the first to bear Hardy’s name as the author. It was also well reviewed.

More important, Thomas in mid-1873 had begun work on a new novel, to be called *Far From the Madding Crowd*. It was serialized (anonymously) in *Cornhill Magazine* from January to December 1874, although Thomas’ authorship had been disclosed in February 1874. This book first gave the name “Wessex” to the region in which the activity of the novel and many later stories occurred.

By the winter of 1874, at the age of 34, Hardy was a well-known writer with four published novels. He married Emma and resettled in London where he hoped to make his living as a writer.

Over the next 20-plus years Hardy established his career as a novelist. During this period, he achieved great success – both artistic and commercial – par-

ticularly with his later novels: *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess*, (1891), and *Jude* (1895).

By 1896, the year after the publication of *Jude*, Thomas was 56. His marriage had produced no children, and his relations with his wife Emma were often strained. Hardy’s biographer Millgate describes her as eccentric, lacking intellectual gifts, and impractical – a woman whose plain appearance and manners were an embarrassment, particularly in London.⁸

Thomas had never stopped writing poetry, but until 1896, his energies had been focused upon his novels, by which he earned a substantial living. After the publication of *Jude*, Thomas felt he could afford to turn back to his first love – poetry. The critical reviews of *Jude* may also have spurred him in that direction. Millgate observes that nothing could have prepared Hardy “for the depth, extent, and directness of the hostility” which marked many reviews.⁹ Whether it was the events of the story – including seduction and murder – or the dark view of life that permeated the story, the book was roundly condemned as “Jude the Obscene.” Edmund Gosse, a writer and an old friend of Hardy, told him that *Jude* was “the most indecent novel ever written.”¹⁰

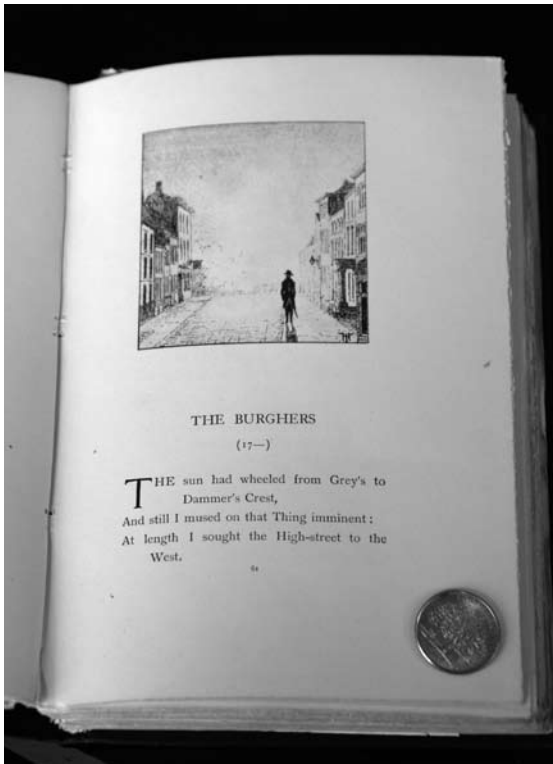
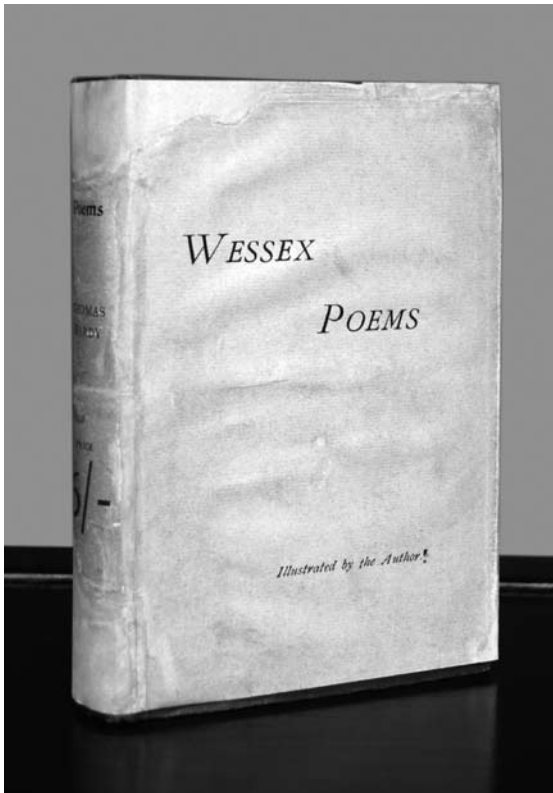
These criticisms no doubt hurt Hardy deeply. In late 1898, responding to a friend who had inquired about the possibility of another novel, Hardy wrote:

I don’t incline to one. ... [T]he little sound & just opinion we get is swamped by the flood of ignorant & venal opinion, & is as if it were not uttered at all. And zest is quenched by the knowledge that by printing a novel which attempts to deal honestly & artistically with the facts of life, one stands up to be abused by any scamp who thinks he can advance the sale of his paper by lying about one.

By early 1897, Thomas was laying out the plan for his first book of poetry, to be entitled *Wessex Poems*. Many of the poems he ultimately included (17 of 51) had been written three decades earlier, in the 1860’s. Others he had drafted in the intervening years and now extensively revised.

Wessex Poems appeared at the end of 1898, and included 32 drawings by Thomas to illustrate the subjects of particular poems. His verses are highly musical, with the rhymes and rolling rhythms of song. Millgate gives us a more professional description. He finds “dense stresses, the strict yet unfamiliar stanza form, the inverted syntax, the archaisms and odd coinages, the profoundly pessimistic mood, unromantically and unfashionably eloquent of non-progression and unfulfillment.”¹¹

Wessex Poems was published in an edition of only 500 copies – which seems surprisingly few for an author of Hardy’s prominence. Thomas had offered to take the financial risk himself, but Harper &



ABOVE: The first edition of *Wessex Poems* in the rare dust jacket. BELOW: Hardy provided the illustrations for the collection.

Brothers were willing to bear it.

Offsetting the fact that so few copies were printed is Hardy's prominence, as a result of which many copies of the first edition appear to have been saved, so the book itself is not particularly rare. However, it is quite rare in a dust jacket.

The standard Hardy bibliography by Purdy includes a notation that "Hardy's own copy [of *Wessex Poems*] with several pencil corrections made in subsequent editions was included in the sale of books from his library and is now in the possession of Mr. F.B. Adams, Jr."¹² Frederick B. Adams, Jr. built up one of the four great collections of Hardy materials noted by Purdy in his introduction. When Adams' collection was sold at auction, this copy of *Wessex Poems* – that is, Hardy's own copy with his penciled corrections – found its way to me. It does not have a dust jacket. It does retain a small book label added after Hardy's death by Sydney Cockerell, Hardy's executor.

