

## The Emergence of Robert Frost, America's Poet

A Review

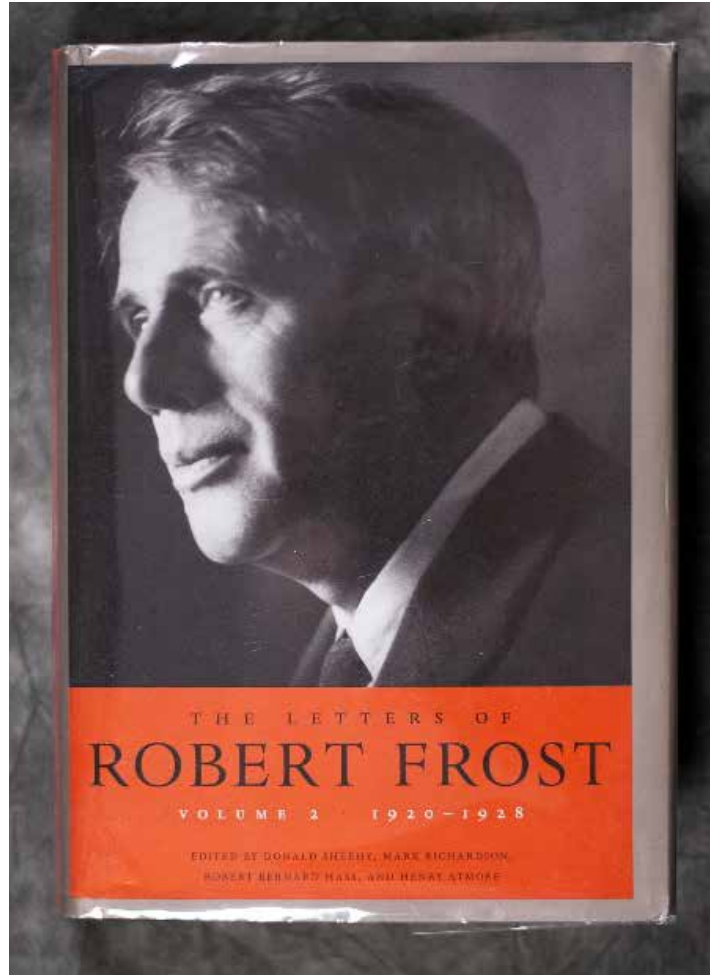
*The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 2 – 1920-1928.* Donald Sheehy, Mark Richardson, Robert Bernard Hass, and Henry Atmore, eds. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016.

Robert Cotner

If you would know the poetry of a poet, read his poetry.  
If you would know the poet, read his letters.

We are indeed fortunate to have in hand the second of four planned volumes of *The Letters of Robert Frost*. In *The Letters of Robert Frost, Volume 2 – 1920-1928* (hereafter, *LRF2*), we encounter the mature poet, firm in his beliefs and at the height of his creative genius. The Robert Frost who emerges in these pages is an intellectual without ostentation, whose mind is grounded in literature and rich western literary traditions, and whose collegial range spans the continent and touches Europe in gentle kindness and subtle humor.

As in *LRF1*, the editors have given us a rich subtext to the letters, in 2,047 footnotes. These notes, integrated by page into the text of the letters themselves, make for a more comprehensive reading and more profound appreciation of the poet and his thoughts. It is appropriate that this volume be dedicated to Frost's granddaughter, Lesley Lee Francis, "A true Frost, a true Frostian, and a true friend." Dr. Francis has kept the poetic and personal traditions of her grandfather alive and true through the annual gathering of what the *New York Times* (2/5/14) called a "tightknit world of Frost scholars," including the editors of this volume, many of the sources for annotations, and this writer. When completed, this letter collection will be a tribute to the constant, authentic nurture of the literary and intellectual inheritance of Robert Frost for all who cherish the spoken language of America in



poem and letter.

*LRF2* is organized into five units: "Book Farmer," "The Guessed at Michigan," "A New Regime at Amherst," "To Michigan Again (for a Lifetime in a Year)," and "Ten Weeks a Year in Amherst, Fourteen Once in Europe." The first letter is dated February 8 (circa 1920), and was written to daughter Lesley during the great blizzard of that winter. Frost claimed there was "very little hope of ever mailing it." He was at home in Franconia, New Hampshire, with the Frost family, all apprehensive, with the "snow actually half way up our windows." He reported to Lesley that "teams of six and eight horses" had brought rescue parties to their home, making certain neighbors were all right. The final letter in

this volume, dated 12/22/28, is to his friend and artistic collaborator, J. J. Lankes, whose woodcut prints appeared in *New Hampshire, West-running Brook*, and other Frost publications. These prints, Frost reported to Lankes, "attach me to you and make me wish for your society."

The central occurrence in the life of Frost between 1920 and 1928 was his appointment as Fellow in Creative Arts at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, at an annual salary of \$5,000. The first such honorary arrangement on an American campus, it became talk of the

nation, often light-hearted for, as one newspaper claimed (Introduction, p. 3), with no teaching required in the fellowship, "He can loaf!"

