



# *Aldus Society Notes*

September, 2009

Volume 9, No. 4

## **Tour of Newly Renovated OSU Library Scheduled for September 10**

Our September tour of the magnificently renovated Thompson Library at OSU is an event that Aldus members have been eagerly awaiting. Last summer, Wes Boomgaarden, coordinator for this landmark project, gave us a personal hard-hat tour of the facility, showing us the exciting, if a bit dusty, work in progress.



Now, after years of planning, and three full years of construction, the work is finished, and the results are truly impressive.

On September 10, Wes will again lead us through the library, this time a sparkling, impressive, truly superb facility that sets the standard for libraries everywhere.

**NOTE: Our starting time is 7 p.m.**, earlier than our usual time. Plan to meet us at the east door (that's the side of the building that has been restored to its original majesty, and faces the Oval). Wes will give us an orientation to the project, then show us the major areas (and we're sure, a few out-of-the-way places that the public does not generally have access to.)

Parking is available in the parking garage on Neil Avenue, and also the Ohio Union garage, which is just a short walk across the Oval. And a gentle reminder: only permit parking is allowed in spaces right next to the library.

See you there!

*More fall programming information on pages 8-9*

## *Aldus Society Meetings*

Regular meetings of the Aldus Society are held at 7:30 PM on the second Thursday of the month at

**The Thurber Center  
91 Jefferson Avenue  
Columbus, Ohio**

☞ Socializing Begins One-Half Hour Before ☞



Visit the Aldus Society web site for up-to-date information about our programs and activities, in-depth articles about many of our speakers, and links to other book-related organizations.

[www.AldusSociety.com](http://www.AldusSociety.com)

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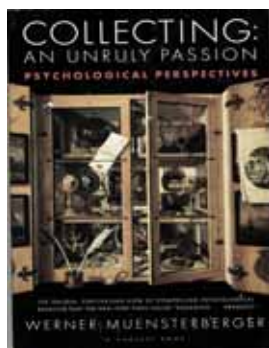
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## A Passion for Collecting (Books)

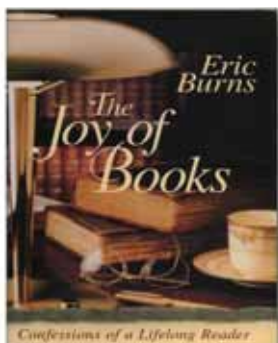
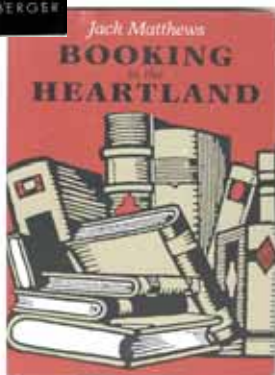
by Genie Hoster

I have a number of books on my shelves at home on the topic of collecting: books on strange and/or wonderful collections; books on *why* we collect; books on specific collecting areas which include mouth-watering photos with their related price guides. And, as you would suspect, I own plenty of books on book collecting.

According to Werner Muensterberger in his book *Collecting: An Unruly Passion*, many folks collect because their collections help them to fill a gaping hole and calm fears or erase insecurities brought about by “unassimilated memories.” Wow, that’s pretty serious! Personally, a lot of the time when I obtain a new book or some other collectible *objet de passion*, I’m rescuing it from a dank, wet basement, an over-heated attic, or Waste Management, with the hope of preserving it for another generation to come.



Muensterberger goes on to say that our collecting passion “is often marked by feelings of exhilaration and states of transport, but is also reflected in moments of tension, sensations of distress or restless nights and harrowing doubts. Often the very process of acquisition is a transparent source of excitement, though at the same time it may prompt stirring of guilt and dis-ease [sic].” Exhilaration and guilt: two major symptoms of that Gentle Madness, indeed!



Thankfully, we have The Aldus Society, where we all understand one another’s passion for books and their related geography. And we all understand one another’s “dis-ease,” and that’s really why most of us joined Aldus. For many of us, Aldus is like Step One of a twelve-step program: we admit we are powerless over our book addiction, and we meet regularly to discuss its various permutations.

And that’s a good enough reason for me to renew my membership for next year. How about you??

## Genie

P.S. Watch for our membership renewal communications, coming in October.

# Travels of a Would-Be Completist

by Don Rice



Yorkshire, an English county between London and Edinburgh, is generously dotted with literary destinations. I have a particular interest in the southwestern area where the Brontës chased their dark shadows across the moors

(finding them all too soon) and where James Herriot (James “Alf” Wight, OBE) became intimately involved with a variety of creatures, human and otherwise.

George Gissing was born in Wakefield, the same city whence Goldsmith’s hapless vicar set forth, and further south, near Sheffield, John Ruskin financed a sort of Luddite Eden. But all this was of only peripheral interest to me when I spent ten days there this past April dogging the footsteps of J. S. Fletcher, an author known today only to used book dealers and readers of classic British mysteries.

Joseph Smith Fletcher (1863-1935) wrote, as near as I can tell, 215 books. There are those who claim 237. They may be right, but I haven’t uncovered any new titles in the past year or two. Of the 215 books, there are 80 mystery novels, 20 collections of short mystery stories, 52 non-mystery novels, 10 collections of non-mystery short stories, 9 historical novels, 11 books of poetry, and 33 non-fiction works. Over the past 30 or so years I have managed to obtain copies of all but four of the 80 mystery novels. I could go online today and buy the missing books, but their asking prices are beyond my \$10 limit. I can wait.

However, even if I bought them I would not be a J. S. Fletcher mystery novel completist. Between title changes (which I think may account for the 22 books I can’t find) and various publishers, there are, by my best calculations, 278 different editions in English and another 82 editions in foreign languages – Danish, Dutch, Estonian, French, German, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, and Spanish – of which I have only 6. Then there are the magazines and newspapers in which the some of the novels were serialized.

A room above The Talbot & Falcon, a friendly local pub, became my home away from home in Wakefield.

Furthermore, in the past few years many of the titles have been reissued as e-books, CDs, and in newly printed editions. I have no idea who is buying them. Until recently I had talked to only one other reader of Fletcher’s books – my son, who learned of them through me. I recently increased the number of known Fletcherites by 300%, and that brings me back to Yorkshire.