The critical reception of *Wessex Poems* ranged from savagely critical to uncertain. Hardy was disappointed, of course, but also grateful for the private congratulations of friends whom he respected, such as Swinburne and Leslie Stephen.¹³

Hardy's wife Emma was perhaps his fiercest critic. Her reaction was not based on a view of its literary merit, but was rather a reaction to the fact that many of the poems referred to other women, and the further fact that she thought one poem contained ungenerous references to herself.¹⁴ Emma complained about Thomas in letters to her friends and became increasingly dyspeptic. As Millgate writes, "[I]t is impossible to ignore the almost universal contemporary impression of her as opinionated, inconsequential, vain, tiresome, and often downright disagreeable."¹⁵ As a result, Thomas and Emma basically lived apart – with no children – in the same house.

Three years after the appearance of *Wessex Poems*, Hardy was ready to publish a second collection – which he called *Poems of the Past and the Present* (1901). The first edition was 1000 copies – 500 in

London and a second issue of 500 in New York – double that of *Wessex Poems*. The new book contained 99 poems – some first drafted in the 1860's, and others more recently. A number had previously appeared in newspapers and literary magazines. The first group of 11 appeared under the heading "War Poems"

– making Hardy the first major English "war poet" of the 20th century. Of course, these poems were about the Boer War. By the time the First World War was over, almost 20 years later, a case could be made that Hardy was also the most accomplished English war poet of the 20th century.

These "war poems" appearing in 1901 were inspired by Hardy's ruminations on the war that had commenced in South Africa in 1899. Some of them have eerie similarities to First war poems written a decade and a half later. Take "The Dead Drummer," for example:

They throw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
Uncoffined – just as found;
His landmark is a Kopje-crest
That breaks the veldt around;

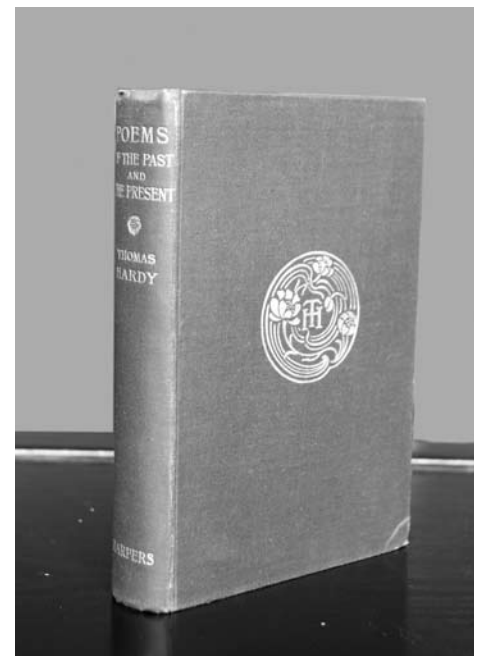
Yet portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge forever be;
His homely Northern breast and brain
Grow to some Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally.

It makes one wonder whether Rupert Brooke might have had Hardy's lines in mind when he wrote, years later, "The Soldier": "If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a foreign field, That is for ever England."

Two other frequently-anthologized war poems from this group are "The Souls of the Slain," and "Song of the Soldiers' Wives."

Purdy's bibliography recites that Hardy's
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Hardy's own copy of Poems of the Past and Present



own copy of this second collection of poetry had “listed three errata, and made several corrections and alterations.”¹⁶ This copy – that is, Hardy’s – found its way into the Frederick Adams collection, and from there (like Hardy’s copy of *Wessex Poems*) to me.

This second collection received a better critical reception than the first, and Millgate regarded it as “a distinct advance over its predecessor in almost every respect.”¹⁷ Seymour-Smith, another of Hardy’s biographers, agreed that this second collection was more successful, and thought it due in part to the war poems at the beginning of the book.¹⁸

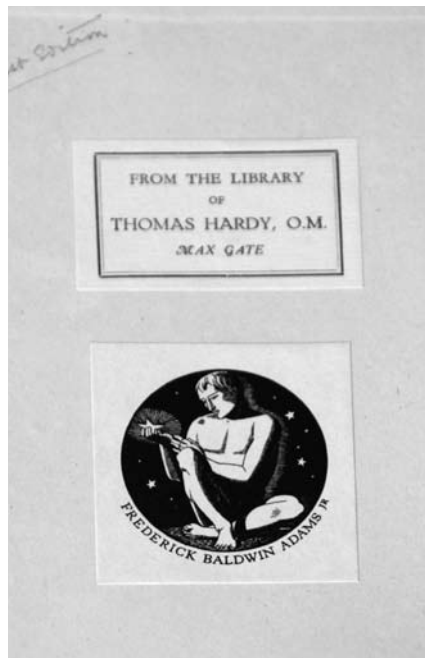
Another volume that belonged to Hardy – a copy of *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, edited by Quiller-Couch (1900) – contains his annotations. Hardy did not like the collection: he called it “second-rate of its class.”¹⁹

Hardy had been thinking about a possible verse-drama on the Napoleonic period for over a quarter century – starting as early as 1875. But he did not commence work on it in earnest until 1897.²⁰ Having first conceived the work as a group of Napoleonic ballads, Thomas shifted his concept to that of a grand drama – designed to be read but not performed. Hardy’s central theme was that the great historical events occurring in Napoleon’s Europe – and at other times and places as well – were the product of blind unconscious forces controlling the motions and actions of the human players (thus reminding one of Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*). These forces Hardy termed “the Immanent Will”; and he populated his narrative with historical figures, as well as ghosts – “phantasms” – who commented on the actions of the characters.

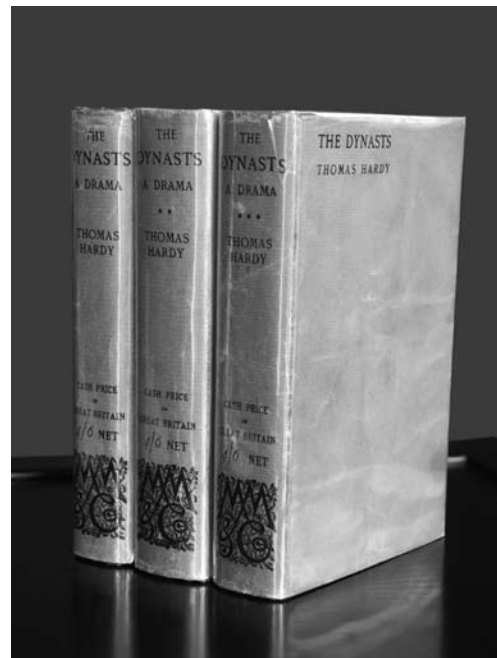
The Dynasts turned out to be Hardy’s most ambitious work in verse. Published in three parts, the volumes appeared over a period of four years: Part First in 1904 (1000 copies), Part Second in 1906 (1500 copies), and Part Third in 1908 (1500 copies). A separate issue of Part First was arranged for the American market (1314 copies); but it sold so poorly that instead of having separate printings of Parts Second and Third for America, 250 copies of the English edition of Parts Second and Third were sent to America for sale.