But he hardly loafed, as letters of this period indicate. Working from this midwestern site, he had a base of operation outside of New England, making travel to Chicago and the west much more convenient. Dr. Marion LeRoy Burton, president of the University of Michigan, and Chase Salmon Osborn, former governor of Michigan and funding philanthropist for the program, wisely determined that Frost needed freedom as a creative soul rather than routine. Together, they initiated one of the most significant enterprises in

See *FROST LETTERS*, page 2



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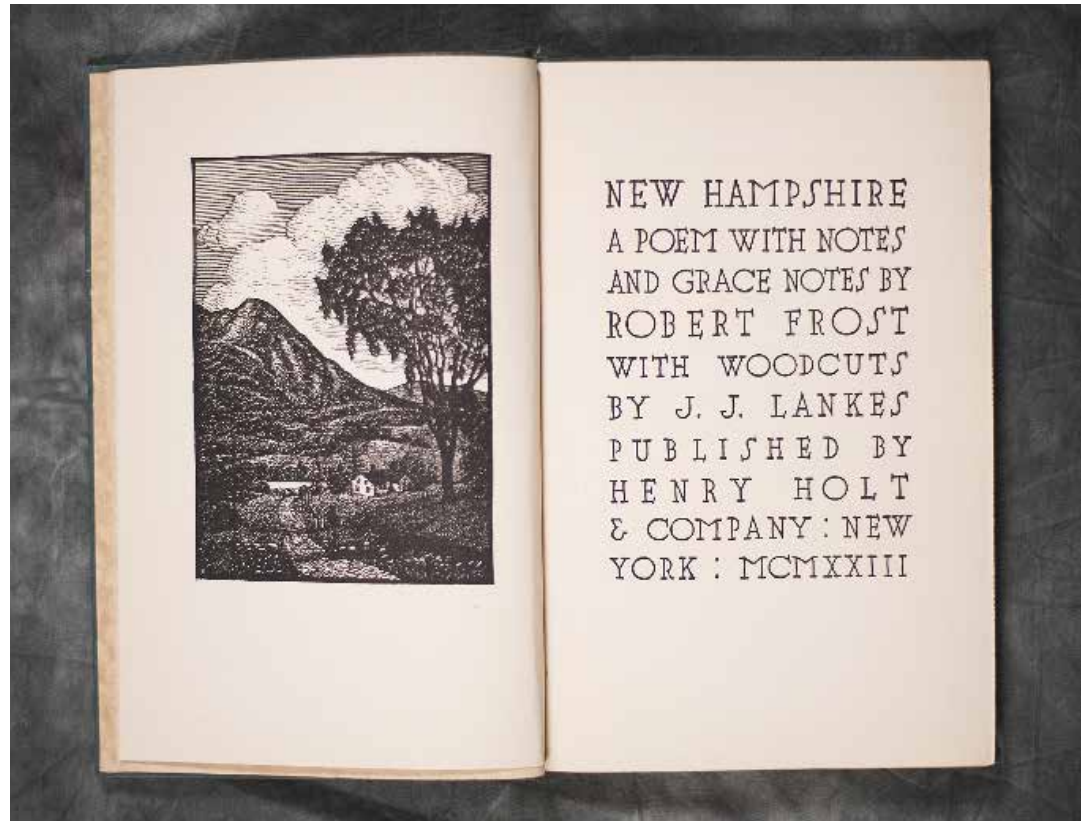
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*J. J. Lankes print opposite title page, New Hampshire, first edition, later printing; signed "To Lawrence Polele/ from/Robert Frost/Newport/Aug 9 56."*

### FROST LETTERS, from page 1

the arts and education ever offered at an American university.

Not only did Frost organize and staff guest artists for programs benefitting the university community, but, with his great gift as a stage presence, he offered programs and guest performances on campus and across the continent. His constant travels during this period kept him on the road from Texas to Maine and all points in between, visiting campuses and literary gatherings, organizing symposia, and serving as inspiration to all in the arts as poets had never before done.

His success was distinct. The notes in a Lincoln MacVeagh letter (9/22/22) offer these assessments of his Michigan work: A letter from the Department of English to President Burton stated,

At the outset many doubts were expressed by members of the Faculty as to the wisdom of an experiment so remote from the conventional trend of educational theory and practice. We venture to assert that these doubts have been completely dissipated, and that no one who has been in a position to observe the situation will deny the benefits accruing to the university are incalculably richer than could reasonably have been expected.

His appointment at Michigan was renewed, and

later he was offered a lifetime appointment, though for family reasons and increasing commitments nationwide he could not accept it. He did remain in contact with many of his Michigan colleagues throughout his life.

The Index to *LRF2* reads like a *Who's Who* in American arts, letters, and publication. Conrad Aiken, William Stanley Braithwaite, Robert Bridges, Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, Van Wyck Brooks, Witter Bynner, Wilbur Cross, J. J. Lankes, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Lincoln MacVeagh, Lewis Mumford, Edward Arlington Robinson, Carl Sandburg, Louis Untermeyer, Carl Van Doren, and George Whicher are but a few of Frost's frequent corresponding associates during these years.

It was in friendships through correspondence that the poet grew in confidence, influence, and stature. What Frost did, in fact, is create what in today's parlance would be called a distinctive "brand" for his unique, much-loved approach to poetry as a binding social force. We could call his brand "Robert Frost – PoetryAmerica." He became a master of the successful use of the brand for the remainder of his life. It elevated him to the inauguration dais of John F. Kennedy and carried him as an international ambassador of goodwill, the fine arts, and the abiding value of poetry to the end of his life. (Oh, to have such a brand in 2017!)

