

The Peculiarities of Nonfiction Pulps¹

David Meyer

“We camped on the boiler-deck, and bought some cheap literature to kill time with.”

—*Life on the Mississippi*
by Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens)

I trace my inordinate affection for pulp publications to my grandfather, Joseph E. Meyer. He sold them through our family mail-order herb business, a cottage industry started in a back bedroom of his home in Hammond, Indiana, which became one of the largest suppliers of herbs and herbal preparations in this country. In the beginning the company offered only herbs, collected and dried by the family and sold for twenty-five cents per box. The herbs were touted as remedies for a variety of ailments and advertised in little catalogs my grandfather printed and my grandmother and her sons stitched together by hand.

Pulp publications were soon added to the product line, along with hair tonics, salves, liniments and other self-help products. But the pulps my grandfather sold were not those defined as “magazine[s] printed on rough, inferior paper stock made from wood pulp, usually containing sensational stories of love, crime, etc.” The only similarity between the two varieties of pulp—fiction and nonfiction—was the kind of paper used: highly acidic and prone to yellowing and turning brittle a few years after production and printing. Within a few decades pulp paper often breaks apart and crumbles into dust.

Pulp fiction magazines are widely known in popular culture for their gripping western, detective, and science fiction series and their eye-catching cover art. The pulps my grandfather sold were not magazines and not fiction—that is, they were not pre-



sented as fiction, although many were suspect in this regard. The nonfiction publications were usually smaller in format than the magazines, trimmed to various sizes—2" x 3", 3" x 4", up to 7" x 10". The most popular size, 5" x 7", fit into turnstile racks at corner newsstands and variety stores, bus and railroad stations. These pulps were the poor, colorless cousins to the fiction magazines.

Perhaps the best way of describing pulp nonfiction publications, other than calling them a mess, is to look at their individual components and try to explain how different they are from other, more conventional printed literature. It helps to keep in mind that the traditional elements of books (title page, text, etc.) do not always apply to nonfiction pulps. In an industry that flourished for a hundred years, beginning in the mid-

19th century, the only rules were to produce a book cheaply, in just enough copies needed at the time and in whatever dress helped to sell it (in any way possible).

Two pulps that have turned up repeatedly in my 50 years of browsing old-book shops will serve as excellent examples of the confusing characteristics of nonfiction pulps. They are Howard Thurston's *Card Tricks* and John George Hohman's *Pow-Wows or, the Long-Lost Friend*.

They, like most other books of their kind, were issued by the most prominent pulp publishers in the East and Midwest, including Henry J. Wehman and Wehman Brothers in New York City; I. & M. Ottenheimer in Baltimore; Royal Publishing Company in Philadelphia; The Arthur Westerbrook Company in Cleveland; and

See PULPS, page 4



Letter from the President

CAXTONIAN Junie L. Sinson

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Last year, as I began my Presidency, I addressed you with pride, apprehension, and a vision for The Caxton Club as it was entering the twenty-first century. As I address you this year, the pride remains, but the apprehension is gone.

WHAT DID WE ACCOMPLISH?

During the 2005-2006 fiscal year, the Caxton Club amended and coordinated its By-laws and began development of defined Policy and Procedures to help various committees function more efficiently. We provided meaningful insurance protection for Council, and established procedures for the timely distribution of our Directory. Criteria were spelled out for awarding of an Honorary Membership; a Policy and Procedure was issued for the awarding of meaningful Fellowships. Lastly, we developed Financial Procedures that should provide efficiency between our Treasurer and General Manager. None of those events could have occurred without individuals drafting the documents, and the Council, while providing oversight, that allowed the efforts to be placed on a "fast track." To the draftsmen and the Council, I say personally and on behalf of the entire Club, a sincere and well-earned "thank you."

In 2005-2006 our luncheon and dinner meetings remained the foundation of our monthly activities. Extraordinary growth occurred in our Luncheon Meeting attendance. We were fortunate to have our inaugural Caxton Seminar, with the support of The Newberry Library and its facilities, addressing Intellectual Property. The Seminar reaffirmed our close association with The Newberry Library, received national acclaim, and attracted new members to our Club. All of that happened while we continued to glow in the afterlife of our Leaf Book Seminar as it traveled about the country.

Need all of the above have been said? It is a thin line between "appreciation," "boasting," and a quest to "motivate and inspire help." There is more to be accomplished. We must prepare for the encore.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Our operating structure is in place. We now need leadership, objectives, and members who are willing to produce. In the 2006-2007 Caxton Club operating year, I would like to:

- (a) Emphasize the recruiting and obtaining of



new members who will complement those who have, for more than a century, enriched our history.

- (b) Encourage "Deferred Giving" so that a monetary fund will be created that will adequately fund the rental or purchase of a building facility for our activities, social relationships, and exhibits.

- (c) Expand our Fellowship Awards.

- (d) Produce our second annual Seminar, "Remodeling the Tower of Babel: The Translator's Role in a Shrinking World," on March 31, 2007, worthy of our first effort.

- (e) Give our members a forum, resources, and energy to explore new and exciting activities consistent with our interests in book arts and literary study.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

During the past year, I learned about the diversity of our membership. Everyone is not a Caxtonian for the same reason. The Book is our common bond. For some, the Book is a form of art or a vehicle for knowledge or an object to collect, for others the Book is all or most of these. All of those interests are legitimate, in some ways different, and in all ways worthy.

Some members, exhibiting amazing energy, make the Club work. Others provide intellectual direction. Some merely attend and accept what is

See SINSON, page 3

Jim Marshall: Outdoorsman, Engineer, Caxtonian

Tom Joyce

Jim Marshall ('78), who was a familiar face at numerous Chicago-area organizations, died at his home on April 1 (Jim would have enjoyed the irony). His literary aspirations were addressed through his active participation in The Caxton Club, The Newberry Library Associates, and The Chicago Literary Club.

Jim earned degrees in Civil Engineering and City & Regional Planning, and was a registered professional civil engineer in Illinois. Such work was not enough for Jim, so he fostered his interests in the great outdoors through his involvement with the Chicago Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He worked as a staffer at the Council's Camp Owasippe. Across more than fifty years he wrote booklets and maps for hikers, Scouts, and outdoorsmen. He knew the subjects intimately, in part due to his activities with the Chicago Area Orienteering Club and the Sierra Club.

The nexus between his engineering interests and his exposure to Native American themes at Camp Owasippe may have pushed him into his intensive study of North American Indian mound builders. Jim toted his surveyor's equipment around the country, especially in Ohio and Illinois, to record the details of pre-Columbian earthworks created by these peoples.

After surveying known mounds, Jim



Jim Marshall (center) at the opening of the Leaf Book exhibition

began searching for undiscovered pre-historic earthworks, especially in northern Illinois, where they were unknown. He identified and surveyed ancient earthworks in Palos Township, and along areas drained by the Fox River. Recognizing a shortage in state park acreage, Jim created a 185-page State Park Plan for the Fox River and Northeastern Illinois, which the state published in 1961. It led to the ongoing parkland acquisition program and new state parks such as Moraine Hills, Silver Springs, and Volo Bog.