A nearby picture shows the full three-volume set of *The Dynasts* in their jackets. This set was once in the collection of Jerome Kern. The title page of Part First shows the date of 1903.

The publication of Part First – the first volume – illustrates the sort of frustrations



LEFT: Hardy library stickers were added by his executor. Several of the author’s volumes passed through the collection of Frederic Adams. RIGHT: This set of *The Dynasts* belonged at one time to Jerome Kern.



and pleasures that can torment or gratify book collectors. Part First was ready for publication in England in December 1903; but the American printers had not yet completed work on their edition.²¹ So publication in England was delayed; the title-page with the date “1903” was cancelled; and a new title page showing the date as “1904” was substituted. However, a handful of copies – perhaps a dozen – were issued with the “1903” date. These few “1903” copies were apparently presented to reviewers or given away by Hardy.

Although it was Hardy’s most ambitious work in verse, *The Dynasts* was not universally regarded as his most successful. Because of his philosophical approach to history, *The Dynasts* reduced many of its historical characters to the puppets he thought they in fact were – giving less scope for his gifts at characterization. Also, as Thomas himself later admitted, the work lacked “finish,” and the quality of portions of the verse was not up to his usual high standards.²² By contrast, his biographer Seymour-Smith thought *The Dynasts* was “the most successful ... long prose poem ... of the 20th century in any language.”²³

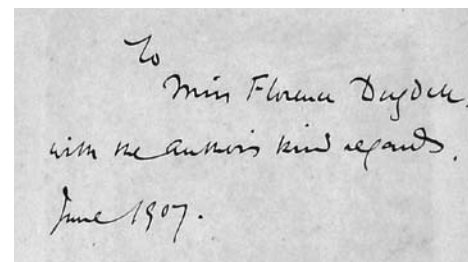
In August 1905, as Hardy was working on the final volume of *The Dynasts*, he met a 26-year old woman writer, Florence Dugdale.²⁴ Hardy was then 65. Nine years later – in 1914 – after Emma’s death, Florence would become the second Mrs. Thomas Hardy – and also the titular author of his two-volume biography.

By the fall of 1906, Florence was doing

little research jobs for Thomas at the British Museum, and in the spring of 1907, Thomas and Florence were visiting museums together, and he was helping her with her own writing.²⁵ In June 1907, Thomas gave Florence a formally-inscribed copy of a pocket volume containing his first two books of poetry, *Wessex Poems* and *Poems of the Past and the Present*:

To Miss Florence Dugdale
with the Author’s kind regards.
June 1907.

It is the sort of inscription which, if some third party had happened to see it, would not have aroused undue suspicion.



Hardy presentation of his first two books of poetry, in one volume, to his future wife, Florence.

By mid-July 1909, Hardy – now 69 – was describing Florence to his friends as his “amanuensis” or “assistant,”²⁶ and was accompanying her on weekend trips to English country homes. By 1910, Florence had also befriended Emma – Hardy’s wife – and had become a regular visitor at Max Gate, the Hardy residence – pouring tea at Emma’s parties and

assisting Emma with her manuscripts.²⁷

Meanwhile, in the summer of 1909, Thomas gathered up 94 poems – written over a period of some 40 years – and published them in a third collection, *Times Laughingstocks* – the first to appear in eight years. The book appeared in December 1909 in an edition of 2000 copies. Hardy's own copy of this volume, incidentally, is now in the Dorset County Museum.

On April 15, 1912, the Titanic sank. Hardy was asked to write a poem for publication in a program in aid of a disaster fund. It appeared in a literary journal in June entitled "The Convergence of the Twain." Like *The Dynasts*, it reflects Hardy's idea that great and mysterious forces guide the universe, producing the ship, the iceberg, and the collision. Tomalin calls it "an advance in power and extension of his range as a poet" and says that "with it he moves into the 20th century."²⁸

Emma and Thomas were virtually the same age, but it was Emma whose health was the first to fail.²⁹ She may have suffered a small stroke in 1906. Whatever the cause, her eccentricities increased, her conversational skills deteriorated, and social relations became painful. This in turn aggravated relations between Emma and Thomas, toward whom she often displayed open hostility. She suffered an attack in November 1912, seemed to recover, but then died on November 27, 1912.

Despite her age (72) and general frailty, Emma's death was totally unexpected by Hardy. He laid a wreath at her grave, inscribed "From her Lonely Husband, with the Old Affection."³⁰ A month after her death, Thomas wrote to a close friend that despite their "differences," and Emma's "delusions," "my life is intensely sad to me now without her."³¹

Over the next few months – reliving his memories of their earlier and happier times – Thomas wrote what he called, simply, "Poems of 1912-13." He described these to Macmillan, his publisher and friend, as poems "I wrote just after Emma died, when I looked back at her as she had originally been, and when I felt miserable lest I had not treated her considerately in her later life."³²

David Perkins, in his *History of Modern Poetry From the 1890's to the High Modernist Mode*, highly praised these "Poems of 1912-13:"³³

Shortly after [Emma's] death, the seventy-three year old poet composed the deeply personal group of poems he colorlessly entitled, 'Poems of 1912-13,' a series of lyrics about his wife and their life together that, with their

vivid memories, passion, tenderness, bitterness, grief, resentment, and remorse, present a complicated, authentic human situation and make up the most remarkable elegy written in the modern period.

Hardy's most recent biographer, Claire Tomalin, is even more enthusiastic – as biographers sometimes are. She says that Emma's death is the moment when Hardy "became a great poet," and calls the "Poems of 1912-13" "among the most original elegies ever written, in feeling and in the handling of language and verse forms." They "makes up one of the finest and strangest celebrations of the dead in English poetry."³⁴

The first of these lyrics from 1912-1913 is my favorite. Entitled "The Going," it should be read aloud:

Why did you give no hint that night
That quickly after the morrow's dawn,
And calmly, as if indifferent quite,
You would close your term here, up and be gone
Where I could not follow
With wing of swallow
To gain one glimpse of you ever anon!