You can throw a dart at a map of the U.K., visit wherever the dart lands, and have a pleasant time. My method of dart-throwing involves picking a site based on some association, usually literary. I started doing this my very first trip twenty-three years ago when I spent a delightful day at The Wakes, Gilbert White’s 16th-century home in Hampshire where he wrote *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789); a few days in Dorchester, Dorset, the Casterbridge of Hardy’s Wessex; a couple of days in Penzance, Cornwall, because of the Gilbert and Sullivan pirates; and a day in the Scilly Isles where I nurtured the unfulfilled hope of meeting the Minister of Scilly Walks.

During my most recent trip I went first to Leeds in Yorkshire, a city that figures in some of Fletcher’s novels.

Brits like to complain about their public transportation. Let them spend some time trying to get around the United States and they’d soon change their tune. In the tiny village of Lyminge, Kent, where I was staying with my son and his family, I hopped on a bus one Friday morning that took me to Folkestone. Shortly after arriving there I boarded the 10:01 train to Charing Cross (a name Helene Hanff’s good book has made familiar to most bibliophiles) where first one underground train (Northern Line) and then another (Victoria Line) quickly moved me beneath the city to King’s Cross. After buying a sandwich and something to drink, I climbed aboard the 12:35 to Leeds. The entire trip from Folkestone was done with a single ticket.



After a night in a decent discount hotel (£36 or \$55.54 at the prevailing rate) I decided that Wakefield, 15 minutes away by train, was a better choice. There I found a clean room over a friendly pub for only £20 (\$30.86) including either a full English breakfast or an evening meal. I checked my email in the local library and then wandered around town to get my bearings and locate the bus terminal. Among other places I wanted to visit was the nearby town of Pontefract. “Bus 149,” I had earlier been advised by one of the daytime regulars in the pub. He was seated with three other old-timers in a booth that bore the sign, “The Booth of Knowledge.”



The “Booth of Knowledge”

That night after dinner I returned to the pub for more conversation, but was totally turned off by the binge-drinking patrons (average age 45 I would say) that inhabited the place at night.

I set off Monday morning to find John Goodchild, whose name I’d come across while researching Fletcher on the internet. Goodchild had been featured in an article in the *Yorkshire Post* a few years earlier when he’d curated an exhibition dedicated to Fletcher’s life and work. The exhibition had been at the Gissing Centre in Wakefield, which, in my earlier peregrinations I’d found up an alley and learned it was open only on Saturday afternoons from May to September.

Championing Fletcher is but a minor activity in Goodchild’s life. Most of his time is spent acquiring and cataloging the hundreds of thousands of documents that constitute his personal collection of historical material relating to the geographic area of which Wakefield is at the center – that is, when he’s not lecturing, writing books and articles, and sermonizing at the nearby Unitarian Chapel.

I found him in his quarters beneath the library where, after first ascertaining I was not an amateur genealogist, he graciously admitted me into his crowded facilities. We spent some time discussing Fletcher, but I found myself

equally interested in his archives. There were over 1,000 cartons, hundreds of map tubes, and scores of prints hanging everywhere. Everything, including Goodchild himself, is available free of charge to all. He told me he’d been amassing the collection for nearly 60 years, starting as a boy of fourteen. Since his retirement he has regarded tending the archives his full-time job. And because he disdains computers, the documents are catalogued on 3x5 cards stored in old wooden library catalog drawers.

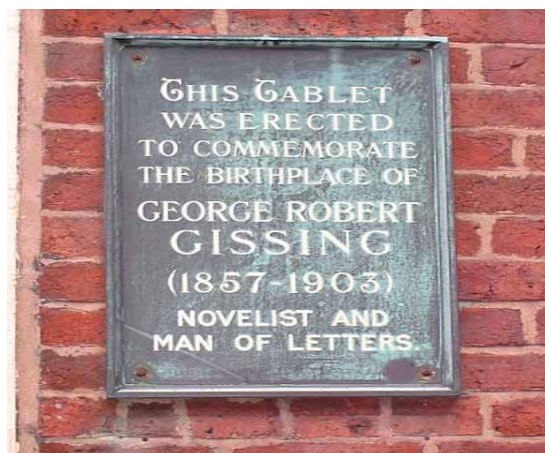
He keeps his Fletcher material at home, but offered to bring a sampling in on Thursday if I would care to return and look it over. I promised to be there.



The next day, Tuesday, I hopped on bus #149 for Pontefract, a medieval market town and formerly the site of a Norman castle known then as Pomfret (which sounds a lot like a French-fried potato) and was referred to by Shakespeare in *Richard III*:

***Pomfret, Pomfret! O thou bloody prison,  
Fatal and ominous to noble peers!  
Within the guilty closure of thy walls  
Richard the second here was hack’d to death;  
And, for more slander to thy dismal seat,  
We give thee up our guiltless blood to drink.***

I walked out to look at what little is left of it. In the 1600s the local citizens petitioned Parliament to have it demolished because they considered it an attractive nuisance, drawing, as it did, various armies to occupy it, which in turn drew opposing armies to conduct sieges, all of which led to the near ruination of the town.



The exhibition was at the Gissing Centre in Wakefield, which was open only on Saturday afternoons from May to September.

In the center of Pontefract, I found a modern library that has what is probably the largest collection of Fletcheriana in the country, which is to say, in the world. I was there to read, and perhaps copy from, *Memories of a Spectator* (Eveleigh Nash, 1917), the nearest Fletcher ever got to writing an autobiography. The title is apt; he wrote more about his surroundings than himself, something he acknowledges in the preface, noting that “I have always looked on at the great game of Life much more than I have taken part in it. However, we all know that it is the spectator who sees most of the game.”

Copies of the book are available online priced from \$87 to \$231, and the fact that I chose to read it in a library rather than buy my own copy demonstrates what a puny excuse for a bibliophile I am compared to Fletcher’s hard-core father who happened to be a Nonconformist minister:

“He was a mighty reader, and had a passion for buying books, which was not a convenient one in a man of modest income. I have heard my mother say that she was never so anxious or fidgety in her life as on the days whereon he received his quarterly stipend, for his first instinct was to depart post-haste for the book-shops, there to remain until the last shilling had been expended in folios, quartos, and octavos.