Jim was frequently asked to give his slide-illustrated lectures about his earthworks hobby before diverse groups such as The Chicago Map Society at the Newberry Library, or The Chicago Corral of the Westerners. His work was the focus of two exhibitions: the first on Native American architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology, and second, "Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand," at the Art Institute.

The present and future state parks will be Jim Marshall's enduring legacy.

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Newberry slates Sherlock Holmes/Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Colloquium

The First Annual Sherlock Holmes/Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Colloquium at the Newberry Library will be held Saturday morning, October 7.

Panelists include Daniel Posnansky on "Doyle's Favorite Book," C. Paul Martin on

"Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle: A Self Portrait," and Glenn Miranker on "When is a Book Not a Book?"

The Newberry Library houses an immense collection of Doyle writings and memorabilia in the C. Frederick Kittle

[Caxton Club '85] Collection of Doyleana.

Admission is free and reservations are not required. For more information, call 312-255-3770 or visit www.newberry.org.

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SINSON, from page 2

offered to them. But even those who offer negative criticism, producing disparate reactions, often end up providing other constructive dialogue that eventually enhances Club work.

Often, in the monthly *Caxtonian*, I see

short biographies of Caxton Club members whom I do not know and who probably do not know me. Regularly, I find these individuals interesting, extraordinary achievers, and the possessors of scholarly interests. We have in our membership individuals and resources that have not been tapped. I

would like to encourage every member, if possible, to contribute one new personal additional Club activity to our Club during the coming year. I encourage members to tell me your dreams, your wishes, and your observations about how we can improve.

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PULPS, from page 1

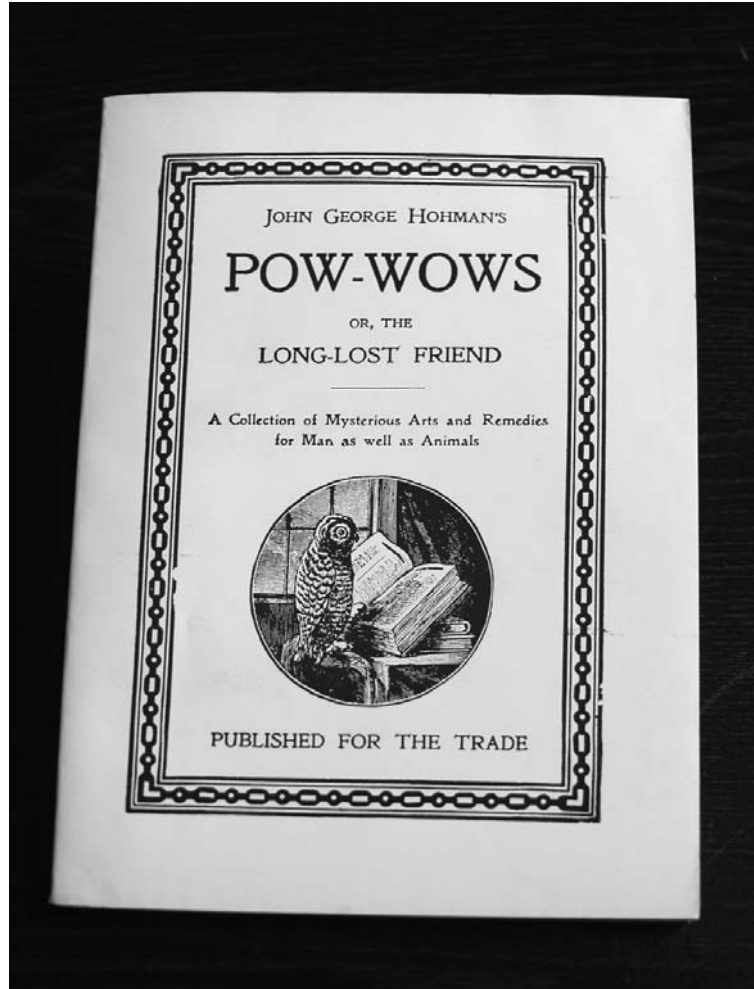
M.A. Donohue & Company, Frederick J. Drake and Max Stein in Chicago.

Often two or more of these companies published the same title. This suggests that each company's distribution may have been limited to the cities and geographic areas in which they were located.

THE COVERS

Unlike their magazine counterparts, the covers of pulp booklets and pamphlets were seldom flashy and were usually printed in only one or two colors. A cover illustration could be fantastic, attractive, interesting, even appealing, but it also might not have anything to do with the subject of the book. *Howard Thurston's Card Tricks* provides a perfect example of this.

Because this book will be mentioned with respect to several unique aspects of pulps, a brief background of the author and the book might be helpful. From 1893 to 1903 the magician Howard Thurston appeared on vaudeville and variety stages in this country and Europe billed as the "King of Cards." Cards appeared magically at his fingertips, one after another, instantly, with no movement of his hand beyond the flick of his fingers. He could make a chosen card rise from the deck and float in the air. In 1901, well into his success, he wrote and published *Howard Thurston's Card Tricks*, explaining his methods for deception. How could revealing the secrets of his magic to the general public possibly help his career? There were two reasons: he intended to establish that he was the originator of his card manipulation act, and his book was meant to squelch the success of his many imitators. He was not alone in offering an expose of his act. T. Nelson Downs, "King of Coins," published a book on how to perform his coin tricks and Harry Houdini, "King of Handcuffs," revealed the workings of his escapes in a pamphlet he printed and



Chicago pulp publisher Max Stein's edition, circa 1950s, of this early 19th century book

updated for more than twenty years. Publishing the secrets of these masters of magic was merely a tease, for it was unlikely that most readers would ever achieve the skill to duplicate the authors' tricks.

Howard Thurston's Card Tricks was first published by its author and was reprinted by several commercial publishers. By 1903 the rights belonged to pulp publishers. Of the 27 pulp editions printed over the next 50 years, only one cover accurately pictured the author.² This was an edition issued in 1903 when Thurston was still billing himself as the "King of Cards." Three editions carried the likeness of Herrmann the Great, a magician who died in 1897. (Herrmann, with his handlebar mustache and devilish goatee, personified the image of a "real magician" of the time.) Two later editions of Thurston's book pictured cartoon magicians on the cover; another showed

leprechaun unicyclists carrying playing cards almost as large as themselves.

Cover art for nonfiction pulps, if not created for a specific title, often used an old engraving or line art taken from a previously printed book. In some cases it seems as if the printer grabbed the first steel or wood block engraving within reach. These illustrations eventually showed their age with faint or broken lines. A worn or muddy engraving or a 19th century typeface was often seen on the cover of a 20th century pulp.

An author's name, if given anywhere, wasn't always on the cover of a pulp, but the publisher's name and/or the copyright claimant's usually was. If the publisher's name did not occupy the lower portion of the front cover, the area might be left blank. This space allowed a wholesale purchaser of quantities of the title to

rubber-stamp his name. The reseller of a title might be a firm or an individual. If the book could be "pitched" (sold) at some event, say a performance of magic, the magician would stamp his name on the cover.