Frost and his family lived dual lives during these





Frost wrote Lankes (12/22/28): "Those are four beautiful pictures you did for the book – the one of the dead-alive tree especially."

years. Much of the academic year was spent on college and university campuses, primarily the University of Michigan during his two-year appointment there. The major part of the remainder of the year was spent in their newly-acquired home called the "Stone House" in South Shaftsbury, Vermont. Frost wrote Lincoln MacVeagh (11/16/20), a younger member of Henry Holt staff, upon whom Frost depended in publication matters, "Part of the roof is off for repairs, the furnace is not yet under us and winter is closing in. But we're here."

He wrote his long-time friend Loring Holmes Dodd of Clark University shortly after returning from Michigan (9/15/22): "I am off for another few days walk now, but I shall surely be back in South Shaftsbury Vermont (where I belong) by the end of next week. So that will be the place to address any letter."

It is noteworthy that two houses in which the Frost family resided during these years, the Pontiac Avenue home in Ann Arbor and the Stone House in South Shaftsbury, have

been preserved as memorials to Frost. Henry Ford moved the Ann Arbor home to the Greenfield Village architectural collection in Dearborn, and the Stone House is now the museum home of Friends of Robert Frost.

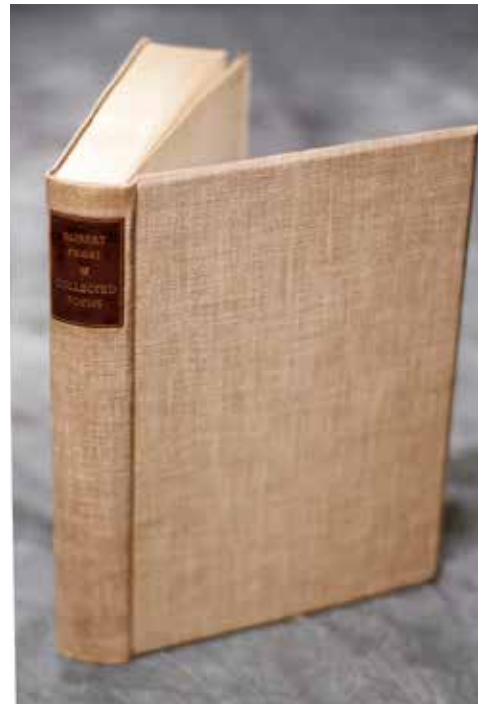
With his poetry in demand and his presence desired, he established high standards for what became in America visiting university appointments for artists of all kinds. He would produce three books during these years and constantly shepherded individual poems and sets of poems in national publications, including the *Yale Review*, *Harpers*, the *Atlantic*, the *New Republic*, and others.

*New Hampshire* stands, 94 years after its publication, as one of the most sought-after items on the collector market. The book represents rare humor, elegant design, and some of the finest lyric poetry ever written in America. The humor of the book is derived from the book's structure, a three-part arrangement of the title poem featuring 18

footnotes referencing 14 longer poems in the following section called "Notes." The final section is composed of 30 shorter poems under the heading "Grace Notes." The book mimicked the recently published book edition of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, to which Eliot had, per an annotation, "Appended . . . copious endnotes drawn up by Eliot . . . to bring it to a length suitable for separate publication" (note 350, p. 310). Frost would be awarded his first Pulitzer Prize for *New Hampshire* (1923).

*New Hampshire* is elegantly printed and features a collection of woodcut prints by Frost's friend, artist J. J. Lankes. Frost wrote Lankes (12/20/24), "My house is one gallery of your black and white imagination."

The title poem was created, he wrote Untermeyer (2/5/23), between 10 am and 12 noon, on July 15, 1922, the date fixed by Lawrance Thompson's biography. Upon finishing "New Hampshire," another poem began forming in his mind, and he sat at the dining room table of the Stone House that morning, looking through the east window across his farm and orchard, and began writing what is, perhaps, the finest lyric poem in English:



First of Frost's *Collected Poems*, 1930.

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

Was he aware of the names of Thoreau and Emerson as he wrote these lines? Did he consciously call upon the iconic episode of Thoreau on Emerson's land at Walden Pond – or was it an unconscious allusion?

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near,  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

Frost scholar Peter Stanlis – long-time Caxtonian, and one of the founding members of the "tightknit world" of contemporary Frost scholars – loved to tell the story of Texas rancher, horseman, and author J. Frank Dobie, who, when asked by a New England professor if horses could ask questions, replied "They ask better questions than college professors!"

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

A recent *New York Times* (6/2/17) piece called Thoreau a "sensualist, responding to physical stimuli." The same could be said of Frost, particularly as it relates to the sense of sound. In these lines, we become aware of his auditory acuity – eliciting sounds few of

See *FROST LETTERS*, page 4

us would hear. He writes to a British critic (11/5/25) "... the most vivid imaginative passages in poetry are ... [of] the ear."