“It became necessary, in fact, that she should accompany him whithersoever he went if he happened to possess money, for just as some men cannot resist the sign of a tavern, so he, poor man, found it impossible to pass by a shop which had books in the window.”

Bookaholic or not, one has to admire a man like that.

Fletcher admits he had little formal education and that schooling was a painful ordeal. He preferred, he wrote, “to wander about amongst the woods and fields, making acquaintances with the world of birds and animals, than to sit within four walls.” He didn’t learn the alphabet until he was ten, nor to read until an uncle taught him, after which he could read anything, and he pretty much did. His early years could not have foretold his adult life when he sat inside day after day cranking out four or so books a year.

Later in the day I visited the Pontefract museum situated next door to the library. This had been the site of the

town’s first free library and, like so many others, was built over 100 years ago with money given by Andrew Carnegie. It’s a handsome building decorated in the Art Nouveau style of the period and contains a nice assortment of local antiquities and cultural artifacts.

A volunteer at the front desk, whose name I later learned was Pam Robbins, realizing I was a stranger, asked what brought me to Pontefract, and much to my credit I didn’t say the #149 bus.

I told her I was on the trail of J. S. Fletcher, and I can’t imagine anything else I could have said that would have pleased her more. She too was a Fletcher fan and had over 100 of his books. Furthermore, she had two duplicates that she offered to give me if I would return the next day.

Not only that, she wanted to arrange for me to meet Roger Ellis, a local man who is writing a book about Fletcher. She called his house, but he was out; she gave me his number so that I might try later.



The church in Pontefract contains an oak screen dedicated to Fletcher, the sole physical memorial to the man in all of Yorkshire.

I was back in Pontefract the next morning, this time to catch the #409 bus to Darrington, the hamlet in which Fletcher had grown up. I’d prepared myself for the visit by acquiring his book, *Memorials of a Yorkshire Parish: An Historical Sketch of the Parish of Darrington* (John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1917). I’d also reread what I think is one of his more insightful novels, *The Pinfold* (Doubleday, Doran, 1928), which Fletcher noted, was “written around the scenes and folk of the Yorkshire village which I had known so well as a boy.” I also found a map on the internet showing a village

green, a hotel, and a church. Surely there'd be a tea shop in the town center where I could have lunch.

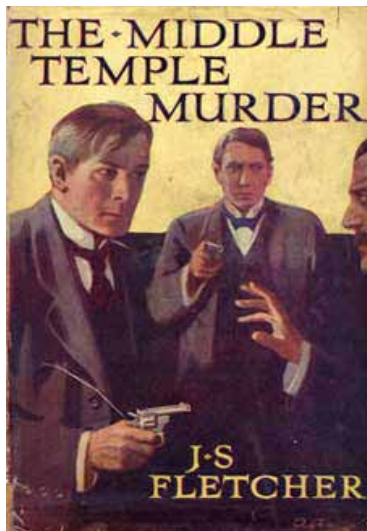
I found the church all right, which I particularly wanted to see because I'd read it contains an oak screen dedicated to Fletcher, the sole physical memorial to the man in all of Yorkshire. As I've experienced more and more in recent years, the church was locked tight. The village green more resembled a football pitch (soccer field) for the elementary school located next to it, and the hotel, some distance down the road, appeared closed. As Gertrude Stein wrote, "There was no there there."

Although disappointed, I wandered around and took a few pictures. I'd brought my copy of *Memorials* with me. It had been illustrated by one of Fletcher's boyhood chums, Percy Rhodes, and I stood in the exact spot Rhodes stood nearly 100 years earlier when he sketched the frontispiece. A tree now intervenes to block some of the view, but there stood the church pretty much as Rhodes and Fletcher had seen it when they were children. With little else to look at I considered walking back to Pontefract, but, feeling hungry, I rode the bus.

After lunch in a particularly nice pub called the Licorice Bush (Pontefract was once the center of a thriving licorice industry established by the Dominicans in the 16th century) I returned to the museum. Pam Robbins was there with the duplicates from her Fletcher collection, and against the odds one of them was a title I didn't own. After a phone call to Roger Ellis's house he soon appeared and we settled into a meeting room with tea and coffee to talk about J. S. Fletcher.

Ellis, a hale and hearty man of 63, which is not surprising for someone who has coached Olympic athletes, retired in 2006 from his day job as superintendent physiotherapist at the Yorkshire Regional Spinal Injuries Centre in Wakefield. This has left him free to pursue other activities including the writing of his book about Fletcher. This was great news for me, particularly when he promised to send me a copy.

The notion of writing a monograph about something or other has always appealed to me, and years ago I settled on Fletcher as the perfect topic. Eventually I realized that such a project was more than I cared to take on. Instead I've made plans to create a J. S. Fletcher blog, and it is this virtual collection that will have to satisfy my completist urge. I want to assemble as comprehensive a compilation



Fletcher was mainly known for his detective novels, for which he built up a reputation both at home and abroad. One audience that became highly favorable, and indeed profitable to Fletcher was in the United States, after President Woodrow Wilson commended his book, *The Middle Temple Murder*.

of data regarding his books as possible – dates, publishers, plot summaries, reviews, a locator guide to short stories – and a bibliography of published material relating to Fletcher and his works. In other words, the blog will contain the information I would have included in the appendices to my monograph. (I'm looking around for a more manageable topic and I think it might be the use of felt bellybands during the Spanish-American War.)

So this is another reason I was delighted to hear that Ellis has nearly completed his book. And after witnessing his enthusiasm as he regaled me with some of the anecdotes he's included, I knew he was the best person to have taken on the job.

I never travel without my Fletcher want list, and I showed it to Ellis. He spotted a couple of titles of which he had duplicate copies and offered to give them to me. One of them was *When Charles the First was King* originally published in three volumes by Richard Bentley in 1892. The copy Ellis gave me was the fourth printing of the popular edition published in October 1927. This was a very generous gift. As I later read in an article Ellis had written in 2007, he regards it as "probably the best known and most loved" of all Fletcher's books, at least in South Yorkshire. Had he not given it to me he would surely have pressed it on some friend or acquaintance in Pontefract. Now it's gone from that area forever.