The price of a pulp—usually 10 or 25 cents—would often be printed in a corner of the front cover. After countless reprintings, the price might change. Rather than replace the entire cover, the price would be smudged until it was unreadable or was removed altogether.

A hint of the immense variety of pulps in a publisher's inventory could be found on the back cover of each publication. Titles and descriptions were listed or the covers of books were reproduced, usually smaller than a postage stamp. The back cover of *How To Entertain an Evening Party*, a 4" x 5" book in the "Wehman Bros.[sic] Handy

Series," reproduces the covers of 25 other titles in the series, mostly collections of jokes (Irish, Scotch, Hebrew, Dutch, Minstrel, Stage, Rube, Hobo, "Kid," "Komical," "Tip Top," "Roaring," "Choice," "Cracker Jack," "Jolly," etc.). Additional titles featured on the back cover of *The Gipsy Dream Book* focused on riddles, rhymes, toasts, puzzles, magic, and after-dinner stories. *How to Wrestle* and *Clog Dancing Made Easy* were standards in the "How To" category. *Old Egyptian Madge's Fortune-Teller and Dream Book* and *Aunt Jemima's Policy Players' Dream Book* were among numerous titles of this kind. *Bonaparte's Oraculum, or the Book of Fate* was another favorite; the cover portrait depicted Napoleon looking very stern.

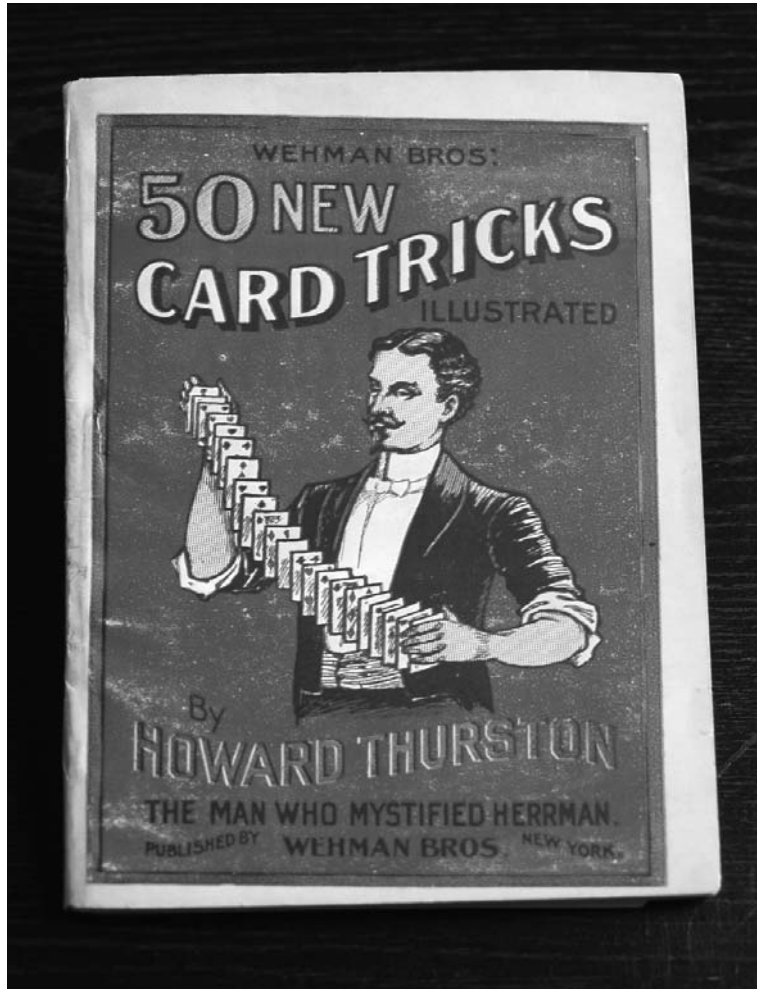
An attempt to survey all the subjects published in pulps would range from translations of French fiction to "how to throw your voice" by ventriloquism, with countless whimsical, exotic and risqué—but almost no *practical*—themes featured in the mix.

THE TITLE PAGE

Many pulps dispensed with a title page for the simple reason that the cover carried the information traditionally printed on the title page: title, author (if given) and publisher. An example of one of the many pulps which did not have a title page is *Thrilling Stories About Snakes and Snake Charmers*. The text had been extracted, without credit, from a larger work.

THE COPYRIGHT PAGE

Pulp fiction magazines usually consisted of original work and were duly copyrighted. Nonfiction pulps, however, were often reprints of books or portions of books—or portions of text of several different books—



One of the many different covers (and title changes) for the pulp edition of Howard Thurston's Card Tricks

put together within the same covers. The original publishers had let the books go out of print; their copyrights had expired and were in public domain; the rights had been sold to a pulp publisher; or a work was simply appropriated and claimed to be owned by the pulp publisher. Consequently, a copyright notice was seldom included in a nonfiction pulp. Normally found on the verso of the title page, the copyright page was either left blank or used to advertise other books. If a copyright was claimed, the holder's name would usually appear on the bottom of the front cover or on the title page.

This brings up another unique aspect of pulps, best illustrated by *Howard Thurston's Card Tricks*. The book was originally written and published by its author in 1901. After printings by trade publishers in London and New York, the rights were sold; exactly who bought them remains a

puzzle. In 1903 Henry J. Wehman, the leading pulp publisher in New York, claimed the copyright in the edition he had for sale. The same year J. S. Ogilvie Publishing Company, also in New York, issued an edition copyrighted by "Walter Morris N.Y.C."

The same copyright can be owned by more than one person. But can two individuals *separately* claim copyright ownership for the same book? (That suggests a fight, with lawyers in opposite corners of the ring.) Did Wehman and Morris actually submit separate copyright claims? The cavalier treatment of truth that abounded in pulp publishing suggests that one of the claims was bogus.

THE TEXT

John G. Hohman's *Pow-Wows* or *The Long-Lost Friend* was a perennial seller for my grandfather's mail-order company for more than 70 years. How many other retailers sold the book and how many hundreds of copies were reprinted and sold in the pulp book trade, year after year,

will never be known. It is known that the book first appeared in this country under the title of *Der Lang Verborgene Freund* and was printed in Reading, Pennsylvania, in 1820. The author's name was given as "Johann Georg. Hohman." The first American edition in English was titled *The Long Secreted Friend, or a true and Christian Information for every body; containing Wonderful and Approved Remedies and Arts for Men and Beast* [etc.]. This edition, translated from the German, was published in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1846. Daniel Siegel of M & S Rare Books in Massachusetts, who offered both of these rare editions in one of his catalogs, described the book as "a collection of old Central European—mainly German—cures for ailments and counter actions for spells."

