

## The prehistory of the prehistoric novel

Pierre Ferrand

There is no question that the Chicago-born Jean Auel has netted one of the great national and international successes of recent years with her *The Earth's Children* saga. It started with *The Clan of the Cave Bear*, (1980), her first novel, published when she was 44. Five hefty volumes of the series have been issued by now, with a sixth in progress.

In the past two decades, a number of other writers, mostly women, have published prehistoric novels, and Auel can be said to have launched a fashion. This does not mean that she invented the genre as some of her more enthusiastic promoters, including her publishers, have claimed.

It can be argued that she *reinvented* it, at least for her many fans, though not everyone finds her proto-feminist, Cro-Magnon heroine with a truly "primitive" sex drive, the prehistoric superwoman Ayla, particularly convincing. The story of her interaction with the Neanderthals, who raised her, feels rather contrived to this reader. Her writing skills are not memorable, though she does have story-telling gifts, and she has made laudable efforts in getting her facts straight about the weaponry, hunting techniques, and housekeeping of our ancestors of 30,000 years ago.

Personally, I prefer *The Flintstones*, which started as a TV cartoon series in 1960 and as a comic strip around that time. They are funnier. However, Nobel Prize Laureate William Golding did a remarkable job in his *The Inheritors*, a novel dating from 1955, which described a final confrontation of Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals with psychological insight and literary skill. Most other early English and American novels often listed as "prehistoric fiction" do not deal with our remote ancestors, but are stories of "lost

worlds," which are found by modern explorers and seen through their eyes. This applies to a number of novels by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Rice Burroughs, which are somewhat marginal as literature. One can perhaps rate Jack London's occasional excursions into the field (including his *Before Adam*, 1907) somewhat higher.

On the other hand, a native of Belgium, who spent most of his life in France, J.H. Rosny, (1856-1940), was at the center of the French literary establishment for a number of decades and the president of the prestigious Academie Goncourt. He wrote (for a time with his younger brother as collaborator), some 90 novels, numerous short stories, several biographies, and memoirs, plays, many essays (including some solidly-based studies of scientific subjects), and a large number of newspaper articles. His first novel, praised by reviewers but with limited sales, was *Nell Horn of the Salvation Army* (1886), perhaps the first notable literary work with a Salvation Army character (followed decades later by George Bernard Shaw and Bertold Brecht).

Several of Rosny's other novels dealing with social issues and political radicals of his time were widely praised by Tolstoy and others, and



Chicagoan Jean Auel, 'Queen of the Prehistoric Novel,' from [www.bookreporter.com](http://www.bookreporter.com) website.

remain useful accounts of some aspects of his period. Open-minded, with multiple interests, and a champion of Marcel Proust, the highly sophisticated French novelist, he also wrote numerous psychological novels and novels of manners, as well as tales with Greek, Roman, and Etruscan and other historical backgrounds. He translated Edgar Allen Poe and Quevedo and published a monograph on the great painter J.M.W. Turner, whom he had come to admire during an early stay in England.

The first of his five prehistoric novels was *Vamireh* (1892). It powerfully evokes, in



## CAXTONIAN

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## Musings...

I fell in love with baseball when I was very young. Although my own baseball career was rather brief. It began in third-grade summer league ball, played early mornings with corporate-sponsored teams. I played shortstop for, appropriately enough, the local newspaper team, the *News-Sun*. My career ended my junior year in high school as catcher and with a batting average of .375, for the Junior Legion baseball team, which won our local championship and then got beat soundly at the playoffs on the campus of Purdue University. It was rumored before the game at Purdue that scouts from the Pittsburgh Pirates were at our game, and the ill-advised information tended to make us a bit tense — to say the least. I had the worst game of my brief career.