Pam Robbins had dug out the museum's J. S. Fletcher archival box filled with printed material, and after Ellis dashed home to fetch the two books he was to give me, I went through the box sheet by sheet. I picked out a few items of special interest, including Ellis's article, and was allowed to carry them over to the library to make copies.

All in all, I'd had a pretty nice day and was quite pleased with the way things had gone as I rode the bus back to Wakefield. To top the day off I attended a Wakefield Little Theatre production of *Lark Rise*, based on Flora Thompson's book, which I'd had the pleasure of reading years ago.

Thursday morning found me back at John Goodchild's door beneath the library. True to his word he had a stack of books for me to look over, one of them being a signed limited edition (one of twelve with vellum binding and handmade paper) of Fletcher's *Memorials of a Yorkshire Parish*. I suppose this would be considered a low-spot book by many collectors, but to a member of the Fletcher fraternity this is a special item, and I was glad to have held it in my hands. Goodchild also had a typewritten copy of an 86-page paper on Fletcher written by his son, Valentine. To add to my pleasure, he allowed me to carry it upstairs to the library to copy. I haven't read it yet. I'm saving it, along with *When Charles the First was King*, for just the right moment. I enjoy savoring the future.



Goodchild told me he'd been amassing the collection for nearly 60 years, starting as a boy of fourteen. Since his retirement he has regarded tending the archives his full-time job.

Not being due back in Lyminge till Sunday, I made a couple of day trips, traveling on Friday to the ancient city of York. I first spent an enjoyable morning in the National Railway Museum ("The World's Largest") and later walked through narrow medieval streets where, as Fletcher wrote, "there are houses which seem impelled by a desire to fall upon each other from opposite sides of the way – from their topmost windows one can shake hands

with a neighbour who lives across the street." Because it was Good Friday and services were being held, I escaped paying the usual £6 entrance fee into the majestic York Minster, which Fletcher called "a poem in stone." York is a touristy city where at times one is forced into the street to get around groups of visitors listening to lectures in Japanese, German, and other languages. I'd like to go back one day for a longer stay.

The next day, Saturday, I returned to Leeds for an afternoon in the Royal Armouries Museum where I happened on a live re-enactment of the scene from the 1938 movie, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, when the outlaw first meets Little John and the two fight with quarterstaves on a narrow bridge. Here I should mention that the folks in southern Yorkshire make a good case for Robin Hood's having been a resident of that neck of the woods and not of Sherwood Forest which lies further to the south. (One of my grandfathers told me he played in Sherwood Forest as a boy, so I'm inclined to believe the Nottinghamshire version of the story, but I admit to having doubts.) On Sunday my return to Kent went as smoothly as my journey north ten days earlier. The trip exceeded my expectations. I'd familiarized myself with another patch of the United Kingdom, met some nice people, and actually increased my knowledge and appreciation of J. S. Fletcher.



There isn't a chance in the world that Fletcher could get any of his mysteries newly published today, but in the 1920s and '30s editors, reviewers, and readers couldn't get enough of him. A typical assessment was written by a reviewer for the *Oakland Tribune* in 1922 stating that his "detective stories rank among the best." His popularity in the United States came after Woodrow Wilson publicly lauded *The Middle Temple Murder*, first published here by Knopf in 1919. In 1920, a columnist for the *New York Times* asserted that as a direct result of Wilson's words "it became no disgrace for men of intelligence and standing in the community to admit a liking for just plain murder and mystery. One might even say that the thing became a fashion." The book is still regarded as one of his best mysteries.

What distinguished Fletcher from many of his contemporaries was his choice of detectives. Unlike such quirky types as Hercule Poirot and Lord Peter Wimsey, he created patient gatherers of evidence – bright and

handsome fellows to be sure, but not otherwise distinguishable from you and me. With a couple of exceptions, he usually created totally new crime-solvers with each mystery. (Years later Dick Francis did the same thing, explaining that describing a new character helped fill many pages of a book.)

Fletcher's historical novels and country sketches never achieved the same popularity here as his mysteries, though I believe them to be better written. A mystery novel, after all, requires a degree of contrivance, but Fletcher's keen-eyed observations of Yorkshire farm and village life ring true. I am no fan of dialect writing, yet I find myself actually hearing the spoken words when I read such sentences as, "ye've never made no complaints about my cookin' or nowt—not 'at ye ever had reason to, for ye'll not find a better plain cook nor what I am 'twixt here and t' North Pole, but, of course, there's some folk, 'ud grumple if they dined wi' t' King hisself."

I wish a producer at BBC could be induced to read a few of these short story collections. They could be shaped into a series comparable to *The Irish RM* based on the 1899 and 1908 novels by Edith Somerville and Martin Ross (Violet Martin). A reviewer for the *New York Times* in 1895 called Fletcher's stories "simple and unpretentious" but with the "quality of good literature" and "no hint of staleness." For me, those observations still apply.

Of a totally different class are Fletcher's non-fiction works. He was taken seriously enough as a historian to have been made a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1921, and wrote many books both descriptive and historical about South Yorkshire. These are somewhat rare in the States. About his poetry I'll say little, not being one who fully understands and appreciates that mode of writing, though I'm pleased to own one of the fifty copies published of his collection, *Verses Written in Early Youth* (privately printed, 1931).

J. S. Fletcher was not, as some have fancied him – and perhaps he sometimes fancied himself – the "Yorkshire Hardy," but I and many others apparently agree with John Goodchild when he said that Fletcher "knew how to tell a cracking good tale."

And that's good enough for me.



## World-class Cartographic Holdings Featured at November 12 Program

Dr. Robert Karrow, Jr., will be our guest speaker at our November program. Karrow is Curator of Special Collections and Curator of Maps at the Newberry Library in Chicago



*Partie Occidentale de la Nouvelle France ou Canada (1745) Novacco 4F 68; one of the many fascinating holdings in the Newberry collection.*

From its beginning in 1887, maps and atlases have been a part of the collections of the Newberry Library, but its current reputation as a premier research library in the history of cartography can be directly traced to a handful of collectors, librarians, and curators who built and nourished it. Among them are collectors Edward E. Ayer, Everett D. Graff, Hermon Dunlap Smith, and Andrew McNally III; dealers Henry Stevens and Wright Howes; and librarians and curators Ruth Lapham Butler, Lawrence W. Towner, and David Woodward.