By the early 20th century, when my grandfather began selling the pulp version,

See PULPS, page 6

CAXTONIAN

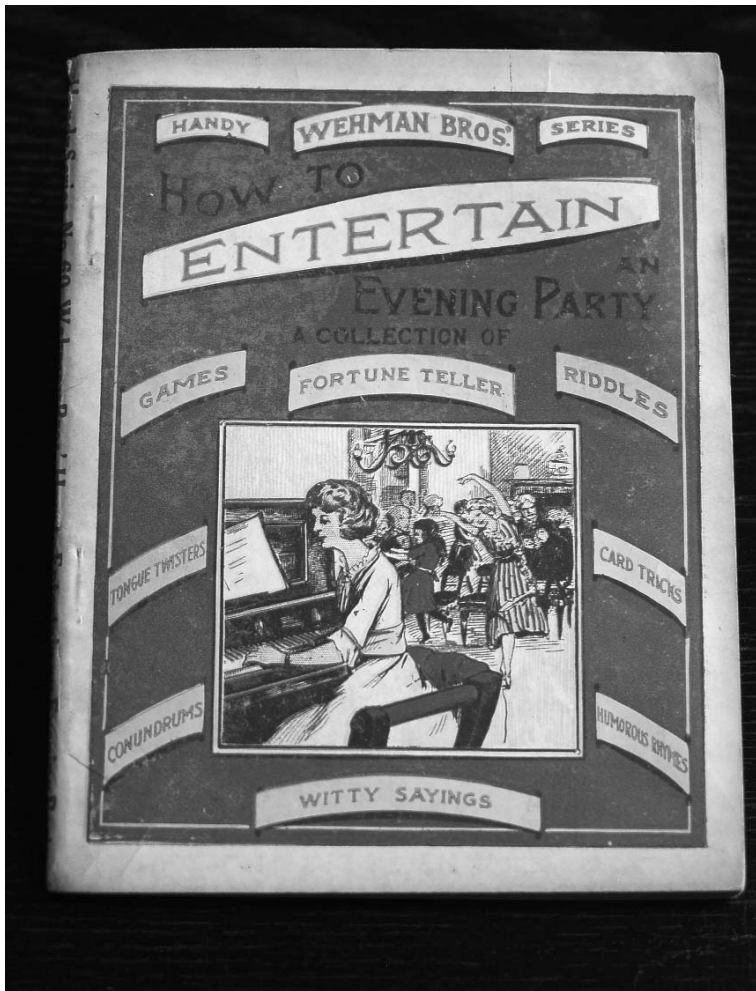
PULPS, from page 5

Johann had been anglicized to John and the title changed to *Pow-Wows*. This word is derived from Indian tribes of the Northeast and refers to medicine men or ceremonies of this and other North American tribes. There are, however, no references to Native Americans in *Pow-Wows*. The altered title possesses two characteristics common to pulps: title changes appear for no stated reason and the text may have little or no connection with the title.

Two versions of the book were sold by my family's company. In my grandfather's day, the text was unchanged from the earliest English edition. By the 1940s or '50s a pulp publisher had added random pages from *Modern Magic*, a classic Victorian book of instruction on how to perform parlor magic.

This unacknowledged "borrowing" is typical of pulp non-fiction. Many pulps consist of the partial contents of various unrelated books.

The *Modern Magic* section of *Pow-Wows* runs 32 pages, possibly selected for no reason other than that the plates were at hand. The *Pow-Wows* text ends on page 84 with a solemn pronouncement that "Whoever carries this book with him, is safe from all enemies, visible or invisible; and whoever has this book with him cannot die without the holy corpse of Jesus Christ, nor drowned [*sic*] in any water, or burn up in any fire, nor can any unjust sentence be passed upon him. So help me." Below this statement is a large cross, flanked by two smaller crosses—an obvious reference to the crucifixion of Jesus. The text on the facing page [85]—"To change four cards, drawn haphazard, and placed on the table, into cards of the same value as a single card subsequently chosen by one of the spectators"—is a subheading beginning the text on magic.



One of the hundreds of titles issued by Wehman Bros., the most prolific of pulp publishers

Although the type for the page number is broken and obscure, this is a reproduction of page 102 of *Modern Magic*. Pages 103 to 107 follow, also with their page numbers indistinct. The text facing page 107 is an eye-catcher: the first sentence begins in the middle of the page! This is because it was originally the beginning of Chapter V of *Modern Magic*, but the chapter heading, all in capital letters, has been deleted. Only the text remains, "floating" on the page. Once again the original page number is missing, but the subsequent numbers—121 to 145 (the end of the chapter)—can be clearly read.

You cannot look at this *Modern Magic* section of *Pow-Wows* without thinking "no rhyme or reason!" But the pulp publisher may have had several reasons for putting these two unrelated texts together in the same book: to bulk up its size and therefore its price and (although improbable) to try

to capture readers who were not only seeking cures for physical ailments and occult curses, but also liked to perform card tricks.

Pulp publishers hardly seemed to care if texts from different books were joined together in the same pulp under a single title. Sequential page numbers did not matter either, and type faces did not need to match. After countless reprintings, broken type became common; sometimes entire lines of old type could disappear. From a typographical standpoint, the interiors of many pulp publications were disasters.

"PUBLISHED FOR THE TRADE"

Every pulp edition of *Pow-Wows* that my family's company sold had the notice "Published for the Trade" printed on the cover. A publisher's name was not given anywhere in the book. We purchased copies from Stein Publishing Company, located on State Street, on the near

south side of Chicago's Loop. Clara Muehlman, who worked for our company from 1918 until her death in 1978, ordered the books from Frieda Stein Fenster, daughter of Max Stein, who founded his company in 1888.

On one occasion in the 1960s or '70s Clara placed an order for *Pow-Wows* and was told by Frieda that there were none in stock but she would have more printed within a few weeks. By the time new copies were ready, we had a tray full of orders for the books. Clara asked me to drive to Chicago to pick them up, saving delivery time and charges. I have no clear remembrance of that day I visited Stein Publishing Company, but a few impressions of my experience still remain. I felt as if I were stepping back in time as I entered the cluttered, street-front store of the five-story Stein building. Pulps, souvenirs, and novelties filled display stands and glass-fronted

tail which so disabled it that it no longer retained the power of doing mischief. It was easily dispatched and found to measure sixty-two feet and some inches in length. A large python was placed on board a ship at Faversham for London. During the passage a large goat was placed in his cage. He viewed it for a few moments, felt it with his tongue, then, withdrawing his head, he darted at a course worthy of a disappointed hunter. The monster on his side, recoiled with more deadly horns. The serpent retreated, to return to the combat with the goat by certainty. He seized the goat by the leg, pulled it down and twisting it self with rapidity round round throwing his principal weight round the neck. The goat was so overpowered that he could not even struggle for escape. For some minutes after his victim was dead the serpent did not change his posture. At length he gradually slackened his grasp, he prepared to swallow the lifeless body. Feeling it about with his mouth he began to draw the head into his throat, but the horns, which were four inches in length, rendered the going of the head a difficult task. In about two hours the whole of the body had disappeared. During the continuance of this extraordinary exertion the appearance of the serpent was hideous. He seemed to be suffering strangulation; his cheeks looking as if they were bursting; and the horns appeared ready to protrude through the monster's scales. After the python had accomplished his task he measured double his ordinary size, and remained in a torpid state for several days.