But it was a good run, while it lasted. There is something remarkable about training the human body to field a high-speed hit. As shortstop, you race toward the speeding ball, reach with the left arm, from which the floppy leather fielder's glove forms an extension, catch the ball in the pocket of the glove, and, planting your right foot, you throw across the diamond to nail the runner at first. There is a certain fluidity of movement and grace that comes with performing that exercise well that is close to what ballet dancer must experience.

I loved the intimacy of catching behind home plate, with the umpire at your back — often touching you, in fact — and the hitter so close you feared in the early part of the season that you might get hit with his swinging bat. I learned "split-vision" as a catcher — that is, seeing simultaneously both the pitcher and a runner on first base, who might, on any pitch, steal second. I can still recall the flow of adrenalin when, as the pitcher winds up, the runner on first begins his move toward second. The incoming pitch smacks your mitt, and, quick as a cat, you set your body for the long throw to second base, the ball arriving a split second ahead of the sliding runner.

Because I was fast on my feet — I quit baseball my senior year in high school to concentrate on track — I could beat out almost any drag bunt I laid down. The coach often called on me to bunt when we needed a base runner. But the greatest thrill in baseball for me was stealing home. You're on third base, and you get the signal from the third base coach to steal. You take as long a lead as you think wise; the pitcher winds and looks over his shoulder toward you. As his head moves back toward the plate, you begin an all-out sprint toward the plate, racing the pitched ball. A dozen feet from the plate, you begin your slide — I slid headfirst in the 1950s

before Pete Rose made such a slide famous in the 1970s — and extend your right arm toward home plate, keeping your prone body as far away from the catcher as possible. Your fingers touch the edge of the plate as you skid through the red dust, past the catcher, several yards beyond home plate. "Safe!" the umpire yells, and you smile to yourself through the dust and hear your teammates' cheers.

After our morning games when I was a grade-schooler, I would hurry home on my bicycle, have a quick lunch, and turn on the radio to listen to Bob Elston and the Chicago Cubs. Every afternoon on game days, you would find me beside our upright radio (which I still have, by the way) in an overstuffed chair, cheering the Cubs — especially my favorite Cub, Andy Pafko. When I was 12 or 13, my dad announced that he had gotten tickets to a double-header at Wrigley Field on a Sunday afternoon. We drove the 150 miles to Chicago to the hustle and confusion of the big city. I shall never forget sitting in the box seat behind first base and realizing that the baseball players, whom I had only heard described over the radio, were real, living human beings and that Wrigley Field was a beautiful, bright, and energized place. I loved the green of the grass and the outfield walls.

NJC, whose enthusiasm for baseball exceeds mine these days, and I frequently catch a Cubs' game on the radio as we relax or travel. We even attended three games last year and plan to catch a couple this season. I took grandson Drake to his first major league game at Wrigley Field last summer when he was 9. We plan another outing this year, as well.

I still love baseball better than any sport. I am still a Cubs fan, though not as avid as in years past. But I do enjoy a good baseball book. Roger Angell is my favorite baseball writer, though currently I am reading David Halberstam's *The Teammates*, the wonderful record of the friendships between Ted Williams, Dominic DiMaggio, Johnny Pesky, and Bobby Doerr. The richness in life of these four members of the Boston Red Sox enfold all of us who love baseball and whose lives are touched by this distinctly American game — the true American pastime.

Robert Cotner  
Editor



Artwork of historic Wrigley Field, Clark and Addison, by Chicago artist and occasional Caxton Club attendee, Donald Lindstrom, who is a consummate Chicago Cubs fan. Mr. Lindstrom has not missed a Cubs' opening-day in 50 years, and that includes the year he was stationed in Korea and had to get a special pass to come home for the first day of baseball at Wrigley Field.

"My guys," Ted [Williams] had called them, and they were that, always very much their own men, but his guys as well, forever linked to him as well as to each other. When Bobby Doerr and Dominic DiMaggio talked about their lives, it was with the same tone as John[ny Pesky], with an appreciation — indeed a gratitude — for their good fortune, and a sense that although they had prospered, the best part, the richest part, of their lives had little to do with material things, and that they had lived their lives with very few regrets.