The library's collections span many centuries and feature items such as illuminated medieval manuscripts, rare early maps, rich genealogical sources, historical sheet music, and the personal papers of Midwestern literary figures, Chicago politicians, and others.

Karrow's illustrated lecture will introduce the "founders" and others, and show how their visions helped form a unique cartographic resource in Chicago.

## Auction Items Welcomed

Don't forget about our annual Silent Auction which we hold each year during our December Holiday Dinner. We will begin accepting donations soon...watch the listserv for details. If you have any questions, contact Christine Hayes at Acorn Bookshop, 486-1860.





## First Saturday Programs to Begin Again in November

Our First Saturday programs will begin a bit late this year because of several home football games and Geoff Smith's excused absence due to his trip to China to present several papers. (Geoff, we'll be watching for some stories in a later newsletter about your bookish experiences there.)

Smith, who heads the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at OSU, has been holding these programs in the Rare Books room (and then in their temporary headquarters on Kenny Road) for a number of years, much to the delight of Aldus members who have been able to experience once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to see, touch and discuss the many interesting holdings in OSU's collections.

With the re-opening of the newly-renovated library, these programs will move back to the Thompson Library, where they will begin at 10 a.m. in the Rare Books reading room on the first floor just inside the east (Oval) entrance.

In November, Geoff will share interesting maps and atlases in OSU's holdings. This Saturday program will provide a small taste of the types of materials we will learn about at our monthly program the following Thursday, in which Dr. Robert Karrow of the Newberry Library will tell about his library's many holdings.

And in the holiday spirit, our December First Saturday program will feature items in OSU's collections that reflect the holiday season. We're sure Geoff will have many surprises, culled from the wide range of interesting rare books, the impressive trade catalog collection, the cookbook collection, and other relevant materials held in Rare Books.

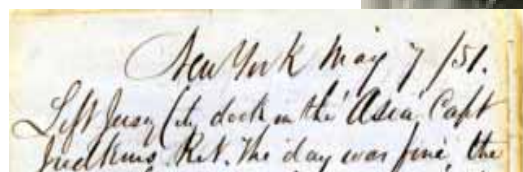
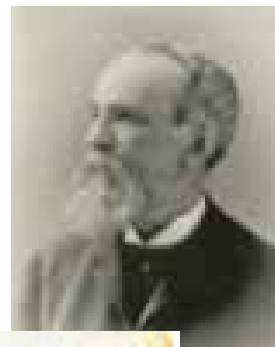
First Saturday programs are a membership bonus for Aldus members. If you have any special collecting interests and would like to have Geoff share related items in OSU's Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at one of these programs, contact him at [smith.1@osu.edu](mailto:smith.1@osu.edu)

## Inside the Digital Scriptorium Topic of October 8 Program

H. Lewis Ulman, Associate Professor of English at The Ohio State University, will discuss the theory and practice of electronic textual editing, focusing on three editions of mid-nineteenth-century American manuscripts held in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at OSU. This program is part of our ongoing History of Text series.

The manuscripts Ulman will share include a set of letters by Sophia Hawthorne; another set of letters by a Civil-War-era Ohio riverboat captain; and a journal of a trip to Europe by Samuel Cox, a budding Ohio travel writer and congressman.

One of three manuscripts Ulman will talk about is a journal recorded by Samuel Sullivan Cox, which records his experiences and reflections during a trip to Europe and the Orient. This book was expanded into a book which was titled *A Buckeye Abroad; or, Wanderings in Europe and in the Orient* (1852).



These editions are, in part, intended to help users explore the interpretive problems and processes involved in representing physical texts in digital formats by engaging them with four interrelated narratives about the historical milieus referred to in the texts; the history of the physical texts; the editorial process that led to the digital editions; and the mediation of digital presentation technologies.

In addition to viewing the editions online, we will explore some of the "back end" technologies employed in electronic textual editing, including encoding schemes that allow single transcriptions to contain bibliographical, codicological, textual, contextual, and interpretive information yet be presented in multiple ways that focus readers' attention on particular aspects of a text.

**NOTE:** After our September meeting on the OSU campus, we will be returning to our usual meeting venue, the Thurber Center (next door to Thurber House) with this program.

## Book Hunting Notes

### Collecting Thackeray: *Barry Lyndon* and *Vanity Fair*

By Bill Rich



Of all the once immensely-popular Victorian authors that I collect, perhaps Thackeray has had one of the more precipitous declines. In the 1850s, he and Dickens were neck and neck, and at the pinnacle of esteem by novel readers, both in England

and America. This high regard persisted for several generations.

Thackeray was the favorite of my own father, who was a young man in the decade before World War I. When Dad sold the family farm in Kentucky and moved south to New Orleans, he dispersed a considerable family library. Among the half dozen books he retained, and that I have to this day, was a much-thumbed pocket edition of *Pendennis*.

This *bildungsroman* has strong autobiographical elements taken from Thackeray's early life. Young *Pendennis* gets into various trials and temptations as he is off on his own as a college student and into the great world. It resonated greatly with my Dad, the son of a well-to-do farmer, and the first of his family to go to college. In its day, *Pendennis* rivaled *David Copperfield* as a coming-of-age-novel.

While all of Thackeray's major books are in print today, a quick check this week of the shelves of Borders and of Barnes and Noble showed that only copies of *Vanity Fair* were available. In contrast, a fair amount of Dickens, and almost all of George Eliot's major novels were represented. There was no Trollope.