The woods are lovely dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

Dark woods, reminiscent of Dante, become part of the poetic fabric, and we are momentarily a soul of foreboding, tempted to wander forever in perpetual abandonment. But the final three lines provide illumination, guiding traveler – and reader – to immediate and ultimate destinations beyond the moment, and lifting the poem to greatness.

In a letter to Sylvester Baxter (4/7/23), Frost explained and defended his use of the "repetend" in the final line of this poem. And he offers a rare personal insight into his estimation of one of his poems: "Take my word for it you wont [sic] often look on as flawless a piece of work as Stopping by Woods."

In a letter to his dearest, lifelong friend Louis Untermeyer (5/2/23), Frost again offered his personal evaluation of "Stopping by Woods," saying it "is my best bid for remembrance." Untermeyer's wife, Jean Starr Untermeyer, poet and Frost devotee, had written in the June 1923 issue of *The Bookman* one of the earliest and finest appraisals of the poem, for which Frost expressed his appreciation. She had written,

There is so much of awe and beauty implicit in the great major themes – life, death, love, grief – that centuries of usage and the most minor of minor poets cannot quite annihilate their magic. On the other hand, it takes mastery both technical and, for want of a more definitive phrase, let us say spiritual, to be able to take the trivial, the commonplace, the evanescent moment and invest it with poignance and significance. In ["Stopping by Woods"] Robert Frost performs such a feat of genius.

Other splendid poems are printed in *New Hampshire*, including "Star in a Stone-boat," "Fire and Ice," "Two Look at Two," and "To E.T."

Over the span of these letters, Frost published two versions of *West-running Brook* (1928), which gave to the world his remarkable "Spring Pools," "Tree at My Window," "Acquainted with the Night," "West-running Brook," and others. He also published his first *Collected Poems* (1930).

Of the 569 letters published in this collection, which stand out as among the best?

That's a bit like selecting a favorite poem from a poet's lifetime production. But let me suggest three of my favorites from *LRF2*. One of them would be Frost's letter to daughter Lesley (mid-November 1925). The editors use this remarkable letter in the introduction to elucidate circumstances as elementary as educating a child and as contemplative as determining measures for success of such a fulfilled educational enterprise.

The back-story here was shared between Lesley and Frost; the fore-story, extended ten pages by the editors, becomes grand dramatic irony, of which only we readers are granted awareness. The brilliant – and I use that word purposely – discussion of this letter in the Introduction is the pinnacle of editorial enterprise in *LRF2*. The confessional poet admits the limitation of knowing, converses with God regarding the hoped future safety of Frost's grandson Prescott Frost, and stands aghast at "Such brain porridge. Cheap metaphor nowhere near a mark." This letter seems prophetic of Lionel Trilling's observation, "The universe that [Frost] conceives is a terrifying universe." Which he made to the surprise of all and shock of many during Frost's 85th birthday dinner in 1959.

Louis Untermeyer was Frost's kindred spirit in literature, publishing, and the great humor they shared as friends. Jean Starr Untermeyer was integral to the social bond between the two men and their families. When Untermeyer decided, on a quick, Mexican arrangement, to divorce Jean in 1926 and to marry poet Virginia Moore in 1927, Frost was upset and stopped writing Untermeyer, who then divorced Moore in 1928 and remarried Jean that same year.

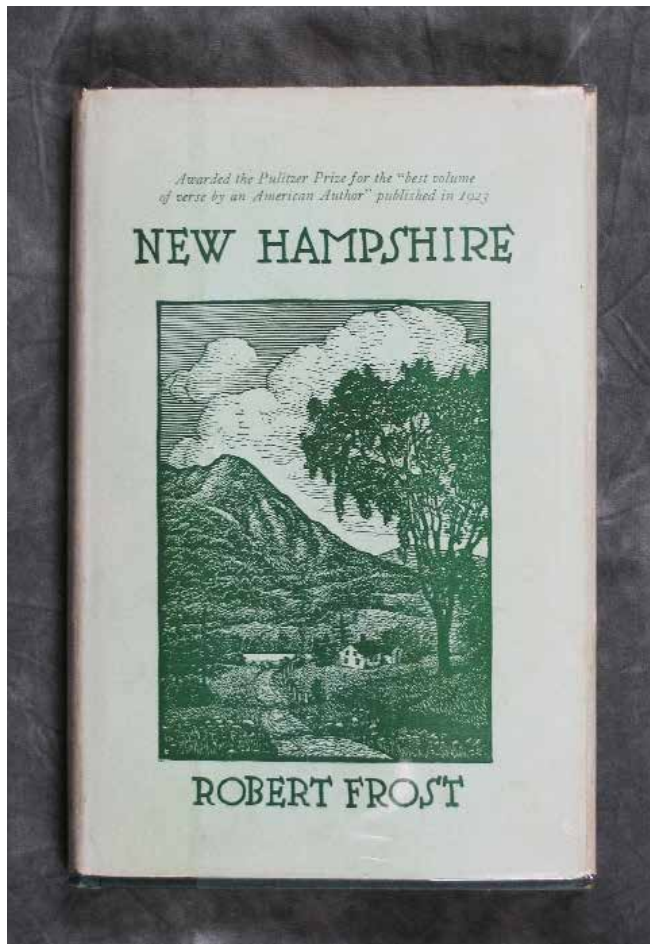
Frost finally wrote Untermeyer (6/21/28) one of the most touching letters a friend could write a friend. "If I haven't written in a long time, I suppose it is because I haven't found anything very easy to say. My spirit barely moves in letter writing anyway under its burden of laziness and disinclination. The least

addition of sorrow or confusion to my load and I stop altogether." In reestablishing communication, Frost confessed his devotion to metaphor: "My ambition has been to have it said of me He made a few connections." And he concluded the letter with his poem, "A Door in the Dark," the final lines of which become Frost's ultimate metaphor for this Untermeyer connection:

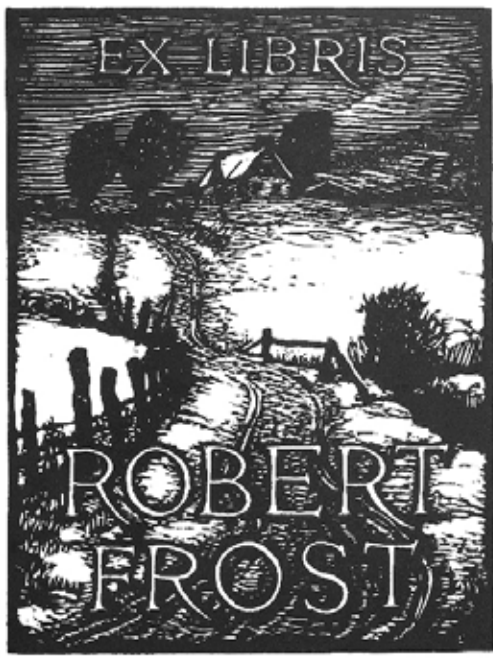
All things still pair in metaphor  
But not with the mates they had before.  
I hardly knew the world any more.

But good as these letters are, each in its respective mode, I choose Frost's letter (12/2/27) to Carl Sandburg, his arch-rival as representative "American" poet, as the best letter in the collection. Perhaps it is the pleasure of remembering that, once upon a time, strong men, diametrically opposed in their views of prosody, contrasting in their performance gifts, and differing in temperament, shared genuine friendship expressed through gifts and letters. Perhaps it is that I have known members of each poet's family, who shared the bounty of the father's abundant humanism with later generations.

Cover of *New Hampshire* featuring J.J. Lankes wood-block art.







Robert Frost Stone House Museum  
South Shalfsbury, Vermont  
2002

A poster created for the opening of the Robert Frost Museum in 2002 from a J.J. Lankes bookplate created for Robert Frost in 1923.

The editors suggest that this letter's origin came when Sandburg sent Frost a recently published copy of his latest book, *The American Songbag*. Frost seemed to have found a voice and a vehicle to deal with the Louis Untermeyer marriage scandal in the pages of this book. Suggesting the American ballad commonly known as "Frankie and Johnnie" be rewritten by Sandburg, around the theme of the Untermeyer episode, still unfolding as he

## Member presentation available online

Caxtonian Caryl Seidenberg describes her work in this video from the University of Illinois at Chicago:



[https://youtu.be/luo\\_DcuE-ss](https://youtu.be/luo_DcuE-ss)

wrote.

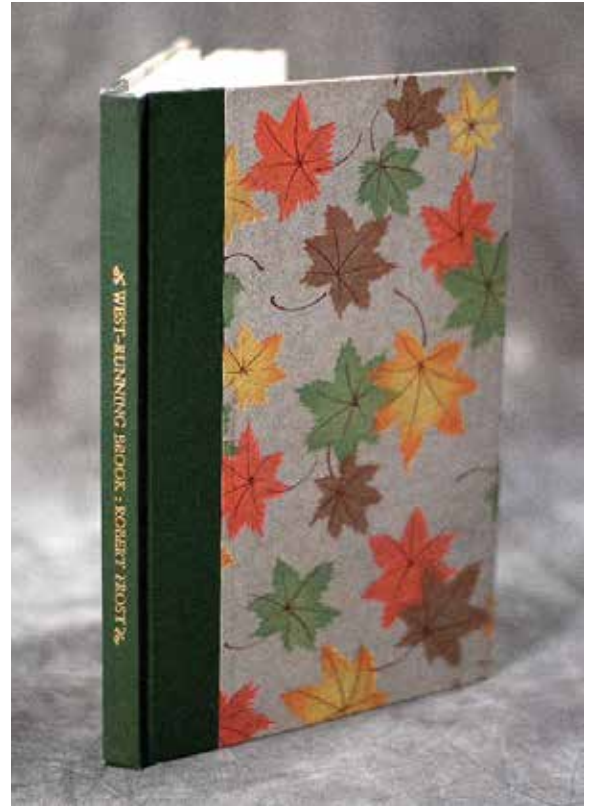
In his letter, Frost mocked himself as "athlete" and singer, who, like the crow in Aesop's fable "The Fox and the Crow," loses the cheese by being duped to sing by the fox ("You were possibly there in the capacity of the fox," Frost chuckled). And he challenged Sandburg, who wrote only in free verse, to create in ballad form a new song memorializing the Untermeyers, "when you get round to writing ballads on your own account, you old ballad-monger." He then gave him sketchy details of the affair from which to create this new ballad.