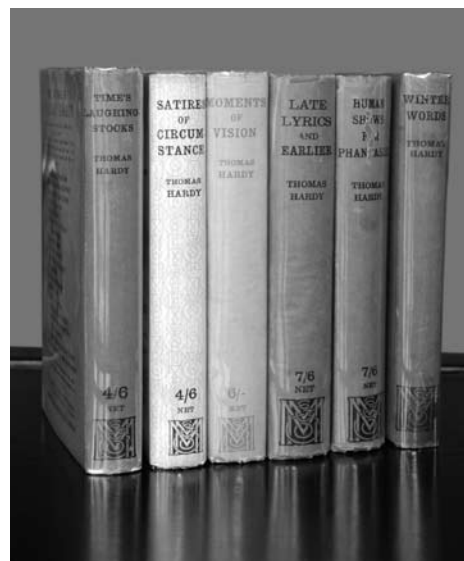
Never to bid good-bye
Or lip me the softest call,
Or utter a wish for a word, while I
Saw morning harden upon the wall,
Unmoved, unknowing
That your great going
Had place that moment, and altered all.

Why do you make me leave the house
And think for a breath it is you I see
At the end of the alley of bending boughs
Where so often at dusk you used to be;
Till in darkening dankness
The yawning blankness
Of the perspective sickens me!

You were she who abode
By those red-veined rocks far West,
You were the swan-necked one who rode
Along the beetling Beeny Crest,
And, reigning nigh me,
Would muse and eye me,
While Life unrolled us its very best.

Why, then, latterly did we not speak,
Did we not think of those days long dead,
And ere your vanishing strive to seek
That time's renewal? We might have said,
"In this bright spring weather
We'll visit together
Those places that once we visited."

Well, well! All's past amend,



A grouping of wartime and post-war volumes, including *Satires of Circumstance*.

Unchangeable. It must go.
I seem but a dead man held on end
To sink down soon.... O you could not know
That such swift fleeing
No soul foreseeing –
Not even I – would undo me so!"

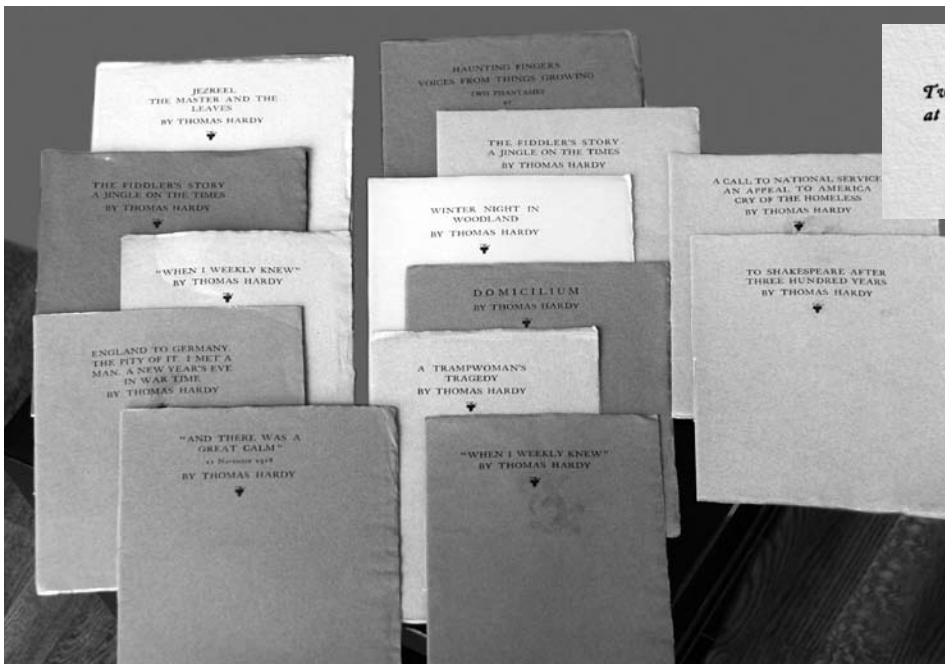
These "Poems of 1912-13" first appeared in Hardy's fourth collection, *Satires of Circumstances, Lyrics and Reveries*, which was published in November 1914, shortly after the outbreak of war with Germany. There were 2000 copies. Hardy's own copy, like that of the prior collection, is in the Dorset County museum. The poems about Emma received hardly any notice at the time. It took years before they were absorbed into the literary consciousness of a new generation of lovers of poetry.

By the time this new collection of 107 poems had appeared, Thomas – now only a few short months shy of his 74th birthday – had married Florence – an arrangement, he wrote a close friend, that they thought "the wisest thing to do, seeing what a right hand Florence has become to me."³⁵

The Great War changed everything. *Satires of Circumstance* had been largely completed by July 1914 – before the war commenced in August. But Hardy decided to add two poems at the end – which entitles this fourth collection to be included in the list of English volumes of First War verse.

The first of these, "Channel Firing," commences and ends with these stanzas:

That night your great guns, unawares,
Shook all our coffins as we lay,



Thirteen of the 16 pamphlets published by Florence Hardy and printed at the Chiswick Press.

POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY, from page 5

And broke the channel window-squares,
We thought it was the Judgment-day
And sat upright.

And the last stanza:

Again the guns disturbed the hour,
Rearing their readiness to avenge,
As far inland as Sturton Tower,
And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.

"Channel Firing" was actually written four months *before* the war's outbreak. The noise of the guns was the practice firing.

The second war poem included in *Satires of Circumstance* was written on September 5 – just after the war had commenced. So it was one of the first in a long line of great First World War poems by English authors. Initially entitled "Song of the Soldier," it first appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* – on September 9 – and then reappeared a day later in the *New York Times*. Because Hardy did not reserve the copyright, the poem was widely reprinted. Then Hardy expressly gave permission to publish it to Clement Shorter – journalist and book collector – who did so in a privately-printed pamphlet on September 12. There were only 12 copies.

Hardy soon renamed the poem "Men Who March Away" and included it in *Satires of Circumstance* when the volume appeared two months later.³⁶ Because preparations for printing were so far advanced in September, "Men Who March Away," was added at the end of the volume as a "Postscript:"

What of the faith and fire within us

Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
Leaving all that here can win us;
What of the faith and fire within us
Men who march away?

Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye,
Who watch us stepping by
With doubt and dolorous sigh?
Can much pondering so hoodwink you!
Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
Friend with the musing eye?

Nay. We see well what we are doing,
Though some may not see –
Dalliers as they be!
England's need are we;
Her distress would leave us rueing:
Nay. We see well what we are doing,
Though some may not see!

In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just,
And that braggarts must
Surely bite the dust,
Press we to the field ungrieving,
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
Leaving all that here can win us;
Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away.