I suspect that the selection available was dictated by the current trends among English teachers. After all, I ask myself, who reads Victorian fiction except for a classroom assignment these days? A major exception to this, of course, comes when one of the great novels is the subject of a color costume drama on TV, or of a new movie. Then, the copies of the work involved flood the

bookstores for awhile. I hope the enthusiasts who then "buy the book" have, in general, an enjoyable read. But I fear that many are discouraged when confronted with the actuality of getting through 800 pages or so of Victorian prose which *can* be mind-numbing, even for those without attention-deficit disorders. When this happens, the paperback copies so optimistically bought reappear in Half Price Books, covers still shiny, spines unincreased, quite evidently unread. My sense of isolation from the 21<sup>st</sup> century grows (apologies to fellow Aldusites who are also English teachers – and to *Masterpiece Theater* buffs – and to those who, like me, *are* lovers of 19<sup>th</sup> Century fiction – no harm intended, gentle friends, no harm in the world).

William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) was from an upper-class English family, and had a gentleman's education of the times – his Cambridge days are part of the humor in *Pendennis*. Financial reverses left him relatively poor, and he supported his wife and two little daughters with work as a journalist and an illustrator for the magazines. He had a fantastic output – hundreds of articles, stories, comic poetry appeared in scores of magazines and newspapers. He was sardonic, humorous, and insightful into the foibles of people and society.

It is this journalistic career, in the 1830s and 40s, that led to many Thackeray book editions being first published in the United States. In particular, the American publisher Appleton published many of Thackeray's pieces in collected book editions – these were almost all piracies, works from Europe being fair game for U. S. publishers in those pre-international-copyright days.

When I first began collecting Thackeray, in the 1970s, I lived in western New York State. A great pleasure was scouring the country bookstores and book barns, which had quite a few old books remaining from the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in this long-settled part of the U. S. Now, amid this detritus – which typically included collections of sermons, Methodist hymnals, wacko health advice to young men and maidens, and books on diseases of horses, were early Thackeray first editions. These, when found, cost less than a paperback. A guide to such American printings of English 19<sup>th</sup> Century authors, which are actually the true firsts, is the

bibliography by I. R. Brussel, *Anglo-American First Editions 1826 – 1900, East to West*. Here Brussel lists 25 Thackeray editions that were first published in the U. S., testimony to the enterprise of American pirate publishers.

I managed to find 15 or so that were above the threshold for “collector’s condition.” Admittedly, my threshold at the time was pretty darn low. After all, these books had not been collector’s items for the first 100 years of their existence – and most showed it all too well.

Of these discoveries, by far the best was the first edition of the great short novel, *The Luck of Barry Lyndon*. This was first published in serial form in *Fraser’s Magazine* in England in 1844. Appleton’s pirated book form of the novel appeared in 1853 in America. This was the book I discovered – in Bob Cook’s Book Store in the hamlet of Holland, a 15 minute drive from my home in East Aurora. My acquisition catalog notes the price I paid – \$9.00, and the date – November 27, 1982. This, I see, was the Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend that year, and the drive must have been over snow-covered roads in the heart of the biggest Snow Belt area in the U.S. I remember that my return to a supper of turkey leftovers was made joyous by the acquisition of a near fine copy of *Barry Lyndon*, in the original blue cloth.

The novel was not published in book form in England until 1856, and considerably modified by Thackeray by that time. Critics consider the original version superior. *Barry Lyndon* was Thackeray’s first work to become part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century English Literature canon. This picaresque novel about an 18<sup>th</sup> Century English rakehell was made into one of the greatest movies ever. Stanley Kubrick developed the screenplay from the novel, and produced and directed what has become a classic of world cinema, which starred Ryan O’Neal in the title role (1975).

I place this above Kubrick’s *Dr. Strangelove, A Clockwork Orange* and *The Shining*, and my opinion is shared by others who are not Thackeray collectors. Everything about this movie is fine – the glorious cinematography, the acting, and the music which was

adapted from several of Kubrick’s baroque and classical favorites.



This is a still from Stanley Kubrick's film of *Barry Lyndon*, showing Ryan O'Neal in the title role, Marisa Berenson playing the beautiful and wealthy Countess of Lyndon, and Frank Middlemass as her husband, the aged and sickly Lord Lyndon. Not hard to guess what happens here – but, eventually, Barry does come to a bad end.

Well, despite *Barry Lyndon*, there was no great recognition of Thackeray’s achievement as a novelist. The fact that the serialized form of this first novel was not republished as a book in England for more than a dozen years shows his lack of blockbuster novelistic appeal at the time. Nevertheless, he had a growing reputation as a writer and sketch artist, and Americans continued pirating his stuff. One New York publishing partnership, however, broke with their own policies and actually *paid* Thackeray for a few original articles. The partners were N. P. Willis and T. O. Porter, who in 1839 started a journal of avowed literary piracy, which boasted that prize selections from European journals and books would be stolen and published by the enterprising New York editors.



The journal was shamelessly entitled *The Corsair*. Willis paid £1 each to the young Thackeray, then in Paris, for eight short articles on the local scene. They appear as by



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“...the author of the *Yellowplush Correspondence*.” This was the first publication of these articles; most were subsequently reprinted in *The Parisian Sketch Book* in 1840.

Even paying real money for a change did not seem to improve the fortunes of *The Corsair*; it folded in less than a year, the last issue appearing on March 7, 1840. Nowadays, copies of *The Corsair* are very uncommon Thackeray items. The only copy I have seen was offered to me by Brian Lake, founder of the firm of Jarndyce in London, specialists in 19<sup>th</sup> Century literature.

Even though it is an American newspaper, a British collector of a century ago had evidently found a complete run, and had it sumptuously bound in full morocco with gilt finishing, all for the sake of the Thackeray pieces, which don't comprise more than five percent of the volume. When I was first told about this book in the London shop, I was more than ready to plunk down the required asking price and take it home to Columbus.

But, I couldn't. The book was being retained as evidence in a robbery trial! After a book fair, Lake had several books stolen from the back of his car – *The Corsair* among them, the large folio size and fine binding evidently being especially attractive to the thieves. The crooks were apprehended, the booty

recovered, but this book had to be retained as evidence, pending trial (in the Old Bailey?).

This was a little rough on the book hunter. No questing knight, being vouchsafed a fleeting vision of the Sangreal, was more anxious than I to secure this prize. The most that could be done at the time was to be promised first refusal of the item, if and when it became free of legal entanglements. Many months later, in 1998, this happened, and I received a letter offering me the book. It remains a key item in my Thackeray collection (*pictured on the next page*).