David Halberstam  
*The Teammates – A Portrait of a Friendship* (2003)  
 p. 200.

Statistics are the food for love. Baseball is nourished by numbers, and all of us who have followed the game with intensity have found ourselves transformed into walking memory banks, humming with games won, games lost, batting averages and earned-run averages, games started and games saved, "magic numbers," final standings, lifetime marks, Series, seasons, decades, epochs.

Roger Angell  
*Late Innings* (1982)  
 p. 9

During 1919, the Pafkos came from Bratislava, peasant farmers, and settled with relatives in Minneapolis. By the time Andy was born in 1921, Michael and Susan Pafko had borrowed money, bought a dairy farm near Boyceville, close to the fork of the Hay River in northwestern Wisconsin. They kept chickens, and hogs, and grew alfalfa and oats. As late as 1942, his third season in professional baseball, he was still helping pay off the family farm.

"Ol'Handy Andy Pafko," Red Barber used to say. "Pow'ful wrists. He strengthened them as a boy milking cows on his daddy's farm."

"Sure," Pafko said over a club sandwich, "I milked cows. And not only that. I chopped wood. I fetched well water. You had to be strong to take discomfort, too, if you know what I mean..."

Pafko sipped beer and shook his head. "Baseball was a tough life. I didn't hit much in Eau Claire but then a good year at Green Bay. Then down in the Sally League, I tied Enos Slaughter's record with 18 triples. Then to the Pacific Coast League. I won the batting championship with .356. Then in '44, I had my first year with the Cubs."

Roger Kahn  
*The Boys of Summer* (1972)  
 pp. 265, 266, 267.



# A tribute to Leonard Freedman

Ed Quattrocchi

Leonard Freedman has recently been admitted to the Wellshire Home for Alzheimer patients at 150 Jamestown Lane in Lincolnshire, IL 60069. As most Caxtonians know, Leonard has been a most loyal and dedicated member of the club since he became a member in 1987. Two years later the council approved a new series of Friday luncheon presentations and discussions. As Frank Piehl in his *Celebrating a Century of the Book in Chicago* notes, "The first meeting was held on December 1989 when Gwin Kolb reminisced about his collection of 18<sup>th</sup> Century literature, focusing on the work of Samuel Johnson."

Leonard was so enthusiastic about the informal discussions of our meetings that he immediately volunteered to help me with scheduling speakers and making arrangements. He had been doing that with me as co-chair of the two-person Friday luncheon committee until the dreadful onslaught of Alzheimer's disease forced him to retire a couple of months ago. In that 14-year period, I cannot remember his ever missing a meeting. He not only sparked the discussions with witty and perceptive contributions, but he also made presentations about his beloved collections of books about Chicago and Jewish history and literature.

Most of my contact with Leonard was at the monthly Wednesday and Friday meetings of the club, but we would also have occasional social meetings. One in particular I remember writing to a friend about:

**"An Afternoon at Wrigley Field, August 22, 1997"**

I have not been to a ball game in about ten years, but on Friday, August 22, 1997, I spent a delightful afternoon at Wrigley Field with my



Ed Quattrocchi (l) and Len Freedman at a Friday luncheon of The Caxton Club

Caxton Club friend, Leonard Freedman. Leonard is 79 years, a former merchant. His father was an old vaudeville star, billed as the "The Strongest Small Man in the World," or "The Smallest Strong Man in the World." On stages in theaters around Chicago and around the world, one of his acts featured his holding two plow horses pulling in opposite directions with ropes tied to his clenched elbows.

Leonard, obviously inspired by his father, is an ex-boxer and still works out three rounds a day in his basement in Skokie on the punching bag as well as the body bag. His nephew follows in the strong man tradition of the family and teaches a course in boxing at the East Bank Club.