Twenty-five copies printed for Florence Emily Hardy
at the Chiswick Press, London, E.C. May 1917

This is No. 23. F.E.H.

Colophon from one of the Chiswick pamphlets.

On first or second reading, this seems a straight-forward, patriotic song for the soldiers marching away from home – indistinguishable in tone from some of the other patriotic efforts characteristic of the opening months of the war, such as Brooke's "The Soldier," or Julian Grenfell's "Into Battle." But a further reading suggests something different: a tension between the patriotic motives of those doing the marching, on the one hand, and, on the other, the "dolorous skepticism" of the observing "friend with the musing eye" – Hardy himself, surely. "We see well what we are doing," say the soldiers – "though some may not see!" "Some" – including perhaps Hardy? "Victory crowns the just," repeat the soldiers, and "braggarts must surely bite the dust." This is cheerleader language – not Hardy's own voice. Hardy, though clearly a supporter of England's war effort, had his doubts.

In the earlier Shorter private printing, Hardy's lines in the third stanza read: "We see well what we are doing." When the poem appeared in the book collection two months later, Hardy not only changed the title, but he also changed the twice-repeated line in the third stanza to: "We well see what we are doing." A small change – but it illustrates the fact that Hardy was constantly looking for ways to improve or polish his poetry. And it illustrates the charm of collecting magazine or other early publications as well as later book collections.

Shorter's little pamphlet – issued in twelve copies – also illustrates the problem of collecting Hardy's poetry over the next decade or so. Large numbers of his works were published privately in tiny pamphlet editions. Many of these were reprinted. Then, the poems were ultimately included in his cloth-bound collections.

For example, four days after Shorter's pamphlet appeared, "Men Who March Away" was privately printed again – by a bookseller named Williams in Hove on September 16. This Hove edition may have been issued to give to soldiers leaving for France.³⁷

Between 1914 and 1916, Clement Shorter printed six pamphlets of Hardy material, all with Hardy's permission.³⁸ For example,

“Before Marching and After” appeared in 1915 – in 25 copies, numbered and signed by Shorter. This poem was a tribute to one of Hardy’s cousins who had been killed in the war.³⁹

“The Oxen” also appeared in 1915; the bookseller Williams, in Hove, beat Shorter to this one, and printed a large number of copies – but “for private circulation only.”

But Shorter got back in the game in February 1916, with “In Time of ‘The Breaking of Nations’” – issued in 25 copies. He gave a copy to Maggs, the English book dealer.

In 1916, Hardy began turning down Shorter’s requests – choosing instead to allow his wife Florence to be the publisher. Her first pamphlet was Hardy’s tribute to the Bard – “To Shakespeare After Three Hundred Years,” printed by Chiswick Press in 50 copies, each numbered and initialed by Florence. Other Chiswick pamphlets were “When I Weekly Knew” (1916 – 25 copies), “England to Germany, Etc.” (1917 – 25 copies), “A Trampwoman’s Tragedy,” (1917 – 25 copies), “A Call to National Service” (1917 – 25 copies), “The Fiddle’s Story” (1917 – 25 copies – appeared in October 1917. “Domicilium” (1918 – 25 copies), “Jesreel” (1919 – 25 copies).

Of these, “A Trampwoman’s Tragedy,” is notable because it had been written 15 years earlier and published in earlier collections; it seems strange to see it appearing in this private pamphlet format. Perhaps this stems from the fact that Hardy said in his autobiography that he considered it to be “his most successful poem.”⁴⁰ It should also be noted that Shorter had beaten Mrs. Hardy to “Domicilium” two years earlier. I regret that I do not have it. It was supposedly written sometime in the late 1850’s, and was the young Thomas Hardy’s “earliest discoverable ... attempt in verse.”⁴¹

Finally, we come to Hardy’s great end-of-the-war poem, written in November 1920: “And There Was A Great Calm” – 25 copies.

All told, between 1916 and 1927, shortly before Hardy died, Florence Hardy printed privately 16 pamphlets of Hardy’s verse – almost all in issues of 25, though in a couple of cases only 12 were printed. Purdy notes in his bibliography that the proofs of these little pamphlets were corrected by Hardy personally, and that they “must be regarded as authoritative.”⁴² He notes that the limitations of issue were “scrupulously observed” – which is too bad for collectors, unless you already have them, in which case it’s great. Of the 16, I have 13. Perhaps some day the other three will turn up.



Hardy’s study (TOP) in his home, Max Gate (BELOW).

By the time Hardy’s fourth collection – *Satires of Circumstance* – had appeared in 1914, he was 74 years old. Yet there would be five more collections.

Selected Poems – a selection from *The Dynasts* and the four preceding collections – appeared in 1916. Of the 120 poems included, only 9 had not previously appeared. Hardy intended that this inexpensive volume (2 s.6d.) would bring his work to a wider public – including “general readers” – and he made his selections accordingly.⁴³ At least some of the copies – including mine – were inscribed by Hardy so they could be sold “in aid of our wounded soldiers.”

In 1917, a mostly new collection appeared, entitled *Moments of Vision*, containing 159 poems – the largest collection he ever published. The recurring themes of most of these poems, other than the war poems, related to the unimportance of humans in an uncaring universe,⁴⁴ and to Hardy’s romance with his first wife, Emma, and her death – a circumstance that did not please his second wife, Florence.⁴⁵

In 1922, the next collection of 151 poems appeared, *Late Lyrics and Earlier* – about half of which were written in earlier years, and half, according to Hardy, “quite lately.”⁴⁶ It also included an “Apology” – a prose preface in which Hardy unburdened himself of his pent-up irritations with reviewers and critics who found his work to be too bleak.

Human Shows Far Phantasies appeared in 1925 – with 152 poems, the last to be published in his life time.

Finally, *Winter Words* appeared in 1928. Hardy had been assembling these 105 poems into a collection at the time of his death in January 1928, at the age of 87. He had planned to publish the volume on his 90th birthday.⁴⁷ The book appeared in October 1928. If anyone offers you an inscribed copy, be suspicious.