Thackeray's great breakthrough came in 1847. By this time, he had been for several years one of the leading contributors to *Punch*, the classic English humor magazine. He was contracted by *Punch* to produce a novel in monthly parts, a style of publication made famous by Dickens with *Pickwick Papers* ten years before. This was the famous *Vanity Fair*. Thackeray contracted to write the required twenty monthly installments, *and* to draw all the illustrations.

Doing a Victorian novel in this style, under the gun for the necessary copy each month, was a gargantuan task. Friends remember Thackeray struggling at his desk, a wet towel wrapped around his head to help the ache, writing away on the deadline day, with the printer's boy waiting outside the door, under instructions not to leave without “is 'aving Mr. Thackeray's copy.” Yet, under this kind of pressure, he produced a masterpiece.

A satirical novel of English society, it was frankly subtitled *A Novel Without A Hero*. But the young social climbing adventuress, Becky Sharp, is one of the immortals of English fiction. I can't resist quoting a couple of my favorite lines from the book:

On the possibility of any woman snaring the man she fancies:

*“This I set down as a positive truth. A woman with fair opportunities and without a positive hump, may marry whom she likes. ”*

And the last words in the entire novel (page 624 in the first book edition):

“Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? Or, having it, is satisfied? – Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out.”

The novel was not an immediate success. Only 500 copies of the first part were initially printed, the publisher taking a chance on an author, who was a well-known humorist writer, but not a novelist in the Dickens’ class. However, people told their friends, the book caught on as the parts came out each month, the earlier parts having to be reprinted to meet demand.

By the last part, a new master novelist was recognized. At the exact same time, the well-established Dickens was publishing *Dombey and Son* in monthly parts. But one contemporary comment was that “Thackeray has beat Dickens to pieces.”

And what of my hunting for *Vanity Fair* firsts? Well, a look on my shelves shows five (!) forms of the book. Yes, this is a bit obsessive, even for me, but I sure like this book.

The first copy I obtained was a beautiful leather-bound copy of the first book edition of the novel, published after the completion of the serial version in the parts. Such copies of the book are not uncommon – it had become enormously popular, and was prized enough by many to have it well bound. It is a book I have long delighted in – every plate of the Thackeray illustrations is crisp and clean. The book was found in the catalog of a well-known New England dealer, and at only \$40, was a bargain price, even in 1978.

This contented me for many years, but in 1997, I saw a copy of the first (English) book edition *in a very good, original cloth binding* listed in a catalog for a book auction here in Ohio (Cleveland). But, when I first saw the catalog, it was a day *after* the auction. In despair but with a desperate hope, I called Cleveland. My suspicions were confirmed when I learned the book had been “bought in,” no bidder coming forward to meet even the reserve price for such a currently unfashionable writer as Thackeray – at least, not among those in attendance in Cleveland that day. And the book was mine at the reserve price.

A British collector of a century ago had evidently found a complete run of *Corsair*, and had it sumptuously bound in full morocco with gilt finishing. After many months of waiting, I was finally able to secure this prize.



By this time, I was using internet resources to maintain a watch for books I especially coveted. And what I especially wanted was *Vanity Fair* in the original parts. Now this is something of a tall order. It is as uncommon in parts as rebound copies of the book edition are common.

Indeed, *Vanity Fair*, the first Thackeray in parts, has much in common with *Pickwick*, the first Dickens in parts – they were both experiments on relatively unknown novelists, and the first issues were both small indeed. But an average *Vanity Fair* in parts, even including later issues of some of the earliest parts, is much rarer than a comparable average *Pickwick*.

So, I kept a watch for such a *Vanity Fair* – using several super search engines. I usually use Bookfinder.com, which, at this point, lists 150 million books for sale, worldwide. This includes the inventory of almost every antiquarian bookseller around the globe. Out of all this there was often not a single listing for the *Vanity Fair* parts. But in 2001 I got very lucky. A copy was being offered by an enormously upscale dealer in a major East Coast city – a dealer who frankly has become famous for top-of-the-line prices for high-spot items.

Nevertheless, the listed price was amazingly low – about equivalent to one of the more common Dickens’ novels in parts in average condition, and one-fifth the price listed for the book in the Ahearn’s standard price guide. So, says the book hunter, what’s wrong with this copy?

I was on the phone right away, and an obliging assistant got out the book, and gave me a detailed description of each part (all 19 of them – the last part is a double one.)

The earlier parts were later issues, done after the book began to catch on, and this was only to be expected. Everything else was OK, all ads, etc., and the yellow wrappers in exceptionally fine condition (*see the figure below*) I bought the book, and realized a long-held desire.



So why the bargain price? I really don't know – but I can theorize: the dealer in question very much caters to the carriage trade. It is easy to be the proud possessor of a collection of “first editions” and display them to even your semi-literate friends, who will dutifully admire them, if we are talking about always-recognizable names, such as Hemingway, Dickens, or even firsts of Tarzan or Mickey Spillane.

But who has heard of Thackeray, and a set of the parts kept in a box that doesn't even look like much? No matter how scarce, the demand would be very small among such clientele, and we have a typical “drug on the market.”

I feel my theory was at least partly supported by receiving, a year later, one of the slick catalogs with glossy colored illustrations typical of this dealer. Here was listed the later, book issue of *Vanity Fair*, in a fine leather binding, quite comparable to my \$40 copy described above. The price asked was more than a 50 percent advance over what the same dealer had asked the previous year for my copy in parts. But, the book in a fine binding at least looks like something on the shelves. I completed my roundup of *Vanity Fairs* by buying first American editions. In 2003, I saw a copy of the first American printing in the shop of John Windle in San Francisco. This was a pirated copy (what else?) published in 1848 by Harper & Brothers in New York.

While not in particularly good shape, it is in the original cloth, and, by this time, I was trying to collect both the first English *and* the first American printings of my favorite Victorians. So, I brought it home.

It is interesting to compare the illustrations with those in the English first. All of Thackeray's drawings have been reproduced, but it is clear that different engraving plates have been used. The illustrations shown below are from early in the book, with the English on the left and the American on the right.