Although he never went to college, Leonard is one of the best-informed persons I know. He knows a lot about everything, especially about Chicago. He used to sell newspapers at Randolph and Michigan over 70 years ago and knows the city like the back of his hand. For example, I told him at the cocktail hour before one of our Caxton Club meetings that as a boy I used to go to a movie theater in which the

screen was facing your back as you entered the front entrance. He asked if it were either the EAR or two others he named on the North Side, which he claimed were the only three in the city with such a structural anomaly. The EAR was at 69<sup>th</sup> and Wentworth

Leonard also knows more about baseball than anyone I have ever met with the possible exception of my late brother Tom. He can recite the batting order, with the batting averages, of the entire lineup of the 1929 Philadelphia Phillies. At our Caxton Club meeting on the Wednesday before, he caught me by surprise and invited me to the Cubs game on Friday. I accepted, because

I could not think up a plausible excuse, especially because I had boasted of knowing a bit about the lore of the game myself.

But it turned out that I had a swell time. The weather was perfect, and the game, though imperfect by Leonard's standards, was interesting and enjoyable. We had seats in a box in the first row behind the Cubs' dugout. His son is a lawyer with season's tickets, who usually gives them out to customers. I liked the seats especially because I could see the house behind the right field wall with fans sitting atop it, in which lived about 45 years ago, a young lady, with her sister, whom my buddy Tom Hill and I dated a few times in our salad days and nights. I was musing to myself how different my life might have been, and that my five children would not be, or would be different beings, if I had been a Cubs fan in those days and unduly attracted to that young lady by the fortuitous location of her apartment.

Leonard is not as much fun at the game as my old pals from Joe Breslin's saloon used to be, but that may be because my interest in sports has waned. For one reason, he doesn't

drink, and for another he doesn't keep a score card. (I guess he doesn't need to, because he can remember everything that happens.) But he has few other deficiencies as a fan. He can eat a whole bag of jumbo peanuts, and he keeps up the chatter. We were there with his friend Irv, who owns a Kosher hot dog franchise, and Irv's grandson, Nick. While I drank beer and wine, Leonard ate peanuts, and Irv and his grandson ate hot dogs, albeit a competitors' brand.

The only disconcerting part of the afternoon was the annual air show going on overhead. The planes would swoop in low, almost over the pitcher's mound, making a terrible roar and threatening to crash. I guess it is good for the economy, and for the morale of the citizens, to know where their defense taxes are going, but it was scary to me.

And I even surprised myself by asking a few questions Leonard couldn't answer. I was surprised to notice that none of the pitchers on either team (Montreal and the Cubs) wind up; at least none who were throwing on Friday, and I asked Leonard how come? Leonard must be slowing down with age, for after all these years, he has failed to notice the year when the pitchers stopped winding up, or how many in the big leagues today wind up and how many do not. My remembrance is that Don Larsen was the innovator, the time he pitched a perfect game for the Yankees in the World Series. I remember watching part of the game on a TV set in a downtown store window, and I couldn't believe, nor could the announcers, that Larsen threw the ball without winding up.

And I had other questions that Leonard couldn't answer. Who was the other fast guy, besides Maury Wills, who stole over 100 bases? And why can't the present day players come anywhere close to those records? How many bases did Wally Moses, or Luke Appling steal, in their best years with the White Sox?

And how many guys did Bill Wight pick off first base in his best year? I have surfed the Internet for the answers to these and like questions, but so far without success. I had always assumed Leonard was infallible on baseball history, analogous to the Pope on faith and morals, but he turned out to have a few lacunae in his memory bank.

My friend Don Stevens called me the next morning, and I told him about my good time and asked him about some of these questions. He can no longer, if he ever could, pay attention to any game, or race, that he does not have a bet on. He was amazed that I could sit through eight innings of a game without having an investment in the outcome. I answered that I would have laid down at least a token wager, but that I did not have time to get the line, and that neither Leonard, nor Irv, nor his grandson Nick were betting fans. I told him about my conversation with Leonard, and of his many astute observations on the history and development of the game.