Hardy’s final years were spent largely at Max Gate, his residence in the west country. He was revered – and frequently visited – by many of the great writers in England: Bridges, Kipling, Yeats, E.M. Forster, See *POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY*, page 8

Sassoon, Graves, Blunden, even T.E. Lawrence. Pound sent him presentation copies of his books. Sassoon was a particular favorite.⁴⁸

Just before Hardy's 79th birthday, Siegfried Sassoon conceived the idea of organizing a tribute to Hardy from the leading poets in England. The tribute took the form of a unique volume of poetry, in which each of some forty writers contributed an autograph poem. Sassoon had the pleasure of delivering the volume to Hardy personally.⁴⁹ Afterward, Hardy dictated a note to be added to his autobiography, speaking of himself in the third person to maintain the illusion that his wife was the author.⁵⁰

It was about his first awakening to the consciousness that an opinion had silently grown up as it were in the night, that he was no mean power in the contemporary world of poetry.⁵¹

Hardy was working on his planned volume, *Winter Words*, in his study on December 10, 1927. About the same time, he sent off to *The Times* a poem he had begun in 1905, entitled "Christmas in the Elgin Room." It was about the gods depicted in the Elgin Marbles, and their unhappiness at being trapped in a sunless museum room at Christmas. Sending these to *The Times* may have been Hardy's last literary act, as he became ill on December 11.⁵² Florence arranged for 25 copies of the *Elgin Room* poem to be printed by a Dorchester printer on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1927. She signed and numbered each of the 25 copies.

Hardy did not recover. He died on January 11, 1928, at the age of 87. After an unseemly dispute about where his remains should rest, his ashes were buried in Westminster Abbey,

along with England's other great writers. The last poet to be buried there had been Tennyson, in 1892.⁵³ The two volumes of Hardy's autobiography – with Florence identified as the author – were published in 1928 and 1930.

Both Max Gate and Hardy's birthplace now belong to the National Trust. Lovers of English literature can visit these places as they explore Dorchester and walk the surrounding countryside, carrying their literary maps of Wessex – a place of imagination as well as geography.

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All photographs are from books in the author's collection. That of the inscription to Florence was taken by the author, and others were taken by Robert McCamant.

NOTES

¹ Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry*, I, p. 144.

² For the basic facts of Thomas Hardy's life, we start with the two-volume autobiography ostensibly written by his second wife, Florence Dugdale Hardy – *The Early Life* (1928), and *The Later Years* (1930). In fact, as Hardy's principal bibliographer has concluded, these volumes are "in reality an autobiography":

Though Mrs. Hardy's name stands on the title-page, her work was confined to a few editorial touches, and the writing is throughout Hardy's own. (Purdy, Richard L., *Thomas Hardy, Bibliographical Study*, p. 265; see Millgate, 516-517.)

Hardy wrote this autobiographical work apparently in self defense, having seen two earlier so-called "authoritative" – but grossly erroneous – works published about himself.

We also have three modern biographies of Hardy – (1) Michael Millgate, *Thomas Hardy* (New York, 1982); (2) Claire Tomalin, *Thomas Hardy* (Penguin, 2006); and (3) Martin Seymour-Smith, *Hardy* (New York, 1994). Millgate is the dean of Hardy studies. His excellent book and Tomalin's lively newer book are interesting and fun. By contrast, the Seymour-Smith work is almost unreadable.

³ *Id.*, p. 36.

⁴ *Id.*, p. 37.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 85-86.

⁶ *Id.*, p. 97.

⁷ *Id.*, p. 110.

⁸ *Id.*, p. 311-313.

⁹ *Id.*, p. 368.

¹⁰ *Id.*, p. 373.

¹¹ *Id.*, p. 392-393.

¹² Purdy, p. 106; emphasis supplied.

¹³ Millgate, 394.

¹⁴ *Id.*, p. 394-395; Tomalin, p. 280.

¹⁵ *Id.*, p. 398.

¹⁶ Purdy, 118.

¹⁷ Millgate, 416.

¹⁸ Seymour-Smith, *Hardy*, p. 467-648.

¹⁹ Letter to Florence Henniker, December 24, 1900.

²⁰ Millgate, 420.

²¹ Purdy, p. 122-123.

²² Millgate, pp. 443, 447, 452.

²³ Seymour-Smith, p. 652.

²⁴ Millgate, 446.

²⁵ *Id.*, p. 453.

²⁶ *Id.*, p. 462.

²⁷ *Id.*, p. 468-469.

²⁸ Tomalin, p. 306, 436.

²⁹ Millgate, pp. 479-484.

³⁰ Tomalin, p. 312.

³¹ Millgate, p. 487.

³² Quoted in Tomalin, p. 319.

³³ p. 144

³⁴ Tomalin, p. xvii-xx.

³⁵ Millgate, 495.

³⁶ Purdy, 1913.

³⁷ *Id.*, p. 158.

³⁸ *Id.*, p. 349.

³⁹ *Id.*, p. 174.

⁴⁰ Hardy, *The Later Years*, p. 93.

⁴¹ Purdy, p. 177, 208.

⁴² Purdy, p. 350.

⁴³ Millgate, 510; Purdy, 187.

⁴⁴ Millgate, p. 512

⁴⁵ *Id.*, p. 514.

⁴⁶ Purdy, 226.

⁴⁷ Millgate, 569.

⁴⁸ *Id.*, p. 528-564.

⁴⁹ Sassoon, *Siegfried's Journey, 1916-1920*, 1982, p. 148-150.

⁵⁰ *Id.*, p. 150

⁵¹ Hardy, *The Later Years*, p. 192-93.

⁵² Tomalin, p. 366.

⁵³ Millgate, p. 547.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

I am shocked, shocked that the *Caxtonian* (Bruce Hatton Boyer, February 2009) accuses us bookdealers of buying stolen books. I have never, ever bought a stolen book. Except just once.

A very long time ago, a nicely dressed young man came into the store with two first editions of Sherlock Holmes, offering them for sale. "Where did you get these?" I asked. "They are mine. My father passed away and left me

his books." This could be true. What made me a tiny bit suspicious were two things. One: his eyeballs were jerking wildly, something I'd never seen before or since, making me suspect drugs, and Two: he said he wanted \$70 for both books.

I couldn't call the police. I couldn't bear to put this unfortunate young man in jail. All I felt I could do was save the books. I gave him \$70, and put the books away in my office. And waited.

It took nearly a year. Another young man came in and said, "I want to buy back the books my brother sold you. They are my dad's. If you still have them." "Yes," I said, "I was waiting for someone." We made the exchange

with no conversation. But I had to ask, "And your brother?"

"He's in jail."

I like to think he came out clean and honest and with a better respect for the value of Sherlock Holmes.

– Florence Shay

Josephine 'Fina' Baker Bray '95

died at her home in February. A remembrance will appear in a future issue of the *Caxtonian*.

CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Wynken de Worde

The ever-shrinking volumes of both *The Chicago Sun-Times* and *The Chicago Tribune* must be deplored by all print lovers, and all those who treasure the long tradition of Chicago journalism and Chicago journalists. And few appreciate good printing more than Wynken de Worde.

That is why I was shaken by the Cassandra-like prediction by *Chicago Reader* columnist Deanna Isaacs in her March 5th column. She wrote, "It's probably not just print journalism but text itself that's going away. Text on

a screen is an anachronism – a code operating at symbolic remove, on equipment capable of delivering something much closer to the real thing. When it's gone, we'll be a

mostly oral society again, driven by the immediacy of sound and image. I hope I'm wrong about that." I fear that she is too correct.