The scene is Becky leaving her boarding school forever, and throwing her headmistress's parting gift (a copy of Johnson's Dictionary) into the dust behind her. It appears to me that Harper's had their own people cut new engravings from the illustrations in the English first. The two pictures are remarkably alike, but the graving lines and hatchings are quite different.

Finally, in the same year (2003), I obtained a much finer copy in the original cloth of the first American edition, although it is the second printing. This was in an English bookshop, surprisingly, and the condition was so superior I bought it, too.

So much for this little trip to *Vanity Fair*. What a fitting name for this book collecting excursion into dandyism, vanity, and self-indulgence. Old Thack had it right when he said:

*“Which of us is happy in this world?  
Which of us has his desire? Or, having it,  
is satisfied?”*



## Coming Book Festivities and Sales

### **Columbus Paper, Postcard and Book Show** Sunday, September 13 (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

Held at Vets Memorial on West Broad Street, admission is \$6  
*More information: columbuspapershow@gmail.com; or go to Facebook page "Columbus Paper Show"*

### **Kerrytown BookFest, Ann Arbor, MI** Sunday, September 13 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

The Kerrytown BookFest features a number of on-going events and activities held simultaneously in the Kerrytown Farmers' Market (which will be set up that day), Kerrytown Concert House, and at Hollander's School of Book & Paper Arts. Booths in the outdoor market area will include author appearances, 20 antiquarian booksellers, book artists, bookbinders, letterpress printers, libraries, and many on-going demonstrations by Hollander's instructors and graduates.

*More information: www.kerrytownbookfest.org*

Ed note: Jay and I have attended the BookFest in the past, and highly recommend a weekend visit to that "Town up North" for this event.

### **Worthington Library Book Sale**

**September 18-20**

Begins Friday 9/17 at 6:30 pm for Friends. This is part of Worthington's Market Day downtown, and there will also be musicians, food & craft vendors, a farmers market and more.

*More information: 614-807-2604*

### **50th Michigan Antiquarian Book & Paper Show**

**Sunday, October 4, opens at 9:30 a.m.**

They plan to have over 75 dealers from around the country offering "more than a million items for sale." Held at Lansing Center, 333 East Michigan Ave in Lansing.

*More information: 517-332-0112*

### **Columbus Metropolitan Library Friends Sale**

**October 16-17 (Friends preview Thursday 10/15 from 5-8 p.m.)**

Located at the main branch on Grant Ave., downtown Columbus

### **Jewish Bookfair**

**November 1-15**

Held at the Jewish Community Center, 1125 College Ave. near Bexley, the Jewish Bookfair features author appearances and book signings, events and activities, and a wide selection of books for sale either written by Jewish authors or about Jewish topics.

*More information: mbutter@columbusjcc.org*

### **Friends of Planned Parenthood 39th Annual Book Fair**

**November 13-15**

Montgomery County Fairgrounds in Dayton

Admission is \$10 on Friday, with 10 a.m. opening. Free admission on Nov. 14-15

*More information: 937-274-5835*



## Ravneberg Memorial Lecture Series Donations Received

Last winter at our Holiday Dinner, The Aldus Society announced the formation of the Ron Ravneberg Memorial Lecture Series, which will be held each Spring. The first speaker, Owen Gingerich, spoke at our March 2009 program.

In March 2010, David Lilburne of Antipodean Books, Maps & Prints in New York state will be our second Ravneberg guest speaker.

Initial funding for the lecture series was put in place at the Silent Auction that evening, and was followed with generous donations made in Ron's memory in early 2009. Listed below are contributors who donated to this fund. We deeply thank you, one and all.

George C. Bauman	Joel and Linda Lucas
Paul & Sandra Watkins	Stephen and Tracy Rubin
Marcie Rogell	M. V. Kramer
Marilyn Ann Logue	Kenneth and Margaret
Helen Leibman	Calestro
James E. Healy	Amanda M. Beltramini
Sunrise/Sunset Ohio	Charles D. Butcher
Marcia Preston	Nina Tolen
John C. Carson MD	Columbus Education
Dean A. Hoffman	Association
Dr. Denny Johnson	William & Carol Logue
Robert & Donna Bennett	Southside Settlement
Ann E. Saup	The Ohio State
Harry & Nancy Campbell	University
Katanya Berndt	The Columbus Jewish
	Foundation

Aldus welcomes further donations to this fund at any time. And in the meantime, part of the proceeds from our silent auction, held during our annual Holiday Dinner will continue to underwrite this lecture series into the future.

### **Coming Soon to Our Website**

We are in the process of preparing scrapbook pages with Aldus event photos, and these will be posted soon on the website. Visit the website, or watch the listserv for our announcement of their posting.

Also, since so many of you enjoy Aldus member George Cowmeadow Bauman's Bookstore-ies, we're setting aside a place on our website where you can link to all-new stories (and perhaps even a few from the past).



# *The Aldus Society*

P. O. Box 1150  
Worthington, Ohio 43085-1150

## **Aldus Calendar**

### **September**

**10** Tour of the newly-renovated OSU Thompson Library led by Aldus member Wes Boomgaarden (*See story on page 1*)

### **October**

**8** H. Lewis Ulman's talk is titled "Inside the Digital Scriptorium" (*See story on page 9*)

**31** We'll have a fun-filled trip to visit James Thurber's grave at Green Lawn Cemetery, where the Acorn Graveside Players, Christine Hayes and Jack Salling, will read several spooky Thurber short stories including "The Night the Ghost Got In." After their entertaining renditions, we'll will adjourn to the nearby Banana Bean Cafe to discuss all things Thurber, Halloween, Aldus, or anything else that strikes our fancy. (*Watch the listserv for further details*)

### **November**

**7** First Saturday program (10 a.m.): a hands-on examination of maps and atlases from OSU's collections

**12** Dr. Robert Karrow, curator of Maps and Special Collections at the Newberry Library in Chicago will share the library's many maps and collections and their fascinating stories (*See story on page 8*)

### **December**

**5** First Saturday program (10 a.m.): interesting holiday music, books and other holiday-related books and ephemera in OSU's collections

**7** Our annual Holiday Dinner and Silent Auction will be held at La Scala, 4199 W. Dublin-Granville Rd. Details will be sent via our listserv in November so you can make your reservation early!