The letter is gentle, funny, and complete with rich literary allusions of which Frost was master. Our good editors have teased well for

us strands of thought and language, from Aesop, John Milton, Christina Rossetti, and William Shakespeare. One of the most pleasant, kind, and insightful letters to come from Frost's pen, we can imagine Sandburg, upon receiving and reading it, calling to his wife: "Paula, come here and listen to this letter from Rob Frost" – and the two of them having a hearty, noisy laugh together as Sandburg rereads the letter.

In a letter (9/19/27) to Mary Cooley, daughter of Charles Horton Cooley, professor of sociology, University of Michigan and longtime friend, Frost thanked her for sending *Life and the Student: Roadside Notes on Human Nature, Society and Letters* (Alfred Knopf, 1927):

There's nobody I'd rather have a book from than your father. I'm glad it is to be a note book. That sounds like things he has just inevitably thought, let them put together as they will. I'm less and less for systems and system-building in my old age. I'm afraid of too



ABOVE RIGHT: Limited edition (#377) of *West-running Brook*, BELOW: as signed by Robert Frost.

*One thousand copies of West-running Brook have been specially printed and bound, and have been signed by the Author. Of these, nine hundred and eighty copies are for sale.*

*This copy is Number 377*

*Robert Frost*

much structure. Some violence is always done to the wisdom you build a philosophy out of. Give us pieces of eight in a buckskin bag. I take my history in letters and diaries, my philosophy in *pensées* . . .

RFL2 contains eight years of Frost's life story in a buckskin bag, revealing more accurately and more intimately than any biography could ever do. Those who knew him personally will vouch for its authenticity and the veracity of style, language, and wisdom in which his very personal *pensées* have been given us in this volume.

§§

*All images from the author's Frost collection.*

# Book- and manuscript-related exhibitions: a selective list

Compiled by Lisa Pevtzow

(Note: on occasion an exhibit may be delayed or extended; it is always wise to call in advance of a visit.)

**American Writers Museum**, 180 N. Michigan Avenue, second floor,

Chicago, 312-374-8790: **"The Beat Journey: Jack Kerouac's On the Road"** (Kerouac's original scroll manuscript), through October 27.

**Art Institute of Chicago**, 111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, 312-443-3600:

**"Caileen Smith: Human 3.0 Reading List"** (Chicago-based artist presents a new canon of literacy through hand-drawn book covers), through October 29. **"Color Studies"** (use of color in the history of architecture and design from the Bauhaus and Swiss typography to postmodern architecture and contemporary graphic design), through February 25, 2018. **"Revolutsiia! Demonstratsiia! Soviet Art Put to the Test"** (works of art and life-size reconstructions of early Soviet display objects or spaces), October 29 to January 15, 2018.

**Chicago Botanic Garden, Lenhardt Library**, 1000 Lake Cook Road,

Glencoe, 847-835-8202: **"Flora Brasil"** (Brazilian flora and biodiversity), through October 15. **"Curtis: The Longest Running Botanical Magazine,"** October 20 to January 21, 2018.

**Chicago Cultural Center**, 78 E. Washington Street, Chicago, 312-744-6630:

**"Stand Up for Landmarks! Protests, Posters & Pictures"** (images, artifacts, and ephemera relating to saving Chicago landmarks), ongoing.

**Chicago History Museum**, 1601 N. Clark Street, Chicago, 312-266-2077:

**"Chicago Authored"** (works by writers that define the character of Chicago), ongoing.

**Chicago Printmakers Collaborative**, 4912 N. Western Avenue, Chicago, 773-

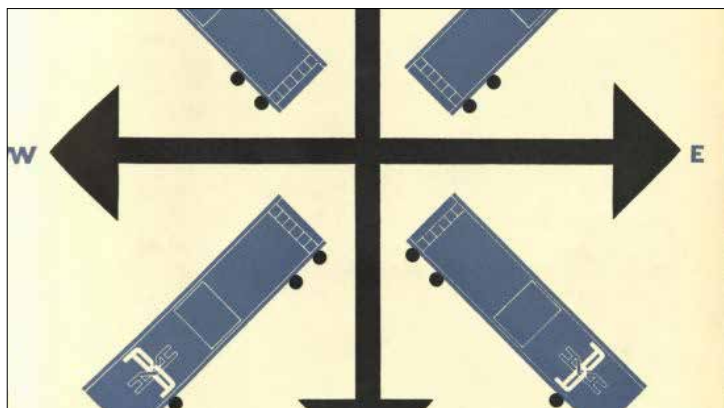
293-2070: **"Thai Printmakers: Work by Artists from Chiangmai Art On Paper Studio,"** through November 4.

**Harold Washington Library Center**, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, 312-747-

4300: **"Art Representing Film: Portrayal of the Chicago Latino Film Festival Throughout the Years,"** through October 29.

**Newberry Library**, 60 W. Walton Street, Chicago, 312-943-9090: **"Religious**

**Change and Print, 1450-1700"** (explores how religion and print challenged authority, upended society, and made the medieval world modern), through December 27.