And as newspapers get slimmer, there is less opportunity to read about somebody you know. Just so, it was a triple pleasure for me to read Rick Kogan's column of March 1 in the ever-trimmer *Chicago Tribune Magazine*. (Pretty soon Rick's column may be the only thing in the Sunday magazine – or, worse, it won't be there. He's the son of **Irene Kogan** ('03). The column focused on the international romance between **Shawn Donnelley** ('95) and her British groom, Prof. Christopher Kelly, author of the forthcoming *The End of Empire: Attila the Hun and the Fall of Rome*. **Note: this is a test.** Kelly has a book tour of the U.S. planned, and undoubtedly will be criss-crossing through Chicago, where his wife lives. That seems like a perfect opportunity to book this Cambridge scholar for a Wednesday dinner program. Hint, hint. If it happens, then it will prove that somebody actually reads this deeply into the *Caxtonian*.

I detect the voice of Friend of Shawn, **Leslie Hindman** ('84), in the unattributed advice quote reported by Kogan, namely, "He's great. You'll figure out how to make it work.

Marry this guy." Ann Landers could not have said it better.

Suzanne Smith Pruchnicki ('85) has a new book out from her Bronte Press. It's a miniature called *Moliere, The Actor Who Made the King Laugh*. It measures a scant 2-1/2 by 3 inches and features hand-colored illustrations by Pruchnicki. "My son always sends me French DVDs" she explained in a cover note to the purchaser of a copy. "A recent one was *Tartuffe* with

many alterations. It's a nice way to exercise my French."

Thomas Bewick, Chicago, and The Caxton Club have a deep,

historical bond, altho Bewick neither ever visited Chicago, nor ever heard about The Caxton Club. John and Thomas Bewick were brothers and wood engravers living in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. Both were accomplished artists, but Thomas re-invented the art of making woodcuts by using the medium of harder woods with tighter grains, especially boxwood. By cutting on the end of the plank rather than the face of the board, and by using engraver's tools, Thomas Bewick was able to achieve amazing results. His techniques re-invented the art of woodcut illustrations because he could get finer details and finer shades of black and gray than earlier workers in wood.

In 1942, Ben Abramson acquired about 1,350 of Bewick's original woodcut blocks, which he displayed for sale in the window of his Argus



Book Shop on south Dearborn Street. In those Depression years, the blocks sold slowly, and often only one or two at a time. Gradually they were widely dispersed and without ownership records. Eventually a number were acquired by The Newberry Library. **Robert Hunter Middleton** ('45) named his private press The Cherryburn Press in honor of the home where Thomas Bewick was born.

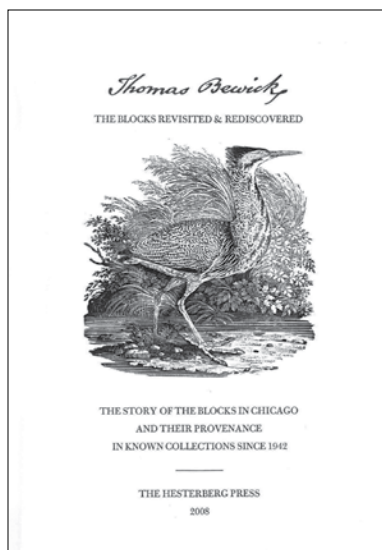
Middleton hand-printed his Thomas Bewick Portfolio in 1945 which used 24 of Bewick's original wood blocks that Middleton had gathered for his tribute to Bewick's genius. Middleton and **Greer Allen** ('54) combined their talents for the 1972 Caxton Club publication, *Fantasy in a Wood-block*. It included a print pulled from the original woodblock which Bewick was cutting on the day in 1827 when John James Audubon visited him at Newcastle.

Now, a generation later, **Bill Hesterberg** ('05) has continued this history and legacy by producing his homage, *Thomas Bewick: The Blocks Revisited & Rediscovered*, hand-printed, in part, on Bill's private Hesterberg Press. Bill's five-year pursuit has tracked over half of Abramson's trove of original woodcuts to 35 collections.

He has printed fourteen of these cuts from those original blocks. Another 35 prints from metal engravings further adorn and illuminate the 80 pages of text, as do several tipped-in color photographs. Only 90 copies of this handsome work have been printed, and the edition is likely to be quickly oversubscribed at

less than \$300 per copy. You will not be disappointed. For a copy of the Prospectus you can contact Bill by phone at 847-328-4382, or by email: bill_hesterberg@sbcglobal.net.

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Caxtonians Collect: David Novick

Fifty-second in a series of interviews with members

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

If you've driven over the Columbus Drive bridge, or ridden the CTA out to O'Hare, you've had the benefit of David Novick's work. You see, he was a practicing civil engineer from 1948 until he retired in 1993, so he has assured the stability of many roads, bridges, and tunnels. He was also instrumental in the design of one of the largest Illinois public works projects that was never built: the multi-billion-dollar Crosstown Expressway.

When he greeted me at the door of his near-north apartment I recognized him as someone I'd often seen at Club meetings but never chanced to talk to. He has an infectious smile and a charming wife, Minna, who often comes to meetings. He joined in 2006, nominated by Morrell Shoemaker and seconded by Adrian Alexander, who both knew him from activities at the Newberry Library.

Although he is a voracious reader, the books that Novick frequently collects are books related to his profession. Not current technical manuals, mind you, but artifacts of the construction process in bygone eras. (He's particularly susceptible to their charms if they have good charts, graphs, or scale drawings.) He showed me a few. A 1926 volume called *Straightening the Chicago River* described the process and geological analysis and provided maps of the before and after. One from 1946, called *Rock Tunneling with Steel Supports*, included a chapter written by one of his heroes, Karl Terzhagi, who was a pioneer in the field of "soil mechanics" which eventually became today's geotechnical engineering. Then there was a commemorative book to celebrate Northwestern Station (now the Ogilvie Transportation Center) and the *Second Annual Report, Chicago Traction*. (Chicago Traction ran streetcars and other transportation.)

Novick studied engineering at Columbia University's School of Engineering and Applied Science. He took his first job at a

New York City firm then working on the Connecticut Turnpike. "When my firm was selected as a major soils consultant for the initial Illinois Toll Highway," he explains, "I was the only qualified person without kids in school. We left for Illinois in 1956 for what was to be a six-month assignment. A major consideration for my undertaking the project was that the firm would ship my piano out to Illinois. I had thought that the project would last for nine months or so, but our Chicago stay has stretched to more than 50 years."