The Rev. Lansdown Guilding thus records the capability of the Boa to cross the seas—a notable specimen of the boa constrictor was lately found round the trunk of a large round cedar tree, which had probably been washed out of the bank by the floods of some great South American river while its huge folds hung on the branches as it waited for its prey. The monster was fortunately destroyed after killing a few sheep, and his skeleton now hangs before me in my study, putting me in mind how much reason I might have had to fear in my future rambles through St. Vincent had this formidable creature been a pregnant female, and escaped to a safe retreat.

These serpents abound in Brazil, particularly in the wooded margins of

lakes, where they attain the enormous length of forty feet. Mr. Gervillier, who visited that country, says the largest I ever saw was at this place, but it was not alive at this time. The favorite riding horse of the Laxoira, which had been put to pasture, not far from the house, was missing, although strict search was made for it. It could not be found shortly after this one of his servants in going through a wood by the side

THRILLING STORIES ABOUT SNAKES



of a small river, saw an enormous boa suspended in the fork of a tree which hung over the water; it was dead, but had evidently been floated down by a recent flood and being in an inert state, it had not been able to extricate itself from the fork before the waters fell. It was dragged out to the open country by two horses and was found to measure thirty-seven feet in length. On opening it, the bones of a horse, in somewhat broken condition, and the flesh in a

half-digested state, were found within it, the bones of the head being unswollen state of my feet had swollen; from these circumstances we concluded that the boa had devoured the horse entire. I have often seen my left leg and instantly jumping into a large Indian rubber shoe, which I swallower a frog larger than my thick every step I was leaving one of my shoes in the mud. I hastened in the direction of the sound, Count Oriolla, the boat, ran to the spot where he had out its sides to nearly twice. It was wounded the serpent and caught it with the smaller kinds, is to be wondered at that one, thirty-seven feet long should be able to swallow a horse.

The captain of a fort in South America many years ago sent a soldier full length upon the creature, as it and an Indian out to kill game. The Indian, who was in advance, being tired, went to rest upon the trunk of a fallen tree, as he supposed; but when he sat down the enormous monster began to move; and the poor fellow discovered that it was a boa, and dropped down in agony. The soldier came up, shot it dead, and then went ward and entwine his bold pursuer in him dead also, having been killed of mark, the only one who was armed the fort and told his story, the boat moment, climbing over the trunk of a tree he faced the enemy, which Prince Adelbert in his "Book of the Travels," gives a thrilling description of an attack on a box containing a shot through the head, which laid to which he witnessed. He says: My companions described it apparently piece of mud of the river, which gleamed in the sun's rays like a coil of silver; it was a serpent basking in the sun. We rowed towards the spot moments after the shot which distance of thirty to forty paces; he of the head, the serpent seemed to rouse the creature; our boat to set Mr. Therman's gun. All seemed to rouse the creature; our boat grounded almost at the same time this was the work of a few moments, a little where I had hardly left the boat more than the serpent lay, but some interven- two or three minutes, when I stood the river followed by most of the up in an unshapen mass at its roots; Counts Oriolla and Bismark I could scarcely wait to hear what were overboard in a minute, but as had passed, but seized a heavy pole the real depth of the water seemed from one of the men who gathered to be very problematical. I leaped round, to have a thrust at it crew- quickly on to a withered branch of an tree's head. Raising itself up, it enormous prostrate tree which served seemed to summon its last strength as a bridge to shore. Although I had but it vainly strove to reach us on a little hope of coming up with the tree. I stood rapt, armed with serpent I advanced as fast as I could a cutlass to thrust into its jaws, along the slippery trunk—a thing by while the Count stirred up the ser- no means easy, on account of my pent, provoking it to fight; the crea-

Spread from Thrilling Stories About Snakes, another pulp issued by "Stein Publishing House, 519 South State St., Chicago"

counters. The wooden floor probably creaked. Frieda was friendly and I followed her into the back rooms—possibly up a flight of stairs to another floor. She chatted about her friendship with Clara as I glanced around at printing presses and cartons of books, many covered with dust and looking as if they had been there since her father's time.

When Frieda was 77 years old, she was strangled by a robber and left dead in one of the back rooms we had visited. By then, 1984, she had become one of the last remaining publishers of pulps.

In 1966, on that same block on State Street, another era was ending for another kind of business—burlesque. One day that summer I was showing my college roommate, visiting from Iowa, the sights of the city. It was a hot, sunny afternoon, although I won't pretend that we entered the burlesque house to cool down. We were merely curious. Neither of us had ever seen

a burlesque show and we had no idea that the industry was in the last sad days of its existence. We paid our admission and entered a theatre that was dark and mostly empty. The strippers appearing on stage looked to be in their forties or fifties; the comedians even older. Music for their acts was provided by a record player. A stripper would walk on stage carrying a record, place it on the player, and begin.

My roommate and I were soon bored and waiting for an opportunity to leave. At the intermission we saw our chance just as a man was coming down the center aisle carrying an armful of books and holding one in the air.

"Only a dollar, my friends! True stories of young women kidnapped into white slavery! An exposé you will never forget! One dollar!"

My friend and I must have thought that if we couldn't see sexy young women on stage, at least we could read about them for only a dollar. I paid the man.

Leaving the theater and stepping into the light of day, I immediately realized I had been fooled. I was holding a classic pulp. Printed decades before, the paper yellowed, the vintage text not racy, the book had been published by Max Stein, a few doors away from the theatre, and was probably for sale by Frieda for fifty cents.

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NOTES

¹ In memory of Jay Marshall, ardent collector of pulps.

² In 1991 I compiled and issued a descriptive checklist of various editions of this book over a 50-year period. Only a few variant editions have since turned up, adding to the number I had managed to locate. Thanks to Hayward Blake's efforts, The Caxton Club acquired copies of this checklist and gave them to members attending the 1991 Christmas Revels.

Rupert L. Wenzel: Caxtonian, Entomologist, Book Lover

By Peggy Sullivan

Rupert Wenzel died at his home in Oak Park, Illinois, on July 7. The first Caxtonian who emailed me to tell me of his death said, "I knew he was world-famous for his study of bugs, but I didn't know he was a leader in civil rights!" or words to that effect. As I read more about Rupert and talked with people about him, I learned that there were more surprises in store. I had known him only for the last decade or so of my own membership in the Caxton Club. Rupert joined the Club in 1967. According to The Caxton Club Directory 2006, only twelve of our resident members hold longer memberships. I had known him as a quiet but friendly person who came less frequently to Caxton Club events and looked somewhat more frail in recent years, but I had much to learn as I prepared to write about him.