Because of our excellent viewing station next to the infield, Leonard observed that the players are getting smaller. I ventured the opinion that that might be the result of the influx of Latinos into the majors, but I also recalled that Chico Carrasquel was one of the tallest Latin American players who ever played. Leonard trumped me by ruling that another Carresquel by name of Alex was taller and bigger. "A very big guy," he said. And Don reminded me that Chico set a record for a rookie by hitting in seventeen consecutive games, or some such improbable number. Could that be true? Does the record still stand? And has any player ever topped Taffy Wright's record of having slid safely into first base six times in a season?

Anyway it was a fine afternoon. I wanted to get out early, for there were 30,000 fans in attendance in the "Friendly Confines" to watch their beloved, last place, losers. I had secured an "easy out" parking spot in the lot across the

street for only \$18, so I left after the eighth inning with the Cubs ahead by one run, an act of an iron will developed in my declining years that I could never have done in all my youth as a baseball fan. And I surprised myself by being fixed to the car radio on the way home and caught the exciting denouement to the heroic action. The Cubs won 3 to 1. Attending a game, let alone listening to one on the radio, is something I have not done in many a year. I would not have accepted any old invitation to a baseball game, but I am glad that Leonard took me by surprise with his invitation. Any event, he was found guilty and dismissed from the Academy as of March 6, 1831. He was a few days short of 22 years old.

Although the court martial occurred at the end of January 1831, Edgar's dismissal did not take effect for over a month. During that interval, Poe persuaded 131 of the 232 cadets to put up \$.75 each to subscribe to a new book of his poems. The money was withheld from the cadets' paychecks by the Treasurer of the Academy. Cadet Poe had in the past amused his colleagues by issuing "pasquinades and diatribes in rhyme upon the officers and faculty which were clever enough both to amuse and to annoy." (Allen, 228) The cadets evidently expected more of the same in return for their subscriptions.

In mid-February 1831, with the subscription money in hand, Poe headed for New York. Poe had no job and no other resources; it is not known how he survived. He wrote a remarkable letter to the Superintendent of West Point (who had just discharged him) saying that he intended to go to Paris with the intention of obtaining the Marquis de La Fayette's help in obtaining an appointment to the Polish Army; and he [Poe] wanted the Superintendent to give him a certificate of "standing" that would help him receive such an appointment. The Superintendent apparently never responded.

But somehow Poe did make arrangements for a New York publisher, Elam Bliss, to print this third volume of his poems, which he dedicated "To the U.S. Corps of Cadets."