When his Connecticut firm decided not to maintain a permanent office in Chicago, Novick took the opportunity to start his own firm, Westenhoff and Novick, in 1960. "Westenhoff had retired from the N.Y. Central Railroad, where he was responsible for bridge engineering in the railroad's western region. N.Y. Central gave us our first significant general engineering project: inspection of a bridge raising in southern Illinois. Following closely were two laboratory testing projects from prominent engineering professors, and the new firm was under way."

Through the years, a fair amount of his work has been in restoration and rehabilitation of older structures. That is what has led to his collecting old books of plans. "When a project is built, there are hundreds, sometimes thousands, of documents created. At first (especially in bygone days) they are carefully published, organized, and stored. But as time goes on, the people who cared about the projects retire or move on, and the documentation is

misplaced or lost. So many cities don't know how their bridges were constructed, or a company may not know what kind of foundation is under its headquarters. I ended up finding that the best source of information on older structures was sometimes commemorative publications, which at least had the information in one place."

In 1981, Novick went to work for the firm of Parsons Brinckerhoff, for many years the largest transportation engineering firm in the U.S. His most visible assignment for them was

design management on the Frankfort Elevated Reconstruction Project. This Philadelphia project required the reconstruction of five miles of elevated railway while service was maintained – it was the largest "under traffic" railroad reconstruction project completed up to that time.

He retired from Parsons Brinckerhoff in 1993, but kept working by doing forensic engineering as a consultant. He also became an adjunct professor at

Northwestern's engineering school, and started work on a topic that has been of continuing interest, "life-cycle considerations in urban infrastructure." Put it another way and Barack Obama's ears would probably perk up: how should governments decide whether to build or rebuild; when should they build tunnels and when bridges? "The sad fact is that these decisions are not being based on analysis," Novick says. "If there is no way to re-route traffic, an older bridge or tunnel is just patched up over and over, no matter what the cost. Tunnels tend to cost more to build, but less to maintain, while bridges are the opposite. But rarely is that fact a part of the decision." He's managed to write and publish a few articles about the topic in professional journals, but laments that funding for this research is not a part of current budgets.

Novick began collecting materials to write a complete history of Chicago subways. But he's not certain he's going to manage to get it

See CAXTONIANS COLLECT, page 12

CAXTONIAN, APRIL 2009

Photograph by Robert McCamant

Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

Friday April 10, 2009, Union League Club

Penelope Bingham

“Dishing Up History: Two Centuries of American Cookbooks”

Beyond being largely untapped treasure-troves of excellent recipes, old American cookbooks are rich resources for understanding our culture and history. Largely ignored by mainstream historians, cookbooks are primary historical documents which offer insights into American values, gender roles and social structure, immigration, and technology by providing a window on the world for which they were written. And the enormous popularity of cookbooks in America is unique – unmatched in the rest of the world as a publishing and cultural phenomenon.

Penelope Bingham, “Cookbook Lady” for Newberry Library’s Annual Book Fair and Road (sic) Scholar for the Illinois Humanities Council is a food historian and cookbook collector. Using selections from her collection of 19th, 20th, and 21st-century American cookbooks, she will talk about the phenomenon of cookbooks in America.

No cooking experience required!

The April luncheon will take place at the Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (in the main dining room on six) opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, displayed on a card at your table and in the lobby) 12:30-1:30 pm. Luncheon is \$30. The April dinner will take place at The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St. Timing: spirits at 5 pm, refreshments at 6 pm, program at 7:30 pm. Due

Beyond April...

MAY LUNCHEON

On May 8, 2009, Caxtonian Paul Gehl and Jenny Schwartzberg, co-curators of the Newberry Library’s recent exhibition “Artifacts of Childhood: 700 years of Children’s Books”, will speak at the Union League Club about the show and the topic of Children’s Literature, including some remarkable revelations.

MAY DINNER

On May 20, Nancy Ramage of Ithaca College (and sister of Caxtonian Ed Hirschland) will explore the relationship between Gertrude Stein and the Cone sisters, her youthful friends from Baltimore, who traveled with her to Europe. Ramage’s new book about the sisters, *Collecting at Full Tilt*, will be available for purchase.

Dinner Program

Wednesday April 15, 2009, Newberry Library

Peter Stanlis

“Robert Frost: The Poet as a Philosophical Dualist”

Robert Frost may be both the best-known and least-understood American poet. Beginning with his first books of poetry, *A Boy’s Will* and *North of Boston*, 1913-14, he was recognized as a uniquely American voice, but also criticized for being distinctly un-modern, and his poetry was often characterized, as one critic has put it, as “suitable for middle-school readers and sentimental seniors.” He was ill-served by Lawrence Thompson’s “authorized” biography in 1966, a book which has mis-characterized Frost and his work for 50 years.

In 2007, Peter Stanlis fulfilled a promise he had made to Frost in 1944 – to write the best book on the poet’s art and philosophy that he had it in him to write. The result, *Robert Frost: The Poet as Philosopher*, is, remarkably, the first full-length study to really understand and elaborate the philosophical dualism that underpins all Frost’s work.

Caxtonian Stanlis, Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Emeritus, at Rockford College, knew Frost for the last quarter-century of his life. His new book has been hailed as “a... definitive study, simultaneously satisfying the demands of the most exigent scholarship, while encouraging the non-specialist reader to reflect upon what it means to be a thinking being in today’s world.”

Copies of the book will be available for purchase at the meeting.

*to an increase in costs to the Club, the price of the April dinner is \$55. For reservations call 312-255-3710 or email caxtonclub@newberry.org; **reservations are needed by noon Tuesday for the Friday luncheon, and by noon Friday for the Wednesday dinner.** See www.caxtonclub.org for additional parking and transit information.*

JUNE LUNCHEON

On June 12, 2009, Caxtonian Jim Tomes returns to talk about his remarkable family of writers (works housed in the Newberry Library), and especially about his new book, *Dear Mother: letters Jim’s father wrote to his own mother from age 6 (re: Santa Claus) until his death in 1975, including significantly his years as a soldier in WWI.*

JUNE DINNER

Wednesday, June 17, speaker to be announced.

CAXTONIANS COLLECT, from page 11

written. “The five grandchildren, plus summers in Montauk, New York, beckon. As do courses at the Newberry. And fundraising for my alma mater,” Novick says. But it ties right in

with one non-book artifact in his possession, a movie on the building of the first Chicago subway. “It shows maps of the proposed routes, has shots of the work in progress – did you know that the tunnels under the Chicago River were built above ground and lowered

into the river? – and shows happy people using the completed subway as only old movies do,” he muses. “Come to think of it, the movie might make an interesting Friday Luncheon program.”

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