*Northwestern U Library / On Board with Design*

BOSTON & MAINE RAILROAD, ANNUAL REPORT, 1957  
TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT COLLECTION



*American Writers Museum / The Beat Journey*

ON LOAN FROM THE COLLECTION OF JAMES S. IRSAY

**Northwestern University Block Museum**, 40 Arts Circle Drive,

Evanston, 847-491-4000: **"William Blake and the Age of Aquarius"** (Blake's impact on American artists in the post-World War II period), through March 11, 2018.

**Northwestern University Library**, 1970 Campus Drive, Evanston,

847-491-7658: **"On Board with Design: Passenger Transportation and Graphic Design in the Mid-20th Century,"** ongoing. **"African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean: Culture, Resistance, and Survival"** (aspects of the history, culture and religion of people of African ancestry in the subject areas) Herskovits Library of African Studies, ongoing.

**Pritzker Military Museum and Library**, 104 S. Michigan Avenue,

Chicago, 312-374-9333: **"Hunting Charlie: Finding the Enemy in the Vietnam War"** (explores U.S. opposition to the war through rarely seen original art pieces), ongoing.

**Smart Museum of Art**, University of Chicago, 5550 S. Greenwood

Avenue., Chicago: 773-702-0200: **"Revolution Every Day"** (works of graphic art, film, and video focusing on the experiences of women under and after communism), through January 14, 2018.

**Spudnik Press Cooperative**, 1821 West Hubbard Street, Suite 302,

312-563-0302: **"Run, Run, Run"** (annual member exhibition), October 20 to December 16.

**University of Illinois at Chicago, Richard J. Daley Library**, 801 S.

Morgan. Chicago, 312-996-2742: **"The Food's the Show! Innovation at the Blackhawk Restaurant"** (photographs, artifacts, and ephemera illustrating the business and social history of this long-standing Chicago favorite), through December 31.

**University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library**, 1100 E. 57th

Street, Chicago, 773-702-8705: **"Red Press: Radical Print Culture from St. Petersburg to Chicago"** (1917 Russian revolution through broadsides, pamphlets, periodicals, and posters, with many drawn from the archive of Samuel N. Harper, son of the University of Chicago's founding president, arguably the first American Russianist, and an eyewitness to the revolution), through December 15.

Send your listings to Lisa Pevtzow at [lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lisa.pevtzow@sbcglobal.net)



# Caxtonians Collect: Benjamin Woodring

Interviewed by Robert McCamant

Ben Woodring is a very new recruit to the Club, having been elected by the Council in February of this year, following nomination by Stuart Campbell and seconding by Susan Hanes. He had heard about the Club during the summer of 2014, when he worked as a summer intern at the Jones Day law firm, but did nothing about it. He came back to Chicago in 2017 to spend a year as a federal judicial law clerk, and decided the Caxton Club might be a good addition to his time here. (Next year, he moves on to a federal appellate clerkship in Salt Lake City. He needs to know about nonresident membership.)

Woodring has discovered that the Club has a number of legendary and current members who combine a legal career with various matters literary. He regrets that he did not make the acquaintance of Paul Ruxin (who worked at Jones Day and died in April 2016) during his 2014 intern summer.

Though born in the District of Columbia, he spent most of his childhood in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, where his parents still live. He went away to Brandeis, in Waltham, Massachusetts, for undergraduate work. He was not a single, nor a double, but a triple major there: in English, classics, and economics. To achieve this without slighting any one of them, he did extra coursework every summer. He also studied at Pembroke College in Cambridge (UK) his junior year.

Next stop was picking up a PhD in English from Harvard. His dissertation title, “*Oft Have I Heard of Sanctuary Men: Fictions of Refuge in Early Shakespeare*,” spells out his fascination with the legal ways of early modern times as captured in literature.

His combination of interests makes a certain sort of sense; literature is an ideal source for everyday history. (Or was before we all started carrying movie cameras in our pockets.) The ways in which characters in plays and stories behave are windows into the Elizabethan era. As for economics: it’s intimately tied up with the law. The structures

that a society uses to incentivize and discourage behaviors are described by its laws. Take literature and laws from a period and you begin to have a framework for thinking about what life must have been like.

That framework goes a good distance to



Woodring (right) at Powell's in Portland, with his brother Ryan.

explaining why Woodring chose to attend Yale Law School for his JD after the PhD. “Yale is the law school most open to students with unconventional backgrounds, and that fit me well,” he says. “I’ve always tried to keep one foot in the ivory tower and one in the practical world.” Somehow, while working on his law degree, he managed to find time to edit the footnotes and glosses for all versions of *Hamlet* in the third edition of the *Norton Shakespeare* (2015), just as he had served as research assistant for Stephen Greenblatt’s *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (2011) while working on his English PhD.

All of us are familiar today with the debate over “sanctuary cities,” where a city’s (or embassy’s) policy can be at odds with the surrounding sovereignty. But the sanctuary concept has played an important role down through history, and often in unpredictable ways. Asylum practices were particularly developed in England, where Westminster Abbey (and other such specially zoned sites) played host to a revolving cast of characters

over the centuries: criminals on the run, innocents fearing harm, foreign craftsmen trying to make a living outside of England’s restrictive guild system, and so on. Sanctuary spaces often flourished through contingent compromises between various powers. (One strain of sanctuary had its origins in Judaic tradition, but the concept appears in many other religious and secular contexts throughout history). Woodring’s work explores the ways in which refuge practices in Shakespearean England (then in their twilight) still held prominent place in the cultural imagination.