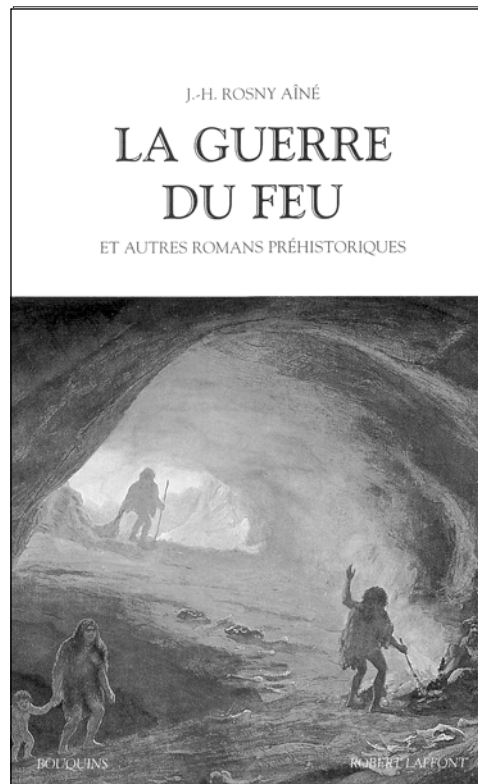
## Prehistoric

Continued from page 1

luxuriant prose, the exotic fauna and flora of the remote past, and the savagery of the Darwinian “struggle for life” among men and beasts, in a spirit of exuberant pantheism and fellow-feeling for all living beings. It is an adventure story full of violent episodes, but the hero, a nomadic hunter who roams through Eurasia, while ready to kill for survival, does not relish it, and prefers to ally himself with tribes of alien races (some definitely strange) and even with beasts. Indeed, his mate becomes a woman of another race, the first of the numerous “mixed marriages” of Rosny’s prehistoric protagonists.

His other prehistoric novels (including *Eymirah*, 1893-6, *La Guerre du Feu*, 1909-11, *Le Félin Géant*, 1918-20, and *Helgvor du Fleuve Bleu*, 1931), have similar characteristics, though the language was toned down somewhat in his books published after 1900. It is noted that, while he speaks of races and blond-haired heroes in the language of his time, he is no racist. He reflects a genuinely humane approach, and his portrayal of women can be described as “pro-feminist.” He has described Amazon tribes in a spirit of sympathy. He also repeatedly tries to describe the dawn of human conscience in the primitive minds of what he sometimes calls “the vertical beasts.”

At least two of these novels (*La Guerre du Feu* as *The Quest for Fire*, and *Quest of the Dawn Man*, a version of *Le Félin Géant*), have been translated into English. *The Quest for Fire*, undoubtedly the best of the series, has remained a classic, often republished, and I remember reading it in France 70 years ago. It has also been the subject of a highly praised film, released in 1981. I took pleasure, last year, in re-reading this novel in a recent French edition of all of Rosny’s prehistoric tales, (*Collection Bouquins*, Editions Laffont, 1985, third reprint, 2002, edited by J.B. Baronian), and I was again thrilled by its intriguing plot and fine style, including its opening line, “Les Oulhamr fuyaient dans la nuit épouvantable,” which sounds quite dramatic in French.<sup>1</sup>



Cover of *La Guerre du Feu*, by J. H. Rosny, from the collection of Pierre Ferrand.

The Bouquins volume also reproduces his early tale, *Les Xipehuz* (1887), which links, in a sense, his prehistoric novels and his pioneering science fiction novels and stories. It is the story of the invasion of a pre-Babylonian culture, which is invaded by aliens, who are strange vectors of light with which all communication is impossible. They are eventually driven off, but the wise man, who defeated them regrets that it was necessary for the Xipehuz and humans to destroy each other.

This story, which has been translated into English, contrasts with the many English language “monsters-from-outer-space” stories, which, until the early 1940s, were uniformly triumphalistic and xenophobic. In a number of other pioneering, science fiction stories, which have attracted attention in England and the U.S. in recent years, Rosny displays a similar original and humanistic spirit.

It was a pleasure for me to renew my acquaintance with Rosny, truly the father of the prehistoric novel, though I cannot fully discuss his science fiction stories, which I read many years ago, until I pick up a reprint of these tales,

which have been republished in a volume, also edited by J.B. Baronian. I am looking forward to finding a copy next time I visit France, since he was indeed a pioneer in science fiction, more original and thoughtful than his near contemporaries, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, and perhaps more readable today. His closest English parallel may be Olaf Stapleton. ❖

<sup>1</sup> The phrase loses something in translation. It refers to the tribe, which has lost the fire, important for its survival, to its enemies. The best English translation I can come up with is “The Oulhamr fled into the terrifying night.”

## Funding sought for exhibit

The Caxton Club needs funding for the costs of our 2005 Leaf Book exhibit and publication of a companion catalog. We plan to apply for grants to major public agencies. If you are familiar with a family foundation or other smaller funding agency in Chicago or elsewhere, please call Adele Hast at 847/256-5768. ❖

## Letter to editor

‘Revels 2003’ was great, but . . .