Rupert may not have been a man of paradoxes, but he was surely a man with diverse interests and enthusiasms. An entomologist who specialized in the study of histerid beetles and bat flies, he knew a lot about diversity because these animals provide critical and useful information about how organisms adapt to their environments. His enthusiasm as a Waller High School student led him to volunteer at the Field Museum of Natural History, where he first earned a salary in 1940, became curator of insects in 1950 and chair of the zoology department from 1970 to 1977. For many years, he was editorial advisor to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on entomology. It was enthusiasm that kept him doing research at the Field until the last months of his life.

Education was important in Rupert's family. He was born in Owen, Wisconsin, where his father was a lumber engineer. He might have spent his childhood moving among various lumber camps, but his mother brought him and a brother and sister to Chicago so they would have a better opportunity to attend good schools. (And isn't that a refreshing note in 2006!) After Waller High School, Rupert went to Central YMCA College, graduating in 1938, the same year he married, a marriage



that lasted till his wife's death in 1978. His educational plans were on hold, like those of many others, during World War II, but in 1962, he earned his Ph. D. from the University of Chicago.

When he served in the U. S. Army Medical Corps in World War II, Rupert led a segregated black medical sanitary company in Maryland. It may be that his experience there led to his becoming a steadfast proponent of an open housing ordinance for Oak Park, where he served as a village trustee in the 1960s. Hostilities were strong; death threats were made, but Rupert and others who shared his view prevailed and made Oak Park exceptional among many suburbs during the period of "white flight" from the cities. There, too, he was on the side of diversity. A decade later, he argued successfully that Oak Park should diversify the trees growing in the village to save them from the diseases that could wipe out all trees of a single species. He combined his scientific knowledge with his concern for the community.

Rupert's home in Oak Park has been described as "a broken down five-bedroom Victorian" that he and his wife purchased after World War II, and where he did much of the rehabbing himself. There, they raised three children: sons Rupert Leon, Jr., and Stephen Charles, and daughter Judith Andersen. Judith reminisced recently that when she was in kindergarten, she had come home to tell her parents that, the next

day, the assignment was to tell the others in the class what she wanted to be, and she wanted to be a nurse. "A nurse?" Rupert repeated. "Why not a doctor?" At that time, even dedicated feminists might have missed that cue, but Rupert got it, and his daughter became a physician in Maine.

Bruce Patterson, Rupert's colleague at the Field, was quoted also about Rupert. "An amazingly broad-thinking guy" was his description. An adult convert to Roman Catholicism, Rupert believed there was no conflict between a belief in evolution and a belief in religion. That thinking may have fostered some of Rupert's enthusiasm for books. The Field library has a collection of specimens in his area of specialization and a collection of materials in its library described as "among the broadest and deepest of their kind in the world." Rupert's own collection also reflected his interests.

Barbara Ballinger, a former Caxtonian, was a close friend of Rupert's in recent years, as was Brother Michael Grace, S. J., a Caxtonian who died a few years ago. Barbara remembers Rupert's enthusiasm for opera. When he saw Renee Fleming in *Susanna* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, he told Barbara she should not miss it, and went again with her, relishing the opera a second time and enjoying it with her. Fleming's concert at Dominican University last March 5 was among the last that Rupert attended. Even in his frailty, he was a determined fan.

Several years ago, at a Caxton Club dinner meeting, Barbara gave a program on the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, and she turned to his poetry again when she spoke at Rupert's wake:

... Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary warm; ' world's
wildfire, leave but ash,
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, ' since he
was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, ' patch,
matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

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See NOTES TO WENZEL, page 9

CAXTONIAN FOOTNOTES

Wynken de Worde

After the success of the recent screen version of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, is it not time for Hollywood to rediscover Charlotte Bronte? Our own Suzanne **Smith Pruchnicki** ('85) has continued her personal rediscovery of Charlotte Bronte through her private press, The Bronte Press, of Bourbonnais, Illinois. A previous miniature book by Suzanne is *Charlotte Bronte and Mary Taylor: Early Feminists*. Another is *Mishka and the Magic Picture*, an imaginative account of Mishka the dog. More recently Suzanne printed and illustrated an excerpt from an unpublished Arizona novel by Ida Flood Dodge. That miniature is *The Courtship of Captain Aguilar*. The tale captures the flavor of northern New Spain and the perils of beauty on the Spanish frontier in the early 1800s.

Caxton Club Historian **Frank Piehl** ('85) recently moved from Naperville to Munster, Indiana, to be closer to his daughter and grand-daughters and great-grandchildren. Frank continues to be accompanied in his new apartment by his complete collection of Caxton Club publications, which he finished en route to compiling the Bibliography which is appended to Frank's centennial history of the Club. The Piehl slot as a west suburban Caxtonian will be filled by fellow Caxtonian and Dofobian **Charles Miner**. A former Rockfordian, Charles ('87) and his wife Jean are leaving

Chicago, but not far enough away to qualify for non-Resident status.

Recently deceased civil engineer member **Jim Marshall** ('78) is beyond non-resident status now, but he will be remembered with fondness as one member who frequently indicated his attentiveness to the after-dinner speakers with his snoring. Admit it. Most of us have suffered with 'wynken' moments after a hearty Mid-Day Club meal, an adult beverage or two, and when the lights go down for the slide show, right? To be fair to Jim, I think that since his retirement he had fewer sonorous episodes, possibly due to an afternoon nap.

Jim was remarkably dedicated to the pursuit and identification of Native American mounds. He spent endless hours searching for and surveying Native earthworks, which had been considered unknown in northern Illinois. Jim, however, tracked, trekked, and traced some huge earthworks in the Fox Lake area, and has urged the State of Illinois to extend park-like protection for the hundreds of acres which he identified. Fortunately, a lot of the wooded area he marked is already in one Forest Preserve District or another. Curiously, Jim never exhibited any interest in what might be inside these mounds, sometimes described as burial mounds. I hope his research records and photographs will find a safe haven—perhaps at the Schin-goethe Indian Center at Aurora University, presided over by Prof. **Michael Sawdey** ('95).

Anthony Mourek ('90), until recently President of The Manuscript Society, participated in the June manuscripts & autographs show assembled with the professional assistance of **Dan Weinberg** (05), who helped to entice other specialty dealers to the Professional Autograph Dealers Association 2d Chicago Show, at the Wyndham Hotel.

Teitan Press entrepreneur **Martin P. Starr** ('95) spent part of last summer addressing a religious conference in Tokyo about his own book, *The Unknown God: W. T. Smith and the Thelemites*, the first documentary history of Aleister Crowley's disciples in North America. This summer Martin is occupied helping to coordinate the sale of the Masonic properties catty-corner to the Newberry Library to developers. Will they take it down brick by brick?

Bob Karrow ('88) was the lead Newberry staff member behind their recent acquisition of map items from the Chicago History Museum (until recently the Chicago Historical Society).

"We are so pleased that we were able to work with the Museum to keep these wonderfully rich maps here in Chicago for scholars and map enthusiasts to study and enjoy," said Karrow. To view one of the maps from the collection, visit the new acquisitions page on Newberry website at <http://www.newberry.org/collections/NewAcq2005.html>.