As Woodring explains in his abstract to an article recently published in the *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities*, “Shakespeare’s use of a sanctuary in *The Comedy of Errors* is not a simple endorsement of Christian mercy. It is rather a deeper reflection on genre and possibility: comedy is predicated on some escape valve from accumulating conflicts and obligations.... The abbey, which jealously defends its sanctuary rights, is a space allowing for recognition and reintegration after long sequences of confusion and chaos.”

Woodring is finishing revising his English PhD dissertation into a publishable book. That and trying to stay fit (he played this summer on the law clerks’ 16-inch softball team) fills most of his free time. Though his budget does not presently permit much collecting of books, he has discovered that a few historic legal and literary items are available in his price range, and has fun going to see what is on offer at places like Sokol Books in London. (When searching for Renaissance-era legal manuscripts, documents involving a major agreement with the crown or city aldermen would obviously not be priced for everyone, but a contract for an individual’s lease of a property – especially in an interesting or contested space – could be far less expensive and still reveal a great deal about how things worked on the ground.)

And occasionally, a piece of literature in a beautiful edition (e.g., the single poet offerings of Humphrey Moseley in the mid-17th century) will tempt him beyond his depth.

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## Bookmarks...

**Luncheon: Friday, October 13, Union League Club  
Guy Fraker on “Lincoln’s Ladder to the Presidency”**

Even the remarkably tall Abraham Lincoln needed a boost to his political career and as a young lawyer he found it traveling Illinois’ Eighth Judicial Circuit. Join Guy Fraker as he takes us on a wonderfully illustrated and captivating journey along the circuit ... where Lincoln developed his reputation and made life-changing contacts. It’s a rare look at Lincoln’s formative years and a treasure trove of wonderful Lincoln stories. Fraker will also reveal just how Lincoln’s Eighth Circuit colleagues played the pivotal role in securing his presidential nomination during the boisterous convention held right here in Chicago.

Fraker has written two books about the Lincoln circuit, including one that – fingers crossed! – will be available and still warm from the presses at our luncheon. It’s a lavishly illustrated *Guide to Lincoln’s Eighth Judicial Circuit* for those who’d like to trace his footsteps (well, his horse’s footsteps) across the region. Fraker is much in demand as a speaker, has appeared on public television, helped curate museum exhibits, and delivered presentations at venues ranging from Harvard’s Boston Club to Gettysburg’s historic battlefield.

*October luncheon: Union League Club, 65 W. Jackson Boulevard. Luncheon buffet (main dining room on six) opens at 11:30 am; program (in a different room, to be announced) 12:30-1:30. Luncheon is \$35. Reservations or cancellations by noon Wednesday for Friday lunch. Call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org.*

### Beyond October...

#### NOVEMBER LUNCHEON

Cue the music, look for the man in the dinner jacket who is winning big at the baccarat table, and shake the martinis. Mike VanBlaricum will speak Nov. 10 on collecting Ian Fleming. He’ll draw on his own collection and also share the secrets of the Ian Fleming Foundation, which Bond might have described with a cryptic pun as “a driving force.”

#### NOVEMBER DINNER

November 15 at the Union League: Russell Maret, type designer, printer, and book artist, explores his work and the typographic art form. This evening will also feature the 2018 Caxton Club Grant awards and an opportunity to connect with past grant winners.

**Dinner: Wednesday, October 18, Newberry Library  
Katherine Hamilton-Smith on “The Teich Postcard Archive”**

In 2016 the Newberry Library received from the Lake County Forest Preserve District the Teich Archive, the world’s largest public collection of picture postcards. Katherine Hamilton-Smith, founding curator of the archive, will provide a look at the Curt Teich Company of Chicago and the development of the collection. Chicago is the birthplace of the American picture postcard, with the first cards printed for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. Hamilton-Smith will explain how the cards have gained an enduring documentary power and historical significance. A special selection of cards from the remarkable archive will be available for viewing. Katherine Hamilton-Smith is a member of the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council. Having managed the growth of the Teich archive for over three decades, she is now the director of public affairs and development for the Lake County Forest Preserve District. This meeting will also pay tribute to past presidents of the Caxton Club.

*October dinner: Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton. The evening will follow this order: 5-5:30, social gathering in Ruggles Hall; 5:30-6:30, viewing of selected cards from the collection; 6:30, program with dinner immediately to follow. Drinks, \$5. Dinner, \$63. Program is free and open to the public. Reservations are required for either the program only or the dinner/program combination. Reservations must be received no later than NOON Monday, October 16. No-shows and dinner cancellations after this deadline will require payment. To reserve call 312-255-3710 or e-mail caxtonclub@newberry.org.*

#### DECEMBER LUNCHEON

December will have us reaching for our warm jackets, so let’s make jackets the theme of an entertaining luncheon as well. Join University of Chicago Press designer Isaac Tobin as he reveals what goes into creating a book jacket that stops you in your tracks and gets you reaching for your wallet. December 8 at the Union League.

#### DECEMBER DINNER

Revels are now set for December 13 at the Newberry Library. There is talk of change this year: perhaps a 10 item live auction and entertainment! No silent auction, one or two raffle items, and all in one room. Watch this space for details as they develop.