The December Revels meeting was delightful. Bonnie Koloc was her old-time, charming, entertaining self. Our annual book auction, though, was a disappointment. The quality of books was great, one of the finest assortments we’ve had. The minimum bids were so high, however, that when we broke for dinner, I counted 26 books with no bids. Instead of reducing the minimum bid on those books during the dinner break, the decision was made to remove them to auction off on e-Bay.

I had donated three modern first editions, signed. I wanted one of our members to have the pleasure of owning one even at a much discounted price. I did not offer them to be bid on e-Bay. I know, I know, the bigger money will go to the treasury. First, I do not believe you will get a better price there, and second, the auction is part of the fun-and-games of the Holiday Revels program.

I am suggesting the committee return to its low minimum, sell-it-here auction.

Florence Shay



## Caxton Club welcomes new members to the fellowship

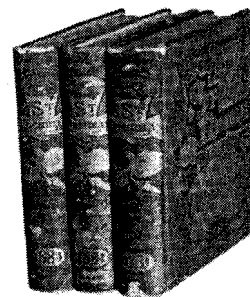
Name	Nominator	Seconder
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Rob Carlson	Norma Rubovits	Lydia Cochrane
Louise Dieterle	Peggy Sullivan	Ed Quattrocchi
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Scott Sinson	Dorothy L. Sinson	Charles Miner
C. Steven Tomashefsky	Bob McCamant	Bob Karrow
Kathryn R.J. Tutkus	Martha Chiplis	Bob McCamant

In addition, a former member, Scott Fehlan, has been reinstated.

To become a member, one is expected to attend at least two meetings of the club, and one is required to fill in the membership request form, which should be submitted to Membership Committee Chair John P. Chalmers, along with a nominating and seconding letter from members of the club. Nominees for membership are discussed at the Council meeting following the submission of all written material, after which the Council votes.

Though voted into membership, an individual does not become a member until the club receives payment of dues and the initiation fee; persons joining in September through December of one year will not see a bill for dues the following January, as that first dues payment is extended to cover the twelve months following. For more information, or a copy of the membership brochure, contact John P. Chalmers.

## Saints & Sinners Corner



**Caxtonian Helen Sclair** will be awarded the Henrietta Merrifield Forbes Award by the Association of Gravestone Studies in June 2004. This award is in recognition for her lifetime work in research on grave markers.

**Caxtonian William H. Rentschler** has moved to Hamilton, OH, where he writes regularly for the Hamilton Journal-News. He was recently described by Edgar Branch, Research Professor Emeritus, Miami University, as "uniquely American,...a cultural critic deeply tempered by the powerful democratic liberal tradition...."

**Caxtonian Robert Cotner** spoke recently to the Big Rock (IL) Historical Society on "Local History and Abraham Lincoln."

**Caxtonian Michael Sawdey** spoke to the Big Rock (IL) Historical Society on the organization of a local historical museum.

## Cotner resigns as Caxtonian Editor

**R**obert Cotner, who has been Editor of the *Caxtonian*, the monthly journal of The Caxton Club since it was founded in 1993, has resigned.

Cotner, who founded the *Caxtonian* while he was Centennial President of the club, will have completed 11 years in August 2004. "That is long enough," Cotner said. "It is time for new ideas and new views to inform the journal." Cotner's final issue will be the August 2004 edition of the *Caxtonian*.

Robert McCamant, Vice President and Program Chair of the club, has accepted the editorship beginning in September 2004. Council member George Leonard will fill McCamant's unexpired term as Vice President and Program Chair, and Paul Ruxin has been named to the Council Class of 2006 to fill the position vacated by Leonard.