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NOTES TO WENZEL, from page 8

Quotations in this article are from: "Former Oak Park Trustee, Wenzel, Dies," Oak Leaves, July 19, 2006, by Gary Wisby; "Rupert L. Wenzel, 1915-2006," Chicago Tribune, July 13, 2006, by William Mullen; "That Nature Is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection," from the Bartleby.com website. The mid-line apostrophes are part of Hopkins's marking for the sprung rhythm of his poetry. I am also grateful to Barbara Ballinger for our conversations on July 20 and 21, 2006.

GRETA BEVER, from page 11

hand-colored plates it is probably the most valuable one that I have. I dithered for weeks whether or not to buy it."

I asked what else she collected. "Nothing rare, a fair amount of fiction written in England during World War II. No individual copies of value, just of interest to me."

The writers she likes best have a sense of humor, such as Richard Russo, author of novels *Empire Falls*, *The Straight Man* and *Nobody's Fool*, to name a few.

If stranded on a desert island, Bever would want to have (she quipped) *Raft*

Building for Dummies.

Greta wants to tell everyone to look for the "One Book, Many Interpretations" exhibit not to be missed in October. In celebration of the fifth anniversary of One Book, One Chicago, book artists across the United States have picked which book inspires them and are doing personal renditions. "We'll have a very visual exhibit that celebrates the five years of the program, the titles that were selected and book arts in general."

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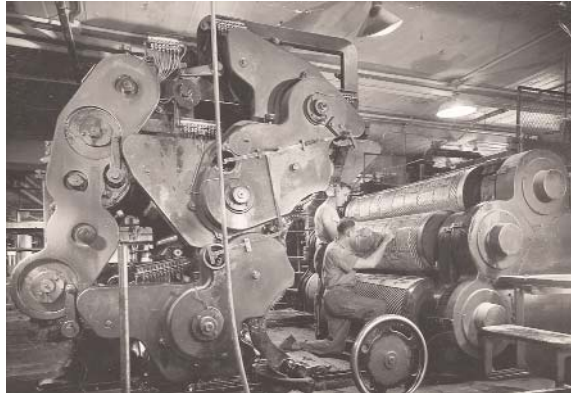
Book and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by John Blew

"Printing for the Modern Age: Commerce, Craft, and Culture in the R.R. Donnelley Archive" (historical materials from the R.R. Donnelley corporate archive presented as a gift to the University of Chicago in 2005) at the Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago 773-702-8705 (from 15 September 2006 through 12 February 2007)

"Islamic Astronomy" (books, manuscripts, instruments and other objects from the Adler's collection reflecting the significant accomplishments of medieval Muslim scientists) at the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, 1300 South Lake Shore Drive (the Museum Campus), Chicago 312-322-0300 (closes 26 November 2006)

An exhibition of materials from the Library's collections and other sources on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the famous 1881 gunfight at the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona (organized by the Chicago Corral of the Westerners International) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago 312-255-3700 (from 7 September 2006 to 7 October 2006)



Printing for the Modern Age at the U. of Chicago

"The Aztecs and the Making of Colonial Mexico" (illustrated books, maps, and manuscripts from the Library's Edward E. Ayer Americana collection documenting the significant contributions made by the Colonial Aztecs (Nahua) to the culture and heritage of Colonial Mexico during a 300-year period after the Spanish conquest) at the Newberry Library, 60 West Walton Street, Chicago 312-255-3700 (from 28 September 2006 to 13 January 2007)

"One Book, Many Interpretations" (to commemorate the five-year anniversary of One Book, One Chicago, an exhibition of bindings done by five binders and book artists from around the world that interpret the One Book, One Chicago selections) in the Special Collections Exhibit Hall, 9th Floor, Harold Washington Library Center of the Chicago Public Library, 400 S. State Street, Chicago 312-747-4300 (from 30 September 2006 to 15 April 2007)

"Solon S. Beman Architecture in Illinois" (an exhibition of contemporary and archival photographs and other materials of some of the more than 1000 buildings designed by Beman, many of which, including Pullman, are located in northern Illinois) at the Pullman State Historic Site, Hotel Florence, 11111 S. Forrestville Avenue, Chicago 773-660-2341 (closes 31 December 2006)

"Autumn Bright, Winter's Delight" (an exhibition of books and images from the Library's collection about woodland plants found at the Arboretum) at the Sterling Morton Library, The Morton Arboretum, 4100 Illinois Route 53, Lisle, IL 630-968-0074 (closes 31 January 2007)

Members who have information about current or forthcoming exhibitions that might be of interest to Caxtonians, please call or e-mail John Blew (312-807-4317, e-mail: jblew@bellboyd.com).

Club Notes

Fiscal Year Membership Report

We enjoy our meetings of the Caxton Club each year for the opportunities they provide to meet others who share our interests in the book arts, collecting, publishing, or reading. Each time a new guest or member joins us for a meal, this conversational circle expands. Our thanks to all who contributed to this expansion during 2005-2006, especially those who nominated or seconded one or more of our twenty-six new members in 2005-2006. We invite you to get out your magnifying glass and examine the list at right.

—Bill Mullikan and Skip Landt

NEW MEMBER

Greta Bever
Matthew Bird
Ken Daley
Brooks Davis
Brian Barnett Duff
Samuel Ellenport
Tony Farthing
Tom Fitzpatrick
Michael Godow
Gabriel Gomez
William A. Gordon
Sylvia Mendoza Hecimovich
Lauren Holhut
John Neal Hoover
Valerie Hotchkiss
Sheri Jones
Sally Sexton Kalmbach
Ann Bates Kittle
Richard Korz
Richard Lamm
Wendy Posner
Linda Naru
William J. O. Roberts
David Spadafora
Eliot Hungerford Stanley
Daniel Weinberg, reinstated

NOMINATOR

Constance J. Gordon
Tom Swanstrom
Ed Quattrocchi
Tom Swanstrom
Ed Quattrocchi
Paul Ruxin
Wendy Cowles Husser
John Allen
Paul Gehl
Bob McCamant
R. Eden Martin
Robert Williams
Bob Karrow
Kay Kramer
R. Eden Martin
Tom Swanstrom
Robert Herbst
Dorothy Sinson
Tom Swanstrom
Anthony Mourek
Anthony Batko
Caryl Sidenberg
Kim Coventry
Bob Karrow
Hayward Blake

SECONDER

John Chalmers
John Notz
Bill Drendel
Muriel Underwood
Bill Mulliken
Paul Gehl
Harry L. Shen
Skip Landt
Rob Carlson
Kim Coventry
Bill Mulliken
Bill Drendel
Karen Skubish
Peter Gleich
Paul Ruxin
Bob Brooks
Bill Locke
Michael Thompson
John Notz
Peter Stanlis
Alice Schreyer
Adele Hast
Eugene Hotchkiss
Roger Baskes
Bob Cotner

Caxtonians Collect: Greta Bever

Twenty-second in a series of interviews with members.