# Bookmarks...

## Dinner Program

May 19, 2004

Arthur P. Young

*“Horatio Alger, Jr — Juvenile Writer, Durable Metaphor, and Collectible Author”*

Many Americans recognize Horatio Alger, Jr. as a prolific 19<sup>th</sup> Century juvenile writer associated with the “rags to riches,” “strive and succeed,” and “luck and pluck” shibboleths of the American dream. In some circles he has become emblematic of American capitalist culture. There is perennial dispute over the quality of his prose. But did you know that Alger’s “Tattered Tom” was a girl, that Alger was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard College, that he wrote several adult novels, that Alger tutored a supreme court justice, and that his name adorns two venerable organizations?

Alger’s books — characters, themes and locales — and their influence on readers throughout the years will be examined. Of continuing interest is his strong influence on the higher education curriculum in such areas as urban history, sociology, child reform, and cultural myth. The Alger influence has extended into the literature of such other authors as Nathanael West, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Theodore Dreiser. Although Alger wrote predominately about New York and the west coast, he did indeed also write about Chicago. Finally, Alger the collectible author leads one into many fascinating adventures as a collector, some of them very close to those experienced by characters in the quartet of books by Caxton Club friend Nicholas Basbanes.

A librarian for more than three decades, Caxtonian Young has served as the dean of libraries at the University of Rhode Island, the University of South Carolina, and now Northern Illinois University. He is the author of 200 publications, including eight books. His

first book, *Books for Sammies*, reconstructed the global book crusade undertaken by the American Library Association during World War I. His latest book, *The Next Library Leadership*, examines the desirable leadership attributes of academic and public library leaders. He recently completed terms as president of the Horatio Alger Society and the Illinois Library Association.

Join your friends for what promises to be an outstanding dinner program.

Robert McCamant

*Vice President and Program Chair*

## June Luncheon and Dinner programs

At the luncheon program on June 10, 2004, our own Bob Williams will be sharing with us his expertise and collections of calligraphy.

At the dinner program on June 16, 2004, Ralph Ehrenberg, an internationally-recognized authority on the history of cartography, will speak on “Collecting Maps at the Library of Congress.” ❖

## New Council slate nominated

The slate for the council, class of 2007, according to the President Michael Thompson, will be: Bruce Boyer, Jane Carpenter, Bill Drendel, Caryl Seidenberg, and Steve Tomashefsky. Paul Ruxin is nominated to the Class of 2006, replacing George Leonard. The election will take place at the Annual Meeting during the May dinner meeting. ❖

## Luncheon Program

May 14, 2004

Betty Jane Wagner & Michael Anania  
*“The Swallow Press, in Stories”*

Caxtonian Betty Jane Wagner, Professor at Roosevelt University, and Michael Anania, Professor Emeritus of the University of Illinois, Chicago, will talk about Swallow Press. This publishing house was purchased by Betty Jane’s late husband, Caxtonian Durrett Wagner, and Morton Weisman in 1967 after the untimely death of its founder, Alan Swallow, of Denver, CO. They moved the press to Chicago and then began a heady, tumultuous, and very satisfying enterprise here.

Durrett resigned as Dean of Kendall College in the summer of 1967 and took over the management of the business and Mort became the publisher while he continued working at A. C. McClurg. To say the challenge was overwhelming is an understatement. Durrett and Mort soon hired Michael Anania as literary editor especially to continue and expand the poetry line of the business, and Durrett took on the role of editor of everything else. Those of you who knew him can understand that his passion was the Sage line focusing on the American West, and he was never happier than when soliciting new manuscripts and working with authors who were filling gaps in Western Americana. Before long, Mort too was working full-time as business manager with the press, and there are many stories to tell about their effort to produce books of exceptional quality in poetry, criticism, fiction, Western Americana, and *belles lettres*.

Swallow Press grew steadily and rapidly in the next few years, expanding the number of books published each year and continuing to build on Alan Swallow’s deserved reputation for scholarly publication and careful editing. Wagner and Anania will bring some of the Swallow publications to show and will enjoy remembering together the rigors, challenges, and triumphs of those exhilarating years.

Edward Quattrocchi

*Chair*

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.