Interviewed by
Kathryn R. J. Tutkus

As part of her job as the Assistant Commissioner for Central Library Services at the Chicago Public Library's Harold Washington Library Center, Greta Bever spent the last three years supervising the Special Collections and Preservation Division. She says, "I hadn't taken any courses on rare books because I was a children's librarian. That's what my back-



ground was. Most of the things I know I've learned from Glenn Humphreys or from the materials he has suggested I read. But a few years ago I started collecting books printed and published by one of my ancestors. So I am also starting a collection of my own."

Bever came to several meetings before joining the Club in April. She was nominated by Connie Gordon, also of the Library, and seconded by former Special Collections director John Chalmers. Peggy Sullivan first invited Bever as her guest. "It was at the Newberry Library, a presentation on Sherlock Holmes."

Bever's own collecting began after she did some genealogy research at her parents' request in 2000. In researching her mother's side of the family, "I came across this guy, a printer/publisher in Boston, Massachusetts and Portland, Maine. Initially I just had his name, Thomas B. Wait, his birth and his death dates, and who he married. The more I searched, the more I discovered he had printed and published."

He had three sons. The company became Thomas B. Wait and Sons. All three sons ended up going west to Illinois. One of the sons who is in the more direct line to Bever was William S. Wait, "a name in politics in Illinois." Another son, Silas Wait, was "my relative who had an apple orchard in Bond County and was a judge. They all were in law and publishing." Bever has a few things

that Silas Wait published but she says, "he was not as prolific as his father."

"Thomas B. Wait did his apprenticeship in Boston and then moved to Portland, Maine, where he established the first newspaper in Maine in 1780. He also printed pamphlets and gradually began to print books and opened a book and stationery shop. There was a fire in his print shop in 1807. He was pretty much wiped out. He took subscriptions to William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, the standard book on law at that time. He gave buyers the first volume as security and promised the other three after they were printed. He went back to Boston and set up shop and hired a foreman and in filling subscriptions reestablished himself."

Bever has an early volume with scorch marks on the side. "That's one of my favorites! I don't know if it's from that fire or some other fire., But I like to think it was that fire."

"I have a lot of collecting to do and a lot of it I am not going to get." Bever has a box of two hundred file cards with titles arranged in chronological order she hopes to collect. So far she has purchased thirty. "He published everything from medical law to political textbooks, children's books, religion—he was all over the place. He was the first publisher of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the first publisher of the

proceedings of Congress, known unofficially as the Wait State Papers."

"At the Harold Washington Library Center's Special Collections and Preservation Division we have a couple of Thomas B. Wait's things. The Maine state hold was one of his big things. He was also a proponent of the Bill of Rights. He's described in a number of places as being anti-federalist, pro-constitution. He published a range on religion though he was a Unitarian."

"I have one book, an association copy, that he's signed and dedicated to someone else. It's a copy you know he's held in his hand."

Bever's roommate doesn't know about half of her collection. "I am assuming when I have all of this collected, my nieces and nephews will get it when I am gone. Putting it together, getting as many books of his as I can together in one place..."

Bever doesn't read them. "If I thought they were things that he published because he had an interest in them I would be more likely to, but he seems as if he was a pretty commercial publisher. But there's one that's an early pharmaceutical book. I got a copy of that for my mother, a recently retired LPN. The family was laughing at it. It told how to make opium from poppies. But even it's not something you would sit down and read."

"Most everything I've purchased I have found on line, but I did see one when I was in Portland, Maine. There was a rare and used book shop and I went in and I saw a binding that looked possible to me and I pulled it out off the shelf and, sure enough, it was a Thomas Wait published in Portland, sitting in a bookstore in Portland and I was in Portland on vacation."

"I also have a medical book, *Anatomical Description of the Arteries of the Human Body* by Albert von Haller. Since it has

See GRETA BEVER, page 9

CAXTONIAN

Bookmarks...

Luncheon Program

September 8, 2006

James Grossman

“Settle That Dispute!

The Encyclopedia of Chicago”

As project manager and co-editor of this well-received book (10-years-in-the-making, 1,117 pages, 1 million words), Jim will include in his talk details about the creation of the *Encyclopedia*, challenges along the way, astounding facts he learned about Chicago and reader reaction and his response to it.

Jim is also Vice President for Research and Education at the Newberry, a professor at the University of Chicago and author of several books. He was one of 7 recipients of *Chicago* magazine’s 2005 “Chicagoan of the Year Award.”

Come and hear about an innovative and monumental work that has “blown the dust from urban history.” A not-to-miss afternoon.

Beyond September...

OCTOBER LUNCHEON

Friday, October 13. Speaker to be announced.

OCTOBER DINNER

Wednesday, October 18, Gordon Turnbull, General Editor of The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell, will address us on “Why James Boswell Never Met Robbie Burns.” He will offer clues to this intriguing 200-year-old puzzle.

Dinner Program

September 20, 2006

Alistair Black

“The History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland”

Our speaker in September is Alistair Black of the University of Leeds, England. Dr. Black is the principal editor of the *Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* and the author of many important studies on English libraries in the 19th century. The monumental three-volume history from the Cambridge University Press is due to be published in the latter half of this year. Dr. Black will be visiting at the University of Illinois in Urbana during the fall, and will come to Chicago to speak to us about the subject he knows best, the history of libraries in Britain and Ireland.

NOVEMBER LUNCHEON

Friday, October 10. Speaker to be announced.

NOVEMBER DINNER

Joseph Parisi will speak to us on “100 Essential Modern Poems, or, What to Take to a Desert Island.” Of the many thousands of poems published in the last century, which are the most meaningful and memorable? He speaks Wednesday, November 15.

Special dinner meeting at the University of Chicago highlights Donnelley exhibit

On Wednesday, November 1, 2006, Caxtonians and their guests are invited to a private viewing of **Printing for the Modern Age: Commerce, Craft, and Culture** in the R.R. Donnelley Archive at the University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center. The exhibition includes materials drawn from the R.R. Donnelley Archive, which was contributed to the University of Chicago in 2005.

5:00-6:00 pm, viewing of exhibition: University of Chicago Libraries, Special Collections Research Center, Regenstein Library, 1100 E. 57th Street, Chicago.

6:15-8:30 pm, dinner (\$45.00 per person): Welcome from Caxtonian Alice Schreyer, Director Special Collections Research Center; remarks by Caxtonian Dan Meyer, Associate Director and University Archivist, Special Collections Research Center; illustrated talk by Caxtonian Kim Coventry, Consultant to R.R. Donnelley and Curator of the Exhibit. Quadrangle Club, 1155 E. 57th Street, Chicago.

Free parking is available after 4:00 pm at the Ellis Avenue Parking Garage on the corner of 55th and Ellis. To make reservations for this special event, call or email the office.

All luncheon and dinner meetings, unless otherwise noted, are held in the Mid-Day Club, 56th floor of Chase Tower, Madison and Clark, Chicago. Luncheon: buffet opens at 11:30; program 12:30-1:30. Dinner meetings: spirits at 5 pm, dinner at 6 pm, lecture at 7:30 pm. For reservations call

312-255-3710 or email 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. Call Steve Masello at 847-905-2247 if you need a ride or can offer one.